

Golden or Green? Growth Infrastructures and Resistance in Goa

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Bo Nielsen^{1,*}

Email k.b.nielsen@sum.uio.no

Solano Jose Savio Da Silva²

Email solano@goa.bits-pilani.ac.in

¹ Department of Sociology, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway

² Department of Humanities & Social Sciences

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, BITS-Pilani, K. K. Birla Goa Campus, Sancoale, Goa, India

Abstract

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This chapter explores how infrastructure projects help materialise utopian visions of a ‘new India’. It does this by focussing on the aviation sector and the specific case of a proposed greenfield airport at Mopa located in the state of Goa. It shows how the proposed project deviates from old-styled airports in terms of being conceived as an ‘airport city’, into a space of consumption, which is itself connected with other utopian projects such as golf courses, marinas, and luxury resorts. Importantly the chapter also demonstrates that such infrastructure projects have generated their own politics of dispossession leading to stiff opposition which has in turn led to the articulation of counter-utopias.

In 2014 the newly elected Indian National Democratic Alliance government, led by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its charismatic, pro-business Prime Minister Narendra Modi, launched its ‘Make in India’ programme. Promoted as a major national programme designed to transform India into a global manufacturing hub, the ‘Make in India’ programme promised to provide global recognition to the Indian economy, facilitate investments, foster innovation, and build best-in-class infrastructure (Government of India, Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion 2015, 3). Indeed, in terms of investment opportunities, the development of the so-called growth infrastructures is one of the cornerstones of the programme, with ‘top visionary projects’ worth a whopping USD 34 billion to be developed over the next five years (ibid., 11). While India’s new ‘smart cities’ are perhaps the most iconic manifestation of such new growth infrastructures (Datta 2015; see also Kuldova, this volume), the broader bundle of growth infrastructures also includes seaports, roads, highways, power generation, industrial corridors, railways, and aviation, all designed to take economic growth and innovation to new global heights. The planned, rapid development of new growth infrastructures is thus the key not only to the ‘Make in India’ programme but also to ‘making’ India into a globally recognised, innovative, world-class nation. New growth infrastructures, in other words, will provide the material basis on which what Kuldova (2014, 17) calls the ‘utopian visions of India’s rise to power’ can rest and be realised.

This chapter examines infrastructure development and the utopian visions infrastructures materialise and embody; their generative links to other utopias and counter-utopias; and the expulsions that new growth infrastructures necessitate. Informing the analysis is a view that holds that while infrastructures are certainly technical in nature, they are much more than that. Infrastructures hold the capacity for doing such diverse things as making new forms of sociality, remaking

landscapes, defining new forms of politics and resistance, and reconfiguring subjects and objects (Jensen and Morita 2015, 82–83). They are, in other words, infused with social meanings and reflective of larger priorities and attentions (Howe et al. 2015, 2). While this may be said to be the case for all infrastructures, from roads (Harvey and Knox 2015) to water pipes (Björkman 2015), the materiality of India's new growth infrastructures is additionally defined by its designed capacity for facilitating circuits of capital—by allowing for the exchange and circulation of goods, ideas, waste, power, people, and finance—as well as by its power to conjure up new aesthetic and affective desires and possibilities, and to fundamentally reconfigure relationships with land and resources by moving people away from agrarian mores and alternative possibilities for development (Sampat 2014, 103). It is in this sense that we locate growth infrastructures at the nexus of utopia and expulsion.

We use the aviation sector as our infrastructural point of entry. In terms of investment potential, aviation is a small sector, but in terms of enabling rapid connectivity and the speedy movement of goods and people, it is an important one. It is also a controversial sector insofar as greenfield airport development in particular will tend to entail a significant measure of expulsion through dispossession and displacement of the kind that has in recent years triggered a spate of 'land wars' (Shiva et al. 2011) that have by now become 'the most significant obstacle to capitalist growth in India' (Levien 2015, 156). The concrete materialisation of growth infrastructures in the guise of new airports thus brings into play contested utopias concerning what tomorrow's India ought to be and for whom. Empirically, we focus on Goa, where a planned greenfield airport in Mopa in Pernem *taluka* in the northernmost corner of the state has been pushed through with massive political and financial backing, while also spawning considerable resistance and deep political divides. By also looking at plans for a new golf resort in Tiracol as well as related developments elsewhere in Pernem, we analyse the utopias and counter-utopias generated by new growth infrastructures. While we here limit ourselves to the Goan context, we believe the analysis resonates with the broader Indian experience as covered elsewhere in this volume.

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We proceed to briefly locate the emergence of new growth infrastructure as drivers of economic development in the broader context of economic liberalisation and, more importantly, in relation to the symbolic and discursive construction of what Kaur (2012) calls a hyperreal 'New India'. In light of this, we analyse how and why airport development has emerged as an important component in India's overall strategy of using infrastructure development as a key means to usher in robust economic growth in the years ahead. We then turn to Goa where the proposed Mopa airport and related plans have become important sites for the articulation of contested utopias about what tomorrow's Goa will look like. One utopia, which we call 'Golden Goa', envisions Goa as a booming tourist and real estate economy and an ideal leisure destination for the domestic and global middle class; its counterpart, which we call 'Green Goa', sees the proposed airport and its associated developments as the final nail in the coffin of an environmentally sustainable and humane 'Green Goa' that should be preserved.¹ Preserving 'Green Goa' has, however, increasingly become a utopian mission insofar as Goa's development over the past many decades has come from 'the destruction of land, not from the careful use of it' (Newman 1984, 444) through rampant, often illegal mining (de Souza 2015), unregulated real estate development, industrialisation, and mass tourism (Goswami 2008). In the conclusion we present some preliminary reflections on the relationship between growth infrastructure development and the formation of contested utopias in the context of contemporary Goa.

Growth Infrastructures and 'New India'

The story of India's economic liberalisation and its increasing embrace of pro-business policies over the past three decades has been told and analysed at length (see for instance Corbridge and Harriss 2000; Sanyal 2007; Chatterjee 2008; Ruparelia et al. 2011; Kohli 2012; Kennedy 2014). We will not retell this story here, but will instead focus more narrowly on one particular aspect of India's neoliberal turn, namely the emergence of the powerful, symbolic, and hyperreal construct of a 'New India', and examine its relationship to the materiality of new growth infrastructures.² As we show later, this construct has also provided an important, new framework for the rearticulation of, and alignment with, discourses and images of Goa as 'Golden Goa' that have a much longer genealogy.

'New India' at one level refers to the socio-political and economic realities that characterise India today after more than two decades of liberalising economic reforms and the increasing consolidation of capitalist markets of commodity production and consumption (D'Costa 2010, 2). There now exists a considerable scholarly literature that has carefully

deconstructed the ‘newness’ of this ‘New India’ to bring to light not only the continuities with the ‘Old India’ of the past but also the persistent socio-economic inequalities that ‘the Wall Street version’ (D’Costa 2010, 7) of ‘New India’ glosses over (see e.g. D’Costa 2010, Kohli 2012, Corbridge and Shah 2013). While one could thus legitimately dismiss ‘New India’ as little more than elite myth-making, we here draw inspiration from Kaur (2012) and Kaur and Hansen (2015) by locating the significance and aspirational force of ‘New India’ precisely at the representational level, that is, as an ideational and symbolic construct that mobilises particular identities, desires, and aspirations.

To Kaur and Hansen (2015, 266), ‘New India’ denotes ‘a new world of enterprise, techno-mobility, consumption and fresh market opportunities’ as embodied in the country’s globally renown IT and ITES industry; its impressive rates of economic growth during the first decade of this millennium; its global soft power spearheaded by Bollywood and its film stars; its long strides towards attracting corporate praise and investment; and not least its rapidly emerging consumer-oriented new middle class. As D’Costa writes (2010, xi):

There is a striking optimism about the emerging India. The country that only had a past is beginning to be seen as a country with a future. The land of scarcities is being thought of as a land of opportunities. The land of snake charmers is now considered a land of fashion designers. The land of traditional crafts is increasingly perceived as a land of information technology. The land of bullock carts or steam trains is beginning to be seen as a land of automobiles or jet planes ... the mood is contagious and the images are larger than life.

A distinct feature of this version of ‘New India’ is its claim to represent a collective dream and aspiration, even when a major part of the population remains outside of it (Kaur and Hansen 2015), superfluous to it (Kaur 2015, 319), or expelled from it (Kuldova 2014), as several chapters in this volume amply demonstrate. Yet ‘New India’ is more than just a myth propagated by ‘sections of the elite masquerading as the “common man”’ (Kaur and Hansen 2015, 270). It is a ‘hyperreal’ construct insofar as it aspires to ‘make the real’, seeking to make the real coincide with itself, even as it precedes the real (Kaur 2012, 619). Much of this ‘making coincide’ takes place at the discursive, visual, and aesthetic levels and seeks to produce ‘an *exaggerated* reality that seeks to subsume and *replace* all other realities’ (Kaur 2015, 318, emphases added) that resonate less well with the hyperreal ‘New India’. We argue that the development of new growth infrastructures can be seen to constitute an important material equivalent to this discursive and aesthetic work of ‘making the real coincide with New India’. In other words, the bundle of new and ostensibly world-class growth infrastructures is what will provide the hyperreal ‘New India’ with the material foundations it needs in order to subsume and replace what went before it. In the context of Goa, but also elsewhere, airports form, as we discuss next, an important node in this bundle of new growth infrastructures.

Promoting Airport Development

India’s early phase of recent airport expansion focussed on the development of new international ‘world-class’ airport infrastructure in, for example, New Delhi and Bangalore. Thus, when the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh inaugurated the new terminal 3 at the airport in New Delhi in July 2010 he tellingly described it as signalling ‘the arrival of a new India, committed to join the ranks of modern, industrialized nations of the world’ (cited in Lalchandani 2010). While these airports are still upheld as successful examples of what public–private partnerships (PPPs) can achieve in the field of aviation, contemporary airport development is increasingly attuned to upgrading existing domestic airports to international airports, while also developing the so-called no-frills airports—envisioned as little more than upgraded railway stations in terms of services—in India’s tier II and tier III towns located some distance from the urban metropolises. Airport development in India thus mixes the creation of new, utopian elite leisure, lounge, and travel spaces with the more mundane ambition of enhanced regional connectivity between the centres and the peripheries for the benefit of the upwardly mobile *mofussil* classes.

The strong emphasis on aviation and airport development in Indian policy-making circles is, as mentioned, evident in the ‘Make in India programme’, but also in strategic plans from the Ministry of Civil Aviation (2010) and in a recently circulated new draft national civil aviation policy from the same ministry. Indian aviation has been a chronically loss-making sector, best exemplified by the spectacular collapse of Kingfisher Airlines in 2012 at a time when it was India’s second largest domestic operator. But several Indian airlines are currently posting profits, and the present policy aim is ‘to take flying to the masses’ (Ministry of Civil Aviation 2015, 1) and to reach 300 million domestic ticketing in

2022 and half a billion in 2027 (ibid., 2), up from a modest 70 million in 2014–2015. In line with our analysis of the link between growth infrastructures and ‘New India’, the guiding idea behind the current policy is to use airports to attract investments and act as drivers of regional economic growth. This is to be achieved either by improving some of the existing approximately 400 Indian airstrips/airports that do not have scheduled operations (ibid., 4) or by building new greenfield airports such as that planned for Mopa. Airport development is thus intended to develop a region’s hinterland economy, rather than waiting for the regional economy to grow on its own to the level where the construction of a new airport would immediately be economically sound. This approach is justified in the Ministry of Civil Aviation’s (2010) strategic plan for 2010–2015, where the linkage between the civil aviation sector and economic activity and its catalytic impact on general development is said to be ‘well recognised’: USD 100 spent on air transport produce benefits worth USD 325 for the economy, and 100 additional jobs in air transport result in 610 new economy-wide jobs, it claims.

In sum, the expectations associated with airport development are massive. As one report states:

It has been observed that the airports and especially International airports have become the catalysts for local economic development. Experts in the field are of the opinion that airports will shape business location and urban development in this century as much as seaports did in the 18th century, railroads in the 19th century and highways in 20th century. (Government of Goa 2015, 106)

The development of greenfield airports is currently possible with 100 per cent foreign direct investment under a PPP set-up, thus making greenfield airport development—including the so-called non-aeronautical revenue from, for example, retail, advertising, vehicle parking, security equipment, hospitality, and other services—a potentially lucrative sector for private investors (Ernst & Young 2014, 26–27). The potential for huge profits is projected as, indeed, almost utopian: While India is currently the world’s tenth largest aviation market, it is the fastest growing, and it will be among the largest in the world if the projected ticketing targets indicated above are met. According to the President of India, the government plans to invest a full USD 120 billion in the development of airport infrastructure and aviation navigation services over the next decade (cited in Phadnis and Majumder 2016), and the recent draft civil aviation policy’s so-called regional connectivity scheme includes a slew of subsidies and concessions—such as viability gap funding, VAT at one per cent or less, free land, and the provision of multimodal hinterland connectivity—to attract developers and operators (Ministry of Civil Aviation 2015).³ In addition, Indian airports are encouraged to adopt or emulate the ‘SEZ Aerropolis model’ under which ‘airport cities’ can include hotels, golf courses, amusement parks, aviation training schools, or IT parks to enhance revenues. Airports thus not only facilitate the transportation of goods and people; they also pry open new spaces of accumulation and enable new forms of conspicuous consumption of branded goods, and new forms of leisure and entertainment that are increasingly associated with ‘having made it’ in ‘New India’ (Kaur and Hansen 2015).

Mopa: Redefining ‘Golden Goa’

‘Mopa airport will generate tourism and hence the income for the state; Mopa is a golden opportunity for the state of Goa’. (Sandip Fulari, convenor of ‘People for Mopa’, cited in *Times of India* 2013b)

The trajectory of the new greenfield airport in Mopa is illustrative of how airports have recently emerged with force as a priority area for Indian governments: Plans for establishing a new international airport at Mopa have been around for more than 15 years, but actual—and very rapid—progress has only been made over the last few years.

In 1999, a Congress-led state government had approved the Mopa project, and land acquisition proceedings for a whopping 80 lakh square metres (800 hectares) of land were initiated in 2003. The land acquisition was never completed, mostly because the proposed airport encountered stiff resistance from south Goa where a key worry was that the building of Mopa would eventually lead to the closure of the existing international airport in centrally located Dabolim. The potential closure of Dabolim would mean that all tourists arriving by plane would land in Mopa and would therefore be more likely to head for the nearby beaches in the north, thus hurting the tourist industry in the south.

This early controversy over Mopa coincided with a phase of intense popular mobilisation against illicit land conversions under Goa’s Regional Plan 2011 in late 2006 and, in the following year, the implementation of the highly unpopular policy of establishing special economic zones (SEZ) for industrial production in the state (Abreu 2014; Bedi 2013; Da

Silva 2014; Sampat 2013). These campaigns brought popular concerns over environmental destruction, water depletion, land scams, and pollution to the top of the political agenda, forcing the incumbent government to withdraw the regional plan, scrap the SEZ policy, and put Mopa on the backburner. It was not until mid-2008, when things had calmed down, that fresh land acquisition notifications were issued for Mopa. But the actual acquisition progressed slowly and was not declared to be complete until late 2013.

By then, the state had a new government, led by the BJP and the current Union Minister of Defence Manohar Parrikar, who had risen to become Chief Minister in 2012. Parrikar hails from north Goa (Bardez). So does his party compatriot and current Chief Minister Laxmikant Parsekar, who succeeded Parrikar in late 2014 and who hails from Pernem itself. In addition, the former speaker of the legislative assembly and current state forest and environment minister—a crucial ministry in terms of obtaining project-related clearances and permits—BJP's Rajendra Arlekar, is elected from Pernem constituency. Both Chief Ministers have been strong backers of the Mopa project, and it is under their dispensations—and in the broader Indian context of prioritising growth infrastructures as outlined above—that the project has been carried forward at full speed.

Depending on audience, Mopa airport has been discursively promoted by its backers in two complementary ways. On the one hand, they have claimed that the state was badly in need of a new airport insofar as the existing one at Dabolim was reaching saturation and could not, for technical reasons, be expanded.⁴ And without a new airport, there was a real danger that the crucial tourism industry would suffer irreparable damage in the years ahead.⁵

Yet more importantly, Mopa has been construed in utopian terms as not just a simple necessity, but also as, as the quote above illustrates, a 'golden opportunity' that will revive Goa's economic fortunes, fortify its position as India's dream holiday capital, and set in motion the transformation of the state's backward northern areas into new leisure spaces. In 2012, Chief Minister Parrikar had said that the state would raise its annual tourist arrivals from 2.6 million to 6 million in just five years (*Indian Express* 2012); by the time the first phase of Mopa airport would be completed, in 2020, it alone would cater to 2.8 million arrivals per year; by 2045, when the fourth and final phase had been completed, that number would have risen to a full 13.1 million (Government of Goa 2015). Not only would this generate considerable revenue—it would also lead to the development of ancillary inductees such as hotels and tourism infrastructure. And the addition of air cargo operations would shift the current ground-based movements in Goa and attract air operations currently conducted outside the area (Government of Goa 2015, 2). This would have a 'positive impact on socio-economic environment due to development of infrastructure in the area, growth of secondary and tertiary sector businesses and subsequent enhancement in the standards of living of the local populace' (Government of Goa 2015, 97).

Yet the full vision for Mopa was much larger. The proposed airport would be equipped with five-star hotels; eco, adventure, and wellness resorts; a shopping plaza; office and exhibition spaces; an amphitheatre; arts and craft workshops and displays; a large auditorium; a VIP lounge; and even a cultural museum (Government of Goa 2015, 108–109); and, in anticipation of a boom in the Indian convention industry, it would have a 1000 delegates convention centre spread over 5 hectares (*ibid.*, 108–110). In all, 381 out of the 2271 acres acquired for Mopa were reserved for 'commercial activities' according to the 'Request for Qualification' document. Mopa airport would thus not, as airports are otherwise often described, be a quintessential non-place (Auge 1995) through which people pass without dwelling; it would be a site for leisure, recreation, spending, and experiences.

The role of Mopa as an infrastructural nodal point for realising a larger utopian vision becomes even more apparent if we lift the [gaze- and survey-related](#) remove the dashes so as to read 'lift the gaze and survey related developments' developments elsewhere in the state. Not only has Goa for some time been home to a, albeit limited, number of offshore casinos that offer the wealthy an opportunity to fritter away their money in luxurious surroundings; there are also recurring plans for setting up new marinas to cater to the clientele of Indian 'bankers, industrialists, corporate houses, and several high-net worth individuals in the country' who have yachts but nowhere to park them (Sequeira 2015). Yacht owners and casino goers of course constitute an important social segment in 'New India', and bringing them to the state would help transform it into something much more aspirational than just a compulsory stop on the hippie trail, or a favoured destination for Russian charter tourists.

More importantly, in Pernem *taluka* itself, vast tracks of land surrounding the planned airport have already been bought

up by real estate developers, politicians, and businessmen in anticipation of an impending real estate boom. Although the use of middlemen or strawmen makes it notoriously difficult to trace the actual buyers of the land, it is well documented that, for example, organised crime groups, politically linked ‘syndicates’, and the politicians’ black money routinely play important roles in the land and real estate market in cities such as Mumbai, Delhi, and Kolkata (see e.g. Weinstein 2008; Björkman 2015; Kaul 2015). Indeed, to Sampat (2014, 148), the real estate economy in Goa is endemically corrupt and discloses a free-for-all grab of land and resources by the political and economic elite. What is important for the present discussion, however, is how the real estate economy more than any other sector powerfully draws upon ideologies of ‘waste’ and ‘value’, and ‘backwardness’ and ‘modernity’ (Sampat 2014, 147) to develop what is routinely projected as wasteland or idle land for accumulation. Some real estate projects are already under construction, such as the B&F Countryside Estates’ farmhouse project, where people can sit on the porch of their luxury bungalows and ‘marvel at the beauty of the flora and fauna under endless blue skies ... or just awaken to the call of peacocks in the morning’ (B&F Realty n.d.). The most spectacular of such new luxury projects is undoubtedly the hotel-cum-golf resort proposed for Tiracol located right on the northern border with Maharashtra. In 2011, the Goa Tourism Department granted approval to the Shiv Jatia-owned Leading Hotels Ltd. to develop a PGA standard golf course and resort in Tiracol, located only 20 km from the site of the proposed Mopa airport. The village is in fact an enclave of Goa and is separated from the main landmass by the Tiracol river. It covers an area of only 1.38 square kilometres and is home to just 48 households.

Claiming to have secured ownership of more than 90 per cent of the village through market transactions, Leading Hotels said in a press release that it envisaged setting up an ‘iconic resort, wrapped by a golf course perched on a rocky elevation’ (*Herald* 2015). Golfing great Colin Montgomerie was roped in to design the course which would sprawl over more than 560,000 square metres and have two artificial lakes. The resort would, in turn, be built by Leading Hotels but would thereafter be managed and operated by high-end hotelier Four Seasons. According to the site plan the entire resort would cover an area measuring close to one square kilometre (nearly all of Tiracol) and would have 153 villas ranging from two to six bedrooms.⁶ The project also includes a marina and a signature bridge which would connect the resort to the Goa landmass. The project also proposed that the area where the inhabitants of the village reside would be developed into a ‘model village’ through the provision of 24-hour water supply, continuous electricity, sewerage systems, health care, a primary school, and internet and banking facilities, all of which would be paid for by the company as part of its corporate social responsibility.⁷ In addition, the project claimed it would generate local employment and create opportunities for medium and small enterprises (*Herald* 2015).

What is conjured up in the project visions for Mopa, B&F Countryside Estates, and Tiracol are, we suggest, a version of ‘Golden Goa’ rearticulated within the discursive framework of ‘New India’. The idea of Goa as golden, as *Goa dourada*, originated as an idealised image of Goa conceived by the Portuguese colonisers, conjuring up the idea of a *sossegado* lifestyle characterised by affluence and leisure (Tichur 2013). This ‘Golden Goa’ image has been a remarkably persistent, if malleable, feature of the face Goa shows to the outside world (Newman 2001, 107), and its seamless appropriation into discourses of tourism has long been noted (e.g. Siqueira 1991). Its present rearticulation within the framework of ‘New India’ similarly continues to conjure up images of prosperity and leisure, now made possible by neoliberal economic reforms rather than mercantile trade under Portuguese rule. However, it is now more unequivocally attuned to the presumed aspirations and desires of the high-spending new Indian elite. In other words, just as the prosperous and leisurely lifestyle extolled in the classical *Goa dourada* genre of poetry and literature was always the *landlord* lifestyle (Newman 2001, 106), the rearticulation of Golden Goa with ‘New India’ extols an *elite* lifestyle that is reserved for the few. And, just as the colonial version of *Goa dourada* elided the fact that it was built on the exploitation of tenants and labourers (Tichur 2013) and a rigid class and landowning system backed by Portuguese colonialism (Newman 2001, 106), the ‘New India’ version of Golden Goa seeks to elide the dispossession or displacement of tenants and other land owners that underpins its realisation in Mopa and Tiracol. Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, the materialisation of Mopa and Tiracol has been hotly contested as resistance has emerged both from dispossessed people who fear that they will find no place in such visions and from social activists and environmentalists across the state. The opposition has, in turn, invoked their own counter-utopias as part of their strategic politics of representation that we analyse below.

‘Green Goa’

We have our fields, *kulaghars* (plantations) and *devasthans* (temples) here. We won’t leave our *devasthans* ... even if they

plan to rehabilitate us, can they rehabilitate God? ... There are so many different species of plants and animals including the tiger living here. Cutting down such a large part of forested land can lead to a repeat of the natural calamity (a devastating flood and landslide) that recently occurred in Uttarakhand. (Sandip Kambli, Covenor, Mopa Vimantall Piditt Xetkari Samiti, cited in *Times of India* 2013a)

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Struggles over land in contemporary India are often framed in terms of displacement and dispossession. But neither Mopa nor Tiracol involved much direct displacement: Tiracol was sparsely populated while few people resided *on* the Mopa plateau itself, something which is not unusual for plateaus rich in aluminiferous bauxite where cultivable land on the hilltop is scarcer than what the case is on the plains below, or on the forested slopes ([Oskarsson in press](#)). This has now been published, so if possible please change to Oskarsson 2017.

If this change is made, please also change the matching entry in the reference list.). Perhaps for this reason, the resistance to the land transfers occurring in these two sites has invoked a different register of protest that focussed more on environmental and sustainable livelihoods issues, both recurring tropes in popular mobilisations in Goa. The Mopa airport opposition has come from local tenants facing dispossession, or otherwise affected by the land acquisition, who organised under the Mopa Vimantall Piditt Xetkari Samiti (association of farmers aggrieved by the Mopa airport), but also from citizens' groups and NGOs from other parts of the state, most notably Goans for Dabolim Only, the Federation of Rainbow Warriors, and the umbrella organisation Goans for Sustainable Development, all predominantly based in south Goa. This broader coalition has made use of a diverse repertoire of contention and styles of framing, and has actively and creatively struggled against the airport in both civil society and legal arenas. While the resistance strategies of the Mopa opposition are thus clearly not reducible to the strategic projection of a 'Green Goa' threatened with annihilation, this trope, we suggest, has been an important one as they have sought to unravel projected images of 'Golden Goa' as outlined above.

The differences between 'Golden Goa' and 'Green Goa' in the context of Mopa are perhaps nowhere as evident as in the radically different ways in which they conceptualise the plateau on which the airport is to be built. To the proponents of the airport, the plateau epitomised 'waste' waiting to be turned into 'value'. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report prepared at the behest of the Government of Goa described it as little more than a rocky, barren patch of land without habitation, residents, or permanent structures of any significance: 'The land is largely non-cultivated due to an outcropping of lateritic soil and no residential and water bodies are found within the project location except few houses', it claimed (2015, 11), adding that 'vegetation and trees are sparse'. Eighty-five per cent of the acquired land was, it said, either 'land with scrub' (55 per cent), barren rocky/stony waste (22 per cent), or scrub forest (8 per cent) (*ibid.*, 11). The EIA report did acknowledge that the airport would have a 'medium impact' on the local biological environment insofar as it heightened the risk of animals being killed in increased car traffic or falling into open construction pits or trenches. But apart from that, placing a new international airport on top of the plateau would have very little impact on the local land, water, and socio-economic environment.

The project's opponents begged to differ. At a controversial public hearing on the EIA report which took place on top of the plateau itself on 2 February 2015, they spent considerable time deconstructing this view of the plateau as barren wasteland. Prior to the hearing, activists had organised an environmental study of their own to counter the official EIA report. To the project's opponents, the plateau's location close to the Western Ghats made it an intrinsically eco-sensitive zone almost on par with the Western Ghats itself, second only to the Amazon in terms of biodiversity. The plateau, they claimed at the hearing and elsewhere (Gokhale 2016), was home to a plethora of flora, fauna, and wildlife, including 174 species of birds, 41 reptiles, and 37 mammals, including endangered species such as leopards, gaur (Indian bison), and pangolins. As one environmentalist argued, this exceptional concentration of life on the small plateau was the result of the destruction of ecosystems elsewhere (cited in Gokhale 2016), in effect making Mopa the last refuge of animals on the run.

The laterite plateau itself, along with the more than 40 surrounding perennial springs, performed an indispensable function in terms of ground water percolation and recharge, acting as a giant sponge that stored and released water throughout the year, thus providing water for thousands of people and countless ecosystems. A groundwater expert enlisted by the activists estimated that the plateau recharged more than six million litres per day, or more than two billion litres every year. Hence, if the plateau was destroyed to make way for the airport, its crucial role in the wider local

hydrology would be disrupted, leading to repercussions far beyond the plateau itself. A wrecked hydrology would destroy not only cultivation on the slopes of the plateau, and on the nearby plains below, but also the fisheries in the nearby Chapora and Tiracol rivers.

It was also found that cattle and goats grazed on the plateau, and that agriculture was practised across the area, including extensive cashew plantations on the slopes that generated an annual turnover of as much as INR 50 crore, and which enabled the production of the locally popular cashew-*feni*, a strong liquor produced from the cashew apple. Several sacred groves (and a Buddhist-era cave) would be lost if the airport came up, including the Barazan on the very top of the plateau, a grove comprised by 12 trees at which important rituals were carried out yearly. For the same reason, one activist group consistently referred to the plateau as the ‘Barazan’, and not the Mopa plateau, so as to underscore its importance in an ancient cultural and socio-economic order that was now fast disappearing.

The resistance to the Tiracol golf project again presents an interesting parallel example of how the project proponents and opponents have invoked radically different ways of conceptualising the character of the land. On 31 May 2015, the Goan paper *The Herald* carried a full-page, front page advertisement by Leading Hotels, promoting its project in Tiracol. Tellingly, the advertisement was titled ‘The Treasure of Tiracol Displayed to the World: From Barren ... to Beautiful’, underscoring how—as in Mopa—the targeted land was little more than barren wasteland waiting to be transformed. Again, the local opposition begged to differ.

The opposition to the golf course and resort is mainly led by members of the St. Anthony’s Tenants and Mundkar Association which was formed in 2010 and mainly consists of agricultural tenants who have not surrendered their tenancy rights to Leading Hotels, the project developer. While claims that Leading Hotels have illicitly circumvented Goa’s strict tenancy laws when buying up land for the project has been a key argument for villagers opposed to the project, they have also argued that such a project—which, it will be recalled, covers the entire village—will lead to extensive environmental damage to lands that are far from barren. In an interview with journalists, community locals Agnelo Godinho and Sarto D’Souza stated that apart from denuding the village of its natural cover, the felling of cashew trees will impair the livelihoods of many of the villagers who are dependent on the cashew orchards (Video Volunteers 2015); others point out that setting up a golf course would involve the diversion of large quantities of water, with village resident Cyril D’Souza alleging that the government will divert the Tillari project—an inter-state hydro project intended to supply water for irrigation, municipal, and industrial purposes—to the golf course (Video Volunteers 2015). It is also feared that the use of fertilisers and other chemicals in the golf course will leach into the fresh water table and into the estuary, which would negatively affect drinking water and fish breeding, respectively. Two separate petitions have also been filed before the National Green Tribunal, one arguing that Leading Hotels has felled large numbers of trees on the plateau without obtaining the requisite permissions under the Goa, Daman and Diu Preservation of Trees Act.

Francis Rodrigues, a member of the tenants association and a leading figure in the local resistance, says that till date, even though the government has not provided any jobs to the villagers, the people of Tiracol have still managed because, thanks to earlier land reforms, all the tenants have had houses and agricultural land in their possession (Video Volunteers 2015). While acknowledging that in recent times many youngsters from the village head to other parts of Goa, Mumbai, and even abroad for work, Rodrigues opines that if the villagers were to set up a cooperative and develop a small-scale ecologically sensitive tourism project, like a 20-rooms ecotourism project, they could both arrest the outmigration of youngsters while also preserving the ecology and pristine beauty of the village.⁸ By thus focussing on the claimed, actual, or potential importance of land, agriculture, and the environment in both Mopa and Tiracol, the project opponents have drawn on a particular ‘moral economy of agriculture’ (Münster 2015) that articulates ideas about what is just, fair, and sustainable, and which draws attention to a particular ethics of care for land and soil embedded in local communities, and fundamentally incompatible with large infrastructural projects.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have located popular discourses on India’s new growth infrastructures at the intersection of utopia and expulsion, focussing predominantly on greenfield airport development in Goa. It is often said that infrastructures go unnoticed and only become visible when they break down. But in the context of India’s growth infrastructures in the

making, maximising visibility and public attention is of crucial importance. The purpose of growth infrastructures is, after all, primarily to attract investments and stimulate enhanced economic activity. As Björkman (2015, 13) writes with reference to contemporary Mumbai, large-scale infrastructure projects are often conceived first and foremost as a way to signal and perform world-class character to investors. Such ‘prestige infrastructures’ (Howe et al. 2015, 5) therefore construct a particular vision of the future—a spectacular one, filled with possibility (Gupta 2015) along the lines of ‘New India’ or ‘Golden Goa’ as outlined above. As Harvey and Knox (2015, 6) argue, this may be particularly the case in ‘development settings’ where infrastructures are aspirational and carry great promise. As nodal points for flows of capital, goods, and people, airports are embedded in larger utopian visions for transforming geographies and economies through, in our case, luxury estates, golf resorts, and marinas, thus creating new, aspirational spaces for both accumulation and leisure. They are, in other words, important in conjuring up new aesthetic and affective desires and possibilities that draw on hyperreal ideas about a ‘New India’ in the making. In Goa, this has allowed for a powerful rearticulation of the long-standing idea of ‘Golden Goa’ that speaks to increasingly hegemonic elite desires in the context of neoliberalisation.

Yet growth infrastructures also carry threats of unwelcome change, of destabilisation and increased vulnerability, thus combining ‘integrative promises and disintegrative threats’ (ibid., 74). As Datta has argued for India’s new smart cities—the stellar example of India’s new phase of ‘utopian urbanisation’ (Datta 2015, 6)—social fault lines are built into such infrastructural utopian imaginings, which prioritise urbanisation (and related infrastructural developments such as airports) first and foremost as a business model rather than a model of social justice. Infrastructures evidently produce contradictions and unevenly felt consequences in the lives and places they contact (Howe et al. 2015, 3), and the powerful discourse of a ‘Green Goa’ threatened with annihilation that we have shown informs environmental activism in Goa can, we suggest, be seen as expressive of popular anxieties over the looming ‘disintegrative threats’ and uneven consequences that accompany large-scale infrastructure development.

While growth infrastructures—in the guise of new airports—thus bring into play contested utopias and counter-utopias concerning what tomorrow’s India ought to be and for whom, the issue of temporality deserves particular attention. Strikingly, plans for a new airport at Mopa have, as mentioned, been around for nearly two decades without actual construction work ever commencing. As Gupta (2015) argues, this ‘suspension’ between the early start of an infrastructural project and its conclusion needs to be understood not so much as a mere temporary phase but as a particular condition of being. While the construction site may be said to be the ideal typical embodiment of such ‘a temporal space between the hopes pinned upon future infrastructures and the actualization of that promise’ (Howe et al. 2015, 7), the cumbersome, contingent, and often contradictory political, social, and legal processes that have underpinned the various stages of planning, design, and implementation of the Mopa project have, in effect, created a different kind of space—a temporal discursive space that enables contestation to play out, visions and counter-visions articulated, and discrepant utopian or dystopian meanings assigned to such infrastructures in the making.

Notes


1. We stress that those who have opposed the Mopa airport, and the golf resort at Tiracol, have done so for a complex and nuanced set of reasons, and have worked hard in civil society and legal arenas to stop these projects. We do not mean to trivialise these dedicated efforts by pointing out that ideas about a lost ‘Green Goa’ utopia have also informed their opposition.
2. Our discussion of ‘New India’ draws on Nielsen and Wilhite (2015).
3. The policy also covers areas such as aviation training, and maintenance, repair and overhaul facilities, and more.
4. See Nielsen (2015) for a short overview of the technical–legal challenges associated with expanding Dabolim.
5. The Goan economy has suffered over the past few years due to a total ban on mining, one of the state’s most important industries. To offset this loss, the performance of the tourist industry has become much more important.
6. Site plan submitted to the Town & Country Planning Department dated 25 February 2013.

7. In the mid-1990s, a comparable project, the 'Japanese Village Project', had been proposed for Paliem, a short distance south of Tiracol. The project would have required around 300 hectares of land but was eventually cancelled.
8. Francis Rodrigues, personal communication, 2 October 2015.

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