The London School of Economics and Political Science

The Private City:

Planning, Property, and Protest in the Making of Lavasa New Town, India

Anokhi Parikh

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Anokhi Parikh
London, March 2015

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Abstract

This dissertation is an ethnographic study of Lavasa, a new town planned, built and managed by a private company in India. It examines the ideologies, institutional arrangements, and political processes at work in the making of this town. It takes seriously the attempt to create a 'market utopia' (an inclusive, environmentally sustainable, properly planned, and profitable town), treating it as an empirical phenomenon with social consequences, and asks: why, how, and with what effects did Lavasa come to be? In tracing its conception, production, and contestation, the dissertation analyses the processes and consequences of transforming a rural landscape into an urban place.

I make two main arguments. First, the construction of Lavasa is fundamentally speculative and is centred on the ability to transform cheap rural land into urban real estate. I show that the land market that enables the city is actively manufactured by the state, through powerful local political actors, and networks of brokers and agrarian intermediaries. The construction of this land market produces a speculative environment: one in which trading in land simultaneously becomes an opportunity to make money, a cause of dispossession, and a way to lay claim to the city.

Second, such speculation generates both resistance against and support for the project. It also, paradoxically, emboldens the ideological project of city-making. Collective action is rendered difficult as it is mediated by the same conditions and state that created the land market. Therefore the contestation takes another form that moves beyond the domain of land, is couched in environmental concerns, and leverages a different level of the state to ultimately stall the project.

I demonstrate how the symbolic power of this 'market utopia' conceals the conditions of its possibility, that is, the ways in which it was made through the state, through speculation, and the discursive and material operations of the land market. I show how this land market is historically and socio-politically constructed, and how its construction shapes and informs the politics of planning, privatisation, and resistance.

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List of Acronyms

BEAG	Bombay Environmental Action Group
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CAG	Comptroller Auditor General (of India)
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CWP	Civil Writ Petition
DCR	Development Control Regulation
DMIC	Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor
DoE	Department of Environment (Maharashtra)
DoT	Department of Tourism (Maharashtra)
DTP	Department of Town Planning (Pune)
EIA	Environment Impact Assessment
EPA	Environment Protection Act (1986)
GoI	Government of India
GoM	Government of Maharashtra
HCC	Hindustan Construction Company
LAA	Land Acquisition Act (1894)
LARR	Land Acquisition Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act (2013)
LCC	Lake City Corporation
LCL	Lavasa Corporation Limited
LIG	Low Income Group
MKVDC	Mose Khore Valley Development Corporation
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MMRDA	Mumbai Metropolitan Regional Development Authority
MoEF	Ministry of Forests and Environment (Central)
MP	Member of Parliament
MPCB	Maharashtra Pollution Control Board
MRTP	Maharashtra Regional Town Planning Act (1996)
NAPM	National Alliance of People's Movements
NBA	*Narmada Bachao Andolan* (save Narmada movement)
NCP	Nationalist Congress Party
NRI	Non-Resident Indian
OBC	Other Backward Classes/Castes

PoA	Power of Attorney
PIL	Public Interest Litigation
RTI	Right to Information
SC	Scheduled Caste
ST	Scheduled Tribe
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
SPA	Special Planning Authority
UDD	Urban Development Department (Maharashtra)
UPA	United Progressive Alliance
YLFPL	Yashomala Leasings and Finance Private Limited

Glossary

7/12	Land record document (also known as record of rights)
Adivasi	Meaning 'original peoples'. A term denoting tribal populations. Also referred to as Scheduled Tribes
Bandharas	Check dams
Crore	Ten million
Gaothan	The portion of a village used for settlement (as defined by the Maharashtra Land Revenue Code, 1966)
Gram Panchayat	Elected local government at the village level (village council)
Other Backward Classes/Castes (OBC)	Disadvantaged communities not including Scheduled Castes or Tribes. They receive special assistance from the state with respect to education, employment and other social programmes
Lakh	One hundred thousand
Sarpanch	Elected head of *gram panchayat*
Scheduled Castes	Castes recognised by the Indian Constitution as disadvantaged. They receive special assistance from the state (including reservation) with respect to land, education, employment and other social programmes
Scheduled Tribes	The official term for adivasi. Tribal populations recognised by the Indian Constitution as disadvantage. They receive special assistance from the state (including reservation) with respect to land, education, employment and other social programmes
Talathi	Government administrator who maintains village records. S/he is in charge of land records and revenue records within a village or a group of villages
Taluka/Tehsil	Sub-district
Tehsildar	Gazetted administrators at the sub-district level appointed by the state government and in charge of tax revenues, appointment of village officials, sign and execute land sales, and acts as a magistrate in revenue disputes

Introduction

A Private Utopia?

"Town and country must be married, and out of this joyous union will spring a new hope, a new life, a new civilisation."

Ebenezer Howard (1898: 7)

Sometime in the mid-1990s, Aniruddha Deshpande, a powerful real estate developer, allegedly threw a lavish party at his farmhouse in Pune, Maharashtra. In attendance were many of the region's important politicians and businessmen including Sharad Pawar,[1] then in his third term as Chief Minister of Maharashtra (Damle, 2010: 27). Pawar had a long-standing vision: he wished to expand tourism in the state by developing a lake district in the scenic Western Ghat Mountains. Deshpande supported his passion: "no Indian has ever built a hill station…every hill station has been built by the British, right from Mahabaleshwar to Matheran, and from Dalhousie to Ooty".[2]

Hill stations are "curious monuments" to the British Raj (Kennedy, 1996: 1). As summer capitals they were "seasonal sites for the recreational activities of a highly transient expatriate population, whose memory of a distant homeland was lovingly evoked" (Kennedy, 1996: 3). Although they were places of escape for the British, particularly in the months of summer, over time they became increasingly 'Indian'. In Maharashtra, for instance, hill stations like Matheran and Mahabaleshwar are popular weekend destinations for urban Indians from a variety of socio-economic

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[1] Sharad Pawar (born 1940) has been a prominent figure in Maharashtra's political landscape since the mid-1960s. He became a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) in 1967 and went on to serve three terms as Chief Minister of Maharashtra (1978-80, 1988-91, and 1993-95), contesting within the Indian National Congress Party. In 1999 he left the Indian National Congress Party (Congress) and founded the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), of which he continues to be party president. The NCP-Congress alliance has dominated positions of political power in Maharashtra for the last two decades. In 2004, he joined the ruling coalition headed by the Congress – the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) – and was appointed Union Cabinet Minister for Agriculture, a position he retained until 2014.

[2] L10 interview, 12/08/2012. See Appendix 11 for a full list of informants.

backgrounds[3]: from the family that takes a public bus to bathe in local waterfalls, to the elite who escape, much like the British, to their holiday homes. Hill stations occupy a space in popular imagination as destinations of cooler climes, Bollywood romance, and boarding schools reminiscent of colonial times. With the British long gone, and a continuing tourist demand for hill stations, Deshpande and Pawar saw an opportunity.

In November 1996, a year after Pawar left his position as Chief Minister, the Government of Maharashtra (GoM) passed the 'Special Regulations for the Development of Tourist Resorts/Holiday Homes/Township in Hill Station Type Areas' (henceforth referred to as the Hill Station Regulation), which empowered private companies to build new settlements in designated areas. The swiftly passed policy waived land-ceiling laws[4], permitted purchase of agricultural land, and provided considerable tax exemptions for developers. It was through this policy that Deshpande and a number of land agents purchased and consolidated 7000 acres (28 square kilometres) in the Mulshi sub-district to build 'Lake Town'.

The plans for Lake Town became bolder over time. What started off as a 7000-acre development in 2000, became a 25,000 acre (100 square kilometre) project called Lavasa by 2004. Deshpande (the project's primary promoter) exited the project soon after, and Pawar became Minister of Agriculture in the central government. By 2006, Lavasa was largely managed by Lavasa Corporation Limited (LCL), a subsidiary of the well-regarded 100-year-old Hindustan Construction Company (HCC), with CEO Ajit Gulabchand at the helm. The project plan went well beyond its initial mandate of merely providing a tourist destination. Gulabchand's wished to develop a "replicable model for the development of future cities" (LCL, 2014: 76).

Planned for a stable population of 240,000 and 2 million annual visitors, Lavasa is imagined as an "inclusive city", a "prime tourist destination", with educational institutions, "non-polluting industries", and "world-class" facilities. It aims to be a

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[3] Domestic tourism increased 620 per cent between 1997 and 2013 (MoT: 10) and hill stations are popular destinations among domestic tourists.
[4] The Maharashtra Agricultural Lands (Ceiling on Holdings) Act, 1961 caps the total area of rural land that can be owned by a single individual/company in Maharashtra. The ceiling limit depends on the type of land in question – it ranges from 18 acres for irrigated land to 54 acres for dry-crop land (per individual).

"more liveable city of the future" where people can "Live, Work, Learn, and Play in harmony with nature" (LCL, 2012a: 2). It is envisioned as a city "unique in its scale and guiding philosophy" (LCL, 2012a: 2), offering a "wide variety of advantages of urban living in the lap of nature" and a "unique value proposition" of "good governance", "sustainability", and "value-added features not found in the average city" (LCL, 2012b: 1). More importantly, it is a city conceptualised, built, and controlled by a private company – Lavasa Corporation Limited (LCL).

Its vision brings together in an experimental (and arguably utopian) manner, the seemingly disparate goals of inclusion, environmental sustainability, economic profitability, and exemplary service delivery. It is no surprise that Lavasa is inspired by a multiplicity of references; the physical plan is New Urbanist[5] in design, the business model combines a conference economy with an education hub and is inspired by Davos, Switzerland and Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the architecture of its town centre is reminiscent of the seaside town of Portofino, Italy. Part lake-town, part hill station, and part city, it is a distinctly new kind of urban settlement, coming to life in a rural and forested setting.

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[5] New Urbanism is an American design movement that emerged in the 1980s as a response to sprawl and automobile-centred urban development. It is premised on creating mixed communities with walkable neighbourhoods, transit-oriented development, environmental conservation, compact living, and is often characterised by nostalgic/traditional architectural styles. See 'The Charter of New Urbanism' (http://www.cnu.org/charter) for the tenets of the movement.

Figure 1.1: Dasve Town Centre, Lavasa

Bold visions for the (re)creation of urban spaces are not new. History provides a long list of such experiments from the restructuring of Paris by Hausmann (Harvey, 2003) and Lutyen's New Delhi (Irving, 1983) to new cities such as Brasilia (Holston, 1989) and Chandigarh (Sarin, 1982). Private companies too have built their own towns with varying degrees of success. From Henry Ford's company town of Fordlandia (Grandin, 2009) to Walt Disney's Celebration (Ross, 2000), these settlements have often attempted to provide exemplary spaces outside the maelstrom of existing urbanism. Planners, 'starchitects', corporations, and governments have time and again been lured by the promise of starting afresh, of designing and planning new ways of living, unencumbered by the problems of the past and present. Their visions for the future are often organised around a "metaphor of rupture" (Kanna, 2011: 32), seeking to use the blank slate as a way to make a radical break with the past. But, as some notable scholars have argued, in implementing

their visions, they encounter not the tabula rasa that is at the foundation of their planning fervour, but society in all its contradictions (Holston, 1989; Grandin, 2009; Gururani, 2013).

Lavasa is no exception. As India embarks on its urban transition, its 'cities of tomorrow' (Hall, 2002) are being built in the villages of today. Their construction requires an encounter not with a blank slate but with the rural, agrarian, and political societies that inhabit those very landscapes. Lavasa's terrain subsumes 18 villages, forests, and a reservoir. Invoking the opening quote by Howard, then, one must ask, how do town and country meet, and what kind of hope and civilisation does this union spawn? How is this 'private city' conceptualised? How are rural communities thrown into the making of a city, and how do they reshape its making (Goldman, 2011)?

Not unlike its global predecessors (some of which are discussed later in this chapter), Lavasa has become a source of critical political contests and questions. While LCL prides itself on the efficiency, ambition, and lawfulness with which it has built (and is building) this city, the National Alliance for People's Movements (NAPM)[6] deems it "a city founded on lies, cheating, deceit, gross corruption and violation of laws" and "the best example of crony capitalism in this era of unholy alliances between corporations, politicians and bureaucrats" (Patkar, 2011: n.p[7]). The NAPM asserts that the various regulations and policies put in place to enable Lavasa are "signs of political manoeuvring" and that the project has "forcibly evicted tribal populations, purchased land illegally and flouted environmental norms" (Patkar, 2011: n.p). To this effect, the NAPM has lodged numerous complaints with various government departments, held protests, filed land dispute court cases, and a Public

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[6] The NAPM was founded in 1992 as an alliance of social movements across India. It works to "bring the struggle for primacy of rights of communities over national resources, conservation and governance, decentralised democratic development and towards a just, sustainable and egalitarian society" (NAPM, 2012: n.p.). The NAPM consists of heterogeneous movements (both rural and urban), which draw on a range of discourses including Gandhianism, Ambedkarism, Marxism, environmentalism, and feminism (Omvedt, 1993). They are united by their "commitment to deepening democratic control over markets, productive resources, and economic development more generally" as well as their struggles against corporate and state led displacement and dispossession (Levien, 2007: 124). Medha Patkar, a politically powerful social activist most well-known for leading community struggles against the Narmada Dam and other dam related displacement, is actively involved in contesting Lavasa and at the helm of the NAPM.

[7] Throughout this dissertation 'n.p.' will be used in instances for web and government documents where no page number is available.

Interest Litigation (PIL) case in the Mumbai High Court. Ironically, despite the city's focus on environmental sustainability, in 2010, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) stalled the project for over a year on the grounds of environmental violations (MoEF, 2010).

That said, other civil society members have argued in favour of the project just as vociferously:

> "Lavasa is perhaps the first world-class city being developed in India which has chosen not to be an alienated gated community. The Lavasa Corporation did not get the state government to forcibly acquire land using the coercive power at its disposal through the Land Acquisition Act of colonial vintage. It purchased land from individual owners at the then prevailing market prices on the basis of government records regarding ownership rights. All the 18 *panchayats*[8] have made common cause supporting Lavasa in the High Court battle being fought. The vision of Lavasa is intrinsically inclusive." (Kishwar, 2011: n.p.)

Therefore, Lavasa presents a number of curiosities (discussed further in Chapter Two). First, set against a context of increasing numbers of gated communities that promise exclusivity (Searle, 2010), LCL seeks to create an "inclusive city". Second, in contrast to most mega-projects in India, which deploy the state's powers of eminent domain to forcibly acquire land from landowners, Lavasa has followed a model of voluntary land purchase, not thought to be possible in the Indian context.[9] Third, despite nationwide farmer-led mass protests around mega-projects (associated with land acquisition), Lavasa has seen relatively little mass-based collective resistance on the issue of land. Instead, and paradoxically, this "environmentally sustainable" city

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[8] A *gram panchayat* is an elected local government at the village level (village council)

[9] Land assembly is considered to be near impossible without the use of the Land Acquisition Act (1894), which allows the government to forcibly expropriate land for 'public purpose'. This is for a number of reasons: first, given the land holding patterns in India (the presence of a large number of small farms), the transaction costs for such an endeavour would be prohibitively high. Second, the probability of holdouts (land-owners unwilling to sell) could prevent the developer from fully carrying out their plan. Third, the knock-on speculative effects on the price of land could result in untenably high land costs for the developer. Therefore, the use of state force is seen as necessary for assembling land. This will be discussed at length in Chapters Two and Five.

was blocked, for a time, on environmental grounds. Fourth, resistance to the project has been met with counter-resistance from both activists and local residents.

Using qualitative interviews, archival evidence, and land records, this dissertation examines the ideologies, interests, and political processes at work in the making of Lavasa. It takes seriously the attempt to create a 'market utopia' (an inclusive, environmentally sustainable, properly planned, and profitable town), treating it as an empirical phenomenon with social consequences. It asks: why, how, and with what effects did Lavasa come to be? How are rural communities thrown into city-making and how do they reshape its making? In tracing the making of this town – its conception, production, and contestation – the dissertation examines the processes and consequences of transforming a rural landscape into an urban place.

I make two main arguments. First, the construction of Lavasa is fundamentally speculative, and is centred on the ability to transform cheap rural land into urban real estate. I show that the land market that facilitates this city is actively manufactured by the state through powerful local political actors, as well as networks of brokers and agrarian intermediaries. The construction of this land market produces a speculative environment: one in which trading in land becomes at once an opportunity to make money, a cause of dispossession, as well as a way to lay claim to the city.

Second, such speculation generates both resistance against and support for the project. It also, paradoxically, emboldens the ideological project of city-making. Collective action is rendered difficult as it is mediated by the same conditions and state that created the land market. Therefore the contestation takes another form that moves beyond the domain of land, is couched in environmental concerns, and leverages a different level of the state to ultimately stall the project.

In telling this story, I demonstrate how the symbolic power of this 'market utopia' and the imaginaries deployed in its portrayal conceal the conditions of its possibility, that is, the ways in which it was made through the state, through speculation, and the discursive and material operations of the land market. I show how this land

market is historically and socio-politically constructed, and how its construction shapes and informs the politics of planning, privatisation, and resistance.

This introductory chapter situates this study of Lavasa within a context that speaks to the politics of new city development globally. Section 1.1 surveys aspects of the long history of new towns, especially those built by private companies, arguing that these projects are often ideological, routinely subverted and undone, and as much a product of structures as individual actors. Given this, Section 1.2 assesses the recent resurgence of new town construction, problematises how they have been conceptualised, and locates Lavasa within the contemporary moment. Section 1.3 then lays out the conceptual terrain for the dissertation: the production of space. Section 1.4 concludes with detailed research questions and an outline of the dissertation.

1.1. Urban Experiments: from Garden City to Suburbia

Modern (Euro-American) urban planning originated as a response to the social ills of the Victorian industrial city and the resultant fear of untamed urbanism (Hall, 2002). As 19th century London became mired in the despair of slums, urban poverty, and inadequate housing, concerns about public health, social tensions, and political upheaval grew. Social reformers of the time began to see the city as a site for social transformation – where poverty could be addressed through an intervention in the built environment through the provision of planned housing and sanitation. Underpinning such proposed interventions was the belief that reforming the urban environment could eradicate prevalent social ills (Faludi, 1973) and "create a new set of social relationships and a new set of social perceptions" (Hall, 2002: 45). Urban planning and reform, therefore, was not just about creating an alternative built form and city layout, but also a vision for an alternative society. Over the years planners put forth a variety of visions, some to reform existing cities and others to respond to existing social problems by starting afresh. A detailed narrative is beyond the scope of this chapter, but a brief historical overview of new towns/cities raises some cross-cutting themes that will be addressed in this dissertation.

Many new cities were premised on the idea that radical new cities would solve the urban and social crises of their time. In a sense they were "manifestos for an urban revolution" (Fishman, 1982: 22). The driving architects and planners of these cities spurned the gradual improvement of existing cities in support of comprehensive planning in new sites. Their visions for the future were not only founded on an indictment of the present, but in sketching out what a better city could look like they also incorporated (either explicitly or implicitly) the means and processes by which that future could be achieved. Furthermore, they regarded the economic and social systems within which they worked to be temporary hurdles to be overcome in order to transform society through new urban forms. But, as we shall see, they proved to be more than temporary hurdles, often subverting and undoing the original visions.

These visions can be considered utopian. I deploy the term utopia not to mean a perfect fantasy world, as originally used by Thomas More (1516)[10] to symbolise a fictional, perfect, and unreachable society, or as "sites with no real place" in which "society itself" is presented in a "perfected form" (Foucault, 1984: 3): rather, the term is used to represent both the vision of an ideal and desired city and the impossibility of this vision. In treating these places as utopian, I allude not only to the idealised vision but also the unrealisable nature of that vision. As we shall see in this section, which is largely a chronological account of new city development, the initial goals of these visions were rarely met, although in some instances they were curiously achieved in unexpected ways.

One such historically important vision, which inspired city-making the world over, was Ebenezer Howard's 'garden city'. Howard (1850-1928), a writer, planner, and social reformer, developed his idea in response to the problems of poverty, squalor, and congestion in Victorian London. In his book 'To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform' (1898), he outlined his vision for the garden city, a settlement that

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[10] More's Utopia does not have private property, locks on doors, unemployment, gender inequality, and luxury commodities; it is a welfare state with a six-hour workday. Ironically, this perfect unreachable society is founded on exploitation, with each household owning two slaves (who are either from other countries or are Utopian criminals). As Lim and Liu argue, the "cost of utopia is what lies outside utopia, the forgotten communities and infrastructure required to support it" (Lim and Liu, 2010: 10).

provided both the economic opportunities of the city and the natural environment of the country. These garden cities were imagined and planned as a number of self-contained towns, a short distance from London (where land prices would be low) and separated from it by a large green belt. In Howard's vision, they were to be cooperatively owned, optimally sized at 30,000 people, economically independent "self-governing welfare states", with an abundance of public space, and employment opportunities in light industries (Hall, 2002: 139). The city revenue would come from rents from various tenants and be used to cover the capital costs, the interest on capital, and to maintain public works. The first garden city – Letchworth – was registered in 1903, but despite its initially successful publicity it remained severely undercapitalised (Hall and Ward, 1998); finances and ownership proved difficult and many of Howard's collectivist goals had to be compromised. For instance, cooperative ownership became impossible, and buildings and businesses needed to be privately owned. Land speculation made the rents too high for poor workers, and factories failed to relocate as anticipated. Although Howard had imagined the garden city as a diverse urban space, housing became unaffordable for the working classes and the cities never managed to reach their target populations or become financially stable without government support (Hall and Ward, 1998).

Despite its lack of immediate success, the idea of the garden city travelled all across the world including to the United States in the 1920s where it was reinterpreted beyond recognition. The Regional Planning Association of America, under the stewardship of Clarence Stein and Henry Wright, modified the garden city to create the 'Radburn layout'. The key innovation here was a spatial layout that grouped houses in small cul-de-sacs facing on to parks, and separated vehicular and pedestrian traffic to reduce the presence of cars within the town. This, too, was an attempt at social reform, but on a smaller scale. Its intention was to renew the "neighbourhood as a political and moral unit" (Hall, 2002: 129) and it was premised on a desire to integrate the new immigrants and their American-born children away from city slums. The first deployment of this layout was in Radburn, New Jersey, and was undertaken by a private company – the City Housing Corporation – in 1929. Despite aiming for a socially mixed community, by 1934 the settlement was largely elite with almost no blue-collar workers; realtors also kept out the Jewish community as well as African Americans. The city's population hovered at a mere 1500 people, the

costs of maintaining it soared, and the onset of the Great Depression ensured that industries did not relocate there. Thus, instead of the garden city it had hoped to be, Radburn became a commuter suburb. More than twenty years later, Clarence Stein reflected that, "a private corporation had at best a gambler's chance to build a new community" (Stein (1958) quoted in Hall (2002): 133).

Across the globe, in colonial India, the garden city took the form of a company town. Indian industrialist Jamshedji Tata obtained capital from 8000 Indian investors and land from the colonial government to build Jamshedpur, a company town with a steel plant at its core (Dutta, 1977). Jamshedpur represents an early attempt at private sector planning, albeit focused on the well-being and productivity of the industrial worker. Yet, Tata was clear that he was "not putting up a row of workmen's huts in Jamshedpur" but he was "building a city", one that "encompassed a secular outlook, and valued open space" (Sinha and Singh, 2011: 266). In Tata's own words, the town was a "notable example of a garden city admirably serving the needs of a great industry and the people whom it supports" and it was unique, for it was "built and run entirely by a private concern" (Koenisberger, 1945: 1). The town was planned incrementally, in four distinct phases, each of which was "aided by foreign expertise" (Sinha and Singh, 2011: 263). The Kennedy Plan (1911) conceptualised the town, the FC Temple Plan (1920) focused on landscape, civic improvement and urban infrastructure, the Stokes Plan (1936) addressed the housing shortage that resulted from the town's explosive growth, and finally, architect Otto Koenigsberger's plan (1944-5) attempted, with only partial success, to bring elements of the garden city to Jamshedpur. Koenigsberger struggled to overlay a garden city layout on this rapidly growing town. Over time, growth outstripped the most perspicacious of plans and Jamshedpur now has a "planned nucleus" with an "unplanned rural-urban fringe" (Dutta, 1977: vi).[11] Today, it is home to 1.1 million people and is one of the few company towns in the world that has stood the test of time.

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[11] A number of company towns (centred on steel plants) were built in India in the 1950s. These state projects were built with foreign aid: Bhilai (Soviet assistance), Durgapur (British) and Rourkela (West German). Nehru referred to them as the "Temples" to "India's industrial modernity that would abolish centuries of economic stagnation; beacons along the path of "progress" that would allow the new nation to "catch up" with the developed world. Not just about forging steel, they were as much about forging a new society" (Parry and Streumpell, 2008: 47). These towns were not only meant to be sites of employment provision for locals as well as migrants but also "entirely new kinds of places inhabited by new kinds of people who would directly participate in the grand project of building the nation" (S Roy, 2007: 135). They were to be "melting pots, exemplars of unity in diversity, symbols of

Farther afield, another kind of colonial project was underway. In the 1930s Henry Ford embarked on building a company town in the Brazilian Amazon. Fordlandia, as it came to be known, was both a town to support a rubber plantation and a "civilising mission". Grandin (2009) argues that the project was never commercially profitable but was fuelled and justified by idealism, as Ford considered the project not just a way of securing his company's rubber supply (which it never did) but as a "Work of Civilisation" (Grandin, 2009: 24). In trying to "ensure fulfilment of workers outside the factory", Ford sought to re-create a puritanical "mid-western dream" with vegetable gardens, the promotion of ballroom dancing, and alcohol prohibition, incongruously mixed with Cape Cod style houses (Grandin, 2009: 6). Fordlandia was enabled by a series of middlemen who organised the concessions, bought land, and found workers. It was only made possible through enormous tax and land concessions (free public land) provided by the local and national Brazilian governments who hoped that Ford would help revive the regional economy which had been in decline since 1910 on account of a changing global rubber market and a slump in world prices of rubber. These concessions were widely criticised by Brazilians at the time.

For all its idealism, Ford's vision of a pastoral American life was rejected by mutinous locals who revolted against the paternalism demonstrated by the company, had numerous altercations with authorities, and defied prohibition. Furthermore, the site attracted all kinds of unseemly characters who frequented the emergent bordellos and gambling houses, and brought with them an element of chaos. In its short life, Fordlandia was permanently in crisis: worker attrition rates were high, various diseases decimated the American employees, and the rubber output was poor. Ford failed to tame the jungle and gave up the project in 1945. The Brazilian government took over in 1950 but abandoned it soon after. Fordlandia, Grandin argues, "represents in crystalline form the utopianism that powered Fordism – and by extension Americanism. It reveals the faith that a drive toward greater efficiency could be controlled and managed in such a way as to bring balance to the world and that technology itself, without the need for government planning, could solve

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national integration," and in hindsight, "temples to Nehru's vision of a secular India" (Parry and Streumpell, 2008: 47). Unlike Jamshedpur, however, these towns were largely state projects.

whatever social problems arose from progress's advance" (2009: 356). Ford "imagined his industrial method as leading to social cohesion" (2009: 358), but the hubris of this vision resulted in a failure that was equally spectacular.

While the garden city emerged in a variety of public and private forms across the globe in the 19th and early 20th centuries, high modernism[12] emerged on the urban landscape in many post-colonial settings. Cities built under the ideology and aesthetic of high modernism were of substantially different form and content than the garden city. Their unsentimental architectural designs sought to embody scientific and technical progress and aimed to transcend the "rot, decay, scum and refuse" of existing cities (Scott, 1998: 117). Unlike the self-contained rural-urban garden cities, many post-colonial cities such as Brasilia, Canberra, Chandigarh, Abuja and Dodoma, were built by the state as administrative capitals and served a larger ideological and political purpose (Scott, 1998).

Chandigarh, for instance, was intended to represent newly independent India's "new genuine, productive and universal modernity", neither steeped in Indian tradition, nor the "inauthentic modernity" of the colonial city (Khilnani, 1999: 128). Prime Minister Nehru's ambition was to remake the city as a symbol of a "new sovereignty", breaking with the existing city which was "stamped by colonialism, soiled by partition, and in the grip of often corrupt municipalities" (Khilnani, 1999: 135). It was a way in which to renew and reclaim the city as an "engine to drive India into the modern world" (Khilnani, 1999: 110). Thus Swiss architect/planner Le Corbusier's design was entirely unsentimental and Chandigarh was built to reflect Nehru's idea "that India must free itself of both the contradictory modernity of the Raj and the nostalgia for its indigenous past" (1999: 132). While the building of Chandigarh was a political project, it remained a "supremely conceptual city", failing to generate any "shared understanding of its meanings" among its citizens and became instead, a city of the most prosperous civil servants, professionals and

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[12] High modernism was a particular instance of modernism (widely varied in its form and application). Scott (1998: 4) defines it as "a strong, one might even say muscle-bound, version of the self-confidence about scientific and technical progress, the expansion of production, the growing satisfaction of human needs, the mastery of nature (including human nature), and above all, the rational design of social order commensurate with the scientific understanding of natural laws". See Scott (1998) for detailed discussion on High Modernism as an ideology and Holston (1989) on high modernism and its deployment in the making of Brasilia.

bureaucrats (Khilnani, 1999: 135). It did, inadvertently, become an economic powerhouse through an unplanned expansion of industrial townships, but some argue that Chandigarh failed to generate "a society of secular individual or modernist politics: drawn into the vortex of Punjab's politics, it was turned into a cipher in a battle of communities" (Khilnani, 1999: 135).

Around the same moment in time, on the other side of the globe, Brazil's populist President Kibitschek promised Brazilians "fifty years of progress in five" and commissioned architects Oscar Niemeyer and Lucio Costa to design the new capital, Brasilia. Like Chandigarh, the vision for Brasilia sought to make a break with the past and the present. It was conceived as a "city of the future, a city of development, a realizable utopia" and made "no references to the habits, traditions, and practices of Brazil's past, or of its great cities" (Scott, 1998: 119). Brasilia's plan was not merely an architectural blueprint for a new city; its master plan contained within it a "program for social change and consciously embodied new and desired forms of social life" (Holston, 1989: 60). It attempted to create a city without classes. The plan's mythology disguised an agenda for the transformation of Brasilian society. The agenda explains why Brasilia had to be radically different and modernist in order to produce regional and national development. The planners and architects believed that the redesign of the urban environment could "refashion public and private life" and rework social relations. But as Holston argues, the utopian project of city-making (a "common type of development project") was "founded on a paradox"; although the desired future for Brasilia sought to be a rupture from the existing social conditions of Brazil, its emergence required the very "existing conditions it denied" (1989: 5). Holston (1989: 5) therefore shows that "the paradoxes of utopia subverted" Brasilia's "initial premises".

In North America, suburbia became a powerful ideal which received increasing support (Fishman, 1987; Glaeser, 2011). Its power came from improvements in transport infrastructure, real estate speculation and from "the capacity of suburban design to express a complex and compelling vision of the modern family freed from the corruption of the city, restored to harmony with nature, endowed with wealth and independence, yet protected by a close-knit, stable community" (Fishman, 1987: x). Suburbia was not just a triumph of the middle class, but also an escape and

"alienation of the middle classes from the urban-industrial world they themselves were creating" (Fishman, 1987: 4). It was thus not an automatic fate; rather, it was a cultural creation and a conscious choice, a "bourgeois utopia", "a collective creation of the bourgeois elite" (Fishman, 1987: 4) or as Lewis Mumford so wonderfully described it, "a collective effort to live a private life" (1938: x).

Levittowns were a series of such early large-scale privately planned settlement/suburban developments across the United States. Imagined, planned and bankrolled by Levitt and Sons, they became, inadvertently or not, a "prototype of post-war suburbia" (Gans, 1967: xvii). In the 1940s, Levitt and Sons were building upper-middle class Tudor-style houses and soon after a contract from the government to deliver housing across the eastern United States. By the time they ventured into building the first Levittown in New York, they were already one of the country's largest builders (Jackson, 1985). Using new building technologies and innovative cost-saving construction techniques, Levittown offered relatively inexpensive housing and hoped to attract both middle and working class people in order to create some kind of community. The first Levittown housed 82,000 residents in 17,400 housing units (Jackson, 1985) and was hugely successful in terms of sales. It would, however, be erroneous to think of the Levittowns as purely private developments. As Gottdeiner (1985) shows, large land areas could only be converted rapidly into urban areas through a variety of state support – either indirectly through the subsidisation of mortgages and homeowner tax shelters or directly with the state partnering with real estate speculators and developers operating in the region. They did so ostensibly to "create property owning citizens with a stake in their country" (Glaeser, 2011; 176). Although they did enable working class families to own better quality housing than was available in the tenements of existing cities the various Levittowns rarely achieved the diversity they set out to (Glaeser, 2011).

In the 1960s and 1970s hundreds of self-contained private communities were publicised in the United States in order to respond to "ugly and conformist suburban expansion, social isolation and environmental problems" (Forsyth, 2005: 1). American communities such as Irvine (California), Columbia (Maryland), and The Woodlands (Texas) were planned to be "phased, coordinated, socially balanced,

environmentally aware, and economically efficient. Their developers wanted to create whole "master-planned new communities" (Forsyth, 2005: 2), which would house anywhere between 10,000 to 500,000 people. "By avoiding many of the problems of uncoordinated incremental growth – or sprawl – they imagined both improving urban areas and creating a real estate product that would sell" (Forsyth, 2005: 2). Designed as compact mixed-use spatial layouts with access to nature, many of these communities were inspired by the Radburn layout and garden cities. These communities were backed and developed by very wealthy individuals and corporations who were able to mobilise their elite networks to gain permissions and change regulations in their favour. These communities represent the private, for-profit planning approach in America, where developers obtain legitimacy through their control over private property. Over time many were financially successful, with robust property markets and stable populations.[13]

Perhaps the most extreme version of a corporate city was that of EPCOT (Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow). Entrepreneur Walt Disney felt that addressing the ills of old cities was futile, rather his goal was to "start from scratch on virgin land…and build a special kind of community" (Arnold, 2002: n.p.). EPCOT was imagined as an evolving display of modern technology. Designed as a community of tomorrow, it was to "be a showcase to the world for the ingenuity and imagination of American free enterprise" (Arnold, 2002: n.p.). In EPCOT, Disney wanted to replace democratic institutions within the city with the company and its corporate partners. Underlying his vision for this city was the belief that corporations, rather than traditional government, were better placed to create jobs, prevent poverty and provide for the common good.

Although EPCOT failed to take off, in 1994 Disney launched 'Celebration' – "a showcase town of 20,000 designed as a corrective to sprawl" in Florida (Ross, 2000: 5). Celebration, like many American urban experiments, sought to create a small town community by adopting New Urbanist planning principles of mixed land use, compact development, mass-transit orientation and some landscape preservation.

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[13] For instance, in 2000 the Woodlands had over 50,000 residents and Irvine had 200,000 residents with a sizeable Asian and Hispanic population. Columbia had 100,000 residents and made big strides in racial integration, with 20 per cent of its population being African American.

Ross (2000: 8) argues that despite Disney's original vision, Celebration was "a shrewd bet on a horse with everything going for it: timing, turf, and a critical mass of influential advocates". It was built on cheap land purchased by multiple front companies in 1967, and designed based on consumer market research. It sought to "take credit for building a showcase public realm in a suburban landscape bereft of public life" and in so doing prove "that corporations could be entrusted with the charge of restoring public space" (Ross, 2000: 312). Furthermore, speculators and homeowners saw it as a safe investment given that it was backed by Disney. Many Americans flocked to the town, seeking a perfect community and relying on their faith in Disney to provide it. 'Celebrationites', as the residents came to be called, were at first "attracted to the efficiency of private government" (Ross, 2000: 310). But within a few years of its first occupancy, there were troubles around poor housing quality, a malfunctioning school, and the management's inability to address these problems. That said, over time, the town became successful on its own terms, with a stable population of 8000 people, well-maintained public spaces, and a healthy real estate market.

In summary, this (necessarily partial) global overview of new towns makes a number of key arguments: First, that the impulse to start afresh embeds within it a political purpose – be it the desire to establish a new sovereignty as in the case of Chandigarh, create an ostensibly classless society as in Brasilia, provide a work of quintessentially American civilisation in Fordlandia, or a wish to create a city free from government like EPCOT. These projects embody different registers of utopianism, ranging from the realpolitik of Brasilia, to the narcissism of Fordlandia and the more modest goals of Jamshedpur. Whatever the political purpose may be, these visions often serve as demonstration projects – of alternate possibilities of the future and they contain within them normative ideas of what the future city (and society) should look like and what 'development' consists of. They are attempts to provide exemplary spaces outside of the maelstrom of existing urbanism, serving as important examples of what *is* possible and therefore embed within them a socio-political purpose.

Second, these experiments reject and seek to reform the very societies that they emerge from. In imagining another future, they represent a "negation of existing

conditions" (Holston, 1989: 5). However, these projects can only emerge using the very existing conditions that they deny and are therefore often frustrated by them. In implementing their visions, the planners encounter not the 'blank slate' upon which their plans are premised, but society and all its contradictions. It is this interaction that often subverts the original ideals of the project, creating the very dystopias the visions sought to eradicate. Therefore, the visions for these places are often undone; some, like Fordlandia, are colossal failures, and abandoned, others, like Jamshedpur and Casablanca, are victims of their own success – their growth outstrips the most perspicacious of plans.

Third, these experiments are as much about the underlying ideas as the mavericks that envision them and the patrons that support them. At every step of the way there are specific actors that imagine an alternative future – be it Ebenezer Howard, Le Corbusier, Hubert Lyautey, Henry Ford or Walt Disney. These actors usually project and realize their own visions with substantial backing from the state (or favours from key individuals within the state), which facilitates and legitimates such projects through partnerships, subsidies, exemptions, and by managing contestation. Consequently, in examining such urban experiments one has to pay attention not only to the structural conditions under which they emerge but also to the individuals that propel them (Hall, 2002).

Fourth, imagining the new has almost always involved foreign actors, ideas, and architectural and urban forms. The circuits of urban planning have long been globalised and internationalised, (Prakash, 2002; King, 2004; Harris, 2008; Legg and McFarlane, 2008; Healey, 2013). Whether it is Geddes in Tel Aviv, Corbusier's modernism in Chandigarh, or Fordlandia's Cape Cod aesthetic, these new sites often experiment with urban design and architectural forms, and are planned by foreign experts.[14] While many of these planning ideals were imported, they were invariably "hybridised", altered, and interpreted in their new contexts (Harris, 2008). While such hybridisation can "be understood as part of a field of power", "the nature and direction of its cultural and political significance should never be assumed" (Harriss,

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[14] Such experts could include engineers, urban designers, sanitation, and transport planners, who often helped "export town planning to the colonies" and modified "entrenched ideas about what colonial urban development was", encouraging "tentative engagements with local urban forms" (Legg and McFarlane, 2008: 9).

2008: 16). In examining the movement of ideas, one must ask, how does "a local, indigenous population, respond to, modify, control or domesticate the urban development strategies of an external authority of power, be it a colonial state, a powerful commercial interest, or simply a firm of planning consultants?" (King, 2004: 85).

This historical overview informs the perspective with which I engage the re-emergence of new town projects: the political work that they do, the actors they are driven by, the networks of ideas they draw from, and the role of the state in privatised city-making.

1.2. The Resurgence of Privatised New Towns

Although privately planned, financed, and developed greenfield cities are not a new phenomenon, there has been a resurgence of such projects in recent years. Why do we see a revival of these strategies and what, if anything, is different about the contemporary moment? Current scholarship suggests that what is different is that these cities are being built in the context of privatisation and neoliberalism. From Mazdar in Abu Dhabi (Caprotti and Romanowicz, 2013) to Daoyan in China (Pow, 2013), such projects have been given a range of names, 'bypass-implant urbanism' (Shatkin, 2008), 'wannabe cities' (Short, 2006), 'splintered urbanism' (Graham and Marvin, 2001), and 'zones of exception' (Ong, 2006). In this section, I offer a critique of this literature and locate Lavasa within it.

Privatised urban settlements have taken on a variety of forms, including gated communities, enclaves, smart cities, eco-cities, townships, and Special Economic Zones (SEZs). In this respect, privatisation has moved beyond the mere provision of services, housing, and infrastructure into the 'privatisation of planning' – "the transfer of power over and responsibility for the visioning of urban futures and the exercise of social action for urban change from public to private sector actors" (Shatkin, 2008: 388). Conceptualised as self-contained entities they represent an urban model based on an interpretation of what a "global urban area should look and function like" (Shatkin, 2011: 78). So what does such "privatisation of planning" look like and what work does it do?

With respect to gated communities, which one can arguably see as privatised towns on a smaller scale, scholars have argued that they serve functions of security, aspiration and escapism. For instance, drawing from her research in Sao Paolo, Caldeira (2001) shows that these "fortified enclaves" emerge as a response to (and further push) concerns of security. To this effect they require security features such as electric fencing, high walling and other methods and motifs of fortification (Ellin, 1997; Low, 2005). In some cases these concerns go as far as creating "security parks" (Hook and Vrdoljak, 2002). In the South African context, Ballard and Jones argue that they can be seen as a kind of "geographical escapism" aiming to "restore feelings of safety and control that were enabled by the earlier state-led spatial strategy of apartheid" (2011: 2). Pow notes that Chinese housing estates are "meticulously planned in order to create [a] picturesque and pristine living environment" and that behind these "pretty housing façade(s) lies an aestheticized landscape of social exclusion and residential segregation" (2009: 372). This aestheticized vision, she argues, serves to depoliticize class relations, reducing them "to questions of lifestyle choices, consumption patterns, visual pleasures and "good taste"" (2009: 373). And so, these gated communities across the world serve as forms of escapism and exclusion, walled-in from the poor, and rooted in concerns of security and consumption of space. In some cases, contemporary new towns are characterised by similar concerns and responses.

Advertised as the "world's first electronic city", with "no factories, no pollution, no problems", Dreamland was Egypt's experiment in city-making (Mitchell, 2007: 2). Construction began in 1995 and it is now the "largest, privately owned urban development project not only in Egypt but in the entire Middle East" (Dreamland Egypt, 2013). Overlooking the Pyramids, Dreamland is a real-estate project supported by various government officials and institutions. But, as speculators realised that they had overbuilt, its values collapsed and it remains under-populated today, a mirage of itself, as its name suggests. Similarly, Iranian Arg-e-Jadid, a 5000-acre artificial oasis in the form of a model town was built in the middle of a desert as part of a special economic zone (SEZ) centred on automobile-assembly. The then President Rafsanjani hoped to diversify Iran's economic base away from oil and natural gas by developing a domestic consumer economy and increasing private

investment. Construction commenced in 1994 with goals of catering to 50,000 people. New Urbanist in design, and built on "unproductive" public land, it is a financially successful real estate venture, with a turnover of USD 200 million in 2005. Arg-e-Jadid mixes commerce and housing to provide a free-market enclave and can be seen as a form of "Islamic neoliberalism" (Forti, 2007). At present it has only 3000 residents and workers are brought in from surrounding villages.

Surveying plans of yet to be built African cities, Watson suggests that they are driven by international real estate companies interested in developing city-region scale satellite cities post the 2008 financial crisis. Watson (2014: 225-226) refers to them as "urban fantasies": "hyper-modern" in their design, sometimes referencing Dubai and Shanghai, seeking to be free of the ""disorder" of existing cities". Tatu City in Kenya for instance, is planned for 70,000 "discerning residents" and companies "who wish to live, work and play in the most modern well-planned urban development in East Africa" (2014: 4219). Outside the Angolan capital of Luanda, Chinese developers have built a range of towns comprising towers of apartments priced at USD 200,000. Understandably vacant, these physical "fantasies", as if to drive home the improbability of their existence, are now referred to as 'ghost towns'. Similarly, the city of Kigamboni outside Dar es Salaam, aims to relieve the latter's land shortages and congestion; developed by companies from Dubai, UAE and China, it promises an "ultra modern urban centre with facilities competing with those in places like Dubai, Hong Kong, and Kuala Lumpur" (Watson, 2014: 223). Taken together, these plans seek to provide elite Africans with serviced urban land that is aspirational and global in scope.

These plans are also "clear attempts to link physical visions to contemporary rhetoric on urban sustainability, risk and new technologies, and are underpinned by the ideal that through these cities Africa can be "modernized"" (Watson, 2013: 218). Almost always designed by foreign consultants, these master-planned settlements are large-scale, based on private property, with elaborate physical visions that are embedded in contemporary discourses of sustainability and new technologies. Surveying privatised city development (what he calls 'urban integrated megaprojects') in Asia, Shatkin argues that their globally referenced urban visions "function in part as allegories" "intended to illustrate a possible urban future" (Shatkin, 2011: 7) and

represent a "vision for the transformation of the urban experience through the wholesale commodification of the urban fabric" (Shatkin, 2011: 78). Furthermore, the presentation of these towns as simply a response to the consumer demand of the increasingly global elite/middle classes allows them to transcend debates about propriety and insulates them from public input and accountability (Shatkin, 2011).

China is the most fervent of city builders today, although unlike the above-mentioned projects, these cities are largely funded and enabled by the state. While Shanghai was designed to "flaunt cutting-edge style", its nine satellite towns were designed as meticulous imitations of European cities including a Paris (with an Eiffel Tower) and Venice (with canals and gondolas). In a survey of these theme-park towns, Bosker (2013) argues that they "re-create not only the superficial appearance of Western historical cities, but also the "feel"", which in "subtle but important ways" shapes "the behaviour of their occupants while also reflecting the achievements, dreams, and even anxieties of their inhabitants and creators" (2013: 2-3). While tourists frequent these towns, the properties – owned by speculators, parking their money and watching their investments grow – often remain empty.

China has also undertaken a number of eco-city projects in order to demonstrate low-waste or sometimes even carbon-neutral urban development pathways. Amidst mounting pressures to respond to global climate change, eco-cities have emerged as potential solutions to this imminent ecological crisis. Caprotti (2014) argues that such eco-cities are "experimental locations in which to trial new technologies, architectures, and environmental-economic reform" that conceptualise the city as a "laboratory" (2014: 2). For instance, Dongtan, China's first eco-city project, sought to develop a carbon neutral town to house 500,000 people in a wetland area (Pow, 2013). Similarly, Yixing's 'Sustainable Development Demonstration Zone' seeks to demonstrate low carbon development by developing a town centred on the solar energy industry (Chen, 2012b). These sites are necessarily demonstration projects which show possible models of an environmentally sustainable and economically productive urban future. They are seen to "promise economic progress, social harmony and ecological protection and represent the apotheosis of China's pursuit of green civilisation" (Pow, 2013: 2256). May (2011: 103) suggests that they "hold forth the promise of cutting the tie between urbanisation, energy and land

consumption enabling those who have heretofore been left behind by the industrial revolution to enjoy an increased quality of life without pushing the planet beyond an ecological tipping point".[15] Caprotti (2014: 3) goes further to argue that "the use and marketing of eco-cities" is a "foil for economic strategies enabling the reproduction of neoliberal economies in the guise of transitions towards "green capitalism" and the "green economy"".

The literature summarised above has a number of shortcomings. First, the historical overview in Section 1.1 impels us to see these new town projects as products of specific actors in particular historical moments. Most new town experiments were driven by the singular obsession of a few individuals – architects/planners and their patrons – to create something new. Yet, in foregrounding structural connections between the state and capital, the key importance of actors and the relationships they share with each other (the visionaries, key government officials, developers, and politicians) is largely ignored in recent scholarship on privatised (and other) city-making (Shatkin (2008) and Sami (2013) are notable exceptions).

Brenner and Theodore (2002) provide some nuance, arguing that neoliberal projects are contextually embedded, "produced within national, regional and local contexts" (2002: 351). Therefore, an analysis of "actually existing neoliberalism" requires an exploration of the "path-dependent, contextually specific interactions" at different scales (2002: 351). However, this approach, too, as Parnell and Robinson (2012) rightly argue, privileges the global over the local. That is to say, if all the diversity of urban outcomes can be explained as a "tendency of neoliberalisation at the urban scale" (2012: 599) then what of the collective importance of other processes that shape urban change, such as the role of traditional elites, land use, and local political-economies? As the introduction to this chapter suggests, ideas are not just products of structures but also of very specific actors (Pawar, Deshpande and Gulabchand, in the case of Lavasa) and to call them neoliberal projects would be to underestimate the very local specific interests, ideas, and associations that generated them. This dissertation thus heeds Parnell and Robinson's (2012: 594) call of developing a "post-

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[15] For recent detailed surveys on eco-cities see Rapoport (2013) and Caprotti (2014).

neoliberal analytic optic" in urban studies, in order to foreground the local actors and conditions as drivers of urban change.

Second, these studies expansively analyse the roots and implications of the plans and visions deployed in making new cities. They foreground the plans, the representations that they draw on, the discourses used to justify and sell such projects, and the political work that these representations do. This analytical focus on imaginaries and symbolism is unavoidable, as many of these cities exist only on paper. Regardless, such analysis ascribes too much power to the plans themselves. In focusing on the imaginaries, the global references they deploy, and seeing neoliberalism as a "package of policies, ideologies, and political interests", these works miss "the processes that pertain to local structures of meaning and symbolism in reshaping neoliberalism" (Kanna, 2011: 32). Here again, history cautions us. We have seen that plans on paper are imperfect – works in progress that are shaped and changed in their implementation. What is of relevance then is to examine how developers plan to achieve their goals, and how the plans are remade or re-imagined. In other words, to understand the true weight and force of the plan, scholarship should move beyond the plan and engage instead with the life of the plan.

Third, there is a growing literature on how plans for new cities (eco-cities and SEZs) impact rural populations in both China (Ong, 2006; May, 2011; Chen, 2012a; Caprotti, 2014) and India (Goldman, 2010; Levien, 2013; Sampat, 2013; Jenkins et al., 2013) and their conclusions are universally grim. By and large, they demonstrate how these projects are premised on dispossessing rural peasantries. While there can be no doubt that the dispossession of peasantry from their lands is a serious global issue, these studies rarely account for the spaces that communities can create, often against substantial odds and sometimes in subversive ways, to shape or participate in the plan. For instance, in terming these new projects speculative real estate projects, they are largely imagined as projects undertaken by domestic and foreign real estate companies, and the government. These studies (with the partial exception of Levien (2013)) rarely uncover how those communities that are thrown into city-making speculate and with what consequences (this point is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two).

Finally, a vast majority of these projects remain on paper, unable to get off the ground due to inadequate capital, and/or a range of local legal and political obstacles (Shatkin, 2011; Watson, 2014). In some cases projects are built, but, in the absence of residents and businesses, are rendered dystopian ghost towns (Bosker, 2013; Watson, 2014).[16] In other cases, they have been thwarted by protest and litigation, as is evident from the numerous SEZs in India (Sampat, 2013; Jenkins et al. 2014). In the Indian context, Roy (2009a: 87) argues that such projects of urban developmentalism "remain damned by the very deregulatory logic that fuels them". While she is not referring to new towns specifically, her point is that attempts to remake Indian cities are often undone either through resistance or through the informalised planning processes of the state. In other words, "it is precisely the nature and ambitions of these plans that will be their undoing, for the "chaos" that they seek to evade is precisely the context in which they must take root" (Bhan, 2014: 235).

To say that these utopian projects end up dystopian, subverted in some manner or another is banal. History shows us that the hubris of many such schemes ensures their subversion. What is of interest is not the fact that they do not live up to their ideals, i.e. whether these projects are successes or failures on the terms that were initially set out. Michel Foucault asserted that nothing happens as laid down in programmers' schemes - yet he insisted that they are not simply utopias "in the heads of a few projectors", they are not "abortive schemas for the creation of a reality" but "fragments of reality" itself and they "induce a whole series of effects in the real" (Foucault, 1991: 81). The utopia conjures images and circulates imaginaries about the future. What must be paid attention to is how the plan as an idea and the plan in action interact with one another to produce a living and breathing city.

As I have demonstrated, the scholarship on contemporary new towns has therefore largely either focused on the imaginaries and ideologies accompanying such urban projects, or the dispossession that they bring about. But these studies rarely bring together the myriad aspects of city-making. For instance, they seldom discuss the

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[16] For instance, the new city of Chenggong consists of 100,000 vacant apartments (BBC, 14 August 2012). Other Chinese cities like Thames Town (modelled on an English village) and the Kangbashi district, which was built to accommodate a million people by 2010, are empty too (Time, 2014).

tactics deployed by the state, private sector, and local communities in moving the project forward as well as resisting and remaking it (Shatkin, 2011). It is these questions that this dissertation seeks to engage with through an ethnography of Lavasa.

1.3. The Production of Space

Scholars working on contemporary urbanism have been enormously influenced by Lefebvre's idea of 'the production of space' (1991) and his writings on 'the right to the city' (1996). These two works offer a framework with which one can begin an inquiry into the making of a place. Marxist perspectives on the production of space, most notably developed by Lefebvre (1991 (1974)), Castells (1977), and Harvey (1973, 1990) explain urbanisation as the spatial manifestation of capitalist accumulation and explain urban growth and change in terms of the circulation of capital. Harvey argues that capitalism's crisis of over-accumulation is temporarily attenuated through investment in the built environment, i.e. through a "spatial fix" for capital. The built environment thus becomes a collective means of consumption and production and absorbs surplus capital in its construction and maintenance (further elaborated upon in Chapter Two). Lefebvre suggests that contemporary capitalism is urban capitalism – where the production of space becomes the driver of the economy and society. Capitalism, according to him, survives by occupying space. Lefebvre sees urbanisation as a product of real estate capital and commodification, everyday symbols and representations. Therefore, late capitalism is "not just an economic, ideological, and cultural project but also a spatial one" (Kanna, 2011: 17).

What is meant by the production of space? Lefebvre argues that space is not merely a means of production, but also a product in and of itself. Its use and design are political instruments of social control. Lefebvre is interested in the production of space – "the ways in which surplus value is produced through the commodification and exchange of space", i.e. the material development of the built environment and "through the representation of space (spatial conceptions of experts and planners), and the collective meanings of representational space" (quoted in Roy (2009a): 825). Space, according to him, is actively produced and its production is "a social process involving the confrontation and negotiation of various practices (architectural,

institutional, and quotidian) that is determinate, embedded in concrete relations of power" (Kanna, 2011: 83).

Lefebvre's heuristic device of a triad consisting of conceived-perceived-lived space serves as a framework for understanding the production of space. The first (conceived space) is what he calls 'representations of space'; space as conceptualised by planners and experts. These representations are conceptual domains of "scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers, and social engineers...all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with, and what is conceived" (Lefebvre, 1991 (1974): 38). They are products of latent historical processes and marked by signs, codes, ideology and power. The dominance of capital is coded within these representations. The second (perceived space) is what he calls 'spaces of representation' which is lived and experiential space, "modified over time and through its use, spaces invested with symbolism and meaning" (Elden, 2004: 190). The third 'spatial practices' (lived space) is space as "a physical form, *real* space, space that is generated and used" (Elden, 2004: 190). The production of space therefore is as much a product of material activities as conceptual.

There are a number of ways in which Lefebvre's conception of the production of space provides a framework for thinking about the emergence of a city, particularly one that represents itself as a kind of market utopia. First, the city of Lavasa is a product, not just in Lefebvre's understanding that all space is produced but also quite literally, as Lavasa is to be sold and marketed to future 'consumer-citizens'. Accordingly, in examining the city, Lefebvre suggests we pay attention to the material – the capitalist forces through which the city emerges; the conceived – the ways in which Lavasa is planned and conceptualised (by experts, planners, etc); the lived – the ways in which the space is experienced and directly lived by those who are subsumed in its making; and finally, through spatial practice – the relationship between the perceived space and its lived realities through physical space.

Second, Lefebvre's writings on 'the production of space' emerged from his observations on the development of a French new town called Mourenx in the 1950s. In examining the transformation of the rural landscape from which it emerged, Lefebvre argued that urban processes extend beyond city limits. The city

therefore, was not the "appropriate scale for urban analysis". Rather, the process requires "a grasp of how agrarian economies have been affected by industrialisation and then by the shift of economic locus to finance capital" (Ballard and Jones, 2013: 4). He therefore insists that as part of examining the urban processes, we also examine how rural economies/societies have been transformed.

Third, the production of space requires us to pay attention to surfaces and imaginaries, not only because of what they produce but also because of what they conceal. The built environment (like commodities in Marxist analysis), conceals the ways it is produced (Lefebvre 1991 (1974): 80). In this concealment, "particular interests reproduce themselves", often in very violent ways (Ballard and Jones, 2013: 4), to give the appearance of stability. So Lefebvre suggests that we not only pay attention to the surfaces but scratch beneath them too.

Although not a Lefebvrian thesis, the idea of the production of space informs the structure of the thesis. Consequently, this thesis seeks to go beyond understanding new urban spaces as simply a product of real estate speculation. It seeks to understand the creation of new urban spaces both in terms of how they are envisioned and how they are materially made. It examines why and how urban development projects (particularly megaprojects) actually get adopted and how they are actively produced and reflect a set of political interests and claims (Shatkin, 2008). Contemporary literature on urban India rarely uncovers how projects were imagined, or why particular strategies were undertaken (were there alternatives?) This project seeks to do both, in a Lefebvrian sense to understand the production of space in representation *and* in practice, i.e. Lavasa as an example of speculation in real estate and a speculation of a future city realised through an ideology of planning.

By using these lenses to examine how Lavasa comes to life, this thesis contributes to the literature on urban studies through an ethnographic study of the first city developed, financed and managed entirely by the private sector in post-independence India. Through the case of Lavasa, I consider the production of space by the private sector in a post-colonial setting, where profit and reform are explicit aims of the developers. This dissertation examines the nexus between the state, private sector,

and society in India in a quintessential example of the production of space: the wholly private city of Lavasa.

1.4. Dissertation Road Map

> "We believe, and always have, that India and the rest of the developing world needs cities like Lavasa. It is a prototype of a medium-sized city, which can act as a financially viable, and environmentally and socially sustainable substitute to the ill served and overcrowded mega cities. We need manageable, planned cities, not burgeoning slums." (Ajit Gulabchand quoted in LCL (2010: 5))

Many greenfield sites in India distinguish themselves from existing Indian cities through three main claims: first, that they will have 'world-class' infrastructure and services, second, that they will be built and managed (at least partially) by the private sector, and third, that they will be 'properly' planned. Lavasa makes an additional claims that by adhering to the Master Plan and imposing "strict financial controls", it will be a profitable, environmentally sustainable, and inclusive city, one where people from various socio-economic classes will come together to live (LCL, 2009: n.p.). It is within these ideals that my inquiry is located. Since planning, inclusion, and environmental concerns are usually domains of the state, what are the tensions of situating these social goals within market forces? Each chapter takes a salient part of the vision – private planning, inclusion, and environmental sustainability – and examines the nature and the implementation of that vision, what it reveals and conceals, the ruptures, undoing, and remaking of that utopian ideal. It examines, in a Lefebvrian sense, how the city was imagined, materially made, and made real. Accordingly, the dissertation is structured as follows.

Chapter Two sets out further thoughts on the theoretical terrain for the thesis, which lies at the intersection of the literatures on urban planning and agrarian change. It locates Lavasa within the contemporary urban moment in India, which is defined by the twin ascendance of privatised urban development and resistance (Shatkin and Vidyarthi, 2014). The chapter outlines and critiques the dominant theoretical narratives deployed in explaining why, how, and with what effects, new

forms of privatised development have emerged in India. Chapter Three describes the methods used in studying Lavasa, detailing both the epistemological basis for the study and the nuts and bolts of conducting it.

Chapter Four sets up the case of Lavasa and traces the ideologies, rationalities, and interests that enabled its making. It seeks to explain how and why the government enabled and rationalised the creation of a privately built hill station and makes three connected arguments. First, it shows that the state government's policy for new hill stations emerged not from techno-scientific analysis or even expert opinion (unlike, perhaps, its modernist predecessors), but rather from a long standing and common sense view that upholds the development of new cities as a solution to the intractable problems of existing cities. Invoking this common sense, then, the development of hill stations was justified both politically and legally as being in the 'public interest' even though these hill stations were essentially meant to be private real estate projects. This redefinition of public interest effectively curbed all discussion on the propriety of such privatised settlements. Second, the chapter demonstrates how a network of politically powerful individuals, connected through kinship and friendship, often occupying influential positions within the government and in real estate companies, was crucial to the foundation of this city. Their involvement further blurred the line between the project's public and private interests. Third, it argues that while Lavasa can be seen as a real estate project, generating surplus through the monetisation of land, it is also building, sustaining and making real the representation of a private and somewhat utopian space. This vision promises that future cities, when planned and managed properly through private partnerships and with a complete top-down vision, can avoid the politics and turmoil that characterise the Indian city of the past (and present). Lavasa, therefore, is a speculative project – a real estate gamble as well as a gamble on what a future city should look like. This speculative vision, as will be seen in the chapters that follow, produces all kinds of socio-political and economic effects.

Having established that the Hill Station Regulations and Lavasa are premised on the conversion of rural land into urban space, Chapter Five seeks to explain how Lavasa's land parcel was assembled. It asks a number of related questions: how did LCL purchase thousands of acres from villagers on the land market? Why were these

villagers willing to part with their lands? And if locals were cheated, as the NAPM has argued, then why was their collectively protest against LCL? The chapter shows that land purchase was made possible by the historical specificity of the land in question. That is to say, the state government had created conditions in which the rural population was sparse, effectively fragmented, partially urbanised, and disconnected from agriculture. The process of land assembly, therefore, was slowly manufactured and it involved the state, law, and agrarian structures. Second, land was purchased quietly over a decade by a multitude of intermediaries (land agents, other real estate companies, and aggregators). Thus, much of the land had already been purchased before the project was formally announced to the villagers. These intermediaries in some instances did cheat farmers, either by forging documents, providing inadequate compensation, or engaging in aggressive coercion.

But, despite these grievances, collective action was feeble and thwarted by three mechanisms (generated by the market process itself). First, the process turned some villagers with relative power and wealth into land speculators with a stake in the project. Second, the voluntary and bilateral nature of market transactions individualised land disputes, making them issues to be addressed within the private and domestic sphere, rather than collectively and publicly. Third, many villagers who had sold their land took responsibility for selling at low prices, buying into the ideology of the market, rather than questioning the grossly asymmetric terms under which such land sales had taken place. Finally, the ostensibly voluntary nature of the transactions disrupted the politically powerful narrative of 'dispossession' that is usually invoked by social movements when contesting land grabs, making collective action all the more difficult. Together, these processes ensured that, aside from a small number of land disputes, LCL managed to assemble its land parcel with relative ease.

That said, a number of villagers did not sell their land (referred to as 'holdouts') and many of those who did continue to reside in Lavasa. Accordingly, Chapter Six examines Lavasa's vision for building an inclusive city. It asks how, and with what effects, have rural communities been thrown into city-making? If Lavasa aims to be an 'inclusive' city then what are the terms of its inclusion and what are its effects? The chapter shows that while LCL seeks to build an inclusive city, one with affordable

housing and services, and a corporate social responsibility programme, their idea of inclusion is founded on retaining control over land. In the plan's conception, therefore, the holdouts are an aesthetic, planning and security liability. The holdouts in this view represent a kind of propertied resistance to the project, unwilling to sell their land and disrupting Lavasa's Master Plan. However, although the holdouts pose a challenge for the company in terms of planning and resistance, they also, by their very existence, politically legitimise the town. The holdouts' presence is presented by LCL as testimony to the lack of coercion/use of violence in the land purchase process as well as an affirmation of Lavasa's ideology of development. The holdouts are in good measure responsible for the project surviving multiple legal and political contestations. Furthermore, in finding themselves amidst a city building project, some holdouts provide affordable services to others and have set up their own businesses within the city, ironically, making real the possibility of inclusion. It is through their propertied citizenship, rather than their plan-based inclusion that they are able to lay claims to the city. Thus, while the holdouts prevent LCL from executing its plan to a certain extent, paradoxically, it is their presence that allows the plan to at least partially succeed.

Chapter Seven interrogates Lavasa's vision for building an environmentally sustainable city. It asks why and how was Lavasa, an "environmentally sustainable" city, contested and stalled on environmental grounds? It argues that the contestation is premised on ideologically opposed conceptions of environmentalism held by the competing groups: LCL and the NAPM. Their respective conceptions of the environment are imbued with ideologies of development and embody irreconcilable views on privatisation and the control and ownership of land. These competing ideas also reflect conflicting interests. LCL's goal is to generate a compelling urban future that is sellable and marketable both domestically and internationally. Such visioning is made possible by and further enables land and resource privatisation. In the case of the NAPM, the environment is invoked to guarantee land and resource rights for the villagers. It serves as a way in which to challenge privatisation and land/resource capture by leveraging environmental laws in a context where land disputes are increasingly difficult to fight (as demonstrated in Chapters Five and Six). In this instance the environment is also used strategically as part of a larger, nationwide struggle against privatisation, displacement and neoliberal economic development.

Therefore, Chapter Seven shows how the environment is leveraged in order to generate support both for and against land privatisation.

Having traced the making of Lavasa – its inception, production, and contestation – Chapter Eight concludes with some reflections on the main themes and arguments raised in this dissertation and its contribution to the study of Indian politics and urban studies.

Chapter Two

India's Urban Transition

On a Sunday evening in 2011, Shankar Dhindale, a local land agent and resident of Dasve village was kidnapped. The kidnappers, later identified as members of a criminal network, threatened Shankar, took his keys, and ransacked his house. They stole the INR 4.7 million (USD 94,000) they found in his cupboard, but left behind gold of undisclosed value (Indian Express, 01 November 2011). Local informants narrated this incident to me on multiple occasions. As they told the story, often with great hyperbole, they highlighted the sheer volume of money that had been making its way into the local economy. But in all the retellings of this story there was little incredulity that someone would stash such a large sum of money in a cupboard, and even less disbelief that the kidnapped person was not just any land agent, but also the *sarpanch* of the Dasve *gram panchayat.*[17]

Dasve is no ordinary village. It is one of the eighteen villages subsumed within Lavasa and slowly being transformed into a single urban settlement. But the story of Shankar Dhindale is more common than one might think. As infrastructure projects, SEZs, and townships grow in number and scope, tales of real estate related crime abound. Accounts of land sharks, dispossession, and conflict find their way into local newspapers on a daily basis. The kidnapping, therefore, raises many questions; how did Shankar Dhindale amass such wealth and power? What is the role of agrarian intermediaries in the making of urban space? And what, if anything, does his case tell us about the ongoing rural—urban transition in India?

In trying to answer these questions, this chapter lays out the theoretical foundation for the dissertation, which lies at the intersection of the literatures on urban planning and agrarian studies. It outlines the dominant theoretical perspectives deployed in explaining why and how new forms of urban development emerge in India and argues that Lavasa disrupts some of these narratives and also points to key

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[17] *Gram panchayat* is the elected local self-government at the village level and the *sarpanch* is its elected head. The *sarpanch* is the chief liaison between the government and the village community.

silences within them. The chapter is structured as follows: Section 2.1 outlines the empirical context of urban development in contemporary India. Section 2.2 lays out the dominant academic narratives used in understanding India's urban transition, namely: i) speculative urbanism ii) land grabs and dispossession, and iii) contestation and resistance. Section 2.3 concludes by making a case for studying Lavasa.

2.1. India's Urban Century

The Indian state's relationship with urbanisation has not been straightforward. As historian Janaki Nair notes, the city "has had a fugitive existence in the political, cultural and sociological imaginations of modern India" (Nair, 2005: 1). In the years just after independence, Nehru saw industrialisation as the way to usher India into the future, and wished to remake the city as "an engine to drive India into the modern world" (Khilnani, 1999: 110). But if modern India lives in its cities, then Gandhi's India began and ended in its villages (Nair, 2005: 4). Gandhi believed that the villages of India could be self-sufficient and India's progress was rooted in the revival of the village economy. In both his and Nehru's view, the village was seen "not only as a place where people lived but as a site which reflected the basic values of Indian civilisation" (Beteille, 1980: 108). Therefore, rural India, housing the majority of the country's population, has long dominated the political imagination of post-colonial India. Paradoxically, despite the political importance of rural India, Lipton (1977) argued that post-independence policies reflected an urban bias, resulting in the long-term impoverishment of rural areas. In the years that followed, explosive urbanisation was routinely predicted. Although urban population growth rates remained low and well below global averages, given the size of India's population, these marginal growth rates generated a substantial increase in the urban population (Table 2.1) (Kundu, 2011).

Table 2.1: Average annual growth rate of urban population for India and the world's major regions, 1950-2015

Period	Latin America	Africa	Asia	India	India % urban population
1950-55	4.70	4.64	3.93	2.41	17.04
1960-65	4.28	5.10	3.86	3.00	17.92
1970-75	3.56	4.38	3.38	3.74	19.76
1980-85	3.17	4.29	3.77	3.30	23.10
1990-95	2.46	3.79	3.17	2.81	25.55
2000-05	1.94	3.40	2.83	2.37	27.67
2010-15	1.33	3.28	2.17	2.38	30.01

Source: Excerpts from Tables 1 and 2 in Kundu (2011: 6, 7)

When the Indian government liberalised the economy and opened its markets to global trade and finance in the early 1990s, it did so to address its current account deficit, increase foreign investment and make Indian industry globally competitive. Entrenching the Nehruvian vision of cities, liberalisation was accompanied by a distinct policy focus towards growth-oriented urban developmentalism (Gooptu, 2011). In 2005, launching the (fittingly named) flagship Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM)[18], then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said, "our urban economy has become an important driver of economic growth. It is also the bridge between the domestic economy and the global economy. It is a bridge we must strengthen" (as quoted in Gooptu, 2011: 37). Cities, although home to only 30 per cent of the country's population, are responsible for 66 per cent of GDP (Alhuwalia et al., 2014). The anticipation of an urban population explosion combined with a decline in the agricultural economy (which dropped from 37 per cent to 17.5 per cent of GDP between 1981 and 2011) presents itself as a "structural transformation" waiting to happen (Ahluwalia et al., 2014: 2). Scholars and policy makers argue that this urban transformation is taking place in an "increasingly unplanned manner" (Ahluwalia et al., 2014: 2) with poor public services, and substandard and/or inadequate infrastructure slowing the growth of the Indian economy (Nilekani, 2008; MGI, 2010). To that effect, the Twelfth Plan for Urban

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[18] The JNNURM was launched in 2005 to reform 65 selected Indian cities. The policy linked central government funding with a set of required city-level reforms aimed at altering financial management of cities, planning and governance frameworks, improving urban services for all citizens, and de-regulating the urban land market (Shaw, 2012). The JNNURM sought to develop ""an efficient real estate market with minimum barriers on transfer of property" (JNNURM, 2007: 74) and thus "catalyze investment flows in the urban infrastructure sector" so that cities will live up to their projected contribution to national economic growth (MUD, 2006)" (Searle, 2010: 82).

Development (2011-2016) identified the need for investment in cities, claiming that "the challenges of urbanisation in India are unprecedented in scale and significance" (GoI, 2011: 3). Indian cities therefore are seen as both engines of entrepreneurship and growth, as well as sites in need of urgent reform (Nilekani, 2008; MGI, 2010; Ahluwalia, 2014).

In contrast to urban planning and governance which, until the 1990s, was a "state dominated affair" characterised by public housing boards (Levien, 2013: 57) and strict controls over land, the post-liberalisation reforms encouraged private sector involvement in the construction of infrastructure and real estate (Banerjee-Guha, 2002; Mathur, 2005). For instance, the Urban Land Ceiling and Regulation Act, 1976 (ULCRA), a law that prevented the concentration of land holdings beyond a specified limit, was repealed in 1999 to allow for the restructuring of urban land markets. In 2002, private developers were permitted to seek foreign direct investment (FDI) for township construction and this policy was further liberalised in 2005 to include a wider range of real estate types. In 2004, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) allowed venture capital funding in real estate, which resulted in the establishment of a number of real estate investment funds. It is thus no surprise that Indian real estate values grew at twice the rate of inflation between 2001 and 2011 (Chakravorty, 2013). The real estate market grew from USD 12 billion in 2005 to USD 55.6 billion in 2010 and is expected to grow to USD 180 billion by 2020 (FICCI, 2013).

As part of the post-liberalisation policy emphasis on urbanisation and economic growth, there has been a renewed focus on greenfield developments. In the years just after Independence, a range of new towns/cities such as Chandigarh (Punjab), Gandhinagar (Gujarat), and Bhilai (Madhya Pradesh)[19] were built almost entirely through state planning and funds. Between 1947 and 1981, India built 118 new towns and accommodated 5 million people in them, making it one of the largest new town programmes in the world (Glover, 2013). The 1970s and '80s saw the development

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[19] Chandigarh and Gandhinagar were post-independence attempts to create new administrative capitals for Punjab and Gujarat, respectively. Bhilai, Durgapur, Bokaro and Rourkela were some of the new steel towns built through the second Five Year Plan (1954-55) under the guidance of Nehru. These industrial towns were to be ""temples" to India's industrial future and secular "modernity"" (Parry and Streumpell, 2008: 47) ushering in employment, industrial production, and economic growth.

of satellite towns such as Navi Mumbai (New Bombay) (Shaw, 2004) and Kengeri and Yehlahanka New Towns outside Bangalore (Nair, 2005). Since 2000, various state governments (particularly those in already relatively urbanised states such as Maharashtra, Karnataka and Gujarat) have resurrected the development of greenfield settlements as a way to address the demands of industrialisation, and deficits in urban housing stock and infrastructure (Shaw, 2004; Nair, 2005).

As urban development lies within the domain of state governments, the policies under which new towns/townships emerge vary from state to state (these are in addition to central level policies like the Special Economic Zone Act (2005) which has generated numerous enclave settlements nationally[20]). In Maharashtra alone, policies such as the Industrial Township Policy (1994), the Special Township Policy (2006) and the Hill Station Regulation (1996) have, and continue to promote integrated greenfield developments by the private sector or through public-private partnerships. Other states like Karnataka and Gujarat have similar policies/regulations.[21] Thus, in just over a decade, the private sector has gone from building apartments to full-scale cities across the country. For example, the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) has identified twenty-four nodal cities that will be developed over the next ten years through the private sector (DMIC, 2010). Encouraging the private sector to build integrated and mixed-use settlements therefore is part of a larger state strategy of urban development. Most recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced plans and a budgetary allocation to develop 100 new 'smart cities' to take the pressure off existing cities, as well as create new centres for economic development.[22]

Therefore, as more and more private sector companies undertake aspects of city building, urban planning has taken on a profit making form. This is in sharp contrast to the historical tenets of Indian planning, which were rarely about selling urban

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[20] By 2011, 585 SEZs were formally approved and 133 were already operational. These SEZs were disproportionately concentrated in the IT sector, pharmaceuticals, and gems and jewellery. Between 2006 and 2011, "exports from SEZs increased tenfold in value terms, representing an average annual growth rate of nearly 72 per cent" (Jenkins et al., 2014: 4).
[21] For example, Gujarat Integrated Township Policy (2007), Gujarat Special Investment Region Act (2009), Bangalore Mysore Industrial Corridor, Karnataka New Industrial Policy (2001).
[22] The national government allocated INR 7060 crore (USD 1.2 billion) for the development of 100 smart cities (almost twice the amount allocated for affordable housing through the National Housing Bank (INR 4000 crore)) in the 2014 union budget (Economic Times, 10 July 2014, n.p.).

space but rather about acquiring, planning, and allocating it. In placing urban development in the hands of private developers and corporations, one observes a gradual shift towards urban planning as a means of selling urban space. This has required changes in land use and ownership, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas, as agricultural land is transformed to industrial and/or urban use and ownership.

This transition has not been without significant problems. For instance, Jenkins et al. (2014: 5) argue that SEZs have come to symbolise two conflicting views of contemporary Indian politics. On the one hand, SEZs represent the potential "growth performance that the rest of India could achieve were it not shackled with burdensome regulation, crushing taxes, insufficient infrastructure, and tumultuous politics." On the other hand, they are seen as emblematic of "state-assisted land-grabbing" (2014: 5), where the poor are dispossessed of their lands and the commons are appropriated to facilitate real estate development masquerading as industrial projects (Shrivastava, 2008; Levien, 2013; Sampat, 2013). Forcible acquisition of rural lands by the state to facilitate such projects, particularly SEZs, has generated ire from many farmers and a large proportion of these new developments have been steeped in contestation and violent protest (Chakravorty, 2013; Sampat 2011, 2013; Jenkins et al., 2014). Thus, "whether one takes a positive or negative view of SEZs, the picture that emerges of India's actually existing democracy is exceedingly grim" (Jenkins et al. 2014: 6).

Twenty-first century Indian urbanism has been marked by a sometimes violent expansion of the urban frontier. Such expansion has generated widespread resistance from the urban and rural poor alike (discussed at length later in this chapter). In this transformation, the idea of a 'world-class city' has emerged as a vague, yet politically powerful, normative vision of an urban future. This vision emerges at a time of growing dependence on the city for national economic growth and envisions the creation of 'world-class' infrastructure and services to facilitate linkages with global capital networks. For instance, in preparation for hosting the Commonwealth Games in 2010, Delhi officially announced its plan to become a "world-class city". In doing so it began to shift funds away from public housing, health care and education towards "highly visible modern infrastructure" in order to "dispel most visitors' first

impression that India is a country soaked in poverty" (Ghertner, 2011: 280). And while Delhi's transport infrastructure saw significant improvements under this vision, the city also saw the eviction of nearly 45,000 households in 2007 alone (Bhan, 2009). Thus, while there have been celebrations of Bangalore and Delhi as emerging global cities (Glaeser, 2011), contests over urban space have intensified substantially in the last decade (Maringanti et al., 2011). In contrast, in Mumbai, developers have not been able to bulldoze their way into redeveloping the Dharavi slum due to the political power of its residents (Weinstein, 2009). Similarly, attempts to build a world-class Indian city in Kolkata have been "repeatedly blocked" through "peasant uprisings and electoral challenges" (Roy, 2011: 259). Thus, while in some instances, the nature of urban change has been "indeterminate" (Shatkin and Vidyarthi, 2014: 2), such processes of urban development have undoubtedly been contested. It is this very dispossession, dissent, and resistance that has been the focus of much recent academic work in India (Menon and Nigam, 2007; Shrivastava and Kothari, 2012; Jenkins et al., 2014).

In a recent survey of scholarship on the political economy of the Indian city post-liberalisation, Shatkin and Vidyarthi (2014: 2) assert that the scholarship is characterised by two approaches, which are "sometimes drawn in too sharp contrast". The first argues that Indian cities are undergoing changes similar to other capitalist societies, as they are adopting neoliberal models of governance that favour corporate interests (i.e. they are converging). The second argues that the political and spatial changes observed in Indian cities are distinctive. They are riddled with contradictions and are defined by "chronic street-level subversion" which limit the state's ability to "impose its desired social vision" (2014: 3). Regardless, what is clear is that cities and their making are now strategic sites for reform and contest. It is in the moment of urbanisation that certain political questions come into sharp relief and it is within this dual (sometimes contradictory) rise of privatised urban development and increasing resistance, that this dissertation is located.

2.2. The Dominant Narratives

This section assesses three dominant narratives used in describing the emergence and consequences of privatised urban development in contemporary India: i) speculative urbanism, ii) land grabs and dispossession, and iii) the politics of resistance. In so doing, it identifies the problems and silences within these narratives, making a case for studying Lavasa.

2.2.1. Speculative Urbanism

With 45.23 per cent of its population living in urban areas, Maharashtra is one of the most urbanised states in India. With high demand for housing and a series of land use regulations curtailing the supply of developable land, Mumbai's land market has long been defined by high prices (Nijman, 2002; Weinstein, 2009). Liberalisation introduced new demands on land, and at one point in 1996 property in Mumbai's business district became the most expensive real estate (per square metre) in the world (Nijman, 2002). Furthermore, the Mumbai-Pune region was identified as an economic corridor in the early 1990s and the state government built a high-speed highway to reduce travel time between the two cities, attract investment, and further industrial clustering. The corridor is now the site for numerous integrated townships, information technology hubs, and real estate projects (Balakrishnan, 2013). The dynamics of a highly constrained land market coupled with a state policy for industrial expansion has led to a sharp increase in land prices in the peri-urban areas of Mumbai and Pune; between 2007 and 2014, house prices in Pune and Mumbai increased by 132 and 129 per cent respectively (Jain, 2014).

Recent studies on Indian cities describe emergent urbanism as speculative – fuelled by real estate speculation taking place both within existing cities and at their edges (Searle, 2010; Goldman, 2010). Within cities, transforming land from one use to another can propel speculation in anticipation of new real estate values; for example, the conversion of former textile mill lands into shopping malls unlocked real estate values in the heart of the city. The restructuring of space within cities and the concomitant creation of rents through land and property markets has been discussed at great length in the literature on gentrification (Smith, 2002; Atkinson

and Bridge, 2005; Whitehead and More, 2007; Weinstein, 2008). At the edges of existing cities, it is the conversion of land from rural to urban use that allows for the extraction of rent and new values. Such conversions transform land from agrarian or industrial ownership to ""financial ownership" where land is no longer evaluated for its productive value but where land is itself the means of extracting profit" (Massey, 2007: 48). For developers, investors, and homeowners, real estate and urban planning are becoming increasingly lucrative avenues for making money.

Such speculation is often facilitated by the state. The SEZ Act (2005), which allows private companies to bid to create SEZs for the purposes of industrial development, is a case in point. The Act requires a minimum 50 per cent of acquired SEZ land to be used for actual industry, giving developers the discretion to put the rest of the land to use as they see fit. Land has been, and continues to be forcibly acquired from farmers at low prices by the state using its powers of eminent domain (discussed at length in the next section). This land is then largely used to create high-end real estate, the financial benefits of which largely accrue to the developer and investors. In fact, SEZ developers argue the business viability of most SEZs lies in their real estate component and they use them as a means to build satellite cities on subsidised land acquired by the government in the midst of an unprecedented real estate boom (Searle, 2010; Levien, 2013).

Scholars have argued that speculation is driven by a perceived and/or real scarcity and a need for serviced land. Such scarcity and need may actually exist but they are also discursively produced. For instance, the McKinsey Urbanisation Report 'India's Urban Awakening' states that the country has the potential to "unlock many new growth markets in its cities, many of them not traditionally associated with India, including infrastructure, transportation, health care, education, and recreation" (MGI, 2010: 17). It projects that to meet urban demand, "the economy will have to build between 700 million and 900 million square meters of residential and commercial space a year – equivalent of adding more than two Mumbais or one Chicago every year" (MGI, 2010: 17-18). Simultaneous narratives of scarcity and need are deployed to define land as a commodity (much like gold during the Gold Rush) that is valuable, in short supply, and expected to rise in value (Li, 2010). These

narratives can also be "discursive instruments to attract investors and potential buyers into investing in land and real estate" (Balakrishnan, 2013: 11).

The real estate market has expanded alongside the Indian middle class which, since the early 2000s, has grown in size and has increased disposable income and access to housing finance[23]. New spatial forms such as enclaves and gated communities have been characterised as an inevitable outcome of the rise of the middle class and their desire to occupy the city (Chatterjee, 2004; Fernandes, 2006). But in examining Delhi, Ghertner (2008) and Searle (2010) argue that some of these big property developments are not fully linked with a middle class occupation of the city; rather, they are speculative in nature, often owned for investment purposes by Non-Resident Indians (NRIs). Real estate has become a financial instrument that relies on speculation for profit, and such speculation is supported through the creation of alternative futures for the (aspirational) Indian middle class and "representations of a prosperous globally integrated Indian future" (Searle, 2010: vi).

King (2002) posits that the internationalist imagery deployed in the advertising of these developments seeks to bridge the gap between India and the NRI world by pegging their aesthetics and vision to foreign places: "The world is an oyster for you. You breakfast in New York, lunch in London, and have dinner in Singapore. But your heart reaches out to India" (King, 2002: 81). The increase of NRI investments in real estate, some argue, has accelerated overall demand and further propelled "local speculative interests" (Nijman, 2002: 165). It is this imagined global Indian and the myth of the Indian middle class that sustains land privatisation and drives speculation (Ghertner, 2010). Searle argues that this speculation is as much about capital as it is about imaginaries, and that it is through holding up ideas of the future that the "productive power of speculation" (2010: vi) is put into motion, propelling the real estate industry further.

Speculation is also characterised by a state of uncertainty as it is premised on a conjecture about the future. Thus, generating real estate assets also produces a

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[23] Historically, Indian banks did not provide loans to buy real estate. In 1998 only 8 per cent of real estate transactions involved a financial institution and mortgages were rare before the late 1990s (Nijman, 2002).

whole series of speculative effects and an environment of anxiety in the face of uncertainty. Using the example of Bangalore, Goldman (2010) shows that whether or not projects are built, "land will be churned many times over in the process of speculation", and even middle class residents will "feel heightened anxiety" about their futures (Goldman, 2010: 22). Although there is great uncertainty about how many and which of the proposed projects will actually be built, it is "this state of uncertainty and anxiety that generates increased cash flows, increased risk-taking in urban planning and development, speculative government and the suspension of justice for the dispossessed in the name of world-city making" (Goldman, 2010: 22).

As detailed in Chapter One, contemporary urban studies literature characterises speculation as driven by global capital (Goldman, 2011; Watson, 2014). Searle (2010) argues that the combination of international capital overhang (due to the 2008 global financial crisis) and absence of other profitable investment portfolios in India led to partnerships between international investors and local developers for the creation of real estate assets for investment purposes. To that effect, USD 23 billion of FDI was invested in Indian real estate between 2000 and 2014 and real estate absorbed 11 per cent of total FDI in India in 2010 (IBEF, 2014). But, as Searle (2014) notes, despite an opening of markets, foreign investment in the Indian real estate market has been slow by global standards, owing to the high risks associated with it. Real estate in India is a highly local business, requiring knowledge of local land records systems and district-level government contacts, and foreign firms need partnerships with domestic firms to navigate the complex terrain of both urban and rural land. While relatively small and local firms have historically dominated the Indian real estate sector, in recent years a few companies such as DLF, Ansal, Sahara, and Raheja have grown to be large and national in scope[24]. Therefore, after decades of public and semi-public real estate development, private property developers have become important players in urban development (see Searle (2010) and Shatkin (2014) for extensive discussion) and real estate is increasingly being treated as a financial asset. Despite its growing prominence in Indian urbanisation, there is scant

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[24] For instance, DLF, one of India's largest developers, has been solely responsible for developing Gurgaon (outside New Delhi). It has developed a number of commercial and residential projects in 30 cities across the country, as well as a 3000-acre township called DLF City. Similarly, Ansal API, a family real estate business based in New Delhi, has developed more than 190 million square feet of real estate and holds a land reserve of over 9000 acres (CCI, 2013).

"literature on [the] real estate industry – the actors who shape it, the models of urban development they adopt, and their influence on urban policy" (Shatkin and Vidyarthi, 2014: 15). This dissertation attempts to fill those gaps.

Furthermore, "contrary to popular and anthropological characterizations (cf. Appadurai, 1996), capital does not "flow" around the world; it is painstakingly moved" by myriad actors (developers, consultants, bureaucrats, etc) coming together (Searle, 2010: 10). This is an important point and closer attention needs to be paid to who speculates, why and how they speculate, and how and why capital is moved to fuel this speculation. Weinstein (2008) argues that the combination of high prices and a relatively opaque and constrained regulatory regime has rendered the real estate sector particularly open to corruption and created conditions which allow members of criminal networks to become real estate players. Similarly, one could argue that investment in real estate is driven less by a capital overhang in the traditional sense but more as a way to park and convert black money domestically (Kumar, 1999; Goldman, 2010; Chakravorty, 2013). Indeed, it is for this reason that real estate is a domain in which politicians are active (a point discussed in the following section).

Finally, speculation is assumed to be a practice of elite political and business actors (whether domestic or foreign). Must it be so? What about villagers/land agents/ small agrarian capitalists like Shankar Dhindale? In a very recent and nascent literature, scholars have begun to pay attention to the presence and importance of middle-men, brokers, agents, and rural intermediaries in the construction of land markets (Baka, 2013; Levien, 2013; Sud, 2014a). These actors are the "local searchers" and fixers that enable land speculation to take place, but in focusing on the "high profile actors, particularly big capital and the state" (Sud, 2014a: 594), the larger scholarship has missed an important facet of the construction of land markets and speculation, and their effects.

Lavasa is in part a real estate project that is facilitated by the state and is premised on the conversion of rural land into urban property. It is a speculative project not only in that it is a real estate project but also because it speculates on a certain representation of space – the future city (as we shall see in Chapter Four). But such

speculation is made real, both in policy and on the ground, by different sets of actors with different stakes in the game. The dissertation, accordingly, delves deeper into the practices of speculation – who speculates, in what ways, and with what political effects.

2.2.2. Land Grabs and Dispossession

The construction of new cities requires land, and this is made possible through a change in land use and ownership. Therefore, an analysis of the politics of land is germane to understanding how, why, and with what effects cities come to life. Given that greenfield cities can only be built on peri-urban and rural land, I restrict the discussion below to issues pertaining to such land and argue that the insights derived from the voluminous scholarship on the politics of rural land and agrarian change in India rarely travel to inform urban studies.

The issue of 'land grabs' has received significant recent scholarly and political attention (Zoomers, 2010; Deininger, 2011; Borras and Franco 2012; Edelman, 2013; Grain, 2013; Oya, 2013; Scoones et al., 2013). Much of this literature refers to post-2006 large-scale land acquisitions for agriculture, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, and focuses on how and with what effects land use and ownership have been changing. Such consolidation of land has taken place for agriculture, industry and/or pure speculation where land has been cleared, kept vacant and "investors are simply preparing for the next global crisis" (Borras et. al., 2011: 209).[25] Unlike in many other parts of the world, where rural land has been consolidated for agricultural purposes, in India such acquisitions are driven by industrial and real estate projects and pushed forward by domestic companies with the assistance of the state (a point we shall return to shortly). For instance, Morgan Stanley Research estimated that between 2003 and 2007 seventeen major Indian developers had acquired a total of 46,200 acres and planned to purchase another 99,164 acres (Searle, 2010).

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[25] Critiques of this literature suggest that given the methodological difficulties in collecting and verifying information on land, the data on global trends are often unreliable and inaccurate. Furthermore the work tends to use concepts such a "local communities" without precision, and deploy binaries such as global and local, agriculture and non-agriculture without sufficient nuance or grounded empirical research (Edelman, 2013; Oya, 2013).

Most of the 'land grab' literature is rooted in Marxist scholarship, extending Marx's ideas of primitive accumulation and Harvey's idea of 'accumulation by dispossession' to contemporary processes of enclosure. Developed to describe the enclosures of peasants' land in England, Marx's concept of primitive accumulation is used to understand "how capitalist social relations are created, how they spread and how they are reproduced in the face of resistance" (Hall, 2013: 1585): that is to say, how people 'outside' capitalism are brought into its fold or how producers are divorced from their means of production to become wage labourers often through the enclosure of common land (Hall, 2013). In the literature on agrarian change, the process of primitive accumulation, typically seen to involve state and landlords, creates the preconditions for capitalism, and accordingly, the recent literature on 'land grabs'/'new enclosures' focuses on the role of the state in facilitating these processes.

Harvey understands urbanisation as the spatial manifestation of capitalist accumulation and explains urban growth and change in terms of the circulation of capital. Capitalism, according to him, "requires a fund of assets outside of itself if it is to confront and circumvent pressures of over-accumulation. If those assets, such as empty land or new raw material sources, do not lie to hand, then capitalism must somehow produce them" (Harvey, 2003: 143). He argues that capitalism's crisis of over-accumulation is temporarily solved through investment in the built environment i.e. through a 'spatial fix' for capital. New assets, such as real estate, are created precisely to do this. The built environment thus becomes a collective means of consumption and production and absorbs surplus capital in its construction and maintenance.

Because capitalism is plagued by recurrent crises, capital calls upon the state to assist it in guaranteeing the provision of certain collective necessities and thus maintaining the balance between capital and labour and preventing class conflict. Thus, the state features centrally in the process of accumulation as it enables speculation and regulates class conflict, servicing the long-term interest of monopoly capital. Therefore, "an intimate connection emerges between the development of capitalism and urbanisation" (Harvey, 1985: 315-6) and the latter is propelled by "distinctive ideologies", which often reflect the "prevailing ideology of the ruling group and

institutions in society" (1985: 310). The urban process therefore, is fuelled by accumulation and is fundamentally "a class phenomenon, since surpluses are extracted from somewhere and from somebody" (1985: 315). This accumulation sometimes takes place by dispossessing the public (and often the poor) of their land and/or wealth.

Much of the recent literature on enclosures sees land grabs, "however varied and inconclusive", as "symptomatic of a crisis of accumulation in the neoliberal globalisation project" (McMichael 2012: 681), that is a "top-down phenomenon driven by global markets and foreign states" (Fairhead, 2013: 335). A number of scholars have refuted this point, arguing that land grabs are not necessarily related to crises but are a function of local political economies (Hall, 2013; Levien, 2013). In the Indian context for instance, large purchases of land are driven by local (rather than foreign) capital (Levien, 2013) and are in no small measure fuelled by investors seeking to park and convert large volumes of black money (Kumar, 1999).[26] In examining real estate markets Nijman (2002: 165) notes a "tendency to overestimate the importance and autonomy of global forces and to underestimate the significance of local and national actors". Land grabs, therefore, are not merely a function of the logics of global capital but often take place through states, bureaucrats and local opportunities for corruption (Hall, 2013: 1590).

While large-scale land acquisition has become topical again, it is by no means a new phenomenon. The Indian state has long acquired land for the development of dams, industries, and power plants using the Land Acquisition Act of 1894 (LAA). The Act endows the state with powers of eminent domain, i.e. the right to expropriate private property for projects of 'public purpose'.[27] It lays out the procedures that

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[26] Black money (undeclared income), though difficult to study, is most commonly parked in real estate/agricultural land. This inflow of black money has contributed to sustaining the rise in land prices in India (Aiyar, 2011). The Central Board for Direct Taxes argues that, "land and real estate are possibly the most important class of assets used for investment of black money" and in 2011-12 the largest portion of undisclosed income detected by the Income Tax department came from the real estate sector (Sharma, 2014; Nagpal, 2014).

[27] What defines 'public purpose' is open to interpretation. Ramanathan (1996) argues that the law assumes that the state acts in the interests of the public and that it is impractical as well as impossible to list which actions and type of projects can be considered as being in the interest of the public. In practice, the definition of what is and is not 'public purpose' remains politically contentious. Sampat (2013) asserts that in post-liberalisation India, the idea of 'public purpose' has been recast to mean economic growth, underemphasising the more expansive understandings of development.

need to be followed by the state to acquire land as well as the terms of compensation for landowners. The colonial roots of this legislation, unsurprisingly, ensure little opportunity for landowners to object to the acquisition itself, therefore, the disputes that have plagued the implementation of the LAA since its enactment have largely been restricted to the domain of compensation (Goswami, 2012). Immediately after Independence, the LAA was used to acquire land in order to build new cities, dams, and factories. As democracy deepened in India, scholars and social movements began to take note of and protested the displacement and dispossession resulting from the use of eminent domain, the most salient example being the Narmada Dam.[28] The many projects that have deployed eminent domain acquisition have largely been referred to, in the literature on the topic as well as within political parlance, as projects that have displaced and dispossessed peasantries (Fernandes and Thukral 1989; Baviskar, 1995; Harvey, 2003).

Levien (2013) argues that if earlier rounds of land acquisition were for modernist nationalist projects like big dams and steel plants then contemporary developments such as SEZs and townships represent a "radically privatised mutation of this old spatial form" (2013: 384). That is to say, while acquisition continues to take place in the name of public interest, lands are being handed over to private companies. In such circumstances, acquisition has not been smooth and has been subject to debate and contestation. Forcibly acquiring land from unwilling sellers has led to an increase in land-related conflicts, including the 2007 riots against Tata Motors in Singur, the Nandigram protests against the West Bengal government,[29] the 2011 protests against the Yamuna Expressway[30], and various SEZ protests across the country (Jenkins et

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[28] The Narmada Dam is one of India's most controversial dam projects. Protest against the project began in the 1980s and continues even today. The project was contested in court as well as through longstanding non-violent protest by the *Narmada Bachao Andolan* (NBA) social movement, which was established in 1986. The NBA opposed the dam-related displacement of approximately 20,000 families and resultant environmental destruction. The social Despite controversy and the World Bank's exit from the project, it is still underway and due to be completed by 2025 (Baviskar, 1995; Omvedt, 2004; Nilsen, 2013).

[29] Nandigram received international attention in 2007 when the West Bengal government executed its plans to create an SEZ. This led to violent resistance between villages and the police, and left 14 villagers dead. Singur had similar (although not fatal) clashes over forcible land acquisition of farmland to establish a Tata car factory.

[30] The Yamuna Expressway is a planned 165 km highway from Agra to Noida in Uttar Pradesh. The land acquisition process for this project ran into trouble when several hundred farmers staged protests about compensation and rehabilitation. The protests turned violent, killing two policemen and a farmer (Kaushika, 2011; India Today, 2013). A number of industrial parks and residential colonies have been planned alongside the expressway.

al., 2014). Levein (2013) argues that these skirmishes reflect a crisis of legitimacy, i.e. farmers are unwilling to give up their lands for projects they do not see as being in the larger public interest. Other scholars argue that the contestation is primarily based on inadequacy of compensation (Chakravorty, 2013; Ghatak and Mookherjee, 2013). In light of this, the LAA was recently modified (in 2013) specifically to provide higher compensation rates and improved resettlement and rehabilitation arrangements.[31]

Why do private companies need the state to engage in land acquisition? Eminent domain land acquisition is premised on the inability of private companies to purchase contiguous tracts of land through voluntary transactions. Industrial development officials across the country insist that, "without the state's role in land acquisition, large industrial and infrastructural projects would not get off the ground" (government official quoted in Levien, 2011: 463). This view is held for a number of reasons: first, given that land holdings in India are small[32], fragmented, and often contested, the sheer number of transactions a developer would have to undertake to purchase a large tract of contiguous land would generate prohibitively high transaction costs.[33] Second, the probability of holdouts (unwilling sellers) could prevent the developer from fully carrying out their plans. Third, the knock-on speculative effects on the price of land would result in untenably high land costs for the developer.

Given this difficult terrain, LCL's ability to purchase approximately 13,000 acres of land instead of acquiring it using eminent domain is puzzling and needs to be explained. Furthermore, it raises a number of questions: what does voluntary land sale mean and why does it take place? What are the conditions that make such land transfers possible and what are the politico-economic consequences? While the

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[31] In other parts of the world, such acquisition is not limited to real estate and industrial projects alone. In some cases it has taken place for environmental purposes and/or conservation projects. These acquisitions have been cynically termed 'green-grabbing,' where lands and resources are appropriated for environmental ends and ownership of resources is transferred from the poor to the powerful (Fairhead et al., 2012).

[32] The average operational land holding size in India was 1.6 hectares in 2010 (NABARD, 2014). Landholdings are also highly fragmented and such fragmentation increases the probability of land disputes. The World Bank (2007) estimates that 28 per cent of all peri-urban landholdings in India are under legal dispute.

[33] For example, Ghatak and Ghose (2011) show that the 1000 acres of land required for the Tata car factory in Singur was owned by12,000 owners.

dominant narrative around land acquisition has been dispossession, do transactions that take place through the land market necessarily result in dispossession?

Consequently, Lavasa engages with three notable gaps within the 'land grab' literature. First, Levien argues that Harvey's (2003) framework "under-theorizes the deeply political role of states in orchestrating dispossession" (2013: 15). That is not to say that he does not acknowledge state force, rather in emphasizing finance capital and global forces, he underemphasizes "the fundamental and transparent reliance on state force" as there is nothing self-evident nor "automatic about capital finding outlets in land or in any other asset" (2013: 15). According to Levien, it is a 'land broker state', which goes about "dispossessing peasants for any private economic purpose that constitutes "growth", including real estate speculation" (2013: 24). For instance, the state features as an important enabler – through a series of exemptions, the common post-facto regularization of illegal construction, and/or as an enabler of land acquisition. Lau's (1996) work on land in Karachi shows that private extortion is rooted in formal state law and institutions. While many scholars have discussed the crucial role of the state in land acquisition, the scholarship largely imagines the state as a unitary actor, acting in favour of capital (or capitalists). It also presupposes a distinction between the state and the non-state, where the state is seen as an institution with clearly defined boundary lines. But, as scholars of rural India have long noted, while state and society are distinct theoretical categories, the separation is often empirically unclear (such blurring has been extensively discussed in the rural context by Harriss-White, 2003; Corbridge et al., 2005; Gupta, 1995, 2012).

Furthermore, although the state does engage in specific policies that enable land acquisition (such as the SEZ Act), the real forces of transformation are often individual political actors. Land and political power have had a long-standing relationship in India. For instance, Surpiya Sule (Sharad Pawar's daughter) is simultaneously a Member of Parliament from Baramati in Pune district, a key figure in the NCP, and a shareholder in multiple real estate firms in Maharashtra (Ray and Tare, 2011). Similarly, Robert Vadra, son-in-law of Sonia Gandhi (leader of the Congress Party) was recently seen to be involved with real estate giant DLF in Gurgaon (Agarwal and Malik, 2012). Several other politicians such as Nitin Gadkari

and Vilasrao Deshmukh have been directly associated with land and real estate firms (Malik, 2014). Most recently, Jayalalitha, four times chief minister of Tamil Nadu, was imprisoned, in part for using government officials to acquire 3000 acres of land assets (Roshan, 2014). Shankar Dhindale, for instance, acts as a villager, a *sarpanch,* and a broker. Similarly, many state and national level politicians juggle multiple roles and it is through their involvement that land and public resources are 'grabbed'. Nowhere else is the blurring of the public and the private more explicit than in the domain of urban development and land, yet its implications are underexplored.

Second, the literature almost always conceptualises capital to be large and those who are engaging it or being dispossessed by it as being outside capitalism. It does not engage with the myriad of small-scale land grabbing that takes place at the local level as part of the larger land grab. While an older agrarian studies literature does discuss the possibility of smaller farmers taking over lands, the recent work rarely explicitly examines the processes and implications of small-scale land expansion (Hall, 2013). A notable exception is Cotula (2012), who uses data from West Africa to show that the aggregate area acquired by many small deals is greater than the larger corporate deals. More recent scholarship from India highlights the importance of local intermediaries in the land market (Baka, 2013; Levien, 2013; Sud, 2014a). To bring it back to the opening anecdote, how do we understand the role of land agents such as Shankar Dhindale? The literature fails to conceptualise the ways in which those who are in danger of being dispossessed may themselves begin to engage in land grabs. The scholarship focuses on capital and the state but neglects the "smallholders" that are "responding to 'multiple crises' by grabbing land" (Hall, 2013: 1590) or perhaps not responding to a crisis at all, but seeking to participate in speculation. We are therefore impelled to ask: who engages in such land grabbing and with what implications? How do their actions change, if at all, the dynamics and our ideas of dispossession? Are there synergies between small-scale land acquisition and corporate land acquisition, and do they further each other's goals?

Third, the crude debate about whether accumulation takes place through extra-economic means or economic means and whether it is voluntary or involuntary needs further elaboration. One line of argument, derived from examining eminent domain acquisition, suggests that land is expropriated from farmers through the use

of political or legal power. Levien asserts "it only makes sense to talk about a 'grab' when land is expropriated using means other than voluntary market purchase" (2011: 436); an assertion that endows the landholder with more power than s/he actually has. A robust agrarian studies literature has shown that economic processes can compel farmers to sell their lands if they are in debt or need money to survive (Athreya et al., 1990; Ramchandran, 1990; Ramchandran and Rawal, 2010). Therefore, even though such sales are often 'voluntary' they take place under substantial structural constraints. Although the distinction between voluntary and coerced transactions can be made in theory, it cannot be made so easily in practice. The conditions and rules of the market may be heavily stacked in favour of capital or those in political power; an eminent threat may induce a 'voluntary' exchange, and a fraud may blur the lines between economic and extra-economic forces.

Furthermore, scholars have argued for the need to disaggregate the term 'local communities' as they encompass a wide variety of people including poor peasants, landless labourers, pastoralists, small-scale farmers, brokers, landlords, politicians and traders, etc (Borras and Franco, 2011; Hall, 2013). Given that communities are diverse, it should be no surprise that the impacts of such projects too are differentiated. As Borras and Franco (2011: 48) suggest, the question we must ask then is "who was dispossessed, why, how and to what extent?" As McCarthy (2010), in his analysis of land use changes in Indonesian oil plantations suggests – some farmers were dispossessed and others were not. Similar arguments have been made for Ukraine (Visser and Spoor, 2011), and the Philippines (Borras and Franco, 2012). Therefore disaggregating local groups allows us to identify the differentiated impacts as well as which groups engage in the land game and stand to win from the process. As Balakrishnan (2013: 8) asserts, "the simplistic and misleading framing of India's land conflicts as between farmers and industrialists cannot capture this complicated terrain of land politics". What is certain, however, is that the politics of peri-urban/rural land are central to the project of (greenfield) urban place-making.

2.2.3. Politics of Resistance

An emerging body of scholarship points to how planning and urban governance in India, whether operationalised by the state, the middle class, or the private sector, is largely exclusionary to the poor (Baviskar, 2006; Bhan, 2009; Ghertner, 2010; Chatterjee, 2004; Fernandes, 2006). The private sector has gone beyond the mere provision of urban infrastructure and services to planning and visioning urban spaces. Spanning a range of typologies such as satellite cities, large-scale gated communities, and industrial and economic enclaves, many of these developments are planned with a view to creating high-end exclusive settlements that cater to the elite, often to the exclusion of the poor. In a similar vein, middle class urban movements often frame their discourse through rights as "consumer citizens" (Fernandes, 2004) and "such reform movements devalorize the citizenship of those who are poor and property-less" (Roy, 2007: xxxiii). Ghertner (2011) showed that the Delhi government had displaced over one million poor over the last decade and made the land available for private development. Exclusionary practices are therefore not just a product of a new powerful middle class but also a project of the state. Together, they are seen to be forces by which Indian cities have become "bourgeois at last" (Chatterjee, 2004: 131). That said, class relations have historically been mediated by the politics of space and these forms of exclusion and marginality are by no means new to post-liberalisation India (Gooptu, 2011).

But equally there is a literature that shows that the poor, however defined, often resist such exclusion. Such resistance is observed both within cities and at their edges and takes multiple forms. In some instances such claims to the city are made through social movements and in others through political associations. For instance, Kaviraj (1999: 91) posits that although planning has had 'relative autonomy' from electoral politics, the lower level non-elite bureaucrats are tasked with interpreting the plans. Thus the system has "feet of vernacular clay" and non-elites, through their associations, are able to mould the plans to suit their needs. Chatterjee (2004: 138) shows how the urban poor wield their power through 'political society' – the power of their vote, through which they engage in "strategic political negotiations with the authorities". Benjamin (2008) argues that the poor subvert exclusionary formal plans through local democratic processes that allow for the occupation of locations.

Similarly, Anjaria (2011) shows how traders in Mumbai create spaces for themselves by negotiating arrangements with individuals within the local government, such as police and municipal officers.

City-making in India has been characterised as middle class/elite interests and/or higher-level state plans negotiating political association between the local state and the urban poor. But, as Shatkin and Vidyarthi (2014) argue, the outcomes of such negotiations are "indeterminate". Although within Mumbai, the residents of Dharavi managed to hold on to their properties and prevent developers from taking over (Weinstein, 2009), in Delhi, entire settlements (such as Bawana) have been demolished (Bhan, 2009). Similarly, although the villagers contesting Singur managed to prevent Tata from developing its factory, the villagers at Mahindra World City (to some extent) consented to the project (Levien, 2013). As Maringanti et al. (2011: 39) summarise, "the urban is now the strategic site both for aggressive reforms and restructuring as well as social movements contesting the reforms agenda. These developments in India have a unique character but they are also of a piece with transformations across the world".

In rural India, Levien (2013) argues that the increased tenacity of resistance to land acquisition is due to lack of ideological legitimacy of the current 'regime of dispossession'; that is to say, earlier rounds of dispossession for big dams and industrial projects benefited from greater public legitimacy than current projects which are largely private and connected to real estate. This is a bold claim, and one that cannot easily be verified. Regardless, not all these 'land grabs' or private projects result in paralysing protests. Studying SEZs in Tamil Nadu, Vijayabaskar (2010) argues that the state's political economy, which encourages farmers to move away from agriculture, is partly responsible for the lack of resistance to land acquisitions. Furthermore, policies that provide generous compensation with little room for negotiation and incentives to avoid litigation also contribute to willingness to part with land. Levien, looking at a SEZ in Rajasthan, argues that "market-oriented compensation policy" facilitated by a "broker state" creates "very unequal relations to the SEZ, enlisting some fraction of the village as self-seeking middlemen and effectively undermining any basis for collective action" (2012: 25). In this respect, the

presence, form, and effects of certain types of resistance in Lavasa need to be explained.

A long lineage of scholarship, rooted in the works of Polanyi (2001 (1944)), Gramsci (1971), and Scott (1985, 1990, 1998), focuses on the modes, tactics and politics of resistance in contexts of both rural and urban 'development'. Resistance, as defined by Scott (1985: 22), is "any act(s) by members of the class that is (are) intended either to mitigate or to deny claims (rent, taxes, dependence) made on that class by superordinate classes (landowners, the State, money lenders) or to advance its own claims (work, land, charity, respect) vis-à-vis these superordinate classes". Resistance in this view is intimately connected with structures of power. Ideas of what is just and unjust are calibrated both ideologically and materially within these structures. And so, resistance can and does take diverse forms, ranging from the overt such as collective action through social movements to covert everyday struggles such as "foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth" (Scott, 1985: 29).

Perhaps the largest body of work on resistance in the rural context is derived from trying to explain the presence and efficacy of social movements. Here, the resistance is overt, in the form of a counter-hegemonic movement that responds to class/state domination. Gramsci (1971) distinguishes between different types of such overt movements – those that engage in 'wars of movements' through direct assaults against state power (e.g. strikes, military action, etc) and those who undertake 'wars of position' – non-violent resistance such as boycotts that interfere with the everyday functioning of the state. If Gramsci's work examines resistance against the state and/or forms of class domination, then Polanyi's 'counter-movement' is deployed to protect society from market forces. Examining the conditions that led to the crises of the 1930s, Polanyi argued that the drive to expand the self-regulating market generated a number of 'counter-movements' in order to protect workers from the commodification caused by the expansion of market society. Thus, dispossession/displacement from land generated by capitalist expansion would result in a political response in the form of a counter movement. If the creation of the market processes was the movement, then the resistance to it was the counter-movement. Together this double movement can be used to understand how market

processes are subverted and re-embedded back into society, and how capitalism is saved from itself.

Both frameworks conceptualise social movements as a form of resistance/collective action built on solidarity. They assume a certain "collectivity" in the 'movement' and this has the effect of constructing counter/social movements as united fronts in and of themselves" (Chin and Mittleman, 1997: 30), a point that a number of scholars of social movements have refuted. Second, the scholars do not examine instances where conformity and resistance coexist and generate inconsistencies between thought and action (Chin and Mittleman, 1997). Indeed, it is entirely possible that people identify with multiple groups and can support one cause in one instance and another in another. Finally, Polanyi does not consider circumstances under which individuals buy into exploitative market processes and therefore prevent movements from being generated. Scholars have noted that there are some problems in applying these frameworks to understanding resistance today.

Gramsci's idea of hegemony offers ways to think about how those who are exploited may find themselves buying into the very ideological project that ostensibly oppresses them. He argues that the ruling class/state controls not only the "means of physical production but the means of symbolic production as well" (Scott, 1985: 315). That is, it is through the control of ideas and ideology that the ruling powers propagate ideas that further their own ends. For Gramsci, the proletariat is more enslaved at the level of ideas than at the level of behavior" (Scott, 1985: 39). Thus in Gramsci's conception, power is not enforced via coercion, rather it is produced through compliance and consent, "by creating and disseminating a universe of discourse and the concepts to go with it, by defining the standards of what is true, beautiful, moral, fair, and legitimate, they build a symbolic climate that prevents subordinate classes from thinking their way free.

Nowhere is this clearer than in Ghertner's (2011) study of slum demolitions in Delhi. He argues that although the "utopian image" of the "world-class city" is part of the "practice of government", it is both accepted and reinterpreted by the slum residents (2011: 301). Residents have "profound ideational critiques of Delhi's world-class redevelopment" and the hegemonic aesthetic aspirations of what a

'world-class' city is, are held by the very people who stand to lose from it. He demonstrates that in Delhi, slum residents are enlisted into "the image of the world-class city, by making "sensible" a world-class aesthetic, and by advancing a myth of private property and the "good life" associated with it" (2011: 300). Residents "tune[d] their aspirational strategies" to the hegemonic "image of the world-class city", and in so doing they also accepted "the promise that such a city will provide them with a world-class lifestyle – be it quality education for their children, secure employment and private property" (2011: 301) even though it directly results in the demolition of their homes and livelihoods. However, it is through this acceptance that their "expectations of improvement can crystallize into new demands and points of politics, threatening to turn the promise of the world-class city into a political demand for world-class citizenship" (2011: 301).

Scott (1985) challenges the idea of hegemony through his work in rural Malaysia. He argues that acquiescence does not necessarily symbolize the hegemonic beliefs of those who are being oppressed. He shows that there are innumerable "anonymous acts" of behavioural as well as ideological resistance behind the "facade of behavioural conformity" as well as "symbolic and ritual compliance imposed by elites" (1985: 304). He reasons that the idea of hegemony fails to make sense of social realities on a number of grounds; most importantly, it runs the risk of conflating what "is inevitable with what is just, an error that subordinate classes rarely, if ever, make" (1985: 318). Consequently, Scott disagrees with Gramsci's idea that "radicalism of subordinate classes is to be found more in their acts than in their beliefs", arguing instead that it is the reverse, that it is "at the level of beliefs and interpretations where they can safely be ventured that subordinate classes are least trammeled". "The realm of behavior particularly in power-laden situations is precisely where dominated classes are most constrained", as the rich "can usually insist on conforming public behavior" but they "can neither insist on private ideological conformity, nor do they need it" (1985: 322). Thus while acquiescence may result from a sense of inevitability, people may not see it as just (and therefore do not automatically subscribe to the hegemonic ideal). Furthermore, he argues that in the context of peasant resistance, it is not overt revolution that is the norm, rather it is these everyday acts of covert resistance that propel, incrementally, social change. Scott therefore holds to a rational view of peasant behaviour, where risks of

various actions are calculated and limit the propensity to action.

Thus, according to Scott, not only are everyday acts of resistance more common (and understudied) than overt forms but they are also the most effective as "persistent practice of everyday forms of resistance underwritten by a subculture of complicity can achieve many, if not all, of the results aimed at by social movements" (1987: 422). But perhaps Scott goes too far in reifying the covert over the overt. As Gutmann notes, "the emphasis here is wrong; it is not a question of overt or covert in isolation; rather, at least in Latin America today and historically, these forms occur together, alternate, and transform themselves into each other" (1993: 77). This is an important critique – it asks us to pay attention to the different forms of resistance that can emerge simultaneously, and the effects that they produce. Furthermore, it allows us to ask what the impact of covert or overt resistance is on those who find themselves aligned in the hegemonic project.

This finds relevance in an important dimension of resistance in India; in recent years, protests have often been met with counter-protests. This is marked by the tension between the opposition to certain projects and the desire to participate in the very same types of consumption, economic organisation, and governance. Roy (2011: 272) highlights a counter protest to Tata's factory in Singur where a segment of the local population announced, "Welcome Ratan Tata. We want industry, we do not want confrontation". She argues that under "persistent structural violence, it is impossible to assert that the subaltern has consented to the wage-slavery of the world-class city. Yet it is equally impossible to assert that industrialisation and urbanisation are elite interests imposed on the poor" (Roy, 2011: 273). Instead, she argues for the importance and centrality of the making of consent to the project of world city making, arguing that "the Indian world-class city cannot be simply understood as an elite project or as the interest of property capital, or even as the practice of an activist state. Rather it is an ideal to which there is broad subscription" (Roy, 2011: 266). Roy's analysis points to an important facet of contemporary politics of resistance in India, but fails to account for the class, caste, and other differences between those who protest and those who support the project.

In summary, the extensive literature on resistance largely draws on the work of Gramsci, Polanyi and Scott. They allow us to conceptualise and look for different modes of resistance and their effects. But how do we understand these multiple and often contradictory claims being made on or against Lavasa? Lavasa presents a complicated terrain of contestation and resistance. Undoubtedly, the project has faced opposition, largely from local *adivasi* (scheduled tribe) communities, mobilized through a social movement – the National Alliance of People's Movement (NAPM). This opposition has taken the form of protests, a range of court cases, blockades, and appeals/complaints to the central, state and local governments. The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) eventually stalled the project on the basis of violation of environmental laws, in no small part due to NAPM's concerted and highly publicised efforts. But, as was briefly described in Chapter One, the project defines itself as "inclusive" and has also enjoyed considerable support in the form of counter-protests by village communities, court affidavits by villagers, and some support from a few civil society members. Most notably the project did not experience any collective action on the issue of land acquisition, the lynchpin of development related resistance in contemporary India. What explains the forms of resistance taking place? What explains the difference in claims made for and against Lavasa by rural communities – is it different interpretations of the meaning of development? Is it based on tangibly different material effects for different populations (does Shankar Dhindale support this project because he is made wealthy by it)? Is this a form of hegemonic consolidation in spatial production? If so, how is it taking place and in what idiom? Is it at all tied to LCL's desire to construct an "inclusive" city or its model of voluntary land purchase and with what consequences? It is these questions that this dissertation seeks to engage with.

2.3. Conclusion

This dissertation examines why and how, according to what logics, conditions and interests, Lavasa came to be. It also assesses how rural communities have been thrown into city-making, and how they have reshaped it. In essence, it is an ethnographic study of a new city planned, developed, and managed by a private company. It draws within its ambit not only the diverse issues that are at the centre of urban development today but also a diverse range of actors. By examining both

issues and actors - how the project was imagined, as well as discursively and materially made, this study goes to the heart of the ideologies and interests that drive spatial transformation in contemporary India.

Shatkin and Vidyarthi (2014) correctly argue that the literature on Indian urbanism is broadly located within two strands of thought. The first argues that India's urban political economy and spatial transformation is in keeping with changes apace in capitalist societies across the world. That is to say, this literature focuses on "convergence and sameness", i.e. the "adoption of neoliberal governance advocated by corporate interests and imposed or propagated through international and bilateral aid organisations" (2014: 2-3). The second strand characterises India's urban processes as 'distinctive', where the agenda for urban change is riddled with contradiction and plans are limited by "chronic street-level subversion", and "prevalence of forces within the state that militate against any re-scaling of state power, to empower municipal governments" and the forces of capital (as demonstrated in the works of Benjamin, 2008: Arabindoo, 2011: Bandhopadhyay, 2011) (2014: 3). One can argue however, that these two strands can - and do - co-exist, that despite every attempt at convergence and sameness, plans are routinely remade. If the literature points to the rise of exclusionary urbanism – such as enclaves, revanchism and middle class reform movements, then it also points to a rise of responses that span collective action, hegemonic aspirations, and subversion. This literature, as I have demonstrated in this chapter, is rooted in the twin ascent of increasingly privatised forms of land use and planning, and collective action to take or retain control over urban space. Lavasa, spanning all these themes – planning, speculation, land, and resistance, can be used as a synecdoche to understand the politics of spatial transformation more broadly.

This chapter has identified some of the key pitfalls and silences within the literatures of both agrarian studies and urban planning that are traversed in this dissertation. It shows that while projects like Lavasa can be seen as part and parcel of a global neoliberal project, they are in fact, in large part a product of domestic real estate speculation. The literature identifies the main forces of such transformation as led by powerful corporations or capital, and backed by the state. But using Shankar Dhindale as an example, I point out that this narrative misses the different ways in

which other actors, villagers, local government officials, etc. are all engaging in speculation. This speculative force can be productive through the imaginaries it deploys, the city that it generates, and the political effects that it produces. The dissertation will go on to examine why and in what ways speculation becomes a force of urban change and show how such speculation is shaped by who controls land.

With respect to assembling land, an issue that lies at the crux of India's rural-urban transition, Shatkin and Vidyarthi (2014: 23) note that only the "more heavy handed attempts by state actors" have received scholarly attention but in fact there are often "more creative" and "less blunt efforts to access land". This is certainly true of Lavasa - Shankar Dhindale, a *sarpanch*, acting as an agrarian intermediary in the making of a city, is part of that creative approach to assembling land. Therefore in this dissertation I look at what these other ways are and what effects they have on ideas of dispossession. Land has always been at the centre of resistance in rural India but "land and livelihood is no longer just an agrarian question, it is also an urban question" (Roy, 2007: xliii). I therefore examine how the politics of land shapes the politics of the project.

Maringanti et al. (2011) note that "Indian cities today are battlegrounds" and that "they are the new frontier of concrete and ideological struggle[s] in India" (2011: 40). Lavasa is certainly a battleground, but the competing claims and resistance strategies from *within* communities and their concomitant effects have yet to be sufficiently explained. The dominant literature suggests that new urban projects in India are exclusive and founded on dispossession. How then do we make sense of LCL's vision to make an inclusive and environmentally sustainable city? What are the terms of this inclusion and what are its effects? In this context, how do we explain the multiple ways in which the project has been resisted and supported by the rural communities that have been thrown into its making? In answering these questions, this dissertation examines how and with what effects a set of villages are converted and made into a city.

Chapter Three

A Note on Method

On June 21, 2012, a fire torched the fourth floor of the Mantrayala, the Maharashtra government's secretariat in Mumbai. This floor had long housed the Urban Development Department (UDD), and the reams of paper and files that so epitomise Indian bureaucracy ensured the entire department was rendered dust and ashes. Six people died and many were injured. The subsequently issued police report ascribed the fire to an electrical fault.

Some civil society members cried foul (Rahman, 2012). How was it possible that the fire only affected the UDD, they asked. In the months running up to the incident, activists had uncovered an important real estate 'scam'. Various high-powered government officials, military officers, politicians and bureaucrats had issued permissions and modified development plans to enable the construction of Adarsh Housing Society on land that had been earmarked for housing war veterans. Government officials subsequently allotted flats to themselves and their relatives. While similar incidents had taken place before, in this case, activists had used the Right to Information (RTI) Act (2005)[34] to uncover a paper trail that indisputably demonstrated corruption and unlawful relationships between builders and politicians. The Adarsh 'scam' became a turning point in the investigation of builders and politicians working together to capture public land in Mahrashtra. It led to the resignation of then Chief Minister Ashok Chavan, the arrests of a number of military officers, and the suspension of government officers (Chadda, 2012).

Thus, when the archive of the UDD went up in flames, activists and opposition parties saw it as arson (First Post, 23 June 2012; Kumar, 23 June 2012, Mumbai Mirror, 11 July 2012). A number of other potential real estate related inquiries were underway but now – with an archive of cinder – there would be no documents to turn to for evidence. This is a compelling counter-narrative but it is equally possible,

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[34] The RTI Act (2005) empowers citizens to file for any non-classified information housed in the Government of India and entitles them to a response within 14 days. This is discussed further in Section 3.3.2 of this chapter.

as the police concluded, that the fire was simply electrical in origin as the building was old, connections faulty, and the documents ready fuel. Indeed government officials were quick to rule out sabotage (DNA, 1 July 2012).

This event, which took place mid-way through my fieldwork serves as a methodological metaphor for this dissertation. First, studying urban development in Maharashtra is a murky business. On the one hand, it is a sector characterised by widespread corruption, popularly referred to as 'the builder-politician nexus'. On the other hand, not all builders are corrupt, and neither are all politicians; as an informant argued, "that every private company is corrupt is a null hypothesis".[35] Yet, a discourse of corruption permeates all writing, thinking, and conversation on the issue. A shroud of suspicion is therefore cast over every real estate project, which makes it not only difficult to uncover basic facts but also generates an environment where industry members are unwilling to divulge even the most innocuous information. Were the controversies surrounding Lavasa a function of actual illegalities and "special favours" as activists argued (Patkar, 2010: n.p), or was LCL simply caught in political turmoil, as it insisted? Second, when searching for documents, files were often incomplete with only a semblance of order; were the documents missing for a reason or merely a casualty of the (rather archaic) filing system? Third, it points to the importance of the unverifiable in engaging with urban development: with facts being contested, multiple narratives about the same process or event abound.

When friends and family heard I was studying new urban formations, and Lavasa in particular, I was almost immediately asked, "tell me, what is *really* happening there? What's the *truth*?" My informants too, frequently claimed to be telling me the "real truth", implying that others were either fabricating stories or vastly exaggerating. This raised a number of questions: how do you examine projects that have multiple and contradictory versions of the 'truth'? And if there are so many competing 'truths' about the project, without conclusive evidence, which does one privilege? How does one study a contentious project within a notoriously corrupt sector? How does one research objects and processes that are shrouded in secrecy, either

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[35] L2 interview, 21/06/2012.

on account of corruption, the desire to be out of the public eye, or simply to protect business interests and advantages?

The position of the researcher then, is to not uncover a unified truth but to "enrich our understanding of divergent socially-situated truths" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985 paraphrased in Baviskar, 1995: 3). "Objectivity" then is not "contemplation without interest" but the employment of "a variety of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge" (Flyvberg, 2001: 139). Through close engagements with those whose lives are connected with Lavasa, I have chosen to represent multiple "truths" with the intention of understanding why and how Lavasa emerged in its imagined, material, and lived form. This dissertation therefore, does not seek to produce "ultimate, unequivocally verified knowledge". Rather, it seeks to provide input into "ongoing social dialogue" (Flyvberg, 2001: 139) about the city and the larger social processes that enabled its creation.

This chapter outlines the epistemic terrain and methods adopted for this research, along with its promises and perils. In so doing, it reflects on the nature and theory of method in inter-disciplinary research and, in particular, the difficulties in studying contested domains such as the state, the private sector, corruption and land. Section 3.1 locates the case of Lavasa within the larger terrain of urban development in contemporary India. Section 3.2 outlines the methodologies adopted in collecting data and reflexively assesses my position in the research process. Section 3.3 highlights three methodological and conceptual concerns in studying 'up', examining state-society relations, and understanding land and real estate. Section 3.4 concludes.

3.1. Lavasa: the Case and its Significance

This dissertation is an attempt to understand the politics of new city development in India. I had originally hoped to study new forms of urban development in western Maharashtra as it is home to a number of new town projects such as Amby Valley, Magarpatta City, and numerous other SEZs. As time passed, I was drawn more and more to Lavasa, for reasons outlined below.

While other new city projects are present in this thesis by way of comparision, but at its heart, this dissertation is a study of the first city built entirely by the private sector in post-independence India. It seeks to understand the mechanisms through which Lavasa was imagined and made real, following an inductive and ethnographic approach to examine the production of space. By ethnographic approach, I do not mean participant observation, but rather an ethnographic *sensibility* around immersion in a context aimed at understanding the multiple ways in which social processes are made and made meaningful. I choose this approach in great part due to the 'newness' of the phenomenon. It responds to a call to use "ethnography to focus on complex interactions of economic, social, political, and cultural processes, without *a priori* privileging causally any of them" (Marcus, 1998: 44). In so doing, the dissertation reflects on broader processes at work in city-making, the politics of planning, as well as the relationship between the state and the private sector, particularly in urban development projects in post-liberalisation India.

There are, of course, dangers of making claims about larger processes based on a single project, particularly if the project is in its infancy. Can a site within one state be used to make broader claims about the Indian state and the processes of privatised urban development? If as Gupta and Ferguson posit, the field is "not just a parochial local place, but a place that has its connected links and networks with the outer world and its interests", if the field is "a meeting point" (1997: 39), then it is possible to argue that a single site can allow us to reflect upon larger processes. The extended case method (Burawoy, 1998, 2009) attempts to rethink theory through deep empirical observation of large processes in (often) single small sites. It does so not through the representativeness of the sites chosen, but rather by extending from the micro case to macro context and from the case to theory, contending that "there can be no microprocesses without macroforces, nor macroforces without microprocesses" (Burawoy, 2009: 9).

Lavasa can be seen as a microcosm of the politics of contemporary urban development in India. It relates to a range of diverse issues such as real estate, transfer of land, planning, and a host of ideas (public purpose, environmental sustainability, economic development strategies, displacement, tourism, local government, resistance, and citizenship). It draws upon a range of actors and

relationships between them such as the state government and the central government, activists, NGOs, courts, politicians, businesses, local communities and the media. More importantly, Lavasa emerges quite explicitly as a possible model for private sector-led urban development, and a replicable one at that. In this sense, it is a provocation.

That said, it would be absurd to call Lavasa and its subsumed villages representative of townships and villages in Maharashtra or India. Although it bears many similarities with other townships and SEZs, I selected Lavasa precisely because it was anomalous and extreme – in size, in the boldness of its vision, in the lack of collective action it faced on the issue of land. I wanted to see how a project this large had assembled its land parcel, given that similar projects in the state and the country had come to a standstill on land issues. I also chose Lavasa because it was one of the first such cities to be built and the most mature site (open to public and partially occupied). Furthermore, Lavasa has been designed to be "a replicable model of the future Asian cities" that brings "world-class standards to Indian urban life" (Lavasa CEO Ajit Gulabchand quoted in Cramer (2010: n.p.)). Thus lessons from this process will likely affect the development of other towns quite significantly. In this it is a landmark case and a study of it should stand on its own grounds.

In this study I connect the making of Lavasa and the changes it brought to the people who lived within it, to the larger forces of Indian urbanisation, in particular the process of rural urban transition. Thus, through the case of Lavasa we can examine some of the more general processes such as new forms of planning, speculation, land assembly, and resistance that characterise urban development and the rural-urban transformation apace in India. The dissertation draws within its ambit not only the diverse issues that are at the centre of urban development today but also a diverse range of actors. By examining both how the project was imagined as well as discursively and materially made, this study goes to the heart of the ideologies and interests that drive spatial transformation in contemporary India. This work is necessarily partial but it is only through many detailed ethnographies in particular sites that we can conjure a more robust and 'general' theory, if any. This study is therefore in conversation with the nascent literature on these new settlements both in India and across the global south (Shatkin 2008, 2011; May, 2011; Chen, 2012a

2012b; Levien, 2013; Sami, 2013; Pow and Neo, 2013; Rapoport, 2013; Shwayri, 2013; Caprotti, 2014).

3.2. Entering the Field

Mumbai is the city I belong to. It is the city I am most familiar with and at home in. When I returned to Mumbai in January 2012 to commence my fieldwork, I found myself both in a deeply familiar and unfamiliar terrain. On the one hand, I knew the landscape and its associated politics. Mumbaikars routinely lament the city's skyrocketing property prices; real estate and its effects have been a long-standing refrain for those who live (and love) the city. Implicit in this view is the widely held assumption that the real estate business is always and already corrupt. However, on the other hand, when I dug deep into my tacit knowledge, I realised I knew very little about the actual workings of real estate in Maharashtra.

The highway that connects Mumbai to Pune forms a corridor along which numerous townships and real estate projects have emerged, including Lavasa and Amby Valley[36]. This road and the adjacent sub-districts are also deeply familiar, as my high school was located in Mulshi sub-district, less than 25 km from Lavasa. The landscape has dramatically transformed in the 16 years since I first went to Mulshi; what was once forested and relatively remote is now peppered with integrated townships and tourism projects. The school I attended was itself on a 100 acre privately assembled parcel of land (still subject to litigation). I was interested in understanding this transformation.

Having received an elite education in Mumbai, I had access to a number of real estate developers in my social circle. My work experience in the non-profit and academic space, made it easy to make connections with activists contesting these projects. My parents had worked for the government for a number of years as advisors, and so navigating the state was not an unfamiliar process either. I was thus both an insider and an outsider, to Maharashtra, to real estate, to government, and to civil society

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[36] Briefly, the Amby Valley project was built by the Sahara Group, a firm with wide business interests (retail, finance, housing, hospitality and manufacturing). It serves as a gated tourism destination for the urban elite. The Amby Valley project will be discussed in the next chapter and throughout this dissertation.

activism. My insider status was largely beneficial to me, providing access that would have taken significantly longer to obtain had I been an outsider. My outsider status – as someone unfamiliar with the workings of real estate and land markets – allowed me to engage with my research with some distance and dispassion.

I embarked into fieldwork between January 2012 and January 2013. I was based in Mumbai, where LCL and other developers are headquartered, and travelled to either Pune and/or Lavasa every other week for anywhere between a day to two weeks in those cities. This travel circuit was unavoidable as my respondents were spread equally across all three cities, and my archival data were housed in Pune and Mumbai. My fieldwork consisted of conducting interviews with a wide range of people and collecting documents from an array of sources, both of which I discuss below.

3.3. Data Collection

This dissertation asks a number of questions that draw upon different methods. First, it examines the conceptualisation of Lavasa – in policy and planning – by tracing its origins through elite interviews and documentary evidence. Second, it looks at the politics of land, specifically the process and consequences of assembling land through market transactions. It does so by using land records, other land transaction documents and interviews with elites, activists, and villagers. Third, it examines the lived experience of Lavasa, which it does through interviews with villagers. I describe below the different groups of people I interviewed and the sources of documentary evidence.

3.3.1. *Interviews*

Real Estate Developers

When I commenced fieldwork, Lavasa was mired in controversy, just emerging from a year-long stay order where all construction had been stalled by the Ministry of Environment. In the interim, its public image had taken a beating – with corruption allegations, a damning report from the Comptroller Auditor General of India (CAG), environmental litigation, a litany of land claims, and declining investor confidence

(exacerbated by a slump in the Indian real estate market). Unsurprisingly, LCL was hesitant to meet with me until a friend (and former Lavasa employee) made an introduction to the Vice President of public relations (PR).

After establishing my credentials as a scholar from the London School of Economics (and confirming that I was not a journalist), the PR representative was extraordinarily helpful, setting up interviews swiftly and providing me with many of the documents I requested. However, despite his candour, it was impossible to ignore that he was indeed in charge of public relations and understandably his job was to ensure that I was told a particular version of the Lavasa story. Large companies have gates, security, "inner lines of defence: public relations departments" and "whole levels of management trained in how to represent the company to the outside world" (Thomas, 1995: 5). Indeed, the PR representative was always present during my interviews with staff, although never explicitly intervened in them.

I interviewed senior personnel currently working for LCL, including the Chief Planner, Head of Business Development, Head of Marketing and Sales, Head of Land Purchase, Head of Environment and the Town Manager. Most of them had been with the project for more than five years, had a sense of the history of and vision for the city, as well as in-depth knowledge of their departments. The interviews were semi-structured, but with plenty of scope to pursue related conversations when they emerged. I went in expecting interviews to be short and to-the-point, given that these were busy executives, but I found that they were forthcoming and gave me their undivided attention for long periods of time. The interviews, conducted in English (the default language of corporate Mumbai), ranged from 45 minutes to 150 minutes, with most of them being approximately 75 minutes long. All interviews were recorded with verbal permission, barring two, where I took notes by hand. I also had a number of unrecorded conversations with other employees during my many visits to Lavasa. Those conversations were off the record and the data revealed do not find their way into this dissertation, but they gave me a fuller sense of the project and enabled me to ask better questions during formal interviews.

The interviews were aimed at understanding how Lavasa was conceptualised, planned and operationalised. I commenced most of my interviews by asking

questions about their life histories and biographies, the ideas and conditions that drew them to Lavasa, their role within the project and how they understood it. I then asked questions regarding the origins of and rationale behind the ideas that underpinned various dimensions of Lavasa, questions regarding urban planning in India and the role of new cities, their relationship with the government, and the tensions and successes in the execution of the project. Unless absolutely necessary, I steered clear of controversial topics such as litigation, the environmental stay order, and anti-Lavasa activism. Some of these topics were raised by the informants themselves; perhaps they assumed that these issues were of interest to me and/or felt the need to explain their positions.

The interviews were forthright, though somewhat formal, and took place at LCL offices ensuring that informants were always aware of their professional boundaries. I found it relatively easy to communicate my research aims and establish common ground in most interviews owing to an ostensibly shared "elite" upbringing and shared social networks. Such access was a double-edged sword, as it often resulted in generous interviews, rare in the experiences of other students of real estate in India (Searle, 2010; Sami, 2012) but with the risk that such proximity could prevent critical reflection, a point to which I shall shortly return.

The information disclosed within interviews, however, had limits. I was told a number of times that certain information, particularly on land sales and profits, would not be made available. One could postulate a number of reasons for this; real estate business requires conditions of secrecy as information such as prices, profits, deal-structures could affect a company's competitive edge (Searle, 2010). Others have argued that such secrecy exists partially "due to the illegal overtone" of real estate operations (Wadhva, 1989: iv). In addition, LCL's cautiousness may have also stemmed from the need to protect the firm from further controversies.

How then did I make sense of the narratives that emerged? Was I simply being fed the party line? This may have been so, but there were considerable nuances in what was revealed to me by different informants. I made attempts to triangulate as much information as I possibly could with other sources. And if I still found instances of a common party line, then the question became, why was this the party line and what

work did/does it do? I also interviewed a number of other developers and planners working on other township projects to get a sense of the larger (and more common) processes at work in Indian real estate.

There is now a small but growing set of ethnographies of corporations. Although this is not an ethnography of a corporation, a little detour into that literature is instructive here. Echoing Marcus (1998), Welker (2006: 12) posits that we need to "surmount the belief that corporations are simply profit-maximizing agents". Corporations need not be "bastions of dispassionate capitalist rationality" (Schoenberger, 2001: 290), rather, we should depart from Polanyi's powerful proposition that economic activity is socially embedded and, thus, so too are corporations. Corporations, like other social organisations, contain within them a multitude of voices, internal dissonance and are "constantly negotiating with external social, legal and political forces" (Welker, 2006: 15).

Welker (2006: 16-17) puts forth five propositions about corporations: first, that corporations are "social entities"; second, that they are not "fully self-present agents with clear self-interests"; third, that those who work for corporations do not necessarily share the same views of the larger corporate interest or how this interest should be achieved; fourth, that as scholars, it is "unproductive to reduce the content of corporate action into a singular intention, whether imputed to individuals or the corporation as a whole". These propositions were certainly confirmed in my interviews. Those who worked at Lavasa came from diverse backgrounds, and with different viewpoints. Their beliefs and viewpoints transformed their practice and therefore Lavasa. While the collective import of the interviews did demonstrate something about the nature of the corporation (there were many commonalities), I have been careful not to conflate individual views with a larger 'corporate interest'.

Government Officials

Like many of the researchers that have come before me, I found Indian government officials difficult to access and interview. The departments I was interested in

interviewing – the urban development department, the town planning department, the land revenue department, and the various district and sub-district offices – tend to be under siege on a daily basis, with large number of people requesting forms, land records, permissions for construction, filing complaints and so on. In addition, these departments are routinely frequented by journalists and activists, seeking to uncover yet another real estate scam. As these departments address a number of politically sensitive issues, officers are incredibly busy (many working long after official working hours) and researchers find themselves to be low priority. Therefore, despite numerous calls and repeated personal visits, I was not able to interview a few key officials. Those who did agree to meet with me were cautious and highlighted that they were reluctant to speak as the project was controversial, politically contentious, and under scrutiny. Furthemore, my interviews were constantly interrupted by phone calls and visitors, and they were not able to spare more than 30 minutes of their time. On two occasions, I conducted interviews at the official's residence, and those interviews were much more candid.

I interviewed government officials at the state, district and *taluka* (sub-district) level. My interviews were formal and held in government offices. Interviewers were interested in knowing whether Lavasa was 'good' or 'bad'. My interview questions related to the history and rationale behind certain government policies and township projects, the need for new settlements, the changing nature of urban development in the state, their opinions on the nature of planning and particularly private sector led planning, how they located Lavasa within broader changes taking place in the state, and how they had understood the contestation surrounding Lavasa and how this had affected their work (if at all). The interviews were often opaque and I therefore relied more heavily on the voluminous government documents to uncover the logics of government processes (detailed in the next section).

Civil Society

Making contact and gaining access to civil society organisations, independent journalists and academics was relatively easy. I identified key people by scanning newspapers and available litigation for names of persons who were either directly or

indirectly involved in either supporting or opposing Lavasa. This included those who had written about the city, whose names appeared in reporting on the city, as well as people who were consistently writing or working on issues related to township development within Maharashtra. The voluminous reportage on the city assisted me in identifying and locating key informants. I used personal networks for introductions and then met additional (though less vocal) civil society members through snowball sampling.

My starting point was the Pune branch of the NAPM, the primary social movement contesting Lavasa. The alliance is spearheaded by Medha Patkar, one of India's most prominent social activists who, through her contestation of the Narmada Dam in the 1980s and '90s, has been credited with mobilising a large number of social movements across the country. Much has been written about her and the *Narmada Bachao Andolan* (save Narmada movement) (Baviskar, 1995; Routledge, 2003; Dwivedi, 2006; Nilsen, 2013). The NAPM, founded in 1992, consists of heterogeneous movements (both rural and urban), which draw on a range of discourses including Gandhianism, Ambedkarism, Marxism, environmentalism, and feminism (Kothari and Sethi, 1984; Omvedt, 1993). These movements are united under the NAPM by their "commitment to deepening democratic control over markets, productive resources, and economic development more generally" as well as resistance to corporate and state led displacement and dispossession (Levien, 2007: 124). I knew much of this before I met them.

The Pune office of the NAPM was easy to establish contact with and several members were happy to meet and discuss Lavasa and similar projects at length. The person at the helm of the environmental and land contestation against Lavasa, Suniti Suresh, was very welcoming. She was responsible for lodging a PIL against LCL as well as assisting villagers in pursuing a number of lower court land claims. I accompanied the NAPM on a number of their meetings through the course of the year, both within activist circles and to the Lavasa subsumed villages, from which they drew their strength. The idea was not to study the social movement itself – the constituent movements of the NAPM (such as the *Narmada Bachao Andolan* and the *Ghar Bachao Ghar Banao Andolan*) have been well documented and critiqued (Baviskar, 1995; Routledge, 2003; Dwivedi, 2006; Nilsen, 2013; Ciafone, 2012;

Weinstein, 2013) – but to get a sense of how activists and locals associated with NAPM understood and negotiated their relationship with Lavasa.

As my relationship with NAPM deepened, I found it difficult to remain non-partisan. Members of the NAPM, fairly familiar with engaging with researchers, did not probe too deeply about what I was interested in. However, in casual conversations over the journeys to Lavasa, I was constantly asked the question, "But what do *you* think of Lavasa?" Answering this question could compromise my research but not answering the question would affect trust. I often tried not to answer it, or answered it in terms of the research questions I was posing. As someone who was travelling between the different worlds of the LCL and NAPM offices, I was always acutely aware of my unusual position. Ultimately, I do believe that although both the NAPM and LCL were very forthcoming, neither party fully trusted me.

In addition to the NAPM network, I interviewed activists that had contested or written about the project, journalists and activists who had written both in favour of and against Lavasa and similar new town/township projects, academics in Mumbai and Pune, and lawyers. These 17 semi-structured interviews lasted an hour on average and were conducted both in Hindi and English. These interviews were aimed at engaging with how they understood Lavasa, and the project of new cities, what they thought the main causes of concern were and how they viewed the process through which the city had emerged. Once again, I commenced most of my interviews with the personal, asking questions about their life histories and biographies, the ideas and conditions that drew them to either contesting or supporting Lavasa, and the strategies deployed in doing so. I then asked more general questions regarding urban planning in India and the role of new cities, the relationship with the state, the tensions and successes in the execution of their activism and tried to locate how they understood Lavasa within the larger political processes at work in contemporary India.

Villagers

Lavasa subsumes 18 census villages in 2 sub-districts (Mulshi and Velhe) in Pune district. These villages were and are very sparsely populated (the reasons are

discussed in detail in Chapter Five and Six), with a total population of 3129 according to the 2011 census. The smallest village has 2 households (Ugavali with 8 individuals) and the largest has 81 (Bhoini with 505 individuals) (Census 2011). When I began my interviews in 2012, LCL had purchased approximately 70 per cent of the earmarked land area and many villagers had already relocated from the villages. The population and sample therefore was constituted of those individuals who stayed, either by choice or circumstance, rather than those who left in the previous decade. About half the population still owns some land (see Table 6.1). The details of the village sample are outlined in Chapter Six. I conducted semi-structured interviews with 42 randomly selected villagers across 7 of the larger villages – Admal, Bhoini, Dasve, Dhamanhol, Koloshi, Mugaon, Varasgaon, This included interviews with 4 *sarpanches* of 4 joint *gram panchayats* in the area and some villagers who also act as land agents.

Interviewing villagers was by far the most difficult part of this research. In the months before I started interviewing people formally, I spent time in the local tea-stalls, often alone, casually conversing with people. Many of these conversations did not go very far as people immediately suspected that I was a journalist, digging for yet another controversial news piece on the city. When I explained my position and research to them, they were more willing to speak but their scepticism remained. I conducted a number of interviews with (mostly) upper-caste (Maratha) informants in Hindi. I was able to conduct these interviews alone as these villagers were comfortable speaking Hindi and were frequently in the town centre or passing through chai shops on account of their businesses which were located in Lavasa.

To access the villages that were farther afield, I conducted interviews on weekends (when people were more likely to be home) and travelled from village to village with a (paid) research assistant – Nagesh Jadhav. Nagesh grew up in a village in the neighbouring district, had lived and worked in Pune as an adult, and had worked as teacher within Velhe sub-district. Therefore, he was deeply familiar with the area, the working of local government, and local caste politics and his observations were immensely insightful. Nagesh's presence and personable demeanour assisted with putting informants at ease before the inteviews commenced. Whereas I came across as an elite urban woman, villagers found it easy to both relate to and trust Nagesh. Even though land and the real estate business is notoriously a male domain, it was

only during interviews with villagers that I felt disadvantaged by my gender. Here too Nagesh was of immense assistance, men spoke more openly in his presence than they did when I attempted to speak to them on my own. He assisted by translating my questions from Hindi to Marathi as well as clarified informants' responses, when I was unable to comprehend them.

I found that the further the village was from Lavasa town centre, the more openly people spoke. Two explanations can be offered. In one of my early interviews, an informant, who had been speaking freely and with great flair, suddenly became reticent when I asked him a particular question. The framing of the question, he explained, was very similar to what either journalists or Lavasa's own surveyors asked. According to him, a number of persons who introduced themselves as "independent" researchers in fact worked for Lavasa. Second, the villages closer to Lavasa town centre were more involved in Lavasa itself. Larger numbers of residents either worked there or had some relationship with the company. This led to a certain exercise of caution in speaking with 'outsiders'.

I started my interviews by gathering the life histories of the villagers, their families, their livelihoods, their connection to their village and the region, and their links to nearby villages, towns and cities such as Pune and Mumbai. I asked open-ended questions about village life, their engagement with local government, their opinions about Lavasa: when and how they first heard about it and what they saw it as, and what they felt the disputes were about. I also asked questions about land, their relationship to it, whether they had sold some land and/or if they intended to, and the reasons for the same. The length of interviews varied greatly from stunted 30-minute dialogues to 90-minute animated conversations (in Marathi and Hindi). Most interviews were not recorded, as many villagers demonstrated considerable discomfort when I asked for permission. I therefore took copious notes by hand in an organised field notebook. The ones that were recorded were done so with oral consent and the interviews transcribed by a research assistant.

It is worth reflecting on how, if at all, our caste/class/gender position may or may not have influenced informants' responses. My position as an elite urban woman (who could have been viewed to be a journalist) could have made some villagers reluctant

to be critical of the LCL. Nagesh never explicitly revealed his caste to informants (for instance he always introduced himself by his first name alone; that said, the lack of last name, some would argue, is itself a marker of caste). While we did interview a variety of informants from a range of castes, I had conducted many of my interviews with upper-caste villagers alone. Nagesh's position as a lower-caste man could have led to very critical interviews with lower caste informants and less critical interviews with upper caste informants. It is difficult to ascertain what kind of biases, if any, emerge from our particular positions. That said, I found that the informants rarely unequivocally praised or critiqued the project or LCL. Their responses (as evident in Chapters 5 and 6) were indicative of careful reflection of their lived experience: they gave credit to the company where they felt it was due and critiqued it when necessary. The villagers associated with the NAPM were more thoroughgoing in their critique.

Finally, as mentioned above, on account of the fact that the interviews took place in 2012, 12 years after the project was officially sanctioned, the sample interviewed did not include those who had either been evicted, or the landless who could no longer lay claim to the area. These villagers had longed moved, to a variety of different destinations and it was difficult, given the already large scope of the research project, to track them down and interview them. Accordingly, the discussions that come in the pages ahead are not focused on rehabilitation and resettlement or precise experiences of selling land or being evicted, but on the making of the city. This is discussed further in Chapter Six.

In total, I interviewed a total of 77 individuals across the various groups (elites, locals, civil society, government officials), all of whom were intimately associated with the project. I stopped interviewing when I encountered saturation and also when it became logistically difficult to add more informants. In many ways, because the scope of the project was relatively small, the number of individuals involved and therefore available to interview was quite limited. A complete list of (anonymised) informants is provided in Appendix II.

3.3.2. Documents and Archives

Given the controversial nature of the project I relied heavily on documentary evidence to tell a verifiable story of Lavasa. As mentioned earlier, in the case of officials at LCL, their cooperation did not always translate to complete access to information. Many documents were not made available despite repeated requests (this could be for a number of reasons ranging from their own time priorities to protecting their business interests). I conducted interviews and collected documents in tandem, almost in an iterative manner, the documents often influenced the questions I would ask in my interviews, and the interviews lead me to different documents.

The strategy I used to unearth documentary evidence was as follows. I first gathered all data that was available online, including newspaper articles, some government documents (including recently digitised land records), Lavasa's voluminous promotional material, and documents related to other similar project, in particular the Amby Valley project. I then gathered documents from my informants. The NAPM offered some reports and allowed me to peruse the government documents they had collected over the years. Unsurprisingly, these documents had been collected for specific purposes: to investigate whether Lavasa had abided by the law, whether Lavasa was guilty of environmental violation, whether public land had been transferred to Lavasa, whether tribal land had been purchased by Lavasa, to name a few. These documents offered an important but necessarily partial narrative of Lavasa's emergence. They were, however, an important starting point.

Once I had a broad sense of the archival space I was working within, I accessed information using the Right to Information Act (RTI) (2005). The RTI Act empowers citizens to file for any non-classified information housed in the GoI and be entitled to a response within 14 days. This landmark act ensures that if you know what the document you are looking for and the department within which it is located, it is likely that you will be able to access it. But the Act is a double-edged sword: while on the one hand it has changed the nature of research in India, enabling researchers to access any document they would like to (providing they know of its existence), on the other hand, it has made government officials and developers reticent about

providing any kind of non-RTI access, never knowing whether the information revealed could be used against them.

I filed two types of RTI requests: ones where I asked for specific sets of information and others termed as 'file inspection'. Any member of the public may file a request to inspect files of any government department. I filed requests at all relevant departments to inspect files on Lavasa, the Hill Station Regulation, and other townships. I carried out the inspections over the course of several months, had to painstakingly list each and every document I wanted photocopied and would often wait months for the copies. On one occasion a request was denied on grounds of the data being classified information, the revelation of which could jeopardize LCL's business. In addition, the files were often poorly organised, with large gaps in information, no page numbers, missing documents, substantial duplication, and in only a semblance of chronological order. Like the Mantralaya fire, one could not easily ascertain whether the missing files were absent by intent or carelessness. However, the Indian bureaucracy's pathological desire to keep documents in multiple copies across departments ensured that if a document was missing in one place it was bound to show up in another.

Finally, land records form an important informational basis for this thesis. These land records (also known as 7/12 extracts), were patched together from various sources: LCL's submission to various government departments often provided maps and lists, laying out the type of land and ownership status; digitised land records available online revealed detailed land data for some parcels; and finally NAPM's numerous inquiries to various government departments ensured that the government files were replete with statistics on land, lists of sellers, owners, and details of disputed properties. Pooled together, these land records revealed how ownership of land had changed over time and the (officially stated) prices that had been paid for individual land holdings.

By the end of my fieldwork, I had amassed a large number of documents from numerous government departments that allowed me to construct the aspects of the history of Lavasa relevant for my research. There were a few documents I was not permitted to access as making them public could have potentially compromised

LCL's competitive edge. However, I could easily patch together much of the essential information from a range of other documents.

The purpose of the document/archival data collection was many-fold. First, I sought to construct a narrative that went beyond the mythology of the project, pointing out to the logics and rationales provided by the government for the decisions to conceptualise and enable such a project. Second, I sought to uncover how the project had changed over time, how it had been imagined and planned both by the government and by the corporation, in order to get a sense of why Lavasa looks the way it does today. Third, I wanted to understand the diversity of logics and rationalities *within* the government and LCL; who put forth what kinds of suggestions, who opposed them and on what grounds, what were the alternatives put forward and what view triumphed and why? Lastly, I sought to triangulate information provided in interviews. In his engagement with the bureaucracy in Pakistan, Hull (2012) shows that documents are not merely important for the information they contain. Rather they also demonstrate relations among places, peoples and paper, that is to say, they convey a set of relations between the state and individuals, social movements, and the corporation; their ubiquity reveals "the double sign of the state's distance and its penetration into the life of the everyday" (Das and Poole, 2004:15). Thus in assessing the documents I collected, I paid close attention to the relationships that had formed through those papers – between levels of the state, the corporation, civil society, and the villagers. In looking at archival evidence, I therefore sought to construct a short history of the city and the logics, ideologies and rationalities that enabled it.

3.3.3. Research Ethics

A deep engagement with a controversial project such as Lavasa that covers the highly sensitive domain of land use meant that ethical concerns around privacy, confidentiality, as well as data access were of regular concern (Baez, 2002; Wiles, 2006). Ethics in the field is often an imperfect exercise and fieldwork presented three key ethical challenges:

First, as mentioned earlier, there was the issue of moving between the worlds of the corporation, the social movement, NGOs, villages, and government officials. Both Lavasa and real estate/land are contested terrains and I interviewed a number of people who were often very critical of each other's worldviews and actions. Some persons I interviewed were in direct legal litigation against each other, and allegations of corruption were made liberally. Over the course of the year a number of informants raised very sensitive issues in good faith and I had to continuously be non-partisan, be willing to engage with a range of opinions, and through repeated verbal assurances, communicate that their identities would be hidden. When I was with activists, they were interested in hearing what LCL's views were; similarly, LCL was interested in understanding what activists' 'real problems' with the project were. By and large I chose to not engage these questions, in most instances by changing the topic of conversation, and in one or two instances by explicitly stating that it would be unethical for me to act as an interlocutor. In writing up, I have taken care to not reveal any information that would either jeopardise individuals or their work (be it LCL's business interests or NAPM's political strategy going forward).

Second, this thesis relies heavily on documents, most of which were not gathered from LCL directly, but rather were compiled through RTI applications and by looking at files accumulated by activists. This raises the question: can one use data that is obtained without the informant's knowledge (in this case LCL)? In response, I only chose to use the information that was already in the public domain (that is to say, retrievable through an RTI request). Moreover, there were occasions where some informants suggested I could get detailed data for a fee (especially with respect to land records and court cases), but I chose not to use such methods.

Third, given that Lavasa is a well-known project that has been widely covered in the media, maintaining the anonymity of informants has been imperfect in the writing up of this dissertation. The informants at LCL were happy to be recorded, did so in the presence of a PR representative, and did not explicitly express concern about their names being used. While I have retained their anonymity, their identities cannot be totally protected as their interviews addressed issues directly related to their tasks, and many informants have been on public record discussing the same issues. I have taken utmost care to not divulge any details about government officials, activists, and

village-level informants, and this has come at the cost of some precision in describing them (their gender, caste, occupation, and the village that they are from).

3.4. Three Methodological Concerns

3.4.1. Studying Up, Down, and All Around

In tracing the making of a city this dissertation could be seen, in the words of Laura Nader, as an attempt at 'studying up.' Nader (1974) initially called for studies of banks, realtors, corporations and other institutions that were considered to be at the centre of capitalist process, encouraging researchers to study the cultures of both the "powerful" and the "powerless" in order to "throw new light on the process of domination" (Gusterson, 1997: 114). Since then, a number of scholars have paid heed to the call arguing that interviewing elites (and interviewing them well) can provide sharp insight into causal processes at work (Tansey, 2007). However, scholars have also highlighted challenges such as difficulty in access, time constraints, the risk of reinforcing dominant narratives put forth by the elite, and uneven power relations (in favour of the informant) (Ostrander, 1993; McDowell, 1998; Rice, 2010)

In researching developers and the government officials, I encountered some of the pitfalls of studying up. As mentioned earlier, access became an issue particularly at the government level, where meetings with senior bureaucrats were near impossible to organise despite my tenacious attempts. While many LCL officials met me at first, they no longer entertained requests for interviews towards the end of my fieldwork, stating that they had other priorities given that the project was back on track. On the whole, however, access was relatively good.[37]

I found, however, that access and trust were much more difficult issues when I was studying 'down,' an observation echoed by a number of other scholars (Nader, 1974; Smith, 2006). People within the villages were suspicious of me, hard to locate, and

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[37] The concept of 'elite' has been problematised in anthropological literature (see Smith (2006) for discussion). In this context I use the term 'elite' to describe those who had considerable power in the creation of Lavasa, in as much as they planned, executed, or gave permissions for the project.

even harder to win over. In both cases I was worried about asking the wrong question, lest the interview be terminated and further access denied. If interviews were granted they were often reticent and were constantly punctuated with interrogations about my own position. That my 'elite' interviews were considerably longer is testimony to the fact that access and trust is not merely an issue associated with studying up as is often argued (Cochrane, 1998; Parry, 1998; Desmond, 2004).

The second question of concern was to what extent were my interviews with elites merely reinforcing dominant narratives (Moyser and Wagstaffe, 1987; Mikecz, 2012). As mentioned earlier, the PR representative accompanied me on trips as well as some interviews. There was a real risk that I would strengthen their narrative. This risk was minimised because I began fieldwork knowing the numerous counter claims that had been very publically made against Lavasa by the NAPM. Furthermore, I addressed this issue through two ways: I interviewed all types of people and groups associated with the project. Thus, the narratives provided by LCL, government officials, activists, and villagers were all juxtaposed against each other. Furthermore, I triangulated as much information as possible through archival research.

Third, a number of scholars who have researched the elite, have argued that they "treated research participants quite differently from the ethical 'best-practice' that one would normally adhere to" (Smith, 2006: 644). Some suggested "couching controversial topics in broad terms, whilst trying to 'flatter' the respondent by emphasising their influential role in the matter (Cochrane, 1998: 2124). I was always aware of creating the right impression and avoiding controversial aspects of the project, but as mentioned earlier, this was not restricted to elites alone but to all informants. I described and introduced my project consistently to all informants as wanting to understand the processes by which new models or urban development (new townships and hill stations) are emerging, using Lavasa as a case.

The approach I therefore took was, as Gusterson describes, "a polymorphous engagement" (1997: 116). I interacted with informants across a number of sites, collected data from a wide array of sources in numerous ways to address the problems of "studying up" and "down". In so doing, the purpose of this research is "not sharing knowledge with those who lack it, but forging links between different

knowledge that are possible from different locations and tracing lines of possible alliance and common purpose between them" (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997: 39).

3.4.2. On State-Society-Capital Relations

The second issue is one of researching the relations between the state, society, and the corporation. As a number of scholars have argued, while state and society are theoretically distinct, they are not often empirically so (Harriss-White, 2003; Corbridge et. al., 2005; Gupta, 1995, 2012). They argue that the conventional distinction between state and society (and by extension state and capital) needs to be re-examined, particularly in the Indian context. This poses some methodological concerns.

Mitchell (2006: 170) argues that we need to "take seriously the elusiveness of the boundary between state and society, not as a problem of conceptual precision but as a clue to the nature of the phenomenon" and "we need to examine the political processes through which the uncertain yet powerful distinction between state and society is produced". How then can we study the relationship between the state and the private sector in the production of space? While in theory these entities are considered to be separate, in practice these distinctions are not so clear. While this and its methodological implications have been discussed at great length when studying local bureaucracies (see Gupta (2012) for a review), little has been said of studying the collapse of this distinction at the higher levels of state, where chief ministers and party leaders also run full-fledged real estate businesses. We do not see the state and society as institutions/spaces with clearly defined boundary lines. During fieldwork I paid close attention to the lack of distinction between the two, for instance, noting the government official who is also a real estate agent, or the individual who is a villager, a *sarpanch*, a real estate broker, and has a contract with Lavasa. Such blurring gave way to a dominant discourse of corruption, one that many other scholars have echoed. Instead of foreground ideas of corruption, I chose instead to focus on the impacts of that blurring on city-making.

Furthermore, every level of the state was involved in this project, including *panchayats,* various local and state level politicians, local government, bureaucrats,

courts, multiple state government departments, the auditor general, and several central government departments. The state is neither unitary nor coherent, and this multitude of departments allowed for an examination of precisely, when and why coherence or unity is or is not performed and/or discursively constructed. Allowing "the state to be disaggregated by focusing on different bureaucracies without prejudging their unity or coherence" allows us to "problematise the relationship between the translocality of "the state" and the necessarily localised offices, institutions, and practices in which it is instantiated" (Gupta, 2012: 77). I thus paid close attention to the ways in which the different levels of the state differ and speak to each other and did not presume unity in the same way in which I did not presume unity in approaches within LCL.

3.4.3. Land and Real Estate

In a country characterised by a large rural and peasant population, land is not only an economic and financial asset but is also deeply intertwined with livelihoods, identity, and culture. The Indian state has an elaborate system of laws and regulations in place (some central and some at the state level) to protect peasants and *adivasis* (e.g. by preventing sales of particular types of lands), to prevent further accumulation of land by the wealthy (by putting 'ceiling' limits to the amount of land that can be owned by a single person/ company) and to correct historic caste-based injustices and redistribute land to the landless.

But land is also an instrument for hiding and laundering money, particularly 'black money' (Kumar, 1999)[38]. It is considered a safe investment, particularly by urban residents, who expect high returns in anticipation of India's imminent urban explosion. The demand for land, particularly agricultural land,[39] and therefore the need to subvert or bypass many of these land laws is high. It is because of this that

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[38] Black money is loosely understood as cash incomes that are illegal, undeclared and/or untaxed. In 1995, it was estimated that the black economy comprised 40 per cent of India's GDP. This money comes from both illegal activities like drugs and smuggling as well as legal activities such as real estate and infrastructure (Kumar, 1999).

[39] Agricultural land is often in high demand as the capital gains on it are non-taxable. However, agricultural land can only be purchased by 'farmers' for agricultural purposes. Such land can only be used for non-agricultural purposes with prior consent from the Collector. A large number of land violations are centred on urban residents fraudulently claiming to be farmers and purchasing farm land or paying bribes to convert agricultural land to non-agricultural land.

land is also a domain of illegal and often criminal activity (Kumar, 1999; Weinstein, 2008; Sami 2012). It is also a domain of political activity, with large numbers of local politicians participating in the land market. With so much regulation and discretion resting in the hands of government officials, land-use planning and therefore departments and officers associated with land-use planning are domains of power and contest.

This heady combination makes land and land transactions particularly difficult to research. This is because land is a site of enormous contestation and details about land transactions are hidden or difficult to ascertain. Complete land records are tedious to obtain and they often hide as much as they reveal. Land prices registered in sale deeds usually do not reflect real land prices, as many land transactions are executed largely in cash, with only the non-cash component being declared on the land record (in order to lower property tax). Land ownership is often difficult to ascertain as land is often hidden under the names of other family members. At the household level, agricultural land is often inherited and held jointly among family members. Depending on the health of family relations, conflicting narratives can be told of the same plot of land from within the same family. Accusations of corruption and illegality are thrown about wildly and with little caution.

And so, conducting factual research on land is an onerous task. But land assembly forms a core part of my research and understanding how and why LCL assembled 13,000 acres of land through the market forms the core question of Chapter Five of this dissertation. The approach I took was to use the facts that are not disputable and instead of calculating rates of return on land, or who sold land to whom, my research focused on the narratives people told of the land. I assumed that if I conducted enough interviews and triangulated this information with land records, I could piece together narratives of why and how people parted (or did not part) with their land.

3.5. Conclusion

This dissertation seeks to tell the story of why and how Lavasa came to be. It does so by both studying corporate engagement with urban planning, the practices of the

state, as well as local communities and their response to such endeavours. But studying a controversial project within a contested sector made many facts unverifiable and questionable. Political sensitivity of the project resulted in some reticent interviews, difficulty in accessing documents, contested and contradictory narratives about the project, and issues of trust and 'truth'.

It was through fieldwork that a number of conceptual questions with methodological consequences were raised. These themes are repeated throughout this dissertation. First, the relative role of individual actors versus the structures that they inhabit in imagining and making real Lavasa, second, the theoretical separation between the state and the non-state/society and the private and public lives of officials that were empirically difficult to entangle. Third, discourses of corruption and secrecy which are intimately tied to the study of land and its transformation into real estate, making facts about land largely unverifiable.

The aim, then, was not to uncover the 'truth': is the Lavasa corrupt by design? Were people cheated out of their land? Were villagers fabricating land-claims? Neither was it to ask more 'practical' questions: Will Lavasa work? Is it good for the villagers? Instead the aim is to tell the myriad stories that can be told of Lavasa, the ideologies that they represent and the political work that these stories do. The research process lies in engaging with multiple perspectives to tell narratives and counter-narratives – narratives of development, narratives of corruption, and narratives of struggle – and how they come together in the messy and ruptured processes of the production of space. I hope that my informants are able to see their truths in this dissertation alongside opposing views and ideologies, and are able to understand them as socially situated rather than factually incorrect.

Chapter Four

Imagining Lavasa: Networks and Visions

This chapter traces the ways in which Lavasa came to be and the ideologies, rationalities, and interests that enabled it. In so doing, it makes three connected arguments: first, it shows that the state government's policy for new hill stations emerged not from techno-scientific analysis or even expert opinion (unlike perhaps its modernist predecessors), but rather from a long standing and common sense view that upholds the development of new cities as a solution to the intractable problems of existing cities. Invoking this common sense, the development of hill stations was justified both politically and legally in the name of 'public interest'. Yet, despite the discourse of public interest, these hill stations were meant to be private real estate projects. The redefinition of public interest was not only crucial in enabling the project but also effectively curbed all discussion on the propriety of such projects, thus legitimising the privatised hill stations.

Second, it demonstrates how a network of politically powerful individuals, connected through kinship and friendship, often occupying influential positions in the government and in real estate companies, was crucial to the foundation of this city. Their involvement further blurred the lines between the project's public and private interests.

Third, the chapter argues that while Lavasa can be seen as a private real estate project, generating surplus through the monetisation of land, it is also building, sustaining and making real the representation of a private and somewhat utopian space. Lavasa is imagined not just as a gamble as a real estate project but also a speculation on a certain representation of space – as an environmentally sustainable, inclusive, well-governed city with a diversified economy, that is also profitable. This vision promises that future cities, when planned and managed properly through private partnerships and with a complete top-down vision, can avoid the politics and turmoil that characterises the Indian city of the past (and present). In so doing, it redefines notions of the public and the private, and aims to generate a public that

sees cities on the same terms. But this future city is only made possible by the very governance institutions it seeks to break free from. Ironically, despite its hefty political backing, it is precisely by grappling with these governance institutions that LCL sees the limits of what can be achieved through private planning.

Section 4.1 explains why and how the state enabled the building of privatised hill stations. Section 4.2 foregrounds the actors responsible for envisioning Lavasa and how their original idea, which was confined to real estate, transformed into a city-making project. Section 4.3, the largest part of this chapter, demonstrates that the vision for Lavasa is indeed utopian and this utopia is mobilised to produce a series of political effects. Section 4.4 examines how, despite its vision and government support, LCL reached the limits of what it could achieve through privatised planning. Section 4.5 concludes by asserting the importance of reading Lavasa as a 'market utopia' that attempts to conceal the way in which it was produced, a premise from which the rest of the dissertation proceeds.

4.1. Needing the New: 1996 Hill Station Regulation

Long before Lavasa was formally conceptualised, Sharad Pawar[40] wanted to create Maharashtra's own lake district (Damle, 2010; Vaidya, 2010a, 2010b) and, with 74 medium and large lakes within the vicinity, Pune district seemed like an ideal site. A consultant was hired to conduct a feasibility study in the mid-1980s and a committee from the Government of Maharashtra's (GoM) Department of Tourism was sent to study the English Lake District. The consultant maintained that the English Lake District had been "developed on the most sophisticated lines", and that despite there being only a "few hundred square miles of inland water lakes" the British government had been "able to project the Lake District as a major tourist attraction for the whole of UK through excellent planning and development control" (Chaney, 1989: sec 2.1). Therefore the GoM could probably do the same to provide destinations for urban residents seeking "a natural environment which is lacking in their daily lives" (Chaney, 1989: sec 2.1).

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[40] One government informant suggested that the lake district idea was floated and developed independently of Pawar (G1 interview 01/10/2013). Archival material shows that the idea for the lake district goes back to the early 1980s, when Pawar was Chief Minister. Furthermore, Pawar is on record on numerous occasions asserting that this was his idea (Vaidya, 2008; 2012).

A partial plan for a lake district was laid out in the 1991-2011 Pune Regional Plan. The Plan identified inadequate tourist amenities and large-scale unplanned construction in the Western Ghats[41] as two key problems that needed to be addressed through planning and policy: "careful planning is needed to forestall degeneration of natural beauty in the face of pressures from unsatisfied and therefore unruly crowds" (Pune Regional Plan, 1991: 165). It further stated that the district must "plan for tourism" to "ensure that unplanned sprawls" and "unregulated activities" do not "disfigure" or "spoil" the "natural beauty, historical, and religious sites" within the region. To this effect, it identified an "urgent need to develop self-sufficient townships with adequate housing and infrastructure" (Pune Regional Plan, 1991: 165). In addition, the GoM announced its Tourism Policy in 1993, declaring areas around the lakes in Pune District as Special Tourism Areas and proposing strategies and incentives to develop tourism in the region.

The integrated lake district idea did not get off the ground;[42] instead, in November 1996, the Urban Development Department (UDD) of the GoM passed the 'Special Regulations for the Development of Tourist Resorts/Holiday Homes/Townships in Hill Station Type Areas' (henceforth referred to as the Hill Station Regulation). Although passed by the Manohar Joshi (BJP – Shiv Sena) government, there are strong reasons to think that the regulation was heavily influenced by Pawar's vision of promoting tourism in Maharashtra, as Pawar himself has asserted (Damle, 2010; Vaidya, 2012). Regardless, the Hill Station Regulation was an astonishing piece of legislation. Barely four pages long, scant in detail, it amended *all* regional plans within the state, stating "any suitable area at appropriate height and suitable topographical features can be declared by Government in Urban development Department for purpose of development as Hill Station" (1996:1). Given the prohibitively high cost of developing a new hill station (estimated at INR 300-400 crores (USD 60-80

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[41] The Western Ghat Region is a mountainous ecologically fragile area on the western coast of India covering approximately 130,000 square kilometres. Spanning four states: Karnataka, Maharashtra, Kerala and Goa, it is considered to be one of the "most significant repositories of India's biodiversity" (Gadgil, 2012: 3).
[42] By one account, the bureaucrats and planners who went to see the English Lake District returned enthusiastically, but over time many of them were transferred to different government posts and the project was forgotten (G1 interview 01/10/2013).

million))[43] the projects would be undertaken by private developers, in locations of their choice, with no financial support from the state government. To offset the cost of such an undertaking, the government offered certain tax exemptions to interested companies.

Once an area had been chosen by a developer and declared a hill station, statutory ceiling laws[44] would be relaxed within the region's boundaries, enabling developers/individuals to purchase up to 4000 hectares of land (considerably more than under the existing ceiling limit). In addition, the purchase of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes would be permitted (a transaction that would usually require the permission of the District Collector[45]). Purchase of *adivasi* (tribal) land was also sanctioned (which was later revoked) and the rehabilitation of affected *adivasi* communities would be the responsibility of the developer (although no guidelines were provided)[46]. Given that the Indian state has historically protected the right to land of tribal populations, and regulated agricultural land to prevent large-scale land accumulation in the hands of private companies or wealthy individuals (and keep it in the hands of small farmers), these were significant concessions.[47] In short, barring some stringent rules on construction and planning, sweeping rights were granted to the developer. A few concerned citizens responded to the regulation during the mandatory period of public consultation (many informants suggested that the regulations were passed very quietly and it was only when projects began to

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[43] G1 interview, 01/10/2013

[44] As part of post-independence land reform policies, the Maharashtra Agricultural Land (Ceiling on Holdings) Act, 1961 was passed to limit the amount of land held by any one individual. The ceiling limits were fixed in 1961 and were dependent on the type of land in question. For instance, one individual can have at most 7 hectares (18 acres) of irrigated land capable of yielding at least two crops a year and 21 hectares (54 acres) of dry crop land. The government acquires landholdings in excess of this ceiling limit, compensation for which is determined by the Collector. This land is to be distributed to landless persons belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, landless persons, and to persons from a pre-defined 'priority list'. If, after this, there remains surplus land, the Collector can assign it to 'public purpose'.

[45] According to the Maharashtra Land Revenue Code, 1966, land used for agriculture cannot be used for any non-agricultural purpose except with the permission of the Collector. This law was put in place to protect agriculture and farmers and prevent speculative hoarding of agricultural land by non-agriculturalists.

[46] According to the Maharashtra Land Revenue Code, 1966 and the Maharashtra Land Revenue Code and Tenancy Laws (Amendment) Act, 1974, land belonging to persons belonging to the Scheduled Tribes, cannot be transferred to non-tribals without the permission of the District Collector.

[47] While post-independence land reform policies varied from state to state, the general thrust of these policies was to distribute land to the landless/marginal landowners. In Maharashtra, tenancy reforms sought to empower tenant farmers by giving them rights to buy the agricultural land they tilled. However, these reforms were in practice weak or subverted by the ruling elite (Khekale, 1999; Chakravorty, 2013)

emerge, that they were made aware of its existence).[48] Eventually the cabinet passed the regulation with few modifications and even less fanfare.

The Hill Station Regulation was premised on three noteworthy assumptions: first, that new hill stations were required to take the pressure off "overcrowded" extant ones and were therefore in the public interest. Second, that new hill stations were needed because "proper planning" would stall unauthorised construction (and concomitant environmental degradation) across the ecologically sensitive Western Ghats. Third, that the GoM was in no financial position to undertake such large investments and thus these projects would have to be private sector undertakings. Each of these points merits discussion.

The hill stations of Maharashtra (Matheran, Mahabaleshwar, Lonavala, Khandala, and Panchgani) are undoubtedly popular weekend destinations for urban Indians from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. Informants across the political spectrum (builders, government officials, civil society) concurred that existing hill stations are indeed just as "overcrowded" (i.e. had reached "carrying capacity"[49]) as the cities from which their visitors seek to escape. The activists who filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL)[50] against the Hill Station Regulation also agreed: "*[they are] crowded definitely, and we need new areas. Yes, we need to get out and build new ones*".[51] But the need for new hill stations was not one that was determined through surveys or scientific studies. In fact, no study was undertaken to evaluate the need for or the potential locations for such settlements; there is nothing obvious about building new settlements to address the problems of population/growth in existing ones.[52] As one activist/scholar explained:

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[48] Letters were not available. Upon filing an RTI to view these letters, I received a response that they had been burnt in the Mantralaya fire.

[49] G1 interview, 01/10/2013.

[50] In 1998 the BEAG filed three (jointly heard) writ petitions contesting both the Hill Station Regulation as well as the Amby Valley project. The former was contested on grounds of violation of statutory planning laws, environmental degradation, and violation of *adivasi* rights. Amby Valley was contested on grounds of illegalities, environmental damage, and illegal eviction of *adivasis*. The case was heard in the Mumbai High Court and the bench ruled in favour of the government and in partial favour of Amby Valley.

[51] C12 interview, 02/06/2012.

[52] As discussed in Chapter One, India built 118 new towns between 1974-1981, accommodating close to five million people in them. Some scholars suggest that this was probably the largest new town programme in the world (Glover, 2013). While these new towns were of an entirely different nature from hill stations (often company towns or towns with an industrial core), they were premised on

> "*Hill stations crowded? Which place in Pune is not crowded? This number (demographic) has more money but their demand will never be satisfied. Estimate how many hill stations will be needed if even five per cent of the urban population wanted to visit. For 15 million Indians, we just don't have enough places. If all of them wanted to go to a national park, it is not possible.*"[53]

Yet, the GoM held the need to build anew as self-evident. An affidavit by then secretary of UDD presents this point emphatically,

> "The development of new hill stations is in the public interest. I further submit that the need to develop new hill stations is beyond dispute. I say that the pressure on the existing hill stations in the state is increasing every year and that several remedial measures, like developing new hill stations, are required to be taken in public interest." (Desphande, 1998: 7)

Two points are noteworthy: first, the UDD argued that new hill stations would be solutions to the problem of overcrowding faced by existing ones. Furthermore, these new hill stations would avoid the problems faced by existing hill stations as it would be comparatively "easier to regulate and control their development than to control and regulate the further development and expansion or improvement of existing hill stations" (Desphande, 1998: 6). According to this logic, the pervasive crisis of monitoring unplanned development could only be addressed by creating regulation for new planned development.

Second, the UDD claimed that construction of new hill stations was in the public interest. Hill stations today do not evoke the elitist imagery they once did, as being

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some similar planning ideas. Radhamal Mukherjee, an eminent sociologist at that time, shared some of these views, and felt that starting afresh had the potential and ability to avoid the problems of existing cities and the uncontrolled growth they were then facing (Glover, 2013). More recently, Navi Mumbai was constructed to address the overcrowding in Mumbai and to provide a planned alternative to the main city (Shaw, 2004). But almost none of these cities have served as effective decongestants to existing overcrowding problems.
[53] C6 interview, 11/10/2012.

"closed communities of their own kind in a setting of their own design" (Kennedy, 1996: 2) as they are now holiday destinations for a wide spectrum of Indians. However, in this case, by the GoM's own admission, the new hill stations would largely be sites of second homes, echoing a direct alignment with the historical function of the hill stations as "a public site for the pursuit of private interests, a site where the British could re-create some semblance of a bourgeois civic life" (Kennedy, 1996: 88). In a country where most citizens do not own first homes, creating opportunities for the 'public' to invest in second homes, conjures a particularly elite definition of 'the public'. As a former official within Department of Town Planning, Pune (DTP) explained,

> *"At that time people had money and they wanted to invest in second homes. That was the trend. When I was working as —, almost 60 per cent of proposals for land development were for farmhouse development. Then the Amby Valley[54] project came, because Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani were crowded; that was the rationale of the government."[55]*

It is important to note that the overcrowding in existing hill stations was/is driven by often-unauthorised construction by the middle-class/elite. For instance, one of the first reports that assessed the hill station of Mahabaleshwar claimed that although it had been planned for 14,000 people, the town received 219,000 visitors in 1984 (Kapoor, 1984). This tourist demand generated building activity, which led to "land speculation outside the municipal limits at the cost of private forests and agricultural land" (Jayal, 1984: 1). The report, however, did not suggest that new hill stations be built, instead it advised the GoM to place "strict checks" on building and speculation, as well as on deforestation. Regardless, it was to deter this unplanned growth and illegal activity that the Hill Station Regulation (to allow planned farm-house development) was ostensibly put forth.

The question of who should build these towns attracted more debate. The Hill Station Regulation was passed five years after economic liberalisation, pre-dating the

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[54] Details of the Amby Valley project will be discussed later in the chapter and throughout this dissertation.
[55] G5 interview, 05/09/12.

various state-specific township policies and the SEZ Act (2005) that emerged in the 2000s. Private sector involvement was encouraged for financial reasons. The developer, rather than the government would incur the cost of infrastructure (roads, water, drainage, electricity, tree planting, social works) but "the ultimate benefit" would go "to the public and the society at large" (BEAG Vs GoM CWP 2772 of 1998: para 2). As an informant explained, "*even hill stations like Mahabaleshwar have both private bungalows and public places such as parks, lakes, etc. So a private developer could build an open settlement, which combines private real estate with public amenities*".[56] Thus from the UDD's perspective, the regulations were "framed with a view to combine development of privately owned land and utilise private financial resources" to develop an infrastructure for "public purpose without any burden on [the] public exchequer" (BEAG Vs GoM CWP 2772 of 1998: para 2). The UDD further rationalised private sector involvement by not only citing financial constraints but also assuming the inevitability of privatisation:

> "Government policy in respect of the development of new hill station sites is in tune with the new trends sweeping across the whole globe. Liberalisation and privatisation have become inevitable concomitants of development process all over the world. The government of India and all the respective state governments in this country have accepted the role of private enterprises in development of infrastructural facilities. I submit that this Hon'ble court can take judicial notice of fundamental policy changes that have taken place in this country over the last couple of years." (Deshpande, 1998: 9)

To be sure, the Hill Station Regulation sparked some opposition, the most notable of which was a case filed by the Bombay Environmental Action Group (BEAG) in the Mumbai High Court (BEAG Vs GoM CWP 2772 of 1998). The BEAG opposed the regulations on multiple grounds. First, they argued that the regulation was in violation of a number of statutory planning laws as stated in the Maharashtra Regional Town Planning Act (MRTP Act), 1966. Second, that the regulation would facilitate large-scale land grabs and dispossess farmers and *adivasis*. Third, that a

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[56] G1 interview, 01/10/2013.

private developer could not be responsible for rehabilitating displaced *adivasi* populations and there was "no instance that the petitioners" were "aware of where a private developer has ever rehabilitated an oustee" (Mehta, 1998: para i). Fourth, the petition challenged the logic of creating a private hill station, and argued that the government could not permit the development of private hill stations just because it had been unable "to curb encroachments as alleged"; by that logic, it argued, the government would have "to sell off all its land" (Mehta, 1998: para 18).

However, even in their opposition, BEAG's petition did not contest the need for new hill stations; it merely contested their 'privateness'. The petition was heard and resolved swiftly, with the court order upholding the regulation and emboldening many of the government's perspectives on crowding, planning and privatisation:

> "According to us, the notification is essentially a policy decision of the government... tourism is developing and increasing rapidly and it is absolutely necessary to ease the pressure on existing hill stations. The State is not able to make such huge investment and hence invited private participation. It is a new concept introduced and in consonance with the global trend. This reminds us what Francis Backo has said, "He that will not apply new remedies must accept new evils for time is the greatest innovator"... The development of hill stations is the need of the hour.

> It has been pointed out by the State government and it cannot be disputed that all the existing hill stations in the state on account of population pressure and unauthorised constructions and developments, are facing environmental and ecological problems and hence it was necessary to have new hill station sites for proper and regulated development." (BEAG Vs GoM CWP 2772 of 1998: 58)

That the Hill Station Regulation withstood legal contest is significant for a number of reasons. First, it legitimated the common sense notion, as put forth by the government, that more hill stations were needed. In so doing, it prevented any further contestation on the propriety of such projects i.e., on whether new hill

stations were indeed desirable. Second, it upheld the notion that these developments would be different from others because they would be *properly* planned and regulated. Third, by invoking the inevitability of privatisation, the GoM firmly placed the private sector at the heart of settlement development. In sum, it created the policy conditions for the creation of a private hill station and firmly shut down certain avenues for resistance to them. As a former town planner explained, "once the policy is launched, you can't stop the development".[57]

With the regulation cemented through a court order, developers began to apply for hill station development permission. Amby Valley, a 5000-acre gated tourist resort with Swiss aesthetic aspirations, had already been partially constructed before the Hill Station Regulation was passed. A controversial project, its land purchases had violated multiple land laws and its construction had also flouted planning and environmental norms (BEAG Vs. Sahara CWP 3041 of 1998). It too was challenged in court by the BEAG. Furthermore, various local government departments challenged the legality of the project but in 1998, it was 'regularised'[58] under the Hill Station Regulation. Thus, ironically, the first hill station built under a regulation that sought to enable 'properly planned' settlements, was itself an illegal construction (BEAG Vs. Sahara CWP 3041 of 1998). Amby Valley, in many ways was a precursor to Lavasa, and it gained notoriety over fraudulent land transactions (which were subsequently demonstrated in court), and over having been regularised post-facto.[59]

In summary, the process by which the Hill Station Regulation was passed and came to life is illuminating for the following reasons: first, it was imagined as a way to promote tourism and reduce the burden on existing hill stations, which had become overcrowded over time. The regulation emerged from a *common sense* need to generate more settlements, not based on techno-scientific analysis or even expert opinion, but rather from a long standing and widely held view that holds the new as

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[57] G5 interview, 05/09/2012.
[58] Regularisation refers to the process by which courts and planning authorities provide legal status to settlements, buildings, and structures that are either illegal or in violation of planning norm.
[59] The Amby Valley project was built by the Sahara Group, a firm with wide business interests (retail, finance, housing, hospitality and manufacturing) whose CEO was imprisoned in 2014 for investor fraud. It assembled land before the Hill Station Regulation was passed and therefore violated both the Maharashtra Agricultural Land (Ceiling on Holdings) Act, 1961 and the Maharashtra Land Revenue Code, 1966 (details discussed in Chapter Five). The Mumbai High Court regularised the project in 1998 and it has since functioned as a gated community with minimal political opposition.

a solution to the intractable problems of the present. Second, it was justified on the grounds of preventing further environmental degradation caused by haphazard farmhouse development. It would therefore be a way to pursue planned and environmentally sustainable settlement development in the face of widespread ecological damage. Third, it redefined public interest to enable large-scale privatised development and permit a private developer to build real estate. It argued that such private development would fulfil a public purpose by providing tourism opportunities and revenue. Finally, the outcome of the court contestation ensured that the need for hill stations could not be effectively challenged. The redefinition of public interest was not only crucial in enabling the project but also effectively curbed all discussion on the propriety of such projects, thus legitimising the privatised hill stations. Hence, by 1996 the stage for Lavasa's emergence had been set.

4.2. From Lake Town to Lavasa

On 11 February 2000, Aniruddha Deshpande and his partners (LM Thapar of Ballarpur Industries, Ajit Gulabchand of Hindustan Construction Company, and Anuradha Desai of Venkateshwara Hatcheries) incorporated Pearly Blue Lake Resorts Private Limited and sought permission from the UDD to develop 'Lake Town'.[60] Another developer, Aqualand Private Limited, placed a similar bid but Pearly Blue Lake Resorts was chosen, and the reasons for its selection are "not available on record" (CAG, 2011: 94). Furthermore, the Principal Secretary of UDD claimed that it had not been necessary to float a tender as the project had been sanctioned on "a first come first serve basis" (CAG, 2011: 95). Between March and June 2000, the DTP swiftly declared an area that had been reserved for reforestation in the Pune Regional Plan (1991-2011) as suitable for the development of a hill station. It was in this area that Pearly Blue Lake Resorts began purchasing land. Subsequently, in June 2001, another notification was issued declaring approximately the area across 18 villages in Pune district (Mulshi and Velhe Taluka) as a hill station. Even though the Hill Station Regulation was passed in order to develop 'properly

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[60] The names of the project and the company changed a number of times. In 2002, Pearly Blue Lake Resorts changed its name to Lake City Corporation (LCC), after which it changed its name to Lavasa Corporation Limited (LCL) in 2004. The project's name changed from Lake Town to Lavasa in 2004.

planned' settlements and avoid ecological damage, no scientific/feasibility study was undertaken to evaluate site appropriateness (CAG, 2011), and the choices of developer and location were made swiftly and with no fuss.

Multiple mythologies exist about site selection. In a newspaper interview Sharad Pawar stated, "It is 100 per cent true that I selected the site for Lavasa… I brought the helicopter down to examine the spot. I was later told that there was sparse habitation at that place" (Vaidya, 2010a: n.p.). A key member of Pearly Blue Lake Resorts on the other hand said:

> "*I and one of my colleagues kept trying to get [a] large [area of] land, so we tried by helicopter to find land where there is no road access and no electricity. There is no access; he [the developer] has to walk…That was the only land in which I could have done [bought] 10,000 acres, at least in Pune district.*"[61]

By most accounts, the site was largely selected for its remoteness and potential ease of land purchase. The site had other attractive features too – nestled in a verdant valley with a large reservoir, its natural setting was (and is) spectacular. Moreover, the area falls squarely within Baramati Lok Sabha constituency, Sharad Pawar's political constituency and power base since 1967.[62]

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[61] L10 interview, 12/08/2012.
[62] Sharad Pawar was first elected the Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) from Baramati in 1967. He was subsequently elected as the Member of Parliament (MP) from the same constituency in 1984, and continuously from 1991 to 2004. Subsequently his daughter, Supriya Sule, was elected MP in the 2009 and 2014 elections. Therefore Baramati has been Pawar's power base since 1967.

Figure 4.1. Lavasa's Location
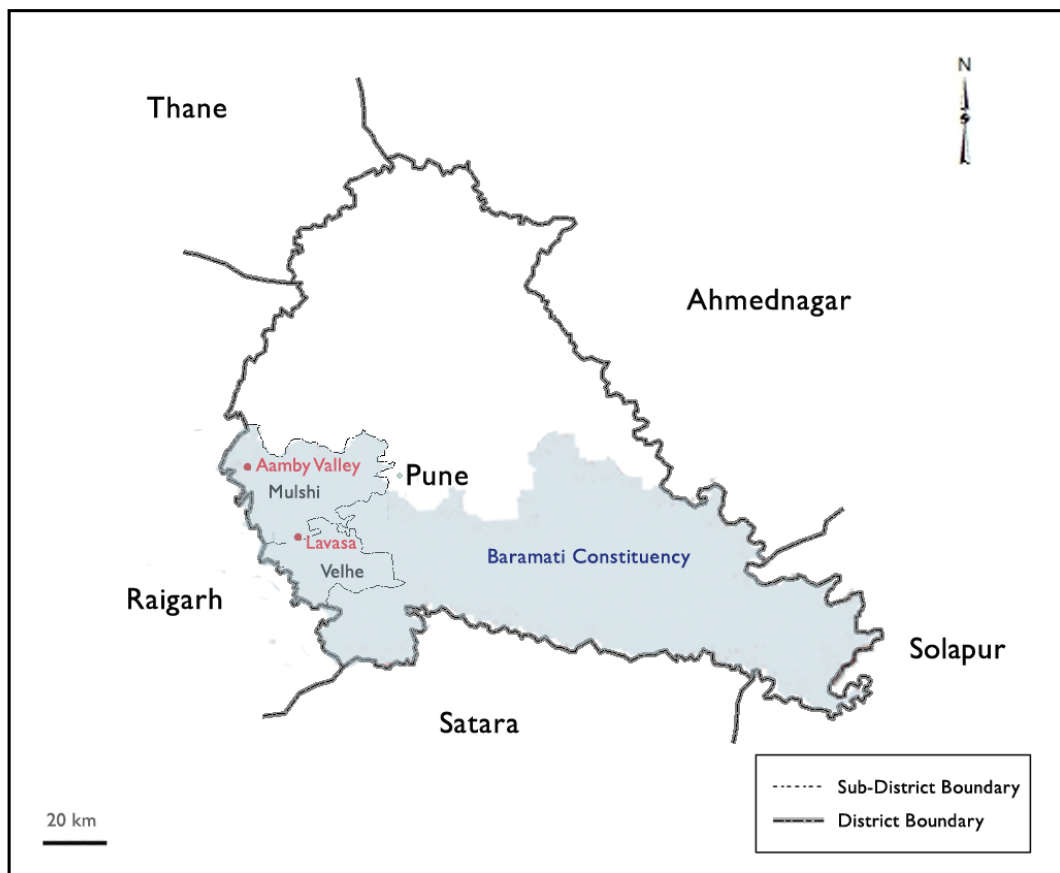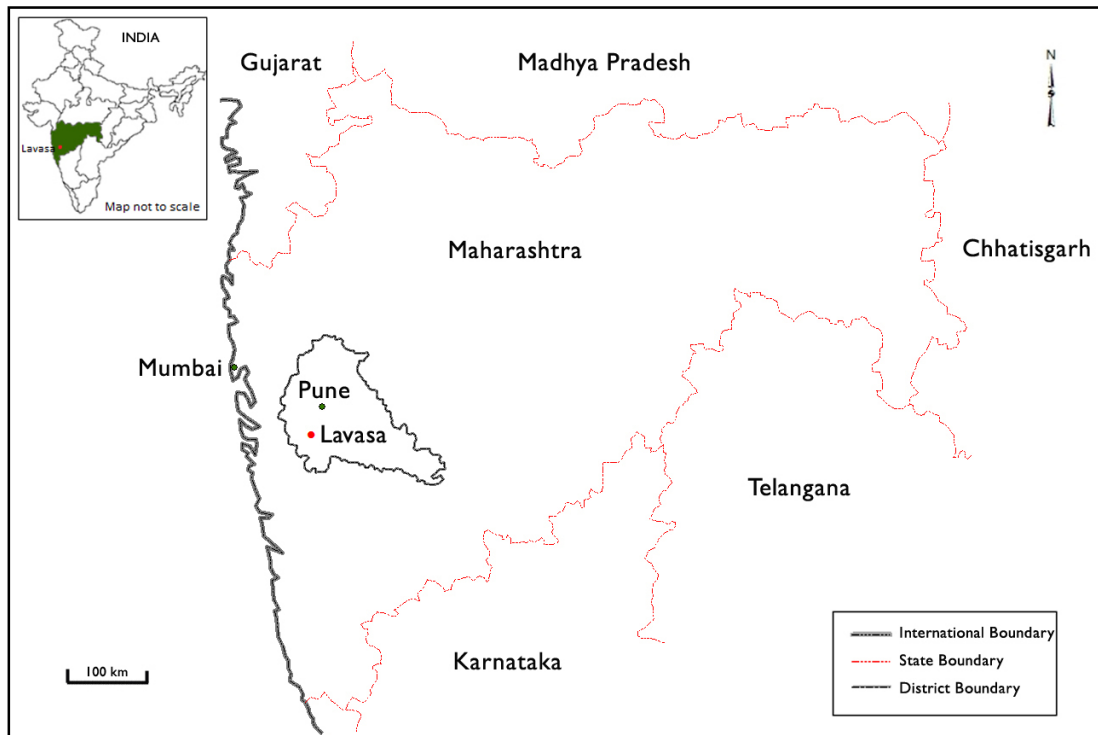
Source: Author (2014) from Census of India (2001)

As Pearly Blue Lake Resorts began to purchase land in the area, so did a range of other companies including Yashomala Leasings and Finance Private Ltd (YLFPL) (selected land records, 2012).[63] Sadanand Sule, Sharad Pawar's son-in-law, held 1664 shares in YFLPL in 2000 (Subramaniam and Jog, 2012). In 2002, the company merged with LCC (formerly Pearly Blue Lake Resorts) and shareholders were given 750 equity stakes for every share in YLFPT; this amounted to the Sadanand Sule and Supriya Sule having a 20.81 per cent stake in LCC (Subramaniam and Jog, 2012), which they sold in 2004, when they exited the project.[64] By July 2003, Pearly Blue Lake Resorts had purchased approximately 7000 acres in the area (the details are the subject of Chapter Five).

Another Pawar family member was also associated with the project. The area declared as a hill station included different types of public land, which private companies are prohibited from purchasing. For instance, forest lands were excluded from Lavasa under the Environment Protection Act (1986) and the National Forest Policy (1988). Irrigation land, however, was under the Maharashtra Krishna Valley Development Corporation's (MKVDC) control; from 2000 to 2012 it was headed by Ajit Pawar, then Maharashtra's minister of irrigation, deputy president of the Nationalist Congress Party, Sharad Pawar's nephew, Supriya Sule's cousin, and later the Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra.

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[63] YLFPL was incorporated in 1986 and was absorbed into LCL in 2002. YLFPL's name appeared on many land records but it was not possible to calculate the total land area that they purchased over the years.

[64] It is unclear when YLFPL began to purchase these lands (before or after the formal announcement of the project) and whether they did so deliberately as a means to acquire and assemble land before the project was officially announced and/or to give the appearance that multiple firms were buying land instead of one single developer. Some informants suggested that in such cases land is often acquired by front companies due to ceiling law restrictions and only merged once projects are declared and they are given permission to purchase more than the ceiling limit (this point is discussed at length in Chapter Five).

Figure 4.2 Key actors and their relationships

SHARAD PAWAR
MLA, Baramati 1967
MP, Baramati 1984, 1991-2004
CM of Maharashtra 1978-80, 1988-91, 1993-95
Minister of Agriculture 2004 - 2014
NCP President: 1999-2014

Friend and business partner

Nephew

AJIT PAWAR
Min. of Irrigation 2002-2010
Dep. CM of Maharashtra
NCP: 1999-2014

ANIRUDHA DESPHANDE
Pearly Blue Lake Resorts/
LCC/LCL

Daughter

SUPRIYA SULE
MP, Baramati 2006-2014
NCP President: 1999-2014
shareholder
YFLPL 1986-2002
LCL 2002-2004

Business partner

AJIT GULABCHAND
Pearly Blue Lake Resorts/
LCC/LCL
HCC

Husband

SADANAND SULE
shareholder
YFLPL 1986-2002
LCL 2002-2004

Source: Author (2014) based on multiple sources (as detailed in this chapter)

In August 2002, MKVDC leased out 141.15 hectares (128.78 hectares of land submerged under the Varasgaon Reservoir and 12.368 hectares of non-submerged land) at INR 275,000 (USD 5500) per annum for 30 years (which amounts to a paltry INR 23,000 (USD 460) per month or INR162 (USD 3.25) per hectare per month) (MKVDC, 2002). This move was widely criticised, as the MKVDC knowingly leased public land to a private company at prices based on rural land use (in 2002) rather than future urban use.[65] LCC received permission to use the submerged land for

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[65] Local land revenue departments calculate ready reckoner rates on an annual basis. These rates are calculated by averaging the prices paid for different types of land in different locations as depicted in registered transactions and information gathered from surveying local people. These rates are used to determine the present value of land. However, given the large black money component in most land transactions, the registered value is usually much lower than the amount that was actually paid.

water sports and the remaining land for commercial purposes. Furthermore, MKVDC authorised the company to build ten small check-dams on the rivers feeding the reservoir. The CAG noted that the "permission to a private party for the construction of *bandharas* (check dams) to store and utilise water" and to "lift water directly from an irrigation project which serves a larger public purpose" "was [the] first of its kind in the State" (CAG, 2011: 101). Thus the GoM, using its interpretation of public interest, made both public land and water resources available to the company for the purpose of privatised hill station development.

Similarly, excess ceiling lands were also transferred to LCC. Excess ceiling land is land that has been set aside for redistribution to the landless (as part of land reform) but has not yet been redistributed. The government argued that by transferring excess ceiling land to LCC it would generate revenues of INR16,471,178 (USD 200,000), a substantially larger amount than it could collect by transferring the same land to the landless (INR102,736 (USD 2000)) (Additional Collector Letter, 2004). Revenue generation has not historically been the purpose of distributing excess ceiling lands and despite this professed concern for revenue generation, the GoM exempted LCC from paying stamp duty (CAG, 2011: 103). The inconsistency of these actions was a source of controversy: "one needs to question the State of Maharashtra and Pune District Administration that while transferring excess ceiling land to the Lavasa Corporation instead of the landless villagers the Administration looked interested in making profits. However, at the same time they lost huge money by exempting Stamp Duty which could have been paid by the Lavasa Corporation easily" (People's Commission, 2009: 7).

With all this land under their control, LCC revealed plans for Lake Town – a hill station with "world-class" facilities, that would cater to "middle and high-income segments of Maharashtra" (LCC, 2003: 10) and be the "largest eco-tourism project in Asia and probably the world's largest project on eco-tourism combined with a township" (LCC letter to MKVDC, 27 May 2002: 1). The plans for the project got bolder with time. What started as a 7000-acre Lake Town in 2000 became a 25,000-acre city called Lavasa by 2004. In the interim, the role of its primary promoter,

Therefore, the prevailing market value of land is often much higher than values listed in the government ready reckoner rates.

Aniruddha Deshpande, diminished (he finally exited the project in 2010), Supriya and Sadanand Sule sold their shares and exited the project in 2004[66], and in 2004 Pawar became the Union Minister of Agriculture. Since 2006, Lavasa has been managed by Lavasa Corporation Limited (LCL), a subsidiary of the reputed 100 year-old Hindustan Construction Company (HCC)[67], with CEO Ajit Gulabchand at the helm.

With an annual turnover of USD 1.6 billion in the sectors of engineering, construction, infrastructure, real estate, and urban development and management, HCC is a public listed company with a reputation for building highly visible infrastructure projects such as the Bandra-Worli sea link in Mumbai, the Farrak Barrage in West Bengal (the longest barrage in the world), and over 50 per cent of India's nuclear power generation capacity (HCC, 2011). Ajit Gulabchand wanted to expand HCC's business from construction to "the entire space of developing, building and operating infrastructure and real estate" and also the "private water space" (Gopalan, 2008: n.p.).

Gulabchand has long been an outspoken critic of the inefficiencies of the Indian government, heavily influenced by his early years engaging with the government while working as the managing director of Ravalgaon Sugar Farm. The process of dealing with various "archaic laws" led to a formative conclusion that "such a system" had to be "fought" (Gulabchand quoted in Gopalan, 2008: n.p.). Since then he has been a champion of the free-market spirit and the power of private enterprise. Gulabchand describes himself as coming "from a family of nation-builders who have contributed much to the development of modern India" and "from a stock that has, against certain odds, created entrepreneurship" in the country. He asserts that his "heritage" drove him to undertake large and often-difficult infrastructure

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[66] In 2004, the Sule's sold their stake in LCL and exited the project. Therefore an INR 1.66 lakh (USD 3000) investment in YLFPL in 2000 amounted to an INR 18.64 crores (USD 3.7 million) in 2004 (a 1125 percentage increase in four years when they exited the project) (Subramaniam and Jog, 2012), Some activists estimate that the gains were even higher (Banerjee, 2012).

[67] The company has four shareholders, HCC being the largest with a 65 per cent stake. The three other shareholding companies (Avantha Group Venkateshwara Hatcheries, and Vithal Maniar) are largely 'silent' partners that do not contribute to or interfere with the day-to-day operations of LCL. Venkateshwara Hatcheries (13 per cent share), headed by Anuradha Desai, is headquartered in Pune. Originally an agricultural group of poultry farmers, the firm has diversified its businesses (including having a controlling stake in English Football leage team Blackburn Rovers). Avantha group (16 per cent share) is a large business house in India with business interests in coal, sugar, insurance, banking and education. Vithal Maniar (6 per cent share) is a Pune based industrialist, a childhood friend of Sharad Pawar, and a trustee of various Pawar educational trusts.

projects and that the government, once "humbled from its control passion", would "start seeing that prosperity has to be brought in with speed" (Gulabchand quoted in Kalbag, 2012: n.p.). Perhaps these statements represent the hubris of an entrepreneur, for it is only through receiving extensive state contracts that HCC has been able to build the vast array of infrastructure that it has today.

It is this desire to be a visionary and nation builder and his long history in the construction business that pushed him to believe in his ventures, arguing that "engineering construction" and "urban development are the dire need of Indian society" (Gulabchand quoted in Kalbag, 2012: n.p.). In interviews, many employees pointed to the importance of Gulabchand's role in imagining and forging a path for Lavasa, "*the chairman has this view that he does not want India's image to be that of cows and buffaloes but an India that gives the world something new*".[68] And it was under his control that the project went well beyond its initial mandate of becoming a tourist destination to becoming a "replicable model for the development of future cities" (LCL, 2014: 77).

As noted in Chapter One, many new towns were made flesh by individual visionaries and their patrons. Colonial hill station properties were seen to be attractive investments, and nearly all the houses belonged to those in the civil and military service. They were often driven by a "founding father", a single individual "whose foresight and initiative were credited with setting the community on a stable footing" (Kennedy, 1996: 106). For instance, Ooty had John Sullivan, Hugh Malet set up Matheran, and John Chesson forged Panchgani (Kennedy, 1996). And although each was a member of the colonial state, their "role in the hill stations seemed rather more like that of the amiable country squire" (Kennedy, 96: 106-7). Similarly, the new town communities built in the United States in the 1950s were developed and funded by some of the wealthiest individuals and corporations in the nation; their membership of the "elite social networks of the developers also helped them gain approvals and get regulations changed" (Forsyth, 2005:18). Although LCL changed hands and revised its visions substantially over time, with many initial shareholders

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[68] L2 interview, 21/06/2012.

departing, as we shall see in the following chapters, it would remain plagued by its murky beginning.

Lavasa, in its early form, was therefore not so much a product of global capital and the forces of foreign investment, as much as of a network of powerful local actors, often occupying influential positions within government maintaining close ties with real estate companies. As I have shown thus far, in its original conception (both in policy and in plan) Lavasa was nothing more than a very large real estate project with recreational appeal. To enable it, the GoM went against decades of legislation that sought to prevent concentration of land in the hands of companies and landlords, and keep public land in the hands of the government and small farmers. In so doing, it redefined public interest to enable private real estate interests. This "coalescence of interests between state and elite actors" (Weinstein, 2014: 42) created the conditions necessary for city-making. It is debatable whether this shift was due to a neoliberal turn in policy exemplified in the GoM's and the High Court's reification of privatisation or whether it was simply an issue of graft, an opportunity for connected politicians and their developer friends to make money from the land market.[69]

4.3. The Vision: A Private Utopia in the Public Interest

In a strange twist, Gulabchand's re-imagination of Lavasa grew well beyond the confines of real estate. Undoubtedly his vision required the city to be a profitable enterprise, but to reduce it to a mere real estate venture would be to short-change its plan considerably; for instance, Lavasa could have become one of the many exclusive gated communities in the area such as Amby Valley, but it did not. Gulabchand had a larger vision, one that befitted the government's mandate to build a post-colonial hill station.

Deshpande's original idea was to build a resort township with a planning philosophy of "live and play", i.e., a site for second/holiday homes, combining tourism and real estate (LCC, 2003). But in 2003, LCC held a design competition; twenty firms

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[69] A number of journalists and political analysts suggest that trading in land by politicians is not intended solely for personal gain; rather, the financial gains made are used to finance elections. The NCP, with its long-standing control over agrarian and political institutions in western Maharashtra, is considered to be particularly adept at leveraging land markets to generate revenue for the party.

applied, five of which were shortlisted. The brief was open ended – to generate a profitable business on the land parcel while staying within the confines of the Hill Station Regulation (LCC, 2003).[70] The international engineering, architectural and design firm HOK[71] submitted the winning bid, laying out a conceptual master plan for a New Urbanist town where residents could 'Live, Work, Learn and Play', a town that "conveniences its residents by placing all essential components of daily life within walking distance of each other" (LCL, 2012b: 7.) and combining leisure with employment, education and residential living. And just like that, the plan for India's first post-colonial hill station, constructed at the desks of an international planning firm, was accepted and put into motion.

With this conceptual Master Plan in hand, Gulabchand pulled together a team of senior professionals and firms from a variety of backgrounds to turn the vision into reality. As the Master Plan was being developed, LCL commissioned global consulting firms AC Nielsen and Accenture to conduct early consumer research to understand the needs and desire "*for an alternate model of urban living*".[72] They hired the international firm of Landor as branding and marketing consultants, who began to create an identity for the town (discussed at length later in this section). The business development team was tasked with developing a business plan for the city to ensure its profitability. LCL employed a retired Mumbai city planner, with more than 40 years of experience in urban planning in Maharashtra, to put together a development plan for the city and ensure that the town would abide by the planning rules and norms of the GoM. Subsequently, Gulabchand headhunted a former Kansas City city manager, to take the reins and devise systems by which the town would be governed and managed efficiently. Thus the team, assembled from both the public and the private sector, developed a range of plans, in which LCL's intentions for the city were made legible. Inspiration came from a variety of sources and places: the physical Master Plan draws on the American planning movement of

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[70] L4 interview, 01/06/2012.
[71] HOK is the largest design firm in the USA, with offices across the world. They have masterplanned a number of greenfield sites in India (in addition to Lavasa), such as the Khed Special Economic Zone, Ensaara Metropark Project, Nagpur. Globally they have provided master plans for numerous regeneration as well as greenfield projects including, Bandar Seri Begawan in Brunei, Golden Harbour Ecotourism Resort, Chengdu Meng Yane New Town, Guiyang New World, and Xiamen Tong'an New Town in China (HOK, 2014).
[72] L2 interview, 21/06/2012

New Urbanism which aims to create mixed communities, walkable neighbourhoods and compact, transit-oriented, spatial development. The city's business model is inspired by the conference economy of Davos, Switzerland and the educational cachet of Cambridge, Massachusetts.[73] Together, these plans reflect LCL's stated goals and the means through which those goals are to be achieved.

Putting these plans together, Lavasa was imagined as a "world-class city," a "prime tourist destination," with educational institutions and "non-polluting industries," a "more liveable city of the future" where people can "Live, Work, Learn, and Play in harmony with nature" (LCL, 2012a: 2). It is envisioned as a city "unique in its scale and guiding philosophy" (LCL, 2012a: 2), offering a "wide variety of advantages of urban living in the lap of nature" and a "unique value proposition" of "good governance", "sustainability", and "value-added features not found in the average city" (LCL, 2012b: 1). Rather than one single city, it would be a conglomerate of five small towns, each with a population of 30-50,000, to be built over four phases.[74] When complete they will form Lavasa, a "city with a diversified economy" (LCL, 2014: 30), a permanent stable population of 240,000, 2 million annual visitors, and an employment base of 80,000 (LCL, 2014: 33).[75] Moving far beyond the confines of real estate, LCL put forth a vision of a new Indian city – profitable, inclusive, well managed, environmentally sustainable, and managed by a private company. Different elements of this vision reside in different plans, to which I now turn.

4.3.1. Representations of Lavasa: Nostalgia and/in the Future

Lavasa presents a mismatch between the scale of the vision (the size of the project and its unabashed ambition) and the scale of the city's physicality. Dasve, the first of the five towns of Lavasa, is modelled on the quaint Italian seaside town of Portofino. The waterfront promenade is flanked by a string of colourful Portofino-reminiscent

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[73] L7 interview 21/08/2012

[74] The project will be built in four phases incorporating different villages (the dates of these phases have changed over time). At the time of writing the four phases were: Phase 1 (pre 2008- 2014) – Towns 1 and 2: Dasve, Mugaon; Phase 2 (2014-19) – Town 3: Dhamanhol and Gadle; Phase 3 – Town 4: Sakhri and Wadavali; Phase 4 – Town 5: remaining villages.

[75] The first feasibility study conducted by Chaney Consultants (1989) suggested that Varasgaon Reservoir (Lavasa's site) had the capacity to host 296 tourists in 2011, a far cry from Lavasa's projected population.

buildings, giving it the reassuring look of a small holiday town rather than a city of the future. In fact, during the early days of the project, LCL used photos of the real Portofino in its advertising, rather than the unfinished, subtropical ersatz. Although different architectural styles are/will be used in other towns (e.g. Goan in Mugaon), they are consistently neo-traditional, an aesthetic that is often embraced by the New Urbanism planning movement. Lavasa's vision and urban form are an incongruous combination of the iconographies of the hill station and the 'world-class' city, the past and the future.

Envisaged as a form of geographic escapism and characterised by European architectural forms such as Tudor and Gothic buildings, Swiss chalets, and the enduring hybrid of Himalayan-Gothic, colonial hill stations were built "by the British for the British" (Baker, 2009: 3) and their appeal was centred on them being 'not Indian'. Visitors went to recuperate from the illnesses that had been inflicted upon them by the Indian city as well as to engage in recreational activities. Marked by a longing for English domesticity and nostalgia, the hill stations' "fantasy like" atmosphere of a "tranquil English village" imbued "their inhabitants with an unmistakable sense of themselves" as agents of a superior culture, charged with the responsibility to ensure that the fidelity and determination that had taken them to India did not deteriorate in this physically and morally corrupting land" (Kennedy, 1996: 7). To that effect, King argues that hill stations served to "maintain the social structure and social behaviour of the British colonial community in India" (1976: 196). The attempt to re-create rural England was not only to evoke something of the "physical appearance of their homeland but to recover elements of its moral meaning as well" (Kennedy, 1996: 106). Within this lineage, it is not surprising that Lavasa's physical form is 'not Indian' but rather nostalgic, foreign, and bucolic.

Mimicry has long been a common trope in urbanism. Just like the colonial hill stations, many other types of new towns have long drawn inspiration from and reference other (almost always foreign) places. Portofino, for instance, has not only inspired Lavasa but also Port Meiron in Wales and Loews Bay in Florida. Similarly, Chengdu British Town, Venice Water Town, and Huizou are new Chinese replicas of Dorchester (England), Venice (Italy), and Halstatt (Austria) respectively. Many of these towns, rather than generating a vision of the future, are themed environments

that have been "airlifted from their historical and geographical foundations" to recreate not only the superficial appearance of western historical cities, but also the "feel" – the atmospheric and experiential local color – of the originals through such devices as foreign names, signage, and lifestyle amenities" (Bosker, 2013: 2). These places are "meticulously reconstructed versions of the most iconic cities of the West", the iconography of which is, according to Bosker "a potent symbol for their ascension to—and aspiration for—global supremacy and the middle-class comforts of the "First World" (Bosker, 2013: 3-4).

A different kind of mimicry and referencing is evident in the building of 'world-class cities'. Scholars have noted that Asian cities are increasingly inter-referencing each other, for instance, Mumbai aims to be the next Shanghai (Prakash, 2008), and Shenzen was to be transformed into Hong Kong. Indeed, the "art of being global" involves "promiscuous borrowings, shameless juxtapositions, and strategic enrolments of disparate ideas, actors, and practices from many sources circulating in the developing world, and beyond" (Ong, 2011: 23). These cities do not faithfully copy the original but rather use modeling as a "practice that tries to capture some aspect, style, or essence of that original" (Ong, 2011: 15). The 'world-class city' refers to the future, where "city ambitions are re-imagined in relation to shifting "forms and norms" of being global" (Ong, 2011: 4). Such a city is competitive and aspirational. And if the hill station looks to the past, then the 'world-class city' looks to the future, conjuring "worlds beyond current conditions of urban living" (Ong, 2011: 13). If, as Kennedy argues, the purpose of nostalgia, is in part to "shift attention away from the circumstances that give rise to it" (1996: 116), then what is the purpose of looking to the future? Ong argues that such imageries are speculative and can include "associated disciplinary effects such as the introduction of new governing norms or the incorporation of unwilling or skeptical subjects into a new scheme" (Ong, 2011: 15).

Figure 4.3: The many Portofinos

1) Portofino Harbour, Italy

2) Dasve, Lavasa

3) Loews Portofino Bay Hotel, Orlando, Florida

[This image has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation. Image of the convention centre can be viewed at https://www.loewshotels.com/d/portofino-bay-hotel/Exterior/__thumbs_hero_property/UEPBH_55668945_Portofino_Bay_-_Primary_Image_1600x1035_150dpi.jpg]

In trying to promise something new to India, it is not the skyscrapers of Manhattan or Hong Kong, but the bucolic quaintness of Europe that Lavasa's architecture conjures. Much like many American and Chinese small new towns, Lavasa embraces European architectural nostalgia, arguably seeking to give itself a history of which it is fundamentally devoid.[76] But it is not a meticulous copy like its Chinese counterparts. Juxtaposed against the city's cobble-stoned 'Portofino Street', is the Lavasa Convention Centre on (the generically named) 'Event Street'. The building's glass façade belies the Italian aesthetic of the rest of the town (Figure 4.4), as do the villas with stone walls and verandahs, and theme-park-like water fountains in the middle of the reservoir, which light up at night. The bilingual signage is consistently blue and white, and the logo is ubiquitous. While from afar the town looks like a replica of Portofino, upon closer inspection, it is replete with incongruous architectural forms and corporate branding. Furthermore, by adopting state-of-the-art and often high-profile technologies and plans, such as biomimicry and hydroseeding for environmental management (discussed at length in Chapter Seven), a NASA space theme park, and a 'Nick Faldo' golf course, it also seeks to offer something of the future. In promising a future city, its representations juxtapose quaint Italian architecture with world-class efficiencies. The city brochure makes this point emphatically:

> "Life in Lavasa has been envisioned as energetic yet calm, aspirational yet affordable, hi-tech yet simple and urban yet close to nature. Goan and Mediterranean themed villa and apartments radiate outwards from the cosmopolitan town centre all along the lakefront. Here, residents and visitors can access state-of-the-art amenities while enjoying the tranquillity of wide-open expanses and a scenic natural waterfront... Lavasa aspires to establish a new benchmark in India of

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[76] As one informant explained, the use of Italian architecture styles was about creating a sense of 'timelessness': *"Tuscan Villas, it means make your buildings and villas such that every second sale should not knock off the house, it should be timeless. Like the Victoria Terminus in Mumbai is a classic building, no one will think of pulling it down whereas any other bungalow in Pali Hill (Mumbai) will be knocked off by the next guy [who buys it] because the appreciation is always for the land and never the build up. So, it means that can we build our villas such that they stand the test of time even after three or four sales"* (L2 interview, 21/06/2012).

a fully planned city based on innovation and rejuvenation such that what is finally delivered is a balanced life." (LCL, 2012: 4)

Figure 4.4: Architectural styles in Lavasa

[This image has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation. Image of the convention centre can be viewed at http://www.licc.in/index.aspx and rental housing at http://www.lavasa.com/live/rental-housing.aspx]

The environment and nature are core motifs in representations of Lavasa. The city is being built along the banks of the Varasgaon Reservoir, in an area marked for afforestation in the Pune Regional Plan. It is precisely its unique location that renders the environment and nature so central to the project. Lavasa's New Urbanist design principles ensure compact and dense development in the town centre to enable pedestrian rather than car use, which they claim (correctly) is less energy intensive than sprawl. Furthermore, since the area was denuded, planners have worked with biologists and developed a landscape plan to "rejuvenate deforested area[s] and drive future landscape performance" (HOK, 2014: n.p.). Lavasa's Development Plan has been "prepared with the objective of delivering planning solution[s] through [a] creative blend of development and environment" and conceives Lavasa "as a place for modern human habitation in harmony with nature" (Lavasa SPA, 2011: 95).

The physical reality and pictorial representations of Lavasa constantly straddle the nostalgic and the future. The latter shows future residents and visitors (none of whom wear any Indian clothing) enjoying the verdant town through consumption (restaurants, hotels, shopping, recreation) and engagement with nature. The aerial view depicts the town, where citizens can engage in work as well as entertainment, on the one side and an expanse of unpopulated hills on the other. In each of the representations of Lavasa in Figure 4.5 Lavasa is depicted as replete with urban amenities in a serene natural setting suitable for relaxation.

In this vein, one of the most striking aspects of Lavasa is its elaborate and high-profile branding and marketing. Once the Master Plan had been devised, Lavasa hired the international branding company Landor Associates to develop the city's brand. In choosing the name 'Lavasa,' Landor applied the:

"usual principles of branding. They wanted it to be an acquired name, not a typical dictionary name. The first two or three workshops we had were on name creation. They gave us Scrabble … everyone was given a few letters. The first two or three workshops were on naming. We were asked to create words which had phonetic value but did not mean anything. We created around 100 words out of which Lavasa was one. Everyone applied their own logic or rationale and come up with a name. Someone created the name Lavasa, I think [the] Chairman himself created it."[77]

The name, therefore, reflects the corporate ethos of the city, where the name is as manufactured as the city itself.[78]

Taking this a step further, Landor developed a 9-cell brand driver, consisting of an accessory, a car, an animal, a piece of furniture, colour, font, architecture, game, and drink, in which the cells represented the core *"values that personify the brand"*[79] (a photograph of which was displayed on most desks at LCL's main office). For instance, the Sunto 6 watch signifies a *"multi-functional watch"* which is "simple" *"efficient"* and not *"overt"*. The Saab Estate represents *"family values"* – i.e. *"Saab Estate is a family car, it is a family drive. Keep the family in mind when you develop this town. It is not a romantic getaway or an escapist town"*.[80] Similarly, the dolphin was to symbolise the sales team and customer service – *"they should be smart, warm and cheerful and active"*.[81] Therefore, the image the company developed was meticulously thought through and deliberate in what it set out to achieve:

"What are our brand dynamics? It has to be linear, it cannot be gaudy. There can be no curves in my brand. Landor has given me an entire book, as a bible, on how my look and feel should be. You will never see intricate

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[77] L2 interview, 21/06/2012.
[78] However, some villagers suggested that the name Lavasa is an acronym composed of the names of the key investors – (L – L M Thapar, A – Ajit Gulabchand, V – Vithal Maniar, A – Anuradha Desai, S – Supriya/Sadanand Sule, A – Anirudha Desphande) – a hypothesis that seems plausible but could not be verified, suggesting that perhaps the delirium of corporate branding (or the story of it) was only masking the realpolitik of the project.
[79] L2 interview, 21/06/2012.
[80] L2 interview, 21/06/2012.
[81] L2 interview, 21/06/2012.

curvy things in anything: no curls, no flowers... It is a corporate brand and a destination brand. Because we were going to be pegging to industry, pegging to a certain kind of a profile, there has to be a certain elegance about it, it cannot be loud."[82]

Figure 4.5: Representations of Lavasa

[This image has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation]

Urban planning in India has rarely been about selling urban space, but about acquiring, planning, and allocating space. A project of this size and scope, with real estate as one of its founding pillars, could not function without a powerful marketing team and strategy. Therefore, the marketing message had to be carefully and precisely chosen:

> "*80 per cent of the revenue is real estate itself. So, we are actually a real estate player. But what we as a brand are doing is that we are creating a city; city, hill station, hill town, whatever you wish to call it. We are a company that also provides the social infrastructure and going forward industrial infrastructure, too. So we asked ourselves, are we really a real estate company? No. We are an urban development and management company which sells real estate. How do we differentiate ourselves from these people? So what would be the marketing tactics? We decided that we would never go and stand in a real estate exhibition on a stall where everybody else is also present. So, as a rule, we have never taken part in any exhibition. We never sell bungalows and apartments; we sell the model of city development. So there is no call to action about selling real estate in terms of [the number] of square feet and apartments and all those things. We tried to dwell a lot on our tourism aspect to make it a more exciting place to be. And through the thought leadership forums, we said that India needs new cities and Lavasa is a model – come be with Lavasa so that you are as visionary as we are."[83]*

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[82] L2 interview, 21/06/2012.
[83] L2 interview, 21/06/2012.

Furthermore, LCL actively chose to build a city and not a gated community for a number of reasons, some more operational than others. The large project area contained a number of public roads, and it was not possible to ring fence the city. The inability of the company to buy all the land within its perimeter contributed to this decision (discussed in detail in Chapter Six). While Lavasa has a gate (at which security guards note your name, exchange pleasantries and offer you a map), in theory access cannot be denied as the road passing through is public. But LCL also had a vision: Lavasa should be for "*the entire cross section and not just the elite*".[84] The regulation of entry was debated and it was decided that visitors would be stopped for information but not be prevented from entering the city. Although LCL is "*entitled by a court order to charge an entry fee to the area*", they decided that it was not "*worth it*" and that Lavasa should be a "*free place*".[85] Multiple employees felt that the project would have suffered less controversy had it been gated, "*if we had gone for the Amby Valley approach[86], we may have been safer. Today people can come in, take photos, organise protests, do what they like and it's like an open city. As a planner I like that idea, that I'm building a city for everyone, not just the elite*".[87]

Lavasa therefore straddles being a hill station, a tourist destination, a real estate project, and a city of the future. Its representations and built environment are both bourgeois banal and utopian – global in aspiration, yet domestic and reassuring. It is an original pastiche, combining various urban forms and models to deliver India's future city, which as we shall see in the next section, is founded on the profitability of real estate.

4.3.2. Turning a Profit

According to LCL, Lavasa's core value proposition is in integrating the "various businesses that comprise the development and management of Indian cities (such as real estate, infrastructure, consumption and governance) [that] are currently fragmented in most Indian cities" (LCL, 2014: 182). In so doing, Lavasa is not merely a real estate project or even a weekend holiday destination but a city with its own

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[84] L4 interview, 01/06/2012.
[85] L4 interview, 01/06/2012.
[86] The speaker is referring to the fact that Amby Valley is a gated community.
[87] L4 interview, 01/06/2012.

"365 day economy" (LCL, 2014: 182). It will generate profits from three revenue streams: real estate, infrastructure, and consumption (of retail, leisure, hospitality, education, and health). The aim therefore was, and is, not only to "develop and sell real estate but to develop an economy" where LCL will "expect to share in the revenue streams related" to its "ongoing consumption and infrastructure businesses" (LCL, 2014: 194). Each of these components is addressed below.

As of 17 June 2014, Lavasa had signed agreements[88] for 12 million square feet of real estate, which includes residential (1673 apartments, 513 villas, 135 villa plots and 399 rental housing units), commercial, and institutional real estate (LCL, 2014). The target, once the project is completed in 2020, is 149 million square feet of real estate development. The real estate business therefore includes "the sale and/or lease of such structures and buildings and the lease of underlying land, development of plots, construction of residential, commercial, institutional, hospitality and social real estate as well as the sale of built up structures and/or lease thereof" (LCL, 2014: 194). This revenue was/is only made possible by the astounding returns that could be made on land. For instance, land purchased in 2002, was bought at approximately INR 13 to 35 per square metre and those lands, developed and sold in 2010 were priced at INR 3114 and 6034 per square metre (CAG, 2011: 103). Some proportion of this increased appreciation is due the investment in infrastructure by LCL, but even so, the turnover on cheap rural land is a core pillar of their business model.

However, as real estate revenues are largely one-off and short-term gains, the business model needed to go a step further:

> "*When I came in 2006, we had already 10,000 acres of land with Lavasa. The first version of the Master Plan was in place so the business plan reflected the Master Plan because those two have to go together in a project like this. But it wasn't really very sexy from a financial standpoint that would interest the financial community. So you would keep asking yourself 'why am I doing this' and keep going back at it and seeing how*

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[88] LCL provides 999 year leasehold agreements so that it can retain control over the underlying land and development plan.

can we rework it… plus realising that it's going to cost you a lot more than you thought it would."[89]

It was from this standpoint that the business development team developed the second component – LCL having equity stakes in the various businesses operating within Lavasa. In most of its current partnerships, LCL has an equity position - typically a minority position of 26 per cent but large enough to have a say in the business as per Indian company law. Each business operating in Lavasa not only contributes to the city's economy but also provides LCL with dividends, although, of course, at some point, LCL may choose to exit from these businesses and cash in on their investments. Moreover, the consumption business is/will be founded on "ongoing revenue streams in the hospitality, education, healthcare, tourism, leisure and retail sectors of our economy, through direct or indirect participation" (LCL, 2014: 194). Thus land is a core component of revenue for the first 10-15 years (as it is a finite resource) and long-term revenues are generated through annuity. At a certain point of time when the project reaches its critical mass, LCL hopes that the revenues from these businesses will pay the city. It is too early to say whether these plans will work out as anticipated.

But to make this model work in the long run, the city can not only be a site for second homes (with a largely seasonal/weekend economy), it also needs to develop its own economy. If the city was "not recognized as a successful commercial destination", then residents would use their properties only as second homes and this would "place additional pricing pressures" on Lavasa's "consumption businesses" (LCL, 2014: 38). So the question became 'how could LCL generate a 365-day economy?'

When the current head of business development joined the team with years of experience in the Indian hospitality industry under his belt, his brief was "to take the Davos model and replicate it".[90] The Swiss site of the annual World Economic Forum (WEF) is characterised by a large convention centre and a number of hotels. Thus "unlike Hong Kong where you can go to the convention centre, where you can

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[89] L7 interview, 21/08/2012.
[90] L7 interview, 21/08/2012.

spend two or three days without ever having to step out if you don't want to and then go back to the airport",[91] Davos requires engagement with the city, which creates traffic throughout the town. Gulabchand, a regular attendee of the WEF, "wanted to replicate" the Davos model in the hope of eventually bringing an Indian version of the WEF to Lavasa.[92] Thus with plans to host two million visitors per year, tourism would fill up the hotels and the city on the weekends, and the convention centre would create a "Monday to Friday economy".[93] In its short life, Lavasa has regularly hosted events at its convention centre[94] but it remains by and large a weekend destination for tourists and is still far from being a 365-day economy.

In addition to conferences and hospitality, the business plan has several other sources of consumption revenue. For instance, education is a significant component of Lavasa's consumption business. Education was recognised as a focus for two reasons: first, higher education is a growing market in India where middle-class students are willing to pay high fees for a premium education. Second, LCL is acutely aware that most new town projects struggle with establishing baseline populations but Lavasa's location and newness would not be a disadvantage as students are often willing to relocate for education. Therefore, Lavasa's business plan incorporated partnerships with niche and highly reputed foreign educational institutions for which there are few substitutes in India in order to attract a stable population of students to the city, and ignite its economy. To that effect, LCL pursued a number of international and domestic institutional partners. For primary education partners, it searched the UK with the assistance of Deloitte consulting firm, and shortlisted a few international schools and also established a joint venture partnership with Doon Public School to start a boarding school in Mugaon by 2017 (LCL, 2014). At the tertiary level, the corporation was approached by a number of Indian institutions such as Christ College and Symbiosis (Pune). Soon after LCL signed partnership deals with Ecole Hotelier Lausanne and Oxford University for executive education (although Oxford later pulled out of the arrangement). In planning the city as an education hub LCL took inspiration from Cambridge,

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[91] L7 interview, 21/08/2012.
[92] L7 interview, 21/08/2012.
[93] L7 interview, 21/08/2012.
[94] For instance, it has held hospitality conferences, a literature festival in association with the Times of India, numerous Bollywood events, and a range of other corporate conferences.

Massachusetts.[95] The corporation also entered into similar partnerships with a range of international hotels and private healthcare providers. A large proportion of its current contracts are joint ventures with well-known international brands in hospitality, recreation, health and education, and at the time of writing, were still being developed.

Finally, LCL has developed and owns physical infrastructure assets such as "water and sewage, drainage, solid waste management, power, roads, street lighting, landscaping, public utilities and information, communication and technology" and it also has developed and maintains "social infrastructure such as town halls, parks and gardens, post offices and police and fire stations" (LCL, 2014: 178). It delivers these services and manages its assets through jointly owned Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs). These various SPVs will "treat 100 per cent sewage and solid waste"/"have 100 per cent piped water and sewage", have storm water drains that cover their road network, and have a water supply network to "deliver 216 litres per capita per day" and provide drinkable tap water (LCL, 2014: 178). In addition to developing these assets, LCC collects revenues through "the city management services in the form of common area maintenance charges, water usage charges and other miscellaneous fees" (LCL, 2014: 196). Indeed, it is the smooth functioning of this city management service that LCL believes is a "key feature" of its "replicable model for the development of future cities" (LCL, 2014: 76).

That said, this ambitious business model presents a serious challenge, one that all new towns face:

> "*The challenge of the model is that it is a chicken and an egg. It works if everything works, so you have to get this ballet going. The challenge is to get people to buy into it. And in the early days it is obviously a bigger challenge than it is later. So I remember when we first did the global exercise with Accor and others like Intercontinental [hotels] and they said 'looks great, sounds great, but in India we think it's too early.'*"[96]

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[95] L7 interview, 21/08/2012 and LCL, 2009
[96] L7 interview, 21/08/2012.

With a range of revenue streams from real estate, shares and annuities, the business plan projected a financially secure future in the long run. LCL's aim of creating a 365-day economy using hospitality, education, health, and tourism as its key pillars is undoubtedly ambitious, requiring large amounts of upfront capital and an enormous appetite for risk. The project cost is estimated at INR 30,000 crore (USD 6 billion) and is being financed through equity, loans, quasi-equity, and securitized debt (LCL, 2014: 53). After a failed attempt in 2010, in 2014 LCL filed for an Initial Public Offering (IPO), making itself a listed company on the Indian stock market in order to generate financing for future stages of the project.

In summary, generating revenues and running the city in a profitable manner is one of the key components of Lavasa's vision. Lavasa's profitability is not merely a requirement for project viability in and of itself but also for demonstrating that Indian cities, if structured a certain way, can be profitable. As a "replicable model for development of future cities", Lavasa must be functional and profitable, with a diverse economy, failing which, LCL's "brand and image will suffer" and, accordingly, will lose any "competitive advantage with respect to winning future projects" (LCL, 2014: 49). This sets Lavasa apart from many other new city projects, which were largely bankrolled by the state.

4.3.3. *Responding to India's Urban Crises: Public Failures, Private Solutions*

Urban experiments, as discussed in Chapter One, are often responses to the existing maelstrom of urbanism. They seek to eschew the failures of the present to conjure a better and often radically different future. In this vein, LCL's vision is premised on the failure of planning and governance of Indian cities, the solution to which "is for India to plan and build a portfolio of newer and smarter cities that provides for the increasing migration" (LCL, 2012b: 3). LCL seeks to build a prototype of such a better Indian city and claims that Lavasa will realise its vision through its various privately planned plans (master plan, development plan, and business plan) and through its unique governance structure. Like all models, this was to serve as a demonstration project – a model of an alternative future, one with an

integrated governance model, improved services, and greater resource efficiency than existing Indian cities:

> "*Chairman Gulabchand's view was that we can do better and we can do better on several levels. We can do better in the sense of how the services were provided and the quality of service that people would expect elsewhere in the world, and we can do better in terms of so many structural and resource efficiencies by coming up with a new model and the intention of Lavasa is to be proving that, a prototype for that…*

> *Our argument is that it is not the building that you are buying… It is not the four walls of your private residence that is your fundamental need, it is the city experience. It is the sense of belonging to a city, of services that you can rely on… there is not trash all around, you can drink water from the tap and the power is reliable…There is a much higher threshold of service and quality of life that is expected in the city."[97]*

The informant is not only directly referring to the failure of planning and governance in existing Indian cities, but is suggesting that Lavasa is an experiment, a prototype that would improve 'city experience', largely defined as 'service delivery' in this instance. Lavasa's conception is responding to two diagnosed failures of Indian cities – the failure of planning and the inadequacy of governance:

> "*Our cities are not planned, they are extremely haphazard, I mean, even today, if anybody is honest they are still living off the infrastructure the British left behind. So to that extent there is a huge difference, where someone has actually done a traffic analysis and someone has thought of how much water, how much power, the standards that are required for the citizens."[98]*

> "*We will overtake China by the 2030s as the [world's] largest country [in terms of population]. Where are we going to live? I mean, the existing*

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[97] L8 interview, 12/07/2012.
[98] L7 interview, 21/08/2012.

cities are a disaster, at least most of them are… and you know, I don't mean to be too harsh, the reality is that Indian cities are badly managed and that is not because there aren't many good people trying to manage them but it is because structurally they are not given the resources, they are not given policy control. They are, in so many ways, handicapped. The cities aren't run well, the services are bad and yet we are going to pour 300 million people into them! It's insanity."[99]

These views of Indian urban planning are neither new nor expressed by LCL employees alone. The first quote suggests that Indian cities suffer not from a failure of planning, but rather from its absence. Planning here is conceptualised in its techno-scientific form – as traffic analysis, knowing power requirements, etc. The second statement is made in a different vein; that governance in Indian cities is poor because of a fundamental structural problem – that of inadequate resources and control given to those who manage them. Scholars too have made this observation in the Indian context, arguing that municipal governments are powerless and do not have sufficient autonomy in governance from the politics of states and the centre (Pinto, 2000; Weinstein, 2009).[100]

These views were expressed through high-profile full-page advertisements in major English daily newspapers (see Figure 4.6). The scale of advertising was deliberately large, to communicate the scale of the Lavasa vision.[101] Aside from developing a strong brand identity through conventional advertising, in 2009-10, LCL embarked on an award-winning and highly visible 'Future Cities Campaign'[102] through advertisements in a major English daily newspaper and panel discussions with urban

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[99] L8 interview, 12/07/2012.
[100] The Indian constitution, in laying out the country's federal structure, did not outline the responsibilities of local government in detail (Weinstein, 2010). The drafters of the constitution ascribed power to state and central governments in part because of their concerns over regional fragmentation at the time. Independence leaders believed that local politics and power would more likely be organised on communal/ethnic principles rather than democratic ones, and so the federalist principle did not extend down to the local level (Corbridge and Harriss, 2000). Although Indian cities are governed by municipal corporations (with a democratically elected mayor and municipal council), state governments have the right to override the decisions made by municipal corporations. Therefore, municipalities tend to have little autonomy and power. This changed with the passing of the 74th Constitutional Amendment in 1992, which enabled urban governments to make more decisions, but the actual devolution of powers has been poorly executed.
[101] L2 interview, 21/06/2012.
[102] See www.lavasafuturecities.com for the full campaign.

experts on television. These full-page advertisements, though very clearly sponsored by LCL, did not explicitly refer to the city in their main content. Instead they highlighted what they deemed as the key issues facing Indian cities: issues of governance, environment, technology, planning and infrastructure. This campaign was premised on two assumptions: that existing Indian cities had failed their citizens on a wide range of counts, and that they were "filled to the brim", with "no place left to go" (LCL FCC, 2011a: n.p.). The campaign was "an initiative born of a vision to build *new* cities that are sensitive to the environment and intelligently planned for a fast-evolving future" (LCL FCC, 2011a: n.p.) – implying that one of the main solutions to Indian urban problems was to build new cities.

LCL's account of India's urban problems in this campaign achieved a number of things. First, it made visible the intractable problems of existing Indian cities. In each full page advertisement it asked a different question: "Why is our city infrastructure always behind time?", "Why do you have to knock on a hundred doors to get one answer?", "Where have all the trees gone?", "Does somebody take responsibility for your city's problems?" In doing so, it linked existing urban problems to failures of public planning and governance. Second, by concluding each advertisement with the question, "Isn't it time to build our future cities?" it defined the future city as "One in which you can breathe clean air", "A city where the infrastructure is planned for a growing population", "Where the distance from home to work is minimal", with "Transparent governance structures with an accountable city manager", "Where decisions on city issues are taken on time", "Where the city functions efficiently because it is mapped through technology", "Where there is a balance in the use and replenishment of natural resources" (LCL FCC, 2011a: n.p.). In so doing, it provided a compelling vision of the future (Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6: Lavasa's Advertising

[This image has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation. It can be viewed at http://www.lavasafuturecities.com/media.html]

Through this campaign (spanning television shows, newspaper articles, and conferences), LCL attempted to set the terms of public discussion on the future of Indian cities. In so doing, it successfully presented Lavasa as a city and not a real

estate project and through its elaborate marketing and public relations strategy, called upon citizens to participate in rejecting existing urban decay and envisioning a different kind of urban future. It sought to make visible the problems that plague existing Indian cities. This is not to suggest that existing Indian cities do not suffer from acute problems, or that indeed newer ways of imagining cities are not needed, or that LCL has taken its own mission lightly. What this shows are the ways in which environmental, governance, and planning issues are being used to generate a compelling vision of a future city, one that is privately managed in a top-down manner, and relies on the privatisation of resources.

That planning in India is always and already failing is "a ubiquitous and commonsensical refrain uniting voices from across sectors, disciplines and ideological positions" (Bhan, 2012: 35). Examples abound; the McKinsey Institute's 2010 report on Indian urbanisation pointed to the "poor state of urban planning" as the root of India's urban problems. When the Prime Minister launched the JNNURM, the most significant urban programme in India's history, he claimed that cities needed to "re-think planning" because "all previous efforts in city planning have been limited by a narrow-focused project approach" that had failed Indian cities. Some social movements refer to the "total bankruptcy and arrogance of the planning process" that has led to a "systemic failure of modern planning" (D Roy, 2004). Scholarly work is even more scathing in announcing the "failure, even irrelevance, of the dominant ideology of urban planning" (Bapat, 1983: 399). Planning in Indian cities is "continuously thwarted" by the "inherent unruliness of people and places" (Baviskar, 2003: 92). In LCL's conception, this failure is resolutely public, a failure of the Indian government to plan and govern its cities.

It is not my intention to assess these narratives of failure. What is important here, as Bhan (2012: 27) argues, is that "narratives of 'failure' are simultaneously narratives of planning. Accusations of chaos, irrelevance, incompetence and exclusion, in other words, each rely upon an imagination of what functional, relevant, competent and inclusionary planning could and should look like within an Indian city". These narratives are therefore powerful in what they produce and justify and, in some instances, give rise to new forms of urban practices: action by resident welfare associations (Ghertner, 2011), intervention in the city by courts

(Bhan, 2012), rejection of planning altogether and occupation of space (Benjamin, 2008), and new urban policies. Narratives of 'failure' also provide critical impetus for 'different' kinds of planning, for 'proper planning', and in this case, planning anew by the private sector.

Given these public failures, how does LCL propose to plan 'properly'? And how does it intend to address the intractable problems of the contemporary Indian city? These goals are to be fulfilled by two separate teams: the planning team and the city management services team. The ambitious conceptual plan devised by HOK has remained largely unchanged and has been hugely influential on the physical form of the city. To implement it, LCL hired a former planner from the Mumbai Metropolitan Authority (MMRDA). As part the New Bombay (Navi Mumbai) planning team in the 1970s, he had experienced building a new town; his task was to take the Master Plan, leverage his knowledge of Indian planning regulations and norms, and transform it into a workable development plan within the Indian context. After 40 years of being a planner in Mumbai, he reflected, "*I've seen that I have not been able to make any difference to the conditions of our cities, because frankly, urban planners have very little influence on what is happening in our cities today*".[103] But planning a private city was not like planning Mumbai, and the planner found himself with much more power working for LCL; many informants suggested that he was instrumental in getting the project off the ground. It was he who wished to take public interest issues into account within the confines of a private project, and those two aims were, unsurprisingly, not always aligned:

"*When you work in the public sector you are constantly dealing with large projects and you are constantly representing the public interest. Here you are not concerned with public interest so much. But you have to regard the private interest, commercial interest. So sometimes there's a conflict. You ask yourself, 'What am I doing in terms of planning that helps the average resident/average consumer?' I am accountable to both; I have to balance the requirement of unseen public interest and also the organisational interest. Because I can easily be faulted for doing something wrong. Of*

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[103] L4 interview, 01/06/2012.

course, if I do something wrong for the company, I will be removed. I am extremely conscious of it. The entire planning has to get a market orientation which was not there when I was in Navi Mumbai. I was more concerned with planning norms - I must provide such wide roads, such footpaths, such open spaces, density, FSI, etc. I would allocate plots for schools on the basis of the population but here I would broadly do that but I'll keep my plan flexible to change and respond to the market needs. And these are changing all the time, what kinds of tie-ups they are doing. Project viability is extremely important."[104]

At LCL, the planner had much more influence and power because, although he had to operate under the constraints of profit-making, he not only had the authority (which he did not have in Mumbai) but also the resources to execute the plan. However, there were also compromises to be made. The planner had to work alongside a number of key departments such as Branding, Marketing and Sales, Business Development, Infrastructure Development, City Management, and Land Acquisition to ensure that the project came to life. These departments often had conflicting aims; for instance, while the planner's task was to assemble as much land as possible at the lowest price and also develop a socio-economically inclusive city, the branding and marketing team had to sell the city as a desirable and aspirational destination, which in turn increased land prices:

"There is obviously a gap between what I say and what my marketing people do. I would say build for lower income people but my business plan people will not do so much. They will keep on postponing them. The compulsion of managing the money and ensuring overall viability is a very big constraint on achieving your ultimate goal".[105]

Furthermore, the Development Plan had to be inclusive in other ways, too. LCL plans to "ensure social and economic inclusivity by facilitating creation of diversified economic activities, housing and social facilities" which would include a major employment economy that is independent of the hill station economy (Lavasa SPA,

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[104] L4 interview, 01/06/2012.
[105] L4 interview, 01/06/2012.

2012: 31). It also includes both first and second homes and a sizeable amount of affordable housing in view of the relative inaccessibility and weak settlement structure (Lavasa SPA, 2012). LCL's vision of inclusion is premised on the affordability of its services, where tourism, retail, hospitality, education and health will be segmented by price (Chapter Six discusses the plans for inclusion in great detail). But this inclusivity had to be communicated within the rubric of branding and marketing, which revealed the inherent tensions in presenting the project as aspirational as well as inclusive.[106]

To summarise, the vision for Lavasa has been drawn from a range of (often incongruous) influences. At its core, however, Lavasa's model is premised on the profitability of and control over real estate. The utopian ideas of building a privatised city with public goals such as inclusion, environmental sustainability, well-managed public spaces, and functioning city services, are at once premised on and limited by the need for Lavasa to be profitable.

4.4. The Limits to Innovation

Despite LCL's intentions, many of these initial dreams of planning and governance remain elusive. Set against democratic politics and a stringent regime of Indian planning laws, innovation became and remains politically contentious. Lavasa's mixed identity as part-hill station, part-city was and continues to be a source of confusion and contestation. Lavasa emerged from the regulations to create new hill stations, but Lavasa is a city in imagination, defined, according to its chief planner, by "the composition of economic activities" (a "*diversified economic base*" for "*a self sustaining economy*") and "*urban form*" ("*with a town centre, which is dense enough to have a congregation of people and should reflect a busy lifestyle of a city*").[107] However, these ideals were and are in conflict with the planning norms put forth in the Hill Station Regulation, which had certain normative ideas of what a hill station should look like:

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[106] As the marketing person explained, *"You can use different mediums to create inclusivity. I am not going to change my mainline ad because Sonia Gandhi and Medha Patkar are talking inclusivity. There are many people who feel that we shouldn't create aspirations. Don't create wrong aspirations, [to that] I agree. I agree [when you say] don't mislead - but don't create aspiration? Then you cannot run the marketing and I am going home"* (L2 interview, 21/06/2012).
[107] L4 interview, 01/06/2012.

"There are people who have notions of what a hill station is, they visualise a hill station from the images of colonial hill stations – a green area, a few bungalows and only rich people - and there are some servants, etc to support that. We want to demolish this image and we want to say that this is another way a hill station can be developed. It can be a tourist destination but it will also have other things."[108]

The GoM's normative ideas of what a hill station should look like were also shared by civil society. In 2005, the Town Planning Department (TPD) modified the regulations to increase the permissible construction within hill stations. Numerous concerned citizens and organisations wrote to the TPD criticising the amendments. I located many such letters; most lamented forest lands being lost to builders and politicians, and some provided substantive comments about the amendment itself. By and large, however, ordinary citizens/civil society members had a strong sense of what a hill station should look like. They argued that hill stations were places of low population and low density, and were "different from other urban areas" (Sardesai, 2005: 2). Some suggested that many of the amendments were unnecessary, objecting to the "arbitrary and unscientific revision of the development control regulations (DCRs) to accommodate vested interest leading to a dilution of prescribed, statutory planning norms and standards" (Benninger, 2005: 2). Others responded to LCL's published development plan asserting, "job creation is not a function of a hill station" (NAPM, 2011: 4; Kanvinde 2011: 3). Together, their normative idea of a hill station, as a quiet getaway, as low density with low-rise construction, was in fundamental opposition to the aesthetics and model that LCL had chosen.

LCL stated that its vision was to rethink the concept of a hill station and render its morphology relevant to India's contemporary socio-politico-environmental landscape. However, despite its political backing, its plans for innovation were thwarted by regulatory constraints posed by local planning and governance laws:

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[108] L4 interview, 01/06/2012.

> "*There is a conflict between the concept of a hill station and our marketing concept of a city. The conflict is that the Hill Station Regulations are constantly driving at making it a low density, sparse development which must not have too much of commercial activities, too many other businesses. But we feel, and perhaps rightly feel, that a city has to be sustainable, and sustainable in all the three important aspects: environmental, social, as well as economic. I believe that this economic sustainability cannot come to a tourist place unless you also have other activities to support it.*"[109]

In terms of governance, LCL found itself in a regulatory purgatory. While the Hill Station Regulation enabled the establishment of new settlements, it did not prescribe governance structures. The very fact that the Hill Station Regulation provided no clear framework for governance, suggests that these projects were never intended to be anything more than gated communities. The Hill Station Regulation provided detailed rules and norms about the minutiae of building codes, such as admissible floor space index and slope heights, yet it failed to even acknowledge the important issue of how these settlements were to be governed. Therefore, although an American city manager has been hired to demonstrate a new model of governance, run the city, and provide services to the citizens, he has no statutory authority. Lavasa thus finds itself a city in vision, imagination, and form, but not in law. LCL's authority comes from the fact that it is a landowner. As a landowner it can issue leases and have some authority over construction but it does not have any authority as a city. As LCL develops its governance model the task of the city manager is to "*manage the city services in a way that mimics a city organisation*".[110]

The important issue of governance structure remains unresolved even at the time of writing, 14 years since the project was sanctioned. LCL, although a property owner building an urban settlement, finds itself part of four *gram panchayats,* to which it (ostensibly) pays property tax. For LCL this poses a conundrum, as it is in charge of managing the city's assets and delivering services, yet the property tax generated by the city is to be paid to the *gram panchayat.* Within LCL, too, there is little

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[109] L4 interview, 01/06/2012.
[110] L8 interview, 12/07/2012.

consensus on what should and can happen; some have suggested creating a municipality, others have argued for forming an industrial township authority governed by a nominated body which would dissolve the *gram panchayats* in the process.[111] At the time of research, these discussions seemed to be taking place mainly behind closed doors in the upper echelons of power, rather than in consultation with *gram panchayats*. LCL did express an urgency in addressing the matter and multiple letters were written to the UDD to request further action arguing that "*panchayats* will not be able to provide a single governing authority required for integrated governance of entire development" (LCL letter to UDD 18 January 2010). The corporation's ambitious aim to create a model for urban governance in India only deepened the challenge:

> "*If it is a private city, then we don't have to worry about it. But if it is going to be a replicable model, India is a democratic country. For all of India's problems, India is a true democracy. So, this has to be democratic. The question is not whether or not it will become democratic, the question is what is the process for getting there incrementally?*"[112]

How then is LCL to execute its vision, both in planning and in governance? How can it innovate within the confines of law and democracy? In 2007 LCL made a plea to the UDD to constitute a Special Planning Authority (SPA) for Lavasa. The request for SPA status was made to allow LCL to plan and manage Lavasa without constant interaction with the government. According to the Hill Station Regulation, all planning powers rest with the District Collector; this meant that Lavasa's plans had to be approved by the Collector of Pune and Director of Town Planning. LCL argued that just for the first phase of development, six hundred pages of documents and six large box files of paperwork had to be prepared for the Collector. The process of approval was lengthy – involving scrutiny at multiple levels of government and even though responses were due within 60-90 days of submission, LCL did not receive a response until three years after submission (LCL letter to UDD 30 January 2007). Therefore, the request for SPA status was made to facilitate proper planning;

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[111] L4 interview, 01/06/2012 and L8 interview, 12/07/2012.
[112] L8 interview, 12/07/2012.

"In a make-shift arrangement GoM has delegated these powers to the Collector, Pune but as is explained in foregoing he is incapable of performing that role. It would therefore be in the public interest to set up a SPA for this area so that the development of the hill station is carried out in a planned and integrated manner. Preparation of plan will enable development of land not only belonging to the LCL but also of the land not acquired by the LCL." (LCL letter to UDD 30 January 2007: n.p.).

The SPA, though it would be technically independent from LCL, could serve "as a precursor to a separate local authority for local governance" (LCL letter to UDD 30 January 2007: n.p.). In 2007, LCL organised a meeting in Lavasa to further discuss the governance of the project. It was attended by Sharad Pawar (who by now was a minister in the central government and held no state-level public office), Ajit Pawar (Sharad Pawar's nephew and the state's Minister of Irrigation), Chief Minister of Maharashtra Vilasrao Desmukh, and other state government officials. Years later this meeting would come to be a source of suspicion. Those at LCL had a different view:

> *"Today the media says we were corrupt because we called all of them, paid a bribe and got clearance. But people like us know, it took us one year to get them together. It is so difficult to get things in the government one by one. In fact, he [Gulabchand] should be complimented for getting them in one room."[113]*

This meeting was in no small way, a testimony to the project's continued political backing and Gulabchand's political clout. But the fact that it had to be held in the first place demonstrates that Lavasa was still bound by certain laws and rules.

Being awarded SPA status comes with a range of benefits; it allows LCL to control development and unauthorised development, permits it to levy charges, and gives it power to enter into land lease and sale agreements. But those powers also come with some "disadvantages" (as articulated by LCL), such as having their employees

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[113] L2 interview, 21/06/2012.

treated as public servants (applying the code of conduct of public servants such as the Prevention of Corruption Act 1988). LCL also has to engage in the time consuming processes of publishing "its planning proposals and invite suggestions and objections from the public process" (LCL letter to UDD 30 January 2007: n.p.). Furthermore, despite SPA status, LCL is not permitted to forcibly acquire land and the plans still have to adhere strictly to the existing Hill Station Regulation rules as determined by the UDD. Hence, the SPA could be seen as a quasi government, with some of the authority of government, but not all: it cannot, for example, impose taxes or forcibly acquire land.

That a private company was awarded SPA status remains a point of contention. A number of letters of complaint were written, arguing that SPA status could not be awarded to a private company and was in violation of the principles of the Constitution. A PIL was filed in the Mumbai High Court and the matter was still pending at the time of writing. Therefore, while LCL's vision for Lavasa was premised on delivering a solution to the planning and governance problems that plague Indian cities, it has struggled to find ways to innovate in terms of urban form and a novel governance framework within the structures of democracy.

4.5. Conclusion

Lavasa was sanctioned by the state, developed by a private company, and built with a middle-class/elite consumer-citizen in mind. It was set into motion by the Hill Station Regulation, which identified new privately planned hill stations as a solution to 'overcrowding', ecological damage, and unplanned encroachment in the Western Ghat region of Maharashtra. This was further legitimated by the Mumbai High Court, which, citing the inevitability of privatisation as a desirable trend, recast the idea of public interest to include large scale management of resources by a private company. In this manner both the executive and the judiciary facilitated the emergence of India's first privately planned and managed, post-colonial hill station.

Roy (2007) shows how Calcutta is planned without maps and data, operating within the logic of informality, which allows the populism of the day to take hold (giving powers to planners to convert a slum into a park one day, and a park into a mall the

next). Similarly, Ghertner (2011) shows how planning in the city of Delhi does not often make use of data and maps, but is rather based on visual surveys. What is desirable and undesirable in the making of world-class Delhi is determined by the rule of aesthetics rather than a techno-scientific evaluation. In the case of hill station development, too, the 'properness' of planning was not ensured by scientific evaluation, but by invoking common sense. Common sense was used to justify the need for such a project as a solution to long-standing problems of congestion and poor ecological management. The lack of fuss in selecting the developer and the free hand given to private developers in site selection, planning and governance shows the extent to which the 'properness' of planning was equated with privatised development.

But to see this project simply as part of a neoliberal turn in India's urban development trajectory, or as a new idiom of planning, would be to ignore the direct private interests that fuelled this ostensibly public interest project. The policies put into motion were supported by powerful political actors with direct interests in real estate. In that respect the project can be interpreted equally as an outcome of "private interest networks" where "vernacular networks of association transform the 'governmentalised' state into one that is amenable to specific interests through forging various forms of alliances" (Sundaresan, 2014: 3). Indeed, like many new towns (discussed in Chapter One) and hill stations, Lavasa was made flesh only through the support of powerful developers and the alliances forged with various political actors.

Despite its origins, the vision of Lavasa moved beyond the confines of real estate. Its vision is speculative; indeed, it is a gamble – a real estate gamble, as well as a gamble on what a future city should look like. But although Lavasa's vision goes beyond the domain of real estate, it is only made possible by it. The vision is premised on speculative returns on real estate, which requires future citizens and businesses to invest in the city because it *is* a profitable real estate investment decision and because they are compelled by its vision. It is a speculation on the future that connects real estate with urban aspiration:

"There is a quantitative and a qualitative benchmark. The quantitative benchmark is that all of our property gets sold to the right people within a targeted period of time. The qualitative benchmark is the waiting list. This is a quantitative and a qualitative benchmark, the number of people who are aspiring to be a part of it that I need to create another Lavasa because my boundaries are full. Like creating a cult community, just as Goans love to be Goans. If Lavasa gets recognized as a community that is different, to me that is the ultimate taste of qualitative success. Another quantitative success is how much can we be brought in to create more developments in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh and maybe UAE and maybe Europe going forward. Can we be thought leaders in that? Another qualitative success is that if your brand starts getting featured in international forums, it is a bench mark topic of discussion, it becomes a bench mark for others, people look up to it."[114]

Lavasa's project is utopian in as much as it presents an idealised vision of the future. This utopia is expressed in a different register from the utopia of Chandigarh or Brasilia, or the megalomania of Fordlandia. It is a corporate market utopia, not unlike Disney's Celebration, but with an Indian twist, responding to the particular problems of existing Indian cities. As a privately planned city, built on private property, with its own parallel governance systems, its success is premised on total control by the corporation, where planning is not democratic or participatory, but top-down with plans drawn up in the offices of various global consulting firms.

Lavasa is imagined therefore, as a privatised city in the public interest. Its vision goes well beyond what the Hill Station Regulation expected, and it is a utopian vision, one that seeks to achieve inclusion (detailed in Chapter Six), ecological sustainability (discussed in Chapter Seven), and efficient and effective service delivery, all through privatised planning. This vision responds to what LCL diagnoses as a failure of planning and urban governance in India. But this future is called to action not through the gains of real estate but by invoking the failure of the government to meet the needs of the public, to deliver public goods such as governance, a clean environment, uncongested roads, and basic sanitation. It is precisely by turning to the widely held

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[114] L2 interview, 21/06/2012.

notions of planning and governance failures that Lavasa can conjure a future for itself, providing private solutions to public failures.

But it is also utopian in that the vision is impossible to fully realise. Lavasa presents itself as a rupture, as many utopian projects do. Its goals of profit, governance, inclusion and sustainability bump and collide with each other and although it wishes to deliver private planning outcomes. Despite its political backing and its desire to become a model Indian city, free from the problems of public planning and governance, LCL's attempts are thwarted by the very local state and democratic frameworks that it seeks to escape.

As discussed in Chapter One, such visions, whether idealised, utopian, or experimental, are routinely undone and fail to achieve their goals. What is of interest then is not the fact that they do not live up to their ideals, i.e. whether these projects are successes or failures on the terms that were initially set out. Michel Foucault readily admitted that nothing happens as laid down in planners' schemes – yet he insisted that they are not simply utopias "in the heads of a few projectors". They are not "abortive schemas for the creation of a reality" but "fragments of reality" itself. They "induce a whole series of effects in the real" (Foucault, 1991:81). The utopia conjures images and circulates imaginaries about the future. What must be paid attention to is how the plan as an idea and the plan in action interact with one another to produce the actual city of Lavasa, how its vision and its reality come into contact. Accordingly, the following chapters will examine the making, unmaking, and remaking of various aspects of Lavasa's 'market utopia'.

Chapter Five

Assembling Lavasa: The Myth and Muscle of the Market

"The Lavasa Corporation did not get the state government to forcibly acquire land using the coercive power at its disposal through the Land Acquisition Act of colonial vintage. It purchased land from individual owners at the then prevailing market prices on the basis of government records regarding ownership rights… The vision of Lavasa is intrinsically inclusive." (Kishwar, 2011: n.p)

"Lavasa Corporation went in for direct purchase from its owners. From the complaints made by the farmers and villagers it [has] transpired that the company used various tactics for grabbing the land from the illiterate and poor people. There are many instances of fraudulent deals. The process of land grab was done by the agents of the company, creating proxy farmers and relatives, presenting fraud witnesses, forging land records, changing land records and corruption in collusion with the administration." (People's Commission, 2009: 8)

Unlike other projects of comparable size, LCL pieced together 10,000 acres by purchasing lands from villagers rather than forcibly acquiring them using the state's powers of eminent domain.[115] As the quotes above indicate, while some civil society members (Kishwar, 2011; Damle, 2010) describe 'direct purchase' as fair to villagers, even inclusive, others depict it as just another method of grabbing lands from villagers (NAPM, 2011). Indeed, these opposing views are representative of the recent political debate around the extent to which land assembly for large-scale projects should be left to the state or in the hands of the market (Bardhan, 2011). They also raise a number of questions: given nationwide resistance to land

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[115] Eminent domain: the right of a government to expropriate private property, with compensation in the name of public interest under the Land Acquisition Act (1984). The state government notifies landowners of its desire to acquire land, giving them 30 days to raise objections. It does so by declaring that the land is needed for some kind of public purpose project. Once this is done, notices are sent, compensations terms are agreed upon and possession of land is taken. This process can take many years (Chakravorty, 2013).

acquisition (as discussed in Chapter Two) how did LCL purchase thousands of acres from villagers? Why were these villagers willing to part with their lands? And if locals were cheated, as the People's Commission asserts, then how did they respond and with what effects?[116]

Developers were quick to put forth a self-interested hypothesis: if the land in question had little agricultural value, and developers were able to provide adequate compensation, villagers would be willing to sell their lands. As the chief planner at LCL explained, *"if you're purchasing land then you can negotiate… you will tailor-make your package to the person who is giving the land. People can ask for cash, or rehabilitation, or another house. I can have different packages for everybody".*[117] Many scholars have argued that the key to 'successful' land acquisition is rooted in the issue of adequate and appropriate compensation (Chakravorty, 2013; Ghatak, 2012). That said, these 'successes' are often furthered by grossly asymmetric information on land prices and future land use (Chakravorty, 2013; Levien, 2013).

There is some theoretical merit to the planner's argument. From an economic perspective, under free market conditions, the most efficient land arrangement is one where a buyer purchases land from a willing seller through a voluntary sale transaction. In such circumstances, an unwilling seller need not part with his or her land and the individual with the highest valuation for that land will own it. Small parcels of land for housing estates and commercial developments are often assembled in this manner. But land is not merely an economic/financial commodity, it is also characterised by deep cultural associations, providing people with livelihoods, security, and social standing (Agarwal, 1994). Indeed, in many parts of the world, and especially in India, the peasantry has refused to sell land irrespective of the compensation on offer (Chakravorty, 2013).

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[116] As discussed in Chapter One, Lavasa has been a site of tremendous contestation. The issues of illegal purchase of tribal lands, the leasing of public lands by the government to the corporation, and environmental degradation have been the key points of contention. However, land purchase per se has not been a salient or core element of this dispute i.e. questions of fraud have been raised, but no large-scale collective mobilisation (as observed in other cases) has taken place (this will be further elaborated within this chapter as well as the next).

[117] L4 interview, 01/06/2012

Land assembly without the use of the state's powers of eminent domain is considered to be near impossible for a number of reasons; first, given the nature of landholding patterns in India (contested land holdings, unclear titles, the presence of a large number of small farms with the average operational landholding size being 1.6 hectares in 2010 (NABARD, 2014)), transaction costs for such an endeavour would be prohibitively high. Second, the probability of holdouts (land-owners unwilling to sell) could prevent the developer from fully carrying out their plans (Singh, 2012). Third, the knock-on speculative effects on the price of land could result in untenably high land costs for the developer. Consequently, industrial development officials across the country generally insist that, "without the state's role in land acquisition, large industrial and infrastructural projects would not get off the ground" (government official quoted in Levien, 2011: 463).

Yet, many townships and SEZs of several hundreds to thousands of acres have been consolidated through private means. For example, the promoters of Kakinada SEZ in Andhra Pradesh bought 4800 acre through direct purchases from farmers, the Navi Mumbai SEZ developers bought several thousand acres through voluntary transactions, and the GMR group purchased 428 acres directly from the villagers in Chhatisgarh (Singh, 2012). Gurgaon (outside New Delhi) too was assembled through the market (Gururani, 2013; Donthi, 2014). In Pune district, Amby Valley, Nanded City, and Amanora Township are a few such examples. Shatkin and Vidyarthi (2014: 23) note that only the "more heavy handed attempts by state actors" to acquire land have received scholarly attention but in fact there are often "more creative" and "less blunt efforts to access land". With the partial exceptions of very recent work by Baka (2013), Gururani (2013), and Levien (2013), the scholarship does not examine closely how and with what consequences is land assembled through market transactions. This chapter is in conversation with that nascent literature. Lavasa is the largest of these projects, in terms of both the area notified (23,000 acres or 93 square kilometres) and the area purchased by LCL, (approximately 10,000 acres or 38 square kilometres) (LCL, 2014).[118] What were the conditions that made market-based land assembly possible? And if forcible acquisition has often led to widespread

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[118] As reference, the average SEZ in India is approximately 400 acres, with the largest being 25000 acres (Lakshmanan, 2009).

dispossession and/or resistance, what are the consequences of voluntary land transactions?

This chapter argues that private land assembly was effective not simply because of the adequacies of compensation, but because of the distinct conditions under and mechanisms through which land had been purchased. First, private land assembly was fundamentally enabled by an earlier historical state-led dispossession – the building of the Varasgaon Dam, a process that altered the terms of agriculture, the relationship of villagers to agriculture and to the valley itself. Second, land was purchased slowly and quietly over a decade by a multitude of intermediaries/land agents/aggregators. Many of these intermediaries leveraged highly asymmetric information to purchase land and in some instances cheated farmers, by either forging documents, providing inadequate compensation, or engaging in aggressive coercion. Thus much of the land had already been purchased before the project was formally announced to the villagers.

Despite these grievances, collective action was thwarted by three mechanisms generated by the market process itself. First, the presence of multiple intermediaries prevented the emergence of a single focal point for resistance. Second, the voluntary bilateral nature of the process, individualised land disputes making them issues to be addressed within the private and often domestic sphere, rather than collectively and/or publically. Finally, given that the transactions were voluntary (at least in theory), the NAPM could not convincingly argue that LCL itself had dispossessed locals. This disrupted the politically powerful narrative of 'dispossession' that is usually invoked when contesting land grabs.

Section 5.1 describes the processes through which land was assembled, arguing that two key processes enabled assembly: dam-related displacements from the 1970s and a slow process of disaggregated aggregation of land by a multitude of land agents. Section 5.2 outlines the effects of this process of assembly. Specifically, it argues that the nature of private land assembly effectively squashed most forms of collective resistance and also individual resistance. Section 5.3 concludes with some theoretical implications.

5.1. The Processes of Assembly

In March 2000, one month after Pearly Blue Lake Resorts had been incorporated, the company requested the GoM to designate approximately 93 square kilometres as hill station area. This area included 18 villages spread across two sub-districts (Mulshi and Velhe), lands marked for reforestation in the regional plan, as well as some government land. The declaration was issued promptly in July 2000. In keeping with the Hill Station Regulation, the GoM relaxed land-ceiling laws[119] and allowed the company to purchase up to 4000 hectares of land (considerably more than under the existing statutory ceiling).[120] Under Maharashtra State regulations and national statutes, some of these lands (such as agricultural lands) are available for purchase from owners directly, others (such as ceiling lands) are available for purchase with the permission of the District Collector, government lands can be leased, while tribal (*adivasi*) and forest lands are unavailable for either purchase or lease.[121] A summary of the different land types is outlined in Table 5.1 below. By 2014, of the 18,689 acres available for purchase, LCL had purchased 10,574 acres, largely in areas marked for phase 1 and 2 of the project. This chapter focuses on those lands that were available for purchase and not those that were on lease (which were discussed in Chapter Four).

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[119] As part of post-independence land reform policies, the Maharashtra Agricultural Land (Ceiling on Holdings) Act, 1961, was passed to limit the amount of land held by any individual. The ceiling limits were fixed in 1961 and are dependent on the type/class of land in question. For instance, a single individual can have at most 7 hectares (18 acres) of irrigated land capable of yielding at least two crops a year and 21 hectares (54 acres) of dry crop land. Landholdings in excess of this ceiling limit are acquired by the government at a compensation rate that is determined by the Collector. This land is then distributed to landless persons belonging to Schedule Castes, Scheduled Tribes, landless persons, and to persons from a pre-defined 'priority list'. If after this there remains surplus land, then the Collector can assign it to projects of 'public purpose'.

[120] According to the Maharashtra Land Revenue Code, 1966, land used for agriculture cannot be used for any non-agricultural purpose except with the permission of the Collector. This law was put in place to protect farmers from speculative hoarding of agricultural land by non-agriculturalists.

[121] According to the Maharashtra Land Revenue Code, 1966, and Maharashtra Land Revenue Code and Tenancy laws (Amendment) Act, 1974, land belonging to members of the Scheduled Tribes cannot be transferred/sold to non-tribals.

Table 5.1: Summary of land type and ownership in Lavasa

No	Land Details	Area (Sq Km)	Area (Acres)
1	Area of 18 villages as per revenue records	119.02	**29398**
2	Government Forest Lands	25.85	6383
3	Area notified as Hill Station	93.17	23022
4	Submerged Land (Varasgaon lake)	17.51	4325
5	Area Available for Development	75.66	18689
6	Purchased by LCL until 2014	38.29	**10574**
7	Notified for Special Planning Authority (SPA) in 2008 (14 villages)	36.56	9034
8	To be notified as SPA in the future	11.61	2869
9	Additional area expected to be purchased by LCL	24.11	**5959**

Source: LCL (2014: 187)

Figure 5.1 from 2010 depicts the above table spatially: it shows the land area, the terrain (a mix of forest, water bodies, and agricultural land), the different kinds of property rights (private government, etc.), as well as LCL's relationship to this landscape. The dark green marks forest and 'forest-like' lands, unavailable for purchase; the yellow areas are those that LCL had purchased as of 2010; the red and purple are areas under agreements with land owners; the white areas depict those parcels that have not yet been bought by the company; and the dark grey areas are those under dispute. Evidently, the process of land assembly has not been smooth, with large numbers of holdouts (subject of Chapter Six), some disputed areas, and a number of lands that are controlled via agreements. It was on this very fractured landscape – of forest, water, private, and public agricultural land – that the project of Lavasa unfolded.

Figure 5.1: Lavasa land purchase status and ownership map within the area demarcated as hill station (2010)

[This image has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation]

5.1.1. The Detritus of the Dam

Mulshi, Velhe and Mawal sub-districts bear a long history of development-induced displacement. Over the course of the last century, a range of projects from medium-sized dams to real estate townships has peppered the region's landscape and altered the lives of its residents. The first of these projects dates back to the 1920s, when the Tata company embarked on building a dam to provide water and electricity to their cotton mills in Bombay. Tata acquired over 44,000 acres in 37 villages and displaced 15,000 people with the help of the colonial state. At that time too, heated public discussions ensued about whether displacement should take place for a private project and so it bears the distinction of being the site of the 'world's first anti-dam movement' (Vora, 2009). Despite compensation offers of cash and equivalent land, villagers were not ready to relocate. The uprising did not prove to be successful in the long run – the dam was built and a large number of the displaced (and their descendents) have still not received compensation. As recently as 1982, descendents of the displaced agitated to close down a power station, demanding their historic compensation be paid (Vora, 2009).

Despite this tumultuous local history, a number of other dams such as Panshet, Thamini, and Khadakwasla were built over the 1970s and 80s. In fact, an astonishing 622 dams were built in Maharashtra during 1970-80, the highest number of any state in India during that period (CWC, 2012). Sanctioned by the Congress-led state government, these dams, though relatively small, resulted in substantial displacement across the regions. A number of dams were built within Pune district. Among them, Varasgaon Dam, the site of Lavasa today, was built in 1976 (completed in 1987) to increase the supply of water to Pune; it remains one of the three major water sources for the city. In order to build the dam, low-lying fertile lands (often used for paddy) had to be flooded; the GoM therefore forcibly acquired these lands from the inhabitants. The GoM forcibly displaced a total of 2094 landholders (*khatedars*) and rehabilitated some of them in Daund within Pune district. Villagers interviewed suggested that those who did get compensation were given 2 acres of land per family

on average. Data on displacement and rehabilitation are unavailable[122] but one estimate suggested that approximately 60 per cent of project-affected persons had still not received compensation/rehabilitation by 2010 (Jadhav, 2010).

With the best agricultural land now in the hands of the state or submerged under the reservoir, a large proportion of the displaced left for Daund, Pune, and Mumbai. Many of these dam-affected families retained ownership over their mountainous (*Varkas/Dongar*) land near the dam, but its poor accessibility and poor yield made it of little agricultural appeal. Some families stayed behind, eking out an existence on the hilly lands that had not been submerged (a terrain that was suitable for a very small variety of crops such as *Nachni* and *Varai*), either because they did not receive compensation or because the resettlement land awarded was of poor quality.[123] They were financially assisted by remittances from family members who had migrated to Pune or Mumbai. Furthermore, in the years following dam construction, the area received almost no government services. Even as recently as 2001, despite their proximity to Pune, the villages did not have access to electricity, their own primary health care unit, road access, or irrigation (Census, 2001). Consequently, the area remained isolated and economically poor for a number of decades.

Large agrarian changes took place within the Mulshi sub-district after the dams were built. For instance, the percentage of cultivators dropped from 62% in 1981 to 48% in 2001 (Patil, 2012: 28). Between 1980 and 2005, the net sown area declined by 22% to cover 40% of total land (Pune district's average is 60%); non-agricultural use went up by 22%; land not available for cultivation increased by 6% in Mulshi and 15% in Velhe (highest in Pune district) (Pune district average is 4%); fallow land increased by 14% in Mulshi and 13% in Velhe (Pune district average is 1%); and the total numbers of cultivators in Mulshi and Velhe dropped to the lowest in the district, second only to Pune city (all figures from Patil (2012: 45-56)). In short, while the region did still officially contain agricultural land, a good proportion of it was no longer being used for agriculture.

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[122] Response to Right to Information (RTI) application filed with the Khadakwasala irrigation department stated that the data are still being compiled.
[123] Dh2 interview, 13/12/2012.

Villagers largely concurred with this narrative, citing that their "*paddy fields went to the dam*", that they "*were not cultivating anything on that land*",[124] that many had left the area because there was "*nothing there, nobody thought there would be a future here: there was no source of income, no facilities. There were just many uneducated people*".[125] The area's remoteness only exacerbated their problems:

> "*There was no road to go up there. It wasn't easy, most of our family used to go to Pune or to Mumbai to find work. If you lived here and someone fell ill, it would take 2-3 days to get there (to Pune). So those who lived outside (the village) saw no use of keeping the mountainous land. People did not realise that something would come up later on.*"[126]

The project promoters leveraged this situation for their own benefit:

> "*That was my biggest advantage, that there was no road. Nobody was staying there, it was barren, they had all been rehabilitated and whatever was left was small land. They were eager to sell… They had nothing to grow, it was barren land so they took whatever they could get.*"[127]

Therefore, state-led displacement and dispossession due to the construction of the Varasgaon Dam produced the conditions for land sales to take place with ease. First, the best, fertile land had been submerged, with the remaining hilly land having little agricultural value. Second, the remoteness and poor services and infrastructure made the area even less attractive for local populations. Finally, decades of government neglect as well as the construction of the dam, dispersed the community to Pune, Mumbai, Daund and the various villages around the Lavasa area. This migration ensured that a sizeable proportion of villagers' livelihoods were not fully connected to land within Lavasa (with the notable exception of the *adivasi* community that continued to live there). This fragmentation led to increased non-farm employment among the younger generation, and some villagers entered into

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[124] Dh2 interview, 13/12/2012.
[125] A2 interview, 19/12/2012.
[126] R1 interview, 16/09/2012.
[127] L10 interview, 12/08/2012.

the urban wage economy (long before Lavasa came), working and vending in Pune and Mumbai.[128]

It is impossible to know whether land sales would have taken place had these initial conditions been different. But similar tales of transformation can be told of other parts of India where land sale/acquisition has taken place with relative ease. Baka demonstrates that in Sattur district of Tamil Nadu, farmers have "reduced cultivation activities or abandoned their lands" on account of poor monsoon and "on-going shifts away from agriculture" (2013: 138). It is often the resultant debt trap that forces them to part with their lands. Vijayabaskar (2010) argues that in Tamil Nadu, clear structural economic changes generated shifts in agrarian society such as agricultural labour shortages, increased non-farm employment and a decrease in farm size. This has led to increasing diversification out of agriculture (Nagarak, 2006; Djurfeldt et al., 2008) and farmers have begun to sell their lands. Similarly, surveying agrarian change in contemporary India, Shah and Harriss-White (2011) point to increasing landholding fragmentation, non-farm employment, and diversification of income for rural populations across the country.[129] They argue that these changes are structural and the state has "an incoherent project, encouraging small-scale livelihoods, destroying them, protecting them, ignoring them, or allowing them to survive as an unintended consequence of other intentions altogether" (2011: 17).

While there is a case to be made of a structural shift in India's agrarian economy, in this case the dam produced the additional conditions for land sale by rendering agricultural livelihoods largely unviable. Some activists suggest that the process of making land less suitable for agriculture is a deliberate political ploy undertaken by

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[128] B2 interview, 20/01/2013; D2 interview, 30/09/2012.

[129] Shah and Harris-White (2011) posit that 63 per cent of producers own holdings of less than one hectare, and that the mean income for those who operate less than 4 hectares is negative. Furthermore, most households run on "salaries of teachers, government servants, shopkeepers or traders than the income from the rent of the farm or its produce" (2011: 15). Although there is no clear shift from agricultural labour to industrial work, estimates suggest that between 50 and 100 million labourers are 'footloose', i.e. circulating as migrant labour, and that the rural non-farm economy has grown to become 20% of all rural jobs. In summary, "If they ever were, poor Indians with homes in rural areas are no longer simple peasants or rural wage labourers, but people who have complex livelihoods involving both forms of work: tilling their small plots of land and now, dependent on migrant wage labour, on working in the rural non-farm economy and on petty commodity production and trade in the capitalist economy to reproduce their household" (2011: 17).

politicians/government officials with real estate interests.[130] For instance, in 2010 police opened fire against villagers protesting the development of a pipeline in Maval sub-district. According to farmers, the pipeline would divert water and decrease the supply of water to nearby farms. Activists claimed that the "resultant decreased supply for farming" would "affect the agricultural yield, thus leading to a lowering of land prices. At that opportune time the realtor lobby aided by the land mafia" would "have a field day buying out bulk stretches of land from financially weakened farmers – only to be resold to the urban rich at premium prices" (Roy, S., 2011: 11).

Describing a less cunning set of circumstances, though in a similar vein, scholars have argued that the categorisation of land as "wasteland" often does not reflect "existing land use patterns"; rather it is a political construction (Whitehead, 2010)[131] which serves to cast wastelands as 'bad' and something to be eliminated (Gidwani, 1992). Baka (2013) shows that by constructing these wastelands as 'empty' the state makes land available for alternative land use projects, including biofuels and real estate. Although the lands upon which Lavasa was built were not categorised as 'wasteland' or 'barren', they were in fact treated as such. In an inquiry looking into excess ceiling lands being made available to LCL, the Collector stated that, "the 7/12 extract of the land shows that the land is lying barren. These lands appear to be not very fertile and the quality of the land is low. Though this land has not been declared 'uncultivable' it seems to be unsuitable for agriculture" (District Collector Letter, 09 January 2005). In keeping with themes raised in Chapter Four, it is merely the common sense appearance of being barren as opposed to an evaluation of the land's barrenness that allows for its transfer.

Whether these dams were actively created to generate real estate or whether such changes are an unintended consequence of the dam is difficult to discern. However, by virtue of creating a large reservoir, the dam produced an idyllic waterfront site for a hill station/tourism project generating interest from a number of land

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[130] C5 interview, 10/10/2012.

[131] As Whitehead (2010) demonstrates, the category of 'wasteland', introduced into Indian law in 1793 in Bengal by the British, is not as a natural category but as a social and historical one. It is often synonymous with "land left idle"; the term is used as "a rhetorical device to justify state appropriation," which historically supported both the conquest of new territories and the enhancement of state territorial control (2010: 86).

speculators and elite Indians. It effectively converted the use of land from agriculture to real estate even though, on paper, it remained marked as agricultural land. Farm-houses began to crop up across Mulshi, Velhe, and Maval sub-districts in the 1980s and 90s. Indeed, it was precisely this menace of unplanned holiday/second home development that the Pune Regional Plan (1991-2011) and the Hill Station Regulation sought to address through building planned hill stations (discussed in Chapter Four). Many townships and tourist resorts have largely developed on the banks of/in the vicinity of various dams and man-made reservoirs, e.g. Amby Valley and Girivan along Mulshi Dam.

Thus India's new project of urban place-making was partially built on the detritus of a ubiquitous older national project – the dam. The villager's willingness to sell land to LCL, brokers, and speculators, was due in no small part to an earlier round of state-led forcible dispossession and decades of government neglect. The developers' claims of the strength of the market in providing appropriate compensations must be contextualised historically. The specific land market conditions were (one can hope, inadvertently) produced through state-plans and are not particular to Lavasa alone, but common to a number of projects emerging on the banks of various dams in the Western Ghats in close proximity to Pune and Mumbai.

5.1.2. 'Direct' Purchase

It was into this milieu that a whole host of intermediaries – investors, brokers, land aggregators and real estate companies – entered.[132] While official permission to purchase land was given in 2001, land records demonstrate that the process of buying land for development/non-agricultural purposes had started as early as the 1980s. As other real estate companies had also bought land in the area, LCL entered into

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[132] Middlemen have always occupied an important space in India's highly local and vast land revenue system. Brass (2004) and Harriss-White (2003) demonstrates the deep reliance of citizens in accessing the state and land departments through gatekeepers and middlemen. Sud (2014), Baka (2013), and Levein (2013) argue that there is a new class of intermediaries, one that has emerged post-liberalisation as land markets have become lucrative. Sud (2014) highlights the wide varieties of middlemen: the fixers, brokers, agents, thugs, aggregators that do different kinds of work in facillitaing land deals. For instance, she argues that "aggregators are on top of the land brokerage chain", "local brokers work with representatives of a potential land buyer, but also with the seller", and "party representatives" "link the land deals to politicians" (2014: 600-1). In this chapter, I refer to them as intermediaries while recognising the tremendous heterogeneity of the group. I differentiate between them in instances where it is relevant to my argument.

agreements with four large land aggregators for a total of 3766 acres. It assembled the rest through 978 bilateral transactions, of which 871 were 'resale' and only 107 transactions were made directly with the 'original' owner (District Collector, 2008). By 2003, LCC (then spearheaded by Deshpande) had purchased a largely contiguous 7000-acre parcel of land (LCC, 2003). Therefore, while LCL did in fact engage in direct purchase, the company purchased a large proportion of its land from intermediaries instead of the 'original owner' (*mul vatandaar*). By LCL's own estimates 75 per cent of the lands that it purchased were not from "local farmers but people who were living in Pune, Mumbai, Dubai, or even London" (Kishwar, 2011: n.p).[133]

Between 2000 and 2014, LCL purchased 10,225 acres (9619 acres of class 1 and 606 acres class 2 agricultural lands)[134] through market transactions. Figure 5.2 details the number of sales by village over time indicating that a large proportion of the land purchases took place between 2002 and 2004, followed by a steady decline and a short-lived second sales peak in 2007-08.[135] Lavasa's land was therefore purchased incrementally from villagers over two decades and through multiple buyers. The remaining lands were either leased from the government or are not within LCL's control (see Table 5.1 for summary).[136]

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[133] The question of how such 'farmers' came to possess the land in the first place is moot but beyond the scope of this chapter (requiring a statutory investigation).

[134] Class 1 lands can be purchased on the market, Class 2 lands require prior permission from the District Collector and the payment of an additional fee 'nazarana'.

[135] Reasons for the second peak are not known.

[136] At the time of research, LCL stated that the remaining 5959 acres of privately-owned land available for purchase would be considered "on an opportunistic basis" if it would assist in pushing their development plan forward (LCL, 2014: 30).

Figure 5.2: Total (class 1) land purchases made by LCC/LCL by village between 2001-2010.
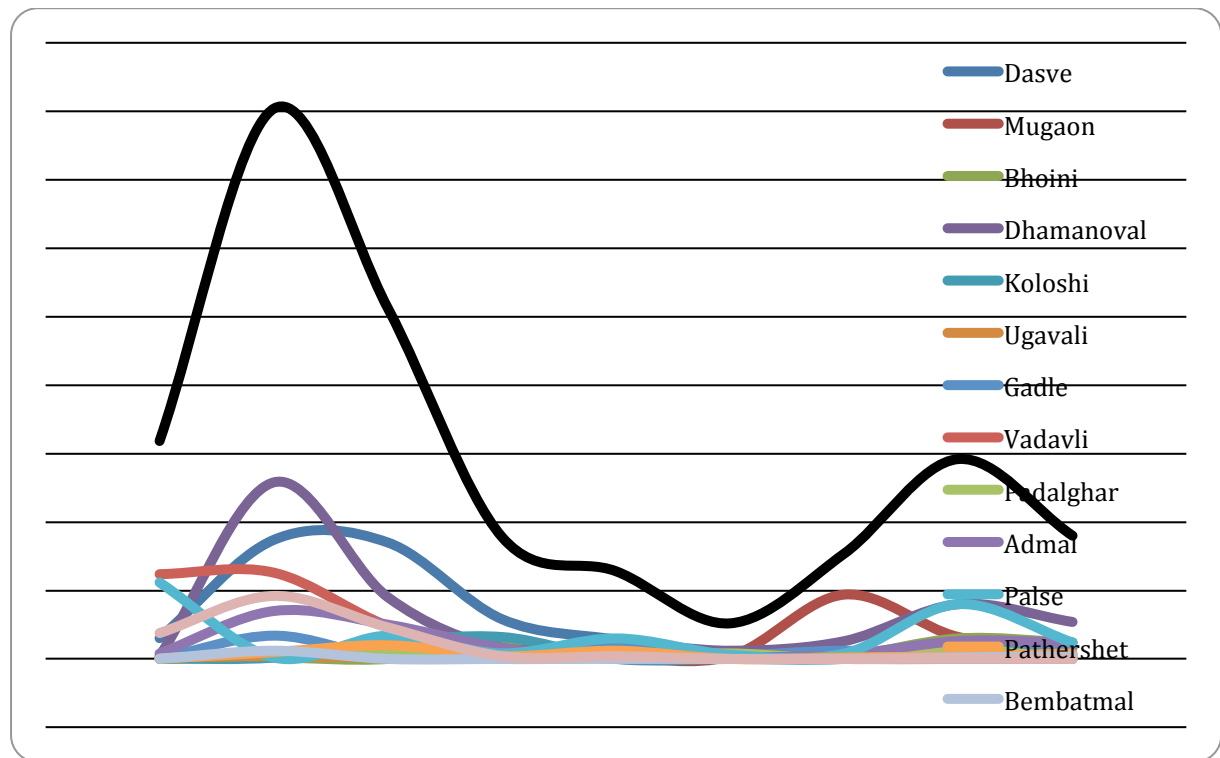
Source: Author's calculations, data tabulated from Revenue Department, Pune District (2012).

Who were these firms and individuals that purchased land in advance of LCL's arrival and why did they decide to invest in a remote, forested location? These intermediaries broadly fit into three categories: i) individual investors who sought to own a scenic second home or invest in individual plots of land, ii) individual aggregators who purchased large land parcels for the purpose of speculation and resale in the future, and iii) real estate companies trading in farm houses. Some of these purchases were part of a more widespread process of urban elites buying agricultural land for the purposes of parking black money, avoiding tax (capital gains on agricultural lands are not taxed), and making speculative investments (Kumar, 1999).

As Pearly Blue Lake Resorts began to purchase land in the area, so did a range of other companies including Solitude Leasings, Sharada Company, and Yashomala Leasings and Finance Private Ltd (YLFPL) (selected land records, GoM Mahabhulekh, 2012). YLFPL, a small and local real estate company purchased land within the

stipulated lake city area.[137] Sadanand Sule, Sharad Pawar's son-in-law (and married to Supriya Sule, a Member of Parliament (2009 onwards) from Baramati in Pune District) held 1664 shares in the company in 2000 (Subramaniam and Jog, 2012). Similarly Sharada Company has also been associated with the Pawar family (Vaidya, 2008; Sharada Group, 2014). In 2002, YLFPL merged with LCC and shareholders were given 750 equity stakes for every share they had in YLFPT; this amounted to the Sules' having a 20.81% stake in LCL (Subramaniam and Jog, 2012).[138] Other real estate companies operating within the area however, remained independent. For instance the Expat Group (Solitude Leasings) engages in real estate investing and has 8000 acres of land on the outskirts of Pune city within its control (Expat Group, 2014). It owned a sizeable portion of land within the area and eventually entered into a development agreement with LCL in the late 2000s (GoM Mahabulekh, 2012).

Similar patterns emerge for various plots of land across the villages in Lavasa. In other cases, intermediaries sold the land within a few weeks or months of buying them, indicating clearly that the land was bought with the purpose of re-selling to LCL. These individuals could well have been fronts for other real estate companies or LCL (in its various previous avatars). Indeed, in Amby Valley, 69 individuals separately purchased a total of 3736 acres of agricultural land between 1992 and 1996 and executed a general Power of Attorney in favour of Sahara Corporation, the parent company building the hill station. It was later found, through judicious investigation by activists, that all 69 were employees of Sahara Corporation in Uttar Pradesh (BEAG Vs GoM CWP 2772 of 1998). Studies from Rajasthan, Haryana, and Tamil Nadu indicate that intermediaries are either put forth by the developers (Gururani, 2013; Baka, 2013) or are aware of projects before they are officially sanctioned (Levien, 2011; Donthi, 2014; Sud, 2014a). LCL's case demonstrates that a wide range of intermediaries were at work in the run-up to the project.

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[137] YLFPL was incorporated in 1986 and was absorbed into LCL in 2002. YLFPL's name appeared on many land records but it was not possible to calculate the total land area that it purchased over the years.
[138] It is unclear whether YLFPL began to purchase these lands before or after the formal announcement of the project and whether it did so deliberately as a means to acquire and assemble land before the project was officially announced or to give the appearance that multiple firms were buying land instead of one single developer. Some informants suggested that in such cases land is often acquired by front companies due to ceiling law restrictions and then merged once projects are declared and they are given permission to purchase more than the ceiling limit.

Land aggregation was not limited to real estate companies alone. Land records reveal that a large number of individuals engaged in land purchase in their private capacity.[139] Had all the intermediaries simply been fronts for the company, LCL would not have the holdout problem that it does today (as is evident by the white areas in Figure 5.1, LCL does not own the entire land parcel marked as hill stations). Some of these holdouts are villagers while some are investors. Many of these resale transactions started as early as 1991. Take, for instance, survey no. 50/12 in Mugaon village. It was owned by Laxman Waghmare, who sold it to Ramesh Agarwal in 1991 who then sold it to 4 joint owners (Nikhil Maruti and Agarwal family) in 2003 who finally sold it to LCL in 2004. Similarly, survey no. 50/3's owner Dilip Golande sold it to Preetam Agarwal in 1992, who then sold it to LCL in 2004. These investors held on to their land parcel for over a decade, and are therefore unlikely to be fronts for any company.

But the question of why people sold their lands to intermediaries remains. Villagers were not sent an acquisition notice but rather a notice that said that a hill station (*giristhan*) was going to be built in the area – many informants stated that, at the time, they did not understand what that meant. Furthermore, many purchases took place before the notice was sent.[140]

> *"Some people sold because they needed money. But some simply thought*
> *they were not going to get anything by keeping the mountainous land with*
> *themselves. Once, one person sold it, everyone started selling it. People were*
> *not educated, they did not have any knowledge. People used to think there*
> *will be no development here since it is a hilly area and far away. They did*

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[139] These individuals could be fronts for larger companies. The Maharashtra Land Revenue Act (1966), puts forth a number of restrictions on land purchase, two of which are important here. First, only bona fide agriculturalists are able to purchase agricultural land. Second, companies and persons are only able to purchase a capped acreage of such land (ceiling laws). There are of course, ways around these laws, the discussion of which is not relevant here. What however, did take place is that "farmers" from other districts and villages, often wealthy, purchased land in the area as speculators, with no intention of farming it. This is by no means restricted to Lavasa but the valley in general. One informant, an established chartered accountant in Mumbai, owns 12 acres of farmland within the sub-district (not within Lavasa) for the purposes of poultry farming. Such lands are often purchased to sink 'black money' and to provide safe asset that could generate speculative returns in the future. Indeed it was this very 'unplanned development' that the Hill Station Regulation sought to curtail.

[140] Determining the exact proportion of land purchased before the notice went out would require detailed analysis of land records going back more than 20 years for the entire land area. This level of analysis was beyond the scope of this dissertation.

not know how smart these outsiders are. They are big people and have all the knowledge."[141]

The prices at which these lands were sold to intermediaries were extremely low:

"My brother, who used to live in Uruli Kanchan, used to look after everything. I never paid attention. He said we should sell off that land. The three of us sold it off to an agent from Pune. We sold it for INR 2000 per acre (USD 40) at that time. He gave me some of the money. We have no land here now. Lavasa bought all our land ultimately."[142]

Similarly, one aggregator informant[143] divulged that he began purchasing land in 1987 at approximately INR 12,000 (USD 240) per acre. By 2012, he had close to 180 acres and sold a portion of this land to LCL in 2008 for INR 7.5 lakhs (USD 15,000) per acre. He suggested that, even in 2008, long after the arrival of the company, some villagers preferred to sell their land to aggregators instead of directly to LCL. The aggregator hypothesised that this was because aggregators were willing to pay more (and in cash) than the going market value for a plot of land, as selling a larger and contiguous land parcel to LCL would increase the price per acre that the aggregators could command from the company.

Not all intermediaries were outsiders; some of them were locals occupying relative positions of political power, as *sarpanches* and members of the *gram panchayat* (names of certain *sarpanches* appear repeatedly in land records). As discussed in Chapter Two, Shankar Dhindale, the *sarpanch* of Dasve, was kidnapped and INR 47 lakh (USD 94,000) was found in his home alongside some gold of undisclosed value. Similarly a *talathi*[144] (resident of Admal village) was also widely rumoured to be one of the first land agents to operate within the area. He was subsequently removed

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[141] R1 interview, 16/09/2012.
[142] B2 interview, 20/01/2013.
[143] Ag1 interview 06/08/2012.
[144] A *talathi* is a government administrator who maintains village records; she or he is in charge of land records, and revenue records within a village or a group of villages.

from his position.[145] Furthermore, barring one exception, all local intermediaries that I interviewed (and was told of) were upper-caste Marathas.[146]

When I commenced my fieldwork, developers repeatedly told me of villagers who were being handsomely compensated for their lands as evident from the influx of expensive Scorpio vehicles and garish mansions into village life. These cars and villas almost always belonged to the *sarpanch* or an aggregator. Both Gururani (2013) and Levien (2013) discuss at great length the pivotal role of the *sarpanch* in the land market; the *sarpanch* and his family became the key beneficiaries (Gururani, 2013) of land purchases. For instance, in Khed SEZ, not far from Lavasa, the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) targeted benefits for *sarpanches*, such as guaranteeing them construction and earthmoving contracts, despite their lack of experience. Such contracts were seen as "confidence building measures" (Balakrishnan, 2013: 108). In Lavasa too, two of the interviewed *sarpanches* had employment contracts with LCL. Many *sarpanches* were no longer full-time residents of their villages, but lived in Pune, visiting their village two or three times a week. When the project found itself amidst controversy and under examination by the central government, many *sarpanches* banded together and filed an affidavit in support of the project. Of course, not all *sarpanches* are involved in real estate transactions of land aggregation, and in some cases (as we shall see in Chapter Six) they protest the company's actions. Regardless, they are consistently the intermediaries between the company and villagers. It is only through using these agrarian intermediaries that the project can come to life.

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[145] Ag2 interview, 18/12/2012.

[146] It is not surprising that the intermediaries are largely Maratha. Palshikar (2011) notes that the dominant sub-groups of the Maratha peasantry have had control over the state, agrarian institutions, as well as networks of patronage since the 1950s. This has changed in recent years; although Marathas still dominate the legislature, "their ability to mediate between agrarian interests and non-agrarian interests has considerably declined during this period the Maratha elite too has diversified its portfolio beyond rural and agrarian interests. The elites from the Maratha community are increasingly entering new avenues of material domination – print media, hotel industry, construction industry, transport and related service sector organizations". However although Marathas are, and have historically been, the politically dominant caste in western Maharashtra, they are a highly differentiated caste group. In recent years this has led to some sub-castes retaining elite status and the poorer sub-castes (Maratha-Kunbi) seeking OBC status. The aggregators I interviewed largely came from elite Maratha backgrounds, where caste and class intersect. The smaller local level brokers came from other sub-castes.

Many informants also recall being told, in one way or another, that Sharad Pawar wanted their land. This is plausible given both his involvement in the project and his many real estate ventures (discussed earlier). Informants explained:

> "Dh1: Yes, it was sold. Now, you travel so much, you must know... sold to Lavasa, to Sharad Pawar. In the beginning people sold land for INR 2000 (USD 40) (per acre) to Sharad Pawar.
>
> AP: They gave it to Sharad Pawar?
>
> Dh1: Yes, Sharad Pawar.
>
> AP: How do you know that?
>
> Dh1: You tell us. It is people like you who say these things and that is why I know. When I tell someone, he would know too. If you wouldn't say, I wouldn't know.[147]"

> "P1: Lavasa belongs primarily to Sharad Pawar. It is due to him that the Lavasa project happene. We know this. There is no documentation but people know this commonly. Ajit Gulabchand or Anirudhha Deshpande cannot get permissions for water etc on their own. Ajit Pawar has 100 acres of land nearby. They (politicians) buy land in the name of other people such as their relatives. Earlier, you were not allowed to buy land above a certain limit such as 50 acres. They would buy land in the name of their staff too. For every rule, there is a loophole."[148]

The narrative of Sharad Pawar 'wanting' the land, whether true or not, was enough to push people to part with their holdings in the early years of the project, given that the area fell within his political constituency and has long been his base of political power. Furthermore, a number of the aggregators and *sarpanches* interviewed were affiliated with the NCP, Pawar's political party. Thus the rumour of the project's political backing formed an important part of encouraging or coercing villagers to part with their land. However, given that not all villagers sold their land, this threat could not have been made with uniform force or credibility.

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[147] Dh1 interview, 13/12/2012.
[148] Ag2 interview, 18/12/2012.

Returning to the chapter's opening quotes, LCL did most certainly engage in direct purchase, but often not with 'original' owners. Intermediaries had done their work for them. Intermediaries have been associated with putting pressure on villagers to sell land, and using "deceptive practises to motivate sales and keep prices low" (Baka, 2013: 417). Such instances are not unique to this valley but have been witnessed in land markets across the country (Vijayabaskar, 2010; Baka, 2013; Gururani, 2013; Levein, 2013; Sud, 2014a). In the case of Lavasa too, a number of different types of fraud and theft took place; first, some brokers generated fake Power of Attorney (PoA) documents and used them to transfer land. For instance, in the case of survey numbers 8/7 and 37/3 of Sakhri village, an intermediary bearing a fake power of attorney for the landowners, transferred the land to LCL (Civil Suit 1682 of 2009). Many such PoA agreements were forged with false fingerprints, e.g. Arvind Yashvant, allegedly had a false PoA for Bhivrao Pasalkar, and sold land to LCL (Civil Suit 62 of 2011). Second, some brokers drew up agreements surreptitiously, taking more land than had been agreed upon. Third, some villagers had agreed to sell their land but did not receive the promised compensation. Variations and permutations of these three types of 'frauds' were reported by a number of informants, though not by all. A detailed discussion is provided in the next section.

The dynamics of aggregation and brokerage therefore, call the concept of 'direct purchase' into question. While it is still true that land was assembled through bilateral transactions, what this hides is that lands were bought in a highly disaggregated manner starting in the 1980s. The question of why people sold is therefore difficult to answer, as the sales took place over a long time span, often to very different types of buyers. It was difficult for villagers to imagine, as they suggested, that these many disaggregated purchases would eventually contribute to a single large project.

Informants (consisting of developers and land agents)[149] revealed that it is common practice for corporations to acquire large land parcels either by creating front companies which finance land purchase, giving the broker a percentage, or by using independent aggregators who are contracted to assemble land. Such aggregation

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[149] C16 interview 02/08/2012; Ag2 interview, 18/12/2012.

takes place over long periods of time, before projects are officially declared, and often with inside information on when land use policies will change to enable the company to pool the various front companies together. As one informant emphatically suggested:

> "*What Lavasa did was that they used multiple agents. Today, no one can say that this [land fraud] has been done by Lavasa. Those agents started buying since 1986. All that land was consolidated and came to Lavasa. That story that is circulating that Sharad Pawar was flying above the land and he saw the land etc. etc. is utter nonsense. Land acquisition started in 1980s, it was well organised and it did not happen incidentally.*"[150]

In the case of Gurgaon, Donthi (2014) shows that speculators purchase farmland in anticipation of a change in land zoning, and usually know which areas will be converted from farm to urban/industrial. He argues that such inside knowledge can yield substantially higher returns, in some instance 40 times the gain that could be made if lands are bought after the project has been declared. Thus, while front companies purchased agricultural land it was only when the area was declared as a hill station area that land values were unlocked. The land market is therefore constructed by both the anticipation of a change, followed by an actual change in regulation. It is a piece of legislation, in this case the Hill Station Regulation, that partially determines the nature of the land market.

Villagers also described a range of compensation packages on offer (in addition to monetary compensation). Some were given homes, others were given land elsewhere, and every household interviewed had one member employed within Lavasa. Although LCL was not required to provide resettlement (as it was purchasing rather than forcibly acquiring land), it took some steps to do so regardless. For instance, in the first phase of development, LCL constructed 34 fully constructed 600 square-foot houses in a serviced resettlement colony for those villagers who sought resettlement (Lavasa SPA, 2012). The titles to these houses were transferred through a deed. In other cases it provided infrastructure, starting

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[150] C7 interview, 27/07/2012.

with the construction of temples, to provision of water tankers and primary schooling. Finally, one member from each family that sold land to LCL was given employment within the company or via a contractor as part of their compensation package; 327 locals were officially provided with jobs within LCL (Lavasa SPA, 2012). The jobs range from overseeing road maintenance to landscaping; however, many villagers remained sceptical of the promise that these jobs were permanent.[151] Such practices are commonplace under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)/rehabilitation programmes. In this case however, by agreeing to sell their lands for the promise of employment, villagers themselves assessed their potential labour value to be higher than their land value (these issues are discussed at length in Chapter Six).

In summary, private land assembly was fundamentally enabled by an earlier historical state-led dispossession – the building of the Varasgaon Dam, a process that altered the terms of agriculture, the relationship of villagers to agriculture and the valley itself. While some purchase did take place directly with LCL, a large proportion of the land was purchased slowly and quietly over a decade by a multitude of intermediaries. Taking advantage of highly asymmetric information, much of the land was purchased before the project was formally announced to the villagers. These intermediaries in some instances did cheat farmers, by either forging documents, providing inadequate compensation, engaging in aggressive coercion, or deploying the force of political power. Land purchased by LCL directly from 'original owners' remains a small fraction of the total sales. The process of private land assembly therefore, was not a triumph of the adequate compensation of the free-market because the land market itself was actively manufactured and undergirded by state policy and agrarian structures.

5.2. Brokering Land, Brokering Peace

Many informants did not articulate their positions as victims of overt land theft, but stated that they had willingly sold their land, at what they considered (in hindsight) to be very low prices given the future use of the land. They expressed, quite clearly,

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[151] D1 interview, 20/01/2013; D3 interview, 11/10/2012.

that they had not been '*smart*, and/or *educated*' and very often, took responsibility, with regret, for their decisions to sell:

> "*We got outsmarted, we were not far sighted, we saw some money and we could not see beyond that. We thought for the time being, we thought we could fill our stomachs. We thought for the short run and the land was gone.*"[152]

> "*Earlier, the elders used to think that nothing could be done on this mountainous land and it was going to be like that forever. Now people regret it. Each bungalow is worth more than a crore of rupees.*"[153]

They stated that at the time they sold their land, they could not, even in their "wildest dreams",[154] contemplate the scale of the project that was to emerge. In the absence of such knowledge, their lands appeared to have little use value, being difficult to cultivate (even if they were not entirely barren). This point is germane to the negotiation of price as the sociological imagination of those landholders did not and could not conceive of the scale of real estate investments and the size of the project to come. The prices they demanded were therefore based largely on present rural use, determined by the land's (lack of) agricultural productivity and historically depressed values rather than its potential future use (which would be determined by location, topography, and centrality to the future plan).

Unlike eminent domain acquisition, where (in a simplified schema) communities collectively bargain with the government for appropriate compensation, here, each family (or individuals) had separately made a deal with an intermediary/LCL, making different compensation demands. Instead of framing the problem in terms of larger systemic injustice: that land markets are heavily stacked against the poor, particularly under conditions of asymmetric information about the future of a project and/or knowledge of prevailing land prices, it was framed as an outcome of a poorly made personal economic decision. As the quotes above demonstrate, the villagers

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[152] V4 interview, 16/12/2012.
[153] R1 interview, 16/09/2012.
[154] D3 interview, 11/10/2012.

attributed their predicament to having succumbed to a bad deal on account of being uneducated and not having sufficient foresight.

Moreover, a number of informants described jointly owned land being sold by one or two members, often against the will and knowledge of another member. A number of court cases disputing LCL's land ownership reflect the widespread prevalence of family disputes in land transactions. One informant suggested that agents often deliberately targeted families that were known to have rifts within them.[155] Describing such land sales as being part and parcel of family dynamics, some villagers conceptualised the problem as a private and domestic one, rather than a systemic one:

> *"All our land is not in the same place and is owned jointly with uncles. 8 acres were left and these 8 acres were equally split between 4 brothers, but they sold 7 acres. They sold one of our acres too. So we got into a dispute, but such things happen in every family, isn't it?"[156]*

Finally, those who had been ostensibly defrauded of their land could not link their predicament to LCL directly. Against the litany of intermediaries, many of whom were not from the local community, villagers found themselves with grievances directed against too many different entities and one too many steps removed from the company itself. About half of the informants interviewed felt that LCL had in fact employed aggregators but, without substantive evidence, they could not collectively connect their present landlessness or the poor compensation they had received for their land to LCL. Although the land was ultimately transferred to LCL, and villagers did often make demands from LCL directly, the company was able to distance itself from the 'frauds' conducted by these intermediaries and indeed argue, as was discussed in the previous section, that LCL was being penalised for no fault of its own. Rather it was the government that had transferred land without proper procedure or on the basis of poor records.

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[155] C16 interview, 02/08/2012.
[156] B1 interview, 28/09/2012.

Members of the NAPM and LCL employees pointed out that a vast majority of these land transactions could only have taken place with the assistance of the state administration. Local government officials (*tehsildar, talathi,* and others in the revenue department) are responsible for ensuring that correct procedures have been followed, that PoAs are not fake, and that all parties involved in the transaction are either present or aware of the sale/transfer being made. However, as we have briefly seen in the previous section, the revenue department permitted a range of improper land transactions – either deliberately or as a by-product of poorly maintained land records. These improper transactions were difficult to challenge by individual citizens. As many scholars of the local state in India have noted, the rural poor with "weak social networks find it hard to make complaints about corruption"; in fact, they expect that low-level officials will be "involved in corruption" (Corbridge et al., 2005: 205).

Poor record-keeping affected not only villagers but also LCL. In some cases lands bought from intermediaries generated substantial problems for LCL. For instance, the Comptroller Auditor General of India's (CAG) investigation of Lavasa's land records revealed that 48 ceiling land transactions had taken place and 58.2 hectares of tribal land had been purchased, even though the law prohibits both types of transactions (CAG, 2011). In both cases, despite its substantial powers to investigate government activity, the CAG was unable to determine from the land records whether the Collector had given permission. Under breach of conditions, LCL was served notices by the District Collector to forfeit those lands. LCL, however, claiming that it had purchased those lands through due process, put up a fight. As a former Collector, now working within LCL explained:

> "Government machinery happily transacted and mutated land entries one after another and then they served the notice that the land was originally tribal. We might be the 3rd or 4th transaction. The initial buyer may not have bought with bad intentions but with bad record of rights. Obviously when this type of notices have been served, we are taking recourse of various Supreme Court judgments, so much development has been done. The Supreme Court also says you cannot wake up after 20 years, there has to be reasonable time. Finally, authority also has to take a pragmatic view, we cannot forfeit

the land after 20 years. Obviously we will face some fine but that is a better outcome. So that sort of compromise, somebody else has made the wrong entry earlier but I'm holding the land now. Initially these 5000 acres was transferred from one company to us, so there we did not have any chance to conduct due diligence."[157]

Furthermore, once land titles had been transferred to the aggregators, given the rules of the land market, original landowners could do little to get their lands back unless they could demonstrate in court (on a case-by-case basis) that the transaction was illegal or fraudulent or had otherwise not followed procedure. To that effect, an informant lamented, "*once they had cheated us, what was the point? We tried but what was the point?"*[158]

Villagers found that raising such issues with the *gram panchayat* (village local government) was difficult too, given that some of the most powerful members of the *panchayat,* particularly *sarpanches*, were aggregators themselves (in some instances with criminal connections),[159] and were on good terms with LCL. By a gram *panchayat* member's own admission, individual land issues would not be dealt with via the *panchayat*:

> *"The gram panchayat is not concerned with this issue. As far as possible, people do address these matters on an individual level according to their capacity. Some people go to the court or the Tehsildar,*[160] *sometimes they come to the gram panchayat with their problems and the gram panchayat can help them in finding options. As far as possible, they solve it on their own."*[161]

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[157] L5 interview, 10/10/2012.

[158] Dh1 interview, 13/12/2012.

[159] The *talathi* of Mulshi district (responsible for keeping the village land records) was arrested in 2012 for assaulting Lavasa security guards. The assault involved him pointing a loaded gun at the security guard and getting a gang of seven men with swords to ransack the office. While not all *talathis* are or would be considered criminal, this incident suggests that they wielded considerable power, which may or may not have been sympathetic to villagers' concerns (Times of India, 20 July 2012).

[160] *Tehsildar* – gazetted administrators at the sub-district level appointed by the state government and in charge of tax revenues, appointment of village officials - sign and execute land sales as well as act as a magistrate in revenue disputes.

[161] D1 interview, 20/01/2013.

Since even the *gram panchayats* conceptualised land disputes as a casualty of the market process (or had a direct hand in the matter), villagers took their issues to court. By and large very few court cases were filed against LCL: 36 cases in total, amounting to less than 5 per cent of total transactions according to the 2007-08 Collector's report. This number rose to approximately 51 pending civil proceedings and 44 revenue proceedings in 2014 (calculated from LCL, 2014). Of the 51 civil cases filed, 40 involved an intermediary (false PoA, family disputes, illegal sale deeds, and poor government record keeping) (LCL, 2014).

Still, this does not represent a sizeable proportion of total land transactions. Informants who had articulated being cheated chose not to approach the court for a number of reasons. Court cases require requisite paperwork, such as title deeds and various proofs of caste and residence, which are notoriously difficult to obtain and are subject to the vagaries of local bureaucracies (Gupta, 2012). Mumtaz (2011) suggests that numerous scheduled caste and scheduled tribe families in the region have "languished without caste certificates to support their legal entitlements to the land" (2011: 1). An informant concurred:

> *"We have been asked to get documents related to our ancestors, our previous generations. We have been trying to get documents for the last 8 years. Just as people go to work every day, we go to government offices to get documents. Nobody is giving us the required documents. Whether it is the talathi or any one… we have not received our caste certificates yet. Every time we need a document, we have to keep making numerous trips to the court and to Paud. They (the court) keep demanding documents. What do we know about these documents? Shouldn't people like the sarpanch get it for us?"*[162]

Furthermore, in the court of law, LCL, being infinitely more resourced and connected, would have the upper hand:

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[162] MI interview, 06/09/2012.

"Their 7/12 (land) agreements happened much more speedily than ours. Even if you hire a government advocate, they [LCL] could pay him more than you would. They can manage anything. In fact, we will end up wasting whatever money we have. The ordinary man cannot do anything – those people who had the standing, support and money went to court."[163]

But when individual land claims are filed in the revenue court it is up to the revenue official, based on the paperwork, to determine the outcome of the case. A recent report by the Ministry of Rural Development (MRD) shows that revenue courts often alienate locals in "connivance" with landlords. When *adivasis* do manage to file a case in court, the probability of their case being rejected is 54% in Maharashtra, considerably higher than the national average of 36% (ranging from 0.25% in Gujarat to 62% in Assam). This is because, despite the 'legal presumption' being in favour of the tribal person, it appears that the burden of proof was placed on the tribal claimant to his/her disadvantage, when the spirit of the law was the opposite. Even once cases have been won, handing over possession is an altogether different matter" (MRD, 2008: 156). Baka (2013) notes that farmers often do not pursue legal processes owing to the financial cost and that sometimes, even if the farmer is victorious, the toll of legal fees can make the victory seem hollow. Similarly, Visser and Spoor demonstrate that farmers in Russia left agriculture even when lands had been returned (2011: 164) due to the financial burden of the litigation.

Most importantly, a court case was undesirable for both parties, as neither LCL nor the villager would unequivocally benefit from one. The lengthy legal process could ensure that the case would be in court for years, potentially preventing LCL from developing it and generating high fees for villagers. Moreover, both LCL and villagers wished to maintain good relations with each other. As a representative from LCL explained:

"In such typical cases our judicial system is such that matters are lengthy and drawn out. So it is very easy for a company to keep the matter in court and

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[163] D1 interview, 20/01/2013.

make the owner frustrated. Here we don't allow that because in the larger picture, I want the support of all villagers."[164]

Villagers too stood to gain from keeping the peace:

"The land that was bought by them could not be bought back. People have bought motorcycles on loan. How is the loan supposed to be paid? They have to be by Lavasa's side. If they do not stand by Lavasa's side, it is their loss."[165]

Hence, the best option for both (willing) parties would be to settle the dispute out of court:

"After all, what fees would the advocate get from the farmer? If he agreed to manage things, he would get fees from the farmer as well as the company. In such a situation, even the advocate would be tempted. The farmer would pay INR 10,000 (USD 200) but the company would be INR 100,000 (USD 2000). Obviously, the farmer would be helpless. Instead of losing everything, they would prefer settlement."[166]

"It is hard for people to go to court. You need to find money and lawyers and Lavasa can just manage these people by giving them some money and deal with the issue. Many of the cases that the People's Commission[167] heard, Lavasa settled them and now those disputes don't exist."[168]

While many villagers attempted to address these issues on their own through the court or through settlements, a small and vocal group joined hands with the NAPM. The NAPM mobilised a number of (mostly *adivasi*) residents of (largely but not solely) Mugaon village (the village with the largest *adivasi* population) to engage in highly visible collective protest, demanding that lands be returned to the people they

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[164] L5 interview, 10/10/2012.
[165] D1 interview, 20/01/2013.
[166] D1 interview, 20/01/2013.
[167] The People's Commission was set up by a number of prominent civil society members and the NAPM in October 2008 to investigate land deals and displacement due to twelve dams and Lavasa in the Western Ghats region. They produced a report in 2009 that outlined key concerns.
[168] C1 interview, 04/04/2012.

had been stolen from, and they did so with some successes.[169] The NAPM's collective action prospects were thwarted by the murkiness of the land transactions and the difficulty in determining who was telling the truth about being defrauded and who was merely trying to get their land back to re-sell their lands at higher prices.[170] The verification of facts in this instance was extremely difficult and required a statutory body to conduct an investigation on a case-by-case basis to determine whether indeed, land theft had indeed taken place.[171] As an activist explained:

> "Between 2000-2004 whatever happened in terms of land transactions was very dubious, so we cannot really say that people themselves have sold that land or if the company has forged those documents. It is very difficult to tell and there is a very thin line to demarcate the two."[172]

In keeping with their ideological resolve, which is committed to resisting neoliberalism and the resultant dispossession and displacement (due to factories, enclosures, SEZs), the NAPM organised protests in Lavasa, Pune, Mumbai, and Delhi, reported frauds to the media, and took land matters to court. Many (though not all) of the NAPM members sought to shut down the project and have lands returned to the original landowners. While NAPM's drive to deliver justice to those who had been cheated was respected by most villagers, including who had not participated in the movement, their larger aim of destabilising and halting the project was not as widely appreciated. Many villagers opined that since they had already sold their land, and LCL was now the rightful owner, even if the project stalled, the land would not be returned to them (unlike if the lands had been acquired using eminent domain). In such circumstances they were better off with the project continuing:

> "If they (NAPM) do it for the rights of the poor and the adivasis, it is all right. But if they talk about shutting down the company, obviously we are not going to support them. It is about our survival, we have no other option. Today, even

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[169] The NAPM filed a series of court cases, including 17 cases against Lavasa for purchasing *adivasi* land. They won 2 cases (in 2012) where lands were returned back to the government for reallocation to the *adivasis*.

[170] The NAPM's position on land purchase and acquisition has not been of negotiating better compensation. Rather, it holds the view that farmers must not sell their lands as it both impoverishes their assets and impacts their long term livelihoods.

[171] C3 interview, 08/10/2013.

[172] C4 interview, 18/04/2012.

if these people (LCL), have us by their foot on our neck, at least they give us our daily bread."[173]

Consequently, while there were attempts to generate collective action against Lavasa on issues of land, protest around land was largely muted and restricted to one village (Mugaon), where it revolved around the issue of *adivasi* and ceiling lands. In the case of the former, the sale of *adivasi* lands to non-*adivasis* is prohibited by law. In the case of ceiling lands, lands that had at one point been redistributed to the villagers as part of land reform, could not be transferred without appropriate permissions from the Collector. Thus, unlike private lands, for which sales were permitted without any special permissions, for ceiling and *adivasi* lands, the legality of the purchases were questionable due to guarantees the government provided to landholders in law. Therefore, resistance organised by NAPM took on a caste dimension because it was relatively easier to dispute *adivasi* land than agricultural land (discussed in Chapter Six). Indeed a number of non-*adivasi* informants were under the impression that the NAPM worked exclusively for *adivasis*. Consequently, little collective action took place around privately purchased lands (the vast bulk of the lands in the area), which largely belonged to those who were neither *adivasi* nor scheduled caste. Although the process of land assembly was a "silent process" of the kind that Vijayabaskar (2010) observed in Tamil Nadu, it is not, as he argues "secured more through a process of consent than coercion" (2010: 42).

Finally, almost all present literature on the topic of land assembly in India refers to instances where the state has played a significant role in forcibly acquiring land from farmers. It focuses on describing the events as instances of 'accumulation by dispossession' in order to shed light on the processes of capitalism in general. The act of forcible transfer of lands from peasants to industries/corporations (in the name of public interest), lends itself easily to a narrative of dispossession. What these studies neglect, is that this narrative is not merely an academic or analytical insight into the changing politics of land, rather it is also politically used as a critique of state policy and its support for land acquisition. The critique is a powerful one, one that unequivocally accuses governments of supporting the interest of capital at

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[173] Dh1 interview, 13/12/2012.

the expense of farmers, and one that has deep resonance in contemporary Indian politics. Indeed, the head of LCL's land acquisitions demonstrated an awareness of the political strength of such critique:

> "There are so many baseless allegations against this project, now if you go for land acquisition, whatever claims people like Medha Patkar are making, are still strengthened because of forcible acquisition by government machinery. So we want to keep out of that actually. That is the biggest reason we don't want to resort to typical land acquisition."[174]

Political opposition to land acquisition has often been framed as an 'opposition to dispossession' and state governments have been forced to engage with farmers on this issue. The private land assembly process not only generated different outcomes for different people it also derived partial legitimacy from the fact that villagers had at least in theory consented to selling lands and had chosen to do so. The political argument then that this necessarily amounted to dispossession was substantially weakened. In the face of a litany of brokers and unverifiable facts around land transactions, the NAPM and the villagers could not effectively critique the project as being one that dispossessed people (as they have successfully done in other instances).

In summary, this protracted land purchase had a number of effects, all of which further served the process of land assembly. First, while the local community often expressed land grievances, the particular dynamics of private land assembly prevented sustained land-related collective action from taking place. Land conflicts became an issue to be addressed within the private and domestic realm as a problem of making bad deals, instead of a collective problem seen as an issue of structural injustice (as is seen under context of land acquisition). Second, the use of courts, though difficult and uncommon, became the only (and individualised) avenue for action. Third, those who had already sold some land became invested in the project's functioning. Finally, NAPM's politically salient critique of dispossession was disrupted by the consent with

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[174] L5 interview, 10/10/2012.

which some villagers had sold their land. Thus, despite some land-related complaints, the market process in effect brokered relative peace in favour of LCL.

5.3. Conclusion: Land Markets and Dispossession

The Indian state has long acquired lands for development projects such as dams, factories, towns etc. With the emergence of SEZs, large infrastructure projects, and large-scale agriculture, the issue of 'land grabs' has regained its prominence (Sampat, 2010; Zoomers, 2010; Deininger, 2011; Gardner, 2012; Shrivastava and Kothari, 2012; Sud, 2014a, 2014b). The political salience of land acquisition is exemplified by the recent redrafting of the colonial Land Acquisition Act (1894) into the Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation, and Resettlement Act (2013), which places greater requirements of consent, dictates that compensation must be four times that of registered market value, and outlines rules for rehabilitation of project-affected people. In the run-up to this bill, the issue of whether the state should intervene in instances where companies opt to purchase land directly from landowners generated much public debate. In this instance, can market purchase, which, at least in theory, is voluntary, be a viable alternative and with what consequences?

I have shown in this chapter that, unlike many other projects that used eminent domain acquisition, LCL could more or less successfully assemble their large land parcel with little sustained political resistance. This was made possible in part by the historical specificity of the land under question (the effects of the Varasgaon Dam). Although the state withheld its powers of eminent domain, it assisted the company by creating the conditions under which this rural population was sparse, effectively fragmented, partially urbanised, and disconnected from agriculture. As I have shown, this land market did not simply exist, but it was actively produced by the state (through policies and politicians), and made to work by a whole host of intermediaries. The presence of intermediaries, producing and leveraging conditions of asymmetric information, ensured that the odds were heavily stacked against most villagers. To that effect, Sud (2014a: 594) points to the importance of looking beyond the "powerful transnational and national actors" participating in land grabs. Similarly, a recent literature on India highlights the importance of local intermediaries in the making of urban space/real estate projects (Baka, 2013; Gururani, 2013; Levien,

2013; Sud, 2014a). This chapter contributes to that literature by not only showing that intermediaries are important to the functioning of land markets and the production of urban space, but also by examining the kinds of social and political effects that their presence produces. The production of this future city conceals its reliance on agrarian structures and the particular spatial history of the land.

Bardhan warns us that "the land market in India is not like any other market of economics textbooks, and it often involves the manipulation and strong-arm tactics of land speculators and the land mafia in collusion with the politicians" (2011: n.p.). This leads us to ask, whether we can think of private land assembly as a form of land grab resulting in dispossession. Levien argues that a land grab is "an extra-economic process," enabled by a "broker state" through political, legal and violent forces, and that "it only makes sense to talk about a 'grab' when land is expropriated using means other than voluntary market purchase" (Levien, 2011: 436). However, in this chapter, I have problematised the idea of "voluntary market purchase" to show that 'grabs' can take place even with consent. Agrarian studies have long shown that economic processes can compel farmers to selling their lands if they are in debt, or for survival. In practice it is difficult to untangle what is voluntary and what is coerced, as the conditions for voluntary sales can be heavily stacked against villagers; an eminent threat may induce a voluntary exchange, and fraud may blur the lines between voluntary and coerced.

Dispossession – "to deprive someone of land, property, or other" (OED, 2013) – implies force and deliberate action but does not necessarily suggest the nature of that force. One could argue therefore, that in a world of constrained choices and asymmetric information, voluntary sale of land can in fact result in dispossession. In some instances, those affected by such projects part with their land based on promises of resettlement, employment, and other markers of 'development.' In others instances they sell at greatly deflated prices without any knowledge of what is to come. Compliance to sell does not necessarily signal consent or support for the project, or constitute a mere rational economic decision, and it can still be seen as an instance of dispossession.

But equally, one cannot assume that all consent to sell is necessarily dispossession. Just as there are instances of villagers being defrauded or coerced into selling lands under grossly asymmetric information, there are also instances where villagers articulated selling their lands directly to LCL. This enabled them to gain a foothold in another (often urban) economy, and/or substantially better their own economic conditions (despite the bittersweet knowledge that, had they held on to their land they could have commanded higher prices). Of course not all villagers consented with full knowledge of the project. But a sizeable number of villagers did see opportunity to make large amounts of money quickly through the burgeoning local land market.

It is precisely this space of interpretation – whether the choice to sell was a 'real' choice or not – that renders opposition to private land assembly difficult. In the absence of clear facts demonstrating theft, the NAPM, even in their opposition to the project, had to grapple with the very real possibility that villagers had sold the land of their own volition. Irrespective of whether the choice was made under duress, the absence of forcible acquisition prevented the politically powerful critique of dispossession, one that the NAPM has invoked with resounding success in many other instances. It was no longer a simple case of peasantry vs. capital/state but rather individual cases of fraud and theft, which could only be addressed in court. The NAPM could not therefore confront it in ways that it was used to, through a thoroughgoing critique of the state, its policies of dispossession, and its use of force. For those who sold their lands, it was not merely handsome compensation or a tailor-made rehabilitation package but the complex processes that the intermediaries, sometimes with political power, unleashed as they swept through these villages. But, as we shall see in the next chapter, this market process generated some unexpected effects for the project.

Chapter Six

Life in Lavasa: Holding Out for Inclusion

As you descend past the breathtaking viewpoints, down the winding road and into the Varasgaon valley you are confronted with an intentionally European-looking town. With red, orange and yellow buildings flanking the town centre's wide waterfront promenade, Dasve's architecture conveys both the grandness of Lavasa's vision and the quaintness of its spirit. Adjacent to the town hall is an ochre building, vernacular in style; with its façade weathered by the monsoon and a tin shack flanking its outer wall, it betrays Dasve's faux-Italian aesthetic. Bustling with activity, it houses a *dhaba* (eatery), a small grocery store, a flourmill, and some rental accommodation. Despite its central location, this property does not belong to LCL but to Shankar Margale, Dasve's most prosperous holdout.

Shankar Margale, a member of the *dhangar*[175] community, is doing well economically. He withstood the land purchase process (described in Chapter Five) and retained possession of some of his centrally located plots. His property now forms a hub for a multitude of budget tourists, students, car and bus drivers, villagers, and land agents, who step in for a quick bite, a cup of tea, or a packet of cigarettes. The businesses housed here and on nearby tracts generate substantial rental revenue every month.

As briefly discussed in Chapter Five, LCL was unable to purchase each and every landholding within the area demarcated for the hill station. Under similar circumstances elsewhere (e.g. in many SEZs), the state's powers of eminent domain would have been invoked to forcibly expropriate land from such holdouts. However, since the GoM did not extend this favour to LCL, holdouts are present all across Lavasa and some, epitomised by Shankar Margale, are highly visible. Furthermore, Lavasa is not planned as a gated community; rather, its aims reflect the desire to build a new city, which is both inclusive and profitable. Thus, Shankar's case impels

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[175] The *dhangar* community is a traditional nomadic pastoral community from Maharashtra. They have been classified as a nomadic tribe and have recently sought to be re-classified as a Scheduled Tribe.

us to ask a number of connected questions: how and with what effects have rural communities (specifically the holdouts) been thrown into and shaped city-making? If Lavasa indeed aims to be an 'inclusive city', as discussed in Chapter Four, then how, if at all, and on what terms are these holdouts included in the city? What are the consequences of holdouts, like Shankar Margale, for Lavasa's plan?

Fig 6.1: Shankar Margale's property in Dasve, Lavasa

Source: Author (2012)

This chapter argues that while LCL does have plans to build an inclusive city – one with affordable services and a corporate social responsibility programme – its idea of inclusion is premised on LCL retaining control over land. Therefore, in LCL's conception, the holdouts (as land owners) are an aesthetic, planning, and security liability. These holdouts are heterogeneous, spanning caste and class, and have different relationships with the company. While they pose a challenge for the company in terms of planning and resistance, they also politically legitimise the project: their existence is invoked by LCL as testimony to the lack of coercion/use of violence in the land purchase process and as an affirmation of LCL's ideology of development. Furthermore, in finding themselves amidst a city building project, some holdouts provide affordable services to others while creating livelihoods for themselves, ironically making real the possibility of inclusion. I show that it is through their propertied citizenship, and not their plan-based inclusion or the power of their

vote, that they are able to lay claim to the city. I further argue that they are in good measure responsible for the project surviving multiple legal and political contestations. Thus, while the holdouts prevent LCL from executing its plan in some measure, paradoxically, it is their presence that allows the plan to at least partially succeed.

Section 6.1 lays out LCL's plan for inclusion and how it has been conceptualised to include villagers and holdouts. Section 6.2 describes the different kinds of holdouts that currently reside within Lavasa and their relationship to the city. Section 6.3 examines the effects of their presence on LCL's plans. It argues that while the holdouts resist the project they also ultimately embolden it, albeit in paradoxical ways. Section 6.4 concludes by reconceptualising the holdout and rethinking ideas of inclusion, planning, and resistance in contemporary India.

6.1. Planning for Inclusion

Scholars have argued that comprehensive master planning is often exclusionary to the poor (Rao, 2006; Benjamin, 2008; Holston, 2008), this is because master planning in India is largely controlled by development authorities that often "promote a very restrictive form of land development", regulate economic activity, and protect "the interests of elite groups who compete with poor groups to access productive locations and public resources" (Benjamin and Bhuvaneshwari, 2001: 1). Furthermore, given that bureaucrats rather than democratically elected representatives often control such organisations, the urban poor's avenues to influence planning processes are arguably constrained (Benjamin, 2008). Master plans reflect the dominant ideology of political power by constituting what is formal and informal, and determining what lies within the plan and is in violation of it. Thus, the areas that fall outside the ambit or the rules of the plan often become sites where the urban poor, sometimes through insurgence (Holston, 2008) and occupation (Benjamin, 2008), stake their claims to the city. It is precisely this insurgence and occupation that simultaneously allows claims of citizenship to be made and also constitutes 'planning failure'.

As discussed in Chapter Two, recent scholarship on Indian cities has emphasized the growing power of the private sector as well as the middle class in restructuring and remaking urban space (Baviskar, 2003; Chatterjee, 2004; Fernandes, 2006; Goldman, 2010; Ghertner, 2011). The private sector has gone beyond the mere provision of urban infrastructure and services to planning and visioning urban spaces, often creating settlements that cater to the elite at the exclusion of the poor. In a similar vein, middle class urban movements often frame their discourse through rights as "consumer citizens" (Fernandes, 2004) and "such reform movements devalorize the citizenship of those who are poor and property-less" (Roy, 2007: xxxiii). Indeed, a large body of scholarship points to how planning and urban governance in India, whether in the domain of the state, the middle class, or the private sector, is largely exclusionary to the poor.

While there is considerable literature to demonstrate that post-liberalisation urban and rural development is exclusive, splintered, takes place in enclaves, marginalises the poor and therefore generates resistance, this literature misses a key facet of contemporary Indian planning. Roy suggests that, "the story of Indian cities is more than that of splintering urbanism and secessionary citizenship" (Roy, 2011: 265). Rather, it is "engendered through claims of integration, public interest, and urban democracy. It is a reclaiming of the city, of the urban commons, rather than a retreat to gated enclaves" (Roy, 2011: 265). Accordingly, "the idea of the 'inclusive city' has for some time now held sway in official and development circles" (Gootu, 2011: 36). New forms of urban development therefore seek to include the poor; what are the terms of this inclusion and what are its effects?

This section shows how inclusion is conceptualised within Lavasa's plan. As outlined in Chapter Four, although Lavasa (Lake Town as it was then) was initially conceptualised as a real estate venture both through government policy and in its own plans, as time passed the vision for the project expanded. LCL insisted that unlike Amby Valley and other exclusive townships, Lavasa would not be a gated community but a profitable and "inclusive" city for the "entire socio-economic spectrum" (LCL, 2009: n.p.). While many critics have asserted that this is a mere public relations exercise, I take LCL's claim seriously, treating a privately planned inclusive city as an empirical phenomenon with social consequences in order to

examine what it means for a city premised on private property to be inclusive. I lay out how such inclusive planning proposes to incorporate villagers (including holdouts) and not just those (largely middle-class/elite) citizens it hopes to attract from elsewhere.

As discussed in Chapter Four, LCL's physical, business and governance plans are founded on its authority as a private property owner and its total control over the demarcated land area. The business plan is premised on the ability of LCL to leverage private property to generate short term revenue from selling and leasing real estate, and medium and long term revenue from annuities and service delivery. Therefore, one of the prime goals of its development plan is to "encourage private initiative in city development by supportive measures to make the project adequately remunerative" (Lavasa SPA, 2012: 31). LCL's plans for inclusion are therefore circumscribed by its need to maintain control over its property and generate profits.

Equally important is LCL's goal to make Lavasa an inclusive city. This goal finds expression in Lavasa's Development Plan, which aims "to ensure social and economic inclusivity by facilitating creation of diversified economic activities, housing and social facilities" (Lavasa SPA, 2012: 31). Therefore, inclusivity in Lavasa is premised on the provision of city services and amenities at a range of price points, and LCL conceptualises its residents as "consumer-citizens" (LCL, 2009: n.p.):

> "*[Lavasa is] supposed to cater to all people, and when you cater to all people you need something at all price points. So we thought we need something for everyone right from a driver to a CEO and everything in between. Obviously you have to create a business model that works, given the cost of construction and the cost of land… so when we went looking for partners we wanted a portfolio that covered the spectrum… restaurants, shopping… again we looked at all the price points – so you have your wada pav and all your fancy restaurants and everything else in between. We've followed this principle in everything: we have affordable housing for those working in Lavasa who can't afford to buy a villa and even when we launched real estate sales we started at a INR 10 lakh (USD 20,000) price point for a studio. So there was something at every 10 lakhs, and we have*

maintained that."[176]

With an indigenous population of 3129 villagers (Census, 2011) and an anticipated steady-state population of 240,000 by 2020 (LCL, 2014), Lavasa is and will be a city of migrants. The planners projected the demographic characteristics of Lavasa's population based on observed trends in Mumbai and Pune, as well as hill stations within Maharashtra. They assumed one "non-residing servant" per four apartments, three residing servant employees per one-acre villa (Lavasa SPA, 2012: 43), and made similar projections for labour involved in commercial businesses. LCL aims to have a workforce participation rate of 35 per cent and generate jobs for 96,706 people by 2021 (Lavasa SPA, 2012: 45). Housing will be built based on these projections. For instance, the Development Plan assumes that 57 per cent of households will be from the 'Low Income Group' (those households with a monthly income of less than INR 20,000 (USD 400)) and accordingly, 57 per cent of housing units (21,796 of 38,081 units) will be built for this demographic group. Therefore, individuals who fall within the lower income group could become property owners in Lavasa. In discussions, LCL employees often boasted about the affordability of their housing stock relative to other Indian cities. Furthermore, LCL also developed workforce housing and a rental housing strategy in order to create "a truly inclusive and cosmopolitan hill station" (Lavasa SPA, 2012: x).

For all its talk of inclusion and cosmopolitanism, the 'Lavasa Citizen's Guide', in keeping with the rules of building societies/resident welfare associations/gated communities, reflects some prevalent Indian middle-class attitudes towards domestic workers. The handbook recommends that "Servants and Drivers employed by the citizens" (LCL, 2012a: 6) should be registered with security and that "exposure of cash and valuables" should "be avoided in front of servants". In fact "close supervision of servants/maid servants" is advised as "casual supervision/over-confidence may lead to pilferages (small quantity theft sometimes difficult to realize at that point of time)" (LCL, 2012a: 7). These are characteristic middle-class tropes of petty crime, security, and the 'untrustworthiness' of servants (Falzon, 2008; Waldrop, 2008).

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[176] L7 interview, 21/08/2012

Most striking however, is that villagers are seldom, if ever, referred to as citizens of Lavasa. Both interviews and company documents revealed a separation in semantics and imagination between the villagers and the future citizens of Lavasa. Accordingly, the needs of the villagers are addressed through a distinct Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) unit (which was recently renamed Community Development). While some members of the LCL team were cognisant of and often troubled by the separation between city development and community development, hinting that eventually CSR should and would fall away, official documents maintained the distinction:

"We *stopped calling it CSR because CSR is completely different. We resumed calling it Community Development because that is what it is. And he (the Community Development Officer) has a very good relationship with the sarpanches and many other village leaders. To a large degree he acts as an ombudsman for them. He helps us deliver messages and deliver programmes but also takes information back to them. He helps them if someone needs a job, places them in a job that fits their skills, and helps them with other problems they have. I think we have a long way to go in this relationship. Unfortunately, some of the less altruistic NGOs in this country have convinced villagers that a relationship with a corporate is just 'see what you can get', that it is fundamentally visceral. I think, and it is not just my view but also the chairman's view, that if their quality of life improves, it is good for us; it is not just good for them but also good for us. We would eventually like to see some of these gaothans[177] go away because they don't need to be separate, because their quality of life has come up so much that they can be regular functioning members of Lavasa."* [178]

The quote above is instructive. It reveals that LCL's relationship with villagers, whether named CSR or not, is conceptualised as CSR – a set of programmes undertaken in order to "*improve lifestyles*"[179] that in the long run are also beneficial to LCL. The CSR programme today includes a whole host of services, activities, and

[177] *Gaothan* – A portion of the village used for settlement as defined by the Maharashtra Land Revenue Code, 1966.
[178] L8 interview, 12/07/2012.
[179] L3 interview, 12/07/2012.

employment opportunities; including a crèche for children, an English-medium school run by an international charity called 'Cristel House', provision of school uniforms and materials, medical check-ups, vocational training, contract employment, construction of temples in various villages, water tanks (in the absence of tap water), and a "superstition eradication campaign" (Lavasa SPA, 2011: 104). The concern, as articulated by another LCL employee, was that if villagers were not able to integrate into Lavasa, it would "*lead to bad relations*", affecting the project in the long run. Furthermore, ensuring "*cordial relations*" would prevent "*hurdles*" while executing plans; should there be a "*road blockage*" such a relationship would *"be able to resolve"* the issue.[180] This view is consistent with the business rationale for CSR, which argues that taking care of villagers is not merely a social responsibility but also makes economic sense. First, it can improve the reputation of the firm, which translates into eventual profits. Second, should there be an accident/dispute, CSR can preserve the corporations' ability to continue working within the community. Third, a buy-in from locals at an early stage prevents larger and costlier hurdles for the corporation in the future (Welker, 2006). Lavasa's CSR programme is headed by an experienced CSR officer (previously employed by Tata in Singur) and its activities are held up as symbols of not only the sincerity of LCL's (somewhat paternalistic) good intentions but also as proof that LCL brought 'progress' to the villagers, who, as the quote above demonstrates, are still not "*functioning members of Lavasa*".[181]

But LCL's idea of inclusion does not encompass the myriad ways in which inclusion is practiced (for better or worse) in India today. For instance, it does not include affirmative action quotas (reservation quotas) and is not governed by a democratically elected local government. In fact the CSR engagement takes place primarily through interactions between the CSR official and a committee (*nagrik vikas sangh)[182]* that is largely composed of male village elites such as the *sarpanches* and other educated villagers. This committee meets on an ad hoc basis to discuss mutual concerns and many informants felt that it only discussed issues that directly benefited the village elite. While many activities can be justified under CSR, certain activities "are more amenable than others", therefore, "investing in villagers who

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[180] L3 interview, 12/07/2012.
[181] L8 interview, 12/07/2012.
[182] L3 interview, 12/07/2012.

secure" a firm's ability to operate within the area makes more sense than investing in villagers with little influence (Welker, 2006: 368).

More importantly, it is clear that LCL's idea of inclusion did not (at least at the outset of the project) include the possibility of villagers leveraging their own private property or receiving joint development rights, as has been the case in a handful of other large-scale projects.[183] This reflects a long-standing bias in Indian urban planning that conceptualises inclusion in terms of housing rather than as access to a productive location/inclusion in the urban economy (Benjamin and Bhuvaneshwari, 2011). LCL's vision for inclusive development is premised on their own exclusive ownership of private property. According to their Development Plan:

> "Availability of developable land in a contiguous manner is a further challenge. LCL has devised strategies such as obtaining right of way agreements to make available contiguous land especially for infrastructure works such as roads, transmission lines, sewerage network etc. As the development of [the] first phase, namely Dasve, is taking shape owners are reluctant to sell land and in other areas are demanding [an] unreasonable price. The LCL plans to devise strategies of involving the land owners in the development process so that the last tranche of lands are easily available." (Lavasa SPA, 2012: 119)

Therefore, it is only when LCL is unable to buy land from the holdouts and they have the capacity to demand an "unreasonable price" that they are offered joint development rights.[184] The proportion of joint agreements remains small, for reasons that will be discussed in the next section.[185]

LCL's plan therefore represents a trade-off between private property ownership and

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[183] Under the Gujarat government Town Planning Scheme, land is acquired from farmers and pooled, areas for public infrastructure are delineated and the remaining area is reconstituted into developed plots and returned to landowners. Under this scheme, existing landowners remain landowners of smaller but higher value plots than before. Similar schemes of joint-ownership or joint development rights have been instituted in, for example, Mahindra World City, Rajasthan and Magarpatta City, Pune.

[184] L5 interview, 10/10/2012.

[185] Data on the exact number of acres under joint agreement is unavailable. From Figure 5.1 we can estimate it to be less than 10 per cent of the total purchasable land area.

a certain kind of inclusion. Its ownership of property is central to its ability to ensure profits and govern the city. That is to say, its right to control, develop, and govern springs from its authority as a land-owner, as the Special Planning Authority (SPA) only controls those parts of the project already owned by LCL (discussed in Chapter Four). Therefore, the holdouts pose an interesting planning problem; while they are firmly located within Lavasa's plan area, LCL is unable to develop these parcels in keeping with their plan. According to LCC the holdouts could pose numerous problems: they could build "illegal structures" which would not "conform" to the Hill Station Regulation, they could become free riders, they might not have any "regard for beautification", their presence would make pollution difficult to control, and finally, they might "compromise aspects" of "security and law and order" as the "sense of security" would be "diluted by unregulated development in isolated pockets" (LCC, 2003: 3). The holdouts were conceptualised, at least initially, as a threat with the potential for plan violation – as an aesthetic, security and legal liability. Consequently, LCL continues to attempt to buy out the holdouts.

In summary, in juggling its dual project goals of profit and governance, LCL's plans for inclusion were confined to providing services to, and job opportunities for, villagers, rather than making them equal partners in the development process. While LCL includes villagers and future lower income migrants in its plans, these groups are conceptualised as beneficiaries of CSR programmes and future urban homeowners (buying their 'low income' apartments from LCL). Therefore, the villagers' inclusion does not come from their own land ownership, their democratic rights as citizens, or their right to the city. By refusing to become merely consumers and beneficiaries in their privatised city, the holdouts contest the very terms of the Development Plan.

6.2. The Holdouts

Who are these holdouts and what is their relationship to the city? The holdouts can be roughly categorised into three groups: the first consists of villagers who own land that can be legally sold (with or without the District Collector's permission) but who have chosen not to sell some or all of it. Some of these villagers are local residents, others live elsewhere but retain possession of their land. The second group consists

of *adivasis* and *dhangar* communities, which are prohibited from selling their *adivasi* and/or ceiling lands under the Maharashtra Land Revenue Code, 1966. As detailed in Chapter Five, many *adivasi* and ceiling lands are under dispute, as some brokers purchased them illegally and eventually transferred them to LCL. These families retain occupancy of their land, although in some instances they do not possess clear land titles. Furthermore, many of them are members of the NAPM. The third group consists of intermediaries/ investors from outside the area who purchased land in the region as speculative investments. These investors do not reside within the area earmarked for Lavasa and are absent from the day-to-day functioning of the city, therefore, they will not be discussed in this chapter. For the first two groups, land ownership significantly determines the relationship of village communities to LCL. A brief description of the village communities (and holdouts) is required in order to proceed.

According to the 2011 census, the 18 villages within Lavasa have a total population of 3129 (692 households). Most families (96 per cent according to Aparna Tamhankar and Associates (2012)) have resided in the area for more than 25 years. The extant population is predominantly Maratha and 14 per cent are members of scheduled tribes (*adivasi*) (444 individuals) (Census, 2011). A third (157) of the latter reside in the village of Mugaon and 117 across Dasve, Bhoini, Koloshi and Dhamanol, all of which are part of Phase 1 of Lavasa. The remaining 170 live in the villages that are part of Phase 4 of the project (Census, 2011).

Not all villagers sold their entire landholding to LCL or intermediaries and therefore approximately 56.5 per cent of them were landowners in 2012 (Aparna Tamhankar and Associates, 2012). The size of their landholdings varies, as do the number of owners per holding (many parcels were jointly owned by more than six people). Table 6.1 summarises the distribution of land ownership in the project area in 2012 showing that 75 per cent of resident families were either landless or owned less than an acre of land, and approximately 6 per cent were large landowners with holdings greater than 10 acres. It is important to note that these lands are in different categories, such as ceiling and agricultural land. The landless population is referred to as 'landless villagers' for the rest of the chapter. Some members of this group have historically been landless while others became landless by selling all their land either

to an intermediary or to LCL.[186] Approximately 40 families (from the latter group) were resettled within the project area and were provided with employment, housing, and basic services in keeping with LCL's CSR plan (LCL, 2014).

Table 6.1: Percentage of village population by land holding size across Lavasa's three phases

Phase	Landless	< 1 acre	1-5 acres	5-10 acres	> 10 acres
Phase 1	42.75	20.39	26.67	5.49	4.71
Phase 2	51.43	19.59	19.18	6.12	3.67
Phase 3	36.36	18.18	30.58	4.55	10.33

Source: Aparna Tamhankar and Associates (2012)

As discussed in Chapter Five, a large proportion of the land purchases had taken place by 2003 before LCL (in its current form) took control over the project. The percentage of holdouts varied drastically by village (see Figure 5.1 and Figure 6.2); areas where land purchase began over a decade ago (e.g. Dasve, Mugaon, Koloshi, and Dhamanol) have fewer holdouts than those areas marked for Phase 4 of the project (e.g. Bhode, Varasgaon). In many villages, such as Bhoini and Varasagaon, the number and pattern of holdouts in 2010 did not differ substantially from that in 2003, indicating that those who held out in 2003 continued to do so even in 2010 (Figure 6.2). However, LCL has had more success in villages within Phase 1 of the project, presumably because it is purchasing land with tenacity given its urgent need; the holdout area in Dasve declined substantially between 2003 and 2010. Moreover, some holdouts only sold a portion of their landholding to LCL, others preferred to enter into development agreements rather than out-right sale.

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[186] As discussed in Section 3.3.1, a major shortcoming of this thesis is its treatment of the landless population within the Lavasa project area. This gap exists in great part because by the time fieldwork was undertaken, many historically landless families had already left the area. The remaining population of landless villagers were largely those who had sold their lands to LCL.

Figure 6.2: Land Ownership in Dasve and Bhoini in 2003 and 2010

DASVE 2003 2010

BHOINI 2003 2010

Legend:
- Land holding belonging to holdout
- Unkown Status
- Land holding belonging to LCL
- Land holding under joint agreement
- Forest Land
- Forest-like Land
- Water

1 km

N
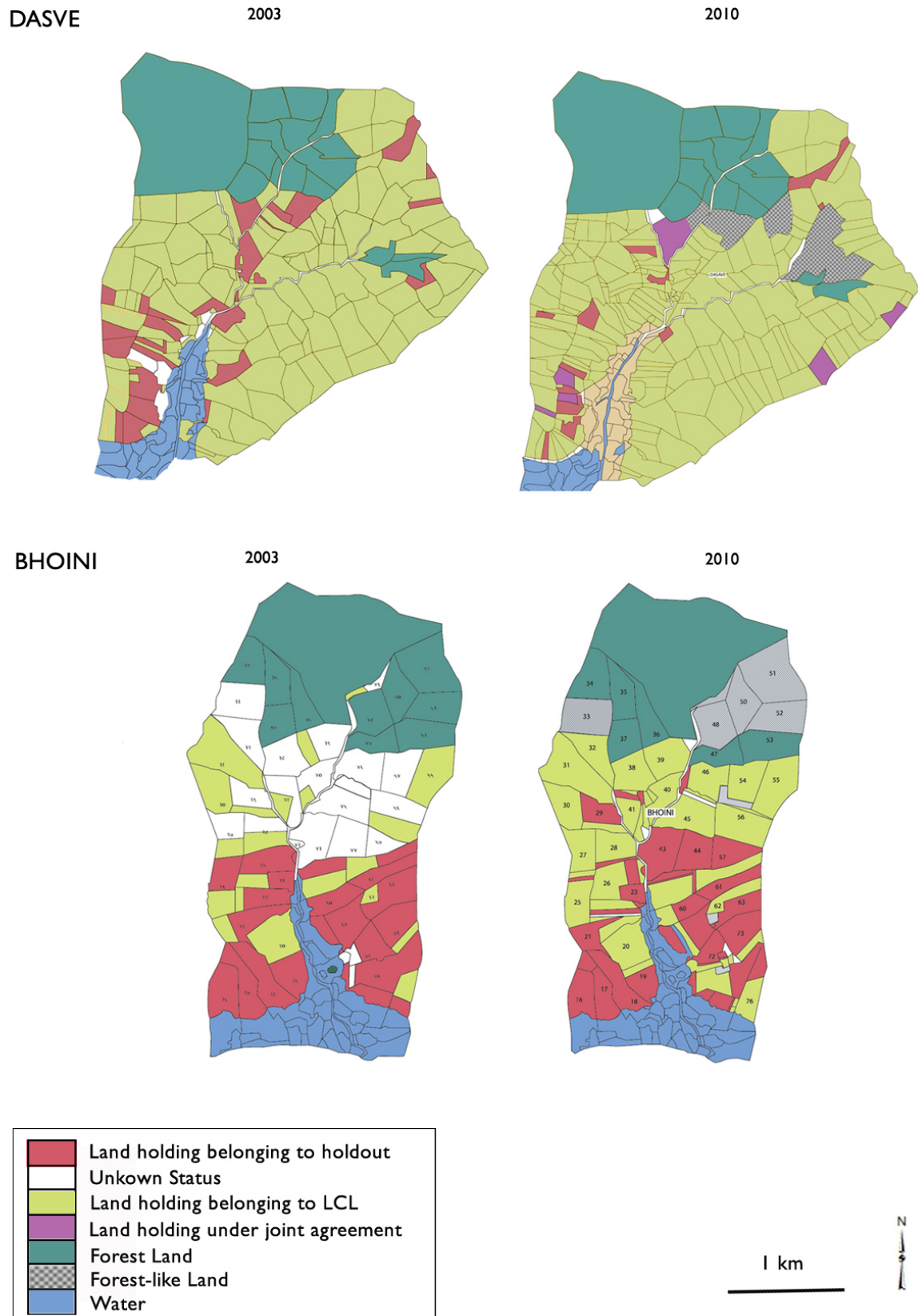
Source: Adapted by author from LCC (2003) and Lavasa SPA (2012)

6.2.1. Holdouts as Speculators

Unsurprisingly, the ability to hold out reflects both class and caste privilege. Many *sarpanche*s for instance, are aggregators and large holdouts themselves, owning land in prime locations. For instance, one deputy *sarpanch* (from the upper-caste Maratha community) retained a large plot along the main road. That said, Shankar Margale and his wife (who belong to the *dhangar* community) have been deputy *sarpanch* and *sarpanch* of Dasve for the last two local elections, revealing that holding out and political power do not always map neatly onto caste.

All holdouts interviewed had sold some land to LCL or an intermediary. These slow yet constant sales are partially indicative of the land game that the villagers were engaging in. As discussed in Chapter Five, while early sales were made, at least in retrospective assessment, largely due to ignorance, the desire to make money, or to escape debt. Sales that took place after the city was built were much more measured and carefully considered. Unsurprisingly, as people became aware of the project and the economic climate of Pune district changed, fewer and fewer people agreed to sell; land sales more or less came to a halt in 2010 when the project came under duress. Many large landowners sold off their lands gradually, demanding higher and higher prices as the project became more visible. All informants were quick to point out just how steeply land prices had risen and irrespective of age, gender and caste, were fully aware of what current land prices were. Furthermore, the holdouts were cognisant of the Master Plan and strategically held on to some pieces of land over others. Some quotes (all from Maratha respondents but from a range of class backgrounds) are instructive here:

> "I will not give my land, it has a house built on it. There is a road around there and all the land around it has been taken. If the company comes there in the future and if they need a place to store something, then I can rent it. These two pieces of land are the ones I own, two acres. As long as I am alive, I cannot sell that land. Whether my sons will sell it after that, I can't say. But I teach them the same thing too."[187]

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[187] Dh1 interview, 13/12/2012.

> *"They have plans to build 40 buildings of workforce housing in Bhoini, near our land. In Mugaon they have big plans to build malls but in Bhoini they're building for workers and storage. Next month their plans will need to be executed on our land."*[188]

> *"I had a map of all my lands and I thought that if the company surrounds me then I should have a plot of land that will not put me in difficulty; where there is water and public road access. Based on that I kept this piece of land and sold off other small parcels. I'm not going to give this land, this is the heart of Lavasa, and so I will not make the mistake of selling this land."*[189]

The above quotes illustrate that some holdouts are speculating on both their lands as well as their futures. Other holdouts with small parcels of land held on to them for cultural rather than solely speculative purposes, expressing the importance of keeping ancestral land:

> *"But we will always keep some, because it is our ancestral land. My father was born here, his father was also born here, and we will make sure to keep the land he kept for us."*[190]

Many holdouts in Phase 1 of the project set up businesses on their lands. Some built shops and restaurants to cater to the thousands of construction workers present at the site. In turn they also cater to the budget traveller, students, and taxi and bus drivers. Others leased their land to other villagers who either owned land in more remote areas or had already sold their lands.[191] On average, in 2012, the rent for a small shop was INR 2000-2500 (USD 40-50) per month, and some larger properties had up to six such tenants.[192] As with most businesses, the location of the landholding is key in determining the profitability of the venture; they are largely located on the (public/government) main road that passes through Lavasa. Those

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[188] B1 interview, 28/09/2012.
[189] D4 interview, 30/09/2012.
[190] B1 interview, 28/09/2012.
[191] A1 interview, 19/12/2012.
[192] Field notes, 16/09/2012.

holdouts with lands along the road and close to Dasve town centre generate sizeable rent revenues, especially in instances when LCL required the land. For instance, the holdout with the land across from the town hall, was rumoured to rent his land to LCL for INR 100,000 (USD 2000) per month (rent amount unverified) for the purposes of a parking lot.

Figure 6.3: Photographs of holdout properties

Source: Author (2012) – left: rental housing built by a landowner, right: liquor store in Dasve

As discussed in Chapters Four and Five, displacement due to the Varasgaon Dam resulted in a highly mobile and dispersed local population. All non-*adivasis* interviewed had at least one member of their direct family studying/working/living in Pune or Mumbai. Moreover, more than half of the male informants had worked in Mumbai or Pune in recent years. Some had had their livelihoods compromised by exclusionary urban development enforced by the state's planning apparatus. For instance, many of the elderly men I interviewed had worked for the old textile mills in Mumbai and returned to their villages after the last of the mills closed in the early 1990s.[193] Similarly, men in their thirties had worked in Mumbai as street vendors, selling clothes and other consumer items but the municipality deemed their roadside stalls illegal and closed them in the mid-2000s.[194] Thus, the 'public' city had either rendered the livelihoods of these migrants unviable and/or the conditions of the urban wage economy did not represent an avenue for upward mobility. Hearing of Lavasa's emergence, many migrants returned to their villages to find employment or to start their own businesses through the security of their land ownership. For

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[193] B2 interview, 20/01/2013.
[194] Dh1 interview, 13/12/2012.

instance, one informant's father sold some of his land to LCL in exchange for employment; the informant then moved back to Lavasa to start his own business, in order to "*be his own boss*" rather than "*someone else's slave*".[195] Similarly, Shankar Margale used to work as a security guard in Pune for a salary of INR 6000 (USD 120) per month but returned in order to set up a shop. Leveraging their rural property, these holdouts tried to do in the 'private city', what they could not do in the public one – find stable employment, start their own business, and live with the security of land tenure. Some articulated the same disenchantment with urban decay that Lavasa's marketing machinery evoked:

> "*Earlier, there was no source of income since the dam was built. We used to live in Pune for work for around 5-6 years. Since Lavasa started we moved back – my mother and father used to live here. They told me that there is some development happening and that maybe some source of income would be available… The village is the village after all. The condition of the city has become pathetic.*"[196]

As part of LCL's land sale agreement, one member of every family that sold land was entitled to a 'permanent' job in Lavasa. Since all informants had sold some land, almost every holdout family had at least one household member (more often than not a male member) employed by the company or one of its contractors. While LCL did honour their commitment, and the salaries offered were on a par with urban wages in Pune, the landless villagers repeatedly called into question the permanence of this employment. LCL hired contractors for a large proportion of the day-to-day operation of Lavasa, such as gardening, construction, road-maintenance. Villagers who had been employed by contractors, were only too acutely aware that their jobs were not indeed permanent and that the contractors could, at least in theory, hire and fire as they pleased. Levien (2013) makes similar observations for an SEZ in Rajasthan.

> "*They said they would give permanent jobs to a person from the family. There was no legal agreement – they gave jobs, but not permanent ones.*

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[195] Field notes, 15/09/2012.
[196] A2 interview, 19/12/2012.

> *The contractor can come anytime and tell us that he does not like our work and ask us to leave.*"[197]

More importantly, the permanence of their employment was predicated on the long-term success of Lavasa. The holdouts were therefore speculating not only on their future real estate values but also their future wages. If Lavasa did not succeed, then those villagers who had already sold their land would also lose their jobs. Unlike in instances of eminent domain acquisition, the lands villagers had sold would not be returned to them. In other instances, this combination of 'permanent' employment and land ownership imbued holdouts with a sense of power:

> *"I'm a local, employee and a landowner, I am also educated. I know all the rules and regulations. So they won't have the gall to fight me; I have worked for them and I know how they operate. They can't fire me and they can't take my land. They can't do anything."* [198]

Thus, those who sold and those who did not, were either by force or choice, speculating in some way or another, albeit from different positions of power.

The unwillingness of holdouts to part with land can be seen as a type of propertied resistance to the terms of the project and a gamble on land prices rising in the future. As demonstrated earlier, by the time of fieldwork, a number of such holdouts were fully aware of LCL's plans and where their own lands fell within the Master Plan. Their ambitions varied considerably but they were unwavering in their desire to retain total control over their properties and develop them independently. The tenacity of their ability to hold out is yet to be seen, as LCL moves into the next phase of development and pressure to sell mounts.

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[197] D1 interview, 20/01/2013.
[198] D4 interview, 30/09/2012.

6.2.2. Holdouts as Insurgents

Unlike the holdouts referred to above, those associated with the NAPM engaged in overt resistance against the project. In the controversy that accompanied the project, NAPM's members routinely accused LCL of theft and illegal purchase of tribal and ceiling land (as demonstrated at great length in the People's Commission Report (2009)).[199] A number of villagers in Mugaon mobilised against Lavasa through the NAPM[200]. The battles to regain control of landholdings were drawn out and involved the use of courts as well as physical occupation of the lands in questions. At the time of research (2012) seventeen *adivasi* families had contested the sales in court (all of whom were residents of Mugaon and members of NAPM)[201]: two had received rulings in their favour (SDO order 50/1 of 2011) and the remaining cases were jettisoned due to lack of documentation.[202]

These holdouts argued that their landholdings had been fraudulently transferred to an intermediary and then to LCC. Furthermore, they refused settlement or compensation, and demanded that their land title be returned. In NAPM village meetings (in which both villagers and NAPM's urban members were present), the long-term perils and implications of selling land were routinely discussed. Many of these holdouts were in agreement with the position NAPM's most prominent members that land should never be sold, regardless of the price offered: "*even if Lavasa pays you crores of rupees, barely one or two of your generations will be able to*

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[199] Mulshi and Velhe Taluka are not designated as tribal districts. Therefore, lands allotted to *adivasis* were allotted to them on the basis of being landless. Some of these *adivasis* own ceiling lands that were allotted to them by the government through the land reform process of the 1970s. Under the 1966 Revenue Act, government lands (tribal lands, ceiling lands) owned by an *adivasi* cannot be sold to non-*adivasis*. Poorly kept land records were routinely cited for the transfer of these lands from scheduled caste/*adivasi* persons to intermediaries. Many such families were employed in Lavasa as gardeners or cleaning staff.

[200] Exact numbers are difficult to provide as the number of villagers associated with the NAPM changed over time. At the time of research, I noted approximately 20 families from Mugaon village that came to NAPM meetings and filed court cases etc with the assistance of the NAPM's members in Pune.

[201] These two *adivasi* owners had proved in court that they had received the land from the government in 1972. Their lands were sold to an investor in 1997 and then again in 2000. But in 2012, the court found that this transaction was unlawful, as *adivasi* land cannot be transacted. Thus, the land was restored to the government (SDO court orders, 2011). At the time of writing, this land had not been allotted back to the *adivasi* owners.

[202] Various documents such as caste certificates and proof of land title are required in order to process such cases. As discussed in Chapter Five, these are often difficult to obtain from local government offices.

survive on it. The second generation will only just be able to survive, the third generation will not get anything".[203] One can argue that this does not necessarily have to be the case, as selling one landholding could generate enough capital to start and run businesses on other land parcels or enable families to get a foothold in the urban economy. However, the urban members of the NAPM pointed out that as *adivasis* were largely illiterate and their livelihoods were intimately connected with the land itself, selling their landholdings and becoming wage labourers in a corporate city would be tantamount to destroying their own livelihoods and dignity.[204]

The stories of four such NAPM-member holdouts: Leelabai Margale, Bandubhau Walhekar, Thumabai Walhekar, and Dhyaneshwar Shedge appeared regularly in media coverage as well as legal documents. They came to represent a different kind of holdout with an antagonistic relationship to Lavasa (in comparison to those described in the previous section). Take, for instance, the case of Leelabai Margale, a *dhangar* woman whose father-in-law had purchased 60 acres of land from a local family. According to her, some of this land (which she had now inherited) had been fraudulently transferred to an intermediary, who then sold it to LCL. LCL, now the legal owners of the land, offered to settle the matter by remunerating her but Leelabai refused to give up possession. A number of confrontations ensued, including an alleged case of arson, and threats of violence from local thugs (DNA, 05 January 2011).[205] LCL attempted to build a road through this disputed property and Leelabai blocked access by building a barricade.[206] Cases were filed in various courts and at the time of writing the matter was still ongoing. Similarly, Thumabai Walhekar, another *adivasi* woman, blocked LCL from developing a quarry and a road through her property.

Bandyabhau Walhekar's land was purchased using a fake power of attorney document by Sharada Suresh Shetty and was later transferred to LCL. With assistance from the NAPM, Walhekar managed to secure his land documents and file

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[203] Field notes, 07/12/2012.
[204] Field notes, 07/12/2012
[205] In her comparative analysis of the types of intermediaries across three states in India, Sud (2014) shows that 'musclemen' are essential to the work of intermediaries and are a regularly used last resort when holdouts refuse to sell.
[206] LCL argues that the road was in the jurisdiction of the *Zilla Parishad* and handed over for maintenance to LCL.

a police complaint, a complaint in the Tehsil office, and a court case. In a letter of complaint to the Pune superintendent of police (drafted by the NAPM) he stated "goons, instigated by the company, have force-entered into my land, have threatened to kill me at the point of gun, and have time and again blocked the road to my land and home. I tried to file a report with the police over these threats by Lavasa company at the Paud Police Station, but the police refused to take cognizance of the same and did not register an offence" (Walhekar, 2010: 2). Despite the harassment he did not surrender his land holding. The harassment of *adivasis* in collusion with the police has also been recorded in other instances. For example, in the case of Amby Valley, 36 *adivasis* filed a legal complaint with the Mumbai High Court in 1998, claiming that their lands "had been taken away and/or grabbed by Sahara; that Sahara and its employees had threatened and intimidated them (with the assistance of the sarpanches and the local Police)" (BEAG affidavit, 1998: 1). Furthermore, in that instance, the (maratha) *sarpanch* allegedly "threatened an *adivasi…*with dire consequences to his life and to his family if the *adivasis* continued to oppose the Sahara project" (BEAG affidavit, 1998: 2).

While these holdouts were at the forefront of the NAPM struggle against Lavasa, LCL employees and those villagers in support of the project unsurprisingly repeatedly questioned their narratives. However, what is relevant to this discussion is not whether their experiences are representative or the veracity of each party's claims, rather, it is the traction that these narratives received in the media and the political effects that they produced. The stories of Leelabai, Dhanyeshwar Shedge, and Bandyabhau Walhekar were and continue to be repeatedly offered up as evidence demonstrating LCL's duplicitous land buying practices and malice (Shrivastava 2011; Ganesh, 2012). They became the faces of resistance to the project. Not only did they refuse to part with their land but they also disrupted LCL's plan by preventing access to their land and by rejecting LCL's ideology of development (not participating in their CSR activities or other programmes).

No kind of inclusive plan whatsoever could bring them into LCL's fold. They are examples through which Lavasa's vision of itself as an inclusive urban development project was and continues to be challenged. This was achieved at two levels: it brought into focus the tactics used for land market transactions and furthermore, it

called into question the premise of Lavasa's development plan. These holdouts attempted to block the plan by waging a well-publicised struggle against LCL, which tarnished the project's image, and led to multiple government investigations. Such overt resistance has also been seen in many other similar mega-projects across the country and worldwide. Indeed, the NAPM has mastered and deployed such non-violent tactics of resistance over a number of decades. Behind the NAPM's resistance also lay an opposition to large-scale capitalist development, which transforms land-owning rural citizens into urban wage labourers.[207][208]

6.3. Emboldening the Plan

These highly public acts of resistance generated their own response. Trouble began to brew in 2009, when urban members of the NAPM brought media attention to the project and the associated land and environmental issues. Given both the scale of the project, the high-profile people associated with it (Ajit Gulabdhand, Sharad Pawar, Supriya Sule, and Ajit Pawar) and the prominent figures associated with the opposition (Medha Patkar and Anna Hazare), it quickly became front-page news, leading to numerous government investigations, several court cases, and an inquiry by the Comptroller Auditor General of India (CAG) in 2011. Patkar, on behalf of the NAPM, drafted multiple letters to the Chief Minister of Maharashtra (Prithviraj Chavan) and the Minister of Environment and Forests (Jairam Ramesh), who then ordered a detailed investigation into the matter in every related government department (including the Urban Development Department, Town Planning Department, Pune District Collector's Office, Forest and Revenue Department, and Irrigation Department). These departments scrutinised their records largely because of the political heft of the NAPM; a large number of government documents that I examined specifically referred to the NAPM and Medha Patkar's inquiries as being

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[207] C1 interview, 04/04/2012.

[208] The NAPM works to "bring the struggle for primacy of rights of communities over national resources, conservation and governance, decentralised democratic development and towards a just, sustainable and egalitarian society" (NAPM, 2012: n.p.). While it consistst of heterogeneous movements (both rural and urban), which draw on a range of discourses including Gandhianism, Ambedkarism, Marxism, environmentalism, and feminism (Omvedt, 1993), they are united by their "commitment to deepening democratic control over markets, productive resources, and economic development more generally" as well as their struggles against corporate and state led displacement and dispossession (Levien, 2007: 124).

the reason for the investigation.[209] Ultimately, Lavasa was stalled on environmental grounds, days before LCL was to file its Initial Public Offering on the Mumbai stock market (discussed in Chapter Seven).

LCL had anticipated a setback or two. In an interview in 2007, Ajit Gulabchand prophetically said, "I will make sure the village communities also benefit from Lavasa…when Medha Patkar comes calling, I hope they will stand by me" (Caroll, 2007: n.p.). With the project now stalled and the company losing money everyday, its strategic response was to counter the various allegations being made against LCL. To tackle these multiple problems, LCL, like many companies in similar situations, sought the assistance of villagers, asking them to testify in support of the project and its intentions. Members of the *gram panchayats* of all 18 villages signed affidavits endorsing the project.[210] Some *sarpanches* and other villagers travelled to Delhi to protest MoEF's stay order and show their support for the project. LCL requested that villagers explain their views on television and narrate their experience of 'progress', "*we told them that we needed the company. Earlier people did not even know what a mobile phone was. If any relatives passed away in Mumbai or Delhi, we wouldn't know unless someone came to inform us physically or wrote a letter*".[211]

In a twist of fate, the company began to 'need' and 'use' the villagers and the holdouts. Significantly, many of the (speculating) holdouts were held up as proof of Lavasa's fair and just land purchase practices, presented as testimony to the absence of coercive land grabbing tactics (Kishwar, 2011).[212] LCL argued that had they deployed political muscle or violence, the holdouts would not exist.[213] Furthermore, since many holdouts used their properties to set up businesses and generate livelihoods and incomes, they were displayed as examples of the ways in which Lavasa is a beneficial and inclusive project for villagers who have suffered decades of government neglect (see Kishwar, 2011: Damle, 2010). Although these holdouts

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[209] For example: Letter from Tenancy Branch to Circle Officer, 17/04/2011; Collector's note on land deals in Mugaon, 01/01/2008; Ceiling land summary letter from SDO Mawal to the Collector, 08/03/2011.
[210] This was a strategy deployed by Amby Valley too, where *sarpanches* filed an affidavit in court in support of the project. BEAG questioned the authority for *sarpanches* to speak on behalf of villagers, as the former were direct beneficiaries of the project (BEAG affidavit, 1998).
[211] B1 interview, 28/09/2012.
[212] L3 interview, 12/07/2012.
[213] L3 interview, 12/07/2012.

were not originally part of LCL's plan, ironically, they found themselves co-opted into the narrative of Lavasa's developmental story.

In effect the powerful protest of a small number of the NAPM's members (both urban members and and the holdouts that actively resisted the project), increased the power of villagers and holdouts not associated with the NAPM. While the latter were supportive of NAPM's struggle to deliver justice on the issue of land rights, they did not support the NAPM's position to shut the project down altogether. Instead, these holdouts leveraged their short-lived bargaining power to demand services such as water, electricity, education facilities and temples.[214] While the holdouts maintained control over their own private property, they were further emboldened through the political strength of the resistance demonstrated by the NAPM (in which they did not participate). As two holdouts explained:

> "*The company was shut down for a year or year and half. It was because of the movement (the NAPM) that the gram panchayat and villagers got some support. Had the NAPM not questioned Lavasa, they would have not been answerable to anyone. They would have not given rehabilitation land.*"[215]

> "*At one point, Lavasa urged the villagers to give up that entire patch of land. They sent letters to the villagers but when Medha Patkar accused them of fraud, they retracted a little bit. In exchange they offered a bullock, a house with a garden, and an acre or two of land to till in Daund. But people rejected the offer.*"[216]

The villagers used this opportunity to make demands:

> "*The authorities asked us villagers to support them, so we laid down a few conditions. There was no school, we asked them for a school for our children. Another request was regarding a water supply. And we also asked them to renovate the temple, it was made out of stone earlier and they had it*

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[214] There were reports that even in 2011, a number of villagers had still not received electricity, despite multiple requests to the company and the government (Chandawarkar and Joshi, 2011).
[215] D1 interview, 13/12/2012.
[216] Dh2 interview, 13/12/2012.

renovated. They need some support right now, so they are willing to bend backwards a bit. They need the villagers. They have to run the project here."[217]

Thus, LCL began to 'need' the landless villagers and the holdouts to demonstrate, not only their innocence, but also their intentions of creating an inclusive city. The villagers leveraged this need to ask for certain services and entitlements.

Furthermore, while some of the villagers supported the project because of the employment prospects it presented, the landowning holdouts were keen to support the project because their own property values and businesses were tied up in Lavasa's success. Ross (2000) describes the early days of Disney's Celebration experiment, in which a large proportion of its new residents (who had purchased homes) had grievances they wished to raise with the company (quality of construction, schooling, etc). He explains that despite a great many problems, the residents never took the matter to journalists, afraid that negative press coverage would lower their property values. The fear of devaluing their own homes, in which they had invested their life savings, led them to, at least outwardly, support Celebration. Property ownership in Lavasa too works in curious ways; on the one hand it may prevent the Master Plan from being executed in totality, but on the other, people's economic stake in the project made them cautious when considering the possibility of rebellion.

How do we make sense of these events? As noted in Chapters Two and Five, the lack of collective resistance to the project cannot simply be understood as support for it. Compliance can be about 'grudging resignation' or 'active ideological support', thus one cannot assume ideological support from compliance. Scott (1985) details how the ubiquitous absence of declared contestations should not be seen as a hegemonic acquiescence. It is by paying attention to the negotiations made in everyday life, to what people do *and* say, that we can see how "counterhegemonic consciousness is elaborated" (Scott, 1990: 200). If there are ideological ruptures, then what work do these ideological ruptures do?

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[217] A2 interview, 19/12/2012.

Could the holdouts be considered as enlisted in the hegemonic project of the inclusive privatised city? As Scott (1985) points out, support in action should not be equated with ideological support. While some of the holdouts were supportive of the project and the material benefits it brought, they were clear that the project was not intended for them, it was for the urban elite. The holdouts did ideologically support capitalist development, and although sympathetic to the NAPM's calls for justice and cognisant of the benefits it had brought them, they were not aligned with NAPM's development ideology[218]. They wanted to be part of Lavasa's capitalist development, not as the wage earners that LCL hoped to transform them into, but as landowners and equals. As one informant explained, "*I don't want to make any kind of agreement, or lease. I don't want to do anything with them. I will not give to them or to someone else. Whatever development I want to do, I will do by myself*".[219] Yet, not all the holdouts had the ability to remain so indefinitely:

> "*We will need to sell some, because we don't have the money to develop our entire property. So we will sell some so that we can develop 2-4 guntha. If we wanted to develop one acre properly we will need ten crores at least. So we will raise funds by selling some land. Maybe we will set up a hotel.*"[220]

Given their background, they also understood the tenuousness of their own power:

> "*Ultimately, if the company has invested so much money, it is not going to just let the project go. They aren't just going to sleep over the problem. People do*

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[218] As discussed in footnote 205, the NAPM is made up of constituent movements and draws on a range of development paradigms; therefore it would be erroneous to ascribe a single coherent development ideology to the whole of the NAPM. As Omvedt (1993) observes of 'new social movements' and Levien (2007: 122) argues, the members of the NAPM's constituent social movements are heterogenous with "not equivalent relationships to the means of production" and have "variegated negative experiences with the manifold effects of market liberalization." That said, the NAPM does resist the "hegemonic logic of neoliberalism" and depends on "the marginalised and the displaced fighting against the landed and trading classes" (Levien, 2007: 126). It sees the "need for an effective alliance to strengthen the secular ethos and struggle for development that empowers people against the hegemonic, exploitative culture associated with the terms 'privatisation' and 'liberalization'" (NAPM (1996) in Levein, 2007: 129). In this instance, the NAPM, was clear in its opposition to the existence of Lavasa – LCL's control and use of resources, the commodifiation of land and the concomitant destruction of agricultural livelihoods, privatisation, Lavasa undemocratic governance framework.
[219] D4 interview, 30/09/2012.
[220] B1 interview, 28/09/2012.

not understand this. They do not understand that they must have the necessary backing. Lavasa wouldn't be able to do this without the necessary backing… building dams and fighting in Delhi courts, they are able to do it because they can."[221]

Echoing Joan Robinson's prescient statement that it is better to be exploited by capitalism than not exploited at all, some holdouts felt that they had limited choices,

"*it is all about exploiting the villagers, and once their work is done, they will push us aside, but if the company stops functioning, we will have to go back to living in the same way that we lived earlier.*"[222]

Caught between a rock and a hard place, some felt that they had little choice but to extend their support to the project.

In summary, the various types of holdouts and villagers had, and continue to have, a number of implications for Lavasa's plan and its emergence. The investor holdouts remain a problem for Lavasa in terms of land ownership. However, they have not engaged in any political or other interference with the project. The holdouts associated with the NAPM resisted Lavasa in overt ways: they waged a sustained struggle against the project, using tactics of protest, media campaigns, and their ideological opposition to the project and all the principles that it stands for. This small group, largely lower-caste and sometimes landless, did so because they could not and did not wish to see themselves be integrated into the wage-labour of Lavasa nor did they see themselves as entrepreneurs in the privatised city. On the other hand, the other holdouts sometimes struggled to keep their lands, but understood that an oddly symbiotic relationship could form with Lavasa, if they cooperated *and* held on to their lands. Given decades of government neglect, and the exclusionary politics of both agrarian change as well as planning in other Indian cities (e.g. the harassment of vendors in Mumbai), these holdouts saw the project as their chance to engage in the propertied urban citizenship that had so far eluded them.

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[221] Dh2 interview, 13/12/2012.
[222] P1 interview, 14/12/2012.

One could suggest, using Polanyi, that this attempt to create a market utopia, which is premised on displacement from land, generated a political response in the form of a counter movement as exemplified by the NAPM. This counter movement then forced LCL to make concessions (rehabilitation, schooling, employment, etc) and ultimately re-embedded a slightly modified market utopia back into society through the support of those holdouts and villagers who are not ideologically opposed to the project. These different forms of resistance interacted with one another to ultimately embolden LCL's claim of building an inclusive city.

6.4 Conclusion: Inclusive Planning and Resistance in the Private City

This chapter sought to answer two related questions: what is the nature of integration of rural communities (holdouts in particular) into Lavasa and what are its effects? LCL's plan for inclusion, as we have seen, is centred on the poor being consumers of, and within, the city, accessing services and housing at lower price points than the middle class or elites. It sees them as recipients of benefits administered through its CSR programmes and, by and large, does not engage with them as active citizens, decision makers, or partners in the process of building the city's economy. In Lefebvre's terms, rural communities subsumed in the city's making do not have the 'right to the city'. In this regard, the holdouts are conceptualised as violations of the plan, preventing 'proper planning' from taking place.

But plans do not always unfold in predictable ways. They are open to "multiple manipulations" and "unintended outcomes", and it is a "live and lively process and a contested domain that generates unexpected collaborations and conflicts that can make the plan possible, or not" (Gururani, 2013: 121). The plan to include rural citizens in the process of city-making unravels in messy ways when a segment of the villagers (those associated with the NAPM) reject this form of inclusive development.

Here we see that there are broadly two types of holdouts, the first retain property rights and legal entitlements to their land. They are included within the plan precisely because the plan formally excludes them (as the rights of the SPA only extend to those properties that LCL owns). Although one could argue that LCL retains power

by its sheer size and economic heft, I argue that the ownership of property gives the holdouts an opportunity to negotiate with the company. The NAPM holdouts, often from a lower caste and poorly educated background, in the absence of proper documents, and in the instance of fraud, control their lands both through legal contestation and physical occupation. Their properties are included in the plan (as LCL often formally owns them) but they are excluded from the plan as individuals as they resist its very ideological project (they do not participate in schooling, or access employment). It is their counter-hegemonic resistance, as instantiated within the approach of the NAPM and made real within the framework of democratic politics in India, that further entrenches the ability of the first set of holdouts to negotiate with LCL and make claims on the city.

In exploring how different villagers and holdouts engage with Lavasa, and how their interaction with each other affects the unfolding of the project, this chapter reflects on the territorial politics of planning and resistance. First, it challenges the assumption that holdouts are a problem for planning projects. This refutation comes with the obvious caveat that if a project area has too many holdouts, then plans may indeed be thwarted. But if the number of holdouts is small enough, they can serve a positive purpose for projects given the political power of movements and litigation to block projects. Some holdouts are presented as beneficiaries of the project, as well as as examples of the lack of coercion in LCL's land purchase policy and one could postulate that their absence would have seriously compromised LCL's credibility.

Second, this chapter questions the dominant narratives of resistance and hegemonic aspirations in understanding spatial transformation in India today. Recent literature on land grabs often assumes that those who are being dispossessed are "previously and straightforwardly 'outside' capitalism", or in a stronger form takes for "granted that they were self-sufficient peasants producing for subsistence and/or holding their land in common" (Hall, 2013: 1597). Some versions assume that "the people being dispossessed live in communities that are internally homogeneous, and/or that they have been 'in place' since time immemorial" (Hall, 2013: 1597). This view has been refuted by a long history of agrarian scholarship in India that has shown the relevance of caste in negotiating with and gaining from development projects. Here

too, I demonstrate the range of responses to and opinions of the project. Scott's (1990: 136) comment that "most of the political life of subordinate groups is to be found neither in over collective defiance of power holders nor in complete hegemonic compliance, but in the vast territory between these two polar positions" rings true. I have shown that despite their discomfort with elements of the project and the company, some holdouts do want to be included in capitalist development. Their ability to negotiate with the company is only strengthened by the real possibility of the project shutting down.

Third, although the resistance and counter-resistance story may appear peculiar to Lavasa, it is increasingly a feature of the politics of development in contemporary India. Here, different forms of resistance come into conflict, generating a new kind of spatial politics. Roy (2011) refers to the Singur case, where villagers rallied to demand that they indeed wanted the factory jobs when the factory was closed. In a number of other cases too, companies have mobilised villagers (though not always holdouts) to support them in times of political trouble. While some informants argued that this is merely a political tactic employed by companies to counter resistance[223] (and in LCL's case, we can see that it is), it is also one that can empower certain villagers to finally be included in the plan. This is as much a reflection on the holdouts themselves as on the current political climate of resistance. Increasingly there is a marked tension between villagers' opposition to certain projects and their desire to participate in the very same types of consumption, economic organisation and governance. In the jostling for power, the company engages the needs of the villagers to overcome the impasse in their contestation over the use of urban spaces. In so doing, the holdouts can create space in the city for themselves (at least in the short-term, their power in the long-term remains to be seen).

Finally, although the analytical focus on the state is relatively weak in this chapter, its presence, however, is not. The state looms over this project both as a facilitator, as well as a potential threat, through its ability to stall or alter the terms of the project; this is not a trivial presence. This dynamic between state, capital and society, offers

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[223] C3 interview, 08/10/2013.

us an optic through which to assess Chatterjee's now well-known distinction between political and civil society. Chatterjee's (2008, 2014) claim that civil society in India is aligned with corporate hegemony does not find evidence in this instance, as the NAPM is decidedly opposed to the company. The NAPM's actions are more in line with Escobar (1995) and Nandy (1989) who understand civil society as a domain where oppositional movements to developmentalism are generated. Furthermore, civil society's ability to leverage the state shapes and strengthens political society and opens avenues for negotiation both with the state and the company.

Scholars have argued that the urban poor access their right to the city through the power of their vote as members of groups/populations that make claims on the state (Chatterjee, 2004), local democratic processes that allow for the occupation of locations (Benjamin, 2008), and by negotiating arrangements with individuals within the local government, such as police, municipal officers, etc (Anjaria, 2011). Therefore, a top-down privately planned city, within which villagers have no avenues for democratic representation/interaction, would seem to be the antithesis of inclusive; certainly Lavasa's conception of inclusion is nothing more than CSR. But here too, in the larger context of Indian democracy, the ability for social movements to call for investigations and threaten to shut down the project, does indeed result in protection and inclusion for some. It is through this combination of resistance and propertied citizenship, and not their plan-based inclusion or the power of their vote, that certain villagers are able to carve out space for themselves and make claims on the city.

Chapter Seven

Resisting Lavasa: Eco-Cities and Eco-Warriors

"*Lavasa's vision is that it is possible, and we're going to show how to do it, how you can have a developed city co-exist with a restored environment. What was here when we came was not a pristine virgin forest, it had been denuded by the indigenous population for many decades. Our challenge was not to keep it as we found it, our challenge was to bring it back to what it was a hundred years before it had been slashed and burned. To show that it can be done with a city in the same place, that's our challenge. Because that's what India needs —it needs hundreds of new cities. Just saying that there are certain areas in which you can never go because the city will naturally trash it is an assumption that we do not accept.*"[224]

Many greenfield settlements distinguish themselves from existing Indian cities through claims of possessing integrated 'world-class' infrastructure and being 'eco-friendly'.[225] Lavasa is no different. With its bewildering array of initiatives ranging from biomimicry[226] to hydroseeding[227], LCL is committed to being a "prototype of a medium-sized city which can act as a financially viable and an environmentally and socially sustainable substitute to the ill-served and overcrowded mega cities" (LCL, 2010: 5). The opening quote is significant for a number of reasons. First, the informant sees the indigenous population (and by extension the absence of state management) as having effectively "denuded" the forest over decades. The blame for the valley's current condition is thus squarely put on local populations and their unsustainable agricultural and forestry practices. Second, he sees LCL as a trustee of the environment, tasked not only with its preservation but its restoration. Third, he

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[224] L8 interview, 12/07/2012.

[225] For example, Amanora township in Pune advertises itself to be "ecologically sound" (Amanora, undated); Khed City in Maharashtra "creates an urban context that synthesizes human need, environmental stewardship and economic viability, creating a global model of urbanism where residents will live in harmony with nature" (HOK, 2014: n.p.); Manesar in Haryana seeks to be the country's "first global business eco-city" (Business Standard, 22 April 2011).

[226] Biomimicry is "a new discipline that studies nature's best ideas and then imitates these designs and processes to solve human problems" (www.biomimicryinstitute.org).

[227] Hydroseeding is a process used for planting seeds over a large area by spraying a combination of seeds and mulch.

assumes that India "needs hundreds of new cities" and therefore the dual challenge for LCL is to undo historical ecological damage while building a city that India needs. In this regard, Lavasa has won a host of international awards for planning and environmental responsibility.[228]

But, as earlier chapters have shown, NAPM has led protests and has written extensively against LCL for causing environmental destruction, claiming that it has cut "lakhs of trees", polluted local water sources, and illegally taken public land (People's Commission, 2009: 8). In 2010, in unison with other local environmental activists, the NAPM filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) petition in the Mumbai High Court challenging the city on environmental grounds, the outcome of which is still pending. Simultaneously, they persuaded the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) to investigate the project. Following which, on 25 November 2010, the MoEF issued a stay-order to the Lavasa on environmental grounds, prohibiting any further construction from taking place (MoEF, 2010a).

This chapter asks how and why did an 'environmentally sustainable' project get contested and stalled on environmental grounds? Some commentators have asserted that LCL paid lip service to the environment while others have argued that the NAPM does not care about the environmental merits of the project, that it simply seeks to shut it down (Singh, 2011). Are LCL's environmental commitments hollow and simply an elaborate public relations 'greenwashing' exercise? Are the activists 'anti-development' as LCL cautions? What environmental claims do the opposing sides make? Why did the state sanction hill station development on grounds of ecological conservation (as seen in Chapter Four) and then turn around and stall its first project? If ecological projects are simultaneously politico-economic projects, as Harvey (1996) argues, what political purposes, if any, do these conflicting environmental discourses serve in steering (and halting) an aspect of India's urban transition?

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[228] Prizes awarded to the Lavasa Master Plan: Congress of New Urbanism (USA) - Charter Awards for Best Master Plan in 2005, American Society of Landscape Architects - Award of Excellence for Dasve Master Plan in 2005 and American Society of Landscape Architects - Honor Award for Mugaon Master Plan in 2009.

Scholarship on environmental politics in India has paid close attention to the "environmentalism of the poor" i.e. the struggles of the rural poor and forest dwellers in preserving nature "against business firms and the state" (Martinez-Allier, 2013: 2). Some of this literature has been critiqued as being almost orientalist in its tone, casting tribal populations and the rural poor as somehow being naturally and intrinsically environmentally conscious (Sinha et al., 1997). But almost no literature has taken seriously the environmental claims made by corporations. The social intentions of corporations, perhaps much like Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (of which environmental sustainability is often a part), are seen as "foregone conclusion[s]: smoke and mirrors, conjuring acts, greenwashing, a sham that reeks from afar of corporate public relations" (Welker, 2006: 5). They are assumed to be always and already insincere in their commitment, of using the environment as a way to grab resources. To take them seriously then "is to be complicit in painting a coat of reality upon a corporate fiction" (Welker, 2006: 5). With the global rise of eco-cities (Rapoport, 2013; Caprotti, 2014), this chapter rejects this view and seeks to examine closely what corporate urban environmentalism can be, the effects that it produces, and how and why it comes to be contested.

This chapter argues that LCL's environmentalism is not a mere exercise in greenwashing, nor is NAPM's activism fuelled by an 'anti-development' stance. Rather, the contestation is premised on ideologically opposed conceptions of environmentalism. LCL's and NAPM's respective conceptions of the environment are imbued with ideologies of development that on the one hand reify the urban and on the other uphold the rural as the core sites of development. Furthermore, they present irreconcilable views on privatisation and the control and ownership of land. These ideals are also held up for the political work that they enable and are part of the wider political strategies through which such projects are both put forth and contested.

The chapter is organised as follows: sections 7.1 and 7.2 interrogate LCL's and the NAPM's conceptions and uses of environmentalism respectively. These sections examine the environmental work done, the discourses deployed, the ideologies that they reflect, and the political work that they produce. Section 7.3 outlines how the project came to be stalled by the MoEF, placing this move within the larger context

of the environmentalism of the Indian state. Section 7.4 concludes by reflecting on the connections between environmentalism and political contestation in contemporary India. In so doing, the chapter critically examines the ways in which competing discourses and politics of environmentalism have emerged as a political force in an aspect of India's urban transition.

7.1. Environmentalism of the Eco-City

Although elements of (Euro-American) ecological urbanism can be traced back to planners such as Mumford and Howard and their designs for compact and efficient cities in proximity to nature, it was Register (1987) who coined the term 'eco-city'. He conceptualised the city in terms of 'urban ecology', which advocated treating the city as a living system that can "feed itself and satisfy all its energy demands without help from outside its boundaries" (Datta, 2012: 985). This vision was premised on ten principles including compact layouts, transit nodes, social diversity, recycling, simplicity, innovative technology, partnerships with businesses, and environmental awareness, among others (Roseland, 1997). But, given the scope of the term, its wide use has come to embody a range of meanings and incorporate a variety of planning strategies: from retrofitting existing towns to building master-planned new towns (Datta, 2012; Rapoport, 2013; Caprotti, 2014).

Amid mounting pressures to respond to global climate change, eco-cities in their most recent form have emerged as potential 'solutions' to an imminent ecological crisis (May, 2011; Chen, 2012b; Caprotti, 2014). Most eco-cities exist only on paper, although a few are currently under construction in Asia (Caprotti (2014) provides a detailed review). Dongtan, China's first prestige eco-city project, was planned as a carbon neutral town to house half a million people in a Wetland area (Pow and Neo, 2013) but the project has been plagued with delays and construction is yet to begin. Similarly, Yixing's Sustainable Development Demonstration Zone focuses on the solar energy industry as the driving force underpinning the low carbon development model (Chen, 2012b). These sites are designed as demonstration projects, which show possible models of an environmentally sustainable and economically productive urban future. They "promise economic progress, social harmony and ecological protection and represent the apotheosis of China's pursuit of green civilisation"

(Pow and Neo, 2013: 2256). Writing on Huangbaiyu, May suggests that they "hold forth the promise of cutting the tie between urbanisation, energy and land consumption", "enabling those who have heretofore been left behind by the industrial revolution to enjoy an increased quality of life without pushing the planet beyond an ecological tipping point" (2011: 103). These new, large, and "top-down eco-city projects master-planned by prestigious international architects" "bear little resemblance to the modest, bottom-up initiatives proposed by early eco-city advocates" (Rapoport, 2013: 141). Accordingly, Pow and Neo (2013: 2262) argue that the contemporary eco-city represents a kind of "neoliberal urban economic form", for its framing is built upon environmental sustainability and economic competitiveness. Eco-cities in this view can be seen as a way to "re-embed neoliberalism in society, to make it more acceptable socially and politically, and to ensure that it is environmentally sustainable" (Jessop, 2002: 17). Such attempts (in China) can therefore be seen "legitimisation strateg[ies] for cities and urban governments which are otherwise engaged in the pursuit of economic growth" (Pow and Neo, 2013: 2258).

India has not forayed into eco-cities in the manner China has, although plans for China-inspired and Japan-assisted prototypes periodically surface and resurface (but never materialise).[229] For example, the Gujarat Infrastructure Tech City is "envisaged as an eco-city" and "will serve as a habitat showcasing business oriented, environmentally sensitive growth with equity" (GIFT, 2011: n.p.). In the Indian context, the term eco-city is so ubiquitously and loosely used that it is devoid of any meaning; it is signifies anything and everything from basic waste-recycling infrastructure to the use of energy efficient electrical fixtures. This is hardly surprising, for even the term 'sustainability' is a contested one, and problems in defining it have "long been recognized" (Pow and Neo, 2013: 2258).

Given the looseness of the term, one can dismiss Lavasa, and indeed many eco-city projects, as 'green washing' at best or 'green grabbing' at worst. There are examples of the former where corporations have superficially undertaken environmental initiatives to further their own image and business or as forms of "(dis)information

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[229] The Indian government in collaboration with the Japanese government is planning to build 7 'eco' and 'smart' cities along the Delhi and Mumbai Industrial Corridor (Economic Times, 03 May 2010)

seeking to repair public reputations and further shape public images" (Laufer, 2003: 253). But as, Watson points out, while the labels 'smart' or 'eco' are embodied with "symbolic power", and are no doubt part of a "marketing ploy to encourage local and other investors", they are also linked to debates on "how cities can maximize the benefits of technology and how they can become more environmentally sustainable" (2014: 226).

Caprotti asks that we pay attention not only to the place-marketing intended of these "green utopias", but also the mechanisms through which they are made possible. Eco-cities are often built on areas of "low-land value" and sometimes on areas subjected to "green grabbing" practices" (2014: 11) where land and resources are transferred from the poor to the powerful for "environmental ends" (Fairhead et al., 2012: 238). As a result, those who are dispossessed "become a proletariat separated from land and nature, releasing resources for private capital" (Fairhead et al., 2012: 238). Such analysis, however, fails to take seriously the form and content of environmental commitment of such projects. What then is the environmental promise that these cities make? How is environmental sustainability understood by these projects? What purposes, if any, do these environmental discourses serve in the making of these cities?

In its earliest avatar, Lavasa (then Lake Town) was to be an eco-tourism project: the "ultimate sanctuary", "a massive garden", a "green laboratory", housing "environmentally friendly industry", and "a utopian escape for thousands would be idyllic, picturesque, natural, quaint, connected, eco-friendly and yet offering a good mix of leisure and activity based infrastructure" (LCC, 2003: 7). Lake Town, therefore, was not originally imagined as an environmental prototype or a solution to climate change, rather, it was to be a place where nature was an aesthetic dimension of planning, facilitating a pleasant experience of the city. In its subsequent iterations, LCL's plans retained the aesthetic importance of the environment (a point which shall be discussed shortly) but also expanded its environmental vision.

Lavasa's environmental management plan highlights a number of environmental issues such as soil erosion, water, air and noise pollution, waste and biodiversity. LCL's broad environmental goals are to minimise pollution and to restore previously

denuded forest cover. It is cognizant of the ecological pitfalls of development projects and seeks to mitigate environmental degradation by developing management plans for each of the above-mentioned sectoral concerns. LCL considers its key innovations to be its compact city plan (a byproduct of New Urbanism), its biomimicry plan, its strategy to reduce soil erosion (continuous contour trenching), and its approach to increase forest cover through hydroseeding. Furthermore, Lavasa's Development Plan has been "prepared with the objective of delivering planning solutions through a creative blend of development and environment" and conceives Lavasa "as a place for modern human habitation in harmony with nature" (Lavasa SPA, 2012: 95). This "harmony", as we shall see, is aesthetic, technological, and premised on LCL's control over the environment. That the city should "function in harmony with the natural environment" is central to both New Urbanism (Till, 2000) as well as earlier planning concepts such as deep ecology and the garden city (Wong and Yuen, 2011: 3). Regardless, most of LCL's strategies focus heavily on containing ecological damage, as required by various environmental laws and planning norms. In this regard its plan is neither ambitious nor particularly unusual.

Informants indicated that LCL's desire to preserve the environment was both an ethico-moral and business decision. One of Lavasa's key selling points is its location in the Western Ghats, an "ecologically sensitive" area marked as one of the four "biodiversity hotspots" in the country (Gadgil, 2012: 1, 110).[230] It is precisely its unique location that makes the environment and nature so central to the project:

> "[We need] to ensure that our actions or our development don't pollute or contaminate this natural resource and to ensure that this place is beautiful. Why would one want to leave Bombay and go live in another urban centre? One of the unique selling points of this place is that it is beautiful and it is beautiful because it is a part of nature. That is why the component of

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[230] It is of course paradoxical that an eco-city should be built in an environmentally fragile area but this is not peculiar to Lavasa. Songdo eco-city in Korea was built on the "destruction of precious wetlands, home to some of the rarest species on the planet, causing the disappearance of some. Once reclaimed, its developers have pursued sustainable building practices, applying guidelines and materials that promote efficient energy use, and recycling 75 per cent of construction" (Shwayri, 2013: 53).

environment becomes the spine through which development process takes place."[231]

As the quote above demonstrates, nature and its preservation are conflated with an aesthetic image of what will be beautiful and therefore appealing for Lavasa's future consumer-citizens. The environment is essential to recreation and the forests, "once restored to their original glory, will serve for countless recreational opportunities such as bicycle rides, rigorous hikes, nature walks, bird watching, and camping" (HOK, 2011: 66). Therefore, the experience of nature is central to the overall experience of Lavasa:

> "As waters gush down the hills through the *nala* corridors, pedestrians can enjoy the natural beauty of a healthy, thriving ecosystem. Oriented on the water, and celebrating the life it gives, these open spaces will be bands of passive recreation and small pockets of relaxing recreational space. As water gathers in pools on its journey down to the lake, visitors can relax in a shady grove at the water's edge or hike up the hill to the water source.
>
> With reforestation being a major goal of the proposed development, the once-pristine deciduous forest will eventually return to its original glory and will serve for countless passive recreation opportunities. From bird-watching to camping, these areas will take "a walk in the park" to a whole new level." (HOK, 2011: 68)

Such consumption of nature is consistent with Lavasa's self-imagination as a world-class and its appeal as a hill station. As discussed in Chapter Four, Hill stations have always been respites from the drudgery of Indian cities, as sites of recreation and recuperation. The British transformed the natural environment by introducing new plants and altering the landscape to "enhance its aesthetic" and "picturesque qualities" (Kennedy, 1996: 62), in order to create a kind of nature that was more resonant with parts of England (especially the Lake District). The world-class city on

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[231] L6 interview, 21/08/2012.

the other hand, must bear a "world-class aesthetic" (Ghertner, 2011), in which ideas of planning, cleanliness, and order take root. Lavasa draws on both these representations, as is depicted in the image in Figure 7.1 where a couple enjoys the lake from their own boat, while the strip of wind turbines suggests a commitment to an ecological future: "modern infrastructure, amenities and the vibrancy of the nature around is what is envisioned will give Lavasa its 'soul'" (LCL, 2011: 17).

Figure 7.1: Representations of Mugaon in the Conceptual Master Plan

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The planning ideal is therefore to construct an urban environment that lives "in harmony with nature", i.e. "a city with the allure of the countryside" (LCL, 2009: n.p.). It is through the "globally circulating concepts of new urbanism" that this type of environmentalism is associated with the "concept of 'quality of life', and ecological progress is increasingly interpreted through physical, aesthetic signifiers such as parks, clean public space, and newly constructed housing" (Chen, 2012b: 90). The environment in this conception is a source of aesthetic and recreational pleasure, to be consumed and enjoyed by the future citizens of Lavasa.

Figure 7.2: Lavasa's environmental marketing

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LCL's environmental vision is also inextricably linked to urban design and technological innovation. LCL worked with the Biomimicry Guild (U.S.A) to incorporate biomimicry in the Master Plan for Mugaon by identifying six of the most important ecosystem services and designed ecological performance standards for all of them. Furthermore, referring to the process of mass plantation through hydroseeding, it claims "technology will help plant a million trees"[232] (LCL, 2011:

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[232] Examining eco-estates in South Africa, Ballard and Jones (2011: 26) argue that such attempts to increase indigenous forest cover are not done for the "environment alone but also constitutes an investment in nature as a step in its commodification. The execution of landscape designs through civil engineering and mass planting means these "natural" spaces are created through intense intervention, or what Harvey calls "the market provision of constructed authenticity" (1993: 12) Natural does not

n.p.). It extends technological and design solutions to various other aspects of environmental management such as topsoil conservation, watershed management, and biodiversity enhancement. Lavasa takes great pride in being at the cutting edge of environmental technology, as is reflected in its advertising (Figure 7.2). In keeping with theories of ecological modernization that valorise technology as being the propelling force behind sustainable development (Pow, 2013; Caprotti, 2014), its environmental vision is part and parcel of what it deems as futuristic about the city.

These technologies and visions serve a function. Datta (2012: 991) claims that ecologists employed by LCL in its early stages had recommended "low-cost local techniques of restoration and conservation such as transplantation of native species, building on lower slopes, restoration through seed collection and replanting, and the use of locally available materials for building which would have been more sensitive to the region". But those techniques were not used as they were "apparently regarded by LCL as inappropriate for global marketing" and it "preferred to use more internationally renowned environmental technologies like biomimicry and hydroseeding to restore hillside slopes" (2012: 991). Similarly, in assessing Lavasa's *Bamboocraft* project, a CSR project through which 65 workers create crafts and furniture from locally grown bamboo, Buckingham and Jepson (2014) argue that Lavasa's commitment to the environment is performative; it seeks to position itself and be internationally recognised as sustainable and does so by getting globally recognised certifications such as Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification for its bamboo business, and the US Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)[233] certification for its buildings and neighbourhood design. Furthermore, it seeks to become a "benchmark for sustainability in Asia" (LCL, 2010: n.p.) by developing the first grading certification system for sustainable cities (Buckingham and Jepson, 2014: 1).

The rationales for and practices of environmental conservation are not merely international in scope; they are rooted in anxieties of the nature of Indian politics.

mean, for consumers of these landscapes, that nature is left to its own devices but rather that it is channeled in the direction of a pre-industrial ideal."

[233] LEED is a set of ratings that were developed by the US Green Building Council. These ratings are used to grade energy efficient resource use in the construction, design, and operation of buildings and neighbourhoods.

The environmental plan is also a speculative response to the real possibility of the project suffering a setback on environmental grounds. As one informant explained:

> "*I do remember the chairman saying in the beginning that if there was one thing that could trip us up, it would be the environment and so he was very intentional and as a company we were intentional to make sure that what we did was way ahead of anything that was as per Indian standards and that it was documented.*"[234]

That said, while LCL has innovated with respect to certain segments of environmental protection and restoration, none of these are innovations of the kind and scope that its Chinese counterparts have put forth. For instance, responding to Climate Change is not a key concern for LCL, nor does it seek to make Lavasa a zero-waste/zero-carbon city or power it entirely on renewable energy (unlike Dongtan, China). Rather, LCL expresses moderation in its environmental goals. For instance, it aims to generate a modest 25 per cent of the energy consumption from renewable sources such as solar and wind in Mugaon, revealing that this model will only be "replicated depending on [its] success" (Lavasa SPA, 2012: 104). This is because LCL conceptualises 'sustainability' as a 'balance' between social, economic and environmental components:

> "*[For it to become a zero carbon city, it has to have] its entire power generation through renewable energy. If you ask me to do that in Lavasa, then the economics of Lavasa will go for a toss. You can't build a city with only renewable energy in a place like Lavasa, There are only four months of rainfall and the efficiency of solar plants is not more than 18-20 percent. At 18-20 percent how would it be sustainable? And if I give you solar power at the rate of INR 20 and you get conventional energy at the rate of INR 5, then it is not sustainable for a power requirement of 500-600 MegaWatt. If you look at wind (power), we are in category B. In terms of material, it is not a resort town, where only a few of us who can afford rooms worth INR 4000-5000 (USD 80-100) per night to live in. It has to*

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[234] L7 interview, 21/08/2012.

be a mixture. If it has to be a mixture, then it has to be like a conventional

city but offers a certain amount of world-class facilities… Most of the cities

in terms of green field developments are not located in conditions like

Lavasa. Some of them are located on flat lands. But I would love to find

cities we could be friends with and learn from one another."[235]

Therefore, Lavasa's environmentalism is still limited by its economic objectives of being a profitable venture. Unlike its Chinese counterparts, which benefit from enormous state subsidies, Lavasa's environmental goals are therefore defined and determined the conditions of the market.[236]

LCL's environmentalism is premised on its ability to control, monitor, map, fence in, landscape, and police the natural environment. As Lavasa is built on private property and LCL is responsible for the condition of the environment, including increasing forest cover and preventing water pollution, it has been forced to engage with nature as a resource to protect and cordon off rather than a source of livelihood for locals. In this manner LCL's plan embodies a "post-materialist perspective where the forest is not central to economic production but rather to the enhancement of the 'quality of life' (Guha, 1993: 245). That is not to say that LCL employees are not individually cognizant of the dependence of the rural poor on the environment. However, as the chapter's opening quote suggests, LCL does not consider many of their practices sustainable. Therefore, in an attempt to restore the environment, it has effectively enclosed the area and prevents villagers from gathering fuel wood, grazing their animals, and using the reservoir in manners that are not in keeping with LCL's overall environmental plan.[237] It has also educated "villagers to stop slash and burn" and instead employed them in "mass plantation activities" (LCL, 2010: 25). In a sense it represents what Guha and Martinez-Alier call environmentalism of 'the north' where, "environmentalism has, by and large, run parallel to the consumer society without questioning its socio-ecological basis, its enormous dependence on

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[235] L6 interview, 18/12/2012.

[236] In a recent survey of eco-cities, Rapoport (2013) argues that "contemporary eco-city projects" are "driven as much by economic objectives as environmental ones" and that their ambitions are often limited by "the realities of operating within a profit-driven, entrepreneurial planning environment." (2013: 137).

[237] This led to some conflicts with villagers particularly around livestock grazing and firewood collection (L11 interview, 12/07/2012).

the lands, peoples and resources of other parts of the globe" (1997: 18). As Mawdsley reminds us, "the global situation of a high consuming minority and a poor majority is not just a North/South issue, but also one that is inflected within national inequalities" (2004: 81).

How do we make sense of LCL's environmentalism and the work that it does? A growing literature on urban areas has highlighted an emergent "bourgeois" or middle class urban environmentalism (see Mawdsley (2004) for a review). This literature has focused primarily on the ways in which urban middle classes have invoked environmental issues to capture (often public) land, and marginalise and dispossess the urban poor (Baviskar, 2003). For example, judicial orders from the Supreme Court of India closed all "polluting and non-conforming industries" in Delhi, displacing close to two million people and 98,000 industrial units (Baviskar, 2003: 90). Casting the poor as polluters, these changes were driven by middle class environmentalists filing environmental PILs around "upper-class concerns" of "aesthetics, leisure, safety and health" (Baviskar, 2003: 90) to order urban space in a particular way. Furthermore, this literature also demonstrates how the middle classes are powerful in steering the terms of public debate on a variety of issues, including the environment. Lavasa, although not strictly a middle class project, bears some connection with these themes.

As discussed in Chapter Four, in 2009-10, LCL embarked on an award-winning and highly visible 'Future Cities Campaign'[238] through advertisements in a major English daily newspaper and panel discussions with urban experts on television and at conferences. These full-page advertisements, though very clearly sponsored by Lavasa, did not explicitly refer to the city in their main content. Instead they highlighted what they understood to be key issues facing Indian cities: issues of governance, environment, technology, planning and infrastructure. This campaign was premised on the assumption that existing Indian cities had failed its citizens on a wide range of counts. Lavasa's expression of urban environmental issues in this campaign did a number of things. First, it made visible the environmental degradation of existing cities. It asked, "Where have all the trees gone?" and claimed, "Cities are

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[238] See www.lavasafuturecities.com for the full campaign

dying a slow death thanks to environmental mismanagement" referring to environmental issues such as soil erosion, untreated sewage, and traffic jams. In doing so, it linked urban environmental issues to failures of planning and governance. Second, by concluding each advertisement with the question, "Isn't it time to build our future cities?" and defining the future city as "One in which you can breathe clean air," it offered then a compelling vision of the future. It asked the public to "Imagine a city where preserving the environment is a way of life", "That plants more trees than it cuts down", "Where there is a balance in the use and replenishment of natural resources", "Where life is powered by clean and renewable energy", where "City planning is done using biomimicry, the science of using nature's best ideas to solve design challenges", and "Where ecological thinking is the only way of life." In making such claims to being an environmentally sustainable city of the future, it rationalised its own existence, deep in the middle of an ecologically sensitive area (Lavasa Future Cities, 2011).

Through this campaign, LCL attempted to set the terms of public discussion on the future of Indian cities. In so doing, it successfully presented itself as a city project and not a real estate project. Through its elaborate marketing and public relations strategy, it called upon citizens to participate in rejecting existing urban decay and to envision a different kind of urban future. It sought to make visible the environmental pollution that plagues existing Indian cities. This is not to suggest that existing Indian cities do not suffer from acute environmental degradation, or that indeed newer ways of imagining cities are not needed, or that Lavasa has taken its own environmental mission lightly. What this shows is the ways in which environmental issues are being used to generate a compelling vision of a future city, one that is premised on real estate, is privately managed in a top-down manner, and relies on the privatisation of natural resources.

But Lavasa is a real estate project, generating new surplus through the monetization of land and the city. Its internal benchmarks of success are primarily real estate sales and future city building projects. Unlike similar projects in East Asia, LCL has steered clear of the language of consumer demand. It has articulated the need for new cities as being part of imagining an alternative future for India. It is thus also building, sustaining, and making real the representation of a private and somewhat utopian

space and so it is not just a gamble as a real-estate project (it is built in the middle of forested land), but also a speculation on a certain representation of space—a privatised city "in harmony with nature" (Lavasa SPA, 2012: 95). If successful, it will draw in new interests and investors and generate a public that sees cities on the same terms. This speculation also takes place in anticipation of the real political risks – the ability of the government and activists to stall projects – associated with poor environmental management.

In summary, LCL's environmental claims are not merely instances of greenwashing; it has moral, business, and political incentives for some sort of environmental conservation. But its environmentalism is aesthetic, ideologically connected to the primacy of the urban over the rural, and tied to technological innovation. It fails to address the link between consumption and environmental degradation and also the connections between the environment and livelihoods of those locals who live off it. The environment and nature are not seen as productive resources but rather as objects to be cordoned off and consumed (through recreation). This environmentalism serves as a justification for the project's astounding location, LCL's level of control, as well as its vision for the future city.

Figure 7.3: Lavasa Future Cities Campaign

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7.2. Environmentalism of Protest

For all its efforts, LCL's idea of sustainable development was firmly rejected by the NAPM and other urban environmental activists. In recent years, a number of industrial projects have been delayed, stalled, and sometimes cancelled on environmental grounds, for example, the Vedanta coal mining project and five SEZs in Goa (Sampat, 2013). But rural environmental conflicts are not new and have often "pitted the rich against the poor" e.g. a multinational company or a dam project against local villages and tribal populations (Guha and Martiner-Alier, 1997: 5). This

narrative suggests that the richer party "seeks to step up the pace of resource exploitation to service an expanding commercial-industrial economy, a process which often involves partial or total dispossession of the communities who earlier had control over the resources in question" (Guha and Martiner-Alier, 1995: 5). These environmental conflicts are not restricted to industrial projects; attempts at scientific forestry and reserving forest areas for wildlife conservation have also been contested on grounds of displacing and dispossessing poor forest dwellers, and critiqued for their exclusionary outcomes (Saberwal and Rangarajan, 2003; Saberwal et al., 2000; Grove et. al., 1998). Many such mega-projects have often publically pitched the conflict as a tussle between development and the environment (see Guha (1995) and Mawdsley (2004) for reviews), seeking to cast environmental movements as being 'anti-development.' This discourse is hardly new but has re-gained fervour in recent years. Rural and urban environmental conflicts in India have been intimately connected with questions of land, livelihood, control over resources, and access to fuel, water and the city itself.

The NAPM was drawn to Lavasa in the early 2000s through the then Corporator of Pimpri-Chinchwad municipality (near Pune). A group of villagers alerted him to the land sales taking place for the project[239] and he put them in touch with Pune-based members of the NAPM. Early concerns about Lavasa were firmly rooted in addressing land fraud and displacement, and immediate efforts were put into investigating the land claims of the villagers who were experiencing land disputes. Another activist and legal expert (with experience contesting SEZs in Maharashtra and Goa) visited the area and took note of various land related grievances, which took months to untangle (as discussed in detail in Chapters Five and Six). Alarmed that such a project was being constructed in an ecologically sensitive area, she immediately inquired whether the project had received the requisite environmental clearance.[240] She found that the company had environmental clearances from the GoM and not from the central MoEF, which according to her was a violation of the recently amended (2004) Environment Impact Assessment Act, 1994.

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[239] C5 interview, 10/10/2012.
[240] C4 interview, 18/04/2012.

As the NAPM grew in strength to include some villagers as well as environmental activists from Pune, they pursued a number of avenues to contest the project; they engaged in protest, brought media attention to the land issues detailed in Chapter Five and Six and the project's environmental impact, they wrote formal complaints to government departments and forced inquiries in multiple government departments. Due to the political heft of Medha Patkar, they eventually got the ear of the Union Minister of MoEF, Jairam Ramesh. What followed was a high profile and highly visible campaign against the project. In a letter to the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Patkar summarised the crux of NAPM's opposition to the project:

> "[Lavasa] has taken away a forested land, a perennial river, mountain that is full of trees and some of the very well endowed water reservoirs in the catchment area of Varasgaon Dam with the help of their immense riches and consequently have displaced thousands of adivasis, farmers, *Katkaris* and have by force and by deceit tried to create this project. The GoM is playing a supportive role instead of opposing such an environmentally detrimental project by wealthy sharks." (Patkar, 2010: n.p.)

The NAPM raised multiple environmental issues in the press and in various government departments. They asserted that the project was diverting water resources from Pune and polluting water sources, that it was causing deforestation, and that in the absence of required permissions from the competent authority, Lavasa was illegal.

At the heart of their opposition lay a three-fold rejection of development related displacement, privatisation of the commons, and the violation of environmental laws. These are consistent with struggles that the NAPM has waged elsewhere in the country. As discussed earlier, the NAPM consists of heterogeneous movements, which draw on a range of discourses including Gandhianism, Ambedkarism, Marxism, environmentalism, and feminism (Kothari and Sethi, 1984; Omvedt, 1993). They are united by their "commitment to deepening democratic control over markets, productive resources, and economic development more generally" and stand against corporate and state led displacement and dispossession (Levien, 2007: 124). Studying

the NAPM's involvement in the movement against the excessive use of local ground water by Coca-Cola's bottling unit, Ciafone argues that they articulated a powerful critique of corporate globalization and privatisation, illuminating the exploitation of the resources of the rural poor for the consumption of those on the other side of an increasingly widening economic divide in the vaunted new free marketplace of India" (Ciafone, 2012: 115). Thus, the NAPM's opposition goes beyond contesting the individual project to a complete rejection of the prevalent and dominant ideology of development.[241]

Despite pursuing multiple strategies of contestation for land and environmental concerns, the two issues are intimately connected for the NAPM, and their conception of environmentalism is tied to interests of securing land and the commons against privatisation. Baviskar (1995) notes that while scholars treat conflicts around water and forests as environmental conflicts, they do not see contests around land as environmental conflicts. But activists and some social movements often (but not always) see them as connected, arguing that for rural communities, land, forest, water and other resources are seen not as 'wilderness' (as often seen by their elite/middle-class counterparts) but as sources of livelihood. In that sense environmentalism is fundamentally a question of rights to the environment:

> *"Land rights, water rights, right to the forest, right to the village ... in one way it was about saving people, it's all together, we cannot look at these separately. For instance, if Krishna Valley water is saved, then Pune's water is saved, and the people's water is saved"*[242]

Thus the issue of contention for the NAPM is not just the protection of the environment but also the protection of land and environment-dependent livelihoods from privatisation of the commons. Ultimately, the fight is not about the preservation of nature and natural resources in a way that is typically associated with

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[241] This ideology has roots in the NBA movement, which is resolutely against large scale, capital-intensive development projects such as big dams. That said, critics state that it is based on the "idealisation of the traditional lifestyles of farmers, especially adivasis" who are "depicted as producing food crops for their own subsistence" (Omvedt, 2004: 416).

[242] C1 interview, 04/04/2012. By "saved" the informant means saved from privatisation and pollution.

wildlife conservationists (who also seek to secure the valley from megaprojects). Rather, it is rooted in preserving local people's rights to those resources.[243] The critique therefore, was not limited to Lavasa as a project alone, but to the dominant ideology of development at play in contemporary India. This includes not just corporations, but also the government and civil society organisations that operate within a similar ideological conception of development:

> "In the last 20 years, after globalisation, the temperament and values of people [have] changed... Full corporatisation has taken place…Even civil society has become centrist in this and [its] aspirations have also changed accordingly: 'so what if there's a little bit of environmental damage and some people have to be uprooted, this is also a way of progress.' We have to work in different ways against all of this. We have to work and appeal against the state, and push this kind of thought out of civil society too, whatever laws are there one has to rely on them. One also has to talk to the media and explain justice and injustice to them."[244]

As scholars have noted, while social movements may convey a consistent message, their members are not always in agreement with one another (Nilsen, 2013; Cox, 1999). So too was the case with the NAPM. While the members were singularly united against Lavasa, their critiques of the project varied. For some members, at the heart of their environmental critique of Lavasa lay the belief that the urban is fundamentally parasitic on the rural. Their environmentalism is a thoroughgoing critique of urban consumption and it is premised on the idea that the rural way of life – characterised by a low-intensity use of resources – is ecologically sustainable. The NAPM challenged the very assumption that more new cities are needed in India. Defining resources as physical and environmental, their opposition is based on a long-standing critique of consumption and the inequities that such consumption is premised on:

> "City development is dependent on rural areas. Our challenge is this: What does the city produce? All the resources that are needed for the city – be it

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[243] For a critique of this view of this see Baviskar (1995), Sinha et al. (1997).
[244] C1 interview, 04/04/2012.

electricity, water, wood, whatever it is, it comes from the villages, and it is priced/valued at next to nothing because their environmental costs are borne by villagers."[245]

To these members of the NAPM, neither capitalist 'development' nor urbanisation are seen as a foregone conclusion or even desirable end goals (unlike LCL who take unplanned and uncontrolled urban development as a given, thus rationalising planned interventions). Regardless, all interviewed members of the NAPM see urbanisation in its current form, particularly through greenfield sites, as ways in which elites capture land and privatise resources through state (and politician) enabled real estate speculation. Their critique is premised on challenging the need for new cities, and in particular the need for cities built by the private sector on real-estate speculation:

"I don't know the need of Lavasa, another city next to Pune. Why do we need Lavasa? That's why an assessment for any kind of development should be done, a project of this kind of magnitude, whether it's industrial project or infrastructure project or anything. And if there's a need you have to justify the need. That's what we said, 'bring out a base study or a whitepaper on it and say Lavasa is required in Maharashtra.' But there is no base study... What is that logical justification behind Lavasa? That is something I want to know. So it means that we need more minerals in coming days and we are trying to exhaust everything in the next 10 years. So what's the futuristic vision for anything? Do you have one at all? Or are you just running a government just for a sake of combinations and saying that India is growing at 7 per cent GDP."[246]

"There are 10 per cent of people who have consumer strength. How much can they consume? Agricultural growth and industrial growth are all down... Everything else is real estate. Real estate is the thing now, and everyone is putting their money into real estate. And that's why there are plans to develop all these big cities. And these cities are coming up in the most beautiful places, where there is water. That's where they want to

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[245] C1 interview, 04/04/2012.
[246] C4 interview, 18/04/2012

create a city for the rich. Whatever is left in India, that's what they are searching for."[247]

Some activists, though certainly not all, held the view that urbanisation is antithetical to environmentalism. And it is only through small-scale rural living that sustainable development can be achieved (a long-standing trope rooted in Gandhi's ideas)[248]:

> *"Our argument is not understood in the first world that gives these prizes [to Lavasa], that a country like India where today 65 per cent of the population is dependent and survives on the land, then it is not necessary at all. Change the pattern of villages, put some life into the villages, locate small industries there, bring value addition in crops, and create employment opportunities. Put a stop to the fully subsidized and close-to-nothing value that is put on the resources that are being drawn to cities. If you put a stop to that no city will be able to survive, especially not Lavasa."*[249]

There were other non-environmental reasons for opposition too; the activists were opposed to a private company engaging in city-making:

> *"The private sector cannot be involved in this and should not be involved in this. In the first place, LCL shouldn't be doing anything. So it's not only that if they offset the impact on the environment they should do it. I'm of the view that LCL has no business being in this. I'm not saying the state does it in a better way. But still an arrangement is there – we still have a constitution – which gives me space to question and challenge. In Lavasa the relationship is like this: I am not a citizen, I'm a customer."*[250]

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[247] C1 interview, 04/04/2012

[248] At Independence, Gandhi (as he outlines in *Hind Swaraj*) wished to revive the village economy as the centre of development. Nehru's ideas for India's transformation, as we saw in Chapter Two, were rooted in promoting industrialisation. At the core of Gandhi's idea was the belief that true liberation lay in generating local livelihoods within village communities. His long-standing rejection of industrialisation is summed up in this iconic quote "God forbid that India should ever take to industrialism in the manner of the West… The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom [England] is today keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 million [India] took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts" (Gandhi, 1928: 422).

[249] C1 interview, 04/04/2012.

[250] C2 interview, 26/03/2012.

Thus, while not all activists and NAPM members upheld the goal of self-sufficient village economies or even saw the urban as fundamentally parasitic, they came together because they felt that they needed to oppose Lavasa on a principled position. Some members were ambivalent about the need for cities, arguing that they were not opposed to new cities per se, but just this particular privatised form.[251] For others, the core concern was the issue of land rights. For many the opposition was rooted in the desire to "*stem the cancer*" from growing i.e. that stalling the project (through legal means or otherwise) would prevent more hill stations from emerging and desecrating the Western Ghats.[252]

The activists see Lavasa as emblematic of other megaprojects in India, which seek to extend 'corporate rule' in India. Lavasa's own environmental efforts are seen to be particularly dangerous, "*If you have a company that says we're building green and such a city where we're growing trees and there will be greenery, well if someone says that, then to others it will look better than other kinds of destructive projects.*"[253] Activists therefore, were concerned that the recognition of Lavasa's environmental efforts would give legitimacy to the project and similar future projects.

Such critiques are not new for development projects, but the contestation has often been on the grounds of land and dispossession. In this case, however, environment became more important as land related grievances could not be easily contested (as seen in Chapters Five and Six):

> "*One has not been able to establish violation for the 5000 acres of land, as for most of it they [LCL] have been able to show that they have purchased it. So, in the eyes of law there is nothing wrong with it. But if you say that one estimate is that more than 300,000 trees have been cut, that a lot of hill cutting has taken place, or when you come to water bodies, a lot has been disturbed, then you say that the ecology has been disturbed.*"[254]

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[251] C2 interview, 26/03/2012; C4 interview, 18/04/2012; C7 interview, 27/07/2012.
[252] C6 interview, 11/10/2012.
[253] C1 interview, 04/04/2012.
[254] C2 interview, 26/03/2012.

Such strategic action is unsurprising, as the NAPM is an experienced social movement, deft at contesting projects; they utilise multiple political strategies when needed:

> "We try different things because we don't know what will click. Like a war is going on and you have different battlefronts. You have one war, but different battlefronts. In some places you will win, in others you will lose. So we will not put all our eggs in one basket."[255]

Therefore, in addition to raising issues in the media and with the government, some environmental activists along with the NAPM filed a PIL petition in the Mumbai High Court. The matter is still sub-judice but it is worth reflecting on the core substance of the petition. The petition did not incorporate some of the complex issues related to displacement and the interconnectedness of the right to land, water, and livelihood as discussed in their letters to various government departments. Its "primary grounds for impugning the construction" was that the project was "desecrating the pristine Western Ghats" (Suniti S.R & Ors Vs. LCL, PIL 90 of 2010: 10) and had not taken the requisite environmental clearance from the appropriate environmental body as stipulated under the Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2004 (1994). Furthermore, the project had violated a planning regulation, which prohibited construction at higher than 1000 metres above sea level as Lavasa's entrance gate was built at 1050 metres. While their original environmental concerns were certainly expansive, the series of complaints and litigation launched against the company bore a particular focus. The framework of the law structured the kind of environmental complaints NAPM could and could not raise. The most important point of contention was the issue of how and from whom LCL had received environmental clearance; in the absence of appropriate clearance, they argued, the project was illegal.

> "All forests have been cut, all these people (locals) were shifted to higher contours and then they merrily cut off all the forest and they were forced to do it – charcoal making, destruction of the forest, vandalising of the

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[255] C2 interview, 26/03/2012.

forest took place. I wouldn't normally say such a thing because then I am blaming the wrong guys for the destruction. But if I were to say it, then the original displacement is government-induced environment destruction at the hands of tribals, now this can't get into litigation. But this bothered me the most. That the biological diversity was destroyed, that the people have been displaced and there is an entire resource transfer. So biological resources have either been depleted, eroded or transferred and physical resources have also been transferred. Now all this can't come into a plaint. Because this is not justicable, there is no law that helps us. In fact there may be laws but it would not have fallen within this PIL. Which took the environmental law, rooted in the 1986 Act. But the plaint stood because of the Environment Act and the notification which says 1000 metres, had that not been there, nothing could have happened…There you see the irony of this whole thing: a whole bunch of arbitrary things could be stopped by another arbitrary thing. So you catch hold of something that you can get a handle on and then add other things, so once the case has been admitted then you start contesting."[256]

In summary, the activists opposed the Lavasa not solely because they felt it had violated environmental laws and degraded the environment but also because they were opposed the project – the ideas of environmentalism and development, and the privatisation it embodied. The confines of the law determined the kind of action they could take, which in this instance amounted to a PIL rooted in issues of improper permissions and violation of planning laws. Although the land conflicts may seem separate from environmental issues, they are part and parcel of the NAPM's conception of the environment as being intimately connected to rights of villagers over resources. Regardless, an analysis of NAPM's strategies suggests that very specific aspects of environmental violations were and are being leveraged, not only for environmental purposes, but also for larger political struggles.

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[256] C6 interview, 11/10/2012.

7.3. Environmentalism of the Indian State

So far we have seen the nature of Lavasa's environmental vision and the ways in which it was and remains contested both ideologically and strategically by the NAPM and other activists. But the question remains, why did the state sanction hill station development on the grounds of ecological conservation and then turn around and stall Lavasa?

As extensively discussed in Chapter Four, the Pune Regional Plan (1990-2011) identified several major problems in the Western Ghats. First, that the area suffered from inadequate tourist facilities and that existing hill stations had "become crowded" (1991:6). Second, that affluent people from Mumbai and Pune were purchasing agricultural land for "speculative purposes and weekend recreation" (1991: 6). Third, that these ad hoc and unplanned farmhouse schemes degraded local ecology and generated pollution. Simultaneously, the plan identified the interior areas of the Ghats as "untapped" for their tourism potential. It argued that "careful planning" was "needed to forestall degeneration of natural beauty in the face of pressures from unsatisfied and therefore unruly crowds" (Regional Plan, 1991: 165). Seeing illegal and/or unplanned real estate developments as a foregone conclusion, the Regional Plan's (and by extension GoM's) solution to ecological damage in the Western Ghats was to enable private companies to build planned settlements. Although these rationales were contested through environmental litigation by the Bombay Environmental Action Group (BEAG) in 1996, the court upheld the government's policy decision:

> "It has been pointed out by the State government and it cannot be disputed that all the existing hill stations in the state on account of population pressure and unauthorised constructions and developments, are facing environmental and ecological problems and hence it was necessary to have new hill station sites for proper and regulated development." (BEAG Vs GoM, CWP 2772 of 1998: 58)

In summary, the court ruled that the Hill Station Regulation, "envisage controlled and regulated development and attempt to maintain ecological balance" (1998: 59).

It was therefore, on an ecological premise that hill stations like Amby Valley and Lavasa were encouraged to emerge within ostensibly forested locations (or areas marked for afforestation within the Regional Plan). Despite the need for 'proper planning' neither Lavasa's nor Amby Valley's site was assessed for feasibility, or ecological appropriateness. Rather, Lavasa's site was chosen for the ease of land purchase and for its aesthetics. According to the GoM, the environment would be safeguarded through a number of strict government-determined planning and building regulations, alongside stringent rules pertaining to pollution control. For instance, the Hill Station Regulation prohibited construction on hills with certain slopes, high-density construction, extensive tree-cutting etc, and required that 70 per cent of the area be open-space. At the heart of this policy lay the Indian state's long standing ambition of balancing development and environment, a point to which we shall return to shortly. In keeping with this mandate, the GoM issued a number of exemptions to LCL to facilitate their project. It permitted cutting hill slopes, and enabled a private company to undertake a development project in an area marked for afforestation in the regional plan. In 2004, the GoM provided LCL environmental clearance for developing the first 2000 hectares of the project.

Under the Indian Constitution, the environment, unlike other sectors such as urban development, falls within the domain of the central and not the state government. That is not to say that state governments have no say in environmental matters, rather that the central government has the ultimate authority over environmental decisions. This is because the 'environment' has been formulated in a number of ways in law and policy to reflect the multiple approaches to sustainability. Although not a fundamental right, the 1976 amendment of the Indian Constitution listed environment under the Directive Principles of State Policy[257], which states that "the State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country" (Divan and Rosencranz, 2008: 45). Consequently,

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[257] "This difference between Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles in the Constitution has had profound effects in shaping the relationship between urbanisation and environmental justice. Since there are no fundamental rights to environment, in the absence of appropriate policies affected parties must file petitions in court on the basis of violation of their fundamental rights to life (interpreted as the right to shelter or livelihoods). Success in such litigation is low since environmental disagreements are settled in India on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the judiciary" (Datta, 2012: 986).

the PILs filed based on the violation of environmental laws and/or a violation of a fundamental right to life has been increasing.[258] While development projects have often been contested on environmental grounds, the ecological sensitivity of Lavasa's geographical location rendered it particularly vulnerable to opposition.

The NAPM therefore brought the project to the attention to the MoEF, arguing that not only had there been substantial ecological damage, but that Lavasa did not have the requisite clearance for the EIA from the central government. MoEF then investigated the matter and on 25 November 2010, a few days before LCL was about to list its company on the Mumbai stock market, the MoEF in Delhi issued a stay order under section (5) of the Environment Protection Act (EPA) (1986). In the first instance, the stay order was premised on two grounds; first, that the project did not have requisite clearance from the MoEF as stipulated under the 2004 amendment of the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA), 1994. Although the project had received clearance from the GoM, given that substantial changes had been made to the project (size and expenditure), the clearance was required from the MoEF and not the GoM. Second, that 47.30 hectares of the project had been constructed at above 1000 metres above sea level, which was a violation of the EPA, 1986. The order prohibited LCL from continuing construction arguing that the matter needed to be investigated further. Notably, the order was propelled by a letter of complaint from the NAPM and issued without an actual assessment of the environmental merits of the projects, (MoEF, 2010a).

LCL, outraged, filed a counter-suit (CWP 9448 of 2010) against the MoEF in the Mumbai High Court arguing that they had obtained the requisite permission from the Maharashtra State Environment Board on the grounds that this was a new township and that the clearance had been granted to them prior to the EIA Act, 1994 being amended in 2004. However, the Mumbai High Court rejected this plea, held the stay-order and further directed the MoEF to hear the complaints against Lavasa as made by the NAPM in their PIL, consider LCL's response, and set up a committee to examine the environmental degradation in Lavasa (MoEF, 2010b).[259]

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[258] See Sivaramakrishnan (2011) for how the environment has become an object of the law.
[259] "PILs in India have come to be characterised by a collaborative approach, procedural flexibility, judicially supervised interim orders and forward-looking relief. Judges in their activist avatar reach out

In a meeting at the MoEF on 14 December 2010, representatives of LCL argued that the development of Lavasa had largely improved the environment since construction commenced as the company had planted 600,000 trees and employed 441 villagers (MoEF, 2010c). They asserted that the stay order would deprive 1000 families of employment, bankrupt the company, put public sector loans and third party rights of foreign and domestic customers in jeopardy, and deplete opportunities available to the local population for their own development. Some *sarpanches* drafted a joint letter stating that the project had benefited the villagers. In contrast, the NAPM pointed out that such a large project should have not been allowed to emerge in such a fragile region without 'proper' assessment, that its presence was affecting the livelihoods of local people, and that water sources were being polluted. If LCL had emerged to be an example of 'proper planning' then it was this very properness that was then questioned by the NAPM and the MoEF. The MoEF surmised that there had been "large scale environmental degradation", that the GoM had awarded environmental clearance without jurisdiction, and that no "proper" transport study had been conducted for the project (MoEF, 2010c).

What followed was an elaborate process of LCL requesting permissions and rebuttals from the NAPM. The MoEF set up a committee to investigate the extent of damage and the actions to be taken. Through a mere three-day visit, with little baseline data, this expert committee evaluated the project. They argued, "that as India's urban profile undergoes a change, as indeed it will, it becomes essential that the spirit of the EPA which calls for a proper balance between environment and development is maintained" (Ravindran, 2011: 3). In the absence of baseline data the committee was unable to scientifically evaluate the environmental damage done over time. However, it observed that the "land profile" had been damaged "extensively", with serious physical damage and violations of existing laws and land allotment regulations", and "extensive cutting and filling of land for infrastructure developments" (2011: 5-6). Waste disposal needed to be addressed, top soil erosion contained, and the check dams needed to be evaluated from a "systemic

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to numerous parties and stake-holders, form fact-finding, monitoring or policy-evolution committees, and arrive at constructive solutions to the problems flagged for their attention by public-spirited citizens" (Rajmani, 2007 : 294).

perspective" to understand their downstream impacts.[260] It recommended that the GoM review the Hill Station Regulation and constitute a committee with stakeholders to ensure environmental compliance: "large number of such projects may come up in [the] future without proper planning assessment of the environmental impacts of projects of such large magnitude and also without taking into view the opinion of local residents to whom such developments are detrimental to their lifestyle" (MoEF, 2011: 18).

In November 2011, after a year of back and forth, with multiple committees and consultations, the first phase of the project was granted permission subject to a number of conditions and penalties. As a penalty, MoEF ordered that the LCL "restore the environment" at its own cost, that it create an environmental restoration fund of 5 per cent of their expenditure, increase expenditure on CSR, report to the MoEF every six months, and finally that the GoM would have to take "credible action" against the company for these violations (the GoM later filed a criminal complaint against LCL's directors). LCL argued that the MoEF had no authority to impose these kinds of conditions on them for clearance. It also argued that no other project that had been stalled on similar grounds had been ordered to meet such conditions. MoEF responded that the scale of Lavasa made it unlike any other project they had encountered. The MoEF did not, however, challenge the very idea of building such a project in an ecologically sensitive area. Thus, the NAPM argued that the MoEF did not have the jurisdiction to give post-facto clearance, given that the matter was now in the Mumbai High Court.

In other words, Phase 1 of the project was 'regularised'. The Indian state, through courts and planning bureaucracy, routinely 'regularises' projects that are often illegal in some respect (built without requisite permission, constructed on public lands, are encroachment etc). A large body of scholarly work has discussed regularisation in the contexts of irregularities, illegalities and informality (See Sunderesan (2014) for

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[260] The committee also noted a number of other irregularities, highlighted numerous procedural issues, and argued that the Master Plan had been approved by the Collector, Pune without following the procedures of public consultation as laid out in the MRTP Act, 1966. It asserted that the land leased by the MKVDC was to be used for the purposes of green open space and not for the development of a convention centre. Furthermore, it highlighted that the Special Planning Authority (SPA) was overwhelmingly constituted by Lavasa employees, which made its independence questionable.

extensive discussion). So pervasive is this practice that projects are often built and properties sold under the assumption that they will eventually be regularised (Weinstein, 2009). In fact, LCL, in its original petition had requested that the project be regularised on the grounds that third party investments from investors and public sector banks would be jeopardized. In the domain of the environment too then, such regularisations or post-facto clearances are regularly granted.[261]

Because the terms of investigation were set around environmental damage and clearance, the investigation did not take into consideration the kinds of issues raised by NAPM. For instance it did not engage with displacement, or rights of villagers to resources. Neither did it contest the very basis and premise of the city's existence (although the committee did suggest revising the Hill Station Regulation). One could argue that its ideas of environmentalism were much more aligned with those of LCL's. By making environmental degradation about measurable norms and standards, the nebulous idea of what constitutes 'proper planning', resurfaced once again. This echoes Baviskar's observation that:

> "The Indian exercise of defining what is environmental and what is not, is somewhat arbitrary. Whereas the conflict around agricultural land tenure and use, or around the workplace, is usually not treated as environmental, conflict around forests or water resources is deemed to be quintessentially environmental. This distinction is hard to maintain because land management is also of critical ecological importance, and confrontations over forests are also about the ownership and control of the means of production" (Baviskar, 1995: 41).

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[261] Although in *Jagpal Singh vs. the State of Punjab and Others* (2011), the Supreme Court in the case of the use of commons lands, directed the state government to: "prepare schemes for eviction of illegal/unauthorised occupants of gram sabha/ panchayat/Poramboke [grazing lands]/Shamlat land and these must be restored to the gram sabha/gram panchayat for the common use of villagers of the village. …The said scheme should provide for the speedy eviction of the illegal occupant, after giving him [sic] a show cause notice and a brief hearing. Long duration of such illegal occupation or huge expenditure in making constructions thereon or political connections must not be treated as a justification for condoning this illegal act or for regularising the illegal possession. Regularisation should only be permitted in exceptional cases, e g, where lease has been granted under some government notification to landless labourers or members of SCs/ST" (quoted in Sampat, 2010: 4).

Notably, this technical and bureaucratic narrative also has a personal element to it. Every single informant suggested a political conspiracy in either stalling or giving clearance to Lavasa. They varied in their micro-details but the meta-narrative was the same: that this environmental clearance became the site where the ruling coalition's (UPA) internal politics were played out. Since LCL was seen to be Pawar's project (now Union Minister of Agriculture and leader of the NCP, part of the UPA) Sonia Gandhi (head of the UPA) sought to discipline him by interfering with his pet project. Others argued that the clearance was eventually issued because Pawar used his political weight:

> "I think that it was a central level tussle between the Congress and the NCP. Lavasa turned out to be the field where they were able to play that battle; the Congress and Sharad Pawar tussle is always there. Lavasa, for the Congress, was a way of settling that score [Me: but then in the end they let it go anyway]. No, but the thing is that for that time period, there was some policy that Sharad Pawar was opposing and later on he kept quiet. And then it's not that the Congress is against Lavasa. I would even say that it wasn't even the MoEF. I don't believe that Jairam Ramesh had a real concern for environment; he was just doing what his bosses were asking him. If Jairam Ramesh had a real concern for the environment then he would have done something in Jaitapur[262] rather than Lavasa. If the environment is of concern then Jaitapur is the main much bigger concern than Lavasa – and in Jaitapur he takes on a different stand. Which means that environment is not the concern, so environment becomes merely the battlefield."[263]

An informant from LCL concurred:

> "So when it finally got down to it there was nothing they could pin onto the environment, it was personality driven probably. That's India. The challenge in India is that we don't have empirical standards. I know because I sat in one of the meetings and they showed on the map that this was bushland but

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[262] Jaitapur is the site of a nuclear power plant in Maharashtra. It too was contested on environmental grounds in 2010 but it received environmental clearance swiftly.
[263] C2 interview, 26/03/2012

they don't know how much bushland, so how much bush should be there, nobody knows. So those are the challenges."[264]

What does this set of incidents tell us about environmentalism of the Indian state? First, the Indian state (state, central, and the courts) sees urbanisation and the development of new towns as desirable. Rather than questioning the need for such projects, environmental protection becomes about following pre-decided rules and norms, and following the rule of law. Second, in the absence of the ability to have a substantive conversation about the environment, it is through law and clearances that the state exerts its environmentalism upon other actors.[265] Third, such conflicts can also be seen as part of larger political tussles, in which the environment is merely a bottleneck that can be used by political players at the central level against state-level actors.

7.4. Conclusion: Environmentalism as Political Strategy

Environmentalism, as Baviskar argues, "is not concerned with *nature* per se, it is concerned with the *sustainable use* of nature" (1995: 42). The conflict therefore is "not merely over material resources", ownership, rights, and control but also "involves fundamentally different conceptions of" and claims about "different relationships with nature" (Baviskar, 1995: 42). To address the seeming paradox about how and why an eco-city got contested and stalled on environmental grounds, EP Thompson's statement that "every contradiction is a conflict of values as well as a conflict of interest" is both values and interest is insightful (Thompson (1975) in Baviskar (1995: 42)).

As I have demonstrated in this chapter, there is no doubt that environmental sustainability is of concern to LCL, the NAPM and other activists that opposed it,

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[264] L7 interview, 21/08/2012.
[265] Scholars have noted that law pertaining to environmental issues in rural and urban areas differs in its focus. In the former, concerns are rooted in individual and collective rights to the environment and in the latter in civic sense and security (Sivaramakrishnan, 2011). In both instances, environmental questions remain enveloped in "legal debates and issues of government that provide a genealogy of ideas about the environment as both an essential resource for individual living and societal heritage for public good" (Sivaramakrishnan, 2011: 906).

and the state. Three points are of interest. First is that the environmental contestation is based on two ideologically opposed conceptions of environmentalism. LCL's view is premised on urban development being a foregone conclusion and centred on the purported need to design cities that are environmentally sustainable and driven by consumption. This conception, in keeping with the tenets of ecological modernization, reifies the urban as an ideal and technological progress as the pathway to it. The NAPM's position is premised on the assumption that city development, no matter how 'green' it claims to be, often comes at the cost of village life. Furthermore, the environment is not merely a set of resources to be passively consumed through recreational activities, it is the lifeblood of rural populations and its protection is inextricably linked with their land and water rights. These environmentalisms therefore reflect a conflict of values.

In a sense both these ideals can be seen as utopian, one upholds the urban, the other the village. Guha notes that within social movements there are "almost always competing factions offering competing interpretations" (Guha 1999: 293). The same can be said of corporations, where employees hold differing views (as Welker (2006) demonstrates). In the face of conflict, however, environmentalism can and is used strategically to depict a single view. While it is theoretically important to engage with categories and constructs as dynamic and contested, the work of environmental movements (and corporations) "demands working assumptions, temporary certitudes, and acts of faith" (Baviskar, 1999: 288). In this light, one could criticise the social movement's "claim that indigenous communities' rights to forests have priority over distant urban consumers" on grounds that such a view constructs a "problematic topology around locality, closed community, nativism, subsistence, and so on" (Baviskar, 1999: 289). But such analytical categories perform a function to "support struggles against the structures of domination" (1999: 289). Similarly, Jones argues that while "law charges resistance with moral weight and language" it requires consensus and in adopting such legal strategies, issues such as "rights, justice and power have to be discussed and agreed upon…before a transcript for public consumption can be offered" (1998: 505). The same can be said of corporations, who unlike social movements are not fighting battles against domination, but nonetheless require constructs, which often change to suit the moment, to put forth their own political agendas. In this case the vision they wished to portray was that of

an internationally recognized, aesthetically pleasing, and inclusive eco-city.

This brings me to my second point; these conflicting ideas of environmentalism are underpinned by conflicting interests. LCL's goal is to generate a compelling urban future that is sellable and marketable both domestically and internationally. Such visioning is made possible by and further enables land and resource privatisation. Ultimately the tropes of environmental degradation in existing cities and by extension the environmental promises of the eco-city are used to generate more support for future cities and associated real estate sales. In the case of the NAPM, the environment is invoked to guarantee land and resource rights to their members, particularly those who are *adivasi* and scheduled caste. It serves as a way in which to challenge privatisation and resource capture by leveraging environmental laws in a context where land disputes are increasingly difficult to fight (as demonstrated in Chapter Five and Six). In this instance the environment is also used strategically as part of a larger, nation-wide struggle against privatisation, displacement, and neoliberal economic development (Levien, 2007).

Third, as the mediator of environmental conflict, the Indian state acts somewhat schizophrenically and seems to have an incoherent project. On the one hand, the state government pushes for urban development projects through policies that encourage private urban development in forested areas. On the other hand, when faced with political pressure the central government stalls the very project on environmental grounds. The state in this case, is not a unitary actor with a singular logic – the goals of the centre and the state governments come into conflict. The GoM passed the Hill Station Regulation to enable proper planning and forestall ecological degradation. Yet, no assessment was undertaken to evaluate site suitability, despite the ecological sensitivity of the region; it simply handed over a parcel of land marked for reforestation to a private company. The central government, however, questioned the properness of LCL's environmental planning, and without any baseline data on the ecological conditions of the area and/or substantial evaluation, swiftly stalled the project on grounds of improper clearances. Moreover, although the GoM overstepped its authority and issued environmental clearances to Lavasa, it was never held responsible for its actions.

It is also noteworthy, that these are not anonymous principled contests but are propelled by powerful individuals with political heft – Lavasa being Pawar's project and the NAPM being represented by Medha Patkar. Furthermore, there is a tussle between the state and the centre and also the personalities that occupy these positions. The Indian state is not unequivocally aligned with big business, it pays close attention to what powerful (arguably personality-driven) social movements like the NAPM say. Nor are the goals of the centre and the state government aligned: if the GoM extended every kind of privilege, exemption and helping hand to the project, then the MoEF, undoubtedly under the pressure from the NAPM, swiftly pulled the rug from beneath LCL's feet. Although the project did receive partial clearance in the end, it did so at significant, almost debilitating cost to LCL. In the year that the project stayed idle, it lost an estimated INR 2 crores (USD 400,000) every day. In the process, its credibility was damaged and many business partners pulled out. The clearance came with multiple restrictions, including a criminal case against the project put forth by the GoM. Although construction has resumed for phase I, it remains to be seen if the project can and will get back up on its feet. Ultimately the Indian state seeks to establish some kind of 'balance' between environmental protection and urban development. This 'balance' translates into support for the project as the state's ideology of sustainable development is more aligned with LCL's than with the NAPM's.

In conclusion, urban megaprojects are being met with protest all over the country. Eco-projects seek to demonstrate a possible environmentally sustainable form of urban development. Yet, many of these projects are contested on environmental grounds. These protests have often succeeded in halting projects altogether and are an important force in steering an aspect of urbanisation. This chapter argues that these conflicts are both led by irreconcilable ideological positions around urbanisation, control of land and resources, and the sustainable use of the environment. It also shows how the environment is invoked to generate support both for and against land and resource privatisation. In a sense then, the competing discourses of environmental sustainability have become political strategies through which such projects are both put forth and contested.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

Days after Narendra Modi became India's Prime Minister in 2014, he announced plans to build 100 'smart cities' across India and remarked, "cities in the past were built on river banks, they are now built along highways. But in the future they will be built based on availability of optical fiber networks and next-generation infrastructure" (Economic Times, 09 July 2014: n.p.). Set against India's predicted and awaited urban explosion, its infrastructure deficit, and its ambitions for economic growth, the fervour to build anew is palpable. Although what constitutes a 'smart city' has yet to be unveiled, INR 7000 crore (USD 1.2 billion) has been allocated in the 2014-15 budget, and partnerships are being pursued with the governments of Japan and Singapore (Economic Times, 10 July 2012: n.p.). Whether and just how these cities emerge and function remains to be seen.

Through a close engagement with Lavasa, this dissertation has examined the impulses behind and the implications of building such new cities. With so much emphasis being placed on building new cities, most of which are still in the planning stage and not yet built, it is important to understand Lavasa as a site that has actually emerged. Accordingly, the thesis examined the ideologies, institutional arrangements, and political processes at work in the making of Lavasa. It also showed how rural communities are thrown into city-making and how they reshape its making. It explored how the imagined, material and lived aspects of the making of a 'model' city shape, and are shaped by, competing ideologies of development, and land and real-estate politics; how a vision for a new Indian city was imagined and made real, in a quintessential example of the production of space. In short, it analysed how a city became both a site and object of politics. This dissertation, therefore, contributes to urban studies through an ethnographic study of the first city developed, financed, and managed entirely by the private sector in post-independence India.

I began the thesis with a brief overview of historical attempts at building new cities and argued that such visions are often the products of individual actors seeking to

demonstrate alternatives to existing urbanism, and that they are invariably resisted, subverted, and remade. Chapters Four to Seven made specific arguments about different aspects of the politics of place-making, they each referred to an element of the plan and the response to the plan – the plan on paper and the plan in practice; in Lefebvrian terms, as the interaction of the conceived, perceived, and lived space in the production of a city. The central object of inquiry is how space becomes an object of politics: space as the city itself, space as land being converted from rural to urban use and ownership, space as a site upon which numerous and often competing claims are made, and space as a product of and means to those claims. I have treated Lavasa as an empirical phenomenon with social consequences in order to examine what it means for a new city premised on private property to be inclusive, environmentally sustainable, *and* profitable. In so doing, I have explicitly rejected the notion that "corporations cannot do good because they are profit maximizing" because such an argument "conflates the moral nature of corporate *intentions* with the moral content of the *outcomes* produced through corporate actions" (emphasis in original, Welker, 2006: 5). Furthermore, since Lavasa and, indeed, all of Modi's smart cities (if they are ever built) are premised on converting rural land and livelihoods into urban ones, we are impelled to examine the processes behind, and effects of, such a transformation. Therefore, as discussed at length in Chapter Three, I contend that this single site can be used as a synecdoche to comment on the larger forces of privatised forms of urbanisation as well as the rural urban transition in India.

In telling this story, I demonstrated how the symbolic power of this 'market utopia' and the imaginaries deployed conceal the conditions of its possibility, i.e. the ways in which it was made through the state, through speculation, and the discursive and material operations of the land market. I illustrated the centrality of the control of land to the project of privatised city-making. Furthermore, I argued that theorising the role of the state in urban processes requires us to pay attention to local networks of elite political actors who inhabit and move between the state, society, and the corporation. Finally, I showed that contemporary environmental concerns are also centred on contestation of the use and control of land. Together, I argued that the land market's construction shapes and informs the politics of the present.

This concluding chapter reflects on the central themes raised through the study of Lavasa and the light they shed on understanding the politics of urbanisation in contemporary India. The contributions made to the three themes laid out in Chapter Two i) speculative urbanism, ii) privatisation and the Indian state, and iii) contestation and consent, are discussed in Sections 8.1 to 8.3. Section 8.4 presents the limitations of this work and suggests avenues for future research. Section 8.5 concludes with a short note on the contribution of this dissertation to urban theory.

8.1. Speculative Urbanism

Assessing his experience of building Radburn, architect Clarence Stein reflected that "a private corporation had at best a gambler's chance to build a new community" (Hall, 2002: 133). Indeed, any corporation building a new city is gambling on a number of things, including the city's present and future real estate values, its desirability to future populations, and, in contemporary India, its ability to withstand contestation. In this respect, one can argue that any vision is speculative, because it is based on a conception of the future and gambles on a whole host of unknowns. As discussed in Chapter Two, the term 'speculative urbanism' has been used to depict urban processes that are premised on the uncertainty of the future as well as on hefty real estate profits. This dissertation contributes to seeing speculation as a force of urban change in three ways, as summarised below.

First, the thesis contributes to the growing evidence that the post-liberalisation Indian state has shifted from protecting farmers from speculation to enabling speculation to take place on a grand scale (Goldman, 2010; Shrivastava and Kothari, 2012; Levien, 2013). Levien (2013) argues that the Indian state is effectively a 'land broker state', which expropriates land from citizens for the benefit of private capital. Sud (2014b) tempers this narrative, arguing that although such transfers are taking place, state governments are attempting to balance the governance of land between farmers and industry and that policies and outcomes vary substantially on a state-by-state basis. In Chapter Four I showed how the state (both the GoM and the Mumbai High Court) played an active role in facilitating real estate speculation by creating and upholding policies geared towards privatised hill station development in the form of second-home investments. It gave permissions and rights to developers and

transferred public land to the company at low prices in the name of 'public interest'. In this respect, the Hill Station Regulation is in keeping with (and precedes) other state policies, such as the 2005 SEZ Act, which have recast the idea of public interest as being equivalent to economic growth and increased revenue for the local government, rather than being cognisant of wider development goals (Ramanathan, 1996; Sampat, 2010). That said, in the case of Lavasa it is impossible to ignore the importance of the network of powerful political actors and developers involved in the project (and their private interests). Kohli (2009) and Rodrik and Subramanian (2004) argue that liberalisation in India has been more business friendly rather than market friendly, where private growth is generated in the name of public interest. Sud (2014b) finds this distinction useful in thinking about land, arguing that some state governments are market friendly and others are business friendly. It is worth investigating to what extent business friendly practices are mapped onto the private interests of politicians. This thesis therefore cautions the reading of such speculative land transfer policies and as simply 'neoliberal' or even 'market friendly' and begs a closer investigation of the direct private interests that ensure certain 'public interest' projects take hold and others do not.

Second, a number of scholars have argued that real estate speculation comes at the cost of the poor because it fuels the dispossession of rural landowners (Goldman, 2010; Levien, 2013) and the exploitation of wage labourers (Searle, 2010). Here, too, I have shown that that certain groups were dispossessed by the workings of the land market. However, as I demonstrated in Chapters Five and Six, it is not merely the developer who engages in speculation; local politicians, brokers, intermediaries, holdouts, and villagers are all engaged in a variety of speculative activities, hedging their present actions on possible future outcomes. Intermediaries speculated on land, buying it long before the project was announced. So too did some *sarpanches*, who participated and benefited from land speculation. Some holdouts speculatively held on to their lands in the hopes of better material outcomes and in turn became directly invested in the success of the project. Meanwhile, those who had sold their lands speculated on their employment opportunities. Hence, many villagers – brokers, holdouts, and the landless – were, either by force or choice, speculating in some way or another, albeit from different positions of power. This speculation is rooted in the discursive and material construction and operation of the land market;

it becomes a double-edged sword – it is the force that dispossesses and displaces some but also creates the conditions for some villagers to support the project. In engaging with the numerous forms and agents of speculation, this thesis provides a counterpoint to a large literature on land grabs which often fails to account for the agency of villagers and agrarian intermediaries in participating in speculation.

Third, speculation has productive power and produces political effects. While Lavasa is a real estate project, generating surplus through the monetisation of land, it is also building, sustaining and making real the representation of a private, somewhat utopian, space. Lavasa was imagined not just as a gamble as a real estate project (after all, it is built in a forested setting) but also as a speculation on a certain representation of space – the future city. The vision of Lavasa promises that future cities, when planned and managed properly through private partnerships and with a complete top-down vision, can avoid the politics and turmoil that characterises the Indian city of the past (and present). These planning ideals are fundamentally premised on the use and control of land and the ability to turn cheap rural land into real estate. By using representations of a prosperous and well-planned future (and contrasting it against the maelstrom of existing Indian urbanism), LCL seeks to expand business opportunities in order to build many more Lavasas across the country, thus generating more real estate profits for the company. However, this vision is being implemented with no clear sense of LCL's governance powers (beyond those of being property owners) and despite the promises of top down and privatised planning, the project remains at the mercy of India's democratic framework. This level of analysis is in agreement with the literature on urban visioning, which suggests that such imaginaries are deployed to deepen real estate profits (Searle, 2010), insulate projects from public accountability (Shatkin, 2008), and rationalise new forms of 'order' and semi-authoritarian governance (Bhan, 2014).

But such visioning can serve other purposes too. Surveying different SEZs across the country, Jenkins et al. (2014) highlight the importance of the interaction between anti-SEZ activism and the state in determining the outcomes of the projects. In some cases, such as Maharashtra (Majumdar and Menezes, 2014), Rajasthan (Levien, 2013), and Tamil Nadu (Vijayabaskar, 2010), resistance has been relatively weak. However in West Bengal and Goa, activism was successful in closing SEZs and despite

substantial "interests working actively in the aid of capital" the state was "not immune to popular resistance" (Sampat, 2013: 19). This backdrop indicates that the threat of (successful) resistance to private enclaves is real and the range of the local state's response to such projects is wide.

I have shown that it is precisely the threat of such resistance, and an uncertainty about the future that generates planning ideals such as inclusion (Chapters 4 and 6) and environmental sustainability (Chapter Seven). While the speculative visioning takes place amid globally circulating references of what a world-class city should look like: 'smart', 'well planned', and 'sustainable', it also takes place by calculating the very real risks of resistance on the grounds of land, displacement, and the environment. To that effect, only days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced his smart city plan, Lavasa's website rebranded itself as a 'smart city' (through it website), arguably to gain political support. In order to ensure that the city is desirable to both domestic and international firms and faces minimal local resistance, an improbable market utopia – profitable, inclusive, environmentally sustainable, and well planned – is generated. The vision, therefore, is not limited to globally circulating ideas of urbanism but also references local and politically salient concepts, conceived in anticipation of the potential disruption caused by democratic politics in India.

In summary, this dissertation provides us a lens through which we can think about speculation as a force of urbanisation. It goes beyond conceiving of speculation as generated through increasingly mobile finance capital (*cf.* Harvey; Searle, 2010; Goldman, 2010) to include forms of speculation taking place at all levels and by all kinds of actors. Furthemore, speculation on the (successful) future of the project within a political environment of resistance, generates public planning goals such as inclusion and environmental sustainability. Thus speculation not only propels the project in material terms but also directly impacts the form and politics of the city-making project. Thus, in thinking about new city projects more broadly, this thesis urges a more expansive use and understanding of 'speculative urbanism'.

8.2. Privatisation and the Indian State

The history of privately built new towns, as discussed in Chapter One, shows us that such projects have always been enabled in one form or another by the state. Indeed, different levels of the state have been present at every stage of Lavasa's making: from its inception and assisting with land and permissions to ultimately stalling the project. As a private city-making project, first sanctioned and then obstructed by different levels of the state, Lavasa can be used as an optic through which we can reflect on the relationship between the state and capital in India. In order to do so however, we need to distinguish between the different levels of the state (local, central, and the courts) and also free the analysis from state-capital and state-society binaries. In this section I focus on the dissertation's contribution to two themes: i) the importance of individual political actors in forging urban outcomes and ii) the seemingly contradictory actions of the Indian state.

In tracing the state's role in Lavasa's making, two observations are noteworthy: first, this 'state' consists of specific actors who actively supported the project. In this instance the most visible political actors belong to the Pawar family – Sharad Pawar, Ajit Pawar, and Supriya Sule – who have long been prominent figures in Pune's and Maharashtra's politics, are members of the NCP, hold public office, and are also shareholders in multiple real estate firms in Maharashtra (Ray and Tare, 2011). In recent years, the relationship between real estate developers and politicians has come under wider public scrutiny, and it is clear, as scholars are beginning to argue, that this relationship is a formidable force in determining the direction that urban development takes (Sami, 2010; Weinstein, 2014).[266] In this instance, the Pawars are not merely benevolent supporters with exceedingly good relations with certain real estate developers, but arguably also direct beneficiaries of the project (although the extent of the benefits accrued is a source of debate).

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[266] This argument also extends beyond real estate. Kohli (2009) argues that the power and influence of business groups in India has grown and these groups wield significant political influence. In the domain of national politics, an increasing number of businessmen/industrialists are members of parliament. For example, Anil Ambani of Reliance Corporation filed nomination papers for the Rajya Sabha in 2004, committing INR 10,000 crores (USD 200 million) to building a power plant in Uttar Pradesh. "Such explicit partisan linkage seems to go against the dictum that most businessmen financed and supported all parties in attempt to maximize their returns and minimize political risk" (Sinha. 2011: 472). The direct benefits may explain why the Indian state is considered pro-business, rather than pro-market.

Sundaresan (2014) refers to these webs as 'private interest networks' that "inhabit the space of governance and produce private and public interest outcomes through engaging in various forms of associational relations" (2014: 296). It is through the involvement of politicians, both their insider knowledge as well as their ability to create legislation, that land markets are constructed. Similarly, key employees within the LCL, such as the Chief Planner and the Vice President of land acquisition were former (senior) government employees, with detailed knowledge of state planning apparatus and land systems, and non-trivial social and professional networks within local government. Majumdar and Menezes (2014: 253) show that when building the Maha Mumbai SEZ, the Reliance Corporation employed "prominent former bureaucrats and state planners who had thorough knowledge of, and easy access to, officials in the state's planning machinery". Unsurprisingly, informants argued that Lavasa's swift emergence could largely be attributed to the various actors that moved effortlessly between the worlds of the state and the private sector.[267]

Such movement between state, society and the corporation is not limited to the upper echelons of power. As detailed in Chapters Five and Six, this dissertation concurs with recent scholarship by Gururani (2013) and Levien (2013), which discusses at great length the pivotal role of the *sarpanch* in the land market, and in particular how the *sarpanch* can become the "greatest beneficiary" (Gururani, 2013) of land buy-ups. *Sarpanches* often act as intermediaries in the land market as well as between the company, the local government, and the village. In Khed SEZ, not far from Lavasa, the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) offered incentives to *sarpanches* such as guaranteeing them construction and earthmoving contracts, despite their lack of experience. Such contracts were seen as "confidence building measures" (Balakrishnan, 2013: 108). In Lavasa too, two of the interviewed *sarpanches* had some kind of employment contract with LCL. Many such *sarpanches* were no longer full-time residents of their villages, but lived in Pune and came in two or three times a week. When the LCL was under examination by the central government, some *sarpanches* got together and filed an affidavit in support of the project. That said, not all *sarpanches* are involved in real estate transactions of land

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[267] C4 interview, 18/04/2012; C2 interview, 26/03/2012.

aggregation, and in some cases they protest the company's actions. Regardless, it was only through using these agrarian intermediaries that the project could come to life. In examining post-liberalisation politics, Chatterjee (2008: 56) observes the ascendancy of "the corporate classes relative to the landed elites". In this instance the corporate classes largely retain their power by bringing landed elites into the fold of the project. This should caution both academics and policy makers as to the weight they give to *sarpanch* testimonies when evaluating development projects.

To summarise the first point, the lack of a clear (Weberian) distinction between state and society has been well documented in the scholarship on the local state in rural India (Harriss-White 2003, Corbridge et al., 2005; Gupta, 1997, 2012). This literature largely refers to how this lack of distinction impacts rural citizens' engagement with and experience of the local state. However, the role of such blurring in the making of urban India is only just beginning to be uncovered (see Sunderesan (2014), Sami (2013), and Shakin and Vidyarthi (2014) for a recent review and a call to re-think state-society binaries in urban studies). It is clear that political actors at all levels of the state (from ministers to *sarpanches*) straddle the business and political worlds, and wield enough power to heavily influence the determination of where and how urban projects emerge. We therefore encounter the importance of the agency of local political actors in shaping the production of space in what seems to be a corporate city-making project.

What implications does this have for our understanding of the Indian state and its relationship to capital? Recent policies supporting SEZs, industrial townships, and industrial corridors have led scholars to argue that the Indian state is increasingly serving the interest of capital; Levien (2013) calls the Indian state a 'land-broker state', which facilitates large-scale transfer of resources to corporations. There is certainly much truth to this – as we have seen, the state does facilitate private real estate projects in the name of public interest, leases public lands at deflated prices, and facilitates land transactions. But it is uncertain whether this is because of graft, motivated by private interests, or whether it is a function of an ideology that upholds the dominance of capital. What we do know is that "the politico-administrative class" is "directly tied to private interests" and this "partisanship and directness of

the nexus in many ways defines the character of the contemporary Indian State" (Yadav and Palshikar, 2011: n.p.).

Which bring us to the issue of inconsistent actions by different levels of the state. Both the GoM and the Mumbai High Court championed privately developed hill stations – seeing them as not only desirable but also necessary. This was evident in their unequivocal support for the Hill Station Regulation, which was enacted by the GoM and confirmed by the High Court's decision to uphold the Regulation as a means to further private investment, develop tourism, and protect the environment. To this effect the court and the GoM gave post-facto clearance to the Amby Valley project (Lavasa's predecessor). LCL, too, benefitted from a range of locally given exemptions and clearances; that the project went from planning to building in less than a decade is testimony to the support that was extended to it (Mumtaz, 2011; CAG, 2011).

While the idea of building new hill stations per se was not contested, the central government, as represented by the MoEF and the CAG was critical of the project, aired its 'irregularities' and proceeded to temporarily stall it, inflicting heavy penalties (as seen in Chapter Seven). At the time of writing, the project does not have full clearance (only Phase 1 does) and the GoM has filed a criminal complaint against Gulabchand and LCL board members (at the behest of MoEF). Furthermore, Lavasa's parent company, HCC, is in court against the state government in multiple cases on the grounds of not having been remunerated for other public infrastructure projects completed by them at the behest of the state[268] (Gulabchand has repeatedly gone on record in the media about non-payment of contracts by the government). The investigation of local government practices by the central government elucidates that the state neither acts as a unitary actor nor does it demonstrate incontrovertible support to capital. This may not be surprising as the tendency to view the Indian state as a unitary actor has long been challenged by scholars of Indian federalism (Corbridge and Harriss, 2000; Yadav and Palshikar, 2011).

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[268] For example, the GoM owes HCC INR 600 crore (USD 100 million) for the Bandra-Worli Sea Link completed in 2010 (HCC, 2013).

However, here too it can be argued that it was elite political actors who precipitated these divergent actions. The project was brought into the public eye largely through the political heft and dedication of the NAPM. Consequently, multiple government departments were forced to launch inquiries into Lavasa; the UDD, the Collector's office, the Revenue department, and the Tahsil office, under the auspices of various laws, had to investigate, justify and/or correct their actions. Whether this is merely a performance is yet to be seen. Regardless, powerful urban activists and social movements use the law to launch inquiries to hold the local state accountable and to leverage the central state against the local state.

While, on the one hand, the state government pushed for urban development projects through policies that encouraged privatized development in forested areas, on the other hand, the centre, when faced with political pressure, stalled the very same project on environmental grounds. In this case, the state is not a unitary actor with a singular logic and so the goals of the centre and the state governments come into conflict. It is also noteworthy that these are not anonymous contests but are propelled by powerful individuals with political heft – Lavasa was backed by Pawar's and is Gulabchand's project and the NAPM is represented by Medha Patkar. In fact, there are few projects in the country that have involved a cast of such politically influential characters. Thus, the tussle between the state and the centre also reflects the power of the personalities that occupy these positions. We see then, that the Indian state is not unequivocally aligned with capital and it is often held accountable by powerful (some would argue personality-driven) social movements like the NAPM. We also observe that the goals of the centre and the state government are not always aligned: although the GoM extended every kind of privilege, exemption and helping hand to the project, the MoEF, undoubtedly under pressure by the NAPM, swiftly pulled the rug from beneath LCL's feet (even if it partially replaced it a year later).

Shatkin and Vidyarthi (2014) posit that this moment of urban reform is largely "state-driven" and has experienced only "sporadic and partial success" as the "state has frustrated the ambitions of corporations, consumer citizens and others, who cover a vision of global urban transformation and the commodification of space" (2014: 5). Roy (2009a) argues that such actions are consistent with the state's informalised

planning practice, whereby the state leverages the blur between what is legal and illegal and is able to align itself with populist measures to further its sovereign power. But Roy does not distinguish between the levels of the state and how and why they act in contradictory manners, and in Lavasa's case it is not even clear that the state is, in fact, furthering its sovereign power. While the central state has certainly frustrated the making of Lavasa, it is a different level of the state from the one that sanctioned the project. These contradictory state actions can also be seen as disciplinary practices, by the central government down to the state government, by senior political leaders to those below them. How this continues to play out as the project proceeds, remains to be seen. This thesis thus calls for a more disaggregated and less structural view of the state in urban politics.

8.3. Contestation and Consent

LCL, anticipating resistance to *any* large building project, hoped to overcome it by planning and presenting Lavasa as an inclusive and environmentally sustainable city. Why and how, then, was it resisted on those very grounds? In Chapter Four we saw that the Hill Station Regulation legitimated the common sense notion as put forth by the government and developers, that more hill stations were needed. In so doing, it prevented any further contestation on the propriety of such projects, i.e. it closed avenues for future public debates on whether new hill stations were desirable and closed off certain avenues for resistance to Lavasa, and other similar projects. This however, did not prevent the project from being resisted in other ways.

Throughout the thesis I have shown that Lavasa presents a complex case of multiple strategies of resistance and counter-resistance and contestation has taken place on a variety of grounds. In the realm of the law, there have been land claims in revenue courts, and PILs in the Mumbai High Court. Alongside individual landowners blocking road access and cordoning off their landholdings from Lavasa, there have been overt protests staged by the NAPM. Some holdouts refused to sell their land despite their ideological agreement with the project. And finally, there were instances when the NAPM forced multiple government departments to pursue inquiries regarding the project, which ultimately led to its temporary cessation. Every single element of the

plan (private planning, market prices for land, inclusion, sustainability) was ultimately contested and remade through various acts of resistance. The workings of the land market generated a very specific type of resistance, one that was fragmented and reliant on local revenue courts instead of collective action. The local state, often the very site of those land frauds, had to investigate and mediate these disputes and the NAPM's political heft ensured that these disputes were examined closely. What does this tell us about the politics of resistance in contemporary India and the role of resistance in the production of space?

First, as outlined in Chapter Five, the 'voluntary' land purchase process produced a complicated terrain of land fraud and sales, which, in some instances, led to dispossession. While the process that unfolded was unlike that in Singur or Nandigram, where the state forcibly acquired land from farmers, it can nonetheless be seen as a land grab. Chatterjee (2008: 53) argues that capitalist growth in contemporary India "will make room for the preservation of the peasantry, but under completely altered conditions" and that given the conditions of urbanisation, shifting to "urban and non-agricultural occupations is no longer a function of their pauperisation and forcible separation from the land, but is often a voluntary choice, shaped by the perception of new opportunities and new desires". As discussed in Chapters Five and Six, it is debatable to what extent this choice is voluntary. But its 'voluntary' nature shaped resistance strategies and also the politics of the project.

Second, that the project is both resisted and supported by different groups of villagers should not be surprising. The caste and class dimension of support for projects has been noted in several other instances across a range of development projects. It is no surprise that landowners who stand to gain from the project support its continuance and buy into the hegemonic ideology of development, despite their other reservations about the project. However, what is less explored is how overt and politically powerful forms of resistance, as undertaken by the NAPM, in the end and perhaps inadvertently, can further embolden those villagers who gain from the project. The real threat of the project closing down imbued those in relative support of the project with more bargaining power, with which they made claims on LCL. LCL leveraged this support symbolically to demonstrate the

inclusiveness of their project. Paradoxically, the end effect of overt resistance to the project was to further legitimise it.

Third, it remains clear that despite attempts to create urban spaces that are privately governed and devoid of a democratically elected government, the actual emergence of these projects remains uncertain and fraught. Roy offers an explanation for this; that Indian planning operates through a regime of informality rooted in a "state of deregulation", where "the ownership, use, and purpose of land cannot be fixed" and "the law itself is rendered open-ended and subject to multiple interpretations and interests" (2009: 80). It is this very regime that both allows the state to allocate land to private companies and also keeps alive multiple, and often insurgent, claims to land that have been "nurtured and fostered by systems of deregulation, unmapping, and informality" (2009a: 81). Thus, "urban developmentalism remains damned by the very deregulatory logic that fuels it" (2009a: 81), that is to say, these informalised practices of planning set into motion new ways of making the Indian city, but these attempts are always partial and eventually undone; "it is precisely the nature and ambitions of these plans that will be their undoing, for the "chaos" that they seek to evade is precisely the context in which they must take root" (Bhan, 2014: 235).

There is much truth to Roy's explanation; while the local state did give public land to LCL, it also did keep multiple land claims of *adivasis* alive. However, these land disputes were not the Achilles' heel of the project; nor was it the electoral power of those who were being displaced, or acts of insurgence (Holston, 2008) or occupancy (Benjamin, 2008). Rather it was the importance of the NAPM as a social movement, with a highly visible, powerful and arguably elite leader (Medha Patkar) able to demand inquiries and insist on being heard by those in power. Although numerous individuals and activists made complaints regarding the project to the government, only the NAPM's complaints were routinely referred to in government documents. These complaints and requests for investigations were made largely with the assistance of the law: information demands were made through the RTI Act (2005), environmental clearances were checked, and land records were pursued in local government offices via revenue court proceedings. It was only through using their political muscle that the NAPM managed to push such inquiries through and bring the project to a temporary standstill. In light of this, it is important when

conceptualising resistance in cities to examine the power of social movements to command leverage of different levels of the state not necessarily based on their mass support (which they can lack) but rather on their political heft.

8.4. Limitations and Future Research

The scope of this dissertation was to examine the making of Lavasa and how it became an object of politics. As the project is ongoing, my research is limited to issues and events that have taken place in the 18 years from when the Hill Station Regulation was passed (1996) up until the time of research and writing (2014). Since the city is a work in progress, things will certainly change; new governments both at central and state level may alter their stand on the project, relationships between LCL and the villagers could take on a new dimension, and the project could take another direction. Therefore, this dissertation can only be a partial account of the emergence and consequences of this city. Nonetheless, it provides an early snapshot into a city-making project.

Despite the focus on Lavasa, given the constraints of time and space, the dissertation did not ask and answer a number of questions: it did not probe into issues of governance (which are still being worked out as briefly discussed in Chapter Four), nor did it study those who bought property and invested in the city (the future citizens) and why they did so. Because fieldwork was conducted in the year that construction had been stalled, it did not focus on the politics of labour: the construction workers and the migrants working to build Lavasa. Finally, the thesis did not make any predictions about whether Lavasa will, in the end, reach its goal, or answer the routinely asked questions: "is Lavasa good or bad? Can it be a model?" A project of this scale and scope will likely morph, re-orient and transform numerous times as it continues to develop. Thus the verdict on the city, whether its goals will be met, whether it will deliver on its promises, and what form it will ultimately take, will be out for a number of decades, if not more.

Some readers may feel that not enough focus was placed on the most marginalised communities – the landless and adivasis – and how Lavasa impacted them. This was not an omission but it remains a gap. As discussed in Chapter Three, a large

proportion of the landless population had already left Lavasa when I commenced fieldwork. Tracing them would have been possible with some concerted effort but it would have expanded the scope of my thesis and the time required for fieldwork. The land story told in this thesis is therefore, partial and some may argue that the perspective that this offers on the project is much too sanguine.

Furthermore, the precise nature of the networks between various political actors, brokers, intermediaries, and LCL (the nature of the networks, the importance of caste and political party membership) would have significantly strengthened the claims of this thesis. However, these relationships were near impossible to untangle due to their 'open secret' nature, i.e. known to all, yet unverifiable. For the purposes of academic work, I could not base conclusions on hearsay.

Given both the peculiarities and the groundbreaking nature of both the idea of Lavasa (it is the first city to be built, planned and managed entirely by the private sector in post-liberalisation India) and how it came to be, the extent to which some findings from this study are generalisable (from a positivist perspective) are limited. In particular, one could argue that Lavasa's land model could only function because of the specific history of the land in question (the conditions generated by the building of the Varasgaon dam). In light of this, I have chosen to conclude the thesis with a discussion, not on the very particular land market story, but on its broader implications for our understandings of speculative urbanism, the Indian state, and the politics of resistance.

Looking to the future, there are at least three substantial avenues for further research. First, to examine more deeply the investment side of Lavasa – very little is known about actual consumer preferences and those who buy into such speculative and aspirational projects or even the investors and banks that finance such projects. While these projects are assumed to be desirable to the Indian elite, little is known about the actual preferences of this group and why and how they become stakeholders in such projects. Second, looking elsewhere, there is a need to study the numerous new city projects that are currently underway to examine the collective impact of such projects on ideas of urbanism and local populations. For instance, one could examine the importance of international circuits of planning in

the making of new towns – the foreign consultants and planning firms, and the ways in which policy ideas travel and are made local. Third, there is immense scope to look laterally across the politics of urban development projects in India and examine how this much cited 'nexus' between builders and politicians actually operates through land, planning, and the law (rather than in violation of it).

8.5.   From Lavasa to Urban Theory

Beyond adding yet another case study of city-making to an already long list of works describing new city projects (summarised in Chapter One), what can this study add to urban theory? What does it mean to think comparatively from a single site? Sayer (1991) argues that "geographical scale" and "abstraction of thought" are often conflated, where the local is seen as "concrete" and "particular" and the global as "abstract" and "theoretical". But Lefebvre's understanding of the production of space decidedly rejects the conception that place is concrete and space is abstract; "instead, space and place are both conceived in terms of embodied practices and processes of production that are simultaneously material and discursive" (Hart, 2006: 21). Hart (2006: 22) purports that "conceptualising space as socially produced, moves us beyond "case studies" to make broader claims." Here, then, we are not comparing pre-existing objects or examining cases as local variants of a larger general phenomenon, for example, how Lavasa compares to other new cities, or whether at all it is representative of new city development. Rather, we are interested in observing how the city is constituted "through power-laden practices in the multiple, interconnected arenas of everyday life" (Hart, 2002: 13) and what that reveals about urban processes at play.

Hence, by locating the study within a long history of building new towns, the thesis implicitly draws upon: transnational perspectives on urban formation in cities of the 'global South'; privatised urban development practices and their effects (Shatkin 2008, 2011; Sami, 2012; Gururani, 2013; Watson, 2014); new elite politics of spatial segregation (Ellin, 1997; Caldeira, 2001; Falzon 2004; Low, 2005; Ballard and Jones, 2011); and new forms and tactics of urban resistance (or lack thereof) (Ghertner, 2010; Roy, 2011; Levien, 2013; Shatkin, 2014; Jenkins et al. 2014). In so doing, I

follow the recent call for a transnational approach to urban studies, which, while being located in the particular ethnographic contexts of cities of the global South, asks questions that are applicable to all cities (Robinson, 2002; Roy, 2009b).

First, I have considered an instance of the production of the space in a post-colonial setting, where city-making is driven by real estate profits and not just reform and control of urban space. Thus, Lavasa is site through which one can reflect on the processes of privatised urbanisation. As outlined briefly in Chapter One, contemporary urban studies scholarship has by and large reflected on new city projects as being shaped by neoliberal policies and processes. Parnell and Robinson (2012) provide a trenchant critique of using neoliberalism as the dominant optic through which to understand urban processes apace in the 'global South'. They suggest, instead, that we must "reflect on processes other than neoliberalism which are shaping cities" and rightly point to the importance of the local state as being "potentially developmental, even progressive" (2012: 594). They argue that such a re-framing can "contribute to a post-neoliberal theorisation of urban processes by illuminating the multiple drivers of urban change, from the developmental or activist state to the role of traditional elites and the persistence of extra-capitalist power bases as well as the political and accumulation strategies of capital, states, and other institutions" (2012: 597).

And so, this study takes seriously the call to develop a "post-neoliberal analytical optic" (Parnell and Robinson, 2012: 594) to understand urban processes and in particular new city development. It has argued against the dominant characterisations of contemporary urban processes as being driven by neoliberal policy and processes and demonstrated the importance of foregrounding the local actors and the highly local control of land as drivers of urban change. By examining the role of real estate developers, the influence they wield, their relationship with the state and political elite, and the strategies they use in the making of urban space. While the state in urban studies is often conceptualised as structural and operating a unitary logic, the dissertation has demonstrated (through disaggregating the levels of the state and its constituent actors) that not only does the state have an incoherent project, but that

this incoherence can creates spaces for political (and progressive) action (as seen in the strategies used by the villagers and the NAPM).

Second, it expands conceptually the modalities of speculation (as discussed in Section 8.1). It goes beyond conceiving of speculation as generated through increasingly mobile finance capital making investments in the built environment (*cf.* Harvey; Searle, 2010; Goldman, 2010; Watson, 2014) to include forms of speculation taking place at all levels and by all kinds of actors. Furthermore, speculation on the (successful) future of the project within a political environment of resistance generates public planning goals such as inclusion and environmental sustainability. Thus speculation not only propels the project in material terms but also directly impacts the form and politics of city-making. It dispossesses some and yet can embolden the ideological project of city making. Accordingly, the dissertation argues for thinking more expansively about speculation – going beyond finance capital, to seeing it as a force through which urban plans are both conceptualised and made real.

Third, I have implicitly demonstrated that such cities cannot merely be understood as attempts of the elite to secede, or projects of spatial segregation/geographic escapism or "bypass-implant urbanism" (Shatkin, 2008: 383) (as also argued by Ballard and Jones, 2013; Watson, 2014). The hegemonic and aspirational symbolism deployed is very much part and parcel of contemporary urban imagination (in addition to being legitimation strategies (Shatkin, 2008; Pow and Neo, 2012)). More importantly, these imaginaries can conceal the ways in which cities are made in real and material ways. They can also conceal the historical conditions that enable such cities to emerge and be profitable. In traversing the rural and the urban, this dissertation highlights the centrality of the control and use of land in understanding urban political processes and outcomes. This ranges from land use policies to local everyday contests over land. Thus, when examining new city developments, it is important not only to pay attention to the plan and the imaginaries deployed but also investigate the use and control of land. The specificity of land can significantly shape and inform the politics of planning, privatisation, and resistance.

As new city developments emerge in India and across the globe, new moments and

opportunities for theorisation of urban change are emerging. As reflected upon in Chapter One, these new settlements have largely been conceptualised as neoliberal projects rooted in real estate speculation and pushed forward through globally circulating imageries of urban futures. I have, through this thesis, offered a modest corrective to that narrative and demonstrated the importance of foregrounding the local in understanding how, why and in what ways urban space is produced.

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Appendix I: List of Important Dates, Chronology of Events

Date	Event
1976-1987	Varasgoan Dam construction takes place.
27 May 1986	Yashomala Leasings and Finance Private Limited (YLFPL) constituted.
18 May 1990	Government of Maharashtra sets up the Regional Planning Board for Pune District under the Maharashtra Regional & Town Planning Act, 1966.
1991 onwards	Sahara begins purchasing land through illegal transactions for Amby Valley project.
13 September 1993	Draft Regional Plan for Pune for the period 1990-2011 comes into force.
March 1995	Sahara begins construction in Amby Valley without requisite permissions.
26 November 1996	Special Regulations for development of tourist resorts/holiday homes/township in hill station type areas (Hill Station Regulation) enacted.
25 November 1997	Pune Regional Plan (1991-2011) approved by UDD.
7 April 1999	Tourism given status of 'industry' by GoM
21 January 2000	Aqualand India Pvt. Ltd seeks permission to purchase land for the development of a hill station in Mulshi.
February 2000	Pearly Blue Lake Resorts Pvt. Ltd. Constituted (Aniruddha Desphande)
15 March 2000	Pearly Blue Lake Resorts Pvt. Ltd. seeks permission from collector to acquire 2000 ha of land around in Mulshi.
21 June 2000	Pearly Blue Lake Resorts Pvt. Ltd. requests that 18 villages (Warasgaon, Saiv Badruk, Mose Badruk, Patharshet, Bembatmal, Palse, Admal, Padalghar, Dasave, Bhoini, Mugaon, Bhode, Ugawali, Dhamanhol, Koloshi, Gadle, Sakhri and Wadawali) be notified as hill station type areas.

15 July 2000	UDD issues notice to designate land in 20 villages (including the 18 above) as hill station (by modifying the Pune Regional Plan).
12 December 2000	Pearly Blue Lake Resorts Pvt. Ltd. changes name to The Lake City Corporation Private Limited (LCC).
30 May 2001	Hill Station Regulations modified by UDD to remove the lower limit of 2000 ha for the construction of hill stations.
1 June 2001	Hill station area demarcated: declared 18 villages as requested by M/s Pearly Blue Lake Resorts as land suitable for development of hill station.
27 June 2001	In-principle approval given to LCC for Lavasa.
15 January 2002	YLFPL is amalgamated with LCC.
30 May 2002	Maharashtra Pollution Control Board gives consent to establish Lavasa.
22 August 2002	Lease agreement signed between LCC and MKVDC for 141.15 hectares of irrigation land.
5 December 2002	Permission for purchase of 400 hectares of agriculture land granted by Directorate of Industries under MTAL Act, 1948.
2003	LCC requests GoM (MIDC) to acquire the lands they have not been able to purchase, and request is denied.
18 March 2004	Department of Environment (GoM) gives environmental clearance to project.
26 March 2004	Company changes name from Lake City Corporation Pvt. Ltd. (LCC) to Lavasa Corporation Ltd (LCL).
2004	Supriya and Sadanand Sule exit LCL as sharedholders.
5 January 2005	MPCB grants LCL consent to operate.
4 July 2005	MoEF tells GoM that Lavasa needs Centre's environment clearance.
15 July 2005	MPCB replies; says project does not require Centre's approval.
31 August 2006	Pune Collector approves Lavasa's first layout plan.

30 August 2007	Pune Collector gives first permit to build.
12 June 2008	LCL declared Special Planning Authority (SPA) by UDD with respect to 14 villages.
April 2009	People's Commission Report produced by NAPM.
5 August 2009	LCL seeks clearance for 5,000 hectares from state EIA authority.
21 August 2009	UDD issues a letter permitting research and development in hill station.
30 June 2010	MoEF seeks report on Lavasa from GoM.
14 July 2010	GoM grants mega-project status to Lavasa.
4 August 2010	State says EIA notification of 1994 not applicable, but 2004 notification applies.
25 November 2010	MoEF issues stop-work order to LCL for violations of provisions of EIA notification 1994 (as amended in 2004 and 2006).
5-7 January 2011	MoEF officials visit Lavasa to examine environmental damage.
17 January, 2011	MoEF concludes construction is illegal and damaging to environment. Asks GoM to take action and sets out conditions for LCL.
9 November 2011	MoEF gives partial and conditional environmental clearance to LCL.
10 March 2011	NAPM appeals MoEF's decision in Mumbai High Court, says no provision in law for post-facto clearance.
24 March 2012	Mugaon (town 2) plans launched.
27 August 2012	170,000 visitors visit Lavasa during one monsoon season (June – August, 2012).

Sources: BEAG, 1998; CAG, 2011; LCL, 2014

Appendix II – List of Informants

No	Code	Description	Date of Interview
		Lavasa (11)	
1	L1	PR	13/07/2012
2	L2	Marketing	21/06/2012
3	L3	CSR	12/07/2012
4	L4	Planning	01/06/2012
5	L5	Land	10/10/2012
6	L6	Environment	18/12/2012
7	L7	Business Development	21/08/2012
8	L8	City Manager	12/07/2012
9	L9	Planning	24/09/2013
10	L10	Founding Partner	12/08/2012
11	L11	Environment	12/07/2012
		Civil Society (17)	
12	C1	NAPM	04/04/2012
13	C2	NAPM	26/03/2012
14	C3	NAPM	08/10/2013
15	C4	NAPM	18/04/2012
16	C5	NAPM	10/10/2012
17	C6	Activist and Academic	11/10/2012
18	C7	Activist and Academic	27/07/2012
19	C8	Journalist	07/12/2012
20	C9	Journalist	21/08/2012
21	C10	Activist	20/09/2012
22	C11	Consultant	25/06/2012
23	C12	Activist	02/06/2012
24	C13	Activist	12/04/2012
25	C14	Developer	24/08/2012
26	C15	Developer	12/09/2012
27	C16	Developer	02/08/2012
28	C17	Academic	05/12/2012
29	C18	Developer	28/09/2013
		Government (5)	
30	G1	Urban Development	01/10/2013
31	G2	Collectors office	17/12/2012
32	G3	District office	26/01/2013
33	G4	Town Planning	26/06/2012
34	G5	Town Planning	05/09/2012
		Villagers (42)	
35	A1	Admal	19/12/2012
36	A2	Admal	19/12/2012
37	A3	Admal	19/12/2012
38	A4	Admal	19/12/2012
39	B1	Bhoini	28/09/2012
40	B2	Bhoini	20/01/2013

41	B3	Bhoini	20/01/2013
42	D1	Dasve	20/01/2013
43	D1	Dasve	21/01/2013
44	D2	Dasve	30/09/2012
45	D3	Dasve	11/10/2012
46	D4	Dasve	30/09/2012
47	D5	Dasve	30/09/2012
48	D6	Dasve	21/01/2013
49	D7	Dasve	19/12/2012
50	D8	Dasve	19/12/2012
51	D9	Dasve	23/12/2012
52	D10	Dasve	23/12/2012
53	Dh1	Dhamanol	13/12/2012
54	Dh2	Dhamanol	13/12/2012
55	Dh3	Dhamanol	13/12/2012
56	Dh4	Dhamanol	13/12/2012
57	Dh5	Dhamanol	14/12/2012
58	Dh6	Dhamanol	14/12/2012
59	K1	Koloshi	14/12/2012
60	K2	Koloshi	15/12/2012
61	K3	Koloshi	15/12/2012
62	M1	Mugaon	06/09/2012
63	M2	Mugaon	07/09/2012
64	M3	Mugaon	06/09/2012
65	M4	Mugaon	06/09/2012
66	M5	Mugaon	23/12/2012
67	M6	Mugaon	23/12/2012
68	P1	Palse	14/12/2012
69	R1	Ramnagar	16/09/2012
70	V1	Varasgaon	06/12/2012
71	V2	Varasgaon	06/12/2012
72	V3	Varasgaon	08/12/2012
73	V4	Varasgaon	06/12/2012
74	V5	Varasgaon	08/12/2012
75	Ag1	Intermediary	06/08/2012
76	Ag2	Intermediary	18/12/2012
77	Ag3	Intermediary	06/01/2013