



Processes of *peri*-urban resource – livelihood transitions: Glimpses from the periphery of greater Mumbai city, India



K.G. Sreeja*, C.G. Madhusoodhanan, T.I. Eldho

Department of Civil Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, Powai, Mumbai, Maharashtra, 400076, India

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ABSTRACT

The villages in the peripheries of a growing and aspiring city like Greater Mumbai, India very often become natural resource repositories of the city, sources of unskilled and temporary labour and investment spaces where the affluent city dweller's rustic dreams seek expression. The lives, livelihoods and rights over resources of the inhabitants of these spaces are transforming in complex ways that result in nascent conflicts, coerced/ill-informed consents and new forms of inequities in the absence of a strong, decentralised resource governance system. This paper is a viewpoint on these processes at work in the *peri*-urban villages in the context of growing urbanisation in India. The present governance structure of the villages are observed to be ill-equipped to deal with the growing resource competition and rapid changes that result when a village becomes a *peri*-urban space.

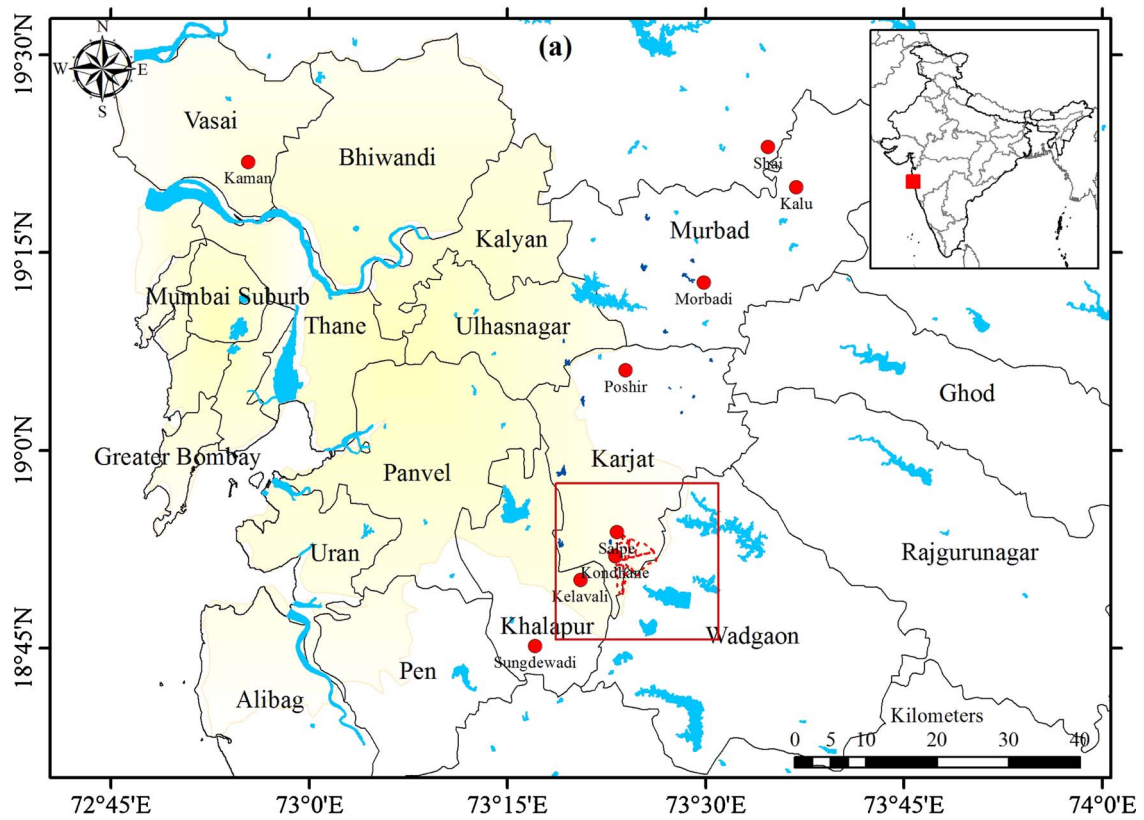
1. Introduction

Peri-urban interfaces are landscapes in transition with changing land use and values, growing infrastructural and market access, diversifying livelihoods and an increasing exposure to urban production processes (Simon, 2008). The unprecedented spurt in *peri*-urbanisation across Asia has set off multiple unexpected, unplanned and informal processes that are being negotiated by the rural populace through highly dynamic and extremely inequitable mechanisms (Abramson, 2016; Goldman, 2011; Labbé, 2016; Shatkin, 2016). The altered livelihood aspirations and opportunities, changed state priorities and forced evictions in these *peri*-urban spaces, induce transition into non-agricultural occupations, transform the relationship to natural resources and institutions for their governance and generate conflicts in myriad and unforeseen ways (Abramson, 2016; Dupont, 2007). Land is identified as a crucial element of the Asian *peri*-urbanisation drive and most of the urban extension spaces of Asian cities are densely populated rural hinterlands (Friedmann, 2016). Peri-urbanisation in Asia is therefore posited to be through land monetisation and the multitude of issues that surround this 'fictitious commodity' and its transformation (Goldman, 2011; Searle, 2014; Shatkin, 2016). Along with violent dispossession and conflict through large-scale coercive land acquisitions (Labbé, 2016; Narain, 2009; Shaw, 2004) and very explicit environmental violations through urban waste disposal (Shaw, 2005), there are several other routine processes at work through which shifts in livelihoods, changes to resource use and re-negotiation of the lived space occur in these transition spaces.

The rapid and unplanned urban growth of India, post-globalisation, has triggered various resource and livelihood transformation processes in its urban/metropolitan hinterlands (Chadchan and Shankar, 2012; Chatterji, 2013; Datta, 2012; Phadke, 2013; Samanta and Koner, 2016; Shaw, 2004). It is also argued that these highly diverse and complex processes (Dupont, 2007) need not always be dependent on the dominant influence of an urban core. The changes to livelihood and resource use that emanate from autonomous processes from within the rural spaces, resulting in important local settlements independent of the metropolis has been posited as 'subaltern urbanisation' (Denis et al., 2012). These multiple, and to a large degree unplanned and unacknowledged patterns of *peri*-urban transition have spawned both intense and subtle inequities and conflicts over resource rights, sharing and governance (Dupont, 2007; Kumar, 2015; Purushothaman et al., 2016; Samanta, 2012; Samanta and Koner, 2016). These processes of change that are transforming millions of Indian villages have received very little academic attention, and even then from an exceedingly urban perspective (Kumar, 2015). This viewpoint paper is a brief analysis of the mundane and gradual processes of resource – livelihood transition, subaltern and informal ways of accommodation, re-negotiation and contestation in the *peri*-urban regions of India based on observations made during a field investigation to evaluate water scarcity in the hinterlands of the mega-city of Greater Mumbai in the state of Maharashtra, India.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: kg.sreeja@gmail.com (K.G. Sreeja), madhucg@gmail.com (C.G. Madhusoodhanan), eldho@civil.iitb.ac.in (T.I. Eldho).



Legend

- Mumbai Metropolitan Region
- Sub-district boundary
- Proposed dams
- Study villages
- Reservoirs/ Rivers

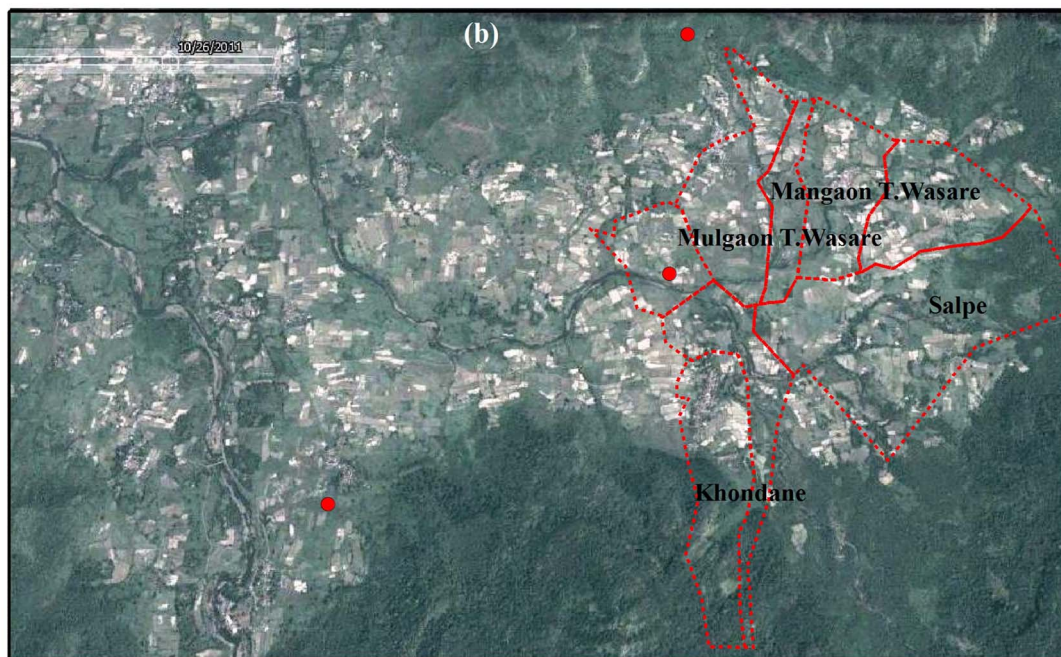


Fig. 1. (a) Extent of Mumbai Metropolitan Region and the villages under study showing the existing and proposed reservoirs, (b) Google image of the study villages showing settlements and agricultural lands. Data sources: (MCGM, 2014; SWBD, 2005).

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