Winds of Change in a ‘Saffronised’ Indian Borderland: Dispossession and Power in Rural Kutch

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Renewables are imagined in India around features of ‘greenness’ and ‘cleanness’ and are presented as the key solutions towards sustainable development and unlimited growth. But this narrative entails a problematic land politics and the reconfiguration of territories for capital accumulation: following the 2001 earthquake, Kutch district has been framed as a major resource frontier and experienced several waves of land liberalisation and industrialisation programs. Being a borderland district, the proximity with Pakistan and the presence of Muslim pastoral populations on both sides of the border have also fostered important ‘saffron’ Hindu nationalist discourses since 1947. What do the new territories of ‘green’ energy extraction look like in this context of sensitive borderland?

This research focuses on the land politics of extracting wind energy as embedded within relations of caste and class, citizenship, and religious identities. Land is being imagined ‘empty’ and ‘waste’, shifting from one user to another via bureaucratic means, while it is materially aligned with companies’ interests. This process affects social differentiation and creates new trajectories of accumulation and domination for ground-level brokers and fixers who mediate consent and resistance. These actors merge the companies’ endless appetite for land with their own socio-economic and political gains affiliated with nationalist projects of territory revivalism. As the thesis argues, wind infrastructures align with broad ethno-religious conceptions of Indian citizenship and space as Hindu and their expansion over new border areas serves the enforcement of a racialised citizenship and security regime. Finally, the emergence of everyday resistance and political reactions to the arrival of wind power reveals continuity with traditional agrarian struggles, but also with caste politics and exclusive forms of mobilisation.

This research adopts perspectives from political ecology, human geography, and critical agrarian studies and is grounded in a 7-month ethnographic investigation in mainland and borderland Kutch.

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Abstract in Danish

Forandringens vinde i et ’safraniseret’, indisk grænseland: fordrivelse og magt i landdistriktet Kutch

Vedvarende energikilder bliver i Indien forestillet som grønne og rene og præsenteres som de vigtigste løsninger mod bæredygtig udvikling og ubegrænset vækst. Men bag den solstrålehistorie er en problematisk jordpolitik og omdannelse af territorier for kapitalakkumulation: Efter jordskælvet i 2001 er Kutch-distriktet blevet beskrevet som en grænseland med vigtige naturressources og har været genstand for flere bølger af landliberaliserings- og industrialiseringsprogrammer. Som et grænsedistrikt har nærheden til Pakistan og tilstedeværelsen af pastorale, muslimske befolkninger på begge sider af grænsen også fremmet 'safran’-hindunationalistiske diskurser siden 1947. Hvordan ser de nye territorier for "grøn" energiudvinding ud i konteksten af Kutchs følsomme grænseområder?

Denne forskning fokuserer på de landpolitiske implikationer af vindenergiudvinding, og på vindenergi som indlejret i kaste og klasse, statsborgerskab og religiøse identiteter. Områderne forestilles som “øde”, og via bureaukratiske midler flyttes deres ejerskab fra visse bruger til andre, samtidig med at det materielt tilpasses virksomhedernes interesser. Denne proces påvirker social differentiering og skaber nye åbninger for akkumulering og dominans for landmæglere og -fixere, som formidler lokal samtykke og modstand. Disse aktører fusionerer virksomhedernes uendelige appetit på land med deres egne socioøkonomiske og politiske mål, der er koblet til et nationalistisk projekt om territorial revitalisering.

Afhandlingen argumenterer for, at de nye vindinfrastrukturer skabes i overenstemmelse med en bredere etnisk-religiøs opfattelse af indisk statsborgerskab og rum som hinduistisk, og at deres ekspansion over nye grænseområder tjener håndhævelsen af et racialiseret statsborgerskab og sikkerhedsregime. Endelig viser fremkomsten af hverdagsmodstand og politiske reaktioner på vindkraftens ankomst en kontinuitet med traditionelle landbrugskampe, men også med kastepolitik og udelukkelse fra mobiliseringsformer. Denne forskning trækker på perspektiver fra politisk økologi, humangeografi og kritiske landbrugsstudier og er baseret på en 7-måneders etnografisk feltarbejde i Kutch-distriktet.

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Other scholars and intellectuals have also accompanied me during this journey and have represented major sources of inspiration that crucially shaped my thinking. Nikita Sud's book on *The Making of Land and the Making of India* was truly a fieldwork manual when I started my investigation in Kutch in 2021 and this book never left me during the writing phases. I would like to thank her for this valuable contribution. Tania Li, Christian Lund, and Anna Tsing's works helped me to identify and conceptualise the research field I was entering in as I decided to start an academic career. Christophe Jaffrelot's extensive work of the past 20 years on Indian politics also constituted a fundamental entry point in one of the most challenging and interesting aspects of my research, namely the connections with Hindutva and ethno-nationalism. I would like to thank all of them for their precious contribution and intellectual mentorship during my PhD.

My journey in Kutch was possible thanks to many individuals that helped me, supported me, and even hosted me all the way. I would like to thank my family on the field, late K.T Rabari and his whole family who were so kind with me. I miss our weekly dinners together and walks in the jungle. Nanji bhai, you have become a friend after months of presence on the field, and for this, I warmly thank you. I extend these acknowledgements to Abdul and Salim bhai and all their fellow villagers who opened the doors of their homes to me. This thesis would not have been possible without your help, and therefore it is as much yours as it is mine.

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Acronyms

BADP	Border Area Development Program
BKS	Bharatiya Kisan Sangh
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BSF	Border Security Force
CAA	Citizenship Amendment Act
CPP	Captive Power Plants
FIT	Feed-In-Tariffs
GSDP	Gross State Domestic Product
HYS	Hindu Yuva Sangathan
INR	Indian National Rupee
INC	Indian National Congress
IPP	Independent Power Producer
LARR	Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act
MP	Member of Parliament
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
NIP	New Industrial Policy
NGT	National Green Tribunal
OBC	Other Backward Class
RDAM	Rashtriya Dalit Adhikar Manch
ROW	Right of Way
RPO	Renewable Purchase Obligation
RTI	Right to Information
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
SC	Scheduled Castes
SEB	State Electricity Board
VHP	Vishva Hindu Parishad
WTG	Wind Turbine Generator

Glossary of vernacular terms

Andolan	Struggle/ resistance movement
Anubhav	Experience
Bhai	Brother
Bharat	India
Dalal	Broker
Dastar	Turban
Darbar	Rajput
Gauchar	Village common grazing-land
Izzat	Honour
Jankari	Information
Jati	Caste
Kisan	Farmer
Lathi	Wooden stick
Maldari	Pastoral
Mamlatdar	Local revenue department head
Mehla	Celebration
Mukhiya/ Neta	Leader
Panchayat	Council
Pawanchaki	Wind power
Peisa	Money
Raj	Rule
Samaj	Community
Sangh	Organisation
Sarpanch	Village council head
Sarkar	Government
Sardar	Turbaned Sikh

Talati	Local tax collector
Tehsil/ taluka	Sub-district unit
Thekedar	Contractor
Theka	Contract
Up-sarpanch	Village council vice head
Zameen	Land
Zila	District

Introduction

Bhuj, district of Kutch, Western India, February 2020. Shaheed is looking anxiously at his mobile phone, checking for latest updates about the current situation in Delhi. His relatives are in danger, they are in the middle of a wide anti-Muslim pogrom that rages in the streets of North-East Delhi and has been orchestrated by Hindu nationalist organisations and local representatives of the political party in power, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), with active support of the police.

> 'Now BJP supporters will feel so powerful, they can kill Muslims and the police will not arrest them but instead, they will arrest the victim. India has changed so much. Even our little Kutch has changed so much in 20 years. Now, people with saffron flags and sticks can parade on motor bikes without any problem, so many wind companies and contractors from outside of Kutch have made their way in the district and have given money to BJP and local MLAs to get land, they have put wires and turbines everywhere with the help of Rajputs and powerful castes and now people do not have any space left for cattle grazing or agriculture. This is all part of the same story, they are changing India, they are changing Kutch.' (Discussion with Shaheed, 23.02.2020)

Shaheed was my research assistant for a short period of time during a scoping visit I conducted in Kutch in 2020. His statement highlights the ongoing struggle happening at the highest spheres of the Indian state and within its margins to redefine the identity, nature and contours of the nation. Crises constitute important political moments and opportunities for changes and transformations (Klein 2007); through the making and unmaking of land and space, through dispossession, power and violence. The climate crisis and its related imperative to transition current energy regimes towards decarbonisation pathways offer such opportunity. On the border with Pakistan, Kutch district was first hit by a deadly earthquake in 2001 and subsequently reframed as a major wind electricity corridor for climate mitigation projects, providing immense opportunities to redefine land, territory, and marginal spaces.

This thesis deals with the local reconfigurations and transformations triggered by the arrival of wind turbine projects in agrarian borderlands and in a context of climate change crisis, aggressive renewable energy development and the redefinition of the Indian state and nation as Hindu. I argue that looking at, around and beyond the sites of renewable energy production (wind turbines) provides us with valuable insights into the broader historical, socio-economic

and political changes that characterise contemporary India. This thesis is an attempt to analyse 'the making of land and the making of India' (Sud 2021), using borderland renewable energy infrastructures as a lens through which we can understand the ongoing reconfigurations of state institutions, citizenship and agency in the context of India's transition towards an authoritarian ethno-nationalist regime.

The sections below act as the thesis' introduction and are organised as follows. The first section briefly contextualises the arrival of wind turbines in borderland India and identifies the main issues and problems that will be addressed in the thesis. Section 2 is a review of the existing literature that has been guiding this investigation. While discussing important debates around the politics of energy, extraction, land, resource governance and resistance, I also identify new research areas and possible gaps to fill. Section 3 details the research questions and interrogations that have structured my study and section 4 presents the overall argument. I conclude with a presentation of the outline of the thesis.

1. Contextualising the Arrival of Wind Turbines in Borderland India

Winds of change are blowing all over India. We witness structural transformations taking place at all levels and spheres of the Indian society, between state and capital and in energy production. India is transitioning along decarbonised, 'clean' and 'green' energy pathways with the help of international donors, private investments and big Indian corporate houses (Phillips and Newell 2013). As I will detail in chapter 2, the country has committed to ambitious targets for the decarbonisation of its economy in international climate policy forums and has placed the development of renewable energy at the centre of its climate politics (Pillai and Dubash 2021), although the extraction of coal resources remains preponderant in India's current energy scenario.

This trend is most obvious since 2014 and the election of Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister of India. In line with his Hindu nationalist and populist political heritage, Modi wants to position the country as a 'green' champion and modern world power and as well as return to a past 'golden age' where the Indian - understand Hindu - civilisation was enlightening the rest of humanity (Chatterji, Hansen, and Jaffrelot 2019). India's G20 presidency in September 2023, or more recently, the invitation by President Macron at the French Bastille Day military parade in July 2023 as a guest of honour, offers tangible evidence of these ambitions. On the other hand, Modi has already won the title of 'saffron' champion or *Hindu Hriday Samrat* (King of Hindus' heart), with his infamous active participation in the worst anti-Muslim state-

sponsored pogrom which happened in 2002 (Ghassem-Fachandi 2012; Jaffrelot 2016). Since then his government and party, the BJP, have been meticulously applying an ethno-nationalist political project that dates back to the 1920s and is highly inspired by contemporary European fascism: the establishment of a Hindu state or Hindu *rashtra* that segregates its citizens based on religious, caste, class and gender identities (Jaffrelot 2021; Hansen and Roy 2022). As many scholars suggest, this is perfectly compatible with the unbridled expansion of liberalisation programs, the establishment of a new form of 'crony capitalism' and capital accumulation by selected corporate groups (Jaffrelot 2019, 2018). I wish to extend these trends to Modi's 'green' politics, climate ambitions and the development of renewable energy infrastructures ('winds of change').

Renewable energy infrastructures increasingly target rural areas situated at the margins of the state. When situated close to international borders, these marginal sites are infused with the production of national security and anxieties, local politics of identity and belonging and they constitute what Cons terms as 'sensitive spaces' (2016). Kutch district is a case in point of such borderland 'sensitive spaces'. Constituting the southern part of the border between India and Pakistan in Western Gujarat, Kutch has been the target of several waves of liberalisation programs, industrialisation, discourses of 'saffron' Hindu nationalism directed towards Muslim pastoral populations (Ibrahim 2008; Simpson 2014) and more recently 'green' energy development in the form of massive wind turbine projects. Kutch epitomises in that sense what a liberalised, 'saffronised' and 'greened' borderland looks like in contemporary India. It has become the playground of international investors and energy companies interested in wind electricity generation, of Hindu nationalist organisations whose project is to reconfigure spaces as Hindu through processes of re-territorialisation and colonisation and of military and intelligence agencies who control and keep an eye on Muslim borderland populations. One important issue in this investigation will be to explore the processes of state formation, boundary-making and citizenship reconfiguration that arise when energy infrastructures enter a 'saffronised' Indian borderland.

Wind turbines produce power, in the form of electricity, but they also generate social power reconfigurations and alter existing structures that determine the capacities, actions, beliefs or conducts of different actors. In rural India, power is intimately linked to land and property, and to structures of caste, class and gender (Lerche 2013; Lerche and Shah 2018). The winds of change I study here dispossess land and disturb existing property relations, they consolidate or contest structures of caste and class. In return, the land dispossession produces new power

structures and relations (Nielsen 2018; Sud 2021), as not everybody has the capacity to react to or counter the arrival of energy infrastructures. This leads to another dimension of the problem I aim to address in this investigation, namely the interactions between dispossession and power as wind electricity gets generated in rural Kutch.

I now turn to the debates and discussions that have been nurturing my investigation.

2. Conceptualising Energy Politics, Resource Governance and Resistance: A Literature Review

2.1 Energy, Extraction and Dispossession

Energy is a sensitive political resource, often the site of popular contestation and spatial expression of hegemonic political-economic ideologies (Calvert 2016). Energy enables or disables certain political configurations and dynamics, representations and expectations over time: the material and infrastructural dimensions of the carbon energy regime have exerted a massive influence over political and economic systems by empowering state and private actors (Boyer 2019; Loloum, Abram, and Ortar 2021; Mitchell 2013). These reflections constitute an interesting starting point. I wish to engage with the socio-political outcomes generated by post-carbon energy regimes and how they differ (or not) from the world of industrial age and fossil fuel extraction, particularly regarding questions of democracy, inclusion, justice, and emancipation.

Energy evolves around the extraction of resources, commonly defined as the activity of extracting materials from territories or the earth and convert them into value (Bridge 2011, 2009). This definition focuses mainly on the physical removal process, traditionally associated with mining, but has been broadened to other forms of resource extraction and energy and also includes renewables now (Bridge 2017, 2). The current energy transition scenario relies on even more mining and extractive processes. The scholarship points out that 'green' energy is not a substitution or disruption to traditional 'black' (coal) or 'brown' (oil) resources, but rather they follow the same complementary and overlapping 'extractive regimes' (Adhikari and Chhotray 2020). The 'green new deal' is providing capitalism with new avenues for accumulation on a more socially and environmentally sound basis and ensures its survival by appropriating and commodifying new elements of nature (wind, sunlight, carbon sequestration) in unexplored frontiers of the earth (Bridge 2009, 2017; Moore 2015).

Extraction is in most cases associated to resource enclosure and land dispossession. This has prompted social scientists around the world to conceptualise a ‘global land rush’ or ‘global land grab’ (Borras JR and Franco 2012; Wolford et al. 2013), referring to the increasing private control and appropriation of land for capital accumulation, and its green version captured in the ‘green grabbing’ debates (Fairhead, Leach, and Scoones 2012). This literature has also pointed out the essential role played by mediators and brokers: dispossession is always mediated by local ‘fixers’, facilitated on the ground by several layers of middlemen who channel the demands for accumulation (Berenschot 2011b; Kumar 2014; Levien 2015).

These valuable studies on commodification and accumulation patterns in extractive contexts could benefit from an extensive analysis of the materiality of energy infrastructures (Thomas 2021; Larkin 2013; Anand, Gupta, and Appel 2018) and the materiality of land (Tsing 2003; Li 2014; Sud 2021) in shaping different dialectics of extraction and dispossession. Renewable sources are by nature intermittent, weather dependent, low in power density and not available on demand (Scholten et al. 2020; Scholten and Bosman 2016). Their spatial distribution does not follow the geography of fossil fuel reserves and targets mainly semi-arid regions and coastal areas (Bridge et al. 2013). As I will demonstrate in the rest of the thesis, wind infrastructures are not situated at one single location (like coal-mining or solar projects, for example) but around large tracts or pockets of land. Finally, renewable electricity distribution patterns contrast radically with oil fluidity or coal solidity (Scholten 2018). Mitchell’s work was prominent in showing how much the shift from coal to oil materialities enabled new political and economic practices (2013). This materiality creates, in return, specific relations to land, space, resources and populations. I argue that these relations have been understudied in the context of renewable energy infrastructures and borderland India, although important studies have advanced our understanding on the extractive and colonial dimensions of renewables.

Indeed, there is a growing body of literature on the relations between renewable energy, extractive processes, labour relations and land dispossession, both in South Asia (Stock 2022b, 2021; Lakhanpal 2019), Sahara (Allan, Lemaadel, and Lakhal 2022; Ryser 2019; Rignall 2016) and South America (Sellwood and Valdivia 2018; Dunlap 2019a; Hesketh 2021). Empirical case studies situated in the southern Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Mexico have largely inspired my approach. Their findings reaffirm the crucial need for empirical and critical analysis on local wind turbines in the specific context of India’s borderland and how these energy

infrastructures might merge with broader issues of citizenship, security and the nation's boundaries.

2.2 Resource Governance, the Nation and Neoliberalism

This research refers to an important body of literature on the government of resources, populations and territories. Foucault and other scholars have acknowledged that manipulating desires, beliefs, representations and imaginaries to shape human conduct and its relations with resources and territories is the main concern of 'government' (Foucault 1991; Li 2007b, 2007a). Renewable energy, as an extraction of resource materials, is associated with this broader process of government in the Foucauldian sense, where knowledge construction and socio-technical imaginaries around resources and energy are making the way for nation-making, neoliberal governmentality and new territorialisation practices.

Societies have been 'energised' and 'powered' for long by specific energy systems that evolve over time, the fossil fuel energy system being for now predominant (Urry 2014). Each energy system is politically constructed and associated with specific resource construction discourses, knowledge production about resource management, materiality and availability (Bridge 2017, 2014). As reported in the emerging literature, renewables seem to be producing a new energy system through a discourse of 'greenness', 'cleanness' and a nationalist story. Renewables also amount to the production of narratives of nationalism, sovereignty and security and this construction is highly technical and depoliticised: wind and solar alleged abundance and almost infinite available potential are associated by Indian policy makers with modernity, national development, energy security, international pride and climate superpower (Shidore and Busby 2019a).

Such resource construction discourses, and national narratives around energy shape the nation. They are 'the basis for national identities and support the legitimacy of governments' and as they change over time, they also refer to the future of the nation and 'the sense that people have about what their society is (and is not)' (Malone et al. 2017, 71). Kuchler and Bridge (2018) have emphasised that the emergence of resource-nations (oil nations, coal nations or wind nations) are shaped by the materiality of resources. Grounding their argument in the case of the Polish nation, they explore how its modernity and development was tied up with the development of coal, a solid and abundant resource available in the country. As Li suggests, governing resources reveals an important 'will to improve' that 'confirms expertise and constitutes the boundary between those who are positioned as trustees, with the capacity to

diagnose deficiencies in others, and those who are subject to expert direction' (2007b, 7). The government of resources therefore aligns with a 'right manner of disposing things' through the deployment of different governmentalities (Foucault 1991), i.e. different governmental rationalities and techniques concerned with the regulation of everyday conduct: the neoliberal governmentality now seems hegemonic in the government of resources, nature, and population's conduct, alongside sovereign and disciplinary governmentalities (Fletcher 2010). Neoliberalism is indeed considered by many scholars as a technology of government that 'relies on calculative choices and techniques in the domains of citizenship and of governing' and whose specific governmentality 'results from the infiltration of market-driven truths and calculations into the domain of politics' (Ong 2006, 4). Neoliberalism differentiates, racialises, constantly values and devalues human conducts, includes and excludes populations, and for this reason, it interacts with regimes of governing and regimes of citizenship. It has also adopted more recently an 'authoritarian fix' to remove all remaining barriers to accumulation and tackle political contestation in situation of multiple crisis through the restructuring of state institutions as less democratic and more repressive entities (Bruff 2014).

Within this neoliberal government of resources, an important literature has emphasised that extraction is organised around 'meta-infrastructures' (Easterling, 2016), where 'extra-statecraft' and extra-territoriality are exercised through jointly public and private administrations. Under neoliberalism, resource extraction follows a 'punctuated, discontinuous' geography, producing 'enclave economies that are, at one and the same moment, both deeply integrated into the global economy and also fragmented from national space' (Bridge 2009, 4–5). This resource territorialisation highlights a global geographical expansion dynamic of modern capitalism that tries to exploit new 'resource frontiers' and advance extractive development in margins of the state (Barney 2009; Eilenberg 2014).

This literature on the government of resources constitutes a precious tool to understand the current development pathway of renewable energy extraction in India. This scholarship is engaging with global mechanisms, the expansion of capitalism via the extractive frontier and its set of narratives, socio-technical imaginaries and nationalist stories. What seems missing is a more cyclical understanding of the overlapping dynamics between the discovery of resources, their extraction and territorialisation practices (Rasmussen and Lund 2018), and how these cycles and waves might be regularly interrupted, resumed or accelerated over long periods of history (Tsing 2003). Bringing questions of infrastructures and borders in this discussion will also emphasise that capitalism and the extractive frontier do not expand on their own but in

tandem with nationalist and ethno-religious projects of re-ordering space, territory and the nation (Smith 1986; Jaffrelot 2021). Finally, a study of the local territorialisation process of renewables in borderland India is critically missing: we need to understand how grand narratives about energy and governmental techniques discussed above are translated to the ground realities by local mediators and power brokers and how these local territorialisation processes might reconfigure the government of resources imagined 'above' (Sud 2014b).

2.3 Resistance and Land Struggles

This research is also grounded in the larger literature on social struggles and resistance movements, and particularly the roles of conflicts in shaping political outcomes and the agency of those resisting.

Environmental impacts of resource extraction in India are well documented (Ahlers et al. 2015; Mishra and Mishra 2017; Nielsen and Oskarsson 2016; Padel and Das 2010). Resisting destructive and dispossessing conservation, mining or renewable projects has been associated with an ongoing process of agrarian historical struggles re-emerging through current environmental issues. Such process is described as the 'environmentalization of social struggles' (Acselrad 2010; Robbins 2004). Ecological issues become political tools to contest power structures, deepen local democracy and empower local indigenous identities, values and norms as legitimate alternatives (Scheidel et al. 2018; Temper et al. 2018). Indeed, environment and biodiversity protection are important mobilisation factors for communities relying on ecosystem services, on common and free natural resources for their livelihood (Mishra and Mishra 2017, 145).

India has been a fertile ground for the development of subaltern studies. These studies pay attention to the political reactions of subordinated social groups who are incorporated into determinate power structures but also try to challenge these structures through the articulation of oppositional agency (Nilsen and Roy 2015). The *Narmada Bachao Andolan* pan-state anti-dam campaign has been described as a powerful process for affected Adivasi communities (indigenous tribes) and subaltern groups to regain a status of citizens and not merely subjects of the state (Nilsen 2010). The anti-Posco movement against a steel mill project in Odisha articulated the small peasantry with regional and national environmental NGOs, activists, lawyers, political parties and saw 'an increasing convergence of the green (ecological) and red (social justice) trajectories' (Kumar 2014, 72). The more recent Indian farmers' protest on Delhi's borders in 2020-2021 constitutes one last important political momentum in this history

of dissent politics in contemporary India. Opposing the liberalisation of the state agrarian market and fearing land dispossession by larger agrobusiness corporates, farmers from different parts of the country united in an unprecedented alliance of unions, NGOs, activists, religious institutions and diasporic networks that partially redraw boundaries of caste, religion and gender (Moliner and Singh forthcoming).

Resistance movements and development projects are also undeniably reproducing and reinforcing existing power relations and hierarchical structures leading in some instances to passive acquiescence, inaction or negotiation of dispossessed groups (Hall et al. 2015; Johansson and Vinthagen 2016). Resistance or acceptance is determined by a pre-existent militant culture and tradition, external allies among social justice and human rights movements and environmental NGOs (Hall et al. 2015). Narratives of opposition and specific identities deployed in struggles for land are also crucial in shaping the trajectories and boundaries of resistance movements: Krishnan and Naga (2017) have demonstrated how the presence/ absence of overt and emotive 'performances' of indigeneity has been instrumental in shaping two radically different resistance pathways in Adivasi land dispossession cases as well as state's response. Depending on the identities, class/ caste interests and narratives of opposition deployed, collective acts of resistance can in some cases further marginalisation and exclusion (Drew 2017). Potential for resistance has also been largely limited, authors argue, by local 'big men' and brokers who impose individual strategies of cost calculation and act as 'agents of social dissolution' (Levien 2015, 88).

These approaches connecting environmental and social agrarian struggles have been largely drawn from mining, industrial or hydropower conflicts. Some inspiring work exists on the resistance to wind energy in the Latin American context (Dunlap 2019a; Dunlap and Arce 2021; Avila 2018), and resistance studies in India are slowly starting to look at how dispossessed rural communities resist renewable park development (Yenneti, Day, and Golubchikov 2016; Lakhanpal 2019; Sareen and Kale 2018): Stock (2022a) adopts, for example, an interesting perspective 'from below' to understand the everyday resistance and discontent of peasants dispossessed by a large solar energy park in Gujarat. These studies constitute important references to grasp the resistance and contestation dynamics to emerging renewable energy dispossession in India, dynamics that are at the heart of this research. Nonetheless, there remains a tremendous field of research to explore, as more critical investigations are needed on the resistance practices that emerge to counter 'green' infrastructure narratives.

Beyond the important debates discussed above, there is still much to be investigated on what triggers resistance or acquiescence and what shapes certain forms of political reactions and not others. The literature discussed so far would benefit from exploring further the intertwined relation between resistance materiality and energy infrastructures materiality (Sud 2021; Nielsen 2018; Jenkins, Kennedy, and Mukhopadhyay 2014), and how the latter might influence the former. This follows the need to mobilise conceptual tools that take into account the complexity and contradictions of exercising agency in extractive contexts and make sense of the spatiality, materiality and temporality of resistance practices, including counter practices like negotiation and incorporation. This knowledge gap suggests a multiplicity and diversity of political reactions that could be apprehended from the perspective of everyday life (Scott 1992). The debates also reveal the importance of adopting an approach that pays attention to class/ caste dynamics and to the power differentiations in context of agrarian change. Analyses accounting for the diversity of everyday negotiation and resistance strategies developed by villagers living in the vicinity of wind infrastructures and in the margins of the Indian state did not in this matter receive enough attention.

3. Research Question(s)

Drawing on these debates and discussions, I situate my thesis at the crossroads of political ecology, human geography, critical agrarian studies, anthropology of development and political science. I am inspired by the discussion taking place around energy politics, brokerage of land and state-making, citizenship and belonging to the nation, dissent politics and resistance.

This research is an investigation of the socio-political and territorial reconfigurations that take place in rural Kutch following the discovery and extraction of wind resource materials on a borderland between India and Pakistan. I am guided by the following main research question: how does the wind extraction frontier in borderland India reconfigure and redefine resource governance, citizenship-making and political agency? I will develop and disaggregate this central research question into four sub-questions that will be answered separately in each empirical chapter:

- What tensions and frictions arise when the wind frontier meets the territory of Kutch? What value regimes, property rules and authority emerge out of reconfigured wind territories? (Chapter 5)

- How are wind turbines concretely fit amidst village(r)s and translated into the local politics of Kutch? How do the land politics and brokerage of wind extraction projects contribute to new forms of state-making and power differentiation along caste and class? (Chapter 6)
- How does the wind extraction frontier enter the realm of identity politics, ethno-nationalism and religious/ caste boundary-making and how does it reproduce and metaphorically embody the borders of the nation-state? (Chapter 7)
- What political actions and reactions do social groups and individuals develop facing dispossession by energy infrastructures? In what site or terrain does the agency of the subordinate get expressed and what determines or permeates its political scope? (Chapter 8)

These questions are answered in the specific context of Kutch district, a borderland between India and Pakistan that has been prone since independence to intense discourses and practices of security, militarisation, nationalism and surveillance. As I will argue in the rest of the thesis, wind turbines constitute the most recent wave of extraction and dispossession in the region, after industrialisation programs, tourism, mineral and salt mining projects. Wind turbines enter a complex landscape of liberalisation, ethno-nationalism and state-making. To answer these questions, I mobilised an ethnographic qualitative method of investigation that paid attention to the everyday dimensions of living/ working in the direct vicinity of wind turbines construction sites, the socio-political re-organisation that ruled new wind territories and the emerging forms of social interactions, dependency and capital that this generated. While I adopted neutral pronouns for all the academic references and authors cited in the text, my informants' gender position was clear enough to directly refer to them with he/ him and she/ her. Chapter 3 and 4 discuss in detail the local context of my fieldwork and the methodological tools that were adopted during this investigation.

4. Overall Argument of the Thesis

I argue in this section that understanding the socio-political transformations and territorial reconfigurations operated by the arrival of wind extraction projects in a rural agrarian borderland of India requires us to look both in, around and beyond the wind turbine sites. We need to explore the new materialities, social relations and territorial control that emerge on and around the wind sites, as machines, cranes, wires and engineers enter the field and reconfigure the land. But most importantly, we need to investigate what happens outside these areas, in tiny

offices of the local state revenue department, in police stations, energy companies' guesthouses, contractors' camps, villages and road tea stalls. Put together, these spaces and agents tell us something significant about the reconfiguration of territory, state's boundaries, power differentiation, citizenship, and agency that the extraction of wind electricity provokes.

A central aim of this research is to rethink the making and unmaking of land, space and territory through the perspective of wind resource extraction, and how the latter rolls out processes of erasure, dispossession and destruction. I argue that peripheries and marginal areas are prone to regular and cyclical capitalist and state territorial expansions that portray land and people as 'waste', 'empty' and 'barren' in order to exploit and extract newly discovered resource materials. Based on empirical research into the history of transformations and social change in rural Kutch, my findings contend that the recent wind extraction frontier is redefining existing relations to land and value regimes through the production of ruins and 'wastes'. It is also contributing to new forms of property-making, authority-building and territorial control where boundaries between legality and illegality, public and private have been redrawn.

This research explores the contemporary reconfiguration of institutions like the state and power categories (of caste and class). I advance that processes taking place within margins and peripheries of the state are in fact central in the shaping and moulding of ideas and representations of the state at the centre, and that this is concretely channelled through the brokerage of land, the materiality of energy infrastructures and the configuration of power in agrarian settings.

Concerning citizenship, I argue that wind energy infrastructures are not immune to questions of national and cultural identity, belonging to the nation or boundary-making. Installed on the margins of the nation state, wind turbines turn into border infrastructures that produce and reproduce national boundaries and perform state's sovereignty. They get infused with identity politics, nationalist anxieties and long-term projects of cultural identity revivalism through similar territorial practices of space making, unmaking and colonisation. Specifically, I argue that the green extraction frontier is compatible with racialised citizenship and security regimes that constitute the core of Hindu ethno-nationalist movements in India. It is restoring a broader social conservative status quo and imposing a disciplined socio-political organisation upon Indian society where religious and caste boundaries have been reinforced.

The final central aim of this research is to analyse the political agency of social groups and individuals who face a reconfiguration of their everyday life, livelihood resources and social

interactions by the arrival of wind turbines. Deploying a caste and class analysis of the actions and reactions developed by Kutchi villagers in face of structural changes in their environment, I argue that agency is exercised along a complex political terrain made of negotiation, compromise, resistance and opposition and whose political outcomes are shaped by the materiality of dispossessive projects and the local configurations of power and domination.

5. Outline of the Thesis

This thesis focuses mostly on the three decades since the 1990s, when India experienced a structural transformation of its political economy towards liberalisation and industrialisation and saw the progressive ascension of the Hindu nationalist movement. In this thesis, I argue that investigating the socio-political and territorial reconfigurations produced by the arrival of wind extraction projects in borderland areas can provide us valuable insights on how resource governance is redefined by state and capital interactions, how citizenship is denied or granted and how political agency is experienced in contemporary India.

In what follows, the overall story transitions from theoretical and historical context related chapters to chapters drawing from ethnographic research.

Chapter 1 lays out my theoretical framework. I argue that the discovery and extraction of new resource materials like wind must be understood from the perspective of resource frontiers and territorialisation (Rasmussen and Lund 2018) that assemble and disassemble land's materiality as a valuable resource for capital accumulation (Li 2014; Sud 2021). Resource frontiers and territories are also the playgrounds for governmental powers expressing ethno-nationalist political movements through the lens of infrastructures and borders. I contend that the making and unmaking of land in extractive projects is linked with state-making, mediation and local forms of accumulation and power expressed through caste and class (Jeffrey 2002; Sud 2014b). Finally, I suggest analysing the political reactions of villagers facing energy dispossession through the lens of everyday resistance (Scott 1992) and via a political terrain (Routledge 1993).

Chapter 2 and 3 are about the socio-political and historical contexts. Chapter 2 posits this study within the important transformations that have shaped the Indian state since independence, in particular - its relation to capital, accumulation, and dispossession. I discuss the emergence of the Hindu nationalist movement in India, its specific application in Gujarat and in the rest of the country since Modi's accession to power in 2014 and the consequences for India's

ambitions to become a 'green' and a 'saffron' champion. Chapter 3 lays out the local landscape of Kutch district, my fieldwork site. I explain that borderland Muslim populations have been historically subjected to a racialised citizenship and security regime that imagined them as less 'loyal' to the Indian nation. This is in line with the representations of Kutch as a backyard of Gujarat, until it became in 2001 the centre of land liberalisation and industrialisation and a playground for Hindu nationalist expansion.

Chapter 4 presents the methodology and research design. This will assist the reader in understanding how the empirical material was collected and analysed, what bias and positionality may have influenced access to it, and how conclusions were arrived at. I present the sites and actors that constituted my fieldwork in borderland Gujarat for a period of seven months, where I deployed an ethnographic qualitative method of investigation based on mixed tools of data collection. As a PhD student raised between French and Indian culture, I explain that multiple identities and positionalities generated natural questions of loyalty, trust, transparency that I needed to navigate through. I also include a discussion on the difficulty to do research in extractive and borderland contexts.

Chapter 5 engages with the new tensions and frictions that arise when the frontier meets the territory (Tsing 2003; Rasmussen and Lund 2018). I analyse how discourses and practices of 'wasteland' and 'wasted' populations have paved the way to a massive expansion of wind turbines in Kutch 20 years ago. I explain that this process took place at the level of 'inscription devices' (Li 2014) developed by state and companies (land categorisation, surveys and maps) and at the level of physical erasures once machines enter the wind site and start digging the land. These modalities of reconfiguring territories for wind resource extraction generated specific spatial organisation and dialectics of dispossession, in line with the materiality of energy and the colonial nature of infrastructures (Dunlap and Arce 2021), and artificially produced a field of ruins and 'wastes'. In this 'new' wired, cabled and wind power-controlled Kutch, companies were able to exercise territorial control, partial hegemony and domination over space, workers and people's lives.

Chapter 6 is dedicated to the processes of land brokerage, state-making and the reconfiguration of local powers of class and caste. Describing the nature and levels of the fixing alliance that emerged in mainland Kutch, I contend that the brokerage of land in wind extraction projects is intimately linked with bureaucratic and socio-political processes of state-making (Sud 2021). I subsequently analyse the political reactions 'from above' as resource extractors and their

enforcing agents monetise pacification and consent-making and resort to intense caste violence and muscle power with the help of state policing agencies. Finally, I explore the social capital and political connections of those actors who fit turbines in the landscape of party politics and elections, and I detail their accumulation strategies as they get to supervise new spaces and people (Levien 2015).

Chapter 7 is about the making of citizenship and security, the production of national boundaries and the Hinduisation of space as wind infrastructures meet the border with Pakistan. I expose the merging points between 'green' and 'saffron' frontiers. Wind infrastructures' materiality seems particularly suitable for renewed dialectics of control, surveillance, and security among Muslim populations and their expansion towards new border areas enforce the same racialised citizenship and security regime that was elaborated after independence (Bhan 2013; Ibrahim 2019). Wind turbines enter a landscape of 'cartographic anxieties' (Krishna 1994) and ethno-nationalist tensions (Jaffrelot 2021) that materialise in everyday struggles for territory, space and identity between Muslim and Hindu communities. This struggle gets extended to wind construction sites, contractors' camps and the available money and jobs coming from companies. Wind companies and the Hindu nationalist BJP jointly try to conquer and expand in the last remaining frontier of Kutch, Lakhpat border *tehsil*. This participates in the elaboration of border infrastructures where wind turbines align with the militarisation of the area and the performance of state sovereignty (Thomas 2021).

Chapter 8 deals with the exercise of agency, dissent and everyday political reactions to energy dispossession. I argue that the political 'terrain of resistance' in mainland Kutch to counter the arrival of wind turbines was moulded by the materiality of energy and the local configurations of power (Nielsen 2018; Sud 2021): this terrain is composed of individual and everyday attempts to negotiate dispossession, while other configurations favoured the emergence of collective resistance movements aimed at opposing dispossession, up to a certain point. I apply this concept of 'terrain of resistance' to three village case studies in mainland and borderland Kutch and discuss how a combination of different caste configurations, political leadership, resistance practices and energy materiality contributed to draw different trajectories of political reactions. I also show that a class and caste analysis of social movements in rural India is indispensable to discern patterns of power and class differentiation (Li 2003; Chhotray 2016; Noy 2022). These patterns either contest or consolidate the existing (unbalanced) equilibrium and social organisation that prevailed in villages before the arrival of wind turbines.

A final section concludes the thesis. It provides an overview of the thesis' findings, original contribution, and implications for further research.

Chapter 1. Theoretical Framework

'Is this your first time in Kutch?' I was asked by an energy company official after a few weeks of presence on the field.

> 'I have been working here for the past five years and I never got used to these lazy Kutchi people here, they do not do anything except blockades against our turbines and asking us for money or jobs when they do not fight with each other. They spend the whole day in the jungle, and nobody knows what they do, who they meet, especially the Muslims on the border. But I am sure wind electricity projects will bring a lot changes, it will bring order, value and development in this area, it will transform all this wasteland to something valuable for us and for the state.' (Discussion, 14.02.2021).

This informant summarised the issues and stakes that lie at the heart of my investigation. I aim to explore the socio-political and territorial reconfigurations that take place when new resources, like wind, are discovered and extracted at the margins of the state, and their entanglements with broader processes of agrarian change, boundary-making, state-making, and political agency. This chapter constitutes the theoretical grounding on which the rest of the dissertation, and particularly the empirical chapters, is built. I present below the three theoretical fields that have been nurturing my investigation: the resource frontier and territorialisation as playgrounds for governmental powers expressing ethno-nationalist political movements; brokerage of land, state-making and politics; and finally, resistance, domination, and power relations. Each section and sub-section are structured with a presentation of the conceptual views and frameworks that will inform the reader for the rest of the thesis, followed by a discussion on how I will apply and operationalise these concepts in my study. Finally, I advance what constitutes my contribution to the existing literature.

1.1 Assembling Resource Frontiers, Territories, and Governmentality in Ethno-nationalist Contexts

My first conceptual inspiration comes from discussions around the politics of land and its assemblage as a resource for capital accumulation via processes of frontier-making and territorialisation. Using the notion of assemblage, I propose to examine the emergence of wind resource frontiers and territories in Kutch from the perspective of energy materiality, value regimes and boundary-making. In this framework, I understand infrastructures and borders as powerful platforms for the application of state and capitalist governmental powers, i.e. their

capacity to govern and order spaces, resources, and populations along a certain governmental rationality. I finally argue that these powers revive questions of identity, nationalism, and cultural survival as resource frontiers and territories get infused with race, religion and ethnicity.

1.1.1 Land

'What is land?' asks Tania Li in a contribution dating from 2014. Taking their point of departure in the Indian district of Chotanagpur in 1921, they mention the investigation conducted by a British colonial official named William Archer who was following the reaction of indigenous communities threatened with eviction as they had fallen into debt:

> 'When asked 'Where are your title deeds?' . . . [members of this movement] replied 'The answer is my spade, my axe, my ploughshare are my title deeds . . . ploughing is the writing of the golden pen on golden land'. To the argument 'Your lands have been auctioned for arrears of rent and purchased by another', they replied: 'When a man buys a mat he rolls it up and takes it away; similarly unless the purchaser has rolled up my land and taken it away how can he be said to have purchased them?'' (2014, 589)

From this anecdote, Li goes on to make several crucial points. First, echoing Polanyian insights from the great transformation about land as a fictitious commodity (Prudham 2013), they argue that what land is for a farmer is not the same thing for a tax collector, or ultimately for a wind company in my case. Land's uses and meanings are not stable and can be disputed. Then, they advance that the materiality of land matters. It is, simply put, not like a mat that you can roll up and take away. It has a presence and location; it is an assemblage of material substances and social relations. Nikita Sud also largely substantiated this understanding of land and added that it is 'social, processual, and multidimensional' (2019, 1176), land is enlivened by human actions and infused with history, memory and identity. It may occupy at the same time multiple registers, 'land as territory, land that is governed, including via property, and land as access and exclusion' (Sud 2020a, 5).

'Inscription devices' are powerful instruments in (un)fixing the materiality of land over time. They 'render so-called 'frontier', 'marginal' or 'underutilised' land visible, and available for global investments' (Li 2014, 592), they turn land into a valuable resource for capital accumulation. The value attached to land or to any other 'natural' resource is 'a flexible assemblage of material substances, technologies, discourses, practices, policies, politics and power' (Sud 2020a, 4). In that sense, these devices do not simply record or represent the

presence of land, its physical features or ownership status but they are actively complicit in its production as territory where (non-)state authority is exercised, and regimes of access and exclusion enforced.

This research is firmly grounded in this understanding of land but is also aimed at broadening and extending it towards less explored fields of research: to what extent is the materiality of land also highly infused, fixed, made and unmade by the materiality of the projects that sit on it, and particularly the materiality of infrastructures and energy? As this research shows, if wind companies certainly cannot roll up land like a mat and take it away, they can heavily modify it, make holes in it, cover it with electricity wires and cables, and by extension destroy its ecosystem and set of relations. This investigation aims at revealing how the materiality of wind energy infrastructures might enfold a specific relation to land and produce new dialectics of dispossession and enclosure. Studies on the making and unmaking of land have extensively analysed its assemblage as a valuable resource for agricultural expansion, industrial programs, or real estate speculation (Levien 2018; Eilenberg 2014; Sud 2021). I propose to investigate a different albeit complementary dynamic with capitalism: land is (dis)assembled for wind power projects as a structurally devaluated, empty and 'waste' resource that will not create any value, but simply host it. How does it stop from being land to being a host site of wind energy infrastructures? By this logic, I hope to highlight the new regime of land devaluation that enfolded in central and borderland Kutch following the arrival of wind turbines and the role of state tools and 'inscription devices' in enforcing this regime and artificially producing wastelands.

1.1.2 Resource Frontiers and Territorialisation

This has to do with a historical and cyclical process, the 'framing [of] marginal spaces – borders, borderlands, upland areas, remote forest zones, deserts, steppes, coastal hinterlands, 'waste' or 'idle' zones – as resource frontiers' (Cons and Eilenberg 2019, 8–9), or in other words, their frontier-making. Indeed, the frontier is not a natural or an indigenous category, neither is it simply discovered at the edge of the state. As a 'travelling theory' (Tsing 2003), the frontier was enrolled in 16th century Ireland when the British imposed new land laws, in the right of 'discovery' and the notion of 'vacant' lands in 19th century United States of America or in the colonisation of Africa and South Asia's lands (Wily 2012). Since the Second World War, the frontier has been deployed in new ways, becoming what Tsing called an endless 'techno-frontier' sustained by industrial technology and development programs (2003).

It is usually 'when a new resource is identified, defined, and becomes subject to extraction and commodification' that the frontier emerges according to Rasmussen and Lund (2018, 391), making the materiality of resources, alongside political and economic histories, crucial to the emergence of frontiers (Sarma, Faxon, and Roberts 2023). Natural disasters constitute important political opportunities for both capital and the state to unlock a '*tabula rasa'* or 'blank slate' right in the aftermath of the shock (Klein 2007; Simpson 2014). Indeed, frontiers convey a sense of change, disruption and rupture. The frontier is a two-sided landscape: on the one side, the unruliness, the backwardness, the disorder, the wildness, the emptiness; but on the other, the symmetry, the order, the abundance, the civilised, making the frontier 'empty but full' (Bridge 2001, 2154). It is 'empty of people, histories and claims, but full of potential for new and improved use' (Li 2014, 592). This binary construction of the frontier establishes legitimate land uses and users whose claims are legalised and sanctioned by the state as rights, while it denies those same rights to others as they become criminalised, depicted as 'poachers' or 'squatters' (Peluso 1992). Frontiers enforce in that sense struggles for property and authority: changes in property regimes, in legislation and the legitimation of new rights usually work in tandem with the use of illegal, illegitimate, and violent means, and the strengthening of authority for the institution granting these new rights (Sikor and Lund 2009; Peluso and Lund 2011). The origin of property is grounded in conquest and enclosure that have been later on 'papered' and legalised by state authority (Banner 2005). The rule of law was for example the preeminent signifier of state legitimacy and authority to 'civilise' the colonial subjects (Hussain 2003). This reveals something crucial in my research: I aim to explore how the wind resource frontier is juggling with these boundaries of legality and illegality, public and private, violence and law, how it is constantly redrawing and unmaking them, and how it amounts to new forms of property-making and authority-building.

Something new emerges out of the frontier, a reconfiguration of the geography of resource control, or what many scholars have called (re/ de)territorialisation or territorial expansion (Vandergeest and Peluso 1995; Peluso 2005; Peluso and Lund 2011). Indeed, frontiers become the privileged sites where (non-)state territorial control and authority over resources and people are being constantly redefined, reinvented and (de)institutionalised. Elden defined territory as a historically constituted political technology of rule aimed at rendering space 'owned, distributed, mapped, calculated, bordered and controlled' (2010, 810). For this reason, territorialisation is associated with the establishment of boundary-making, the mapping and zoning of space through institutional and legal arrangements such as land cover categories,

cadastral maps, measurement standards, property legislations (Rasmussen and Lund 2018; Peluso 2018; Scott 1999). For historical reasons, this process was mostly the prerogative of the state and expressed within national boundaries, therefore called state (or internal) territorialisation, but under neoliberalism, it has adopted 'extra-'territorialisation features and private character where space is now governed and controlled by transnational networks of actors and institutions (Corson 2011). This leads to the following central question in this research: what do wind territories look like? And particularly, how are they carved out from the blending of state and capital territorial practices?

Rasmussen and Lund saw the 'frontier dynamics [as] not linear, but a-rhythmic and cyclical, and the corresponding territorialisations [as] equally provisory and often arrested when new resources prompt another frontier' (2018, 390), producing this constant movement of 'frontier-territorialisation-frontier-territorialisation' (Ibid.). I precisely aim to explore these self-reinforcing conflations between the frontier and territorialisation, and how these dynamics sustain and justify each other. I will situate the recent arrival of wind turbines and extracting wind energy in the long run of previous cycles of 'frontier-territorialisation-frontier-territorialisation' that rolled out in Kutch over the past 30 years.

Inspired by the insights of Tania Li (2014), Sud (2021) and Cons and Eilenberg (2019), I suggest that these analyses on resource frontiers and territories would benefit from the notion of assemblage. The assemblage investigates multiple and intertwined configurations of causalities, helping to make sense of messy and complex social realities where connexions and relations between them are not directly observable (Lund 2019). Defined by Deleuze as 'what keeps very heterogeneous elements together' (2007, 179), the assemblage helps to capture a combination and juxtaposition of different materialities, spatialities and temporalities, discourses, narratives and imaginaries, landscapes and ecologies, human and non-human agencies involved in the making of resource frontiers and territories. All of these heterogeneous elements are brought together with the assemblage, without assigning overdetermining qualities to any of them and with the specificity that this 'coming together itself is not the precondition, but rather the object of inquiry' (Cons and Eilenberg 2019, 5). In that sense, the assemblage will be deployed in the thesis as a descriptive tool, an object of study as well as a method of enquiry: it will be a tool to describe and map the social elements (actors, discourses, interests, etc.) that have historically and geographically collapsed in specific places and moments to shape wind resource frontiers and territories; it will also be used to raise questions about the novelty and (dis)continuity of this current wave of frontier-making and

territorialisation for wind electricity. It is precisely what this research aims to be, an investigation of the wind extraction frontier assemblage and its specific 'coming together' of heterogenous components listed above and how they constantly mould Kutch into a potential new resource frontier and a site for (re)territorialisation. In that aspect, I am guided by the understanding of Peluso: 'frontiers are the relational spaces [..] where these components converge, and territories are the emergent result of their coming together.' (2018, 405).

1.1.3 Infrastructures and Borders: Devices of Governmental Power

Resource frontiers and territories must be understood together with practices to govern and order spaces, resources, and populations along a certain governmental rationality. It has to do with organising, ordering, dividing, and separating things, with ways of 'seeing like a State' (Scott 1999) or in the Foucauldian sense with a 'right manner of disposing things' (Foucault 1991). Resource frontiers and territorialisation sometimes concretely materialise in wires, cables, tubes, and walls but also in words, discourses and justifying narratives.

This research explores wind infrastructures and borders as specific modes of governing resource frontiers and territories. I understand infrastructures as state/ private infrastructures of circulation liberating the flow of capital, resources, people (in my case wind turbines, electricity wires, high-voltage towers, substations, roads, etc.) (Larkin 2013) and borders as national boundaries aimed at fixing (im)mobility, identity, and control (in my case, the border with Pakistan - and its sets of military checkpoints, barracks, trucks, restricted zones, etc.) (Ibrahim 2008; Sur 2021). Infrastructures and borders separate, organise, divide, and order (separating between the legal and the illegal, the valued and the wasted, the insider and the outsider, the included and the excluded). They shape life and death, produce difference and manage identities and bodies of people around them (Das and Poole 2004; Ibrahim 2008). For these reasons, borders and infrastructures constitute privileged devices and platforms for the application of state and capitalist governmental powers (Foucault 2010), i.e. power to educate desires and configure habits, aspirations, and beliefs through governmental rationality. These powers concretely unfold through certain governmental practices such as problematisation, knowledge production, interventions and subjectification (McElwee 2016).

Infrastructures and borders emerge out of a governmental practice (problematisation) that has rendered them natural and even necessary, framed as technical solutions responsive to technical problems through routine 'anti-politics' (Ferguson 1994; Li 2005). They have been voluntarily depoliticised, increasingly separating 'politics from nature, the technical from the political, and

the human from the nonhuman' (Anand, Gupta, and Appel 2018, 4). The 'infrastructural turn' in political ecology (Mitchell 2013; Boyer 2019) and recent developments in critical border studies (Deleixhe, Dembinska, and Danero Iglesias 2019; Parker and Vaughan-Williams 2009) have shown that these are spaces of struggle, tensions, and frictions. Infrastructures and borders are 'sites of expression for dominant ideologies, collective subjectivities and socio-environmental contestations' (Loloum, Abram, and Ortar 2021, 4). They are profoundly political and social, they participate in the consolidation of state's authority and sovereignty (Wilson and Donnan 1998; Thomas 2021), and the expansion of capitalist accumulation. State and capitalist projects get intertwined at the site of the infrastructure and the border, as they both 'differentiate, racialise, and systematically devalue' (Bosworth and Chua 2021, 4), revealing their profoundly colonial and racial nature (Dunlap and Arce 2021; Dunlap 2021).

Wires, concrete, walls, fences, and checkpoints give form and life to infrastructures and borders as well as discourses, narratives, and new languages of development and security (Anand, Gupta, and Appel 2018). Infrastructures and borders operate as technologies of knowledge production where the mobilisation of 'rationalities', 'sense-making', 'science', 'data', and technology helps to build shared beliefs and representations, revealing a strong 'will to know' and imposing 'regimes of truth' (Curran 2012; Harjanne and Korhonen 2019; Li 2007b; McCarthy and Thatcher 2019). Borders and infrastructures have been similarly described as instruments of 'technopolitics' (Larkin 2013; Lesutis 2021), referring to a form of governmental power aimed at organising populations and territories through technological domain and the production of knowledge. They rely on the promise of modernism, development, progress, civilisation (Anand, Gupta, and Appel 2018; Larkin 2013) but also the production of national security and identity, territorial boundaries (Cons 2016; Krishna 1994). They mobilise affects and senses of desire, pride, belonging and frustration that amount to a form of border and infrastructural 'fetishism' or 'sacralisation' (Larkin 2013; Ibrahim 2011).

The knowledge production and discursive foundation surrounding infrastructures and border-making have largely justified the deployment of governmental interventions under the 'development' umbrella. The former have justified the deployment of ordered, disciplined, organised and even militarised resource and population control, technologies of surveillance and overall 'more authoritarian forms of government [...] often reserved for sections of a population deemed especially deficient and unable to exercise the responsibility of freedom' (Li 2005, 387). Infrastructural and border-making interventions shape certain subject identification, citizenship regimes and labour relations. They involve the (un)making of

political subjects and a politics of life and death, they are sites where identity and citizenship are contested, denied, affirmed and reconfigured (Cons 2016; Cons and Sanyal 2013; Li 2010; Das and Poole 2004). As I will demonstrate in the following chapters of this thesis in the specific context of wind power production, borders and infrastructures define who is a legal citizen and who is an illegal subject, who is to be included and deemed 'productive' and 'loyal' and who is to be cast outside the boundaries of the national identity and deemed 'disposable', whose life is judged valuable and worth living for and whose life is of 'utter indifference to global circuits of capital' (Gidwani and Reddy 2011, 1652).

This research takes a stance within this conceptual framework on infrastructures and borders as specific devices and platforms for governing resource frontiers and new territories. But it seeks to engage more thoroughly with the overlapping and cyclical dynamics taking place between borders and infrastructures, keeping in mind the specific materialities, spatialities and temporalities of the wind assemblage. Inspired by Thomas (2021) and their analysis of the 'river-border complex' between India and Bangladesh, I aim to investigate these dynamics in the following way: how wind infrastructures consolidate border-making and operate as powerful platforms for (re)producing border spaces, boundaries and territories; how militarised border practices and their sets of separations, divisions and territorial boundaries make space, accommodate and are even redefined by the expansion of wind turbines; most importantly, one original contribution lies in the study of a new border-infrastructure complex formed by the unique blending of border and wind infrastructures. Within this complex, I am particularly interested in exploring the (re)production of labour relations, citizenship, security and identity.

1.1.4 Ethno-nationalism

Border infrastructures 'are the locus of sovereignty' argues Sur, they 'evoke the poetics of contemporary nationalism as much as its politics' (2021, 9). Indeed, investigating infrastructures in borderland India requires us to explore questions of identity, nationalism, and cultural survival as these questions are mapped onto territory and resource frontiers.

Relying on Gellner's understanding (1983), Jaffrelot defined nationalism as 'a new form of collective consciousness, the feeling of belonging to this innovation that is the nation-state' (2005, 24), acknowledging that race and religion, or in other words - ethnicity, can constitute the basis of social belonging to the nation. This is what Smith (1986) analysed as the emergence of ethnic nationalism, or ethno-nationalism: the construction of a distinctly 'recognisable cultural unit' following foreign invasion or colonisation and the need to 'ensure the survival of

the group's cultural identity' by strict separation and division with the cultural 'other'. In reaction to European modernity, a part of the colonised intelligentsia in the Global South adopted for example, movements to reform its traditions, movements that easily turned into discourses of indigeneity and the revivalism of an imagined 'golden' civilisational era (Jaffrelot 1996). This easily extended to claims over territory and space, as 'the ethnic nation claims ownership of a certain territory that it considers its exclusive homeland' (Smooha 2002, 477).

Ethno-nationalism is a powerful force of frontier-making and territorialisation, as it reconfigures and re-orders space, resources, and populations according to an imagined homogeneous cultural identity and the strong enforcement of boundary-making (the 'other'). Indeed, land is also infused with religion, identity and nationalist imaginations (Sud 2021). Ethno-nationalism invigorates nativist and revivalist nostalgic conceptions about landscape and nature: territory is inscribed with natural characteristics that are attached to a set of national symbols and pride, the 'natural contours of the nation' or ethno-religious moral values (Cederlöf and Sivaramakrishnan 2012; Chhotray 2016; Sharma 2012).

Post-colonial societies have specific anxieties surrounding questions of national identity, culture and survival, one of them is expressed in cartographic manifestations of the nation via the production of an inside/ outside boundary (Krishna 1994). National territory and national identity (defined in ethno-religious terms) are increasingly aligned as contiguous, revealing the communal politics of territory in ethno-nationalist ideologies (Cons 2016). Ethno-nationalisms are indeed political movements aimed at restoring a social conservative status quo and imposing a disciplined social and political organisation upon society (Jaffrelot 2021). This project materialises in struggles over territory, space, land and resource frontiers, and in the case of this study, it materialises in the wind extraction frontier. Drawing from the discussion above, I aim to explore the following dimensions: what are the connections between the wind extraction frontier-making and ethno-nationalist territorial projects of cultural identity revival and boundary-making? How does the wind extraction frontier advance ethno-nationalist rituals of religiosity, loyalty, inclusion, and exclusion through similar territorialisation practices? An original contribution of this thesis will be to unravel the appropriation of 'green' development programs by identity politics, racial capitalism and right-wing Hindu nationalism in the specific arena of wind electricity in borderland India.

1.2 Brokers, the State, and Politics

This research is particularly attentive to the issue of mediation, brokerage and patronage relations, and more specifically how modes of governing discussed above and their sets of formal territorial rules and regulations, narratives and discourses, development programs and schemes or policies are (re)interpreted, (re)shaped by a diversity of local actors when they 'hit' the ground reality : power brokers, *dalals*, middlemen but also local bureaucrats and companies representatives are essential in fixing and mediating resource extraction and commodification projects and are active agents consolidating frontier spaces and territorialisation dynamics. Following a conceptual discussion below, I aim to disaggregate the different brokerage and meditation activities involved in wind power projects and highlight their relations to the materialities of extraction and land, the everyday and local state, capital accumulation, caste/ class power and politics.

1.2.1 Brokering Land in Extractive Contexts

Brokers operate at the 'interface' of two worlds (Bierschenk, Chauveau, and de Sardan 2000), providing the interlinkage between the local and the global. They are highly involved in development and resource extraction projects, and for this reason they have been usually described as 'facilitators', 'rule-takers', instrumental in the expansion of extractive capitalism and in the 'advancement of rural markets by mediating financial, service and commodity transactions' (Simon 2009, 198; Haxby 2021). They fulfil a critical social role in providing local knowledge, bridging social distance and trust deficit in land deals and smoothen the implementation of resource extractors and their control over space. Brokering activities perform land commodification and ensure 'the 'non-contractual basis of contract' (Durkheim, 1984), allowing rural land to become treated as a commodity' (Levien 2015, 83). But brokers are not simple agents of international capital expansion over space. Other studies have rather emphasised their peculiar agencies and interests in brokering land: Sud (2014b, 2020a, 2021), Levien (2015, 2018) and others (Jeffrey 2002; Witsoe 2012; Harriss-White 2002) have been instrumental in demonstrating that brokers are also 'rule-makers', 'translators' rather than just 'facilitators', their activities are grounded in constant (re)interpretations of extractive development projects. They pursue personal interests and strategies of capital accumulation, authority consolidation, performing territorial practices on their own and as such they 'are part of this ecosystem of re-fixing or flattening unfixed land into landscapes of infrastructure building and accumulation' (Sud 2020a, 14).

These studies have also emphasised the diversity and complexity of brokering activities in extractive contexts. Beyond the only land brokering dimension and the local *dalal,* 'as soon as we move up the ladder - of rank, as well as size of the benefits and payoffs - middlemen of some [other] type make their appearance' and 'transactions involving only two actors [are rarely] the most significant' (Oldenburg 1987, 526). There are indeed different ways of classifying levels and natures of brokering (or gatekeeping) activities in extractive contexts depending on whether we look at the size and location of land transactions involved (Sud 2014b), the insider-outsider position of intermediaries (Oldenburg 1987) or their socio-economic profile (Pattenden 2011). But all these classifications share common features: first, land occupies a major stake in brokering activities in contexts of extraction, these activities range from top-level and regional land aggregators, their district and sub-district relays organised in complex networks of sub-brokers with the many village-level brokers or *dalals* constituting the very end of the mediating chain; the political wing of gatekeeping activities is occupied by party representatives and their local musclemen and enforcers, elected members of district, sub-district or village councils and state's officials from different levels; the more economic aspect of mediation is performed here by a range of consultants, private investors and contractors. These boundaries and classifications of gatekeeping activities are not rigid, as many brokers simultaneously engage in land, political and economic mediation (Sud 2014b).

This research is inspired by this understanding of brokerage as translators and interface, its multifold range of activities, its relations to land, extractive processes, and territorial practices. Following others (Noy 2019, 2022; Sikor et al. 2019; Nielsen 2018), I aim to investigate the materiality of energy extraction, how it produces specific relations to land and therefore creates different composition, nature, and level of brokerage activities. This research particularly hopes to shed some light on the reconfigurations at play between the materiality of wind energy extraction and traditional brokerage activities, and how the former has given renewed relevance to the latter. One important contribution of this thesis is to explore how established brokers may have gained more space for bargaining, negotiation, exercising agency and power vis-à-vis external actors (companies) as a result of the materiality of wind energy.

1.2.2 Brokers and the Everyday (local) State

The Indian post-colonial state is omnipotent and omnipresent, controlling every single aspect of social life either 'as an oppressive intruder in the affairs of the local community or as a benevolent protector of the people against local oppressors' (Chatterjee 2010, 264). This is encapsulated in the popular vertical representation of the state as '*maa-baap*' referring to a maternal-paternal patron that 'looks after' its people (Witsoe 2011). But the state is also described as a very distant impersonal bureaucratic machine, imagined as an external and marginal entity, porous to existing caste and class hierarchies and with very limited capacity to change the social structures of the Indian society (Chatterjee 2010; Ruud 2000).

People rarely experience the conceptual and elite-imagined post-colonial state in their everyday life, neither do they interact daily with local state representatives. Rather, brokers, mediators and gatekeepers are 'crucial for understanding the ways in which most people experience the Indian state' in their everyday life (Witsoe 2012, 53; Fuller and Bénéï 2001). Indeed, in a situation of intense scarcity and competition for increasingly limited resources, brokers are able to penetrate a distant, impersonal and intimidating bureaucratic machinery. They negotiate the state's constant presence, ultimately draw spaces of survival within it and provide direct access to state's resources (Ruud 2000; Anjaria 2011; Witsoe 2012). As they 'get things done' in the popular representation, their interactions with state officials have often been described as 'corruption' practices, usually understood from a moral standpoint and as an explanatory trope for the failure of development in India (Mathur 2017). This rather pertains to the selling of the state's resources in exchange for electoral support or what more precisely defines the nature of the Indian 'patronage democracy' (Chandra 2004). In this specific context of the Indian post-colonial state, brokers act effectively as agents mediating various bargaining interest-groups and 'lubricating' everyday democracy and state at lower levels (Berenschot 2011a, 2010).

Brokers also supplant the state itself on some occasions and even mimic its 'papery', bureaucratic and cartographic practices. By doing so, they both extend and stretch state's (space and physical) boundaries to new areas and point out to the artefact dimension of governmental papers (Mathur 2017). The scholarly literature of the late 1990s on the 'shadow state' and 'blurred boundaries' (Gupta 1995; Harriss-White 2002) between public and private, state and society, seems a bit outdated now and less relevant in contexts where the line between who is a state official, a company's representative and a broker has become clearer with the institutionalisation of state structures (Mathur 2014; Chandra 2015; Sinha 2019). What seems

more relevant is all these ‘moonlighting official[s], the revolving door, and […] the[se] men who sit outside the office’(Sud 2019, 14). They do not run parallel or in the shadows of the state, but rather they are the state, they become an extension of the state, stretching its contours both inwards and outwards. This research hopes to explore how the specific brokerage dimension of wind infrastructures and land is participating to new forms of state-making in rural India, considering both those men who mimic government operations, and the local state that embraces so many non-official actors into its operative processes. By doing so, it will highlight that the state is a project in-the-making, largely influenced and affected by external processes (Abrams 1988), particularly ‘at the margins’ (Das and Poole 2004).

1.2.3 Brokerage, Capital Accumulation, Caste/ Class Power, and Politics

Relations of brokerage and mediation are intimately tied to relations and experiences of caste and class. Mediation activities, brokerage and alternative networks of resource allocation have been associated in certain agrarian contexts of India to lower-caste empowerment and a tool for repossession of power and voices by disfranchised groups (Witsoe 2012, 2011, 2013). But overall, the literature underlines cumulative strategies of accumulation, reproduction of caste power and processes of social and class differentiation enfolding in brokerage activities. Using Bourdieu’s theory of social capital, several scholars have emphasised that brokerage is still the prerogative of socially powerful and well-connected groups, who possess the necessary social capital or, in other words, the necessary set of networks, knowledge, relations, connections and influence usually associated with upper caste/ class privilege (Jeffrey 2001; Levien 2015; Michelutti et al. 2018; Lund 1999). Srinivas’ account hints in that regard at an understanding of caste as a form of social or symbolic capital that is brought into service within networks of social relations (1994). The social capital required to build efficient networks and connections for the purpose of brokering derives from previous economic, political and cultural accumulated capital (Levien 2015). This is precisely why dominant landowning classes and castes are disproportionally represented among brokers in agrarian settings, because they have been able to convert their economic and cultural power into a political one over *panchayat* (village assembly), and by doing so they have obtained a privileged access to government resources (Jeffrey 2002). If the decline of agricultural activities and land ownership and control as a form of power in rural life has undoubtedly produced a process of social and class differentiation among dominant agrarian castes, the latter have also been able to extend their power outside the village and have been more inclined to invest and reorient their capital

surplus towards brokering activities, establishing new patterns of exclusion and domination on the rural proletariat (Harriss 2013; Jeffrey 2001).

By doing so, brokers have informed a specific type of citizenship, peculiar political identities and subjectivities. They have been strong voices of the regionalisation of power, the 'casteisation' of politics and more particularly its 'mandalisation' (Chhotray 2011), referring here to the intense competition taking place between several groups of the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category to get reservations in government jobs and education opportunities in exchange of electoral support. Mediators have imposed castes and religion as the central set of understandings to approach, contest or negotiate the state: people's political identities and subjectivities are defined by their collective caste and religious affiliations and not their individual citizenship (Witsoe 2012). The diffusion of Kshatriya-type masculine ideals, virile symbols and martial-heroic narratives by political mediators has also been central in the rise of Hindu nationalism (Michelutti 2010).

This definition of brokerage as profoundly political, aligning with the capital accumulation strategies of dominant castes, classes and religious groups and the reproduction of their power in situation of reconfigured agrarian contexts, constitutes an important theoretical background for this research. I also aim to investigate something new in the relationship between brokerage and politics: how brokers blend, fit and translate the materiality of infrastructures (in my case wind energy infrastructures) into the local social and political landscapes of power and (party) politics? In doing this, I hope to highlight in a new-fashioned way their alignment with broader nationalist politics, ethno-religious conceptions of space and territory and long-term projects of cultural identity revivalism as discussed in section 1.1.4.

1.3. Resistance, Domination, and Power

This third section proposes to ground the thesis within a theoretical discussion on resistance, power, and domination. Using James Scott's contribution on everyday resistance and domination as a major entry point in the field (1985, 1992), I intend to analyse the different political reactions deployed by Kutchi villagers following the arrival of wind turbines in a nuanced and flexible way using the concept of 'terrain of resistance' (Routledge 1996). I also aim at extending this terrain to the materiality of energy and the nature of agrarian power relations.

1.3.1 How do we Understand (Everyday) Resistance?

Resistance is intimately carried out in reaction to situations of domination and in an oppositional relation to power (Foucault 1982). Following this, 'it becomes interesting to discuss what kinds of resistance are linked to or emanate from what kinds of power' (Lilja and Vinthagen 2014, 107).

Scott's contributions on domination and resistance (1985, 1992) constitute an important theoretical departure point of this thesis. His views on diverse experiences of domination and relations of power as a three-fold addition of ideological domination (justification by ruling groups of their position), status domination (humiliation, assaults on dignity, violence) and material domination (the appropriation of resources like land) have been instrumental in acknowledging that the reactions to them are equally diverse and multiple. Scott conceptualised that public quiescence did not mean formal compliance and that there existed a completely new terrain of struggle outside the 'public' transcript or the collective, open, and declared forms of resistance. He imagined a whole new field of everyday insubordination acts or '*infrapolitics'* that took more ambiguous, dissimulated, and disguised forms of expression and constituted a parallel 'hidden transcript'. This 'host of down-to-earth, low-profile stratagems' (Scott 1992, 188) comprised different forms of theft, sabotage, poaching, desertion and foot-dragging but also the development of dissident subcultures. Scott described these practices of everyday resistance as 'tactical wisdom': in a situation of unfavourable and disadvantaged power relations or lack of political support, the squatter, for example, will 'typically move off private or state lands when faced with force, only to return quietly at a later date' (1989, 54). Scott also held the view that the 'hidden' transcript had the potential to 'become a direct and open political challenge' (1989, 58), while open resistance and the 'public' transcript might be in some instances 'forced into increasingly furtive and clandestine expression' (1992, 192).

While Scott's contribution added a new way of looking at power relations and helped a whole generation of scholars to interpret the absence of open and direct conflicts not as consensus, it could also be argued that – overall, it held a linear and almost mechanical relation between power and resistance giving too much room to agency. The 'wherever there is power, there is resistance' conveyed a dichotomous image that presented resisting subordinates as bodily coerced by domination but spiritually unpersuaded by hegemonic arguments and therefore continuously in the capacity to fight (Butz 2011; Bayat 2000). Relying on a more Foucauldian perspective of power, where it is more circulating and never localised in one specific place,

other scholars have developed a more nuanced, relational and comprehensive understanding of (everyday) resistance. For example, Johansson and Vinthagen added to Scott that (everyday) resistance is a complex and ongoing process of social construction, a negotiated and intersectional relation, it is 'always situated in a context, a historic tradition, a certain place and/ or social space formed by power' (2019, 6, 2016). Following Scott, this updated understanding of (everyday) resistance and power also rejected intention or consciousness as a precondition to define and detect resistance (Peluso 1992; Hahirwa, Orjuela, and Vinthagen 2017).

Scholars have pointed that the subordinate is not always resisting dispossession and domination in a (non-) confrontational way, he is also at times negotiating them, circumventing them, trying to cope with new pressures, in ways that still constitute everyday resistance. Hall et al. (2015) extended the concept by suggesting that acquiescence, even without the intention to resist, still constituted a form of agency and resistance anyway. They imagined a much more nuanced, complex and flexible 'middle-ground' terrain (Turton 1986) that exists between the 'public' and the 'hidden' transcript, the two poles defined by Scott: the 'quiet encroachment [...] of the ordinary people on the propertied and powerful in order to survive and improve their lives' (Bayat 2016, 545), the sudden large open and collective mobilisations or what lies in the middle (conciliation, co-optation, negotiation, etc.), all of this might be utilised simultaneously, alternatively or subsequently, depending on the fluctuations in the nature and intensity of both domination and resistance (Adnan 2007).

This research is interested in the everyday political actions and reactions that emerged with the arrival of wind turbines in Kutch. I aim to contribute to Scott's understanding and more generally to the field of resistance studies by emphasising the intertwined relation between resistance materiality (its shape, nature and forms of mobilisation) and (wind) energy infrastructure materiality. Sud (2021), Nielsen (2018) and Jenkins et al. (2014) have argued that the materiality of dispossessive projects (Special Economic Zones, dams, industrial or infrastructural projects...) does influence, constrain or even dilute resistance in certain ways (towards negotiation, passive acquiescence, open resistance or everyday forms of insubordination). In the same vein, I ask how does the assemblage nature of wind energy infrastructures, or in other words their specific materiality, temporality and spatiality, shape and mould a specific 'site of contestation' or 'terrain of resistance' (Routledge 1996, 1997)? Does it constrain, disperse or even orient resistance capacities and practices in any specific direction?

I engage here with the concept of 'terrain of resistance' defined by Routledge as 'those places where struggle is actively articulated by the oppressed [and] comprises an interwoven web of historical, political, cultural, economic, ecological, geographical, social and psychological conditions and relationships-a site of contestation among differing beliefs, values and goals that are place-specific' (1993, 35–36). The 'terrain of resistance' is a loose conceptual field that helps to make sense of all the complexities, contradictions, and tensions arising when domination and resistance meet. Routledge mobilised this notion in analysis of social movements to locate resistance within peculiar spatiality, materiality and temporality (the terrain), and explore how the latter might influence resistance through an addition of potentially conflicting interests, identities, and practices (1997). In particular, I propose to investigate how this mobile and oscillating political 'terrain of resistance' might work a 'collage' or as a 'melange of information' (Sud 2021, 162), actions and reactions: in my case, a political terrain composed of traditional resistance practices such as (anonymous) blockades, silent sabotages and open confrontation but also counter-practices like negotiation, compromise, and acquiescence. I investigate how this ambivalent political 'terrain of resistance' was formed with the arrival of wind power in Kutch as a reaction to situations of socio-political reconfigurations and how it helped to perform and exercise agency in ways that fit diverse interests and mobilisation capacities. By doing so, the notion of terrain will embrace a more complex and ambiguous field of actions and reactions.

1.3.2 Vertical and Horizontal Power Relations

Acts of resistance are not always democratic or emancipatory. They take place within structured and hierarchical agrarian and rural economies, where class, caste, religious and gender fractures are particularly strong and persistent. If they have the capacity to 'open new spaces for contesting […] caste- class relations', Nielsen rightly showed that they also have the same one to 'consolidat[e]' them (2018, 5). Indeed, scholars have been trying to locate existing power relations within resistance, and their findings point out to cases where resistance furthers the marginalisation and exclusion of more vulnerable and subordinated groups, like Dalits or tribals. Terms like 'local communities', 'local populations' or even punctual inter-caste/ class alliances often dilute these stratifications and ruptures into a common group sharing the same interests (Borras JR and Franco 2013). For these reasons, researchers investigating political reactions 'from below' have been advocating for a more disaggregated view on the 'rural poor' and the subordinate and suggested to deploy an analysis that pays attention to class and power differentiation within resistance.

Following the arrival of an external and competing actor (the state, a company, an NGO, etc.) and its development or conservation projects, resources usually become a site of conflict, struggle and resistance between different social groups that were imagined as class-homogenous and unified. It reveals internal conflicts and tensions among the so-called 'local communities', highlights their conflicting and opposing interests. Noy (2022) analysed, for example, the class and power differentiation dynamics that unfolded among Adivasi communities facing the opening of a mining project on their lands, exploring how some individuals manipulated resistance to negotiate formal jobs compensation (*sarkari naukari*), increase their economic capital and secure positions of *neta* (political leader). Chhotray (2016) similarly showed that the implementation of a marine sanctuary park banning fishing in Odisha, and the internal conflicts that arose between Odiya and Bengali fishers over who is or is not a legitimate 'traditional' or indigenous fisher, actually hide a larger class conflict regarding fishing rights between small fishers - both Odiya and Bengali - and the state. Resistance movements, be it successful or not, can therefore 'result in mixed outcomes when a movement's participants have diverging motivations and diverse understandings of what is at stake' (Drew 2017, 17). These cases of complicated resistance reveal questions that are central to most studies of social movements (who is fighting, for what interests and what outcomes?), from the *Narmada Bachao Andolan* (Nilsen 2010), the anti-Tata car manufacturing plant movement in Singur (Nielsen 2018), to the 2020-2021 *Kisan Andolan* in Delhi borders (Jodhka 2021) or in my case the Samio *andolan* against wind turbines.

Studies of resistance movements have slowly moved away from traditional representations of domination and power as opposing the 'powerful' to the 'powerless' in a vertical way, the company or the state to the 'local communities' (Drew 2017; Whitehead 2007; Kabra and Mahalwal 2019), without either taking the differences between and within social groups (horizontal conflicts) as granted or natural. Tania Li (2003) questioned Scott's view of domination as only vertical and rather advocated for an understanding of conflicts situated at the intersection of the vertical and horizontal and framed by certain projects (governmental, economic or political ones) that assign people certain positions and identities, shape certain practices of resistance and generate unplanned outcomes (processes). The mobilisation of top-down environmental discourses to oppose destructive and dispossessive projects might assign simplified categories, racialised and colonial identities to the contestants (Whitehead 2007), serve nativist and revivalist understanding of nature (Chhotray 2016), and rely on non-democratic and exclusive practices of resistance that further marginalise the people they claim

to voice (Drew 2017). For example, Tania Li (2003) demonstrated how the establishment of a national reserve park over indigenous and farmers' lands in Indonesia was understood by pro-farmers organisations as a classical vertical conflict, opposing the farmers to the state, but actually fostered a horizontal conflict between two impoverished groups, the farmers and the indigenous communities.

This discussion reveals how much caste and class formation and further differentiation following transformations in capitalist agriculture have been instrumental in determining the nature of power relations within resistance and the interplay between vertical and horizontal forms of domination (Kabra and Mahalwal 2019). My doctoral research acknowledges these contributions discussed above and takes root within this conception of power relations as both vertical and horizontal, assigning a set of identities, discourses, understandings and practices of resistance. By doing so, I will investigate the political 'terrain of resistance' that rolled out in western mainland and borderland Kutch following the arrival of wind turbines through the perspective of caste and class power, land politics, village and power configurations and differentiations. Specifically, the contribution of this thesis will be the following: how did certain configurations of power affect the political 'terrain of resistance', how did they dilute the potential for inclusive and emancipatory collective actions and rather favour the emergence of everyday forms of opposition, negotiation, and accommodation channelled by caste, class, religion, and village affiliation?

Conclusion

What ties together these three important bodies of conceptual framework is land. Land is assembled and disassembled as a resource through processes of frontier-making and territorialisation that reconfigure its attached value, uses, and claims. When situated at national boundaries established by the state, land is infused with religion, identity, and nationalism and the infrastructures that sit on it become political platforms for the application of governmental power and more authoritarian modes of governing and controlling border spaces, resources, and populations. The brokering of land reveals the everyday (mal)functioning processes of local state bureaucracies as well as capital accumulation strategies and power differentiation emanating from privileged classes and castes. People react differently to situations of land conflicts and dispossession, from everyday resistance and open confrontation to negotiation or passive acquiescence, depending on the nature of power relations. The materiality of (wind) energy infrastructures is also central in this analysis, as it produces new forms of relations to

land, space and territories and gives renewed relevance to traditional brokering activities. In what follows, I also suggest that the materiality of wind electricity infrastructures generates certain dialectics of dispossession and enclosure that are highly compatible with renewed dialectics of control and surveillance of borderland populations and in return shape specific dialectics of resistance and political reactions.

This theoretical framework is particularly relevant to understand the winds of change that are blowing in borderland India since the arrival of wind power projects. Situated at the intersection of land and energy infrastructures' materiality, this conceptual puzzle grasps the socio-political transformations and the territorial reconfigurations operated by these three-bladed turbine machines and enquires how the politics of renewable energy in borderland India might reconfigure and redefine resource governance, citizenship-making and political agency. Mobilising concepts of resource frontiers and territories is helpful to understand the new tensions and frictions that emerge when wind extractive projects enter pastoral and agrarian territories, and their relationships with new value regimes, property rules and authority. I conceptually define infrastructures and borders as powerful platforms for governing new resource frontiers and territories that are increasingly infused with ethno-nationalist conceptions of identity. This, in return, is essential to grasp the political nature of wind energy infrastructures and their blending with racialised forms of belonging to the nation. The conceptual discussion on brokerage and mediation is also informing my understanding of the new forms of state-making and power differentiation generated by the arrival of wind turbines. Finally, dimensions of everyday contentions and the 'terrain of resistance' offer a nuanced and complex understanding of the different political reactions that emerged to counter wind power and situate the political agency of the subordinate in relation to the materiality of dispossessive projects and local configurations of power.

Each of the four empirical chapters presented in this thesis is directly inspired by one or more of these three conceptual discussions. Chapter 5 is theoretically grounded in the first section of this chapter, as it discusses in detail the emergence of a new frontier and extractive territories following the arrival of wind turbines in Kutch, and the kind of value regime, labour relations and relations to land it enfolds. Chapter 6 provides an empirical discussion pertaining to the second section of this conceptual chapter, with insights into the brokering of land and state-making processes, the enforcement of caste-based muscular power and the strategies of capital accumulation in a context of competitive party politics. Chapter 7 is conceptually nurtured by two sets of discussion: infrastructures and borders as devices of governmental power,

compatible with the (re)production of national boundaries and exclusionary citizenship regime, and ethno-nationalism as a driving force of frontier-making and territorialisation through cultural identity revivalism and enforcement of boundary-making. Chapter 8 takes root in the last theorical section of this chapter discussing the entanglement of domination, resistance, and power. Emphasising how wind energy materiality and Kutch's agrarian power relations shape a certain political site or 'terrain of resistance', I analyse the political reactions that emerge in three different villages of my fieldwork following the arrival of turbines and how these reactions fostered new forms of (vertical/ horizontal) domination and socio-political reconfigurations.

Chapter 2. Setting the National and Regional Context: Power, Liberalisation, and Hindu Nationalism in India and Gujarat

This chapter presents the national and regional context to this doctoral research. It seeks to provide an overview to the trajectory of India's political economy through the past 70 years and the more recent turn towards authoritarianism, liberalisation, and institutionalised Hindu nationalism. My study took place in the western state of Gujarat in 2020-2021, at a political moment of almost complete hegemony of a right-wing Hindu nationalist party in India, and its discourse of infrastructural development and private-investment fuelled 'green' growth. The party saw no contradiction in destroying the secular, federal and plural nature of India's democratic institutions, while its leader, Narendra Modi, was claiming to be the architect of global climate diplomacy and 'green' growth. Various types of domination, marginalisation, and exclusion that historically aligned with the Hindu nationalist project have now been easily enveloped within a 'green' growth and climate change agenda. Overall, the thesis will highlight the continuities and similarities between the expansion of capitalism, 'saffron' ideology, and 'green' energy in the margins of the Indian state.

To understand this political moment, I first account for the important transformations and reconfigurations that shaped the Indian state since independence, in relation to capital, accumulation, and dispossession within the specific case of the electricity sector and renewables. I then describe the political ideology, Hindutva, that influenced the emergence of an ethno-nationalist movement in India in the 1980-1990s, and its specific application in Gujarat and in the rest of the country since Modi's accession to power.

2.1 Changes in Governance Model: From the Nehruvian Dirigiste State to Neoliberal Capitalism

The Indian state's prerogatives and functions in the economy and the society have gradually evolved and been redefined since the country gained independence in 1947. The post-colonial Indian state has been imagined around a modernist and developmental ideology that constituted the basis of its authority and legitimacy, as opposed to the colonial state whose illegitimacy lay in its exploitative nature impending the development of India (Chatterjee 2010). This ideal was embodied in the aftermath of independence by the figure of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's freedom fighter and first Prime Minister, who shaped the contours of the new nation and left his imprint

on its bureaucratic functioning and planning that persisted for several decades. With the transformations towards liberalisation and globalisation of the economy in the 1980-1990s, the Indian state has experienced transitions through a 're-scaling' process (Sinha 2005; Jenkins, Kennedy, and Mukhopadhyay 2014; Sud 2014). The electricity sector and the electrification project represent a case in point of this nationalist imagination of development and modernity (Kale 2014a).

2.1.1 The Nehruvian Model of 'State Capitalism': Development, Planning and Democracy in the Aftermath of Independence

Nehru had ambitious goals for the state he wanted to build. Holding a Jacobin view, he conceptualised the state as a vast bureaucratic instrument aimed at steering revolutionary, socio-economic changes in society and tearing apart thousand years of caste oppression: 'its task was precisely to drag into a modern age a largely reluctant, conservative society, directly attacking its unjust and reactionary practices' (Kaviraj 2005, 289).

In this vision, the Indian society would be drawn out of 'backwardness' and dragged into modernity through strong industrial and infrastructural development, with the state directing investments to the private sector, and especially to heavy industries. This kind of development would help to achieve true independence and sovereignty understood as self-reliance, self-sufficiency and an economy freed from external interference. As the Indian bourgeoisie lacked the capital required for establishing large-scale industries, the state soon filled this role by constructing a large public sector of state-run industries under the Five-Year Plan (FYP) programme. It also introduced the so-called 'license-permit *raj'* that both protected and regulated domestic production in accordance with the requirements of planning. Because it was allegedly guided by the defence of national society and general interest, the planning of economic development was to be conducted by technocratic, 'scientific experts' and an 'enlightened elite' operating in a bureaucratic function above private interests and outside the realm of representative politics and democratic processes (Chatterjee 2010; Chhotray 2011).

The construction of an elite-oriented and omnipresent state with the excessive 'bureaucratisation of social life' via planning was a direct consequence of the absence of civil society structures in India and the consequent necessity for the state to create these same structures and undertake 'many of capitalism's classical initiatives within civil society' (Kaviraj 2010, 25). For this reason, the Indian state post-1947 has been categorised as a form of state capitalism, state dirigisme or developmental state (Sinha 2019). But the Indian so-

called elite did not have unified interests and was much more complex and heterogenous: the planned industrialisation of the country under the developmental state has been generally associated with an overall strategy of Gramscian ‘passive revolution’ (Chatterjee 2010). Bardhan (1999, 1990) described a situation where none of the three dominant classes- industrial capitalists, rich farmers and state bureaucrats - were able to take hold of the state on their own after independence and rather formed a conflict-ridden and heterogeneous coalition. They promoted planning and interventionism as a way to further capital expansion and accumulation without altering the structures of power in the countryside. This strategy was accompanied by the exploitation of existing social hierarchies around landed property or caste loyalty to secure large electoral support with the ‘vote-bank’ system (Chandra 2004). Broad ideals of industrial modernity, secularism, democracy constituted a new conceptual vocabulary of rights that was mostly intelligible to privileged sections of the society and rarely translated in the vernacular everyday discourses and words of rural life. If industrialisation grew exponentially for more than three decades and undoubtedly helped to reach a new stage of development, the Nehruvian state and its model of planned economy did not result in any significant poverty reduction, land reforms or social changes in agrarian structures of power (Rudolph and Rudolph 1987). It rather conferred ‘on the lowest sections of Indian society a ritualistic formal citizenship which the state could not actually translate into effective redistribution of dignity, not to speak of incomes’ (Kaviraj 2005, 292).

2.1.2 Liberalisation and Renewed State-Capital Relations: The 1991 Turn

In the wake of a financial and fiscal crisis in the early 1990s at a time when India was on the verge of economic collapse, the country had to adopt structural adjustment programs promoted by the IMF and the World Bank. They aimed at deregulating the economy, dismantling the dirigiste state and opening up new sectors to private participation and international investments. In 1991, Manmohan Singh (the then Finance Minister) and Amar Nath Verma (the Prime Minister’s Principal Secretary) were tasked with crafting a New Industrial Policy (NIP) and a new budget reflecting these imperatives: the ‘licensing’ system was dismantled, trade and foreign investment regimes were gradually liberalised and oriented towards promoting exports and removing import controls, (foreign) private participation was increased in key sectors of the economy (financial, energy, infrastructures…) while the state-owned enterprise model was abandoned (Mathur 2014; Münster and Strümpell 2014).

These economic reforms have generated processes of liberalisation and were often described as neoliberal imperatives, although the Indian reform pathway did not comply with a model of 'pure' market liberalism or 'the neoliberal state in theory' as discussed by Harvey (2007). The 1991 liberalisation turn marked a decisive reconfiguration of the relations between state and capital where neoliberal principles were often introduced as exceptions in an otherwise instable political landscape. The Special Economic Zones (SEZ) Act in 2005 is a relevant illustration of this neoliberalism as exception: this arrangement 'separat[ed] some groups for special attention, carving out special zones that overlap, but do not coincide, with the national terrain'(Ong 2007, 6) allowing 'liberalisation over a limited area in high-potency concentrations when the rest of India is too politically divided and/or institutionally dysfunctional' (Jenkins, Kennedy, and Mukhopadhyay 2014, 14). The dismantlement of important pillars of the Nehruvian developmental state is rather the result of a recomposed class coalition, where 'corporate capital has gained a 'moral–political sway' over the bureaucratic–managerial class and the urban middle classes' (Münster and Strümpell 2014, 10). Private capital and businesses have increasingly acquired the ideological dominance to define what 'development' means in India, usually equated with private accumulation (Chandra 2015).

This hegemony of private capital as the new legitimate engine for growth and development rarely materialise in a complete 'roll-back' of the state. On the contrary, the post-1991 period was characterised by what Harvey called the 'neoliberal state in practice' (2007), i.e. an increase of state interventions in providing a political-economic climate where business could flourish, or in other words a 'business-friendly' or 'pro-business' environment (Kohli 2009). The end of the 'licensing' regime meant that the central government could no longer control location decisions regarding investment, shifting the centre of gravity from a vertical to an horizontal axis: 'while competition between the regions played out 'vertically' through New Delhi in the past, today it has shifted to a 'horizontal' plane, with opportunities for economic development being contested at the sub-national level' (Sud 2014a, 234). This has been described by several scholars as a process of state 're-scaling' where 'state institutions [have] to engage more effectively with global markets, notably by enhancing the capacity of subnational jurisdictions to promote capital accumulation' (Jenkins, Kennedy, and Mukhopadhyay 2014, 10). Land has been a major asset that subnational states could mobilise to promote capital accumulation, although unevenly, through the constitution of 'land banks' and 'land pooling' for industrial and infrastructural projects, diluted versions of existing land rights and 'fast-track' procedures of land acquisition (Jenkins 2019). This situation of the state

selling its land resources to corporate capital has prompted Levien to identify the rise of a new 'regime of dispossession' post-1991, 'in which the state has become a mere land broker for capital' (2013a, 384), dispossessing land for private capital. This 'neoliberal regime of dispossession', Levien argues, has become less developmental, productive, and labour intensive compared to its Nehruvian counterpart: India's growth model is mostly jobless, capital intensive and relying on informal labour (Breman 2019), 92% of Indian workers were engaged in precarious and informal work in 2010-2011 (Parry 2013; Shah et al. 2017). The non-agricultural economy has not absorbed completely the agrarian surplus population and has rather generated a process of 'partial proletarization' (Byres 1981), creating new 'classes of labour' that 'pursue their reproduction through insecure and oppressive – and typically increasingly scarce – wage employment and/or a range of likewise precarious small-scale and insecure "informal sector" ("survival") activity, including farming' (Bernstein 2007, 6).

For these reasons, India's neoliberal regime adopted from 1991 is politically more tenuous and fragile than the Nehruvian regime of developmentalism and statism. It has been prone to more contestation, resistance or 'land wars' (Levien 2013b), triggering mobilisation from lower sections of the society.

2.1.3 Power Sector Reforms and Renewable Energy

Electricity is constitutive of the state's infrastructural and political power over territories, space and populations and has been central to nationalist narratives of development and modernism both during colonial and post-colonial times. Indeed, projects of electrification epitomised Nehru's visions of a 'modern' and 'socialist' India, it 'shined the "lamp of Ilich" [a reference to Lenin] on what were considered backward peasant ways of life' (Kale 2014a, 29). Electrification has widely been recognised as analogue to colonial railway building, as both entailed a civilising narrative of bringing progress and development through science and technology (Kale 2014b). As a highly contested arena of power and development, electricity is also subject to fierce electoral politics at regional levels and intense competition between different class interests: industrial consumers who rely on energy for capital accumulation, farmers who secured important input subsidies since the Green Revolution and urban consumers who live an energy-dependent life (Dubash, Kale, and Bharvirkar 2018).

The structures and governance models of the power sector have changed since the first Electricity Act in 1948 which placed electricity on the 'Concurrent List' and enforced a publicly owned electricity network of power generation, transmission and distribution

governed at the provincial level. Since then, businesses have been intensively pushing for liberalisation of the sector as they could not get cheap and reliable electricity access within this state-run model. The first set of reforms took place in 1991, opening the sector to private participation with a model of Independent Power Producers (IPPs) selling electricity directly to the State Electricity Boards (SEBs). In 1998, following the 'Orissa model' of privatising electricity generation and distribution, the new BJP-coalition government adopted reforms to unbundle electricity generation, transmission and distribution utilities (Dubash and Rajan 2001). But these reforms did not properly alter the pricing structure or removed subsidies in rural areas. Industrial consumers across India exited the still state-run system and started to rely on their own on-site power generation, called Captive Power Plants (CPPs) (Joseph 2010). The 2003 Electricity Act generalised this new model and created the possibility of competitive electricity generation across regions, as CPPs are allowed to use the electricity generated for their own use, for sale to state utilities or to private distribution companies (discoms). The 1990s global trend towards electricity sector liberalisation has not resulted in a complete privatisation or retreat of the state, as in many other domains. The electricity sector in neoliberal India features a complex in-between, a 'dual track economy' and hybrid governance model that oscillates between incomplete privatisation and state-owned enterprises (Chatterjee 2017; Joseph 2010; Krishna, Sagar, and Spratt 2015).

Renewable development has been fully embedded in this power sector hybrid model of both liberalisation as well as high state commitment and steering. The initial success of renewable energy in India is largely due to financial and fiscal incentives from both centre and state governments to allow the sector to become cost competitive:

> 'In the post-reform period, government has provided incentives for independent power producers (IPPs) by imposing Renewable Purchase Obligations (RPOs) [on states], creating feed-in tariffs[1] and offering accelerated depreciation, direct subsidies, tax exemptions, reductions on import duty and low interest loans' (Phillips, Newell, and Purohit 2011, 16).

The institutional structure of wind energy policy making evolved in three major phases: prior to 2003, incentives were geared mainly towards capacity installation rather than performance

[1] Feed-in tariffs (FIT) is a policy mechanism designed to accelerate investment in renewable energy technologies by offering long-term contracts to renewable energy producers. This means promising an above-market price and providing price certainty and long-term contracts that help finance renewable energy investment.

and largely favoured the dominant model of captive power generation (Chaudhary, Krishna, and Sagar 2015). The 2003 Electricity Act introduced mandatory RPOs and generalised the model of selling electricity to state utilities under preferential FIT (Thapar, Sharma, and Verma 2018). Once the wind industry reached a certain technology development and maturity, a shift in policy making was initiated in 2016 onwards with the introduction of e-reverse auctions where projects and tariffs are now selected through a competitive bidding process where the lowest bidder is usually the winner (Bose and Sarkar 2019). This led to an even more privatised development pathway as 'the generation of power from RE services is almost 90% in the hands of private parties' (Benecke 2010, 9).

There are important subnational variations as state governments are in intense competition with each other to attract investments in the power and renewable sector. Certain states became 'first movers' (Gujarat or Karnataka) while others were categorised as 'weak' states (Jharkhand, Odisha or Uttar Pradesh) trapped in a vicious spiral of low rural electrification, important losses and financially non solvent electricity sectors (Dubash, Kale, and Bharvirkar 2018). Gujarat stood out quickly as a successful model of electricity and power sector reform: it was one of the first states to liberalise its electricity sector in the late 1990s and to facilitate private participation, leading to 62% of the state electricity installed generation capacity being owned by private capital in 2019 (the national figure was 46%) (Chatterjee 2020). Under CM Modi's governance, the state aggressively secured a position of 'first-mover' in renewables, by establishing respectively in 2007 and 2009 a wind and solar policy, prior to Delhi's national move, and by offering generous FIT over 25 years to investors. Just before Modi's election at the national level in 2014, Gujarat accounted for more than 40% of India's total solar energy installed capacity, it was held as a successful model of prosperous and efficient electricity sector steered by 'proactive' governance (Phillips, Newell, and Purohit 2011; Sareen 2018).

2.2 Modi Champions 'Green' Energy, Hindutva, and Authoritarian Populism

This thesis is rooted in a specific socio-political landscape, where increasing authoritarian politics, normalised ethno-nationalism and unbridled liberalisation have become the norm in 21st century Indian politics. The case study discussed in this research is also situated in the western state of Gujarat, what has been labelled the 'Gujarat model': a state-wise laboratory merging business-friendly and Hindu nationalist politics, sub-national populism, pogroms of Muslim minority populations but also a pioneering and leading state in renewable energy development. Gujarat saw the rise of a particular figure, Narendra Modi, and his specific style

of government; three-times elected as Chief Minister of the state, and then ascending to national power in 2014. In what follows, I first contextualise the origins, nature and evolutions of Hindu nationalism or Hindutva over the past century, and then discuss the intricacies of this 'Gujarat model', its application to the rest of the country and the rise of an 'ethnic democracy'.

2.2.1 What is Hindutva? From Margins to Centre, the Historical and Political Trajectory of a Right-Wing Movement in India

Hindutva 'is a multifaceted term that simultaneously refers to an ideology, a political movement, and an objective, that of laying the foundations of this ideology within the Indian political system and in the minds of Indian citizens' (Mohammad-Arif and Naudet 2020, 2).

Hindu nationalism gained its political and ideological momentum in the 1920s and found its core inspiration in the Italian fascist ideology (Casolari 2020). V.D Savarkar is considered to be one of the founding fathers of the Hindu nationalist ideology, with the publication of his book in 1923, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* In his definition, Hindus are the 'sons of the soil' who see India not only as their motherland and nation, but also as their sacred land (*punyabhoomi*). They are the descendants of the Aryans, they share a common language, Sanskrit, and a common Hindu culture. By contrast, Muslims and Christians are imagined as 'foreigners' and 'outsiders' to this land, having historically 'attacked' and 'invaded' Hindus in the past. For these reasons, Jaffrelot argued that the Hindutva doctrine fulfilled all the criteria of ethnic nationalism (1996, 2007), as discussed in chapter 1. This vision of history and nation relied on a set of 'ideological fantasies' about the 'other' (Hansen 1999), and nurtured a sense of vulnerability and weakness among Hindu nationalist ideologues: they saw Hindus as lacking self-esteem, physical strength, unity (because of caste and sectarian divisions) and soon to be outnumbered by Muslims' growing demography (Jeffery and Jeffery 1997). This fear of an emasculated Hindu community justified the constitution of more violent, masculine, and militarised organisations like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in 1925. This was supposed to build up Hindus physically and mentally (Corbridge 1999) and bring back 'lost' communities (Dalits and tribals) under the saffron banner, the colour of Hinduism.

RSS's priority in the initial years was to 'build the Hindu nation from below, not to capture the state' (Chatterji, Hansen, and Jaffrelot 2019, 54). To this end, the nationalist organisation infiltrated different sections of the society and created satellite organisations in the aftermath of independence, dedicated to the awakening of Hindu students (the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, ABVP or Indian Student Association), workers, (the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, BMS

or Indian Workers' Association), farmers (the Bharatiya Kisan Sangh, BKS or Indian Farmers' Association), women (the Rashtra Sevika Samiti), tribal communities (Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram, VKA or Ashram for Tribal Welfare) and different Hindu sects (Vishva Hindu Parishad, VHP or World Council of Hindus). These myriad affiliates later constituted what has been called the 'RSS family' or the *Sangh Parivar* (*Sangh* family), with the RSS as the 'parent organisation'. In 1951, the RSS and its leader Golwalkar were compelled to enter the competitive political arena and form a new party, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS, Indian People's Association), following the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by a former RSS member.

For many years, Hindu nationalist organisations were at the margins of society, politically dominated by the Congress Party. Some Congress leaders did not hesitate to mobilise religion for electoral gains and diffuse Hindu traditionalism or 'looser forms of Hindu nationalism' in the public debate (Gould 2004), what has been labelled in the media parlance as 'soft Hindutva' (Sen and Nielsen, 2021)[2]. Indeed, if the Indian Constitution established the foundation of a secular and multicultural country, important Congress leaders like the Gujarati Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel advocated a greater social conservatism and Hindu traditionalism: they manifested a deeply problematic sympathy with the RSS and its ideology of a Hindu unity being victimised by the 'foreign' Muslims, they engaged in campaigns for the reconstruction of Hindu temples like Somnath, and for these reasons they prepared the ground for the 'saffron' wave of the 1980-1990s (Bhagavan 2008; Jaffrelot 2017; Sud 2007b). Jayal (2013) also contested the inclusiveness and secular nature of India's citizenship regime established after independence: depending on religion, property, social status and gender, the state categorised certain groups as 'refugees' who could easily become Indian citizens (upper-caste Hindus) and others as 'illegal migrants' (Muslims). I will discuss in the next chapter how this citizenship regime enfolded in Kutch and was linked to a security regime regarding borderland Muslim populations.

Subsequent Hindu nationalist political success came from the possibilities offered by parliamentary democracy and party coalitions and the authoritarian turn undertaken by Indira Gandhi during the Emergency period (1975-1977). In 1980, the *Sangh* started a new chapter of its journey, with the creation of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party), its new political wing. It engaged in the anti-reservation agitation to unite the upper-castes

[2] https://www.asiaportal.info/competitive-hindutva/

Brahmin and Bania, opposing the recommendations of the Mandal Commission for separate quotas in favour of Other Backward Classes (OBC) groups. BJP's high command soon realised that this upper-caste Brahmin identity would condemn them to remain in the opposition, considering the insufficient vote share that upper-caste communities represented. They adopted therefore, a new agenda of reactivating the liberation of supposed Hindu holy spots from architectural vestiges of Muslim 'invasion' and the 'saffronisation' of public space, an approach aimed at diffusing and normalising the visible presence of 'saffron' or Hinduism in the everyday life via Hindu gods, *mandir* constructions, religious processions and *yatra* politics (Sud 2012; Jaffrelot 2021). The demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in 1992 constituted the culmination of this strategy and imposed a recovered muscular Hindu identity, this time also rallying lower castes and OBC groups. For these reasons, Hansen analysed the success of Hindu nationalism as a kind of '"conservative populism" that mainly attracted more privileged groups who feared encroachment on their dominant positions, but also "plebeian" and impoverished groups seeking recognition around a majoritarian rhetoric of cultural pride, order, and national strength' (1999, 8–9). It is in this context, that the end of the 20th century saw the rise of BJP to national power with the Vajpayee coalition governments (1998-99-2004) elected around a 'good governance' agenda and a diluted Hindu nationalist political platform. The next chapters of the Hindutva journey were subsequently written in the state of Gujarat.

2.2.2 The 'Gujarat Model'

Gujarat's socio-political history reveals a distinctive sense of regional cultural pride and identity that sets it apart from the rest of the country and forms the basis of a self-appointed role of 'vanguard' for India as a whole.

2.2.2.1 Gujarati Asmita: A Regional Variation of Hindu Nationalism and Mercantilism

The Gujarati peculiar sense of regional identity is best encapsulated in the notion of *asmita*, referring to its pride, glory, or identity, that has been defined as a form of sub-nationalism precluding the formation of the state in 1960 (Jaffrelot 2016) and as a 'regional variation of right-wing Hindu nationalist ideology' in the late 2000s (Ibrahim 2008, 15). Indeed, *asmita* mobilises the idea that Gujarati identity is defined by a specific language, a defined territory (the *Maha* Gujarat, or the Great Gujarat), and a glorious medieval history associated with a mythical Hindu 'golden age' plundered by Muslims so-called 'invasion'. If the initial conception of *asmita* was not exclusive of Muslims and other minorities, certain Gujarati

'Hindu traditionalist' intellectuals among the Congress, like the novelist and politician K.M. Munshi, have put forward a definition of Gujarat's identity that equates with Hinduism and with the period of the medieval Hindu rule and their dynasties of kings[3]. BJP and Modi's later specific application of Hindutva and *asmita* has been influenced by these writings.

Gujarati-ness has therefore become increasingly attached to Hindu-ness, but it also entailed from the beginning a profound mercantile tradition. This 'natural' inclination towards entrepreneurship from the Gujarati population was rather referring to the mercantile elite of Ahmedabad belonging to upper-case Brahmin and Bania groups. This mercantile tradition partly explains why the Gujarati business community obtained certain concessions from the state dirigiste economy and got quota permits established by the Planning Commission for the private sector (Sinha 2005). The state of Gujarat quickly adopted the features of the neoliberal state defined earlier in this chapter, before the rest of the country, in the mid-1980s. Amarsinh Chaudary's Congress government put an official end to the 'land to the tiller' politics and the incomplete land reform period that prevailed after the Independence (Sud 2014a, 236). This was followed in the 1990s by the relaxation of Non-Agricultural (NA) conversion procedures, the promulgation of a New Land Policy in 1996, and in 1999 the transfer of *gauchar* (village common pasturelands) and later on revenue 'wastelands' to industrialists and private infrastructural projects (Sud 2007a). There was no strong distinction or opposition to the liberalisation discourse between the two political parties, as both Congress and BJP leaders welcomed the 1991 NIP as a way to consolidate Gujarat's image as one of the wealthiest states in India (Sud 2012, 2020b). These reforms were also largely requested by upper-caste mercantile groups from urban milieus who had benefitted from the early industrialisation period and wanted to invest their capital in new sectors and by well-to-do Patel farmers who were the major beneficiaries of the earlier land reforms and now wanted to sell and purchase their land assets freely (Bobbio 2012; Sud 2012). These two social groups constituted the foundation base of BJP's electoral success at the corner of the century.

2.2.2.2 The Rise of 'Moditva': Narendra Modi, Gujarat and 'Crony Capitalism'

Narendra Modi was appointed as Gujarat's new CM in 2001, in the aftermath of a deadly earthquake that hit Kutch region and Western Gujarat and electoral losses forcing his predecessor Keshubhai Patel to resign. Winning his first election in February 2002, he was

[3] Like the Chalukya dynasty who ruled parts of modern-day Gujarat and Rajasthan between the 10th and the 13th century.

subsequently re-elected three times (2002, 2007, 2012). Modi left his own footprint in the Hindutva framework (hence called 'Moditva') by embodying and synthetising the figures of the *Hindu Hriday Samrat* (King of Hindus' heart) and the *Vikas Purush* (Development Man) (Jaffrelot 2021).

Modi's first period started with the worst anti-Muslim state-sponsored pogrom that Gujarat has experienced since Partition in 1947. Lasting for three days in late February 2002 and causing the death of more than 2,000 people according to NGO estimates, the personal implication of Modi in the massacres caused him to be banned from several European countries and the U.S, and cynically conferred him the title of the Emperor of Hindus' heart (Ghassem-Fachandi 2012). Indeed, after the 2002 event, Modi mobilised ideals of a strong, virile and charismatic leader who physically stands 'as a muscular defender of the Hindu majority' (Chatterji, Hansen, and Jaffrelot 2019, 59) and the Gujarati people. In the following years and electoral campaigns, Modi indulged in security and anti-terrorism discourses post-9/11, and regularly linked these issues with anti-Muslim references to their alleged polygamy, high birth rate[4] or so-called deleterious role in India's history. As chief minister of Gujarat, he also normalised Hindu religious figures and rituals in the public space and in everyday state ceremonies (a process called 'saffronisation'). This went hand in hand with national populist stances, as Modi pretended to have a direct and personal relation with the 'six crore [60 million] Gujaratis' constituting his own family, placing himself in opposition to the so-called 'establishment' in Delhi, its foreign elite[5] and its historical anti-Gujarati bias (Jaffrelot 2016). By contrast, Modi, who started his career as a small political activist of the RSS in the 1960s, was a common man of the people (*aam admi*), a self-made man who turned his modest social background into a political slogan of the *chaiwala* (tea boy).

Modi's footprint over Gujarat's politics and Hindutva also resides in the fact that he has been able to 'include Hindutva within an ideology of development and modernisation' (Bobbio 2012, 667), capitalism and liberalisation. Indeed, after the violence of 2002 pogroms and the international repercussions of these events, BJP leaders in Gujarat and Modi needed to revive their image as a 'land of entrepreneurs' and reassure business milieus. Hence, the idea of the

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[4] His speech in 2002 on Muslim's philosophy being '*hum paanch, hamare pachchees'* (translated as 'we are five, we will have twenty-five children') was an allusion to both Muslim polygamy and their high birth rate that Hindu nationalists have been politicising since a long time. See Jaffrelot (2021, 43) for more details.

[5] Referring here to Sonia Gandhi Congress leadership, whose Italian origin has been turned into a political argument by the BJP.

business summit 'Vibrant Gujarat' started in January 2003 and quickly gathered top business delegates and major industrialists from India and abroad. If liberalisation of the economy and the opening up of land for big capital was already under way since the mid-1980s in Gujarat, across ruling party and leadership regimes, Modi's chief ministership amplified the scale significantly and added new features of 'cronyism' and 'business-friendliness' to this ongoing form of capitalism (Jaffrelot 2018).

In its 2003 Industrial Policy, Modi relaxed the existing environmental, land and labour regulations for new investors. Industrialists were, for example, no longer obliged to offer stable employment contracts in order to be eligible for state subsidies. Gujarat preceded the Indian union in promulgating a Special Economic Zone Act, in 2004, and the year after, it generalised the transfer of its so-called government 'wastelands' and *gauchar* to private investors. Sud estimates that by 2005 the state had already sold 4.6 million hectares (2021). These reforms mostly benefitted to two specific Gujarati corporate houses with whom Modi entertained a 'special' relationship: the Reliance group owned by Mukesh and Anil Ambani and particularly the Adani group owned by Gautam Adani. In fact, Adani's close relationship with Modi was precipitated by the 2002 pogroms and the constitution of a lobbying group composed of Gujarat big business houses, 'the Resurgent Group of Gujarat' (Jaffrelot 2019). Adani was entrusted India's first multiproduct port based private SEZ in Mundra, Kutch in 2003 (more details on this in chapter 3), and a decade later, 'the market capitalization of its companies increased by 250 percent between September 2013—when Narendra Modi was declared the BJP's official candidate for the prime ministership—and September 2014' (Jaffrelot 2019, 224).

This is the 'Gujarat model', a business-friendly model of development based on high Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) rates, mega-infrastructural projects highly intensive in private capital and poor in labour leading to rising social inequalities and chronic under-investments in key social sectors like education, health, housing, and rural development. This led to a situation of 'growth without development' for a large section of the society, at the expense of the labourers whose average daily salaries are among the lowest, the rural poor, the Dalit and Adivasi communities (Jaffrelot 2015). This model was nonetheless sustained electorally for three successive mandates: an evident religious polarisation of votes managed to dilute caste identities and bring the poor under the Hindu majority umbrella, while a new parallel social polarisation strategy downplayed the importance of caste in favour of class, with new voters identifying themselves with the 'middle-class' status. If the traditional 'middle-class' (rich upper caste urban milieus) constituted the backbone of BJP voters for decades, Modi's success

after 2002 lay in his ability to conquer the OBC vote, what he termed himself the 'neo-middle class': those enriched OBC castes (like the Patel or the Koli) who had moved to urban centres, occupied first informal jobs but then experienced social mobility and parallelly adopted strong Hindu religiosity. This complex equilibrium of both religious and social polarisation laid down the foundation for Modi's victory in 2014 at the national level.

2.2.3 Modi's Rise to Central Power: Extending the Gujarat Model to the Entire Country?

2.2.3.1 Ingredients of a 'Saffron' Victory

The ingredients in Modi's victory in 2014 were a mix of populism, polarisation, promise of development and low intensity riots. This politics targeted sections of the society that either experienced social decline (upper-caste middle class), felt disenfranchised (plebians or the poor) or aspired to climb the social ladder (the OBC 'neo-middle class'). These people found an alternative recovered identity and self-esteem in Hindutva and Hindu majoritarianism by identifying themselves with Modi and his politics of revenge. This politics found particular resonance among two social groups: the so-called 'angry young men' (Jaffrelot 2021, 87), referring to these upper-caste youth who found themselves on the losing end of the rise of lower castes, lacked social capital and did not fit completely in the new liberalised Indian labour market; and among intermediate castes and plebeians who constituted Modi's new 'plus vote'.

The 2014 campaign was centred on the promise of development and modernisation, the promise that '*ache din'* (good days) were about to come, if the country was ready to adopt the 'Gujarat model' and elect its *vikas purush* as the head of state. The business milieus had also slowly shifted from Congress to the BJP, hoping that Modi's arrival in office would mean an extension of his business-friendly connections. This development agenda was articulated with an increased form of national populism and highly personalised campaign: establishing a personal and direct relationship between the leader and the nation, Modi portrayed his opponents (Congress party) as the true enemy, anti-national and anti-Indian, and put his mandate above all. This populist stance of circumventing the rules of the law and India's democratic institutions in the name of the people or the majority is a central feature of Indian politics, it was also regularly mobilised under Congress rule, for example during the Emergency period with Indira Gandhi (Jaffrelot and Anil 2020). Modi was about to add a new dimension to this trend, ethnic nationalism. He did not need to indulge in a systematic and organised attack on Muslins, as the memories of his actions in the 2002 pogroms were still

persistent, he rather adopted a strategy of low intensity riots and everyday communal tensions (Pai and Kumar 2018). RSS and its youth wing, the Bajrang Dal, were entrusted with these types of actions, mobilising around the cow's protection and the protection (or surveillance) of Hindu women, and more generally all the 'dirty work' the BJP could not do anymore on its own. But Modi also delegated all his communication strategy and social media to a team of professional campaigners and IT experts who developed aggressive tactics to recruit vote mobilizers and saturate cyber spaces, highly contributing to his electoral victory (Jaffrelot 2021).

2.2.3.2 Post-2019: A Right Turn Towards an 'Ethnic Democracy'

Scholars agree that after Modi's re-election in 2019, India has taken a right turn towards more authoritarianism, as the figure of the '*chowkidar'* (watchman) mobilised in the last election campaign attests it. Modi's authoritarian regime has been widely described as profoundly neoliberal, opening up new sectors of the economy to private investments. But his broader politics of authoritarian populism did not only serve a function of neoliberal restoration, it systematically attacked the democratic, secular and federal nature of India's institutions and constitution (Sinha 2021). His re-election in 2019 started with the abrogation of article 370 of the Constitution granting special status and autonomy to the states of Jammu and Kashmir. Modi's government amended the citizenship laws the same year, the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) redefined the access to citizenship and naturalisation on a religious basis. The attempted Agricultural Bills in 2020 have also been described as a case in point of authoritarian neoliberalism, combining BJP's centralist views, the opening up of the agricultural sector to agri-business capital and practices of repression and control of opposition (Singh 2020).

By advancing the Indian-Hindu equation, the government was openly stigmatising minorities who could not identity to these nationalist symbols of the majority community: through practices rather than true law, the BJP has multiplied the number of campaigns against Muslims and their so-called propensity to 'love *jihad*' and 'land *jihad*' (Jaffrelot 2021). These two campaigns appealed to traditional themes of the Hindu far right discussed previously, namely the physical inferiority complex and fear of demographic decline due to Muslims' uncontrolled sexuality, but also their alleged invasion and colonisation of public spaces. Overall, the 'land *jihad'* discourse participated to the ghettoisation of Muslims communities, the relegation of their religious practices to the private sphere and the establishment of Hinduism as the only legitimate religion in the public space.

This situation of a two-tiered citizenship, where the (Hindu) majority enjoys more rights than the (Muslim) minority, has prompted Jaffrelot to analyse Modi's India, particularly after 2019, as a rising 'ethnic democracy' aimed at establishing a *de facto Hindu rashtra* (Hindu state) (Chatterji, Hansen, and Jaffrelot 2019; Jaffrelot 2021). Organisations like the RSS, the Bajrang Dal or the Gau Raksha Dal (Cow Protection Association) have been involved in a new form of state-building process, the *Hindu rashtra*, whose foundation lies on a social and cultural order drawing from the sources of Hindu traditions, rather than on a constitutional or legal-rational order. In the latest stages of this 'ethnic democracy' post-2019, the Indian state 'appears to have transitioned from a predominantly Hindu nationalist vigilantism-based agenda to a more Hindu statist authoritarianism-oriented one' (Jaffrelot 2021, 404). This time, the state's legal and coercive apparatus (the law and police) is fully mobilised to back up the Hindu ethno-nationalist and authoritarian project of redefining India's core nature and violently repressing any form of opposition and dissent. This later development has encouraged scholars to develop new terms to qualify the current Indian political scenario, like 'electoral autocracy' (V-Dem Institute 2020), 'authoritarian populism' (Waghmore 2022) or 'competitive authoritarianism' (Mukherji 2020) as elections and populist appeals to the people are still the preferred modes of political regulation. Some have also analysed the rise of a fascist government in India based on the social basis of contemporary Hindutva and its historical roots in 1920s fascism, the personality cult around Modi and the 'othering' of Muslims (Banaji 2013; Desai 2016).

2.2.3.3 A 'Green' Champion?

Running parallel to this authoritarian and ethno-nationalist turn, Modi has ambitiously sought to put India on the map of international climate leadership, among the world leading countries governing and shaping global climate negotiations and politics. Following the promises to position the country as 'an emergent, modern world power' (Chatterji, Hansen, and Jaffrelot 2019, 10) through technology-driven development, the BJP promised to build 100 'smart cities' and further develop the renewable sector in its 2014 electoral manifesto. The Paris Climate Agreement in 2015 constituted an important political moment for Modi's climate diplomacy: the world's third biggest emitter had indeed committed to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions 33-35% below the 2005 level by 2030. Modi's climate politics was then followed by a succession of ambitious targets: 50% of electricity installed-capacity coming from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030, an installed capacity of renewable energy of 500 GW by 2030 (in February 2023, this capacity was 174 GW, including large hydropower dams), a target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2070, etc. These targets materialised in a succession of

breaking records and superlatives, announcing for example the installation of the world's largest solar power plant (in Rajasthan) or Asia's biggest wind farm (in Gujarat), in line with Modi's 'hyperbolic' capitalism initiated back in Gujarat and Kutch (Simpson 2014) (see chapter 3 for more details).

Renewable energy development and electricity power as a whole have been dominated by techno-economic considerations, that either see electricity from the standpoint of development, growth, and investment, energy security and sovereignty or energy access and energy poverty (Kale 2014a; Dubash, Kale, and Bharvirkar 2018). These nationalist narratives about electricity power have implications for technological choices and socio-political decisions: they justify making space for large-scale, centralised, and grid-connected renewable infrastructures while making the development of renewables compatible with increased reliance on coal resources in the name of 'realistic' policies (Shidore and Busby 2019a; Mohan and Topp 2018). The foundation of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) in a joint effort with France in 2015, the first international organisation headquartered in India (Shidore and Busby 2019b), or India's G20 presidency in September 2023 is supposed to materialise India's new position within the circle of world powers. To serve this global leadership ambition, Modi has been imposing an 'autocratic environmental governance' style in the name of 'good' and 'efficient' governance (Dutta and Nielsen 2021): diluting provisions of environmental laws[6] and clauses related to the right to fair compensation in the Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (LARR) Act 2013, as well as policing and criminalising environmental groups and activists. He has also strengthened the role of big private corporate houses specialised in energy (Adani, Reliance Industries and Tata group) as the main developers of renewable projects, in line with Modi's regime of 'crony capitalism' discussed earlier. The policy shift operated in 2016 from feed-in-tariff to competitive e-reverse auctions has favoured large developers and power producers backed by international investors, and generalised the entry of pension funds, sovereign wealth funds and private equity funds in the renewable sector (Bose and Sarkar 2019).

This nationalist story of Modi championing renewable energy and architect of 'green' growth and climate diplomacy globally, through agendas of sustainable development, 'smart cities' and environmental protection, reveals a certain trend. It is compatible with his long-term political agenda of excluding and further marginalising (religious and social) minorities in

[6] Renewable projects like solar parks and wind farms are still exempted of any environmental clearance procedures, considered as 'green' and 'clean' energy technologies, they are supposedly harmful to the environment.

public space and policy and strengthening eco-nationalist conceptions of nature and space in line with upper caste middle-class urban elites' expectations. Indeed, middle-class urban citizenship aspires to 'greener' and 'cleaner' neighbourhoods, digital and affluent urban landscapes that have been redrawn as pockets of 'exclusive spaces' (Basu 2019). In these highly securitised spaces, air pollution is drastically reduced, energy comes from renewable sources, and daily social life is run by mobile applications and digital interactions. In this model, 'undesirable' populations (the poor, Muslims, SC, internal migrants, etc.) and their so-called 'illegal' settlements have been removed, the signs of their 'unaesthetic' poverty have been 'cleaned' by urban public authorities through demolition actions (Lama-Rewal, Zerah, and Dupont 2011; Baviskar 2020). These environmentally conscious urban elites have been quite favourable to Modi's ambitions to become a climate leader and champion renewable 'green' energy, also because they endorsed eco-nationalist visions of the Hindutva ideology.

As in other cases of eco-nationalism, Hindutva's understanding of nature 'is about the imagination of particular territorial landscapes through the invocation of specific national cultural symbols and historical continuities' (Chhotray 2016, 5). Hindu nationalists understand 'society as a natural ecosystem in a manner analogous to the ecological perception of the natural world' (Sharma 2012, 33), and for this reason, they look at the laws of nature as a model for social and cultural order. In this argument, every species, plants, animals and by extension humans and ethnic or religious groups belong to a certain order and a certain place. Hindu culture, traditions, and philosophy, they argue, have been able to sustain this 'natural' order for ages, by strictly implementing a purity/ pollution dichotomy, keeping the 'eco-enemy' outside (Muslims' demographic rate is also associated by the RSS to a destruction and depletion of natural resources) and naturalising social hierarchies like caste. Modi's climate diplomacy is mobilising this eco-nationalist rhetoric of Hinduism's supposed 'natural' inclination for nature protection, environmental sustainability and ecological balance on the argument that Hindu religious texts like the *Vedas* or the *Dharmasastras* conferred a status of sacredness and purity to 'mother-nature'.

Conclusion

Modi's current 'green' energy politics and ambitious targets acclaimed by most Western countries and energy power companies need to be understood from the perspective of the structural changes the Indian state experienced since 1947 and the redefinition of its relations with capital, accumulation and Hindu majoritarianism.

Inspired by a fascist ideology of the interwar period, the Hindu nationalist movement proposed a racialised and ethnic definition of the Indian nation aligning homeland with (Hindu) sacred land. Modi and other Hindu nationalists have then consistently translated these conceptions into a regional Gujarati form of pride and identity exclusive of other religious minorities and made compatible with a culture of 'crony' capitalism and liberalisation. Accessing the highest spheres of the Indian state after 2014, Modi and the BJP have redefined the nature of India's democratic institutions towards greater authoritarianism, centralism and ethno-nationalism. While crafting the contours of a new state, the Hindu *rashtra.* Modi successfully defended his model within the neoliberal global order, despite emerging criticisms due to the several attempts to curb minorities' rights which led to the 2020 pogroms in Delhi for example. This model of 'saffron' authoritarian neoliberalism was unsurprisingly 'greened' over the last two mandates and made compatible with ambitions to become an architect of the global fight against climate change, incentives for 'green growth' and energy transition.

This thesis hopes to situate the development of 'green' energy infrastructures in western India, on the border with Pakistan, within the current Indian political scenario of increased authoritarianism, unbridled liberalisation and institutionalised Hindu nationalism since Modi's accession to power in 2014. In particular, this chapter tried to emphasise that there was no contradiction imagined at higher ranks of the Indian state or the BJP party machinery between tearing apart the foundational core of India's democracy and claiming at the same time a new position of global leader in the neoliberal order. As the rest of the thesis will demonstrate, there were important similarities between the 'saffron' political project of restoring a social conservative status quo and imposing a disciplined social and political organisation upon society, and the expansion of 'green' infrastructures, private energy companies and state's authority and sovereignty on its borderland.

I now turn to chapter 3 to the specific local context of my fieldwork, the district of Kutch in Western India, that shifted from being a 'punishment posting' to the shining face of 'Vibrant Gujarat'.

Chapter 3. From a ‘Punishment Posting’ to the Shining Face of ‘Vibrant Gujarat’ and a Case in Point of ‘Saffronised’ Borders: Kutch District

In 2000, a popular Bollywood movie called *Refugee* was set in the mysterious Rann of Kutch, a desert-like region that now constitutes the southern border between India and Pakistan. Set in an imagined Muslim village on the Indian side of the border, the movie narrates the story of a young Muslim man (named ‘Refugee’) who earns his living by ferrying people and goods illegally across the Rann, to the Pakistani province of Sindh, until he unintentionally smuggles terrorists and guns back in India provoking a terrible blast in Delhi. This movie is a case in point of the popular representation, widely spread across the Bollywood film industry, of Muslim men transgressing borders, smuggling arms, contributing to ‘Islamic terror’ and national insecurity (Athique 2008), and ultimately fraternising with their co-religionists on the other side of the border, because, as the film suggests, they ‘eat the same food’, ‘dress the same’ and ‘think the same’ (*Refugee*, 2000).

My case study is rooted within this complex entanglement of boundary-making and transgression, identities and mobility, state-building and citizenship. Kutch was imagined for a long time as a ‘punishment posting’ by state bureaucrats, a place of strong environmental adversity and ‘backwardness’ because of its desert-like characteristics, dry climate, and lack of infrastructures, until it recently became the shining face of ‘Vibrant Gujarat’. In a speech delivered in December 2020 on Kutch’s borders, Narendra Modi himself recalled the structural changes that occurred in this region, emphasising the miraculous dimension of that revolution:

> ‘At one point of time, it was being said that Kutch […] is a place for punishment posting and people also considered it as ‘*Kala Pani*’ punishment (a reference to the British colonial jail in Andaman and Nicobar Islands). Such is the situation today that people beg to work in Kutch’[7] (online translation, 15.12.2020).

Since the 2001 earthquake, Kutch district has been reframed as a major resource frontier and the area has experienced several waves of land liberalisation and industrialisation. Being a borderland district, the proximity with Pakistan and the presence of Muslim pastoral

[7] https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/pms-address-at-foundation-stone-laying-ceremony-of-several-development-projects-in-kutch-gujarat/

populations on both sides of the border also fostered important 'saffron' Hindu nationalist discourses since 1947. This chapter aims at setting the local context of my research, looking at the transformations and reconfigurations of Kutch before and after independence, from a position of margin and periphery to the centre of capitalist expansion, state-building and Hindu nationalism.

I first describe the salient features of this region, both in terms of environment, climate, social and political organisation. I then discuss the ambivalent relations of Kutch with Gujarat sub-nationalism and *asmita* (pride), and its position within the nation as a borderland district where a specific citizenship and security regime enfolded. The 2001 earthquake opened an important discussion on the liberalisation and industrialisation of this region, but also its remaking by Hindutva forces. Finally, I briefly discuss the arrival of wind turbines in Kutch 20 years ago.

3.1 Kutch: Environment, Social Organisation and Political Landscape

Kutch is the largest district in Gujarat, with a land area of 45,612 square kilometres, constituting 23 per cent of the state. It has a population of 2,090,313 people, which makes it far more sparsely populated than the rest of India, with a population density of only 46 per square kilometre against 382 (Mehta and Srivastava 2019). It has ten *talukas*/ *tehsils* or administrative sub-units and the region has nine distinct ecological zones (see figure 1) that range from salt marshlands (the Ranns), mangrove vegetation, to lush green irrigated fields and vast grasslands. It is, in effect, an island, bound by the sea in the south and west and by salt marshlands in the east and the north.

Figure 1 Modified Google Map of India and Administrative Map of Kutch District, Gujarat.[8]

It has arid to semi-arid climate, due to the absence of perennial rivers and a lack of rain (usually only 15 days per year). Kutch is a drought-prone district, as droughts take place every two to three years. Combined with sea-water ingression, over exploitation of the aquifer for agricultural and industrial use has also led to salinity in the water and soils, as well as a sinking ground-water table. Pastoralism or a livestock-based economy has always been prevalent in Kutch, as it is still regarded 'as drought insurance cover par excellence […] ensur[ing] the spreading of risks and resources over a vast area, the optimal use of limited resources and constant adaptation to environmental variability' (Mehta and Srivastava 2019, 196). The total livestock population is higher than the human population, with specific breeds of cows and the Kharai Kutchi camel, the world's only swimming camel that can thrive in both marine and desert environments. But it is rare to find pastoralists these days who are not engaged in other

[8] Accessed through https://www.onefivenine.com/india/villag/Kachchh

agricultural activities or off-farm employment. Indeed, groundwater or rain-fed agriculture is also practised, depending on the water endowments of the region that may vary considerably from place to place, ranging from areas having abundant groundwater supplies (such as pockets in Nakhatrana *taluka*) to vast desert-like saline tracts (like in Lakhpat and the Rann).

Land ownership in Kutch, as in other places of India, is structured by caste, class, and gender. The dominant caste, owing its status from the princely state legacy and historically owning most of the land is the Kshatriya caste of Rajputs, and its subcastes of Jadeja and Sodha. A series of land reforms were implemented in the 1950s and 1960s to redistribute large landholdings owned by Rajputs to landless and lower caste populations: in 1958, a land reform act was passed which stipulated that no family could own more than two plots of land over 52 acres (21 hectares) each (Mehta 1997). Although some Dalit communities were granted land in that period, they remained owners on paper as upper caste Rajputs continued to hold onto the land. The most important beneficiaries of these land reforms were rather the former tenants of the Rajput intermediaries: the agrarian middle-caste - Patels or Patidars who experienced a rapid ascension in the second half of the 20th century owing to land liberalisation, industrialisation, and Hindu nationalism (Sud 2012). Patels today occupy the central stage in Kutch politics, along with Rajput Jadejas, particularly in prosperous agrarian areas like Nakhatrana *tehsils* where I completed part of my fieldwork and where the Bhartiya Kisan Sangh, RSS's farmers' wing, is strong. Rabaris and Ahirs constitute the two important castes of Hindu pastoralists, grazing cows and camels. These castes also went through a process of Sanskritization, adopting upper-caste religious and social practices and re-appropriating a martial Hindu ethos, particularly around cow protection mobilisation. Dalit communities in Kutch mostly comprise of the Meghwal caste, representing more than 70% of all the Scheduled Castes (SC) population in the district (Census of India 2011). They either practice agriculture, more often working on Patels' and Rajputs' lands when they are landless, or are informal wage workers outside the village. If Dalit communities in Kutch did benefit marginally from land reforms post-1947, there remain strong inequalities between castes with regard to access to water and irrigation, as borewells are privately owned and managed: 'the rule of the game is money. Those who can afford to do so, are constantly engaged in well-digging or deepening activities' and 'well ownership goes hand in hand with land ownership' (Mehta 1997, 86), drawing an important line between those who practice groundwater horticulture (usually Patels and Rajputs) and those who rely on monsoon rain to irrigate their fields (usually Dalits).

Because Kutch has a long history of cultural ties, trade, and migration with Sindh, it is also the home to numerous Muslim communities (a bit more than 20% of the population according to the 2011 census), usually divided in different castes depending on their sect affiliations, livelihood practices and region of origin. The Jats of Kutch constitute the most important Muslim pastoralist group claiming origin from the Sindhi region. They are usually represented with a camel and populate the northern and western parts of the district, particularly the Banni grassland region in the Rann.

Regarding the political landscape of Kutch, it is dominated by the BJP since the mid-1990s, as in the rest of Gujarat. The BJP made its first entry in Kutch in 1990, winning few seats in the Legislative Assembly in the district. Since 1998, the party has won all the elections in almost all the *talukas*, with two exceptions: the Abdassa constituency (regrouping Nakhatrana, Abdassa and Lakphat *tehsils*) whose MLA seat kept swinging between the two parties depending on the MLA political loyalties, and Lakhpat *tehsil* whose *panchayat* is the only one left in the whole of Kutch to be still ruled by Congress. This, commentators argue, has to do with the demographic profile of this borderland sub-unit and its 'natural' proximity with Pakistan.

3.2 Kutch, Gujarat and the Indian nation post-1947

3.2.1 An Ambivalent Relation with Gujarat: Between Sindh, *Maha Gujarat* and Subnationalism

Ibrahim (2008) argues, 'Kutch sits somewhat ambivalently within the regional historical narrative of Gujarat, animated by the notion of *asmita*' (31). The strong social and cultural ties that the district entertained with Sindh did not align with the monolithic vision of a Hindu/ Gujarati *asmita* and its 'glorious past' that ostensibly categorised Muslims as 'othered' and 'outsiders'.

Indeed, Kutch was connected to mainland Gujarat via an over-land road only in 1968 with the construction of the Surajbari Bridge. It was historically much closer to two other places. Firstly, Bombay because the former Princely State of Kutch was merged into the Bombay state in 1956 and a lot of opulent Kutchi merchant castes and classes had already settled there, and second, the then Sindhi region and its capital Karachi. Kutch has for long been the buffer zone between the Indian subcontinent and Central Asia with a porous border and important trade and pilgrim routes linking the region with Sindh and even beyond to Afghanistan. The diversity of social groups in Kutch is the result of several waves of migration coming from the north and the west,

as its location on the western seaboard made it the chief entry point into Gujarat and Western India more generally. The Arab conquest of Sindh in the 8th century was followed by some religious conversions and the migration of (Hindu) merchants and pastoralists to Kutch, like the Samas, who later on rose to become the rulers of Jadeja Rajputs in the mid-1500s.

The kingdom of Kutch came into existence in 1147 and was a princely state between 1819 and 1948, although it was never a directly administered territory of British India. As a gateway to Sindh, Kutch was nonetheless an important foothold for the British to make preliminary surveys of Sindhi territories. The princely state of Kutch had its own governance structure, currency, strong kinship (marriages) and economic ties with Sindh: the city of Lakhpat and its impressive fort, now a ghost town made of ruins, epitomises its prosperous past. Situated on the very western end of Kutch, this city used to be connected to Sindh via the Indus (or Sindhu) river, before a major earthquake in 1819 diverted its course further west and drained the area, forming this salt marsh called the Rann[9]. Lakhpat was also a significant transit route for traders, and the princely state of Kutch benefited from lower custom rates than the rest of the British Indian provinces. Pastoral populations of the region were major players of these cross-border trade and migration relations, crossing the Rann back and forth in large *qafilas* (caravans) of camels loaded with goods such as rice, dates, and *ghee* (clarified butter) or in search of better pasture grasslands on both sides of the Kutch-Sindhi border (Ibrahim 2011).

This history of long-term social and cultural intimacies with Sindh reveals the ambivalent position of Kutch within the discursive framework of Gujarat's *asmita* and regional patriotism that was rather grounded on the 'othering' and exclusion of Sindh rulers and Muslims. Gujarati intellectuals did not include Kutch in their broad understanding of what constituted the essence of Gujarat. The poet Narmad (1833-1886) retained a linguistic definition of Gujarat centred around the Gujarati language. This would formally exclude Kutch from Gujarat as the Kutchi language, with no script of its own, was classified by the Linguistic Survey of India as a dialect of Sindh in 1908 (Ibrahim 2012). The 'glorious' pre-Sultanate Hindu/ Gujarati past celebrated by Gujarati 'Hindu traditionalists' like Munshi was mostly centred on what is now Central and South-Central Gujarat, excluding much of South Gujarat and the entire Saurashtra and Kutch peninsular regions. The first time Kutch was included in the territorial boundary of Gujarat was in 1936, when a group of lawyers and intellectuals founded the Gujarat Research Society and imagined this *Maha Gujarat* or 'Greater Gujarat', a movement that culminated in the 1950s

[9] Rann is derived from the Sanskrit word *irana* or *irina* meaning desert or waste.

with the demand of a separate state based on linguistic division. But *Maha Gujarat* was mostly an imposition of eastern, Gujarati-speaking and Hindu or Jain views and as argued by Simpson, those who did not align with this understanding of Gujarat, 'spoke different languages, who saw themselves as part of alternative social or imaginative networks, or who had different ideas about sovereignty, territory or diet, also became peripheral, if not deviant, to the core model of Gujarat'(2014, 67). The carving out of this new state in 1960 was therefore a first important political moment for restoring Gujarat's pride or *asmita* and integrating, although incompletely, peninsular regions like Kutch in this discursive framework.

3.2.2 Border-Making, Citizenship Regime and Muslim Populations in the Aftermath of Independence

Soon after independence, authorities in Delhi realised that Kutch was a strategic border area for the nation, and for this reason, it remained under the direct control of India's central government until 1956. Among the different visions that prevailed regarding border management, the obsession and paranoia about the predominantly Muslim demographic profile of Kutch border region was a common feature. Ibrahim discusses the prevalence of two distinct border management visions: the first one saw cross-border kinship, social and religious ties between Muslims in Kutch and Sindh as a strong deterrent for any violence and hostility on this border, the second vision analysed these same ties in a diametrically opposite way. The presence of Muslim populations in borderland villages and among the police forces was precisely the source of concern for these officials, 'argu[ing] that national security was far too important to be left to local residents, all the more so if they were Muslims on the border with Pakistan, therefore with suspect national loyalties' (Ibrahim 2021, 39). This second vision largely prevailed in border management and advocated for a professionalisation of border patrolling forces with men and materials coming from elsewhere. It suggested that 'as Pakistan professed to be a homeland for Muslims, Muslims on the Indian side of the border could not […] be trusted to always remain loyal to the abstract notion of the Indian nation' (Ibrahim 2008, 106). These early debates about border management in Kutch reveal how much the Indian state and its political apparatus at that time, the Congress party, had adopted an anti-Muslim bias and communal understanding of the nation's borders way before the BJP's electoral success or the Hindutva journey of the 1980-1990s: if Indian Muslims' loyalty to the Indian nation was questioned and scrutinised in Kutch as early as 1947, it was precisely because, in line with Savarkar's ethno-nationalist ideology, Indian Muslims' 'sacred land' did

not match their ‘homeland’ and in case of a conflict between these two, their allegiance would undoubtedly go to the former rather than to the latter.

Kutch was the theatre of armed conflicts and border skirmishes between India and Pakistan on few occasions. The border between Kutch and Sindh remained ambiguously defined throughout the 19th century, particularly the question of whom the Rann belonged to (see figure 2 for a map of the border area). The British administrators did not want to get involved in these boundary disputes as long as customary agreements between Kutch and Sindh permitted the sharing of pasture lands. After the withdrawal of the British, a status-quo dominated for many years as India controlled most of the Rann but did not attempt a clear demarcation or sealing of the border. Populations from both sides could travel and migrate in search of pastures for their animals, better economic opportunities, or marriage opportunities. In April 1965, a few weeks before the official start of the second Kashmir War, Pakistan rangers decided to test India’s forces’ capacity and reactivity, launching Operation Desert Hawk. They easily captured three Indian border posts near the Kanjarkot fort in the Rann. In 1968, an international tribunal finally settled the border dispute and granted Pakistan 910 square kilometres of the Rann, including Kanjarkot fort (Chaudhuri 2019). The 1965 conflict demonstrated to Indian national authorities the inadequacy of state police to cope with outside aggression, because since independence the protection of India’s international borders was the responsibility of the local (state) police force. Consequently, in December of the same year, the central government created the Border Security Force (BSF) in an attempt to professionalise and centralise border management and security. In 1971, Kutch was again the theatre of brief encounters between Indian and Pakistani air forces with the bombing of Bhuj air base, as a side event of the ongoing Bangladesh Liberation War (Ibrahim 2022).

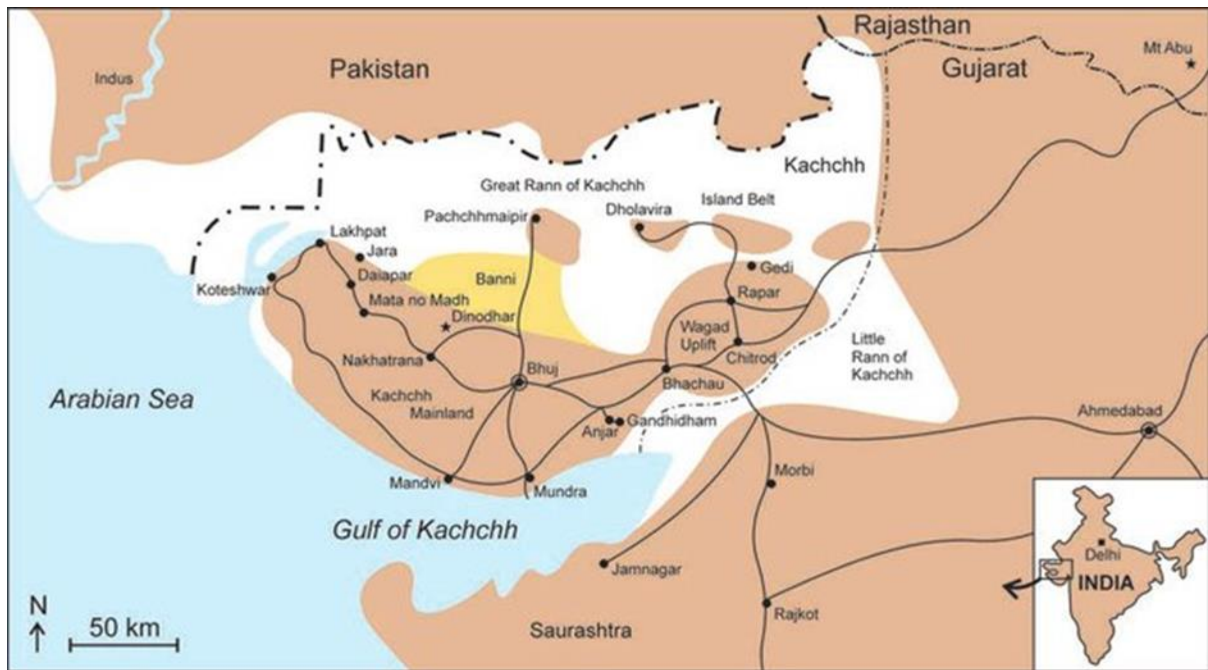


Figure 2 Schematic map of Kutch with its major towns and roads in Fürsich, Alberti, and Pandey (2013). Temporarily flooded areas of salt marshes of the Great and Little Ranns of Kutch are shown in white. While emerged land is illustrated in brown, the grasslands of the Banni are shown in a yellow colour.

These military conflicts in Kutch nurtured the idea among military and civil authorities that professional armed forces recruited outside of Kutch and through a centralised process was not sufficient to ensure border security. It needed to settle more ‘loyal’ and ‘trustful’ populations, preferably Hindus, ‘in the middle of Muslims’, with the main task to ‘bring *Bharat* back’ in this hostile land and ‘Mini-Pakistan’.

After the 1965 war with Pakistan, Congress Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri allotted semi-arid lands in Kutch to Sikh farmers, most of whom were refugees from the Partition settled in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana or Punjab. Some were given land in the village of Nara, at the entry of the Rann, near the Muslim *dargah* of Hajipir, while others were asked to settle in Western Kutch Panandhro village, south of the Sir Creek, the maritime leg of the border[10]. Indeed, Sikhs have been imagined and constructed as a ‘martial race’ by the British, a designation that classified certain castes as typically brave and well-built for fighting and for joining the Army (Fox 1985). The implementation of Sikh settlements in Kutch’s borderlands, some of them retired Army officers, precisely relied on and supported this colonial representation, with their alleged skills for battle, determination, and hard work in situations of

[10] This maritime leg of the border is regularly a source of conflict between India and Pakistan, 1968 international tribunal did not completely settle the dispute. India claims the border between the two countries lies in the middle of the navigable channel of Sir Creek, while Pakistan says the border is on the eastern bank of the creek and thus claims the whole creek. This area is apparently rich in oil, natural gas and fishery resources.

adversity. Sikhs were tasked to protect the border from the outside enemy, Pakistan, but they were also most importantly protecting the border from the 'inside' enemy, the 'disloyal' and 'untrustworthy' Muslim 'other'. I met on several occasions Sikh elders from Nara village who arrived in Kutch as teenagers and their *sarpanch*, Harpal Singh, an influential BJP leader. They had unsurprisingly adopted the border-making discourse about Muslims' dubious loyalty and fully endorsed their role as the last bulwark or last defenders of the nation:

> 'There were lots of situation of intrusion and infiltration, of Muslims passing the border, coming in and out, from Pakistan and India. *We did not know which one was Indian and which one was Pakistani* [emphasis added]. So, the idea was to bring *Bharat* back here in this Muslim dominated area and mini-Pakistan' (Discussion with Harpal Singh, *sarpanch* of Nara, 10.03.21).

The arrival of Sikhs in this region largely aligned with a project of 'saffronising' India's borders (making Hindu presence strong and visible) and repopulating these margins with Sikhs, assimilated with Hindus in the Hindutva framework. RSS and Hindu nationalists have always engaged with this minority group in a much more positive way than with any other (particularly Muslims) and treated them as part of the big 'Hindu family' (Moliner 2011). The implementation of Sikhs in a Muslim populated area also largely used and played on the violence, hostilities and antagonism between Sikh and Muslim communities inherited from the Partition in Punjab (Ibrahim 2008).

As agrarian castes, Sikh settlers also imagined themselves as agricultural pioneers, having brought order, value, production, discipline, and development with the powerful image of 'creating fields out of nothing' (Discussion with a Sikh villager from Nara, 30.06.21). Indeed, a few years after the implementation of the first Sikh households, the government had created a large dam at the edge of the village, the only dam in the region, creating jealousy and resentment from neighbouring villages. Ordering and disciplining this 'wasteland', in a way comparable to what I will discuss in chapter 5 with the arrival of wind companies 60 years later, naturally extended to the locals and their pastoral livelihoods. Those, who were doing 'nothing […] just roaming around the jungle all day' (Ibid.), were also transformed to a certain extent as they supposedly learnt agriculture and how to work on fields with the arrival of *Sardars* in Nara. Sikh settlements were followed by those of Sindhi Rajput populations as Kutch also witnessed a 'Rajputisation' of its borderlands with the migration of Sodha Rajputs

coming from the Sindhi region of Thar and fleeing Pakistan after the 1971 Indo-Pak War (Ibrahim 2008, 2021).

The 1965-armed conflict and the settlement of non-Muslim populations along the Rann inaugurated the first ‘saffron’ wave on Kutch's borderland. It also contributed to the official sealing and closure of the border with Sindh, shifting from being a ‘soft’ border to a more rigorously policed, wired and militarised one: ‘centuries of cross-border trade and social ties [were] now reduced to illegal ‘infiltration’, the import of ‘lethal weapons’ and influx of ‘Pakistani-looking people’’(Ibrahim 2007, 8). The Indian state sought here to fix porous boundaries, mobilities and identities along this border into concrete cartographic moulds of the nation state and present these as natural divides. The introduction of Sikh and Hindu populations was precisely aimed at clearly distinguishing India’s borders from its Muslim-majority neighbour, or in the words of Harpal Singh quoted earlier, clearly distinguishing ‘which one was Indian, and which one was Pakistani’.

3.3 The 2001 Earthquake

3.3.1 The ‘Second Earthquake’: Liberalisation, Industrialisation, and ‘Hyperbolic’ Capitalism in Kutch

On the 26th of January 2001, at 8.46 AM, a devastating earthquake measuring between 6.8 and 7.9 on the Richter scale struck the north-east of Bhuj and damaged the whole region. More than 90% of all the fatalities in Gujarat were located in Kutch. This natural catastrophe, like others in the past (1819 earthquake), left a permanent footprint on the contours of Kutch’s socio-political and economic landscapes, opening up the way to intense liberalisation, capitalism and Hindu nationalism (Simpson 2014).

Klein’s compelling book, *The Shock Doctrine*, suggests that interventions following disasters or invasions (shock) and framed within emergency and exception states are crucial political moments for the expansion of free market capitalism and neoliberal doctrine (2007). In that matter, the 2001 earthquake constituted an exceptional political opportunity to speed up much awaited economic reforms and restructuring of state’s institutions, a movement that was already under way since the 1990s. But Simpson also demonstrated that ‘it was not the disaster itself but the doctrines of the interveners that were truly shocking’, instituting a ‘doctrine-SHOCK era’ (2014, 50–51) or a ‘second earthquake’.

Indeed, a few days and weeks after the earthquake, international donors, investors, and NGOs, including the World Bank, representatives of the U.S. Aid and the Asian Development Bank

were rushing in to propose rehabilitation and reconstruction programs in Kutch. Those who intervened also brought with them new ideas and arrangements about policy making, knowledge about how to best 'help' and 'develop' communities affected by the earthquake. Financial institutions advocated for the deregulation of state sectors, financialisation of aid, penetration of private insurance companies and overall the introduction of incentives for the private sector to take over activities previously undertaken by the state (Simpson 2014). The need to reconstruct urban areas provided the opportunity to introduce ideas of new systems of land management, removal of protectionist measures, and simplified land registration, reclassification, and titling procedures.

This restructuring was supported by important policy changes at central and state government level: the central government declared a five-year excise duty exemption, and Modi's government (state level) announced a package of tax incentives for industries and private power plants as well as cheap government 'wasteland' acquisition rates. Over a period of ten years (2001-2011), Kutch's industrial and infrastructural landscape changed drastically, around 200 companies invested more than INR 150 billion in Kutch and benefitted from tax incentives to the tune of INR 58.41 billion, turning 'the Kutch earthquake [into] an opportunity for investors and a blessing in disguise for the locals' (Kohli and Menon 2016, 271). This landscape is now heavily dominated by port infrastructures, SEZs, coal-based power plants, and industrial parks, mostly in the coastal part of Kutch. The facilities are portrayed with 'taglines of "ultra-mega" power plants, "major players," "five star," the "world's largest coal import terminal," "India's largest commercial port"' (Sud 2020b, 12), revealing the 'hyperbolic' capitalist imaginary underlying Kutch's socio-economic transformations and the 'Vibrant Gujarat' rhetoric (Simpson 2014, 37–41).

The Adani group benefitted the most from this new investment climate, as mentioned in chapter 2, the group was entrusted with India's first multiproduct port-based private SEZ in Mundra in 2003. Jaffrelot reveals that the group was granted land at an extremely cheap rate, way below the real market value. It got 3,585 hectares of land from the government, including 2,008 hectares of forest and 900 hectares of *gauchar* (village grazing land). 'The Adani Group bought this land, in one area, at a rate ranging from Rs. 1 to Rs. 32 a square meter, when the market rate was over Rs. 1,500 a square meter' (Jaffrelot 2019, 226) making enormous profit by subletting the land to other companies, including public ones, at a much higher rate. Not only did Adani benefit from massive tax exemptions producing important losses to the exchequer, the group was also allowed to bypass all the state environmental rules regarding coastal

regulations, as mangroves and forestlands were illegally cleared, and improper handling of coal ash drastically reduced fish catch and polluted water (Kohli and Menon 2016).

Nonetheless, for admirers of the 'Gujarat Model', Modi accomplished a miracle, turning a deadly disaster into an exceptional economic opportunity for investments, or in his words 'turn[ing] despair into hope'[11]. Kutch stopped being imagined as 'the backwater of the prosperous state of Gujarat, a 'punishment post for the bureaucrats' or a 'museum of environmental hardship'', rather it 'emerged as a symbol of reconstruction and development' (Mehta and Srivastava 2019, 199), a land 'full' of opportunities and promises, especially as the earthquake revealed an almost unlimited availability of 'empty' and 'waste' lands. For many of my informants who were working in Kutch before the earthquake, Modi's style of government had been a real game changer, making Kutch the 'number one' destination for investors in India and a compulsory posting for anyone who wanted to make a career in a big industrial group such as Adani. These representations about the 'transformations of Kutch', 'the totally changed face of Kutch' or 'the rise of a new Kutch' following the earthquake and Modi's vision are a clear reference to the new, 'hyperbolic' capitalism that enfolded locally. But they also refer to the 'new, more Hindu, region of a Hindu Gujarat with a changed iconography pushed by the state and muscular, populist strongman leader from above' (Sud 2020b, 13).

3.3.2 A 'New' Kutch: Hindu, Brahmanical and Gujarati

The post-earthquake politics in Kutch, or the 'second earthquake', fostered a second 'saffron' wave, and the reconstruction of an ideal 'new' Kutch as profoundly Hindu, Brahmanical and Gujarati. The 'saffron' wave of the 1960s was aimed at (re)colonising and (re)populating borderland areas with more 'loyal' and 'trustful' non-Muslim populations and was initiated by a Congress government in the name of border security and fight against 'illegal' infiltration. This second 'saffron' wave post-2001 was led by organisations of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the BJP government and Hindu sects that intervened in village reconstruction and resettlement programs with particular ideologies and understandings of the ideal (Hindu) nation.

As part of the state restructuring and financialisation of disaster management advocated by international donors, private agencies and NGOs were soon allowed to 'adopt' affected villages

[11] https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/pms-address-at-foundation-stone-laying-ceremony-of-several-development-projects-in-kutch-gujarat/

via public-private partnerships. Reconstruction was supposed to be carried out by the private partner while the government of Gujarat would contribute to half of the basic cost. RSS satellite organisations, like its service wing – the Seva Bharati founded in 1979, Hindu sects like the Swaminarayan movement, or overseas branches of the VHP used the opportunity of these 'village adoption schemes' to build new models of 'saffron' villages where social order had been re-established, and local syncretic religious practices firmly embedded into a more universal, homogeneous and 'purified' practice of Brahmanical Hinduism (Simpson and Corbridge 2006; Simpson 2014).

The VHP constructed for example - a new settlement 'model' village at the supposed location of the earthquake epicentre, Lodai, renamed afterwards as Keshav Nagar or Krishna's City. It carefully selected upper caste Hindus as new inhabitants, while Dalit and Muslim villagers remained in the old village ruins, reflecting the new Indian civilisation as envisaged by the VHP: 'excusive, disciplined, strong and Hindu' (Simpson 2014, 110). Other organisations mobilised ideas of *sewa* (service), selfless 'social welfare', acts of spirituality and hospitality. Scholars working on Hindutva have argued that 'far from being a benign practice, *seva* in the Hindu nationalist tradition has played an important role in furthering the political project of Hindutva by reorganizing communities according to new Hindu political identities […] in more nuanced forms of enlisting support […] subtle, nonviolent, and clothed in humanitarianism' (Bhattacharjee 2016, 77–79). This is precisely what the Swaminarayan movement did, a 19th century reformist movement within Hinduism placing strong emphasis on strict non-violence, vegetarianism, ascetism and purity. Using the language of service, Swaminarayan organisations introduced new religious practices, culinary habits and 'purification' ceremonies, particularly popular among mid-level caste Patels and incorporated the local Kutchi goddess Ashapura in a 'regional Gujarati brand of Hinduism' (Ibrahim 2008, 174).

The profound social reconfigurations caused by the 'second earthquake' nurtured a strong sense of nostalgia among the Kutchis. As a response to the humiliation of the earthquake and the subsequent deprivations, people started to remember the 'golden era' princely Kutch where Gujarat was an outsider (Simpson 2005, 2014, 161–65). Keshubhai Patel government's bad management of the weeks and months that followed the disaster prompted calls coming from the Kutchi intelligentsia for a new and independent Kutch state, or at least its reconfiguration as a Union Territory under Delhi's control. It is in this political context of uncertainty for the BJP that Modi promoted a politics of memorialisation that was aimed at 'silenc[ing] alternative readings of the earthquake and its significance' (Simpson and Corbridge 2006, 581) and

establish it as something of the past. Cultivating a sense of collective amnesia, Modi prompted Kutchis 'to put the earthquake behind them. The rest of Gujarat has also been affected but has forgotten about it' (Ibid.). His post-earthquake politics of accelerated industrialisation and intense infrastructural development was precisely aimed at bringing this peninsular region under Gujarat state's control and influence.

3.3.3 Border Control and Surveillance-through-Development: Kutch Borders Under the Spotlight

Post-earthquake industrial development, liberalisation and relative economic prosperity have been limited to Southern and South-Eastern Kutch, where the Patidar-vegetarian-agrarian belt has been most prosperous. On the contrary, northern and western border areas have been largely neglected in terms of social and economic development. Lakhpat (in the north-west end of the district) is still imagined as the most 'backward' area of Kutch, because of the lack of infrastructures, roads and public services, a higher level of illiteracy (literacy rate in Lakhpat is indeed lower than in the rest of Kutch, 62.09% against 70.59% according to the last census in 2011), and an extreme scarcity of water. Residents of Lakhpat usually associated this under-development to a 'lack of political will' because the *tehsil* is inhabited by religious minorities[12] and has been mostly ruled by Congress party.

In situations of transgression, negotiation and circumvention, borders are prone to fantasies, rumours, whispers and myths. The decades following partition and particularly post-9/11 have given birth 'to a greater and phantasmagorical spectre of the Muslim who made his home in the borderlands. He brought guns, terrorism and trouble across the border in his gunny bag' (Simpson 2014, 72). Indeed, local newspapers in Kutch are full of stories and news about illegal arm-bearers, drug smugglers and border crossers infiltrating India, usually with 'inside' support and help. During my presence in the field in 2021, I heard of no-less than six reports in the news about such arrestations, usually involving Muslim fishermen, drugs and arms or even spies among the BSF forces. These events and the 'global war on terror' launched by the US post-2001 have definitely put Kutch's borders on the map of national security and border surveillance, providing the state with new tools to keep an eye on its Muslims citizens. Lakhpat *tehsil* was the deployment site of a pilot project launched by the Vajpayee government in 2003,

[12] According to 2011 census, Muslims account for 41% of Lakhpat *tehsil* population, Hindus 57% and Sikhs 1.4%.

the Multi-purpose National Identity Card (MNIC)[13], aimed at surveying and rendering visible its borderland subjects.

Surveillance and securitisation of Kutch border also went along with broad notions of development, humanitarianism, and modernisation. Bhan (2013) has emphasised that the language of development and humanitarian actions '[are] required to cultivate "appropriate sentiments and dispositions" towards Indian rule (Stoler 2004: 5), especially among border populations [and] transform subversive (or potentially subversive) subjects into law-abiding citizens' (2013, 8). In Kutch, the Border Area Development Program (BADP) advised to develop mining industries in the Rann, based on the availability of minerals in the region (lignite, bauxite and bromine). Several private mining plants were installed on BSF owned lands, almost at the border, and required active collaboration between central government, the military, and the local populations (mostly Muslims) who are now employed in small managerial capacities or as contract labour. Interventions like these blend discourses of development, modernism, and technology with strategies to exert control over troubled frontiers, margins of the state and 'create new citizens of various kinds, with loyalties that lead them to look affectionately to the east: towards Gujarat and the Indian nation' (Simpson 2014, 75).

These mining projects were followed by similar incentives to securitise and control the border and its (Muslim) populations via border tourism programs and promotion of traditional Kutchi 'folk' culture in the Rann. In 2006, Narendra Modi inaugurated the first 'Rann Utsav' festival in Dhordo village, reframed as the 'nation's last village', initiating the opening up of the Rann as a destination for hordes of tourists, essentially coming from other parts of Gujarat. This border was targeted by intense rebranding, tourist packaging and advertising campaigns aimed at aligning this historical 'marginal' region 'within the larger discursive strategy of industrialisation and "development" that is seen as the meta-narrative of contemporary Gujarat […] it is through this development package that Kutch – officially at least – perceives it has finally found its "emotional" bond with Gujarat' (Ibrahim 2012, 68). Recently in February 2023, Dhordo was once again at the centre of national and international attention, as the Indian government organised there the first Tourism Working Group (TWG) meeting under its G20 presidency. 100 delegates from G20 countries and tourism sector representatives attended the

[13] This pilot project heavily inspired the National Register of Citizens (NRC) launched by Modi in 2019 to identify so-called 'illegal migrants' among the Indian population (mostly Muslims) and take their citizenship back.

three-day event and were invited to admire the 'essence' of 'Indian' handicraft and the potential for global investments in the Indian tourism sector[14]. Such campaigns reveal attempts at grounding Kutch within a singular and homogenous imagination of Gujarat and India, where 'handicraft', 'folklore' and 'colours' speak of Kutch and have become 'one of the ways in which some of the more marginal communities (Dalits, Muslims) are inserted into the narrative of the nation' (Ibrahim 2012, 71).

These border regions and borderland populations have become central to the project of firmly locating Kutch into contemporary sites of *asmita*, narratives of indigeneity and a revived Hindu mythical past and space built in opposition to Sindh and its Islamic heritage (Simpson 2014). Hindu nationalists' constant obsession has been to prove that the Indus Valley civilisation was an Aryan civilisation *par excellence*, and Hindus, as descendants of the Aryans, are endogenous to the civilisational chore of North India. Many of the archaeological sites of the Indus Valley civilisation reappropriated today by Hindutva organisations have been excavated in Kutch and in its borderland regions. Dholavira, an archaeological site situated near the Rann of Kutch and inscribed in UNESCO's world heritage list in 2021, is supposed to have hosted a prosperous city of the Harrapan or Indus Valley civilisation in the mid-2nd millennium BCE. According to Hindu nationalists, this city is the proof that the Indus (or Sindhu) river, and its mythic-historical counterpart, the Saraswati (said to be mentioned in the *Rig* Veda, the foundational text for Hindu civilisation) once flowed in the Rann of Kutch. This city emerges as a powerful symbol for Hindutva agents to (re)claim Kutch history and territory as part of their framework. In this understanding,

> 'Hindu, Aryan and the Indus civilisation are all tied together into a Vedic cultural complex from which the Hindus of today are believed to be lineal descendants. History, geography and religion thus come together to create an overlapping understanding of the region' (Ibrahim 2011, 454).

Kutch region and its Rann, as the historic cradle of the Indus Valley civilisation, embody more than anywhere else a glorious Hindu past and are part of a Hindu-Aryan space stretching from the Indus/ Saraswati River to the Ganges. By aligning Kutch with this narrative of indigeneity, this region is carved out as a constituent subunit within Gujarat, its regional pride *asmita*, and

[14] https://www.livemint.com/news/india/tourism-working-group-meeting-under-india-s-g20-presidency-begins-at-dhordo-11675779567849.html

upper-caste Brahminic Hinduism while centuries of Sindh-Kutch cultural ties are rebranded as a supposedly age-old enmity between the two kingdoms.

3.4 At the Juncture of Liberalisation, Border-Making and Ethno-Nationalism: The Arrival of Wind Turbines

At this juncture of liberalisation, border-making and ethno-nationalism, the first wind turbines arrived in Kutch in the early 2000s. A first pilot project was developed in 1986 between the government of Gujarat and the Danish company Vestas, making the beach of Mandvi, in coastal Kutch, India and Asia's 'first' wind power project. Today, these wind turbines are still standing on the beach, but with most of them falling apart, as a result of age and the saline air, yet they have become a tourist attraction. The district became the target of massive renewable projects after 2010, when the National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE) identified the area's great wind energy potential. The topographical features of Kutch with hilly areas situated in the mainland resembles a tortoise or *kachua* (hence giving the name to the district, Kutch or Kachchh), were also favourable for wind power. The Gujarat state-level wind energy policies, the generous feed-in-tariffs and 'simplified' land acquisition procedures discussed in the previous chapter have encouraged private energy companies to rush into Kutch to exploit this new 'gold'. If the first actors were niche companies that had invested in wind turbines manufacturing since the late 1990s, like Suzlon, Vestas, the German Enercon, they were after 2015 followed by national and multinational energy conglomerates kin to diversify their portfolios and investments towards 'green' energy, like Adani Power, General Electric, Siemens, Electricité de France (EDF), etc.

The expansion of wind turbines in Kutch for the past 20 years followed a certain order, based on land availability, and gradually moved its centre of gravity from coastal regions (Abdassa and Mandvi *tehsils*) at the beginning of the century to mainland (Nakhatrana) and more recently to borderland areas (Lakhpat). Over the recent years, this expansion turned into a competitive and harsh race between the different wind actors in general as lesser land was available, and less space was left. Wind companies had to move to new areas, look for new *tehsils* and search for remaining 'empty', 'untouched' and 'virgin' lands where they could put their turbines.

Figure 3 OpenStreetMap data indicating 2,053 wind turbines in Kutch, according to Mongabay, 2022.[15] *This map suggests that wind expansion has exploited certain corridors or regions more than others. It started from the coastal areas and moved towards mainland and borderland Kutch.*

Looking back at Kutch's transformations and socio-economic reconfigurations since independence, wind turbines' arrival constitutes the last and most recent dynamic of what have been successive waves of resource frontier-making. The settlements of *Sardars* along the border in the 1960s constituted one important political moment in that process, their task to 'create fields out of nothing' reveals that this period was marked by value-making coming from agricultural production. The 2001 earthquake emphasised the immense availability of 'empty', 'barren' and 'waste' lands in Kutch. These would now generate value not from agricultural production, but by shifting towards industrial and energy-electricity production (mineral mining and more recently, wind extraction).

[15] https://india.mongabay.com/2022/04/expansion-of-wind turbines-in-kachchh-impact-unique-thorn-forest-and-wildlife/

Conclusion

Kutch's socio-political history reveals a complex relationship towards Gujarat, *asmita*, nationalism and the Indian state.

It has been historically more oriented towards the west, Sindh, Afghanistan, and central Asia as a whole, the intense migration of populations between these regions attests to flourishing cultural and trade ties across borders. The post-independence citizenship and security regime has reframed Kutch along issues of belonging, loyalty, trust, boundary-making and nationalism, the presence of Muslim pastoral populations on both sides of the border being imagined as a national security threat and justifying the settlements of more 'trustful' citizens. The deadly 2001 earthquake further reconfigured Kutch's socio-political landscape with the expansion of a 'hyperbolic' capitalism (Simpson 2014), that went along with shaping of a 'new' Kutch aligned this time with Gujarati *asmita*, the Hindu nation and its 'glorious' past civilisation.

Kutch's trajectory since independence is therefore a succession of 'frontier-territorialisation-frontier-territorialisation' cycles as defined by Rasmussen and Lund (2018). These cycles have enforced different property and value regimes over time and were always at the juncture of capitalism and ethno-nationalism. Indeed, ethno-nationalist 'saffron' waves in Kutch and reconfigurations of border spaces through questions of loyalty, cultural survival and security have fostered important frontier-making processes: sending *Sardars* and Hindu Rajputs on the border with Pakistan strengthened their representation as more loyal citizens to the Indian nation, defined as Hindu, but also as powerful frontier makers and explorers who were tasked to turn the 'jungle' (i.e. pastoral lands) into organised and disciplined agrarian fields. The frontier dynamic that followed the earthquake and consecrated the importance of industrial and infrastructural value regimes was also profoundly ethno-nationalist in nature, putting the revival and survival of Hindu cultural identity at the centre of its matrix. I wish to situate the new wind extraction frontier that started 20 years ago within that long history of frontier-making and territorialisation as it rolled out in Kutch and its borderland. Chapter 5 and chapter 7 engage more thoroughly with the respective questions of capitalist expansion and ethno-nationalist frontiers as they are mapped onto territory and space.

In what comes next, chapter 4, I discuss the methodological tools that guided this investigation, the fieldwork design, and the positionality of the researcher.

Chapter 4. Methodology and Research Design

'What are you looking for?' asked my first landlord in Nakhatrana a couple of days after I reached the field. This question and others occupied my mind for a certain time: what am I looking for? Where should I start? How should I proceed? Will I get enough material to analyse?

While the last question was easily answered (I was overwhelmed by data after a few weeks only), the first three were processed during and after the fieldwork, as I slowly managed to put the pieces of my story together. My PhD thesis is an ethnography of the socio-political transformations and territorial reconfigurations of rural Kutch in time of climate crisis, liberalisation, and ethno-nationalism; of the redefinition of power relations and state boundaries as land navigates different value and property regimes; and of citizenship, agency, and resistance. To conduct this ethnographic investigation, I needed a specific method.

This chapter contributes to the thesis by presenting the methodology and the research design adopted. This will assist the reader in understanding how the material of the following empirical chapters was collected and analysed, what bias and positionality may have influenced access to it, and how conclusions were framed later on. I discuss in a first section the sites and actors of the thesis, the method of investigation and data collection process as well as the temporality of the fieldwork. The second section raises important questions regarding the researcher's positionality and ethics of investigation.

4.1 Research Methodology, Data Collection and Fieldwork Design

4.1.1 Sites and Actors of the Fieldwork

My fieldwork stretched over a year, between the 4th of January 2021 and the 17th of December, 2021, and it amounted to seven cumulative months. I would like to present the sites, villages and actors that shaped this investigation and will make regular appearances throughout the thesis.

Out of the 20 villages I visited over the year, I decided to focus on three of them. The selection was made on the criteria that they should represent diverse caste and religious configurations (single or multiple), different wind turbines' expansion (highly saturated or scarcely occupied), different scenarios of political leadership (strong, contested, or absent) and reactions to the

arrival of wind companies (resistance/ passive acquiescence/ active negotiation, collective/ individual strategies, every day/ punctual, or all of them).

My first case, in chronological order, was Samio, a village that was famous for its successful resistance movement and the complete halt of all new wind turbines projects since 2019. Situated eight kilometres from the closest town, Nakhatrana, which is also the *tehsil* administrative centre, Samio is a middle-sized village of 250 households divided into three main castes: Patels constitute the third numerical group, owning most of the private land (7.6 hectares on an average, opposed to 2.9 in the village) and working on their farm or in businesses and shops they have opened in Nakhatrana; Rabaris are the second most important caste, they practise in their majority cattle-grazing livelihoods and own on an average more cattle than any other group (50, while Patels own 4 and Dalits 3). Dalits constitute the most important numerical group in the village, an important majority of them are landless and they mostly work informal jobs outside the village or as agricultural labourers on Patels' land. I soon realised that the real leaders of the resistance movement were Patels, **Mankar *bhai*** and his brother, **Malji**, two wealthy land and business owners with important connections to the BJP, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the Bhartiya Kisan Sangh. **Dev** was my main Rabari informant, a youngster in his twenties who belonged to a household owning 30 cows and practising only cattle-grazing, while **Vogesh** was my main Dalit informant, a father of two kids who did not own any land and worked in a car repairing shop in Nakhatrana.

Pamori was the second case study, a village of a smaller size compared to Samio (150 households) situated 50 kilometres north-west of Nakhatrana. Although the village is administratively situated in Nakhatrana *tehsil*, it is much closer to Dayapar (only six kilometres), the administrative centre of the neighbouring border Lakhpat *tehsil*. It had been presented to me as 'a village of Rajputs', referring to the important Jadeja community that owned most of the available land and livestock and has held on to the *sarpanch* position for the past five years. I was introduced to the village by **Vijayrajsinh Jadeja** and his two older brothers, who constituted a family of wealthy farmers and cattle-owners. Number-wise, Pamori should have been called 'a village of Dalits', a community that mostly practised farming and informal wage labour outside the village. **Vimo**, the son of the previous Dalit *sarpanch*, was my main Dalit contact, he owned a small shop in the Dalit area of the village and a bit less than six hectares of land. The main structure of inequality between Dalits and Rajputs, along land ownership, was access to irrigation and boreholes: half of the surveyed Rajput households possessed one borehole or more, while most Dalit households relied on monsoon rains to

practise agriculture. Finally, Patels constituted the third social group (less than 15%), they were numerically dominant two decades ago but left the village for better economic opportunities in other parts of Gujarat.

The last case study, Haroma, is a village populated only by one Muslim community, the Mandra caste (150 households) practising mostly agricultural labour and cattle-grazing. Situated at the east of Dayapar, few kilometres away from the entry of the Rann of Kutch and a more regular presence of BSF *jawans* (soldiers), Haroma crystallises all the whispers, rumours and fantasies about being a 'mini-Pakistan': out of eight villages that compose this joint *panchayat*, five are populated only by Muslims from two different castes (Mandra and Jat) while three villages are populated by Hindus. The pseudo affinity of Haroma villagers with Pakistan is also linked to their emotional history with Sindh: people from the village used to travel to Sindh and cross the Rann on a regular basis, seeking better cattle grazing lands, but when the border suddenly got closed by the BSF after the 1965 War, many family members (around 100 people) got trapped and blocked on the 'wrong' side of the border. I got access to Haroma through **Hassan *bhai***, the charismatic leader of the village affiliated to the BJP since 2018 and former president of the *taluka panchayat*, he owned a contractor business and 15 hectares of land. He put me in contact with his henchman, **Abdal *bhai***, whose family was traditionally practising pastoralism (he owned 50 goats) but was now working full-time for Hassan *bhai's* contracting business. **Abdul Karim** was a third important informant, contrary to the first two, he owned very little land and cattle, and worked as an agricultural labourer in the neighbouring villages and was occasionally transporting cattle to the Ahmedabad market.

Figure 4 Geographical location of the three village case studies. Samio village is represented in red, Pamori in blue and Haroma in purple.

Along these three village case studies, certain individual key actors shaped this investigation and opened the doors to precious informants in different sectors. My first contact was the Vice-President of the Kutch *sarpanch* association, **Iqlab**, the *sarpanch* of a small village near Nakhatrana who had entered politics recently with BJP and quickly climbed the ladder of the party machinery to become the party's face in the *tehsil*. Thanks to his new prerogatives, he was in touch, directly or indirectly, with most of the actors I wanted to meet both upwards and downwards: he introduced me to **Harpal Singh**, this popular BJP politician and leader of the *Sardars'* village, he was well renowned in the entire district and acclaimed for his personal connections with Narendra Modi. **Baku** was the first important broker-fixer-contractor that Iqlab introduced me to, someone working at lower levels, but essential to get in touch with companies' representatives and local henchmen (security guards or drivers) as he ensured the link between these two tiers. The local heads of wind companies were usually interested to meet me in the beginning (**Rahul S.**, a Punjabi Hindu from Chandigarh and manager of a company's land team was one of them), but soon delegated this work to subordinates who easily agreed to take me on their working day: **Dasram** was a 25-year-old Gujarati man from Ahmedabad who had been deputed to Kutch since a couple of months when I first met him, he was in charge of land surveys. **Harjinder** was an interesting character, a Punjabi engineer coming from Kolkata and in charge of wind turbines assemblies, and as I will explain later, he was by no accident given mostly border areas to supervise. Finally, **Virajsinh Jadeja** is a local Kutchi Rajput who joined the wind company seven years ago and has been acting since then as the 'local' face of the land team, who knows the intricacies of village politics, caste, and

state bureaucracy. He was a privileged contact as he introduced me to local state officials, policemen and other office clerks. Most of my interactions took place at lower tiers of the bureaucracy: **Avrat**, a Dalit informant from Dayapar, was a local revenue operator in Lakhpat *taluka* since his brother vacated the seat six years ago and became a land broker on his own working for wind companies. Virajsinh also introduced me to **Kiva R**., a Rabari police constable from Nakhatrana who had joined Gujarat forces in 2018 and had been deputed since then to Lakhpat *taluka*, working closely with wind companies as he intervened on contested wind construction sites.

4.1.2 Method of Investigation and Data Collection

I wanted to investigate the reconfigurations of territory, space, and land following the arrival of wind turbines in Kutch landscape and the new relations of property, citizenry, power and domination that emerged out of it. To undertake this, I needed to rely on an ethnographic qualitative method of investigation that combined semi-structured and structured interviews, informal conversations, participant and non-participant observation, household survey, collection of secondary data and map making. I also maintained a daily journal to record my observations and comments about the ongoing investigation, its trajectory and evolution. I conducted 70 interviews, lasting between 15 minutes to three hours. My interviewees were divided by broad actor categories, caste, and religion: company, local state, broker-fixer-contractor or politician (mediator), villager (farmer, pastoralist or landless), activist; Rajput, Patel, Brahmin, Rabari, Dalit, Koli, Jat, Mandra; Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh. All my informants' names have been anonymised, including villages but not *tehsil* administrative units like Nakhatrana, Dayapar or Bhuj. This means that the village names mentioned above and in the rest of the thesis are not the true names. This was an agreement made with villagers to ensure the anonymity of the cases and informants. Wind companies' names have not been disclosed either and hence will be referred to in the rest of the thesis with the generic term 'company'. I list below the different methodological tools and data collected for each category of actor.

4.1.2.1 Village(r)s

My first entry in Samio, Pamori or Haroma villages was justified by a household survey (30 household in each village, the sample was representative of the caste configuration). This tool was relatively important to apprehend the nature of land ownership (who owns what), caste relations, livelihood sources and the structures of inequality in a given village, asking the following questions to each household: what are your principal sources of income, how much

land and cattle do you own, what crops do you grow, are you dependent on *gauchar* land for household use only or for income, and later on added a question on the participation to any blockade or anti-wind turbines action, and if this was mediated by someone else. Roaming around the village and between the different caste compounds, the survey justified my daily back and forth in the village, giving me the opportunity to discuss with a variety of villagers, both outside the village common spot, and in the intimacy of the house.

Once a trustful relationship was established with villagers, I would get invitation for social events, birthdays, marriages, religious celebrations, harvest parties and later on for more crucial moments like village blockades, *panchayat* meetings, election gatherings, etc. My visits to villages were usually organised as follows: I arrived around 4 P.M, as most people were still working before that, I surveyed households and discussed with villagers in the central spot till 8 in the evening and then I was invited for dinner with a specific family, with a specific caste compound or directly on the fields. These evening dinners gathered different families, usually from the same caste, and they were privileged moments to discuss more intimate issues regarding land, caste relations, but also gossips and rumours about wind turbines. My informants would often clarify, contradict or dismiss what had been said in the collective discussion at the public spot. I would ask questions about villagers' relations to land and structural changes in livelihoods, how the arrival of wind turbines may have disturbed the social and political organisation that ruled the village, who benefitted from this arrival and how did people react. If it was difficult to grasp the everyday dimension of villagers' political reactions to wind turbines via interviews, this was mostly done by attending social gatherings that were extremely rich in observation. These moments revealed the important horizontal power relations that governed everyday village life.

4.1.2.2 Companies

My relations with companies evolved around different sites and with different timelines: engineers and staffs' working day was organised around wind turbines construction and project timeline, if they were working officially from 8 in the morning to 5 in the evening, this could easily get extended till 10 P.M and some staff even got calls in the middle of the night. My initial interactions with companies' representatives usually involved interviews of head managers about broad project scope and expansion in Kutch, but rapidly shifted to informal conversations and observations of ground staff daily work routine. As they spent a lot of time waiting, I was able to enter their intimate space, sharing lunches and dinners with them, rest

time at the guesthouse or evening employees' parties after a tiring day of work. During these moments, I would pay attention at their relations to the surrounding space and environment as we walked between wind sites, their interactions with wind workers, villagers and brokers, the kind of people they met regularly and the nature of their exchanges. When asking open questions, I would try to understand the different stages of wind project development, the role of land (survey, acquisition, compensation, conflict), brokers, money and muscle in the completion of projects. These questions help me to investigate how companies acted as agents of frontier-making and territorialisation in their daily work routine and through the expansion of border infrastructures. While visiting wind sites with companies' officials, I also spontaneously collected GPS coordinates of the turbines, contractors' camps and storage areas, always with the consent of my interlocutors. A year later, in 2022, I produced maps using Geographical Information System (GIS) software and the coordinates collected on the field to represent different levels of wind power development (two of these maps are discussed in chapter 5).

4.1.2.3 Mediators

Be it (professional) land brokers, companies' fixers, contractors or political leaders (*sarpanch*, *panchayat* members, party representatives), my interactions with these mediators were mostly shaped by interviews, informal conversations and observations at certain key moments. They gravitated around certain regular spaces: chit-chatting at tea-stalls, roaming around local state compounds (revenue and police departments), paying a visit at companies' guesthouses, or inspecting wind construction sites, contractors' and storage camps, some even had their own private offices. Those I became close to would occasionally bring me on their 'tours' of wind construction sites, introduce me to their 'local partners' (understand local henchmen), and invite me at public gatherings during elections times. During our discussions, my questions would focus on their knowledge of land acquisition, paperwork and trajectory in the wind assemblage. I would try to identify the social conditions, the capital and knowledge required to become a mediator and how this would get translated into forms of territorial control, state mimicry and caste/ class domination.

4.1.2.4 State Officials

State officials from different agencies and at different levels (*tehsil*, district and Gujarat) were always more difficult to reach than other actors. I met District Magistrate (DM), Sub-district Magistrate (SDM), *mamlatdar* (*tehsil* revenue department head), Police Sub-Inspector and also

officials from energy ministers in Gandhinagar on rare occasions. Exchanges with these high-profile state representatives were quite formal, superficial and rather stayed on the 'legal' and policy dimensions of wind energy and land acquisition. I rather spent most of my time in the tiny rooms of the *tehsil* revenue department, with operators who happily opened the doors of their office and answered questions about land records administration (maps and surveys), the production of government papers and land transfer procedures for wind turbine projects. Meeting them daily, inside and outside office, I could also observe their interactions with companies' representatives and land brokers who roamed around their buildings. These daily visits emphasised how much the boundaries of the state were slowly reconfigured and stretched both inwards and outwards.

4.1.3 Temporality, Evolution and Access to the Field

As the fieldwork stretched over a year, it experienced certain changes, evolutions and adjustments all the way. Certain tracks were extremely rich in data at the beginning and slowly dried up as the weeks and months passed, whereas others only really opened and revealed their potential lately after months of 'investment'. Temporality was therefore an important component of this fieldwork, and it enfolded quite differently depending on the interlocutors.

I gained access to the world of wind companies very easily, with the help of influential contacts among the brokerage network and a Punjabi connection (most of the companies' managers were originating from Punjab, a common point with me as I will discuss later). Thanks to a kind of surprise effect and curiosity from company's employees, I got an almost unlimited access to their work. But as soon as these staff started to understand more precisely what my research was about and learned I had visited villages and met opponents to wind turbines, their attitude changed. Although they knew my intentions to meet both opponents and supporters of wind companies, they were not always aware about my exact whereabouts and those staff who showed enthusiasm about my research at the beginning slowly made their distance once they understood I was going to stick around for a while: they started avoiding my calls, keeping things silent, hiding information from me when I was around, cancelling our meetings or pretending sudden transfers out of Kutch, and slowly my contacts in companies' circles shrank after three-four months of presence on the field.

Companies' own race towards remaining 'empty' areas also influenced the trajectory of my fieldwork. When I reached the field in January 2021, I had the intention to stay half in mainland Nakhatrana *taluka* and then move to the coastal area of Mandvi, where projects were older. But

companies were all moving up north, towards villages like Pamori and Haroma. They were getting closer to the border and to Lakhpat *tehsil*, as all the machines, workers and contractors had left Nakhatrana and slowly moved to Dayapar when I arrived. For these reasons, companies' own temporality and expansion towards the north made me reconsider the initial fieldwork plan and instead of moving to the south in Mandvi to study completed projects, I decided to follow the race towards Lakhpat.

Temporality was quite different in villages. I needed to invest time and energy in each village to gain the trust of my informants, this was a proof of my good faith. But long-term presence in villages was also working to my disadvantage, particularly when external events and factors affected my presence on the field. Overall, I was somehow accepted as long as I remained a guest and did not interfere in the village internal debates, particularly regarding wind power. As soon as I started to pay more regular visits, roaming around the different compounds and meeting people from different castes, my presence became a source of suspicion. I have experienced in all my cases attempts at controlling my comings and goings in the village or even preventing me to come on a regular basis.

These injunctions mostly came from upper-caste leaders and elders of the village (Patels in Samio, Rajputs in Pamori and elders Mandras in Haroma), while they were often contradicted by others, usually young people who supported me. Indeed, my presence in villages generated the same debates, tensions, opposition, and support that the arrival of wind turbines did, as I will demonstrate in chapter 8.

4.2. Ethics and Positionality

Most of the ethical issues that emerged during this research pertain to the question of identity and positionality: my own identity and positionality towards informants, but also the one they would assign to me depending on how I was perceived. These multiple identities and positionalities generated natural questions of loyalty, trust, transparency and by extension suspicion that I needed to navigate.

4.2.1 '*Sardar*-ji, Are You Punjabi or Are You French?'

I am born and raised in the suburb of Paris, from a Punjabi migrant worker who arrived in France in the 1990s and settled ten years ago in the UK, and from a French white woman who works in academia and moved to Delhi to join a private university. For these reasons, I have been evolving between these different countries, France where I graduated my masters and

most of my family still reside, UK where my father lives and the place where I started my PhD four years ago, Denmark more recently as part of a joint program, and of course India, a country I have been attached to for the past 28 years.

As a kid, I visited North India and particularly Punjab regularly, where part of my family is still living. Over there, I was the 'white's son' (*mem ka bacha*), the '*vilatia'* (the one who comes from England), the NRI (Non-Resident or Non-'Reliable' Indian, as people like to joke) and in France I was anything but French, more a 'Hindu' or a 'Paki'. I was, what others have called, a 'halfie': Abu-Lughod defined it as someone 'whose national or cultural identity is mixed by virtue of migration, overseas education, [and] parentage'(1991, 137). In 2019, after a six-month exchange program in India, I decided to embrace religious and cultural signs of Sikhism, by wearing the turban. As a cultural and political motive, I decided to become what people call a *Sardar* or turbaned Sikh. Although I was quite accustomed to North Indian social and cultural norms regarding caste and gender, I first experienced Gujarat and Kutch during my fieldwork in 2020 and 2021. All the religious, caste, culinary or even linguistic specificities of this region were unfamiliar to me (I did not speak any Gujarati or Kutchi but became more fluent in Hindi over time). As a researcher affiliated to two prestigious European universities, a non-Gujarati and a non-Kutchi, but an identifiable *Sardar* who people would easily associate to Punjab, I was not a complete cultural insider to my field nor a total outsider.

This position was entitled with both advantages and disadvantages. Contrary to what Gupta and Ferguson (2023) criticised in anthropology and ethnographic investigation, my relation to the field was not based on conceptions of otherness, exotism and distance from home (defined as white, European and middle-class). There were also benefits of not being completely an insider: I was out of Kutch and Gujarat, external to the specific caste and religious configurations, although people would regularly enquire about my own caste and religion to fit it in their framework. I was not biased by the traditional middle-class urban Gujaratis stereotypes about Kutch, who imagined it as a 'barren', 'empty' and 'backward' area of Gujarat, although I did imagine Kutch to be radically different from the experiences I had in Punjab and Delhi.

As suggested by Reyes (2020), I was juggling with my visible (race, ethnicity and gender) and invisible (social capital and individual background) positions and strategically using them in different situations to gain access: with state officials and high-profile companies' representatives, I was David, the French PhD student pursuing a research in English about wind

energy in two prestigious universities, while with villagers and local brokers I was 'the Punjabi guy' or the '*Sardar*' as they would call me. Using the visible position (Sikh/ Punjabi) would allow me to distance myself from the westerner background, while the invisible position of having a French background would become social and cultural capital in other situations. I also needed to craft a personal character and history that matched my informants' norms and understanding, masking on some occasions this double identity (Subedi 2009): it was for example incomprehensible for my village informants that my parents did not live together, let alone being separated and re-married. I therefore had to create a policed portrait of myself, where I would carefully think about what to reveal and what to hide about my personal history (Abu-Lughod 1988).

4.2.2 'On Which Side Are You?': Transparency, Suspicion, and Loyalty

I faced a deeply polarised Kutch society torn apart by the arrival of wind turbines: those who got jobs and contracts from companies and those who remained unemployed, those who turned aggressive brokers and fixers and those who remained passive witnesses, in other words *company-wale* (the company guys) and *gaon-wale* (the villagers). Even though my investigation will show that these boundaries were flexible, the question of my own position vis-à-vis these polarised groups was a crucial issue, particularly how to maintain a certain balance and not get caught in internal disputes.

I navigated between different actors with opposite interests, who waged a fierce battle of information and counter-information, whispers, manipulation, and lies. As suggested by Ibrahim, 'people said one thing at one time, and they were quite often contradicted another time' (2021, 96), making triangulation indispensable. I also felt increasing injunctions to choose and pick a side, as a proof of my loyalty and honesty, and if I did not openly take one, informants themselves assigned one depending on how they perceived me. I was considered for a long time respectively as a troublemaker and a social activist helping villagers to oppose wind projects, as a company guy or a broker working unofficially for them (the important number of Punjabis working for wind companies did not help me), a military man working for state intelligence agencies, sometimes a *Khalistani* (Sikh independentist) or a farmers' protest supporter (the 2020-2021 farmer' protest had erupted only few weeks before I arrived on the field). Alternatively, my religious identity as a turbaned Sikh inclined me to be more kin with Hindus or Muslims, upper castes or Dalits. Everyone looked at me in a way that made sense and fit their own framework of understanding.

My relation to informants was a negotiated relationship made of strong hospitality and friendship but also occasional ambiguity, nuanced suspicion, doubt and underground hostility. I could never access completely transparent and honest people, but neither was I was completely transparent or honest with them. Although nuanced behaviour was necessary, I never wilfully deceived or manipulated my respondents, and I strongly adhered to the standards of ethical research that were expected by my two institutions. I rather used to police, conform, and standardise the shape of my interactions with informants. Be it villagers, resisters, supporters/ fixers or companies' staff, we were in a negotiated and transactional process. It was a complex equilibrium between what my interlocutor was ready to tell/ share and what he was not, what we both agreed to know and what we did not. This was usually probed during a 'testing' phase in the beginning of my interviews to assess on which 'side' I was. Sometimes the discussion ended after this testing phase while it also turned into a real investigation: in the three village case studies, leaders and villagers acknowledged having inquired about me and my intentions. The people I interacted with daily used to keep an eye on my movements and whereabouts, on my discussion and the information I collected: 'What did he tell you? What did you tell him? Where have you been? What did you learn?' were regular questions I was asked. I responded to these questions as truthfully as possible, but never compromised the anonymity or trust of any of my respondents.

4.2.3 Siding with the Dominants?

Not taking a side or position openly did not prevent me from being assigned ambitions and purposes that were not mine. During this fieldwork, I always tried to avoid situations of violence, threat, and force as this would have definitely put me on the dominants' side and affiliated my research with their interests. Whenever I felt the situation was going out of hand and my presence was affecting the particular course of events in any direction, particularly towards more violence or tension, I would try to leave and come back later when things had 'cooled down'.

There were nonetheless numerous situations where I almost sided and sat with the dominants, at least from the perspectives of the subordinates and the dispossessed: during negotiations and resolution of land conflicts between companies' representatives and landowner/ user on wind sites or in companies' offices, I would witness situations where companies' staff were exercising direct pressure and threats on villagers with the help of local fixers and 'strongmen'. I was certainly not participating in these events, rather just observing all along, but standing

just behind the companies' staff or the police did not play in my favour and largely strengthened misleading conceptions that I was working for companies or the state.

I needed therefore to draw an ethical line of conduct in my investigation and settle certain rules. It was essential to compartmentalise at best my contacts and informants to ensure the anonymity and security of all of them and a long-term access to the field: early on in the fieldwork process, I took the decision to separate my contacts and visits between the company-broker spheres and the village one. This meant to avoid when possible, visiting and surveying villages where I had already been with companies or brokers and reversely avoid visiting wind turbine construction sites with (opponent) villagers when I knew the staff personally or the broker operating it. In that logic, situations of conflicts because of my actions and presence and potential competing loyalties between different informants would be kept to a minimum. As I found myself in regular situations of ambiguity and got easily affiliated with the people I followed, it was also important to obtain an open consent with new informants and clarify my position: whenever I was accompanying a company's representative, a broker or a villager on his land I would introduce myself to new people as a student working on Kutch politics, land and wind power and would systematically enquire if they agreed to let me sit with them, listen to the conversation and discuss, providing anonymity. The difficulty and sometimes impossibility of these fieldwork situations are common to most research about extractive development issues in an increasingly tense and militarised context, such as in borderland India (Cons and Sanyal 2013; Cons 2016; Sur 2021; Ibrahim 2021).

4.2.4 'Information Was Currency'

While investigating in my early weeks the wind assemblage in central Kutch, I was desperately in search of information and knowledge, in search of contacts and informants who would disclose to me the inner workings of the wind assemblage and open to me the doors of this opaque and shadowy business. In other words, I was in search of data. I soon discovered that 'information was currency' (Ibrahim 2021, 59), and that the data I collected was treated by my informants as such: 'don't teach him too much' said laughingly this head of a company's land team to his staff on our first meeting when I told him I was here to collect information and knowledge about wind power projects (Discussion, 21.01.2021).

As I will discuss in chapter 6, information about land and the wind assemblage was considered as 'gold' and a form of power by many people in Kutch. As I collected and compiled over time much 'gold', this data attracted the interest and curiosity of many people around me who easily

recognised and acknowledged the value of the data I collected: ‘you know much more about wind business than us now’ joked this company representative at the end of my fieldwork, ‘you are doing a PhD on wind power, then you are going to become a doctor on ROW (reference to wind site blockades), I hope you will not teach these things to villagers here (laughing)’ he added (Discussion, 21.11.2021). This anecdote reveals how much people around me wanted to know the content of my research, get actively involved, interfere and influence its orientation. Everyone saw in my research a way to serve their personal and private interests: company people and contractors definitely wanted me to depict their work in a positive way and confirm that villagers’ reactions to wind turbines (blockades, opposition) were mere thefts and money extortion, they also wanted to understand how villagers were organising; village contestants or activists assigned to my research the difficult mission ‘to reveal the truth’ about wind business, companies and politicians’ corruption or comply with the official ‘unity’ narrative story in case of village resistance movements. I tried to answer these injunctions at best, disclosing some information when I could, but I was not in a position where I could be completely transparent with my informants as this would have potentially breached security and anonymity of other informants. On some occasions, I even had to make distance with people who were too invasive in my research. I had to police our interactions, keep them casual and limit as much as possible the amount of information I was sharing with them. These decisions and strategies can be quite common in the field, and in this matter, I am extremely indebted to the ethnographic work of Ibrahim (2021, 2008) and particularly their ability to navigate multiple identities and complex political fieldworks. The questions discussed in their last monograph about positionality and ethics helped me make sense of many complicated situations and positions I experienced in my own fieldwork.

4.2.5 Researching on the Indo-Pak Border

The border started to become real and concrete when I moved more regularly in the area around Haroma. Along the usual suspicion that I was working for wind companies, I was now suspected of something completely new: ‘did the CID or the CBI send you here to check on us?’ asked this villager from Haroma on one of my first visits (Discussion 03.10.2021), using acronyms I had never heard of before, (CID referring to the Crime Investigation Department, CBI to Central Bureau of Investigation). These concerns were of course related to the proximity of the border (less than 50 kilometres) and its ‘sensitivity’ (understand religious composition) that had put Muslims villagers (and particularly pastorals) under specific scrutiny and surveillance from state agencies. Then, also my visible *Sardar* status (and all the

representations it conveys around martial and military race) largely favoured affiliation with police and military agencies.

Surveillance from state agencies became more concrete towards the end of the fieldwork: ‘people from Ahmedabad and Delhi came this morning and asked for you, they showed me their cards and they were related to CID and CBI. They were asking questions about you’ said my guesthouse landlord as I came back after two days spent at Haroma (Discussion, 24.11.2021). Apparently, my foreigner status had been ‘discovered’ by the authorities and I was accused of having breached in a ‘notified area’, referring to those spaces around the actual border that are off limits to those without formal authorisation to enter it. Police later came to my room, and I was asked to vacate it immediately, go back to Bhuj and obtain the proper authorisation. Moving from District Magistrate office to Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) station and BSF headquarter in Bhuj, my foreigner-insider status was now at stake:

> ‘We need to check you don’t come from Pakistan or you are not related to them, we get a lot of intrusion here. People like you come on research or tourist visa, and they actually get intelligence for ISI (Pakistan intelligence services). How can we be sure you are the PhD student your pretend to be? Who are you Mr. Singh, French? Punjabi? Who do you work for and what do you do here?’ (Discussion at the police station, Bhuj, 27.11.2021).

If for a long time, being a Punjabi *Sardar* originating from France had been an advantage, this time, the dual identity was not playing in my favour. The ‘non-reliable’ joke in NRI appellation was taking all its sense and my turban rather awoke suspicions of Pakistani affiliations.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the methodology and research design adopted for this study. I detailed how this was following an ethnographic qualitative method of investigation that combined different data collection tools. As this fieldwork was governed by the temporality of everyday life and agrarian change, time was an important component of the evolution and access to the field. Evolving in an extremely sensitive landscape made of suspicion, loyalty and hostility, I outlined the important ethical and positionality questions that erupted during and after the fieldwork. Through consideration of respondents’ anonymity and confidentiality, flexibility regarding my position and common-sense decisions, I managed to navigate safely (for me and for my informants) a polarised and conflicted field.

This chapter will guide the reader for the next four empirical chapters, and provides the methodological framework to understand how, why, where and with whom the data was collected.

Chapter 5. Wind Frontiers and Reconfigured Territories: Wasteland and Infrastructural Colonisation, Land Erasure and Territorial Control

Turning certain spaces into a malleable and exploitable resource frontier is a long process, a project always in-the-making, never completely achieved. Frontiers are mobile, mutable and expanding projects, and for this reason they constitute zones of 'not yet mapped, not yet regulated. It is a zone of unmapping: even in its planning, a frontier is imagined as unplanned' (Tsing 2003, 5100). In this chapter, I engage with the new tensions and frictions that arise when the frontier meets the territory. I argue that turning Kutch into a new major wind corridor 20 years ago followed a certain configuration, or juxtaposition, of 'intertwined materialities, actors, cultural logics, spatial dynamics, ecologies, and political economic processes [I would also add temporalities and discourses] that produce particular places as resource frontiers' (Cons and Eilenberg 2019, 2) and formed in this case a wind (frontier) assemblage. I suggest that the frontier-making of Kutch was on the way before the arrival of wind power in the region and that its current trajectory is still going through several phases of transition and change. For these reasons, I aim to analyse in this chapter the discourses, imaginaries, representations, and technologies of knowledge production about Kutch, its lands and populations that paved the way to a massive wind turbines expansion.

The chapter shows how the wind frontier assemblage enforces a process of mapping and unmapping space, annihilating, and erasing existing land uses and livelihoods, rendering people and land disposable through the construction of 'wasteness' and 'emptiness'(Baka 2013; Gidwani 2013). In parallel, a new world is established, a new set of relations with space and nature, new claims, uses, and norms emerge out of reconfigured wind territories (Franquesa 2018). These are highly dispossessive and destructive in nature, they reproduce the colonial nature of infrastructures (Dunlap 2018c, 2021), and they complete a process of territorial control, fractured hegemony and omnipresence in space and people's lives.

In response to one of the key concerns of this thesis, namely investigate the reconfigurations of land property relations, value regimes and the blending of state and capital territorial practices following the arrival of 'green' energy infrastructures, this chapter is a direct contribution to the land making and unmaking, resource frontier and territorialisation debates

outlined in chapter 1 (Li 2014; Rasmussen and Lund 2018; Sud 2021). In the first section of the chapter, I argue that the making of a 'new' wired and cabled Kutch by wind electricity extraction has been relying on the 'wasteland' discourse regularly mobilised in the district to justify the erasure of land and people. As new agents lay hands on the land and impose new temporalities, materialities and spatialities (section 5.2 of this chapter), they further achieve a process of territorial control, partial hegemony and domination over people's lives, dreams, and movements (section 5.3).

5.1 (Un)Making of a 'New' Kutch: Wind Frontier, Wasteland, and Land Erasure

This section looks at the frontier-making of Kutch since the arrival of the first wind turbines 20 years ago, and particularly emphasises the importance of exploration phases before the actual construction of turbines (mapping and survey phases). I argue that this process relies on the related discourses of 'wasteness' and 'emptiness' rooted in colonial legacy. These discourses need to be historicised through a discussion of capitalist regimes of (de)valuation. Erasure and annihilation of past uses are discursively but also physically produced through maps, surveys and other technologies of knowledge.

5.1.1 These Lands are 'Just Waiting for Development': Creating 'Waste' Lands and 'Wasted' Populations

Classifying certain lands as 'waste', 'deserted', 'empty' and 'unproductive' complies with a certain political construction. These constructs or categories do not simply appear as such, and neither were 'wastelands' discovered in Kutch with the arrival of wind turbines. This construction follows the long-standing capitalist expansion over space and nature (Gidwani 2008; Harms 2014). Waste operates as the 'political other of capitalist 'value', it is both encapsulating 'society's internal and mobile limit' and 'a fiercely contested frontier of surplus value production' (Gidwani and Reddy 2011, 1625–26). 'Wasteland' has been framed as an untapped potential for capital accumulation, its ordering and integration into capitalist discipline of private property and production constituted a crucial moment of political modernity in Locke's treatise (Whitehead 2010).

'Wasteland' is usually state land, and the power of legally classifying, formalising and categorising certain lands as waste and state-property via bureaucratic means, papers and technology bears an important process of authority consolidation for the classifying institution. In India, this 'terra nullius' discourse has been a powerful rhetorical device to justify colonial

civilising discourses as well as post-independence hegemonic modernism and development projects (Saigal 2011; Baka 2013; Kapila 2022). 'Waste' was and is still more than just descriptive of a certain category of land. It was both prescriptive of human behaviours and ascriptive of moral values. It enforced the 'cultural inferiority and physical infirmity' of colonial Indian subjects and justified a certain kind of political conduct, a desire to conquer and transform the 'savage' and the 'wild' through force and knowledge (Gidwani 1992, 40). The construction of certain lands as 'waste' leads inevitably to the construction of certain lives, livelihoods and practices as 'wasted' (Gidwani and Reddy 2011; Harms 2014; Kelly and Peluso 2015): traditional pastoral practices and the use of common lands for cattle grazing have been imagined since colonial times as 'primitive', 'backward', 'corrupted' and even blamed for environmental degradation (Mehta and Srivastava 2019). This 'waste' discourse justified state appropriation of common lands and the conflation of different land uses: as 'wastelands' were lands that did not generate any revenue, this justification gave the British Crown the right to seize - for example - 'mismanaged' forest common 'wastelands' to convert them into export-oriented timber production (Stock 2022b).

The legal category of 'wasteland' and more generally, state lands in India, still encompasses highly contested and varied lands and uses, both referring to gullied, degraded and marshy lands, but also under-utilised or degraded forest, agriculture and pasture lands. These extremely diverse categories of 'wastelands' have played a crucial role in Gujarat's development strategies and land policies liberalisation since the late 1980s (discussed in chapter 2). This materialised in the attempt to sell off government 'wastelands' and village common grazing-lands (*gauchar*) in two instances (in 1999 and 2005) to the so-called more 'competent' and 'deserving' groups of the society, namely big industrialists and capitalist farmers (Sud 2012, 89).

Kutch's socio-political history of the past 20 years and more (discussed in chapter 3) embodies this process of privatising government 'wastelands' in the interests of more 'competent' and 'deserving' groups. Indeed, Kutch is labelled with the highest concentration of 'wastelands' in Gujarat according to figures from the Wasteland Atlas of India for the years 1992 and 2006 (respectively 41.9% of the district and 16.7%) (Gujarat Ecology Commission 2017). This last figure reveals how much of Kutch's 'wastelands' have been subjected to intense changes, transformations, and competition between 1992 and 2006, first from agricultural interests, then from industrial and mining projects and more recently, from 'green' energy production.

State lands targeted by wind power projects today encompass the legal category of revenue lands and 'wastelands' discussed so far, but also, village common grazing-lands (*gauchar*). To companies' representatives, there is no difference between *gauchar*, revenue land or 'wastelands'. These lands constitute the same flat, disposable, manipulable, stretchable and uniform piece of 'waste'. It can be easily appropriated as 'nobody' used land, or at least not in the productive ways as defined by policy planners in Ahmedabad. According to this state official from a renewable energy agency based in Ahmedabad,

> 'These lands do not hold any value, do not produce anything. We have a lot of wastelands, a lot of empty lands in India, even 15km outside of Ahmedabad you will find empty lands, so imagine how much are just lying there in Kutch, *just waiting for development* [emphasis added]. Nobody uses them properly.' (Interview with a state official, 24.03.2021)

'Wasteland' is much more than just a simple legal category of land; it encompasses almost all types of land in Kutch. As these lands belong to 'nobody' and are the property of the government, the state produces 'rightless' citizens (Berenschot and Dhiaulhaq forthcoming), both *de jure* and *de facto*, as people sitting on 'wastelands' are not entitled to any right to compensation or recognition of previous land rights. Even more, the state 'has deprived them not just of rights, but of the right to have any' (Lund 2022, 5). What Lund here suggested was confirmed by most of my informants from wind companies and the local state that unanimously acknowledged:

> 'Villagers don't have any right to oppose our projects, they don't have anything to say, we are following legal procedures, we have government permissions coming directly from the district collector to install these wind turbines on revenue wastelands. This is not their property, it is government property, if they claim anything it's just illegal encroachment. So, these people don't have any right to stop our work, they don't have any right for compensation or money, basically the only right they have is to shut up' (Interview with a wind company representative, 23.10.2021)

5.1.2 Technologies, Surveys and Maps of Erasure

Mapping technologies, surveys and other 'inscription devices' are powerful instruments 'render[ing] so-called 'frontier,' 'marginal' or 'underutilised' land visible, and available for global investments'(Li 2014, 592), they turn land into a valuable resource for capital accumulation. Mapping and survey procedures deployed by companies at early phases of wind

extraction or by state agencies to categorise and (re)classify lands are instrumental in the artificial making of 'empty' and 'waste' lands. Maps are never neutral representations of an objective reality; they are political choices aimed at legitimising certain resource uses and claims while marginalising or simply erasing others, and therefore they can be easily changed or modified to reflect new territorial reconfigurations and land control (McCarthy and Thatcher 2019). Satellite images and other remote technologies used to map land-cover or wind resources ultimately enforce a fixed and uniformed interpretation of the landscape, and to a large extent, in favour of 'wasteness' and 'emptiness' (Robbins 2016).

5.1.2.1 In the Hands of the State and Companies

The power of (re)classifying certain lands as government 'waste' lands, protected forests or *panchayat gauchar* expediently aligns with the increasing appetite of wind companies for more and more land. In Kutch, it's the District Land Record (DLR) office based in Bhuj that has the power to survey land over time and metaphorically press the power switch, the one that moves land from one category to another (usually from *gauchar* to revenue 'wasteland'). *Gauchar*'s size is defined by the total number of available cattle in a given village, forming the only parcel of land that is commonly owned and fully dedicated to cattle-grazing needs. As it is owned by the village *panchayat*, no *gauchar* transfers or sales can happen without its approval. By re-categorising these lands as revenue 'wastes', the DLR office opens up opportunities and avenues for wind companies to conquer new areas while it considerably curtails and reduces access and rights of villagers to pasturelands. In Samio, my first case study situated in the vicinity of Nakhatrana administrative centre, this power switch was pressed in 2018. At that time, the DLR office decided to resurvey the total land area and produce a new map. The new map showed a fairly reduced size of *gauchar* as it reclassified certain common grazing-lands into government-owned 'wastelands'. This reclassification was certainly not innocent as it coincided with the arrival of new contested wind turbine points in the village: with the new promulgated map, four contested wind turbines points suddenly moved from being located in *gauchar* to government 'wastelands', a reclassification that allowed the company to bypass any agreement from the *panchayat* and seek clearance directly from the revenue department.

Erasure and annihilation of past uses, representations and attachment to land continues at the survey procedures that companies' staff undertake at early stages of wind extraction. I describe in the next section of this chapter (section 5.2) how land moves from 'waste' to hosting value via clearing and cleaning processes, and in chapter 6, I discuss in more details the bureaucratic

and 'papery' journey of land acquisition. Here, I want to discuss what happens before land is acquired, before negotiation and legal procedures are started and even before machines and cranes enter the village. I suggest that satellite images and other remote technologies used to map wind resources and assign specific location points by legal and land companies departments are crucial tools in emptying and erasing the 'old' Kutch while building the 'new' one. This process starts from their tiny company offices, where using mapping and zoning software as well as satellite images, areas of high wind-potential are overlapped on to adjacent lands. In the wind resource map presented below (Figure 5), Kutch has been emptied of everything, of its people, its animals, its peculiar vegetation. It looks like a space of empty, flat, and clean land just 'lying there' and 'waiting for development' to quote the previous government official I mentioned earlier.

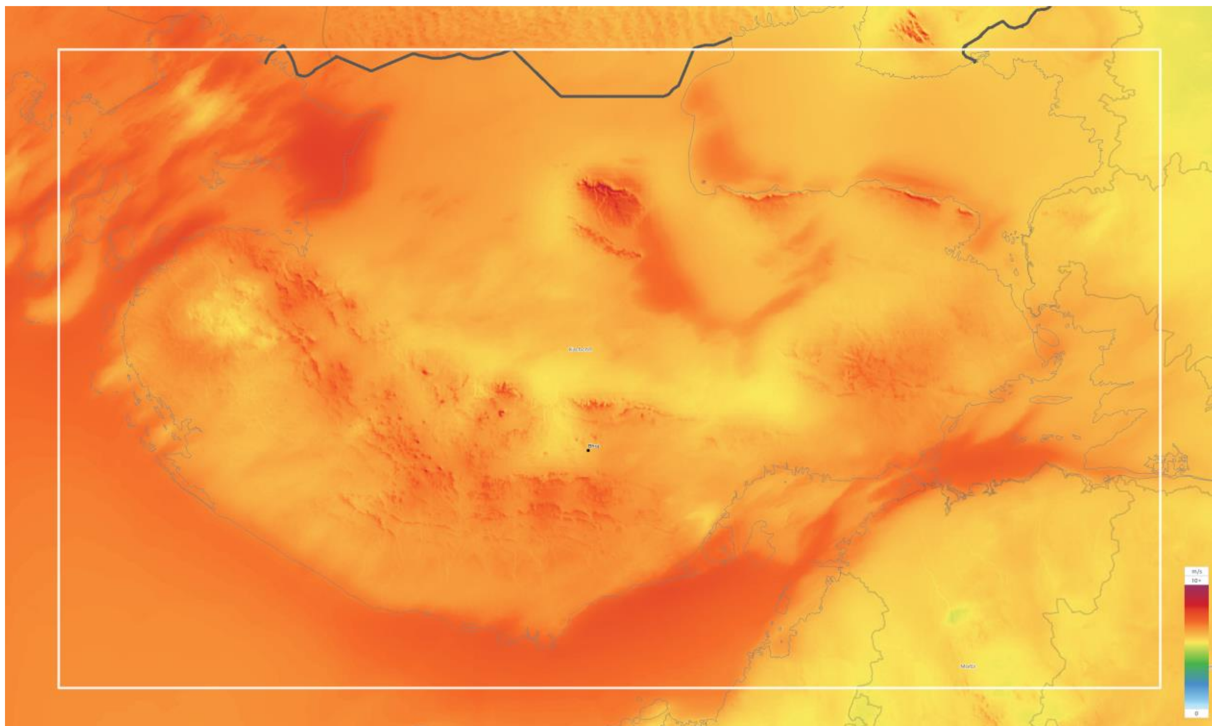


Figure 5 Modified map of wind resources in Kutch[16].

Once the wind sites have been selected, someone needs to personally visit the assigned villages and locations and assess if they constitute 'good' or 'bad' wind locations. Someone needs to bridge the gap between what is on the map or the satellite image and what is on the ground,

[16] Accessed through https://globalwindatlas.info/fr

and in that regard, this decision rests upon the assessment of a few individual company managers and staff.

Dasram was the first land team staff member I was introduced to at the beginning of my fieldwork, in mid-January 2021. When I met him, he had been on the survey team for a couple of months and was responsible for a cluster of four villages. The first day I accompanied him on his jeep, he was tasked to survey three new points located in the vicinity of Pamori village and Dayapar. As he entered the exact coordinates of the first location into the GPS, he went on to explain what it meant to find a 'good' location and what he was precisely looking for:

> 'Our job when we survey locations, is also to survey the type of land, its quality: will it be possible to put the wind turbine at the exact location we have been given by the team at Bhuj, or should we move it a bit. Then we have to look for possible roads, where can we bring them, it shouldn't be on forest lands or *gauchar*, and if we can avoid private lands its better but sometimes, we can't. At that stage, observation is primordial, we can't miss anything because then it might have consequences at the latter stages, like lots of blockades and ROW[17], so *we have to predict the unpredictable* [emphasis added], predict potential conflicts' (Discussion with Dasram, 27.01.2021)

As we got closer to the first location, the road suddenly stopped, we had to get out of the car and finish the last kilometre by foot. I followed Dasram who looked religiously at his GPS to identify the exact point. As we finally reached the top of the hill after 30 minutes of walking between bushes and rocks, he nodded and added 'you see, that's a bad location, it's too far from the main road, the point is situated on top of the hill, it's extremely steep, and there is a private farming land just down the hill. This is going to cost us too much.' Hopefully, the second location was a good draw:

> 'You see this one is a good location, the main road is just a few meters away so there is going to be very little road work, the location is not situated on a steep land and the vegetation here is pretty easy to cut so it means less cleaning and clearing work, there is not a single farmland here, it's revenue wasteland all around, so no people complaining or doing ROW'

[17] Dasram refers here to the Right of Way (ROW). If the ROW normally refers to the right a company has to build roads to access and connect the wind turbines with each other as well as build transmission lines to evacuate the electricity produced, in Kutch, ROW was used in a complete opposite way, it referred to an attempt conducted by individuals to physically block a wind site development for any kind of reasons. I will discuss the significance of ROW in the land politics around wind projects in detail in Chapter 8.

Pointing at the nearby vegetation, he added 'this is nothing right? This is pure waste, what can people possibly do with this land? It's just few shrubs and rocks. For us it's a great location, we can start work in a couple of days'.

Dasram perceived the environment and the nature surrounding him that day in a very peculiar way. What he saw was only an addition of obstacles and disturbances to his work. The diversity of the ecosystem we moved in was reduced to the question of costs, roads to develop, hills and vegetation to cut and clear. This simplification supported his view that everything around us was 'nothing' but 'waste'. He tacked and imposed a single, rationalised and ordered perception of space where everything is organised and disposed for the sole purpose of wind extraction. By doing so, he erased and annihilated any existing uses, perceptions and relations of villagers to this space, but he also negated any value attached to it. There are abundant such meanings of value, as I come to next.

5.1.2.2 'Do You Think a Cow, or a Goat, Knows the Difference Between a Gauchar Grass and a Revenue Grass?' Value and Biodiversity of Kutch's Lands

The lands of Kutch surveyed by wind project officials and declared as 'waste', surely had value for some other people. Forest, pasture, mangrove, and wetlands - available in important numbers in Kutch - produce services that are indispensable for sustaining rural livelihoods. These lands are also crucial to biodiversity conservation in a context of intense climate crisis. The question here is therefore whose value and production regime prevailed and ultimately defined what is 'waste' and what is not? A scientist from the Gujarat Institute of Desert Ecology (GIDE) I met in Bhuj emphasised how monetary and financial values were prominent in mainstream definitions advanced by companies and backed by the state:

> 'When companies install wind turbines, they allege that these lands have no productivity, they are waste, but the problem is that they only count agricultural productivity. Companies or the state never count ecosystem productivity, all the services that ecosystems provide to us, essentially because they have no financial value. Ministries and government agencies never asked us to survey wastelands and assess or count the ecosystem services they provide. So-called wastelands are actually precious for the livestock economy and for the biodiversity: its more than 1000 species of vegetation and 300 species of birds. This is not waste!' (Interview, 08.01.2021).

This scientist was employed by a state institute, the GIDE, but certainly did not understand 'wasteland' in the same way than his counterparts in revenue and energy ministry offices in Gandhinagar, Gujarat's administrative capital.

I accompanied several pastoral villagers from the village of Samio on their usual routine, out in the 'jungle', for cattle-grazing. I could observe how they related differently to the same land that was described as 'nothing' and 'waste' by Dasram. Much like the wind companies, they did not make any strong differences between *gauchar* and revenue 'waste' lands while grazing their cattle but for completely different reasons. To Samio villagers, these lands looked like the same, they were part of one single ecosystem, and they provided exactly the same resources: 'Do you think a cow, or a goat, knows the difference between a *gauchar* grass and a revenue grass?' joked Dev, a youth pastoral Rabari villager I accompanied on several occasions (Discussion, 21.01.2021). These lands are full of resources, plenty of possibilities. They are anything but 'waste' contrary to what wind companies and the state want to show with all their maps and surveys, although it is no doubt hard work to make a living in Samio's jungle. These lands provide minimum survival and livelihoods: Patels and other farmers of the village get access to the best groundwater resources over there, people rely punctually or regularly on the multiple vegetations and tree species available, for religious and medicinal purposes, or in the case of the poorest villagers (Dalits) they sell the natural gum extracted from Acacia trees to the nearby city.

Kutch was experiencing the imposition and juxtaposition a 'new' world on top of an already existing 'old' one. It was the world of (wind) energy production and infrastructure technologies against the world of everyday pastoral and agrarian life:

> 'These two worlds exist in different spaces and operate at different scales. One is a qualitative world, the texture of everyday life, a universe where every name, every piece of land, every food is signified, pervaded by multiple relations rooted in history. The other one, the world of energy, operates in an abstract space, made of magnitudes and flows, the strategic space of state and capital, connecting nature and power, overcoming all obstacles, insensitive to any particularism', these worlds are juxtaposed rather than integrated, simultaneous rather than contemporaneous' (Franquesa 2018, 6–7).

This 'new' world, what I described as the wind frontier assemblage in the introduction of this chapter, produces specific dialectics of dispossession and generates processes of

(re)territorialisation. I will discuss next the modalities of reconfiguring Kutch territories, which lay the ground for these dynamics of dispossession to unfold.

5.2 Territorialities of Wind Extraction

This section is dedicated to the new explorers of Kutch wind resource frontiers. It looks at those agents, mostly companies' staff and contractors, who advance between the 'old' and the 'new'. The previous section was dedicated to the discursive erasure of land and space that takes place at the conceptualisation of wind projects, this section focuses on the physical erasures or the modalities of reconfiguring territories once machines enter the wind site and start digging the land. I analyse the set of rules, norms, uses, rights, and claims imposed on the 'old' world of pastoral and agrarian life, while agents from the wind assemblage transform and reshape 'new' wind extraction territories. I explore the confluences between energy materiality, (wind) infrastructural colonisation and dialectics of dispossession and destruction. I argue that contrary to other findings (Levien 2018; Sud 2021), the arrival of wind turbines furthers the devaluation of Kutch's land and contributes to make land cheap rather than an object of speculation. The socio-political consequences of this devaluation and the development of alternative accumulation strategies for upper-caste landowners is discussed later in chapters 6 and 8.

5.2.1 Energy Materiality, Infrastructural Colonisation, and Dialectics of Dispossession

Wind power, unlike coal or oil resources, cannot be seen, cannot be touched or smelled. It cannot be transported by trucks, trains, or pipelines. It needs a constant and uninterrupted flow of electricity channelled through transmission towers, thousands of kilometres of wires, high-voltage lines and cables, regular substations and utility poles. For these reasons, wind turbines infrastructures have by nature different materialities, spatialities and temporalities that strongly differ from other fossil-fuel energy sources (Mitchell 2013; Boyer 2019). This, in return, shapes specific territories of extraction.

5.2.1.1 Dialectics of Dispossession at the Wind Farm Level

In this matter, wind electricity occupies an even more specific position among other energy infrastructures. Unlike other energy extraction projects like mining, industries, SEZ or even solar plants that are usually situated at one single and delimited location, with apparent boundaries, windfarms do not have any visible or physical boundaries, walls or limits. Typically, a single windfarm project of 300 MW, which is the most common project I have

been studying, is dispersed around large tracts of lands, scattered around hundreds of locations in a 20 km radius, grouped in little clusters of 15 to 20 wind turbines covering up to dozens of villages. A company's representative who previously worked on solar projects emphasised the specificity of wind electricity:

> 'For solar power, land acquisition is done once, at a single time, you have to purchase a contiguous and one-piece surface of land. Once you have established the boundaries of the solar park and finished the project, nobody will disturb you. Wind is completely different: we don't have boundaries, it's covering hundreds and hundreds of kilometres, spread over dozens and dozens of villages. This doesn't stop to the wind turbine sites, it gets extended to a huge network of roads, transmission lines and towers, that connect the wind turbines to each other but also to the nearest electricity substation, the storage areas, the contractor camps, the companies' offices…' (Interview, 10.02.2021).

The modified GIS map below (Figure 6) provides a visual understanding of the kind of space occupation my interlocutor meant.

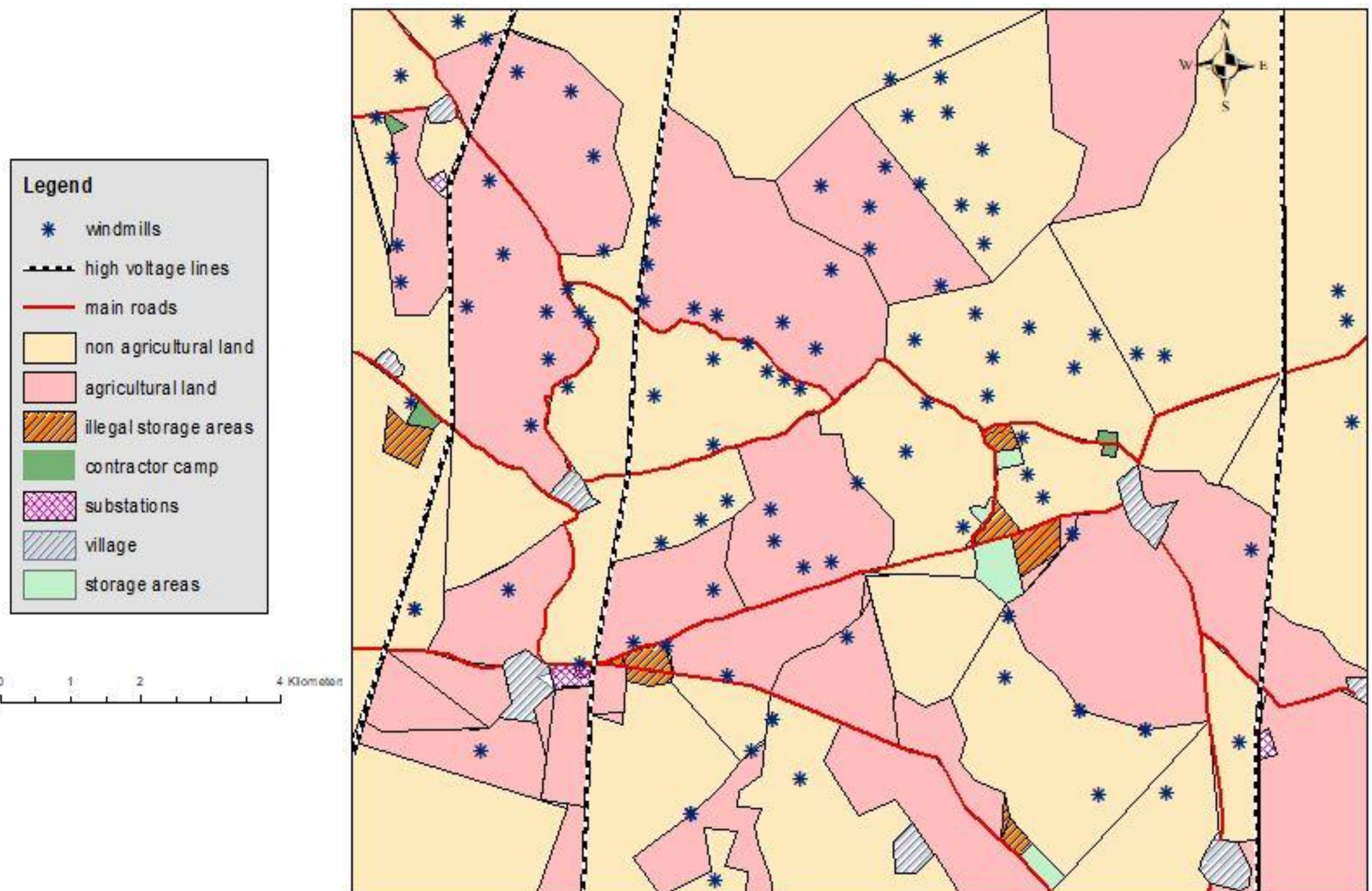


Figure 6 Modified GIS map of different overlapping wind farm projects in Nakhatrana tehsil[18].

The private appropriation of (mostly revenue) lands does not happen at a go, at a single time, but follows different temporal and spatial lines. Indeed, wind companies acquire land on a cluster basis, once they have overcome the land clearance process and started construction, they move on to the next cluster and start acquiring land again until the whole project is completed. It is the land clearance process in each location and cluster that determines and dictates the pace and rhythm of wind turbines' expansion and project completion. A representative from a land team working for a foreign wind company explained how the project he was currently working on was both stretched around time and space:

> 'Our new project has 120 wind turbine locations, it is spread over 15 villages, 5 in Abdassa *taluka*, 5 in Lakhpat and 5 in Nakhatrana *taluka* and work will continue for one year and a half. The purchase or clearance of land is done by grouping, clustering 10-15 locations together: we purchase land for 10-15 locations at one time, on one shot, once the land clearance is ready, we start construction, and we move on to the next cluster' (Discussion, 15.03.21)

What appeared to be a messy expansion over space at first sight was well ordered and planned with the progression of wind turbines following a clear logic based on roads availability, land and geographical continuity. The same company's representative detailed the geographical organisation of a wind farm:

> 'We always try to align the locations, to put 8-10 locations in a geographical continuity, in the same line, so that we have to build only one single road that will connect all of them, that will go from one location to the other, and so on… So, it is really essential that when we put one location somewhere, the next location is not too far, stays in a reachable radius and the same continuity, if you need to change the place of the location, you can move it from one or two land, but you can't move it for four or five kilometres (Discussion with the same company's representative, 15.03.21)

This materiality leads to an on-going, continuous, invasive and cumulative process of landgrab and dispossession, stretched around space and time (Oskarsson, Lahiri-Dutt and Wennström 2019): a company like the one mentioned above establishing wind turbines in a certain village

[18] This modified GIS map does not intend to be exhaustive and map out all the elements of the wind assemblage in this particular area. Some wind turbine points might be missing, small electrical lines as well as other types of space occupation. But the purpose here is to simply suggest that wind power expansion is unlimited, invasive, boundaryless and that it extends well beyond the wind turbine points.

at a certain time does not prevent any other companies or the same one to come later on and start the construction of new locations. Pamori and Haroma are two fine examples of how messy, complex, uncertain, and opaque these dialectics of dispossession can be for villagers. Pamori has been completely saturated by three different wind energy companies in less than four years. A first cluster of five wind turbines was initially implemented in 2018 by an Indian energy company. Since then, the villagers recount '[they] have been completely surrounded by wind turbines' as 55 more locations were constructed from two different companies, foreigners this time (Discussion with a Rajput villager, 25.03.21). In Haroma, the situation was pretty much similar, 60 turbines were operating from two different companies since 2018 at the time I first visited the village in June 2021, and I was told that a third company was surveying some land mid-December for a further batch of 10 locations.

Electricity transmission lines and electric towers have a different materiality than wind power infrastructures for electricity generation. The route of transmission lines and towers from one substation to another is identified, surveyed, and established before its construction. It is easy to know in advance where the lines will pass, as it dispossesses everyone on the designated route at one go, with some time gaps happening between the beginning of the route and the end. This creates in return alternative dialectics of dispossession, where hundreds and hundreds of farmers, private owners and common land users are impacted and dispossessed at the same time by the same single transmission line. High-voltage lines and electric poles are mostly developed by state electricity transmission companies whose mission is to connect all the wind electricity produced in Kutch to the national grid, whereas small lines and wires connecting wind turbines to each other and to the nearest substation are owned and installed by private wind companies. Because companies have the legal right (Right of Way, ROW) to access their turbines via roads and evacuate the electricity generated to other places via transmission lines, there is no proper land acquisition procedures or land selling/leasing as in the case of turbines, but simply compensation to whoever is the landowner.

5.2.1.2 Who Dispossesses? Messiness, Complexity, and Uncertainty in Dispossessive Processes

Denying access to information, messiness, complexity and uncertainty in dispossessive processes are common features of resource extraction (Oskarsson 2013). The fragmented and multi-layered inner organisation of the wind assemblage - with numerous different actors and players - largely strengthens this phenomenon and manufactures an overall appearance of messiness and complexity.

Indeed, people are being dispossessed or losing access to revenue land pastures on grounds of a multitude of companies and contractors, each of them performing specific tasks and missions in the overall wind energy production chain. A main line of distinction exists among the extractive and dispossessive agents of the wind assemblage: on the one hand are the companies who own the project, usually called the customers or Independent Power Producers (IPPs) (coloured in orange in Figure 7 below), and on the other hand are the companies that run the project on a daily basis and take part in any task of the production chain (land acquisition, civil, mechanical or electrical work) and these are called manufacturers-developers (coloured in purple). Adani, ReNew Power, Alfanar, EDF and Enel are the most important customers or IPPs I have heard or encountered in Kutch, they only supervise projects and usually acquire land through a third-party, the manufacturer-developer, or on their own. Suzlon, Siemens Gamesa, General Electric, Vestas, INOX, Green World, Opera were the principal manufacturer-developers. Contractors constitute a third type of agent that are mostly divided along the work or mission they accomplish, for each stage of the construction. This means that foundation work, wind turbines assembly and erection of electric lines is each done by three different contractors, just like for security, storage and transport.

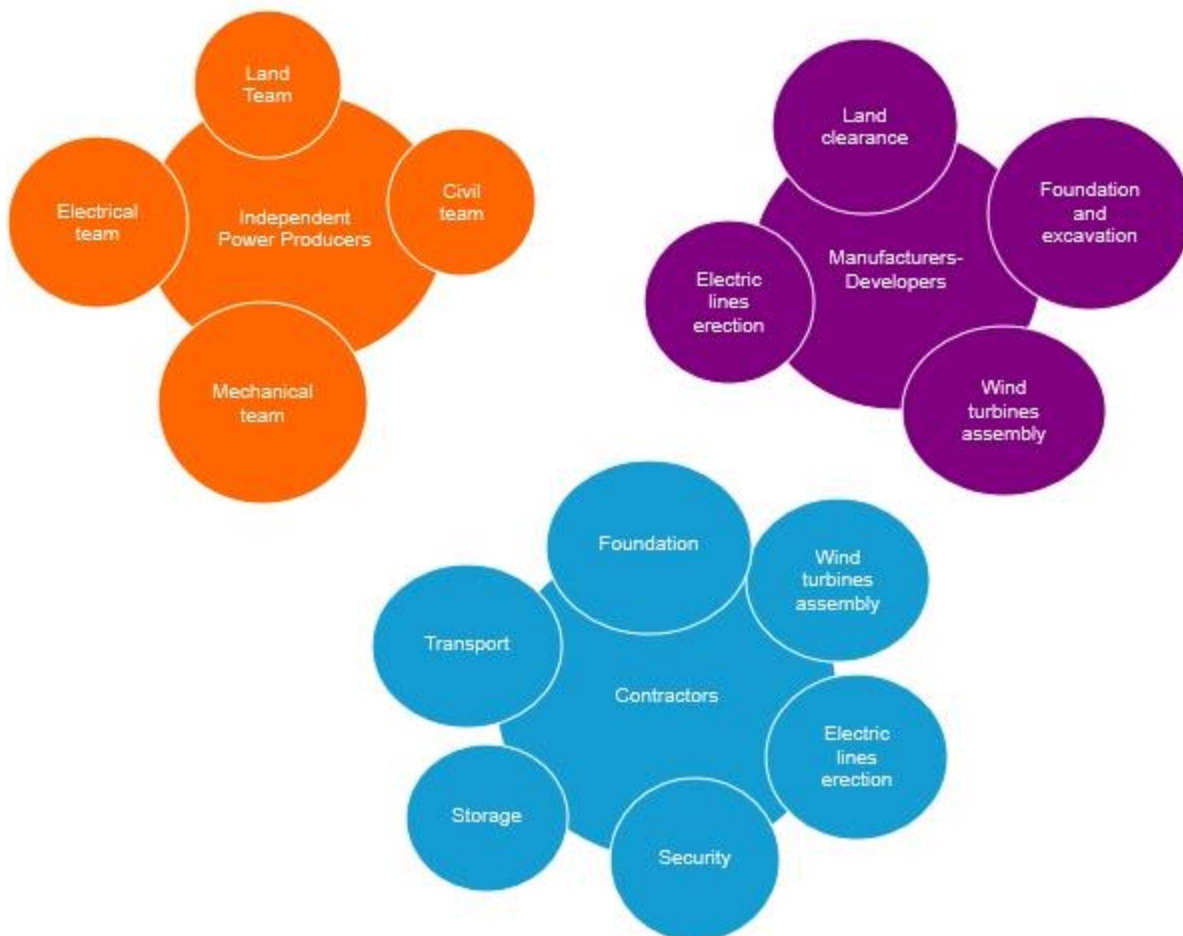


Figure 7 Concept map of the three types of actors involved in dispossessive processes. Each colour represents one category of actor and the different categories of tasks and missions accomplished. The independent power producer owns and supervises the wind farm project as a whole and delegates the everyday construction and operation of wind turbines to the manufacturer-developer(s). The latter subcontracts different skilled and non-skilled work to the contractors.

This complexity of interrelated dependency between and within companies and contractors, who both competed with each other but also collaborated and raced for space and land, largely fuelled a tremendous confusion among villagers about who was dispossessing them and to whom they should claim their rights (for compensation, for jobs…). As I will discuss in chapter 8, (road or machine) blockade was the preferred mode of reaction to the arrival of wind turbines when villagers wanted to claim rights and negotiate for some money or a job. This mode of reaction also ensured that the concerned company's interlocutor would come quickly to the wind site in order to negotiate, either with money or with force (as I will explain in chapter 6, blockades are costly for companies).

5.2.1.3 At the Village and Wind Turbine Level: Illicit Appropriation of Space

In the same invasive logic as the rest of the wind farm, the wind turbine location site operates as a boundaryless and ever-changing zone whose delimitation and shape gets distorted and stretched, depending on the different construction stages. It functions as a bubble, a disconnected and 'extra-territory' for the time of the construction (usually for two-three weeks), with its own set of rules, codes, technical vocabulary and terms; its own autonomous ecosystem of heavy vehicles and machines, cranes, water tanks, assembly platforms and boom-up areas where the turbine is assembled, 4-wheeler boleros from the company, wind workers and their camps. This temporary bubble sometimes gets broken and even infiltrated by external and disruptive elements that completely contrast and do not fit at all within this world of heavy machines and cranes. The wind site is also a burning spot for eruption of conflicts, contestation, and opposition where villagers come to stop and block the machines (temporarily), as well as the project development. It is also the place where negotiations and compromises on compensation, job and money are being discussed between companies' land team and contestants, out of sight from the public eye, where contestants are being recruited by companies, where domination and violence are exercised and sanctioned with the help of brokers-fixers or the police (I will provide concrete evidence on this in chapter 6).

Draped with 'an air of legality' (Lund 2022), endorsed by the coercive powers of the law, of state's regulations and land policies that have been handing over government-owned 'wastelands' to private investors, wind companies advance in these seemingly 'conquered'

territories, with a strong sense of impunity and untouchability. For these reasons, they rarely restrict themselves to the one-hectare land allotment per location they are given by the revenue department and therefore an important dimension of wind power land appropriation is situated in a grey zone, between legality and illegality, each licit or legal land acquisition having its illicit and illegal duplication. ‘Licit transactions […] may follow from illicit processes’ (Tellman et al. 2020, 176) but they may as well produce them. Land can be easily manipulated and distorted, ‘it has to be physically aligned to fit state records’ and companies’ interests (Sud 2021, 103). Naresh, an environmental activist I met in Bhuj, emphasised that companies were occupying and clearing much more land than the right they have on paper:

> ‘Revenue department gives them one hectare per location, but you know they clear everything in a four hectares radius to store their material, all the machines, cranes and trucks, to create their assembly platforms and boom-up areas during erection stage. At the end for one cluster of let’s say 25 locations, it is not 25 hectares of land that have been cleared, but a hundred. This is a hundred hectare of land and grass missing for pastorals.’ (Interview with Naresh, 05.04.21)

A *talati* I met in his office at Dayapar’s *taluka panchayat* even suggested that most of the road network and electric lines carved out by companies on revenue or private lands were done completely illegally:

> ‘For road construction and electric lines, they don’t even ask for permission although they should, it is compulsory to obtain permission from either *panchayat*, *mamlatdar* or the private owner before constructing new roads and lines, they should provide compensation, but they don’t. They don’t need to ask as they are backed by powerful people, so they do whatever they want, they put new roads wherever it suits them best. The only thing legal in wind power is the order they get from the collector office in Bhuj, or the sale agreement they signed with private owners. Otherwise all the rest, all the roads are illegally set, without authorisation. There is a whole field of wind turbines which is illegal, without permission, authorisation or any order.’ (Discussion with a *talati*, 25.11.21)

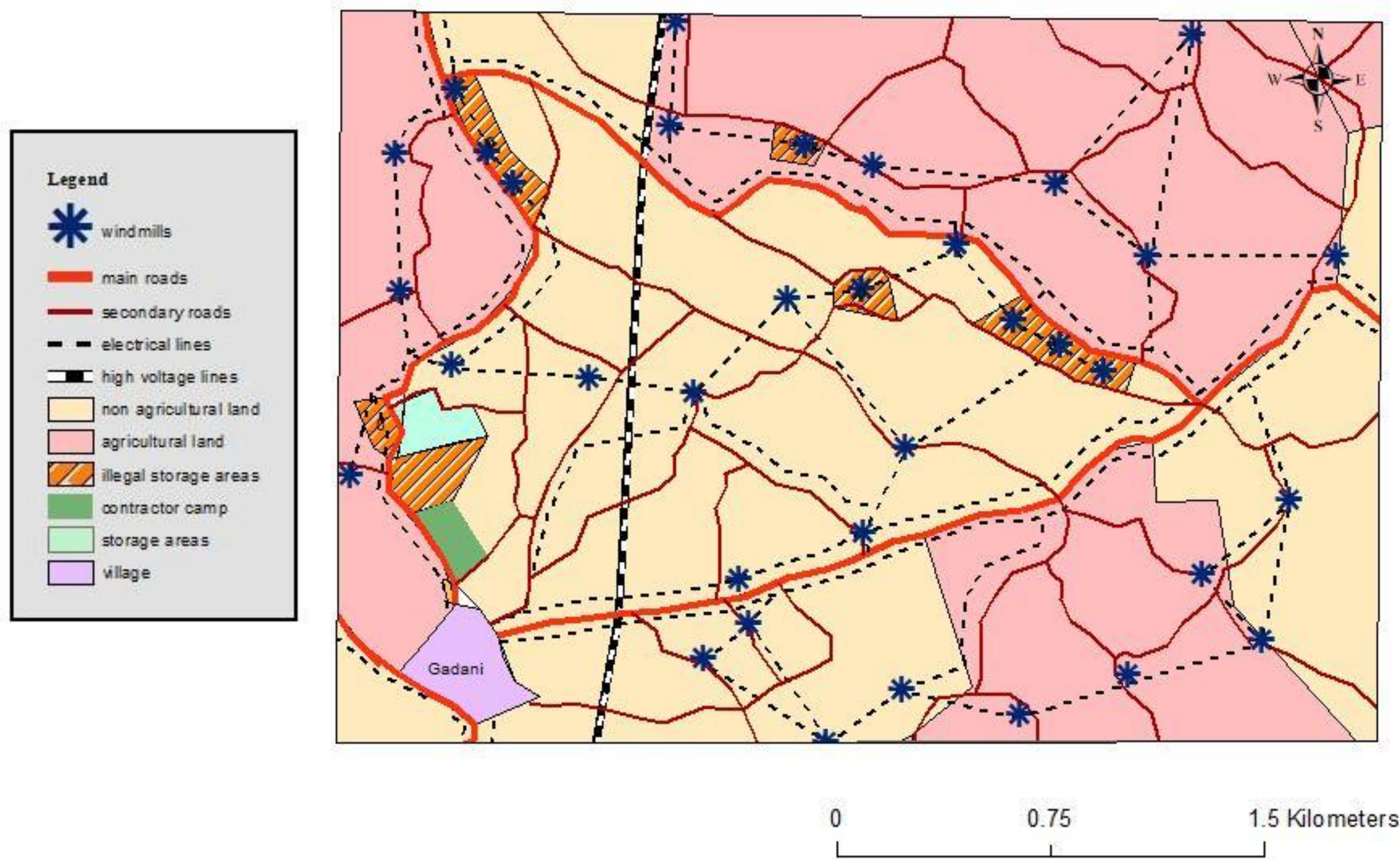


Figure 8 Modified GIS map of Gadani village and the surrounding wind turbines[19]*. This map suggests that most wind turbine sites, storage areas or contractor camps get extended way beyond their designated areas. Small electrical lines and secondary roads constitute a completely new network of circulation.*

Indeed, public lands allocated by the state to wind companies are like private property in the minds of many engineers. Accompanying a land team staff, Dasram, and an engineer, Harjinder (a protagonist I will discuss in more detail in the following chapters), on a wind turbine location where they needed to coordinate and check how the cranes and machines would fit, they realised that a part of the adjacent land might be encroached a little. Harjinder looked at his colleague annoyed, 'we are going to have a problem Dasram. Whose land is this?'. Dasram checked at his computer nervously, searching for a map of the area, and finally found out that this was also revenue land. Harjinder smiled back and responded with this very evocative

[19] This modified GIS map is also non exhaustive in its content and representation. But two elements have been added compared to the previous map, small electrical lines and secondary roads (that have been constructed or broadened and gravelled by companies).

statement: ‘this is revenue land, right? You are sure? Then it’s like home! [*Sarkari zameen hai na? Pakka? Toh phir ghar ki zameen hai*!]’ (Observation, 17.06.21)

The wind assemblage advances through a continuous and sometimes illicit landgrab conducted by a complex and messy entanglement of different actors. For these features, the wind assemblage constitutes a ‘hydra-like [..] Zone’ in-the-making, that brings ‘more and more land into its ambit’ (Sud 2021, 153–55) and aligns with the colonial nature of (energy) infrastructures: wind turbines operate as ‘territorial weapons that […] ‘roll out’ an apparatus of spatial, economic and psychosocial management’ (Dunlap and Arce 2021, 7) and sustain a ‘modality of conquest’, or ‘infrastructural colonisation’, that ‘normalises socio-ecological plunder’ (Dunlap 2021, 6). Wind infrastructural colonisation in Kutch resonates with more general forms of ‘energy colonialism’, whereby dispossessive and destructive resource material extraction in the margins and frontiers of the state are organised to sustain a continuous consumption of ‘green’ and ‘clean’ energy in regions of social and political power (Batel and Devine-Wright 2017). Ironically, although they have been surrounded by wind turbines, Pamori and Haroma villagers do not have any access to reliable and continuous provision of electricity, let alone ‘green’ and ‘clean’ energy. As night falls, there is no public lighting in the streets of the village, and everything falls dark. Villagers punctually rely on fuel power generators to supply electricity to their households when there are several hours of power cuts and use battery torch lights to navigate between fields. Where does all the ‘green’ and ‘clean’ electricity produced by these huge wind turbines only few meters away go then? Certainly not to them, but to the national grid, and the electricity produced in Pamori and Haroma might end up being consumed thousands of kilometres away.

5.2.2 Destructive Development? Cleaning and Clearing Land

Wind power brings development. At least that’s what everybody claims, from companies’ representatives and contractors to state officials:

> ‘Wind power is bringing a lot of development to this area, to Kutch in general. I first arrived in Kutch in 1995: at that time, being sent to Kutch was a real punishment, there were almost no roads connecting Kutch to the rest of Gujarat, and no good highways connecting the different parts of Kutch, thousands of lignite trucks were all passing on the same narrow road. There was no water and gas connection, no electricity in villages, no school… Life was really hard and wild. Since the earthquake and the arrival of wind, many things have changed, everyone has car and money now. There are roads

> everywhere. But you still have some remote areas of Kutch, particularly near the border, that have remained completely wild and savage, extremely backward, like Lakhpat *tehsil* for example' testified this energy company representative (Discussion, 25.06.21).

As certain parts of Kutch are still imagined as 'wild', 'savage' and 'backward', they need to be physically modified, ordered, (re)organised, disciplined and even domesticated by a set of frontier explorers and pioneers in order to transition from 'waste' to value (Tsing 2003). This process is initiated at the early construction stages of the wind turbine site once the land acquisition is complete and the first JCBs and diggers start clearing land for foundation and road work. Sand dunes are flattened, and the floor is gravelled to accommodate the arrival of heavy machines, trucks and cranes, while some piles of sand are removed from one place and dumped somewhere more convenient. Watercourses are diverted when they intersect a road construction, groundwater sources are depleted when they are situated on a wind turbine location[20] (see Figure 9 below), while hills are simply cut, and surrounding vegetation cleared to make space for wind turbines. An excavation hole of seven metres is dug to accommodate the several tonnes of heavy steel and concrete that will consolidate the base of the foundation (see Figure 10 below), while at later stages all the sand piles and land around is backfilled and flattened on top of the foundation. This clearing and cleaning process actively participates to the material making and unmaking of land and the concomitant making of wind territories: 'it unfixes land from particular materialities and re-fixes it to align with alternate ones', argues Sud (2021, 180).

[20] What engineers called 'water locations', referring to a location situated on a groundwater source and where the water needs to be drained, causing in turn a massive waste of water.

Figure 9 Picture of a 'water location'. The wind turbine point is situated on a groundwater source. The water is drained with the use of a motor pump and released a few meters away from the future wind turbine. (Photo by author)

Figure 10 Picture of two companies' engineers observing the steel construction phase of the wind turbine. (Photo by author)

On more than one occasion, I have accompanied wind companies' staff from the civil team on their day of clearing and cleaning land for foundation construction. I observed how they acted as frontier explorers, pioneers and order-makers in a space that they had initially imagined as 'wild' and 'hostile' and how they contributed to its making, unmaking and remaking.

I was following the engineer Harjinder one day, who was finalising the foundation work on four locations near Dayapar. To him and to his colleagues, none of the four locations were practically fit or even ready to host the arrival of cars, machines, and trucks:

> 'We can't do anything with these lands as it is now, if we don't develop them, it is not of any use for us. First, we will need to clean and clear them from all the vegetation and people, then only we can start foundation and construction' commented Harjinder (Observation, 16.06.21).

In all the four locations we visited, I could spot at the distance pastoral communities grazing their cattle, and the path we undertook was extremely tortuous, to the extent that our car and the machines following us got stuck in the sand for several hours. 'When it's not the villagers blocking us, it's the sand and the rocks, I swear to you my friend, this land is cursed!' added Harjinder. When reaching the final location, my interlocutor got angry because the civil contractor had not done his job properly, a lot of vegetation and trees were still standing at the end of the road, just before the designated area for the machine storage. Moving his hand towards that direction, Harjinder shouted 'why is this waste still standing here? How do you think my machines and cranes will park here with all this shit? Empty it and wipe it all quickly!'.

Indeed, to become the host of valued wind energy production, this space needed to go through harsh changes; it needed to be tamed, domesticated, upgraded. It needed to be carved out and remodelled along more rational and practical organisation. In other words, this space needed to become wind-compatible.

Kutch was indeed changing, and its traditional livelihood sources were largely threatened by the development of wind power projects. Less grasslands and vegetation with good quality were available for cattle, less water for agriculture, and land was largely damaged and disturbed by the construction work of turbines, wires, and electric towers. I will analyse in chapter 8 how people reacted to these reconfigurations and unmaking of space, what coping strategies did they develop and what 'terrain of resistance' emerged out of it.

5.2.3 'The More They Put Wind Turbines, Towers and Transmission Lines, the Less our Lands Have Value': Under-valuation, Devaluation and Making Land Cheap

When Special Economic Zones, real-estate and other industrial or IT development programs arrive in rural India, land usually gets valued in its transitioning from one regime of value to another, or in the words of Sud, 'the land itself is being exponentially, and even explosively valued' (2021, 105). Indeed, in the case of expanded SEZ projects in coastal Kutch, Sud describes a situation where land becomes the object of intense competition and speculation, where it is considered as an investment product in itself offering limitless possibilities of accumulation. This leads to a huge increase of prices and interest in land transactions around what is a Zone-in-the-making. I argue here that wind territories do not follow this dynamic - on the contrary, they are carved out of under-valuating Kutch's lands, artificially making them cheap and then furthering their devaluation.

Everyone agreed that land in Kutch was extremely cheap, be it revenue or private land, compared to other parts of Gujarat. This had physical and geographical factors (Kutch is situated far away and not well connected to the rest of Gujarat) and climate and geological reasons (intense drought seasons, lack of underground water sources and a desert-like ecosystem). Beyond these geographical and climate factors that influenced the price of land sales, I suggest that land in Kutch has also been artificially made cheap and its sale price has been considerably decreased. Indeed, how could something considered structurally and historically as 'waste' and 'nothing', be of any value? This construction allowed wind companies to buy land cheaply[21], and to 'make something [not] *from* nothing, but […] *for* nothing, creating value out of something that has none' (Franquesa 2018, 168). With the arrival of wind turbines in Kutch, land did not become a valuable asset, opening multiple investment opportunities for those who own it. It did not become an object of speculation where people could expect high margins and profits in buying land very cheaply from private owners and then selling it to companies, because wind companies had informally agreed on a common price. The conditions for lucrative wind electricity generation in Kutch were that land had no value and was worth 'nothing', alongside important state subsidies as discussed in the political economy of renewable energy in chapter 2. What had value and was valued was not land *per se*, it was rather what companies put on it (wind turbines) and the electricity they produced.

[21] 4 lakhs per acre in the case of private land and only few thousand rupees per year for one hectare of government-owned 'wastelands', more details on this in chapter 6.

Land was only going to host the value produced, serve as a simple albeit indispensable receptacle or value-container, and for this reason there was no increase in land prices. Additionally, not every piece of land could host turbines, it had to respect a minimum of wind velocity, height, and road access. This was confirmed by one of my informants sitting at the revenue department in Dayapar:

> 'I don't see any increase in private land transaction and particularly in the price of purchase because wind companies have specific criteria to respect right, they are not interested in every land available. They will buy only the land that they need for a specific location, they will buy max 4 acres per location. And then, almost all the companies have the same fixed rate, 4 lakh per acre, so there is no room for much negotiation or bargaining, you can't really get more than that' (Discussion with Avrat, 02.03.21).

Villagers owning private lands that were coveted by companies were facing two choices: sell their land after an intense under-valuation that had decreased the sale price they could expect, or continue their (farming) activities surrounded by other wind turbines with the risk of getting their land further devaluated by the process of wind extraction. Land was therefore artificially made cheap by companies, because villagers were left with no other option than to sell their land to companies at a price fixed and imposed by the latter. This company representative reminded me that the bargaining power was in their favour because of a simple market mechanism, the law of supply and demand:

> 'Honestly, who else is going to come so far away until Lakhpat, travel hours and hours, suffer all of this just to buy their rubbish and sandy lands, if not us [wind companies]? Nobody of course! So, these farmers have no other scope or no other options than selling their lands to wind companies, that's the only development pathway they have. Plus, we give them good money, around 4 lakhs per acre, that's way more they can expect if they sell it to another farmer, their land is not even worth 1 lakh!' (Interview with a company's land team representative, 13.02.20)

Those who refused to sell their land to companies, or were simply surrounded by wind turbines, roads and material, faced an important devaluation of their existing asset. As roads were encroaching lands, electrical lines, towers and cables were cutting across them, piles of dust and sand were thrown away during construction stages, farming lands were slowly losing the small value left. A representative of the Bhartiya Kisan Sangh (BKS), a right-wing farmers'

union quite strong in Gujarat and Kutch, detailed the reasons of land devaluation by wind power during one meeting:

> 'These high-voltage lines are completely devaluing our lands, once they put the towers and transmission lines on our land, we can't grow certain crops - those above 10 ft, so this limits our crops and production possibilities. We can't build any house, any building or accommodation nearby the tower or the lines on our land, we can't do Non-Agricultural (NA) conversion anymore, the compensations given by companies for these lines and tower are really low, so then what is left for us? What can we do on our land? What is the value of the land if we can't do anything, if we can't grow anything? The more they put wind turbines, towers and transmission lines, the less our lands have value' (Discussion with a Patel farmer, 02.04.21)

This process of under(/de)-valuation and making land cheap before and after the arrival of wind turbines reveals how much frontier-making and territorialisation dynamics are cyclical, overlapping and self-reinforcing. One dynamic sustains, feeds, and justifies the other, and vice-versa. The frontier-making dynamic and its 'wasteness' discourse, the prerequisite under-valuation of land and existing uses, is precisely what justifies the deployment of wind turbines, establishing new territorial rules and transitioning towards a new regime of value (based on energy generation). But that same wind territorialisation process also produces waste and advances the 'waste frontier' (Lilley 2011; Moore 2015): it materially destroys and damages land through extraction, makes it cheap and 'lays the land waste' (Sud 2021, 181) when it does not devaluate it further, a process that then justifies and sustains in return the frontier-making of Kutch, and its construction as an 'empty', 'abandoned' and 'waste' land.

5.3 Exercising Control, Hegemony and Domination over Space and People's Lives

'What happens after the land grab?' asks Li. What happens to territories, spaces and populations once they are surrounded by wind turbines, machines and cranes, 'what is the actual form of life that emerges in a [wind power controlled] zone?' (2018, 328). The violence continues and becomes visible in everyday routine life. Companies exercise strong territorial control, hegemony, and omnipresence over space as they constantly occupy it, and saturate the field with their presence.

I refer to hegemony as a field of force and tension that spans between domination and resistance. Roseberry advanced a relevant understanding of hegemony, 'not [as] a shared

ideology but a common material and meaningful framework for living through, talking about, and acting upon social orders characterised by domination' (1994, 361). Hegemony is useful as a concept to make sense of situations of domination. This framework is undoubtedly discursive, hegemony is at the level of language, and rests upon governing and controlling people's lives, dreams, expectations, and movements. Indeed, wind companies now almost own the villages (and the people working for them) where they implement wind turbines. Everything around you, every aspect of everyday (social) life seems to be a reminder of wind turbines' constant presence. People must get used to living surrounded by wind turbines, even though they develop fears about these machines that will stick around them for more than 20 years.

But hegemony is not a finished, coherent, or monolithic process, it is on the contrary 'a problematic, contested, political process of domination and struggle' (Roseberry 1994, 358). Wind companies' hegemony is fragile, fractured and at times weak when faced with organised and individual political reactions (chapter 8 is dedicated to these reactions). Hegemony is not simply opposing the 'companies' and the 'villagers', violence and control are also highly exercised within the wind assemblage, through exploitative and oppressive labour relations that segregate wind workers based on their job status, company, and home state.

5.3.1 'This is Not our Village Anymore; This is Slowly Becoming Companies' One'

I have explained earlier that wind power materiality is spread around different temporalities and spatialities, it expands over so many different locations and timelines. For this reason, I argue that the extraction process of wind electricity requires a constant and uninterrupted flow and supply of wind material (blades, nacelles, turbines, wires etc…), raw material (steel, concrete, sand, etc.), of trucks, cranes, JCBs and other machines, of workers and engineers transported via pick-ups and cars to the wind locations. To operate on its full extractive potential, the wind assemblage needs to be constantly fed and supplied with this mix of human and non-human elements.

This leads to a situation where space is constantly occupied, surrounded, and saturated by visible elements and movements of the wind assemblage who exercise considerable territorial control. Companies' staff never spend the whole day at one single location, they keep moving from one location to another, from one civil contractor camp to another, from one village to another, and half of their time is actually spent commuting between spaces. The project keeps

going on, irrespective of the time, it must advance and progress, it has to expand, even at night. The construction of a diffused roads network is a primordial step in appropriating and controlling space. Roads participate actively to the movement of machines, material and men on the ground, they contribute to the control and hegemony of wind companies on space (Simpson 2022).

Beyond constant movement and circulation, one other significant way to exercise control over large tracts of space is to cluster it. As mentioned earlier, companies divide their projects in smaller clusters of 15 to 20 locations and assign specific staff and managers to each of them. Through this cluster-based division of space, the manager takes hold of the cluster he is assigned and develops an intimate relationship with the different villages that fall within his responsibility, to the extent that the cluster becomes 'his' area, 'his' zone of influence. Dasram, the cluster manager I discussed in the previous sections, is in charge of four villages and 15 locations. He was extremely proud to tell me that, only after a couple of months working on this cluster, he knew all the 'powerful guys' of these villages and the 'troublemakers', and that the villages had finally 'came under [his] control':

> 'For my area I know all the *sarpanch*, I have all their numbers, I know the powerful guys, the politicians linked to BJP. I know these villagers very well, how they think, I know who will make troubles and ROW-blockades, I can tell you by his face how much a guy will ask to stop his blockade, in how much I can buy him and make him come on my side. […] In four months, all these villages came under my control, I made a full data list of who makes ROW, who doesn't, what kind of ROW they make, how much they ask… and now they all work for me.' (Discussion with Dasram, 27.01.21)

This stance of omnipresence and hegemony is easily extended to spaces and places outside the direct range of the wind turbine locations, as agents and materials of the wind assemblage also saturate public spaces such as tea-stalls, restaurants, petrol pumps, roadsides and so on. During my numerous breaks at tea stalls on the main highways or in small villages, it was extremely common to see truck drivers, contractors and wind staff randomly gathered there, the ten-meter-long assembling cranes were also regularly halted on the roadside. Companies' staff contrasted (in terms of look and appearances) against what was mostly a Kutchi and Gujarati landscape: they did not wear any *kurta* unlike most of the people, particularly in Lakhpat *tehsil*, but jeans, safety shoes, corporate t-shirts and wireless headphones; they did not speak Kutchi nor Gujarati but Hindi, Punjabi or Tamil, these 'company *wale'* (from company) people largely

stood out in the crowd. They had two types of very distinct car models, Mahindra Bolero and Mahindra Toofan (see Figure 23 in Appendices) and seeing one of them at a tea-stall, a restaurant or on the roadside meant that the companies' staff were somewhere around.

Territorial control is nonetheless never fixed and written in stone, villagers might contest it and companies might have to (re)assert it over time. In these conditions, companies regularly try to regain lost territories, through surprise visits in the middle of a pandemic, they try to take some space and land back. In Samio, all the contested wind projects were frozen since December 2019 and companies could not start the construction until a legal statement was taken by judicial authorities. But companies had the firm intention to resume work on a couple of other locations that were not contested in courts. In less than four months, between May and August 2021, companies tried to resume work on two occasions, first during the high peak of covid second wave in April-May 2021, the second in August. If companies did manage to regain space and built one more wind turbine location in Samio's land during their first attempt, their second attempt triggered a second wave of massive protest and resistance that even rallied neighbouring villages and which lasted for two months. Companies had certainly regained and reasserted a form of control over Samio's lands via these two actions, but this also meant that others had lost it.

Indeed, as the wind assemblage and its sets of human and non-human elements expand over new areas, villagers lose control on their own space and land. With the arrival of wind turbines, villagers of Kutch had slowly lost the right to exercise control over their own village and decide how to engage with outsiders, particularly 'determin[e] constantly who is to be let in and when' (Ibrahim 2021, 48) and ultimately who is not. This villager confirmed my thoughts during a dinner, out on his field:

> 'These people keep coming in and out in the village as they want, day and night, they don't ask us anything, it's like they own the place. Sometimes they even don't tell us when or where they put new locations. They don't tell us that they are starting work. We are aware of this only when we see machines and JCB coming. *This is not our village anymore; this is slowly becoming companies' one* [emphasis added]!' (Discussion with a Rajput Pamori villager, 26.02.21)

Indeed, wind turbines' omnipresence do not stop after the land grab, after people lose access to pasture and grasslands. This will continue for months, and years, the average lifetime of a wind turbine being between 20 and 25 years. I explained in chapter 4 that an analysis of what

happens when companies have completed their projects and left the area is out of the scope of this thesis. Rather, I decided to investigate in this chapter and in the following ones the reconfigurations that took place just before, during and in the direct aftermath of wind turbines' arrival.

5.3.2 Living Surrounded by Wind Turbines: Everyday Life in Wind Companies' Villages

Living in a place surrounded by wind turbines was something I had never experienced before moving to Kutch. If wind turbines had started to pop up here and there in the European countries I have visited in the last ten years, they were always something distant, something I would rarely see, only on few occasions while on a long car drive to visit some relatives in the countryside. As a kid, I was fascinated by these enormous machines, these mills turning wind into electricity, something I could not see nor touch. But I never had to live or just sleep for a few nights near one of those.

Pamori and Hamora were materialising what Samio villagers feared, resisted and wanted to avoid at all costs: a situation where wind turbines, and their sets of blades, lights, alarms, technical incidents, short-circuits and fires were punctuating the life of the village, from early morning to the middle of the night. Living in a village surrounded by wind turbines had a particular flavour, a particular taste. It had developed an incredible set of fears, rumours, and whispers from villagers all around Kutch about the true impacts of wind turbines. I encountered these rumours and whispers many times as I introduced myself to new informants and mentioned my research topic. People whispered that wind turbines rotation and the sound produced by the blades was decreasing the fertility of women in the village, even preventing some of them to have kids; they also associated the increased lack of rain and intense periods of drought to wind turbines' arrival; cattle would be afraid of the turbines and their sound would produce less milk than before; people living in the direct vicinity of a wind turbine would also complain about the noise disturbance and how much it troubled them during their sleep. Although I could not find tangible proof for all these fears, as wind turbines got closer and closer to villages and houses, they left an intangible footprint on people's lives.

When roads needed to be developed, civil contractors first gravelled and broadened the 'messy' and 'disorganised' paths used by pastorals with their cattle, turning them into ordered and cemented roads that can carry several tonnes of vehicles and cranes. But when it was more convenient, companies just passed these roads right in the middle of the jungle, impinging on

rich-grassland zones or farming lands. The calm pace of cows, goats or camels grazing along the road in Haroma or Pamori got suddenly disturbed by the thunderous movement of cars, cranes and other vehicles that left with a heavy cloud of dust. Fires, explosions and other technical accidents also regularly erupted on wind infrastructures and electrical lines, burning several hectares of grass (*gauchar* or revenue) and farming land, electrocuting animals and even sometimes villagers themselves as wires directly hung loose to the ground (Figures 20 and 21 in Appendices report such incidents in local newspaper). In less than three months of my presence in the village, fires erupted three times in Haroma at different places, burning both private lands, forests and *gauchar*.

As cattle gets access to less rich-grassland areas and to less good-quality grass, they also produce less milk which in turn reduces the salary of pastoral populations from this activity and increases their dependency on informal wage labour. Farming lands neighbouring a wind turbine location, or a well-travelled road also get disturbed, damaged, and devalued by the construction work, an assemblage of dust, concrete and sand as evoked in section 5.2.3. In that sense, the future of pastoral and farming activities in this 'new' wired, cabled and wind power-controlled Kutch looks compromised, as suggested by an informant from Netra near Nakhatrana:

> 'In 10 years, trust me, there will be no jungle left, there will be no space left for us. There will be only cables and wires here, towers and turbines, and all the jungle and the land, its incredible resources that many villagers use to live and survive will be destroyed' (Discussion with a farmer, 26.02.2021)

By doing so, companies and the state create a 'surplus' population in wind turbines-controlled villages that cannot practice pastoralism or farming in peace anymore, but cannot either be employed in the wind sector, a mostly jobless industry that relies on cheap and migrant labour. This 'surplus' population is not fully integrated in the local and global circuits of 'green' capitalism, because as in other forms of extractivism, 'their land is needed', or the access to it, 'but their labour is not' (Li 2011, 286). In a situation of privatised extractive industries, decreased labour intensity and greater labour informalisation, companies do not need 'to recruit, discipline, and reproduce workforces but […] the[y] need to manage and regulate local populations, to keep them well outside the company gates' (Kale 2020, 1220) and in my case well away from the wind turbines. I detail in the next chapter how companies used the power of money to keep villagers away from the scope of wind turbines, ensure the long-term stability

of projects and buy local peace. Villagers are slowly pushed away, out of their villages and out of Kutch, as their main livelihood source – land - is destroyed, and their practices are rendered impossible, extremely difficult, devaluated if not dangerous.

5.3.3 Hierarchised Labour Relations in the Wind Assemblage

Control and domination are exercised outside the wind assemblage, on villagers, their lands and the space surrounding them, but also increasingly within, on those contracted wind workers and labourers that constitute the bottom layers of the wind assemblage. Indeed, the wind assemblage and its extractive dynamic rely on oppressive, exploitative, informal and highly hierarchised labour relations that characterise more generally the political economy of India's labour market (Breman 2019).

If wind turbines construction requires the input of skilled, educated, and experienced staff coming from urban engineering colleges, it also relies on a massive labour force that is fragmented, regionalised, invisible, informal (contracted) and completely masculine. Wind companies (IPPs or manufacturers-developers) 'don't do anything on their own' says this local broker and blockade solver I met in March 2021, 'everything works on contracts, this is the main rule of the companies (*Sab theka pe chalta, ye rule hai company ka*)' (Discussion with a Rajput broker, 04.03.21). Indeed, companies externalise and delegate almost all the different project phases to mediators, brokers and contractors and their role is limited to supervision. For this reason, the wind assemblage works as a complex contract-based business where contractors from different natures, different levels and with different labour play a crucial role in the development of wind projects.

At the top of the wind labour hierarchy were situated the wind energy companies' regular staff and engineers whose working conditions strongly differed from the rest of the wind workers categories I describe below. Companies' hired staff are always staying in hotels and guesthouses paid by the company where meals, laundry and internet is provided, they are accommodated to maximum two employees per room and some of them even enjoy five-star hotel rooms. They are transported to the locations via AC Bolero cars, two or three staff maximum in each of them, with the higher ranked personnel given private cars. These people have a real status, with the possibility of paid holidays open to them, they can bring their families with them, and they evolve along a career path. For the engineers I met, like Harjinder and others, Kutch was their first posting, and they all dreamt of better posting and a promotion in a couple of years. They were the most visible part of the wind assemblage in the public

space, the emerged part of the iceberg so to speak. Because they were recruited directly from engineering colleges by the headquarters of each company, their regional profile was extremely diverse, although certain companies had staff coming mainly from two regions, Punjab and South India (Tamil Nadu and Karnataka).

Then came the crane operators, helpers and trucks drivers who were mostly from Punjab and Haryana and worked for outsider material and transport contractors. Unlike the engineers, they had no formal contract or job security, no entitlement to any paid holiday, sick leave or pension. They had to find their housing by themselves and rent tiny rooms that they shared with five or six other men, usually through brokers who asked more money from people working in the wind business. Indeed, if the arrival of wind turbines did not create any speculation on land and an increase in land prices, the arrival of such wind workers like the Punjabis, but also companies' official staff, produced an important increase in the demand for housing, hotel rooms and guesthouses. Rooms that people could rent for 3,000 INR per month had increased up to 12,000 INR. Hotels would not offer an AC room below 25,000 INR per month as they arguably could get much more (up to 45,000) by renting to companies' staff who had an allocated budget for this. If the Punjabi crane operators were quite visible in the public space, as some of them wore *dastar* (Sikh turban), they overall lived in a certain autarchy from the surrounding environment. Their world was limited to the wind turbine location and their room, and they interacted with the locals only on few occasions at the market or the tea-stall for example.

At the bottom of the hierarchy lies the most informal, exploited, invisible, disciplined and also cheap labour force. This referred to all the unskilled workers who were involved in construction stages (steel work, concrete, excavation, and foundation) and mostly came from Bihar, UP or Bengal. Around 30-40 wind workers were required on a single location per day for steel and concrete work, this could amount to few hundreds of labourers deployed on a single project and split between three or four civil contractors. For this reason, they constitute by far the most massive labour force in the wind assemblage. But at the same time, they were the most invisible and hidden, you would not see them at traditional tea stalls, restaurants or even markets. They also did not live in any of Nakhatrana's or Dayapar's hotels, guesthouses or residential areas like the other wind workers. The concentration and control of these labourers was organised in what was called 'labour' or 'workers camps', referring to these makeshift dwellings constituted in a hurry, out of sight, along roadsides and usually at the edge of villages. Wind workers would stay on the contractor's plant or storage areas and packed in 10-bunk bedded dormitory

containers or even directly on the wind turbine location in tents or huts with very basic amenities for the time of the construction. They were merely 'stored' like any other (raw) material, living between concrete, sand and machines. In these camps, it was the contractor's rule and discipline that governed the workers' lives, how much time they had to work, how much sleep they would get, what they will have for lunch and dinner. They had no chance to leave the camp or the wind site for any other purposes than commuting between locations, and they only made rare appearances in the public space crammed on top of each other at the back of a tractor trolley or a pickup.

Kutchi villagers had the reputation among outsider civil contractors and companies to be 'lazy' and causing troubles. They were portrayed as non-reliable subversive people, who could change position anytime, and for this reason could not be trusted and considered as 'good', 'quiet' and 'disciplined' wind workers. This characterisation of 'laziness' and 'trouble-making' is a common feature attached to communities populating frontier spaces, and linking back to the discussion provided earlier in section 5.1.1, characterising their lands as 'waste' also extends to their labour and their capacity to add value (Gidwani and Reddy 2011; Baka 2013; Harms 2014).

> 'I have to find labour for foundation work. The thing is that in Kutch, nobody wants to do hard and heavy work, people here are lazy, they just want to do ROW and get money from companies, nobody is ready to work. So, I mostly hire labour from UP and Bihar for all the heavy work like steel and concrete, and Punjabi and Haryanvi for driving machines and trucks. These people are hard workers, disciplined and they don't make troubles', testified this Rajput civil contractor from Rajasthan (Discussion, 26.01.21).

Still, companies and contractors had to employ some 'locals', particularly when the latter conducted blockades or ROW actions. They were temporary security guards, car drivers or given small-scale road construction work or electric lines erection.

Conclusion

This chapter has unravelled the last stages of a 'frontier-territorialisation-frontier-territorialisation' cycle that unleashed in rural Kutch with the arrival of wind turbines projects. I have advanced three main arguments.

First, I have argued that the development of wind electricity in this region was firmly rooted in a colonial legacy disregarding land and people as 'waste' because they did not produce anything according to the capitalist value regime. Different discourses, imaginaries and technologies of knowledge and erasure came together as Kutch was turned into a major wind corridor and slowly emptied from its people and its vegetation. Second, I demonstrated how the modalities of reconfiguring Kutch territories for wind extraction were highly dispossessive and destructive: the materiality of energy and the colonial nature of infrastructures have generated unique dialectics of dispossession where land, nature and people have been aligned and ordered with companies' extractive interests. Finally, wind territories have consecrated the control, hegemony and domination of companies' turbines and machines over people's lives, and the new labour regime constituted in the emerging wind industry has been entangled with longstanding oppressive, informal, and hierarchised relations characterising India's current labour market.

Overall, this chapter offered an important contribution to the discussion on (dis)assembling land for resource frontiers and territorialisation: state and companies' 'inscriptions devices' (Li 2014) have been instrumental in making sure Kutch's land was portrayed as 'empty' and 'barren', 'cleaned' of identity, memory and people. The making and unmaking of land's materiality and value (Li 2014; Sud 2021) concretely took place when JCBs and diggers started to clear and clean land for turbines foundation and road work, aligning it with a certain political technology of rule aimed at ordering space (Elden 2010). I described wind power as an assemblage of infrastructural materiality, temporality and spatiality (leading to specific enclosure situations), of actors, workers and oppressive labour relations, of discourses and narratives (of 'wasteness' and 'emptiness'), of machines, cables and raw material (Cons and Eilenberg 2019). As a method of enquiry and object of study, the assemblage helped to understand the specific elements that collapsed in central Kutch to form new wind resource frontiers and territories and identify the novelty of this current wave of frontier-making. This notion will be regularly mobilised in the following empirical chapters.

Contrary to the valuable findings of Sud (2021) or Levien (2018), who observed an intense competition and speculation around land transactions and attached value during frontiers expansion, my fieldwork highlights a different albeit complementary dynamic within capitalism: the expansion of the wind extraction frontier relied on the creation of a field of ruins and a 'waste frontier'(Lilley 2011; Moore 2015), a field carved out of under(/de)-valuating Kutch's lands, artificially making them cheap and then furthering their devaluation through wind territorialisation. This finding rather supports the analysis of Rasmussen and Lund (2018) who understood frontier-making and territorialisation as cyclical, overlapping and self-reinforcing dynamics. In response to the research questions outlined in the introduction of the thesis, I demonstrated how state and capital territorial practices, materialised in my case in territorialities of wind extraction, redrew boundaries between legality and illegality, public and private (Sikor and Lund 2009). This resulted in new forms of value regimes, property-making and authority-building that largely favoured wind companies' control over people's lives and space. I also argued that the expansion of the 'green' extractive frontier in rural borderland India follows a similar colonial discourse of 'wasteness' and 'emptiness' that was central in the emergence of contemporary liberalised, 'vibrant' and crony Gujarat (Sud 2012; Jaffrelot 2019). This chapter's original contribution therefore lied in exposing new relations and tensions when the wind electricity frontier meets the rural territory of Kutch.

I discuss in the next chapter the mobilisation of violence, muscle and money related to class and caste power in the everyday life of wind turbines projects. Taking the standpoint of those mediators of the wind assemblage that fit turbines in the local social and political landscapes of power, land and (party) politics, I explore how the different discourses, imaginaries and technologies of knowledge and control discussed in this chapter are concretely carried out and reconfigured to lower levels and scales.

Chapter 6. Fitting Wind Turbines amidst Village(r)s: Enforcers and Mediators of the Wind Assemblage

Wind extraction frontiers and territorialisation processes take shape or form only if certain key local actors carry them out and transpose them to the intricacies of ground realities. There is always a gap and a mismatch between how formal territorial rules, regulations and land control are conceptualised and how they are concretely enforced on the ground or how people comply with them. Indeed, 'what is on paper, on maps, never matches the ground and practical reality: on the map it may be written that a piece of land is revenue, but on the ground, it might be encroached by two farmers' explained a company representative (Discussion, 24.03.21). And so, if two farmers have encroached a piece of land allocated by the state to wind companies and refuse to let the machines enter the fields, what happens? What ensues if what is on the map does not match with the 'ground and practical reality' of wind projects? As this chapter shows, there are enforcers, gatekeepers and brokers making sure that both levels match, or appear to match, for better and for worse.

Referred to as *thekedar* (contractor), *vichawlia* (middleman) or *dalal* (usually translated as broker), these actors are situated at the 'interface' of two worlds (Bierschenk, Chauveau, and de Sardan 2000), bridging the social distance and trust deficit between the village(r)s and the companies, between the citizens and the state (Levien 2015). They are usually associated with corrupt transactions, use of muscle power and caste violence and close ties to (party) politics (Jeffrey 2001; Witsoe 2012). In fact, the brokers I describe below are predominantly recruited amongst the dominant landowning upper-caste Rajput communities (and the subcastes Jadeja and Sodha) and via the BJP party networks[22]. This chapter takes root within the discussion on brokerage laid out in chapter 1 as a long-established lens with which state-society relationship in post-colonial India are understood (Berenschot 2011b). I hope here to shed new lights on this relationship by analysing how the materiality of brokerage and of wind turbines are reconfiguring the boundaries and contours of the state towards new spaces and new actors.

[22] Among the 24 informants that I labelled in the category of either fixer, land broker, contractor or companies' staff, 13 are Rajput and 8 hold official position or mandate within the BJP (*tehsil* President, Vice-President, *sarpanch*, *taluka panchayat* president or member, MLA, MP), five of them being both Rajput and affiliated to BJP. Informants were labelled in these categories if they performed any work for companies in construction, security, land acquisition or in solving contestation. They were classified as such if these activities constituted their principal source of incomes.

Enforcers and mediators do not obey blindly to wind companies' orders. Seeing them only as companies' loyal soldiers or henchmen, without their own agency and interests, would be too simplistic and therefore inaccurate. They are rather translators, important interpreters and re-interpreters of companies' projects: they manipulate resistance and engineer local consent, metaphorically translate, fit and blend wind turbines into the local social and political landscapes of power. Specifically, I suggest that the material nature and spatial organisation of windfarms discussed in the previous chapter (dispersed in space, time, and construction phases) entrenches this dependency of wind companies on local brokers, contractors and fixers. This gives them in return a renewed and reinforced relevance in land transactions, as well as more room for bargaining, autonomy and for authority consolidation.

This chapter aims therefore at analysing the brokerage network that emerged in Kutch to enforce wind extraction projects in relation to the existing literature on the brokerage of land and the local state. By doing so, I hope to provide additional evidence of the connections between brokerage, land and the state, but also emphasise the novelty of these connections as wind turbines enter villages of Kutch and their fixers contribute to (re)territorialisation, capital accumulation and (caste) power consolidation. It follows a structure in four parts: following existing typologies of brokerage activities and socio-economic profiles of brokers (Sud 2014b; Oldenburg 1987; Pattenden 2011), I first describe and analyse the nature and levels of that fixing alliance. Next, I discuss the brokerage activities that emerged on, in and around land, emphasising how these activities were highly bureaucratic, social, and political in nature and reconfigured the boundaries of the state. Third, I shed some light on the 'dirty' practices of consent-making, enfolded in so-called 'clean' energy projects, and finally in the last section, I draw connections between the mediation activities of the wind assemblage and the socio-political interests and agency of those conducting them.

6.1 Nature and Levels of the Fixing Alliance

Wind mediation is organised in different group coalitions, different fixing alliances that operate at multiple levels. These groups can be divided in three broad types of overlapping and connecting circles (symbolised in Figure 11 below by three sets of colours): the companies and particularly their land team staff (in dark blue) recruited locally from Kutch or Gujarat among local dominant castes (mostly Rajput); the fixer-broker-contractor circles (in purple) which are mostly at stake in this chapter; and finally, the local state representatives denoted in light blue in the map. The boundaries between the figures of the land team staff, the land broker, the fixer,

the contractor and the local state representative are largely blurred. People move freely between these three groups of agents and retrain from one to the other: companies' circles connect and overlap with each other because of friendship, kinship, and shared professional relations. Companies' circles connect and overlap with contractors and brokers spheres, as some contractors and brokers might be previous company staff who started brokering activities on their own later or the reverse. Finally, both companies and brokers circles overlap with local state, as people from revenue or forest departments turn into company staff or land brokers. Political connections and networks via parties like the BJP are powerful connecting elements and essential lubricants between these three categories of circles, alongside kinship ties, village, religious and caste affiliations.

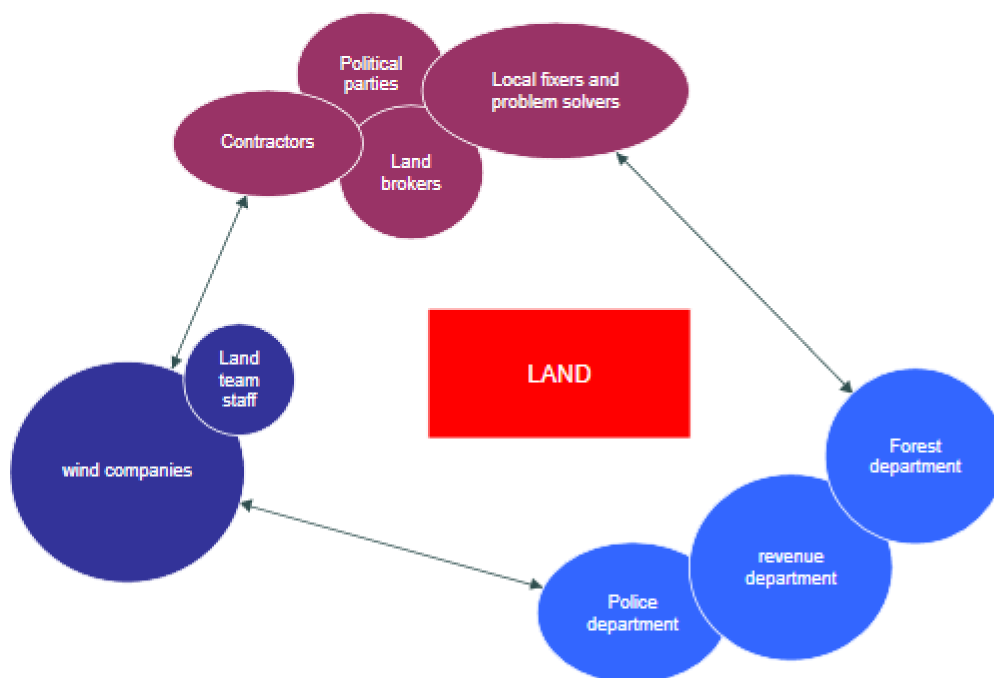


Figure 11 Concept map: actors and groups of the fixing alliance. Each colour represents a sub-category of actors involved in the brokering of wind extraction activities.

6.1.1 From the Village

Companies (and their land teams) usually work in tandem with two levels of brokers, fixers, and contractors: the ground and village level, and the *tehsil* and district level. These two levels are connected to each other via networks of brokers and sub-brokers.

When companies have identified suitable lands for a certain number of wind turbines,

> ‘They catch anyone from the village who has a little bit of knowledge about land, who knows who will be ready to sell and who is not, someone who has a name, some position and influence in the village and they will make him a broker. They will say ‘we need this many locations’ and in return, he will connect them to the landowner, will sit with both of them and follow the situation up to the deal is signed. It’s like Hassan *bhai* in Haroma, he is the leader over there, or like me, I am the leader of my own village. So, we help companies to find some private lands in our area when they need it. We become land broker for the time of the transaction’ (Discussion with a Muslim *sarpanch*, 26.06.21).

Fakir Jat, the *sarpanch* of a village near Haroma, to which I will return later, confirms here the non-professional, occasional or one-time nature of village-level (land) brokers. These individuals are selected because they already enjoy some authority and power in the village, as *sarpanch* or other *panchayat* members, caste, religious or small-scale political leaders. They become the principal interlocutor of the company in the village as their main task is to convince fellow villagers to sell their land, collect signatures and documents for land transactions, take care of any agreement from the *panchayat* when *gauchar* lands are involved, and manage conflict or contestation that might arise at later stages. In exchange, they are ‘thanked’ with commissions on land transactions, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds (usually around one or two lakhs per location) that go to the *panchayat* or a village committee (constituted by villagers or the companies themselves), small-scale contracts (water tanks, JCB and road construction) or jobs on wind turbine locations (like security guard or driver). Together, these village-level fixers form an extensive network of faithful and loyal supporters in every village, in every corner of a wind power project. They are elements regularly mobilised, or in a certain manner (re-)activated, by companies’ staff at different critical times of the project’s life.

Baku, a wealthy Rajput Jadeja farmer owning 50 acres (20 hectares) of land near the village of Mata na Madh in Dayapar *taluka*, is one of them. Locally, he is considered to be an influential ‘strongman’ and defines himself as a ‘social worker’, partly because of his caste affiliation and his landowner status, and because he is associated with the BJP as a multiple times’ elected *sarpanch* of his village. In his village, Baku knows every single location, the precise number and localisation of each windmill and the different stages of advancement, every security guard and driver he has placed himself, every private landowner whose road or land have been granted to companies and the amount of money he has received. Village-level fixers like Baku

are present daily on the windmill sites, at night they do not go back to their hotels or camps several kilometres away like companies' staff and (external) contractors do. They go back home, to the villages where they live. With this peculiar position, Baku ensures and embodies companies' continuous, uninterrupted and 24/7 presence.

6.1.2 Up to the District

This network of highly visible local village-level fixers is complemented by a fixing alliance emerging at the subdistrict (*tehsil*) and district levels of professional and trained land brokers, 'problem solvers', and contractors. Composed of high-profile politicians (MLAs, MPs, party's president and vice president), state administrators (District Magistrates-DM, Sub-District Magistrates-SDM, revenue officers, *mamlatdar* and police inspectors), caste and religious leaders as well as already established businessmen and big landowners engaged in sand mining and other extraction projects. These people are usually assigned a specific cluster of wind turbines (from 15 to 50) or a whole project. The professional (sub-)district land brokers are tasked to look for private lands and start the negotiation with potential landowners:

> 'What happens is that the company will give you a specific area to cover, with, let's say, a dozen of villages and they will tell you we need 50 locations. Then my men will go to every village within the area, find survey numbers and then discuss directly with the *sarpanch* or the *talati* to make sure there is no dispute on the land, and then with their help we will approach the owner and negotiate with him. Then once we have a deal, I go back to the company, and then they prepare the papers and different forms' (Discussion with a Rajput professional land broker, 18.02.21).

I met this professional land broker in his Dayapar office in 2021, surrounded by six of his employees who scurried to serve us *chai*. He was working for wind companies since 2018 as a land broker and owned this new position to his 10-year long experience in different revenue administrations of Kutch as a former *mamlatdar* (revenue administration head at the *tehsil* level). During this discussion, he confirmed that he constitutes, alongside the village-level fixer, a more professional chain link between villages and companies, working on land before the arrival of wind turbines and owning his new position in the wind assemblage to his reputation, status, and knowledge (either as a politician, a former state administrator or an established businessman). I encountered only few of these professional brokers, their presence on the ground was somehow rare due to the function they occupied (MLAs would not be roaming around villages for example). At the same level, *tehsil* and wind cluster wise,

companies also hire professional 'problem-solvers', in other words - hired goons and thugs - who are specifically responsible for dealing with and fixing any type of opposition and contestation to wind turbines and are paid depending on the level of difficulty and sensitivity they face. Finally, all the non-skilled work that requires less manpower from security, transport to small road development is assigned to BJP-affiliated political leaders and upper-caste Rajput individuals in the form of large-scale contracts. As discussed in the previous chapter (section 5.3.3), these contractors hire a few workers from the nearby villages for the time of the construction.

Iqlab belongs to this second category of professional and well-trained political mediators and brokers operating at the *tehsil* and district levels. Indeed, Iqlab is first of all the *sarpanch* of a small village in the outskirts of Nakhatrana and belonging to an Other Backward Caste (OBC) of Muslim, but most importantly, he is the Vice-President of the Kutch *sarpanch* association and has recently entered politics as BJP's Vice-President in Nakhatrana *tehsil*. His official job consists of running an NGO on women empowerment and before the arrival of wind turbines, he was involved in sand and salt mining business as a contractor. Iqlab is well connected via personal and party relations to the village-level brokers and local contractors in Nakhatrana *tehsil*, but also directly to certain wind and electricity transmission companies as several important power substations, poles and lines are stationed in his village. His new position within the BJP and the *sarpanch* association has also placed him close to the local state official circles, DM (District Magistrate) and SDM, revenue, forest and police officers.

6.2 Brokering on, in and around Land

As argued in chapter 5, in its transition from waste to value, land is being physically cleaned and cleared from it past uses, ordered and unmade for the purpose of renewable energy extraction. I suggest in the next section that this journey is also profoundly bureaucratic and 'papery', where rules, regulations, permissions, forms and governmental papers punctuate the life of land. Section 6.2.2 emphasises that it is 'also thoroughly social' and political (Sud 2021, 93) as boundaries of the state get stretched and extended to 'shadow' offices and a diversity of new actors.

6.2.1 The Bureaucratic Journey of Land

Land starts its long bureaucratic journey with a complex diversity of actors intervening at different crucial moments of the transition. These actors range from landowners and

encroachers, land brokers and fixers, companies' land team, *talati*, revenue office operators and heads (*mamlatdar)*, District Collectors and Magistrates.

After the land team staff have physically surveyed the land, looked at the available roads on the ground and confirmed that a wind turbine location can be implemented here (what Dasram did in chapter 5), then the property and ownership nature of the land determines different journeys and directions before the construction can legally start. Following the work of Sud (2021), I observed in all land transactions the pervasive importance of Non-Objection Certificates (NOC), government orders and permissions, sale and lease deeds, and by extension, the importance of those issuing these documents, the lower levels of the bureaucracy. I have detailed so far in chapter 5, the first steps suggested in Figure 12 below (and coloured in blue), entitled *the journey of land, from waste to hosting value*. Let me now navigate you towards the rest of the process, the diversity of actors involved, and the set of papers and forms unfolded.

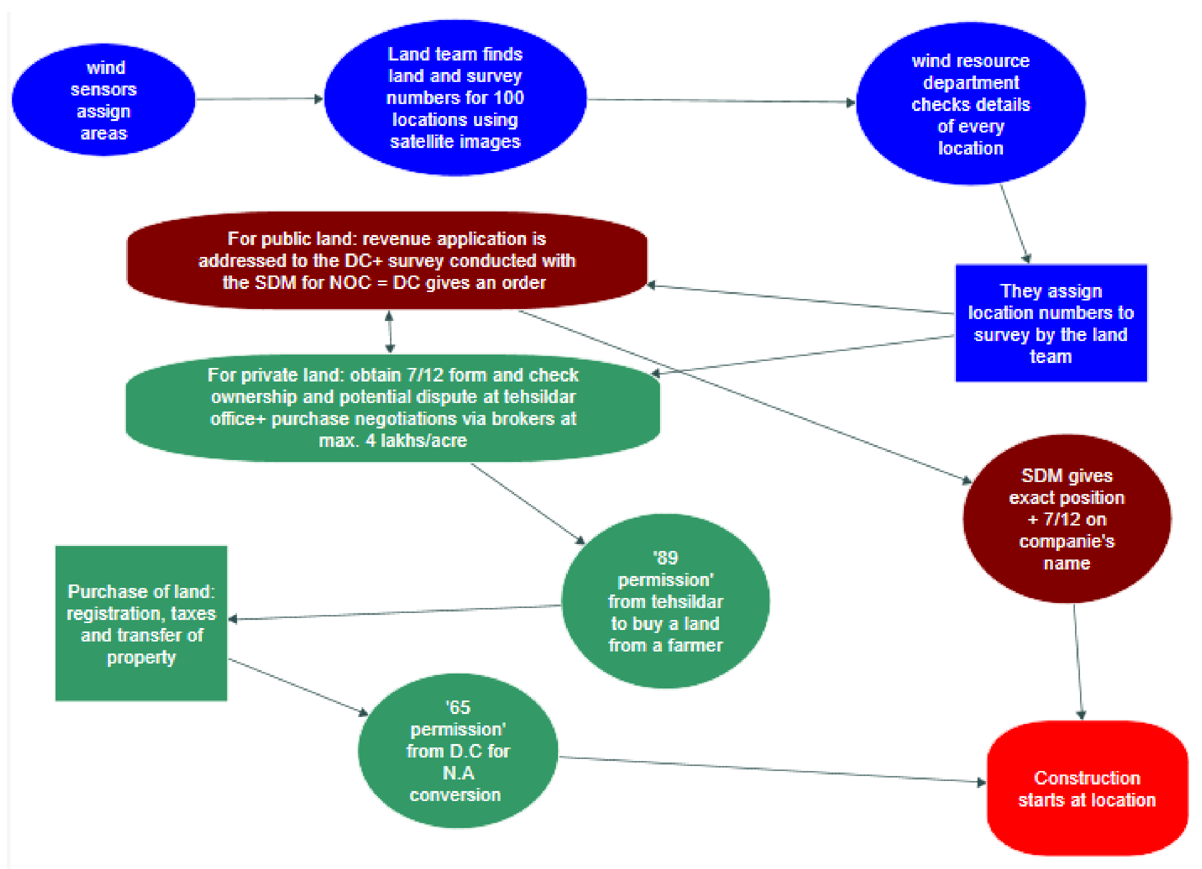


Figure 12 Concept map: the journey of land, from waste to holding value. Each colour represents a different step in the bureaucratic journey of land, with the journey ending at the construction stage

Central is the 7/12 (commonly referred to as *sat baran*), registering land title and property ownership of any type of land. The *sat baran* is essential for anyone aiming at purchasing

(agricultural and non-agricultural) land, as it details all the ownership, occupancy right, liabilities and information of the land. For that reason, the 7/12 document follows land throughout its journey, passing from offices to offices, and it is checked, scrutinised and investigated for potential disputes and conflicts, particularly when wind companies try to acquire private lands. For private lands (process coloured in green in Figure 12), this investigation process and the rest of the acquisition procedures take place in different offices and rooms of the local revenue department. I visited on several occasions the one located in Dayapar, supervising, and legalising all the land transactions happening in Lakhpat *tehsil*. They receive dozens of demands everyday, coming from wind companies for 7/12, for collectorate permission to buy private land from a farmer for non-Gujarati companies or individuals (number 89 in Figure 12), and permission to convert agricultural lands to non-agricultural (NA) purposes (number 65 in Figure 12).

> 'When companies want to buy land, they need to collect information about the land and the owner. So, in our office, we will do the entry, and certify that they can buy the land once we have checked the survey number and the 7/12' detailed this revenue operator in the *tehsildar* office of Dayapar (Discussion, 09.03.21).

In the meantime, companies' land team staff have to negotiate and agree on a deal with the landowner, 'always with the help of a local broker or village-head', and in the range of 4 lakhs per acre[23]. Once the sale deed, and others lease deeds, road agreements and negotiations summaries are signed by the landowner, companies' representatives move to a different office. They go to the second floor of Dayapar's revenue department, and enter the tiny room of Avrat, an operator responsible for registering and legalising the land property transfers with government stamp once taxes have been paid.

'But all this process is specific to private lands, when companies want revenue lands, then it becomes a different process' warns Avrat (Discussion, 21.02.2021). Except in few situations, and particularly in the last waves of wind expansion towards Lakhpat *tehsil*, companies have been predominantly relying on government so-called 'wastelands', essentially because 'they are cheaper, they have a faster pace of acquisition, and you can apply and acquire at one go for 300 locations' confided this company representative (Discussion, 10.02.21). Indeed, the process of acquiring revenue 'waste' lands (coloured in brown in Figure 12) is way easier, faster and cheaper: companies' land team directly submit their application to the District

[23] The price of 4 lakhs per acre paid by companies for private lands was confirmed by many informants.

Collectorate office in Bhuj. If the lower tiers of the local administration (forest and revenue departments) give a positive opinion and send their NOCs, a new 7/12 document is established and a District Collectorate order (a screenshot example is provided below in Figure 13) is produced that ostensibly states the right of companies to lease and take full ownership over the land for a period of 20 years, provided they pay an annual rate of 10,000 INR per hectare on top of tax duties.

Office of District Collectorate and Magistrate, Bhuj – Kachchh
JMN-4, Office Revenue Section, Jilla SevaSadan, Mandvi Road,
Bhuj Kachchh 370001
Email: collector-kut@gujarat.gov.in; Tel 02832 250020 / Fax 02832 250430

JMN-4/windmill/Vashi/2637/2019 **Date: 05.07.2019**

Sub: Sangnara, Taluka : Nakhatrana

Survey number 4,65,109,174 – land hectare from each survey number, survey no 60 – land 3 hectare, survey no 75 – land 2 hectare; survey number 209, land 3 hectare; total land 12-hectare allotment on lease for windfarm project
(Shri Green Infra Wind Energy Limited, New Delhi)

The requested land is unused, wasteland and has a hilly terrain, wherein the company has requested allotment of land on lease for 20 years for setting up various units of windfarm at different locations. The requested land is neither grassland nor it has been transferred to the Forest department. Religious monuments or any other such structures. The requested land has approach roads / Kachha road. There are no telephone lines and / or electricity lines passing through the requested land. There are scattered Prosophis julifera (Gando Bawal) and other such similar small wild shrubs on the requested land. Detals report (Panchnamu) of location, status, traced map is attached herewith for submission.

Vide Chief Conservator of Forest Reference No. (7) against the total hec.7.00.00 land at Sangnara, Tal.Nakhatrana demanded by the applicant, opinion has been given for land at S.No.4Hec.1.00.00, 89 Hec.1.00.00, 75 Hec.1.00.00 163 Hec.2.00.00, 174 Hec.1.00.00, 194 Hec.1.00.00totalHec.7.00.00. This opinion has been given subject to insulation of electric lines, to fit bird guards and reflectors on poles and lines and other conditions whose location No. is MDV-601, 178, 31, 96, 436, 260, 568

Vide reference No. (8) of Additional Director (Development), Office of the Gology and Mining, Gandhinagar, "No Objection" certificate has been submitted in respect of demanded land at S.No.4Hec.1.00.00, 89 Hec.1.00.00, 75 Hec.1.00.00 163 Hec.2.00.00, 174 Hec.1.00.00, 194 Hec.1.00.00 total hec.7.00.00 of village Sangnara, MDV-601, 178, 31, 96, 436, 260, 568

Condtions:-

1. The land is leased for 20 years.
2. Annual rent of Rs.10,000.00 per hectare per year as per provision in Government Resolution dated 2.12.2001 shall be regularly paid. Cess for non-agricultural land and other taxes shall be regularly paid. This payment shall be made by the developer company OR sub leased client. In future, the company shall be bound to pay any revisions in annual rent rate as mandated by the Government. The company shall have to submit proof of payments made in this regard to this office from time to time.

Figure 13 Screenshots of a District Collectorate's order granting land to a wind energy company, 2019.

These simplified and softened procedures of (private and government) land clearances for industrial projects like wind turbines largely comply with the liberalisation dynamic undertaken by the Gujarat state in the 1990s of relaxing and lifting most of the restrictions on NA conversion and transferring massive amounts of state controlled 'wastelands' to the corporate sector (Sud 2021, 2014c).

The only scenario when companies need the *panchayat's* official approval and NOC is in the case of *gauchar,* the village-owned grazing lands. Because they constitute *panchayat* property, companies are legally compelled to obtain a written consent from the village body if they want to put a transmission line, tower, a windmill or even simply pass their road on these types of land. Nonetheless, NOCs and other sets of written agreements between the *panchayat* and the companies were pretty easy to obtain, particularly when the *sarpanch* was himself an ally or acted as a broker and when these agreements were coupled with different CSR funds and 'village development' project money.

6.2.2 A Social and Political Process Stretching the Boundaries of the State

Mediation, brokering and fixing activities on, in and around land in the wind assemblage is both social and political: it requires building friendship and camaraderie, cultivating social intimacy and sharing common codes with those who have the power to clear, sign, stamp and legalise papers (Sud 2017). But in some instances, it also requires a step further, the mimicking of governmental practices and the reproduction of paperwork, in the shadows of the state. Distinctively, I show how new spaces and actors come to embody and reify the state.

6.2.2.1 Spaces of Friendship and Camaraderie

Indeed, like the diversity of actors involved in the brokerage of land, the spaces that 'host' these vital interactions also traverse the blurred boundaries of state and society. My first encounter with the brokers' and contractors' community was in fact initiated by Iqlab and took place at a tea stall in Nakhatrana, just near my accommodation. There, both brokering, companies, local revenue operators and BJP political networks would regularly connect and meet in the evening to share the latest news about upcoming contracts and land transactions but also political news.

They would build and shape friendly and interpersonal ties by regularly exchanging gifts and counter-gifts as a symbol of respect and obedience and acknowledging a person's importance. They precisely built what they called 'connections' and 'networks', in other words - a coded

protocol of mutual obligations and reciprocal services that would be mobilised in due time (Ruud 2000). In these spaces of exchange and camaraderie, they circulated shared representations and common reference points about local resistance to wind projects (described as theft and extortion), shared believes and values about development, land, and livelihood practices in Kutch (described as waste and unproductive). As I will explain in chapter 7, these fixers and brokers also shared a mutual affiliation to Hindutva and Gujarati sub-nationalism that naturally opposed them to the 'other', either the Muslim imagined as an infiltrator and potential enemy, or the non-Gujarati, referring to the migrant workers coming from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Companies' land team staff, contractors and other (land) brokers were constantly roaming around what they ironically called their 'temples' (*mandir*): police stations, revenue departments, SDM office or *taluka panchayat*. Their everyday routine presence outside these buildings from 10 AM to 5 PM exemplified what Sud called 'the man who sits outside office', referring to those men 'bustling around official compounds; sitting within or just outside boundary walls - on chairs, on the ground, under trees […] filling in and carrying paperwork to the '*sahibs'* (sirs) inside, or files and information from the inside to those waiting eagerly outside' (2021, 81). This description made strong echoes with the men I used to meet regularly in these offices.

The first time I met Avrat, the Dalit revenue operator from Dayapar I mentioned earlier, I was accompanying Virajsinh Jadeja, a Rajput land team staff whose office was located near the city of Mata na Madh. He needed to get some sale deeds stamped and suggested he would introduce me to some of the operators there. As we entered his tiny office filled with high piles of documents and papers, Avrat automatically stood up to greet us and gave his seat to Virajsinh. While he checked the information on the sale deeds before stamping them, Avrat and Virajsinh chatted about their personal life, shared some *chai* and chewed tobacco and recounted the first time they met:

> 'I met Virajsinh for the first time in 2016, at that time he was responsible for getting revenue and wasteland authorisations, since then we became friends, we meet almost every day, we chat and have fun. I have many friends in wind companies' land team, everyone from the land team who comes in my office becomes my friend. These guys from the companies are really nice with us, they treat us well, they always feed us with

tea and water (*company wale hamko chai-paani pilate hai*)' (Discussion with Avrat and Virajsinh, 02.03.21).

'*Chai-paani'* is often used as an euphemism to refer to a form of corrupt giving (Mathur 2017). I regularly visited Avrat's office the months that followed this initial meeting, and I always bumped into Virajsinh, other companies' staff or professional land brokers (some of whom were related to Avrat via kinship relations). They were roaming in the close surroundings of his office, sitting almost every day outside or inside the revenue department even when they had no specific work to do.

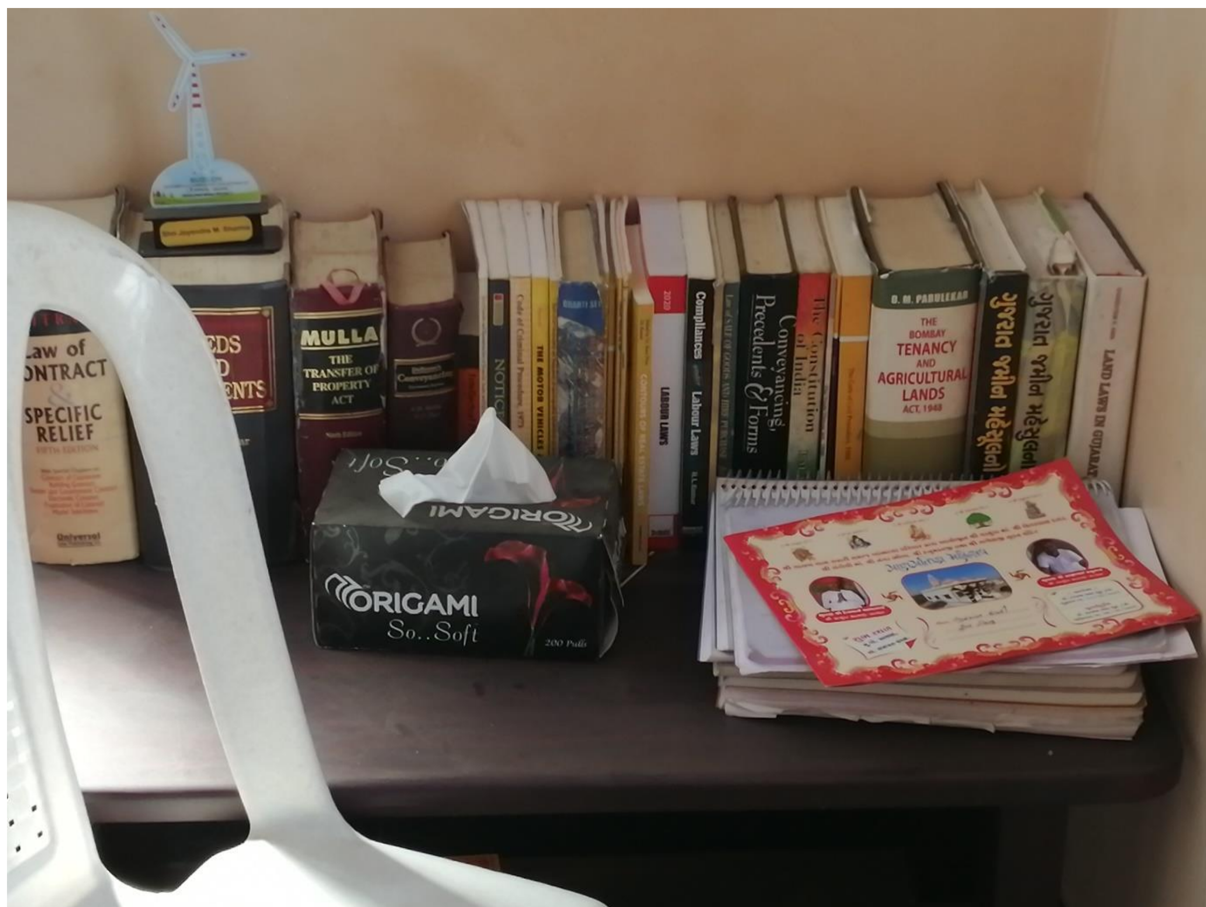
Companies' buildings, land team offices and staff hotels or guesthouses were a second set of spaces where boundaries of the state got spatially extended. Parties and dinners organised at companies' hotels were privileged moments of bonding between companies' staff, contractors, brokers, state officials and politicians, where boundaries between them used to disappear for few hours: organised for the final completion and commissioning of a wind project, for traditional Hindu celebrations or the impromptu visit of a company's VIP from Ahmedabad or Delhi, local Rajput brokers and contractors would make sure the party was supplied with good meat and enough whisky bottles to satisfy the host. In the parties I was invited to, they imagined to be in a kind of *entre-soi* environment (among peers) who shared the same vision about India's development, the nation or identity. For this reason, they expressed, with much less restraints and barriers than in the public space - strong caste and anti-Muslim stances. In these informal moments, important decisions were made regarding the management of opposition to wind projects (decision to send police forces, resort to money or violence via fixers…), in close cooperation with state and police officials present in the room.

6.2.2.2 Mimicry of Government Work

The brokerage around land conducted by companies' land team staff, (land) brokers, fixers and contractors was done in a replication and mimicry of state's bureaucratic and cartographic practices. These brokering and fixing actors were behaving and acting like government officials in their daily interactions with villagers, but also in the number of papers, maps, and documents they themselves produced. These documents 'embodied and congealed state power' and were invested with the same sort of 'aura' or 'magical effects' as those produced by the local state (Gupta 2012, 208). When I met professional brokers and contractors for the first time, they would invite me to come directly to their offices in Nakhatrana or Dayapar, usually situated really close to the revenue department or SDM building, and their 'offices [strikingly]

resemble[d] *sarkari* (government) spaces' (Sud 2021, 99). In that sense, the state got disaggregated, extended, and materialised over new spaces and new actors.

Companies' land team offices performed bureaucratic, social-networking and patronage practices: they were constantly attracting villagers, complainants, ROW (blockade) makers who were in negotiations with companies' representatives and sought compensation, landowners who had agreed to sell (part of) their lands and came to sign sale deeds and other papers, local brokers, fixers and contractors who came for specific reasons or just to maintain their relations with companies' head, police officers in uniform who came to enforce 'law and order' but also share some informal time outside their duty hours. Recalcitrant villagers were received in offices full of *taluka* and district maps, large boards summarising the different locations' development stage, land acquisition and property law books exposed on visible shelves as well as companies' trophies (see Figure 14 below).



Sr. No.	Loc.	Status.	
1	ABD 128	FDN	S111/140
2	133	ER Done.	''
3	249	ER Done.	''
4	262	ER Done	''
5	261	ER Done.	''
6	246	ER Done.	''
7	245	ER Done.	''
8	184	Stub Ass.	''
9	097	Stub Ere.	''
10	118	PCC.	''
11	129	FDN.	''
12	199	ER Done	''
13	260	Steel.	''
14	241	Ass.	''
15	201	Ass.	''
16	236.	EXC.	''
17	117	Road Dev.	''
18	249.	FDN.	''
19	203.	FDN.	''
20	244	FDN.	''
21	204	Ass WIP	''
22	205	ER Done.	''
23	206	ER Done	''
24	248	ER Done	''
25	RWS. 037	FDN	''
26	'' 039	ER Done	''
27	'' 033	FDN	''
28	'' 034	FDN	''
29	'' 035	FDN.	''
30	ABD 121	Ass.	''
31	'' 127	Ass.	''
32	'' 130	ER Done	''
33	'' 183	ER Done.	''
34	BND 117	PCC.	''
35	ANS 125	Area Dev.	''

Sr. No.	Loc.	Status	Model.
36	BND 126	Exc.	S111/140
37	'' 127	PCC.	''
38	'' 135	EXC.	''
39	'' 136	EXC.	''
40	'' 103	PCC.	''
41	ABD 263	FDN	S120/140
42	'' 185	FDN	
43	'' 094	AD WIP.	other options.
44	'' 096	AD WIP.	
45	'' 110	Under Nego.	ABD 173
46	'' 109	''	'' 174
47	'' 111	''	'' 172
48	'' 112	''	AS ON Date
49	'' 115	''	FDN COMPLETE
50	'' 135	''	S:111 = 29
51	'' 053		
52	'' 081	Under Nego.	
53	'' 083	''	
54	'' 084	Soil Testing	S120 = 03
55	'' 100	Under Nego.	
56	'' 103	''	ASS. COMPLETE
57	'' 104	''	
58	'' 105	''	
59	BND 057	Soil Testing	17
60	'' 058	''	
61	'' 059.	''	
62	'' 134		
63	RWS. 036.	FDN	ERE. COMPLETE
64	'' 038	Area Development	
65	ABD 088		13
66	'' 180		
67	'' 306		
68	'' 346		
69	'' 347		
70	'' 132		

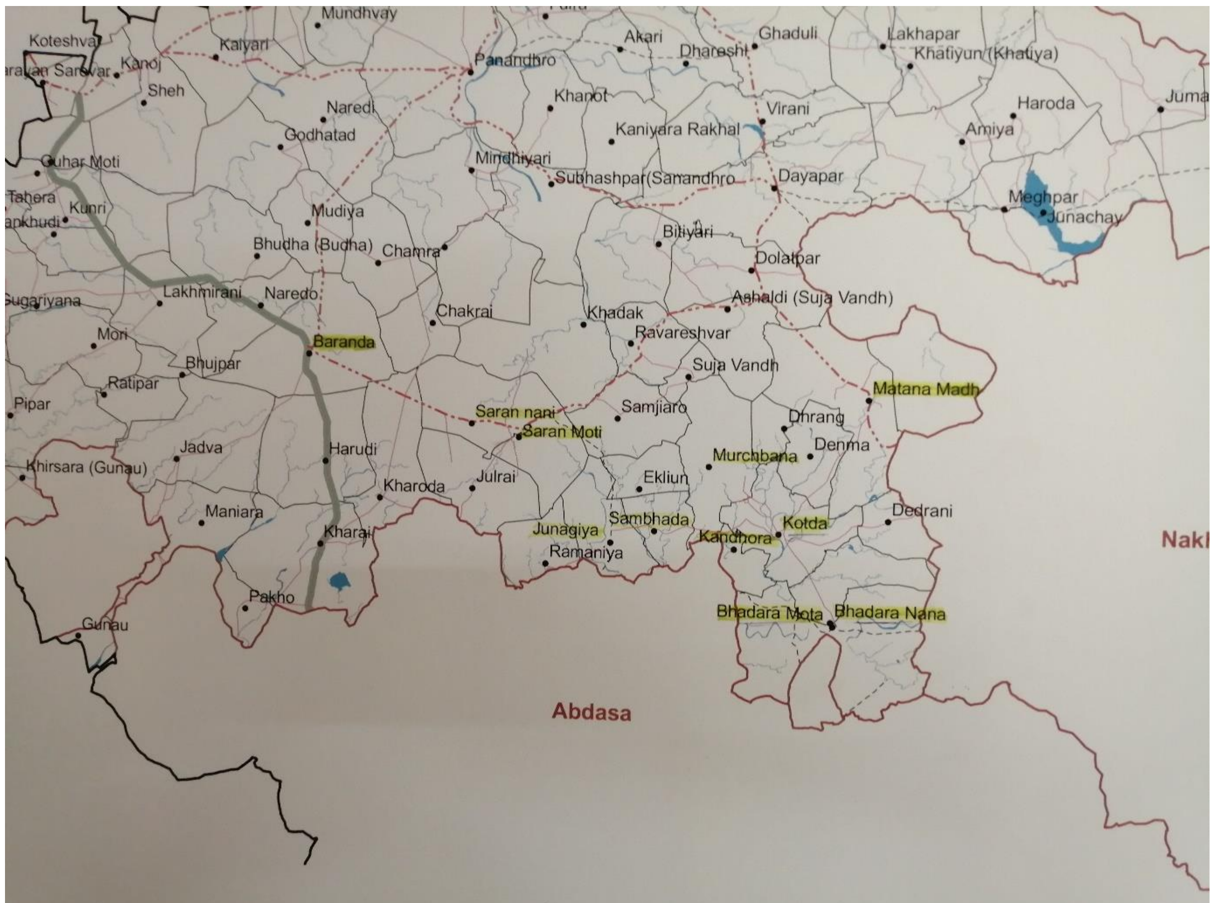


Figure 14 Three pictures from a wind company's land team office. First is a shelf of property and tenancy law books; a board summarising all the wind locations of a given project and the different stages of acquisition/development; and a map of Lakhpat taluka. In this tiny intimidating office, villagers and all sorts of complainants are received by the head of the land team. (Photo by author)

Villagers had to defend their case in front of the company's head manager, convince him and prove the truth of what they were claiming (for example that they owned the land). I remember the first time I met Rahul S., the head manager of a wind company's land team whose office was situated in Mata na Madh. During our discussion, we got interrupted by a villager who came to implore Rahul S. to remove the First Information Report (FIR) case filed against him by the company after he had blocked the access to a wind site with his uncle. 'You keep coming every day to my office, what do you want?' asked Rahul S. in a strict and dry tone of voice.

'Sir, I have come because the FIR hasn't been removed, I have told my uncle not to block the project anymore, and I have even removed the stones.

- You put the stones in the first place! Listen, *I know you are teaching people how to make ROW and claim money, don't do such bad work* [emphasis added].

But sir, I know, that's why I have removed the stones and convinced my uncle. I have brought the property documents and he is ready to sell the land, so please just remove my name from the FIR case.

- Let me check this property document, and come back later, this will take some time.' (Observation, 16.02.21)

Even though this man had changed his mind and had convinced his uncle to sell (part of) his land, he was at the mercy of Rahul S.'s goodwill to call the police sub-inspector and withdraw the FIR. He was in a subordination relation vis-à-vis Rahul S., and the latter was enjoying a position of power and domination. Companies' land team staff also gathered and compiled an incredible amount of information, data and documents about wind locations, land clearance, private owners, contract(or)s but also about their supporters and contestants. In that sense, their work of collecting data and information about village(r)s, compiling documents, proofs, photographs and signatures was extremely similar to the practices and functioning of governmental agencies working on land or on intelligence.

Professional (land) brokers, experienced contractors and politicians had also their own set of offices, rooms, and buildings. These people performed their brokerage activities on, in and around land within offices called 'xerox', referring here to the printing and photocopying machines name. In 'xerox' offices, you could get documents printed as well as any other

stationary goods. These spaces were also working as antechamber for any kind of other brokering activities, may it be land, housing (rent, sale or buy a house) or civil documents: all the land brokers, contractors and politicians I met had a space in their office for 'xerox' and printing work, and conversely all the 'xerox' offices I visited randomly during my fieldwork had some back shop for brokerage activities. In these spaces, brokers took care of any kind of governmental applications, documents or forms related to land (purchase, sale and lease documents and permissions, transfer of property, NA conversion, 7/12…), civil status (birth certificate, marriage certificate, passport application), residency (domicile certificate), social benefits (ration card). In exchange of commission per document, the broker collected all the documents, filed the forms, and submitted the application to the right administration. Companies, brokers and contractors, politicians but also common villagers and landowners had to visit this place at some point if they wanted to get some paperwork done. They exchanged maps, signed official documents, and stapled files before they got stamped in the revenue department on the other side of the road. 'Xerox' spaces were bubbling ecosystems where different circles and worlds crossed and met, they revealed how much brokerage activities were intertwined and entangled with so many other things: these offices were at the same time serving for political activities, contracting work or land brokering separately or simultaneously.

By working on, in and around land in a very bureaucratic, papery, but also social way, wind companies' land team staff, (land) brokers, contractors and politicians were situated at this 'interface' of the state and the society. They were stretching the contours of the state both inwards and outwards as they mimicked government operations and got integrated in local state functioning processes. These private actors were also replicating clientelist and patronage political networks and practices traditionally associated to the state and to electoral moments (Chandra 2004). Following Sud (2021), I showed distinctively how the arrival of wind turbines disaggregated the local state to new areas and new actors: the state did not only materialise in the police station building or the revenue department, if people needed to prove something, get documents signed or raise a complain, they would go to companies and brokers' offices, as the villager mentioned above did in Rahul S.'s office to withdraw the FIR case.

6.3 'Clean' Energy, 'Dirty' Business

Wind power's unique materiality and spatial organisation spread over hundreds of sites, dozens of villages and square kilometres present a real challenge for wind companies. One way to overcome this challenge is to let henchmen deal with the heavy, difficult, and nasty job of mediating accumulation while enforcing dispossession, manufacturing consent while managing dissent.

> 'Companies always use locals to *deal with that dirty business* [emphasis added], with villagers and ROW because *they want to remain clean* [emphasis added], they don't want to take the risk of violence, case, FIR on their name. It can be bad for their reputation, media and NGO might use this against them, so they always use brokers and contractors for this' (Discussion with Devpalsinh, a Rajput hired 'problem-solver' working for wind companies, 04.03.21).

This section adopts a focus on the political reactions coming from 'above', from the perspective of resource extractors, their mediators and henchmen, and hopes to shed light on the 'counterinsurgency' techniques deployed to depoliticise dissent, engineer and manipulate consent (Verweijen and Dunlap 2021). Defined by Kilcullen as 'a competition with the insurgent for the right and ability to win the hearts, minds and acquiescence of the population' (2006, 29), counterinsurgency relies on a set of 'hard' techniques, referring to open political violence by police, military or private security forces, and 'soft' techniques, a set of development programs, CSR funds and money. Counterinsurgency plays a critical role in resource extraction projects in general: '[it] takes on a totalising approach, seeking to monitor and engineer entire populations, and make them internalise particular values and worldviews. In other words, counterinsurgency is the art of population control' summarises Dunlap (2018b, 635). There is an already well-documented reliance on counterinsurgency and militarised techniques to advance resource control in nature conservation programs and other sensitive areas (Peluso and Vandergeest 2011; Dunlap and Fairhead 2014), but also in recent renewable energy extraction projects (Dunlap 2018b, 2019b) with specific emphasis on 'corporate counterinsurgency' (Brock and Dunlap 2018). If wind power expansion in Kutch is not enforced with the same amount of political violence, threat, and death than in other parts of the world, this duality of 'soft' and 'hard' techniques seems quite relevant to grasp the large spectrum of political reactions deployed from 'above'. Monetisation of pacification ('soft' techniques) and caste or muscle power ('hard' techniques) are central to these political

reactions from ‘above’, as well as manipulating resistance and recruiting supporters among contestants.

6.3.1 Monetisation of Pacification

When wisely disseminated, money turns out to be an effective weapon used as a counter insurgency strategy to ‘win’, or in more appropriated terms buy, ‘the hearts, minds and acquiescence of the population’ (Kilcullen 2006, 29). Disaggregated in contracts, commissions on land transactions, CSR funds deposited into the *panchayat* or more straightforward wads of banknotes given hands to hands, money is first of all mobilised to secure the support of those who already enjoy power and authority: both individuals affiliated to certain political parties (BJP) and/or caste networks (mostly Rajput) but also state officials belonging to policing institutions like the police. As summarised by a Rajput villager from Netra, ‘here support is secured with money. You give money to powerful people and they will support you; it is that easy and simple’ (Discussion, 26.02.21).

What was both surprising and disturbing at the beginning of my investigation, was companies’ representatives, sometimes high up in the hierarchy, openly acknowledging giving money to ‘big men’ in exchange of their support. This could have been appropriately labelled in other contexts as ‘political corruption’ or as ‘an elite network of political (territorial) power that is built on the disproportionate control of wealth’ (Rajan 2020, 19). On the other hand, as brokers, fixers, and state officials were at the receiving end, they were generally more shy, less transparent, and less disposed to talk frankly about these financial transactions and their collusion with companies.

And yet, corruption is also something more than just ‘powerful state actors exploiting less powerful nonstate subjects’ (Jauregui 2014, 86); it is mobilised by private wind companies and subsequently recycled within (sub-)networks of corruption to buy support and silence resistance. Money is a powerful ‘problem-solving’ tool in itself, as ROW and other blockades constitute important costs of money:

> ‘ROW is for us a real waste of money and time, because while the construction is stopped and the situation is under negotiation, we still have to pay the cranes and machines rent charges, we still have to pay labour’s wages to contractors… So it is primordial to find a solution quickly’ (Discussion with a company representative, 16.02.21).

Time is ticking, and by any means work must resume. The faster the blockade is solved, the better. This implies to give -

> 'Money to anyone who can make sure construction will not stop, anyone who can make things done easily and quickly. Police action and FIR might take some time, several days at some point. For this reason, companies prefer to give one or two lakhs to the ROW-maker and get rid of him' (Discussion with a security contractor, 25.06.21).

According to this security contractor, anyone who conducts a blockade, even a small one, can expect to get between 10,000 to 50,000 INR from wind companies, and way more (dozens of lakhs) if it is done at the most critical time and by a powerful person. This reveals how much pacification and consent have been rationalised, quantified, and monetised: (passive) acquiescence can be bought and this has a concrete price, which is itself subjected to bargain, negotiation, and compromise. Representatives of energy companies which have arrived more recently in Kutch and started projects only five years ago were more reluctant to give money to all ROW makers and contestants. They were blaming the older companies who started their project 15 years ago for giving out money too easily and in too many scenarios. Watering villagers with money every time they were not happy or were opposing, instead of confronting them with police, had a bad consequence according to this company representative:

> 'The first companies like [company] when they arrived 15 years ago, they gave way too much money to people. They were giving sometimes 10 lakh per location to the village's committee when we now give only 1.5 lakh. So, because of these methods, now everyone is used to getting money from companies, and they are asking way too much' (Discussion with a company representative, 31.03.21).

Company representatives have managed to turn this situation in their advantage, dividing and segregating villagers and contestants along caste, religion and village lines, as not everyone gets money: in many instances, I have witnessed situations where companies' land teams were trying to buy one caste against another in the same village, were awarding a local contract to the leader of the resistance in order to end a village-level contestation, or seemingly giving a contract to a Muslim from a different village until the Hindu contestant accepts the companies' deal or even agrees to do the same work at a cheaper price. 'Violating the social norms' of reciprocity and trust and exploiting the existing skirmishes, frustrations and anxieties between village(r)s, companies' representatives and their supporters have been active 'agents of social dissolution'(Levien 2015, 88), undermining potential for collective action.

6.3.2 Caste and Muscle Power

Once brokers, contractors, politicians but also contestants and opponents have received wind money and 'gifts', they put their existing caste power and muscle power in the service of companies and their projects. Indeed, institutionalised networks of corruption and patronage transactions of the wind assemblage still privilege upper caste landowning communities: in a time of decreasing agricultural economies, those who have direct access to state's resources or to wind companies are ensured to maintain and reproduce their caste dominance and power over less privileged groups (Jeffrey 2001; Witsoe 2012).

Companies' staff or villagers would always name these musclemen as the 'powerful guys', 'the strong men', 'the big men', 'those who have influence and power', 'those who are in charge', 'goons' or in Hindi '*bade admi*', '*neta*', '*mukhiya*', '*goonda*', '*jiski chalti hai*'. These terms and designations refer to the underlying strength, a muscular force and masculinity that is involved in the act of brokering and fixing companies' projects. Indeed, solving ROW for companies, crushing (individual or collective) resistance and contestation movements, physically dislodging a villager who is blocking the entry of the wind site, all of this requires a certain amount of force and strength. It is grounded on the physical pomp and certain masculine attributes benefiting the upper castes. When companies' land team or fixers face a recalcitrant villager falling in their designated cluster, they mobilise upper-caste networks and contacts in the said village and do not hesitate to resort to violence and threats to make him change his mind:

> 'When it involves Dalits' lands, the companies try to frighten them, using the upper-caste communities and their local power in villages, they approach local goons from Rajput community and give them full power' (Discussion, 15.01.21).

What this Dalit rights activist meant by 'full power' is of course intimidation, humiliation and caste atrocities, in the same way that they happen in other parts of Kutch[24]. This caste-based form of muscle power to enforce wind projects is on some occasions coupled to a state-sanctioned form of violence. I observed on the ground a complete privatisation of the state police force and its blending with upper-caste power. The monopoly of legitimate violence is deployed for the sole benefit of wind companies and their fixers, sanctioning private orders and

[24] During my fieldwork period, I heard of several caste atrocity cases perpetrated in different *tehsils* of Kutch. The last one I heard in the media was of a Dalit family getting assaulted by upper castes for entering a Hindu temple: https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/rajkot/dalit-family-attacked-for-praying-at-temple-in-kutch/articleshow/87317253.cms

decisions regarding land acquisition. At least one company I regularly encountered had a dedicated police task force of five policemen, that companies' staff ironically called '[company] police'[25], stationed permanently at the employees' hotel and deployed on the ground, on sites and locations via private companies' vehicles to deal with non-cooperating villagers who refuse to vacate lands. The anecdote I share next precisely encapsulates the merging of caste power and state-sanctioned muscle power in an unprecedented form of violent consent engineering.

On this day of February, I visited wind turbine locations with staff from the land team I had met for the first time the same day. Virajsinh Jadeja is the local Rajput company's land team staff I mentioned earlier, stationed near Dayapar in Mata na Madh. As we got to know each other at the land team office, he received the urgent call of his head, mentioning he just got confirmation from the sub-inspector at Dayapar police station that 'we can send our [company] police' out there to dislodge a woman blocking access to a wind site. Ten minutes later two armed policemen in uniform and two policewomen entered the building, 'come, we are going to show you your first ROW [laughing]. You are going to see how we solve them' said Virajsinh. As we all moved by car towards the designated location, I asked for some precision to my interlocutor about the ROW:

> 'This old auntie is blocking the access to our machines and trucks for the past two days claiming that part of the land used for our windmill belongs to her family. But she doesn't have any proof or legal documents. The land was given to us by the collector office, it's revenue wasteland. Besides, these Marwada people are pure cowards, they are not human, they don't have any honour (*izzat*), they leave their wives and daughters alone to do ROW! But this time, we have anticipated, we have brought two ladies police staff with us.' (Discussion, 20.02.21).

Marwada is a sub-caste belonging to Dalit communities. Denying them humanity, honour and dignity is the first step in casteism and caste violence. We finally encountered an old lady, probably in her sixties, and her two daughters sitting in front of the impressive cranes and machines. Baku, the Rajput local fixer and company's loyal supporter I mentioned earlier in this chapter, was already there, close to one of the daughters. 'How dare you do this? Don't

[25] Companies' representatives and state officials would refer to these specific police task force by adding the name of the wind company before the word police, becoming this strange '[company] police' stationed at companies' guesthouses and intervening on the ground with regular weapons and uniforms using companies' private vehicles.

you know your rank? You really think you can do ROW here in my area? Where is your coward husband? I am going to teach him a lesson!' yelled Baku while grabbing the old lady's arm (Observation, 20.02.2021). The three women still refused to vacate the site and even hanged on to the machines. Violently *lathi* charged (beaten with sticks) by the ladies police and physically assaulted by Baku, the latter threw them in the car and they were finally transported to Dayapar police station where an FIR was filed against them later.

This short story shows how much Rajput local fixers and state-sanctioned police force worked hand in hand and combined their caste power and muscle power to align with companies' projects and their representatives' interests.

6.3.3 Recruiting Supporters

In this process, companies are not just extinguishing the embers of contestation and buying (passive) acquiescence, they also expand their network of fixers and supporters in villages as they manipulate resistance. Former contestants and ROW makers, particularly when they belong to upper-caste Rajput communities or are leaders within their village or community, constitute important recruitment pools. In that sense, the incorporation and integration of upper-caste troubling and contesting elements at privileged positions of responsibility in the new wind assemblage is a last powerful counterinsurgency strategy to assert companies' domination and hegemony and to deprive of any agency and or mobilisation tools. The entrance into the brokering and fixing world from a position of contestant is quite common for Rajputs, and my first encounter with Rajput villagers from Pamori is extremely relevant in that regard.

On a two-days trip with a company's land team in February, I was accompanying Virajsinh Jadeja and a local contractor on a windmill location near Dayapar. When we reached the spot, I saw three men, probably brothers, sitting on the ground, and I mistook them for some workers or local fixers helping the land team. I understood that these three men were doing a ROW only few minutes later, when the younger brother, Vijayrajsinh Jadeja, who will play an important role in the rest of my investigation in Pamori, addressed me: 'please bring me with you in France *paji* [brother], I'll do anything else than ROW' (Observation, 25.02.21). From this point, I understood that the three brothers had been blocking the arrival of machines and trucks at the location since the morning, pretending that the bordering land belonging to them had been damaged by the construction. While the older brother negotiated with the civil contractor and the land team staff, the two others discussed with me at the back of the car. They criticised the methods of the companies, their alleged illegal construction of roads and the damages

caused on agricultural lands. Vijayrajsinh finally asked for my number and insisted on inviting me in Pamori over diner. Few days later, I decided to pick this village for my second case study, and I learned that the ROW got resolved within few hours: Vijayraj's older brother negotiated a security guard job for three months and later on obtained a contract from the company to erect two transmission lines in the village. In the weeks and months that followed my initial visit, Vijayraj and his two brothers became active proponents of wind companies in the village.

This powerful counterinsurgency strategy does not stop here, it is actually a self-reinforcing circle: the newly appointed broker or 'problem-solver' in a given village or cluster of villages becomes himself a recruiter *de facto*, a head-hunter of sorts for potential new ROW solvers and fixers. Devpalsinh, a professional 'problem-solver', belonging to the Rajput community and supervising a cluster of five villages in the area of Nakhatrana for two wind companies, explained me this process:

> 'We are in total five to seven ROW solvers in the area around Netra, I look after five villages. When I solve ROW, I also try to recruit new supporters for companies. But this will depend on the interlocutor, if I see that the ROW maker just wants money, he is ready to find an agreement easily and quickly, he doesn't make much trouble, then I will make him ROW solver for his village. I will tell him that now it is his responsibility to take care of any new ROW in his zone.' (Discussion, 04.03.21)

6.4 Party Politics, Elections, and Social Capital in Mediating Wind Power

Enforcers and mediators of the wind assemblage are active agents of (re)territorialisation. As they take over projects for companies and embody their everyday presence on the ground, they blend and fit wind turbines into the local social and political landscapes of power and (party) politics. Upper-caste landowning communities mobilise their social capital and existing networks and 'connections' to corner every single position of brokers and contractors. Once entered in the wind assemblage, they use their newly appointed position to accumulate more economic and political capital. Indeed, wind companies are closely related to political parties and political intermediaries, and this relation gets even more visible and evident in election times. As fixers reorder land and villages for wind companies, they simultaneously reassert power, authority and control over space and people they supervise.

6.4.1 Mobilising Social Capital to Enter the Brokering World: 'Information', 'Knowledge' and 'Experience'

Enforcers and mediators have mobilised their existing social capital, in other words a set of 'information' (*jankari*), 'knowledge', 'connections', or 'experience' (*anubhav*) they possessed before the arrival of wind turbines, to forcefully make their way in the wind assemblage. The analysis I present below draws on Sud and Levien's work on land brokering, and particularly their application of Bourdieu's social capital thesis (Sud 2021; Levien 2015).

Information and knowledge about future wind turbines' locations, about contracts and land transactions, about land ownership and paperwork constituted a valuable currency in the wind assemblage. It constituted a metaphorical 'gold' particularly cherished, coveted and accumulated by mediators, contractors and politicians, confirming what Ibrahim said, 'information was currency' (2021, 59). According to this village head I met in June, a minimum knowledge package allows you to become a broker or fixer for companies in your own village: 'everyone can become a broker as long as you have a little bit of knowledge about land, about NA procedure, about who owns what in the village', confirming the non-professional nature of village-level and one-time brokering activities (Discussion, 15.06.21).

But the questions arising from this discussion is that - who is the best prepared or best positioned to possess and control that 'little bit of knowledge' and what are the attributes or qualities of those best able to access this 'gold'? Based on my fieldwork, I propose the following argument: people who have 'knowledge' about land ownership and land structure, are already well 'connected' to party and companies' circles via family and kinship relations, who have access to elite and powerful castes, or best belong to those groups - have intimate 'experience' of the internal and bureaucratic functioning of local revenue administrations, those people are best positioned to occupy a privileged rank in the reorganisation of value regimes and production relations induced by wind extraction. In other words, the brokers and fixers I describe here do not constitute a class of emerging new entrants' brokers, they belong to a class of already well-established and well positioned upper caste landowners affiliated to the BJP, who had been working on, in and around land before the arrival of wind turbines. Baku for example was an established *sarpanch* affiliated to the BJP before the arrival of wind turbines, Iqlab was a salt and sand mining contractor, and the other professional land broker I mentioned in section 6.1.2 was a former *mamlatdar*. Since then, they have mobilised and reactivated their existing socio-political connections and networks (social capital) to capture the best positions.

Once brokers and mediators get in the wind assemblage and fix companies projects, they make sure that the position they occupy will generate substantially more gold, or in other terms, more economic capital. This is possible only if there is an unbalanced repartition of knowledge and information between people, a false equilibrium between 'those who have information and knowledge and those who want it, those to give and share information and those not' summarised this village-level broker (Discussion, 07.10.21). Indeed, scarcity is an essential part of value, if everyone possesses 'gold', or information and knowledge about the wind assemblage, then its value automatically decreases. For these reasons, mediators need to create scarcity and keep the process of brokering wind energy as mysterious and secret as possible. True information about upcoming surveys, windmill's exact locations and compensation rates given to landowners is always hidden from the public eye and kept as a secret to entertain confusion, rumours, and whispers among villagers:

> 'Our job is in the shadow, secret and discreet. We never go on sites or in villages if we don't need to, if there is not a special task for us or a problem to solve. When we do the survey in villages, we never tell anyone what we are doing here, where have we been, how much location are going to come and all. We never mark the revenue land we have surveyed because otherwise you are sure that the next day someone will have encroached the land. Our policy is to keep our actions, our movements, our purposes as subtle and secret as possible. The less people know what we do and where we go the best it is for us', testifies Dasram (Discussion, 27.01.21).

Advancing in the shadows and behind curtains allows fixers to exploit grey zones and even flirt with semi-legal transactions, as they realised soon that they could 'refill their pockets' by leaking some information in exchange of commissions. This was confirmed by professional 'problem solvers', village-level fixers and even different staff from companies' land teams: while never acknowledging taking part personally in this business, companies' representatives would blame 'some companies' guys [who] have also joined and helped villagers in making and solving ROW, because they realised that they could get some money', usually previous staff and companies who left Kutch (Discussion with a company's representative, 23.10.21). Meanwhile, ROW solvers and village fixers were much keener in pointing out the participation of companies' land team staff in grey areas and semi-legal money transactions. Devpalsinh, the Rajput ROW solver I mentioned earlier, confessed getting help from companies' staff to make blockades:

> 'It is the companies themselves; their land team staff who gives us knowledge and information about ROW, they give us advice on when is best to do ROW, at what time can we put more pressure on the company and obtain more money from them. They do this because they also get a commission in the final agreement. They will tell us - 'you do a ROW at this place and that time, you can get good amount of money from the company, and in exchange you give me 10%'. So, it's the land team staff who is at the origin of all this knowledge on ROW, and they exploited their position within the company to fill their pockets in the shadow' (Discussion, 01.04.21).

Sometimes, these brokers, politicians or even police officers would name the companies implicated in such business. One name in particular was widely circulated and gossiped about at the end of my fieldwork: Rahul S., mentioned earlier, was the head of the land team for the past three years when I arrived in Kutch. I first met him in mid-February 2021, he was a very mysterious man, particularly about his meetings and his movements. He was rarely in the office, and even his own staff would rarely know where he was precisely, and what he was doing. When I came back in the field after the summer break, I learned from his staff that he had been transferred to a new project in Karnataka and was replaced by a new 'inexperienced' head, who freshly landed from Delhi and knew nothing about the local politics in Kutch. In the weeks that followed, a lot of rumours and gossips circulated among brokers, contractors and local politicians about this sudden removal after three years of loyal service for the company: Rahul S. had apparently 'eaten' a lot of money while helping people make ROW and then solve them with company's money, to such an extent that the headquarters in Ahmedabad and Pune had become aware of his activities. Kiva R., a police officer stationed at Dayapar and regularly in contact with the said land team, whispered this hypothesis to me during a discussion behind closed doors.

> 'Did you know why Rahul S. from [company] has been transferred?' he asked first to check on my own knowledge about this rumour. Once I candidly replied that I was not aware of what happened, he added 'because he has made so many *hera pheri* (shenanigans*)* with ROW and money, he got his own pockets filled. He disseminated all the budget allocated by the company, and then his accountancy was invalidated by the headquarters, they started to question where all that money was going. He got transferred two days after and was replaced by someone who doesn't know anything about Kutch, who doesn't know how things work here. Because he doesn't have any

> knowledge or experience, they hope that he will stay far away from ROW.' (Discussion with Kiva R., 22.10.21)

The case of Rahul S., head of the land team in Mata na Madh, and his '*hera pheri*' with company's money and ROW makers reveal how much the boundaries between the companies' representatives, the brokers and fixers and the ROW makers or contestants are blurred, porous and changing over time. It's precisely these blurred and porous boundaries that make the mediation of the wind assemblage particularly novel and unique. Sitting on a new pile of 'gold', fixers and brokers tried to recycle their position within the wind assemblage and convert wind related accumulated money into new political patronages and dependency relationships.

6.4.2 Fitting Wind Turbines and Companies in the Landscape of Party Politics and Elections

Indeed, wind related money and contracts were feeding party politics, patronage relations and political (dis)affiliations. Those who can control and direct these channels of money, open or alternatively close the money valve, can at the same time secure their existing political leadership but also convince new people to come on their side, convince new people to vote for them. This is something that other important political leaders and companies' fixers acknowledged, like Baku who extensively saw his brokering activities in the wind assemblage as a powerful political platform to broaden his vote bank, and secure votes for the BJP in forthcoming elections:

> 'It is all about vote bank and politics. Imagine someone from my village comes to me, wants to sell his land, get some money from the company, or a job, or wants to put his tractor or water tank on contract, if I help him, if I connect him with the company, with the *sahibs* (sirs) in the land team and manage to find him a driver job, some money in exchange of land brokering or help him to get good compensation from land sale, then he will definitely vote for me and BJP at the next election.' (Discussion with Baku, 12.06.21)

What Baku revealed here is that there are important connecting channels between mediating land and wind power and mediating party politics: brokers and fixers are able to translate and convert their position within the wind assemblage into (new) dominant positions of political leaders, and conversely political connections and leadership are essential, if not determining, criteria to enter the brokering world of wind extraction. This embeddedness of the use of (land)

brokerage to further local political ambitions is a central feature of Indian politics (Sud 2021; Noy 2022).

And yet, it was sometimes difficult to identify distinctively and decouple what prevailed over the other, as land, wind power and party politics merged and intertwined so well. Iqlab's profile eminently corresponds to this description: he has mobilised his NGO activities, his position within the Kutch *sarpanch* association, his friendly connections with BJP-affiliated wind brokers and contractors and his contacts with wind and electricity transmission companies' representatives to enter politics and start a career as BJP's Vice President face in the *tehsil*. Conversely, his entry into politics and the newly formed connections in the BJP have largely fed in and promoted his NGO activities and opened the doors of more wind companies' representatives and a stable position of *tehsil* land broker and contractor.

The event of 14th March 2021 was a particular expression of how all his different activities actually fed off each other: on that day, Iqlab was at the centre of all the attention as he organised via his NGO and his *panchayat* a whole day event, a kind of festival (*mehla)*, where 71 underprivileged and poor families of the nearby villages were offered free and simultaneous marriages. During that day, I randomly bumped into many precedent informants from nearby villages I had met few weeks or months ago, from Samio, or even Pamori. But more interestingly, all the local state officials attended the event, from the SDM, *mamlatdar*, police Sub-Inspector but also VIP politicians from the BJP (MP and MLAs), as well as wind companies' local heads, like Rahul S.

This close nexus of the wind assemblage and party politics became even more visible and evident at crucial moments like elections. They happened twice in 2021, in February for the *taluka* and district *panchayats* and December for the village *panchayat*. Six months before the *sarpanch* election, in June, Baku warned me that:

> 'Wind power companies, contracts and money will play a big game in determining who is the next *sarpanch* in every village. Companies will give money and contracts, will make promises to whoever candidate is in favour of wind turbines, and candidates will make big promises to get votes.' (Discussion, 12.06.21)

Indeed, the wind assemblage played a big game in both elections. Companies' staff, brokers and contractors sided with candidates who had the best chances to get (re-)elected or were even candidates themselves, mostly from the BJP in Nakhatrana *tehsil* and parts of Lakhpat. Of course, this support materialised in money and funding, but also in a complete commitment

and involvement in the electoral campaign: companies put on hold all their new projects and new windmill locations, especially those which were contested, and sent their staff, those recruited locally, to fight the political battle alongside BJP candidates. Although companies' representatives never openly acknowledged this involvement, I remember that they were quite busy and unreachable during the two-three weeks that punctuated the electoral campaign. During this time, everyone else was also busy with elections, contractors, brokers, fixers and of course politicians attended party rallies, meetings, and gatherings, going from villages to villages to convince people to vote for BJP. It was extremely common to find the same companies' staff at these meetings and rallies, not as simple spectators, but as ground-level logistic organisers, transporting and accompanying the candidates from one village to the other with companies' private vehicles. This pro-active involvement in electoral campaigns insured that companies' candidates got (re)elected and that wind projects carried on. The BJP won an overwhelming majority of seats at district and *taluka panchayats* in February 2021. In certain areas of Lakhpat historically ruled by the Congress Party, the BJP made decisive progress and electoral breakthrough at the same time than new wind power projects were expanding in the region (I discuss this in more details in chapter 7). As companies and their representatives plunged into the political battle of everyday local (party) politics, they also turned *panchayat* positions into critical resources for villagers of all castes.

I witnessed the last weeks of the *sarpanch* electoral campaign between the end of November and early December and left the field just before the polling date set on the 19th of December 2021. The more we approached the deadline to cast votes, the more I could feel an incredible tension, effervescence, and excitement in the atmosphere. At every corner, people would share their own anecdotes and stories about their village, their thoughts about who had the best chances to get elected and how wind turbines and companies had a huge impact on the electoral competition and the final outcome. This time, the *sarpanch* election had sparked much more interest and attention than the previous ones: with the arrival of wind companies in the area, the next *sarpanch* would now secure for the upcoming five years a financial rent from wind turbines, a mix of CSR funds and commissions awarded by companies, plus government funding. He would secure contracts as security guards or transporters and a privileged position of bargaining and negotiating with companies who also need him to sign a bunch of documents and papers in the name of the *panchayat*. For the first time, an unprecedented and fierce competition was launched between villagers to contest for *sarpanch* elections and become

companies' *de facto* brokers and fixers. This observation was shared by most of my informants, like the *talati* of Haroma *panchayat* I had met late November:

> 'Before, nobody wanted to become *sarpanch* because this meant a lot of problems, troubles, and complains from other villagers. Now, there is going to be harsh competition for *sarpanch* elections, because since the arrival of wind turbines 2 years ago - everyone wants to become *sarpanch*, people are running after wind turbines and money' (Discussion, 24.11.21).

I was myself ironically invited by many informants to fight for the *sarpanch* election and become a candidate, as apparently, 'you have gathered so much knowledge and information on wind power and companies, everybody knows you now in Lakhpat *taluka*. You can pick any village you want, and they will definitely elect a *Sardar* from Paris and you will become the next *sarpanch'* (Discussion with a villager from Dayapar, 27.11.21).

6.4.3 (Re)Asserting Power and Authority Over Spaces and Populations they Supervise

Brokers' relationship with companies' representatives is highly ambivalent, complex, and transactional. Support is never permanent, never written in stone. It is always conditional to the respect of some private gains, and if they feel that the terms of the deal are not respected or unfair, support might easily blend into opposition. For this reason, as brokers resort to both resistance and support, alternatively or simultaneously, they also consolidate their own control and authority over spaces and people they supervise, including companies.

Companies' representatives were the first ones to acknowledge that if brokers and fixers were dependent on wind projects to get money, job and contracts, companies in return wouldn't have the capacities at all to perform their plans alone and without their help:

> 'Without broker you can't do anything in India. This whole country works on brokers. Without them you can't get a birth certificate, or a passport renewed, you can't find a house, right? The same goes for land, without them you can't find land', explained this company representative (Discussion, 23.10.21).

Wind staff are not naïve about the true motives of brokers and fixers, they know that while mediating projects and undertaking companies' 'dirty' jobs, brokers also fulfil their own social and political interests. The same company's representative added:

> 'These same locals are mainly interested in their own profits. They will bargain with the private landowner to make him sign the sale deed, but they will also bargain with us, they will always try to fulfil their own interests and fill their own pockets while helping us' (Discussion, 24.03.21).

It reveals the duality and the double face of wind enforcers and mediators, at the interface between villagers and companies, neither fully with villagers nor fully on companies' side.

Village-level leaders who entered into the service of companies as small-scale contractors, ROW fixers or land brokers and had some acknowledged influence, authority, and power on their fellows (because of caste or party affiliations) realised that they had the same amount of influence, authority, and power vis-a-vis companies. Without their active approval and support, companies' plans would face serious obstacles. Kiva R., the policeman I mentioned earlier, suggested that these 'leaders in villages soon realised that the companies cannot actually do anything without their help, they can't find land, they can't enter in the village, or move between locations without their approval' (Discussion, 22.10.21).

Companies' moves and circulation of trucks and machines in the village, its vicinity or even faraway lands are extremely dependent on the acquiescence and the goodwill of the village strongman. If he says no, it's no. In Haroma, a village situated in the outskirts of Dayapar and populated only by Muslims, Hassan *bhai* is the village strongman, leader and BJP elected representative at the *taluka panchayat*. As companies' principal interlocutor, everything that is related to wind, land, ROW, or jobs passes through him or his three henchmen. Companies' staff even need his permission before conducting any work. On my first visit to the village in June 2021, Hassan *bhai* had instructed his henchman Abdal to show me the village area and some wind turbines around. On his motorbike, I asked him to drive to a windmill location that had intrigued me a couple of weeks ago. When reaching the precise spot, we came across two companies' staff from the electrical team who were conducting some work on the windmill. Abdal directly shouted at them angrily: 'who told you, you could work here on the location? Who did you ask to come on the location? Why didn't you call me first?' (Observation, 28.06.21).

Hassan *bhai*, and by extension Abdal, is in sole command here, and in the wide expanse of this hilly landscape, he is the king. He is the official responsible, if not the unofficial owner, of the wind turbine and company's staff cannot come here without his permission. The driver accompanying the company staff responded that 'we did not know there was ROW here,

nobody told us, that is why we came'. Abdal ordered them to stop the work and leave immediately, forbidding them to come on the location until the payment for the security guard job was done. After this event, Abdal came back two times on the location during the night to check that the staff had not tried to resume work. Companies therefore need Abdal and Hassan *bhai's* approval, but most importantly, they need their guidance to navigate this unknown terrain.

The fixers who were already powerful established politicians, even before the arrival of wind turbines, have ensured that companies cannot avoid or bypass them, that they cannot engage in any financial transaction with a single private owner without giving them a fair share. That is precisely what Hassan *bhai* managed to do: as a BJP political leader locally strong and influent in the area where companies want to implement wind turbines, he is naturally entitled to commissions and shares in any land transaction and road agreement that companies sign with villagers from Haroma. People like Hassan *bhai* became so prominent for wind companies, that some areas or villages even borne their names:

> '[pointing to Haroma] This is Hassan *bhai* area. Whenever people ask about Haroma, they hear his name. There is nothing he doesn't do there, nothing he doesn't supervise, everything is in his hands! From finding land, to making ROW and solving them, he is your man!' explained this company's representative the first time I visited the surrounding area in April 2021 (Discussion, 01.04.21).

This renewed authority and power over spaces and territories reconfigured by companies also extends to fellow villagers: controlling who can get a job as a security guard or driver and who cannot, who can get a contract for road development or electric poles erection and who cannot, who can get a share in the village's committee receiving CSR funds and who is excluded from that, who is allowed to directly bargain and negotiate with companies' representatives and whose land transaction is on the contrary negotiated by someone else, all of this confers a renewed superordinate power to upper caste wind fixers and enforcers over Dalits villagers.

In Pamori, Rajput village-level fixers have mobilised their position within the wind assemblage and the resources and capital diverted from it for the benefit of their own group, of their own caste against another, the Dalits. Ensuring a caste-based appropriation of wind turbines benefits, Rajputs have strengthened their dominant caste status within the village: the household survey revealed that Rajput villagers structurally owned more (irrigated) lands than Dalits (on an average, 7.4 ha opposed to 4.1), larger livestock (an average of 8 opposed to 2.5)

and sent more children to higher education (above 10th class), they also now monopolise almost all the available jobs on the wind locations settled in the village.[26] Vijayrajsinh Jadeja, the Rajput villager I encountered during a ROW, his two brothers and the extended family circle were the main beneficiaries of the wind turbines' arrival in the village, also because the *sarpanch*, Viratsinh, who got elected before the implementation of the first projects, was an extended family member and a close ally and friend of the BJP's main face in Lakhpat *tehsil*, Harpal Singh. Using these connections and their historical dominant power in the village, Rajput villagers were separately and simultaneously, in small circles, distributing among their kin members the available security guard and driver jobs, making sure that each of the brothers gets some work for a minimum of two or three months. Vijayraj's family was also in position to interfere and intervene in every land transaction and deal sealed between a Dalit household and companies. As Dalit villagers rarely met companies' officials for these deals and transactions, Rajput became their *de facto* representants and voices. For Dalit informants, what they called 'companies-*raj'* (companies' rule) was in fact a 'Rajput-*raj'*. In a context of decreasing dominant caste power, the loosening of dependency ties on poorer Dalits and increasing economic and class fragmentation among Rajputs, partly due to the impact of capitalist agricultural development (Harriss 2013; Mendelsohn 1993; Jeffrey 2001), the latter have been more inclined to invest and reorient their capital surplus in activities related to the wind assemblage. Becoming the companies' *de facto* gatekeepers, or even better - wind turbines keepers, Rajputs have secured new ways to accumulate capital outside traditional agrarian or pastoral activities and they have extended their exploitation and domination over Dalits outside traditional relations of production (Pattenden 2011).

Conclusion

I argued in this chapter that the roll-out phase of the wind extraction assemblage in Kutch and its specific brokerage of land have re-organised important socio-political relations on which institutions like the state and categories of power (like caste and class) were built. I tentatively tried to emphasise three important elements.

First of all, wind energy's specific infrastructural materiality and spatial organisation have given renewed relevance to traditional brokerage activities around land and has entrenched the dependency of external extracting agencies on local middlemen to buy (passive) acquiescence

[26] 7 Rajput informants out of 9 at the time of the household survey held a job as a security guard or driver in the past 12 months, opposed to 1 out of 13 Dalit informants.

and manufacture consent. This entrenched dependency has also provided the latter with even more agency and power than before, making them something more than simple 'facilitators' as brokers also advance personal agendas of (re)territorialisation, authority consolidation and capital accumulation. Second, I showed how the development of wind turbines in rural India and their reconfigurations of space and land via unique energy materiality and brokerage processes affected the contours and boundaries of the state. The state got concretely reified through new spaces and agents, mostly evolving around wind companies and brokers' spheres, and ruled by new bureaucratic, social and political relations. Finally, I tried to explore how brokers have fit and blended wind turbines in the political and social landscapes of power and (party) politics of Kutch, drawing new political patronage and asserting caste and muscle power on both wind companies and subordinate villagers.

In that sense, this chapter contributed to the existing literature on land politics, brokerage, state-making and power in extractive contexts: first, my findings confirmed that the state is a project in-the-making, largely influenced and affected by processes taking place within the society and its margins (Abrams 1988; Das and Poole 2004). I offered an additional evidence that land making and unmaking in India is tied up with state-making (Levien 2018; Sud 2021), and that these processes are concretely undertaken by local brokers and mediators who channel power relations of caste and class and the materiality of energy infrastructures to the intricacies of ground reality (Jeffrey 2002; Witsoe 2012). Specifically, I analysed how brokers made sure that Kutch was indeed becoming a wind extraction frontier organised by new territorialities and where land, state boundaries and power relations were constantly reconfigured to serve companies' and their own interests.

Drawing on these findings, I argue in the next chapter that the wind extraction frontier is fully compatible with a long-term project of territory revivalism, boundary-making and identity politics: the 'saffron' far-right ethno-nationalist ideology and its objective of remaking India's nation, state and borders to its 'original' Hindu nature as opposed to the Muslim 'other'. Wind turbines infrastructures align with security and citizenship regimes elaborated after independence and with the performance of state sovereignty in (re)producing its national boundaries.

Chapter 7. When 'Green' Becomes 'Saffron': (Everyday) Hindu Nationalism, Border Infrastructure and Surveillance-through-(wind) Development

This chapter invites the reader to look beyond the limited scope of the wind turbine sphere and rather understand the socio-religious and political landscape of everyday ethno-nationalism in which they were deployed in borderland India. This landscape, I argue, broadly shaped the modalities and practicalities of wind turbines' expansion in borderland Kutch. Indeed, the presence of Muslim pastoral populations in the *tehsil* of Lakhpat added a new dimension to the 'green' extraction frontier, a new colour: 'saffron'. Imagined as an inaccessible and inscrutable troubled frontier, full of disloyal, suspicious and subversive 'others' supporting Pakistani 'infiltration', Lakhpat border areas have been subjected since the Independence to a specific form of 'saffron' revolution: silent, underground and materialised in an everyday competition and struggle for space, sounds, words and images. As the last frontier where Hindutva politics and wind extraction have not completely permeated the society yet, Lakhpat border areas constitute the playground for both BJP's electoral politics and wind turbines expansion. In this context of nationalist tensions, frustrations and anxieties, wind turbines expansion endorses a recent project of political reconquest started by the BJP 20 years ago, and a more profound cultural identity revivalism expressed through territory and space and along religious and caste boundary-making vis-à-vis the Muslim 'other'. Wind power development also aligns with strategies of remote control and surveillance of border populations specifically designed by the state for its margins.

This chapter brings together the materiality of (wind) energy infrastructures and borders (Larkin 2013; Sur 2021; Lesutis 2021) and ethno-nationalist practices of cultural identity revivalism and boundary-making (Smith 1986; Jaffrelot 1996) as they both reconfigure space, population and resources along issues of national identity, security and citizenship. As demonstrated in chapter 5 and 6, the expansion of the wind extraction frontier in Kutch resulted in changing value and property regimes and affected the contours and boundaries of the local state and power relations. I argue in this chapter that ethno-nationalisms are themselves important drivers of frontier-making and territorialisation, and that in this case, the 'green' frontier (wind electricity) discussed so far is highly compatible with the 'saffron' frontier (Hindu nationalism), as they share common territorial practices, common agents of

enforcement and discourses of national security. Specifically, I contribute to the existing scholarship on state border-making, infrastructures and ethno-nationalism by exploring how both frontiers ('green' and 'saffron') blend in with each other to form a new border-infrastructure complex that produces new modes of governing and ordering 'sensitive spaces' (Cons 2016; Thomas 2021). The chapter gives particular attention to the emergence of racialised citizenship and security regimes (Jayal 2013; Ibrahim 2021).

It adopts the following structure: the first section explores the materiality of wind infrastructures as a platform for the deployment of security and surveillance technologies and the enforcement of territorial control at the margins of the state. I then propose to look at the infiltration of 'everyday' and 'soft' Hindutva politics in Lakhpat border areas and the concomitant Hinduisation and 'saffronisation' of the space by the wind assemblage. Wind infrastructural expansion over new areas also largely aligns with BJP's electoral strategy to conquer new constituencies and buy minority leaders, as discussed in a third section. Finally, I analyse the deployment of wind turbines technologies along this contentious space from the perspective of border infrastructures and performance of state's sovereignty.

7.1 Wind Power Infrastructures as Platform for Territorial Control, Surveillance, and Security

The more time I spent with companies' staff on new wind turbine locations along the border, in the wind corridor between Haroma, Nara (the '*Sardars*' village') and Hajipir (a Muslim *dargah* at the entry of the Rann of Kutch), the more I had the impression that putting wind turbines in this area, 'in the middle of Muslims', was not solely following the map of wind resources. Notes and observations started to amount here and there in my daily field notebook, noticing the presence of saffron flags and *mandirs* on wind turbine construction sites, saffron and BJP banners in companies' staff vehicles or describing a scene of apparent distrust and suspicion between companies' staff and Muslim pastoralists in borderland villages. It therefore became evident after some time that there were strong connections and collaborations to be drawn between the materiality, spatiality and the colonial nature of wind infrastructures (discussed in chapter 5) and more ancient 'saffron' waves with similar projects of recolonising and reconfiguring space along the revival of an imagined homogeneous Hindu identity and 'golden' civilisational era (Jaffrelot 1996; Hansen 1999). As mentioned in chapter 3, wind turbines are the last and most recent tool to materialise and enforce these agendas, alongside mining industries and tourism programs, which started on the border 20 years ago. Overall, the

state defined Kutch's border areas in ethno-nationalist terms, in questions of belonging, loyalty, and untrustworthy citizenship right after the Independence.

Wind power spatial organisation and expansion are based on constant movement and uninterrupted flow of humans, machines, material, electricity, resources. This trajectory of constant movement is based on a developed and complex network of roads covering a huge amount of space. I have explained in more details in chapter 5 how wind power materiality and spatial organisation were creating specific dialectics of dispossession, around a continuous and on-going process of land grab that aligned with the colonial nature of (energy) infrastructures. I now suggest that these same material, spatial and infrastructural characteristics, deployed in a certain socio-religious and political context, such as Kutch's borderlands populated by Muslim pastoral communities and coveted by the Hindu far-right, are highly favourable and suitable for renewed dialectics of control, surveillance, and security emanating from a diversity of actors.

I first started investigating the connections and collaborations between the 'green' and the 'saffron' in June 2021, and then most prominently, in the second half of my fieldwork between October and December 2021. Most of these connections were visible and tangible in the borderland *tehsil* of Lakhpat, because of the historical and socio-religious specificities I outlined in chapter 3. Overlaps between wind electricity and 'saffron' waves were most salient in my third case study, Haroma, situated 20 kilometres west of Dayapar, the administrative town of Lakhpat *tehsil*.

7.1.1 Controlling Muslim Pastorals along the Border based on Increased Access and Movement

Who is to be watched, who is to be controlled, how and where? These questions are central, and they reveal the sensitive and political nature of wind infrastructures. Wind turbine infrastructures are not just wind turbines, they are much more than that. As I observed through my fieldwork, they are instruments of control, power and domination fitted for certain populations when deployed in certain configurations. Lakhpat border areas are the playground for control and surveillance strategies emanating from the state and its security apparatus (the army and the police) since independence and increasingly, from Hindu nationalist organisations (RSS, BKS, Hindu Yuva Sangathan). Lakhpat border areas are imagined by Hindu nationalists as 'mini-Pakistan' because of the presence of Muslim populations; they are framed as opaque and dangerous because of supposed infiltration and complicity with Pakistani

intelligence. Villages bordering the Rann of Kutch are unreachable and inaccessible, both physically because of their remote location and the lack of roads; and discursively or ideologically, in the collective imaginary - they are inscrutable. The pastoral nature of the livelihoods practiced by Muslim villagers along the border is precisely the problem, it's precisely what makes them 'subversive', 'dangerous' and 'untrustworthy'. Pastoral communities have been historically more difficult to control, watch and fix at one place, they have in a way partially escaped the full and complete scrutiny of the state (Singh 2009).

A security contractor I came across randomly at one of my regular tea stalls in June 2021, Malisinh Jadeja, recounted how Lakhpat border areas used to be dangerous and inaccessible years ago, paving the way to wind power infrastructures' crucial role in bringing these areas closer to control and surveillance:

> 'In these areas, for example around Hajipir *dargah*, it is all Muslim communities, they are all doing pastoral activities. They move all day with their cattle, from morning until the night they are outside in the jungle, and nobody knows what they are doing, where they are going, who they are meeting. There have been many situations of Pakistani and terrorist infiltrations in this area within many people helping them to cross the border, and before it was completely inaccessible, unreachable. Not even the BSF or the police could go there. You went to Haroma recently, before nobody used to go there, nobody could even access this area by bike.' (Discussion with Malisinh, Rajput security contractor, 25.06.21)

Malisinh insisted that there was a 'before' and an 'after'. The 'after' is of course the arrival of wind turbines, and the thousands of kilometres of roads crossing or following the same exact pasture paths taken by Muslim pastorals and their cattle [27] (see Figure 15 below).

[27] The development of roads by companies consists usually in the widening, enlargement and levelling of existing pasture paths and tracts taken by pastorals with their cattle.

Figure 15 Picture of Haroma's village cattle-grazing area. Accompanying two villagers from Haroma with their goats and sheeps, they informed me that this paved road had been recently constructed by wind companies, right in the middle of an existing pasture path. (Photo by author)

When extraction starts, it is followed by a constant and uninterrupted flow of vehicles, cranes and machines passing day and night, colonising and domesticating a hostile, 'savage' and unknown space. Wind power expansion in so-called 'Muslim areas' along the border opens a breach, a physical and discursive breach in what is constructed as the space of the 'other', a space that needs to be taken back in the Hindutva framework and simultaneously opened to the eye and scrutiny of the state, but also the common (Hindu) man:

> 'We have done a lot of development there, we have created and opened up so many roads, so many ways to access this area. Now you have boleros, trucks, heavy vehicles and cranes which move around daily. *Wind power has brought some light and attention on this area* [emphasis added]. Now, everyone can go there, everyone can access this area with his car, every day companies keep coming, moving from location to location, from village to village, going in and out. Wind power has brought security and control in this area, now if they [Muslims] do something everybody knows, everybody can see and report. The wind turbines and the companies, they will literally sit in the middle of these people. It is the same thing they have done in the Rann of Kutch with tourism projects, now everyone can go there, visit this place, take pictures, and have a look at the border.' (Discussion with a company's representative, 10.06.21)

This local Rajput Sodha land team staff from a company operating around Haroma's wind corridor was the first one to openly acknowledge that wind power materiality (based on access and movement) was producing more control and security. Access is indeed primordial in controlling space, as well as occupying and covering it with constant movement and flows, as they both allow to keep a (suspicious) eye on the negative 'other', bringing 'them' closer to 'us', 'closer to control and surveillance' to quote a policeman informant (Discussion with Kiva R., 22.10.2021).

During my wind sites visits with companies' staff in the area near Hajipir, on board their impressive four-wheeler cars specially designed for desert and rocky terrains, the only few people we came across were usually local pastorals, dressed in 'Islamic' style, and grazing their vast herds of goats or camels. As our car would make its way slowly between the animals, both companies' staff and the pastoral people would exchange a staring look, the former scrutinising top-down the pastoralist and cursing him for his animals that were slowing down the movement of cars and vehicles and the second one trying to probe the identity of the people sitting behind the tinted glass of the car.

7.1.2 60 Years Later, Sikhs (Wind Staff) Still 'Keep an Eye' on the Border and Muslims

As wind turbines turn into infrastructures of control, surveillance and security in borderland territories, wind companies' staff who circulate and move daily in these territories also become border-enforcers and agents of control and surveillance. Companies do not randomly assign their staff to border areas projects like the Haroma wind corridor or the area around Hajipir *dargah* in the Rann. They rely heavily on the historical and problematic role that Sikhs have played along the border as frontier-explorers, pioneers, border enforcers and watchers. When they are not locally recruited Rajputs (Kutch or Gujarat), all the companies' representatives who are given wind clusters to supervise in border areas of Lakhpat are Sikhs and Punjabis, and for this reason they share many similarities with the *Sardars* sent in the same area 60 years ago (the arrival of Sikh settlements in the region is discussed in chapter 3).

I have made quite a lot of visits to wind sites with Harjinder Singh, an engineer supervising the three components of a windfarm project following land acquisition (civil, mechanical and electrical work) and coordinating the different contractors for a given cluster of 15 locations south of the Haroma area. Harjinder is a 30 years-old Sikh coming originally from Jalandhar in Punjab but settled in Bengal since his childhood. He joined the energy company three years

ago and his first workstation was in Kutch. When I first met him in January 2021, he was responsible for the mechanical work of the cluster, but over the months he got promoted to manage the whole chain. He has been awarded mostly borderland clusters populated by Muslim pastorals and has developed close relationships with people he calls 'my locals'. With his large orange *damala*-style turban (worn usually by religious people) and his impressive height, Harjinder is respected by the local Muslims he interacts with during his workday, always greeted with a '*Sat Sri Akal Sardar-Ji'* (a salutation related to Sikhs and Punjabis) and not the usual '*Namaste'*. While visiting several wind sites with him on a hot day in June 2021, only a few days after visiting the Sikhs of Nara, I was surprised at the similarities of discourses and positioning towards space and local populations: in his daily work, Harjinder advances and progresses in what he perceives to be a 'hostile', 'wild and savage', 'abandoned' space, where he brings order, discipline, organisation and rigor with the construction of road networks, electrical lines and poles. He is domesticating the land and space, cleaning and clearing it for the purpose of wind turbine construction, in the same logic as the *Sardars* of Nara cleaned and cleared 'wastelands' 60 years ago for agriculture production. Cutting the trees and vegetation, transforming this 'jungle' where there is literally 'nothing' of value, Harjinder occupies the same role of frontier-maker, explorer, and pioneer. But he is also a problematic border enforcer and border protector, controlling and monitoring the movements of Muslim pastorals in his cluster and reporting those he deems illegal and suspicious:

> 'Once there was a guy claiming to come from Bengal, and he was asking for the road to Hajipir *dargah*, but I found his Bengali a bit unfamiliar, as he was using a dialect I had never heard before. I told him to sit in my bolero car, and I brought him directly to the Nara police station. And I was right to keep an eye on him, he was an illegal Bangladeshi migrant trying cross the border with Pakistan.' (Discussion with Harjinder, 16.06.21)

Harjinder's statement confirms that wind power infrastructures are at the crossroad of territorial control, surveillance, and security in the margins of the state, both physical and discursive margins. They reveal their contested political nature as infrastructures of power and domination embedded in struggles over territory, belonging, identity and citizenship. Wind turbine infrastructures take part and enforce in new ways the exclusionary citizenship and security regime that was built in India after 1947 and has been imagining Muslims as second-class citizens and the negative 'other' since then (Jayal 2013; Ibrahim 2021).

7.2 Winds of 'Everyday' Hindutva: Struggles for Territory, Space, and Identity

The specific socio-religious features in Lakhpat, whereby Muslims represent a higher percentage of the population compared to other parts of India[28], and its related construction as an imagined 'Muslim-dominated area' have historically created the conditions for the deployment of a particular form and type of Hindutva politics. This politics is diluted in local and everyday manifestations of struggles for territory, space, images and sounds but also identities. Identities are assigned or denied, people compete against each other to control space and impose a certain definition and understanding of it that is highly infused by religion and caste. Wind turbines expansion is sensitive to these revivalist and nostalgic conceptions of space. As Rajput local wind enforcers progress in so-called Muslim border areas with a 'mission' to accomplish, wind territories become increasingly 'saffronised' territories and vice-versa.

7.2.1 The 'Saffron' Wave in Borderland Kutch: Local Manifestations of Everyday Hindutva

Lakhpat rarely makes the headlines for inter-religious violence and communal division. I have never heard or been narrated during my presence on the field of any attacks on Muslims, their properties or religious sites, unlike in other parts of India. On the contrary, I was surprised to hear discourses of apparent peace, harmony and friendly relations between religious communities emanating from both Muslims and Hindus living in Lakhpat. This discourse is very much in line with the strategy deployed by Modi in Gujarat between the 2007 and 2012 electoral campaigns to avoid provocative and violent statements towards Muslims and rather try to reach out to Sunni Muslims with programs promoting peace and 'social harmony beyond caste, class and religious divisions' like the *Sadbhavna* Mission (Jaffrelot 2016, 205). Reasons mobilised by my informants to explain this situation of apparent peace and harmony were actually even more interesting and relevant: while Hindu informants and BJP supporters explained this peaceful situation by the fixing of the border, the arrival of the BSF, Sikhs and more important police presence in the region which 'put Muslims under control', 'calmed them down'; Muslims explained this situation by their numerical power and strength which prevented Hindus from doing anything harmful to them.

[28] As mentioned in chapter 3, Muslims account for 41% of Lakhpat *tehsil* population, while Hindus are at 57% and Sikhs at 1.4% (Census of India 2011). When asking Hindu or Sikh informants about the Muslim population in the sub-district, they would usually advance overstated and fantasized figures of 60 or 70%.

Nonetheless, references to Muslims, Pakistan and to the border had a peculiar nature, rarely encountered before: my Hindu informants always made these in a subtle and discreet manner, never directly pointing out to Muslims, and rarely shared in open spaces like a tea stall. Usually, my informant would even lower the tone of his voice, almost whispering as if he was telling me some secret, some confidential information. BJP and RSS leaders I interviewed would rarely mobilise the classical themes of Hindu nationalism and communal divide but rather talk about 'development', 'modernism', and 'progress'.

7.2.1.1 'Neo-Hindutva': Soft and Everyday Means of Infiltration

The 'saffron' wave I observed in Lakhpat did not seem to comply with or follow the traditional features of violent, communal, and polarising politics and appeals to Hindu majoritarianism along a single reified Hindu identity (Hansen 1999; Chatterji, Hansen, and Jaffrelot 2019). Neither did it seem to comply with 'the militarisation of all Hindudom' that the BJP has been using in different parts of India over the past 40 years (Corbridge 1999). On the contrary, the nationalist project of recolonising and enforcing the Hinduisation of so-called 'Muslim spaces' in borderland areas required to develop permeating and absorbing strategies. These techniques and strategies of 'saffronising' public space are specifically designed for 'recalcitrant peripher[ies]', if not hostile - at least non-favourable environments such as Lakhpat, and fall within the broad category of what Anderson and Longkumer call 'Neo-Hindutva', i.e., the new forms, shapes and expressions that Hindu nationalism takes in its attempt to conquer and permeate new spaces, both 'institutional, territorial, conceptual, ideological' (2018, 372).

Hindutva agents are not in position to advance their nationalist conceptions of space and border-making in the open and public space, nor can they implement them violently or directly towards Muslims. For these reasons, they are forced to develop strategies of permeating these ideas using disguised, edulcorated, underground, 'soft' and 'everyday' means, similar to those developed by the Congress party and the 'Hindu traditionalists' within its ranks in the 1970-1980s (Bhagavan 2008). The 'saffron' wave in Lakhpat 'invades' the terrain with images, symbols, words, sounds, and flags and materialises in a constant struggle and competition for space.

7.2.1.2 A Constant Competition and Struggle for Space, Sounds, Images, and Words

This 'saffron' wave is precisely about making the Hindu presence visible and audible to the 'other', reasserting this presence and identity over space and reminding it constantly to the

‘other’, through routine life. When discussing with Rajput villagers from Junamay, in the same joint *panchayat* with Haroma, I found them in constant and daily competition with Muslims of nearby villages to counter their presence over space as materialised in *dargahs* and green flags. They would counter their ‘loud’ calls to prayer with planting saffron flags at every corner of the village, with new *mandirs* and even louder religious ceremonies or weddings:

> ‘Because this is not Pakistan here right, so we have to make Muslim people understand that we are in India, we have to make them fear us. We are forced to hear their five prayers a day in the loudspeakers, we got used to it, but then when we celebrate for Navratri, Diwali or Holi we also put loudspeakers, we make lots of noise so that the Muslims can hear us’ (Discussion with a Rajput villager from Junamay, 29.06.21,).

(Re)asserting their particular upper-caste identity over space in the everyday life also implies for Rajputs from Junamay to show and display their wealth and opulence to the ‘other’: building big mansions visible from the main road, driving latest SUVs like Scorpio or Bolero, organising regular big and loud parties where alcohol is consumed, where highly masculine and virile attributes associated to Kshatriya castes are overly manifested was common. Taking more and more space from Muslims, slowly advancing, and taking feet after feet first starts with the concrete step of *mandir* construction or *mandir* colonisation in new areas. A Muslim informant from Haroma once elaborated on the construction of new *mandirs* in the area:

> ‘They put *mandir* wherever they like, on top of a hill, near a wind turbine, near a lake… Sometimes there is no specific meaning, a *sadhu* slept there, dreamt about a god or a *mandir* and so they construct one… and they even get government funding for this!’ (Discussion, 24.11.21)

He then adds that Hindus from local villages and also from other parts of Kutch and Gujarat regularly build new *mandirs* near the border, particularly where Muslims live. In the direct vicinity of Haroma, 5 new *mandirs* have been built in the last couple of years, a process that usually aligns with wind turbines colonisation as I will detail later. One specific hilly point seemed to be at the centre of all the attention, the Jara *Dungar*.

7.2.1.3 A Field of Battle: Jara Dungar and Eid-Milad-un-Nabi

Jara *Dungar* is a hill point situated near Haroma and close to Jara, the last village before the BSF camp at the entry of the Rann, its height provides an amazing view of the seemingly endless desert. Jara *Dungar* was also the epic battlefield point of the war that opposed Ghulam

Shah Kalhora from Sindh and the Jadeja Rajput ruler of Kutch in 1762. What is interesting about this story, is less the veracity of historical facts advanced by people, but more how events in the past are recalled in the present, what people say about them and what constructions it reveals. This battle is still present in the popular imagination, which today links the actions of Ghulam Shah with the diversion of the Indus River from Lakhpat district. If this phenomenon is usually traced to an earthquake that took place in 1819, this *posteriori* reconstruction is really interesting and 'creates an association between Muslims, violence and destruction in a manner that reproduces itself to the present day' (Ibrahim 2008, 39).

This point has been reappropriated, first by the Congress party who commemorated the 'martyrs' of Jara in the 1990s, and then by BJP and Hindutva forces with a huge *mandir* complex project under construction, precisely because it is situated in the middle of three Muslim villages, Jara, Jumara and Haroma. Hindutva forces look at this epic battle story with the eyes of identity politics, communalism, and exclusion. To them, it was a historical rupture moment that opposed India and Pakistan, Hindus and Muslims, Sindhis and Kutchis, emphasising the long-term project of erasing centuries of Sindh-Kutch cultural ties and rebranding them as a supposedly age-old enmity (this is outlined in chapter 3). When I mentioned Jara *Dungar* to Hindu informants and asked for more details about the battle, I was surprised by the response I got:

> 'We try to build new *mandirs* where Rajput history took place, like in Jara *Dungar*. This was a long time ago, a big and bloody battle between *India and Pakistan* [emphasis added], the Jadeja Rajput ruler of Kutch fought with thousands of Hindu soldiers against the merciless Muslim ruler Gulam Shah' (Interview with a villager from Junamay, 25.10.22).

When I was on the field in 2021, rumours were also spreading that Jara *Dungar* would become the next borderland target for wind power projects. Some local journalists even reported about this (see Figure 22 in Appendices).

In this everyday battle for sound, images, words and space, Muslim villagers are also trying to appropriate visual and sound spaces, counter the Hinduisation and 'saffronisation' of territory and public space: during the day of Eid-Milad-un-Nabi, the Prophet's birthday celebrated on the 19th October 2021, I was invited by Haroma villagers to join them on their public parade (what they call '*jalus*') towards the nearby *dargah* and we ended up at Jara village for a big gathering. It took the form of a long religious parade with thousands of people from Haroma

either on their bikes, crammed on the back of pick-ups, cars, big trucks or even trolleys. Loud and big speakers were broadcasting religious music, and people chanting slogans like '*Allah hu Akbar*!'.

7.2.1.4 Assigning or Denying Identities: Hindu vs. Muslim, Gujarati/Kutchi vs. Sindhi

In this everyday form of Hindutva politics, religious (Hindu/Muslim), cultural and even regional (Kutchi, Gujarati or Sindhi) identities are assigned, denied and shaped through clothing and commensality practices, what people wear, how they wear it, the way they cut or shave their beard, what they eat and how they eat: spending a lot of time with Muslim informants, I observed that their everyday practices of eating, clothing, matrimonial practices were quite different from the ones I observed in Hindu populated villages, and that in public space, these practices shaped certain people as Hindu and Gujarati and others as Muslim and Sindhi. Regarding clothing first, one villager from Haroma recounted that when they take the train to Bombay in a big group (more than 15 people) and they all wear a *pathani kurta* (the traditional cloth of Muslims in the region) or a *keffiyeh*, nobody else wants to sit in their coach as people are afraid that they might have come from Sindh and Pakistan. This clothing practice was usually one of the elements used by my (Hindu) interlocutors to justify the branding of Lakhpat *tehsil* as 'mini-Pakistan':

> 'Didn't you have the impression you crossed the border when you left Nakhatrana and arrived in Dayapar? They all wear *shalwar kameez* in this area, you'll think you have reached Karachi' pointed this Dalit informant from Nakhatrana as I recounted my first motorbike ride towards Lakhpat (Discussion, 14.03.21).

The clothing practice that makes Kutchi Muslims 'aliens' and denies them any Gujarati identity is even extended to their whole body:

> 'If you put a Muslim Jat from Lakhpat in Ahmedabad, someone who doesn't know them will think he is a terrorist! They wear the same clothes, have the same beard, and Jat people are very recognisable, identifiable*, their body is not like us Gujarati, they are not organised physically like us, they are much bigger, imposing, much dangerous* [emphasis added]' (Discussion with the police officer Kiva R., 14.10.21)

This quote is extremely relevant to the historical construction of the Muslim body by Hindu nationalists as ill-disciplined, dangerous and posing a threat to Hindus' survival: imagined as more virile and strong, their sexuality is scrutinised and portrayed as hyperactive and

aggressive, potentially abducting and harming the monolithic and upper-caste Hindu woman (Ibrahim 2018; Corbridge 1999; Jeffery and Jeffery 1997). More generally, Muslims' marriage practices are quite different from Hindus and particularly Rajputs: endogamous marriages (within the same sub-caste) are the rule in Haroma, mostly for women - as a Muslim Mandra girl must always marry another Mandra, while men are allowed to marry outside their sub-caste, as long as it is a Muslim. Consanguineous marriages with the extended cousins have been preferred for a long time in the village. Endogamous marriages are completely opposed to the practice of Hindus and particularly Rajputs in nearby villages, where exogamous marriages (outside the same sub-caste) are strictly compulsory.

Then of course the food practices draw a big line between Hindus and Muslims: most of my Hindu informants were vegetarian, except maybe Dalits and a few Rajputs who were eating meat occasionally and usually out of sights; while all my Muslim informants were non-vegetarian. What precisely they were eating was also at stake: in Haroma, I discovered that people consumed camel meat on many occasions for religious and social events. This was apparently considered by Hindu pastoralist groups (Rabari and Rajput) as an incredible offense and sin, in the same way as beef consumption, as pastoralists in border areas rely heavily on camels to survive (by selling their milk and also as a mean of transportation). It was also how people eat, their commensality practices, that differentiated one group from another: Muslims' practice to eat together in one single plate strongly differs and marginalises them from Hindus and particularly Rajputs who, because of caste purity, do not share their meals/utensils with others and eat separately from both Dalits and Muslims.

Dinners with Muslim informants, particularly the cooking time and after eating, were privileged moments to discuss the village life, local politics, and wind expansion in front of the bonfire as we enjoyed goat-milk *chai* and non-vegetarian food. This nature of very close and trustful relations I developed with my informants in Haroma was the key to get accepted in the village, although I explained in chapter 4 that my presence was also met with occasional ambiguity, nuanced suspicion, doubt and underground hostility. These interactions nonetheless allowed me to witness the infiltration of Hindu nationalist rhetoric in the field of everyday life, everyday language and chats at tea stalls, or during social events like cricket games. Contrary to many (Rajput) Hindus in the area and in other *tehsils* of Kutch who dared not come to Lakhpat or to villages like Haroma because it was 'full of Muslims', '[I was] not allergic to people like [them]' (Discussion with a Haroma villager, 24.10.21).

7.2.2 'Saffronising' the 'Green' or 'Greening' the 'Saffron'

The wind assemblage has not remained neutral or external to this constant competition and struggle between Hindu and Muslim village(r)s. It openly declared its affiliation to an ethno-nationalist project of territorial revival and concretely advanced soft Hindutva material presence in the everyday life. It sported and celebrated constant rituals of loyalty, patriotism, and religiosity (Sud 2020b, 2021). The wind extraction frontier in that sense accommodated and adopted features of the 'saffron' frontier, nurtured everyday, and soft Hindutva politics in 'Muslim-dominated' areas and designed a pure vegetarian, upper caste, and Hindu territory.

7.2.2.1 Local Wind Enforcers and Territorial Revivalism: A Pure Vegetarian, Upper Caste, and Hindu Territory

Drawing on wind turbine expansion to new areas along the border, enforcers and mediators of the wind assemblage described in chapter 6 are on a 'mission' to (re)assert Hindu pride and visible presence as well as upper caste muscular masculinity in so-called 'Muslim areas'. As I shared daily routine work with them, on wind sites, contractor camps and tea stalls, I could observe how their everyday interactions with Muslim village(r)s (along the border) were grounded in distrust, suspicion and conveyed the same sort of representations about the 'othered' Muslim discussed earlier in this chapter and in chapter 2 and 3. Before I got overwhelmed with whispers and rumours about the Lakhpat border area, Kutchi and Gujarati land team staff from different companies were the first ones to refer to certain areas of the *taluka* as 'Mini-Pakistan' and completely endorsed representations of the Muslim man as polygamous and the discourses around his growing population soon to overtake the Hindu population.

> 'We are going to this village called Haroma, it is like Mini-Pakistan over there' warned Virajsinh the first day I accompanied this local Rajput company staff to the vicinity of Haroma, 'it's only populated by Muslims. Every man has two or three wives and every nine months they give birth [laughing]' he explained (Discussion, 01.04.2021).

Some of these staff even argued, in the privacy of their rooms, that their company was the first to invest and put wind turbines in this *taluka* 'despite' the dominant Muslim population and the 'risks' encountered:

> 'Before, nobody wanted to invest and put wind turbines in Lakhpat because it's Mini-Pakistan over there. But our company was the first one to do it, despite the dominant Muslim population, we were not afraid of anything. It was dangerous though, there

> were important security risks of terrorist infiltration with local support, at that time we had the strict rule to leave the wind location before sunset and never work during night-time. Then only recently, five years ago, a lot of companies made the move towards Lakhpat and started projects there, but we paved the way for them.' (Discussion with a local Rajput land team staff in the employees' residence, 23.02.21)

As contractors, fixers and land team staff spend most of their days outside, in cars moving between villages and locations, they interact with the space they intend to change. At lunch times, they would mostly avoid places serving meat or owned by Muslims and would prefer vegetarian restaurants like the *Sardar Hotel* in Dayapar owned by Harpal Singh, the renowned BJP political leader from Nara, his restaurant being a real hub for companies and politicians looking for a 'VIP' service. They would also avoid drinking *chai* (tea) at stalls owned by Muslims or in Muslim villages, having developed habits and friendship with tea-stall owners in Hindu villages: when we moved in the area of Haroma, companies' staff and contractors I accompanied never stopped by the tea-stall and shop in front of the Mosque, neither did they ever enter the village - but they always bypassed it. For their regular *chai* breaks, they would rather make a detour and go back to nearby Melpar village where the tea stall is owned by a Hindu Rabari. As they constantly move, occupy and physically cover 'Muslim areas' with their presence, wind frontier enforcers ostensibly sport affiliation to upper-caste Hinduism, BJP and Hindutva: you can spot upper-caste names ('Jadeja', 'Sodha') written on the back of their Bolero four wheelers, saffron and BJP flags hooked at the inside mirror, particularly during election times. Civil contractors' camps and their machines sport saffron flags and images of upper-caste Hindu gods, some of the wind turbine sites even have their own dedicated *mandirs* and saffron flags. All this visible presence of upper caste Hinduism materialised in the public space via the wind extraction frontier seems to indicate and notify to the 'other', the Muslim, that part of 'his' territory has been reclaimed.

Some of the wind enforcers I encountered even openly acknowledged the connections between wind extraction frontier, 'development' programs and the 'saffron' frontier, particularly its repopulating dimension. They established a clear continuity between the deployment of Sikh settlements in the 1960s, 2001 big policy shift undertaken by Modi after the earthquake, and the recent arrival of wind turbines in border areas: these different events follow the same project - repopulate the area with Hindus. Baku, this Rajput fixer and BJP *sarpanch* from Mata na Madh area I mentioned earlier, first highlighted these connections to me in February 2021:

> ‘There is need to repopulate this border area, here in Lakhpat *taluka*, with Hindus, making a re-Hinduisation of the area. This project was already started in the 1960s when Delhi *sarkar* gave lands in Lakhpat *taluka* in Nara to *Sardars* from Punjab, it was to repopulate areas where Muslims were too much important; and because they are good in agriculture, they did great things in Nara. Then after the earthquake in 2001, Modi-ji’s plan was to invest in Kutch, develop the district with big projects, big industries, and factories, and by doing so - repopulate Kutch with Hindus coming from rest of Gujarat and India. And I also think that wind power will help this big project that Modi-ji started: wind power brings companies with lots of engineers from all of India, it brings contractors and workers, machines, it brings money and investments here. So, in the long run, this region becomes attractive, and therefore it brings back more Hindus’ (Discussion, 12.02.21).

Blended in a long-prevailing context of everyday competition and struggle between Hindu and Muslims village(r)s for space, wealth, sound, and images, the wind turbines unleash a new type of competition and struggle, this time for wind extraction-related money, jobs, commissions, and contracts.

7.2.2.2 Everyday Competition and Struggle for Wind Money in Two Neighbouring Hindu and Muslim Villages: The Haroma-Junamay Wind Corridor

As the wind extraction frontier enters the realm of identity politics and merges with the ‘saffron’ frontier, its related financial windfall and money coming from various compensation, contracts and commissions unleash a fierce and everyday struggle and competition between Hindu and Muslim village(r)s to either support or oppose the companies. Indeed, supporting or (occasionally) opposing wind projects has very different meanings and motivations depending on the caste, the village, the political affiliation and most importantly, the religion of the supporter or contestant. The wind corridor that runs between Dayapar (the administrative centre of Lakphat *tehsil*) and Nara (at the entry of the Rann), which includes both Muslim and Hindu villages like Haroma and Junamay, witnesses this everyday struggle for wind money, wind contracts and wind commissions more than anywhere else.

7.2.2.2.1 Rajputs, Wind Money and Caste/ Religious Domination

Supporting wind companies or (occasionally) opposing them via ROW (blockades) in Rajput populated villages like Junamay or Alyia is a way to (re)assert religious and caste domination

in what they perceive as a 'Muslim-dominated' area. It is a tool used by upper caste Hindus in their everyday competition with Muslims for space, symbols and wealth. Rajput villagers of Junamay or Alyia alternatively make ROW and oppose new locations in their village when the security contract coming under their 'jurisdiction' goes to a Muslim villager, their 'jurisdiction' being broadly defined as any Hindu village in the wind corridor, and on the contrary, they voluntarily take contracts and support wind companies inside and outside their own village when the ROW maker is a Muslim. I had a discussion with a Rajput (Jadeja) villager from Alyia who mentioned to me the last ROW he was making then at that time near Melpar (a Hindu village in the middle of the wind corridor). He was opposing towers and transmission lines in this village, for the main reason that the contract had been awarded to a Muslim villager from Haroma, and not a Hindu (from Melpar or even Alyia):

> 'I won't stop the ROW until the contract is given to us. I will teach this Muslim contractor a lesson. They think they can get all the money and the contracts from wind in the area because they are in majority, but we Rajputs are not afraid of anything.' (Discussion, 04.03.21)

Rajput villagers are in a constant competition with Muslims to grab all the contracts as security guards, transporters (four wheelers' drivers) and small-scale civil contractors, to monopolise individually and collectively (as a village and as a caste) all the money available from wind companies. This Rajput villager from Junamay explains a recent ROW that took place between Hindus of his village and Muslims from Mirja, a village neighbouring Haroma:

> 'Two days ago, there was a problem with a security guard job, [company] had given us two security guard positions on one location, and then [another company] also gave two security jobs to Jat people from Mirja village on the same location. We did a ROW there, with our WhatsApp group, we mobilised some people and finally companies accepted to pay everyone, all the four people, Hindus and Muslims. Now we have two of our people who sit at home and still get paid!' (Discussion, 29.06.21).

Grabbing contracts, money and compensation coming from wind projects, via alternative support or opposition, is precisely what helps Rajputs to win the competition for success and wealth in the area, win the symbolic struggle of images and sounds, and take their revenge on Muslims. Wind contracts and money obtained after bargains also largely fund the underpinning project of 'saffronising' space and building a Hinduised territory:

> ‘We negotiated 2.5 lakh per location with companies, but we didn’t do the Haroma system where they distributed money to each household. Instead, we invested the money in 2 new *mandirs* and one big community hall for our events, weddings, and parties. It is the big building you can see here. Last month for Navratri, we organised a big celebration there, everyone could hear our speaker, even in Haroma they could hear it. Then with all the ROW, we preferred to put that money for our *mandirs*, our religion and community events.’ (Discussion with a Rajput villager from Junamay, 05.12.21)

7.2.2.2.2 Muslims, Wind Money and Honour

In Muslim villages, supporting or opposing wind companies simply did not have the same meaning than in Rajput and Hindu village(r)s. Muslim villagers I have encountered in Haroma, Mirja and other neighbour villages all expressed the same concern: supporting or opposing wind projects is about defending the reputation, honour and name of their village, their caste, their religion and by extension, acknowledging the authority of their respective leaders. It also expresses a profound wish to (re)claim right, existence and belonging to this territory which is coveted both by wind companies and Hindu nationalists. This ability to defend their identity and culture as Muslims in front of mostly Hindu companies’ representatives and contractors was even more possible when a strong leadership prevailed before the arrival of wind turbines in the village. In Haroma, villagers supported their leader, Hassan *bhai*, in mediating and brokering companies’ projects in the same way as they also supported his conversion to BJP: it was a way to acknowledge and recognise his leadership and authority inherited from his father. All the positive evolutions and progress in the village (in terms of roads construction, money and jobs related to wind turbines’ arrival) are affiliated and attributed to the ‘good’ leadership of Hassan *bhai*, his recent conversion to BJP and his willingness to work for his fellow villagers. The analysis drawn by Ibrahim in the different context of development programs conducted under the leadership and ‘charisma’ of a Muslim leader in the Banni region of the Rann is highly relevant here:

> ‘All the development projects […] are rescripted as miracles and prophecies set in motion through [Hassan *bhai*]’s charisma and foresight rather than an imposition from the state administration’ (2021, 45).

But more largely, following Hassan *bhai* in either supporting or (punctually) opposing wind companies was a way to defend the name and reputation of their village (Haroma), their caste (Mandra), and their religion in front of contractors and companies’ representatives who are

mostly (Rajput) Hindus. During my absence for Diwali, Haroma villagers recounted that a fire had burned several hectares of land in the village due to a short-circuit in transmission lines. They therefore blocked the entry of the village to the wind company in charge of the transmission line for several days until they got compensation. One company representative apparently accused the villagers of throwing things on the lines, insulted them for being 'stupid and uneducated Muslims' and spoke very roughly to Hassan *bhai*. In retaliation to this humiliation, Abdal *bhai*, Hassan *bhai's* right hand, slapped him two-three times and said:

> 'How do you dare speak to us like this? Do you even know who you are speaking to? Do you know who is Hassan *bhai* Mandra? He is the ex-Lakhpat *taluka panchayat* president! You are in a Muslim village here; you do not do whatever you want or say things like that to us' (Discussion with Haroma villagers including Abdal *bhai* and Abdul Karim, 14.11.21)

According to my interlocutor, the company guy had not recognised Hassan *bhai* and took him for a simple villager. Behind this small anecdote, we see that Hassan *bhai* crystalises and concentrates Haroma villagers' pride, reputation, and honour as Mandra and as Mulisms. He crystalises all their hopes and expectations for success and improvement in the future. Attacking Hassan bhai's figure and reputation means attacking Haroma, its villagers, Mandras and Muslims. By occasionally opposing companies and contractors when the latter openly challenged them and humiliated them, Haroma villagers tried to (re)claim the dignity, the existence, and the belonging to this territory they have long been denied, they tried to defend their identity as Mandra and Muslims. The next chapter discusses in more details the different dimensions present in ROW and blockades making, particularly the role political/ caste leaders like Hassan *bhai* play in it, but I tried to emphasise in this section the religious dimensions: what did it mean to conduct ROW and blockades as a (Rajput) Hindu villager and as a Muslim?

The arrival of wind turbines in Haroma corridor in 2018 has revealed in broad daylight and even exacerbated all the undergrounded frustrations and tensions that pre-existed between communities, between Hindus and Muslims of the area, between Mandra and Rajput castes, between Haroma and Junamay village(r)s. The everyday frustration and competition between Muslims and Rajputs converted into an open race to control and corner all the money, contracts and jobs coming from the wind assemblage. This race also largely extended to the political and electoral fields as wind turbines expansion also aligned and conformed with BJP's electoral strategy to conquer borderlands.

7.3 Conquering the Last Remaining Frontier: BJP and Wind Power Expansion in Lakhpat Border Areas

My fieldwork in Lakhpat border areas and so-called 'Muslim spaces' reveals a unique and intertwined strategy of both BJP and wind companies to conquer and expand in the last frontier spaces left in Kutch. Following BJP's strategy to buy religious minority ex-Congress leaders and dilute its divisive and communal agenda to conquer new constituencies, I observed that this dynamic was advancing parallelly and symmetrically to the dynamic of wind territorial expansion in new areas, and even more that these dynamics were mutually reinforcing. Wind territorial expansion over new frontier spaces serves the BJP in its electoral reconquest of so-called 'Muslims spaces', and conversely BJP's success in bringing new people within its ranks and expanding electorally offers new avenues for wind territorial expansion and colonisation and enhances companies' chances to recruit new fixers and brokers.

7.3.1 BJP's Electoral Strategy to Take Back this *Tehsil*

7.3.1.1 Buying Minority Leaders and Diluting its Traditional Divisive Agenda

BJP's electoral strategy and political expansion to take back 'Muslim' territories, like Lakhpat *tehsil*, does not align with the political strategy applied in the rest of Kutch, Gujarat or even India. It does not follow the traditional religious and social polarisation of votes and appeals to Hindu majoritarianism that were mobilised by Narendra Modi regionally and nationally during elections times and discussed in chapter 2 (Jaffrelot 2015, 2021). Given the percentage of Muslim populations in Lakhpat, this strategy would not be viable electorally. On the contrary, what is deployed is the integration and absorption, usually with the help of money, of ex-Congress leaders, Muslims and Sikhs, from the constituency into important local positions within the party. This strategy materialises what BJP and Hindutva forces have been doing in other margins of the state, and particularly for populations historically outside the direct range of Hindutva, namely the integration and co-optation of minority leaders through tokenistic means when there are not completely alienated and brutalised (Sundar 2019; Waghmore 2022). I interviewed a Muslim leader from the Congress party in Dayapar, Hala bhai, who critically examined this strategy in his *tehsil*:

> 'In the last term, 2015-2020, we had to share mandate with BJP because some *panchayat* members, two Dalits and the president Hassan *bhai* from Haroma left for BJP, so we did 2.5 years and BJP also did 2.5 years. In the last election in February

> 2021, we won the majority of seats and hopefully we will rule for the next five years, unless some other people in our ranks leave us…This is the strategy of the BJP in Lakhpat *taluka*, buy people from the Congress party to join their ranks with the power of money.' (Interview, 08.10.21)

Hassan *bhai*, the leader and fixer from Haroma, had joined BJP four years ago, in rupture with his father who acted his whole life as a prominent Muslim leader for the Congress party. BJP has been able to secure the support and alliance of local Muslim leaders because they have largely diluted and edulcorated their traditional divisive and communal agenda into more universal themes of development, modernisation, and progress, in line with Modi's *Vikash Purush* (development man) strategy (Jaffrelot 2016; Bhan 2022). Muslim and Sikh BJP leaders from both Lakhpat and Nakhatrana *tehsils* were promoting broad ideas of development, like Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or even Happiness Index. All these 'social work' activities usually done via NGOs were aimed at diluting the DNA of BJP identity politics, put its traditional divisive and communal agenda on the side for a while in order to progress and expand electorally in a 'non-favourable environment'.

I already have mentioned in the last chapter the case of Iqlab, the *sarpanch* of a small village near Nakhatrana, both BJP Vice-President in Nakhatrana *tehsil* and highly connected to the brokering world of wind business: besides his yearly event organised in March gathering 70 underprivileged and poor families of the area for free marriages, Iqlab has the ambition to use his position within the BJP to build a model village for Kutch, Gujarat and even India, a sort of 'brand' by implementing tools like a village happiness Index and promote women empowerment through his NGO. BJP also regularly accused the Congress party of instigating Hindu-Muslim divide and polarising votes to benefit from the Muslim vote bank in Lakhpat: during one of my meetings with Harpal Singh, the Sikh *sarpanch* of Nara and BJP leader, he recalls the February 2021 election campaign for the *taluka panchayat* where he himself fought from his village. He mentions that the Congress party voluntarily gave ticket to a Muslim against him because Nara *panchayat* is largely populated by Muslims. This Congress candidate apparently attended a prayer at the nearby Hajipir *dargah* and invited his 'brothers' to vote for a fellow Muslim, 'one of them'. Harpal Singh then explained that he also had to visit the *dargah* and invited people 'not to fall in this Hindu-Muslim trap' (Discussion, 27.03.210), placing himself indirectly on the Hindu side, and that people should rather vote for development (*vikas*), progress, roads, hospitals and so on, rather than for religion.

Though Nara *panchayat* is predominantly populated by Muslims, Harpal Singh still got re-elected as *taluka panchayat* member and attracted most of the Jat Muslims votes, essentially because BJP puts the reputation, image, and the figure of their representatives first, even before the party:

> 'In Nara, people didn't vote for BJP, they voted for Harpal *bhai*, he is in contact with Modi-ji himself, how could people not vote for him?' (Discussion, 29.06.21), or 'in Haroma, we follow Hassan *bhai* because we followed his father before him. Hassan *bhai* tells us to vote Congress, we vote Congress, he tells us to vote BJP, we vote BJP' (Discussion, 04.12.21) explained two villagers from Nara and Haroma.

7.3.1.2 Agents of BJP's Electoral Strategy and Everyday Hindutva: The 'Good' Muslim and The Sardar

BJP politicians like Hassan *bhai*, Iqlab or Harpal Singh get elected because of their heritage, because of their reputation and their acclaimed image locally. Choosing a Sikh and a Muslim as the two Lakhpat and Nakhtrana *taluka* BJP faces is not an innocent move on part of the BJP, it strongly relies on the peculiar story Sikhs and Muslims on the border share since the 1960s. It relies on this process of everyday and 'soft' Hindutva that was initiated 60 years ago by the Congress government, and now largely re-appropriated politically by the BJP. Within the BJP, Muslim leaders like Iqlab or Hassan *bhai* play the role of the 'good' and 'integrated' Muslim, the one who acts as a connecting and liaison agent between Muslim pastorals and the state. The 'good' Muslim endorses nationalist discourses of securing the border with Pakistan, like the leaders described by Ibrahim in their analyses of the Bani grassland border areas (2019, 2021) or even promotes versions of various Hindu-majoritarian projects like the revocation of Article 370 in Kashmir (Vachani 2022), while the 'bad' Muslim is 'communal' and 'brainwashed' by the Congress:

> 'Some Muslims, like the Jat people, think in the old ways, because they are uneducated and brainwashed by their Congress leaders who tell them that behind BJP is RSS, it's Ram *mandir* construction in Ayodhya. On the contrary, Mandra Muslims from Haroma and their leader Hassan *bhai* are good Muslims, they joined BJP because they are educated, they understood that BJP is working for development and progress in Lakhpat' (Discussion with a Rajput villager from Junamay, 07.12.21)

Voting traditionally for Congress since decades, Haroma villagers collectively started casting votes for BJP when Hassan *bhai* joined BJP in 2018. This seemed to be a strategic and

pragmatic move from Muslim villagers but also a way to acknowledge and respect Hassan *bhai's* legacy, authority, and reputation: Haroma villagers were really proud to say that they did not have any elections for the last 30 years and that Hassan *bhai's* family has always held the *sarpanch* position. As a charismatic figure, Hassan's *de facto* control over the *panchayat* and particularly the Mandras of Haroma was rarely questioned in public. The shift towards BJP is also a logical consequence of 60 years of 'soft' and everyday Hindutva that has permeated and infiltrated the Kutchi society in Lakhpat *tehsil*.

Nara's *Sardars'* political integration within the BJP 20 years ago followed a similar line as the Muslims in Haroma: in a political context saturated by Hindu nationalist themes and more recently saturated by the BJP, the only way for them to exist has been to integrate the political landscape of Hindu nationalism. They needed to fulfil completely the role for which they had been sent on the border in the 1960s, fulfil a role of a buffer community between Muslims and Hindus, a role of border protectors and resource frontier explorers serving a wider, deeper and everyday 'saffron' wave. Harpal Singh plays the acceptable local and even shining image of the 'good' minority leader cherished by the BJP, particularly in times of social protests like the *Kisan Andolan* in Delhi, securing votes from Muslims by talking about development.

7.3.1.3 Local Politics and Voting Coalition in a Specific Panchayat: Haroma

Haroma *panchayat* offers an exceptional insight on the ways BJP's electoral strategy concretely unfolds on the ground but also the internal contradictions and tensions that span around it. The specific climate where 'soft' Hindutva is permeating into everyday social life, and the construction of this *panchayat* as a 'Muslim-dominated' one lead to a specific local politics, to reshuffled political alliances and configurations that did not always align with party politics, particularly during the *sarpanch* election of December 2021. As suggested in chapter 6, the *sarpanch* election in December was an interesting period to observe how wind companies entered the political battle of everyday local party politics and revived *panchayat* positions as critical resources for villagers of all castes. I argue in this section that the 2021 *sarpanch* election was also an opportune moment to observe how religious, village and caste affiliations were shifting and merging into new coalitions, and how it revealed a deeper understanding about the relations between Muslims and Hindus in the region.

Haroma is part of a joint *panchayat* with seven other villages (out of which five are fully populated by Muslims from two castes, Mandra and Jat) and the previous *sarpanch*, Fakir Jat,

who belongs to the second most populated village in the *panchayat* after Haroma, Mirja, was openly affiliated to Congress. When I started investigating the upcoming elections with Muslim informants from Haroma, I was interested to understand the dynamics of vote and coalitions that would emerge and the role of traditional parties and wind companies. Before the electoral campaign got more tense and coalitions shifted, I was told that village and therefore caste affiliation (as each village in the *panchayat* is populated by one caste) was mostly determining the votes, then religion of the candidate (Hindu or Muslim), and then his party affiliation:

> 'Does he belong to our village, Haroma? That's the best choice to make, pick a Mandra from the village. If not, then is he a Muslim or a Hindu? Last time, Fakir Jat from Mirja, who belongs to Congress, was facing a Rajput from Alyia, so in the village we decided to support Fakir as he is a Muslim, he might be a better option for us. Then what party is he from? BJP or Congress? For those who belong to BJP, like Hassan *bhai*, party affiliation will come first, and they will have to support the unofficial BJP candidate' (Discussion with Abdul Karim, villager from Haroma, 27.10.21).

Because of this specific context, where different affiliations, belongings and identities overlap, clash or merge, every village (Haroma/ Mirja/ Junamay/ Alyia) wants to see 'his' candidate win, every religious/caste community (Hindu/ Muslim-Jat/ Mandra/ Rajput) wants to see 'his' candidate win, and every political party (BJP/ Congress) wants to see 'his unofficial' candidate win. As political parties are officially not present during the *sarpanch* elections, you will not see any logo or any political rally, but parties are here unofficially, in the shadow. Everyone comments and discusses the party affiliation of Haroma, Junamay and Mirja candidates, and in the backstage this joint *panchayat* is a real playground for party politics: for the Congress, *sarpanch* elections should help to maintain its position in the *taluka*, while for the BJP it should confirm the breakthrough of the last elections in February 2021 and take this *panchayat*. But BJP's electoral strategy of buying and converting some influential local Muslim leaders within their ranks is not fixed, settled, neither is it uniform or coherent. It battles with many internal tensions and contradictions that arise at local levels regarding which candidate to support in *panchayat* elections: like five years ago, BJP has backed a Hindu/ Rajput candidate from Junamay with very little chance to win considering the share of votes between Hindus and Muslims, instead of supporting Hassan *bhai's protégé* from Haroma.

What prevailed five years ago, and again in 2021, is the religious affiliation. This is confirmed by the last events of the campaign: while I visit Haroma for one of the last times, I am told that

Hindus from the three other villages (Junamay, Alyia and Melpar) and particularly Rajputs have made a recent move towards Fakir and the Jats from Mirja to find a compromise and ally with them in exchange of the position of vice-*sarpanch*:

> 'They have allied against us, they wanted to defeat Haroma because they are jealous of Hassan *bhai*, of his position and name in the *tehsil*, in the BJP and among wind companies. The youth circles from Alyia are instigating a Hindu-Muslim thing among the villagers, saying Muslims are looting us, so we should get the *sarpanch* position or at least the vice *sarpanch*' (Discussion with a villager from Haroma, 04.12.21)

What is interesting here, is that villagers interpreted this move as an attack against Haroma and the person of Hassan *bhai*, as an act of jealousy in light of the success and development they are enjoying since the arrival of wind and his conversion to BJP. Religious unity and cohesion among Muslims in the *panchayat* are threatened and attacked by the Rajput's move. For this reason, Muslims need to unite, select one candidate, and put party affiliation differences on the side. That's the choice being made by Hassan *bhai* and Haroma villagers: in a fear of being set aside and marginalised by this new Rajput-Jat alliance, Hassan *bhai* would have decided to withdraw his *protégé*'s application and endorse Mirja's candidate, Fakir Jat, in the same alliance and status-quo established five years ago.

Few days after I left the field, I got the news that Fakir Jat had been unsurprisingly re-elected at the head of the joint *panchayat*, but that this renewed alliance between Jat and Mandra Muslims had a price: Fakir and the Jats of Mirja joined BJP soon after the result. If I left the field too early to understand the consequences of this new alliance of Fakir Jat with the BJP on the wind assemblage and the expansion of wind turbines in the joint *panchayat*, it was very likely that wind companies would use this shifting alliance to strengthen their position in the area and potentially recruit Fakir Jat as a new power broker, like they did with Hassan *bhai* four years ago.

7.3.2 When Wind Power Expansion and BJP's Electoral Progress Serve Each Other

7.3.2.1 Converted Ex-Congress Leaders are 'Thanked' with Wind Power Money

Previous Congress leaders rallying BJP at elections times are usually rewarded and 'thanked' with huge amount of money financed by wind companies, important contracts in wind sector (security, road or transport) and a hegemonic and privileged position of companies' broker and

fixer in their area of influence: Hassan *bhai's* late conversion to BJP in 2018 when he occupied the function of *taluka panchayat* president coincided with the arrival of the first wind turbines in his village and was rewarded with a position of broker for wind companies. Absorption and integration in BJP's landscape and network usually goes hand in hand with an absorption and integration into the wind assemblage, as summarised by this representative of a Hindu nationalist organisation quite critical of BJP's electoral strategy in Lakhpat:

> 'Now even BJP and wind companies go after them [Muslims], they give candidate tickets and contractors positions to former terrorists and anti-nationals elements. Because BJP and companies know that if they don't integrate and include Muslims they won't win and will face many difficulties in getting votes and putting wind turbines in border areas, so these orders come from higher tiers. In the party, there has been many attempts in the past to take back this *tehsil* from the Congress and make sure it comes under BJP's influence, party representatives in Bhuj and Ahmedabad have been using mining projects and tourism programs in the Rann to convince Muslims leaders before, and now they use wind turbines' (Discussion with a Rajput villager from Dayapar, president of the Hindu Yuva Sangathan organisation in Lakhpat *tehsil*, 01.07.2021)

I have already stressed in the previous chapter the close proximity of networks, circles and agents between BJP and the wind assemblage, particularly in terms of brokering activities and election times. I argue something different here: wind money, the related contracts and commissions constitute a critical resource mobilised and manipulated by BJP representatives at higher levels of the party machinery (district and state levels) to secure Muslim votes at local levels and get hold of border populations that have been historically outside of Hindutva's range. Hala *bhai*, the Muslim Congress leader I quoted earlier, openly connected the availability of wind companies' money with BJP's electoral strategy in the second half of our meeting in his personal office:

> 'This is the strategy of the BJP in Lakhpat *taluka*, buy people from the Congress Party to join their ranks with the power of money. But where do they get all this money? Big corporates, wind companies! Companies are fully linked to BJP, they serve its political agenda and strategy on the ground, they help each other. In our area, around Haroma and Mirja where you have mostly Muslims, they have given all the big security contracts either to Rajputs or Muslims who belong to the BJP like Hassan bhai Mandra

> from Haroma. So, there is a link between companies work and BJP networks and its political agenda.' (Interview, 08.10.2021)

Hala *bhai* did not hide to me his personal occupations as a civil contractor for wind companies, and our interview on that day got interrupted by the arrival of land team staff from a company I had encountered several times in the past. Most of the Congress leaders I met were ardent critics of wind power development in Kutch, for biodiversity conservation reasons or for links between companies and BJP elected representatives. They were keen to show me pictures of peacocks and other birds lying dead near wind turbines, videos of wind turbines or electrical lines burning because of technical incidents and destroying hectares of land. Most of them also acknowledged that their opposition to wind power was overall purely formal, as they were 'on the other side':

> 'BJP is fully supporting companies and wind power business. In Congress, we are mostly opposing it because we are an opposition party, we are on the other side. The day Congress party comes back in Gujarat, we will also move around the area in companies' four wheelers' vehicles, we will become wind turbines hardest supporters' recognised this other Rajput Congress leader from West Lakhpat (Discussion, 14.06.21).

7.3.2.2 Companies Recruit Loyal Fixers Among the Newly Formed BJP Networks

As people change 'side' and BJP buys new supporters and candidates in areas previously held by the Congress, companies also manage to both silence contesting voices and recruit them as new loyal brokers and fixers through the newly formed BJP networks and alliances. When people wanted to give me a name of someone who shifted from Congress to BJP and became in the same occasion one of the biggest and powerful companies' brokers, they were all pointing to the same direction: the Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Pradyumansinh Jadeja elected twice at the head of the Abdasa Assembly constituency covering 3 *tehsils*, Nakhatrana, Lakhpat and Abdasa. In 2017, this wealthy Rajput farmer got elected on a Congress ticket, after his predecessor won the 2014 by-election due to the then Congress MLA's defection to BJP. During his time as a Congress MLA, Pradyumansinh Jadeja was eagerly vocal against wind power and its destruction of Kutch's ecosystem and biodiversity, and made the protection of the peacock, the national bird in India, a central fight. Again in 2020, history repeated itself and Jadeja resigned from his position to join BJP, forcing another

by-election to take place. Re-elected as a new BJP MLA this time, he has since then become one of the biggest and most powerful contractors for wind companies in the district, active from Bhuj suburb till Lakhpat. He is precisely the kind of professional broker and contractor operating at (sub-)district levels I mentioned in chapter 6, you would never see him roaming around villages and wind construction sites. His son was in charge of all the contracts on road development, security, transport, land acquisition and even electrical lines installation. A Dalit rights activist I met several times during my fieldwork, summarised this situation in the following terms:

> 'Here the MLA, who is from the Rajput community, was with the Congress before, and in the last election he joined the BJP, why? Because his son gets all the big contracts for electric lines, road development, security, and land acquisition. When he was under Congress, Jadeja fought a lot to defend the national bird, the peacock, from wind turbines. But then BJP bought him, and since he is an MLA for BJP, he is defending the wind turbines and do not care anymore about the bird' (Discussion, 15.01.21).

The same scenario is visible in Haroma's joint *panchayat*. As mentioned earlier, the *panchayat* head of these eight villages comprising Haroma is affiliated to the Congress party, and in normal situations, companies would have relied heavily on him to 'get things done', get land and secure the passive acquiescence of villagers. Instead of giving money directly to the joint *panchayat* head Fakir Jat and the other *panchayat* members, companies implementing wind turbines in Haroma have been funding a village-based committee established by villagers themselves and headed by Hassan *bhai*. This shift emphasises the balance of power at play between Haroma and Mirja, between Mandra and Jat, between Hassan and Fakir's leadership, and ultimately between BJP and Congress. The results of December 2021 *sarpanch* elections discussed in section 7.3.1.3 will most certainly reconfigure this balance of power.

7.4 Border Infrastructures and Performance of State Sovereignty

Wind power expansion over Lakhpat border area moulds a securitised, scrutinised, and permeable territory, alongside 'saffron', upper caste and pure vegetarian features discussed previously. The only other trucks, cars and tankers navigating this zone are owned by the BSF or by the few mining companies that have erupted a few years ago on the border. Wind power and its assemblage of wind turbines, CCTV cameras, cables and lines, electrical poles and substations, contractors' camps and storage areas enforce, materialise, and bring border to life in a comparable way that military trucks, BSF camps and their flags, checkpoints, restricted

and notified zones do. Wind infrastructures (re)produce borders and existing national boundaries for both outsiders, Pakistan, and insiders, Indian Muslims, they physically and materially become border infrastructures, standing on the edge of the nation between India and Pakistan (Thomas 2021).

On some occasions, the wind complex aligns and even blends in with the military complex, wind and military forming a new conglomerate where each of their prerogatives and jurisdictions have been (re)negotiated. Narendra Modi visited the Rann of Kutch and the border with Pakistan in December 2020 to inaugurate the foundation stone of a hybrid renewable park of solar and wind infrastructures. It is projected to become the world's largest hybrid renewable park, in line with the 'hyperbolic' capitalist imaginary discussed in chapter 3 and underlying Kutch's socio-economic transformations since the earthquake and the 'Vibrant Gujarat' rhetoric (Simpson 2014, 37–41). This on-going project undertaken by companies like Adani is extremely indicative of the political nature of putting wind turbines right on the border, on land owned by the BSF. Indeed, in early 2020, the Government of Gujarat had announced, with great fanfare, that 60,000 hectares of 'wastelands' (nearly the size of Greater Mumbai) had been cleared and allotted to a mega project of 30,000 MW generating 1.5 lakh crore rupees of investment. The exact location of the project was not communicated in the media until Narendra Modi visited Khavda, the last village and BSF camp before Pakistan in the northern flank of the border, up Bhuj. In his inauguration speech, the PM drew a direct connection between wind turbines implementation and border security, and even mobilised the rhetoric about border repopulation through development programs:

> 'Earlier there used to be a continuous exodus in this border area and the population also recorded negative growth. Elsewhere, the population was increasing and here it was on the decline, because most of the people in the border areas used to migrate. As a result, there was naturally a problem of security. Now that the migration has come to a halt, people are returning to villages which were once deserted. It has also cast a huge positive impact on national security. […] The border security will also improve with windmills along the border'[29] (online translation, 15.12.20).

Kutch's border with Pakistan is not rigid and fixed, there is no fence or wall. During the period of the Sindh and Kutch kingdoms before partition, the important socio-cultural ties and

[29] https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/pms-address-at-foundation-stone-laying-ceremony-of-several-development-projects-in-kutch-gujarat/

migratory movements between these two regions prevented from imposing a sealed border and as chapter 3 explained, the post-1947 border between India and Pakistan in the Rann did not get concretely demarcated or enforced before 1965. The natural environment composed of lakes and creeks and large areas of seasonal salt marsh and desert also does not align with the state's project of border-making. In this context, wind turbines and solar infrastructures materialise and embody the border in a new-fashioned way, they become key 'site[s] for the performance of [state's] own sovereignty in its borderlands' (Ibrahim 2019, 428). Border-making is indeed never a complete and finished process, borders must be continuously (re)asserted and (en)forced as they 'are perpetually open to question' (Agnew 2008, 176 cited in Thomas 2021, 8).

This project is therefore about symbols, national pride and glory, it acts as a display of power and technology towards the 'other' on the other side, Pakistan, rather than pure and optimal electricity production. Putting wind turbines in the middle of the Rann, an area very sparsely populated and mostly occupied by the Army, is also an important strategy to avoid controversial land acquisition and potential resistance from local populations, as acknowledged by many of my informants. I interviewed the representative of a big Indian energy company working on this on-going project for the past 10 years, he emphasised the political nature and the difficulty of the project:

> 'The 30GW project in Kutch border with Pakistan, it's a very big target, even realising 20% of it will be difficult. It was dormant for the past 10 years and then everything got accelerated 2 years ago. The state government choose this area only because they needed a place with no population at all, no risk of villagers agitating, and it was also about national pride, it was also about sending a message to Pakistan 'see we are more advanced than you, we put wind turbines and solar panels on the border, what do you do?', but when targeting the border they didn't take into account our concerns as companies: the soil strata is not viable, the salinity of the soil is really high and the construction window is very limited, we can work only during non-rainy seasons which is 5 months per year, roads and infrastructures are completely absent, then we have also to comply with BSF orders and regulations, sometimes they don't let us work because of security issues… So, it is going to be a lot of work, and worse, for not much because this precise area on the border is not optimal in terms of wind resources, we get sun but not the best wind corridor.' (Discussion over phone, 10.02.21)

Borders are par excellence the private domains of the state, their 'walls and fences are the locus of sovereignty; these infrastructures emplace nationalism' argues Sur (2021, 9). For these reasons, borderland populations are subjected to increased surveillance, security, and control as suggested in section 7.1 of this chapter. Borders are sites where state's authority and sovereignty is exercised and expressed in even more intense, violent and masculine ways, shaping in return, specific border citizenship (Bhan 2013; Cons and Sanyal 2013). Wind turbines, as border infrastructures, are fully permeated by these projects of state-making, border-making, and citizenship-(un)making.

Conclusion

This chapter aimed at emphasising the political nature of infrastructures as technologies to govern, order, and organise certain resource frontiers, territories, and populations (Larkin 2013; Anand, Gupta, and Appel 2018) and their entanglements with ethno-nationalist practices of cultural revivalism and boundary-making (Smith 1986). Indeed, ethno-nationalisms operate through waves and frontiers that similarly attempt to infuse resources, space, territory and populations with ethnic categories (Smooha 2002), sometimes using more everyday, 'soft' and edulcorated means of infiltration as it is the case for Kutch borderlands. I developed an argument around three points.

First, putting wind turbines closer to the border with Pakistan and 'in the middle of Muslims' was certainly following a race for space, considering the scarce land resources between wind companies as suggested in chapter 5, but it also complied with long term political imperatives to increase control, surveillance, and security on the border via 'development' projects. The deployment of wind turbines in borderland villages like Haroma attempted at cultivating, if not loyal Muslim borderland citizens, at least monitored and watched Muslim borderland subjects whose pastoral movements in the 'jungle' were constantly controlled and kept under close scrutiny by a set of new actors, roads, vehicles, and machines. Second, I demonstrated how the arrival of turbines in villages, already infused with everyday struggles for territory, space and (religious) identity - was used by forces of Hindutva and its electoral wing, the BJP, to serve a political agenda of 'saffronising' India's borders and reviving an imagined 'golden' Hindu space. The wind electricity expansion also backed an electoral strategy of incorporating and co-opting minority leaders within BJP's ambit through tokenistic means. Third, turning into border infrastructures, wind turbines frontier-making and territories aligned with the state's

project of reproducing national borders and boundaries as well as performing sovereignty vis-à-vis outsiders and insiders.

The novelty of this chapter resided in showcasing the appropriation of wind turbines' territorial expansion by identity politics, racialised capitalism and ethno-nationalism as driving forces of frontier-making and territorialisation: so-called 'green' and 'clean' energy infrastructures revealed their compatibility with longstanding racialised citizenship and security regimes that have been targeting Muslims all over India since the Independence, and particularly those residing on the borders of the state (Jayal 2013; Ibrahim 2021). The wind extraction frontier, as other resource frontiers in the past (chapter 3 details the socio-history of frontier-making in Kutch), is consubstantial with the 'saffron' ethno-nationalist frontier, and serves a broader project aimed at restoring a social conservative status quo and imposing a disciplined social and political organisation upon society (Jaffrelot 2021). The findings of this chapter draw on other valuable studies that have analysed the conflations between resource extraction, capitalist expansion over nature and rituals of indigeneity, religiosity, and nationalism (Cederlöf and Sivaramakrishnan 2012; Sharma 2012; Chhotray 2016), with the novelty of looking at border 'green' infrastructures.

In the last chapter of this thesis (chapter 8), I now turn to the political reactions and the socio-political reconfigurations that the arrival of wind turbines provoked in Kutch villages. Relying on a three-fold case study analysis, I argue that these reactions and reconfigurations have been shaped by wind energy materiality and the local structures of class/caste power.

Chapter 8. Resisting or Negotiating Energy Dispossession: Everyday Political Reactions and Dissent Politics

When wind turbines arrive in central and borderland Kutch, with their assemblage of wires, towers, cranes, trucks, and lights, they leave the village(r)s affected and disturbed. People react, engage, collaborate, or oppose the wind assemblage. They pick sides but also change sides over months and years of wind turbines implementation and expansion in their backyards. They develop collective or individual strategies and schemes to cope with the violent making and unmaking of a new Kutch, a Kutch where traditional livelihoods of pastoralism and agriculture are not valued anymore. This chapter argues that these strategies and practices form a nuanced political 'terrain of resistance' (Routledge 1993, 1996) that is shaped and determined most importantly by energy materiality of wind electricity and the social status of opponents (caste and class). The political reactions oscillate between strong resistance and collective open movements, everyday disguised blockades to mere acts of negotiation and bargaining. Together, they reveal the political agency of the subordinate facing dispossession, destruction and domination and its capacity to counter the dominant 'cleanness' and 'greenness' narratives of global climate politics. If struggles against wind turbines certainly aggregate vertical forms of domination, opposing the companies or state and the dispossessed villagers, they also most importantly reveal horizontal forms of power, opposing those of different castes, classes, and social status.

This chapter hopes to contribute to the notion of a political 'terrain of resistance' by encapsulating the different forms, tools, practices, and discourses of reaction that emerge through the everyday encounters created by the arrival of wind power in Kutch. I understand this terrain as a political continuum that lies between resistance and domination, considers the diversity, complexity, and sometimes contradictions of dissent politics and its everyday dimensions (Scott 1985), and is permeable to the materiality of dispossessive projects (Sud 2021; Nielsen 2018; Jenkins et al. 2014). Struggles against wind turbines emerge under certain circumstances and social configurations, they are situated within agrarian relations of power and infrastructures of domination and therefore they are far from simply opposing the 'powerful' to the 'powerless' (Li 2003). This chapter thus questions essentialised notions of unified peasant resistance who run the risk of diluting power stratifications and social ruptures into a common group sharing the same interests (Borras JR and Franco 2013). Following others

(Chhotray 2016; Drew 2017; Noy 2022), my intervention deploys an analysis paying attention to class/ caste and power differentiation within resistance, and questions vertical understandings of domination.

The chapter adopts the following structure: the first section analyses the political 'terrain of resistance' as being moulded by energy materiality and the local configurations of power. In this, I try to understand what shapes social movements and resistance actions against wind turbines in Kutch, both theoretically and empirically at the district-level. I then discuss the village cases in three different sections, taking care to situate these within the broader regional history explained in the first section. Each section analyses the type and nature of political reactions specific to the materiality of wind energy and the village's caste and power configurations, and their broad alignment with other forms of domination, control, and exclusion. Finally, I look at the crosscutting social and political processes of class and power differentiation produced in the three villages following the arrival of wind turbines. In a conclusive statement, I situate this chapter within the broader argument of the thesis and set the ground for an original contribution.

8.1 A Complex Political 'Terrain of Resistance' in Kutch

What shapes the specific political 'terrain of resistance' that enfolds in Kutch with the arrival of wind turbines? What do we make of reactions that seem to serve radically different purposes, for example an individual blockade aimed at negotiating some benefit from a wind company to an organised collective protest opposing the arrival of machines on common lands?

I see these different reactions as part of the same continuum for exercising agency, the same political 'terrain of resistance' that rolls out in a flexible and nuanced way between a variety of practices and discourses of resistance. Levien and Upadhyay (2022) attempted to conduct a political sociology of dispossession in India's so-called new 'land wars' by isolating the different factors that shape the emergence of contentious land acquisition politics and resistance. They found that the specific sector of a project 'significantly affects opposition to it', and that projects like dams, Special Economic Zones and railways were 'the most likely to encounter land acquisition problems by a large margin' (2022, 3). What is underlying this finding is that the specific infrastructure of a project, its materiality and relation to space, land and nature profoundly shapes the type, the scale, and the nature of dissent politics. Dams have indeed a specific materiality, drowning and submerging thousands and thousands of hectares and people at the same time they produce a certain form of 'infrastructural violence' (Rodgers

and O'Neill 2012). This, in return, shapes certain forms of mobilisations, largely in favour of collective, organised and pan-unified movements like the *Narmada Bachao Andolan* (Nilsen 2010, 2013). There was no district-wise mass, organised and collective opposition to wind power in Kutch, nothing comparable to coal, SEZ or dam-related anti-dispossession struggles (Nielsen 2018; Nilsen 2010; Kumar 2014). The overall lack of open resistance to dispossession in Gujarat has usually been linked to a longstanding absence of anti-caste or labour movements and the predominance of Hindu nationalist politics and the Hindu-Gujarati pride discourse (Sud 2012, 2014) but also to the structure of class formation in rural Gujarat with the emergence of a landed class of farmers (Patel) that largely benefited from land reforms, liberalisation and industrialisation (I discuss the rapid ascension of this class in chapters 2 and 3) (Whitehead 2007). This specific socio-political history of Gujarat and the nature of its capitalist agricultural change merged in Kutch with the unique materiality of wind infrastructures. What prevailed was the cohabitation of different forms of reactions: individual-level reactions aimed at blocking, sometimes opposing but mostly negotiating the arrival of wind companies and more spontaneous, eruptive and at the same time well-organised public and collective village-level movements trying to oppose and contain the expansion of wind projects. In the Isthmus of Tehuantepec region of Oaxaca, Mexico, Dunlap also found the cohabitation of negotiation/ incorporation and organised insurrection, as towns situated in the north of the Isthmus fought for better land deals and greater incorporation while towns in the south were in total rejection of the projects and organised collective resistance movements (Dunlap 2018a, 2018c).

I now investigate at the district-level (in this section 8.1) and case-level (in the following ones, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4), the relations between infrastructure materiality, agrarian power relations and the terrain of resistance. I argue that the assemblage nature of wind electricity, and the specific features of power and domination in rural Gujarat, largely limit and shape the available resistance tools and the set of possibilities for mobilisation against wind power. This company representative, and others, confirmed my thoughts:

> 'Because of material specificity, wind power is the business where you have most of blockade situations, because it is based on wide roads, movement, circulation, so you can have people blocking work at every single location, at every corner of road, at every village's entry. *Every turbine is a new project* [emphasis added], with new people, new rules, new problems where you have to adapt and negotiate. It requires a very deepened local social fabric in each location.' (Interview with a company representative, 23.10.21)

8.1.1 ‘Every Turbine is a New Project’: Energy Materiality and ‘Terrain of Resistance’

First, the specific material and geographical organisation of wind farms and their structural dependency on local mediators did not seem to favour the emergence of pan-district resistance: as discussed in chapter 5, people are dispossessed along different spatial and temporal lines and by a complex and opaque layer of different actors. This material feature of the wind assemblage largely ‘disperses the oppositional political and possibly dilutes it’ towards individual, disorganised, hidden and everyday attempts to negotiate or to reappropriate dispossessed resources (Sud 2021, 162). This is what companies’ representatives, contractors, state officials and villagers unanimously referred to as ‘ROW’, an acronym I mentioned on several occasions in the previous empirical chapters.

‘ROW’ stands for ‘Right of Way’ and refers to the right a company has, to build roads to access and connect the wind turbines with each other as well as build transmission lines to evacuate the electricity produced, provided that the company compensates the landowner for the road or transmission line. But here, in Kutch, ROW was used in a complete opposite way, its meaning was turned upside down in popular language. For everyone in Kutch, it referred to any attempt conducted by an individual, or more rarely by an organised collective of villagers, to physically block, interrupt, disturb or even attack any stage of wind turbine development (survey, foundation, erection and daily maintenance, etc.) for any kind of reasons. The motivations behind an act of ROW could be related to a villager claiming ownership of (part of) the land on which the wind turbine or some material is standing, bargaining for a higher compensation or simply for a job (usually security guard position for a few weeks), protesting because compensation has not been paid or because some damages has been caused on his land. The most common phenomenon I witnessed was the trespassing into public and common lands and the physical occupation of space when companies would come to survey locations and start construction. A common ROW case was also anonymous villagers simply blocking the access to a road with trees and rocks and banning companies’ vehicles from entering the village, forcing staff to take long detours to reach wind turbine locations.

The ROW constituted an essential part of this political ‘terrain of resistance’ against wind turbines in Kutch, whereby isolated and sometimes anonymous individuals (referred to as the ROW makers) conducted non-coordinated, spatially, and temporally dispersed, multiple, and unpredictable blockades on the companies’ locations and projects. This ROW making was always met in return by the ROW solving, a task usually conducted by wind companies’ staff

and their brokers, and sometimes by those same people who initially conducted the ROW or ‘leaked’ sensible information in exchange for money (as discussed in chapter 6). Because ROW materialises an attempt to physically interrupt and block (albeit temporary) the constant day and night gear, flow and circulation of relentless machines, trucks and cranes, it is highly comparable to other forms of blockades practiced in different energy infrastructural contexts, particularly of pipeline blockades. Blockades trouble, blockades disrupt the capitalist logistical order, ‘they simultaneously arrest the flow of capital, and the underlying sovereignty claims that uphold the security of that capital’ (Bosworth and Chua 2021, 6). What I observed on the ground was a kind of race taking place between ROW makers and companies’ representatives (ROW solvers), where the former tries to take back some of the space lost from the latter, exploiting the weaknesses lying in the wind assemblage, the grey-zones and the small spaces left by companies. This spatial and temporal dispersion of resistance practices like ROW did not reduce at all the nuisance capacity and the striking power of individual contestants: if one isolated situation of blockade or theft could certainly not harm the company and put a whole project in danger, its addition, multiplication, and overlaps constituted a real threat to the stability of wind power development, as companies had to deal with multiple tension spots erupting unpredictably at different places and different times. Cumulated, these multiple tension spots had the capacity to paralyse and block a whole link of the wind turbine construction chain. I mentioned in chapter 6 how much these blockades were costly for wind companies, having to pay machines’ rent and workers’ wages to contactors while the work was halted. ROW could be solved within a few hours (as in the case of Vijayrajsinh’s ROW on the day of our first encounter, see section 6.3.3 in chapter 6), few days or even weeks. In case of days and weeks, companies would prefer to cancel the initial wind location and find a better land plot somewhere less contested.

What truly motivates a villager to come to a wind turbine location at 6 AM before workers arrive and block the cranes and machines with rocks and stones? What does this individual, small-scale, and isolated political reaction to wind power reveal about the kind of domination it fights and the agency it performs? A discourse I had been hearing for a long time about ROW and (individual) opposition to wind was pointing to something less confrontational and radical than expected: ‘usually people who try to stop and block projects are looking for money, either because they didn’t get any money or job from companies, or they didn’t get enough’ suggested this local contractor (Discussion, 26.01.2021). Indeed, blockades were rarely aimed at opposing or frontally resisting wind turbines and dispossession but worked as an individual-

scale and isolated tool to negotiate and cope personally with dispossession and loss of resources, in a context where they cannot be avoided. ROW is imagined by those who make them as a bargaining and negotiation tool with companies, a survival tactic in the absence of real (long-term) job opportunities (so-called 'green jobs'):

> 'The only way we can manage to obtain some money or job is by bothering them constantly, pressuring them everyday with ROW, that is the only way to get something from companies, otherwise they don't ask us anything, they don't even tell us that they are starting work on a new location. And anyway, they will put the wind turbines whatever happens, however we try to stop and resist them they will put the wind turbines in the village, so better take the money' (Discussion with Rajput from Pamori conducting regularly ROW, 10.03.21)

This survival tactic was present in most of the ROW cases I witnessed, people usually blocking the wind site for few days until they got a small compensation or a job. The money extracted from ROW would usually help for small household expenses, housing repairs or buy a new tractor, a car or a motorbike. This aligns with Dunlap's findings and their description of negotiation and survival strategies in Mexico:

> 'The presence of wind turbines creates a struggle *to make the best out of a bad situation* [emphasis added] that leaves people fighting for more social benefits, hopes of land owners' negotiating free electricity for more wind projects, as well as adapting to the situation to survive' (2018c, 559).

There was nonetheless a hierarchy between different types of ROW actions. As mentioned in chapter 6, some are being more 'sensible', critical and generating more money than others, depending on the network of the ROW maker, his demands, and the construction stage at which the ROW erupts. Indeed, villagers of Kutch have 'learned', or better, have been 'taught' in the words of Rahul S.[30], how, when, where and on which basis to conduct ROW. For example, most of the villagers I met knew that the best moment to start a ROW was during the erection and assembly phases, and not at preliminary stages like survey or civil work:

> 'People don't make ROW at the beginning, they just wait until they can ask for more money to the company, particularly at the assembly time, because at that time the company can't afford to waste too much time and get all the machines blocked, so they

[30] I mentioned in chapter 6 (section 6.2.2.2) this discussion where Rahul S. accused a villager of 'teaching people how to make ROW and claim money' (observation, 16.02.2021)

will give more money easily' explained this ROW maker I encountered near Nakhatrana (Discussion, 03.04.2021).

ROW actions and all other types of 'middle-ground patrolling' resistance modes, even if they usually ended up with a sum of money and passive acquiescence, they materialised an attempt to reclaim and regain self-confidence, dignity, honour and (political) agency of the subordinate after the humiliation of dispossession (Turton 1986). For pastorals who had lost access to common lands and seen their pastures and livelihoods destroyed and attacked by wind companies, being able to block and disturb their machines and cranes with few rocks or occupying their sites with cattle was a real sign of revenge. Pursuing their (pastoral) lifestyles and livelihood practices in the middle of wind turbines, construction work and machines was in itself also a form of resistance (Haynes and Prakash 1992). It acted as a powerful reminder to companies that, even though they have police and state support, villagers are still here. They still exist and this territory, although completely reshaped and modified by wind extraction, still belongs to them. It acted as an indirect way to reappropriate dispossessed resources, and for these reasons the notion of 'quiet encroachment' advanced by Bayat seemed appropriate to the situation of ROW and wind sites blockades I describe here (2000).

Villagers reacted and organised quite differently when they faced dispossession by electricity transmission lines and tower poles. Indeed, electricity transmission lines and electricity towers have a different materiality than wind turbine infrastructures, and they enfold a different dialectics of dispossession, creating in turn different dialectics of resistance. I have mentioned in chapter 5 that the route of transmission lines and towers from one substation to another is identified, surveyed, and established well in advance. These specific dialectics of dispossession – where hundreds and hundreds of farmers, private owners and common land users are impacted by the same single transmission line – considerably favoured open, public, organised, and unified resistance practices. What determined different resistance trajectories between the three cases I witnessed was also caste. Indeed, caste mattered for collective and organised resistance movements, but it also mattered for ROW and blockade-like individual political reactions.

8.1.2 'Local Social Fabric' or Social Configurations of Power

Indeed, the same materiality of wind power deployed in different villages of mainland and borderland Kutch produced completely different outcomes and political reactions from dispossessed populations. Villagers facing the arrival of wind turbines used alternatively or

simultaneously contestation and support, ROW and collective movements to serve their interests in the best possible ways. What determined this political 'terrain of resistance' and its range of diversity and nuances was caste, class, and social status. Depending on the possibilities each villager had, his negotiation and bargaining capacities and skills, his influence and power locally, his contacts and network, he developed (individually or collectively) different strategies to negotiate or resist wind turbines. Certain caste alliances and social configurations or caste-based organisations and networks rendered the emergence of organised and collective movements more likely.

I have come across or heard about no less than five actions in central Kutch where village-committees helped with environmental NGOs, lawyers and caste-based organisations decided to block, protest and petition against the construction of wind turbines or the erection of transmission lines and electricity towers (I provide newspaper clippings recounting some of these movements and translated from Gujarati to English in the Appendices, see Figures 18, 19 and 22). Samio *andolan* was the action that sparked most of the attention of local and regional media and had echoes in Bhuj and outside of Kutch. Central to these movements is the use of traditional tools of contestation (petitions, protests and rallies, hunger strikes), common mobilisation factors around the protection of the environment and the defence of agrarian livelihoods and identities as legitimate alternatives to dispossessive and destructive climate politics. An important part of the struggle was also situated on the judicial and legal terrain, contesting the wind turbines on the basis of the violation of government rules and manipulation of land records. Villagers used the Right to Information (RTI) Act in their favour and collected all the necessary information and documents to prepare their fight: permission letters and land allotments given by the Collector office to companies, the exact records of lands and maps of wind projects, existing regulations on minimum distance between wind turbines and village accommodations. In many aspects, collective fights against wind turbines expansion in Kutch were comparable to previous resistance movements that took place in other parts of India and the world against destructive and dispossessive renewable, mining or hydropower projects (Stock 2022a; Lakhanpal 2019; Avila-Calero 2017). Like other environmental and land struggles, collective struggles against wind turbines articulated different demands and mobilised different narratives, it saw 'an increasing convergence of the green (ecological) and red (social justice) trajectories' (Kumar 2014, 72) as villagers legitimately questioned the true beneficiaries of this new form of 'development':

> ‘They say wind companies are coming, you will get development and jobs: but we only lose our lands, our forests, our pastures. They don’t care about our development: they just want to pressure us like sugarcanes, get all the juice we have, all the land and forest of our village, and then once they get what they want, they just throw us like waste, without giving us any job or compensation.’ (Discussion with a Patel from Samio, 24.02.2021)

Struggles against the wind assemblage or against other forms of energy extraction in Kutch do not simply oppose the powerful and the powerless, the dispossessing and the dispossessed, companies and ‘local communities’. Certain caste alliances and social configurations (multiple or single-caste configurations) emerging in a vertical reaction to the arrival of wind turbines and companies in the village also sometimes revealed and fostered more profound horizontal axes of power and domination between villagers from different castes and classes. Individual political reactions to wind turbines like ROW blockades and even collective mobilisations regularly reflected upper-caste domination and masculinity and marginalised more critical struggles around land redistribution and caste-based oppressions. The presence of caste-based and Hindu nationalist organisations among the leadership of collective struggles also participated in the depoliticisation and dilution of critical voices among the movement.

The arrival of wind turbines in Kutch’s villages of Nakhatrana and Lakhpat *tehsils* did profoundly affect families, brotherhoods, and friendships. The silent dissemination of money and the monetisation of pacification outlined in chapter 6, the small possibilities for contracts, employment and brokerage positions opened up by the wind assemblage widened the gap between the haves and the have nots, between those who ‘ate’ and those who remained on ‘empty stomachs’. Most of my informants agreed that the strategy of giving money to some while purposely denying it to others had disastrous effects on the (far from harmonious) social cohesion and interactions ruling village life, with the apparition of two teams, two groups or two sides, the ‘pros’ and ‘cons’, even though my investigation suggests a more nuanced and complex nature of the boundaries between them:

> ‘By using money power, they have created so much division, fight and dispute in the village. Now, there are always two teams in every village, I have never heard of any village where there hasn’t been any dispute, any team and group between people: one half who work for the company, who have some interest in the work and are pros, the other half who is opposing the arrival of wind turbine and will make ROW. Before, it

was not like that, it was peaceful, there was no trouble between us. Now everyone is running after money, and for this, *people will betray their own brother if needed* [emphasis added]' (Discussion, 24.02.21)

This Rajput villager was well conscious and aware of the companies' strategy to divide villagers between castes and within castes and at the end enforce their projects. There was a widespread consensus that unity, solidarity, trust and collective sense of belonging had disappeared in Kutch with the arrival of wind turbines and money, and that the *samaj* leaders bore an important responsibility in this loss of trust and hope. Indeed, wind expansion generated tremendous social and political (re)configurations at the village-level, shook the existing (unbalanced) equilibrium and social organisation, and created processes of class and power differentiation as well as inter and intra-caste competition. As I will discuss in the following sections, some managed to turn their opposition and/ or their support to wind companies into a position of '*neta*' (leader), while others got marginalised and side-lined. This in turn had profound consequences for the resistance capacities and the potential for unity.

In the three sections that follow, I analyse the specific political 'terrain of resistance' as it unravelled in the three different village cases of this study, the villages of Pamori, Haroma and Samio. I systematically present the kind of political reactions that emerge following the arrival of wind turbines in the village, how these reactions were entangled with energy materiality and local configurations of power and how they strengthened/ contested new and established forms of domination.

8.2 Pamori

When Pamori villagers faced the arrival of the first five wind turbines in 2018 and the 55 more that followed, not everyone was in capacity to react, oppose or support companies in their projects. Patels had left the village a long time ago for better economic opportunities in Vadodara. Dalits were numerically more important than the other castes but politically and economically marginalised. Rajput families, holding more (irrigated) land and cattle, holding hand on the *sarpanch* position and historically empowered in the village by their dominant caste status, were the first ones to show up in front of machines and cranes and start blockades.

8.2.1 'My Second Business is Doing ROW': Upper-caste Privilege and Blockade Professionals

ROW is the privilege of upper-castes, and particularly of Rajputs. Indeed, making ROW is not an easy task, it does not fit for everyone: blocking a location and stopping the pace of cranes

and truck movements, sometimes with one's body, requires muscle and manpower, network and support, influence in the area so that people will physically help you to block the machines and negotiate with the company or at least will not intervene and prevent you from doing it. For these reasons, making ROW requires the same amount of force, strength, physical pomp and aura, or in other words, masculine attributes of the upper castes, as solving ROW. A Rajput villager from Pamori confirmed this hypothesis as he linked ROW making with Rajput's intrinsic 'nature':

> 'As Rajput, we are not afraid of companies or outsiders, this is in our nature, we have always been in power here. Even a little kid in Pamori will not be afraid to talk to companies' guys and make ROW, he will know what to do, what to say and how. Only people like us have the courage to do ROW' (Discussion, 05.07.2021).

Blockade is not necessarily related to the ROW maker's own land or village. I encountered people in Pamori who proudly affirmed that 'wherever I have power [*jahan hamari chalti hai*] I do ROW, wherever I have some strength and connections, here or there, I do ROW and get some money', be it their village and land or someone else's (Discussion, 03.03.2021). I met this testifying Rajput villager during the household survey in Pamori, he went on to give me a surprising answer when I asked about his income sources and occupations: 'I am doing farming, but my second business is doing ROW' he replied laughingly (Ibid.). There were indeed rumours about the existence of ROW 'businessmen' and blockades 'professionals' in Kutch since the arrival of wind turbines. These rumours first emanated from companies' representatives, whose widespread conception was that ROW had become a business. Land team staff often told me that in every village, two or three men conducted ROW on a daily basis and that they organised and coordinated their actions via WhatsApp groups. I heard about Pamori, ROW and Rajput for the first time in early January 2021, as I accompanied Dasram, the company's land team staff I mentioned in chapters 5 and 6. As we passed through Pamori village to join the main road to Dayapar and get some lunch, my companion spontaneously told me the name of the village and added this very interesting comment:

> 'We are crossing Pamori village. It is a very difficult and tough village for us, in Pamori there are ROW almost every day. They are extremely organised; they use WhatsApp groups to coordinate and make ROW. It's because the village belongs to Rajput [*Rajput log ka gau he*], these people do a lot of ROW' (Discussion with Dasram, 23.01.2021).

I was quite sceptical about these affirmations at the beginning and doubted that ROW making, something that appeared quite spontaneous and eruptive in its nature, could be organised and coordinated to the level described by companies' representatives. My later investigation in different villages conducting regular ROWs like Pamori proved me wrong.

I came across organised ROW practices, usually by one caste against another (Rajputs against Dalits), as combined individual and collective methods deployed to take advantage from the arrival of wind turbines. In Pamori, wind sites blockades were almost exclusively a Rajput privilege, as summarised by the *sarpanch* himself: 'Here all the ROWs that have been initiated in the village, have been done by Rajputs**,** you will not find a single Dalit or Patel who did a ROW [laughing]' (Discussion, 02.03.2021). Indeed, out of the seven Rajput informants surveyed who held a job as security guard or driver in the past 12 months, all of them obtained it after conducting a blockade on wind sites. On the other hand, I came across only three Dalit villagers who initiated ROW, the *up-sarpanch* (*panchayat* vice-president) whose son was the only Dalit to occupy a security guard job in the sample, and two other households whose ROW action was mediated by Rajputs close to Vijayrajsinh's circles and did not end up with any concrete outcome. Indeed, Rajput villagers, and particularly the family of Vijayraj, controlled who could and who could not do ROW, who could resist and oppose companies and who could not:

> 'All our fight and negotiation with companies are mediated by *darbars* [another name for Rajputs], they will come in the middle, convince the companies that they will manage the situation if they give them some small amount of money. In return they tell us to stop the ROW because we will get our money, but then they always keep the money, and we never get anything' confessed one of the two unsuccessful Dalit ROW maker (Discussion, 06.03.2021).

With this caste factor, wind turbine blockades are not only tools to reassert Rajputs' power and authority over outsiders, contractors, and companies' representatives. Making ROW is also a message sent to insiders within the village, a reminder for Dalits that Rajputs are still in power in the village, they still rule and own it. In the words of the Dalit *up-sarpanch*, ROW was a just supplementary proof that those 'who have the stick in their hands impose their rule [*jiski lathi, uski raj*]', those who have physical strength impose their rule (Discussion, 26.03.2021). What was presented as dissent, resistance, and opposition actions to wind turbines by Rajput ROW

makers was conversely perceived as mere support, profit, and benefit-seeking in the eyes of Dalit villagers.

8.2.2 Manipulation, Money, and Resistance

ROW was a practical tool to create economic opportunities, to negotiate and secure a good position among the new dominants of this recomposed regime of value. Indeed, Pamori was slowly experiencing a disruption of the whole regime of value and production, particularly around the value of land, agriculture, and pastoralism, transitioning towards wind-based electricity production. The power relations were now in favour of the new companies' brokers, fixers and contractors, and Pamori's Rajputs' historical stronghold over (irrigated) land was under threat. Their farming and pastoral livelihoods were not seen of value anymore. For these reasons, they could not be left on the roadside, they had to find ways to secure an equivalent position in that new regime as a security guard, a temporary contractor for a small construction work, as a broker and ROW maker/ solver. By alternatively opposing-supporting wind turbines and forcefully controlling the negotiation and bargaining capacities of other villagers, Rajputs have been able to monopolise the village-level small benefits emanating from the wind assemblage in terms of contracts, jobs and compensation while also (re)asserting their hegemony and domination over Dalits (something I partially mentioned in chapter 6, section 6.4.3). This position reaffirms how thin the boundary between ROW making and ROW solving is, between the contestant and the supporter. These two terrains are highly connected, and as mentioned in chapter 6, those involved in making blockades are also involved in their solving, and vice-versa.

Rajputs from Pamori did not only curtail and filter Dalits' individual political reactions to wind turbines (ROW actions), they also mobilised the whole village and manipulated its resisting capacity, a case of collective action of blockade, to serve their own private interests. After few initial months of wind turbines' arrival, villagers unanimously decided to oppose the companies on the basis of *gauchar* destruction, land degradation, lack of employment opportunities and low compensation. The whole village, aggregating the three different castes (Rajput, Patel, Dalit), blocked the arrival of new machines for several days and forced company's representatives to come in Pamori. 'The Darbars first said that we should resist and stop the wind turbines, that this will destroy *gauchar* and our lands, nobody will get job or compensation' recalled this Dalit villager Discussion, 15.03.2021). As soon as the company offered to raise the amount of CSR money given to the *panchayat* per location, from 1.5 to 6

lakhs, the *Darbar* and their *sarpanch* whistled the end of the game and sent everyone back home, 'once they obtained what they wanted from the company, which was more money, they simply sent us back home, saying it's done we can't do anything else, we should accept the company's deal before they send the police' (Ibid.). For many Dalits informants who recounted me this event, this pseudo victory left a bitter taste. The increase of money did not change anything for them, it went directly to the *panchayat* and benefited mostly to the *sarpanch*, Viratsinh, and his family and friendly circles like Vijayraj. Dalits of Pamori have been deprived of employment opportunities, deprived of compensation and money emanating from the wind assemblage, but most importantly they have been deprived by Rajputs of (individual and collective) resistance tools and political reactions. From their point of view, the arrival of wind turbines and the related ROW, blockades and other types of dissent politics in the village have been far from emancipatory and have on the contrary strengthened and reinforced caste hierarchies.

8.3 Haroma

In the single-caste context of Haroma (populated only by Mandra Muslims), and in the presence of a single, charismatic and strong leader like Hassan *bhai*, wind turbines' arrival and the availability of money, jobs and contracts did not produce the same political reactions and outcomes as in Pamori. If the ROW-blockade was also a privileged type of reaction used by villagers, it was always conducted under the supervision of the leader and his lieutenants and it benefited a larger group of villagers.

8.3.1 'ROW is Going on Almost Every Day in the Village'

The situation I observed while visiting the premises of Haroma village for the first time in early April 2021, was extremely reminiscent of the kind of 'middle-ground patrolling' Turton described (1986). I was accompanying Virajsinh, a main informant acting as a land team staff, who had specifically been sent by his company to supervise what he called a 'sensible' location in the outskirts of Haroma. His mission for that day was to control the closing down stages that take place after turbine assembly where the different cranes, materials and trucks are dismantled to prepare for the next location. Most importantly, he was tasked to occupy the space, maintain the company's position until all the material had been dismantled and prevent any ROW coming from Haroma villagers. When we left the location for lunch around noon, just five minutes after our departure, the staff received a call from the contractors still working on the location saying that a villager from Haroma had popped up on the location and blocked

the work. Indeed, this location was 'sensible' and needed a dedicated staff from the land team for a certain reason, the said villager had not been paid the promised compensation for leasing part of his land for crane storage. When we came back to the location after finishing our lunch, the mysterious ROW maker had disappeared:

> 'You see, they don't even tell their names, they do ROW and block the work when there is no [company] supervisor, when we come back, they leave and hide in some nearby land, and then they block again when we leave the site, it goes like this again and again' complained the land team supervisor (Discussion with Virajsinh, 01.04.2021).

I learned later that the ROW maker came back during the night and for the next two days until he got his compensation paid.

ROW became so prevalent in Haroma and overall in Kutch since the arrival of wind turbines, that it completely infiltrated the field of everyday life and social relations, to the extent that 'now, you even ask a kid about ROW, he will tell you what it is and how to make one' ironically said Abdul Karim, my informant from Haroma (Discussion, 22.10.2021). It was extremely common to hear these three letters pronounced by people while sitting at the tea stall near Haroma's village mosque, or at nights on informants' lands. Haroma villagers would exchange and share the latest news about ROW (who had been doing the latest one, where and how much he got) while drinking tea. ROW punctuated everyday village life and its monotonous routine, both during the day and the night.

Since the village got surrounded by wind turbines three years ago, villagers' everyday routine life is marked by the loud noises of blades, particularly at nights, by technical incidents provoking fires and destruction of *gauchar* lands, and by the constant circulation of companies' vehicles and materials near the village and in the middle of grazing areas (I analysed these issues in detail in chapters 5 and 7). For the past three years, their everyday life is also punctuated by ROW making, blockades of wind sites, and related accusation of wind turbines' destruction and cable theft emanating from companies. When I used to walk at nights with villagers from Haroma, bringing the goats back to the pen after a whole day of grazing in the jungle, I was always surprised to notice that some road access to erected wind turbines were blocked with heavy stones and tree branches. Sometimes, informants would place these big rocks and stones in front of me and even ask me to help move them. When I would ask if this was ROW, they would respond smiling, 'ROW is going on almost every day in the village brother!' (Discussion with a villager from Haroma, 16.10.2021).

8.3.2 ‘When We Have a Problem With the Company […] We Call Abdal *bhai*’: Money Distribution and Control

Rather than monopolising or appropriating all the wind turbines related money for the interest of one restricted small group like in Pamori, Hassan *bhai* designed a complex mechanism of rational, organised and pragmatic redistribution whereby almost all the households got at some point a job and some money from the village fund. What Haroma informants described is a principle of ‘lottery’, where each household is allotted a number and by round of selection is given the chance to get a security guard job, usually for one or two months, after what this job rotates to someone else in the village with the same selection procedure. Parallel to that, like most villages in the district, a committee has been established with the arrival of wind turbines in 2018 to collect the CSR money given by companies. To further ensure the support of the majority of Haroma villagers, the committee has redistributed that CSR fund directly to households, in two rounds of redistribution (respectively 17,000 INR and 13,000 INR for each household).

The appraised money redistribution system that Hassan *bhai* initiated conferred on him the authority and legitimacy to completely control the political reactions and insubordination acts (ROW) of his fellow villagers: if a villager was feeling cheated by a private land transaction with wind companies, if he did not receive his salary as a security guard or a driver or received less than promised, he would call Hassan or one of his lieutenants (Abdal *bhai*) who would initiate the blockade on his behalf or at least give his blessings. This was explained by one of the villagers during my survey:

> ‘When we have a problem with the company, when we don’t get our security guard salary paid, when we don’t get our compensation for land sale, then we call Abdal *bhai* and he does the ROW himself. If he is too busy, he will let us to do it on our own” (Discussion, 11.10.2021).

Hassan did keep his words and conducted blockades whenever fellow villagers from Haroma approached him for help as they were in situation of grievance with companies.

8.4 Samio

Samio presents a radically contrasting picture compared to Pamori and Haroma. The village was indeed experiencing a different caste configuration (three important castes, Dalit, Rabari and Patel, none being able to truly dominate the others as opposed to Pamori's Rajputs), no strong and established political leadership (contrary to Haroma and the charismatic figure of Hassan *bhai*), different discourses of resistance, unity, and alliance and a slightly different energy materiality (presence of high-voltage electricity transmission lines). What was also different from the two previous cases was a strong attachment to the 'jungle' and the presence of enduring inter-caste relations structured around land, pastures, and water. These relations preceded the arrival of wind turbines and were now under threat.

Samio villagers therefore reacted collectively to the arrival of wind turbines and transmission lines, notwithstanding the fact that caste hierarchies and local configurations of power played a decisive role in determining who was part and could lead the collective struggle and who could not.

8.4.1 'We Are All Related to the Jungle and its Land': A Case of Collective Resistance Movement

In 2015, a renowned Indian wind company established six preliminary wind turbines in Samio on so-called government 'wastelands'. When 40 more locations were allocated to three other companies in 2018-2019, the villagers unanimously opposed the new project, physically blocking the different sites where construction had started and decided to challenge the companies on the basis of illegal and unauthorised cutting and felling of trees. This led to a halt of the different wind turbine projects and the beginning of a long judicial process at the National Green Tribunal (NGT) that was still pending at the time I left the village in 2021. Contrary to the rest of Nakhatrana *tehsil*, Samio has few wind turbines, but villagers wanted to avoid at all costs the situation I described in Pamori and Haroma's case (more than 60 wind turbines were installed in each village). Additionally, as many other villages in the area, Samio was within a 45km corridor of 16 high-voltage lines and their hundreds and hundreds of poles aimed at transmitting the wind electricity produced in the area to the electricity substation in Palanpur. These lines also triggered organised and united opposition from the villagers, gathering mostly Patel residents whose lands were crossed by the transmission lines.

Pastoralist and non-pastoralist groups in Samio united in an inter-caste Patel-Rabari-Dalit alliance as they shared common interests in relation to land and common fears about the future.

One of the leaders of the resistance movement in the village summarised these fears during our first interview:

> 'Where will we go? And what will we do? If they put all these 40 wind turbines and their towers and cables, there will be nothing left for us in our own village. Wind power is a business, but there is nothing for us, it will never feed us. For now, everyone one is surviving around land, either as farmers, agricultural labourers, or pastoralists. *We are all related to the jungle and its land, all the castes, that is precisely what united us* [emphasis added].' (Interview with Mankar Bhai Patel, leader of the resistance movement, 26.01.2021)

Indeed, wind turbines 'will never feed' them, contrary to the land. The pastoral Rabaris have been at the forefront of the struggle because their livelihood is more dependent on the availability of grasslands than other castes. They practise cattle-grazing (alongside other activities) and they own more livestock than the rest of the village[31]. But interestingly, almost every household in the village possesses at least one or two cows, providing milk to the family, and for this reason everyone relies at some point on the 'jungle'. The fear is that wind extraction, its construction of roads and transmission lines, and the related risks of technical accidents and fires detailed in chapter 5, will destroy and damage this 'jungle', it will put them and the future generations at risks:

> 'They destroy the whole jungle ecosystem, the wind turbines kill the animals and birds, the vibrations produced by the excavation disturb the whole cycle. This has consequences for agriculture and farming, as some bird species have left and don't come on the fields to eat invasive and crop-destroying insects. They also throw dust, cement and all kind of waste on our lands, which destroys the quality of the soil and crops, leading to a devaluation of our lands afterwards. They block access to water sources, and pump all the existing water underground, which means less water for our activity. What happens if we don't have lands anymore, or jungle or grass anymore? What will be left for us, for our kids or for our animals?' (Discussion, 19.01.2021).

This villager, Malji *bhai* Patel, active in the resistance movement and member of a farmers' union, expressed fear that many other villagers in Samio shared: wind turbines will break and disrupt their special relationship and attachment to land, 'jungle' and space, but they fear that

[31] According to the household survey, Rabari's average livestock holding is around 50 animals contra 4 for Patel and 3 for Dalits.

it will also disturb the existing inter-caste relationships, because Patels and other Dalit farmers occasionally provide fodder to Rabari herders in dry seasons in exchange of milk and butter. What prevailed, at the beginning of the protest, was a complex inter-caste equilibrium where each group had interest in joining the movement as long as every caste was on board and did not accept companies' money. Additionally, the passing of 16 high-voltage lines in the middle of the village also contributed to gather and unite the hundreds of discontented Samio landowners who were impacted by the lines.

Aggregating different interests and motivations, villagers unanimously contested the core of the interrelated 'wasteness' and 'greenness' discourse that was used by the state to justify the private takeover of revenue grasslands via mobilising environmental and biodiversity counterarguments:

> 'They were claiming that these lands are waste, it is all dry lands where nothing can grow, where you have no vegetation at all. But this was completely wrong, they were lying, so with the help of environmental NGOs, lawyers, and social activists we showed to the district collector that these lands have actually a unique biodiversity, with species of trees, vegetation, birds and animals living here. Then they said wind is pollution free, that green energy is carbon free, which might be true. But green energy is only a brand, this same green energy is creating the wide destruction of trees, vegetation, and jungle, it is provoking fires and technical incidents' (Discussion with a Rabari villager of Samio, 11.03.21).

Samio's fight against wind turbines is profoundly political, it is situated at the intersection of social, cultural, environmental and economic dimensions and re-energises traditional agrarian struggles around the defence of common lands and attached livelihoods practices (Temper *et al.* 2018). Villagers from Samio expressed a strong attachment to what they understand to be 'our' lands, 'our' common property resources which have been providing livelihood sources for generations. What is at stake here is the defence of their cultural identity, of who they are and what they do (as pastoralist or as farmer) as well as where they belong (their village). This attachment was particularly strong for villagers belonging to the Rabari caste, they openly identified themselves as belonging to the 'jungle'. One day I accompanied Dev, a Rabari youngster, on his journey for cattle-grazing in Samio grasslands.

> 'You know *paaji* (brother), I am a pure Rabari. I am not like the other Rabaris you have met in the village who work in offices all day. My whole existence is attached to this

jungle, is attached to these cows, they are my mothers. If I lose them, then I cease to be a Rabari', he said after a couple of minutes (Discussion, 27.01.2021).

Even though these lands were the property of the government, they belonged to Dev and other villagers like him. He took care of this space on a regular basis, knew how to manage it, how to use these resources but also how to preserve them. 'With this land I can live on my own, I don't need anyone, I am independent. As long as there is jungle and forest, we will have something to eat, we can live and stay in the village' argued Dev (Ibid.). In this discursive fight, Dev and his fellow villagers hoped to legitimise their independent ways of life outside informal wage labour.

8.4.2 'We Had to Join the Fight': When the Struggle Reinforced Caste Hierarchies and Silenced More Critical Voices

Samio villagers, and those from nearby villages praising the movement, were proud to say that 'the whole village' united 'as one' against wind turbines, that all '*jatis'* (castes) collectively understood that *gauchar* and the 'jungle' were in danger. In public, everyone insisted that without this exceptional and unprecedented unity, nothing would have been possible, nothing would have been achieved, each caste attributing to itself the main responsibility of building and maintaining the unity. In the ambient atmosphere of money, betrayal, and lost solidarities I laid out earlier in this chapter (section 8.1.2), Samio occupied a unique position and stood as an exception. The villagers were extremely proud to say that they were the 'only and single village in the whole of Kutch' who resisted and refused the hundreds and hundreds of lakhs promised by the companies and instead chose to preserve their land, their jungle. Samio and the leaders of the *andolan* made a name out of this, gained an image of honest and uncorrupted village in the region.

And yet, Samio was like any other village of Kutch, and caste relations and hierarchies had certainly not disappeared with the anti-wind turbines movement. Land ownership was largely structured by caste, the Patel community owning most of the lands (an average of 7.6 hectares per households) while Dalits had only partially benefited from 1950s-1960s land reforms and held smaller plots (an average of 2.8 hectares, with many landless households, out of the 11 households surveyed, 7 were landless). There were only few inter-caste interactions and exchanges in the everyday life in Samio. Every caste had its own temples, shops and common spaces, and for this reason the anti-wind turbine *andolan* and the regular protests, sit-ins and demonstrations were certainly unique occasions to bring villagers from all castes, and to a

certain point gender, together (see Figure 16 below). But these moments constituted parentheses in an otherwise everyday life that was organised by caste relations; they were eruptive moments that only lasted for few days.

Figure 16 Picture of Samio's resistance movement against wind turbines. This protest took place in August 2021 when wind companies tried to resume work on the turbine visible at the back of the picture. (Photo by informant)

Regarding the leadership of the movement, I soon realised that the Dalit *sarpanch*, Ramu *bhai*, played only a symbolic and secondary importance role, limited to signing the petitions and letters written at the *panchayat*, and he was never involved in any of the meetings I had with Mankar or Malji *bhai*. Mankar *bhai* and his brother Malji on the other hand were in the spotlight, with the support of Laxmi *bhai*, the Rabari representative who acted as their right-arm. Mankar *bhai* was a respected Patel owning 30 acres of land (the largest in the whole household survey). He ran a motor-bike business in Nakhatrana while his brother, living in Nakhatrana, owned a borewell shop as well as land in Samio. As an important fact, he was also the *tehsil* representative of two Hindu nationalist organisations, the BKS and the RSS. Since the beginning of the struggle, they handled most of the responsibilities, all the knowledge about the case at the NGT, they followed the legal aspects and went to Delhi during court sessions.

They became the bullhorn of the movement, giving regular interviews to local and national journalists, and social media (Youtube, Facebook and Instagram pages).

The not so inclusive nature of this leadership was in fact quite representative of the marginal and symbolic participation of Dalits in Samio's *andolan*. While they took part in the protests and rallies in 2020 and 2021, the arrival of wind turbines did not represent the same danger and threat to them than to Rabaris and Patels. Indeed, how would a Dalit household, not owning a single hectare of land and one or two cows, working as an informal wage labourer outside the village and complementing his income with occasional agricultural labour on Patel's land, possibly be impacted in the same ways as a Rabari household, owning an average 50 animals, or a Patel owning between 4 to 10 hectares of land? As the pressures became stronger to support the movement, come to rallies and stick to the inter-caste uniting discourse, Dalits were left with no other choice than to follow the newly constituted majority of Patel and Rabari:

> 'We don't have much land, we are labourers (*mazdoor*), we don't have many cattle either so even if wind turbines come, it will not affect us. We may even have the opportunity to get a job, who knows? But still *we had to join the fight* [emphasis added], because we live in the village right, we share everyday life with Patels and Rabaris, not supporting the *andolan* would have created a lot of conflicts, we would have been left behind' confessed this Dalit informant in the intimacy of his house, far from the public eye and the praised narrative of inter-caste alliance (Discussion, 07.12.2021).

What this informant indirectly revealed was the socio-economic vulnerability and marginality of Dalits in Samio. They could not bear the cost of protest. Indeed, opposing wind companies over such a long time entailed a certain price:

> 'A Dalit who works as an agricultural labourer on Patel's land or in a factory in Nakhatrana, how can he go every day on the protest site, sit there all day and then lose the small salary of 300 rupees he gets? How will he eat?' concluded Vogesh after several months of protest (Discussion, 01.10.2021).

This argument was regularly used by people in Kutch to justify the absence of organised resistance and the compliance with companies' project:

> '*Only rich people can resist wind companies* [emphasis added] those with money and funds, those who don't need to work on farming land, because they have a running business, they own land. Otherwise, a labourer can pause his job only for 2 or 3 days,

> once there is no money left, he needs to eat and get back to work' (Discussion with the *talati* of Lakhpat *taluka*, 24.11.2021).

Patels have not only been leading the resistance movement, they have also been funding it. They have been paying for the advocate fees and all the related costs at the NGT, financially supported, behind the scenes, by the two Hindu nationalist organisations, the Bharatya Kisan Sangh (BKS) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

BKS and RSS support came to my attention only a few months after my investigation started, when I learned that leaders from both organisations attended several rallies and protests organised in Samio during the summer 2021. They were mostly involved in the fight against electricity transmission lines that passed Samio and other nearby villages. Representatives of these two organisations saw no apparent contradictions in supporting these resistance movements, while their political wing, the BJP, was fully complicit in the expansion of wind electricity projects. They were on the contrary critical of BJP's collusion with big energy corporates and rather portrayed themselves as defenders of Kutch's 'traditional' land and culture. As part of Samio *andolan* against wind turbines and transmission lines, the two organisations gathered 300 people in a highway blockade at the entry of Nakatrana in March 2021 (see Figure 17 below). Impacted farmers from neighbouring villages including Samio (almost exclusively Patel) had been united and organised against the proposed transmission lines by the BKS and the RSS, who campaigned in the different villages to 'raise awareness among the farmers':

> 'Thanks to the work conducted by the BKS and the RSS, we have been in every village impacted by the lines, to unite the farmers, to raise awareness**,** try to make a combo of villages because if farmers try to fight and struggle with the company on their own, individually they won't get anything, if all the 1000 farmers impacted around Samio get together then our voice is heard' explained Malji, also highly involved in the fight against the 16 high-voltage lines as the *tehsil* face of the BKS and the RSS (Discussion, 13.03.2021).
>
> 'Our *kisan sangh* (farmers' organisation) in Samio is very united, very strong around the Patel *samaj* (community), 90% of the farmers in the *sanganthan* (organisation) are Patel. So, in this protest, the unity has been done by the *kisan sangh* and contacts have been established between villages via our Patel *samaj* and family networks' explained

Ramji bhai Patel, a farmer from Samio owning 4 hectares of land impacted by one of the proposed lines (Discussion, 02.04.2021).

Figure 17 Two pictures of Nakhatrana's high-way blockade. This high-way blockade took place on the 8th of March 2021 and gathered mostly (Patel) farmers from Samio and villages around who were impacted by the same electric lines. The event was organised by the BKS. (Photo by author)

Indeed, this protest was precisely about Patels, it was mobilising around the farmer's identity, the ownership of land and around very consensual and even highly BJP-compatible slogans: '*Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan'* ('Hail the soldier, Hail the farmer'), '*Bharat Mata Ki Jai'* ('Long Live Mother India') were chanted during the highway blockade. Ramji *bhai* made it clear that this struggle was about defending the land, fighting against its degradation and devaluation by the proposed line[32] and a potential loss of Patel's landowner social status:

> 'We will give everything to stop the arrival of these lines in Samio, whatever it costs us, but we will not let these lines come on our lands. We will protect our lands and the Patel *samaj* at all costs'(Ibid.).

How did (landless) Dalits from Samio and nearby villages relate to this specific fight? Veru, a village situated only few kilometres from Samio, was impacted by the same exact transmission line, with the noticeable difference that the line was not crossing any private farming land, but *gauchar*. Veru is only populated by Dalits, which is not the case of Samio. For this reason, villagers sought the support of the Rasthriya Dalit Adhikar Manch (RDAM) instead of the BKS or the RSS. The RDAM is an organisation founded in 2017 by Jignesh Mevani, a renowned social activist, former journalist and now MLA of Vadgam constituency, who has been fighting caste atrocities and violence and advocating for land redistribution reforms. In Samio, leaders from the resistance movement and particularly those affiliated to the BKS and the RSS did not want to get affiliated to the RDAM. According to the RDAM activists I met several days after the highway blockade conducted in March 2021, they had been directly asked by the Samio Patel leadership and people from BKS and RSS to go at the back of the protest and asked not to appear on the stage. The Patel leadership, and behind it the BKS and RSS, certainly did not want their movement to be affiliated to Dalits and their struggles, to a movement that has been historically anti-Hindutva, anti-BJP and anti-RSS.

This process of depoliticisation and silencing of more critical voices among the *andolan* was a crucial element in the involvement of the BKS and the RSS. Representatives of these two

[32] The implementation of these lines would have considerably limited the maximum size of crops a farmer can grow to five meters, rendered impossible to put any borewell within 50m of the tower and forbidden any conversion to Non-Agricultural purposes, hence a devaluation of land as alleged by farmers.

organisations involved in the protest denied any 'activism', any strong opposition in their actions to the government, the BJP or even to wind electricity:

> '*We are not activists* [emphasis added], we are not against the government, this is our government, we don't want to make any harm to it (*hamari sarkar hai, hamko sarkar ka nuksan nahi karna hai*). We are not against wind power or the companies, we need green and wind energy, everyone needs electricity nowadays, every sector more than ever. Our only demand to the company and the DC is to put their lines somewhere else, not on our agricultural lands', said this representative of the RSS who was punctually involved in Samio protest against transmission lines (Interview, 05.04.2021).

Indeed, they made the struggles compatible with the BJP and its agenda in Gujarat, pointing to the fact that the only real problem in wind turbines electricity and transmission lines implementation was the non-compliance of government's existing regulations. Relying on a hegemonic inter-caste unity narrative and mobilising broad environmental arguments of protecting the village's land and 'jungle' from degradation and devaluation ('defend Kutch's land and jungle' or *Kutch ki zameen or jungle ko bachao*), resistance leaders from Samio have been marginalising and silencing more subversive, critical, and dissenting voices within the movement. As in other cases of struggles against dispossession (Li 2003; Chhotray 2016; Noy 2022), class/ caste dynamics have been subsumed and diluted within a larger narrative of united resistance that unanimously portrayed vague categories of 'farmers' or 'villagers' opposing wind energy and public transmission companies. This means that critical struggles around land redistribution, caste-based oppressions and overall caste/ class contradictions (between Patel landowners and landless Dalits for example) got marginalised within public discourse (Whitehead 2007).

8.5 Social and Political (Re)configurations in the Village: Processes of Class and Power Differentiation

Although the cases discussed above have different caste configurations, the presence/ absence of a strong leadership and different political reactions deployed to counter wind turbines, I saw similar processes of class and power differentiation emerging. As I argue below, certain individuals and social groups benefited from the arrival of wind turbines either by opposing (ROW) and/ or negotiating, they built a name and a reputation out of their opposition/ support to wind turbines and converted it to other forms of capital. In the three case studies discussed here, processes of class and power differentiation, coupled with inter and intra-caste

competition, unfolded in different ways and generated unexpected outcomes, for example the loss of a *sarpanch* seat. These processes have either contested or consolidated the existing (unbalanced) equilibrium and social organisation regarding crucial collective decisions that prevailed before the arrival of wind turbines.

8.5.1 Power Differentiation and Leadership

The arrival of wind turbines in rural Kutch does affect existing political leadership and the figure of the leader, the '*neta'* or the '*mukhiya'*. Indeed, when companies' cars and cranes enter villages, certain individuals, usually already enjoying power through land ownership, caste status or political mandate, are pushed under the spotlight as they decide to oppose or support wind projects. In the meantime, they either raise slowly to the position of new leaders in the village, or if they already sit on the *mukhiya*'s metaphorical chair, they make sure that the arrival of companies will consolidate their position.

In Samio, villagers did not cast any votes for the *sarpanch* election in December 2021. In a surprising move, Mankar *bhai* Patel, the leader of the anti-wind *andolan*, was the only one to fill an application form at the *taluka panchayat* and Ramu *bhai*, the Dalit *sarpanch* for the past five years, suddenly lost his seat. This political reshuffle was very much the outcome of two years of protest led by a Patel leadership that became predominant in the village politics. According to the official version, the final decision to elect Mankar *bhai* was collective, unanimous, and following the same inter-caste unity forged during the struggle. Certain Dalit informants even argued that it made sense to elect Mankar because the Patels had been overall more implicated and engaged in the struggle, particularly as they paid the fees related to the judicial case. This election to the *sarpanch* position, two years after the protest against wind turbines started in Samio, reveals important power reconfigurations at play. Mankar *bhai* Patel has been able to convert the name and reputation he built during the resistance movement into a political leadership over the whole village. Relying on the same inter-caste alliance discourse of unity that was mobilised during the *andolan*, he has been able to convert this into a new form of political capital and get elected as *sarpanch* without any contest or challenge even though Patels are far from constituting a majority in the village. Rumours were saying that Mankar *bhai* Patel would not stop at the *sarpanch* seat. He had built a name and a good reputation in the *tehsil* and the whole district, via his brotherly connections in the RSS and the BKS, and he was now eagerly waiting for a BJP ticket in the next elections.

In Haroma, the money and job redistribution system discussed in section 8.3.2 was also not a neutral gesture initiated by the leader, Hassan *bhai*. It was a calculated move aimed at growing new patronage and dependency relations with his fellow villagers, buying the support of the majority with wind extraction related money and, growing on the same occasion his own economic capital (via all the commissions on land transactions, ROW and CSR funds).

The way Hassan handled unhappy villagers in the case of wind projects (making ROW for them) and ensured a minimum redistribution of money and job to the rest of the village, this has considerably strengthened and consolidated his stronghold and his position of '*neta*' over caste (Mandra) and village (Haroma) fellows. With the arrival of wind turbines and his conversion to BJP, Hassan *bhai* appeared as a young, modern, and successful leader. For this, he wanted to learn English in order to 'better negotiate with companies' representatives' and asked me to bring him an English learning book as I flew back to Delhi for the Diwali break. On the other hand, Haroma villagers have become even more dependent on Hassan *bhai's* will to do ROW, obtain a better compensation, a job or simply their salaries back. If Hassan *bhai* and his close family circles certainly benefitted much more from the arrival of wind turbines and companies than others, I never found any critical voice contesting Hassan *bhai's* leadership and his handling of wind turbines and companies. 'The accumulation of particular forms of political power through the arrival of [wind turbines] has allowed [Hassan] to establish exclusive political dominance, partly in reality and perhaps more so in villagers' perception' (Noy 2022, 71), as people in Haroma would now refer to him as the 'King of Mandra'.

8.5.2 Class Differentiation and New Caste Equilibriums

Wind power undoubtedly fostered important inter-caste competition in villages of Kutch, but it also instigated an intra-caste competition, between important families, and consolidated an already on-going process of class differentiation. This process, coupled to the power differentiation and leadership issue discussed in the previous section, generated new caste equilibriums, where existing balances of power and prestige got reconfigured.

In Pamori, not everyone had benefited from the arrival of wind turbines among Rajputs, because not everyone possessed the same amount of economic, political, and social capital. Class formation was already taking place in Pamori for a long time: there was indeed a small number of Rajput households who were completely landless and who occupied agricultural labourer positions within the village, on more well-off caste fellows' lands, or informal wage labourer jobs in nearby cities. Because they lacked the contacts, network, and influence within

their caste and in the village, they could not benefit from the arrival of wind turbines or even conduct ROW by themselves. On the other hand, Vijayrajsinh, his two brothers and his extended family circle were the main beneficiaries of the wind turbines' arrival (as argued in chapter 6), not only because they enjoyed a more important social capital and connections that cruelly lacked to their less-off caste fellows (proximity with the *sarpanch*, BJP and RSS-related organisations networks, with companies' staff and contractors in Lakhpat and Nakhatrana *tehsil*), but also because they already owned more land (the three brothers owned 12 hectares each, against an average of 7.4 hectares per Rajput household) and more cattle (50 cows and buffalos, against an average of 8 per Rajput household). The arrival of wind turbines, and its jobs, contracts and money reinforced the class antagonism between the highest and the lower tiers of the Rajput caste in Pamori, creating jealousy, frustration and bitterness among those left behind: after a year of security guard jobs, transmission line contracts and commissions in land transactions, Vijayrajsinh and his two older brothers were able to buy new cars, buy more cattle and more land, and to rebuild and refurnish the part of the house that was dedicated to hosting guests and parties, including fancy sofas, plasma screens, an American fridge and two ACs.

On the other side of the village, I attended the intra-caste Dalit meeting that took place in November 2021 to select their common candidate for the *sarpanch* election, and it was clear that Dalits wanted to exploit and to capitalise on this internal Rajput division to reverse the situation in their favour. Vimo, whose father was the previous *sarpanch* five years ago during Dalit's turn, now wanted to become the next *sarpanch* and by extension the next companies' broker. He obtained the endorsement of other Dalit fellows to fight for the *sarpanch* election. For the first time, Dalits of Pamori had the opportunity to take their revenge. They had the opportunity to use the arrival of wind turbines to their advantage, to exploit the class differentiation between Rajputs that wind turbines had consolidated, and potentially, to reverse the situation where Rajputs had monopolised all benefits in terms of jobs and compensation. Indeed, Pamori had always been presented to me as a 'Rajputs' village' even though the majority of households was composed of Dalits as suggested by my survey. This was the chance to turn this 'village of Rajputs' into a 'village of Dalits', and by extension reconfigure the prevailing caste equilibrium. I called my informants in the village late December 2021 to know the result of the election: the Rajput-Patel unity against the Dalit candidate did not prevent Vimo to win, and according to Vijayrajsinh Jadeja, it happened because 'some of the poor Rajput and Patel have accepted money from Dalits and decided to vote for their candidate'

(Discussion over phone, 22.12.21). For Vimo on the contrary, this victory was a clear revenge over Rajputs who 'had eaten a lot of companies' money' and now it was 'our turn to fill our pockets' (Discussion over phone, 22.12.21).

In Samio, Patels and Mankar *bhai* were able to strengthen their leadership in the village, but mostly at the expense of Dalits, who got marginalised as they lost the prestigious *sarpanch* seat and became subjected to more suspicion and scrutiny from the two other castes. Indeed, there were important rumours circulating in the village that Dalit individuals had decided to join hands with companies and accept small contracts. Visiting the village from January to December 2021, meeting the same informants over and over for a year, I observed myself that certain villagers had slowly changed sides, evolved their discourse regarding wind and companies and gradually moved from a strong opposition position to a more compromise posture vis-à-vis companies' money and contracts. This was the result of companies' own strategy to divide the unity, exploit the flaws within the resistance alliance and the socio-economic vulnerability of Dalits with money. Vogesh, my main Dalit informant, was among the targeted villagers. He confessed to me after several weeks having accepted with three other caste fellows a contract from a wind company to install electricity lines and poles in the village. This 'changing of side' from people around Vogesh's entourage casted heavy doubts, suspicion, and scrutiny over all the Dalits in the village. They had to show clean hands, reaffirm their loyalty towards the resistance movement and its (Patel) leadership and openly distance themselves with those who had joined hands with companies.

Vogesh and other Dalit informants analysed the election of Mankar *bhai* as a pure strategic move to marginalise the Dalits in the village, and reconfigure a new caste equilibrium in favour of Patels and part of the Rabaris:

> 'Patels understood that this was their best opportunity to take over the *sarpanch* seat, although they are the smallest caste in the village. So, they have decided to put Mankar *bhai* in front, using his reputation in the *andolan* and allying with half of the Rabaris, they have left us, Dalits, in the back' (Discussion with Vogesh, 07.12.2021).

Conclusion

This chapter aimed at contributing to the notion of a political 'terrain of resistance' (Routledge 1993, 1996). Drawing on original empirical research, I emphasised the permeability of this political terrain to the materiality of dispossessive projects and to local configurations of power and domination. Contributing to Scott's understanding (1985, 1989), I also demonstrated that, if power undoubtedly shapes resistance (towards certain practices, discourses, and possibilities), resistance also shapes power in return, by ways of consolidating, strengthening, or contesting established forms of domination.

I developed the following main argument: the assemblage nature of wind electricity has diluted and dispersed the 'terrain of resistance' towards individual-level actions aimed at negotiating dispossession rather than truly opposing it, while certain social configurations of power and caste scenarios have rendered the emergence of collective resistance movements possible, up to a certain point. This argument was empirically deployed with three village case studies, Pamori, Haroma and Samio villages.

The cases discussed in this chapter provide three different trajectories and configurations of power and resistance that, put together, constitute a complex and nuanced field or 'terrain of resistance': wind turbines have triggered intense inter and intra-caste competition among villagers of Pamori as the dominant group of Rajputs decided to accommodate their arrival and monopolise the benefits. These internal struggles have at the same time completed a process of class differentiation between well-off and less privileged Rajput households, opening up a potential new reconfiguration of existing caste equilibrium and new opportunities for Dalits; In the context of single-caste village and the presence of a strong and charismatic leader, villagers from Haroma have been left with no other choice than following Hassan *bhai* in its decision to accommodate wind turbines and grow new political patronage; Samio presents all the characteristics of an open and collective fight against the arrival of wind turbines, as villagers from all castes united to defend their land, but I have demonstrated here that it was far from being emancipatory and inclusive. The movement was framed and shaped by Patel caste-based networks and Hindu nationalist organisations that voluntarily silenced more critical voices and transformed the resistance leadership into an exclusive political leadership over the village.

I have also argued that there were common patterns of social and political reconfiguration at play, with processes of power and class differentiation spanning across the three cases. If some

people had certainly benefitted from openly joining the wind assemblage and supporting companies in their projects, the same could be said for those who openly or more subtly opposed (temporarily or permanently) the wind turbines. They usually made a name and a reputation out of a successful resistance movement that they could later mobilise for diverse capital accumulation, and/ or they found a comfortable position of broker and joined the ranks of the wind assemblage. In the meantime, all the subordinates, who did not have the capital, the leadership, the network and a dominant social status to resist or negotiate the arrival of wind turbines, continued to be dominated, oppressed and exploited by superordinate groups.

Overall, this chapter constitutes an important contribution to the discussion on resistance, domination and power laid out in chapter 1: while emphasising the everyday nature of resistance, its diversity of practices and discourses and its unequivocal relation with domination (Scott 1992), I also demonstrated the risk of adopting a linear, mechanical and vertical understating of domination and resistance, and rather I tried to emphasise the nuances and complexities in what is otherwise a negotiated relationship situated in a certain social space (Johansson and Vinthagen 2019). Deploying a class and caste analysis of political reactions to resource conflicts in rural agrarian contexts (Li 2003; Chhotray 2016; Noy 2022), my findings confirm that the possibilities of exercising agency for the subordinates are constrained by power configurations and differentiations and the materiality of dispossessive projects.

This chapter is unambiguously positioned in the overall argument of the thesis and comes after three empirical chapters that explored different theoretical tracks. Chapter 5 was interested in the initial roll-out phase of the 'green' extractive frontier in Western Kutch, and its underlying shifting value and property regimes through wind territorialisation practices of erasure and dispossession. Chapter 6 argued that the wind extraction assemblage and its specific brokerage of land re-organised important socio-political relations on which institutions like the state and categories of power (like caste and class) were built, at the advantage of brokers and companies. Chapter 7 emphasised the intrinsic compatibility of 'clean' energy infrastructures or the 'green' frontier with exclusionary and racialised citizenship and security regimes that have been at the core of the 'saffron' ethno-nationalist frontier aimed at remaking India's nation, borders and state along a Hindu cultural identity. Chapter 8 analysed the different political reactions after the arrival of wind turbines as forming a complex political 'terrain of resistance' shaped by the materiality of the wind assemblage and the social configurations of power that consecrated the importance of caste and class in defining who could fight and who could not.

Conclusion

This thesis is an ethnography of the socio-political transformations and territorial reconfigurations of rural Kutch at a time of climate crisis, liberalisation, and ethno-nationalism. It examines how the rollout of wind electricity extraction projects produced the unmapping and remapping of land, as the latter navigates through different value and property regimes and is prone to new forms of authority and territorial control. Wind electricity projects also triggered the reconfiguration of local power relations and state boundaries. The thesis explores the racialised citizenship and security regimes enforced by the merging of wind infrastructures and borders around discourses of loyalty, cultural identity revivalism and boundary-making vis-à-vis the 'other' (both 'outsider' and 'insider'). It investigates the political contention and reactions produced by these reconfigurations at village levels, as the political agency of social groups and individuals facing wind energy dispossession is expressed both through caste and class.

The thesis fulfils several objectives. It attempts to understand the transformations of the Indian state and its current trajectory towards unbridled liberalisation, authoritarianism and institutionalised Hindu nationalism from the perspective of climate mitigation projects and 'green' energy politics (wind infrastructures) implemented in its margins, on the borders of the nation-state. These projects tell us something significant about the reconfiguration of territory, state's boundaries, power differentiation, citizenship, and agency. Then, it aims to provide insights into these reconfigurations and transformations by emphasising the importance of the materiality of energy (infrastructures), the materiality of land and the local configurations of social power in creating different dialectics of dispossession, control and surveillance and of resistance and political reactions. This, in turn, reveals problematic socio-political outcomes generated by ostensibly post-carbon energy regimes (renewables), particularly in the context of a 'saffronised' India's borderland.

With these imperatives in mind, chapter 1 sets out the theoretical framework and interrogations that guide this investigation. I suggest understanding the rollout of wind infrastructures in borderland India as another wave of frontier-making and territorialisation, that assembles and disassembles land for capital accumulation, but also for ethno-nationalist cultural identity revivalism and boundary-making expressed through border infrastructures and their specific governmental powers. I contend that the making and unmaking of land in extractive contexts

have to do with the brokerage of the state and reveal local forms of accumulation and power expressed through caste and class. Finally, I engage with interactions between resistance, domination and power through their everyday dimensions as articulated through vertical as well as horizontal power relations.

Chapters 2 and 3 situate the thesis within the long history of transitions that the Indian state has experienced since independence and in its complex relationship with borderland regions like Kutch, while Chapter 4 is about methodology, research design and positionality.

Chapters 5 to 8 are empirical chapters drawing on data collected in rural Kutch. They move from discussions about the rolling out of the wind extraction frontier and the new value and property regimes enfolded, the brokerage of land and the reconfigurations of state boundaries and power relations, to the making of border infrastructures aimed at controlling Muslim populations and building a Hindu territory and the political reactions to energy dispossession. What spans these different empirical chapters, and their findings, is the materiality of energy infrastructures, the materiality of land and the local structures and hierarchies of social power. Put together, these materialities and local structures shape certain dialectics of dispossession and erasure (discussed in chapter 5) that create a need for enforcers and mediators of extraction projects (chapter 6), they mould certain dialectics of control and surveillance (chapter 7) and dialectics of resistance and political reactions (chapter 8). These chapters also emphasise salient features of India's political economy that are expressed here through its margins: the making and unmaking of space and territory for capital accumulation and its value and production regime, the reconfiguration of state boundaries and mimicry of its clientelist and political practices by private agents, the enforcement of a racialised citizenship and security regime for borderland Muslim populations and the redefinition of space and history as Hindu, the prevalence of caste and class in exercising political agency. These features have been documented in other contexts of India's political economy (Levien 2018; Nielsen 2018; Kikon 2019; Sud 2021), and constituted the main winds of change I observed in my fieldwork.

The following sections constitute the conclusion of the thesis. They reflect on the major themes and contributions of this thesis and provide insights on the politics of energy and the politics of identity and nationalism in contemporary India. Section 1 recaptures the overall arguments made in the thesis, while section 2 states the thesis' scholarly contribution to the existing literature and to the current Indian political scenario. A final section discusses the work's limitations and the implications for further research.

1. The Overall Argument of the Thesis

This thesis has argued that understanding the socio-political transformations and territorial reconfigurations operated by the arrival of wind extraction projects in a rural agrarian borderland of India requires us to look both in, around and beyond wind turbines sites. The empirical chapters offered different ways of looking at wind extraction and its political outcomes, either from the perspective of construction sites, companies or local state offices, tea stalls or Xerox offices, the village or the field. Overall, the thesis shows that we can understand structural changes happening at the centre of the Indian state, particularly its relations with capital expansion, ethno-nationalist definition of the nation and citizenship and with local structures of power, from processes taking place within its margins and borders. This was developed around four arguments.

The socio-political history of Kutch since independence (discussed in chapter 3) confirms Tsing's argument that the frontier is a 'traveling theory' (2003, 2005): it advances through several waves aimed at exploiting resources and producing value. I have argued that the discovery and extraction of wind resource materials in rural Kutch is following this trajectory of frontier-making and is expanding the frontier towards 'green' energy production. Chapter 5 substantially detailed the rolling out phase of this new frontier, through discourses of 'waste' (Gidwani 2008), state and companies' 'inscription devices' (Li 2014) and technologies of erasure that emptied Kutch of its people and vegetation. As new actors laid hands on the land, reconfigured wind territorialities emerged, in other words new political technologies of rule aimed at re-ordering space and territory for the sake of wind extraction (Elden 2013). These findings align with the discussion on assembling and disassembling land as a resource for capital accumulation and state authority (Li 2014; Sud 2020a, 2021; Levien 2018). I expose specifically how the materiality of wind energy infrastructures enfolded a specific relation to land and produced renewed dialectics of dispossession and enclosure. But contrary to other findings (Levien 2018; Sud 2021), I argue that expanding the wind extraction frontier did not value land *per se* and was rather accompanied by the expansion of the 'waste frontier'(Lilley 2011; Moore 2015): a field of ruins and 'waste', carved out of the destruction and under(/de)-valuation of Kutch's lands, allowed wind companies to justify their arrival in Kutch and their expansion towards new areas. As suggested by other scholars (Sikor and Lund 2009; Peluso and Lund 2011), such dynamics allow private agents to brutally redefine property-making, authority-building and boundaries of legality and illegality, public and private, violence and law.

The state is a project in-the-making, largely influenced and affected by external processes (Abrams 1988), particularly at its margins (Das and Poole 2004). Within this discussion, I concretely emphasised that the state is channelled through the brokerage of land, the materiality of energy infrastructures and the configuration of power in agrarian settings. Following others (Levien 2018; Sud 2021), chapter 6 offers additional evidence that state-making in India is tied up with land making and unmaking. I have specifically argued that the materiality of wind energy infrastructures has given renewed relevance to traditional brokerage activities around land and entrenched the dependency of resource extractors on brokers and mediators as a whole: these actors are in a position to extend the boundaries of state towards new spaces, practices and actors, they perform governmental work themselves and fit energy infrastructures in the landscape of caste/ class, money, muscle power and party politics. This argument contributes to the literature that sees brokerage and mediation not as mere 'facilitation' or 'transmission belt' but rather as a long-established lens through which we can understand state-society relationship (Bierschenk et al. 2002; Lund 1999; Sud 2014b; Levien 2015).

Wind turbine infrastructures are not just wind turbines. As in other cases (Boyer 2019; Thomas 2021; Lesutis 2021), I argue in chapter 7 that infrastructures are instruments and technologies of control, power and domination fitted for certain populations when deployed in certain configurations. In a context of nationalist tensions and 'cartographic anxieties' because of potential 'competing' loyalties of Indian Muslims vis-à-vis the nation (Krishna 1994), wind turbines and their set of actors, roads, vehicles, and machines are here to racialise and differentiate between the 'loyal' and 'trustful' citizen (upper-caste Hindu or Sikh) and the 'untrustworthy' and 'disloyal' subject (pastoral Muslim). They are here to reassert national borders and boundaries of 'insider' and 'outsider'. This political nature of infrastructure renders the 'green' extraction frontier highly compatible with racialised citizenship and security regimes that were enrolled after independence for borderland Muslim populations and now constitute the core of Hindu ethno-nationalist movements in India (Jayal 2013; Ibrahim 2021). My argument is a concrete illustration of the 'saffronisation' and Hinduisation of public space, territory and history that have been analysed for the past 30 years as a tool to revive an imagined 'golden' age and enforce a strict separation with the 'other' (Jaffrelot 1996, 2021; Hansen 1999; Hansen and Roy 2022). Wind turbines' expansion over borderland areas that are simultaneously coveted by the BJP also reveals the use of political practices of integration and co-optation specifically designed for 'recalcitrant peripher[ies]' (Anderson and Longkumer 2018).

Power undoubtedly shapes resistance, but resistance also shapes power in return. This is a central argument of this thesis. Relying on three village case studies and other resistance movements against wind turbines in central Kutch, chapter 8 contends that the political terrain where agency, dissent and resistance are exercised is largely permeable to the materiality of dispossessive projects and the local configurations of power relations. Following Sud (2021), Nielsen (2018) and Jenkins et al. (2014), my findings confirm that the materiality of dispossessive projects (Special Economic Zones, dams, industrial or wind infrastructural projects) does influence, constrain or even dilute resistance in certain ways. In my case, the assemblage nature of wind electricity has diluted and dispersed the 'terrain of resistance' imagined by Routledge (1993) towards individual-level actions aimed at negotiating dispossession rather than truly opposing it. Although collective resistance movements existed and mobilised counter-discourses of valued pastoral and agrarian lives, they were not immune to processes of exclusion and marginalisation of more vulnerable and subordinated groups (Dalits). Analysing cases with different caste configurations, the absence/ presence of a strong leadership and different political reactions, I argued nonetheless that similar processes of class and power differentiation enfolded, as not everyone was in a capacity to resist or negotiate the arrival of wind turbines. These arguments confirm what other scholars have pointed out in rural agrarian contexts and situation of resource conflicts: political agency of the subordinate is constrained by power configurations and differentiations and the materiality of dispossession (Li 2003; Chhotray 2016; Noy 2022).

2. Contributions

This thesis offered several contributions to energy politics, the expansion of the capitalist frontier and its entanglement with ethno-nationalism and authoritarianism, the 'casteisation' of politics and resistance movements. Overall, I situate this work as a contribution to the recent evolutions and trajectories of the Indian state and the larger political economy of development in India.

I engaged here with the work of Boyer (2019) and Mitchell (2013) who see energy regimes as enabling and disabling certain political configurations, representations and expectations over time: I analysed in this dissertation how the material and infrastructural dimensions of the renewable energy regime in rural borderland Kutch have been exerting important influence over political, social and economic systems by empowering a new set of actors, creating new expectations and desires and shaping processes of power reconfiguration. This contributes to

our understanding of how post-carbon energy regimes may look like in the future. The specific case of Kutch constitutes an empirical picture of what a decarbonised world will look like and augurs future energy transition pathways that are insensible for now to questions of democracy, inclusion, justice, and emancipation. In that sense, the world of wind turbines, wires, cables, towers and cranes strikingly resemble the world of industrial age and fossil fuel extraction.

The thesis' argument also adds an important contribution to the recent expansion of the capitalist frontier via 'green' energy infrastructures (Dunlap 2019a; Del Bene, Scheidel, and Temper 2018; Sellwood and Valdivia 2018). I specifically expose new tensions and frictions when the frontier meets the territory. This feeds an important discussion on energy transition and climate crisis as opening up a new political momentum for accumulating capital on a more socially and environmentally sound basis (McCarthy 2015). This is an opportunity to redefine value and property regimes, reorganise state functioning and assert authority and territorial control of private actors over space, resources and populations. I also contribute to the cyclical understanding of frontier dynamics and related territorialisations and reaffirm that they are 'equally provisory and often arrested when new resources prompt another frontier' (Rasmussen and Lund 2018, 390): the wind extraction frontier in Kutch comes after an agrarian frontier in the 1960s and an industrial frontier post-2001. I contribute to the understanding of ethno-nationalism as a frontier that runs parallel to the capitalist frontier and enfolds processes of (re)territorialisation, as it equally reconfigures and re-orders space, resources, and populations but according to an imagined homogeneous cultural identity and the strong enforcement of boundary-making (Smith 1986; Smooha 2002; Jaffrelot 2021). I contend that capitalist and ethno-nationalist frontiers meet even more tellingly at the space of the infrastructure and the border, where they produce violent regimes of governing and citizenship that racialise, differentiate, value and devalue human conducts, include and exclude populations. This is reflecting a global dynamic, the rise of an 'authoritarian fix' within neoliberal capitalism as a way to remove all remaining barriers to accumulation and resolve its structural crisis tendency (Bruff 2014). All around the world, we see the emergence of national-populist leaders who promise the restoration of a social conservative status quo via violent modes of consent manufacturing in face of multiple crises and political contestation (Sinha 2021). I situate the development of wind energy turbines in borderland India within this trend of authoritarian crisis resolution under neoliberal capitalism.

This thesis is also a direct contribution to the increasing 'casteisation' of political life in India (Chhotray 2011), and particularly of resistance, dissent and contentious politics. Castes and

religion have become central transmission belts to approach, contest or negotiate the state and its extractive projects. In a context of intense dissent politics and resistance in India and after movements such as the *Narmada Bachao Andolan* (Nilsen 2010) or the *Kisan Andolan* in 2020-2021 (Moliner and Singh forthcoming), the cases of resistance movements discussed in this thesis emphasise how important it is to consider international divisions, vertical and horizontal structures of domination and power as prevalent in struggles over resources (Li 2003). In that sense, my intervention follows other valuable research that have been exploring the political dimensions and outcomes of resistance movements and how they are infused by power of class, caste and gender (Jenkins, Kennedy, and Mukhopadhyay 2014; Chhotray 2016; Nielsen 2018; Noy 2022). Rather than essentialising unified peasant resistance against wind turbines, I expose the reactionary dimensions of resistance and its alignment with the interests of upper-caste and upper-class social groups. This is a contribution to Scott's vertical understanding of domination and resistance (1985, 1992) and more generally to the field of resistance studies as I emphasise the intertwined relation between the materiality of resistance, the materiality of energy infrastructures and the local configurations of power.

Finally, I position this thesis in relation to the recent evolutions of the Indian state happening at the centre. My findings point out that political practices of patronage and clientelism, which have been mostly restricted to understanding the politics of welfare and electoral democracy in India (Chandra 2004), now also extend to the negotiation of extractive projects, land politics and even the mimicry of governmental work. The state gets disaggregated to new actors and new spheres of the society, this argument contributes to the literature on the making of the Indian post-colonial state (Gupta 1995; Das 1998; Kaviraj 2010; Chatterjee 2010). I also situate my findings in connection with India's political trajectory towards increased authoritarianism, institutionalised Hindu nationalism and the rise of an 'ethnic democracy' (Jaffrelot 2021; Hansen and Roy 2022): I show how energy and environmental politics in the form of wind infrastructures have been re-appropriated and hijacked by a conservative and repressive political movement. The site of the border and the infrastructure have become playgrounds for the redefinition of the nation's contours along a unified Hindu cultural identity, as much as political centres of the state. I engage with the compulsions of the 'vibrant' Gujarat model and Modi's heritage who is now trying to become a 'green' champion, after winning the uncontested title of 'saffron' champion or *Hindu Hriday Samrat* (Sud 2012; Jaffrelot 2016). Specifically, I describe what the environmental and climate politics of an ethno-nationalist and 'saffron' government may look like. This picture unfortunately does not augur encouraging

political outcomes for the future of India’s energy transition and democracy under Modi’s neoliberal, authoritarian and ethno-nationalist regime.

3. Limits and Implications for Further Research

I acknowledge that this thesis has limitations. I try to address them below and draw implications for further research.

First of all, my fieldwork and approach adopted for this investigation are of limited scope. I limit myself to a single district in Gujarat, Kutch, and to two particular *tehsils*, Nakhatrana and Lakhpat. My investigation is about the local implications of wind turbines’ arrival in terms of socio-political transformations and territorial reconfigurations, it engages marginally with the national and international scales. This approach might raise legitimate questions about the generalisation of my arguments. I need to first remind the reader that this research was conducted in the middle of a global pandemic in 2020-2021, with successive lockdowns and important restrictions to move to India. This situation highly compromised the possibility to conduct multi-sited and multi-scaled fieldwork. Fieldwork was delayed by four months, and because of increasing restrictions on movements between federal states in India, I decided to spend most of my time in Kutch when I reached the field, rather than moving between Ahmedabad and Delhi for example. Regarding the generalisation question, I suggested in the thesis that processes and dynamics taking place in borderland Kutch with the arrival of the wind extraction frontier highlight structural transformations happening in other situations of agrarian change in India and South Asia. For this reason, the findings from my case study will resonate with other contexts where the expansion of the extractive frontier generates state reconfigurations, citizenship making and dissent politics (Kikon 2019; Berenschot and Dhiaulhaq forthcoming; Sarma, Faxon, and Roberts 2023).

Women are the main absentees in this study, and this reveals an important gender limitation. My informants were almost exclusively men. I spoke on rare occasions to women, either as elderly, kids or spouses/ sisters of my male informants. This pertains first to the organisation of the wind extraction industry: it is a business of men, and many tasks involved in wind turbines appeal to masculine attributes, be it for security purposes, machinery, construction work or even negotiating and brokering skills. This is a world of men, who either negotiate land deals and manufacture consent, undertake contractual work, drive companies’ cars and trucks or act as security guards. Women were kept outside of this world, and I never encountered any women on contractors’ camps, companies’ guesthouses or brokers’ offices.

Second, the Kutchi society is highly patriarchal, and the agrarian economy is mostly dominated by men: men own and control land, they cultivate and sell it, they take care of cattle grazing, while women are constrained to a role of labour reproduction through household work. Women are for most of the time invisible in everyday life and public space. I rarely encountered women chatting at tea stalls or roaming around spaces of power like revenue departments, police stations or wind companies' offices. They made rare appearances in the public space, never alone and mostly performing the role of a mother, daughter, wife or sister. For these reasons, it was more difficult to access women on the field and I acknowledge here the gender limitation of my work.

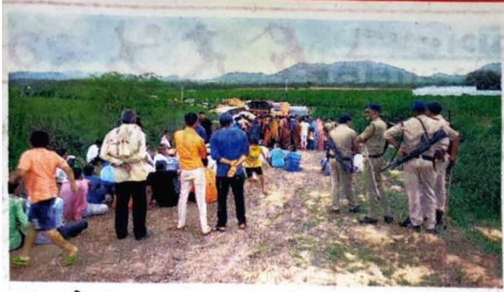
A final limitation pertains to the study object, it is difficult to study and analyse ongoing dynamics of frontier-making and territorialisation: wind turbines' expansion might evolve through different trajectories in the next couple of years, they might expand to new areas and foster unexplored outcomes, or they might as well be replaced by another resource frontier (I heard that important hydrogen gas projects are in the pipelines in Kutch). This reveals the difficulty and limitations of studying an object that evolves rapidly and might take unexpected or unanticipated turns. For these reasons, I acknowledge the limitation of the claims articulated in this thesis: they are space and time dependent, and largely open to challenge and question. But I also argued that this recent wave of wind extraction frontier in Kutch did not operate on its own or in isolated manner from previous waves of frontier-making, rather they are connected by a long history of territorial reconfigurations for capital accumulation, state-making and citizenship. It therefore becomes relevant to study contemporary and soon to be resource frontiers if we historicise them and trace their origins and long-term trajectories.

These observations have important implications for further research. As the energy transition is only in its premises and the Northern-imposed consensus around 'green' growth is becoming hegemonic in policymaking and finance, once can expect renewable extraction projects and related infrastructures to flourish and proliferate in the coming decades, particularly in marginal and peripheral areas of the global South. It therefore becomes indispensable to develop a critical analysis of 'green' extraction projects from the lens of political ecology, human geography and critical agrarian studies: more qualitative research on the resistance practices and political reactions to renewable energy infrastructures is needed and how they might advance or not just transition pathways, possibly with a geographical comparison (North-South or South-South) or extractive regimes comparison (the coal-renewable nexus for example). We also crucially need to advance research exploring the soon-to-be resource frontiers that emerge

at the juncture of ‘green’ extraction, militarised regimes and ethno-nationalism, particularly given the current political scenario in India: the recent discovery of lithium reserves in the Indian occupied state of Jammu and Kashmir in February 2023 augurs for example - lucrative outcomes and worldwide implications for electric vehicles, energy transition or the dependency vis-à-vis China for the manufacturing of batteries. Yet, this discovery will also enfold disruptive socio-political, environmental, and spatial reconfigurations in an already authoritarian and militarised landscape. This constitutes an important agenda for future research.

Appendices

Article 1



વૃક્ષ-ગૌચર બચાવવા ગ્રામજનો લડી લેવા કટિબદ્ધ

સાંગનારા સીમાડામાં ફરી બબાલ

વિથોણ (તા. નખત્રાણા), તા. ૨૨ : સાંગનારા ગામ અને પવનચક્કીની કંપની સાથેનો વિવાદ હવે વધુ વકરી રહ્યો છે. ગઇકાલે ઢળતી સાંજે કંપનીવાળા પોતાનાં વાહનો સાથે પવનચક્કી ઊભી કરવા સીમાડામાં પ્રવેશે તે પૂર્વે ગ્રામજનોએ નાકાબંધી કરી વાહનોને રોકી દીધાં હતાં. સ્થળ ઉપર લાંબી ચર્ચાઓ ચાલી, મામલો તૂ તૂ મૈં મૈં સુધી પહોંચી ગયો હતો. સદ્દ્ભાગ્યે કોઇ ટકરાવ થયો નહોતો.

મંગળવારે સાંજે કંપનીવાળા પોતાનાં સાત વાહન, બે હિટાચી મશીન, ત્રણ ટ્રક તેમજ એસઆરપીના જવાનોની એક બસ તથા ગાડી તેમજ પોલીસ કાફલા સાથે આવી પહોંચતાં સાંગનારા અડધું ગામ માર્ગ પર એકત્ર થઇ ગયું હતું અને રસ્તા પર રીતસર નાકાબંધી કરી નાખી હતી, આથી બબાલ સર્જાઇ હતી અને આ ઘટનાક્રમ રાતના દશ વાગ્યા સુધી ચાલ્યો હતો. જો કે, વાત તૂ તૂ-મૈં મૈં સુધી પહોંચી હતી અને વધુ ટકરાવ થયો નહોતો.

પવનચક્કીવાળા મશીનરી લઇને આવતાં ગ્રામજનોએ નાકાબંધી કરી : તૂ તૂ-મૈં મૈં થઇ

જ્યાં પવનચક્કી ઊભી કરવાની છે તે જમીન ગૌચર છે તેવું સાંગનારા ગામના લોકો કહે છે, જ્યારે સુઝલોન કંપનીવાળા અને તંત્રના અમલદારો ડી.એલ.આર.ના નકશા સાથે રાખીને જમીન સીમતળમાં હોવાનો દાવો કરે છે. ગામના અગ્રણીઓનો આક્ષેપ છે કે ખોટા ૭/૧૨ કાઢીને કંપનીવાળા ગામલોકો ઉપર દાદાગીરી કરે છે અને અસલ નકશા સાથે છેડછાડ કરીને પવનચક્કી ઊભી કરવા માગે છે.

તંત્રના એકતરફી વલણથી ગામલોકો ખફા હોવાના આક્ષેપ સાથે જણાવે છે કે, વિવાદવાળી જગ્યા ૧૯૮૮ ગૌચર નીમ થયેલી છે. પવનચક્કીઓ માટે ૨૦૧૫માં જમીન ફાળવવામાં આવી છે, પરંતુ જૂના નકશા મુજબ તે જમીન ગૌચર છે. ૨૦૧૭માં પ્રમોલગેશન પ્રમાણે બહાર આવે છે. ગામલોકો કહે છે કે જો ૨૦૧૫માં જમન મળી હોય તો ૧૯૮૮નો નકશો સાચો ગણાય છે.

સાંગનારા ગામમાં કુલ ૪૦ પવનચક્કી ઊભી કરવાની મંજૂરી સરકારે આપી છે, જેનાથી ગામની વનસંપદા નષ્ટ થઇ જશે અને પશુઓનું ચરિયાણ નાશ થઇ જશે, તેનો ગામલોકો વિરોધ કરે છે. આવા ઉપકરણો આવવાથી ચારથી પાંચ હજાર વૃક્ષોનું નિકંદન નીકળી જશે. પર્યાવરણ બચાવવા ગામલોકો લાંબા સમયથી લડત ચલાવી રહ્યા છે અને વૃક્ષ તથા ગૌચર બચાવવા કટિબદ્ધ છે. જરૂર પડશે તો લોકો તંત્ર સમક્ષ અનશન અને ધરણાં પ્રદર્શન જેવા નિર્ણય લેતાં ખચકાશે નહીં, તેવું સરપંચ મંજુલાબેન જેપારે જણાવ્યું હતું.

Figure 18 Newspaper clipping. (Photo by author)

Translation

Villagers determined to fight to save trees and pastures. Another upheaval takes place at Sangnara border

Villagers blockade windmill developers bringing machinery: back and forth ensues

Vithon (District Nakhtrana) dated 22nd: The dispute between Sanganara village and the windmill company is now escalating. Yesterday evening, before company officials could enter the border with their vehicles to set up the windmill, the villagers blockaded and stopped the vehicles. A long discussion occurred at the site, and the matter had reached a back-and-forth. Fortunately, there were no clashes.

On Tuesday evening, when the company arrived with its seven vehicles, two Hitachi machines, and three trucks, along with a bus and a car of SRP (State Reserve Police) personnel and a police convoy, half the village of Sanganara gathered on the road and methodically blocked it. This caused upheaval and the incident went on till ten o'clock in the night. However, the matter reached a back-and-forth and there was no further confrontation.

The people of Sangnara village say that the land where the windmill is to be erected is a pasture, while Suzlon company officials and bureaucrats of the administration claim that the land is on the border according to the DLR (Department of Land Records) map. The village leaders allege that the company is intimidating the villagers by extracting the false 7/12 extracts (Record of Land Rights) and wants to erect a windmill by tampering with the original map.

The villagers, alleging that they are upset with the one-sided attitude of the administration, say that the disputed site had been named a pasture in 1988. The land was earmarked for windmills in 2015, but as per the old map, the land is a pasture, which falls out of the border as per a 2017 promulgation. The villagers say that if the land was found in 2015, then the 1988 map should be considered correct.

The government has granted permission to erect a total of 40 windmills in Sanganara village, destroying the forest resources of the village and the cattle grazing, which the villagers oppose. The arrival of such devices will destroy four to five thousand trees. The villagers have been fighting to save the environment for a long time and are determined to save the trees and pastures. Sarpanch Manjulaben Jepar said that if necessary, people will not hesitate to take decisions to hunger strike and demonstrate against the administration.

Article 2

કચ્છ ભાસ્કર 29-09-2021

પવનચક્કી સામે લડત ચલાવતા સાંગનારાને અન્ય ગામોનો ટેકો

નખત્રાણા પ્રાંતને આપેલા આવેદનમાં જલદ આંદોલનની અપાઇ ચીમકી

ભાસ્કર ન્યૂઝ . નખત્રાણા

નખત્રાણા તાલુકાના સાંગનારા ગામે ગૌચર જમીન અને પર્યાવરણ બચાવવા માટે છેલ્લા ઘણા સમયથી લડત ચાલી રહી છે જેને અન્ય ગામોએ ટેકો જાહેર કર્યો છે. સાંગનારાની લડાઈમાં જોડાયેલા મોસુણા, નારણપર, રામપર, જતાવીરા સહિતના ગામોના ખેડૂતોએ એકત્ર થઈ નખત્રાણાના પ્રાંત અધિકારીને આવેદન પાઠવ્યું હતું જેમાં પવનચક્કીની કંપનીઓ દ્વારા થતી મનમાની સામે જરૂર પડશે તો જલદ કાર્યક્રમો અપાશે તેવી ચીમકી અપાઈ હતી.

આવેદનપત્ર પાઠવવા પૂર્વે બહોળી સંખ્યામાં એકત્ર ખેડૂતોએ જણાવ્યું કે, જમીન અમારી, વિસ્તાર અમારો અને મનમાની પવનચક્કીની? આ લોકશાહી છે કે કંપની શાસન? આવી કંપનીઓની જોહુકમી હવે સહન નહીં કરાય અને જરૂર પડશે તો ખેડૂતો રોડ ઉપર ઉતરી આવશે. નખત્રાણા તાલુકો પવન ચક્કીઓનું વન બની ગયો છે. જ્યાં નજર કરો ત્યાં પવનચક્કી જ દેખાય છે. આ વિકાસ નહીં પણ કચ્છના પર્યાવરણના વિનાશ ની નિશાની છે.

છેલ્લા ઘણા સમયથી સાંગનારા ગામના લોકો પર્યાવરણ અને ગૌચર બચાવવા પવનચક્કીઓ સામે લડી રહ્યા છે તેમ છતાં કંપનીઓની તરફદારી કરતા અમલદારોને પવનચક્કી વાળા પગાર ચૂકવે છે? વગેરે આક્ષેપો કર્યા હતા.

પ્રાંતને પાઠવાયેલા આવેદનપત્રમા જણાવાયું હતું કે ગૌચર તેમજ સીમાડામાં પવનચક્કીને મંજૂરી આપી છે તેની સામે અમારો વિરોધ છે. આ પવનચક્કીઓથી વન્ય સંપત્તિને નુકસાન થાય છે તેમજ હાઈ વોલ્ટના વાયરોથી રૂપકડા પક્ષીઓ અને મોર મોતને ભેટે છે.

સાગનારા સરપંચ ઉમરા બાલા, લક્ષ્મણ રબારી, વાલજી લીંબાણી, પ્રવીણ પટેલ, ઈશ્વર પટેલ, રામાભાઈ રબારી, કિરણ પોકાર સહિત 300 જેટલા વિવિધ ગામોના આગેવાનોએ રજૂઆતો કરી હતી

Figure 19 Newspaper clipping. (Photo by author)

Translation

Sanganara's movement of fighting against windmills finds support from other villages.

District Nakhatrana strongly warns in the application submitted.

In the village of Sanganara, District Nakhtrana, there has been a prolonged fight to save animals, arable land and the environment; many other villages have announced their support for this.

Farmers of Mosuna, Naranper, Ramper, Jatavira and others have united to send an application to support to Sangnara's fight against Windmills to area district officer. It mentions taking strict action against Windmills companies' bad intentions else they threatened to stage protests against these companies.

Before giving the application, a large number of farmers came together and questioned, “Ours lands, our areas yet the high-handedness of these Windmill companies? Is this a democracy or a company rule?”. The tyranny of such companies will no longer be tolerated and if necessary, the farmers will come out to the streets to protest.

Nakhatrana District has become the “Forest of Windmills”, wherever you see, you only see windmills - this is not development, it is a sign of Kutch’s environment being destroyed.

For a long time now, people of the Sangnara village have fought to save agricultural land and the environment. Even then, “implementers" siding with the companies are on the payroll of the Windmill companies.

‘Application received from the Nakhatrana district threatens protests.’

In the application given to the district, the farmers have expressed their opposition to the approvals given to windmills in the agricultural land on the borders. The windmills damage Forest resources and beautiful birds like peacocks die from the high voltage wires.

Around 300 different Village heads, including the heads of Sangnara, Umrabala, Lakshman Rabari, Balaji Limbani, Praveen Patel, Ishwar Patel, Rama Bhai Rabari and Kiran Poker supported this protest against windmill companies.

Article 3

પવનચક્કીની આડેધડ મંજૂરી પર્યાવરણ માટે નુકસાનકર્તા

કડક કાર્યવાહી કરવા વાગડ માનવ વિકાસ ટ્રસ્ટની મુખ્યમંત્રીને રજૂઆત : ઉગ્ર આંદોલનની ચીમકી

ભુજ, તા. ૧૮ : ખાનગી વીજ કંપનીઓને મહાકાય પવનચક્કી અને વીજ પોલ લગાવવા અપાયેલી આડેધડ મંજૂરી પર્યાવરણ માટે નુકસાનકર્તા હોવાની રજૂઆત રાજ્યના મુખ્યમંત્રી સમક્ષ કરવામાં આવી છે.

વાગડ માનવ વિકાસ ટ્રસ્ટ-ગાગોદર દ્વારા કરાયેલી રજૂઆતમાં જણાવ્યાનુસાર સુરજબારીથી લઇ છોટાપર સુધી અલગ-અલગ ખાનગી કંપનીઓ દ્વારા વીજ લાઇન બિછાવી પવનચક્કી ઊભી કરી દેવાઇ છે. હજુ બીજી અનેક પવનચક્કીઓ લાગવવાની છે ત્યારે પવનચક્કીના કારણે પર્યાવરણને મોટી જફા પહોંચી છે. પ્રદૂષણની માત્રા ગંભીર રીતે વધવા સાથે તેની જન સ્વાસ્થ્ય પર વિપરીત અસર જોવા મળી રહી છે.

ખેતી-પાકોને આ કારણે મોટી નુકસાની પહોંચવા સાથે અભયારણ્યની જમીનોમાં પણ પવનચક્કીની આડેધડ મંજૂરીથી અનેક વિપરીત અસરો દેખાઇ રહી છે.

જો એક માસમાં આ મુદ્દે કોઇ કડક કાર્યવાહી કરવામાં નહીં આવે તો ગાંધી ચીંધ્યા માર્ગે ઉગ્ર લડત છેડવાની ચીમકી સંસ્થાના પ્રમુખ ધારાભાઇ ભરવાડ દ્વારા આપવામાં આવી છે.

સૂરજબારી, વાંઢિયા, શિકારપુર, કટારિયા, સામખિયાળી, કુંભારિયા, માળીયા સહિતના ગામોમાં પવનચક્કીના લીધે અનેક સમસ્યાઓ સર્જાયાની રજૂઆત આ યાદીમાં કરવામાં આવી છે.

Figure 20 Newspaper clipping. (Photo by author)

Translation

Reckless approvals for loads of Windmills detrimental for the environment.

Vagad Manav Vikas Trust's application to the Chief Minister for taking strict actions: warns of agitations.

Bhuj dated 18.

An application regarding reckless approvals for Windmills and large electric poles of private electric companies being harmful to the environment has been submitted to the State’s Chief Minister.

‘Vagad Manav Vikas Trust’" from Gagoder, has shown that several different private companies have constructed windmills by laying down electric lines from Suraj-Bari till Chhotaper. Many more windmills are yet to be put up and due to this the environment has already been damaged.

With Pollution levels rising alarmingly, public health is being poorly affected. The reckless approvals for windmills are leading to multiple adverse effects in addition to agricultural yields being severely harmed and even sanctuaries being affected due to windmill constructions.

The Trust's Head, Dharabhai Bharwad has threatened that if a strict investigation does not take place within a month, then, on the path that Gandhi has paved, there will be agitated protests.

Surajbari, Vadhiya, Shikarpur, Jatariya, Samkhiyani, Kumbhariya, Manaba and other collective villages facing the multiple problems created because of windmills have been presented in this application.

Article 4

પવનચક્કીના કેબલમાં શૉર્ટ સર્કિટ થતાં

ત્રણ દિવસમાં બીજી વખત જુણાચાય-મેઘપર સીમમાં આગ

ચાર એકરમાં ઘાસ અને અન્ય વૃક્ષો સળગી ગયા

ભાસ્કર ન્યૂઝ | દયાપર

કચ્છમા વરસાદ બાદ ઘાસ સુકાતા આગ લાગવાના બનાવો શરૂ થઈ ગયા છે. લખપત તાલુકાના જુણાચા-મેઘપર ગામના સીમાડામાં તો ત્રણ દિવસમાં બુધવારે આગનો બીજો બનાવ બન્યો હતો. પવનચક્કીના કેબલમાં શોર્ટ સર્કિટ થતાં તણખલા જમીન પર પડતા આગે ચાર એકર જમીનમાં ઘાસ અને વૃક્ષોને ખાક કરી નાખ્યા હતાં.

જુણાચા નજીક આવેલા સીમાડામાં અહીંથી પસાર થતી પવનચક્કીના કારણે આગ લાગી હતી. મેઘપરના રમેશ બલિયાએ જણાવ્યું હતું કે, અહીં આઇનોક્ષ કંપનીના ખુલ્લા સબસ્ટેશન પાસેથી પસાર થતી અદાણી કંપનીની ખુલ્લી વીજ લાઈનમાં શોર્ટ સર્કિટ થવાના કારણે ખાગ લાગી હતી. જેનાકારણે ચારેક એકર જમીનમાં ઘાસ તથા અન્ય વૃક્ષો સળગી ગયા હતાં. પ્રથમ આઈનોક્ષ કંપનીના સબસ્ટેશનમાં ધડાકો થયો હતો. બાદમાં આગ લાગી હતી. પ્રથમ કંપનીએ આ વાત માની ન હતી. પણ સ્થળ પર લોકો ભેગા થઈ જતા આખરે કંપનીના જવાબદારોએ પોતાના સબસ્ટેશનના લીધે આગ લાગી હોવાની વાત સ્વિકારી હતી. અન્ય આગેવાન કે.બી.જાડેજાએ આક્રોશ સાથે જણાવ્યું હતું કે, આ અગાઉ પણ પવનચક્કીના કારણે આગના બનાવો બન્યા છે. તેમ છતાં કંપનીઓએ ફાયર સેફ્ટીના સાધનો વસાવ્યા નથી. તેના કારણે મોટી સંખ્યામાં ઘાસચારો સળગી જાય છે. આવી કંપનીઓ સામે તાત્કાલિક પગલા ભરવા જોઈએ.

પ્રથમ સ્થાનિક લોકોએ આગ પર કાબુ મેળવવાની કોશિશ કરી હતી. ત્યારબાદ પાનધ્રો પાવરસ્ટેશનેથી ફાયર ફાઈટરો દ્વારા આગને કાબુમાં લેવાઈ હતી.

Figure 21 Newspaper clipping. (Photo by author)

Translation

Short circuit on windmill cable causes second fire in three days on Junachay-Meghpar border

Four acres of grass and other trees up in flames

New agency: Bhaskar News

Location: Dayapar

Fires have begun breaking out in Kutch due to grass drying up after the rains. The border of Junacha-Meghpar villages in the Lakhpat administrative district saw its second incident of fire in three days on Wednesday. A short circuit in the windmill cable caused sparks to fall on the ground, setting off a fire that turned grass and trees into ashes on four acres of land.

A fire broke out near the boundary of Junacha due to windmill cables passing through. Meghpar's Ramesh Baliya said the fire broke out due to a short circuit in Adani Company's open power line passing near Inox Company's open substation located there. Consequently, grass and other trees on about four acres of land were burnt. Initially, an explosion was heard in Inox's substation, which was followed by the fire. The company first denied it. But after public gathered at the site, the company officials finally admitted to the fire being caused by their substation. Another leader, K.B. Jadeja, expressed outrage that even though there have also been prior incidents of fire due to windmills, the companies have not yet installed fire safety equipment. A large amount of grass fodder gets burnt as a result. He called for immediate action to be taken against such companies.

The locals initially tried to bring the fire under control. Subsequently, it was subdued by firefighters from the Pandhro power station.

Article 5

લખપત તા.માં ભારે વિરોધ છતાં પવનચક્કીઓ ન અટકી !!

મોટા ભાગના ગામડાંઓ રજૂઆત કરી થાકયા, છતાં ડેમ, તળાવ, ડુંગર, અભયારણ્યમાં નિર્માણ જારી : પ્રશાસન, આગેવાનો કંપનીની પડખે હોવાના ઊઠતા આક્ષેપો

લોકવિરોધ છતાં લખપત તા.માં ઠેર-ઠેર જોવા મળતી પવનચક્કી.

Figure 22 Newspaper clipping. (Photo by author)

Translation

Windmill project in Lakhpat administrative district goes on despite heavy protests

Majority of villages are weary of filing complaints, yet construction continues on dams, lakes, hills, and sanctuaries: allegations of administration, leaders siding with the company

Photo caption: Windmills can be seen all around Lakhpat administrative district despite public protests

Dayapar: Villagers have filed petitions against windmills in most of the administrative district headquarters in Kutch district, but unfortunately, these petitioners are the ordinary class. Meanwhile, myriad leaders sit with their bellies full, none opposing the windmills. The administration is also in lockstep with the windmill companies. The pressing question that rises is – who is listening to the complaints of ordinary people?

Presently, in a fresh case in Kotda village, two cars with representatives from the windmill company along with four cars with police officers arrived to threaten the farmers. A majority of the villages in Lakhpat administrative district have already filed complaints. Moreover, the

district collector has issued an order instructing the deputy collector to remove the windmill that has been erected in the embankment of the dam near Haroda village. Out of the three hectares of land from plot no. 138/1 in Haroda village allotted on lease to Inox Infrastructure Ltd. for the purpose of building a windmill, one hectare falls about 150 meters inland behind the check dam. This area gets waterlogged during rains because there is a dam after all! The sanction order was canceled to avoid any short circuits in the future. The remaining two hectares will remain with the company. According to sources, the windmill has not yet been removed, against which the demand is to investigate and take action.

On the other hand, these companies have not spared the historical Jara hill and the administration is also approving new sites indiscriminately, which is a novelty. Jara hill is a historical heritage, where a terrible war was fought between the kings of Kutch and Sindh. Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) himself visited this hill when he was the Chief Minister. There are plenty of sweet myrrh trees on Jara hill but the windmill companies have erected windmills alongside the precious trees. In contrast to the forest department being alert about the diversion in the Pandhro-Subhaspar road work, the aware are raising questions as to why it is so apathetic about Jara hill.

Another windmill has been erected in the Koranagar sanctuary area. With the eco-sensitive zone nearby, many questions arise with this windmill being erected between Dayapar-Virani. There could be possible breaches of land use rules near Ghaduli, where cultivable land has been converted into non-agricultural land. Yet no action has been taken against the windmill companies!

Numerous windmills can be seen in the east of Dayapar, which make so much noise at night that people's sleep has been ruined. The Dayapar village panchayat has been accused of being silent as the windmill companies gave them 19 lakh rupees. From those 19 lakhs, the repair work for most of the inoperative lights or even the CCTV cameras on the Dayapar highway road could not be carried out. The administrative district panchayat must be asked – what is the meaning of an amount of 19 lakhs that cannot be used for safety purposes?

In Nani Virani, the amount of money received by the villages per windmill point has been eaten away. In fact, two years ago, the district collector decided that a committee should be formed to invest the money received per point into the development of the village, but the rumors are that the sitting dispensation swallowed up the money.

Why has action yet to be taken regarding the removal of the windmill on the embankment of Haroda dam? On being asked this question, revenue officer A.N. Solanki informed that a notice has been issued in this regard and clarified that action will be taken if the relocation is not done by Jan. 4.

<u>Pictures</u>

Figure 23 Pictures of Mahindra Bolero and Mahindra Toofan car models. Wind companies' representatives were moving between wind locations in these private vehicles, as well as '[company] police' personnel mentioned in chapter 6, and other fixers and contractors. Seeing one of these cars stationed at a tea-stall, a restaurant or on the roadside meant that the companies' staff were somewhere around.

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