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# **One Part Farmers: Villages two decades after land acquisition for the Bengaluru International Airport**

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# One Part Farmers: Villages two decades after land acquisition for the Bengaluru International Airport<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** Constitutional measures to ensure fair compensation and livelihood security to the land losing refugees of development processes, overlook the complexity of ‘public purpose’ - the dominant rationale behind operationalizing ‘eminent domain’ of the state. Popular perception of public purpose as urbanization muffles the de facto social citizenship around plural values of agricultural landscapes. Ignoring the enduring public purposes served by agrarian landscapes aids in underestimating the long-term welfare impacts on displaced farmers.

This essay presents the impact of land acquisition for the Bengaluru International Airport on the agro-pastoral communities of Devanahalli. Visible changes in the landscape came with major uncertainties in their lives and livelihoods for over two decades now. The paper aims to contribute to the recent and connected theses around agrarian urbanism and plural values of landscapes, with narratives from Devanahalli. In what was almost a non-controversial choice of location for the airport, people from 11 villages to the north of Bengaluru city lost their land fully or partly, along with their habitat, village community and food cultures.

In this study, narratives of representative cases of impact inflicted on different groups were collated and synthesized through short term longitudinal interviews. It showcases prolonged struggles to find secure livelihoods amidst persisting caste and gender divides, weakening cultural fabric and a loss of identity. Together they precipitate one-part farmers in the displaced and scattered people who still find a weak but persistent identity in agriculture. The paper concludes by deriving pointers on avoiding, minimizing, and mitigating potential impacts of projects involving inevitable displacement of agro-pastoral communities.

**Keywords:** Bengaluru Airport, conversion of agricultural land, Devanahalli, development refugees, displacement, eminent domain, land acquisition, public purpose, urbanism

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- 1 This is the third and last one in a three-part series on **Farming and Farmers in Peri-urban Bengaluru**. Working Paper 1 and 20 mentioned below are the two preceding Working Papers in the series. Azim Premji University Working Paper No. 1. Purushothaman, S; Patil, S; Lodha, S. (2016). **Social and Environmental Transformation in the Indian Peri-Urban Interface** - Emerging Questions. (<https://azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/SitePages/pdf/APU-160204-Working-Paper-series.pdf>). Bangalore. Azim Premji University Working Paper No.20. Purushothaman, S., Sheetal Patil, Raghvendra S. Vanjari and Shwetha A. R. (2021). **Urban Wastewater for Agriculture: Farmers’ Perspectives from Peri-urban Bengaluru**.
  - 2 **Acknowledgment** - This working paper is an output from the project titled “Ecosystem Services, Agriculture Diversification and Small Farmers’ Livelihood in the Rural-Urban Interface of Bengaluru.” under the Indo-German Collaborative Research project (FOR2432). Financial support from Department of Biotechnology, Government of India is duly acknowledged. The authors would sincerely like to thank all the farmers, stakeholders, and village respondents of the research without whose help this research would not have been completed. Last, but not the least the authors would like to thank reviewers for valuable feedback to the working paper.



# One Part Farmers: Villages two decades after land acquisition for the Bengaluru International Airport

Seema Purushothaman, Raghvendra S. Vanjari

Most development projects begin with land acquisition which impacts mostly vulnerable communities of farmers and tribes (WGHR, 2012) more than resourceful entities or large holders. These small and marginal holders lose a piece of land that they live and work on along with shared sources of subsistence, livelihood, and identity. Displacement and resettlement of project affected people, are constant and controversial activities in independent India, owing to a variety of perpetual reasons including infrastructure expansion, conservation projects, natural disasters and socio-political conflicts. India records one of the highest levels of displacements in the world, with nearly 50 million people displaced in the past 50 years by development projects alone (IDMR, 2019).

Fair processes and rightful compensation to the displaced population are supposed to be guaranteed by a series of national policies<sup>3</sup>. Each of them tries to fill the lacunae in the preceding policy, though the extent of their implementation does not seem to be assessed or monitored. Academic and other literature on displacement tends to focus on well-known controversial interventions, especially hydroelectric projects like the Narmada valley project. Reports from the state agencies on even such highly visible projects seem to be mute on the recurrence of displacement among the same set of smallholders. Such displaced small farmers eventually join the floating labour force to build growing and urbanizing economies. Displacement details are usually provided alongside other details on the project, with minimal information on compensation and resettlement options. Very few reports touch upon the aftermath of displacement cascading into long-term impacts, especially in the case of lesser known displacements.

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3 The Land Acquisition Act of 1894 amended in 1962 and 1984; National Policy on Resettlement and Rehabilitation for Project Affected Families, 2003; National Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy 2007; Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, (LARR Act) and ordinance in 2014 (Division of Land Reforms, Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development)

This paper builds on the arguments in agrarian studies and related fields on how the process of dispossessing small farmers of their land is driven by a) generating adverse terms of trade (see the argument elaborated in Vijayabaskar and Menon, 2018<sup>4</sup>) b) financialisation of land and c) the eminent domain of urbanism (Purushothaman et al., 2021) entrenched in policies on food security and land use planning. Thus, farmers stripped of their land become the largest group of development refugees in the country. We attempt to understand the long-term outcomes and impacts of geographical and occupational displacement of farmers for the International Airport in Bengaluru - an infrastructural icon of neoliberal India, through a qualitative assessment of narratives.

The paper is organized into six sections. Section one provides a brief backdrop of Bengaluru airport, followed by a section covering the urban-agrarian dynamics and the study's genesis. The third section briefs the study process followed. The fourth section presents a set of five narratives around displacement in selected villages. Section five is an overall analysis of the multiple concerns in villages that gave way to the airport. The concluding section looks at ways to minimize such impacts in similar projects that demand farmer displacements.

## 1. Background

Large infrastructural projects in India, such as airports and highways are increasingly being built under Public - Private - Partnership mechanisms. Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) situated at the northern edge of the Bengaluru rural district, is a prominent landmark in such infrastructural collaborations between the state and corporations. It is India's third-largest airport in terms of the total land area acquired<sup>5</sup>. Established in 2008 and spread across 4009 acres of land in Devanahalli Taluk, it is owned and operated by the Bengaluru International Airport Limited (BIAL). KIA that was Bengaluru International Airport till December 2013 celebrates the Silicon Valley status of Bangalore and drives growth and transformation of this metropolis.

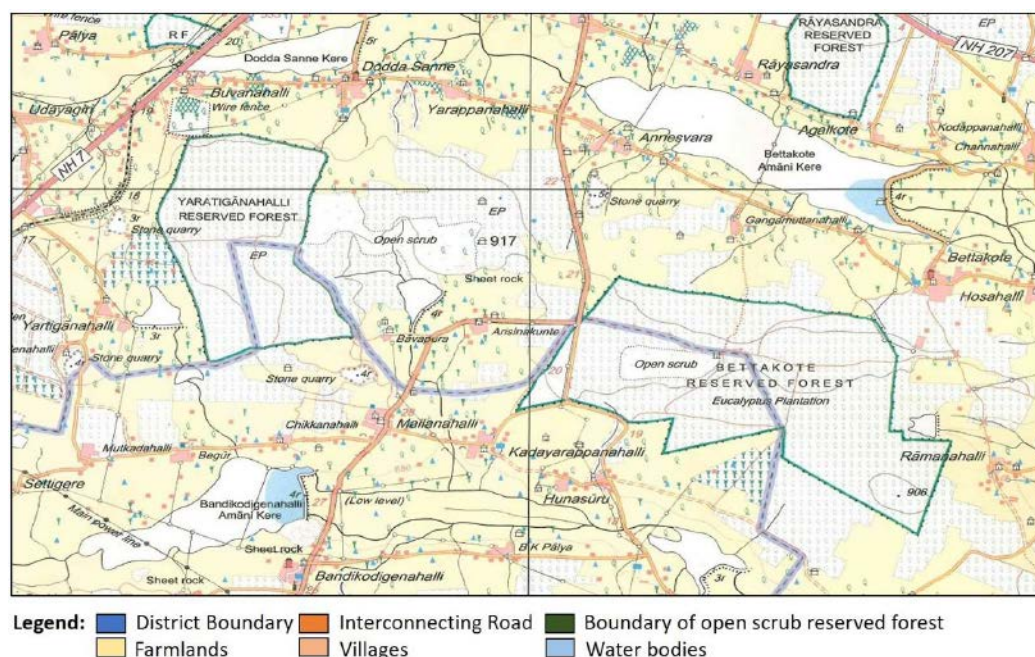
The larger picture of the great land grab and land alienation to produce the global city of Bangalore is yet to be visible to the public eye. However, Mayur et al (2013) had brought out the larger land-use changes that happened because of the airport and those expected changes that did not happen. Here we try to capture narratives from representative farm families caught up in the entire process that is still unfolding in multiple and unexpected ways. The purpose is to give voice to the lives that were bullied and obscured in producing a neoliberal urban economy.

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4 Although Vijayabaskar and Menon bring to light the forced nature of seemingly voluntary sale of peri urban farmlands, their reasoning about the neglect being meted out through non provision of irrigation infrastructure needs to be reexamined. Irrigation in agro ecologically unsuitable manner adds to small farmer vulnerability. Purushothaman and Patil (2019) provide evidence to show that more than irrigation, reliable prices and sustainable non-farm rural incomes help small holders sustain themselves, once they have secure and sufficient land. Since the latter two have been subjected to neglect by the state and the society, Vijayabaskar and Menon's argument on forced nature of voluntary sale stays.

5 Hyderabad: 5500 acres, Delhi: 5106 acres, Kolkata: 2460 acres, Mumbai: 1450 acres, Chennai: 1323 acres (source: respective airport websites)

Land acquisition for the airport was carried out by the Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board (KIADB) between 1991 and 2001. The KIA completely displaced two villages- Arasinakunte and Gangamuthanhalli - and acquired farmlands from nine other villages - Bhoovanahalli, Doddasanne, Anneswara, Bettakote, Hunchur, Mylanahalli, Begur, Yerthiganahalli and Chikkanahalli. (Map 1).



**Map 1. Study area prior to the airport.**

Source: Open Series Map (2005) Survey of India, D43R12.

Land records gathered from village accountants of the above villages show acquisition of around 3779 acres (Table 1) and the displacement of 140 households for the airport. Apart from the land needed for flight operations, the acquisition included land for industrial development and Special Economic Zones (SEZ) intended for financing the airport project. During fieldwork (2018-19), we heard rumours about more impending land acquisitions in these villages.

**Table 1: Details of land acquired for KIA**

Village	Land acquired (acres)				
	Commons	Forest	Private land	Other	Total
Bhoovanahalli	23.08	-	60.19	-	83.27
Begur	-	-	88.32	-	88.32
Yerthiganahalli	19.24	-	73.57	-	92.81
Chikkanahalli	12	-	87.15	-	99.15
Mylanahalli	39.2	-	148.02	3.18	190.4
Hunchur	226.27	-	58.6	-	284.87
Doddasanne	279.36	20.3	56.64	-	356.3
Bettakote	-	354.19	154.26	29.14	537.59
Gangamuthanhalli*	222	3.17	353.34	3.39	581.9
Anneswara	511.19	-	171.13	-	682.32
Arasinakunte*	41.8	-	740.6	-	782.4
<b>Total area of land acquired</b>	<b>1374.14</b>	<b>377.66</b>	<b>1991.82</b>	<b>35.71</b>	<b>3779.33</b>

\*Completely displaced villages. Source: Collected from land records of each village



**Map 2. Airport and study villages (2019).**

Base map: [www.openstreetmap.org](http://www.openstreetmap.org)

Around the time when land was being acquired for the airport, Karnataka started getting noticed for agrarian distress, recording 11,385 farmer suicides between 1997 and 2001<sup>6</sup>. Devanahalli Taluk and surrounding areas used to be inhabited by farmers growing mainly *ragi* (finger millet) and paddy along with some vegetables and pulses. They also maintained a variety of livestock like cows, sheep, goats and hens. Primary livelihood was farming, and continues to be so in those villages where acquisition spared hamlets of dwellings along with part of their private and/or common lands.

There is no clear source of information regarding the compensation paid by KIADB for acquired farmlands. Villagers mentioned an official price of INR 5,00,000.00 per acre<sup>7</sup>.

According to the ousted families, despite their initial reluctance, they finally conceded to the price offered after repeated negotiations between village representatives and government authorities. For the people of Gangamuthanhalli and Arasinakunte where entire villages (including common land, private farm-lands, and hamlets) were acquired, compensation package included the estimated value of the house, trees, wells, and livestock according to the then regulations. They were given a couple of places to choose from, for relocation. Eventually, common land belonging to a village named Balepura was selected for relocation of these two displaced hamlets<sup>8</sup>. Displaced families from the two villages were offered housing sites in Balepura, of two different dimensions (30 x 40 and 40 x 60 feet) depending on the size of the family. Very large joint families were given larger or more than one housing sites.

<sup>6</sup> Data received from – Joint Director, Department of Agriculture, Government of Karnataka, Office of the Commissionerate of Agriculture, Bangalore

<sup>7</sup> This paper does not discuss if the acquisition price has to reflect market rates, speculative real estate fortunes or the plural value of land (Dey, 2020), though it acknowledges the multiple (tangible and intangible) values attached to land belonging to the family farms. It argues for including all societal and private values around land while choosing the site for acquisition and while deciding the compensation package as a whole.

<sup>8</sup> Apparently the only other option other than the commons of Balepura was a distant place then covered with eucalyptus trees.



Many displaced families started occupying these sites in the relocated village. Still, many others sold off the housing sites allotted to them and moved away to other places trying to construct a new life. The resettlement also came with the promise of job opportunities at BIAL, at least for one person per household, depending on the applicant's educational qualification. We will look at the ways in which displaced families are trying to adapt to a formidable shift in their life and landscape, two decades after losing their land, dwellings and village.

## 2. Urban –agrarian dynamics and the genesis of the study

The coronation of footloose capital as the principal agent of a development process that is construed as urbanisation of land use and livelihoods to reproduce the neoliberal economy of Bengaluru city has been well documented (e.g., Goswami M., 2004, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy To National Space*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press. Benjamin and Raman 2011)<sup>9</sup>. That KIA space represents territorialisation and occupancy urbanism has also been established in Benjamin and Raman (2011). The dynamics between agrarian landed property and urban real estate was termed 'recombinant urbanization' by Balakrishnan (2013), borrowing the concept from Stark (1996). With privatisation of village commons and well-known initiatives to digitize land titles in Karnataka, this invasion of capital-driven and capital chasing urbanism managed to stunt the significance of regional small-scale economies, including family enterprises in farming and grazing.

Urban expansion by converting land use from farming and relocating agrarian communities is known to give rise to uneven peri-urbanism characterized by sediments of rurality (Gururani, 2020). The remnants of agrarian rurality in these interstitial locations alongside neoliberal livelihood cultures, produce a dynamism that skillfully hides the stagnating outcomes of displacement for development, on the disadvantaged communities. We try to tease out these subdued impacts in the backdrop of the international airport that Bengaluru city is proud of.

The facts that rural land has plural values beyond being a tradeable commodity (see Davy, (2012) in territory, capability and ecology and that these are embedded in the social citizenship (for a definition of social citizenship see Marshall 1950) around common lands have been brought to light in the context of more controversial cases of acquisition (like Singur in Biswas (2020)). While the political-economic angles of land alienation from farmers have been well documented in literature, how the displaced farmers tread their lives long after their peri-urbanisation is worth a closer understanding. This insight can help us look for possible development trajectories for small holders through urbanization. It can also inform policymakers and technocrats of a welfare state involved in urban planning and industrialization about why and how to minimize social-ecological externalities and economic disparities in the process of development by displacement.

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9 This video depicts plight of agrarian communities in the city outskirts and what happens to them when the city expands. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7mrepdqeUI>)

### *Eminent domain of the state and urbanism*

The theory of eminent domain finds a notable place in the Land Acquisition Act of 1894. It attributes power to the state and its agencies to acquire private property for activities identified as involving 'public purpose'. This privilege empowered both the central and state governments as land is a state subject under the constitution while acquisition is in the concurrent list of power sharing between the state and the center. History of applying the eminent domain in India is ridden with agitations and litigations around evictions and compensations. It remains controversial even after 116 years of the prevalence of the foundational principle of the Act and the emergence of its supposedly progressive descendants (see foot note 1, (Seetharaman, 2018) (Bhardwaj, 2017)).

Conflicts and litigations around displacement could be attributed to some extent to the ambiguity in the existing regulations. Ambiguity is manifested in the way regulations first categorically define the boundaries of 'public purpose', to be soon followed by a long list of possible exceptions. Ambiguity also prevails on the process of acquisition and compensation, rehabilitation and resettlement. The spirit of the law has been that owners of the land to be acquired for the stated public purpose must receive market price. 'Market price' is considered to be either 'circle rate' - a price fixed by the government or a corresponding rate mentioned in any similar sale deed registered in the locality. Circle rates are generally outdated and lower than market price while sale deeds usually state lower rates than actual transactions, in order to minimise the stamp duty to be paid.

Ambiguity on the price of land to be acquired shifts the burden of establishing the actual market price to the land owners. Though land remains the single most valued asset held by farmers, many are unable to judge its' monetary value, especially as land inherited over generations is attributed plural values. Then, there are also many dimensions to acquisition. One is the deceptive use of the 'public' nature of the purpose. Use of the term 'public' arouses some social pressure to forego land for the betterment of the larger society and to accept whatever is offered by the state. In practice however, the 'public' associated with the purpose of displacement could be referring to the state itself for its own use or for use by its people or for the convoluted public purpose of generating capital for public projects. The add-ons to, or the dilution of, public purpose despite certain legislative efforts to make the purpose and process of acquisition more transparent and just, result in conflicts<sup>10</sup>. Additionally, there are confusing signals to the land owning farmers from various quarters. These include coercion, persuasion and threats from the local real estate agents or land mafia trying to make the most out of the tumbling fortunes in farming. All these together eventually commoditize both privately held as well as common lands while breeding insignificance around other values relevant to small family farms and pastoralists.

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10 This can be seen in the conflicts between SEZ and the local community in West Bengal's Tata Nano project at Nandigram, and Odisha's Mittal steel project at Keonjhar ([https://sspconline.org/opinion/SpecialEconomicZone-TheNewConflictGroundinIndia\\_RajatKumarKujur\\_070207](https://sspconline.org/opinion/SpecialEconomicZone-TheNewConflictGroundinIndia_RajatKumarKujur_070207))

The unfairness of the acquisition process is stark when the state seizes small holdings in the name of public purpose and then transfers them to corporate agencies for capital generation as in public-private partnership mode or through SEZs or large public sector projects. Projects in the name of public purpose seem to rarely eject resourceful (rich and powerful) entities from their land. Acquisition in India appears to be about deploying coercive powers to transfer farm lands to capital investments, thus making it a land broker state (Levien, 2011). It also makes the state a 'nature broker', as acquisition entails the transfer of entire agroecology including public goods and village commons, away from primary production activities.

Extending the concept of spatial justice (Harvey, 2003 and Zhu, et al., 2018), resource allocation among all affected groups is supposed to be even. But in most projects involving displacement, access to the declared compensatory package itself has been partial and uneven depending on various factors like literacy, political affiliation, extent of land involved, or dependence on commons.

### *Choosing Devanahalli for the airport*

Physical and operational factors like soil texture, slope, connectivity with highways and cities formed the prioritized criteria for selecting a site for Bangalore airport (Gopalan, 2012). Among the candidate sites evaluated by the Ramanathan panel in 1991 (David, 1997), Devanahalli with a relatively low population density (430/km<sup>2</sup> in 2001) and fewer farm holdings (23,456 in 1995), less area under forests, along with a vast expanse of flat land with stable soil, offered a viable location with a low probability of conflicts. Chances for controversies to arise due to concerns about impacts on wildlife, unique ecologies, ethnic population or politically powerful people were very faint. Thus, Devanahalli offered a low hanging fruit for infrastructural planning, with its' vast cheap, suitable land and weak social resistance.

Nearly half of the land acquired for KIA came from village commons and forests (Table 1). Common lands also known as '*gomaala*' locally and the unculturable land (locally called '*paalu bhoomi*') were used by people in multiple ways. The landless and smallholders widely relied on collecting fuelwood, tree fodder, berries and leafy vegetables from these commons and occasional cultivation in suitable parts. These lands were in use also as community pastures, watersheds and meeting spaces. Yet, a declining trend in the number of free grazing native livestock, along with the absence of local community institutions informed about the links between agroecology and livelihood security made sure that acquisition of commons (including forest areas) coming to around 1700 acres, went unopposed (Figure 2) in Devanahalli, except for minor instances. Mainly inhabited by pastoralist lower caste communities, the grazing commons of Devanahalli thus became a politically convenient choice in expanding the nexus between urbanisation and capital accumulation.

### 3. The study processes

After a couple of initial visits to all 10 villages impacted by the airport, we selected four villages among the nine partially acquired villages around the airport (Map 2) and the new village created to resettle households from the two completely displaced villages. Among the four partially acquired selected villages, large extent of forests was acquired from Bettakote. Anneswara and Doddasanne were selected for the extensive acquisition of village commons and Bhoovanahalli for the least extent of land acquired among all the impacted villages. Evicted farm families from the two completely displaced villages -Arasinakunte and Gangamuthanhalli-officially were rehabilitated in a newly created hamlet in Balepura village and named after the first village - Arasinakunte colony. This new settlement that hosted the development refugees of Devanahalli formed the fifth study site.

The newly created village of Arasinakunte colony doesn't have farmlands and grazing lands. Apart from studying the displaced farmers who occupied this new settlement, we also tried to trace the 10 to 15 percent of the total displaced population who sold their allotted sites here and migrated out. This group consisted of households with medium to large holdings in the acquired villages and received relatively larger sums as compensation. We were told that most of them continue to engage in agriculture wherever they managed to buy land. But none of them could be traced despite our efforts with the help of those from old Arasinakunte now residing in the resettled colony.

Data on the displaced communities as a whole, on the families displaced, and the extent and types of land acquired were collected from Gram Panchayats, Village Accountants, BIAL and KIADB. As mentioned earlier, details on the compensation and resettlement package were not available with any single source. Media reports and official websites were relied upon for information on the support being extended to the displaced families, by the state and corporate bodies, including KIAL.

Fieldwork for this study had two phases - first was a series of exploratory interactions in the selected villages followed by detailed case studies. Starting with exploratory visits and interactions that spanned over two months, we identified 26 respondents from the two categories of villages-villages that faced partial loss and villages that were completely displaced to the newly created village. These respondents formed the first point of information on changes in their villages. Based on the preliminary information gathered from them, the next step was to shortlist a set of households as cases to be followed through longitudinal interviews combined with participant observation.

The second phase involved weekly individual interactions with identified households for a period of eight to twelve weeks. We conveyed the purpose of the study and sought their willingness to meet with us for a couple of hours every week for 8 to 10 weeks in two to three months. Over these weekly interactions, discussions traced their life at that point in time to that before the acquisition and the coming of the airport. This design was conceived to help each respondent family to comfortably recollect the details of their life two decades ago while updating with the on-going changes. This helped us confirm and clarify the facts discussed in the previous week's interview as well as to briefly partake in farming and other activities in the day-to-day life at least across a period of six months since our entry to these villages.

Sectoral transitions in economies (deagrariansation) happening with or without the smallholder transitioning to other livelihood sectors (de-peasantisation) have been reported from many parts of the world (see Bryceson and Jamal (2020), for Africa, Hu (2021) for China). Yet, the long-term plight of farmers who gave up land for popular development projects does not seem to catch the sustained attention of media, activist groups or academic literature. A snapshot of the chronicles presented below reflecting the life and livelihood of displaced farm families of Devanahalli after two decades of their loss is supposed to partially fill that lacuna.

#### **4. Farm families after losing land**

What do farmers do after losing land? Does the loss of land de-peasantise<sup>11</sup> traditional farming communities? If so, in the aftermath of development-induced displacement and/or land loss, are other better livelihoods accessible to them? We try to look at these questions through short-term longitudinal surveys, as mentioned in the previous section. Below we discuss the narratives from selected families before synthesizing them with other observations from the field. Paper ensures the anonymity of respondents by not using their real names.

##### *Case 1: Farmer to renter*

Kalraju's family in Anneswara village used to depend on sericulture, growing *ragi* and keeping dairy animals. After losing three acres to the airport, their source of income shifted to rents received from houses and tractors, apart from cultivating rose flowers. The only crop that continues its pre airport legacy in this holding, although scaled down, is *ragi*, grown just for home use. *Ragi* cultivation brings Kalraju's entire family together for farming activities even now.

Kalraju's three acres of land should have fetched INR15 lakhs of compensation in the year 2000. The actual amount received was around 12 lakhs. This was invested in constructing a building complex with one room apartments and also in buying a tractor. Now the family owns three tractors, different types of ploughs and other accessories. The tractors managed by his sons are a sought after service in the locality and earns them INR 1,000 per hour of use. Kalraju's tractors are frequently hired for ploughing and transport and are rarely found in their sheds.

The shift from being a full-time agriculturist to that of an enterprising rentier who leases small apartments and tractors was adequate to make Kalraju's family - his wife, two sons, and a daughter-in-law - happy, till a few years ago. The situation changed for the family since Kalraju was diagnosed with a serious illness.

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<sup>11</sup> Here de-peasantisation refers to both weakening and erosion of peasant practices and agrarian communities (for details on the concept see McMichael, 2012; Hussain and Anzar, 2019)

The lucrative crop of table roses entered the small land patches left in Anneswara after the acquisition, including that of Kalraju's. High-valued long stalked rose flower was new to these villages. These roses had consistent demand from Bangalore, other cities in the country and abroad. About half an acre of such rose varieties can compensate the loss (by acquisition) of three acres of field crops, they said. With the new flower crop came new agronomic practices including pesticides that is suspected to be behind Kalraju's illness. After its' suspected link to his illness, Kalraju's family stopped cultivating high-value roses.

He praises the airport for non-farm livelihoods that would have been otherwise hard to come by in his village. Yet, he also pointed at the economic damage inflicted on their agricultural incomes by the realignment of a major market road that passed through their village.

### *Case 2: The artist-shepherd*

Like many Dalit farmers, Muniraju of Doddasanne village keeps herds of small ruminants. A grazer cum theatre artist, Muniraju and his wife Ratnamma keep about 25 heads of sheep and grow roses on about half an acre of land near their house. The occasional sale of a sheep or two, rose flowers and their son's job at the airport's cargo section cater to the needs of this family.

During the acquisition process, they couldn't produce clear documents of land ownership. Hence the three acres that were lost to the airport fetched them only three lakhs altogether. It was spent on buying a few more sheep and renovating their house to accommodate the newly acquired animals.

Herders are not usually inclined towards commercial farming. Their mainstay continues to be grazing and breeding of sheep and goats. Muniraju's grazing vocation doesn't seem to flourish. If there were some village commons available, they would have kept a larger herd, Muniraju said. Thanks to his passion -folk theatre, Muniraju often gets philosophical in conversations with us. Acting in dance dramas based on stories from religious texts helped him memorize and recite spiritual verses. As his wife talked resentfully of their inability to organize required proofs to claim eligible compensation, he reminisced on the beauty of life on the whole and how their village hasn't lost its charm altogether. This is despite the fact that folk art forms had lost their sheen even in rural areas. It was already a few years since he appeared in any performance.

Muniraju says if no one in the village goes hungry now, it is thanks to the airport. He stresses on the positive change in the life of women, brought by new occupations earning them a regular income. But he feels strongly against the denied access to forest land to collect small timber, fodder, berries and leaves. Muniraju also points to the ironic lack of public transport from their village to travel to Bangalore, though huge planes fly above them to and from faraway cities!

### *Case 3: Mulberry, conflicts and fear*

Bettakote village, with many enterprising residents well connected with public and private sector agencies in development, receives good support from KIA. People of Bettakote are proud of the school in their village run by the CSR wing of BIAL (Rasheed, 2019).

Chandrappa of Bettakote was the beneficiary of a water storage sump and five sheep provided by the airport authorities. The compensation money of three lakhs was not commensurate with the 1.75 acres Chandrappa had to forego. He was unsuccessful in investing even that amount prudently. Using the compensation received, he had dug a bore well in the remaining 0.5 acres with him. That is lying unused now, thanks to a conflict over access. He had another acre of uncultivable land just outside the village.

Like many others in Bettakote, Chandrappa also is an enterprising sericulturist. He reclaimed the stretch of uncultivable land with him and started growing mulberry. His family is now solely dependent on mulberry for income. They grew *ragi* for their use in a patch encroached on the lakebed. *Ragi* for subsistence along with sericulture and livestock for income was the usual pattern seen in the small holdings here. This strategy came to be known as the 'silk' and 'milk' pillars of peri-urban livelihood around Bengaluru. With land prices soaring, Chandrappa is worried about his land getting snatched by the real estate mafia. He says that the airport brought with it a wave of coerced land dealings - a nightmare for people like him for whom farming refuses to die even after losing cultivable soil.

### *Case 4: The warrior turned dairy keeper*

Sondappa, a bachelor of about 56 years of age lives with his brother and family. Among the 40 farmers we talked to, he was the sole warrior against land acquisition and eviction. Currently living in the new relocated colony, Sondappa hailed from Gangamuthanhalli, one of the two villages completely displaced by the airport. When the final negotiations on acquisition happened, Sondappa had fallen ill and was hospitalized. Power supply to the village was disconnected and people were forced to shift from Gangamuthanhalli. Sondappa was the last one to relocate from their village.

He fondly remembers their spacious house, the lush fields and the trees of Gangamuthanhalli. An old settlement, this village had kutcha houses belonging to people from several castes. Every household had some land, though dairy farming was not much. Education status was generally below matric level, but the cultural ambience was vibrant with annual fairs and festivals.

Irrespective of the long time taken by Sondappa to get used to the lackluster life in the new settlement, he turned out to be enterprising. He was the first and most successful dairy farmer in the new village and encouraged others in the colony to engage in dairying. Dairy farming for this family wasn't hindered by the lack of grazing areas in the new village, as they managed to feed the hybrid cows kept for milk. Sondappa got five lakhs from KIA for his land and purchased an acre elsewhere that he gave it off for a wedding in the family.

### *Case 5: New found mobility dampened by domestic violence*

Gowamma of 44 years living in the new colony recollects her pre-displacement life in Arasinakunte village after which the new relocated colony was given its name. Her family did not own any cultivable land. Their land was sold off a few years before the acquisition process began. As her family was rearing silkworms, they were buying mulberry leaves from landed farmers in the same village who grew them. Gowamma maintained two cows to meet the everyday needs of milk products in the household and doesn't sell them. Farming and farm labour were the two major livelihood options available in old Arasinakunte.

Old Arasinakunte's vast eucalyptus plantations of absentee landlords apart from village common lands and scrub jungles made sure that there was no shortage of fodder and fuelwood. Collecting firewood and grazing livestock were everyday activities for the landless women of Arasinakunte. Women's life in the old village revolved around silkworms and livestock. There were forests around and no streetlights in the hamlet. Women rarely stepped out of the boundaries of their village and had no direct access to money.

After moving to the Arasinakunte colony, women started searching for work such as farming and collecting fuelwood or fodder no longer preoccupied them. The village Balepura adjacent to the colony, whose commons lands were allocated as housing colony for the ousted families, denied them work. Thus, women of Arasinakunte started working in other villages as farm labourers and also started small dairy units, garland making, milk agencies, candle making, etc. These activities also brought in micro- credit collectives to their lives. Since the colony is situated on the main road, mobility too was better than old Arasinakunte.

Gowamma was very clear about two changes in women's life after displacement. One was that community bonding among village women has become a thing of their past, despite the new thrift collectives that came into being. Her concern was that instead of volunteering their labour and time to collectively celebrate and experience the spirit of festivals, huge sums were being spent by increasingly individualised households. Second was about how more money in hand and no land to work on brought in alcoholism and increased the incidences of domestic violence. Voluntary agencies were conducting de addiction camps and counselling sessions, though the issue seemed to be at large.

### *Summarizing narratives*

The above stories and other narratives that we heard in the five villages indicate uneven outcomes across households, but all reflect an undying instinct to farm, amidst the loss of land and non-arrival of other secure livelihood occupations. While the relatively landed households who were already distancing themselves from their rural linkages as absentee landlords, completely ejected themselves out of their rural roots, medium landholders transformed the farming systems in response to the new drivers and demands, facing new risks and vulnerabilities. Some among them have blended a rentier economy to the new peri-urbanism along with the immigrant labour



population<sup>12</sup>. Thus peri-urban economies go beyond the usual imagination of small dairy units and high value crops to feed the city. The lost voices and faces in the above urban-agrarian dynamics belonged to the pastoral communities, folk artists and artisans who were also marginal cultivators.

Some litigations between the family members and other claimants to the land parcels acquired were still dragging on. Lack of foolproof documents (mostly pledged with money lenders) and bribes considerably reduced the actual compensation received by the relatively disadvantaged groups like Dalit pastoralists. Other ousted families living in the new colony or remaining in partially acquired villages either reconciled to the partial and uncertain livelihoods that came with impacts on food and health. They are also cut off from those in their old villages who translocated completely from the landscape.

Most youngsters who found work in the airport, shops, and industries in the surroundings work as helpers, housekeepers, cargo handlers, or gardeners. There are about 120 youngsters from these villages working at the airport complex. Between the airport and the ITC factory close by, young people of these villages were not complaining of lack of jobs, though none of them we met had a formal contract with their employer. Over the two decades after land acquisition, there has been an increased money flow in the families here, though it cannot be exclusively attributed to the airport. The urban sprawl around Bengaluru seems to have changed the income status in its surrounding villages. With the arrival of mobile phones and internet, people have been availing ad hoc opportunities in the informal sectors of construction of buildings and roads, driving, security keeping, etc.

As mentioned earlier, this increase in cash flow came along with individualisation within these agrarian communities in transition. People engaged in ad-hoc non-farm jobs of varying kinds and in varying locations are coming to terms with a lack of collective identity and sense of belonging. Families undertaking some bit of *ragi* cultivation continue to work together at least occasionally in growing and processing the millet. Most land losers were trying to grow some crop or the other in whatever patches they could find, even on the roadsides. In our trips from KIA, we started looking for these one part farmers in the women and men doing casual jobs inside and outside the airport.

## 5. Villages two decades after the land acquisition

The two visible shifts caused by land acquisition include the complete uprooting of two communities to graft a new settlement and the pruning of agrarian landscapes in nine villages. This section portrays these major changes' impacts on the community, summarizing the conversations in the six months of interactions in these villages. Some of these observations have already been mentioned in the individual narratives we discussed above.

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12 Migrant labourers from eastern and central India staying in these one room apartments built using the compensation money received for the land acquired, are pushed out of their natives due to a lacklustre performance of agriculture attributable to long term negligence meted out to rainfed small holdings. Thus agricultural refugees (Devinder Sharma 2017..<http://rajpatel.org/2009/10/30/devinder-sharma-on-agricultural-refugees-in-india/>) from other corners of India and development refugees in Devanahalli, together produce Bangalore – infrastructure, buildings and industries.

As mentioned earlier, people from the two completely uprooted villages were relocated into a new space carved out of the common lands of a third village. This new settlement was named after one of the two displaced villages – Arasinakunte. Even after two decades, the overall feeling of people presently living in the new colony is of apprehension. Though people acknowledge better cash flow than the pre-displacement times (as the case narratives show in section 4, this increase is not attributable directly to the airport), they do not completely identify with the new place. There is a lingering feeling of being unwelcome intruders into another village. Residents of the colony feel as a disjointed community consisting of families coming from different places. Typical socio-cultural events and norms seen in rural Karnataka (temple *jatre*, sharing of resources including labour or customary village meetings) are conspicuous by absence in the new village created by clubbing two displaced villages. The situation is comparable to the expansion of Julius Nyrere International Airport (JNAI) in Tanzania (Mteki et. al, 2017) where the displaced communities felt unsettled for years. After more than five years of resettlement, the diaspora of displaced Tanzanian communities had to find peace by socializing in religious lines.

Villagers with three different social and geographical pasts are trying to share a landscape while coming to terms with the shrinking resources of land, water and biomass in the surroundings. Resettled farmers can still be seen trying to cultivate in the meager land available around the colony (Figure 3). Together they struggle to call themselves a village that actually came up in the common lands of another village – Balepura. Old residents of Balepura do not consider the airport refugees in their neighborhood as their people (*nammooru jana*). Balepura residents look at the colony relocated to their erstwhile burial grounds, with contempt. Even after 15 years of establishment, Arasinakunte colony hasn't evolved a '*nammooru, namma jana*' (my village, my people) comradery.

Those families that sold off their allotted housing sites and translocated were totally cut off from their fellow villagers of old Arasinakunte, now residing in the relocated colony. It was difficult to imagine that they all belonged to one village for many generations. Alcoholism and caste violence in this new hamlet seems to be more of a concern than in the other villages where only land was lost and not the settlement itself.

### *Pruned agrarian roots*

Even as the displaced community in the new settlement maneuvers the lack of private and common lands as well as the occurrence of social discrimination and a cultural vacuum, other farmers who lost part of their land to KIA face another set of challenges – around food and livelihood security. After scaling down their agriculture, most of them are yet to find a stable livelihood. For them, the city's informal sector is not just tedious to commute but also insecure and monotonous. The heavily advertised compensatory employment in the new ventures in and around the airport has been ad hoc at best.

Even in the villages where settlements are intact and only land was acquired, people acknowledge the fact that families spend less and less time for and with each other, unlike when they shared a vast agrarian landscape two decades ago. Temple *jatres* (fairs), the only events that bring people together now, have become expensive less frequent events organized with minimal volunteering from the community.

### *New farming patterns*

With the shrinking of land size and increased dependence on the Public Distribution System for food grains, staple crops became redundant. Relying on mulberry and rearing silkworms for regular incomes also became difficult with frequent restrictions imposed due to flight operations. Farm animals also disappeared with the grazing commons that were acquired. But floriculture seems to be holding its forte.

Flowers are not completely new crops to the area. But they too changed in their kind, practices followed and area cultivated. Fields of humble *Kanakambara* (*Crossandra*) - a flower of low value but high local demand - gave way to demanding and pricey rose plants in the drip irrigated patches (Figure 1). *Kanakambara* and *Kakada* (a variety of jasmine) were the two popular flower crops when land was not a major constraint for the farm families. Rain-fed floriculture of *Crossandra*, jasmine or cheaper roses by small holders targeted temples, households, festivals, social events and weddings. The micro patches of land left after acquisition and the homogenization of flower cultures across cities brought high value rose varieties to the periphery of Bengaluru airport. It was aided by the spread of bore well and drip irrigation systems (subsidized by the government) using the compensation money. Farmers with somewhat larger holdings cultivate flowers like chrysanthemum and marigold. International Flower Auction centre located closer to the city on the airport road exports large volumes of cut flowers, during December to March.



**Figure 1: Intensive cultivation of roses in patches of farmland remaining just outside the airport boundary wall.**

### *Commons and Dalits*

Though less contested by the locals, loss of commons in addition to their individual pieces of land, is equally impactful on the informal, small scale but legitimate livelihoods weaved around the local ecology (Banerjee-Guha, 2013). Farming, grazing, small produce gathering and fishing continue to be important in the remaining commons, despite being adversely impacted through the changes in local hydrology and biodiversity.

Like what happened after land acquisition for the airport in Java that took away aquaculture of a particular shrimp variety (Rachman et al., (2018)) most farmers around KIA too find the process of adaptation to new constraints and opportunities an unfamiliar territory. This helplessness exposes the skewed outlook of a welfare state that was proactive in exercising its' eminent domain on land while being indifferent to the huge shift that it inflicted in the process, on the lives and livelihoods of development refugees.

Close to 50 percent of the land acquired for KIA came from the village commons. Grazing areas shrank considerably as also land under fodder cultivation, and both together affected the size of livestock kept by villagers. 'Silk' (growing mulberry and/or silkworm rearing) and milk (small dairy units)- the two popular pillars of rural livelihoods here, were thus hampered by land acquisition. If runways were built on the grazing lands, cultivable land simply is not enough to grow mulberry nor is rearing worms encouraged near the airports. Since the acquisition happened, about 40 percent reduction in milk collection has been reported in the dairy societies here (Table 2). Thus, both grazing communities and dairy farmers were adversely impacted by the airport.

Seasonal water channels feeding the perennial water sources of ponds and *keres* located downstream are interrupted by the boundary walls of the airport. Hence the water bodies dotting the landscape of Devanahalli start drying up soon after rains<sup>13</sup>, depriving the grazing cattle of drinking water during summers.

**Table 2: Milk production (in litres) in villages from where land was acquired**

Village	2000	2019	Percentage decrease
Anneswara	800	500	37.5
Doddasanne	600	450	25
Bhoovanahalli	350	150	57.15
Bettakote	1800	1150	36.11

Source: Dairy Societies of respective villages

<sup>13</sup> KIA is known for water recycling. It claims to have recharged water for villages nearby. We heard the other side of this claim from respondents in the study. The laudable move to make an airport sustainable comes at a cost to the surrounding ecology and livelihoods. The news on KIA's claim can be read here : (<https://www.internationalairportreview.com/article/101813/bengaluru-garden-terminal-sustainability/>)retrieved on 20 August 2020



**Figure 2: Airport came up on grazing commons and farmlands.**

Health and wellbeing appear to be the cost incurred by almost all families, though it is tough to directly attribute this to loss of farmland and commons. Seasonal fruits and vegetables in the common lands and fish from the overflowing *keres* (lakes) used to be gathered freely. Lack of such common sources of nutrients, decline in the area under *ragi* and decline in the number of farm animals could be driving nutritional insecurity in these villages. With the exit of *ragi* from the cropping pattern along with the spread of government food security scheme -*AnnaBhagya* from 2013, rice started occupying a dominant place in the local diet.

With the disappearance of common lands and water bodies, and in the absence of other livelihoods and with the weakened traditional cultural economy around fairs and festivals, families of grazers and folk artists are left in the lurch. Caste specific lanes or hamlets in the new settlements and persisting patriarchal tendencies testify that the new infrastructure and associated (deceptive) modernity have not erased the social divides.

### *New look neighborhoods*

With new stout buildings that house migrant labourers and the coming of high value crops, the landscape around the airport is unrecognizable now as is the case with the lives of people here. The favourite pass time of men in these villages seems to be frequenting the Devanahalli town. While women have mostly withdrawn from farming, most of them are whiling away their time at home. Only those women with formal education entered alternate occupations close to the airport area and, hence, went out for work. These women seemed happy to be earning some money for their families now left without much land. Yet, they also disliked the menial contractual jobs at or around the airport, earning them a maximum of INR 15,000 (in 2019) per month.

It has been a big shift for the local governments too. Local Panchayats have been receiving hefty tax revenue from KIA, ranging from INR eight lakhs to INR 18 crores<sup>14</sup> annually. They are yet to figure out how to spend this money, while plans drawn by the local self-governments to spend this unprecedented revenue are in different stages of preparation and approval. Most plans that we

<sup>14</sup> Revenue records of Panchayats, shared by the Panchayat officials

heard hovered around building convention centers, concrete roads, bringing water connection to the houses, etc. One Panchayat also mentioned digitizing the revenue records. Most villagers are however unaware of this huge increase in the revenue of their Panchayats.

Airport authorities have been extending support to the villages around by renovating school buildings, building water storage structures, and providing small ruminants to poorer families. Somehow Arasinakunte colony, the settlement to which evicted families were relocated, seems to be out of sight for such flow of support.



**Figure 3: Resettled colony displays an undying aptitude for agriculture, among the displaced farmers.**

Occasional sight of working women in western style uniforms, plying automobiles, new tenements for rentals and airplanes flying low over the villages - all impart a faint image of economic progress in Devanahalli. Losing the dignity of owning farmlands and also the autonomy over a family's food and health may not be big losses to most young men and women hailing from displaced families that still remain close to farming in some form. What is deceptive in these seemingly harmless changes are the undercurrents of lost identity, uncertainty and vulnerability of nonfarm informal sectors, persistent patriarchal tendencies and domestic violence.

### *Unending and deceptive changes*

KIA has now proposed a landside development scheme, visualized as SEZ in the land already acquired but not yet utilized for airport operations<sup>15</sup>. Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has provided clearance for the second and third stages of expansion of the Bengaluru airport<sup>16</sup>. This repeated, involuntary and regressive alienation of cultivable lands, forests and grazing areas away from agrarian communities showcase a treadmill of urbanization. It resonates well with the processes of accumulation by dispossession or by expropriation (Harvey, 2003) (Fontes, 2017) and is spreading to other production areas in the surroundings too. With the entire landscape changing

15 The following page was last retrieved on November 2019, but the information referred to, is no longer available. ([http://www.bengaluruairport.com/ourBusiness/airportCity.jsp?\\_afLoop=2016647015329912&\\_afWindowMode=0&\\_adf.ctrl-state=vwng5gmic\\_4](http://www.bengaluruairport.com/ourBusiness/airportCity.jsp?_afLoop=2016647015329912&_afWindowMode=0&_adf.ctrl-state=vwng5gmic_4). KIA has a phase 2 plan inclusive of SEZ)

16 <https://environmentclearance.nic.in/writereaddata/Form-1A/EC/12242018IDODMRN479613BengaluruAirportAmdECLetter.PDF> last accessed on 14th May 2021.

its character (in terms of pressure to sell and the increasingly rare sight of crops, animals and farmers), farmers in other villages of the landscape have no choice but to await acquisition.

The new nomenclature of a few areas in the surroundings of KIA as Special Agricultural Zone (SAZ, see Map 2) gives an impression of spaces where farming is incentivized, as is the case with industries in similar sounding SEZ. While special economic privileges await firms established in SEZ, nothing much awaits farmers in SAZ, according to our respondents. In theory, a coalition of people who may be potentially impacted by infrastructure projects can become the vehicle for implementing public-private partnerships through special purpose economic vehicles. However, negotiating the dynamics between urban planners, real estate lobbies, local governments and political parties is shown to be possible only when the primary stakeholders have “political and financial resources, strong cohesive leadership and the ability to recognize and capitalize on opportunity” (Sami, 2012).

In the absence of such political and economic power, social cohesion and leadership in the villages of Devanahalli during the 1990s, the ongoing financialisation process of transforming Bengaluru into a global city<sup>17</sup> accelerated the process of land acquisition from weaker communities. Through equity and debt driven foreign investments, this process added colour<sup>18</sup> to an otherwise low profile local game between parastatal executives, politicians and local capitalists. To add to the concern of the affected locals, much of the huge extent of land acquired for the private sector Global city project lies unused even after years. The above described process of land alienation in Devanahalli, however problematic it was, now seems to be taking a different form in other places. In the emerging forms of accumulation of land in other parts of the country by the state- corporate nexus, the legally prescribed process of acquisition is being circumvented through state specific amendments or by newly designed tools of land pooling (see Sampat (2016) for land pooling in Gujarat, such measures are reported from other states too<sup>19</sup>). The role of corruption in speculative urbanism in Bengaluru is already known (Doshi and Ranganathan, 2017).

In the usual neoliberal development rhetoric, following the acquisition of land, the youth in the displaced families shift occupation to informal insecure jobs, eventually leading to better educational standards of their children who in turn may enter less insecure non-farm jobs in formal sectors. ((Takahashi and Otsuka (2007) has such a story from Philippines). This prospect seems to be a mirage for Devanahalli, with notable social and economic disparities across caste, asset ownership and gender.

The presence of industrial migrant labour from rural areas of other states of India in this urban frontier of the city of Bengaluru adds competition to the local labour force in the ousted families.

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17 For the journey of a historical twin city around a native trading hub of agrarian south India and the colonial cantonment, to a mega city of neoliberal times, see Purushothaman and Patil (2019) p.119-151.

18 Buying a locality of one's interest categorised in the most speculative part of the colour coded zoning of the urban plan is a coveted collusive act by the political-real estate- landed community nexus.

19 Land pooling for a new capital for Andhra Pradesh in Amaravati, is a case in point. <https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/farmers-who-gave-land-pooling-worried-world-bank-drops-funding-amaravati-105780>

Migrant population adds opportunities in rental income and in small enterprises around vending food and other things needed in day-to-day life. Obviously, the planning and acquisition agencies of the state couldn't deliver the promise of prosperity by way of new employment options to the once vibrant rain-fed farming systems that they displaced<sup>20</sup>. These undelivered development promises also bear the imprint of revoking the meagre land justice rendered to the Dalit communities here as land reforms.

## 6. Pointers from Devanahalli

Rose bushes blooming in small patches, patches of ragi springing up in the lake beds or in the narrow gaps between houses, maize plants on the roadsides, that occasional grazer woman roaming with her sheep, the erstwhile sericulturist or dairy keeper trying to adorn the hat of an informal worker in the industrial establishments – these are common concurrent encounters just outside the walls of KIAL compound. They embody one part farmers persisting in the people of Devanahalli villages struggling for nearly two decades to eke out a living from non-farming occupations – a specter of deagrariansiation without de-peasantisation. As elders from the completely displaced communities narrate tales of individualization and sedentarisation, the young generation is still awaiting their turn to embrace secure urban lifestyles, while engaging in ad-hoc informal livelihoods. Men from the impacted villages who are currently into manual wage work talked about the monotony and drudgery involved. Young women working as housekeepers or salespersons considered farm work more strenuous, though wished for better nonfarm occupations. They resonated with the essentiality of 'creative freedom' for an Economy of Permanence in societies with fairness and inclusivity (Kumarappa,1957). Livelihood security for the poor seems to be elusive in the 10 study villages that display images of deceptive prosperity amidst a feeling of loss reinforced by lingering woes around gender and caste.

What would have helped the impacted families in escaping this insecurity often camouflaged by momentary gains? Commensurate reparation for the loss of a small but secure asset like own farmland would mean three mutually complementary benefits: a) locally suitable, healthy and stable occupation (with capacity building for newly required skills) for at least one member in the affected family b) at least an acre of alternate land for each family (a family had three adults and two children on an average, in the study villages) to grow crops of their choice and c) access to grazing lands required to keep at least a few farm animals. All of these need informed social formations to be crafted in these villages so that families can collectively adapt in order to gain some control of their lives and self-govern as a community. A secure livelihood basket for the displaced farmers who became either landless labour and/or micro holders would necessitate inclusive efforts in adaptive transition through creative and collective pursuits.

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20 Goldman (2020) provides details of the institutions and processes spawned around making Bangalore a Global city.



The impacts triggered by acquisition, despite the fact that Devanahalli was a suitable choice in many respects, reveal avoidable adversities. Projects with little benefit to locals should minimize acquisition and confine it to the exact public purpose announced by the government. Deciding on any additional extent of land to be acquired from agriculture should follow a transparent process taking the local government bodies and communities into confidence. Here the role of the state will be to avoid coercion by investors and other agents. Though LARR Act (Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act 2013) provides for two separate *de jure* procedures of acquisition of land for 'public purpose' and for 'companies', it has been critiqued of *de facto* ignoring the possibility of direct buying of land for fully transparent public purposes by the corporate bodies under the supervision of the government ((Bhardwaj, 2017), (Singh, 2012)). This seemingly deliberate oversight mindless of its long-term repercussions on livelihoods gives way to collusion between the eminent domain of the state and accumulating capitalists in wooing urbanization. However, others (e.g. Ramachandran, 2019) favour acquisition by the government rather than the direct purchase of land by developers in order to retain fertile arable land in agriculture.

Secondly, India needs a decentralized decision-making mechanism to decide the minimum extent of natural assets and ecological balance needed for local livelihoods. This process should be informed about the ecological, socio-cultural, health and livelihood impacts of various land use changes at a local scale of governance. Impacts of change in land use should be assessed inclusively by a consortium of reputed academic and civil society institutions. Their findings should be available in vernacular to all people to be impacted and in the public domain. It should be the responsibility of the local government to ensure its detailed discussion, inviting the authors of the assessment report for clarifications. Thirdly, legal support should be given to poor and legitimate land owners who lack necessary documents in order to claim eligible compensation with minimum transaction cost. The fourth aspect is the desirability of providing counselling by competent and collaborative agencies to set in motion adaptive processes amidst rapid changes in cultural, economic and social aspects of village life. This will help the development impacted farm families to take informed decisions (e.g. on crops grown, dietary habits, occupations, financial flows) and in building new individual and collective identity.

Such supportive steps should be based on the realization that the large interruption in the life and livelihoods of agrarian communities cannot be recompensed by money alone even if it is supplemented by a handful of insecure non-farm jobs. This recognition would go a long way in making the development process less contested and less regressive on the ground. Unless this recognition translates into changes in infrastructure planning, by 2030<sup>21</sup>, the proposed major industrial corridors and approved SEZs will displace a further notable share of India's arable land from agro ecosystems, food production and rural livelihoods.

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21 See Ramachandran (2019), for details of the proposed major industrial corridors, economic corridors and approved SEZs.

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## **About Azim Premji University**

Azim Premji University was established in Karnataka by the Azim Premji University Act 2010 as a not-for-profit University and is recognized by The University Grants Commission (UGC) under Section 22F. The University has a clearly stated social purpose. As an institution, it exists to make significant contributions through education towards the building of a just, equitable, humane and sustainable society. This is an explicit commitment to the idea that education contributes to social change. The beginnings of the University are in the learning and experience of a decade of work in school education by the Azim Premji Foundation. The University is a part of the Foundation and integral to its vision. The University currently offers Postgraduate Programmes in Education, Development and Public Policy and Governance, Undergraduate Programmes in Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities, and a range of Continuing Education Programmes.



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