



From the core to the periphery: Conflicts and cooperation over land and water in periurban Gurgaon, India



Sumit Vij^{a,*}, Vishal Narain^b, Timothy Karpouzoglou^a, Patik Mishra^c

^a Wageningen University and Research, Public Administration and Policy Group, The Netherlands

^b Management Development Institute, Public Policy & Governance Department, India

^c King's College London, UK

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Periurban
Conflicts and cooperation
Urban political ecology
Gurgaon
India

ABSTRACT

Recent studies that emphasize the contested nature of resource allocation address the politics of periurban development. However, the issue of conflicts and cooperation in periurban contexts continues to remain weakly studied. Based on the study of periurban Gurgaon in North-West India, this paper unravels the different types of conflicts and cooperation that have emerged around land and water, drawing insights from conflict/cooperation studies and urban political ecology. We focus on how changes in land-use bring about changes in water use, access and practices in periurban Gurgaon, giving rise to new forms of conflicts, conflicts of interest and cooperation. Conflicts over land and water are linked to the changing characteristics of land and water appropriation that has occurred in the aftermath of neoliberal reforms. Drawing insights from urban political ecology perspective, we show how periurban areas are systematically undermined through the acquisition of land and water to serve urban expansion and growth. We conclude that periurban conflicts are rooted in the issue of land-use change and are fundamentally tied to the politics of urbanization and its impact on periurban areas. These processes give rise to conflicts of interest and explicit conflicts, whilst creating new forms of cooperation. Cooperation is exemplified by emerging forms of collective action over the use of wastewater and groundwater. The paper distinguishes between conflict and cooperation but concludes that these are in fact not mutually exclusive; rather points along a continuum.

1. Introduction

India's urban population has increased from 23.3 per cent to 31.2 per cent during the period between 1981 and 2011 (Census, India, 2001, 2014). The pace of urbanization has changed significantly in the neoliberal reform period, that is, after 1991 (Dupont and Sridharan, 2007). India has created a favourable environment for the private sector (service industries), real estate (residential and shopping malls) and outsourcing services (multi-national corporations) to expand the scale of their operations. This pattern of urban growth relies upon peripheral areas and often comes at the cost of the poor living there (Shatkin, 2016; Mehta et al., 2014).

Gurgaon¹ is a residential, outsourcing, and recreation hub in North-West India that has grown steadily since the 1980s. It is the second

largest city in the state of Haryana, an agricultural state which has traditionally been India's food basket; it is also the highest tax contributing city, accounting for almost 70% of total investments in the state in 2014-15 (Kumar, 2015). The proximity of the city to Delhi and the policies pursued by the state government to invite private enterprise since the economic reforms of 1991 have helped harness the city's growth potential (Kulkarni et al., 2010). Gurgaon has been identified as a Millennium City on account of its landscape dominated by glitzy malls, high rise residential buildings, state-of-the-art corporate offices and recreation centres. Its growth has been significant for the state's trendsetting policy of championing private enterprise-driven land development (Chatterji, 2013). However, in many ways, it reproduces the ambiguities and paradoxes of the world-class city phenomenon as observed in megacities such as Delhi (Ghertner, 2014).

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: sumit.vij@wur.nl (S. Vij), vishalnarain@mdi.ac.in (V. Narain), timos.karpouzoglou@gmail.com (T. Karpouzoglou), pratik.mishra@kcl.ac.uk (P. Mishra).

¹ The city is recently rechristened as 'Gurugram', but for consistency purposes, authors will use the name 'Gurgaon' in this paper.

As the process of urbanization unfolds in the city, speculative land holdings and urban-oriented land use have become common and disruptive to the predominantly agrarian economy in the periurban villages. Both on account of opportunism and need, periurban landowners have sold their land to real estate companies, property dealers, and speculators. Alternatively, their lands have been acquired² by the State, for instance, for the development of SEZs³ (Special Economic Zones). This land use change has been associated with the adoption of urban lifestyles by the rural population as well as the in-migration of retirees (Antrop, 2004). The urban elite have bought large farmlands in the periurban areas of Delhi and Gurgaon and converted them to farmhouses often as a second home for retired life. Periurban landscapes are also increasingly exposed to numerous additional environmental risks — such as litter, building wrecks, dumping grounds, and household waste that is spatially concentrated in areas outside of elite circulation and in proximity to living areas for poorer and marginalized social groups (Hofmann, 2013; Qviström 2007).

With rapid urbanization and its effect on the use of land, the use of water in Gurgaon has become contested (Narain, 2017). Urbanization has generated new demands for water; these demands are often met by acquiring more water from periurban villages, engulfing the commons on which the poor residents from these villages depend for their livelihoods (Diaz-Caravantes and Wilder, 2014). This process has also amplified inequalities in Gurgaon and has led to the displacement and dispossession of hundreds of periurban farmers, and intensified social fragmentation (Vij and Narain, 2016). Landless households, tenants and sharecroppers who depend on common property resources for their survival have lost access, as commons have been acquired for building urban infrastructure. While land-owners are compensated, the tenants and sharecroppers who work on their lands are not. Agriculture and private land is acquired in periurban Gurgaon for building water and sewage treatment plants to meet the city requirements (Vij, 2014). Similarly, to supply drinking water to the Gurgaon city, canals are constructed in the peripheries (Narain and Singh, 2017). These canals cut through peripheral villages and are built on the agricultural lands of the periurban communities, depriving them both of the agricultural lands and water sources located on them. These dynamics are shaped by the interaction of different interest groups – the urban elites, state authorities and a growing middle-class that is now firmly established in periurban areas (Schindler and Kishore, 2015).

In this paper, we consider term ‘periurban’ as an analytical construct to explain land and water changes linked with the underlying social, political and economic processes, but also a geographical territory to demarcate and attach these observed changes with a community. The changing periurban landscape produces new types of conflicts, while also giving rise to new forms of cooperation. The diversity of these institutional responses, ranging along a continuum from forms of cooperation, conflicts of interest and explicit conflicts are weakly studied in the periurban context. Further, there is little understanding of whether these conflicts are due to the scarcity of resources or their mismanagement. Drawing on their work on contestations of land and drinking water in Bangladesh and Mexico, Gomes and Hermans (2017) and Lombard (2016) emphasize that very little is known indeed about periurban resource conflicts.

Against this backdrop, the research question that this paper address is:

How have emergent processes of urbanization in Gurgaon shaped new forms of conflicts and cooperation around land and water resources in the periurban interface?

To examine the dynamics around land and water, we draw insights from the literature on natural resource conflict and cooperation and from that on urban political ecology (UPE). We use the conflicts and cooperation literature to characterise conflicts, conflicts of interest and forms of cooperation in response to the re-appropriation of land and water from the periphery to the core; and we argue that this re-appropriation is explained through an urban political ecology perspective. The ‘conflicts’ literature and UPE perspective together help in generating a nuanced understanding of periurban conflicts that are inter-related with the larger urban political economy – particularly with regard to the ways in which Gurgaon through its political, economic and institutional power structures has appropriated land and water resources from periurban areas (Shatkin, 2016). Moreover, such appropriation of resources throws light on the interplay between different actors (periurban residents, urban elites, and the state authorities) in periurban areas to explain the underlying power relations. Further, defying a dichotomous classification, we argue that conflicts and cooperation are not mutually exclusive, rather points along a continuum.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 outlines the conceptual framing of the study, linking insights from the study of conflicts and cooperation with perspectives from UPE. Section 3 explains the methodology and context of the study. This is followed by Section 4, analyzing conflicts and cooperation around land and water in periurban Gurgaon. We focus on how changes in land-use have become a precursor for conflicts over water. We draw a conceptual distinction here between conflicts and conflicts of interest and show how local norms can prevent conflicts of interest from erupting into conflicts. Lastly, Section 5 presents the concluding remarks.

2. Conceptual grounding: combining conflicts and cooperation and UPE perspectives

2.1. Conflicts and cooperation over land and water

The term “conflict” has various connotations; broadly, however, it refers to confrontations between groups or categories of people regarding a resource activity and its management (Bavinck et al., 2014). The emergence of conflicts over natural resources is often seen as related to the management of natural resources or more widely to the nature of resource governance regimes (Kuzdas and Wiek, 2014; Adano et al., 2012). Natural resource degradation plays a role in the rise of conflicts, but conflicts can rarely be characterized as being purely resource scarcity driven; more often than not, natural resource degradation is understood to be the result of conflict, rather than the cause (Frerks et al. 2014).

There are different causes of conflicts related to natural resources. For some scholars, the causes of conflicts include globalization – escalating the income inequality between the skilled and the unskilled (Mamoon and Murshed, 2009) and contestation over valuable natural resource rents, restricted to minerals and fuels (Murshed, 2014). Population growth and climate change can also lead to scarcity of land, forest, and water for agriculture, forestry or pastoral activities – leading to conflicts (Homer-Dixon, 1999). Conflicts may manifest as the struggles within social and power structures for political supremacy and legitimacy (Zeitoun, 2008). These causes and categories are, however, not mutually exclusive; conflicts may arise as a result of an aggregation or compounding of these factors. These categories have, however, not been tested or evaluated against the complexity posed by periurban environments, creating a knowledge gap.

It is useful to distinguish between a ‘conflict’ and a ‘conflict of interest’ (Bavinck et al., 2014). In this paper, we define a ‘conflict of interest’ as a divergence between the interests of two or more actors,

² Land acquisition in India is now governed by a new Land Acquisition, Resettlement and Rehabilitation Act passed in 2013. The earlier Land Acquisition Act of 1894 which had a much broader view on Eminent Domain is the law under which the acquisitions mentioned happened. Eminent Domain means that the State can acquire lands for ostensibly public purposes with the payment of a state-determined compensation amount without the requirement of consent from private landowner. It is a provision known for its misuse by the state to award subsidized land to private and corporate entities or push forward large controversial projects as dams and industries.

³ Special economic zone or SEZ is an area where the country’s business and trade laws are relaxed in order to induce investment from domestic and foreign corporations and create jobs.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6546279>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6546279>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)