Neoliberalism and Hindutva in the Actually Existing State: *The case of Dholera Smart City*

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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Abstract

In recent decades, countries around the world have witnessed the expansion of neoliberal policies, within which the concept of smart cities has been proffered as a panacea for 'sustainable development'. Alongside economic changes, many countries have also seen the rise of right-wing nationalism, with leaders using policies of urbanisation and infrastructure building to take their agendas forward. What is often witnessed, although barely studied, is the coming together of these two ideologies – neoliberalism and right-wing nationalism – as they help one another to deeply influence state organisations. This dissertation studies the Dholera smart city project in the western Indian province of Gujarat. Launched and continuously promoted by India's current Prime Minister and head of a right-wing Hindu nationalist party, Narendra Modi, since his days as Gujarat's Chief Minister, Dholera has been a platform to reimagine the state and ideas of development.

The dissertation uses the state as an analytical lens to understand micro-practices of development in Dholera. Based on nine months of ethnography observing numerous actors across villages, corporations and the state, the dissertation explores how the everyday state functions in Dholera. The study finds that at various levels of government, the state constitutes and is simultaneously constituted by multiple intricate linkages between the actors and practices of neoliberalism and right-wing Hindu nationalism (or Hindutva). It shows how these linkages help to promote the cause of both ideologies, further entrenching them into institutions across state and society. In doing so, both neoliberalism and Hindutva, use strategies that display disjuncture between their foundational ideologies and practices, which help them further their cause. At the intersection of development, smart urbanism, and right-wing nationalism, the study is of topical significance to understand

how the very idea of the state is being transformed in Gujarat and India – beyond recognition – with implications that are global.

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My dear parents (Maa and Abba) despite their financial constraints never stopped dreaming of the best education for their two sons. Maa's hardships to raise us took an emotional as well as physical toll on her. Abba's 'never back down' approach when it came to education despite earning a paltry sum as a laboratory technician, went a long way for me to undertake a DPhil. However, I believe they too would have stopped dreaming if there was no state-subsidised/free higher education. I will always support free education (and a socialist state too) for the opportunities that can change lives of the underprivileged while giving equal chances to everyone. Both my parents wanted their children to become 'doctors'. I ended up in an engineering college to study architecture whereas the elder son

went on to study Mathematics and Computing. Getting a DPhil was the only way I could be a ‘doctor’ – even if I cannot prescribe medicines the way they would have liked! My elder brother happened to be my closest friend who supported my emotional and financial misadventures without ever raising a question. Knowing that he was always behind me, I continued with those misadventures. My sister in law is more like a sister always supporting the family and me. Thanks to all of you.

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Figure 0.1: A billboard announcing the arrival of the smart city. The image on the right shows the poor quality of the roads in the villages barely a few hundred metres from the billboard.

Capitalism survives 'by occupying space, by producing space'.

Henri Lefebvre, 1976: 21.

List of Abbreviations

AES	Actually Existing State
ABVP	Akhil Bharatiya Vidhyarthi Parishad
BBS	Bhal Bachao Samiti
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BJS	Bharatiya Jana Sangh
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CTP	Chief Town Planner
DDIS	Dholera Developers and Investors Summit
DICDL	Dholera Industrial City Development Limited
DMIC	Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor
DP—TPS	Development Plan—Town Planning Schemes
DSIRDA	Dholera Special Investment Region Development Authority
DSP	Deputy Superintendent of Police
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
GDIPL	Greater Dholera Infracon Private Limited
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIDB	Gujarat Infrastructure Development Board
GIDC	Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation
GIFT	Gujarat International Finance Tec-City
GPBS	Gujarat Patidar Business Summit
GTPUDA	Gujarat Town Planning and Urban Development Act
HVM	Hotel Vision Modi
IAS	Indian Administrative Service
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IL&FS	Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INC	Indian National Congress Party
INR	Indian Rupee
KHAM	Kshatriya-Harijan-Adivasi-Muslim
L&T	Larsen & Toubro
MNC	Multi-National Corporation

MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
OBC	Other Backward Classes
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
SC	Scheduled Castes
SP	Superintendent of Police
ST	Scheduled Tribes
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
SIR	Special Investment Region
SPV	Special Purpose Vehicle
USE	Universal Success Enterprise
VGGS	Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit
VHP	Vishwa Hindu Parishad

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

'Development neither reaches us nor leaves us. It's an illusion…'

A Dholera farmer[2]

The above quote by a local farmer epitomises the protracted history of development in Dholera. Dholera is one of the 22 villages located in a low-lying area off the Gulf of Khambhat (on the Arabian Sea) in the western Indian province of Gujarat (see Figure 1.1) that will be pooled together to build 'Dholera smart city' (see Figure 1.2). Although famous for producing the Bhalia wheat,[3] in recent years, the Gujarat government has often termed the quality of land in the Dholera region as saline or infertile.[4] Through such narratives and the siting of an infrastructure project, Dholera's land has been 'rendered investible' by enabling flows of commodities and capital to circulate between sites of investment and (global) markets (Li, 2014). The Dholera project has captured global attention due to its sheer size and continued promotion by the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi. It is supposed to include 920 square kilometres affecting a population of more than 39,000 (Sampat, 2016).

[2] Interview with Karsanbhai (pseudonym) in Dholera, September 2017. Real names are anonymised to protect identity of informants.Pseudonyms are used throughout the dissertation except where specified.

[3] Bhalia wheat is cultivated in the 'Bhal' region of Gujarat. The organic wheat is famous for its high carotene, low water absorption or high protein content and commands 40-50 per cent higher price compared to the standard wheat in Gujarat (PTI 2011). The wheat is cultivated under conserved soil moisture that the soil retains from monsoon rainfall and after sowing, the crop receives neither irrigated water nor rain (refer to PTI 2011). 'Bhal' is the region of Gujarat spread over areas within the districts of Ahmedabad, Bhavnagar and Surendranagar of Gujarat province. All the 22 villages belong to the region and come under Ahmedabad district.

[4] During most interviews with bureaucrats and politicians involved in the planning and implementation of the Dholera smart city project, they argue that the land in Dholera is saline, infertile or unproductive. Yet while the proximity to the Arabian Sea does render some of the land in the region saline, agriculture in the region has thrived over the years and a range of crops like wheat and cumin are produced.



Figure 1.1: Map of India with the location of the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC). The corridor connecting Delhi to Mumbai is marked in orange. Gujarat is highlighted in blue within which Dholera is located. Other important nodes along the corridor are shown. IR stands for Industrial Region and IA for Industrial Area (DIPP, 2018)



Figure 1.2: Computer-generated images of the proposed Dholera smart city (Source: DICDL official website).

Importantly, as I go on to elaborate, Dholera's protracted development history represents the journey of development of the Indian state[5]. Since India's independence from the British, to improve the living conditions of the locals, Dholera has been promised a number of major 'development' projects in accordance with or against the wishes of its people. They include proposals to build dams, canals, a sea-port, an industrial estate, the smart city – as I elaborate in the next section. Although Dholera's land continues to lie idle, the visions around it mutate and multiply, becoming bigger, 'global' and 'smarter'. While building cities and towns to pursue 'development' is not a new phenomenon, the Dholera

[5] The 'state' is defined in later sections and in more detail in Chapter 2. Indian regions are also called 'States'. However, I prefer to use 'province' throughout the dissertation to avoid confusion.

smart city, the most recent version, exhibits transformations that India has witnessed over the last two decades.

The current version of the project was launched in 2009 as the Dholera Special Investment Region (SIR) to build an industrial city. However, as the proposed city was to 'have smart and sustainable infrastructure spanning transportation, water, power, wastewater, drainage and urban design' (AECOM, 2020), it has frequently been referred to as 'Dholera smart city'.[6] I will refer to the project using both terms interchangeably throughout the dissertation. As of now, within the 920 square kilometres, work has started in what is called the 'Activation Area', a 22.5 square kilometre zone proposed to be developed as an industrial park. Dholera is also part of the largest infrastructure project of India, the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) that will connect India's administrative capital Delhi with the financial hub, Mumbai, through a 1,500 kilometre-long dedicated freight corridor (Figure 1). Along this corridor, 13 industrial areas and 11 investment regions are to be developed as smart cities along with a host of other infrastructure projects such as airports, power plants among others to encourage foreign investment and increase industrial output and export (AECOM, 2020).

Two historical changes are key to understanding Dholera and linking it to the transformations taking place across the globe. Being touted as the first smart city in India to be developed entirely in greenfield, Dholera marks a significant departure from India's previous state-led planning and development models towards a new private and market-

[6] The concept of smart cities refers to the simultaneous 'use of information and communication technology (ICT) to stimulate economic development', along with the 'extensive embedding of software enabled technologies into the fabric of cities to augment urban management' (Kitchin 2015: 131). It emphasises that a smart city 'can be monitored, managed and regulated in real-time using ICT, infrastructure and ubiquitous computing' to increase efficiency, productivity, sustainability (Townsend, 2013). Scholars like Greenfield (2013), Kitchin (2014, 2015) and Townsend (2013) have covered the debates around the concept.

oriented development. Since the 1970s, countries across the world have witnessed similar changes usually categorised under neoliberalism[7]. India too adopted similar market-oriented policies in the early 1990s. Within India, Gujarat has been amongst the leading provinces in the race to adopt such neoliberal policies. A host of provincial institutions targeting privatisation, financialisation or other liberal policies underlines this. Some of those institutions include Gujarat Infrastructure Development Board (GIDB), Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit (VGGS), the provincial Special Economic Zones Act and the SIR Act, which are in addition to existing organisations such as Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation more investment friendly and 'efficient'. Within such neoliberal endeavours of the Gujarat province, the role of Narendra Modi, the current Prime Minister of India who was also the Chief Minister of Gujarat for 14 years from 2001-2014 is significant as he unapologetically backed a series of economically liberal policies.

The second important change overlapping the timeline of Dholera's smart city project is the rise of right-wing Hindu nationalism or Hindutva[8] in the everyday lives of citizens. Following a similar trajectory, right-wing nationalism has witnessed an upsurge across the globe over the last few decades. Modi's tenure as the Chief Minister of Gujarat and now as the Prime Minister of India has been marked by the continued rise of Hindutva. Scholars have rightly argued that liberal economic policies have gone hand in hand with political illiberalism during this period (Sud, 2012). However, what is novel, and of central interest to this dissertation, is that with the coming of the Dholera project, a quintessentially

[7] Neoliberalism, primarily, refers to the laissez-faire economic liberalism practiced since the 1980s, which includes policies such as privatisation, free trade agreements between nations, state deregulation, the opening up of financial markets, encouragement of foreign direct investment, and reductions in government spending in order to increase the role of the private sector in the economy (Harvey, 1989). It is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

[8] Hindutva is a distinct form of Hindu right-wing nationalism. Pioneered by V.D. Savarkar (1969), the concept portrayed Hindus, for the first time, as the original people of India, 'with a distinct territorial, racial, and linguistic identity'. Hindutva translates into *Hinduness*. I expand on the definition of Hindutva in Chapter 2.

neoliberal project, Hindutva networks in the villages of Dholera have taken newer forms to drive forward its exclusionary cultural and religious ideologies while accruing material benefits from the project. In the process, what is witnessed is a coming together of actors and practices of neoliberalism and Hindutva.

Thus, this dissertation lies at the intersection of themes concerning development, neoliberalism, smart urbanism and right-wing nationalism, and is of topical significance to India, Asia as well as the world. It gives a detailed picture of how the smart cities of the future are likely to be planned, delivered or governed – largely by the active functioning of a host of shadow practices by actors in the state, society and market. As I will illustrate in the next chapter, the existing scholarship exploring the connections between these themes are macro-level studies and do not inform us how they come together in everyday lives. This dissertation unfolds an altogether different dimension, by explaining how liberalisation and Hindutva come together in rural areas and how they affect the specific configurations of state-society-market relations. More importantly however, as I will illustrate, Dholera exhibits a number of contradictory traits of both neoliberalism and Hindutva, between their ideologies and their practices. These contradictory traits help Hindutva and neoliberalism, and push the agendas of the state on most occasions in case of Dholera.

This chapter introduces the case of Dholera SIR in more depth, conveying its significance, and goes on to describe the research context, research questions and focus of the study. Section 1.2 discusses the protracted journey of development Dholera has witnessed that essentially mirrors India's trajectory of development. This section also locates the dissertation's relevance to similar current global phenomena underlining the urgency to study such cases. Section 1.3 introduces the themes of the dissertation while explaining

the research questions which guide it. This is followed by Section 1.4 that spells out the main arguments of the dissertation along with an outline of each chapter.

1.2 Dholera as a symbol of the confluence of neoliberalism and right-wing nationalism

The 1990s was a historic decade for India that significantly altered and transformed the future course of the Indian political economy. While on the one hand, the country decided to open its markets to the world by initiating a set of economic reforms, on the other hand, it witnessed a significant rise of right-wing Hindu nationalism. The rise of both these phenomena, neoliberalism and right-wing nationalism, has been witnessed across many parts of the world although in varying degrees.

The adoption of neoliberal policies ushered in a new era of economic growth, albeit with significant contradictory societal outcomes. Urbanisation and infrastructure projects such as industrial corridors and Special Economic Zones (SEZs) have been some of the key spatial policies during this period that prioritised economic growth above all else. This led to concerted attempts on the part of several provincial governments to adopt strategies competing against each other to attract foreign and domestic investment and stimulate private enterprise, with the hope of unleashing high growth rates. As the policies targeted investment into existing and proposed urban spatial projects, of late, the concept of smart cities that use information and communications technology (ICT) in their management and functioning, has been proffered as a panacea to provide ‘sustainable development’ and to deal with major challenges such as stagnating economic growth, unemployment, and environmental degradation. While its efficiency and ability to address these issues remains unproven, India has witnessed the launch of smart city projects such as Dholera along with

another hundred cities that are to be upgraded under the '100 Smart Cities'[9] project launched in 2015.

Around the same time, India witnessed a rise of political illiberalism in the form of right-wing Hindu nationalism or Hindutva across many provinces. This resulted in the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party [Indian People's Party, (BJP)] coming to power at national level as well as in many provinces across the country. At a critical juncture when neoliberalism and Hindutva are becoming further entrenched in the country, this dissertation makes an empirical and conceptual contribution by demonstrating the intricate connections between these two economic and cultural ideologies, as they help one another take root in a particular place. I argue that the role of the state is key in neoliberalism and Hindutva coming together and taking their agendas forward. This coming together of two ideologies into newer geographies also shows a significant departure of the Indian developmental state from a previous state-led model to a market-led type. Dholera essentially represents this journey of the state.

Dholera has had a unique history remaining a prominent focus of the state in terms of development since India's independence from the British in 1947. It was in the 1960s when the Sardar Sarovar Dam[10], also called the Narmada Dam, was being planned and Dholera was notified as one of the beneficiaries of the project. The government, at that time, argued that in order to support more than one crop a year 'on the precious black soil',[11] it was

[9] 100 Smart Cities or the National Smart Cities Mission is an urban renewal and retrofitting project launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2015. This was one of the pledges from his 2014 parliamentary election campaign. The status of the project is debatable. For details, refer to Das (2020) and Praharaj et al. (2018).

[10] The Sardar Sarovar Dam is a concrete gravity dam on the Narmada River in Gujarat constructed to irrigate drought prone or water scarce regions especially Kutch and Saurashtra. The provinces of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan are all beneficiaries with water and electricity supplied from the dam.

[11] Interviews with Bhaubhai and Vijayrajsinh in Dholera, August 2017.

necessary for Dholera to be given more water. The government acquired land from farmers to construct the canals in the decades that followed.

Although newer versions of 'development' have since been launched over subsequent decades, Narmada's water is yet to reach Dholera. The Kalpasar Project that has been in planning since the 1970s was announced by the provincial government in the 1980s (Shah, 2018). The ambitious plan included building a dam across the Gulf of Khambhat for establishing a huge fresh water reservoir to provide for irrigation, drinking and industrial purposes, sourced from the seasonal rivers which meet the sea at this location (Figure 1.3). A 10-lane road link was to be set up over the dam, significantly reducing the distance between South Gujarat and Saurashtra, the greater region encompassing Dholera (ibid). Although the project has not seen any construction, it has a dedicated wing under the water resource ministry and is often talked about in policy circles.

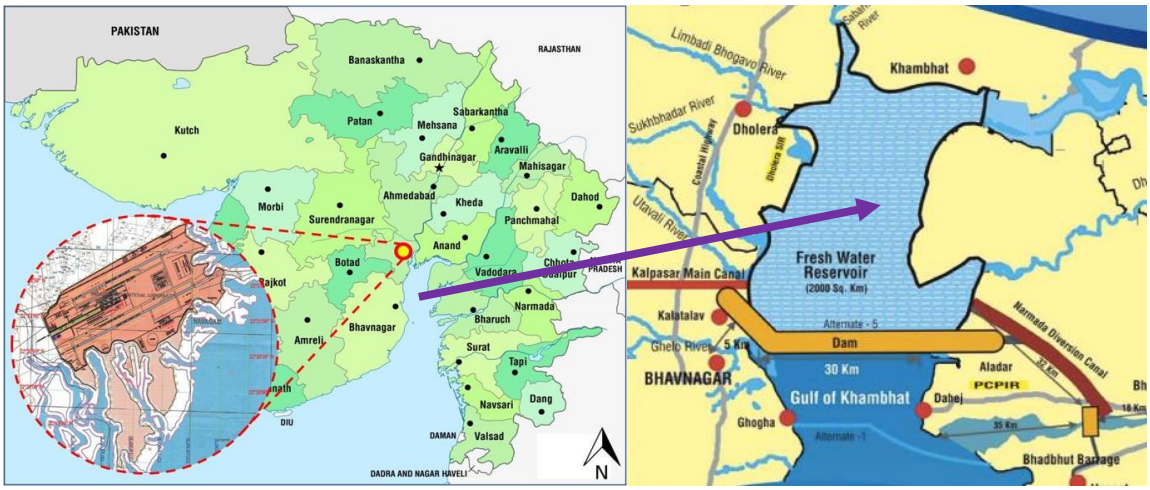


Figure 1.3. Left: The location of Dholera in Gujarat with the inset showing Dholera SIR (DIPP, 2018). Right: The Kalpasar Project in the Gulf of Khambhat in the Arabian Sea (Source: Kalpasar official website).

With economic narratives shifting towards liberalisation and the political climate changing in favour of the BJP, who went on to capture the provincial government, the 1990s witnessed private corporations becoming key players in infrastructure provisions in Gujarat. There were proposals to revive the ancient Dholera sea port. In 2002, the port was

announced to which a chemical industrial estate was added later (Projects Today, 2006). The government acquired substantial areas of village common land through the Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC). The location of the project was barely a few kilometers from the Velavadar Blackbuck National Park on the western edge of the region. The pronouncement of the chemical industrial estate resulted in local villagers and activists filing a petition at the High Court, which led to a dampening of the initial euphoria around the project. However, there was a significant spike in land sales (and hence land prices too) after the announcement of the project (covered in detail in Chapter 5). The current state of the project is unclear although the GIDC acquired land has not been returned and remains with the state.

In 2007, a site to develop a new Ahmedabad International Airport was moved to Fedara, which is 15 kilometres from the eastern boundary of current Dholera SIR (TNN, 2008). Later, the site was moved closer to Dholera and in its current form, is the proposed Dholera International Airport (Arora, 2010). European airplane manufacturer Airbus planned to start an aerospace and defence cluster using this proposed airport, supposed to be one of the largest in the country. Continuing with neoliberal policies, in 2009, the provincial government announced the Dholera Special Investment Region. With the proliferation of the idea of smart cities across the globe, it was argued that Dholera would be developed as India's very own smart city, with state of the art technologies and infrastructure. Hence, 'Dholera smart city' came into being.

These visions are reproductions of the state's approach towards development as they represent the state's own journey from a 'modernising' state to a 'liberalising' state that now focuses on market-oriented development. Although each of these projects has its own set of political contexts behind it, which I discuss in the dissertation, the changing

narratives of development in one such small place essentially marks the shift of the state's stance on development. While the post-independence state in Gujarat (as in the rest of India or the newly independent states across the world), focused on delivering a state-led planned economy, since the 1990s the state has essentially entered a phase when it began promoting infrastructure projects such as sea ports, airports or building of SIRs and smart cities through substantial involvement of private corporations. In this way, Dholera marks a significant departure towards market-led development.

James Ferguson (1994) mentions the story of a villager from Lesotho saying: 'It seems that politics nowadays is nicknamed development.' This was due to the failure to deliver despite multiple development projects, while social problems such as inequities remained. Not very different was the sarcastic view of the farmer I quoted at the start of this chapter. Despite newer versions of development, be it state-led or neoliberal, none of those has been implemented. Hence, as one local argued, Dholera's villages (especially those along the sea) remain 'hundreds of years behind the rest of Gujarat'.[12] Over the decades, the sphere of development has expanded often due to political compulsions and 'development' has often been used as a key tool by the state to create legitimacy. Beyond legitimacy, development has also provided a platform to political entities to reimagine the idea of the state. Hence, it was the developmental state led by the first Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru in the post-independent era; the neoliberal state since the 1990s, or of late, what has been referred to as the Hindutva state given the entrenchment of the ideology across the length and breadth of the country.

Another key aspect within the state's developmental endeavours has been the use of projects of urbanisation or infrastructure building as the generator of economic growth,

[12] Interview with Mangalram (pseudonym) in Dholera in August 2017.

and as marking a break from a previous era. Whereas the British built New Delhi as a symbol of the Raj to mark a break from previous rulers (the Mughals), the first Prime Minister of independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru, similarly opted to build new planned cities. While laying down the foundations of Chandigarh, India's first planned city in the modern era, Nehru argued: 'let this be a new town symbolic of the freedom of India, unfettered by the traditions of the past ... an expression of the nation's faith in the future' (Kalia, 2004; 2006). Closer home is the planned city of Gandhinagar, the provincial capital of Gujarat. Over the years, governments have hired planners, consultants seeking to use the 'blank slate' that these potential cities provide to make a radical break from previous ideas of the state. Modi, whose tenure in Gujarat or as the Prime Minister of India has been marked by many instances of authoritarian tendencies, said this before the launch of the flagship 100 Smart Cities project (Tolan, 2014):

> *Cities in the past were built on river banks. They are now built along highways. But in the future they will be built based on availability of optical fiber networks and next generation infrastructure.*

Modi's comment that cities in the future will depend on 'next generation infrastructure' is an attempt to mark a departure from the previous ways of city planning. Hence, the case of Dholera is significant as Modi continues to champion the project possibly to mark a break from previous Nehruvian ideas of the state and bring in a sense of 'newness'. Scholars have elucidated how leaders with similar authoritarian or right-wing nationalist tendencies use 'seductive language and technologically utopian imaginings of the future' (Bunnell, 2015) in these projects that are essentially embedded in neoliberal policies to bring in a semblance of progress even if at the cost of dispossession of large populations. The construction span of these infrastructure projects is usually rather long, during which such leaders may have sold its imageries at various platforms or won many elections using the project's grandeur as a measure of the leader's own success or ability to do something

'big'. Thus, what matters most for Dholera is how it is the biggest or the first smart city or how it is double the size of Delhi or six times the size of Shanghai.[13] Whether its promise has been delivered or not remains less important. At the same time, when such projects have faced protests by farmers, the 'charismatic' leaders have turned to authoritarianism or have gone back to other populist welfare measures to mitigate some of the losses of farmers. What we get is a combination of neoliberalism and right-wing nationalism. Such trends are widespread across countries in Asia, Europe, North and South America.

The task of analysing the practices of neoliberalism is significant in the current period. It is doubtful if there is any place in the world which remains untouched by market forces. The question of whether neoliberal policies are good or bad goes unchallenged by political parties from both the right and left. As India has witnessed since the 1990s, the only constant when political regimes change are successive neoliberal policies. Ultimately, the triumph of the market seems imminent, being at the centre of myriad processes discussed under the rubric of economic liberalisation, globalisation, development, and even democracy. The importance of this study comes equally from the triumph of right-wing ideologies and their intended outcomes as they capture not just political power but also become a way of life.

The combination of economic liberalisation and right-wing nationalism (Hindutva for India) may at first glance appear somewhat unexpected because the former is based on a liberal view of the economy while the latter is based on an illiberal, exclusionary view of state and society. Neoliberalism is a 'free trade faith' being essentially a transnational project reflecting the interests of finance capital (Bourdieu, 1998). On the other hand,

[13] Narendra Modi, in one of the 2014 parliamentary election campaign speeches in front of a businesse group, Indian Merchants' Chamber, claimed that Dholera city will be double in size of Delhi and six times the size of Shanghai. This is, of course, factually wrong (Newsd, 2020).

Hindutva's foundational ideology vociferously opposes such global integration, instead invoking vague arrangements of economic nationalism. However, in practice, both have seen very little such contradiction as noticed by scholars across the world. As I will go on to discuss, despite apparent tension between the two ideologies, it is important to note that the disjuncture between what they profess and what they practice enables the two ideologies to come together and align their interests.

Disjuncture, the word, for this dissertation is used to refer to the gap between the ideal worlds and the social reality that are encountered in the process of of establishing those, similar to Lewis and Mosse's (2006) use of it. Scholars have suggested that disjuncture might be a strategy rather than a by-product of a process (cited in Rossi, 2004: 559) which also is the case in my research as I go on to explain in the dissertation. Although the term can be interpreted in different ways, I use it to refer to 'the fact of disjoining or condition of being disjoined; disjunction; separation' as the Oxford English Dictionary defines it. While scholars including Appadurai (1990) have used the term in similar contexts, it has not been elaborated yet by scholars.

The idea of delivering development through an infrastructure project such as Dholera comes at the back of significant changes witnessed over the last few decades following the hegemony of market forces. As the market has become the norm, issues of 'inequality between rich and poor, rural and urban, labour and capital' or the loss of well-being has resulted in myriad reactions across societies. One of the common reactions to this has been the rise of authoritarian populist leaders often in the form of the 'strong man'[14]. Among such leaders, be it Modi, Trump, Erdoğan or Duerte, often there is a push to increase

[14] Narendra Modi, during his 2014 election campaign would frequently boast of having a 56-inch chest to take down the enemies of India. Similar 'strong man' talk has come from the likes of Brazillian President Bolsonaro, Turkish President Erdoğan, US President Trump or Phillippines President Duterte.

natural resource extraction and similarly environmentally destructive practices. At the level of the state, these leaders have moved towards authoritarian or fascist tendencies, utilising state powers to increase surplus for a few while moving away from any idea of welfare for the majority of citizens (Scoones et al. 2018). Of course, the intensity of these elements varies across countries or even within a country. However, their global relevance is beyond doubt and that is where the study of Dholera becomes important.

In recent decades, the extension of neoliberalism and right-wing nationalism to newer geographies have propelled many countries and societies at an alarming pace towards heightened levels of inequality across income, race or religion. At the same time, the overlap of the two ideologies, which is far beyond their rise pan-India in the 1990s when the BJP party along with most of the other Hindutva organisations embraced neoliberalism, should impress upon us the need to look beyond macro-level ideological intersections. We are witness to a distinct moment in history of the rise of right-wing nationalism hand in glove with neoliberal capitalism, although there may be significant differences in how they are constituted in different places.

With respect to India, there have been theoretical (Chacko, 2018; Gopalakrishnan, 2006) or macro-level accounts of the commonalities between neoliberalism and right-wing Hindu nationalism by various scholars (Breman, 2020; Corbridge and Harriss, 2000; Desai, 2006; Sud, 2012). Atul Kohli (1989) argued that Hindutva has been used as an electoral strategy by the pro-business elite to connect with the large Hindu majority of the country. Ashutosh Varshney (1999) analysed it through identity politics that helped implement the economic reforms in the 1990s. Corbridge and Harriss (2000) argued it to be the outcome of an ‘elite revolt’, coming especially from the middle classes and upper

castes against an earlier model of state directed economic development and social justice. I disuss these existing literature throughout the dissertation.

While many of these explanations can be witnessed simultaneously in Gujarat as Sud (2012) mentioned, what is usually missing are micro-level studies that can give a richer account of the coming together of these ideologies in a particular place. Whereas this confluence may have occurred at a later point in time in many other provinces in India, Gujarat witnessed it at least a decade earlier. The culmination of this partnership in Gujarat was the rise of Modi, who was the Chief Minister of Gujarat for four consecutive terms, and is currently in his second term as Indian Prime Minister. In exploring the official and unofficial activities that shape the running of the everyday state, this dissertation provides an understanding of the provincial and sub-provincial processes that shape the establishment of right-wing leaders in the hearts and minds of the people, in both government and society.

1.3 Research Questions on the state, neoliberalism and Hindutva

Within this context of neoliberalism and right-wing nationalism, the state remains at the center of all developmental endeavours. Hence, the dissertation analyses these phenomena through the case of Dholera by using the state as an analytical lens while neoliberalism and Hindutva provide the context. I disentangle how the state has come to be constituted due to profound changes brought about by policies of neoliberalism and an extension of Hindu nationalism into these geographies. State refers to the set of institutions of political and executive control, 'a palpable nexus of practice and institutional structure centred on government' (Abrams, 1988: 58; Harriss-White, 2003: 72). In other words the state 'refers to the state apparatus—a set of political, administrative and coercive institutions and organisations, more or less well coordinated by an executive authority: the government'

(Mooij, 1996; cited in Sud, 2007: 604). This is the formal state, centred on the bureaucracy as a key implementing body for a project such as Dholera. However, studying the everyday functioning of the state at the ground level in Dholera or in Gandhinagar, I explore other dimensions that complicate such an understanding of the state as a concept. The state in practice is what I call the 'Actually Existing State' (AES), a multi-faceted, internally differentiated, pluralised entity rather than a homogenous one (Sinha, 2011). Through this, I point towards a more nuanced, situated understanding of how state policies emerge, how they take root in a particular place, and their impact on the entity of the state.

In framing the AES, I make four key propositions. My first proposition is that the AES is characterised by both formal and shadow elements. Formal state officials accept tribute, patronage or clientage whereas non-state actors use the shadow of the state to earn their livelihoods. In the process, the activities of the formal state are shadowed from within or from outside and by both state and non-state actors. Building on this, my second proposition is that a number of actors simultaneously constitute the shadow and formal elements of AES. The state is shaped by their practices. I call them middlemen, who do not neatly belong to either of the two realms even if they distinctly represent state and non-state organisations. Through their ability to manipulate their proximity to the state, society or other non-state organisations, they affect the entity of the state or the delivery of services by the state.

The third proposition looks at the consequences of the first two propositions. As the smart city project attracts both support and resistance, the blurred boundaries of the formal and the shadow state work together to diffuse anti-SIR protests or to smoothen business deals. In the process, the two projects of economic and cultural-religious ideologies are used in various ways and often there is a disjuncture between their ideologies and practices. This

leads to the fourth proposition. The AES in everyday practices in Dholera constitutes and is, simultaneously, constituted by intricate linkages between these two economic and cultural ideologies: neoliberalism and Hindutva. The networks provided by these ideologies facilitate the AES's functioning as their material benefits determine the success, failure or longevity of the state. In Chapter 2, I discuss each of the four propositions in depth while also providing a detailed guideline on how they speak to the overall dissertation.

In trying to see how these practices unfold through the actors involved and what these practices mean for the concept of the state, the dissertation is guided by the following questions:

- What constitutes the Actually Existing State (AES) in the proposed Dholera SIR? How do the formal and the shadow elements of the AES feed off each other in Dholera?
- Which factors and actors help neoliberal policies to be embedded in the everyday lives of people?
- How has neoliberalism found a marriage of convenience with Hindutva in Gujarat? Who are the key actors and how do they use the state and societal norms to smoothen the process?

1.4 Dissertation outline

In answering the research questions, the dissertation finds the disjuncture between the practices and ideologies of both neoliberalism and Hindutva to be a defining theme in Dholera, shaping the central argument of the dissertation concerning the nature of the state. While neoliberalism is taken to imply an ideological emphasis on market ethic, competition and commodification, the practices manifest the lack of competition or an ideal type neoliberalism as it mutates depending on the context. Similarly, Hindutva in practice exhibits departure from its foundational ideologies in order to be successful. In

all, the target remains the capture of the state and society for both neoliberalism and Hindutva. The research questions are addressed through analysis of my empirical observations and related literature, leading to the arguments discussed across the remaining eight chapters of the dissertation.

Chapter 2, The 'Actually Existing State' lays out the concepts that frame the dissertation. Through an analysis of the role of the state at multiple levels in Dholera, the dissertation argues that to understand processes of urbanisation in rural India, two key aspects signify the interconnections between state and society: Hindutva and neoliberalism. In doing so, I disentangle how the state has come to be constituted due to profound changes brought about by policies of neoliberalism and an extension of Hindu nationalism into the countryside. By using the state as the analytical framework that draws from the scholarship of Timothy Mitchell and Philip Abrams, I put forth a set of propositions to better understand the phenomenon of Dholera. Each empirical chapter (5, 6, 7, 8) then elaborates on one or more of these propositions through the field data. To develop the framework, I build on a wide range of literature that includes, but is not limited to, the scholarship around the concept of the state, anthropological studies of the everyday state, and scholarship on Hindutva and neoliberalism.

With respect to both the themes of Hindutva and neoliberalism, the chapter focuses on the dynamics that operate outside their ideological framework and help them successfully become entrenched in a particular place. The intention is to identify and understand the 'idiosyncratic expressions' that 'operate outside of the institutional and ideological framework' of such philosophies (Anderson 2015: 47) which become mediating discourses in their own right.

Chapter 3, Research Methodology describes the research process. In doing so, it explains the epistemological basis of the research. I conducted the research mainly in the site of Dholera smart city spread over 22 villages (along with adjoining towns and villages) and the office of the Special Purpose Vehicle that has been designed to deliver the Dholera project. In the villages, my focus was on the functioning of the state and its shadow, actors of Hindutva or proponents of neoliberalism, their involvement in land deals or their attempt to diffuse farmers' protests, the everyday resistance of farmers against land acquisition, and farmers' multiple roles including those in which their consent or opposition was unclear. Importantly, I also discuss how the case study or the field guided my theories at many points or vice versa.

Chapter 4, '*Development has gone crazy*': the Gujarat Model of unequal development through neoliberalism and Hindutva maps the background story of the province of Gujarat in which the research is located. I provide an overview of post-independent Gujarat's political economy telling the story through four key moments that are crucial to understand Dholera. Focusing on development, the chapter analyses the evolution and outcome of the famed 'Gujarat model of development' that has incorporated both Hindutva and neoliberalism. Beyond creating legitimacy for the state and state actors, development has provided the platform to reimagine the idea of the state. Gujarat over the last few decades has been led by a political party that furthers Hindutva ideologies and has taken neoliberal policies onboard. The chapter illustrates that the intensified adoption of both Hindutva and neoliberalism has resulted in unequal development across regions, sectors of the economy

and industries, as well as across axes of class, caste[15] and religion. The unequal development that even a small place such as Dholera has witnessed over the years almost replicates the provincial patterns of the political economy. The chapter proposes that as unequal development is inherent in both the ideologies of neoliberalism and Hindutva, they further exacerbate societal inequalities across multiple spheres let alone address these.

Having discussed the background of Gujarat's development, Chapter 5, 'Development neither reaches us nor leaves us. It's an illusion': The story of development in Dholera empirically explores the central themes in the study site, namely the state, neoliberalism and Hindutva. This chapter addresses two key aspects of the dissertation. Firstly, it provides the context of neoliberalism and Hindutva in the 'development' process in Dholera and secondly, it takes these observations forward to link these phenomena to formal and shadow elements of the Actually Existing State (the first proposition I make concerning the AES), addressing the question of how the coming together of liberal economic policies and illiberal Hindutva is even possible (Sud, 2012). Deconstructing the state through ideas of development, I document and analyse the initial period of the arrival of a series of development projects in Dholera in the early 2000s with the essential facets of neoliberalism which also became the vehicle for Hindutva to take root. I introduce the

[15] Caste in India refers to the four subdivisions of the traditional Hindu hierarchy: Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (merchants), and Shudras (labourers). Dalits, treated as the 'untouchable' caste lie outside this hierarchy. While the first three groups are usually referred to as 'upper' or 'forward' castes, the Shudras form the 'middle' castes or the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Dalits are the 'lower'/'backward' castes or the Scheduled Castes (SC). The indigenous tribes, variously referred to as tribals or Adivasis also remain outside the hierarchy and are called the Scheduled Tribes (ST). However, there is a significant variation across provinces in India. I give the details of these groups with respect to Dholera in Section 4.2 in Chapter 4. A system of affirmative action, the 'Reservation system' provides representation for some of these historically and currently disadvantaged castes (largely middle and lower castes) especially in education, public employment and positions of political representation. Reservation is primarily given to three groups: SCs, STs, and OBCs. However, different new groups have been included or on rare occasions excluded owing to political pressure. Provinces can also bring in new communities within the ambit of reservation. Reservation has often become controversial. I will discuss some of the relevant controversies throughout the dissertation and especially in Chapter 4.

actors of neoliberalism and Hindutva at the ground level which scale up to the provincial or federal level due to the key roles they play in many of the shadow land transactions in the early years of these projects. I go on to show the key role of AES actors in the project of reimagining the state by Hindutva.

Chapter 6, Mimicking the State: Shadow Practices and Hindutva in Dholera analyses the second proposition concerning the AES, namely that a number of actors simultaneously constitute both the shadow and formal elements of AES. As these actors, whom I refer to as middlemen, mimic the state and straddle roles in both the formal and shadow state spaces, the chapter analyses the impact of their practices on the entity of the state and its relationship with society. Middlemen often use their proximity to the state as well as Hindutva networks to make land deals happen or to corner the benefits provided by investment by private corporations. At the same time, these practices delineate Hindutva's capture of development and its role in the everyday state and its outcome on citizens' access to the state. Through the study of the middlemen's two relationships: one with the state and the second with Hindutva organisations, this chapter shows how the two ideologies come together on the ground. Middlemen mimic the state to appear state-like while banal forms of Hindutva provide networks that connect these actors even if they come from diverse backgrounds with disparate state or societal origins and associations. Through these practices, Hindutva is strengthened on the ground while the project of neoliberalism takes shape. In discussing this, the chapter considers what policies of neoliberalism or state retrenchment could mean for smaller towns and villages where a neoliberal state has decided to deliver development through an infrastructure project.

Focusing on the third proposition concerning the AES, Chapter 7: The Actually Existing State at work in Gandhinagar, looks at the blurred boundaries of the formal and shadow

state, which smoothen business deals at multiple levels of the state. The chapter studies the functioning of the Special Purpose Vehicle based in Gandhinagar, which is designed to deliver the Dholera smart city. The chapter examines the impact of blurred boundaries between state and non-state, public and private, or formal and shadow elements at higher echelons of the state. The ethnography follows a few bureaucrats while they interact with a host of national and transnational agencies that are tasked with delivering 'development' in Dholera, illuminating how the state functions at multiple scales. Along with the bureaucrats, I also study staff of the American private consultant AECOM[16] who are based inside the government office of Dholera Special Investment Region Development Authority (DSIRDA), representing the physical overlap of the state and private corporations. The chapter illustrates that even at the higher echelons of the state, the actors of the AES undertake a host of shadow practices to take forward the project of neoliberalism while also being guided by ideologies of Hindutva. Whether or not their shadow practices escalate the speed of the project is one matter, but in the process, a number of the usual bureaucratic procedures are skipped. I argue that these shadow practices by formal state actors take place due to the demands of the entrepreneurial zeal of the state, a key facet of neoliberalism.

Chapter 8: Protests, Neoliberalism and Hindutva amongst farmers analyses the fourth proposition concerning the Actually Existing State, namely that in everyday practices, the AES constitutes and is, simultaneously, constituted by intricate linkages between these two economic and cultural ideologies. The networks provided by these ideologies facilitate

[16] AECOM is an American multinational engineering and consulting group with interests in design, consulting, construction, and management services (AECOM Website, 2019). There is no mention of the full form of the term AECOM. One of the largest global infrastructure consultancy firms featuring on the Fortune 500 list, it is the Program Management Consultant for Dholera SIR tasked with looking after the entire programme of the project.

the AES's functioning as their material benefits determine the success, failure or longevity of the state. Using the theme that underlies the central argument of the dissertation, concerning the disjuncture between ideology and practice in both neoliberalism and Hindutva, the chapter explains farmers' weak resistance to the SIR project as well as the continued support for the BJP party. As actors of AES adopt various strategies that mark a departure from the foundational ideologies of neoliberalism and Hindutva, the chapter gives a vivid picture of how and why the two economic and cultural ideologies, one liberal and the other illiberal, come together and help each other to take root in a particular place.

In Chapter 9: Conclusion, I summarise the findings and the main contributions of the dissertation. I comment on the implications of the findings on understanding the state and its developmental endeavours in India while pointing out the importance of the empirical study of projects of urbanisation and industrialisation that have adopted newer genealogies, such as smart urbanism, for the development of theory. Finally, I outline the limitations and possible future directions of research.

In the next chapter, I will cover the analytical framework of the dissertation: the three themes, the scholarship concerning them, and the contribution of the dissertation to the existing literature.

Chapter 2: The 'Actually Existing State': Literature Review and Analytical Framework

2.1 Introduction

> *The problem with our protest is that we cannot find who to fight against or where to fight. The 'sarkar'[17] is nowhere… You go to the Collector's office with your application letter, s/he[18] will say 'I do not have the power. I can keep your letter, that's it.' I received notices from the SIR (Authority), so I went to meet the (Town Planning) officer who comes to Dholera weekly. Useless. Then, I went to SIR office in Gandhinagar. Nobody knew who will speak (to me). If you go to Shivahare,[19] he will say I am just implementing the orders… Go and meet the MLA, he has no idea of SIR. Where should we go? Where is the sarkar then? Who is the sarkar? It is absent when we want to fight against it…*
>
> *…Whereas when they want our land, (even) the Talati will snatch it away from me. Now see, the sarkar is everywhere and everyone is sarkar… If you say now that you came to Dholera to buy land, you will find thousands of people telling you that they know how it works, they have people in offices… Go and meet a BJP leader, he will tell you that he can complete the deal in one or two days because it is their sarkar. Now because you want to buy, everyone knows the sarkar, everyone is part of it. [But] if I go to the BJP leaders and ask for help in the protests, he will not know anyone in the sarkar.*
>
> A Dholera farmer[20]

A post-graduate in economics and a retired government employee leading the farmers' protests, Vijayrajsinh aptly articulated the role of the 'sarkar' in Dholera. His struggle to find the 'sarkar' against whom he could lodge the protests against land acquisition by the state sums up the importance of the 'state', while signifying the hide and seek game it plays with citizens. At the same time, two more themes emerge very clearly whenever

[17] Among the many different meanings, the Oxford English Dictionary defines 'sarkar' (or sirkar) as the 'state' or the 'government'. It can also be used to refer to a person in a position of authority by a subordinate. It is also a surname in India. It has an Urdu/Persian origin. I use the term to refer to the state unless otherwise specified. As Simpson (2006: 346) similarly noted, during interviews in Gujarat with common citizens, the terms to refer to the 'state' are usually 'government' or 'sarkar'.

[18] The interviewee uses the Hindi word 'wo' which may refer to both male and female in a higher position in office or in social ties.

[19] Shivahare was the Chief Executive Officer of Dholera SIR Development Authority during my fieldwork.

[20] Interview with Vijayrajsinh in Dholera, September 2017. Pseudonym used throughout the dissertation unless otherwise specified.

Vijayrajsinh or other farmers talk of the 'sarkar'. One is the prevalence of Dholera smart city or the Special Investment Region (SIR) project and how the character of the 'sarkar' changed since the announcement of the project. Farmers often associate the 'sarkar' with their imminent dispossession, linking privatisation with how the 'sarkar' is handing over their land to corporations. The second topic that came up in interviews with farmers is the role of Hindutva actors and how they were enmeshed with the everyday state that the Dholera farmers encounter. As the farmers protesting against the project were largely against the BJP,[21] one may argue that they may have exaggerated views. However, both of these ideas articulated by villagers are buttressed upon observing the state from close quarters.

As Vijayrajsinh struggles with the state's deceptive nature of being everywhere and still nowhere, the concept of the state and its relationship with society becomes the key analytical lens for the dissertation. Of course, there is considerable literature across disciplines emerging from various geographies and cultures, which has contributed towards the concept of the state. This has ensured that even the most fundamental questions, such as if the state should be studied at all as an analytical category, have been raised. I find the state to be a useful concept on which to base my analysis. Not only does my empirical data show that the state remains a category which society is compelled to grapple with, but also because theoretically, the fluidity of the concept opens up new possibilities for analysis.

The same fluidity is also key to my contributions around the other two concepts that are central to the dissertation, neoliberalism and Hindutva. With regard to the fluidity of the

[21] Their support or opposition to the BJP party is not so straightforward, something I will analyse in Chapter 8.

state, that gives rise to a set of propositions concerning its nature, I term this concept the 'Actually Existing State'. With respect to Hindutva and neoliberalism, I use disjuncture in neoliberalism or in Hindutva to express the fluidity in their ideologies and practices. Through a description of the interactions between these concepts, I tell a more complex story of Dholera which goes beyond the unified understandings of either the state, neoliberalism or Hindutva.

With respect to the state, what has particularly captured the attention of scholars has been its relationship with society. From seeing the state as a solitary unit unaffected by the dynamics of society, a number of scholars have argued against a false dichotomy of two bounded entities represented as 'state' and 'society' in opposition to one another (Nugent, 1994). Fuller and Harriss (2001: 15) have rightly argued that in the case of India, 'sarkar' — understood as both 'state' and 'government' in Hindi — appears on many levels; when it interacts with everyday citizens at its lowest echelons, the state is usually staffed by people with whom citizens may have some kind of social relationship. The state is not always 'faceless' (ibid) and could be trespassed by actors who are not necessarily part of the state in the strictest sense. Berenschot (2010) asserts that on the ground it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between the state and society since they meet at a 'blurred boundary' (Gupta, 1995) or 'spongiform interface' (Harriss-White, 1997). As Vijayrajsinh, my interviewee, further pointed out, the same state may play hide and seek with its citizens, at once both concealed and visible when serving its own interests in its interactions with society. The strikingly self-interested state in Dholera disappears when people are in need, and reappears when the state is in need.

Beyond the fluidity of the state, I propose that there are two fundamental characteristics of the state in relation to society. These concern its ideological position, as well as its

relationship with market forces. In the Indian context, these characteristics relate to neoliberalism and Hindutva. As I have mentioned earlier, I use 'state' as a concept similar to the 'government' referring to institutional aspects, including the bureaucracy, political legislature, judiciary and police machinery (Harriss-White, 2003; Sud, 2007). This is the *formal state*, and in the dissertation, the focus is largely on the executive, centred on the bureaucracy with its associated implementing body for a project such as Dholera.

In this chapter, I first delineate the theoretical framework of the dissertation and point out its key contributions. In Section 2.2, I lay down my propositions around the concept of the state to better understand the case of Dholera while pointing out some of the contributions of the dissertation to the existing literature. Over the subsequent three sections, I cover the three themes: state (Section 2.3), neoliberalism (Section 2.4) and Hindutva (Section 2.5). In each of these, I discuss the gaps in the scholarship and how I attempt to address these gaps. The chapter concludes with Section 2.6.

2.2 The Actually Existing State

Studying the everyday functioning of the state, at the ground level in Dholera or in Gandhinagar, brings newer dimensions that complicate not just a unified understanding of the state but also urges us to take on board the newer intermeshing of practices and actors that have now become part of the state. The state in practice in Dholera (or in Gandhinagar), which I call the 'Actually Existing State', is a multi-faceted, internally differentiated, pluralised entity rather than a homogenous one (Sinha, 2011). Through this, I point towards a more nuanced, situated understanding of how state policies emerge, how they take root in a particular place, their impact on the entity of the state and most importantly, the role of the ideologies, actors and practices of Hindutva and neoliberalism in the everyday workings of the state.

While the scholarship on the state, which as I explain in subsequent sections, disaggregates the state in interactions with society, it fails to explain several phenomena. For example, the newly emerging interactions between the state and businesses in infrastructure projects, lubricated by right-wing religious or cultural ideologies (that is Hindutva for India), within the backdrop of neoliberalism, cannot be explained through the existing scholarship, be it the case of Turkey, Brazil or India. Existing studies in India are usually at the macro-level and fail to explain how these two projects interact in the everyday lives of state and society. Secondly, when the everyday state is studied, it has been done in the context of religious riots in urban regions such as Ahmedabad (Berenschot, 2010; 2011a; Desai, 2008; Ghassem-Fachandi, 2012). These studies thus fail to explain the continuing relevance of an exclusivist majoritarian ideology, i.e. Hindutva, in rural areas or amongst farmers. This is especially important when proponents of the these ideologies are behind their dispossession. I explain this in more detail in the course of this chapter.

This dissertation provides an explanation based on the everyday interactions of the state and society at the micro level, which I suggest is a richer approach to analysis. To answer the research questions mentioned in Chapter 1, I propose the framework of the Actually Existing State (AES). In framing the AES, I make four key propositions. Each empirical chapter in the dissertation focuses mainly on one or two of these distinctions:

1. My first proposition is that the AES is characterised by both formal and shadow elements. Formal state officials accept tribute, patronage or clientage whereas non-state actors use the shadow of the state to earn their livelihoods. In the process, the activities of the formal state are shadowed from within or outside and by both state and non-state actors. This makes the state porous to the actors of society as well as businesses. The porosity of the state shapes and at the same time is shaped by the disjuncture in economic or cultural

ideological projects, which I discuss below. The dissertation looks at the impact of the shadow and formal elements on citizens' access to the state. This is covered in Chapter 5 of the dissertation.

2. Building on this, my second proposition is that a number of actors simultaneously constitute the shadow and formal elements of AES. The state is shaped by the practices of these middlemen, who do not neatly belong to either of the two realms even if they distinctly represent state and/or non-state organisations. Through their ability to manipulate their proximity to the state, society or other non-state organisations, they affect the entity of the state and the delivery of its services. Chapter 6 of the dissertation covers this proposition through empirical data.

3. The third proposition looks at the consequences of the above two propositions. As the smart city project attracts both support and resistance, the blurred boundaries of the formal and shadow state work together to diffuse anti-SIR protests or to smoothen business deals. In the process, the two projects of economic and cultural-religious ideologies are used in various ways. Such interactions are present at multiple levels of the state. Thus, through shadow practices, they negotiate not just the anti-SIR protests by farmers through co-option, acquiescence or incorporation, but are also key to making business deals, which take place in the provincial capital with bigger investors of capital. Chapter 7 of the dissertation mainly focuses on this dimension.

4. This leads to the fourth proposition. The AES in everyday practices in Dholera constitutes and is, simultaneously, constituted by intricate linkages between these two economic and cultural ideologies and at multiple levels of the state. The networks provided by these ideologies facilitate the AES's functioning as their material benefits determine the success, failure or longevity of the state. This is covered in Chapter 8 of the dissertation.

The term, Actually Existing State (AES), is particularly influenced by Brenner and Theodore's (2002) concept of 'actually existing neoliberalism'. Both Harriss-White (2003) and Jessop (1990; 2015) have also used the terminology of the 'Actually Existing State' (AES, both the scholars do not use the term with abbreviations). However, they do not explore it conceptually. To Harriss-White (2003: 72), the AES is the local state that explains a great deal of overlap between the state and the economy present at administrative levels below the state capital. However, this dissertation understands the AES as being present at various levels of the state; it is not limited to the informal sector or the local state (ibid). In Dholera, the formal economy also taps into the informal economy, and the formal state taps into the shadow state.[22] This dissertation shows the role of AES actors at multiple levels of the state.

Similar to Mamonova et al. (2020: 02), I use the term 'actually existing' state, to focus on, 'the historically and culturally conditioned and context-specific manifestations' of the state in Dholera to analyse the uneven and variegated realities of how the state helps neoliberalism and Hindutva entrench, guided by 'empirical manifestations of the phenomenon, not by its precise definition or conceptualisation' of the state (ibid: 02). Thus, instead of 'moving analytically from the general and the ideal to the concrete' that would have necessitated assuming the state as a more or less coherent concept that then 'takes hold of specific social realities', I approach it from 'the perspective of practice, focusing on how it emerges out of variegated forms of socio-economic structures that are experienced from specific socially-situated positions' (ibid: 02).

[22] To clarify, I am not equating the informal economy with the shadow state; these are two distinct though overlapping entities.

Through the framework of AES, the dissertation contributes to the literature on the overlap of neoliberalism and Hindutva. This is witnessed in the everyday struggles of farmers to save their farmlands. Despite imminent dispossession, the actors of AES ensure that protests by farmers remain weak. The fourth proposition, concerning Hindutva-neoliberal networks, also fleshes out how Hindutva has effectively superseded earlier styles of political action amongst farmers, most notably the New Farmers Movement (Brass, 1994b).[23] This is explored in depth in Chapter 8.

Although, I do not explore in greater detail analytically, the dissertation speaks to an emerging scholarship around authoritarian populism in rural areas, which has delivered 'a surprising cast of charismatic but authoritarian leaders that include Erdoğan, Modi or Trump' (Scoones et al. 2018). The Journal of Peasant Studies recently explored the continuing rise of the phenomenon in its series 'Authoritarian Populism and the Rural World'. The dissertation reflects on how the phenomenon looks like on the ground, discussing the dynamics that come into play when the exclusionary and majoritarian ideology of Hindutva goes rural and negotiates a project with neoliberal tenets in the countryside. Importantly, the coming together of the two ideologies has added to the possibility of the rise of authoritarian populism in rural areas. It explains how these dynamics further entrench the popularity of a certain political leader (Narendra Modi in the case of India) or a political party (BJP) with an exclusivist agenda based on race, ethnicity or religion. Authoritarian populism in this case is from below—via infrastructure provision.

[23] I do not claim that the Hindutva groups have replaced farmers' movements across Gujarat, let alone across India. There are various land rights movements, farmers' protests across the country including Gujarat, led by the left and progressive platforms.

As I briefly discussed in Chapter 1 (Introduction), Dholera is the microcosm of development in Gujarat as well as India. While the story of the state's journey to the neoliberal state is one aspect, the rise of right-wing Hindu nationalism in the length and breadth of the country is another signifier. Hence, as the state has failed to deliver previous versions of development such as canals or dams, the current state is now pursuing an infrastructure project that intends to build a 'smart city' in the farmlands of Dholera. Along with this, the right-wing Hindu nationalist BJP party has replaced the previous hegemony of the Congress party in the political landscape. At the grassroots, the members of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh [National Volunteers Association (RSS hereon or 'Sangh')] or other Hindutva organisations have wiped the Congress party out of the landscape. At the same time, studying Dholera requires that the state is observed in its upper echelons, the office of the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) in the provincial capital, where the policies to be implemented in the villages of Dholera are planned. Whereas the case of Dholera shows the expected blurred nature of its boundaries with society at each level, my study also shows how the state has essentially taken on board newer actors and ideologies linked to both neoliberalism and Hindutva. These are some of the reasons that make Dholera an intriguing case to understand the state.

The next section on the scholarship on the concept of the state discusses the literature relevant to the dissertation, and helps me situate some of the propositions I have made above. This is especially with regard to the state's relation to its actors and their practices. The discussion on state and society also helps me situate how actors of neoliberalism and Hindutva trespass the state through their formal or shadow roles. The final two sections on these two ideologies then elaborate on how a contextual departure from their core ideologies help each of them gain further ground in constituting the state.

2.3 The State

To start with, Weber's concept of the modern state, 'a compulsory association with a territorial basis characterised by a system of administrative and legal order, which claims binding authority, not only over the members of the state, the citizens ... but also to a very large extent, over all action taking place in the area of its jurisdiction' has remained central since its articulation (Weber, 1964:156). Over the decades, this concept has been critiqued for its utility and relevance, nevertheless it remains significant for understanding the essence of the state.

Later influential scholarship comes from Abrams (1988) who proposes two distinct objects of study while dealing with the state: the state-system and the state-idea. The state-system is a palpable nexus of practice and institutional structure centred in government and characterised as extensive, unified and dominant in any given context. Its sources, structure and variations can be examined in fairly straightforward empirical ways. Secondly, there is a state-idea, projected, purveyed and variously believed in different societies at different times whose modes, effects and variations are also susceptible to research. The state starts its 'life as an implicit construct; it is then reified acquiring an overt symbolic identity' which is then 'progressively divorced from practice as an illusory account of practice' (Abrams, 1988). This dissertation draws from Abrams's proposals regarding the state to explain how the state-system and state-idea work together in the everyday practices of actors in state and society.

In a similar vein, Mitchell (1991) argues that the state has remained difficult to define especially due to the nature of its boundary with society that appears elusive, porous, and mobile. The edges of the state are uncertain as societal elements penetrate it on all sides, ensuring that the resulting boundary between state and society is difficult to determine

(ibid). Mitchell (1991) points out that the elusiveness of this boundary should not lead to sharper definitions of either concept, but lead us to explore more deeply the empirical clues to the state's actual nature.

According to Mitchell, the state is not to be analysed as a structure but as a structural effect (ibid). These effects are products of practices that give the state the appearance of a structure. When we approach the state as an effect of its practices, it is easy to acknowledge the power of its political arrangements as well as explain its elusiveness. As Migdal (2001) similarly argues, the state should be defined on the basis of the image of the state and the practices of its actors. This means that through the analysis of its practices or the effects that those practices create, it is easy to explain why the state simultaneously seems to stand apart from society and come across as an internal arrangement. Further, the boundary of the state is merely the effect of such arrangements and does not mark a real edge (Mitchell, 1991). Hence, such an illusory boundary can be trespassed by actors with any formal or non-formal associations with the state.

These perspectives are important for the dissertation as they explain the significant role played by state and non-state actors in Dholera in creating the idea of the state. It is through their practices that the Actually Existing State, which I delineated above, comes into existence in the everyday life of the citizens. These actors, whether part of the formal state or mimicking its practices, create an effect of the state. The propositions on the state in this dissertation take this scholarship forward. The next section on the scholarship studying the dynamics of the Indian state and society helps contextualise some of the key arguments of the dissertation. This is particularly important to understand the main roles played by non-state actors in the everyday lives of citizens over the years.

2.3.1 The Indian State

After independence from the British in 1947, India opted for a state-led development-planning model under the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Placing emphasis on the economies of scale associated with the manufacturing industry, Nehru tried to address the 'agrarian question' in the context of a grim picture of underemployment and low productivity in agriculture (Corbridge and Harriss 2000). Democracy, socialism and secularism were the foundational principles of the post independent Indian state. These principles came to be challenged over the subsequent decades particularly from forces of neoliberalism and Hindutva, as I discuss in the remaining parts of this chapter.

Some of the early influential scholarship around the Indian state focused on the organisation of the state through a coalition of dominant class interests (similar theses were developed by Bardhan, 1984; Varshney, 1995; Rudolph and Rudolph, 1987; and Vanaik, 1990). Kaviraj (1984; 1988) and Chatterjee (1986; 1998) put forward a richer analysis through the thesis of 'passive revolution' taking the dominant class coalition argument further. They point out that because Nehru and his small coterie of supporters were in a minority within Congress, he had to water down, if not completely abandon, progressive policies such as land redistribution. The state's elite involved in planning were relatively weak within society and were politically isolated. Hence, they were unable to exercise cultural leadership through society and came to rely heavily on 'state-bureaucratic agency' for bringing about social transformation (Chatterjee, 1998). Such bureaucrats who came in touch with society were not entirely 'faceless' and came with their own caste, kin relations along with the adherences to ideologies.

The thesis of passive revolution is supported by anthropological perspectives of the Indian state that discuss the role of 'big men' who were in coalitions with state elites (Bailey, 1963; Kothari, 1970). They played key roles in the elections, in the functioning of the

bureaucracy or in the everyday lives of citizens/subjects. They were often local notables – landed, wealthy, in positions of power in institutions of local government – exercising authority coming largely from the locally dominant caste. These 'big men' oiled by 'patronage – the exchange of offices, jobs and access to public resources for the mobilisation of electoral support' – formed the organisational base of the Congress-dominated political system although they were not necessarily active cadres (Weiner, 1967). Bailey argued that because of 'the fundamental fact of the economic and social cleavage, [the] politician cannot reach his electorate, the voters cannot communicate with the politicians and administrators, [and] the gap is bridged by the political broker and his network' (Bailey, 1963 cited in Corbridge and Harriss, 2000: 50). This is supported further through works on specific themes like patronage, in which these 'brokers' have found different names like middlemen, patrons, 'gatekeepers', *dalal*, and *pyarveekar* amongst various scholars (Manor, 2000; Oldenburg, 1987; Reddy and Haragopal, 1985; Sud, 2014a; Witsoe, 2012). Whereas the nature and profiles of the middlemen have changed over the decades, they play a key role and often become part of the state in Dholera as I illustrate in Chapter 6.

Looking through the analyses of Abrams or Mitchell above, these middlemen come to create the state effect through their practices despite not being formally part of the state system. Through the everyday practices of these actors in Chapter 6, I delineate how the idea of the state 'is reified' amongst subjects. Further, the dissertation documents how non-state actors pervade state spaces both physically as well as ideologically creating the state effect while opening up the avenue of 'reimagining' the state (Chapter 5). Some of the images I elucidate from the field underscore the reification described by Abrams (1988) or the 'state-effect' of Mitchell (1991), an outcome of the role of AES actors at multiple levels of the state. However, this reification ultimately creates an impression of the state

when actors from the shadows of the state become formal state actors. Hence, as I show in Chapters 6 and 7, people associated with Hindutva groups portray themselves as state actors, something mentioned by the farmer in the opening of this chapter.

An impact of their practices is that the boundary between state and society appears blurred as they trespass state spaces through their practices. This boundary is not only unclear; it is also fluid and negotiable according to social context. In that porosity and fluidity, the question is how and where do we find the state to study? Where does the state begin or end? In an interesting study, Mathur (2015) argues that even state officials themselves are often confused, and find the state illegible and unreadable. To look into how states are constituted, substantiated or constructed in the lives of citizens, one starting point is the study of the bureaucracy's everyday workings and interactions with society (Gupta and Sharma, 2006). This is particularly useful when studied at multiple levels as the Indian state has come to be constituted through everyday interactions of citizens in villages or towns often involving personal, kin or caste relations with state officials. While the state does operate within localised structures of power, it is also constituted by networks with outside actors such as higher-level bureaucracy, private consultants and international financial institutions, and most importantly global discourses such as neoliberalism.

I discuss neoliberalism in Section 2.4 of this chapter. As an example of its significance, even at the scale of Dholera's villages, its impact is clear. The number of village level officials (called Talatis, explained in fn 128) has reduced over the years, as the state has preferred outsourcing or stopping many of its developmental jobs. Previously one such village official would look after a village each. Since the 1990s, in Dholera, they are now responsible for at least two villages and in some cases, even more. Outsourcing can be witnessed in the revenue department at sub-district levels too. The computer operators in

the land record offices are employed by private companies, which won the contracts, with a paltry salary ranging from INR[24] 6,000 to INR 10,000 per month. This in turn has led to these employees looking for other sources to earn money, making use of such an important office. As I show in Chapter 6, many of them are involved in brokering land for private buyers.

Within this literature on the blurring of state-society boundaries in India, a significant contribution comes from Barbara Harriss-White (1997; 2003) in her study of the intermediate classes in a town in the southern province of Tamil Nadu. She explains how they 'colonise the state to further their interests' and expand the scope of what she calls the 'shadow state' which exists alongside and in some ways interlocking with the 'formal' state (Harriss-White, 2003). Here, the formal state refers to the set of institutions of political and executive control centred upon government while the shadow state represents the practices that are outside the formal counterparts. However, when one analyses the (formal) state and practices of its actors, the line between formal and shadow elements are blurred.

The term 'shadow state' has been used to refer to the state in countries like Sierra Leone which were characterised by 'the emergence of rulers drawing authority from their ability to control markets and their material rewards' (Reno, 1995: 3) especially through the exploitation of precious resources.[25] Following Harriss-White (2003), whereas the informal economy of the shadow state in Sierra Leone was loosely connected to its formal counterpart, the economy that the shadow state in India (or in Dholera) generates cannot

[24] 'INR' (₹) or variously termed 'Rupees' or 'Rs' refers to the currency of India. At the current exchange rate (as of November, 2020), 1 GBP equals INR 95.

[25] In a different context, Geiger and Wolch (1986) introduced the term 'shadow state' to theorise structural changes in the US and UK nonprofit sectors during the 1970s and 1980s (Trudeau, 2008; Wolch, 1990).

operate without the formal state. As I document throughout the dissertation, the shadow state and the economic activities generated in Dholera due to the coming of the neoliberal project are then strongly tied to actors and practices of Hindutva. This is one key aspect of the dissertation that runs through Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Importantly, official bureaucrats simultaneously play some roles in the shadow state while other actors make the shadow state a source of their self-employment, something we will witness throughout the dissertation. These actors (covered especially in Chapters 6 and 8) play a key role in taking Dholera smart city forward or in negotiating the politics of delivering the project. This is shown through an elaboration of the overlap of the shadow state with the formal state that is so obvious that it 'spills into the lanes surrounding state offices and into the private domestic space of officials' residences' providing perhaps the most vivid images of blurred boundaries (Harriss-White, 2003).

Where I depart from Harriss-White is in arguing that the Actually Existing State (AES) to me is present at multiple levels of the state, going beyond just the small towns and villages about which Harriss-White writes. Whereas the local shadow state and the informal economy that its practices generate are central to the functioning of the new Dholera, the network goes higher up, to the provincial capital or the federal level, as we shall see in Chapters 5 and 7. Secondly, what I also add to the scholarship is that these actors working in the shadow of the state in Dholera trespass the state by virtue of their affiliation to ideologies like Hindutva. In doing so, the dissertation explains how the blurred state-society boundary has enabled the entry of new actors of Hindutva and neoliberalism. Interestingly, this overlap or coming together of the actors of Hindutva and neoliberalism takes place through a disjuncture between their ideologies and practices. Their practices

often reveal exceptions from their professed ideologies as both try to further their capture of society, as discussed further in the remainder of this chapter.

2.4 Neoliberalism

In the 1970s, states across the world faced a series of existential crises especially due to economic policies. During this period, neoclassical economists and international financial institutions strongly advocated policies of economic liberalisation, state retrenchment and a turn to competitive markets, measures that came to be called neoliberalism. Neoliberalism refers primarily to the laissez-faire economic liberalism practiced since the 1980s, including policies such as privatisation, free trade agreements between nations, state deregulation, the opening up of financial markets, encouragement of foreign direct investment, and reductions in government spending in order to increase the role of the private sector in the economy (Harvey, 1989; 2005). In short, neoliberalism entails the triadic combination of 'deregulation, privatisation, and withdrawal of the state from many areas of provision' (Harvey, 2005; Wacquant, 2012).[26]

With the proliferation of neoliberal policies across the globe, many scholars in the 1990s concluded that the state had diminished, becoming 'hollow' (Sassen, 1991). However, none of these prophecies has been found to be factually true as the state remained at the centre of most activities providing at least the larger macroeconomic framework and the critical infrastructure for neoliberalism to become successful (Gupta and Sivaramakrishnan, 2011). Interestingly by the late 1990s, the same set of institutions, which previously argued for the retrenchment of the state, came to assert the key role of

[26] I do not carry out a detailed historical analysis of neoliberalism in this dissertation. For its history and relevance, refer to Harvey (1989; 2005), Venugopal (2015), Wacquant (2009, 2012) and the scholarship of Brenner, Peck and Theodore (2010a; 2010b; 2011; 2013; 2018). Also, refer to Peck (2013), Saad Filho and Johnston (2004), or Venugopal (2015) on the usefulness of 'neoliberalism' and the tendency to make it a catch all phrase to explain a host of practices.

the state in pushing towards economic liberalisation and market economies (World Bank, 1997) that Stiglitz (2008) termed as the 'post Washington Consensus consensus'. Scholars have argued that in practice, states deviate from the doctrinal template of 'small government' only to promote a business-friendly climate for capitalistic endeavours, to safeguard financial institutions and to repress popular resistance to the neoliberal drive toward 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey, 2005; Wacquant, 2012).

This inconsistency in neoliberalism is a key theme in this dissertation. Beyond the inconsistency with respect to the state, neoliberalism has been far from a coherent ideology and has taken on different forms in different contexts (Ong, 2006). In many contexts, the set of policies that have come to be associated with neoliberalism do not always mark a significant departure from the pre-neoliberal set-ups. There is path dependency and a crisis driven tendency, which is why Ong (2006) defines neoliberalism as a logic of governing that travels and mutates with different actor networks and diverse contexts. In their influential scholarship, Brenner, Peck and Theodore (2010a; 2010b; 2011; 2013; 2018) argue that the idea of 'neoliberalism' as an immutable ideology, centred on an ideal end state should be discarded and instead the focus should be on the process of neoliberalisation, which involves the ceaseless evolution of 'opportunistic' ideologies. I come back to this discussion in Section 2.4.3 after situating the neoliberal case of India.

2.4.1 Socialism to the celebrated 'neoliberal success story'

With the background of a massive fiscal deficit, foreign reserves sufficient to pay for barely two weeks' worth of imports and on the verge of defaulting on external balance of payment obligations, the newly appointed Finance Minister, Manmohan Singh rolled out

a slew of policies of liberalisation in 1991.[27] The result was a fundamental restructuring of the Indian economy. Over the next two decades, India's GDP grew between 5-10% constantly following the reforms. This accompanied growth in urban and real estate sectors. Investment into these sectors led to a surge in demands for access to land fostering a spike in land value. This ultimately placed land-based revenue, and control of land markets, at the center of the political as well as economic agenda. The state itself led many of these adventures. A host of policies were framed to regenerate existing urban spaces or to create new ones.

Gooptu (2011) argues that economic liberalisation brought in a distinctive feature in policies targeting 'growth-oriented urban developmentalism.' The 'city captured the imagination of both the state and the private corporate sector as the most important engine of national growth and development and as the site of market expansion and investment' (Gooptu, 2016: 216). She points out that this was aptly put by then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh while launching a massive city-modernisation scheme in the year 2005: '…urban economy has become an important driver of economic growth. It is also the bridge between the domestic economy and the global economy…' (Gooptu, 2011: 37). The Special Economic Zones (SEZ) of the early 2000s represent these set of spatial neoliberal policies in India (Cross, 2010; Jenkins et al., 2014; 2015). SEZs often created tax-free zones for investment in manufacturing and service industries along with a portion of land to be developed for housing and other commercial purposes in both Public-Private Partnership (PPP) as well completely privately owned models. Taking a step further,

[27] The scholarship on Indian liberalisation covers most aspects on the context or the events leading to its initiation as well as its outcomes over the decades. Refer to Bardhan (2000), Bhagwati (1993), Corbridge and Harriss (2000), Jenkins (1999, 2006), Kaur (2007), Kohli (2006a and 2006b), Manor (1995), Mooij (2005), Nagaraj (1991), Nayar (2006), Panagariya (2008), Pedersen (2000), Rodrik and Subramanian (2004) and Varshney (1999). Also, scholars have pointed out that there was a sharp growth in GDP (5.5–6 per cent) around 1980 and the impact was not necessarily immediate.

Narendra Modi upon becoming the Prime Minister of India in 2014, announced the project to build '100 Smart Cities' across the country along with continuation of the gigantic corridor projects such as the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC).

As with the global trend, the state did not wither away following economic liberalisation in India. Its 'central role in social change, politics, and policymaking' remains an 'empirical reality' (Mooij, 1999: 44) while retaining a preeminent place in the popular imagination of the citizens (as underscored by my interviewee at the start of the chapter). With the set of new economic policies since 1991, the Indian state 'is now represented as just one of the many agencies, organisations, or associations that dot the [political] landscape' (Chandhoke, 2003: 2958). Although an argument can be made that the scale of the national government has witnessed a reorganisation of some of its powers; provincial and urban levels received considerable autonomy to formulate their own policies.[28] Provincial governments proposed spatial policies seeking domestic and international investments from private sectors with an idea of competition and free markets gaining prominence in these policies. Tax breaks, subsidised resources (such as land or water), provision of physical infrastructure to investors were central to those policies which Harvey (2005) calls 'urban entrepreneurialism'. The policy of Special Investment Region (SIR) launched in 2009 while Narendra Modi was Gujarat's Chief Minister, through which the Dholera project came into existence, is a similar example of provincial scale taking the lead to 'develop' previously urban fringes or rural areas.

2.4.2 Neoliberalism in Dholera

[28] For the literature on rescaling of the state, refer to to Kennedy (2013), Kennedy and Zérah (2008), Mahadevia (2005), Maringanti et al. (2015). Indian provinces received financial autonomy post liberalisation, tied to the idea of making them fiscally responsible and generating their own funds. By the late 1990s, provinces could directly negotiate loans from transnational organisations like the World Bank or Asian Development Bank.

Is Dholera smart city then a neoliberal project? Dholera, being the *terra nullius* where the state envisions to build a smart city, is a project which would be a representative case of Scott's (1998) 'high modernism'. Scott defined it as 'a rejection of the past as a model to improve upon and a desire to make a completely fresh start…' In similar ways, everything in Dholera is 'barren, unproductive or primitive', as a bureaucrat from Dholera SIR Development Authority (DSIRDA) pointed out to me.[29] On numerous occasions during his speeches, the key proponent of Dholera smart city, Narendra Modi, displays faith in 'smart technology' to drive the growth of Dholera and by extension Gujarat and India, similar to the previous generations propagating Scott's high modernism. However, this faith in science is tied with the market as the driving force of the economy in Dholera, making the case for it to be a representative case of neoliberalism. Private consultants have been hired at different points to deliver the Dholera project and there is notable faith in those organisations among state actors (as I discuss in Chapter 7).

The policy of Special Investment Regions (SIRs) in Gujarat, through which Dholera SIR or smart city came into being, is essentially a scaled-up version of SEZs in Gujarat. SIRs are proposed to cover a minimum of 100 square kilometres. Dholera SIR intends to create 'improvements' of an otherwise 'underdeveloped' countryside by creating an environment for investment to fuel economic growth (as laid out in the SIR policy). These are often the standard features of a neoliberal project. Looking through David Harvey's (2005) 'accumulation by dispossession' that he argues to be central to neoliberalism, the SIRs are targeting urbanisation with an inherent dispossession of thousands of local farmers. Dispossession is imminent as the SIR's success is based on the legal transfer of land for

[29] Interview with an anonymous bureaucrat from DSIRDA in Gandhinagar, January 2018.

'development' to private corporations along with other incentives such as tax breaks or physical infrastructure.[30]

Overall, Dholera embodies most characteristics of neoliberalism: be it commodification of land, privatisation, or financialisation. Aihwa Ong (2006) defined economic zones such as SEZs or SIRs as 'an extraordinary departure in policy that can be deployed to include as well as exclude' in order to create new socio-economic possibilities. An SEZ or SIR to Ong (2006: 19) is 'a country within a country' carved out from the territory of the nation for economic freedom and entrepreneurial activity without following the laws of the main territory. For example, a private entity, Dholera Industrial City Development Limited (DICDL), is proposed to manage and govern the huge city of 920 square kilometre area, jumping the usual municipal governance model of India.[31] It also brings into the scenario the privatisation of governance to justify urban entrepreneurialism, a phenomenon that is seen elsewhere in India as Idiculla (2016) demonstrates for Bengaluru or as seen in the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City in Gandhinagar. With its set of policies, business incentives or governance model, Dholera displays similar notions.

2.4.3 Disjuncture in neoliberalism

What is idiosyncratic in Dholera's neoliberalism or the Indian story of neoliberalism? The dissertation argues that it is the myriad ways in which neoliberal policies have been framed, passed or implemented or how the support or opposition towards them has been

[30] Interview with Shivahare, CEO of DSIRDA, in December 2018. Shivahare spoke of a 'plug and play' policy to refer to the ready to use land plots, offered to corporations to start businesses in Dholera which according to him have all necessary hard and soft 'smart' infrastructure 'preinstalled'. Although prices of serviced plots of land with infrastructure have been fixed, DSIRDA authorities have mentioned their willingness to bargain with any prospective investors. Also, see Appendix 1 for a clarification on the organisations working on Dholera SIR project.

[31] Interview with Raj, AECOM, in December 2017.

sustained. This is where our understanding and experience of neoliberalism is also enriched. As I will explain in the empirical chapters, the Dholera case shows how neoliberalism mutates itself. For example, breaking from the previous proposition of private sector building its own infrastructure, the federal state continues to pump in money to the tune of INR 30 billion to build basic infrastructure (referred to as Trunk infrastructure) in the 'Activation Area'. This is in addition to state investment into building an expressway connecting Dholera to Ahmedabad or building a massive solar energy park to power Dholera.

Marking a departure from ideas such as state withdrawal, the role of the state is key to institute the neoliberal project of Dholera. However, this in itself was a mutation as a DSIRDA bureaucrat explained: '(This was) not the case on day one. We expected private sector to carry out everything. (But,) with so much happening in those years, financial crash, farmer protests, we changed track. A lesson (was) learnt from the SEZs that faced massive hindrance as the private corporations felt powerless on many occasions against oppositions…'[32] As the senior bureaucrat argued, the state is also heavily involved in land acquisitions for the project, which are not left simply to market forces. [33] Such disjuncture is key to neoliberalism entrenching further in a particular place as this dissertation will demonstrate. Hence, rather than a specific set of policy templates, I focus on the political and social processes to provide a far more complex and richer explanation of the developments and dynamics of neoliberalism.

This disjuncture between its ideologies and practices shows that neoliberalism as a process is often contradictory. This approach is what Brenner and Theodore (2002) referred to as

[32] Interview with Rajesh (pseudonym) in Gandhinagar in December 2017.

[33] Interview with Rajesh (pseudonym) in Gandhinagar in December 2017.

'actually existing neoliberalism' or 'variegated neoliberalisation' (Brenner et al., 2010a), focusing on the differences between neoliberal ideologies and their practices. They consider neoliberalism not as an 'end-state' but as a process – and as a project embedded in the context, 'produced within national, regional, and local contexts defined by the legacies of inherited frameworks, policy regimes, regulatory practices, and political struggles' (ibid: 349). The process with its ultimate pursuit of market-driven development is fraught with negotiations and contradictions.

What these contradictions, however, depict is a dogged capacity to exploit the crises which it generates in the course of its own adaptive reinvention (Brenner et al., 2010a). The process is 'non-linear and multi-dimensional' marked by policy failures leading to improvised adaptations through combative encounters with obstacles and counter-movements (ibid). The path taken is often 'shaped by opportunistic moments, workarounds and on-the-hoof recalibrations' which barely come closer to the ideologies of neoliberal proponents (ibid). For example, as I show from Dholera in Chapter 8, while one of the foundational policies of neoliberalism is the removal of farm subsidies, when it faces protests by farmers in Dholera, proponents go back to launch a set of subsidies to negotiate with the protestors.[34]

Another aspect of Indian neoliberalism has been what Jenkins (1999) shows as the practices of the 'dirty state' of India in which a host of state actors involved in 'shady' land deals, are often found hand in glove with criminals. The state seems to have entered newer and previously unexplored territories. Its practices simultaneously display a similar disjuncture between the ideologies and practices of neoliberalism. Overall, looking through the lens of the state, neoliberalism in India has resulted in a further blurring of the

[34] Ferguson (2015) also briefly explores the idea of a neoliberal redistribution.

boundary between the state and society (Harriss-White 2003), opening up newer nodes to which new actors of the (shadow) state could cling on to or find newer avenues to enter state spaces. I will explore the disjuncture in neoliberalism throughout the dissertation and especially in Chapter 7 and 8.

2.5 Hindutva and the disjuncture in its ideologies and practices

Although India is constitutionally secular, what I witness in Gujarat or in Dholera is that the balanced relationship between the state and various communities does not exist. This supports the literature put forth by scholars such as Sud (2012) or Spodek (2002) that points to the 'un-secular' nature of the state**.** The rise of right-wing Hindu nationalism or Hindutva is a key reason for this. The story behind this rise is a multifaceted narrative and the existing scholarship covers a number of related debates.[35] These debates are beyond the scope of the dissertation, which focuses instead on the workings of Hindutva within the Dholera site and the implications of the empirical data on our understanding of Hindutva given its particular philosophical origins.

Right-wing Hindu nationalism draws its origins from movements within the Hindu religion such as Arya Samaj or Sanatana Dharma. V.D. Savarkar reframed these movements into a one-eyed form of mobilisation supporting the idea of 'Hindutva'—a distinct form of Hindu right-wing nationalism where for the first time, Hindus were portrayed as the original people of India, with a distinct territorial, racial, and linguistic identity. Hindutva loosely translates as Hindu-ness and is used often to refer to right-wing

[35] On Indian secularism since independence, refer to Corbridge and Harriss (2000) and Fuller and Harriss (2000) who provide detailed commentaries based on various scholarships. On Hindutva, refer to Basu (2000), Hansen (1999), Hansen and Jaffrelot (1998) and Jaffrelot (1996, 2005 and 2007). Also see Gooptu (1997) for an account on the rise of Hindu nationalism in the province of Uttar Pradesh during the British era. Her commentary on the urban poor and their attraction to a militant form of Hinduism provides a detailed account of the phenomenon.

Hindu nationalism. Savarkar's writings such as 'Hindutva: who is a Hindu?' [1923 (1969)] provide the ideological foundations for the phenomenon. Savarkar linked Hindutva with an identification with India as simultaneously 'fatherland' and 'holy land'. 'Fatherland' alludes to the idea of a common nation and 'holy land' incorporates culture, the 'rites and rituals, ceremonies and sacraments' as well as an identification with the 'sacred geography' of the land itself (Reddy, 2011). Hence, Muslims and Christians can partially possess the attributes of Hindutva, but they cannot be counted as Hindus because their respective holy lands are elsewhere and he claims their love is divided and patriotism questionable. The basis of the ideology is an othering of these communities.[36]

Critical to the rise of Hindutva was the formation of different social and political organisations, chief among them is the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) whose aim is the disciplining and training of a Hindu nation (Jaffrelot, 2007). Another important organisation is the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council, VHP hereon) that focussed both on working in tribal areas and on the Hindu diaspora abroad (Van der Veer, 1994). A political wing, previously Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), which became Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1980, remained active since independence. This along with similar other groups that represent students, youths, farmers, labour unions and women, came together to form the Sangh Parivar (Hindi: 'family of organisations') under the symbolic saffron flag (Damle & Anderson, 1987; Basu et al., 1993). Corbridge and Harriss (2000) point out that both before and after independence, alongside the Congress, the RSS has

[36] Savarkar's many of the demagogic views include advocating rape of Muslim women as a political tool to subjugate the Muslim community (1971). Hindutva leaders' including Savarkar's tacit support for the Nazis in Germany or Fascists in Italy is well documented (Casolari, 2000). Savarkar himself compared the German majority and Jewish minority in Germany to India's Hindu majority and Muslim minority condemning how German Jews and Indian Muslims failed to assimilate (Gier, 2014).

been the most significant and innovative organisation in India keeping itself relevant and growing across the country and abroad for a century now.

Most anthropological accounts from Gujarat on the rise of Hindutva in the province study the recurring communal riots particularly in urban regions such as Ahmedabad (Berenschot 2010, 2011, Shani 2007, Ghassem-Fachandi 2012). Concerning the key focus of this dissertation, the overlap of economic liberalisation and Hindutva in India, existing scholarship has largely analysed the macro-scale, usually the provincial scale [some of these include Chacko (2018a; 2018b), Corbridge and Harriss (2000), Desai (2006; 2011a), Gopalakrishnan (2006), Kohli (1990; 2009), Sud (2007; 2012), Vanaik (2001)]. Although these studies illuminate the rise of both Hindutva and neoliberalism, the myriad ways through which they unfold on the ground is not always explained. The study of Dholera in this dissertation attempts to provide a more contextual analysis focused at a micro-level. This is done by proposing an understanding of the phenomenon that has rendered it banal, present in everyday forms as nothing special which itself is an outcome of the disjuncture in its practice and ideologies.

I use this 'disjuncture in Hindutva' to illustrate how the cultural or religious ideology of Hindutva penetrates the state and moves together with the economic ideology of neoliberalism. This disjuncture between Hindutva ideologies and practices is a similar trait I have mentioned in the discussion on neoliberalism. Scholars have referred to the phenomenon as 'neo-Hindutva' (Reddy, 2011; 2018), 'banalisation of Hindu nationalism' (Jaffrelot, 2015b) or 'banal Hindutva' (Jeffrey et al., 2017). These scholars have highlighted the practices that make the everyday forms of Hindutva 'normal' or 'nothing special'. At the same time, these practices eventually help Hindutva to increasingly permeate different aspects of state and society, developing and spreading far beyond the

organisational network that is conventionally linked to the Sangh Parivar (Longkumer and Anderson, 2018). These practices lack a strict framework for categorisation as they do not always restrict themselves to the orthodox ideologies of Savarkar or fellow Hindutva proponents (ibid).

This scholarship has elaborated on the 'dynamic and idiosyncratic' ways in which Hindutva has evolved over the recent decades to become 'increasingly mainstream and normalised' even if in an obfuscated manner (Longkumer and Anderson, 2018). For example, through this, Longkumer (2020) examines how Hindutva actors have successfully made inroads into Northeast India, a region traditionally 'seen as a recalcitrant periphery'. According to Longkumer (2020), Hindutva is re-fashioning itself by reforming Savarkar's core ideologies in new ways. From a different perspective, Simpson (2004, 2013) talks briefly about the rise of Hindutva forces in the backdrop of the earthquake that devastated large parts of Kutch in Gujarat in 2001.[37] Simpson's analysis highlights how Hindutva can exploit the mundane economic, social or religious aspects of everyday life to take its project forward while simultaneously gaining material benefits. His (2004) analysis of the planning mechanism in the post-earthquake scenario reflects how the everyday bureaucratic processes from a seemingly apolitical dimension can be used by Hindutva groups to further their ideologies, a theme which empirical chapters in this dissertation covers. The strategies may come across as obvious or usual practices of the state or societal actors.

Although Hindutva may be prone to internally generated issues of caste, or to processes where its support leads to dispossession of the larger population (as in Dholera), akin to

[37] Bhattacharjee (2019) also shows the rise of Hindutva in the region in the backdrop of the 2001 Gujarat earthquake.

neoliberalism, the actors of Hindutva demonstrate a dogged capacity to exploit the same contradictions and crises 'in the course of its own adaptive reinvention' (Peck and Theodore, 2012: 178). In the actual world of practice, we cannot reduce Hindutva to a process of enacting a singular plan or grand design or a singular image of the Hindu state in the form of Savarkar's proposals. [38] It instead displays a staggering dynamic that is marked by regular improvisations and/or manipulations when it faces obstacles. What this has resulted in is the banal Hindutva which has an economic, religious as well as cultural logic.

Hindutva's distinctive configurations of economic or political programmes are shaped by the ways in which these programmes collide with existing landscapes to produce distinctive forms. Hence, in the Northeast Indian province of Nagaland with a Christian majority population, the argument is framed not around Hindutva but around an economic logic (Longkumer 2020). In the neighbouring province of Assam, it latches on to the issue of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh (Saikia, 2020). Consequently, rather than examining a specific set of ideologies that came from Savarkar or similar ideologues of Hindutva, the focus of the dissertation is to understand the strategies that affect everyday political and social processes, similar to my approach to neoliberalism. This would allow the dissertation a more complex understanding of the avatars that Hindutva may take within different contexts. However, this should not distract us from the fact that the achievement of the Hindu state that Savarkar projected nevertheless remains the ultimate target.

To explain the relevance of Hindutva in the everyday state or society of Dholera, I bring in observations which underscore its presence in different forms and expressions that help

[38] Peck (2013) uses a similar vocabulary on neoliberalism as a variegated process.

it to become entrenched further in society or corner benefits from the neoliberal project. In these practices, they may appear to position themselves with contradictory ideas. These contradictions are explored across the dissertation and especially in Chapters 6 and 8. As I witness in Dholera, many Hindutva supporters stand with the farmers' protests while also undertaking land brokering. They oppose the dispossession of farmers while also claiming that 'the Dholera smart city is the only way' through which the region can witness 'development'. They form the Bhal Vikas Manch (Bhal Development Platform) to counter the protesting farmers' group called Bhal Bachao Samiti (Save Bhal Forum). In similar ways, the idea of disjuncture in Hindutva helps explain why the local head of the opposition Congress party[39] uses his past Hindutva networks to broker land deals while arguing that Narendra Modi is the 'Hindu *hriday samrat* (king of Hindu hearts) who is capable of developing India' (covered in Chapter 8). It also helps explain how Hindutva actors use caste and kin networks to their advantage in diffusing farmers' protests against land acquisition.

My proposition on Hindutva's disjuncture between ideologies and practices also enriches our understanding of the state or the AES, which is trespassed by numerous actors with affiliations to Hindutva. As I witness government bureaucrats in Dholera undertake official as well as private transactions at the local BJP office, or when the government officials rent a room in the commercial building owned by the local BJP leader for private land brokering, the idea of disjuncture in Hindutva helps explain these phenomena (Chapter 6). Through the proposition, I explain the everyday state practices in the villages that display a blurring of state and non-state identities amongst a range of actors. At the same time, such practices go upwards to the scale of the provincial capital where policymakers of the

[39] The Congress party has opposed the Dholera project and promised to cancel it during the campaigning of the 2017 provincial election if the locals demand.

Special Investment Region find similarities between the philosophies of neoliberalism and Hindutva to justify support for privatisation or deregulation (covered in Chapter 7). Thus, through the proposition, the dissertation explains the overlaps in the cultural or religious ideology of Hindutva with the economic ideology of neoliberalism at multiple scales of the state.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has set the analytical framework for the dissertation, laying down the key themes elaborated in the existing literature, identifying the gaps in each area, outlining how the dissertation attempts to address them. As I explain in Chapter 3 on research methodology, the analytical–framework of the dissertation has been guided by the ethnography and not the other way around. Hence, what I witnessed on site be it Hindutva, neoliberalism or the state-society dynamics then made me revisit the relevant scholarship because what I was seeing in Dholera could not be explained by the existing literature in its entirety. As my fieldwork guided me towards an understanding of the state that could give Hindutva and neoliberalism their due attention (made clear by the quote at the start of the chapter), I laid down my propositions around the state, termed AES in the dissertation. As this chapter has clarified, the four propositions of the AES will better explain the case study of Dholera. The journey of the state from being understood as a unitary concept to its multifaceted nature was first explained through the scholarship of Abrams (1988) and Mitchell (1991; 1999), allowing us to analyse the scholarship on the state in the Indian context. Any attempt to contextualise the scholarship for Dholera confirms that the state and society cannot be understood as distinct singular entities.

As neoliberalism and Hindutva provide the context for the dissertation, this chapter has laid down the relevant theories, which move beyond a simplistic understanding of both the

phenomena. Instead, I have focused on the disjuncture within their ideologies and practices. The two phenomena will be empirically linked in the subsequent chapters of the dissertation. The case of Dholera brings a host of new observations that enrich the theories concerning neoliberalism, in which scholars have described the messy ways through which neoliberal policies are implemented in real life.

Similarly, in understanding Hindutva, this dissertation will focus on themes such as 'banal Hindutva' or 'neo-Hindutva' that has rendered Hindutva normal in the everyday lives of the state and society. This also allows a level of fluidity amongst actors of the Actually Existing State to swing between supporting and opposing the neoliberal project in Dholera. The banality that is an outcome of the disjuncture in ideology and practices of Hindutva has ensured the existence of contradictory phenomenon like farmers continuing to vote for the BJP party while the same ruling party threatens them with dispossession of land. Hence, Hindutva as an ideology and as a practice brings in similar contradictions that are multi-dimensional. Hindutva does not always walk the narrow ideological path, instead preferring to negotiate with its various constituents.

The next chapter on methodology explains the research process. The remaining chapters of this dissertation then explore local specificities as they unfold through the confluence of neoliberalism and Hindutva during the course of the Dholera project.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Dholera has received an unprecedented level of media coverage during Narendra Modi's 2014 parliamentary election campaign when he sold the Dholera project to the Indian electorate. Media interest has since continued and Dholera would regularly feature around every election and/or whenever the talk of building smart cities in India comes up. During election campaigns, journalists have often flocked to report on the project and even campaigners like Modi would hold election rallies within the Dholera region to amplify its 'success'. An analysis of the newspapers circulated in Gujarat shows that the number of news items related to Dholera quadrupled during 2014-2018 compared to the initial phase of 2009-2013.[40] When I started my fieldwork, many friends, journalists and academics asked me questions such as 'what does Dholera look like?' This was in 2017 when Dholera was yet to build anything. On many occasions, it was difficult to convince someone in Ahmedabad, barely 100 kilometres away, that Dholera remains a set of villages with dilapidated infrastructure. The project was everywhere and still nowehere to be found.

The previous chapter explained in detail the nature of the state in Dholera that was similar to the smart city project in being ubiquitous yet still not existing anywhere on the ground. To study the state in such a project; this dissertation follows anthropologists of the state. Scholars such as Anjaria (2011), Gupta (1995), Gupta and Sharma (2006) have stressed on the importance of 'studying the interactions between local functionaries and ordinary people' as the starting point for an ethnography of the state (Gupta and Sharma, 2006: 17). As Gupta and Ferguson (2002) have pointed out about such interactions, '…it is here that it becomes possible to speak of states… as 'Imagined'—that is, as constructed entities that

[40] This data is from archival research detailed in Section 3.3.4 of this chapter.

are conceptualised and made socially effective through particular imaginative and symbolic devices that require study…' In trying to understand this, the main questions with which I went into the fieldwork concerned the everyday state and society's role in Dholera smart city, the practices and representations of the state, and people's experiences in the dynamics that are the outcomes of the project. How do everyday state practices in a project of urbanisation in a rural area affect state-society relations? As I observed the relationship between the formal and shadow actors of the state, the question that ultimately became predominant during the course of fieldwork was regarding the nature of the state. What constitutes the Actually Existing State (AES) in Dholera? In trying to understand the changes that Dholera has undergone and what these mean for the concept of the state, the dissertation was then guided by the Research questions I have listed in Chapter 1.

In this chapter, I explain how the dissertation evolved methodologically, and how I went about answering the research questions. In Section 3.2, I comment on the research design along with the timeline of fieldwork. Section 3.3 explains the various methods employed in the study along with the choice of participants. Section 3.4 then deals with issues of ethical and methodological considerations. The concluding Section 3.5 sums up the key points.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This research did not proceed with the conventional model of a qualitative research such as starting with a 'theoretical hypothesis, a representative case study and a search for analytical fitness' (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Mukhija, 2010; Ragin and Becker, 1992; Small, 2009). My starting point was a wide reading to formulate a research which covered the concepts of the state, neoliberalism, urbanisation to list a few. However, the realities of the field made me re-formulate the main questions, and focus on themes emerging from the

fieldwork. The observations from the field, were extended to theoretical problems that finally directed me to a thorough analysis. Hence, the field assisted the process of identifying the theoretical directions, which in itself was due to a continuous exchange between the experiences from fieldwork, the reflexivity of the researcher and critical engagement with various conceptual approaches. For example, I had not gone into the fieldwork with the theme of Hindutva in mind. Instead, the site of research surprised me, offering a very different data set displaying an overlap of neoliberalism and Hindutva among actors ultimately revealing how the local is connected with the global (Burawoy, 1998). In similar ways, I began fieldwork with very little idea of what the state was in practice. I was able to build a concept of the state based on what I saw at the sites of my research. During the fieldwork, literature on the anthropological studies of the state or the shadow state in India (Gupta, 1995; Gupta and Ferguson, 2002; Harriss-White, 2003; Mathur 2015) were some of the key readings which helped me link the data back to theory or in building the picture of the everyday state.

This dissertation is qualitative research with a case study design adopting largely an ethnography although other qualitative research methods were also employed on occasions. There are two aspects of the methodology that are important to explain, particularly in their relationship to the theoretical framework. The first is the adoption of the case study method and the second is the choice of ethnography within it. Case study method is embedded in the tradition of qualitative methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Meyer, 2001; Yin, 2009). Stake (1995) defines case study research as an investigation and analysis of a single or collective case/s, intended to capture the complexity of the object of study, particularly useful for in-depth exploration and detailed consideration of contextual factors (Burnham et el. 2008; Creswell, 2013; George and Bennet, 2005). It draws together ‘naturalistic, holistic, ethnographic, phenomenological, and biographic

research methods' (Stake, 1995: xixii) shaped by context and emergent data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Morse, 2009; Stake, 1995) and instead of establishing average relationships, as is the case with statistical methods, it puts multiple pieces together to build a composite argument (Jacob, 2015). To study the entity of state that is ubiquitous yet tough to locate or to study neoliberalism and Hindutva, which exhibit disjuncture between its professed ideologies and practices, qualitative case study research presented more scope to me.

The second important aspect that requires an explanation is the choice of ethnography to study the state and what this choice entails. While, I have used other qualitative methods as I explain below, ethnography was the dominant method used in the process. Ethnography has broadened its scope in terms of methods, a transgression of the model which Amit (2000: 6) argues is 'as much an anthropological tradition as the model itself'. I largely used ethnographic methods, deriving from an anthropological approach, the starting point for which is the everyday, routine workings of the state. Gupta and Sharma (2006: 10) point out that anthropology brings to the study of the state a divergence from the idea that the state is a fixed or coherent unit while guiding us towards its multifacetedness. Everyday practices of the state and the resulting representations, bare the process, illuminating how the state or the idea of the state is 'created, negotiated, and contested' (ibid). Tilche and Simpson's (2017) review of ethnography as a method raises and addresses some fundamental issues in using and trusting it as a research technique. Scholars have similarly pointed out that ethnography is helpful in bringing people's understandings of neglected political processes (Megoran, 2006). Herbert (2000: 550) points out that ethnography is also advantageous '…for uncovering the processes and meanings that undergird sociospatial life' of the people.

Ethnography involves, at the least, 'writing about the world from the standpoint of participant observation' (Burawoy 1998: 6). There is a debate on whether ethnography should be informed by theory or if the process should be reversed. Scholars have shown that when field sites are used to study and comment on macro-structures and processes by moving outwards from the field, ethnography can be argued to be informed by theory (Bourdieu, 2003; Wacquant, 2002; 2003). On the other hand, an ethnography that intends to generate a theory/theories or refute a certain theory develops contextually specific detailed descriptions about the micro setting of the field (Tavory and Timmermans 2009: 245). However, many scholars have taken a middle ground, where both theory and ethnography help each other polish.

Burawoy (1998; 2000) argued that the local cannot be studied as local places, but only as places of interconnectedness.[41] In this, the researcher moves 'from specific small observations in their ethnographic field towards outside to wider problems and larger structures within which the subject is contained or constrained in their practices' (Burawoy 2000: 5; also Appadurai, 1997; Gupta and Ferguson, 1997). This also addresses the debate around the generalisability from a single case study. As the scholars above Appadurai (1997), Burawoy (1998) and Gupta and Ferguson (1997) have argued, any ethnographic field (or case/s) is not simply a site contained within itself, but is 'a meeting point' with the wider world. Following Gupta and Ferguson (1997: 39), field 'is not just a parochial local place, but a place that has its connected links and networks with the outer world and its interests'.[42]

[41] To clarify, I do not use the Burawoy's (2000) proposed Extended Case method. What I am arguing here is the possibility of generating theory/theories from a single case through ethnography.

[42] Thomas (2011) pointed out that, the objective in case study as a research method, is not statistical research, or produce outcomes that are generalisable.

This dissertation connects the production of Dholera smart city along with the transformations it has brought to the locals in the area, to the larger forces which drive ideas of development in a particular place. These forces emerge from the state, neoliberalism or right-wing nationalism. The theoretical underpinnings of the state subsumed the globally and locally prevalent phenomena, neoliberalism and Hindutva, both of which profusely affected the site. Importantly, as the dissertation illustrates, the global (neoliberalism) could be found in the local and the local (Hindutva) could be found at a global scale. The concepts in this research emerged because of continuous exchange between what I observed, inferred in the field, my own implicit and spontaneous reflexivity, along with the analytical engagement with a range of theories (drawing from Tilche and Simpson, 2017).

3.2.1 Field Sites and Timeline

The fieldwork can roughly be divided into two phases, with the first period of ethnography mainly focused in the villages, and the second one covering Gandhinagar (Table 3.1).

July - November 2017	December 2017 - March 2018	March 2018 onwards	December 2018
Main round of fieldwork in the villages until the 2017 assembly elections, involving participant observation and interviews with farmers, activists, villagers, brokers, local politicians and local level government officials. Some visits to Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar to interview civil society activists, real estate developers.	Fieldwork focused more in Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar after the elections, involving participant observation and interviews with government bureaucrats, private consultants, and politicians. Frequent visits with long and short stays in the villages continued, interviewing farmers, brokers, villagers, local politicians, and local level government officials.	Data analysis in Oxford	Repeat visit of a few days

Table 3.1: Timeline of the fieldwork.



Figure 3.1: Fieldwork sites in Gujarat with district outlines. Inset: Gujarat province in India (Source: Author).

I planned the fieldwork in two primary sites along with other spaces that connected the two to broader structures of the state that I was studying. Dholera and its nearby areas fall under Ahmedabad district whereas the capital city of Gandhinagar is a district in itself that includes the surrounding villages and smaller towns. In the course of the fieldwork, the 'sites' extended past these two places, as informants and their linkages were far more mobile than I expected. I draw from the 22 villages of Dholera SIR, although am not restricted to it, and the DSIRDA office at Udyog Bhawan in Sector 11, Gandhinagar (Figures 3.1 and 3.2). These 22 villages come under the newly created Dholera sub-district in Ahmedabad district. Although I interviewed stakeholders from all 22 villages as well as neighbouring villages, my closer observations focused on 5 villages. At the same time, I regularly visited other villages and drew a significant amount of data from interviews and

observations. Along with the field sites, government offices at various levels with authority over the Dholera villages became my research sites which were located in Dholera, Dhandhuka, Ahmedabad or Gandhinagar. Beyond these areas, I have also followed some of my interviewees in other places in Gujarat such as Bhavnagar, Surat, Vadodara, Mandal and to Delhi and Mumbai.



Figure 3.2: The 22 villages inside Dholera SIR. Dholera village is highlighted with red color (Source: Author).

I was based in a village within the Dholera region, the main site of the project, as well as in Ahmedabad, 30 kilometres from the DSIRDA office in Gandhinagar. I also lived for a few weeks in Dhandhuka, the nearest town from Dholera, around 25 kilometres away. Whereas the location of the interviewees decided my choice of multiple accommodations, another reason was also my safety. Gujarat's administration has not always been very welcoming to researchers, and friends and well-wishers had warned me on more than one

occasion about my safety. By staying in the two places and travelling frequently, I felt that I could create some ambiguity.

3.3 Research Methods: Data Collection, Research Tools and Methods

During the fieldwork, I used a combination of semi-structured interviews, formal and informal conversations (many of which were repeated with the same people), participant observation, focus group discussions and archival work to collect data. As the range of participants and sites for data collection was extensive as well as dynamic, I had to be inventive and improvise my approach frequently. Upon completion of the fieldwork, I had multiple recorded interviews and field notes of unrecorded interviews and conversations as well as reflections on my own experiences. I have also obtained and appraised government documents and reports, court case details, similar related documents via formal as well as informal means.

3.3.1 Participant Observation

Participant observation is considered unique compared to most forms of research as the primary vehicles for eliciting findings and insight are the relationships formed by the researcher (Amit, 2000; Bourdieu, 2003). This method played a key role in my study. I would spend hours sitting close to agricultural fields or teashops or hang out at the DSIRDA office arriving early before an interview or staying late afterwards. I intended to undertake participant observation across a range of diverse settings, even if guided by my access.

Initially, being a participant observer proved more challenging than I had anticipated. Even if village level bureaucrats had formal office spaces, they preferred to function, instead, at roadside teashops, home-offices or private offices in the market place. These spaces were

home to conversations of all sorts, formal, informal or casual, that illuminated the research. However, on many occasions, I combined interviews and participant observation due to the presence of others who were not initially planned to be part of the conversation. As many of the middlemen dealing with land were associated with political parties, their party offices became a site for research. These spaces were fluid with respect to the nature of activities as well as the type of people and helped me gain more insights.The research was a multi-sited, multi-method research.

3.3.2 Interviews

Reflecting on the usefulness of interviews as a qualitative method, Rapley (2001) has pointed that interviews are social encounters that are shaped equally by the interviewer as the interviewee (Rapley, 2001). I have used in-depth interviews as the main method of data collection . Corbin and Morse (2003) have argued that where topics of sensitive nature are researched and interrogated, in-depth interviews usually allow the interviewee a bigger amount of control over the description or the account. However, it does not mean that the interviewer is powerless. The researcher chooses the respondents, chooses the questions for the respondents, or selects the narratives to be pursued. At the same time, s/he also analyses what is heard. As a researcher, I was continuously analysing my data while in the field, such that I probed certain issues further and parked others aside.

I used interviews with the intent of letting topics such as state practices, land or its brokerage to emerge as much as possible from the context itself. As scholars (Corbin and Morse, 2003; Rapley, 2001) have mentioned all information gathereed during an interview or the knowledge produced is specific to the setting of the interview, the analysis must reflect on the notion that it is only one account of the wider narratives (ibid). However, it should not be a cause for the method to be abandoned. Rather, Rapley (2001) argues that

it gives a chance to to make the inquiry more transparent and rooted in its context. The ethnographic details in the chapters attempt to provide this transparency.

3.3.3 Participants

The research participants or the interviewees were mostly identified, approached and met through three means: (a) snowball sampling; (b) networks of friends, community and activist groups, (c) hanging around in government offices. Apart from my interactions with officials, farmers and real estate dealers and brokers, studying the state also necessitated respondents such as members of Hindutva groups, associated organisations and political leaders who are entwined with the state and the right-wing groups. The reasons for this become clear through the empirical chapters.

In total, over the course of the fieldwork, I interacted with a total of 117 farmers, 15 land brokers, 7 real estate developers, 15 lower level bureaucrats, 10 senior bureaucrats mostly based in Gandhinagar, 10 civil society activists, 6 academics, 5 elected politicians from ruling and opposition parties including the Leader of the Opposition in the provincial assembly, 5 employees of AECOM, 6 practicing architects and urban planners who were involved with Dholera in some capacity, 3 journalists who wrote on Dholera, and 4 board members of DSIRDA. I held Focus Group Discussions with women and youths. At the same time, many of these interviewees, as I elaborate below, had multiple roles. For example, some of the land brokers would also identify themselves as farmers while being active BJP or RSS leaders. Many of the government officials in the villages turned out to be land brokers. However, I categorise them based on their most identifiable positions.

A significant challenge of the project was the adequate representation of the gender dynamics that apprise the current situation in terms of the impact of the smart city on the

villages. The society I study is closed and interaction with men outside the family is usually considered a taboo for women. In fact, the upper-caste Darbar women largely practiced *purdah*. The shortage of women contributors is also a marker of the masculinity in the region and its representations as women become symbols of cultural purity. Taking the help of a female research assistant, I managed to undertake three Focus Group Discussions in three different villages. I also undertook a few individual interviews with women farmers and those who were holding elected offices such as female Sarpanch[43]. However, I must acknowledge that as a single male researcher, I could not engage with women in ways I could do with men. At the same time, the narratives which I could get from the interviews and the Focus Group Discussions with female farmers and elected officials were not particularly different from their male counterparts. Hence, I believe, the lack of female participants has not adversely affected the story of Dholera which I tell here. Below, I give further details of the participants.

Civil Society

As my entry into these sites was through a farmer leader, getting access or contact to the civil society organisations was fairly easy. My first point of contact was the farmer rights group, Gujarat Khedut Samaj, which was leading the anti-SIR protests for the farmers. My starting point was Sagar Rabari, the General Secretary of the Gujarat Khedut Samaj. With the activists, most interviews were semi-structured and would run from 45 minutes to more than an hour, conducted in Hindi and/or English. Beyond Gujarat Khedut Samaj, I scanned newspapers for persons, journalists, activists who wrote in favour of or against the Dholera project or contested similar new projects. Wherever possible, I used personal relations and

[43] Sarpanch is the head of the village-level local self-government in India. S/he is the main point of contact between the village population and the government officials.

networks to get introduced that also led to meeting more members through snowball sampling. I stopped interviewing when I felt there was saturation in my findings.

Villagers: Farmers and Middlemen

When I began my interviews in 2017 for the DPhil, the DSIRDA authorities had acquired land from only a handful of farmers although almost all of the villagers had been served with notices. Other than this, farmers continued to undertake farming even if they had been served notices by the DSIRDA. However, a large number of landholdings in most villages had already been sold. I conducted semi-structured interviews with farmers and land brokers from all the 22 villages. However, eventually I focused more on five key villages guided by factors such as caste, class, local politics, pattern of land sale as well as my access and familiarity.

Interviews with local villagers was the easiest section of the fieldwork. As I approached the villages through my previous networks, farmers and middlemen from both sides of the divide were eager to make themselves heard. I found them casually conversing with people in various places, in their fields, the roadside tea stalls, the courtyard inside their homes, or the village temples. The interviews varied from thirty minutes long monologues to even ninety minutes long lively discussions in Hindi and/or Gujarati. My questionnaire for a land broker varied significantly from that for a farmer.

Government Officials and Consultants

Although my planning and architecture background was useful, getting access to DSIRDA was never going to be smooth. Government officials were difficult to access and interview and many were usually evasive. On occasions, those officials were cautious due to the controversial nature of the project. The interviews, conducted in Hindi and English, ranged

from 15 minutes to 120 minutes. Interviews were only recorded after verbal permission. Otherwise, I scribbled on my notebook after s/he allowed me to. Beyond this, there were many conversations with employees in these offices. Although off the record, these conversations enriched my knowledge and understanding of the politics of the project while challenging me to prepare more contextually specific questionnaire for interviews.

The government officials interviewed represented the provincial, district, taluka (sub-district) and village levels. Most of the interviews with higher-level officials were formal when conducted in government offices. However, I also met a few of them at their residences, personal offices and at clubs over coffee or dinner. With respect to the consultancy AECOM, where some of my friends worked, it was comparatively easy to communicate the study due to a shared background. I also knew some of their staff in offices in New Delhi and abroad and hence access was relatively easy. I explain the fieldwork in these spaces further in Chapter 7 as necessitated by the discussions.

3.3.4 Documents and Archives

Along with the above methods, I looked at newspaper archives, comprising one English, one Hindi and two major Gujarati dailies to get a better sense of the trajectory of the project and the place. To this end, I spent a short period at the archives of Gujarat Vidyapeeth University where I was helped by a Research Assistant especially in reading the Gujarati dailies. Although it was a brief research, the material was particularly useful in clarifying my arguments and understanding of the relevant history, and of land dynamics in particular. In my research, the documents I accessed established the relationships between the state, corporations, citizens and lastly the social movements (Hull, 2012). At the same time, to understand why Dholera looks the way it does today, these documents revealed the transformations which the project has witnessed, from when it was initially planned by

authorities until recently. Last but not least, the documents helped me triangulate information provided in interviews. I also collected land sale or transfer records of the 22 villages from the land revenue offices based in Dhandhuka and Dholera.

3.4 Methodological and Ethical Considerations

As the research required a deeper examination into numerous multifaceted practices, ethical considerations were of regular concern. They were around issues of privacy, confidentiality and/or data access. In the dissertation, I am careful to hide information that may complicate an individual or even her/his work. While I anonymise most of my interviewees barring a very few, many of the places are usually too big and obvious. I have changed names of few villages while also taking utmost care so that even the mention of place doesn't endanger anybody. However, as the project is well known, maintaining the anonymity of every informant has not been possible.

3.4.1 Studying Up and Down

Since Nader's (1974) call for studies of institutions considered to be at the centre of capitalism, scholars have argued on the importance and challenges of interviewing elites[44] ('studying up') in providing insights into processes at work. The challenges such as 'difficulty in access, time constraints, the risk of reinforcing dominant narratives put forth by the elite, and uneven power relations' were particularly highlighted (Rice, 2010). In studying 'elites' such as the real-estate professionals, politicians, officials and private consultants, I faced some of the challenges of 'elite interviewing' or studying up. Overall, however, I found access was relatively good compared to students who have studied

[44] The concept of 'elite' has been problematised in anthropological literature (for a discussion, refer Smith 2006). In this context, I use the term 'elite' to describe those who had considerable power in the creation of Dholera, inasmuch as they planned, executed, or gave permissions for the project.

similar projects. For any bureaucrats or real estate professionals, 'Oxford', 'London' or 'UK' ensured that I agreed with their views as I came from the same 'class' and hence, they were happy to talk, insightfully or evasively depending on the topic and context.

As the research topic was sensitive and contentious, issues related to access continued to appear repeatedly. Once, a senior officer started demanding to see the questionnaire with which I was interviewing her. Giving a quick glance at the questionnaire and without reading any of the questions, she claimed that they were unnecessarily critical and she would only respond to the questions she wanted to answer, since 'foreign researchers study Gujarat and always write negatively about everything and defame us in the world.'[45] Still, by hanging around in offices while sending repeated requests, I was able to access some originally cagey bureaucrats. In similar ways, 'studying down' also posed issues of access and trust. Many farmers were tough to locate and tougher to win over. What helped often was my referees amongst the villagers. Middlemen offered a certain set of challenges as they were initially suspicious of me. With time and experience, I was able to meet the challenges approaching them through better references.

3.4.2 Positionality

In Gujarat, I was an outsider Muslim man from 'England', 'London'; identities and places that have a complex relationship with the people of the province. These identities profoundly affected my access or data collection and on many occasions in contradictory ways. As a Muslim researcher from a foreign university had the twin result of shutting down entry to a number of spaces and subjects, although it also opened up others. Scholars

[45] Interview with Hetvi (pseudonym) at DSIRDA in Gandhinagar, January 2018.

have pointed out such situations and how research cannot keep itself sacred from one's institutional and geographical positionality (Jazeel and McFarlane, 2010).

A significant challenge during the study was to handle disagreeable opinions. I would come across extremely derogatory views when aspects such as caste or religion appeared. At large, I tried to understand why such views existed and emerged while trying not to impose my own views. However, when it mattered or when I came across vile remarks, I explained my disagreements. I was asked by many political party members, middlemen, farmer leaders or bureaucrats about my views on the project. I was always straightforward about my position as a researcher which helped address many of the ethical concerns of self-reflexivity (Kunnath, 2013). On the other hand, many people shared opinions, inside stories of practices, remarks about colleagues which required a guarantee of anonymity from my side. I informed every participant of this research about the project before I requested any interactions. I also clarified my identity on most occasions although some of the data come from situations where I was a silent participant.

Lastly, I decided not to repay my informants through monetary compensations. Choosing whether or not to pay, and in what form, is a context-specific choice (Hammett and Sporton, 2012). With some participants such as government officials, this was the obvious choice, as they were in a position of power. However, in many instances, for example, at a teashop, I have paid the bills. While travelling with farmer activists, I similarly paid expenses for fuel, food etc.

3.4.3 Recording data

Throughout the fieldwork, my use of the audio-recorder during the interviews was mostly intuitive. After spending time with the interviewee, when I found that s/he was

comfortable, I would seek permission to record the conversation. However, on many occasions, I would simply not bring it up during the conversation. Such decisions were mostly intuitive having learnt from multiple experiences. For example, one land broker mentioned frankly during an interview: '…I will tell you how many bighas[46] of land I have brokered only if you put the recorder off. You can write on your notebook but with the recorder, I will have Income Tax officers at my home tomorrow morning…'[47] This happened despite the fact that he allowed me to record at the start of the interview. The recorder on many occasions could make the interviewee jittery about opening up. At the least, it signals a degree of formality that would make easy flowing conversation more tricky. Moreover, I did not want my role to seem at all investigative. There were times when I decided not to raise the issue of the recorder choosing not to use it, as a way to build trust.

3.4.4 Research Assistants

Although I am conversant in Gujarati along with Hindi and English, which were the most common languages in the spaces of my research, I hired paid research assistants (RA) at various stages during the fieldwork in the villages. Two of them, one each amongst the Kolis and Darbars, both graduates, were local. The two were key interlocutors, acting as gatekeepers and/or translators when linguistic barrier became obvious. Beyond the interviews, they obtained land records from the revenue offices. The RAs had implicit knowledge of the local dynamics with respect to caste or class. They eventually assisted gaining further insights into issues otherwise impenetrable. Whereas I come across as a

[46] Bigha is a traditional unit of measurement of area of land in Gujarat. 1 acre = 2.5 Bighas. It is used across various provinces although the sizes and measurements vary.

[47] Interview with Kunwarsinh in Dholera in November 2017.

non-local, villagers could easily relate or trust the RAs. To address some aspects of the gender imbalance in the research, I also hired a female student from Ahmedabad, who helped me access female interviewees across the villages.

When accompanied, both the perception as well as researcher's own positionality is affected. RAs have biases or opinions, on caste, class and gender affecting data collection or analysis. Although I experienced this, overall their involvement enriched the research.

3.4.5 Risk Factors

The risk assessment was prepared with the knowledge that Gujarat has a history of conflict and violence. I had to take great precaution to ensure safe living and working conditions during the fieldwork. To ensure, I preferred safer transport modes especially with people I could trust. I relied on the advice of the locals whose knowledge of threat was more nuanced. I was also careful in making contacts. During the early fieldwork, I refrained from raising contentious questions. Throughout the fieldwork I maintained regular contact with my supervisor, Professor Nikita Sud, sending her fortnightly updates.

3.5 Conclusion

The following research attempts to narrate the role of the state in delivering the Dholera SIR. The state in Dholera includes many more actors and their practices, which work in the shadow of the state. In the process, the Dholera case essentially connects the local to the global and hence includes several phenomena signifying these scales. In this chapter, I have deliberated how the research was planned to mitigate the challenges and address the research questions. I described how the involvement of various actors and processes was investigated, and summarised the methodological underpinnings that guide this research project.

A number of conceptual questions were raised from the field with methodological outcomes, highlighting several themes that are central to the research. The study intends to tell the myriad stories of Dholera, and the cultural and economic ideologies that they reflect, and the research process involved engaging with multiple perspectives in order to tell these narratives. In the following chapter, I outline the background of the politics of development of Gujarat vis-à-vis Dholera, examining the factors that eased the coming together of Hindutva and neoliberalism via the institutional architecture of the state.

Chapter 4: '*Development has gone crazy*': the Gujarat Model of 'unequal' development through neoliberalism and Hindutva

4.1 Introduction

In late August of 2017, and throughout September, as the monsoon left Gujarat and the upcoming provincial election gathered steam, the slogan '*vikas gando thayo chhe*' meaning 'development has gone crazy' became one of the most trending topics on social media. It was used to mock the poor state of 'development' across the province. The BJP was taken by surprise because development was the territory in which they claimed to have delivered and suddenly a campaign targeting them head-on, unexpected to say the least, was proving those claims to be hollow (Langa, 2017). The campaign began spontaneously after a 20-year-old engineering student posted some photographs of a dilapidated state-owned bus on Facebook (Figure 4.1) with a tag line: 'Stay Away! Vikas has gone crazy in Gujarat' (Langa, 2017).

The post set off a conflagration of memes mocking the BJP's claim of development. People shared photographs as well as video clips of broken roads, rickety buses owned by the state, garbage dumps on the streets, flooded roads, broken bridges, unfinished construction and records of swine flu-related casualties, all with the catchy tag line of '*vikas*' (development). What helped was the fact that 'Vikas' is a common male name in Gujarati society. Hence, comments about 'Vikas' falling in love (Figure 4.2), getting lost, going mad, or having his engagement broken because he had gone crazy, all perfectly fitted in with the use of the word. Adding to the humor and wit, the Hindu festival of Navratri brought with it new songs released on the theme '*vikas gando thayo chhe*'.

The moment was both natural and political. The monsoon downpour of July-August washed away the BJP's roads and highways as well as their claims of world class infrastructure. Even in the province's financial capital of Ahmedabad, these were in a run-down condition, prompting people to question the 'Gujarat model of development' that the BJP had been parroting for decades. The opposition Congress party latched on to this with the impending provincial assembly elections, and this became a major embarrassment for the BJP as the party's top brass was forced to respond. However, it was a tough task to create a narrative against the more relatable social media campaign that solely focused on issues such as fuel price hikes, recently introduced high Goods and Services Tax rates, and the growing unemployment, having already reeled under the massive agitations by Other Backward Classes (OBCs)[48] and Patidar[49] youths and followed by Dalit protests since 2014.[50] Never has the word *vikas* (development) exasperated the ruling BJP in Gujarat as much over the last two decades as it did then.

The Gujarat model of development and slogans such as '*sabka saath, sabka vikas*' (all together, development for all) were the major platforms of Narendra Modi's successful Prime ministerial campaign in 2014. However, the reality of development in Gujarat has been very different. The remote areas of the province were also in bad shape in sectors such as health, education and other social sectors. Rising unemployment has remained a major concern. For instance, one survey showed that more than 80 per cent of engineers

[48] See fn 15 for Other Backward Classes (OBCs).

[49] 'Patidar' is a landed caste spread across the province of Gujarat and a significant diaspora spread over Europe, North America, and Eastern and Southern Africa. They were hired as tenants by the landlords and princely states to farm large tracts of land of which ownership post-independence was transferred to the Patidar tenants through the land reforms. Post-independence, the community has diversified into secondary and tertiary sectors and has continued to influence the province's politics. In Dholera, although only one of the 22 villages has a Patidar majority, their financial and political strength has ensured a key role, which I will elaborate in Chapter 7.

[50] Refer to Sud (2017) for a summary on these agitations.

in the province are jobless (Shekhar, 2017). It was around this time when I was undertaking my fieldwork for the DPhil when the party claims concerning development faced a significant challenge.



Figure 4.1 Social media memes on 'development has gone crazy'. Left: The Facebook post that led to the '*vikas gando thayo chhe*' campaign. Right: Another image showed a man asked by his curious friends 'what are you doing brother?' answering that he is 'looking for *vikas* (development)' in the broken roads. (Source: Langa. 2017)



Figure 4.2 Social media memes on 'development has gone crazy'. Left: One of the most commonly shared memes showed a pothole in the shape of a heart accompanied by a caption: 'Vikas has fallen in love'. Right: Another picture of a broken bridge from which a bus hangs (Source: HT Correspondent, 2017).

As I tell the background story of Gujarat, I use the lens of the Gujarat model of development and its unequal impact for different groups. Some key questions emerge.

What exactly is the Gujarat model of development and why is it important? What are the contexts, events and background which led to it? What is the role of the state and society within it? Why should the background of the province be told through the Gujarat model of Development? Does it signify the past actions of the state or indicate a future course of actions? Was the formal state driving it, or shadow state or non-state actors? Through the chapter, I illustrate that this model is the elephant in the room that needs to be addressed if the context of the neoliberal growth of Gujarat is to be understood. Importantly, for this dissertation, the Dholera smart city project is very much part of the Gujarat model of development that intends to deliver development in a backward region of the province.

The model primarily refers to the slew of policies and measures when Modi was the Chief Minister of Gujarat between 2001 and 2014. The set of mainly neoliberal policies encouraged private participation, being business-friendly while breaking down laws, which safeguarded environment or labour rights. The period witnessed high GDP growth although investment into the health and education sectors depleted (I give the detailed data in Section 4.5). As can be expected, there have been contesting academic views of the Gujarat model of development. Neoclassical economists such as Jagdish Bhagwati, Arvind Panagariya or Bibek Debroy have projected Gujarat as a model for the country, while the likes of Amartya Sen and Jean Drèze have criticised it for the poor progress on indicators of human development (Bhagwati and Panagariya, 2012a; 2012b; Debroy, 2012; Sen and Drèze 2013). Critics also describe the model as one which signifies unequal development (Hirway et al., 2014a; Mahadevia, 2005), being all about economic growth without social development (Hirway et al., 2014b: 7; Jaffrelot 2015a, 2017), involving crony capitalism and the ills resulting from an overlap of business and politics (Jaffrelot 2019, Sud 2012), and capital led growth laced with elements of Hindutva (Desai, 2011b, Jaffrelot 2019, Sud

2012). As I shall discuss, the model often flirts with practices of illiberal Hindutva while following economic models of liberalism.

However, it is important to acknowledge here that the marginalisation of economically and socially backward populations or the key role of non-state actors in state and society, precede economic liberalisation or Hindutva in Gujarat. As Sud (2012: 188) remarked, illiberal political conditions long precede market-oriented reform or the rise of Hindutva, for religious minorities, lower castes and other disadvantaged groups. Scholars including Jan Breman (1974, 1985, 1996, 2002, 2004), Indira Hirway (1995), Marrio Rutten (1986, 1995), Shah (1970, 1974a, 1974b, 1975, 1996, 1998a, 1998b), Shinoda (2002), Streefkerk (1997) have all shown the social polarisation and paradoxical growth process with respect to economy and polity through their works on Gujarat's political economy in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. The asymmetrical impact of the incomplete land redistribution process is an apt example towards this (see Sud, 2012: 75-96; on Gujarat's land reforms). I explain this in Section 5.6 of Chapter 5, through the works of some of these scholars. However, that does not mean the coming of neoliberalism and Hindutva is less important. In fact, the situation of Gujarat before the full throttle commencement of the two ideologies make it a more comprehensive case study to understand how they exacerbate existing marginalisation along with creating new ones.

Dholera or the constituency of Dhandhuka is a microcosm of the political changes that have taken place in Gujarat over the years (Table 4.1). It is not necessarily a bell-weather constituency, but the election results tell a significant story of the province's politics especially the shift from the Congress era to BJP hegemony. I do not give a full account of the history of the province since a host of scholars has dealt with this from various

perspectives.[51] Instead, I tell the story with a focus on four key moments in the politico-economic history of the province that are crucial to understand the complex of Dholera. These are defining moments in post-independent Gujarat that impact the course of its political economy. The underlining focus on development going 'crazy' or the Gujarat model of development is important to understand the context of the province because they are the outcomes of the history of the political economy of Gujarat, especially in the last three decades.

In the next section (4.2), I elaborate on the first moment, namely the creation of Gujarat in 1960. Section 4.3 covers the second moment when the Congress party split in 1969 which had a significant bearing on the politics of agitation and anarchy over the subsequent decades. The next moment covered in Section 4.4 discusses the politics of forming electoral alliances with hitherto marginalised groups that also lead to the consolidation of the upper-caste behind the forces of Hindutva. The result of these events, in addition to the backdrop of national events, ensured a strong BJP, and as India opted to liberalise its economy in the early 1990s, we arrive at the fourth key moment in which Hindutva and neoliberalism overlap. This phase is elaborated in Section 4.5. As unequal development progressed further in the post-liberalisation era, we arrive at our starting point of '*vikas gaando thayo chhe*' and the 'Gujarat model of development' discussed in Section 4.6. Section 4.7 then concludes.

4.2 Moment One: The creation of Gujarat

Traditionally, Gujarat is divided into four geographical, socio-cultural sub regions and this categorisation has had historical influence on matters of every aspect of life: whether

[51] Two excellent books are by Sud (2012) and Yagnik and Sheth (2005). Also, Simpson and Kapadia (2010) edited volume provides a good reflection of both colonial and post-colonial history of Gujarat.

culture, economy, trade, or caste (Figure 4.3). These regions are (a) mainland Gujarat extending from the southern tip of Aravali and Vindhya Satpura ranges to the beginning of the Western Ghats; (b) Saurashtra or Kathiawar; (c) Kutch; and (d) the eastern Adivasi belt (Yagnik and Sheth 2005: 09). The British ruled barely one seventh of what is currently Gujarat and the remaining area composed of a number of small and large princely kingdoms spread across the province. For example, the region of Saurashtra was divided into 222 princely kingdoms and estates (ibid: 226).

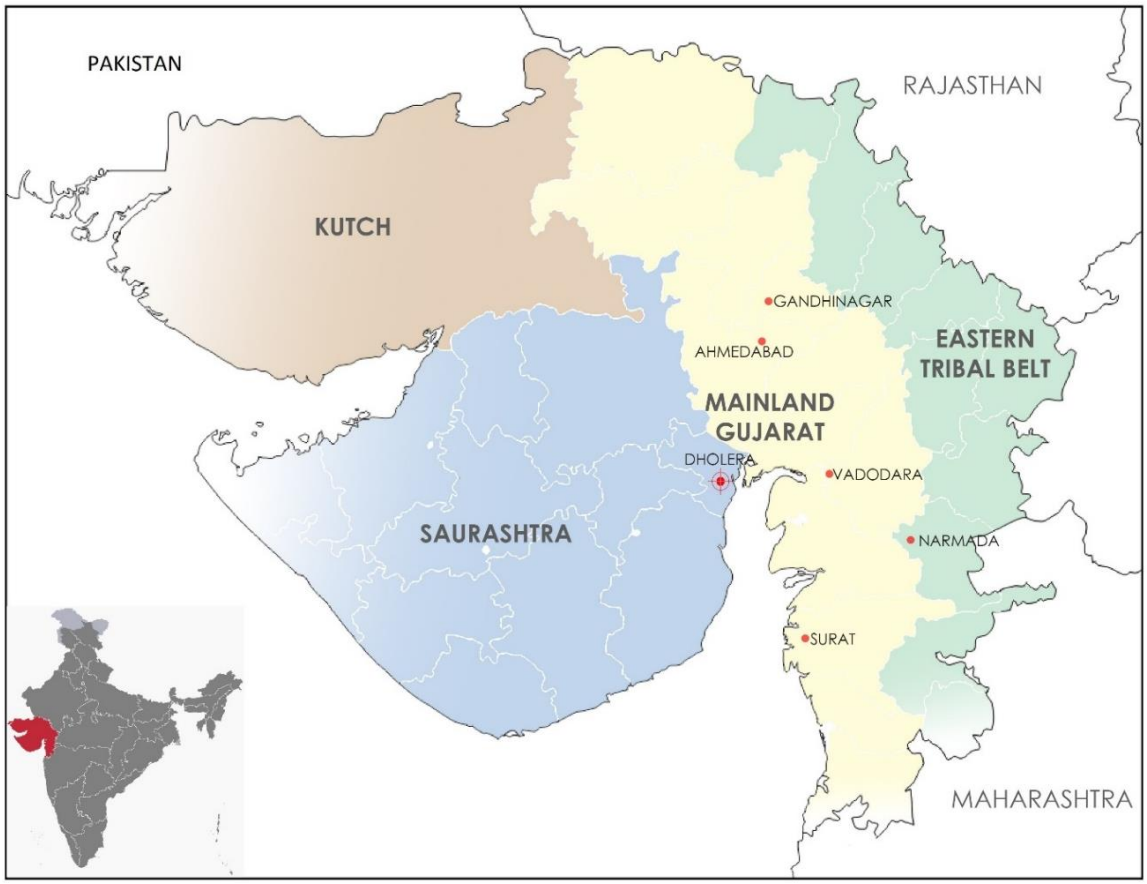


Figure 4.3: The regions of Gujarat (Source: Author).

However, when it comes to analysing the political economy of the province, a more useful lens than geographical area is the categorisation in terms of the 'core' and the 'periphery' that was an outcome of British roads and train routes (Patel, 1991). While mainland Gujarat forms the 'core', the rest of the three regions become the peripheries, illustrating the inequality of economic development witnessed by the province. The core consists of

the fertile areas on the coast of central and southern Gujarat and plains along the Sabarmati and Mahi rivers (Hirway 1995, Patel 1991). The 'peripheries' included the less fertile regions of Saurashtra, Kutch and north and eastern Gujarat. The core is also referred to as the 'Golden Corridor' and would run through mainland Gujarat as marked in Figure 4.3.

Through economic liberalisation, and an infrastructure based development model—first the coastal Saurashtra, and later Kutch (since 2001 earthquake), were included in what came to be called the 'Silver Corridor'. Simpson (2013) discusses the story of this model's introduction into Kutch region in detail through what he calls 'hyperbolic capitalism'. Other scholars such as Nikita Sud's (2009; 2020a; 2020b) work on Kutch covers the phenomenon. Tambs-Lyche and Sud (2016), Viswanathan and Pathak (2014) specifically discuss the policy geography of these 'corridors'. I will discuss the role of Kutch and the mobility of capital generated by its liberalisation on Dholera in Section 5.5 of Chapter 5.

In 1947 as India attained independence from the British, current Gujarat became part of three different provinces. While British Gujarat along with other princely kingdoms such as Baroda went to Bombay province, Kathiawar's princely kingdoms were joined together to form the United States of Saurashtra. The third province, Kutch, was directly ruled by the federal government (ibid: 64). In 1956 through the States Reorganisation Act, Kutch and Saurashtra were absorbed into Bombay. Bombay province was split again in 1960 along linguistic lines creating the present-day Gujarat and Maharashtra.

Gujarat's coastline of 1600 kilometers constitutes more than a quarter of India's total mainland coastline (CCZMCSB, 2020). The location of this lengthy coastline towards the Middle East, Africa and Europe has ensured a long mercantile history that has left a great impact on societal composition, and trade has long been a forte for the economy (Yagnik and Sheth, 2005). Export and import historically formed a significant proportion of

economic activities and continue to do so. Agriculture remained the highest employer and modernising agriculture was prioritised in India from the mid-1960s onwards. Gujarat was amongst the key beneficiary states of the federal government's policies of initiating a green revolution.[52] With a substantial arid region in the province, Narmada dam became an emotive political issue while the input-heavy green revolution played a key role in justifying its further need. Mona Mehta (2010) discusses the case of the Narmada dam project leading to one of Gujarat's most influential social movements called the 'Narmada Movement' dominating public debate in the province since its inception to the present. According to her, the movement was marked by a sustained campaign linking 'identifiable claimants, goals and a public in a common relationship' and its 'mobilisation had a rich repertoire of contention that included demonstrations, public statements, lobbying, letter writing, marches and sloganeering' (Mehta 2010: 510).

With respect to industry, since independence, successive provincial governments have promoted industrial development and Gujarat remains one of India's most industrialised and urbanised provinces. The province took various initiatives, formulated several favourable policies, and established a number of special institutions[53]—all meant to support and diversify industrial development. The industrial as well as trade lobby were significantly influential and shaped many of the government strategies and policies. With the green revolution, a second important lobby of rich farmers emerged.[54] Groundnut is

[52] See Mathur and Kashyap (2002), Joshi (1999) for further details.

[53] These include Gujarat Industrial Investment Corporation, Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation, Gujarat State Finance Corporation and Industrial Extension Bureau.

[54] Refer to Gidwani (2008) for an excellent analysis of the Patidar community in central Gujarat and how they emerged as an influential community. Also, the creation of an influential lobby through the green revolution does not mean that farmers were less important in the earlier periods. During the freedom struggle, farmer led protests occurred in Gujarat and both Mahatma Gandhi and Vallabhbhai Patel used their mobilisation. The green revolution added to their economic strength.

one of Gujarat's main cash crops, and groundnut oil producers (industrialists) formed a third important lobby (Hirway, 1995). These lobbies financed state assembly elections in the following decades while being able to influence policies.

In the last census of 2011, Gujarat's population was 60 million spread over 196,000 square kilometres (Census India, 2011). The population comprises 88.6% Hindus, 9.7% Muslims and the remaining less than 2% consisting of Jains, Christians and others. Caste remains a key marker when it comes to the Indian populace, especially among Hindus (ibid). Caste wise, the composition of the population is: (1) Upper castes – 26 per cent (Vanias/Baniya – 3 per cent, Brahmins – 4 per cent, Rajputs/Darbars – 5 percent, Patidars–13 percent); (2) Other Backward Classes (OBCs) – 40 percent; (3) Scheduled Castes (SCs) – 7 percent; (4) Scheduled Tribes (STs) or Adivasis – 15 percent (ibid).

To refer to the caste categories throughout the dissertation, I use 'upper' and 'lower' castes. The use of the term 'lower' (and similarly 'upper') has been contested by many scholars and many instead prefer using 'backward' or 'marginalised' etc. However, I use 'lower' because of the structure of the caste system in Hindu society that has put these groups in a 'lower' category ultimately leading to their marginalised or backward economic and social status in Gujarat. Hence, 'lower' refers more towards the structure and less towards the outcome. The one quarter upper castes occupy three quarters of middle class space and 95 per cent of upper class space in Gujarat in the forms of traders, businessmen, industrialists, big landholders, professionals and service sectors, as well as Non-Resident Indians (Patel, 2002).

The 22 villages located within Dholera SIR have a population of 39,000 with 60-70% Koli caste members and 10-20% Darbars (Senes Consultants, 2013). Koli is a peasant community, classified as OBC in Gujarat, belonging to the middle-castes. On the other

hand, Darbar is an upper caste group amongst the Rajputs who were the rulers of this area before and during the British era. While across the province, OBC communities have been playing an important political role in Gujarat; in Dholera, Kolis are far less influential both politically and financially. They practice subsistence agriculture, owning middle-sized land holdings. Politically, despite being the majority in the Dhandhuka constituency to which the 22 villages belong, it was only in 2007 when a Koli or non-upper caste candidate won it (Election Commission of India, 2020).

Interestingly, both Koli and Darbar groups are clubbed under what is called Kshatriya.[55] Ghanshyam Shah (1975) provides an excellent account of how the Rajputs (Darbars in Dholera) and Kolis came to form the 'Kshatriya' group. He argues that as the Patidar community came to control the Congress party post-independence, the previous rulers and landlords, the Rajputs were sidelined from the corridors of political power. The numerically inferior Rajputs engineered a mobilisation under the banner of Gujarat Kshatriya Samaj (Hindi: Gujarat Kshatriya Society) which worked to bring together the diverse Ksahtriya communities such as Kolis under the same banner. The Gujarat Kshatriya Samaj argued that these communities shared a common history of taking up arms for society, which is why they have been called 'Kshatriyas'. For a start, it suited the Kolis as it increased their societal status while also becoming part of a significant alliance. However, as Dholera locals pointed out to me, discrimination at the everyday level continued. During my fieldwork I was given multiple accounts of physical violence committed by the Darbars on the Kolis. Some of those are past incidents while a few took place during my stay. I describe one such incident in Section 6.5 of Chapter 6.

[55] Kshatriya is one of the four social orders of Hindu society constituting the ruling class. Refer to Shah (1975) for an analysis of Kshatriya groups in Gujarat.

The site of my case study, Dholera smart city spread over 22 villages, is interesting within the Saurashtra-Gujarat geography. While two of its villages, Otariya and Sandhida, were part of the Bhavnagar princely kingdom, and hence the Saurashtra province between 1947-56, the rest of the villages were British administered and fell under Dhandhuka block of Ahmedabad district. Later, in the reorganisation of 1960, the former two villages, along with a few others, were added to Ahmedabad.[56] However, culturally as well as in the core-periphery categorisation, the villages remain closer to Saurashtra than the prosperous Ahmedabad. Most of the Darbars still find glory claiming fraternity with the rulers of the Bhavnagar princely kingdom while calling themselves the rulers of those lands. The pre-independence developmental work of the King of Bhavnagar, such as the building and annual maintenance of the bund along the sea that saved the region from floods while storing freshwater from the rivers for agriculture, are often cited by locals in contrast with the failures of the independent Indian state in delivering development.[57] Furthermore, a key reason for the region remaining backward is expressed by the movement of Saurashtra nationalism, in its grievances of being demoted from a province to become part of Gujarat, losing significant resources. These aspects are covered in detail by Spodek (1972; 1974; 1976) and Tambs-Lyche (2003; 2004; 2012) in their scholarship.

[56] Data collected from the set of interviews across Dholera and nearby regions, and from archival information available with the office of the Sarpanch (see fn 43 for Sarpanch) of Dholera village. The intervieweess include: in Dholera and Dhandhuka: Vijayrajsinh, Kunwarsinh, Bhaubhai, Naranbhai (pseudonym), Pradeepsinh; in Dhandhuka: Yuvrajsinh, Rafiq (pseudonym) and Member of Legislative Assembly – Rajeshbhai. These are some of the names with whom long discussions were held.

[57] This and the above information comes from the series of interviews with local Darbar leaders. Interview with Nirmalsinh (real names), Vijayrajsinh (pseudonym) in Dholera in November 2017 were some of the main contributors.

Dholera itself used to be a bustling port town[58] until the early 1900s. During the initial mechanisation of cotton processing, places such as Dhandhuka and Dholera were at the forefront. The British appointed a superintendent of cotton experiments, C. Daley in Dhandhuka who was behind the first steam operated saw gin in Ahmedabad in the 1850s (Mehta, 1982 also cited in Yagnik and Sheth, 2005). As the experiments on mechanisation became successful, these were accompanied by efforts to improve transport and communication networks to facilitate cotton exports. A tramway was to be planned connecting the town and port of Dholera, and a tramway company was set up in 1850 in Dholera, with merchants of Ahmedabad buying most of its shares (ibid). The locals, especially the Darbars, vividly recount the 'glorious past' as narrated by Nirmalsinh:

> *…There was a port in this area, I guess 100 years back. I have been Sarpanch of the village for 10 years. Until 1910, Dholera wasn't a village, (it) was a municipality, and I have the records of tax and trade, I have in my office… After that due to silting, the port was shut, population at that time was around 40,000, now it's 4000. We were bigger than Ahmedabad in the 1800s… So, we have gone downwards…*[59]

Understanding the trajectory of development in Dholera in the post-independence era requires a discussion of what Rajni Kothari (1964) called the Congress 'system' that had a stronghold in Dholera, as with other parts of Gujarat. Since independence, the Congress party in Gujarat remained unchallenged for a decade and a half. Two key figures of Indian independence, Mahatma Gandhi and Vallabhbhai Patel, built a party oriented around principles of pragmatism, discipline, and social work (Ludden, 1996; Varshney, 2002). During this period, upper caste leaders acted as patrons for the 'lower' caste masses. Corbridge and Harriss (2000: 50) argued that the patrons were the main points of

[58] Not to be confused with the Dholavira port of the Indus-Valley civilisation, the remains of which is located in the district of Kutch. The other port of the Indus Valley civilisation is Lothal, 35 kilometres from Dholera.

[59] Interview with Nirmalsinh (real name) in Ahmedabad in November 2017.

connection in the countryside for the Congress party (also see Bailey, 1963: 111; Kohli, 1990: 18; Kothari, 1970; Weiner, 1967). These men were local notables — landed, wealthy, in positions of power in the institutions of local government — who usually exercised authority, or were members of a dominant caste (Weiner, 1967). They formed the organisational base of the Congress-dominated political system. In Dholera, the patrons in the villages came largely from the Darbars who had strong financial clout and owned large land holdings.[60]

By the 1950s, while continuing to win elections, chinks could be seen in the Congress armour with a major section opposed to the socio-economic programme or the socialist ideas of the post-independence federal government headed by Jawaharlal Nehru (Kohli, 1990). In fact, the business community, politicians and bureaucrats came together at an early date and resisted the Nehruvian system, and many dimensions of the state-owned economic regime were circumvented (Sinha, 2005). Land reform was a key arena where this was particularly witnessed and the reforms largely failed in most regions of Gujarat. Sud (2012: 78-95) provides a concise analysis of the land reforms. Other scholars such as Patel (1990), Ghanshyam Shah (2002a), Shah and Sah (2002); Yagnik and Sheth (2005); also discuss the failure of the reforms. Within this, it is interesting to note that land redistribution was successful in Saurashtra where the Patidars were beneficiaries and failed significantly in regions where Patidars tend to lose underlining the influence of the community.[61] Scholars on land redistribution in other provinces of India have similarly commented on the incomplete implementation of the process (Byres 1991; Dantwala and Shah 1971; Herring, 1980; 1983; Sinha 1978; Sinha and Pushpendra 2000).

[60] The story of patronage in Dholera was sritched together from the interviews mentioned in fn 56.

[61] This was pointed to me by the Dalit activist Martin Macwan who has worked for Dalit's access to land. The argument holds true with most of the scholars on land reforms in Gujarat listed above. Interview with Martin Macwan (real name) in Ahmedabad in January 2018.

Year	Dhandhuka Constituency		Overall Results (Governing party/coalition in bold)
	Winner	Runner up	
1962	INC	Swatantra Party	**INC** (113/154) Swatantra (26)
1967	Swatantra Party	INC	**INC** (93/168), Swatantra (66)
1972	INC	Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS)	**INC** (140/168)
1975	INC (O)	INC	[**INC (O)**: 56/182 + **BJS**:18 + **KMLP**: 12], INC:75
1980	INC	BJP	**INC**: 141/182, JP: 21, BJP: 9
1985	INC	Janata Party	**INC:**149/182, JP: 14, BJP: 11
1990	BJP	INC	**JD**: 70 + **BJP**: 67, INC: 93 [Later **JD + INC** (1991-95)]
1995	BJP	INC	**BJP**: 121/182, INC: 45
1998	BJP	All India Rashtriya Janata Party (2nd), INC (3rd)	**BJP**: 117/182, INC: 53
2002	BJP	INC	**BJP**: 127/182, INC: 51
2007	IND (INC support)	BJP	**BJP**: 117/182, INC: 59
2012	BJP	INC	**BJP**: 120/182, INC: 57
2017	INC	BJP	**BJP**: 99/182, INC: 78

Table 4.1: Assembly election results of Dhandhuka vis-à-vis Gujarat [INC: Indian National Congress. 'O' stands for Organisation and 'R' for Requisitions. INC (O) and INC (R) were the outcomes of the split in the INC in 1969 which I explain below]. Source: Election Commission of India (2020).

The resistance to such Nehruvian policies resulted in the Swatantra Party that came within striking distances especially in the 1967 provincial elections (Shah, 1976). The party comprised a loose association of Rajputs, the erstwhile rulers in the princely kingdoms who managed to consolidate a large mass in the name of Kshatriya unity under Gujarat Kshatriyas Sabha and the Patidars (Shah, 1976). As I go on to elaborate, Ghanshyam Shah (1975) has provided a very rich and early analysis of the dynamics and the inherent tensions amongst the groups within Gujarat Kshatriyas Sabha. Dholera's Darbars and Kolis came under the Kshatriya banner and as the Gujarat Kshatriyas Sabha supported

Swatantra Party in the 1960s, it went on to win the Dhandhuka constituency in 1967, having come second in 1962 (Table 4.1). On the eve of independence, Hindutva organisations, especially RSS, had been active in many cities and towns of Gujarat. However, Mahatma Gandhi's assassination by a former member of the RSS in 1948 resulted in their temporary ban (Shah, 2002a). In the 1950s and 1960s, the right-wing Hindu political parties, the Hindu Mahasabha and Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), remained marginal although their ideologies found many takers within the broad church of the Congress Party (Shah, 1996; Shani, 2007; Yagnik and Sheth, 2005).

4.3 Moment Two: The division of Congress

After Vallabhbhai Patel, the next supreme leader was Morarji Desai who also favoured a conservative Congress which remained in the same shape until it was split in 1969 (Yagnik and Sheth, 2005). Indira Gandhi clashed with some of the strong provincial satraps such as Desai leading to the formation of Congress (Requisitionists) of Indira Gandhi and Congress (Organisation) of Desai [Congress (R) and Congress (O) hereon]. The Gujarat Congress largely remained with Desai (Sud, 2012). The middle class who were opposed to the Nehruvian idea of the state or Congress policies towards 'lower' castes and Muslims, transferred their resentment to Desai's Congress (O) (Yagnik and Sheth, 2005). At the same time, as Indira Gandhi took over the Congress mantle, the organisation was decimated at its grassroots due to her dependence on personal authority (Kohli 1990).[62]

While the Swatantra party disappeared after the 1967 election, its core constituencies of rich Patidar and Kshatriya peasantry remained a potent political force (Shah 1976). After the Congress split in 1969, a majority of the upper caste peasant leaders defected to

[62] A range of national level political developments also impacted some of these events, I do not go into the details of those developments. For further details, see Brass (1994a, 1997), Frankel et al. (2000), Kohli (1990), Rudolph and Rudolph (1987).

Congress (O); a few joined the BJS while lower caste Kshatriyas went behind Congress (R) (ibid). The Gujarat Kshatriya Sabha lost its political appeal and although the division was not strictly along class lines, the poor and non-Rajput Kshatriyas went behind Indira's Congress (R) (Shah, 1975; 1976). Hence, the erstwhile rulers, the Darbars, in Dholera were looking for non-Congress parties while Kolis went back to support Indira's Congress.[63] This was an important moment when young Darbar locals like Bhupendrasinh Chudasama, active in RSS and BJS emerged, as Hindutva groups began finding takers amongst the Darbars. This support for Hindutva groups is significant for the coming decades as they eventually took over the Congress system of patronage in the Dholera villages. I elaborate on this in Chapter 6 through a discussion on middlemen and how a few Koli men were empowered by Hindutva groups, and thereby ensured votes for them. Bhupendrasinh Chudasama is currently a powerful BJP provincial minister holding a host of portfolios and had been in the Hindutva fold since the BJS years in the 1970s. A contemporary and friend of Narendra Modi, they spent a long time together with the RSS in their initial years, a fact pointed to me during interviews with many local BJP leaders.

This split of the Congress in 1969 was significant for the rise of communalism in Gujarat. It was accompanied by the first major Hindu-Muslim riot in Ahmedabad and some other towns that killed close to a thousand people, mostly Muslims.[64] Scholars have pointed out that the riot set a trend that was repeated over the next decades which ultimately brought Hindutva forces to power (Shah 1970). Patel (2002) identifies certain patterns that emerged, with the spread of riots in workers' areas of Ahmedabad: politicisation of the riots, the lukewarm attitude of the government, the involvement or connivance of the

[63] Interview with Vijayrajsinh, Bhaubhai and Bhaishankar (pseudonym) in Ahmedabad in November 2017.

[64] For details on the 1969 riot and events, refer to Shah (1970); and on its impact on Muslims, see Jaffrelot and Gayer (2012).

police, the role of the Gujarati vernacular press, and the large scale killing of Muslims and burning or looting of their properties, alongside the call for a boycott of Muslims. Following the 1969 riots, Hindutva forces witnessed an increase in support amongst the public reflected by the significant rise in the number of RSS offices across Gujarat (Shah, 2002a).

Although the 1969 riots were a watershed moment, scholars also argue that tensions had been building for a while (Shani, 2007; Spodek, 2011). Before independence, the Muslim League had received considerable traction amongst the Gujarati Muslims and many scholars have alluded to this as a factor in the later growth of Hindutva ideologies. The history of foreign aggressors in Gujarat plundering the province's cities and places of worship, a number of whom were Muslim rulers from Central Asia, remained in public memory told and retold through various novels and poems (Yagnik and Sheth, 2005).[65] Gujarat also faced the impact of partition riots, when a large number of Hindu refugees fled to Gujarat from Sindh, now in Pakistan, and settled in Gujarat. This provided a fertile ground for RSS and its associates (Sud, 2012; Yagnik and Sheth, 2005). Gujarat's geographical location was significant as the province shared a long international border with Pakistan in the north along Kutch (Figure 4.3). This has always created fact-cum-fiction narratives about continuous Pakistani 'infiltration' into Gujarat – which continued

[65] Romila Thapar (2000, 2005) deals in great depth with the subject of such imagined and real foreign aggressors through an analysis of the historiography on the destruction of the Somnath temple by Mahmud of Ghazni. Also, see Pandey (1992) and Van der Veer (1994).

to be exploited by right-wing Hindu nationalists.[66] Altogether, an opening was created for Hindutva groups, which until now remained on the margins.

Although Indira Gandhi's Congress (R) won the 1972 elections, the province witnessed a series of violent public agitations targeted at the incumbent government, led by upper caste and conservative groups (Sanghavi, 2010). The first was in 1974 called the Nav Nirman (re-construction) movement which was supposedly a movement against corruption. A number of commentators such as Bhagat-Ganguly (2015), Jones and Jones (1976), Sanghavi (2010), Shah (1974a; 1974b; 1976, 1986) Yagnik and Bhatt (1984) have covered the agitation politics in Gujarat since the 1970s in detail. Initially started by students, it led to the resignation of the then Chief Minister, Chimanbhai Patel. It also witnessed participation of the Hindutva student group Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), taking lead in the late stages and making the mobilisation highly reactionary. It was followed by the anti-Indira crusade of Jayaprakash Narayan in 1974, and the anti-Emergency agitation as Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency across the country curbing civil and institutional liberties (Patel, 2002). The anti-Emergency agitation witnessed the large participation of members of RSS and was a key moment in validating their political acceptance as they struggled in the name of democracy (Shah 1996; Yagnik and Sheth, 2005). The weakening of the Congress during this decade was evident when the first non-Congress government was formed in 1975 by a coalition led by Indian National Congress (INC) (O) that was also joined by BJS (ibid). In Dholera, Bhupendrasinh Chudasama and the likes were active in the agitations and could carve out

[66] Scholars like Shani (2005) have questioned this thesis pointing out that there were rarely incidents of religious violence until 1969, to be followed only in 1985 after which they became a recurring affair. In her work, Shani (2010) for instance brings up other issues like the control of bootlegging in the 1980s as key factors in which some of the killings were disparate incidents that did not have communal motives.

a space for them.[67] RSS made some inroads into the villages as is evident from the fact that BJS came second in the 1972 elections while the INC (O) won the Dhandhuka constituency in 1975 (refer to Table 4.1).

With repeated divisions of the party and struggling in the fight against taller leaders who could challenge her authority, Indira Gandhi came to rely on her personal charisma more than ground level organisations (Hart, 1976; Rudolph and Rudolph, 1987: 137). After her death in 1984, her son Rajiv Gandhi followed the style of personal charisma, disliking stronger leaders from the provinces and further weakening the grassroots organisation of the Congress. Kohli (1990) argues that since the 1970s, the Congress party nationally became increasingly populist, sharing with other political actors a kind of 'competing populism' (also Lindberg, 1995). Scholars (Ghassem-Fachandi, 2012; Kohli, 1990; Shani, 2010a) have argued that it created space for communal appeals in the early 1980s, as the Congress party attempted to exploit cultural feelings, particularly of the Hindu majority. The RSS and its sister organisations were taking root across the country and both Indira and Rajiv Gandhi pandered to such Hindutva groups on various occasions (Kohli, 1990). This legitimised Hindu nationalism opening a public political discourse for it (ibid). Thus, the vacuum created by the decimation of grassroots level Congress was ready to be filled by RSS, a strong cadre based organisation.

4.4 Moment Three: KHAM politics

A major electoral strategy framed by the Congress in the late 1970s alienated Gujarat's middle class and paved the way for the firm entrenchment of Hindutva ideology. Referred to as the KHAM strategy, Congress forged an alliance of Kshatriyas, Harijans, Adivasis and Muslims (KHAM), together constituting about two thirds of Gujarat's population (see

[67] This information is also from the set of interviews mentioned in fn 56.

Kohli, 1990; Shah, 1996; Sud, 2012; Yagnik and Sheth, 2005; for more details). A motley group who never shared power gave Congress massive wins in the 1980 and 1985 provincial elections with three fourths of the total seats each time (Table 4.1). Madhavsinh Solanki became the Chief Minister. However, the exclusion of the higher castes/upper classes from the corridors of political power led to their alienation, causing them to fight back soon after.

The challenge towards the KHAM coalition as well as the Madhavsinh Solanki government's policies came from the upper caste constituencies. As Sud (2012: 188) has argued, this challenge 'against the widening of democracy, as well as a potentially redistributive state' has been the sort of 'elite revolt' that Corbridge and Harriss (2000) earlier theorised. The alternative to KHAM was Hindutva and neoliberalism that helped control both polity and economy of the province. Kohli (1990:238-266), Sud (2012), Yagnik and Sheth (2005) have provided detailed analyses of Gujarat politics. Kohli (1990) argues that the KHAM model, despite its electoral success, brought along governance failure. There were also inherent tensions between the groups within KHAM. Shah (1996) argues that strategies such as distribution of party tickets and offices; poverty alleviation programmes; reservation for lower castes; and pro-poor activities of leaders such as Jinabhai Darjee, Madhavsinh Solanki, Narsinhi Makwana etc., gave the party a firm support base temporarily. However, with the declining influence of these leaders within the party, their pro-poor image waned. The backward groups eventually joined different formations (ibid).

After winning the elections each time (1980 and 1985), Solanki reopened cases of land ceiling avoidance along with reservations for backward castes in government jobs and educational institutions. The potential beneficiaries were from the KHAM groups, and

losers were upper-castes (Spodek, 2011; Sud, 2012; Tambs-Lyche and Sud 2016). On each occasion, the province witnessed massive anti-reservation agitations led by the upper castes resulting in open riots especially in 1985 (Shani, 2005). The anti-reservation agitations led by the upper caste constituencies had an avowed aim to dislodge Solanki and the Congress-led social and political formation KHAM in general. It also catapulted the combination of Brahmins, Vaniyas and Patidars to achieve upper-caste unity (Patel, 2002; Prakash, 2003; Shah, 1996; Shani, 2007). In 1985, it started as caste riots between upper and lower caste Hindus over the government's new reservation policy. However, within weeks, the conflict took a religious colour as it turned into a violence between Hindus and Muslims, with a key role again played by Hindutva organisations (Shani, 2010b).[68]

According to Shani (2010b: 496), the violence of 1985 'marked the rise of Hindu nationalism to power in Gujarat'. The Sangh Parivar's indirect support during the anti-reservation movements and later explicit mobilisation around Hindutva ensured its ascendance amongst the upper caste constituency. Several national-level events helped Hindutva activities in Gujarat. For example, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) used the Ramjanmabhoomi programme (see Kohli 1990; 2009) to spread its wing while RSS worked to occupy the political space left open by Congress' growing irrelevance through a range of activities including social work. The Bharatiya Kisan Sangh took over the farmer leadership replacing age old organisations such as Gujarat Khedut Samaj.[69]

[68] For details on the events leading to anti-reservation riots and then to anti-Muslim riots, see Engineer, (1985), Ghassem-Fachandi (2012), Sanghavi (2010), Shani (2005, 2007, 2010), Spodek (1989).

[69] Interview with leaders of Gujarat Khedut Samaj: Sagar Rabari in Ahmedabad, Jayesh Patel in Surat. Both in January 2018.

In Dholera, with strong backing of the marginalised Kshatriyas, the Kolis, Congress won Dhandhuka in 1980 and 1985 by massive margins (Election Commission of India, 2020). However, as Darbars were upper castes, they were not amongst the beneficiaries of Solanki's policies. Already displeased at losing some of their land and traditional influence, they viewed Solanki's policies with suspicion. The anti-reservation agitations of the 1980s and other failures of the Solanki government provided a platform for the likes of Bhupendrasinh to groom an anti-Congress constituency. At the same time, for Darbar youths disillusioned with the loss of their traditional influence in society, the voluntary work of the RSS that involved tasks such as supplying aid to villages after a natural calamity gave a sense of leadership.

Thachil (2014) has shown how elite parties can use social services to win mass support. Both Shani (2007) and Simpson (2013) document examples of how Hindutva organisations provided help to Hindu families during the communal riots in Ahmedabad and after the 2001 earthquake in Kutch. Such actions helped them gain support of new communities. Similar examples were given by other scholars such as Berenschot (2011a) and Breman (2004) for the urban centre of Ahmedabad. Ramakumar (2017) gives a very good analysis of how New Farmers movements of the 1980s were infiltrated by RSS and how in the current decade, due to the agrarian crisis in the countryside, youth are being attracted to RSS. The upper caste coalition that emerged in Gujarat emboldened the BJP. The party decided to play an 'exclusively rabid Hindu card' in corporation/municipal elections after 1985 (Mahadevia, 2005; Patel, 2002: 4833). The outcome was positive for BJP as it won municipal elections in Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat, Rajkot, Bhavnagar, Jamnagar — the major cities that constitute a quarter of the population of the province (Patel, 2002: 4830). Following this, BJP founder LK Advani's Ram *Rath Yatra* in 1989-

1990, that passed through large areas of Gujarat, left behind a long trail of communal violence.[70]

At the national level, as the Mandal Commission's recommendation for reservations in jobs and educational establishments was accepted in 1989 by the federal government, India witnessed nationwide protests by upper-caste students showing cleavages within the Hindu population.[71] From the Gujarat experience of 1985, the Sangh organisations were armed with the skill of managing such anti-reservation agitations, supporting it first and then turning it into an anti-Muslim agitation in Gujarat as scholars such as Shani (2007) has argued (also see Breman, 2002; 2004: 253-254). Following the exact template at the national level, they initially supported these anti-reservation protests, while trying to shift the debate by raising the issue of Ram Janmabhhomi and uniting all Hindus under one flag to fight for the religion. Through her study of Gujarat, Ornit Shani (2007, 2010a, 2010b) argues that manufacturing Muslims into a viable threat to India and to its Hindu majority in the 1980s along with its associated, although sudden, political success, was related to growing caste tensions. This insecurity was particularly amongst the minority upper castes about the growing assertion of the majority lower caste, which 'threatened to upset the Hindu moral order' (Mehta, 2010). Although, from a very different context and period, Simpson (2004, 2013: 107-111) describes how the discourses of anti-Muslim entered the reconstruction process of post-2001 Kutch, ultimately helping Hindutva organisations and leaders to gain grounds.

[70] Rath Yatra usually refers to a public procession in a chariot. For details on these events see Guha (2008), Jaffrelot (1996, 2009), Panikkar (1993) and Srinivas (1991).

[71] For details on these events refer to Corbridge and Harriss (2000); and Kohli (1990). They both provide detailed commentary of the events.

Over the subsequent decades, the RSS and BJP increased their support amongst 'lower' castes despite being the party of the 'Brahmin-Baniya' until the 1980s. Their growth amongst 'lower' castes since the 1990s has attracted the attention of many scholars who connected this vital shift to a 'politics of recognition' (Berenschot, 2011b; Shah, 1996; Shani, 2007; Yagnik and Sheth, 2005). While the Hindutva organisations presented a unified platform of all Hindus and shifted their opposition towards reservation policies in the 1980s, the 'lower' castes turned to the 'BJP out of a desire for social recognition, since they hoped to gain respectability and social mobility' (Berenschot, 2011b: 385). In addition, another class-based argument proposes that deindustrialisation and subsequent informalisation of labour in the 1980s in cities such as Ahmedabad, that resulted in a scramble for jobs and resources, enabled Sangh organisations to tap into the increased precarity that occurred simultaneously along with heightened communal tensions (Breman, 2004; Mahadevia, 2002).

A similar historical account is presented by Gooptu (1997) on the rise of Hindu nationalism in the province of Uttar Pradesh during the inter-war period. During this British era, in the newly transforming urban centres, there was a scramble for employment and resources amongst lower caste Hindus and Muslim poor that created the foundations for a militant Hindu ideology supported for a while by the Hindu elites (ibid). In the Gujarat of the 1980s, with the background of joblessness, general precarity, and the recurring religious riots, the BJP took on the role of service providers, helping them make inroads into the 'lower' castes who were hitherto not aligned with the Hindutva project (Berenschot, 2011a; Shani, 2007; Spodek, 2011). Berenschot's (2011a) argument is particularly relevant here, pointing out that along with the context, there was a key role played by middlemen associated with Hindutva organisations. I analyse this phenomenon further in Chapter 6, which looks at the local politics of Dholera.

4.5 Moment Four: Liberalisation and Modi

The BJP combined with Janata Dal of Chimanbhai Patel to capture power in 1990 although the coalition broke after a year in power. However, BJP won the province in 1995. As India opened its economy through policies of liberalisation, BJP warmed up to the idea of a liberalised economy shunning their previous incongruent economic policies. As Keshubhai Patel, a long-time RSS leader from the Patidar caste became the Chief Minister of Gujarat, he brought a clear Hindu agenda into the politics of the province. For example, he removed the ban preventing government employees from becoming active RSS members and filled the various educational and employment bodies with RSS personnel (Simpson, 2006: 341). A strong OBC leader from the BJP, Shankarsinh Vaghela, rebelled and went on to become the Chief Minister for more than a year. But the next provincial election in 1998 put the BJP firmly in power. Keshubhai's government remained a non-performing government and failed miserably in dealing with the earthquake in January 2001. This led to Narendra Modi being installed as the Chief Minister. Taking forward the agendas of Hindutva and liberalisation, Modi continued to win elections as the BJP created a hegemony having been in power until now.

The marching together of Hindutva and liberalisation in the 1990s is aptly summarised by the interesting pattern Sud (2012) alludes to: 'From 1995, three of Gujarat's five chief ministers—Keshubhai Patel, Shankarsinh Vaghela, and Narendra Modi—owe their political rise to the RSS while the non-RSS chief ministers: Dilip Parikh and Suresh Mehta are industrialists.' With Modi at the helm of the government from late 2001, the association of Hindutva and liberalisation suddenly became more glaring. With a close overlap of business and politics, what we see now is the 'Gujarat model of development'.

During the liberalisation era since the early 1990s, significant reforms in Gujarat have pushed up the GDP rate significantly (Bhagwati and Panagariya 2012a, 2012b, 2013; Debroy 2012; Dholakia and Dholakia 2015; Hirway and Mahadevia, 2005). The reform era policies of the provincial government furthered the privatisation agenda that had been slyly in place in Gujarat since independence as Hirway and Mahadevia (2005) argues. For example, The Gujarat Infrastructure Agenda 2010 published in 1995 by the first BJP government lay down a blueprint for the privatisation of infrastructure (GIDB, 1999). A direct outcome of the vision document was the framing of the Build-Own-Operate-Transfer policy providing a legal framework for private participation in the financing, construction, maintenance and operation of infrastructure projects as also in health facilities, water supply and sewerage, and education (Hirway and Mahadevia, 2005). Similarly, the New Industrial and Incentive Policy 1995-2000 laid out concessions for industries that were willing to set up their own infrastructure. Direct investments made by industrial units in fixed assets, such as residential colonies, hospitals and schools for employees, roads, water transportation facilities, telecommunication cables, etc. would be considered eligible for sales tax incentives (Dholakia and Dholakia, 2015; Mahadevia, 1997).

4.5.1 Urbanisation: the BJP's forte

As the Dholera SIR project is essentially about creating a thriving city in the coming years, it is important to look at the story of urbanisation of the province. Amongst the bigger provinces in India, Gujarat at 42 percent is the fourth most urbanised province in India after Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Maharashtra (Census India, 2011). Since liberalisation, the focus on urbanisation has increased dramatically. The national policy discourse has also changed since the 1990s as the emphasis shifted from balanced regional development to

an urbanisation strategy in which cities and towns were being seen as growth centres and destinations for domestic and international investment (Desai, 2008).

Following this pattern, the provincial government made significant reforms in the institutional architecture of urban and infrastructure governance. Along with the private sector, transnational institutions such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) became involved (Mahadevia, 1998). The Ahmedabad city authorities initiated road development and beautification projects such as the 1995-96 redevelopment project of C.G. Road, delivered through a public-private partnership. The municipal corporation contributed 10% of the cost of the project while a private company put forward the rest in return for advertisement rights on the road for a period of seven years (Desai 2008). Large-scale infrastructure and beautification projects followed including the Sabarmati River Front development, Kankaria Lakefront development, and Bhadra redevelopment projects along with transportation projects such as the Bus Rapid Transit System, Ahmedabad Metro or the Ahmedabad Suburban Railway (Desai, 2008; Mahadevia, 2006; 2014;). The politics of these projects, the impact on the economic as well as the socio-cultural profile is covered by a range of scholars [Desai (2008, 2012); Mahadevia, 2003, 2006, 2014; Mehta (2016); Mehta and Banerjee (2017); Shah, (2016); Spodek (2011); Yagnik and Sheth (2011)].

One of the key laws that has been used for urbanisation is the Gujarat Town Planning and Urban Development Act (GTPUDA) that provided the Development Plan–Town Planning Schemes (DP–TPS)[72] mechanism. It was revived by Ahmedabad municipal chairman Surendra Patel, an RSS member and BJP treasurer during his tenure from 1997-2005. Its usage multiplied when 224 draft TP schemes were prepared during 2000-2016—nine

[72] For details on DP-TPS mechanism, see Ballaney and Patel (2009); and Jain (2019).

times more than the 24 schemes during the 1976–1999 period (Mahadevia et al. 2018**)**. This suited the real estate lobby that emerged as a potent force in the 1980s, highly represented by the Patidar community that sponsored many of the agitations of the previous decades. One key link of the real-estate lobby to the BJP was Surendra Patel who himself was a Patidar. The troika was completed by the presence of the architecture and planning consultancy, Environmental Planning Collaborative, led by Bimal Patel, a Patidar who received the commissions for most of these projects. [73]

These urban transformations, however, have come to represent an elitist vision to developing cities, such as Ahmedabad, termed 'world class' that could attract more investments while catering to BJP's core aspirational constituency of upper castes-middle class (Mahadevia et al., 2018). The projects have been used to promote the province and its cities at various platforms including the Vibrant Gujarat summits. Desai (2012) argues that the promotional coupling of the city and the province has been deployed to rehabilitate Gujarat and Ahmedabad's image after the 2002 communal violence. While the middle class stood behind the state and its aspirational projects, the projects were equally controversial for evicting significant numbers of urban poor citizens. This created what Mahadevia called the 'schism of high growth and poor employment for a very large section of the population, high growth and low food consumption of a section of the population, and high investments in urban infrastructure and inadequate attention to the housing of the urban poor…' (2014: 374).

[73] The same firm of Bimal Patel has gone national with Narendra Modi becoming the Prime Minister in 2014. It has received several commisions for public projects across the country over the last few years. This includes one of the most prestigious and controversial recent projects, the Central Vista Project in New Delhi (Trivedy, 2019). This project plans to significantly change the heritage area that houses the Parliament(referred to as Lutyens' Delhi after the architect Edward Lutyens), with proposals to construct a new office and residence for the Indian Prime Minister in line with the French Élysée Palace; a new parliament building along with other massive constructions (Bhatia, 2020; Kapoor, 2020; Menon, 2020).

However, with a significant upper caste-middle class population living in urban areas, the voting patterns over the last few elections suggest that BJP has a greater advantage in urban areas, evident from the last few assembly election results (Mahaprashasta, 2017; Shah, 1996; Tiwari and Verma, 2017). The events above depict how the upper caste-middle class constituency was captured by the BJP while the RSS and its sister organisations were able to get the now unemployed, precariously employed and new immigrants to cities on board the Hindutva bandwagon.

4.5.2 Modi takes over

Coming to power on the backdrop of the Gujarat earthquake of 2001 that ravaged part of the province taking close to 20,000 lives, Modi's initial few months witnessed another set of mass deaths, this time with the state being hand in glove with the culprits. One of the most widespread and brutal communal riots in India took place in 2002, referred to as the Gujarat communal riots, which led to the deaths of approximately 2,000 people, the majority of whom were Muslims, while several hundreds of thousands were displaced (Sud 2012).[74] The communal riots witnessed heavy handedness of the administration and Modi has been criticised globally for his complicity (Patel, 2002; Varadarajan 2002).

Since winning the provincial assembly elections that followed the anti-Muslim riots with an increased majority in December 2002, Modi made significant efforts to attract investments into the province. One important institution for this was the biennale Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit (VGGS), an event to promote Gujarat as a safe investment destination for corporations and investors. Through VGGS, the government was looking

[74] For details of the events, refer to Human Rights Watch (2002), International Initiative for Justice (2003), Raza and Hashmi (2002) and Varadarajan (2002). Also see Jaffrelot (2012) for an analysis of the Hindutva-isation of state apparatuses in Gujarat especially around the 2002 riots.

forward to revive the confidence of both domestic and foreign investors and the first event in 2003 led to the signing of hundreds of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) **(**Mahadevia, 2005; Sud, 2012**)**. Interestingly, this approach towards a neoliberal development model had a dose of Hindutva. The event was consciously scheduled during the important Hindu festival of Navratri that is widely celebrated in Gujarat. That year, it was celebrated by the provincial government as the International Navratri Festival spending millions from the state coffers. The idea was to show normalcy as every citizen comes out on the streets to participate in the festivities and 'speak for themselves and dispel the propaganda that the state is unsafe' (Chief Industrial Adviser to the government quoted in Desai 2008: 77).

This process also had parallels in Dholera. The first major neoliberal policy was the Dholera port launched in June 2002 soon after the riots (Projects Today, 2006). During this period of heightened tension, Hindutva organisations such as VHPs were also making inroads into the villages of Dholera. What later transpired was a latent commercial interest of many of the VHP workers (described in detail in Chapter 5). In the later years, while the port project was shelved after briefly being clubbed with an industrial estate, a new International Airport that was to replace the Ahmedabad airport was launched in 2007 only to change site within two years, followed by the Dholera SIR project that later became the Dholera smart city. Electorally, the BJP continued to win Dhandhuka having wrested it from Congress in 1990.

Over his 13 years as Gujarat's Chief Minister winning three provincial elections, Modi has been held up both as the poster boy of Hindutva as well as of development, during the period in which the economy of the province grew close to double digits continuously (Desai, 2008). Support and admiration for him on the development front, and for his

unapologetic slew of neoliberal policies, was expressed vigorously by a larger Indian upper and middle class, corporate elites as well as economists such as Jagdish Bhagwati or Arvind Panagariya. Hirway (2017) has defined Modi's famed Gujarat model as the era 'from 2002-03 to 2011-12 during which Gujarat experienced a quantum jump in its growth rate'. Narendra Modi's interpretation of neoliberal policies drove it forward. Hirway (2017) argues that the growth strategy had three major components: 'quantum jump in infrastructure to facilitate inflow of corporate investment; quantum jump in (business-friendly) governance to address the requirements of corporate units; and unprecedented rise in incentives and subsidies to the corporate sector to attract investments' (ibid). The result was a 'highly dualistic economy with a small high-tech, high-income, high-growth sector and a large informal and traditional sector' (Hirway, 2017).

Beyond the fact that Gujarat's economy grew close to double digits during this period, what it resulted is significant and the withdrawal of the state from many speheres of development becomes obvious. When it comes to spending on social sectors as percentage of provincial GDP, the Reserve Bank of India's (2016) annual report ranks Gujarat amongst the worst (15^{th}) in a list of 18 big provinces (by population). Social sector includes sepnding on health, education, rural and urban development, labour welfare, to list a few. It spent just about 5.9 per cent, as against the national average of 7.4 per cent of provincial GDP (also cited in Shah, 2016). The cuts in allocations for social sectors have continued since the 1990s as the report by Reserve Bank of India (2006) showed (as cited in Sud, 2020b). In fact, the education sector continues to fare very poorly with shrinking spending. The Reserve Bank of India's (2020) recent analysis of 2019-2020 provincial budgets reports that the share of spending on education is down to 1.46% of the provinces's GDP, from an earlier 1.87% in 2014-15 (cited in DNA Correspondent, 2020). In similar ways, its healthcare expenditure stands at 0.7% of GDP amongst the lowest Indian provinces

compared to an all India average of 1% (Reserve bank of India, 2020: 55). With respect to labour, beyond the decrease in formal jobs, Gujarat has most jobs created in the informal sector with some of the lowest average daily wages, specifically declining during Modi's decade long rule (Hirway, 2014; Hirway, 2017; Hirway and Shah, 2011; Unni and Naik, 2014: 282-286).[75] On the other hand, several instances of land grabs from farmers by the state and corporations emerged.[76]

The development model perpetuated alliances between the state and upper caste-middle class along with the corporate sector.[77] Jaffrelot (2019) analyses the influence of the Adanis and Ambanis on the Gujarat government and their personal rapport with Modi. Data reveals that these relations have transcended many typical examples of crony capitalism (Guha Thakurta, 2015; Jaffrelot, 2019). At the same time, liberalisation policies vis-à-vis Modi, himself an OBC, created new upwardly mobile groups that Modi called the 'neo-middle class' (Times of India, 2012). Jaffrelot (2015a) argues that such groups who moved to cities (for various reasons such as failure of agriculture or loss of land to corporations) and aspired to improve their living were a key vote bank for the BJP. They have consistently ensured a strong voter turnout and regular wins for the BJP in urban constituencies.

[75] The book by Hirway et al. (2014a) covers these aspects in great detail. I do not cite individual statistics here covered in Hirway (2015, 2017), Hirway and Shah (2011), Iyengar (2014), Jaffrelot (2015a, 2019), Mahadevia (2005), Sen and Drèze (2013).

[76] Bahree (2014), Lobo and Kumar (2009), Sud (2009, 2012) cover instances of land grab in Gujarat.

[77] Sud (2009, 2012) has made an argument in the case of Gujarat that it exemplified a 'business friendly' pattern, more than a 'market-friendly' economy, even after liberalisation. Rodrik and Subramanian (2004) and Kohli (2006a and 2006b) earlier made the case for India.

4.6 The case of unequal development and its connection with neoliberalism and Hindutva

Going back to where I began, why despite rising growth rates has '*vikas gando thayo chhe*' (development gone crazy)? Why did this movement garner such massive public support when Gujarat has supposedly been amongst the most developed provinces, where according to scholars such as of Bhagwati and Panagariya (2012a, 2012b), the 'Gujarat model of development' has addressed issues of poverty, health, education or unemployment? The rise of Hindutva and neoliberalism in Gujarat has been described in the above sections and as I go on to argue, unequal development is simultaneously both the cause as well as the result of their ascendance.

Historical accounts point towards the significant unequal development that goes back to the British era when roads were built and railway lines were laid down. Regional inequalities were evident in the core-periphery dichotomy in almost every aspect of life (Patel 1991, Hirway 1995). As both the erstwhile provinces of Saurashtra and Kutch merged with Bombay and then with Gujarat, these peripheries reeled under severe under-investment for decades (although changed recently, as I mentioned above). The Nehruvian developmental state was to address some of these inequalities; however, it was circumvented by various lobbies using a business-politician-bureaucratic alliance.

Apart from geographical inequalities, there are sectoral inequalities, most glaringly between agriculture and industry, especially with respect to production and the workforce they employ (Hirway 2017).[78] There are also huge disparities within the agricultural sector. While both the core and the periphery have agriculture, canal-irrigated areas are concentrated in the core (Mahadevia, 2005). Most districts of the periphery are still

[78] Contributing 10-15 percent to GDP, agriculture employs half of the workforce while only 16 percent of the state's workforce was employed in the manufacturing sector contributing one-third of the state's GDP.

drought-prone and depend on groundwater for agriculture and domestic use. As these areas increasingly face a water crisis, the local population seeks seasonal employment in cities (Hirway and Mahadevia, 2005). Farmers in the core areas have often diversified their economic interests and are relatively well networked in political circles. Beyond the regional inequalities in agriculture, there is also the factor of caste. Small and marginal farmers belong largely to OBC groups (GoG, 2016). This was certainly an outcome of the failure of land reforms of the 1950s and 1960s in the core region where wealthy and upper caste communities circumvented the policies on land. In Dholera too, large landholdings remain in the hands of the Darbars even above the land ceiling whereas Kolis remain marginal farmers.

The core-periphery dichotomy inevitably played out in the trend of industrialisation and urbanisation. As described earlier, historically investment had been heavily concentrated along the Golden Corridor (Mahadevia, 2005; Patel, 1991). Similarly, urbanisation remained concentrated in the core represented by Gujarat's three largest cities – Ahmedabad, Surat and Vadodara. Although the periphery has known urban centres such as Rajkot and Bhavnagar built by the princely kingdom; two-thirds of the total urban population in the province live in the core (Mahadevia, 2005). While the core has half of its population living in urban areas, the corresponding figures in the periphery are less than one-third. Notably, even the communal riots had a core-periphery dichotomy as most of these took place along the Ahmedabad-Vadodara-Godhra-Surat (Golden Corridor). An excellent study in Shinoda (2002) buttresses the unequal development thesis along caste lines, which found that Brahmins, Banias and Patidars were owners in all types of industries, especially in capital-intensive fields, with a higher concentration in central Gujarat.

In the post-liberalisation period, although there was a chance to address some of these inequalities, what the peripheral regions received were mostly capital-intensive, resource extracting or high polluting industries, which only furthered the inequality. Although the natural resource rich coastal regions of Saurashtra and Kutch became the hub of large and medium industries, the new export targeted capital-intensive industries are islands of modern production amidst an impoverished hinterland (Mahadevia 2005).[79] At the same time, with the help of government policies, these industries alienate land from the farmers while water resources are diverted to industries. Job creation has taken a major hit as the average investment per project in large and medium industries has gone up while the average employment per project has fallen. Emblematic of this problem is the Tata Nano plant whose arrival was celebrated as a major coup of Modi's policies. The factory that received subsidies amounting to billions of rupees barely employed a few hundred and was ultimately shut down.[80]

The outcome of the decade long asymmetrical growth that was the 'Gujarat model of development' was seen in the National Sample Survey Office data of 2018 that itself became controversial after the Modi government decided not to release it. In that report, unemployment reached a 45 year high nationally while in Gujarat, the rate of unemployment rose more rapidly than other Indian provinces—from 0.5 percent in 2011-12 to 4.8 per cent in 2017-18 (Economic Times, 2019). The number of jobless youth rose exponentially both in rural (from a mere 0.8 percent in 2011-12 to 14.9 percent in 2017-18) and urban Gujarat (from 2.1 percent to 10.7 percent) (ibid). These changes had an

[79] While there are many examples starting from the factories owned by the Adanis and Ambanis, two interesting cases not far from the site of my study are the Nirma cement plant against which farmers have fought a protracted battle and the Mithivirdi Nuclear Plant which too was revoked after farmer protests. See Juneja (2015), Sarvaiya (2014) for more on the Nirma case and Dhar (2017) on the nuclear plant.

[80] Refer to Guha Thakurta (2009), Jaffrelot (2019) and Outlook (2017) for details on subsidies, job creation and the meagre labour wages in the Tata Nano project.

impact on the Patidar and OBC youth agitation between 2015-2017 for the very campaign of '*vikas gando thayo chhe*'. The Patidar community that led the anti-reservation agitations of the 1980s against the Congress were now on the streets against the BJP government, which had the Chief Minister and the Finance minister from their own community, demanding reservations.[81] Similarly, the constituency of urban OBCs, the neo-middle class that stood solidly behind Modi, now turned against the BJP government.[82]

With recurring agitation based politics that was also targeted at Muslims, religious tensions and conflicts stalled a genuine political debate on economic policies over the years and especially during Modi's tenure as the Chief Minister. While many of the reforms were introduced by stealth, elections were often on the issue of support for/rejection of Hindutva, and not on the government's performance or the right kind of development policies (Mahadevia 2005). Modi has used communal, anti-minority, sub-nationalism or Hindutva planks in each of the three provincial elections he has won. The first time in the 21st century when elections were fought on the platform of development, i.e. the 2017 elections, the BJP barely managed to cling on to power. However, one can argue that if Modi had still been the Chief Minister, then this dire situation for the BJP may not have arrived. Even in 2017, the charismatic Modi saved the day for the BJP as he actively campaigned in the late stages and fought again on the grounds of Gujarati *Asmita*,[83] coming up with fictional stories of how a Gujarati (himself) has been targeted by the Congress,

[81] With their record of anti-government agitation before every assembly election which ultimately ensured more seats for Patidar leaders, this agitation too may be ignored as another attempt to grab a further slice of power by the community. In the 2007 elections, Gordhan Zadafiya, and in 2012, Keshubhai Patel formed political parties. Both these parties were unsuccessful in the respective elections and were merged with the BJP. Thus, there was always skepticism when the 2015 Patidar agitation started.

[82] Refer to Hirway (2016), Kothari (2016), Mehta (2015), for detailed analysis of these protests and Sud (2017) to understand the contradictions within.

[83] Asmita means identity or soul often used towards the idea of Gujarati self-pride. See Bobbio (2012), Jaffrelot (2016) and Suhrud (2008).

having joined hands with enemy Pakistan to remove him from the Prime Minister post (Naqvi, 2017).

Jaffrelot (1996) contends that the fact that the Gujarat government has been decreasing social expenditure 'is well in tune with the minimal state that the Sangh Parivar has always cultivated.' The Hindutva actors 'rejected the Nehruvian state because of its attempts at reforming society—when, for the Hindu nationalists, the existing social order had to prevail' (ibid). This social order was essentially elitist with the upper caste-middle class alliance. Over the years, the BJP has retained this social basis, but has also developed links with big corporate houses (Jaffrelot, 2016). This explains why an unequal development model continued to survive and why there has rarely been a healthy debate around unequal development or the 'Gujarat model of development' in Gujarat politics.

Following Mahadevia (2005), I find that unequal development helps further both Hindutva and neoliberalism and both the cultural and economic ideologies overlap on these fronts. Both neoliberalism and Hindutva are ultimately exclusivist in nature (ibid). This was clear from the post-liberalisation policies that furthered unequal development across sectors, geography, caste or religious segments. This unequal development furthered by post-liberalisation policies excludes large groups of people from the ambits of development, as does Hindutva. Like Hindutva, the 'Gujarat model of development' (or liberalisation policies) is not about redistribution or equity (Mahadevia, 2005). Since it is in the interests of the political and economic elite (who are mostly upper castes) to preserve the economic order, they seek refuge in a social ideology that legitimises the status quo. Hindutva ideologies in all their manifestations have never questioned caste and class inequalities. The social order that is envisaged by Hindutva and neoliberalism both converge on the belief that one has to be satisfied with whatever endowment one has from birth. Neither

Hindutva nor neoliberalism is interested in redistribution of wealth. The outcome of these dynamics was the starting point of the chapter: '*vikas gando thayo chhe*'.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the provincial context in which my empirical research is located, providing an overview of Gujarat's political economy. In doing so, the chapter has focused on four moments in the history of the province which played a key role in determining the events of subsequent decades and in ultimately enabling the Gujarat model of development as well as the '*vikas gando thayo chhe*' (development has gone crazy) campaign. The theme of unequal development ran through these moments. While the model of development represents an outcome of state policies, especially those enacted post liberalisation, the campaign is an outcome of this very model of development. Both are key to understanding what Gujarat or the complex of Dholera are today. I have included reflections from Dholera, which largely follow provincial patterns of electoral politics and development. Since Hindutva and neoliberalism do not attempt to address these dichotomies, I suggest that this is because unequal development is inherent in both Hindutva and neoliberalism.

When the province of Bombay and Gujarat were created, this was the moment of furthering unequal development across regions. Saurashtra and Kutch lost provincial status and reeled under severe under-investment over the years as the focus of growth remained with the core regions. In this period, the Nehruvian development state was ultimately circumvented by the upper caste-middle class lobbies who were also behind the rise of the Swatantra Party that came close to capturing power in 1967.

The second moment was the division of Congress in 1969 that was also the year of the first deadly communal riot in Gujarat of independent India. This riot had significant

bearings over the events of subsequent decades that witnessed the rise of right-wing Hindu nationalism in the province. The Congress under Indira Gandhi targeted backward communities and conservative classes grouped under Morarji Desai in opposition. The 1970s witnessed a series of agitations, Nav Nirman, Sarvodaya, anti-Emergency, led by upper caste groups. These agitations also witnessed participation of Hindutva leaders eventually giving them the much-required legitimacy in the political space. Eventually, the first non-Congress government was formed in 1975 and the Hindutva party of the time became part of it.

As the Congress party faced repeated divisions, the grassroots organisation was decimated in the process, and turning towards populism, we arrive at the third key moment. The Congress leaders of Gujarat managed to cobble the alliance of KHAM, the marginalised and under-represented groups in Gujarat politics. With three fourth majority in the assembly, the Chief Minister Solanki launched a slew of measures to help these groups. However, this alienated the upper caste who came together to thwart the Solanki government. Anti-reservation agitations followed each time and the government failed to deliver any meaningful change to its voters. With the national political space now opening up for Hindutva based parties, these events resulted in the BJP sharing power briefly in 1990 in the provincial government.

The fourth moment was effectively the era of post-liberalisation. By now, the BJP was a strong power in Gujarat and won the 1995 election on its own. Since then, they have never lost any of the provincial elections. Internal party differences put Narendra Modi on the chair of Chief Minister and he took the agendas of Hindutva and liberalisation to new heights as well as of unequal development. Coming to power, Modi saw the anti-Muslim riots of 2002 in which his administration was complicit. Over the next decade, he launched

a slew of neoliberal policies laying down the red carpet for investors. Within this, capital-intensive industries were given priority, receiving significant subsidies in various taxes along with cheaper inputs such as land, electricity or labour.

It was presumed that rapid economic growth would lead to improved well-being of the population as a whole. However, as the chapter has shown, this has not yet happened and is less likely to happen in the near future as the situation worsens further. As we have seen, the Gujarat model entailed high growth numbers for the economy through a close business-politics-bureaucratic alliance that ran the state coffers dry, ultimately resulting in the non-delivery of many of the social provisions with which the state was tasked. This alliance has at times been formal as the state felt the urgency to walk the extra mile to get investors on board in the era of liberalisation. Although undertaken by the formal state, many of these practices enter spaces where corruption and crony capitalism are rife. Taking this debate forward, the next empirical chapters of the dissertation (Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8) will unfold the realities of the Actually Existing State (AES) at the ground level.

Chapter 5: '*Development neither reaches us nor leaves us. It's an illusion*': The story of development in Dholera

5.1 Introduction:

> *First, it was development by giving us canal water. We were ready to give away our lands. They took those… Then they came up with Kalpasar dam. Nothing happened… But, we had land to cultivate… Now, we have roads, probably canal water soon. Everything. But no land to cultivate. This is the joke of development… Development neither reaches us nor leaves us. It's an illusion. It was coming in the form of Narmada canal water. Then in the form of Kalpasar dam. We welcomed them all. After that, they almost built the Dholera port (chuckles)… But, this time, we did not want any more development. We were tired of development. So, they came to force development on us. They came up with the SIR, smart city, International Airport. Development has actually gone crazy.*[84]

Bhaubhai, a retired schoolteacher, was often sarcastic whenever I discussed the possibility of the smart city project being delivered. A Congress party supporter, he was critical of the current spate of projects in Dholera, resenting the role of private corporations and land speculation which he argued were the reasons for the region's under-development. According to him, if the government was so keen to develop a city in Dholera, 'it should have been modelled after Gandhinagar and not a private company built city like in America.' He was one of the key members of Bhal Bachao Samiti and on more than one occasion, he spoke to me about the importance of the 'sarkar' (government) in delivering development since private companies would never think about the benefits to locals.[85] He rightly identifies the last two decades of Gujarat's growth with the privatisation of all

[84] Interview with Bhaubhai (pseudonym), November 2017. Throughout the dissertation, names of respondents have been anonymised unless otherwise stated.

[85] Bhal Bachao Samiti is the farmers' platform that is fighting against the government to cancel the SIR project. I provide a note in Section 8.2 in Chapter 8.

development activities. At the same time, this perspective of Bhaubhai contrasts significantly with Pradeepsinh, a local BJP leader:

> *I built the Hotel Vision Modi. I wanted to show that what we are witnessing is development in real. We all have a responsibility in the development of Dholera. That was my part. Farmers' part is to give up their land. And with the SIR, we have such a good development project here. With farming, land gives crop just once in 12 months. If you give up, industries will come… Go and see the number of (motor)bikes and cars in Dholera, people have now. They have smartphones, this big (gestures with his right hand). Secondly, in 2009, we had just two banks here, now there are 6 banks, today we have 200 times more deposits in these banks… You see in all the 22 villages, newly constructed houses, ask them when were these built, they would tell you only after 2009. Earlier all the pucca buildings belonged to government. 99 percent were mud houses… It does not matter if the smart city is built or not. Our villagers have developed even before a brick has been laid. We had the '*vision'*, so we captured it… In 2002, the (Dholera) port project was announced… I had bought land just before the announcement of the project for INR 2000 per bigha.*[86] *Today the same land is worth INR 6-7 lakh*[87]*.*[88]

During the hour-long interview in Hindi, Pradeepsinh used the word 'vision' in English more than ten times, mostly stressing that one needs to have a vision to keep and multiply money. His use of the word could also be linked to the hotel that he built and named 'Hotel Vision Modi' (HVM) that I will dicuss in Chapter 6. At the same time, during the interview, Pradeepsinh would often underline the role of Narendra Modi and the Gujarat government in delivering 'development' and how the 'Modi-sarkar'[89] continues to do a great job for Dholera. For him, 'development' was inherently linked to Modi and the

[86] Refer to fn 46 for 'bigha'.

[87] A 'lakh' denotes 100,000 in the Indian numbering system. For INR, refer fn 24.

[88] Interview with Pradeepsinh, November 2017.

[89] By 'Modi-sarkar', Pradeepsinh referred to the Modi-led government or state although in different contexts, it may even mean 'Mr Modi' as 'sarkar' can be used to refer to a person in higher position. Refer to fn 17 for an explanation on 'Sarkar'. At the same time, when he said 'continues to do', it was to refer to Modi's role as the Chief Minister of Gujarat when he launched the Dholera project and now as the Prime Minister of India when a slew of measures and funds were allocated for Dholera. During the interview, he mentioned these repeatedly.

government led by him. Even if the 'private companies', 'doctors and engineers from Ahmedabad' were throwing money into Dholera, it was down to Modi's 'vision' and 'planning'.[90]

In many ways, the 'development' projects have meant different things to different stakeholders, even amongst the locals. Bhaubhai and Pradeepsinh had opposing ideas of development, representing two significantly varying discourses around development. While the former spoke of the loss of land ownership as an irony of development, the latter portrayed villagers as carrying out their 'part' in the development process, as if it were their duty to hand over their land to people like himself. Bhaubhai's comments portrayed development as a responsibility for the state or government to deliver. In contrast, Pradeepsinh saw the port or the smart city project as essentially bringing in money to the area and giving locals a chance to develop. Those who had the 'vision' could keep and multiply their money whereas the 'rest wasted the money on prostitutes, alcohol or gambling.'[91] According to him, an individual's choice and ability shape whether they take hold of the chance for development. At the same time, both respondents agreed that none of the development projects have built anything concrete in Dholera.

It might be asked why, for such two very different individuals, development is so central in discussing the state? Although it was Modi who featured more often than the government or state during the interview with Pradeepsinh, it was Modi and Modi's vision that represented the state for him. During the discussions, his reference to the state and even ideas such as development won't miss a mention of Modi. Scholars have pointed that, over the decades, the sphere of the state has expanded in response to the political

[90] These terms in quotation were used by Pradeepsinh during the interview.

[91] Interview with Pradeepsinh, November 2017.

necessities of development (Corbridge et al. 2005). At the same time, development or welfare have been key sources for the state to create legitimacy although the ways in which they have been planned and delivered have changed over the years.[92] Beyond this legitimacy, development has provided the platform to reimagine the idea of the state, whether this was the Nehruvian version of socialism or the current era of neoliberalism. In the reimagining project, certain actors such as Nehru or Narendra Modi become central, essentially riding on their ideas concerning development. As discussed in Chapter 1, Dholera has witnessed a chequered history when it comes to development. As development ideas travelled from a state-led canal project to a privately built port or a city, what is important within this is how the state, its constituents and its relationship with citizen subjects have been significantly transformed. Discussing this history below, I intend to reveal the state in practice in Dholera.

Section 5.2 briefly talks about the objectives of the chapter. In Section 5.3, I go on to discuss the initial entry of Hindutva and neoliberalism around the same time in the villages of Dholera. Section 5.4 then describes the influential role of a provincial cabinet minister in the launch of the Dholera SIR project and the International Airport project. In Section 5.5, through the stories of some of the early land buyers in Dholera, I comment on how neoliberal ideas of development travel and how such travel is also based upon characters such as Modi. Through these vignettes, beyond the overlap of Hindutva and neoliberal development, I introduce the practices of the shadow state. Section 5.6 discusses the

[92] Other than James Scott (1998) in his book, 'Seeing like a state', where he illustrates an expansion of state capacity to extract further information on the society, scholars on the Indian state and development have covered this in great detail. For some of the insights, see Corbridge and Harriss (2000); Corbridge et al. (2005); Gupta and Sivaramakrishnan (2011) and Mosse (2001).

theoretical importance of these observations for the dissertation. I sum up the key points of the chapter in Section 5.7.

5.2 Chapter objectives

Within the Hindutva's reimagining of the state through development, Narendra Modi's approach is significant, having come up with an unapologetic brand of politics. The BJP's recent politics of Hindutva and ideas of delivering development through neoliberal policies have marched forward despite being heavily criticised on both fronts. In Chapter 4, I laid out how Modi has been condemned for his administration's complicity in the communal violence of 2002 while his party's economic policies were criticised for delivering growth at the cost of 'human development' (Hirway, 2017). However, he has gone unabashedly ahead with both while dividing opinions during his time in office as the Chief Minister of Gujarat (2001 to 2014) and as Prime Minister of India (2014 till date). His policies have also been important in trying to create a new discourse of development, even if divisive.

Jessop (1990) argues that to implement its professed objectives, a new political regime usually undertakes a 'state project'. The desire to transform the social status-quo, political forces needs comprehensive institutional reforms and a certain 'reinvention of the state'. As the institutions of the state are thoroughly reformed, the society in effect replicates the trend. Whereas the Hindutva group's project of 're-imagination of the state' or in simple terms, making India a 'Hindu Rashtra', has been covered by many scholars [see Jaffrelot (1996) for detailed insights], I partially used Prakash's (2003) theorisation of the idea, which he argues, has two domains to capture: social and material. The Hindutva forces' restructuring of the social domain involves consolidating 'all social groups except the minorities for dominating electoral politics' (Prakash, 2003: 1602). This in turn would contribute to its objective in the material domain, i.e. sanctioning certain castes/classes 'to

own and control productive assets and sustain the existing hierarchy in social relationships through the control of state apparatus' (Prakash, 2003: 1602; Patel, 2002; also see Shah, 1998b). This would ultimately help redefine the state into what the Hindutva forces would prefer: the Hindu state. Simpson's (2006) essay brings up the role of non-state actors and supporters of Hindutva who are now perceived as part of the re-imagined state. He argues that re-imagination of the state by Hindutva groups has been done by 'edging power away from formal office through the privatisation of state authority and the simultaneous outsourcing of state functions'. Within this, neoliberal policies played a significant role.

Kashwan (2014) postulated that Modi differentiates his approach to development from the Congress in a clear manner. His vision for proposed market-linked development is not based on some apologetic explanation of trickle-down theories (ibid). During an election rally in 2009, Modi said, 'For 60 years, the Congress Party has been doling out hens and goats in the name of tribal development; I want to ask you why my Adivasi brothers should not aspire for floriculture?' Kashwan (2014) argues that although his development policies have rarely integrated Adivasis (or similar categories) into markets,[93] he manages to stir a debate or create an impression around their possible participation as market players. A quote on Modi's website during the 2014 election campaign said, 'Forget if you are rich or poor. All you need is faith in yourself. If you have the passion to work, then just get up and set forth and you will find the way' (ibid). Whereas BJP's campaigning has shown a clear championing of the neoliberal model in the recent years, it is essentially tied to how the party wants to reimagine the idea of the Indian state.

[93] In Chapter 4, I have illustrated how Modi's policies have rather been detrimental for marginal communities like Adivasis. Also refer to Hirway and Mahadevia (2005); Hirway et al. (2014a), Jaffrelot (2015a).

As discussed in Section 2.3 of Chapter 2, Abrams (1988) conceptualised the state as a set of ideas and practices, personnel and institutions that would come under a system of government. Picking the strand of the state as a set of ideas is hence key to the framing of the state to which this chapter intends to contribute. Firstly, it is obvious that the state has moved away from the post-colonial state that followed the Nehruvian model of development at an 'ideational level' to the era of the post liberalisation phase. For example, Sud (2012) has shown how the Gujarat state has moved from its policies of 'land to the tiller' to those of land liberalisation. This has been further accelerated during Modi's tenure aptly shown by the fact that the Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC) acquired 4,620 hectares in 1990- 2001, which increased to 21,308 hectares in 2001-2011 (Hirway et al. 2014c: 160- 166, Lobo and Kumar, 2009). Jaffrelot (2017) argues that this was often at the expense of the state's agricultural capabilities while land was usually sold to industrialists at less than the market price.

Take the case of the Special Investment Region (SIR) Act of 2009 that marked a significant step in unapologetically courting the corporations, the bigger, the more global, the better. The SIR Act intended 'to come up with a legal framework to enable development of mega investment regions and industrial areas in the state' which will be 'global hubs of economic activity supported by world-class infrastructure, premium civic amenities, centers of excellence and proactive policy framework' (GoG, 2009: 01). In similar ways, the Gujarat Industrial Policy of 2009 was explicitly designed for making the province the most attractive investment destination in the world (cited in Jaffrelot 2017). Since land with right kind of infrastructure is key to compete, the adequate provisioning and availability of land was urgent. As Sud (2009: 655) has mentioned this 'interweaving of ideas is seen not only in the discourse of the official state as a whole, but also at the level of individuals within the state' as depicted by Modi in his argument regarding the market in the previous

paragraph. Interestingly for Dholera, such ideas were even carried out by the likes of Pradeepsinh or the many BJP supporters I have interviewed, in the villages during my fieldwork.

However, despite much talk and the hype generated, most projects have never been realised. In many others, land deals are made through everyday relations between state and society in which a host of actors (middlemen, contractors, lower level bureaucrats) come to play a key role. These are the shadow state actors who use the state variously for their personal benefits. As a set of relations or social capital is required, Hindutva networks would then provide the perfect platform as the vignettes below would illustrate.

This chapter deconstructs the state through ideas of development while documenting the arrival of neoliberal development, an entry that also emboldened the actors of Hindutva. In Chapter 2, I proposed that to understand the state in practice in Dholera, we need to see it through the concept of the Actually Existing State (AES). Within AES, I laid out four propositions to better understand the state in Dholera. This chapter deals with the first proposition that the AES is characterised by both formal and shadow elements. As Barbara Harriss-White (2003) contends, the official part of the state has been hollowed out especially since the 1980s, being replaced by what she called the 'shadow state' which is a vast assemblage of brokers, political workers or crooks. She argues that the 1980s saw the politicisation of administrative rent-seeking discretion and politicians 'captured the process of regulation, seizing and sharing the rents formerly collected by officials' (Harriss-White, 2003: 70).

In similar ways, in the site I study, the formal state, as well as its shadow, exist side by side, complementing each other's roles on occasions, while acting as agents of neoliberalism as well as Hindutva. The shadow elements are evident when formal state

officials accept tribute, patronage or use their office to corner private benefits whereas non-state actors use the shadow of the state to earn their livelihoods. In the process, the activities of the formal state are shadowed from within or from outside and by both state and non-state actors. This makes the state porous to the actors of society as well as businesses. This is why I argue that to understand the state in Dholera, we need to look through the lens of the Actually Existing State. To do this, the chapter looks at the changes that came just before and after the announcement of a series of development projects, particularly in the 2000s.

Having detailed out the background of Gujarat's development in Chapter 4, the discussion on development in this chapter helps situate the central themes in the site of the research. At the same time, the analysis is important to understand how the Gujarat 'model of development' was legitimised within the province after which it was sold throughout the country during the national election campaign of 2014. The chapter brings out the newer particularities of the neoliberal model in Dholera: its relation with Hindutva. In the process, the chapter examines how the initial phases of neoliberalism and Hindutva in Dholera function at the ground level and how their convergence influences the state.

5.3 The start of neoliberalism laced with Hindutva in Dholera

It is understandable that the Narmada canal project of the 1960s did not cause any major land sales other than farmers losing land to the government for canal constructions. Similarly, the next project, the Kalpasar Dam initially mooted in the 1970s did not affect any changes in the daily lives of most farmers in Dholera. The latter project did not acquire any land from the farmers. In fact, most farmers in Dholera were unaware of the Kalpasar Dam while actively campaigning for the canal water project. Both the projects remained on paper for the most part of their history. In 2017, after some of the farmers threatened

the government with a massive hunger strike just before the provincial assembly elections, the government passed the contracts for the start of construction of Narmada canal distribuaries to Dholera. While I was undertaking my fieldwork, in some areas, construction was taking place, although at a snail's pace. What massively changed the complexion of land transaction in the region is the Dholera port. However, as many of the locals claim and the land sale records in part prove, land sales started before the announcement of the project.

As I discussed in Chapter 4, Hindutva organisations such as RSS took root in Dholera or Dhandhuka in the 1970s. In the 1980s and 1990s, the more militant groups such as VHP, Bajrang Dal or ABVP spread further in the region, especially among college going students from higher-castes, even if they were relatively few in number. Aside from college students, upper caste youth visiting the nearby towns and cities, which were rife with loose groups that had representations of these organisations, helped the spread of Hindutva groups. Similarly, the few Koli youths (such as Naranbhai, features prominently throughout the dissertation) who had friendships with upper caste peers or ventured out to nearby cities in search of jobs, were introduced to these organisations. 'These organisations were always for the Patels or Brahmans. There were even very few Rajputs.'[94] In fact, one Darbar leader made this point: 'We should have listened to Bhupen Bhai (Bhupendrasinh Chudasama) and joined the BJP early in the 1980s. Our community received zero benefits from Solanki. You see the outcomes now. We are far behind the Patidars who were given the lands we ruled. They joined other higher castes to corner everything in the 1980s and 1990s while Solanki cheated us.'[95]

[94] Interview with Bhaubhai, November 2017.

[95] Interview with Dilipsinh, Dhandhuka, RSS functionary, December 2017.

This claim by a Darbar leader active within RSS is significant as data has shown that Rajput communities across the province have lagged behind other upper castes (Shah, 1998a: 31 and Patel, 2002: 4828). Scholars have pointed out that the Kshatriya, Harijan, Adivasi and Muslim (KHAM) alliance that former Chief Minister Madhavsinh Solanki created could not sustain the attack by upper castes because it was not built based on shared ideologies.[96] At the same time, there are vast material contradictions between Kolis and Darbars often resulting in open conflict. Hence, in the absence of ideologies, the alliance was overtaken by opportunism.

During my fieldwork, I often came across families whose two siblings or two cousins controlled the BJP and Congress party in the same locality.[97] In Dholera, it was no different as the leaders of the BJP and Congress parties were cousins with bonhomie amongst them when required. Scholars have analysed the role of the provincial propertied classes in the pro-capitalist direction of economic policy (Desai, 2011b). There has been a 'cross-party consensus on this policy direction over the last two decades' (Desai, 2011b: 361). Thus, whereas the announcement of projects such as the Narmada canal or Kalpasar did not initiate any land sales, the new set of neoliberal projects certainly did. This overlapped with the furthering of the Hindutva project which reached previously unconquered territories.

The Rath Yatras, the Ram Janmabhoomi movement and the frequent incidents of religious violence against Muslims in the last two decades of the twentieth century gave Hindutva

[96] Ghanshyam Shah (1975) has elaborated on this in his study of the Kshatriyas.

[97] In Dholera, while Pradeepsinh led the BJP, his cousins Rajbha and Kunwarsinh led the Congress party. One young journalism student, a native of Dholera who just became the district head of the Congress party's student union confided to me that he ensured that his elder brother remains with ABVP, the Hindutva student group, telling me: "If I do not get much from Congress, I can jump to the other side or he can come here when needed." (Interview with Dhruvasinh Chudasama in Ahmedabad, December 2018).

organisations important space in the media and public discourses in the province. Although there has not been any recorded religious violence in Dholera or Dhandhuka, news of riots in bigger cities often spread like wildfire. With a biased press, this became easier,[98] essentially giving the Hindutva organisations an entrance to many villages and towns of the region. The penetration was eased by the range of development works by the state beyond traditional RSS based development activities. Now, the activities were both political as well as developmental. At the same time, it is important to underline that although locals anticipated these two interests, they never expected any commercial interest. I illustrate this below.

The Dholera Port project was announced in June 2002 although it was in discussion for a while (Prabhune 2006, Projects Today 2006). At this point Dholera was to be developed as a General Cargo port. The project first went to the construction company JK Cements who later formed a joint venture with the Adanis to build the port. The Adanis had already been into the port business having built and owned the Mundra port in the Kutch region of Gujarat. The project was ultimately transferred to the Adanis alone (Manoj, 2007). Later, a chemical industrial estate to be fronted by the Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC) was added. This was, however, met with massive protests by the local farmers especially from Unai village (not the real name of the village), led by Vijayrajsinh. He formed a group which later came to be known as Bhal Bachao Samiti, and filed a Public Interest Litigation at the High Court arguing that the project would harm the wildlife sanctuary that bordered the proposed industrial estate. This was the first instance when local farmers joined hands against state projects. This same group of farmers then went on

[98] The biased role of the vernacular press in reporting the communal riots starting with the 1969 riots has been mentioned by many scholars as leading to further violence and legitimising riots (Shah 1970, Shani 2007, Sud 2012). In the same way, the reach of the newer media like video cassettes to smaller towns and villages extended this.

to undertake their protracted struggle against the current Dholera SIR project that I discuss in Chapter 8. After the High Court raised objections, the project was shelved and not much is known about the chemical estate.

Narendra Modi came to power in 2001 and Gujarat witnessed one of the most horrific episodes of communal riots that started in February 2002 with skirmishes continued into the next couple of months. In June of the same year, the Dholera Port project was officially launched. Around the time when the project was launched, these villages were easily accessible to Hindutva organisations. The fear of the 'other' was palpable, due to the widespread media coverage amid open support for Modi's acts by the vernacular press. As reflected in Vijayrajsinh's statement, 'The Sangh organisations, especially VHP, were mostly *saving* the locals from the others' (emphasis added to highlight his sarcasm).[99] Around this time, a new set of land buyers arrived in these villages of the region. As many of the farmers recollected during interviews with me, most of them had been ignorant about the Port project. While I was discussing my project with Vijayrajsinh, he first mentioned the presence of people associated with VHP in these land transactions:

> *Why don't you examine the role of the BJP politicians? I can show you the resorts and (Town Planning) schemes[100] around Dholera which are owned by Amit Shah and Bhupendrasinh or their sons. Let's go and I'll show you one by one. The problem is that I do not have documentary evidence… And why just BJP. Do you know Sinha (pseudonym), the VHP leader?[101] He is a doctor. His brother is also a doctor. (They) have a number of friends and families who are doctors. During the Gujarat riots, or may be a little before or after, when the Port was announced, these people frequented our villages. This was the time when VHP was everywhere due to the riots. It was funny because they were here to buy*

[99] Interview with Vijayrajsinh, Dholera, August 2017.

[100] 'Scheme' is often used to refer to real estate projects. It comes from the common use of the Town Planning Schemes in the cities and towns of Gujarat. For Town Planning scehmes, see Ballaney and Patel (2009); and Jain (2019).

[101] The interviewee mentioned the real name as well his national level post in VHP which I anonymise to protect the interviewee.

> *land… That is how they saved my village from the Mughals (chuckles).*[102]

In other villages which came under this project, buyers of similar profile were mentioned by farmer leaders. Some of my interviewees in the two villages which were affected by the port pointed out that during this time, a motley group of businessmen from Ahmedabad came shopping for Dholera's farmlands. They were mostly doctors or other professionals such as engineers and advocates. As I verified and tallied multiple accounts from interviewees, it was not clear whether the sale started before the announcement of the project but it certainly was around the time when communal passions were high. In fact, during my interview, Pradeepsinh, the local BJP leader, while arguing how the SIR project was helpful for the locals, blurted out something, which buttressed the same:

> *See all these doctor, lawyers from Ahmedabad came to give us money in Dholera. Earlier, they were charging us lakhs of rupees for our surgeries, court cases in Ahmedabad. Do you think if Modiji did not announce this project, we could have access to their money? Sinha Bhai brought a lot of his friends for our lands. I know they bought at a cheaper price but it led to many new buyers from Ahmedabad. All doctors, engineers, lawyers from Ahmedabad.*[103]

As he finished, I asked him who Sinha is. Probably realising that he should not have mentioned the name, he told me that he was a friend and good doctor from Ahmedabad. More than the role of one or two Sinhas, what is more important is to see how the politics of Hindutva, and its actors by extension, fluently dissipated into real estate. It also illustrates the role of Hindutva actors in taking a neoliberal project forward. Although non-state actors, they draw their power from associations with the state. For example, VHP has been instrumental in enabling BJP to gain power at the provincial as well as at the national level. The organisation is often seen as part of the state influencing significant policy

[102] Interview with Vijayrajsinh, Uni, August 2017.

[103] Interview with Sailesh, Dholera, November 2017.

directions of the government. The entry of Sinha or businessmen friends into these villages were on the pretext of a Hindutva project: 'to save them from the others' as Vijayrajsinh mentioned sarcastically. However, their entry is intrinsically linked with the commercial and private interests of these actors.

Scholars have argued that along with the decline of the Congress Party and the rise of regional parties, the rise of Hindutva has been an outcome of the gradual shift in favour of an increasingly market-driven economy that worked itself through the political system (Desai, 2011b: 358; also Mooij, 2005; Nielsen and Nilsen, 2016). It can certainly be argued as to which one predated the other, whether neoliberalism helped Hindutva or if Hindutva led to neoliberalism. However, what is certain is their interconnectedness. This is one answer to why Hindutva goes together with neoliberalism, the question I asked in Chapter 1. In this case, in all likelihood, the entry of the Sinhas into these villages has been on the pretext of a Hindutva ideological project as people related them with VHP and not with the Port project. However, their Hindutva was intrinsically linked with commercial and private interests. I will come back to this in the discussions in Section 5.6.

5.4 Ahmedabad International Airport and its ever-shifting locations

The development juggernaut of Dholera is often an unending puzzle with a number of projects thrown in only to be cancelled or morphed into another one. For a long time, finding an alternative site to develop a new Ahmedabad International Airport (currently called Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport) remained a priority for the provincial government. Initially, there was talk to extend the airport at the existing site in Ahmedabad, but this was deemed unfeasible because of the lack of vacant land around it.[104] Then, the site moved to Vadsar, which is around 20 kilometres from both

[104] Interview with town planner US Mehta (real name) in Ahmedabad, September 2017.

Gandhinagar and Ahmedabad.[105] Around 2007, it was moved to Fedara and the site covered an area of 1,700 hectares spread over three villages (Bhardwaj Chand, 2006; TNN, 2008). However, in 2010, the site was again moved to the village of Navagam located around 8 kilometres off the highway and on the north-eastern boundaries of the Dholera SIR closer to the sea (Figures 5.1 and 5.2; Arora, 2010).[106] The new site was significantly bigger with an area of 7,500 hectares. However, the relocation was met with objection from specialist teams initially due to the low-lying area with significant flood risks. Interestingly, in this journey through these prospective sites, the fictitious airport has left a trail of real estate activities, which I discuss below (Figure 5.3).

Relocating the Ahmedabad airport was further justified when the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT city) had to cancel its tallest building, Diamond tower (Pathak, 2012). During my interview with Mishra, the governing body member of the DSIRDA who was also part of the apex body of GIFT city, he subtly gave me evidence of the involvement of high-ranking politicians and bureaucrats in some shadow dealings of the projects. According to him, some of them were involved directly in real estate speculation:

> *The case of another International Airport for Ahmedabad has been there for a while. Once the GIFT city faced issues with height restrictions because of its proximity to the current (Ahmedabad) airport, the chorus grew stronger. Hence, the planners and bureaucrats (at GIDB or with the government) thought that instead of moving something yet to be built (hence GIFT city), we should move the existing airport. Do you still want me to deny that this is not for real estate speculation by ministers or developers? Why did it go to Fedara, which is 100 kilometers from Ahmedabad after deciding a nearby site?[107]Then, you learn that no, it's not even Fedara… You should check the owners of these real-estate projects around Fedara. Get all the details, especially when they started. I am sure you will be puzzled and can never trace the real ones (laughs). Go to the villages and ask the farmers or the Dalals: whom did*

[105] Interview with bureaucrat, January 2018 and Sagar Rabari in September 2017.

[106] Interview with academician CEPT, December 2017 and Sagar Rabari in September 2017.

[107] He refers to Vadsar which is roughly 20 kilometres from both Gandhinagar and Ahmedabad.

> *they sold (sic.) their land to? And I promise you will have a fascinating story to write. That should motivate you…*[108]

Tempted by Mishra's advice, I spoke to some of the middlemen and farmers in the area to inquire about the details of land sales. Fedara was on the highway connecting Dholera with Ahmedabad; it was 20 kilometres away from Ambli, the north-eastern bordering village of the SIR. Similar to the frequent housing societies and resorts in the middle of nowhere along the highway, this 20 kilometres is adorned with a number of hoardings amid farmland converted into residential plots. For a long stretch on the highway from Ahmedabad before arriving in Fedara, the highway remains barren. However, from Fedara until the start of the SIR, there are a number of proposed housing societies, resorts or residential plots.

Tracing the documentary trail with respect to ownership of these projects is a tough and risky task as most of the projects are flooded with what is referred to as black money through *benami* (unnamed) transactions. In this, the price at which a plot of land is sold is often not shown on official papers, with mention of a much lower value. As most transactions of money take place in cash instead of bank transfers, there is no record to track them. In fact, I came across farmers who claimed to be paid in gold biscuit bars to hide any official record. This would mean that the land, which was, for example, bought for Rs 1 million per acre, would be registered in the Land Record office to be sold for Rs 100,000. Hence, Rs 900,000 was paid directly in cash (or in gold). The buyer's money of Rs 900,000 in this case can presumed to be untaxed and hence black. Thus, the buyer found a way to turn his black money into white (which is accounted) by investing in land bought at the prevailing market rate but without recording the same. This is because the value of the land would be based on Rs 1 million and not the Rs 100,000 paid in records. Real estate

[108] Interview with Mishra, November 2017.

investments in India have been a major sector absorbing black money and converting it into white.[109]

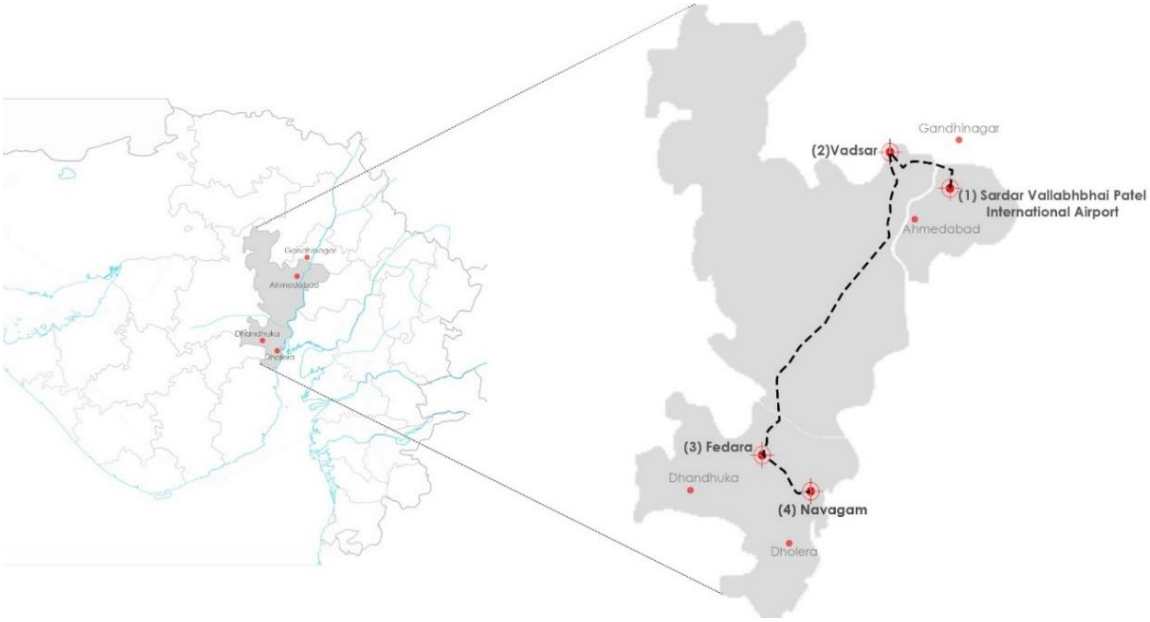


Figure 5.1: The journey for an alternative site for Ahmedabad International Airport (Source: Author).



Figure 5.2: The mud road leading to the current site of the airport and the village of Nawagaon. (Source: Author).



[109] See Kumar (1999) for a detailed take on the black economy in India. Although dated in terms of the data as the size of the economy has significantly increased over the last two decades, the book analyses the phenomenon in great depth.


Figure 5.3: Some of the real estate projects between Fedara and Dholera (Source: Author)

Newspapers around 2007-2008 started reporting that about 1,690 hectares of land were acquired for an airport and government bureaucrats claimed that three top infrastructure companies, GMR Groups, GVK from India, and Changi of Singapore, were in the race for developing the project (Shah, 2008; Shah, 2009; TNN, 2009). In one report, the Adanis offered to entirely fund or even build the roads in the 30 km stretch from the proposed airport to the sea port which they were to develop (TNN, 2008). Another project came up around this time as newspapers reported the proposed mini-Japan township between Fedara, the site of the international airport on one side and Dholera, the site for Adani's sea port on the other side (Shah, 2008). The reports further claim that this was a shot in the arm of the Modi led government a week following the Tatas moving their factory to build Nano cars from the province of West Bengal to Gujarat (Shah, 2008). The government expected Japanese automakers to start factories across the province after a huge business delegation led by Modi visited Japan in April 2007 (ibid). The talk of building a Japanese Township returned in 2018 although in a different site located next to where the Tatas moved their factory in 2008 (Ahmedabad Mirror, 2018). The Tata factory is now almost redundant as the production of Nano cars has been stopped.

A middleman, Mihir, from Dhandhuka helped me connect a few dots. Although I could not get documentary evidence to prove his (or my) version of the story, I cross checked some of the details with local farmers and middlemen. Mihir spoke at length explaining how a BJP senior leader named Jain was living in the town of Dhandhuka when he was

being investigated by a federal level investigating agency during the Congress federal government. Jain is currently a senior Cabinet Minister in the federal government whose henchman, Yashpalsinh Chudasama was a Dhandhuka native. Yashpalsinh's brother was Mihir's classmate and friend from school:

> *Before the Fedara airport was announced, Jain used to live here (Dhandhuka) temporarily. This was before the 2007 elections after which he became a Cabinet minister. Then the Fedara airport project was announced and later the SIR… Yashpalsinh was his good friend and during this time, both collaborated to buy land here. From Fedara to Ambli. This is probably 15 kilometres and in those 15 kilometres there are (Town Planning) schemes[110] (Figure 5.1 and 5.3). Land was bought by Jain's son and Yashpal's younger brother (who) was my batchmate in school and college… Their mom's village is near Fedara. You cannot buy such massive quantity of land in your own name. So, they did not transfer ownership immediately. They would pay the farmer, convert it into Non-Agricultural (NA) land (still in farmers' name) and then transfer it to a company. When they bought land in that area, the maximum price was Rs 10,000-12,000 per bigha. Mostly, Rs 2000, 3000 or 4000 per bigha… In this way, they bought 15,000 bighas of land along the highway. That entire stretch, you must have seen while travelling. There are so many buildings and (TP) schemes. All those belong to them.*[111]

After the 2007 provincial elections, which BJP comfortably won, Jain got a set of powerful Cabinet portfolios in the ministry. He then managed to get the Fedara and Dholera project on track. Before the elections and hence before the announcement of the project, he already converted those agricultural lands to Non-Agricultural (NA) usage at a cheaper rate. After the announcement of the project, newspaper front-pages were laden with the talk of these projects. Suddenly, these villages started witnessing government surveyors, which increased the hype. Mihir argues:

> *The same land (which he bought for Rs 5,000) was now worth Rs 500,000 per bigha overnight. But forget that appreciation in price. Think about the NA converted which were now being converted into (Town-Planning) schemes and sold in plots of 100, 200 square metres.*

[110] Refer to fn 100 for Town Planning schemes.

[111] Interview with Mihir, December 2017.

> *If NA (conversion) cost him Rs 5000 per bigha add Rs 5,000-10,000 for the land, probably even lesser. It means for one square meter it's not even 5 rupees. They started making plots in square metres: 100, 200, 500, 1000, 2000. They had an office on SG Highway in Ahmedabad named 'some' infrastructure. All these ministers or businessmen who wanted to buy lands after the Fedara airport was announced, would meet Jain and ask him to tell an acquaintance who could help in buying land. He would say go and meet Yashpal… Most of them are BJP leaders. You will not find any other party supporter in land business.*[112]

During the fieldwork, I attained similar accounts from some local middlemen in a village near Fedara. One middleman, Ashok, who had associations with the BJP party, discussed how he helped the BJP leaders buy land in his village without realising that there was a big project coming. He regretted not keeping his own land. Later, he started brokering when land sales peaked further and the initial buyers such as Yashpalsinh disappeared. Land further into the interior villages far from the highways was being sold. By then, Ashok managed to gain some information through his party links about the location of the airport. He bought two plots of land at almost 10 times the price at which he had helped the Chudasamas buy the plots. When I interviewed him, he seemed content as the land he bought near the new airport site was from the profit he accrued working as a broker. Other than this he also built a two-storey house.

Politicians' business interests and the political interests of businessmen are an emerging area of research to which scholars such as Jaffrelot et al. (2019), Sinha and Wyatt (2019) have contributed recently. Often, many of these deals entail crony-capitalism if not outright unfair practices. Beyond situating some of these arguments, the prospective Dholera international airport and its ever-changing location underline the role of profits that can be accrued in the production of such fictitious sites without delivering anything significant. The involvement of Jain in the above set of projects not only underlines how

[112] Interview with Mihir, December 2017.

state actors corner benefits or how they are involved in private businesses; it is illustrative of how state actors working in the shadows leave a trail of speculative real estate projects while going through the networks of Hindutva. The state then becomes the arena through which the benefits of a neoliberal project are captured. In that case, party politics or Hindutva organisations help these networks. Whereas Jain comes from the formal state and draws his power from his state-position, his practices are for private gains. He is here to maximise accumulation and not necessarily to further BJP ideologies or RSS works. However, as Mihir claimed most of the people in the land business are from the BJP, it is important that one comes through a certain set of social capital or networks. Even if a person is not with the BJP party, a history with the RSS or caste kinship comes handy. I discuss this further in Section 5.6.

5.5 Travel of neoliberal discourses of development from Kutch to Dholera

Whereas the previous two vignettes documented how the AES is composed of the formal and shadow elements of the state and their role in taking Hindutva and neoliberal projects forward, in looking at the provincial scale, it is also important to understand how neoliberal ideas of development travel from one part of the province to the other. More importantly, we need to explore how surpluses generated from one site are invested in another, leading to a chain of speculative activities. Simultaneously, in the travels of such neoliberal ideas, often popular politicians or corporations become the binding force. Below, I document a few businessmen who, based on their ideas and experiences of development in Kutch, their native region, have invested in Dholera's land.

Kutch, considered amongst the backward regions of Gujarat, went on to become a major industrial destination in Gujarat for many corporations in the 2000s. Being some of the early land buyers in Dholera, a group of Kutchi businessmen drew from their experiences

after the windfall they made in Kutch from the Modi-led industrialisation of the Kutch region (Simpson, 2013; Sud, 2020a). The speculation of businessmen is entirely based on their confidence that, as one of them stated, 'Modi will build Dholera, the way he built Kutch.'[113] Beyond Modi, some of them also had the Adanis in mind who built the Mundra port in Kutch and made it a hub of business activities. In Section 4.2 of Chapter 4, I have mentioned scholars such as Simpson (2004, 2013) Sud (2009; 2020a; 2020b), Tambs-Lyche and Sud (2016) who have covered the transformation and the associated socio-political imacts that the Kutch region witnessed.

While looking for accommodation during my initial days of fieldwork, I met the manager of one of the hotels on the highway. He initially told me that the hotel rooms were available only for a few months as they were booked in advance by Kutchi businessmen who come during the prawn harvesting season. Prawn harvesting fisheries cropped up around the 2000s and turned out to be a lucrative business in the vast fallow land near the sea. Around 500 such fisheries exist currently in the area.

When the staff at the hotel showed me rooms on the first floor, I met 45-year-old Shankar. He walked up to me to ask who I was and I briefly explained my research. Hearing that I was from the UK and knew bureaucrats in Gandhinagar (or GIDB), he requested me to sit in his room for a chat. As I explained my research to him, for some reason, he kept asking me various questions on how the bureaucrats in Gandhinagar see the project, if they are taking an active interest, or what I think of the usefulness of the Activation Area. Curious, I asked him about his background. Although he was a bit sketchy with the details, he mentioned that he deals with prawns and belonged to a town in Kutch. During my fieldwork, we met on a couple of more occasions. A passionate Modi supporter, he had

[113] Interview with Shankar, December 2017.

been with BJP in his native town and also joined the RSS, although he acknowledged that his attendance in their meetings was infrequent. In these chats, I got to know more about Shankar's business dealings since he had made a fair amount of money from land deals as a middleman in Kutch. In his role as middleman, he was what Sud (2014a: 597) called an 'aggregator', 'putting together small plots of land to produce a commercially viable unit' for the eventual buyer, mostly for incoming industries or businessmen.

Local informants claim that businessmen like Shankar had bought vast amounts of land in Dholera, although many of them did not keep hold of them and soon sold them.[114] Their first introduction to Dholera was through the prawn harvesting business around the time when the Dholera port project was announced. Prices started increasing but land was still affordable. According to Shankar, he had witnessed similar incidents of rising prices in his native place. Dholera's land price was too low. Anticipating similar growth as in Kutch, Shankar bought 50 bighas of land near Unai village at a nominal rate compared to current prices. He used his links in RSS and used a Darbar broker to get his deal done. Although he was non-committal on the prices, he did mention that it was a few thousand per bigha. I asked him how and why he bought that land and if there were fellow Kutchis who invested similarly. He said:

> *Whatever money we have is from the land price increase in Kutch because of the factories coming into our region. It is entirely Modiji's work. Locals made a lot of profit in those deals… Our land was not even fertile. There was no water. Worse than Dholera … Modiji transformed the broken and fallen lands of Kutch. We were devastated by the earthquake. But, see today. Labourers from UP, Bihar flocked in to work.*[115]

[114] Interview with Kunwarsinh, December 2017.

[115] Interview with Shankar, August 2017.

I am not sure if Shankar used 'Modiji will transform Dholera' for himself, or to buttress his own faith in Modi, especially since all was not well with his investment. Since he bought the land in Unai, the southernmost village, the Port project has been forgotten. With the launch of the Dholera SIR project, the focus shifted to other villages such as Dholera. Although Unai village falls under the Dholera SIR boundary, it has had a complicated relation with the authorities as it became the center of all the agitations. Whether linked to the protests or not, however, the bigger issue for Shankar was the fact that Unai fell under the 6th Town Planning scheme which means that it will be the last scheme to be developed and according to the Development Plan released by DSIRDA, it will start only after 2030. On top of that, most of the Unai land was in the agriculture zone, barring a fraction that was residential. Shankar's land also came in the agriculture zone, which commands the lowest price in the market. This meant that there has not been any appreciation in prices. In fact, he may lose money if he decides to sell.

The travel of development ideas through Hindutva networks was further clarified to me by one of his friends, fellow Kutch businessman Jugraj. Jugraj supported the Congress party in his native village near Bhachau although he has spent some time as a member of the RSS in the past. Harbouring political ambitions, he joined the Congress fold and won the Sarpanch election in his village. In Dholera, Jugraj bought land in a residential zone in the main village of Dholera as he wanted to play safe:

> *Around the time I started coming to Dholera, many people were buying land. I do not support BJP but I know Modiji does what he promises. And when I initially came to Dholera, Adanis took over the port. I was very sure it'll be successful. Adanis built Mundra… But, I took my time. It was after the SIR project came, I got in touch with a friend in Gandhinagar revenue office. He was a Rajput. Although from BJP, we were together in RSS. He managed to get some information from a colleague… So, I just spoke to Kunwarbhai (Kunwarsinh) that I need*

land from this village and you cannot take any commission. (Laughs). I am sure he must have pocketed some money. [116]

In the Dholera land market, Kutchis along with businessmen from other parts of the world inflated land value while ushering in new imaginaries and possibilities of profit.[117] Ultimately, the port project resurrected land as an object of intense speculation. Kutch is the westernmost district of India and shares its boundary with Pakistan. Historically and especially since India's independence, the region has remained backward owing to a number of factors such as location, geography among others. The disastrous 2001 earthquake further worsened the situation. The mishandling of the~~w~~ 2001 earthquake was one key factor that led to the resignation of then Chief Minister Keshubhai Patel, putting Narendra Modi in the chair. Modi adopted a slew of neoliberal measures while involving private corporations and religious organisations in the rebuilding efforts.[118]

Making Kutch a tax haven along with a slew of other measures such as availability of cheap land and electricity, the Kutch district turned into a prosperous industrial region. A number of corporate houses moved to the region to start their manufacturing units due to the significant tax-break. Just the two power plants of Tata and Adani brought £4.5 billion of investments. Simultaneously, Kutch tourism with its beautiful white salt deserts was promoted and became a tourist hub. With such remarkable transformation from an arid wasteland into an industrial hub and tourist destination, Kutch is often held up as a showpiece of Narendra Modi's Gujarat model of development. Along with industries, hotels and resorts suddenly started dotting the landscape which led to a sudden surge of

[116] Interview with Jugraj, December 2017.

[117] In Chapter 6, I discuss the massive spike in land prices in Dholera. Above, Pradeepsinh also mentioned how the cost increased INR 2,000 per bigha to Rs 600,000-700,000 per bigha after the announcement of the project as buyers flocked in. Bigha is explained in fn 46.

[118] Refer to Simpson 2013 for greatly detailed insights.

demand in land, leading to massive land speculation. Thus, Kutchi land buyers, armed with memories of their own underdevelopment, have seen the 'miracle' of (neoliberal) development firsthand.[119]

When looking at the experiences of the Kutchis, who signify the provincial level embrace of the neoliberal model of development, their referencing of Kutch to see Dholera's future is also key to drive speculations. The platforms used for land speculation are provincial, national as well as transnational circuits of capital and is not limited to just the Kutchis. For example, while interviewing the cousin of Pradeepsinh, who featured in Section 5.1, I met his US based retired uncle, Ramdevsinh (pseudonym), who has a motel business in the US. He too has bought land in the Dholera SIR as he saw a future in the idea of smart cities. Speaking in English with me, he drifted across topics during his 15-minute-long monologue:

> *I left these lands, went to Bombay and then to USA. I had to work really hard… Modi is a great visionary. Once I knew it (Dholera smart city or SIR) was launched by Modiji, I was very sure these lands will yield gold. See how much he is respected everywhere in the world. Now, I bought few acres at a very small price… I have heard a lot about smart cities around the world. London, New York all are smart cities… This will develop Dholera and make rich. Modiji knows how to 'make' development in any place.*[120]

Thus, Ramdevsinh referenced cities from the west in order to legitimise the concept of smart cities and to argue his faith in Modi's narrative of development. At the same time, he referenced the Dholera of the 1980s when he left the place for greener pastures abroad enroute Bombay. During my fieldwork, I came across many similar accounts when a

[119] Although, they see Kutch's underdevelopment through a certain lens, it does not mean that the likes of Shankar were living in poverty and suddenly benefitted from a neoliberal project. They must have been at least lower middle class to have had enough money to buy and sell land in the first place, other than the social capital to get into the business of land. Shankar was a Rajput, which explains why he jumped into the land business.

[120] Interview with Ramdevsinh, in Dholera, February 2018.

relative of a respondent living abroad invested to buy land or advised the locals to do so. The village of Otariya, which is the only village with a Patidar majority in the SIR, had a significant population migrating to Surat, Mumbai or abroad. The relatives who stayed back in Otariya are regularly advised to buy further land from the remittances; to not sell existing land and wait for prices to appreciate further. Often the interviewees would make it a point how their non-resident relatives were well aware of 'smart cities' in other parts of the world. At the same time, beyond the global examples, for many their reasoning was that Modi had 'developed' Gujarat, bringing in industries or building 'top quality' roads and airports across the province. The examples of development given were numerous, though it is notable that some of these were developed during Modi's reign (such as Sanand, Hansalpur) while others (Morbi) preceded him, but were thrown in to make their arguments stronger. Each individual had their own way of inter-referencing and their own imaginations of development forged from the legacy of economic development in Gujarat, where industrialisation or infrastructure building occurred in places that were desolate only a few years ago.[121]

Importantly, this has not gone unchallenged. The 2017 provincial Gujarat Assembly elections became a major battleground and a referendum of sorts concerning this growth model. These neoliberal projects were also countered in the political battlefield. Whereas the Dholera SIR project has been a prime public relations tool for Modi during his successful 2014 prime ministerial campaign, the 2017 state assembly elections saw radio advertisements of the opposition Congress party which mocked the government sitting idle on Dholera farmers' lands for 10 years and its failure to build the proposed Dholera airport

[121] In saying this, I am careful to not to argue that this has been 'development for all'. In most cases, such industrialisation or delivery of infrastructure has benefitted a select few, especially the upper echelons. I have discussed this and the failure of the Gujarat model of development in Chapter 4.

in as many years. As development discourses are inevitably linked to Modi, his critics point towards the same argument. Talking about crony capitalism under Modi, Paresh Dhanani, the current Leader of Opposition in the provincial assembly from the Congress party pointed out to me during an interview that Modi has helped corporations dry out the state's resources.

> *I will share the data on the amount of land which has been given away to the corporations for free or for one or two rupees. I am not even talking about the tax benefits. Wherever cheap lands (are available) they get 2000 or 5000 acres, they just keep buying it. Then, they announce the government project and sell the land at huge prices. This is the way of BJP leaders to make money. Whether it is Dholera SIR or the number of GIDC (Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation) projects… I have detailed data on the promised investments of the Vibrant Gujarat and what was realised ultimately. You will be astonished. Barely one or two percentage of promised (investments) have landed. See, the job creations from those investments. It's cruel…That's why, we decided to fight these elections on development. We knew they are hollow. Development has gone mad… See, we almost defeated them. If only we had more ground level workers.* [122]

Another Congress leader, Lalji Desai, was equally critical of crony capitalism, which according to him has caused the state's development to rot. Talking about what he calls the 'Modani' model, Modi plus Adani, of crony capitalism, he argued that it snatched resources away from the public and placed it into the hands of a few industrial houses. Hence, 'the two main agitations in Gujarat over the last few years, the Patidars and the OBC (Other Backward Class) ones or even the Adivasi or the farmers' agitations, are all outcomes of the reverse gear that the economy has taken which led to loss of employment opportunities. This is the outcome of the Modani model.'[123] The 2017 Gujarat election fought on development minus Hindutva proved to be a major test for BJP and the Modi led development model. The BJP hang on to power with a reduced majority, Modi's

[122] Interview with Paresh Dhanani, Leader of Opposition, Gandhinagar, February 2018.

[123] Interview with Lalji Desai, Congress leader, Ahmedabad, January 2018.

development took a hit as discussed in the previous chapter. An election outcome is not necessarily a referendum on one single issue (such as development) since a host of other considerations such as caste matter. However, the significant protests by some of the traditional BJP supporters (for example, Patidars) dented a massive blow to the capitalist led Hindutva bandwagon, and the government went back to launch a number of policies which were a disjuncture from neoliberal policy prescriptions. I discuss these policies in detail in Section 8.5 of Chapter 8.

5.6 Analysis

Mitchell (2002), in one of his most interesting essays titled 'Can the Mosquito Speak?' illustrated how 'capital can circulate and, by combining with further forces, go through metamorphoses into other forms.' He showed the metamorphoses from 'money into property and labor, property and labor into sugarcane, sugarcane into processed sugar or alcohol, and back again into money' (ibid: 33). In the process, resources and arrangements that were used by the capitalist, Abbud, who was behind these metamorphoses in Egypt, did not come alone from him as he used an intricate network of power, resource and money that flowed and mutated forms. The sections above depict a similar metamorphosis of power, money, religion or resources in Dholera with networks spread well beyond it. However, to limit the phenomenon to VHP leaders, the Kutchi businessmen or even to the federal minister Jain who was at the centre of a number of real-estate projects around Dholera would be misplaced. According to Mitchell (2002), to personify or link these circulations and forces to particular individuals is too simple although such individuals at times secure control of certain elements, and may even claim to represent those elements. This analysis brings the three themes of the dissertation—state, neoliberalism and Hindutva—into prominence.

Throughout these vignettes, which are from the early years of a spate of neoliberal projects coming to the Dholera region, what we have witnessed is that both state and non-state actors use the shadow of the state for personal benefits. Such shadowing or use of the state takes place from within the state space or from outside. At the same time, it is done by both state and non-state actors. This makes the state porous to the actors of society as well as businesses. The porosity of the state shapes and at the same time is shaped by the disjuncture in economic or cultural ideological projects. Hence, it brings the very idea of development to the centre. More interestingly, in all the cases above (be it the VHP leaders, the politician Jain or the Kutchi businessmen), more than ideology, accumulation remained key as Barbara Harriss-White argues, when she claims that 'the state is [also] used by the intermediate classes for accumulation rather than for legitimation' (2003: 47).

There are some key observations around the central themes of the state and development. Firstly, in the 1990s, there was a change in approach by the provincial state as well as the central government to adopt a host of policies which mark a break from the previous Nehruvian era. For example, until then, infrastructure construction as well as its day to day running was the domain of the state. So much so that even the export-processing zones, first set up in Kandla in Gujarat as early as 1965 were all set up and owned by the government (Kundra 2000). However, in the 1990s with the BJP government in power, as I discussed in the previous chapter (4), policies start changing. The vision document of the provincial government I referred to marked a significant departure to encourage complete private involvement in various sectors including infrastructure. Through a comparison of the contrasting views of development of Bhaubhai and Pradeepsinh in the introduction to this Chapter, I demonstrated how these ideas are diffused at the level of even the villages. As with privatisation of the state in Tamil Nadu, about which Barbara Harriss-White (2003) writes in greater detail, the shadow practices of Hindutva actors have been greatly

enhanced by the doctrines of economic liberalism, the launching of the infrastructure projects that at the same time worsened a more fundamental problem of state depletion (ibid).

However, as I have discussed in Chapter 4, the stepping back of the state or the inching forward of non-state actors precedes the BJP in Gujarat. Many scholars on Gujarat have argued this through a number of themes. A number of scholars have shown that this was very clearly the case of Gujarat's political economy from the 1970s until the 1990s. Marrio Rutten (1986, 1995) has produced an elaborate scholarship and his work on the partially implemented land reforms provides a vivid example of the above mentioned themes. Similarly, extensively detailed works of Jan Breman (1985, 1996, 2004, 2007), Ghanshyam Shah's (1975, 1976, 1996) on Gujarat's political economy covered the role of the state through polarisation and paradoxical growth process with respect economy and polity. Some of the edited volumes such as Hirway et al. (2002), Streefkert et al (2002) and Shinoda's (2002) aptly titled 'The Other Gujarat', have covered a whole range of issues of income and social inequality, religious and communal polarisation from the 1980s or early 1990s that predate the era of Modi or BJP. Through her scholarship on Gujarat on a range of issues around income, gender and labour, Indira Hirway (1995, 2000, 2002, 2003) has arrived at similar arguments. What I argue is that there is a further proliferation of these phenomena across the province with Hindutva and economic liberalisation. The observations remained similar that despite significant economic growth Gujarat fared poorly in terms of the Human Development Index.

Secondly, I have illustrated that policies of infrastructure delivery by private sectors made the state more porous to society. As it opened up newer avenues of shadow activities, it also gave scope for newer actors to make claims to the state or resources. Hence, within

this, whereas the likes of the Adanis are given cheaper land, Hindutva or caste alliances open up the field for newer actors like VHP workers or Kutchi businessmen. However, as I have argued above, in most cases, accumulation matters more than ideology. So, Hindutva acts as a way of opening up spheres of accumulation, an introduction card to a large extent. This is applicable to all cases, be it the Dholera port, the international airport in proposed multiple locations, or the SIR project. It helped a host of state and non-state actors using their position within the state or their influence due to their proximity to state institutions, to corner personal benefits. For non-state actors, to begin with, this proximity was usually through Hindutva organisations in the case of the Sinhas or the Kutchi businessmen. Sinha and his friends entered the villages with ambiguous identities. While their association with VHP impressed upon the villagers their attempt to work with Hindu society, their commercial interests were unknown. The Kutchi businessmen used past associations with Hindutva groups or caste networks to get the best land in Dholera. In the same way, Jain, a ruling party politician used his influence in state organisations to possibly launch the airport project at a certain site which was around the areas where he had already bought vast swathes of land to start real-estate ventures.

Thirdly, linking the state at an ideational level with the projects of neoliberal development is how ideas of such development travel from one site to another, increasing their legitimacy. Be it the Kutchi businessmen, the US returnee Ramdevsinh or other non-residents, they found references to the smart city project or the port project at provincial, national or transnational level. Their business was driven essentially by neoliberal ideas of development while using Hindutva networks. What is particularly interesting is how these neoliberal ideas travel from one place to another with its intended or unintended impacts.

At the same time, such referencing is heavily linked with the likes of Modi or Adani. This brings forth the last and most important point that approaches to development can be used to reimagine the state. Such narratives of development enable leaders like Modi to launch a project which reorients the values and ideologies which the state has hitherto given to development projects. The state's journey from the Nehruvian model of development to the current neoliberal model, which in Gujarat came to be expressed through the Gujarat model of development (critiqued in Chapter 4), is testimony to how the state is being reimagined. In this re-imagination of the state, the project of Hindutva would address the social domain while an economic model is needed to address the material domain.

In this, neoliberalism seems to have suited the Hindutva flagbearers whether BJP or Modi. Thus, in the case of Gujarat, the two projects by which BJP was able to reimagine the state are Hindutva and neoliberalism as it became the 'Hindutva laboratory' (Spodek, 2002) where BJP has been partly successful in creating a hegemony while attempting to get rid of the vestiges of the Nehruvian socialism and secularism in the province. These developments have allowed a leader like Modi to capture the institutions of the state and reimagine and represent it through discourses of neoliberalism. However, when it comes to the delivery or implementation of such neoliberal development, which in itself is exclusionary, we find people such as Jain or the brothers of the VHP national leader. Development with Hindutva legitimation provides the platform to these state or non-state actors to capture the institutions of the state.

The interconnectedness between the two projects is present at multiple levels. In the villages, VHP workers (or their brothers) invest in land while possibly introducing themselves through their VHP or Hindutva networks. At the provincial level Modi overlaps the Vibrant Gujarat investment summits with the Hindu festival of Navaratri

spending millions from state coffers to celebrate it as International Navratri Festival. Aggressive neoliberal policies that were coupled with equally aggressive Hindutva practices were giving Modi or BJP the breathing space and the platform to revisit the idea of the state. At the ideational level, economic liberalism meets political illiberalism at multiple levels.[124] Although illiberal Hindutva shares little in common with the Washington Consensus, the former favouring an exclusivist societal order where the latter favours markets, there is a strong measure of agreement in their shared disdain for dirigisme, or the idea that states can directly empower poorer people (Corbridge, 1999). This is another answer to why Hindutva and neoliberalism go together, the question I raised in Chapter 1.

The newly emerging interactions between the state and businesses in infrastructure projects, lubricated by Hindutva, within the backdrop of neoliberalism, cannot be explained through the existing scholarship. The existing macro-level studies fail to explain how these two projects interact in the everyday lives of the state and society; when the everyday is studied, it has been done in the context of religious riots located in urban regions such as Ahmedabad (Berenschot, 2010; 2011a; Desai, 2008; Ghassem-Fachandi, 2012; Shani, 2007). Such limitations have meant that these studies fail to explain the continuing rise of an exclusivist majoritarian ideology, i.e. Hindutva, in rural areas or amongst farmers. While scholars such as Chacko (2018a, 2018b), Chacko and Jayasuriya (2017) or Nilsen (2019) have provided analysis through various frameworks at macro scale, I have provided an explanation based on the everyday interactions of the state and society at the micro level through both societal as well as economic logic, which I argue is a richer approach to analysis. Most importantly, current scholarship lacks the intimate

[124] I have elaborated the background to this in Section 4.5 in Chapter 4.

stories of how the actors and practices of Hindutva and neoliberalism come together. This confluence is the subject of this dissertation, and this chapter has made a contribution in this direction.

5.7 Conclusion

Through a series of events involving the launch of a neoliberal project in the villages of Gujarat, this chapter has illustrated how actors of Hindutva rode on the neoliberal bandwagon to make further inroads by delivering material gains. The period saw the coming of both the project of neoliberalism as well as the furthering of the Hindutva agenda using the scaffolding provided by the SIR project. Because even though land speculation and 'development' is about accumulation—it ultimately allowed the entry and deepening of Hindutva in these rural areas of Gujarat.

I started the chapter through a discussion of the different versions of development in Dholera and their impact. What we saw was a school teacher who expected the state, Nehruvian state in his view, to deliver equitable development in the villages. Similar believers in development do not see the role of private corporations in the process. On the other hand, buying into the neoliberal discourse, Pradeepsinh believed that the buying of land by professionals from cities such as Ahmedabad would make the poor of Dholera wealthier as the investments would trickle down, also creating jobs and opportunities. As such, the arguments run similar to Narendra Modi's visions around development through unapologetic neoliberalism. As I have argued, development projects provide a platform for the re-imagination of the state, and the chapter explored Hindutva forces' attempts to do so in the case of Gujarat. In doing so, the chapter laid down the foundation of the dissertation: by showing how the two ideologies of neoliberalism and Hindutva help each other on the ground.

In the process, this chapter illustrated how the state and its development projects become a platform for cultural or economic ideologies to prosper as formal state and non-state actors who are part of the Actually Existing State (AES) become bound together. At the same time, it is important to understand how strategies of the AES force it to depart from its own professed policies. As Chapter 4 had described, in response to opposition from the Congress party in the 2017 elections, the BJP ultimately launched a slew of measures such as unemployment benefits or subsidy to farmers, which were in contradiction with its earlier models of economic liberalisation. I elaborate on some of these contradictions over subsequent chapters.

Importantly, this chapter also documented instances when neoliberal development discourses travel from one place to another. While this leads to more speculative activities as surplus travels from one place to another, it also depicts how neoliberalism is carried on the back of existing caste and Hindutva networks. In doing so, Hindutva needs a way to channel material gains to its believers. This became possible due to the neoliberal project as in the launch of the seaport project that was followed by an addition of a chemical industrial estate laid the foundation for a spike in land sales. The same neoliberal project also helped Hindutva actors to entrench further into these villages.

Interestingly, these projects show a remarkable resilience wherein they may disappear only to reappear in another form. The port project was long forgotten only to be announced in 2002 and then suddenly an expansion that follows it through the addition of the chemical industrial estate in an area near a protected wildlife sanctuary – only to be shelved in years to come. The case of the airport is no less intriguing. From the possibility of extending the existing site, it moved to a location 20 kilometres away. Within a few years, it then moved to Fedara on the outskirts of Dholera, only to then move to the current site. In similar ways,

the Japanese exclusive township reappeared years later, in another location. What is more important with respect to a study of development, is that each of these speculative sites witnessed significant real estate activities. Farmlands have been bought by outsiders, converted into residential plots on some occasions and then abandoned as real estate lobbies raced after new sites. This shelving and morphing of infrastructure projects leads finally to what we currently have, the Dholera Special Investment Region or the Dholera smart city that sees a host of activities of shadow state actors. The next chapter (6) focuses on this current avatar of development and the actors surrounding it.

Chapter 6: Mimicking the State: Shadow Practices and Hindutva in Dholera

6.1 Introduction

Vijayrajsinh, the leader of the protesting farmers in Dholera, often complained[125] about how people from the BJP, RSS and the VHP[126] have captured the Mamlatdar[127] or the Block Development Office. He criticised that they do not let any work happen without approval from the likes of Rajeshsinh (pseudonym), the BJP District Council president. According to him, the Mamlatdar advised him to speak to Rajeshsinh to expedite the process of converting his agricultural land to non-agricultural land. Furious at this, Vijayrajsinh preferred to wait instead of talking to a 'stupid' (as Vijayrajsinh calls Rajeshsinh) from the BJP.

In the initial days of fieldwork, I often felt that such stories were forced into his narrative, which was usually targeted against RSS or BJP. After all, he was fighting against them in his opposition to the Dholera Special Investment Region (SIR) project. However, as I spent time in the region, I was able to document evidence of how these Hindutva organisations were in fact part of the everyday state. For example, take the case of the Talatis,[128] who are at the lowest echelons of bureaucracy in the villages. I followed the ten Talatis working in these 22 villages and a few more from the neighbouring villages. All these villages have witnessed a massive spike in land prices after the announcement of the Dholera SIR

[125] Interview with Vijayrajsinh, August 2017.

[126] As I have mentioned in Section 2.5 in Chapter 2; RSS, BJP and VHP are some of the main Hindu nationalist organisations in India, usually referred to as part of the Sangh Parivar (Family of Organisations).

[127] Mamlatdar is a Gazetted officer of the provincial government and is the head of a Block, consisting of about fifty or more groups of villages.

[128] Talatis are government officials in rural Gujarat tasked with duties such as maintaining crop and land records of the village, collection of tax revenue and irrigation dues (Business Standard, 2019). Also called 'Patwari' in some provinces of India, the institution was introduced before the British arrived who carried it forward.

project. Most of the Talatis, in private, accepted that they have brokered land deals for buyers, which involved going beyond their official duties. Their task as officials was to act as conduits to bring the state closer to citizens. However, their moonlighting is entirely against such a novel idea as they come between the state and citizen, acting as a go-between but ultimately becoming a barrier.

Similarly, in land deals, there is also a ubiquity of private intermediaries usually referred to as *dalal* (brokers). In this chapter, I use 'broker' to refer to the private agents or intermediaries who are not officially associated with the state. Under middlemen, I include both brokers and government officials who moonlight. The ubiquity of middlemen and their affiliation with Hindutva organisations is the basis of my second proposition on the Actually Existing State (AES), that a number of actors work in both the shadow and formal spheres of the state simultaneously, and constitute the Actually Existing State. Through their ability to manipulate proximity to the state, society and other non-state organisations, they shape the entity of the state and its delivery of services to citizens. Whereas government officials may represent the formal state, brokers have increasingly penetrated the formal state spaces. In working within or outside the state spaces, middlemen (both private brokers and government officials) create a shadow space within the state, in which they work. State officials, in turn, through their moonlighting practices enlarge this shadow. In Dholera, both the brokers and moonlighting officials constitute the AES. As I document below, what binds these actors of AES, however disparate, is their affiliation to Hindutva organisations.

In the next section (6.2), I discuss the central arguments of the chapter, while Section 6.3 provides a brief commentary on the scholarship on middlemen. Section 6.4 briefly describes the growth of Hindutva organisations in Dholera. This helps to understand why

middlemen are so ubiquitous along with their common link: the Hindutva organisations. In Section 6.5, I follow a broker active in the land business who is a member of the ruling BJP party and has allegiance to RSS. Section 6.6 documents the functioning of two village-level government officials who have been moonlighting since the coming of the Dholera SIR project. These officials simultaneously use their networks in RSS. Section 6.7 captures how government officials collaborate with private real estate developers to create a local level replica of the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit (VGGS). Section 6.8 finally sums up the key points of the chapter and its contribution to the dissertation.

6.2 Central arguments of the chapter

I study the practices of middlemen through a number of broad questions, such as how does the AES in Dholera function at the ground level when a neoliberal project has been launched?[129] Who are the key actors and how do their practices shape the AES? What are the cultural associations, existing social norms and networks, which help such practices? As middlemen straddle smoothly between the formal and shadow spaces, their movement is lubricated by the networks formed through societal, cultural and economic associations. I analyse their practices and impact asking how they affect the delivery of development and citizens' access to the state. Do they decrease or increase the gap between the state and its subjects or is the scenario more complex than this?

Beyond their ubiquity, why are middlemen so important to disaggregate the state and the AES in particular? Why should the study of everyday practices of these actors (officials or brokers) illuminate how a state that facilitates a majoritarian cultural ideology comes

[129] The case of the Dholera SIR representing neoliberalism is covered in Chapter 2 (Section 2.4.2). Scholars have covered similar projects rightly depicting their neoliberal tenets. For cases on India, see Banerjee-Guha (2008, 2010), Goldman (2011), Levien (2011, 2013a, 2018) and Sampat (2008, 2010). For Dholera Smart City or the SIR, Bhandari (2015), Datta (2015) and Sampat (2015c and 2016) cover the debate.

together with a transnational economic philosophy? This requires an explanation of the formation of the state and its relationship to society. As I have discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2, Abrams argued that the state is a multi-layered entity and it 'comes into being as a structuration within political practice' (1988: 82). This entity starts as an implicit construct or an idea, and then gets formed/takes shape, and becomes embedded in society through everyday practices before acquiring an overt symbolic identity. The entity, both its image and practices, are produced when the actors (and institutions) who represent the state interact with society. As the state is continuously in touch with society and never isolated, it is constantly made and remade through changes in society. However, this is not a one-way process. As the state comes into existence through these practices, existing societal hierarchies or relationships could give rise to newer ones. The everyday practices of middlemen are important to understand the changes which a project such as Dholera SIR can bring to the entity of the state and society. This chapter is ultimately an exploration of the AES, revealing how the state comes into being through its relationship with society.

In seeking to enhance their legitimacy and effectiveness, middlemen make concerted efforts to mimic key symbols or practices of the state. I use the idea of '*mimicking the state*' to depict how they imitate the formal state to gain legitimacy. At the same time, they do not attempt to create a parallel state and limit their activities strictly to proving their association to state institutions. Nandini Sundar (2014) also uses the term '*mimetic state*' while examining the tactics of the state and Maoists in India. She finds that both the state as well as Maoists mimic one another in order to improve efficacy and gain legitimacy. Whereas I draw from the mimicry discourse by Bhabha (1984) on the colonial state, I do not go into disaggregating the concept, as it is not the central argument of the chapter.

There are two related arguments that emerge from my assessment of the everyday practices of middlemen and are explored through two relationships. Both of these inform my propositions for AES and contribute towards a better understanding of the everyday state in Dholera. The first is the relationship between middlemen and the state. One of the most common practices of middlemen is their mimicry of the state. I argue that to be successful, they are dependent on the ability to appear like the state. The hard work put in presenting themselves as the state or at least state-like is underlined by their frequent attempts to exhibit their proximity to state institutions, to ministers or to bureaucrats. Second is the relationship of these middlemen with Hindutva organisations. I argue that everyday Hindutva, the banal or mundane form of it, provides a network that connects these actors even if they come from diverse backgrounds with disparate state or societal associations. Through these practices, Hindutva is strengthened, riding on the project of liberalisation.

6.3 Middlemen in literature

Scholars have taken the failure of democratic norms and institutions outlined in the Indian Constitution to be the reason for an 'omnipresent, but feeble' (Kohli, 1990:06) state that has led to the ubiquity of middlemen in India. They have been variously termed *pyarveekar, dalal,* broker, political fixer by various scholars and their functions vary (Jeffrey & Lerche, 2000; Manor, 2000; Oldenburg, 1987; Reddy and Haragopal, 1985; Sud, 2014a; Witsoe, 2012). They, as Sud (2012) argues, are part of the landscape of imperfect, inaccessible states. This relationship has been explored through client-patron forms leading Chandra (2004) to call India a 'patronage democracy' through which she investigates the choice of parties amongst voters. Guha (2014) and Mosse (2001) have elaborated on how historical background of the Indian society can be argued as a precursor to the current system.

Importantly for the chapter and the dissertation at large, the presence of these actors demonstrates the blurred boundaries of the state and such middlemen represent the porous interface between state and society (Berenschot, 2011a). They highlight how state sovereignty is questioned or at least is fragmented. There is a symbiotic relationship as these actors on one hand are necessary for citizens to access the state. On the other hand, politicians need them to access citizens. Although their ubiquity has been researched as a marker of corruption (Jeffrey & Lerche, 2000; Oldenburg, 1987), their key role in bringing the state closer to the people by linking rural clients with government bureaucrats and politicians has also been pointed out. In this scholarship, they are termed as agents of benevolence, goodwill and increased equity, 'lubricants' of Indian democracy who enable citizen access to government resources (Corbridge et al., 2005; Krishna, 2003; Manor, 2000; Simon, 2009). Berenschot (2011a) highlights a missing link in the middlemen scholarship: Hindutva. He finds that middlemen who are active in BJP or RSS play a key role as patrons of 'lower' castes, delivering state resources in return for their votes. This is especially evident during two important economic and political transitions in Gujarat: the decline of the textile industry and the diminishing strength of Indian National Congress.

Contrary to the existing scholarship underlining the 'benevolence' of middlemen, or ability to act as a lubricant in Indian democracy, I find that their current practices do not bring the state closer to the people. Rather, middlemen corner state resources and even private investments and become a barrier between people and the state. This is because their own survival is reliant on maintaining this distance.[130] The chapter shows 'how' this distance is sustained through the practices of certain actors with associations to an exclusivist cultural and religious ideology (i.e. Hindutva), and their role in taking forward the

[130] Oldenburg (1987) pointed towards this.

neoliberal project in rural areas. Since 1991, state cutback and privatisation have created newer spaces for these middlemen as they coordinate 'activities between state, market and civil society', in the process shaping these relationships (Simon, 2009: 198). The middlemen I come across in Dholera deal especially with land, their role in land administration and transactions being of greater relevance to this dissertation.[131] Overall, middlemen are part of the post-liberalisation Indian state.

While I reflect on this throughout the chapter, one pertinent question is whether middlemens' furthering of neoliberalism conscious or coincidental. In the stories of the subjects I study, it is important to point out that many of them may never have heard the term neoliberalism. In that case, should they be called as an important part of Dholera's neoliberal phenomenon? I argue that while many of the middlemen may not be actively aware of their role in the process, the realisation of phenomenon such as real estate transactions, privatisation of commons, financialisation of hitherto farmlands, or building of the real estate township projects in Dholera would have never been possible in their absence. I illustrate and discuss this throughout the chapter.

6.4 How patronage changed in Dholera: Congress to RSS

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the 22 villages located within the Dholera SIR have a population of around 60-70% Koli caste members and 10-20% Darbars. Electorally, the legislative assembly constituency called Dhandhuka (under which the villages come) remained largely with the Congress or its offshoots until 1990, when BJP first won the constituency. Since then, in the seven elections until 2017, BJP lost just once to an independent candidate. How did the BJP enable such a successful social and electoral

[131] Sud (2014a), Levien (2011), Baka (2013) or Searle (2010) have discussed middlemen involved in land deals.

transformation? I argue that Hindutva organisations have successfully replaced the Congress patronage system and simultaneously Hindutva-ised it (Tambs-Lyche and Sud, 2016). Although I agree that concurrent national changes are crucial and interconnected, here I focus more on local and provincial changes.

The growth of the RSS and other Hindutva organisations amongst 'lower' castes has attracted the attention of many scholars working on Gujarat. In particular, their successful assimilation of the 'lower' castes since the 1990s has received scholarly interest. Shah (1996), Shani (2007) as well as Yagnik and Sheth (2005) have related this important shift to a 'politics of recognition'. While the Hindutva organisations presented a unity platform of all Hindus and shifted their opposition towards reservation policies in the 1980s, they argue that 'lower' castes 'turned to the BJP out of a desire for social recognition, since they hoped to gain respectability and social mobility' by involving themseleves in the Hindutva movement (Berenschot, 2011b: 385). The class-based argument proposed that with deindustrialisation and subsequent informalisation of labour in the 1980s, the subsequent struggle for jobs and resources helped Hindutva groups to use the increased communal tensions (Berenschot, 2011b; Breman, 2004). With this background in general and the incessant religious riots, the BJP also took on the role of service providers, helping them make inroads into the 'lower' castes who were hitherto not aligned with the Hindutva project.

I find two key shortcomings with these explanations. Firstly, these studies were carried out in cities and usually in the context of communal violence between Hindus and Muslims. Dholera or nearby villages barely have a noticeable Muslim population, and hence there is no history of riots. Secondly, the argument of job crisis and informalisation of employment seems far-fetched when applied to farming communities in the villages of

Dholera.[132] What deserves a detailed analysis is the continuing increase in the underlying, and relatively unwavering, support that the Hindutva groups has managed to gather in villages and smaller towns.

I have discussed in Chapter 4 that since independence, the Congress 'system' had a stronghold in Dholera, as with other parts of Gujarat (Kothari, 1964).[133] In the 1970s and 80s, following a number of events at the national level[134] along with its own set of developments in Gujarat politics, the Congress party lost its traditional support base. To counter this loss, Madhavsinh Solanki of Congress successfully mobilised the constituency of KHAM that ensured Congress won in the 1980 and 1985 elections. However, national events such as Mandal Commission or the Ram Janmabhoomi agitation provided a platform for young local residents and RSS members like Bhupendrasinh Chudasama[135] to groom an anti-Congress constituency. After the 1985 elections, across the province, Hindutva organisations changed its tactics and started recruiting more members from 'lower' castes to widen its electoral base. This was a pan-India strategy.[136] In Dholera, RSS successfully empowered leaders amongst the Kolis whose advice would be easily

[132] Ramakumar (2017) gives a very good analysis of how farmers movements were historically infiltrated by the RSS and how in the current decade, due to the agrarian crisis in the countryside, youth are being attracted to RSS.

[133] This narrative is from a series of interviews with the locals (also mentioned in fn 56): in Dholera: Vijayrajsinh, Kunwarsinh, Bhaubhai, Naranbhai (pseudonym), Pradeepsinh; in Dhandhuka: Yuvrajsinh (pseudonym), Rafiq and Member of Legislative Assembly – Rajeshbhai.

[134] These events include the national Emergency by Indira Gandhi, the Mandal Commission and the Ram Janmabhoomi agitation, which have been widely covered in various scholarship (Jaffrelot, 2000, 2003; Hansen 1999). The Mandal Commission recommended that OBCs be granted reservations to 27% of jobs. Its proposed implementation in 1990 led to widespread protests by upper castes. Ram Janmabhoomi agitation refers to the movement by the RSS organisations that demanded the building of a new Ram (a Hindu god) temple in Ayodhya, in the province of Uttar Pradesh, thought to be the birthplace of Ram, at the site of an existing mosque.

[135] Bhupendrasinh Chudasama is the powerful BJP provincial minister holding a host of portfolios who is a Dholera native. A contemporary and friend of Narendra Modi, they spent a long time together with the RSS in their initial years.

[136] See Berenschot (2011) and Shani (2007) for Gujarat; Zerinini-Brotel (1998:80) for Uttar Pradesh; and Hansen (1998) for Maharashtra.

followed by the community compared to the Darbars' orders. In return, they ensured votes from Koli communities for the BJP.

6.5 Naranbhai and RSS in the frequent skirmishes of Kolis and Darbars

Naranbhai (pseudonym) in Manor's (2000: 817) classification would be called a political fixer, described as 'political intermediaries between the localities and powerful figures (bureaucrats, politicians) at high levels' (also cited in Simon, 2009: 198). Naranbhai is a local BJP leader from a village near Dholera and started life as a worker in a diamond-polishing factory in nearby Bhavnagar. Returning a few years later, he opened a small workshop to polish diamonds and looked after the family farm. He was a classmate of Pradeepsinh (pseudonym), a local Darbar strongman and important BJP functionary. Of late, collaborating with Pradeepsinh and others, Naranbhai has made a huge fortune in land deals and invested the surplus to diversify his businesses. He accepted that he had brokered more than 1,800 acres of land over the last 10 years. I asked him about his networks in BJP and RSS and if those are useful for his land business. He began by claiming that RSS was more like a development organisation that never prescribes violence:

> *I cannot compare but I think BJP party meetings are more useful businesswise. Sangh meetings mostly target at development work. Still, I have received some business through Sangh members. The interactions after the (BJP) party meetings are very different. Here, we speak about each other's wealth, profession that is very useful… So many 'Sahebs' have gotten in touch with me after the meetings and I have sold them land.*[137]

The acknowledgement that he benefitted from the meetings of both RSS and BJP is important. Brokers such as Naranbhai use their networks in these organisations to take their private businesses forward. For example, a typical deal that Naranbhai undertook had this route: he would get a referral from a friend in RSS or BJP about a prospective client

[137] Interview with Naranbhai, October 2017.

keen on buying land in Dholera. To identify a potential seller; he would use his network within his village or approach a RSS/BJP worker from another village. Then, his connections at the revenue department who in all likelihood have some association with RSS or BJP would come in handy to complete the transaction. Simpson (2006: 339) similarly noted that the membership and networks of many of Hindutva organisations coincide, so that 'a merchant may be a member of his caste association, professional guild and the Rotary Club, and enjoy the influence of his comrades in each'. These networks also overlap with local governments, party politics, commerce and religious committees and constitutions (ibid).

Once, while we were chatting at a roadside stall, Naranbhai received a call on his mobile. After 10-15 minutes of persuading the caller, he picked up his motorcycle and I perched on the pillion precariously. On our way to the village that was a ten minutes' drive, Naranbhai told me:

> *Someone has excavated two bighas[138] of his (the caller's) land and supplied the soil to L&T (Larsen & Toubro) [139] in the Activation Zone.[140] Everyone knows the contractors who are supplying soil (he mentioned a few names who were regulars at the BJP office).[141]*

Such incidents, usually small fights, within the village or involving different castes were commonly mediated by the likes of Naranbhai. Negotiations by middlemen fill a crucial gap and may be a source of rent-seeking for them. Their involvement can solve such issues quickly without the involvement of the police or court (Berenschot, 2011a). However, this

[138] Refer to fn 46 for 'bigha'.

[139] L&T or Larsen & Toubro Limited, is an Indian conglomerate, with business interests in engineering, construction, real-estate manufacturing of capital goods as well as information technology, and financial services (Forbes, 2019).

[140] In Chapter 1 I have described the 21 square kilometres within the Dholera SIR that is being developed as the Activation Area to be sold as land parcels to corporations.

[141] Interview with Naranbhai, October 2017.

incident was different as the villagers wanted to approach the police station, a move that Naranbhai would oppose. As we arrived, 12-15 people gathered and were quite agitated as this was the third case in a month's time. The region of Dholera is low-lying and close to the sea. Most constructions require enormous earth filling. Since the start of construction at the Activation Area, there has been a scarcity of soil in Dholera. Naranbhai tried his best to convince the crowd:

> *I will ensure that you get your compensation. I will speak to Pradeepsinh or Bhupendrasinh's men. However, do not pursue a police case. We all know that the Darbars are in control of the entire police and court. Havildar (police officer corresponding to a sergeant), Thanedar (Station House Officer), DSP (Deputy Superintendent of Police), SP (Superintendent of Police), everyone is a Darbar… You have lost the land and you will end up in jail… I am assuring you that you will get back whatever you have lost…*

Sensing that the matter was getting out of control as the crowd was still restless, he offered to call Pradeepsinh (the local BJP head and cousin of Cabinet Minister Bhupendrasinh Chudasama) and resolve the matter. After the call, Naranbhai explained that Pradeepsinh has assured that the farmers would be compensated and going to the police would not help. The crowd now seemed convinced. With the impending Gujarat assembly elections of December 2017, Naranbhai saw an opportunity to remind them that he is their leader:

> *I am your* sevak *(servant)… I will not let injustice happen to you. If you do not get anything, I will buy those few bighas of lands. Is that okay?*

Although Naranbhai was not fighting the election, his nephew Rambhai lobbied hard for the BJP party candidature. Moreover, Naranbhai was a dedicated 'foot soldier' of the RSS and needed to garner votes for the BJP. I became curious, as I was aware that Pradeepsinh was suffering from a brain tumour and was avoiding phone calls. A 10-15 minute long conversation with him was doubtful. On our return, I asked Naranbhai if he actually spoke to Pradeepsinh. He smiled without answering.

From the vignette, two important issues emerged which are connected to the two relationships mentioned in Section 6.2: between middlemen and the state, and middlemen and Hindutva. Firstly, middlemen are not always the benevolent agents who bring the state and its resources to villagers, instead they may block citizens' attempts to approach the state. In his traditional avatar as the political fixer, Naranbhai helped these people in accessing the state including approaching the police. However, despite the crowd's insistence, Naranbhai stopped them from filing a case with the police. He instilled in them fear of the police, thus presenting the state and its institutions as anti-Koli and hence anti-people. The state was made to appear too distant, too hostile while he, the RSS/BJP functionary, was by their side or at their home to resolve their issues.



Figure 6.1: Middlemen with provincial and federal level politicians.
Left: Pradeepsinh giving a replica of an airplane to Modi when he visited the region during the 2017 election campaign. The airplane is symbolic of the Airbus factory that was the focus of the SIR around this time.
Right: A picture of Naranbhai with Bhupendrasinh in his drawing room.
(Source: The photos were sourced from Pradeepsinh and Naranbhai respectively with the consent to publish.)

After all, Naranbhai was not any middleman, but one embedded in the BJP or RSS (a point which Figure 6.1, Right, clearly demonstrates). He stopped them from accessing the state not because this would be a difficult process for the Kolis but because this may affect his hold on the village or complicate his relationships with other Darbars. In this way, middlemen such as Naranbhai block people's access to the state, something that erstwhile

established them as leaders while ensuring continuity of the patron-client relationship. In this process, do the subjects perceive Naranbhai as the one who guarantees them justice more than the state? Yes, is the more likely answer. Naranbhai assured the villagers that they would be compensated. Although the authenticity of the call is in doubt, he managed to convince them that a BJP or RSS worker could be trusted more than state institutions.

However, the main reason for the actions of middlemen is financial as well as political which is my second takeaway from the vignette. This validates my argument that middlemen's businesses have a strong connection with networks in Hindutva organisations. Harriss-White's (2003) shadow state also has similar traits with the market; society and the state are not separate but flow seamlessly into one other. In this case, Naranbhai has business partnerships with many Darbar contractors who dug soil from the farmlands. These contractors are BJP members and Naranbhai cannot afford a scenario in which BJP leaders are openly perceived to be aggressors against the Kolis. Hence, to maintain his political, social and economic capital, he promised the Kolis that he would buy their land if he cannot ensure compensation. Now, this was a smart deal. It would ensure his patronage without any financial loss. Starting as a modest middleman, Naranbhai has bought swathes of land in these villages. He has built his own land bank buying from fellow villagers who sell at the time of distress, as he was sure that prices would increase. Therefore, buying 4-5 bighas of lands and then selling them later is part of his business. A buyer from another city would not be concerned about the land digging.

6.6 Village officials' use of the state and Hindutva networks

Scholars have discussed the possibility of studying the state through everyday bureaucratic practices (Gupta, 1995; Gupta and Sharma, 2006; Mitchell, 1999). Ethnographies of the Indian state have focused on the bureaucracy and the everyday performances of these

institutions (Gupta, 1995; 2012; Mathur, 2015; Qureshi, 2015). Gupta and Sharma (2006: 27) have argued that to understand how states are constituted or are substantiated in people's lives, one must move beyond the macro-level institutional analyses of the state and undertake ethnography of local bureaucratic practices and their encounters with citizen subjects (also cited in Bouchard, 2011). This may include a range of possibilities such as following government officials in their role as a state official or as a private citizen when s/he interacts with citizen-subjects or with an international agency, as the state in its everyday form cannot be disconnected from macro-processes and structures (Joseph and Nugent, 1994). The first part of this, a bureaucrat's interaction with citizens, is clearly visible in this chapter whereas in the next chapter, I describe an ethnography of the bureaucrat's interaction with international agencies. At the same time, even if lower level officials in this chapter do not meet personnel from international agencies, their role in smoothening the functions of such agencies cannot be ignored. Through their practices, these officials create the preconditions in which the flow of international capital or knowledge take place.

The next two vignettes are about two village officials, who are part of the formal state but also switch into shadow roles using the networks of Hindutva organisations, delineating how the AES functions. Government officials in their state roles undertake a host of bureaucratic exercises that create a 'state effect' (Mitchell, 1991) that I discussed in Section 2.3.1 of Chapter 2. However, through practices that are beyond their official roles, they continue to create the state effect whether intended or otherwise. For example, an official, moonlighting as a real-estate broker for a private buyer, continues to create the state effect as he draws power from his state role. He is hired because he is associated with the formal state in some capacity. This deconstructing of the state or the AES through informal practices contribute significantly to an understanding of the coming together of

the agents of liberalisation and the actors of Hindutva in the villages of Dholera. This widens the rich scholarship on state-society relations and helps us understand the phenomenon better.

6.6.1 The Darbar Talati

The Talati in Gujarat works under the local government. The person keeps village records and implements a development plan. More importantly, as he works with the revenue office, a Talati has access to the land records of his village. At the same time, he is also aware of the socio-economic demographics of each household in detail. Each of them is powered with documents knowing the bureaucratic nitty-gritties, which often baffle individual buyers or even a less powerful broker. As I mentioned at the start of the chapter, most of the Talatis in Dholera villages accepted they had moonlighted as land brokers. The number of deals that they have been involved in until now ranged from 10 to 'countless'.[142] When I asked them where they meet their prospective clients or discuss land deals, they were upfront in their acceptance that they had private offices. None of them lived in the villages of Dholera, preferring instead the town of Dhandhuka due to 'lack of basic infrastructures such as good school, hospitals', as one Talati described, in these 22 villages.[143] However, I noticed that such distances often gave them enough ambiguity to carry out these extra jobs. Depending on the quantity and quality of business each Talati used to get, the sizes of the offices varied.

[142] Interviews with Sailesh and Rajveersinh (pseudonym), Dholera, November 2017. Both mentioned 'countless'. Other Talatis also acknowledged various numbers of deals.

[143] Interview with Ajit, Dhandhuka, November 2017.

I met Ajit (pseudonym), at the office of one of the village Sarpanch's[144] husband whose family headed the Congress party in the area. Ajit was the Talati of this important village (I do not disclose the name of the village to conceal identity) along with a few more villages and belonged to the powerful Darbar community. The villages under his supervision are centrally located and command high land price vis-à-vis political strength. Ajit's presence at the Sarpanch's office was not very surprising because the Talati's role required a lot of coordination with the Sarpanch. However, on the day of our next meeting, he asked me to come to the BJP party office adjoining a local highway restaurant owned by the BJP strongman Pradeepsinh. I frequented the office during my fieldwork to interview some middlemen who were associated with the BJP. I was surprised to find Ajit there, as I did not expect a government official to be sitting in a political party office. For our next meeting, he invited me to his home. I was taken to his small office adjoining the drawing room but with separate access. As I followed him, Ajit removed his sandals and looked at me implying I should follow suit. The otherwise modern office had a small statue of a female deity raised on a laminated wooden platform hinged in one corner of the room. He slightly bowed to the statue before lighting an incense stick. I asked him why he built the office. He answered:

> *Earlier, I used to meet them (clients) outside my office in Dholera. However, I felt that people started snooping… Then, I started meeting them in the village market. Here, I had all the resources: land records, maps, photocopy, printers. Moreover, I could see that the clients trusted me easily because of my office or due to the fact that I was known in the market as the local Talati… Even, someone coming from Mumbai would be comfortable if he is dealing with a government employee than a 'dalal' (broker). One Baroda party just said to me: 'I have faith in you'…*[145]

[144] Sarpanch is the head of the village-level local self-government in India. See fn 43 for details.

[145] Interview with Ajit, Dhandhuka, November 2017.

I asked him how and why he navigated both Congress and BJP. According to him, the Congress leader was a Darbar and they are on good terms, more because of their Darbar lineage than any association with the political party. Being a Darbar, he was always preferred by other Darbars for any official work and went on to argue that even the Congress leaders have RSS connections. Narrating that his father was an RSS *pracharak*[146], he mentioned how he worked with RSS in the tribal districts of Gujarat and travelled to other provinces to undertake 'development' work before he got the job of Talati. He acknowledged that those networks still help him as he gets businesses from them.

Ajit's siting of offices and use of networks in the RSS/BJP is illustrative of my argument that state officials mimic the formal state where they undertake their non-state practices while using networks of Hindutva. Two aspects are important here. Firstly, the importance of a state position is discernible. The client above asserting, 'I have faith in you' is a reflection of where Ajit's power comes from. Other Talatis similarly acknowledge the importance of their state roles in getting these deals in the overcrowded market of brokers in Dholera. What works to their advantage is the fact that their official position with the state ensures extra trust, as they are vulnerable to complaints. The Talati cannot run away. At the same time, he has an intricate knowledge of the bureaucracy.

Second, Ajit spoke about how he lost some business after he moved his office to his residence, 30 kilometers from his workplace. Compared to the days when he was moonlighting seated in his state office or the marketplace, he claimed to have lost momentum. In the market or at his state office, he was known as the government employee and clients trusted him more due to this proximity. At home, physically far from the office,

[146] Pracharaks are full time workers or volunteers for RSS.

he lacked social capital, which automatically was there at the marketplace or the government office.

Lastly, the role of the RSS as the lubricant in the success of mimicking the state is noticeable. Ajit has a long association with the RSS. Calling the RSS a development organisation, he argued during the interview that his state role is very similar to what his role in RSS stood for. He also admitted that these networks still fetch him business. In that case, if Dholera SIR is a project of neoliberal essence, then the likes of Ajit are conduits in the circulation of finance and knowledge in the speculative real estate market through the networks of Hindutva.

6.6.2 The outsider and 'lower' caste Talati using Hindutva

I followed another Talati closely, Sailesh (pseudonym) who was in his early 40s. Hailing from a nearby district, he belonged to a 'lower' caste. A week after our first brief meeting in the village under his supervision, I was at the Hotel Vision Modi (HVM) (Figure 6.2), looking for a broker when I saw Sailesh sitting in another office. After my request for a detailed meeting, I was invited to the same office at HVM.

HVM was a recently built five-storey structure at the entrance of Dholera. Standing near the Ahmedabad-Bhavnagar highway, HVM was strange if one considers its usage. The ground floor had a teashop that was the most active place, an ATM that was permanently shut, a printing and photocopy shop, and a couple of similar shops. The Dholera SIR Development Authority (DSIRDA) local office where the Town Planner sits once or twice a week occupied two big halls in the first and second floor. These two floors also have a number of offices providing real estate related services. Both Naranbhai and his nephew Rambhai, who too was a BJP leader, were amongst those with offices here although Naranbhai mostly operated remotely or from the BJP local office. A few rooms on the

third and fourth floor of the building also provided overnight accommodation. Therefore, various spaces accessible to the public from a tea stall to a government office sit alongside private real estate offices involved in speculation. Most locals refer to the HVM (Hotel Vision Modi) as the Riddhi Siddhi Complex but the owner, Pradeepsinh, renamed it after Modi as he said he felt an 'obligation to dedicate something to Narendra Modi who has done so much for them by announcing the SIR project.'[147] When I asked Pradeepsinh why he built this building when it was still half occupied, he argued that he wanted to show the world that Dholera has more to offer than mud and thatched roof houses.



Figure 6.2: A front view of the HVM. Source: Author

On the day of our meeting, Sailesh invited me to a shiny air-conditioned office in HVM with sleek furniture with a small female deity placed on a corner platform, very similar to Ajit's office. After I assured him that I would not mention his name, Sailesh acknowledged that he owned the office. He started narrating his personal story: how he moved from a

[147] Interview with Pradeepsinh, Ahmedabad, November 2017.

nearby district, how tough it was to gain contact here as an outsider from a 'lower' caste and how his connections in RSS helped him. To set up this office, he borrowed money from Pradeepsinh, the BJP leader. On why he chose this location, he replied that the building was at the centre of everything. It was next door to the SIR office, close to the Sub Registrar or the Mamlatdar and close to Rambhai or Naranbhai from the BJP who have helped him immensely by forwarding business. I asked him why RSS was so important when I could not even see an office of the organisation. Sailesh smiled:

> *'RSS does not need an office. Every temple is its office. Every Gram Panchayat can be their office. Every highway hotel is their office. They just need their men to be leading these (places). If I tell you the truth, most of the people here in Gujarat have some association with Sangh. See, even leaders in Congress have people with Sangh origins… So, if I have RSS connections, even if it is Congress or BJP, I will be getting my business done…*[148]

This partly explained how the Talati above, Ajit, was working smoothly with the Congress Sarpanch while frequenting the BJP office, spending long hours carrying out transactions or strengthening his networks. As we were chatting, the office attendant informed us that a client from Mumbai would arrive in a few minutes. Two men arrived less than fifteen minutes later. One of them, Doshi (pseudonym), mentioned how a certain *panditji* (priest) from Mumbai suggested the name of the local head of some '*sanstha*' (organisation) in Ahmedabad who knew a bureaucrat in the revenue department who gave him Sailesh's number. According to Doshi, he spoke with Sailesh only because he was a government official and hence is more responsible. Later, I asked Sailesh what was this '*sanstha*' and he confirmed that this was a local branch of the RSS.

The conversation moved swiftly to finalise a deal and visit the Sub-registrar's office that was a few hundred meters from the HVM to 'inform' and 'request' the officials to hasten

[148] Interview with Sailesh, Dholera, November 2017.

the process. Finalising the price, Doshi asked Sailesh about the survey number of the land he had just bought, claiming that he knew someone in Gandhinagar who would tell him the location of his final plot.[149] Sailesh smiled broadly and said:

> *Should I take you to the government office in two minutes which will tell you best where your final plot will be? It is just opposite my office. The Dholera SIR office is around the corridor…*

Both the visitors appeared puzzled. Sailesh then explained that his office was located at the centre of everything: Sub-registrar office, DSIRDA local office and the Mamlatdar office.

The two vignettes of the Talatis illustrate the practice of mimicking the formal state using Hindutva as the lubricant. The state is mimicked by both the categories of middlemen, the brokers as well as the moonlighting officials. To mimic the formal state successfully, Sailesh sited his private office in the HVM and hence, physically closer to other state institutions such as the SIR, Mamlatdar and Sub-registrar offices. All these offices deal with land related matters. The attempt here is to appear like the state and hence mimic the state. This was clear as Sailesh boasted in front of his clients regarding how they are at the best property office.

The practices of the Talatis above help me explain the two key relationships of significance to this chapter: (a) middlemen and the state; and (b) middlemen and Hindutva organisations. Both Ajit and Sailesh used the state in more than just these ways. Due to

[149] In Section 8.5.2 of Chapter 8, I explain the process of Town Planning Schemes in Gujarat. In brief, the authorities acquire plots of land (called Original Plot or OP) in a certain area after notifying it, usually on the outskirts of an urban region. After putting infrastructure like roads, electricity in these plots, the original owner is returned a new plot of land, called the Final Plot (FP), which is 40-60% of the OP. Although a reduced size, the price of the new plot or FP, is significantly higher due to the new infrastructure as well as due to the fact that it now falls within the municipal boundary. The balanced land is used by the authorities for the infrastructure with rest sold to generate revenue. See Ballaney and Patel (2009) and Jain (2019) for details.

their position as the village Talatis, they are presumed to be more responsible than a private broker, as Doshi, the land buyer, clearly mentioned, something we also saw in Ajit's case. This official role of the Talati ensures an embedded life in the villages, which plays a key role in making these deals easier. Other than swift access to land related records of these villages due to their state positions, the Talatis are well versed with the vicissitudes of every family. Spending a day or two every week in these villages, they know the socio-economic conditions of each village households: which man is looking actively to sell land to marry his daughter off, who is drowning under debts, or who lost a lot of money in the gambling dens along the sea. Such knowledge is important in finding land that is prone to sale.



Figure 6.3. Middlemen's activities in Dholera.
Left: A conversation between one of the middlemen whom I interviewed (in orange shirt), the Ahmedabad based client in grey polo shirt and the farmers. This took place just outside the sub-registrar office while I was in the middle of the discussions when the final clauses of the deal were being brokered. (Source: Author).
Right: An office of one of the land brokers cum real estate dealer along the Ahmedabad-Bhavnagar highway. Notice Narendra Modi's picture on the office front signage. Modi's pictures are ubiquitous in such office or shop front signages in the region. (Source: Author).

The other relationship is between the middlemen and the Hindutva organisations. The formation and use of their networks, and the material implications on the idea of the state is noteworthy. There is a symbiotic relationship between the Talatis and the BJP/RSS members where both gain from each other's presence. Sailesh rented the office space in HVM to use not just the proximity to the state but also the RSS. He borrowed money from

the owner of HVM who is a BJP leader. At the same time, he is next door to Rambhai or Naranbhai's offices who are BJP/RSS office-bearers. It allows an individual such as Naranbhai to maintain and exhibit his proximity to the formal machinery of the state. The likes of Sailesh, the Talati, help Naranbhai, the middleman and BJP/RSS member, by fast tracking his official work. Sailesh, the lower caste Talati, coming from a different place, uses the networks of Hindutva to cope with, deal and penetrate existing social relations. Both the Talatis, Sailesh and Ajit, clearly drew power from their previous or current associations with RSS. As acknowledged by both, a great deal of their business references come from people active in Hindutva organisations. Thus, the middlemens' mimicking of the state and their embeddedness in BJP/RSS are inextricable from each other in the AES. These practices of both state officials and brokers create what Mitchell (1991) argued as being the state effect which I explained in Section 2.3.1 of Chapter 2.

What then is the outcome of these newer formations of the state? Do this web of Talatis and other middlemen block the state from citizens? Jayesh (pseudonym), a farmer from Naranbhai's village, which is also under the purview of Sailesh, tried his best to take their help. He spent a year running around revenue offices and middlemen to convert his agricultural land along the highway into non-agricultural land.[150] This is despite the fact that he was ready to pay a small amount as bribe at the revenue office. During this period, he requested help from Sailesh, the Talati, who according to Jayesh wanted more money. I asked Naranbhai, the middleman and BJP/RSS member, why has his fellow-villager and a Koli, been facing so many issues? Categorically denying that he failed to help him, Naranbhai argued that Jayesh never approached him because he has been a Congress supporter and went with the anti-SIR protests. That was the reason why this routine work

[150] Interview with Jayesh, Dholera, August 2017.

was stalled.[151] Thus, in the state, which has come into effect through the practices of these actors and the bureaucrats with a strong Hindutva connection, services are exclusionary. Whereas the reasons for the delay were not entirely clear, Jayesh's active participation in the anti-SIR protests or non-association with Hindutva organisations made matters worse. As Das and Poole (2004: 245) argues, 'it is this illegibility of the state, the unreadability of its rules and regulations…' that allows the oscillation 'between the rational and the magical to become the defining feature of the state' in such spaces. Does this mean that the newer forms of the state are exclusionary? Perhaps yes as the state becomes captured and cornered by agents of an exclusivist philosophy—Hindutva.

The majoritarian ideology of Hindutva helps to explain some of the dynamics played out in villages between middlemen and the state. Hindutva in Dholera is noticeably present or absent through its mundaneness, what scholars have termed as 'neo-Hindutva' (Reddy, 2011), 'banalisation of Hindu nationalism' (Jaffrelot 2015b) or 'banal Hindutva' (Jeffrey et al., 2017) that makes Hindutva practices seem ordinary. As I have outlined in Chapter 2, in these forms, Hindutva has a clear disjuncture between its ideologies and practices. What was more important to Savarkar, the founding father of the ideology may not reflect in the practices in Dholera. However, what is most important is to entrench the state and society in the particular place. In Dholera, there has not necessarily been an increase in Hindu religiosity, compared to the 'state-temple-corporate complex' that Nanda (2009) talks about due to the coming together of globalisation and Hindutva. However, in the everyday state and society of Dholera, there is a discernible political and economic angle of Hindutva that does not bare (maybe does not need to bare) its exclusivist religious or

[151] Interview with Naranbhai, Dholera, October 2017.

cultural ideology. The political angle delivers votes whereas the economic angle delivers material benefits to its followers.

In Section 7.6 of Chapter 7, I will discuss how caste, kinship or religion has continued to remain central in the neoliberal era, pointed by a number of scholars including Harriss-White (2003: 176-200) and Heyer (2010: 236). Importantly, the banal Hindutva in practice in Dholera takes on-board existing kinship or caste configurations. Hence, Ajit, the upper-caste Talati combined his Darbar caste networks with his past associations with Hindutva to make a smooth movement between opposing political parties or between the state and society. Sailesh, on the other hand, was an outsider from a nearby district belonging to a 'lower' caste and did not have the social capital like Ajit. For him, Hindutva provided a perfect network to make some inroads. Thus, the two Talatis, with contrasting backgrounds, use Hindutva to further their material gains. The practices of Hindutva or its banal forms in Dholera is illustrated when Talatis, the government officials drink cups of tea, play cards or spend hours chatting at the local BJP office. In the process, the state official straddles multiple roles: a Talati, a broker and an RSS member (officially or otherwise).

Such banal forms of Hindutva are an outcome of deeper roots spread by the RSS over time. Hence, many of these middlemen in their youth have attended the weekly RSS exercise camps in Dholera or Dhandhuka without necessarily knowing what RSS stands for. For many of them, taking part in such sessions was more about keeping yourself fit and less about fighting the 'anti-Hindu' forces. Taking this onward and linking it back to the key themes of the dissertation, the mimicking of the state coupled with banal Hindutva takes the project of neoliberalism forward. Hindutva has provided a political, cultural or social platform for neoliberalism to penetrate these villages. At the same time, the Dholera SIR,

the neoliberal project provides a route to material gains to lubricate the wheels of the Hindutva chariot. Hence Hindutva has been further entrenched into the state and society due to the chances of material gains that the SIR project has brought with it. This has resulted in the penetration of the state not just by the transnational actors of neoliberalism in Gandhinagar but also by the small-time middlemen in Dholera. Thus, going back to Abrams (1988), the image of the state that the practices of these men create signifies the Actually Existing State (AES) I have proposed.

6.7 The construction of Vibrant Dholera Summits

Another case of mimicking formal institutions of the state in Dholera resulted in the Vibrant Dholera summit held annually. Named the Dholera Developers and Investors' Summit (DDIS) and instituted by the local property developers' association, the aim was to mimic the Gujarat government's Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit (VGGS). In the process, DDIS also became a platform through which many of the actors of AES appropriate state and non-state spaces.

Dilipsinh (pseudonym) was the brother of Pradeepsinh, the local BJP leader and the owner of HVM. He was more famous as Bhupendrasinh's (the powerful Cabinet Minister's) right hand man. One afternoon, he accompanied the CEO of DSIRDA, Jai Prakash Shivahare who was inspecting the construction progress of the Activation Area. Shivahare was an officer from the Indian Administrative Services (IAS).[152] I have noticed that whenever Shivahare was on his official visit to Dholera, Dilipsinh accompanied him. Dilipsinh's proximity to Bhupendrasinh, BJP as well as to the IAS officer, Shivahare, channeled such authority in Dholera that anyone could be misled into taking him as a political office bearer or a senior government officer. As I too could not ignore the impression of someone from

[152] IAS is the premier civil service of India. Members serve the Government of India as well as the provinces.

the state, I asked him about the progress of the project or investors' interest in Dholera. He said:

> *We should be in a good position by the end of next year (2018) when the Activation Area will be ready… See, Shivahare frequents the place and we will hold L&T if they do not deliver on time…*
>
> *(On drop of interest amongst investors) We used to hold these investors' meet… We modelled it on the Vibrant Gujarat (Global Summit). We received amazing responses... All these Mamlatdars, Talatis, revenue officials and even few police officers are asked to attend so that any issue faced by the buyers could be resolved… The buyers used to bring their documents and get verified. There were transfers of land in few minutes... As they say 'single window'[153], we did something similar.*[154]

I became curious hearing about the investors' meet where real estate developers brought government officials to resolve issues faced by buyers. He told me that since many of the buyers faced issues due to bureaucratic delays or fake brokers, the real estate developers in Dholera instituted the DDIS. Attended by government officials, buyers could have their documents verified by government officials or could get land transferred.

The next investors' summit was organised in Ahmedabad soon after the December 2017 provincial elections.[155] It drew a wider audience and the cabinet minister and Dholera native, Bhupendrasinh attended as the chief guest. Dignitaries included officials of Gujarat Infrastructure Development Board (GIDB) and the country deputy head of AECOM[156] on the stage who delivered PowerPoint presentations on the benefits of investing in Dholera (Figure 6.4). Dilipsinh was also on the stage. The minister, during his lecture, mentioned Dilipsinh's name underlining how he was keeping track of progress. I noticed familiar

[153] Single Window refers to a facility that allows multiple parties involved in transactions to lodge standardised applications with a single entry point to fulfil all related regulatory requirements.

[154] Interview with Dilipsinh, Dholera, November 2017.

[155] The summit was held at Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Auditorium in Ahmedabad on 26 December 2017.

[156] AECOM is the American multinational engineering firm that is the Program Management Consultant for Dholera SIR tasked with looking after the entire program of the project.

faces from the villages: some middlemen including Naranbhai, real estate dealers and local government officials from Dholera. While lectures were being delivered, Naranbhai invited me for tea outside. Two officials joined us, and I asked what they were doing here. One of them, a revenue official, responded:

> *We cannot say no (to the officials or the politicians) … We have to work in these villages, with these leaders, with this party. In addition, we do get to know some new people and may get business… However, I do accept that as a department, it is our responsibility to make things easy for buyers. We should be always willing to help…*[157]

The Dholera investors' summit and the presence of government officials can be interpreted as an instance of the state walking extra miles to help business, a facet of the neoliberal state. However, is this the formal state or its shadow? At the same time, is this the state, which cuts short the usual bureaucratic procedures to woo prospective investors? People associated with the formal state participated to fulfil private tasks that involved their official position. The reasons behind the participation of the village officials could be many: the compulsion to follow the unofficial orders of a senior official, associations with BJP/RSS or to keep the likes of Pradeepsinh or Bhupendrasinh, the BJP leaders, happy to undertake their own set of shadow practices. Moonlighting officials need the patronage of local BJP leaders, illustrated in the case of the lower caste Talati, Sailesh in Section 6.6.2 who borrowed money from the BJP leader and rented an office at his building.

At the same time, while the village officials acknowledge that it is part of their duty to serve the land buyers or make the process smoother, the event cannot be defined as an exercise of the formal state or even a collaboration. It is worth noting that not all the practices in the shadow of the formal state are illegal. The DDIS event is not an illegal

[157] Interview with Deepak in Ahmedabad in December 2017.

event. It however works in the shadow of the state. I would rather call it an exception where the state actors joined non-state actors and came out to woo prospective investors. The AES actors above also include the staff of AECOM who are not part of the formal state. Thus, as expected, the network, which worked in the village to introduce and deliver a neoliberal project, goes higher up.



Figure 6.4: Photograph of Dholera Developers and Investors' Summit. GIDB officials, AECOM staff and Bhupendrasinh are seated on the stage during the event. Source: Author

Secondly, this is a platform where the non-state mimics the state in order to undertake shadow activities. The investors' summit is an imitation of the successful model of Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit (VGGS) where corporations from around the world gather in Gandhinagar every two years. In section 4.5.2, I have elaborated on how the biennale VGGS became a major institution in reviving the image of Narendra Modi as a market friendly leader. Hence, to appear like the state, the association of real-estate dealers from Dholera mimics a platform that has an acceptance at multiple levels of the state or amongst business fraternities. Further, with the use of their influence in BJP and the government

machinery, they could bring not just a tall cabinet minister but also a host of government officials who are expected to resolve the issues of buyers. Although the event does not have an official tag, officials from the revenue department were present and were ready to serve land buyers. They were there to provide the single window service to private land buyers.

These networks of state and non-state players in the AES are an outcome of the actually existing neoliberal project from which I borrowed the term AES. Neoliberalism is carried forward through disjuncture between ideologies and its everyday political operations and societal effects (Castree, 2006) and neoliberalism in practice takes myriad forms (Ong, 2006). For example, it may enable state expansion in certain spheres although the idea is against its very foundational ideologies (Wacquant, 2009). In Dholera's case, whereas the state policymakers[158] argue for the state to hollow-out, the practices of these officials show how the AES instead is drawn-out. Hence, when neoliberalism came to Dholera, it used the platform provided by middlemen who were also members of Hindutva organisations.

The ideological vagueness in practice is not just about neoliberalism. Hindutva based organisations (RSS, BJP) swung back and forth when it came to economic and social policies, made necessary by their desire to broaden their support base and capture state power. Thus, the idea of disjuncture in Hindutva is proposed. When in opposition, Hindutva based organisations (RSS, BJP) remained strong opponents of liberalisation and other measures arguing instead for a protection of domestic industries. However, while in power in New Delhi or in Gujarat, they have been the strong proponents of neoliberalism. Thus, the everyday practices of Hindutva or neoliberalism significantly differ from the

[158] In Section 7.4.1 of Chapter 7, I describe two of the high-ranking bureaucrats who advocate cutting down the red tape and minimising state bureaucratic staff by outsourcing state functions.

ideologies of these projects. I argue that the marriage of convenience between Hindutva and neoliberalism has been possible because of inconsistencies between their ideologies and practices, helping to explain the continued rise of Hindutva with the coming of a neoliberal project to the rural areas of Dholera. I will further discuss the disjuncture in neoliberalism and Hindutva in Chapters 7 and 8 through empirical data. This understanding of neoliberalism or Hindutva synchronises well with my proposition of the state (which I call the Actually Existing State) as each of them are signified by the everyday realities of how they function on the ground compared to theories and ideologies.[159]

6.8 Conclusion

The coming together of Hindutva and the economic liberalisation project has been explored by scholars at a macro level, arguing that since the mid-1990s, the state has tended to combine pro-Hindu and pro-liberalisation inclinations (Sud 2012). In my exploration of the everyday alignment of the two trends, I have analysed the case of Dholera through a number of middlemen whose practices form what I term as Actually Existing State. As mentioned earlier, the literature exploring these themes is scant. For example, middlemen and their active role in Hindutva organisations is explored only in the backdrop of communal violence. The other strand of scholarship inquiring how middlemen have taken forward neoliberalism[160] is also minimal and does not involve the project of Hindutva, a point which Sud (2020b) mentions. Through this chapter, I have explored the intrinsic link between all three themes and how they come into practice in

[159] Chapter 8 in this dissertation furthers this theme of disjuncture from neoliberalism.

[160] Exceptions would include Baka (2013), Levien (2011), Sud (2014a).

rural areas. As the role of middlemen is essential, I have looked at how the AES is being formed through their practices, actions, aspirations and subjectivity.

The SIR project comes at a time of shrinking government budgets in welfare and other provisions, when the previous windows of brokering and patronage have started to shrink. I have explained Gujarat's shrinking budgetary allocation for the social sectors in Section 4.5.2 of Chapter 4. It was clear that the province has witnessed significant withdrawal from many spheres where previously the state has been heavily involved. In that case, the sudden increase in middlemen and their shadow practices is clearly an outcome of the Dholera SIR project. Until the announcement of the neoliberal projects, there was barely any sale of land and thus, the brokering around land is strictly an outcome of the project. Similar to how these middlemen managed to access the state for citizen-subjects, they continue to do so while consolidating personal, familial and political gain. However, their mimicking of the state becomes a barrier between the state and its citizens. The middlemen's current practices and their outcomes are in stark contrast to what they earlier represented. While scholars previously called them benevolent agents or the lubricants of Indian democracy, due to their ability to bring the state closer to people, now they essentially do the opposite.

In this way, I have described what state retrenchment could mean for smaller towns and villages where a neoliberal state has decided to deliver development through an infrastructure project. I have illustrated how citizens and communities face privatisation and state withdrawal. The launch of an infrastructure project first led to a massive spike in land prices resulting in a diverse set of shadow state practices. In this shadowing, the men in the middle combine tasks usually linked with brokers or political fixers by working within and between the state, society and market. In the process, they transform how

neoliberalism functions at the ground level. New business transactions have taken place through new political alignments usually stitched through Hindutva forces without necessarily undermining existing caste, kin or religious dynamics (Berenschot, 2010).

The two aims and the two relationships, which I set out in Section 6.2, are important: firstly, the relationship between middlemen and the state. I have argued that to be successful in their practices, these middlemen are dependent on their ability to mimic the state. The hard work that is invested by these middlemen in presenting themselves as the state or at least state-like is underlined by their frequent assertion of their proximity to an institution of the state, a minister, a Mamlatdar or someone similar. This is combined with the power they draw from their current positions: public office for a bureaucrat, or societal influence and embeddedness for a private broker.

Second is the relationship between these middlemen and Hindutva. Why is this relationship so important? Through the empirical data, I have illustrated that the state's interaction with citizens, largely, have long been monopolised by these actors. The pervasiveness of these men is not a neoliberal phenomenon, as I showed how patronage worked in pre-liberalisation Dholera. I provided a brief account of patronage by the Congress and then the Hindutva organisations in Dholera, showing how the latter managed to create a new system of patronage in their attempt to broaden electoral and social support. This was important to understand the hegemony of the BJP or Hindutva forces in the electoral and social lives of Gujarat, creating banal Hindutva. I explained the spread of Hindutva not just amongst the trident wielding, dedicated, idealistic workers but also amongst those who are not necessarily strongly aligned with its ideologies. The middlemen in my stories are not always active RSS or BJP workers. However, they frequent the BJP

party offices, where they spend hours chatting, drinking tea or playing cards. Both these aims inform the central framework of the dissertation: the AES.

To sum up, I have illustrated that as liberalisation of the economy has resulted in a shrinking of services by the state, certain actors of the shadow state at various levels also corner private development. As the state in Gandhinagar or New Delhi is allying with private corporations, actors working in its shadows at the ground level too are appropriating the state. What binds together these myriad disparate actors—the politicians, the government officials, the middlemen with allegiance to the BJP or Congress party across various scales—are the Hindutva organisations. Thus, the shadow state overlaps with these organisations. While Modi earns political capital speaking at various forums about Dholera smart city from within the 'formal' state, the shadows continue their own practices—both with and without the blessings of the formal state. In this, I have illustrated how liberalisation and Hindutva go hand in hand on the ground and how the various layers of the state—formal and informal—feed off one other. The next chapter studies the Actually Existing State at higher echelons.

Chapter 7: The Actually Existing State at work in Gandhinagar

7.1 Introduction

Tripathi, the current Chief Town Planner (CTP) of Gujarat was scathing in his attacks on the Dholera Special Investment Region Development Authority (DSIRDA), admitting the errors in the SIR Act and its implementation in Dholera.[161] Coming from the CTP, this admission was significant, as he had chaired many meetings where crucial decisions concerning the planning and implementation of Dholera SIR were made. The post of the CTP is quite powerful as he heads the Town Planning and Valuation Department under the Urban Development Department of the provincial government. Knowing that I am studying in the UK, Tripathi proudly talked about his own son who was a graduate in Town Planning from a reputed UK university. He called his son, Rutul, who was seated in a room within his office. Tripathi's large office had adjoining cabins, which were spacious enough to act as regular offices. After a brief introduction, I followed Rutul to the cabin where he was seated as Tripathi had other tasks to complete. As we conversed about different things, life in Gujarat or in the UK, I realised that this cabin was effectively Rutul's de facto office for the planning and architecture consultancy services he offered. According to him, he often attended to his clients here. It was quite convenient as he was learning the trade from his experienced father.[162] In fact, when we entered his cabin, he had a client or two who had earlier discussed their projects with Rutul.

Even though Rutul had started his consultancy very recently, he had an envious portfolio of projects lined up in such a short time. In the half hour-long interaction, unsurprisingly,

[161] Interview with Tripathi in Gandhinagar, January, 2018.

[162] Interview with Rutul in Gandhinagar, January, 2018.

he did not acknowledge how the location of his own office inside the CTP's office fetches him business. In a society where patronage, favours and bribes are rampant, clients who visit or seek favour from Rutul's father, the CTP, have an obligation to hire Rutul if their application for a certain project is approved. As Harriss-White (2003: 89) notes in her study, 'the shadow state spills into the lanes surrounding state offices and … officials' residences.' These are the most vivid images of the formal and shadow elements of the state working in tandem with one another. The shadow elements physically spill into and are found inside the state offices undertaking private business. A private individual who did not have any association with the state was undertaking private business by using spaces belonging to the state.

Such practices raise questions around the actors of the state, or more appropriately for this dissertation, the actors of the Actually Existing State (AES). The practices of these actors are widespread and come in different shapes and forms, and given the seamless connection between the shadow and the formal elements, an inquiry into these practices is important to understand the functioning of the state. While Chapter 6 examined the practices of the actors of the AES in the villages where the SIR project was being implemented, this chapter looks at the level of the provincial capital where the policies of projects such as Dholera SIR are framed. As I begin to disentangle the various facets of the AES in practice, this chapter gives a picture of state policy-making and the institutional architecture that set the stage for implementation of the Dholera SIR.

The chapter studies the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) called the DSIRDA tasked with delivering the Dholera SIR project.[163] The main office of the DSIRDA is located in Udyog Bhawan (Industries' Building) in Gandhinagar, the provincial capital. Specifically

[163] I provide the details of the composition and organisational structure of DSIRDA in Appendix 1.

exploring its functioning, board members and its staff both in their roles inside and outside the state, the chapter brings attention to how the practices of the shadow state transform the newer institutions of the state. The office space also houses the staff of the American consulting firm AECOM that has been hired as a Programme Consultant for the Dholera SIR project. Their physical presence on the same floor of the government owned DSIRDA tells the story of how the neoliberal Indian state is porous at multiple scales.

At the level of the state where policies are framed, the state is presumably more formal with the least interference of, and overlap with, society. In fact, the location of institutions such as DSIRDA in Gandhinagar in itself is interesting. Far from the chaos of society, the planned city of Gandhinagar is an island largely bereft of everyday state-society interactions. For a villager from Dholera to come, find and interact with the state in Udyog Bhawan or Gandhinagar is at best a dreadful task,[164] so much so that farmer protests are not allowed to enter the precincts of Gandhinagar. Even MLAs find it tough to raise issues concerning farmers in the spaces of the provincial capital.[165] Thus, Gandhinagar as the seat of the state's legislature or executive sits like the proverbial state in theory, far removed from the chaos of the rest of Gujarat. However, this level of the state also exhibits similar shadow practices. Studying the AES here to see the impact of its practices on the idea of the state, the chapter is in conversation with what Gupta and Sivaramakrishnan (2011: 05) called the attempt to find 'new way(s) to conceptualise the Indian state after liberalisation'. This chapter does so by showing how Hindutva and liberalisation are entrenched at the higher echelons of the state.

[164] Interviews with many farmers and especially the ones from Bhal Bhachao Samiti from Dholera revealed their unsuccessful attempts to reach the DSIRDA authorities.

[165] Interview with current MLA Jignesh Mevani and farmer leader Sagar Rabari in September 2017.

It is debatable if one can draw a clean break from the past to show that the state I am studying here is entirely 'new'. As I have mentioned in Chapter 4, through various policies, strategies and actions, Modi has clearly shown his attempt to build the 'New Gujarat', reimagining the idea of the state that would show a clear departure from the previous Nehruvian or Congress led state and a break from the past under his leadership. Projects such as Dholera SIR and GIFT city are physical manifestations while pushing to build a more energetic and entrepreneurial set of state or semi-state organisations such as GIDB. While the current neoliberal state may have many links with the past, in the case of Gujarat, between 2001 and 2014 during Modi's tenure as Chief Minister and until now—active attempts have been made to forge a 'newness'. Narendra Modi took neoliberal competitive entrepreneurial expectations of the state and made them into a reality—starkly different from images of the state of the past. While these can still be termed as continuities in practice, he has tried to create the narrative of generating and emphasising 'newness'. This may have involved falsely claiming a certain project started or completed by a previous leader as being his own as done in the case of Narmada Dam's extensions (Shah, 2011).

Before I give an outline of the chapter, it is important to provide the process of gathering data in the upper echelons of the Actually Existing State. The DSIRDA office covers the entire sixth floor in one of the blocks of Udyog Bhawan in Sector 19 in Gandhinagar. Udyog Bhawan is a large office complex accommodating different wings of the Industries department of the provincial government. The interior of the office has been recently renovated making it plush and shiny, as they 'had to welcome corporate leaders and foreign delegates' (Figure 7.1 and 7.2).[166] What I found interesting and different from the usual bureaucratic offices was the presence of AECOM's dedicated 20-plus staff sitting in the

[166] Interview with Mehta in Gandhinagar in January 2018.

same hall. The UK-based firm Halcrow prepared the initial Master Plan[167] and the Development Plan[168] of Dholera SIR. Later, AECOM was awarded a 5-year long extendable contract worth $30 million in mid-2013 for Programme Management Services of Dholera SIR (AECOM Press Release, 2013). The impact of sharing the space physically is significant on how the state has come to be imagined.

I interviewed a number of DSIRDA and Gujarat Infrastructure Development Board (GIDB) staff involved in the planning and management of the SIR project including the CEO Jaiprakash Shivarahare[169] on more than one occasion. Simultaneously, I followed them in the office and also attempted the same when they visited the Dholera SIR site. I gathered information from both the villagers as well as the AECOM and DSIRDA staff regarding their earlier visits to the villages when mandatory public hearings were undertaken. Beyond qualitative interviews, the ethnography at DSIRDA involved non-participant observation at the office, spending long hours hanging out at the office-reception, arriving early for interviews or spending time after completing them to follow the everyday work taking place at the office. Other than the routine work involved in delivering the Dholera project, the office is also a place for many prospective investors to encounter the newly transformed 'state'.

[167] 'Master plan' is an all-encompassing term and usually refers to an overarching planning document in a certain project to guide future growth and development in a time based manner. It includes analysis, recommendations, and proposals for a site's population, economy, housing, transportation, community facilities, and land use as defined by the World Bank portal on urban regeneration (World Bank, 2019).

[168] A British planning legacy, 'Development Plan' (DP) sets out the policies and proposals for land use in a certain area by the city level or local authorities. It works on larger areas mapping the broad contours of a city such as zones and road networks. At a lower micro scale, it is taken forward by the 'Town Plans' or TPs in Gujarat, which flesh out the development plan in detail, and work on a specified timeframe. As there is no tradition of 'Master Plans' in Gujarat, often the 'Development Plan' takes its place setting out the broad proposals. Owing to the mechanism, TP-DP is a common terminology in the planning discourses of Gujarat.

[169] I do not anonymise Shivahare as his position was too prominent to be hidden. In addition, during interviews he did not seek any anonymity.

One of my key interviewee was Raj, who joined AECOM as an Urban and Regional Planner soon after the firm received the contract. I knew Raj through a friend and he eventually became a key interviewee. I also interviewed Jagdish Salgaonkar,[170] the Senior Vice President and Program Director for Dholera SIR; Vyas (real name), who worked in the project initially with Halcrow before moving to AECOM; Panchal (real name) who is the Director of Urban Planning of AECOM.[171] Panchal has previously been the Chief Town Planner with the Gujarat government. Two other important AECOM staff who were friends came in handy sharing particularly useful inside information and I anonymise their names here.

In Section 7.2, I outline the key arguments of the chapter. Based on an interview with a policymaker involved in the framing of the SIR Act, Section 7.3 shows the role of Hindutva and how this ideology is used to justify the involvement of the private sector in the Dholera project. In Section 7.4, I narrate the entrenchment of neoliberal ideas amongst bureaucrats and the outcome of the presence of non-state actors like consultants within state spaces. Based on interviews with two of the board members of DSIRDA, Section 7.5 then provides an insider's perspective on how there are constant pressures to help investors even if it means bypassing the state's own regulations. Section 7.6 narrates how a powerful bureaucrat associated with DSIRDA uses his caste and kin relations to carry out a couple of successful real estate projects in Dholera. Through these vignettes, this chapter explores the inner workings of the state. I further develop these arguments in Section 7.7 (Conclusion) where I also sum up the key takeaway points from the chapter.

[170] Real name; I do not anonymise for reasons similar to Shivahare above.

[171] Both Panchal and Vyas did not object to the use of their real names in my research. At the same time, they never shared any confidential or potentially controversial information with me.

7.2 Central arguments of the chapter

In the previous chapter, I focussed on understanding the Actually Existing State (AES) in practice by exploring the everyday workings of the bureaucracy and interactions with society, and how the people perceive the state in their day-to-day lives. At the same time, the state must be studied through its actors, institutions, and discourses from local to global level, as the state in its everyday form cannot be disconnected from macro-processes and structures (Joseph and Nugent, 1994; Gupta and Sharma, 2006). Taking forward the possibility of studying the state through everyday bureaucratic practices (Mitchel, 1999; Gupta and Sharma, 2006), this chapter looks at a higher level of the state. An ethnography where one follows the bureaucrat, when he interacts with citizen-subjects or international agencies, can illuminate our understanding of how the state functions at these multiple scales (Gupta and Sharma, 2006). I follow a few bureaucrats who interact with a host of international agencies (as well as domestic organisations and individuals) that are tasked with delivering development in Dholera. Along with the bureaucrats, I also study the staff of AECOM based inside the DSIRDA office. These personnel from a multi-national corporation (MNC) have no official state role but as I document, they straddle between state and non-state roles.

This chapter focuses on my third proposition of the AES. As the smart city project attracts both support and resistance, the formal and the shadow state work together to smoothen business deals or to diffuse anti-SIR protests. These interactions are present at multiple levels of the state. As services are outsourced, such blurred boundaries between formal and shadow elements help theorise how the state's relationship with society and market is being redefined. By studying the DSIRDA, the chapter looks at the impact of blurring boundaries on the state and its implications on the two economic and cultural-religious ideologies.

In drawing upon this evidence, I have two inferences to make which contribute to our understanding of the state. First, policies of liberalisation have affected how actors from shadow spaces appropriate the state and take up the role of the state, often becoming the face of the state. This may involve a non-state actor from amongst consultants acting as a state actor or a government employee starting private real estate projects. Second, the actors of the AES undertake a host of shadow practices to take forward the project of neoliberalism. Whether their practices escalate the speed with which projects are undertaken is one matter, but in the process, a number of usual bureaucratic procedures are skipped. I argue that these shadow practices of formal state actors take place due to the entrepreneurial zeal of the state, a key facet of neoliberalism. Within this, what is noticeable amongst the neoliberal actors is their departure from the core ideologies that I elaborate through the chapter.

7.3 Hindutva expressed through neoliberalism: Integral humanism

While the role of Hindutva was distinctly discernible in the villages, it appeared in a very disguised manner in Gandhinagar. For a start, the few officials whom I asked if they had ever been associated with Hindutva organisations were in outright denial other than a few who during informal conversations mentioned their relatives or friends had some association with the ruling party or other 'voluntary' organisations. However, while talking to Mehta, a policymaker from GIDB on the SIR policy, I came across interesting arguments of how Hindutva and neoliberalism justify one another. Mehta was a senior bureaucrat, heavily involved throughout the framing of the SIR Act. During my interview with him, I inquired about the origins of the idea of SIR and why he thought the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model or privatisation could serve better when India has a history of state planning, and while he himself was a government bureaucrat. I also asked why the government did not opt for a public-sector undertaking to start business in the

Activation Area of Dholera after failing to attract private investors. To this, he answered that the public sector was incapable.[172] After criticising the Indian state since the 'Nehru era', he moved on to argue about the role of *dharma*[173] and Indian culture in delivering development. He found a strong state unimportant:

> *The public-sector model has failed and I don't need to give you examples to prove it… If we see the Indian culture, we have better alternatives. Have you read Deendayal Upadhyaya? He is one of the best philosophers who had written so much about development and progress in the Indian society. Swadeshi, [174] for example… These ideas of government and all are western imports. Democracy, voting… Our Bharatiya (Indian) culture is rich and we have always been democratic… We practiced through Raj Dharma… Citizen, society etc. are part of the same (pauses) thing and they should come together to build the nation… Now, through PPP (Public-Private Partnership) or privatisation, we are creating a balance because everyone is participating in development…*[175]

On the criticism of 'western imports', I asked him what justifies DSIRDA luring foreign investors to Dholera or consulting AECOM, an American MNC. Preferring to obfuscate, Mehta mentioned how the Nehru era has depleted the 'financial strength and the technical knowhow' of Indian organisations and companies due to which 'we need foreign organisations from friendly countries to build our base. Had we followed Gandhiji's

[172] Interview with Mehta in Gandhinagar, January 2018.

[173] *Dharma* is a concept shared by many religions in the Indian subcontinent. In Hinduism, it refers to 'the moral order of the universe and a code of living that embody the fundamental principles of law, religion, and duty that governs all reality' (Berkley Centre, 2020). *Dharma* emphasises on individual duty and one's personal responsibility in building society can be interpreted as a counter to one's right to be provided welfare by the state. By placing the emphasis on individual duty, the Hindutva actors (mis)use *dharma* to encourage the duty of non-state actors to contribute to development with ideas of *Swadeshi* (fn 174), self-reliance. As I will provide evidences towards this in Section 8.5.1 in Chapter 8, it creates an opening for corporations while undermining citizens' rights upon the state.

[174] *Swadeshi* means 'of one's own country' and usually refers to an idea of economic nationalism. During India's freedom struggle against British colonialism, *Swadeshi* movement was a rallying cry of the nationalists against the use of the colonial produce (Goswami, 1998). In the current context, *Swadeshi* has been voiced by various groups as an economic agenda to protect and promote domestic economic interests to counter economic globalisation.

[175] Interview with Mehta in Gandhinagar, January 2018.

swadeshi ideas, Bharat[176] would have been in a different place.'[177] Mehta's frequent use of words such as '*dharma*', 'Bharatiya culture', 'Deendayal Upadhyaya' prompted me to ask if he was associated with RSS. Possibly sensing some judgements, he answered that he has friends and well-wishers in RSS. During this discussion and while talking about Deendayal Upadyaya, Mehta also mentioned the philosophy of 'integral humanism' and how it is more appropriate for Indian society. I will come back to this.

This example highlights the importance of understanding the role of Hindutva in the current state of Gujarat. Hindutva plays out not just at the level of villages but also even at the upper echelons where state actors with beliefs in Hindutva are directing policymaking. It is interesting to note that as a policymaker, he vouched for a smaller role of the state, delegating more power and function to private actors, through the lens of *dharma*, a latent philosophy within Hindutva. In neoliberal Gujarat, he found the realisation of *dharma* through the practices of PPP which reflect globally prevalent neoliberal ideas. Thus, to extend the argument of the previous chapter, Hindutva ideologies go hand in hand with neoliberalism in Gujarat. Looking at his or other similar bureaucrats' association with RSS, it is hardly surprising that such practices trickle down to the village-level.

The infiltration of the RSS into the state institutions of Gujarat goes back to the 1990s. On many occasions, RSS has been banned across the country as well as in specific provinces. The first nationwide ban was placed soon after India's independence when Mahatma Gandhi was murdered by one of its former members. The ban was removed after a few years. In Gujarat, due to the large participation of its members in the anti-reservation

[176] 'Bharat' in Hindi is India and Bharatiya would mean Indian.

[177] Interview with Mehta in Gandhinagar, January 2018.

agitations[178] of the 1980s, government employees were forbidden from its membership. However, after winning the 1995 elections, the BJP Chief Minister Keshubhai Patel reformed various advisory committees, including those responsible for police and social justice, and packed them with people sympathetic to Hindu nationalist policies (Breman, 2004). Through these and other measures, by the end of the 1990s the BJP had changed complexion of the bureaucracy. Keshubhai Patel removed the ban on government employees' membership of RSS in Gujarat in 2000 (Simpson, 2013: 59). In fact, as I have mentioned in Section 4.5 of Chapter 4, since 1995, when BJP first captured power on its own, the Chief Ministers of the province were either industrialists or associated with the RSS.

The person behind integral humanism, Deendayal Upadhyaya (1916 – 1968), was a key figure of Hindutva organisations and the first general secretary of the 'Bharatiya Jan Sangh', the forerunner of what is called BJP today. Nanda (2009: 27) mentions that 'integral humanism along with Hindutva is still the official philosophy of the BJP and new members are required to swear an oath that they support this philosophy.' Through integral humanism, Hindutva actors had often attacked the importance given to the state by Congress leaders such as the first Prime Minister of independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru, as alien and essentially un-Hindu. However, this does not mean they fully welcomed free market. What they recommended was a 'third way', which was neither socialist nor capitalist but '*dharmik*', with a distinct Gandhian touch of '*swadeshi*' (Bhatt, 2001; BJP, 2019a; 2019b).

According to Upadhyaya, it is Hindu India's inherent, inborn nature to integrate individuals into the organic whole. When this integration takes place, 'individuals do not

[178] In Section 4.4 of Chapter 4, I have detailed out the anti-reservation agitations.

need control from some external power like the state' and similarly, they do not 'fall prey to the selfish instincts of capitalists' (Nanda, 2009: 27, also Chacko, 2018a). This is because individuals are now adept at 'limiting and controlling their desires and demands in the interest of the national community' (Nanda, 2009: 27). Upadhyaya further argues that India needed to nurture *dharma* through which the individuals would 'learn to see themselves as limbs of the body politic made up of the family, caste, guild, and the nation' (BJP, 2019a). Just as there can be no conflict between the limb and the body, there could be no conflict of interest between individuals born in different castes and classes and the rest of society (Chacko, 2018a). Going ahead, economic policies also needed to have a dose of 'Hindu religious and moral values' (Nanda, 2009). Mehta's preference of the PPP model clearly draws upon Upadhyaya's symbolism of the body, in which Mehta sees the active participation of the state as well as private actors functioning in sync like parts of a body.

However, the blind adoption of an economic ideology is a trend witnessed amongst the Hindutva groups. Priya Chacko (2018b) points out that instead of taking clear stands on economic and social policies, Hindutva organisations have latched on to prevailing international or national philosophies although reinterpreting those to serve the group's supporters or the majoritarian philosophies. While Hindutva groups were strongly critical of the socialist version of the state under Nehru, throughout the 20th century (atleast until late 1990s), they have also underlined the role of the state (ibid). In this, the state was to largely regulate markets and redistribute resources to benefit its support base among small traders and farmers, with the aim of strengthening the Hindu society. By late 1990s, with global shifts, now markets were increasingly seen by Indian elites, including those in the Hindutva groups, 'as a provider of public goods and the source of societal transformation'

(Chacko, 2018b).[179] Thus, the chronology of Hindutva's shifting standpoints on the economy shows major inconsistencies. This is one reason why I use the term disjuncture regarding both Hindutva and neoliberalism to explain how their adherents cherry-pick ideas and philosophies depending on the context. This also justifies the inherent contradiction in which the likes of Mehta are keen on welcoming foreign investors while vouching for the *swadeshi* movement of Gandhi that was against foreign involvement in the economy.

On the other hand, neoliberalism similarly exhibits departures from its ideologies as well as inconsistencies that I have mentioned in Chapter 2. David Harvey points out that in neoliberal ideologies, 'the role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices' (2005: 3–4) and neoliberalism entails the combination of 'deregulation, privatisation, and withdrawal of the state from many areas of provision' (ibid). The arrival of 'market fundamentalism' implies 'retrenchment, withdrawal of the state, portrayed either as an impediment to efficiency or as a mere instrumentality serving to boost the regained supremacy of capital' (Wacquant, 2012: 68-69). However, when it comes down to implementation, states diverge from such a 'doctrinal template of 'small government' only to foster a business-friendly climate for capitalistic endeavours, to safeguard financial institutions and to suppress protests' (ibid: 69).

As Mehta's example shows, he is against the state bringing in public sector companies to jump-start production, yet his policies do not shy away from using the state to forcefully acquire land, with the state rather than the market making decisions on the process. Indeed,

[179] These changing shifts on economic and social ideologies have also been covered by commentators like Jaffrelot (2007: 342-354) and Hansen (1999).

he was aware of the problems with the existing land acquisition laws despite their pro-market stance and instead opted for the Town Planning law, which makes it mandatory for farmers to surrender their land in return for 50% of the plot with infrastructure built on it. Altogether, we see that while both neoliberalism and Hindutva argue in theory against greater involvement of the state, in practice they both rely on the state to push their ideologies forward. In fact, as I have discussed in Chapter 5, one of the key focus of the Modi era has been to reimagine the state and hence the state remains at the centre of most of these practices. My findings suggest that not only is the state being used as an instrument to propel these two ideologies, the proponents of these ideologies have progressively appropriated state institutions, such that the very architecture of the state has now come to represent elements of Hindutva and neoliberalism.

7.4 Making the state efficient and entrepreneurial: neoliberalism and bureaucracy

Das (2005) in his work on the role of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) argues that 'the idea that India should liberalise entered the IAS thinking in the early 1980s and gained visible support towards the middle of the decade.' While the support or opposition towards neoliberal policies amongst the IAS was not unified, the upper echelons often formulated policies with full commitment (ibid). To begin with, scholars have demonstrated that under neoliberalism, the Indian state has not withered away. Instead, the state has adopted newer forms as the traditional bureaucracy now coordinates with groups like NGOs that promotes development through notions such as self-reliance (Gupta and Sharma, 2006; Mathur 2015). The size of bureaucrats has been trimmed down in a number of provinces although this is not a uniform pattern. As mentioned in Section 2.3.1 of Chapter 2, even the number of village level officials has decreased. Earlier, each Talati had one village to look after. With almost minimum new hiring over the last two decades, most Talatis now are

responsible for at least two-three villages in the Dholera region. Outsourcing of jobs and tasks has led to the land record offices contracting private companies to keep IT records, who in turn employ computer operators on abysmally low salaries ranging from INR 6,000 to INR 10,000 per month. At least with respect to Gujarat, such appallingly low remuneration and labour conditions are outcomes of Narendra Modi's tearing down of whatever labour laws existed to protect some of the basic rights and wages.

7.4.1 Neoliberalism amongst bureaucrats

The role of bureaucrats in Gujarat in taking the project of neoliberalism forward is extremely important. Newspaper and magazine articles in Gujarat often mention the role of some of the key bureaucrats in the success of institutions such as Vibrant Gujarat. These same bureaucrats were moved to the Prime Ministers' Office in New Delhi after Modi won the national elections in 2014. However, critical academic scholarship is missing which could tell us how entrenched neoliberalism is in the ideologies of these bureaucrats, or reveal their impact on the ground. While the initial reaction towards economic liberalisation amongst high-ranking bureaucrats was mixed (Das, 2005), by the end of the 1990s, there seemed to be a consensus amongst the higher levels of bureaucracy about the role of neoliberal policies in advancing India's economy. Many of these bureaucrats have become cheerleaders for these policies (Chatterjee and McCartney, 2019; Das, 2005; Mooij, 2005).

I once asked Dilip Brahmbhatt (real name), currently the General Manager of the commercial division at DSIRDA, about how he views the overlap of the role of AECOM and DSIRDA. He had this to say:

> *Importantly, here we have government officials who work for 8 hours a day continuously. That is because they see the AECOM people, seated*

> *in the same office, (work) for 10 hours a day. There is pressure on our people, so they are much more efficient now. Otherwise, (if you) go to any government department, you will not find a single person who sits for more than 4 hours (a day) … We need to learn the ethos from private sector and then we can become efficient and entrepreneurial. Whatever organisational structure and system we are developing for Dholera, there will be a brand of corporate-government culture. We are not strictly government because if we follow government rules and way of working, nothing can happen… We have to become entrepreneurial… (Therefore), having AECOM inside has improved our speed, made us more efficient and productive…*[180]

There seemed to be agreement on this among other civil servants as Shivahare, the CEO of DSIRDA, argued similarly. Shivahare joined the project as its head in August 2017 around the time when I started my fieldwork. When I asked him about the impact of sharing an office with a private consultant, he said:

> *I see it as a very positive development. Firstly, we do not want government departments to swell too much. That talk is everywhere. (The government needs) to cut down on size and expenditure. It is better to outsource, to achieve higher efficiency. (Secondly), there is a perception that government departments are very bad and not managed properly, and private sector is good. These are common images in people's mind… However, (with AECOM) we are engaging world class consultants, to create a world class city… In the future, however, it will also lead to capacity building of government organisations. When the contract with AECOM terminates, DSIRDA will have a team strong enough to handle what AECOM has been doing.* [181]

Both these views clearly represent on-the-ground perspectives on a state under neoliberalism—pared down, efficient, such as the corporate sector. Two key arguments supporting neoliberalism emerge from the above quotes. First, neoliberal ideologies of competition and efficiency have played a key role for the state in the recruitment of the AECOM. Shivahare is happy to outsource state responsibilities to private consultancies to increase efficiency. Second, another rationalisation given for AECOM's presence is the need for the public sector to mimic the private sector and become more efficient, for

[180] Interview with Dilip Brahmbhatt in February 2018.

[181] Interview with Shivahare in December 2017.

example in terms of the number of working hours. ‘Mimicking’ was the central theme of Chapter 6, in which non-state actors were mimicking the state, whereas here it is the private sector being mimicked by state actors in Gandhinagar. Simultaneously, Shivahare and Brahmbhatt foresaw a key role for AECOM to restructure the state from within. Both of them pointed out how AECOM could ‘professionalise’, ‘corporatise’ and/or make the state’s development interventions ‘more efficient’,[182] through its effect on state organisations.

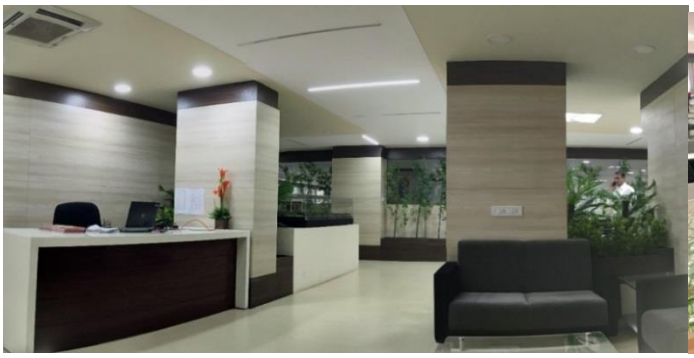




Figure 7.1: The reception area at the DSIRDA office. The ‘corporate culture’ that Brahmbhatt wanted to develop was ably supported by the office interior which is distinct from the usual government offices, even the ones on the same floor in Udyog Bhawan. (Source: Author)
Figure 7.2: A delegation of Suzuki going through the model of the proposed Dholera SIR. (Source: DSIRDA Twitter profile).

Similarly, Brahmabhatt was clear in underlining the need to make the state more ‘entrepreneurial’ and Shivahare also expressed the same view. The case of making the state more entrepreneurial is again a neoliberal tenet. State entrepreneurialism refers to a policy which attempts to leverage support for increased private sector involvement, and a more business-like way of running (Chen, 2013; Sinha, 2018). In the infrastructure and urbanisation sectors in particular, such an endeavour is usually made through institutions such as parastatals, Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) such as DSIRDA (Datta, 2015). In working towards state entrepreneurialism, Shivahare found a key role for AECOM. In the short term, AECOM brought what he felt were ‘world-class’ practices to the countryside

[182] The words commonly appeared during the interviews with both Brahmbhatt and Shivahare.

of Gujarat. In the longer run, AECOM in his view would contribute towards the capacity building of DSIRDA. However, such statements provide evidence of a more tangible outcome of engaging with such firms, namely the lasting impression on the zeal of the state to be entrepreneurial.

7.4.2 The state/non-state conundrum: The case of AECOM

Beyond making the DSIRDA's staff work for longer hours, the outcome of AECOM's involvement was rather different from what Shivahare claimed. Analysing the practices of the AES here, it is worth noting that everyday practices inside the state office reflect a negotiation of state vs. non-state relations. AECOM's staff have created a space for themselves and are often perceived as actors of the state in Gandhinagar. AECOM plays a key part in the processes of negotiation of the DSIRDA. In fact, AECOM embodies what one observer described as 'the only constant in the office'.[183] Raj, an urban planner, was a regular face from AECOM inside the DSIRDA office. In his routine work, Raj advised a host of government officials from the DSIRDA team and took care of his own work for AECOM. He was also the front man in dealing with a possible investor for the project or a land buyer visiting the DSIRDA office. On many occasions, when a researcher like me visited the office, Raj was the first person to give a presentation on the progress or advantages of the project. For a high-profile investor, his boss Salgaonkar would do a similar job. Whereas this could have involved a synergy between AECOM and DSIRDA in managing daily affairs, such practices instead involved Raj or Salgaonkar acting on behalf of the state, creating an impression that they were part of the state.

This was evident from my interactions with visitors to the DSIRDA office. Those who visited multiple times (like the real estate developers from Dholera) named the staff of

[183] Interview with Jadeja in January 2018 in Ahmedabad. He is the manager of one of the Dholera based real estate developers with offices in Dholera and Ahmedabad.

AECOM, both Raj and Salgaonkar, as being amongst the 'high-ranking officials who are very good at getting things done.'[184] They could rarely differentiate between the AECOM staff and the bureaucrats of DSIRDA. Many of them considered Salgaonkar to be the head of DSIRDA and described him as the 'constant' presence whereas 'people like Shivahare keep coming and going.'[185] To a business delegate, Salgaonkar exuded 'confidence, power and continuity while interacting with them even if in the company of state officials.'[186]

Largely, Salgaonkar represented a centre of power in the office other than the CEO of DSIRDA. As the interviewees mentioned, Salgaonkar was the mainstay since 2013 whereas the IAS officers in charge of DSIRDA were transferred or promoted regularly. Shivahare, for instance, was transferred in August 2019, exactly two years after he joined as the head of DSIRDA. For a long time, the post remained vacant or was delegated to officers as an additional responsibility. Discussing the role of Salgaonkar in the project, his junior Raj said:

> *It is because of Jagdish (Salgaonkar) sir that the project is still on… He is decisive and knows whom to pressurise and how to handle the bureaucrats. I will give you an example: getting the water for Dholera… We kept revolving around five different sources and were back to square one after a year or two. Then, we had a meeting with the Principal Secretary and Jagdish sir made sure that all those five bureaucrats (head of these water sources) were summoned. He told them that 'if you are not giving me water, I can get other sources but do not mess around with me. You will be transferred in two years. Someone new will come to ask me to start it again'… Actually, because Shivahare sir is new, he also needs Salgaonkar sir by his side. Else, his own officials will give him a tough time…*[187]

[184] Interview with Jadeja in January 2018 in Ahmedabad.

[185] Interview with Jadeja in January 2018 in Ahmedabad. Similar accounts given by other interviewees.

[186] Interview with business delegate in December 2017 and January 2018.

[187] Interview with Raj in November 2017 in Gandhinagar.

My impression of Salgaonkar from our short interview was no different. Assertive, often using the language of a state bureaucrat or politician, he spoke about the importance of the project for India and Gujarat:

> *This country needs the DMIC (Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor) to be successful. DMIC is where all our economic growth will happen over the coming few decades. Within this, Dholera SIR will be the most important node. The country needs the project. It will give a sudden boost to the economy. You must have seen Mr Modi stressing on its importance. The key aspect is the size and scale of Dholera. It is bigger than Singapore. Mr. Modi wants this to be realised as soon as possible and we are putting our best efforts. He is behind us. (On my question of local farmers opposing the project:) The old adage of land is 'my mother is gone'. No more. We have created a different value for their land. They will not be poor any more. It has already boosted the local economy…*[188]

Interestingly, whenever AECOM or DSIRDA staff visited the site in Dholera, the local real estate developers often paid enthusiastic visits (Figure 7.3), in which they were unable to differentiate between AECOM and DSIRDA. For these developers, 'they are all from Gandhinagar.'[189] I asked them to elaborate what they meant by this. Gandhinagar to them was the seat of the state that delivers business, or at least by associating with it, one can acquire business deals. These property developers' websites and social media profiles are adorned with photographs of company bosses with AECOM or DSIRDA staff or with other business delegates visiting Dholera. Both AECOM and DSIRDA staff including Salgaonkar and Brahmbhatt attended the Dholera Developers and Investors Summit 2018 of the local property developers' association (which I elaborated in Chapter 6). A number of property developers queued up to click pictures with them (Figure 7.4). One of them responded to my question on why the staff were important, as I had noticed these pictures all over his website: 'They make our projects legitimate. These are 'big' government officers, big people. And our customers then find us easy to believe. Else, there are too

[188] Interview with Jagdish Salgaonkar in February 2018 in Gandhinagar.

[189] Interview with Apoorva Sanghvi in February 2018, Bhavesh Hakkani in November 2017.

many cheaters selling plots in Dholera…'[190] This endeavour to prove proximity to the state draws us back to some of the conclusions of the previous chapter, especially with regard to 'mimicking the state'.




Figure 7.3 (left): Local property dealer welcoming a Chinese business delegate. This was on the sideline during the visit of a Chinese group to the Activation Area of Dholera SIR.
Figure 7.4 (right): A property dealer is giving a memento to AECOM staff. Accepting it is Salgaonkar (right) during the Dholera Developers and Investors' Summit event.
(Source: Both the pictures are from the official websites of the real estate companies. I do not add the website links).

The position of AECOM, the authority of Salgaonkar, or the perception that businesses have of them, raise a fundamental question: are these corporate actors part of the Actually Existing State (AES)? This is especially significant in the post-liberalisation context in India when existing bureaucratic structures have collaborated with new actors like private corporations. AECOM's staff are not officially part of the bureaucratic structure of DSIRDA but work from the same space. Although AECOM is different from the middlemen of Chapter 6 in being appointed by the government, AECOM here also straddles the formal and shadow spaces of the state. In working simultaneously from both inside and outside of the state spaces, AECOM mediates the relations between state and businesses. What it has provided to the DSIRDA office beyond its consultancy is an anchor

[190] Interview with Bhavesh Hakkani, November 2017 and with Siddharth Shah, January 2018.

to hold the many aspects of the project together. I argue that through these practices, they have become part of the AES in Gandhinagar.

7.5 The Governing Body of DSIRDA: politicking and breaching of the state

As the state tries to become more entrepreneurial and lure investors, the actors of AES undertake a host of shadow practices. I have argued earlier that the formal and shadow elements flow into one another smoothly and their movement creates a new image of the state as well as new state actors who constitute the AES. These new actors blur the lines between formal and shadow elements in light of a large infrastructure project, as we witness the state's changing relationship with society and the market or business. They underline the importance of practices ongoing in the shadow state, and as revealed by the discussion that follows, these practices occur even at the highest echelons of the state, whether amongst Board Members of DSIRDA or bureaucrats, architects and planners who have worked with DSIRDA in various capacities.

Mishra is one of the Board Members of DSIRDA.[191] Once while talking about how there was always political pressure on the members to move forward in the project without particular care for the details, he described certain events during the stages of Dholera's initiation. This helped me connect a few dots that were still a mystery until that point. While looking into the details of the companies, which signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with the government, I came across one company, which was registered under the name of Dholera even before the announcement of the project. Mishra told me about an interaction with one senior bureaucrat, Saha (pseudonym) after a board meeting that took place around November-December 2008. The Dholera SIR project was

[191] I am withholding further details of his position to maintain anonymity. Through some personal networks, he was close to me and this helped me gain some intricate details of many of the shadow practices inside DSIRDA or in the Gujarat bureaucracy and government in general.

being finalised around this time and a conceptual 'Master Plan'[192] had just arrived from Halcrow, the UK based consultants:

> *… At the meeting when we were shown the 'conceptual master plan' of Dholera for the first time, Saha said: 'We will implement this.' I said: 'The plan has to be worked out. It is still sketchy.' (Saha said:) 'Sir, whatever you have to do, you can do later. You please approve it today. Write your complaints, we will look into it. However, if you are going to sit on this or reject, I am going to lose my job tomorrow. I have a sword hanging on my head.' (I said :) 'But this is incomplete. Even the zones are not complete.' He went on: 'Sir, I will come to your home for dinner. We can arrange some funds for your institute (takes the name) to set up a center of excellence or whatever… Or else I will have to change the board. You will not be in the board from tomorrow. We will put somebody else… Vibrant Gujarat is in 2 months' time. We have the investors from Singapore, Sabeer Bhatia are (sic) on board. Where will we give them lands from if this is not approved?' The board approved this although it was still a preliminary plan.* [193]

The Vibrant Gujarat [Global Summit (VGGS)] 2009 was held in February 2009 where the Dholera SIR project was launched by the government. During the summit, there were three main companies which signed MoUs with the government: Universal Success Enterprise (USE), Hindustan Construction Company and Nano Works Developers promoted by Sabeer Bhatia of Hotmail fame (Das and Umarji, 2013; Dave, 2017). USE, a Singapore based company, is owned by Prasoon Mukherjee, who floated a couple of companies around 2008, one of which was called Greater Dholera Infracon Private Limited (GDIPL). The company was to be allotted 1,219 hectares in Dholera. GDIPL was registered with the Registrar of Companies Kolkata on 24 November 2008.[194] If Dholera SIR was first announced to the public in February 2009, how did Mukherjee float a company named 'Greater Dholera' three months before the launch of the project? Mishra subtly answered

[192] Refer to fn 167 for 'Master Plan'. By 'conceptual' master plan, Mishra here referred to the sketchy nature of the planning documents which he was reviewing.

[193] Interview with Mishra in February 2018 in Gandhinagar.

[194] These records can be accessed officially for a small fee from the website of MCA21 and operated by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs of India (http://www.mca.gov.in/).

the question by explaining that Saha told him in November-December 2008 that the Singapore based investors were ready with the money to invest, and the state needed to give them land at any cost.

Similar incidents of exceptions are quite widespread, such that the state of exception is so common that they come across as routine (Das and Poole, 2004). For example, the government launched the Dholera port in 2002. The JK Cement group first landed it although they later came up with a Joint Venture with the corporate group Adani to deliver the project. Surprisingly, the Adanis had already registered a company named 'Dholera Port and Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Limited' in 1998 as records from the website of MCA21, operated by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs of India, clarifies.[195] This was much before anything was heard about the Dholera port project and more interestingly, even before the concept of SEZ was in place in India. When I analysed the land sale records of some villages of the Dholera region, I found that the first set of sudden sales or outside buyers arriving in Dholera began around 2000 and soon after, the port project along with an industrial estate was launched in 2002. Offices of real estate companies started mushrooming in Dhandhuka around 2000.[196]

Importantly, these 'exceptions' are an outcome of the entrepreneurial zeal which the state needs to inculcate to become more 'efficient' or 'professional' as Shivahare or Brahmbhatt argued. At the same time, this entrepreneurial zeal has resulted in a series of shadow practices by the state. The passing of information to businesses like the USE or Adani, possibly by bureaucrats, is one case in point. Whether these practices escalate the speed of project delivery is one matter, but in the process, a number of the usual bureaucratic

[195] These records were obtained from the website of MCA21. This is operated by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs of India (http://www.mca.gov.in/).

[196] Interview with Rafi, teacher in Dhandhuka College in Dhandhuka, August 2017.

procedures are skipped. At the same time, the informal luring, threatening or arm-twisting to approve the planning drawings of the project illustrate how shadow practices are undertaken. The obligations of a neoliberal ideology compel the state to become 'competitive' and 'entrepreneurial'. Such obligations force the state to undertake the shadow practices and become the 'state of exception'. This essentially underlines the third proposition of the AES, that the blurred boundaries of the formal and shadow state work together to smoothen business deals.

7.6 An official's use of caste, kinship and the state

In the previous chapter (6), I illustrated how caste and kinship networks overlap with Hindutva and neoliberalism at the village level, affecting how the AES functions. In similar ways, caste and kin relations are significant at the level of Gandhinagar to understand the practices of the AES. In other words, it is not just through the ideologies of a pared down state, or through its mechanisms of efficiency, that neoliberalism moves forward. In Chapter 6, I quoted Harriss-White (2003: 191) who asserts that the state is no neutral arbiter when it comes to the social relations of caste or kin. In fact, it actively synthesises corporatist ideals and values that serve to promote the interests of capital. In that case, neoliberalism never attempted to abolish or transform such existing relations in which markets are embedded. Contrary to that it 'encourage(s) them to rework themselves as economic institutions and to persist' (ibid: 191). As both caste and religion are practiced in a flexible manner, they 'generate exclusive, networked forms of accumulation and corporatist forms of economic regulation' while controlling labour to the advantage of capital (ibid: 191).

Mihir was previously a muscleman cum middleman operating in land deals. His role usually involves brokering a land deal charging a fixed sum from the buyer (usually never

more than 5% in his case). However, when he comes across obstinate sellers, using muscle power is 'part of the job'. He argued to me once that the nature of the work was such that every land broker has to be a muscleman or at least hire someone on most occasions. A Muslim by religion, he was narrating his initial experiences one evening over supper at his home. Talking about his entry into the land business that he now claimed to have left (after realising the 'dirt in the business'), he vividly explained his first major deal. According to him, a 'Collector' from Gandhinagar was buying land for a company named 'Suzlon' that deals in wind energy and planned to set up an SEZ in Dholera. A relative of the 'Collector' introduced him and that is when Mihir decided to take the plunge. By 'Collector', Mihir referred to an administrative position as the following discussion will clarify.

I quote a section from our discussion:

> *Mihir: …This company (Suzlon) wanted more land from that area. Kaushik Dhanani did the entire deal for Gandhipora's land…He gave them these lands in 2012 or 2013… Being a Patidar[197], he is the main person of the then Chief Minister's daughter in Dholera. In our first meeting in his office, he gave me the list of all the land and I was stunned. He knew if the land was Navi Sarat (new tenancy), or Juni Sarat (old tenancy), its ownership history... What happens is companies like Suzlon cannot buy such a massive tract of land. They hire people like Kaushik… They ask Kaushik to buy as he is responsible, being a government official. Then, he can buy in anyone's name; Suzlon is not concerned because they will get hold of Kaushik whenever they want… Then, Kaushik needs us to buy the land on the ground…*
>
> *Rakib: You said that the deal did not materialise. What happened then?*
>
> *Mihir: So, after a couple of months, the Darbars in Dholera started fighting for the commons and Suzlon decided not to get into the mess… We bought a Honda City car (from the token money). Kaushik started his projects in Ambli from the same money probably.*
>
> *Rakib: Which project?*
>
> *Mihir: Smart Township (name changed) next to Dholera Hotel ((name changed) on the highway… I am not sure about the real owner but the*

[197] Patidar is a landed caste. Refer to fn 49.

> *CM's (Chief Minister) daughter is certainly there. However, he is the man behind it and some other projects as well.*[198]

Kaushik Dhanani is currently a Senior Manager for land acquisition at the GIDB, the Apex Authority of DSIRDA. He held many important positions and was a key person in DSIRDA or GIDB. Before moving to Gandhinagar, Kaushik was a Mamlatdar[199] in a sub-district neighbouring Dholera from 2005 to 2012 (during the time Dholera SIR was launched). The position of Mamlatdar is important, as he is the custodian of all the land records of the 50 or so villages, which come under a block's administration. Any land transaction has to pass through his office. Kaushik then moved to Gandhinagar as a Deputy Collector in the Revenue Department. This was followed by his elevation to GIDB where he had an impressive profile. Surprisingly for a graduate in chemistry, he was also the Chief Town Planner with GIDB and was the CEO of DSIRDA and hence, a member of its Governing Board members. He was also the CEO of Mandal-Becharaji SIR (MBSIR) Authority, which is tasked with delivering the SIR.

During the fieldwork, this was not the only story that I came across of Kaushik's land deals. He has been involved in a number of more deals. One farmer, at whose house I lived for some time during my fieldwork, sold 10 bighas[200] of his land to Kaushik for Smart Township that is located on the eastern boundary of Dholera SIR. Real estate dealers often claim that this project has been one of the most successful in the region. When I inquired why, two reasons given were: 'it belonged to Patidars and second, they have connections in the ministry and SIR Office.'[201] In a society where caste is a consistent marker of most relationships (personal, professional or political), Patidar buyers first went to Kaushik.

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198 Interview with Mihir, Dhandhuka, December 2017.

199 Refer to fn 127 for details on Mamlatdar.

200 Refer to fn 46 for 'bigha'.

201 Interview with Siddhartha, January 2018 in Bhavnagar; with Kunwarsinh in Dholera.

Secondly, their bureaucratic and political connections in Gandhinagar gave buyers additional faith in their transactions. Another argument was that the project was owned by the daughter of the Chief Minister, who was also a Patidar.

Kaushik's private office dealing with these projects was in Sector 8 where he undertook his shadow role while his government position at GIDB/DSIRDA in Sector 19 was barely 3 kilometres away. When I looked at the Registrar of Company Ahmedabad's records to find the registration details of the company that promoted Smart Township, the address of the company was the same as where Kaushik's office was located.[202] On the website of Smart Township, a series of MoUs have been uploaded worth billions of rupees signed with the Government of Gujarat during the biennial VGGS. At the 2015 VGGS, when Anandiben Patel was the Chief Minister, the website claimed to have signed MoUs worth INR 3,680 crores,[203] which dipped to INR 852 crores in the VGGS 2017 by the time a new Chief Minister was in place (Figure 7.7). Along with its own projects, the website regularly uploaded recent pictures on the progress of construction of SIR undertaken on behalf of the government. Such practices highlight that there has always been an attempt by the company to garner more legitimacy by trying to project itself as a state promoted project.

However, of late, Kaushik has been facing the heat from various sides after a new Chief Minister came to power in Gujarat. A departmental inquiry was launched against him although information has not been divulged.[204] This was further corroborated by a number of complaints against Kaushik and Smart Township, which has appeared online on multiple websites that report consumer complaints (Figure 7.6). Complaints ranged from

[202] Records available on website named MCA21 operated by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs of India (http://www.mca.gov.in/).

[203] A crore is a unit in the Indian numbering system equal to ten million (10,000,000).

[204] Interview with one Board Member DSIRDA, in Gandhinagar, January, 2018.

being cheated to how Kaushik used his connections to suppress the voices of the complainants. One buyer, who worked as a small businessperson whom I met in Ahmedabad mentioned:

> *…I bought two plots of land and invested all my money when Dholera's price was still increasing… After more than five years, even the roads are not paved and they are selling more phases located behind us. Now, even if I want to sell the land, there is no such buyer. I cannot complain against Kaushik, as he never signed anywhere but it was his face behind the project… He was from our community and I knew that he had the backing of the Chief Minister's daughter. Despite all these, I was cheated…*[205]

Likewise, the role of caste is noticeable although not unique. At the Gujarat Patidar Business Summit 2018 held in Gandhinagar, Kaushik's company participated actively (Figure 7.5). When I visited their stall at the summit, it drew immense interest being the only representation from the much talked about Dholera smart city. As the buyer above commented, despite finding other real estate sellers, many people preferred to buy from a Patidar. A number of local brokers and developers unabashedly mentioned how the blessing of the Chief Minister's daughter is key to Kaushik's project.

Such networks are hard for researchers to break into, while finding a documentary trail to prove it is near impossible. Yet the evidence suggests that these claims are not completely unfounded. The Chief Minister's daughter has been caught in a massive land fraud in the nearby district of Amreli, for getting government owned land at a 92% discounted rate (Singh, 2016). Similarly, in the Mandal-Becharaji SIR (MBSIR), which witnessed protests by farmers leading to the cancellation of 36 of the 44 villages, the remaining 8 villages were not withdrawn because the Chief Minister's daughter owned most of the land.[206] One cannot ignore the fact that when the Chief Minister was a Patidar, Kaushik's company

[205] Interview with Madhav Patel (pseudonym), Businessman, in Ahmedabad in February 2018.

[206] Interview with Valjibhai, August, 2017 in Mandal.

signed MoUs worth more than four times compared to a year later when the Chief Minister was replaced (Figure 7.7). At the same time, Suzlon Energy Limited, for which Kaushik was buying land through Mihir, was owned by a Patidar.

More importantly, a bureaucrat like Kaushik blurs the line between the state and non-state. He has worked as the person to approach enabling a large company such as Suzlon to aggregate land, and what worked to his advantage was his position at the revenue department or later at the GIDB. To target a specific seller, one needs to know the survey numbers and ownership details of the land that Kaushik automatically had access to. He could use his official power and acquire the necessary documents. Using his public office, he has been carrying out non-state business quite conveniently from his private Gandhinagar residence cum office, not very far from his public office from which he draws his power. The buyer above clearly mentioned that Kaushik's official position was a reason for his investment into the Smart Township project.

Kaushik drew power from his state office as well as from his Patidar kinship networks to undertake his shadow practices. Hence, within these dynamics involving the shadow state manifesting neoliberalism, traditional caste and kin relations play an important role. David Mosse (2018, 2020) has argued that current economic and political forces have simultaneously weakened and revived caste in ways that defy easy generalisation. Historically accumulated 'caste capital' is flexible enough to 'suit new institutional orders and opportunity structures' (Bandyopadhyay, 2016 cited in Nielsen, 2020: 767). Some scholars have celebrated neoliberalism as socially liberating for lower castes arguing its ability to significantly undermine discriminatory caste practices (Kapur et al. 2010; Prasad, 2008). However, incidents of untouchability and atrocities against the lower castes are pervasive and well documented. Jeffrey and Lerche (2000) showed how privatisation has

reduced the scope for lower castes' access to formal jobs whereas dominant castes managed to navigate the challenges. As I have mentioned earlier, Harriss-White (2003: 176–200) argued that under market economy caste continues to be what she calls a 'social structure of accumulation' for Indian capitalism.

Kaushik used his contacts, sources of influence and references through caste and kinship networks for his land deals while carrying out his DSIRDA or GIDB duties. Such moonlighting that blurs the public–private or formal-shadow boundaries sums up the AES, be it in Gandhinagar or in Dholera. Importantly, these fuzzy boundaries of the public-private or state-non-state are not just an outcome of their poor categorisation, but arise from the shadow practices of AES actors such as Kaushik who constantly unmake these boundaries. Caste and Hindutva become the logic through which shadow practices are undertaken that ultimately take the project of neoliberalism forward, depicting the changing nature of the state in light of a large infrastructure project.



Figure 7.5: Photographs of the Smart Township's stall at the Gujarat Patidar Summit (Source: Smart Township Website)



[redacted] - Gandhinagar — land / property

1 Review

Ab [redacted] on Jan 20, 2018 Submit a Complaint

[redacted] company has done cheating with us worth rs 4 crores. They are big cheater and its owner mr [redacted] who works in gidb govt office should be punished for cheating us. They are big fraud company. Dholera metro city sells plots and land but their location of plot and land are very rural and cheap in price. Customer don't know the location so they take customer in trust and then cheat. Beware of [redacted], and other stafff of [redacted]
Their website is www. [redacted] com they are cheater and fraud

PROJECT AHMEDABAD By anonymous / February 22, 2018

Property is a once in a lifetime investment and we all should double and triple check about whatever investments we go ahead with any deal. [redacted] and their owner [redacted] GIDB are literally known for fake promises, they even tell you the fake location to trap you and once you get trapped they wont retunr the money as well.

Be it [redacted] or [redacted] we all should beware of them and don't fall for the fake and irrelevant promises.

The staff they have is usually very well spoken and cunningly they will explain about the project using flowery words. all the basic facilities havent been set up at their location, clearance also is doubtful but they won't share all these things with you and ask you to give the booking amount. And once you give them the amount they will never return it no matter what.

The owners have big connections and hence the suppress everthing which is against them, the only solution is that we victims come together and do something about it.

Can someone explain me the whole process about how to take this matter to the court? I want a legal opinion on this matter. Also please let me know if there is any whatsapp group you guys have, so invite me there also.

CLICK HERE TO VIEW OTHER FRAUD REPORTS ON [redacted]

Figure 7.6: Screenshots of online complaints against Kaushik and his company on consumer forums (Source: Compiled by Author).

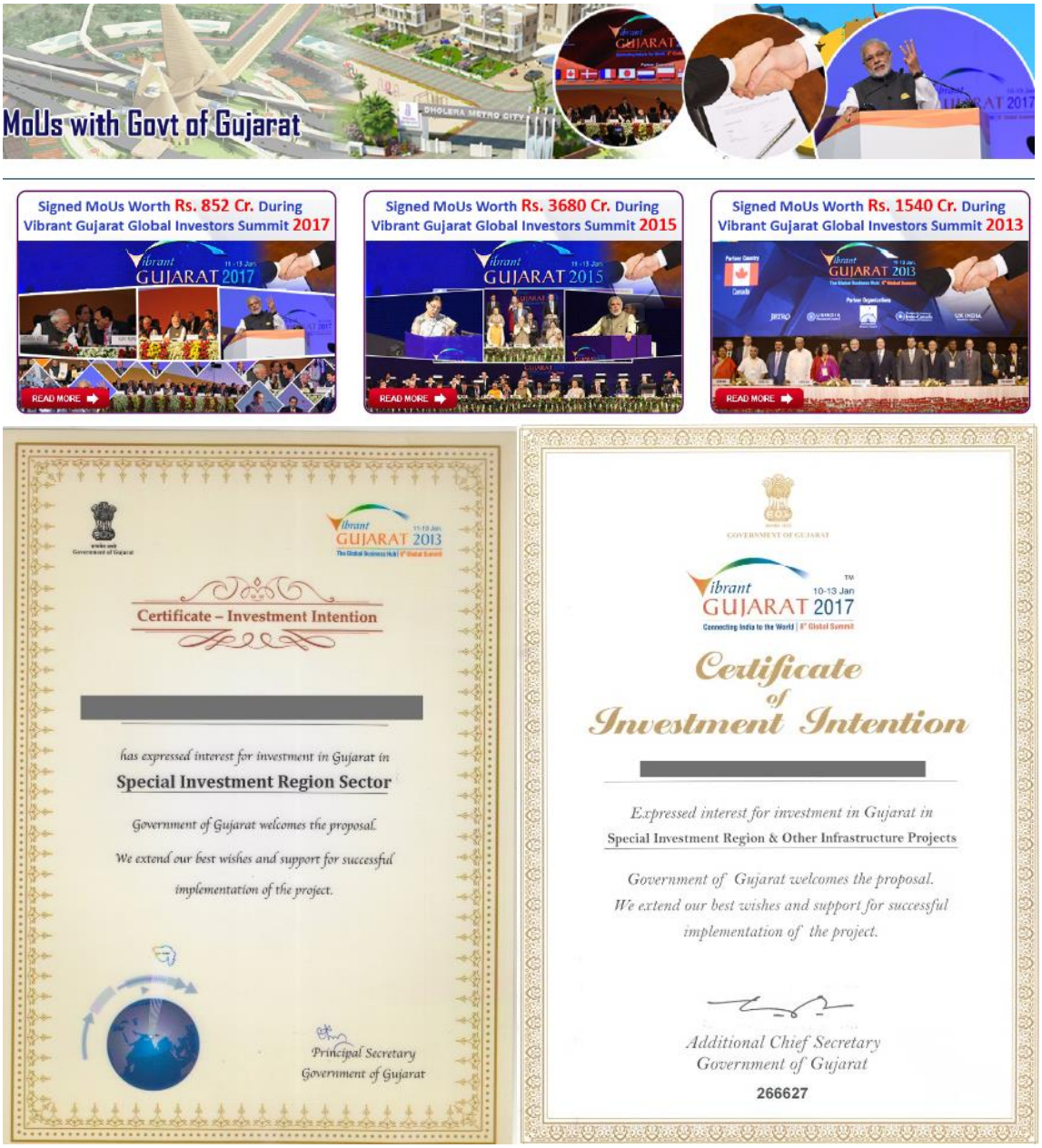


Figure 7.7: Screenshots of Smart Township's MoUs (Source: Smart Township Website)

7.7 Conclusion

What about the transformations that these new actors and their practices bring to the state? Bureaucrats like Brahmbhatt or Shivahare reasoned their presence by using a neoliberal argument: that the traditional state is inefficient or unprofessional and these new state actors represent the opposite. However, in order to professionalise the state or make it more efficient and entrepreneurial, a number of shadow practices are adopted. To ensure

a slew of investors are on board to invest in Dholera at the (entrepreneurial) state organised Vibrant Global Gujarat Summit, bureaucrats appear to have passed on important information to businesses. At the same time, usual bureaucratic procedures or protocols are bypassed by the entrepreneurial state to become 'more efficient and get business done'. Informal pressure, the lure of private benefits or arm-twisting are some of the tactics regularly used towards attaining outcomes. The ubiquity of business transactions makes shadow practices routine and such activities are no longer the exception. Hence Kaushik's use of official powers to acquire documents that can help him to buy land in the villages, using his caste and kin relations to do so, do not come across as an aberration to the practices of the AES. The vignettes also underline how studying, following and observing the bureaucrats' many interactions with citizens or with international organisations tasked with delivering a certain tenet of development, provides us new understandings of the state.

As illustrated by a number of scholars (Gupta, 1995; Das and Poole, 2004; Fuller and Benei, 2001; Hansen and Stepputat, 2001), the boundaries between the state and society or state and non-state actors have always remained fuzzy. The case of an infrastructure project in the context of Hindutva and neoliberalism are creating new dynamics as I have attempted to show in this chapter. However, if the movement between state and non-state is as fluid as seen in the previous chapter, why do I still label the entities, formal and shadow, separately? I find Fuller and Harriss' (2001) argument relevant here that even if the state-society boundary is fluid and negotiable to social context and position, material boundaries such as the wall of a government offices exist however blurred and porous. At the same time, for a majority of the citizens like farmers, the Actually Existing State, for all its shadow characteristics, remains inaccessible.

The chapter has examined the consequences of blurred boundaries on the state's activities. As services are outsourced, such blurring helps to theorise how the state's relationship with the society and market is being redefined. Two key ideas that emerge from the chapter contribute towards my framing of the AES. First, policies of liberalisation have affected how new entrants into the state's bureaucratic architecture appropriate the state and often become the face of the state. Second, these new actors of the AES undertake a host of shadow practices to take forward the project of neoliberalism. I argue that these shadow practices by formal state actors take place due to the demand of the entrepreneurial zeal of the state, a key facet of neoliberalism.

Studying the new entrants representing the state shed light on the emerging structures of the state in the neoliberal era. Through the example of the son of Tripathi, the current Chief Town Planner, I have shown how non-state actors enter state spaces and operate within them. Here, a private individual without any association with the state used a state office for business gains by using family connections. Such informal practices extend to the integration of ideologically charged actors. I have shown how Hindutva dictates many aspects of the state even at the policy level. Mehta, a key person behind the SIR policy in Gujarat justified state withdrawal and private public partnership not through advocating neoliberalism but rather 'integral humanism', a key philosophy driving many aspects of Hindutva over the last few decades. At the same time, this depicts how neoliberalism finds a convenient supporter in Hindutva at the ideational level of the state and not just at the sites where these ideas are practiced.

Not only do state actors advocate the intrinsic virtue in private entities participating in public affairs, but bureaucrats such as Shivahare and Brahmabhatt use a neoliberal argument to explain why the public sector needs to learn from the private. According to

them, the state ought to mimic private corporations, the role of organisations such as AECOM perceived as crucial in state capacity building. However, the evidence indicates that AECOM has strengthened state capacity in minimal ways; instead, I have shown how AECOM has in fact appropriated state spaces. As AECOM collaborates with the government to undertake functions previously the preserve of the state, in the process, the state is being re-imagined at every level. Non-state personnel such as Raj or Salgaonkar are often perceived as representing the state by citizens as they experience the state through these actors. Despite being located outside the formal bureaucratic apparatus, AECOM has very much become integrated into the state and entrenched in bureaucratic hierarchies. The trespassing of the state by non-state actors illustrates what constitutes the AES in Gandhinagar or DSIRDA. The next chapter takes the discussion forward focusing on some of the practices of the AES actors in the villages that help navigate farmers' resistance against the smart city project.

Chapter 8: Protests, Neoliberalism and Hindutva amongst farmers

8.1 Introduction

It was September 2016. Around 2,000 farmers led by the Bhal Bachao Samiti[207] (Protect Bhal Committee, henceforth BBS) and Sagar Rabari from Gujarat Khedut Samaj[208] (Gujarat Farmers' Society) gathered in front of Hotel Vision Modi where the local office of Dholera SIR Development Authority (DSIRDA) is located. Many of these farmers were recently served notices to vacate their land for the SIR project. The farmers were particularly angry because in December 2015, they managed to get an order from the Gujarat High Court which directed the DSIRDA to maintain status-quo and not acquire any land from farmers until the matter was duly heard (Express News Network, 2015). However, ignoring the court order, the DSIRDA kept sending these notices. The crowd, on that day, initially sent three BBS representatives to speak to the state DSIRDA officials. While these leaders were talking to the officials, the crowd standing outside with Sagar Rabari grew restless. As Sagar took the stairs to the first floor, a number of Koli women joined him, followed by the large crowd.[209]

Once the women were inside the office, they started creating a ruckus. They began with tearing down the maps on the walls. The matter suddenly snowballed into a commotion as they broke down furniture, tore down maps, or threw away official files. This continued

[207] Bhal Bachao Samiti (BBS) is the banner under which a group of local farmers led the anti-SIR protest in Dholera. I give a detailed description of BBS in Section 8.2 of this Chapter.

[208] Gujarat Khedut Samaj was established in 1972 and led the Gujarat unit of the New Farmers Movement. It provides leadership to farmers' movements at multiple levels within the province.

[209] This incident as well as the following events mentioned in the chapter were narrated to me by members of BBS, Gujarat Khedut Samaj as well as local farmers who joined or witnessed the protest. Interviewees included both men and women..

for almost an hour as nobody seemed to be able to control the situation. The DSIRDA officials then offered to negotiate with Sagar and Vijayrajsinh (pseudonym), the de facto leaders of the protesting farmers. The negotiations included a complete stop on notices immediately. Other demands such as shutting down the local DSIRDA office altogether were to be taken up with senior officials in Gandhinagar. However, the momentum of this incident was not sustained and when I started my fieldwork in July 2017, the SIR project was in full swing with farmers regularly served notices to vacate their farmlands. Some of these farmers 'voluntarily'[210] accepted compensation and parted with their lands when I started my fieldwork.

Before this incident, another huge meeting was organised in Dholera in 2015, under the banner of Koli Samaj (Koli Society) against the SIR project. The meeting came across as an anti-BJP platform to register farmers' grievances. Although close to 10,000 women and men attended the meeting, it did not yield much beyond the show of strength.[211] In fact, a few months after the Koli Samaj meeting, when the BBS farmers planned a *padayatra* (march on foot) rally to be led by Sagar Rabari from Dholera to Gandhinagar, only a few participated. On the day of the rally's arrival in Gandhinagar, enthusiasm was lacking, as many leaders from Dholera had not come. Sensing that the impact of the meagre crowd could be negative, Sagar ultimately went to the District Collector (instead of heading towards the legislative assembly or secretariat) and submitted a charter of demands. What transpired later was that many of the BBS leaders from Dholera were convinced by individual caste leaders (both Koli and Darbar) to skip the event.[212]

[210] Interview with Trivedi (pseudonym) at DSIRDA, December 2017.

[211] The details of these events are from the set of interviews with villagers, local farmers, protesting farmer leaders, or community leaders. I have stitched together many of these narratives from multiple interviews.

[212] Interview with Sagar Rabari, in Ahmedabad, August 2017; with Vijayrajsinh, and with Bhaubhai, in Dholera in August 2017.

On most occasions, during my interviews with the soon to be dispossessed farmers, it was difficult to find either resistance or consent as predominant themes in the subjective expressions of the farmers (Desai, 2015). Instead, what emerged was ambivalence. What makes it more intriguing is the fact that in 2013, the same set of Gujarat Khedut Samaj leaders successfully coordinated with local farmers of the Mandal Becharaji SIR, barely 100 kilometres from Dholera, and removed 36 of the 44 villages from the planned SIR project in a 100-day long agitation.[213] The picture one gets by studying the anti-SIR resistance in Dholera is of a resistance that failed to maintain momentum after every notable protest event. Whenever the BBS farmers have lodged a major protest, the resistance was altogether diffused in a few days. Trying to understand the reasons behind the weak or dispersed resistance, what I find is a host of practices by the actors of the AES. In this chapter, I analyse these practices, or more accurately strategies, through which the AES actors have managed to negotiate and weaken farmers' opposition such that protests continue while the SIR project is also being executed in some form.

Simultaneously, to understand the weak farmer protests, it is important to analyse the continued prominence of the BJP party in rural Gujarat. This is especially significant because weak farmer resistance and strong electoral performance of BJP are connected. In the 2017 provincial Gujarat elections, when the BJP faced a stiff challenge from Congress, it was able to win 63 out of the 140 rural seats (down from 77). However, in the 2019 Parliamentary elections, the BJP pocketed 59% of the votes polled compared to 33% by the Congress candidate in the Surendranagar constituency to which Dhandhuka belonged. Overall, in Gujarat, BJP won 61% of rural votes in 2019 compared to 44% from the 2017 provincial elections (Bansal, 2019; Kumar, 2017).

[213] Interview with Sagar Rabari, Persis Ginwala, August 2017; Lalji Desai in Ahmedabad, January 2018.

This has remained the trend: whenever the BJP has lost some rural support in Gujarat, it has managed to bounce back in the next elections. This brings Bernstein's (2020) quoting of Gaventa (2019) into context: 'Why in a situation of glaring inequality where one may intuitively expect upheaval, does one instead find, or appear to find, acquiescence? Under what conditions and against what obstacles does rebellion begin to appear?' How do we make sense of these events: a farmer campaign against the SIR project frequently loses momentum; despite getting the SIR project stalled by the High Court through a strong agitation against Narendra Modi, locals continue to vote for the same BJP party led by him? Similarly, having lagged behind Congress by 2% in rural areas in 2017, how does the BJP bounce back with 60% of total votes within two years?

In answering these questions and through my analysis, I show the coming together of Hindutva and neoliberalism. Along with this, in order to demonstrate the overlapping role of the state, the political party in power, caste and Hindutva organisations in diffusing farmers' protests, I document the practices of the state in furthering the project of neoliberalism. I use my fourth proposition of the Actually Existing State (AES) that in everyday practices, the AES constitutes and is, simultaneously, constituted by intricate linkages between economic and cultural ideologies. Through its formal and shadow elements, AES is a great facilitator of the marriage between 'liberal' neoliberalism and 'illiberal' Hindutva and this chapter provides some of the evidence for this. In doing so, an explanation of how economic and cultural ideologies come together to help each other, and how they may depart from their own macro-ideologies depending on the context in which they are implemented, significantly contribute to my analysis. The chapter tells the story of the state and Hindutva organisations pushing through a neoliberal project, which saw diffused protests.

In the next section (8.2), I provide a short note on the anti-SIR protest in Dholera to explain its history and organisation. In order to contextualise the farmers' protests and the role of the Actually Existing State in diffusing their resistance, I discuss the literature around these themes in Section 8.3. Section 8.4 focuses on how everyday Hindutva politics uses a number of strategies to diffuse active dissent against the SIR project. In the next Section (8.5), I document a number of practices employed by the AES, which essentially keep farmers away from protests and/or ensure delivery of votes for the BJP. Section 8.6 (Conclusion) then sums up the key points.

8.2 Note on the anti-SIR protest



Figure 8.1: Photographs from the anti-SIR rallies between 2012 and 2016 (Source: Sagar Rabari)

The anti-SIR protest in Dholera is led by the Bhal Bachao Samiti (BBS), formed by representatives of the 22 villages that comes under the SIR to coordinate the movement. Protests started in 2010 although a strong resistance was noticeable by 2012 with a simultaneous peak in land sales. This same group of local farmers has a history of fighting against similar projects. When the government launched the Dholera Port (which featured

in Chapter 5), these farmers led by Vijayrajsinh went to the High Court seeking an injunction to save the adjoining Blackbuck National Park. BBS has sub-committees in the affected villages representing both Koli and Darbar castes. 'Bhal' is the traditional name of the Dholera region and is termed the 'wheat bowl of Gujarat' by the locals because of the superior quality of the wheat produced here (refer fn 3). Water from the Narmada via canals remains a long-term demand by the locals and has been clubbed with the fight against the SIR. Slogans by the farmers of BBS include '*SIR hatao, Bhal bachao'* (Take back SIR, save Bhal) or '*SIR hatao, Narmada laao*' (Take back SIR, bring Narmada). On a bigger scale, the Gujarat Khedut Samaj that is led by its General Secretary Sagar Rabari in this region coordinates with BBS. Although the movement has not been strong enough to repeal the project, the farmers managed to get an order from the High Court to maintain 'status-quo', essentially stopping any land acquisition until the matter is duly heard (Express News Network, 2015). Table 8.1 documents some of the key events.

Year	Event
2009	Dholera SIR launched
2011	*Bhal Bachao Samiti* (BBS) formed. Petition against the SIR project at the Gujarat Hugh Court
2012	Gujarat Legislative Assembly election. A Koli from BJP wins the Dhandhuka constituency
2013	Another SIR (Mandal Becharaji) is cancelled after a 100-day long intense farmer protests led by Gujarat Khedut Samaj
2014	Federal election and Narendra Modi becomes Prime Minister of India
2015	Koli Samaj meeting in Dholera against the SIR project
2015	'*Padayatra'* rally from Dholera to Gandhinagar
2015	Gujarat High Court orders status quo and stops further land acquisition
2016	Local office of DSIRDA torched in Dholera (narrated in Introduction to this chapter)
2017	Narmada canal distributaries construction starts in Dholera
2017	Gujarat Legislative Assembly election when Bhupendrasinh scraped through from Dholka constituency. In Dhandhuka, a Koli from Congress wins

Table 8.1: Key events in the resistance movement

8.3 Resistance and the Actually Existing State (AES)

While living with the knowledge that the loss of their land was imminent, I found that farmers were not always vocal in protest. Some farmer leaders especially from BBS carried on protesting but the majority of farmers could not be mobilised. On occasions, even the farmer leaders would miss important demonstrations or meetings. A major change in their livelihood was in the making, but on many occasions, even the leaders in BBS chose not to protest. However, weak resistance should not lead us to assume support for the SIR project. James Scott (1985) has pointed out that we should not conclude acquiescence even in the the lack of contestation. Instead, focus should be on everyday negotiations, in order to understand 'counterhegemonic consciousness' (Scott, 1990: 200).

This is especially true as there are sporadic protests against the SIR, a sustained fight at the High Court by a few farmers, and everyday incidents such as DSIRDA officials being held at ransom while entering villages to undertake surveys. What I try to focus on is why this same resistance has been unsuccessful in maintaining a sustained momentum. To better explain the issues raised in the earlier sections, we need to understand the everyday interactions between the state, society, and the key role that economic policies as well as the socio-cultural project of Hindutva plays in these villages. Voting for the BJP by the Dholera population goes beyond identifying with the majoritarian exclusivist political project that is Hindutva.

The scholarship on the phenomenon of state or government led land acquisition received significant attention in the 2000s through the concept of 'land grab'.[214] While diverse in nature, the scholarship largely uses David Harvey's (2005) framework of 'accummulation

[214] A few of the scholarship would include Borras and Franco (2012); Borras et al. (2011); Deininger (2011); Edelman (2013); Oya (2013); Scoones et al. (2013); Wolford (2004); Zoomers (2010).

by dispossession'. However, in critiquing accummulation by dispossession, Levien (2013b: 15) points out that despite Harvey's acknowledgement of state force, it ignores the obvious reliance on state force'. Capital cannot automatically find 'outlets in land or in any other asset' (ibid: 15) and is painstakingly moved (Searle, 2010). In this, the state is an important enabler through various strategies including exemptions or use of force and the scholarship on land grab covers many dimensions of it.

The political reactions from below to 'land grabbing' is vastly varied and complex ranging from 'resistance, acquiescence or incorporation' as Hall et al. (2015) sums up.[215] The scholarship which covers the resistance to 'land grab' is influenced particularly by concepts such as 'countermovement' by Polanyi [2001 (1944)], 'hegemony' by Gramsci (1971), or James Scott's (1985) 'weapons of the weak'.[216] According to Scott (1985: 29), resistance takes diverse overt and covert forms such as judicial challenges, social movements or even ordinary scuffles including 'foot dragging… slander, arson, sabotage…' and these are illustrated in the scholarship. Scott (1985) proposes that peasants calculate the risks of their actions in coming up with far more rational behavious as a range of factors such as safety, ethnicity or local politics also come into play.

Within this, the scholarship on the Indian rural resistance against similar phenomena offers an interesting perspective due to the centrality of its electoral politics. Resistance is often channeled and made to work through both 'social movements' as well as 'political associations' (Levien and Agarwal, 2020). Scholars like Chatterjee (2004, 2008) have argued that the poor wield their power through their vote as they engage in political negotiations with authorities. Similar ideas were developed by Benjamin (2008) and

[215] Also, see Borras and Franco, 2013.

[216] I do not go into the details of these scholarships in the dissertation, instead focusing on the role of the state.

Anjaria (2011).[217] However, underlining the role of the state in making land deals happen, Levien (2012: 12) proposes that the 'broker state' has facilitated 'market-oriented compensation policy'. Such policies fracture villagers, ultimately 'undermining any basis for collective action.' In other cases such as in the province of Tamil Nadu, Vijayabaskar (2010) argues that the state has been rolling out policies for a while to encourage peasants to quit farming. Such policies are behind the absence of protests against state or coroprations led land acquisitions in the case, Vijayabaskar (2010) studies. As I show below, Dholera farmers' protests can be placed within these bargains where farmers have ocassioanlly managed to push the state to take its demands onboard due to democratic compulsions. At the same time, what is novel in Dholera is the extra-determination of the Actually Existing State actors who take caste, religious or political associations onboard to weaken the protests.

Beyond electoral politics, the Indian case is particularly interesting due to the success in blocking major projects over the past two decades (Levien and Agarwal, 2020). The literature on protests in the Indian context has taken onboard aspects of castes, class, religion based politics onboard (Nielsen, 2020). These aspects provide a key entry point to understand the complexity of these resistances as well as the counter-resistances that could be run by similar groups or even the Actually Existing State (AES) or organisations associated with AES (Roy, 2011a: 272). Baviskar (1995) critiqued the focus on a farmers vs the state study in her study of the impact of the Sardar Sarovar Project. This was followed by a significant scholarship in the 2000s that commented on similar reduction of

[217] For this chapter and the dissertation as a whole, I focus largely on the rural phenomenon. There is a wide scholarship that studies the urban spaces through themes of neoliberalism, land acquisition, urban informality and resistance. On India particularly, see Benjamin (2000, 2008); Bhan (2014), Ghertner (2011); Gooptu (2011); Mahadevia, (2006, 2014), Maringanti et al. (2015); Roy (2009a, 2009b, 2011b), Shatkin (2014); Weinstein (2009) that represent a section of the wide scholarship. As Gooptu (2015: 222) rightly points out most of the scholarship, however, 'tend to be metro-centric'.

farmers vs state or farmers vs corporations (Balakrishnan, 2013; Levien and Agarwal, 2020).

Some of the scholarships include Levien (2018) on Rajasthan; Kenneth Bo Nielsen (2018, 2020) and Dayabati Roy (2008, 2014) on West Bengal that witnessed one of the earliest successful farmers' resistance against SEZs; Sud (2009, 2020a) on Gujarat; Balakrishnan (2013), Chatterjee (2020), and Sami (2012) on Maharashtra; Da Silva (2014)[218] and Sampat (2015a, 2015b) on Goa; Pattenden (2005), Steur (2015), Vijayabaskar (2010), and Vijayabaskar and Menon (2018) on Southern Indian provinces as well as Jenkins et al's (2014) book on the politics of SEZs covering multiple provinces. Bedi and Tillin (2015) also provides a review of the tactics used by the state. Neilsen et al's (2020) recent editorial article in the Journal of Contemporary Asia summarises many of these caste and land-based movements. They find that 'the ability to cultivate and appropriate the new political spaces opened by the anti-dispossession movement…correlated strongly with historically produced caste and class relations…' (Nielsen, 2020).

This chapter contributes to this literature. I make two key arguments, which are also part of my framing of the AES. The first is the prevalence of Hindutva politics through which actors of the AES negotiate with the state and society to help diffuse these protests. Their practices may include contradictory steps ultimately aimed at creating acquiescence. Aspects such as elite capture of protests, co-option of dissenting leaders, or caste solidarity vis-à-vis caste contradictions are used through the networks of Hindutva. This is the disjuncture in Hindutva. Similar to Yogendra Yadav's argument concerning Narendra

[218] Da Silva has also written a few more co-authored articles on Goa. See Da Silva and Nielsen (2017); Da Silva et al. (2017, 2020).

Modi, this disjuncture in Hindutva 'represents a constellation of forces, not all of which draw energy from the RSS-Jan Sangh-BJP lineage' (Yadav, 2017).

Second, I argue that through a host of economic measures that may signify a departure from the basic tenets of neoliberalism, the actors in the AES negotiate farmers' resistance and help the neoliberal project to continue. This brings to fore the economic logic of the diffused protest. In his book, 'Give a Man a Fish', James Ferguson (2015) analyses a redistributive neoliberalism in which the state has taken an active role in the process by handing out direct cash to citizens. While not argued by Ferguson, the strategies by the AES in Dholera, as I explain in Section 8.5, can be seen as an attempt to keep neoliberalism on track by negotiating some of the resistances, which may arise due to the extreme impact of neoliberal policies.

8.4 Hindutva Politics

For the Dholera farmers, it was not that the smart city project or the loss of their land 'was such a terrible thing that everyone forgot their usual squabbles in order to focus on remaking the world' (Simpson, 2013: 05). Existing patronage and caste fights found their way into the language of the daily lives of villagers in their opposition or support of the project. Within this, Hindutva politics has assimilated a host of practices to mitigate protests by farmers in Dholera or to ensure support for the BJP party. Desai's (2015) work with 'lower' caste populations in Ahmedabad exploring their continued support for the BJP pointed towards desire and ambivalence that mark subaltern political subjectivities. In similar ways, Hindutva actors using the state or its institutions in Dholera managed to create a sense of ambivalence as well as hope and aspiration towards the neoliberal project. This made it difficult to find either resistance or consent as predominant themes in the subjective expressions of the dispossessed (Desai, 2015). Below I document a series of

strategies that these actors employ to negotiate anti-SIR protests or to ensure votes for the BJP.

8.4.1 Navigating anti-SIR protests through caste solidarity and contradictions

Caste remains a significant indicator of economic, social as well as political relations in India and particularly in rural areas. In a review of the role played by caste in 'India's land wars', Nielsen et al. (2020: 684-685) describe how 'caste consistently mediates land transfers in present day India by pre-empting, undermining or fueling processes of social contestation'. I mentioned in Chapter 6 that the project of Hindutva has successfully replaced the Congress system of patronage by empowering 'lower' caste leaders amongst the Kolis. However, this does not mean that Kolis lead the Hindutva organisations. In fact, the top echelons of Hindutva organisations remain with the Darbars who hold considerable financial power whereas the Kolis became the 'foot soldiers' (Berenschot, 2011a). Both these Darbars and Kolis from the Hindutva organisations made BJP the winning machine as it went on to win almost every election from 1989. These leaders have acted as key points of contact for the BJP politicians for any action or information. They are supportive of the SIR project on most occasions although often make contradictory statements which I will discuss in the chapter.

Many Kolis have managed to become the Sarpanch[219] of their villages. When land transactions began in any village after the announcement of the Dholera SIR, the Sarpanch took the lead. Most of them were BJP supporters. When the *Bhal Bachao Samiti* (BBS) petitioned at the High Court against the project, every Sarpanch from these 22 villages signed letters explicitly mentioning the support of their villagers towards the project. One narrative successfully established amongst the villagers has been to transfer the blame for

[219] See fn 43 for Sarpanch.

the loss of land to the previous federal Congress government that launched the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) project, which necessitated the Dholera SIR project. During my ethnography, even a village Sarpanch would start his argument blaming the Congress who began the DMIC project: 'Modi had no other option but to agree.' [220] Hence, the neoliberal policies due to which farmers were going to lose their lands became associated with both BJP and Congress, despite the fact that the latter have been out of power in Gujarat since 1995. Jenkins (1999) also makes this argument of obfuscation at the macro scale in his highly cited 'reform by stealth' argument that neoliberal reform went through in India as the 'blame' was shifted between centre and provincial governments and various parties.

Coming back to caste, until 2007, the elected Members of Parliament and Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) in Dholera belonged to upper caste groups. However, during the 2007 provincial assembly election, the Koli community challenged this and a Koli local who stood as Independent went on to win. The Koli Samaj, an umbrella group to represent the Kolis at various platforms, supported him. This win was a signal of the strength of their mobilisation and challenged the upper caste as well as RSS and BJP in Dhandhuka or Dholera. The BJP quickly understood the group's sentiments and ceded space to them by fielding a local Koli in 2012 who fought an upper caste candidate from Congress and wrested the seat for the BJP.

When BJP fielded the Koli candidate in 2012, one informal agreement was that the Kolis would not coordinate with Darbar leaders in BBS or Khedut Samaj.[221] In return, some of the Koli majority villages were to be taken off the SIR project. Post-election, the BJP did

[220] Interview with Ranchorbhai (pseudonym) in August 2017.

[221] Interview with Naranbhai in September and November 2017, Bhaubhai in December 2017.

not respect the promise. The Koli Samaj then held the massive anti-SIR meeting in Dholera in 2015, as mentioned in the Introduction to this chapter (Figure 8.1, top right). This meeting coupled with the High Court directive ordering a status-quo a few months later boosted the confidence of the anti-SIR protesters amongst the Kolis, the culmination of which was the incident at the SIR office described at the start of this chapter. However, the ultimate aim of these protests that was to get the project cancelled remained a distant dream.

In 2017, Koli leaders in the anti-SIR movement, BBS, planned to organise a rally before the election as a message to the ruling government. This time, the Koli Samaj stepped back. In interviews with one of the local Koli Samaj leaders, I was informed about the pressure from Koli BJP leaders from Gandhinagar not to go openly against the BJP government closer to election: 'I received a call directly from Purshottam Solanki, the minister from Bhavnagar. He asked us to not do anything until the elections…'[222] Although organisations like Koli Samaj claim to be apolitical, they are often arm-twisted by BJP. Even during the anti-SIR meeting of 2015, which was clearly anti-BJP or anti-Modi, leaders of Koli Samaj rarely criticised BJP or Modi in meetings. They would criticise a specific policy, a state official, or a BJP cabinet minister, but shied away from an anti-Modi agenda.

The leaders from the protesting group, Bhal Bachao Samiti (BBS), often pointed out how Koli Samaj leaders use such social networks and platforms (such as Koli Samaj) as a step to gain a place in the ruling BJP party. Whereas the Koli Samaj advised constituents to vote for the BJP in 2012, there was no clarity in the 2017 elections. The local Kolis

[222] Interview with Ram Mer (pseudonym), January 2018. Parshottam Solanki is an influential BJP Cabinet Minister from the Kolis representing nearby Bhavnagar Rural constituency since 1998.

interpreted this to be pressure from the BJP leadership on the Koli Samaj: 'the Koli Samaj leaders are more interested in getting a BJP ticket for themselves. Why did they not clearly declare that we should not vote for the party that is taking our lands away? Why is Naranbhai so influential inside the Koli Samaj when he is not even a functionary? Isn't he from BJP?'[223] Negotiating contradictions through caste solidarity or by conceding political space to the 'lower' caste, as was witnessed in offering the MLA ticket to a Koli, Hindutva politics mitigated the anti-SIR protests amongst the Kolis from becoming a strong force.

The Koli Samaj meeting of 2015 emboldened the BBS leaders at that time and the Darbar leaders promised to hold a similar meeting. However, Darbar community leaders stopped the Darbars in BBS who wanted to use the banner of Darbar Samaj (Darbar Society). The anti-SIR Darbars lobbied for a long time to persuade the Darbar Samaj for the meeting in Dholera, but the leadership did not show any enthusiasm.[224] When I met one of these Darbar Samaj leaders and asked him why they did not let the anti-SIR meeting take place, I was told, 'It would have weakened the Darbar caste solidarity giving an undue advantage to the already empowered Kolis…'[225]

The work of the local Hindutva leaders went further in weakening the anti-SIR movement. One of the key Darbar leaders in BBS, Vijayrajsinh (pseudonym), often complained how BBS leaders from amongst Darbars were forced not to join him by the BJP leaders.[226] His village, Unai (not real name), has remained the centre of resistance. However, in a change of tactics, instead of confrontation, many of the leaders amongst the protesting farmers had been lured to the BJP by offering them tickets to fight local elections. One such was

[223] Interview with Bhaubhai, December 2017.

[224] Interview with Amarsinh, October 2017.

[225] Interview with Digvijay, January 2018.

[226] Interview with Vijayrajsinh August 2017.

Vijayrajsinh's cousin, Bakulsinh. I interviewed him during my Masters dissertation in 2015, when he was with the BBS and was a staunch critic of the SIR project. In fact, in a 2014 report in Frontline magazine that highlighted the protesting farmers and the BBS, Bakulsinh was photographed sitting with Sagar Rabari from Gujarat Khedut Samaj at Vijayrajsinh's house (Figure 8.2; Katakam, 2014).



Figure 8.2: Bakulsinh (extreme left) with Sagar Rabari (extreme right) in the Fortline magazine article (Katakam, 2014)

However, when I met him in 2017, after he unsuccessfully fought the local deputy Sarpanch election on a BJP ticket, Bakulsinh was a changed man. He now supported the SIR project and explained to me how the SIR will bring development to Dholera.[227] Bakulsinh acknowledged that he had still been a broker when we had met in 2015. He confided that although he was with the protesting farmers, he believed that the SIR project

[227] Interview with Bakulsinh December 2017.

would benefit him more. He used to attend BJP party meetings and had spent some time in the RSS camps in his youth. When BJP made him the deputy Sarpanch candidate, it was time to cut all ties with the farmers. Of late, Bakulsinh has been trying to turn some of the Unai villagers (not the real name of the corresponding village) against Vijayrajsinh and the anti-SIR group, BBS.[228] Similar incidents of co-option and incorporation by Hindutva actors were present in many villages. Scholars on land deals like Hall et al. (2015); Borrass and Franco (2012); Sud (2020a) have shown how such cases of incorporation are common around the world. As I have mentioned earlier, the use of caste networks by both the state and the social movements has been documented by scholars (see Nielsen et al. 2020; Levien and Agarwal, 2020 for a summary). The Dholera case, as I explained above adds the dimensions of how the actors of AES use networks of caste as well as Hindutva.

8.4.2 Bhupendrasinh's 2017 election

In one of the Bhal Bachao Samiti (BBS) meetings in September 2017, it was decided that the BBS would campaign against Bhupendrasinh Chudasama, the all-powerful BJP Cabinet minister. The intention was to defeat a strong BJP minister and increase the pressure on the government to cancel the SIR project. Bhupendrasinh, although a Dholera local, represented the nearby Dholka constituency that borders the Dhandhuka constituency to which the SIR villages belonged (Figure 8.3). In Dholka, Bhupendrasinh was facing a resurgent Congress. As news about BBS's plan broke, Darbar community elders summoned the Darbar leaders like Vijayrajsinh and Amarsinh in the BBS. They were pressurised not to go ahead with those plans. Vijayrajsinh later narrated:

> *We prepared everything. We even had two (candidates named) 'Bhupendrasinh Manubha Chudasama'. If these candidates had their names in the EVM (Electronic Voting Machine), there was no chance that Bhupendrasinh could win. He was there in that meeting…*

[228] Interview with Bakulsinh, December 2017.

> *Pradeepsinh and many BJP leaders (were there too). (They) promised that Bhupendrasinh would get the (SIR) project cancelled after the election. Although, I do not believe him, others said yes and we cancelled our plan…*[229]

Amarsinh (from BBS) mentioned that they were asked to back out as 'ensuring a Darbar defeat would be betrayal to the community.'[230] Bhupendrasinh won the election and became a Cabinet Minister again. However, the promise of cancelling the Dholera SIR was not respected by the BJP leaders. Nor were they pressurised by the Darbar community elders when Vijayrajsinh and Amarsinh approached them after the elections.[231]

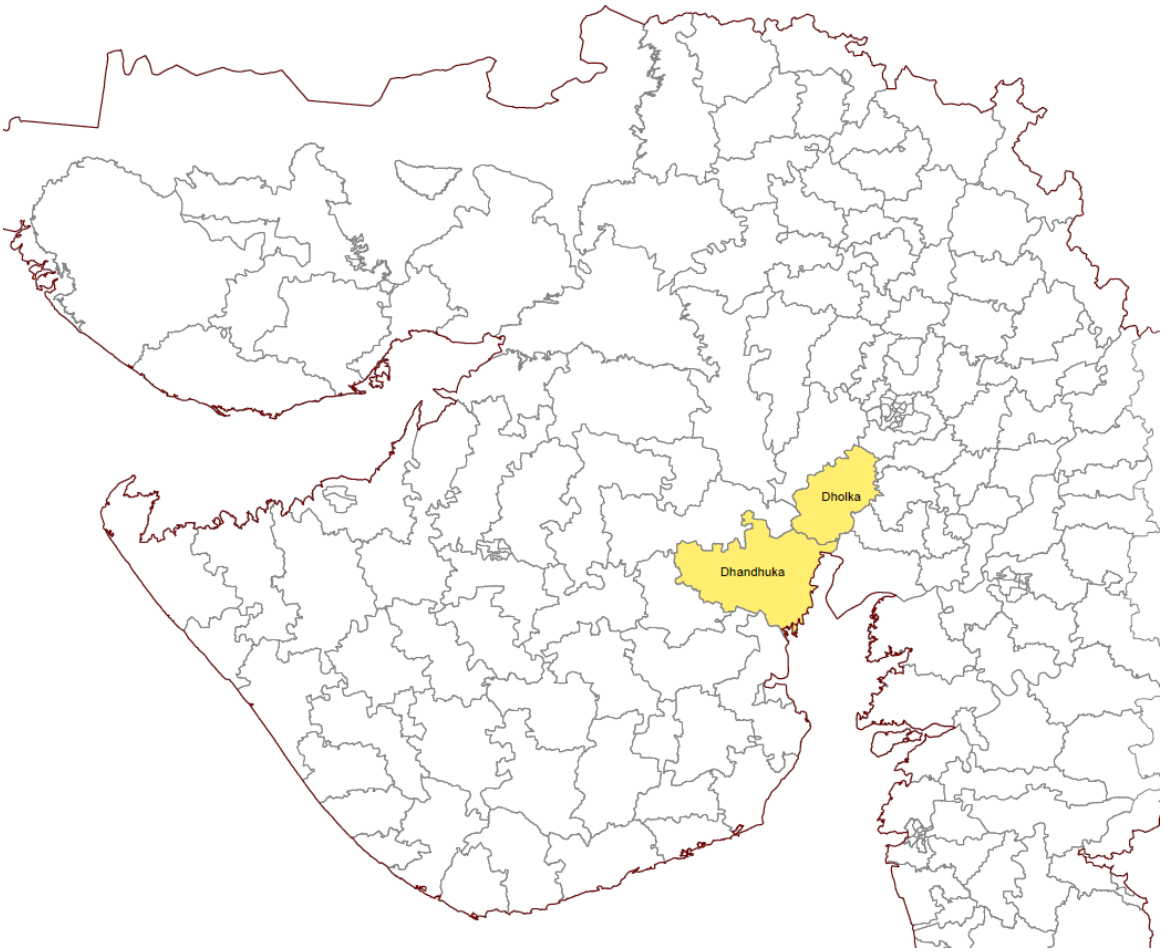


Figure 8.3: Location of the constituencies of Dhandhuka and Dholka in Gujarat (Source: Author)

[229] Interview with Vijayrajsinh, December 2017.

[230] Interview with Amarsinh, December 2017.

[231] Interview with Amarsinh and Vijayrajsinh, January 2018.

The incident was significant because by ensuring that the anti-SIR Darbar leaders do not campaign against Bhupendrasinh, a definite defeat was averted. Bhupendrasinh won by a margin of just 327 votes, securing 71,530 against 71,203 of the Congress, despite the machinations of the Darbar caste body and the ruling BJP party, showing huge discontent (Election Data, 2017).[232] Secondly, by managing the anti-SIR protestors using caste solidarity, the Hindutva actors[233] also ensured a loss of face for the anti-SIR Darbar leaders as BJP did not keep the promise of canceling the SIR project. This led to many Kolis amongst the protesting farmers questioning the wisdom of Vijayrajsinh as they felt cheated, thus creating a rift within BBS. One of the Koli leaders from BBS told me during an interview:

> *Although I do not doubt Vijaybha's (Vijayrajsinh's) honesty, he gets caught with the Darbar politicians (referring to the community elders). They are all BJP supporters and do not support farmers at all … In Sandhida (village), just a few days before the 'Padayatra', we held a meeting and Sagarbhai was there. That day, Vijaybha and Amarsinh missed the important meeting. Both were summoned by the Darbars and were asked not to join us in the rally. These were the same people who convinced him to support Bhupendrasinh…*[234]

The summoning of Vijayrajsinh and other Darbar leaders from BBS just before the *Padayatra* (march on foot) was important as it diffused the agitation that was planned to build a sustained momentum against the SIR. Vijayrajsinh and his associates in BBS were asked 'not to empower the Kolis further… If this continues, Darbars will lose whatever influence they have left in the society.'[235] Many of the Darbar leaders went missing on that

[232] Bhupendrasinh's election win was challenged by the opposition Congress candidate in the courts. In May 2020, his election was declared void by the Gujarat High Court due to a host of irregularities in the voting process. This would have forced him to resign from the ministry. However, within days, the Supreme Court gave him a reprieve by putting the previous judgement by the Gujarat High Court on hold. See Vaidyanathan (2020) for details.

[233] Through Hindutva actors here, I refer to the BJP party members, RSS linked Darbar Samaj leaders who were present in these meetings.

[234] Interview with Kanubhai, February 2018.

[235] Interview with Sagar Rabari, January 2018.

day and in the end, were alienated from BBS altogether. Such caste solidarity trumped party ideologies or resistance against the SIR on many occasions.

8.4.3 Political Hindutva co-opting opposing ideologies

Kunwarsinh (pseudonym), a Darbar, was the General Secretary of the anti-SIR farmers' group, Bhal Bachao Samiti (BBS). During our initial meetings, he always criticised the SIR project. His office on the highway next to the motel owned by his family doubled up as the local office of the Congress party. Kunwarsinh's family controlled the District Council through the Congress party while the BJP was controlled by his cousins, Bhupendrasinh, the Cabinet minister and Pradeepsinh, who built the Hotel Vision Modi that featured in Chapters 5 and 6. Surprisingly, for the General Secretary of the BBS, Kunwarsinh's main business was real estate. When the Dholera project came, his family swiftly took up the chance of brokering. He confessed making millions of rupees even in small deals. With the massive sum earned as brokerage, he started a few real estate projects in Dholera and now ventured into Bhavnagar, Dhandhuka and Ahmedabad. Kunwarsinh himself lived in Bhavnagar to supervise the projects and visited Dholera three to four days a week depending on the amount of business. Similar elites in Dholera have their roots in land but are increasingly involved in non-agricultural activities preferring to live in the urban centres due to 'availability of schools, hospitals'. [236] Surprisingly, in private, Kunwarsinh often came across as a supporter of the SIR project:

> *How will Dholera progress if not SIR? We have all become richer because of the land business, not because of the Bhalia wheat or cumin farming. We gave up farming ages ago… I do not meet the BJP leaders because of Pradeepsinh's family or Bhupendrasinh. They are both cheaters. We made Bhupendrasinh what he is now … However, I support Modi. He is doing great for India and we Indians are getting our respect*

[236] Interview with Kunwarsinh, August 2017.

in the world… He is the Hindu Hriday Samrat (King of Hindus' hearts) …[237]

On many occasions, I have found him posting clips of Modi's lectures on his social media accounts or posting BJP tweets on his social media status. I asked him why he was still part of BBS. He said that the issue was more about going to the opposing camp of Pradeepsinh or Bhupendrasinh. Opposition to the BJP or a certain leader within BJP was not necessarily an ideological fight or a form of resistance against the SIR project. Thus, even within the resistance movement, there are leaders supportive of the neoliberal project or believe in its ability to deliver development. At the same time, Kunwarsinh praised Modi as the king of Hindu hearts, a title bestowed by right-wing groups. Such appeal eclipsed ideologies of support or opposition towards the SIR project and ensured the continued electoral success for BJP. What works for Hindutva is the presence of such leaders who undermine the unity amongst the Darbars and Kolis, exploiting the caste contradictions that existed in these societies historically. The case of SIR is a perfect example that across political lines, people are ambivalent towards the project if not always supportive.

8.4.4 Aspiration and hope through sub-nationalism and Hindutva

The launch of the smart city project and the associated construction and real estate activities became a key vehicle to create a semblance of progress while also delivering some economic benefits to a certain section. The real estate boom and the infrastructure development that followed the announcement of Dholera SIR created a positive perception of the project or of BJP in general amongst a certain section. Similarly, with the start of construction activities in the 'Activation Area' along with the mushrooming real estate projects, there was a sense of ongoing economic activities along with improvement in

[237] Interview with Kunwarsinh, August 2017.

roads and infrastructure. For example, the Bhavnagar-Ahmedabad highway on which these villages are located was widened to four lanes from a single lane highway when the SIR project was announced. Similarly, concrete buildings started appearing as the real estate projects were launched. There was, no doubt, visible prosperity although not everything could be attributed to the SIR project or to the BJP party for that matter. With the massive increase in the price of land, from INR 10,000 per acre to INR 1 million per acre,[238] many farmers, especially Kolis, came out of their cyclical debt.

Scholars have earlier argued that the lack of resistance could be due to 'aspirations' and 'hope' that such projects may evoke (Cross, 2014). Both Balakrishnan (2013) and Cross (2014) argue that lower castes view these projects as 'a space of promise and hope' and 'a great leveller' and see the resettlement sites as 'socially liberating' with a potential to enervate caste hierarchies (cited in Levien and Agarwal, 2020: 702). While both nonetheless point out how caste inequality hasn't changed, they conclude that these new spaces should be considered as having the power to trouble the existing hierarchies.

Although locals increasingly undertake seasonal migration to nearby cities, the rise of construction and infrastructural investment has provided some opportunity for upward mobility. A Koli farmer stated, 'I could never imagine that I could come out of my debt. But having sold half of my land, I have paid back (the loans), built a 'pucca' house, a car for the family and have some fixed deposits in the bank.'[239] Around the same time, many of the villages along the sea, which remained neglected by the state until now, have seen

[238] Interviews in Dholera: with Kunwarsinh, August 2017; with Siddhartha, January 2018 and Ahmedabad: with Bhaveshbhai, November 2017; with Pradeepsinh (pseudonym), November 2017.

[239] Interview with Kanubhai, July 2017.

significant improvement in basic infrastructure such as road and potable water.[240]These infrastructure improvements are often argued to be associated with the SIR projects by BJP leaders during interviews.

The neoliberal project also resonates with the narrative of sub-national identity of Gujarat. Within the local population, a section emerged which staged demonstrations showing their support to projects such as the 'Bhal Vikas Manch'. Chatterjee (2020), Levien (2018) and Sud (2009) have similarly documented instances of breakdown of protests by variegated groups and how some land sellers support the infrastructure project, while others may not. In Dholera, some villagers even blame the anti-SIR protestors for posing a threat to their development. Such narratives were especially popular among BJP or Modi supporters. One local businessman (unclear political affiliation) expressed his support of the project: '…we will have schools, hospitals, airports similar to Ahmedabad. We will not be forced to travel to Ahmedabad for small medical issues… If the solar farm comes up, then Dholera will supply electricity to the world. Gujarat will remain the number one province in India.'[241] Appeal to sub-national identity has shaped expectations of informed villagers and helped form consent. Adaman et al. (2019) have documented a very similar set of nationalist sentiments around a mining project in the Turkish context.

An important factor for Modi's successful election campaigns during his stay as the Chief Minister of Gujarat (2001-2014) was his ability to appeal to sub-national identities. While he played these sentiments when he had to defend himself against the 2002 Gujarat riots

[240] Two points are important to clarify here. The delivery of the basic infrastructure has nothing to do with the SIR project and come through various rural development schemes from both federal and provincial governments. Secondly, inequality has, in fact, increased, as most of the land sellers from the lower castes have not reinvested the money wisely that they received from selling their land. These people now undertake yearlong migration to nearby cities as they do not have land to cultivate, compared to the seasonal migration, earlier.

[241] Interview with Bhaveshbhai, November 2018.

(see Bobbio, 2012 and Jaffrelot, 2016 for details on strategies), he used the same regional identity in various other fields. For example, although the Narmada Dam was a project championed by leaders of various parties, Shah (2011) argues that Modi took credit for it as a marker of his 'good governance' telling a gathering in the drought prone region of Kutch, 'For the last 50 years, people were being fooled with empty talk. Your dreams were realised only when we brought Narmada water to your doorstep' (quoted in Shah, 2011: 179). According to Ghanshyam Shah (2011: 174), Modi 'made a cocktail combining Hindutva and the dam as development.' This sub-nationalism was so successful that Shah (2011) points out that due to the perceived 'good governance' or similar performances of Narendra Modi, even voters content with the Congress led government in New Delhi, nonetheless chose BJP in the Parliamentary elections of 2009.

8.5 Disjuncture in neoliberalism

Whereas the Dholera SIR project is a representative case of neoliberalism in the definitions of David Harvey (2005) or the Washington Consensus (Williamson, 1990) as I have elaboarated in Section 2.3 of Chapter 2, some of the policies and welfare measures that the provincial government has recently adopted depart from this understanding of neoliberalism. Lately scholars have widened our understanding on how neoliberalism has come to be experienced. Both Venugopal (2015) and Wacquant (2012) categorised the scholarship on neoliberalism broadly into two groups. The first takes neoliberalism as a given doctrine and focuses on the hegemonic economic conception as scholars like Ferguson (2010: 170) pointed out how 'in perhaps the strictest sense, neoliberalism refers to a macroeconomic doctrine.' Chang (2003: 05) similarly describes neoliberalism as 'born out of an unholy alliance between neoclassical economics and the Austrian-Libertarian tradition' (both cited in Venugopal, 2015: 167).

The second approach identifies neoliberalism in the real world and focuses on the disjuncture between neoliberal ideologies and their practices (Brenner and Theodore, 2002: 352). It considers neoliberalism not as an 'end-state' but as a process – and as a project embedded in the context, 'produced within national, regional, and local contexts defined by the legacies of inherited frameworks, policy regimes, regulatory practices, and political struggles' (ibid: 349). It is fraught with contradictions and negotiations in the pursuit of market-driven transformation. At the same time, being embedded in the context, neoliberalism should not be seen as a unitary top-down force as it is constituted by situated practices (Springer, 2012). Hence, many of the practices and policies that are adopted by the AES in Dholera signify the disjuncture in practice.

The distinctive configurations of market-oriented programmes are shaped by the way in which these programmes collide with existing institutional landscapes to produce distinctive forms of 'variegated neoliberalisation' (Chacko and Jayasuriya, 2018). In this approach, the focus is on the ongoing political and social processes, rather than a specific set of policy templates (ibid). I explore these negotiations that shape and constitute neoliberalism in these rural areas displaying a disjuncture between what is proffered and what is practiced. I argue that beyond the strategies of Hindutva politics, the AES actors have delivered material benefits to farmers to mitigate their protests. As I show, it simultaneously allowed BJP to balance the needs of poor voters, wealthy core constituencies, and movement ideologues something Thachil (2014) explored.

8.5.1 Welfare policies for farmers

The 2017 election results alarmed the BJP due to their significant loss in popularity in rural areas. While it clung on to power, the numbers were severely dented. BJP was only able to win 63 seats out of the 140 rural seats (down from 77) whereas Congress won 71 seats.

Overall, polls showed its popularity as 2 percentage points less than Congress in rural areas compared to 7 points higher overall (Kumar, 2017). The assembly seat of Dhandhuka went to Congress. The new BJP government post-election reacted with a slew of measures targeting rural areas. In the 2018-2019 provincial budget, it sanctioned INR 192.1 billion to be spent on new power connections for farmers, and another INR 401.1 billion for power subsidies. Crop loans were to be provided at zero percent interest for which INR 50 billion was allocated along with INR 110 billion for crop insurance. Other promises included allotment of INR 300,000 per farm for setting up milch animal farms (Financial Express 2018, Pathak 2018). In the 2019-2020 budget, again significant allocations were made towards agriculture (India Today, 2019).

In Dholera, Bhupendrasinh and the BJP government took significant steps that represented a departure from neoliberalism. Since 2012, as acknowledged by the locals in Dholera from both anti- and pro-SIR camps, Bhupendrasinh delivered benefits to a number of farmers under the Sujalam Sufalam project. Through the project, the government funded 60% of the total cost of building water reservoirs for farmers in dry areas. Dholera farmers were particular beneficiaries of the project. The benefits also came during a politically apt time around 2013 when the anti-SIR protest was gaining momentum and when Modi started his campaign to be the BJP candidate for the Prime Minister post.

I find two aspects of the Sujalam Sufalam project to be interesting. Firstly, such welfare projects are against the basic tenets of neoliberalism. The provincial budgets in 2018-2019 as well as 2019-2020 had significant allocations for subsidies related to agriculture. Following the Washington Consensus' (Williamson, 1990) policy prescriptions, governments around the world have been cutting welfare or subsidy budgets. In similar ways, the Gujarat government has been cutting down subsidies and has often been accused

of corporatisation of agriculture (Desai, 2015). In that case, the Sujalam Sufalam project is a departure from neoliberalism as it is subsidising agriculture. Interestingly, this departure is intended to deliver the neoliberal project of Dholera SIR in the longer run and political victory for the BJP in the immediate term (the 2014 parliamentary elections).

Secondly, Sujalam Sufalam furthers another neoliberal tenet, which scholars have pointed out in other cases (Kaya, 2015) and underscores how neoliberalism finds a marriage of convenience with Hindutva. To cover the remaining 40% cost of the projects, the government appealed to religious and social institutions to contribute. In one way, this can be interpreted as a Public-Private Partnership, a key feature of neoliberalism. However, I argue that it helped the Hindutva organisations entrench further in society as well as negotiate the anti-SIR resistance in Dholera. Many of the farmers managed to get funding from religious groups such as the Swaminarayan temple[242] in Dholera or similar religious organisations.[243] Others received donations from caste based Koli or Darbar societies.

Scholars[244] like Bhattacharjee (2016, 2019), Kim (2010), Shah (2002a); Simpson (2013, 2016) have mentioned about the increasing friendliness between Hindutva organisations and the Swaminarayan sect. In fact, the Swaminarayan temple priests, over the years, have vocally supported BJP and asked the sect's majorly Patidar supporters not to vote for Congress in the 2017 assembly elections (Express News Service, 2017). Involving such religious or social groups is a feature of neoliberalism in practice. Kaya (2015) has shown

[242] The Swaminarayan temples in Gujarat and across the world are part of the Swaminarayan movement, founded in Gujarat in the 19th century with followers and organisations spreas across the globe especially through the Gujarati diaspora (Dwyer, 2004). While claiming to be apolitical and spiritual, they have increasingly been argued to be political and close to the righ-wing Hindu nationalist movement.

[243] I interviewed many of the farmers who built the water reservoirs over the last few years with the help of the state and religious groups. I keep these farmers anonymous here.

[244] Simpson (2016: 117-119) also points out other scholars like Nussbaum 2007; McKean 1996; Shukla 1997 have also commented on this. Although Kim (2009, 2010, 2012) calls the movement apolitical, her work provides a great detail on the movement.

in the case of Turkey how the ruling Justice and Development Party's welfare measures and liberal economic policies went together with a number of faith-based welfare organisations. Such proliferation of charities is not just a marker of neoliberalism but also an increasing manifestation of religiosity in the world as a whole. Hence, in Dholera, both neoliberalism and Hindutva feed off and help each other proliferate in these villages.

Importantly, most of the beneficiaries of Sujalam Sufalam were now BJP supporters. Many of them are recent BJP members who jumped ship after receiving the donations. During interviews, they opposed the SIR project due to the fear of loss of their land but also acknowledged that they did not attend the anti-SIR meeting. Their support for the BJP remained undisputed. Some of these farmers confessed to having attended Bhal Bachao Samiti (BBS) meetings or rallies before getting the 40% donations for the Sujalam Sufalam project from religious groups, which they think were possible only due to BJP's help. They claim that it would be immoral to go to BBS after taking financial help from the religious groups or BJP leaders. Thus, the welfare services by these religious groups have weakened the anti-SIR movement and simultaneously, supplied votes for the Hindutva party.

Scholars including Simpson (2013) and Thachil (2014) makes an interesting argument that such outsourcing of welfare helped the BJP gain new supporters while preserving its core constituency. I have met a number of locals as well as regional donors to these organisations that eventually helped the farmers in the Sujalam Sufalam. One local upper-caste businessman, a BJP supporter, who made it big from land business in Dholera saw it as a way to give back to his 'poor' or 'backward' neighbours.[245] Similarly, Dilipsinh (the BJP leader from Section 6.7 in Chapter 6) claimed that he 'donated land to construct Sujalam Sufalam water reservoirs for his villagers because this is what Hinduism teaches

[245] Interview with Siddhartha, January 2018.

them.'[246] As I have argued in Chapter 6, the involvement in the welfare projects of Hindutva organisations helped address upper caste youth's disillusionment with the loss of their community's traditional influence in society. Thus, Sujalam Sufalam brought new supporters into the Hindutva fold without antagonising traditional upper-caste voters. This is fascinating when compared to the massive agitation by upper-caste youths against affirmative actions, especially the Mandal Commission (see fn 134). The Mandal Commission that proposed reservations for lower castes in late 1980s negatively affected the prospect of the Congress party as the upper castes that stood to lose, deserted the party. The rainbow coalition that Congress previously enjoyed shrunk unlike the BJP.

The second interesting policy decision taken by the government, especially due to the influential role played by Cabinet Minister Bhupendrasinh Chudasama, was to bring back Dholera under the Naramada Canal notified area and escalate the speed of construction of the distributary canals in the villages. The canal water has been a long-standing demand of the local farmers. In fact, Bhal Bachao Samiti (BBS) made it a war cry '*SIR hatao, Narmada laao*' (Remove SIR, bring Narmada) and have been lobbying for Narmada's canal water for decades. However, over the years, intense politicking of development in Dholera meant that the villages were included and then excluded from the plans of Narmada's distributary canals multiple times. Suddenly, just before the provincial elections of 2017, funds were allocated. Construction started within a few weeks. The coming of Narmada water is contradictory because the SIR project is intended to move the 'farmers from agriculture to manufacturing since the area was infertile.'[247] In that case, the construction of the canals would create further confusion especially when it is also not

[246] Interview with Dilipsinh, November 2017.

[247] Interview with Jaiprakash Shivahare, in Gandhinagar, January 2018.

aligned with the planning of the SIR by AECOM that arranged its own sources of water.[248] The canal construction in that regard helped negotiate some of the demands of the anti-SIR farmers. However, it is unclear what the farmers will do with the Narmada water, if the SIR project to which they were losing their farmlands, remains.

8.5.2 Compensation for the activation area

As the anti-SIR protests peaked in 2014-2015, SIR Authorities in Gandhinagar took some steps to negotiate with the opposition. One such measure was to grant compensation to the farmers. In the SIR Act, land is acquired using what is called The Gujarat Town Planning and Urban Development Act 1976 (GTPUDA). Through the GTPUDA, the Town Planning Authority in any city declares a certain area to be under the municipal boundary of the city. This would mean that the notified area (usually farmland) would be taken over by the concerned governmental authority. Land parcels of various sizes belonging to farmers are pooled together and the authority lays out infrastructure. A farmer who owns a parcel of land (referred to as Original Plot or OP) is then returned 50% of the original size (referred to as Final Plot or FP) with basic infrastructure such as roads, electricity, sewerage put in place (also see fn 149). As the prices of the serviced plots of land quickly increase, a farmer supposedly ends up profiting despite losing half of his original plot. There is no option of monetary compensation. The process is referred to as land pooling or land readjustment instead of land acquisition. Land acquisition usually delivers monetary compensation based on the price of the land lost.

Thus, when the Dholera SIR was announced in 2009, there was no clause for monetary compensation. However, with the setback from Mandal Becharaji in 2015 and a sustained campaign by the anti-SIR protestors in Dholera that culminated with the High Court status-

[248] Interview with Raj, AECOM in Gandhinagar, November 2017.

quo order, the state changed tactics. Farmers who were losing land to the Activation area were to be paid compensation at the government-notified rate. Although not at market price, this was still a good rate as there was a recent revision of the government rate that was not very low compared to the market price. The compensation diffused the possibility of court cases despite the High Court ruling as none of the dispossessed farmers went to court after receiving compensation. In fact, as I have noticed during my study, the two villages that covered the Activation Area have the weakest representation in Bhal Bachao Samiti, the protesting farmers' platform. In addition, the compensation was swiftly paid which led to an overall positive perception. Further, farmers were allowed to carry out farming indefinitely until the government begins construction.

Some of the measures that the state has taken in Dholera to diffuse farmers' protests can be clubbed under the forms of redistributive neoliberalism. In the South African context, James Ferguson (2015) commented on the 'politics of distribution' through state-level cash transfers to the poor that somehow mitigated the worsts of neoliberalism. He found that such economic support is key in a world of declining opportunities for agricultural livelihoods and formal wage labour. In similar ways, in a pan-Indian context of declining agricultural returns and farmers' suicide at a record high, some of these redistributions can be termed as a way to keep the neoliberal project ongoing.

For example, at a national level, Prime Minister Modi further dismantled state agricultural subsidies moving to a model of crop insurance scheme. Although it was claimed to increase farmers' income, any addressal of farmers' issues remains a distant dream while private corporations have cornered massive benefits as documented widely by news outlets (Agarwal and Mishra, 2018; Bhatnagar, 2018; Kasturi, 2019; Matthew, 2019). As Ferguson (2015) argued for cash transfers in South Africa; acts such as building canal

infrastructure for agriculture, subsidising building of the water reservoirs through the Sujalam Sufalam scheme or even compensating the dispossessed farmers instead of leaving them to the market, are particularly interesting because they break with the entrenched logics of neoliberalism. While Ferguson (2015: 3) heralds the cash transfer as the coming of 'a new kind of welfare state', the measures adopted by the state in Dholera did help in diffusing the protests. The following section further highlights this negotiation of the hardships due to neoliberal policies.

8.5.3 Coercion, intimidation and state force

Murray and Overton (2011: 313) points out that the hardship and suffering which the neoliberal policies resulted across the world until the 1990s, led to what Stiglitz (2008) termed as the 'post Washington Consensus consensus'. Others have referred this process of the 'more aggressive neoliberal doctrines, usually associated with Thatcher and Reagan' giving way to 'modified versions in the Clinton era and under Blair's Third Way' as Gooptu (2011: 36) has pointed out.[249] The central role of the state was emphasised again, something I have discussed earlier in Section 2.4 of Chapter 2. States were encouraged 'to promote as well as regulate markets, and to provide various infrastructure and adopt frameworks of good governance… to encourage transparency and accountability'… (Murray and Overton, 2011: 313).

On a separate issue although with a similar trajectory, with the extreme controversies due to land acquisition that was governed by a British era law in India, there was an attempt to make land acquisition and subsequent transfer fairer by making the process more transparent and participatory. One step towards this was the 'Right to Fair Compensation

[249] Gooptu (2011) rightly clarified that exclusion or marginality has remained a consistent theme in the politics of the urban spaces even in the pre-liberalisation era.

and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013' that was cleared by cross-party consensus in the Indian Parliament in 2013.[250] Another key policy that was encouraged across the world was digitisation of land records aimed at making land transfer transparent (Nayak, 2013; 2020). Nayak (2013: 72-74) argues that this policy in India can be seen as a continuity to the economic reforms of the 1990s as it was targeted at creating an effective and smooth market for land. Provinces such as Odisha and Gujarat were the earliest in the land records digitisation process (ibid). As a bureaucrat from GIDB mentioned during an interview,[251] Gujarat eventually clubbed the digitisation of land records with the 'Ease of Doing Business' discourse, where it ranked amongst the top provinces in India during Modi's tenure as the Chief Minister. The senior bureaucrat argued that land records digitisation accelerated the speed as well as the number of land transactions in the province. 'With the availability of all these (land) records online and applications made through the 'Single Window',[252] any investor could buy land (pauses), even sitting in London, New York...'[253] He further argued that these measures helped improve Gujarat's 'Ease of Doing Business' index.

However, Schatz & Rogers (2016) have shown that despite the lofty talks of 'transparency' or 'public participation' in the 'post Washington Consensus consensus', actual practices stand in stark contrast. Scholars like Cox (2004), Groves et al. (2013), Guarneros-Meza and Geddes (2010), Hetherington (2011), McCarthy and Prudham (2004: 276); Rodan (2006) have explored the apparent tension between transparency, public participation and

[250] See Chakravorty (2016), Goswami (2016), Nielsen and Nilsen (2015), Sud (2014b) for critical reviews of the 2013 law.

[251] Interview with Solanki (pseudonym), GIDB in Gandhinagar, January 2018.

[252] See fn. 153 for 'Single Window'.

[253] Interview with Solanki (pseudonym), GIDB in Gandhinagar, January 2018.

neoliberalism in different contexts. Nayak (2013) has also argued that the reality of the process of land digitisation in India is far removed from what is argued by its proponents.

Taking a cue from such discourses, the Special Investment Region (SIR) Act of 2009 through which Dholera SIR came into existence, made it compulsory to organise public hearings. The Town Planner or a designated official would take questions from the affected public and give them written responses within a specified time. This also included a compulsory Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) public hearing. In 2013, in the EIA hearing for the Dholera SIR, a number of farmers raised important issues and many of those remained unanswered although the authorities went ahead with the project. An interesting incident on the complications of the land records digitisation process came to light during this EIA hearing. The computerised land records and the subsequent map that was used by the EIA consultants enlisted a village, called Mandvipura. This village submerged in the Arabian Sea several decades ago. Even its former residents were rehabilitated in nearby villages by local administration. However, in the new plan of the Dholera SIR, farmers especially from Uni village were allotted their 'Final Plot'[254] in Mandvipura (Counterview, 2014; Kaushik, 2014). The petitioners against the SIR project highlighted these issues at the High Court and the authority's inability to answer those became a key argument against the project in the High Court in 2015.

Learning from this experience, the authorities stopped the exercise of public hearings. When they organised these, it was a low-key affair and BJP supporters cordoned off BBS members. The practice was to deliver the letter to the Sarpanch through the village Talatis. The Sarpanch was supposed to inform the villagers. However, in certain cases, the letter did not arrive at the Sarpanch's office; or the Sarpanch or the Talati would forget about

[254] For 'Final Plot', see fn 149 or Section 8.5.2.

the letter altogether.[255] On one occasion, when the public hearing for farmers losing land to the National Highway project was ongoing, BBS leaders including Vijayrajsinh attended it. However, they were not allowed to voice their issues because 'they did not belong to the village where the public meeting was held.[256]

The use of coercive measures on other occasions has also been frequent. Many BBS leaders have often been detained before the rallies. The Gujarat Khedut Samaj leaders who provide the leadership in Gandhinagar or Ahmedabad were taken into preventive custody when they planned a protest outside the Vibrant Gujarat venue (Chakravartty, 2015). Cases of surveillance of even the smallest of the BBS meetings are common.[257] The use of these coercive measures has ensured that radical farmer organisations or progressive political groups barely exist in the rural politics of Gujarat (See Bedi and Tillin, 2015; Sud, 2009).

To sum up, these strategies and policies of the AES demonstrate 'a dogged capacity to exploit these same crises in the course of its own adaptive reinvention' (Peck and Theodore, 2012). The process of implementing the neoliberal project displays a 'lurching dynamic, marked by serial policy failure and improvised adaptation and by combative encounters with obstacles and counter-movements' (ibid: 178-179). What is idiosyncratic in Dholera, however, is the use of caste, religion or ethnicity by Hindutva actors to keep the neoliberal project moving.

8.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided empirical evidence towards my fourth proposition on the AES, that the AES in everyday practice constitutes and is simultaneously constituted by

[255] Interview with Bhaubhai in September and October 2017; Ashwin Mer in October 2017. All interviews in Dholera.

[256] Interview with Vijayrajshinh, December 2018.

[257] Interview with Sagar Rabari in August 2017.

intricate linkages between economic and cultural ideologies. I have shown how the ideologies come together on occasions to help each other, and how they may depart from their own principles depending on the context in which they are implemented. The chapter discussed the politics and its diffusion with the help of the state, the right-wing political party in power, caste and hindu organisations and their consequent role in diffusing the resistance by the farmers against the smart city project.

In doing this, the chapter documented the reasons behind the weak farmers' protests and why the soon to be dispossessed farmers continue to vote for the same BJP party, which is behind the project that threatens them with dispossession. In explaining the two, I have also shown that these phenomena are connected. I used two broad themes to situate these two aspects. First was the political Hindutva that adopted a range of strategies such as caste solidarity or animosity, elite co-option etc. Such cases have been documented by scholars in the Indian case and Dholera adds a number of new dimensions into the scholarship. The second theme was a form neoliberal redistribution. While scholars have spoken about such politics of distriction to thwart opposition, it does not connect farmers' resistance to the politics of delivering material concessions. In both the frameworks, I have underlined the creation of what Desai (2015) called desire and ambivalence which shape the political subjectivities of the farmers in Dholera. These subjectivities are much 'more complex and open than the binary between acquiescence and resistance would suggest.' In that case, even when a project with essential neoliberal tenets threatens to dispossess these citizen-subjects, their complex subjectivities and identifications make them ambivalent towards the project. To understand these nuances, it is important to study the everyday state and society, and my use of AES contributes here.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

I introduced the dissertation with a quote by a local farmer where he argued that the many versions of development which Dholera has been promised since the 1960s have been contradictory to the needs and wants of the local population. While some of the development projects such as the Narmada canal still remain the demand of the locals, not everyone celebrates the more recent avatars such as the smart city or the international airport. In fact, the farmer implied, various versions of development keep being imposed without consulting the locals or trying to understand their needs. More importantly, none of these versions has been delivered. This does not mean that Dholera is off the map of new development endeavours so much so that he terms them 'illusions', as the standard of living of the locals have not seen any major improvement through such projects. For him and for many Dholera natives, instead of improving their living conditions or addressing inequalities, such development projects instead create scope for more politics and often threaten to dispossess them of whatever they have.

In the preceding chapters, I have discussed the implications of these development endeavours through a close study of the role of the state in the development and delivery of Dholera smart city or the impact of such projects on the entity of the state. This was done after I laid out the case of Dholera and how the changing narratives of development in such a small place epitomises the journey of the Indian state when it comes to delivering development to its subjects. The choice of the concepts, theories or the analytical lens to a large extent was informed and guided by the field. The state was explored analytically while neoliberalism and Hindutva provided the context. In doing so, the dissertation contributed to the scholarship on all the three themes. The starting point of the dissertation

was the multifaceted nature and the contradictory practices of each of the themes. At the same time, the dissertation also involved the analysis of a set of processes and phenomena such as smart urbanism, real estate, farmers' resistance.

This concluding chapter reflects on the central themes raised in the dissertation to reiterate some of the contributions towards these concepts. The contributions to the three themes are discussed in Section 9.2. Then, Section 9.3 comments on the scope and limitations along with suggesting future directions for research.

9.2 Research findings and contributions

Overall, Dholera smart city project embodies most characteristics of neoliberalism: be it commodification of land, privatisation, or financialisation (Harvey, 2005). I have also presented a detailed picture of how Hindutva organisations, its actors or supporters have entrenched the state and the society in Dholera. As both neoliberalism and Hindutva intend to capture the state, the entity of the state became the main analytical lens while the two ideologies of neoliberalism and Hindutva provided the context for the study.

Deriving from the existing scholarship on the state, especially from the likes of Abrams (1988) and Mitchell (1991), I have argued that the state is an idea that comes into being through a set of practices as well as a lived material reality. To start with, I have taken a wider composition of the state by considering a host of actors and their practices who work in the shadow of the state. As I have illustrated in the preceding chapters, studying the everyday functioning of the state, at the ground level in Dholera or in Gandhinagar, brings dimensions that complicate a unified understanding of the state impelling us to take on board the newer intermeshing of practices and actors that have now become part of the state. To do so, I proposed the concept of the 'Actually Existing State' (AES).

In framing the proposals around the AES, I drew from Timothy Mitchell (1991, 1999) and Philip Abrams (1988) who widened our understanding of the state and its relation to society. However, when it comes to India and how the state functions in the everyday lives, I drew significantly from Barbara Harriss-White's (2003) proposed shadow state to better understand the Indian context. I put forth a set of four propositions on the AES to understand the phenomenon of Dholera. Each empirical chapter (5, 6, 7, 8) then elaborated on one or more of these propositions through the field data.

To develop the framework, I build on a wide range of literature that includes, although is not limited to, the scholarship around the concept of the state and anthropological studies of the everyday state. Through this, I pointed towards a more nuanced, situated understanding of how state policies emerge, how they take root in a particular place, their impact on the entity of the state and most importantly, the role of the ideologies, actors and practices of Hindutva and neoliberalism in the everyday workings of the state. While existing scholarship disaggregates the state's interactions with society, it does not fully explain the newly emerging interactions between the state and businesses in infrastructure projects, lubricated by right-wing religious or cultural ideologies, within the backdrop of neoliberalism. These studies in India are usually at the macro-level and fail to explain how these two projects interact in the everyday lives of state and society.

To provide a richer explanation of the processes and the shapes which both neoliberalism and Hindutva display in their endeavours, I focused on the political and social processes of capturing state institutions and organisations, rather than a specific set of policy templates. With respect to both the themes of Hindutva and neoliberalism, the dissertation focused on the idiosyncratic expressions that operate outside their ideological framework and help them successfully become entrenched a particular place. What was illustrated

particularly was a disjuncture between the ideologies that supposedly guide them and the practices which they undertake that on many occasions depart from these ideologies. Hence, a set of contradictory strategies govern the implementation of neoliberalism or Hindutva in the real world, which ultimately mediate their existence.

As both the ideologies undertake a host of contradictory measures, they depict the persistent capacity to generate their own adaptive reinvention (Brenner et al., 2010a). I have shown that the process is 'non-linear and multi-dimensional' marked by policy failures. This leads to adaptations or on occasions, combative encounters with obstacles and counter-movements and hence, the path taken is shaped by 'opportunistic moments, workarounds and on-the-hoof recalibrations' (ibid). The farmers' resistance in Dholera discussed in Chapter 8 was a perfect example for this where the neoliberal proponents, or their facilitators in the state and Hindutva organisations, use all measures of manipulation to mitigate the protest and continue the SIR project. Whereas neoliberalism may profess the removal of subsidies in agriculture, when faced with farmers' protests, its proponents would simultaneously launch policies to deliver subsidies to farmers. The empirical chapters have shown similar instances of how neoliberal actors adopt various other contradictory strategies to keep the project alive.

Scholars like Bhattacharjee (2019), Froerer (2007) and Thachil (2011) have shown how Hindutva organisations have become entrenched in various societies through local welfare services for education and health. In other cases, Longkumer (2020) has shown how similar organisations have entered newer and previously unexplored territories such as North-East India developing a set of new discourses that at times move too far from the doctrinal Hindutva proposed by the likes of Savarkar or his disciples such as Gowalkar. These practices demonstrate the myriad ways in which Hindutva entrenches itself into state

and society. Within these debates, what I illustrated are the mundane practices that Hindutva organisations undertake and present Hindutva as banal and essentially a way of life. These practices make the everyday forms of Hindutva seem 'normal' or 'nothing special'. At the same time, as I have shown these practices eventually help Hindutva to permeate different aspects of state and society while also mitigating or negotiating issues such as farmers' protests against the Dholera SIR project. Overall, due to the lack of orthodoxies, such practices cannot be categorised under a strict framework.

Through these arguments, I discussed the idiosyncratic ways which have helped Hindutva become mainstream and normalised even if in an obfuscated manners in recent years. As Anderson (2015) and Reddy (2011) have pointed out, such practices have a 'diffuse logic' that even if nebulous, may become a mediating discourse in their own right (Reddy, 2011: 421). These hybrid forms 'negotiate local legal, social, moral, and political environments in ways that variously concentrate or dilute their ideological emphases' (Reddy, 2012). However, these practices should not create an impression that Hindutva organisations are oblivious of foundational ideologies. As I have shown, the ultimate aim is to create the 'Hindu state' through whatever means possible and such departure at the level of practices depending on the context serves the larger goal.

At the same time, as I have shown throughout the dissertation, we also see a coming together of the actors and the practices of Hindutva and neoliberalism. This is not just at the level of practices. In fact, in the examples I show such as a bureaucrat justifying neoliberalism through ideologies of Hindutva in Chapter 7, the coming together occurs at multiple levels and forms.

Chapter 2 provided the conceptual theories that guided the dissertation, discussing the relevant literature across key themes. This also involved highlighting the gaps in the

existing scholarship and giving a roadmap as to how the dissertation planned to contribute towards those gaps. Beyond explaining the concept of the state as well as the AES, the chapter highlighted the focus of the research with respect to neoliberalism and Hindutva which was to identify and understand the distinctive practices that 'operate outside of the institutional and ideological framework' of such ideologies (Reddy, 2018). These practices often become the key mediating steps to entrench both the ideologies further in society.

Chapter 3 discussed the process of undertaking the research. I allowed the field to direct me towards the relevant theories instead of the other way round, ensuring a constant dialogue between my data and the theoretical concepts throughout the fieldwork. Hence, when I arrived at the site, I did not have an expectation of what the state looks like. I was guided to an understanding of the state through the practices of actors who play many roles within the state and its shadows. Hence, the site of research guided my proposal of the concept of the Actually Existing State. Thus, Chapters 2 and 3 heavily contributed to each other and eventually directed the course of the dissertation.

Chapter 4 set the background of the dissertation by situating Dholera in the history of the political economy of the province of Gujarat. It placed the three themes in the context exploring how the adoption of neoliberal policies as well as the extension of Hindutva organisations over the last few decades has increased unequal development across geographies, sectors and groups. This was explored through four key moments that symbolise how unequal development in the province has been exacerbated over the last two decades through the Gujarat model of development. The Gujarat model was one of the key factors behind Modi's 2014 electoral success when he won a massive mandate. The chapter argued that the model was marked by the intensified adoption of both Hindutva and neoliberalism that has resulted in unequal development across regions,

sectors of the economy and industries or across class, caste or religion. The chapter proposed that as unequal development is inherent in both the ideologies of neoliberalism and Hindutva, they further exacerbate societal inequalities across spheres let alone address those, justifying the youth protests with which the chapter began.

Using the lens of unequal development was important to narrate the provincial context of the dissertation, since Dholera smart city project, the key research site for the dissertation, is a representative of the Gujarat model of development. The lens also helped place Hindutva and neoliberalism in the macro-context of the province as they play key roles in the everyday lives of Dholera. The Gujarat model of development displayed the story of how a certain charismatic leader has been able to win elections despite delivering the benefit of development to a small section of society while a significant number missed out. The story of the protests led by various groups that cynically labelled 'development' as going crazy in Gujarat, provided an entry-point to an analysis of the impact of hegemony by Hindutva and neoliberalism over a certain society. As was argued in the discussion, both Hindutva and neoliberalism share resemblances over social order that one has to be satisfied with whatever endowment one has from birth as non of the ideologies are interested in redistribution of wealth.

Having established the role of neoliberalism and Hindutva in the history of the state and its development endeavours, Chapter 5 moved to the initial periods of neoliberal development at the village level in Dholera. This was to analyse the first proposition of the Actually Existing State (AES) that the state in Dholera is characterised by both formal and shadow elements. This period, with the backdrop of the ghastly communal riots of 2002, saw Hindutva leaders entering these areas to 'defend the religion of Hinduism and protect

its followers.'[258] Interestingly, the chapter showed how under the garb of working towards the Hindu faith, many of these leaders were heavily involved in real estate businesses. Here, we witness Hindutva leaders taking benefit of a neoliberal project while ensuring its extension in the area and capturing state machinery. At the same time, the neoliberal project is benefitted through the practices of Hindutva actors. Two aspects were noticeable. One is that there is an economic (and neoliberal) logic to Hindutva's practices. Second is that most of these Hindutva organisations have captured the state and its institutions and hence have managed to define how development is delivered. As the state's institutions become captured by right-wing forces, the state's monopoly over public goods ensures Hindutva's capture of the delivery of development, making the state more and more exclusive for a certain set of citizens.

Through the stories of a few mobile petty capitalists from Kutch, the chapter also showed the travel of neoliberal ideas of development. As entrepreneurs who made it 'big' in Kutch due to the policies of Narendra Modi invest their surplus in Dholera, they bring in a set of discourses where Modi is being celebrated as the icon of (neoliberal) development and someone who can 'turn sand into gold'.[259] Importantly, as capital travels along with such discourses, old networks of caste and kinship reemerge and are used in the mobility of new capital as well. Hence, the traditional forms of networks through religion, kinship or caste have been strengthened in India by furthering neoliberal capital. This theme of neoliberalism providing a platform to traditional caste, kin or religious networks has run through the dissertation.

[258] Interview with Vijayrajsinh, Dholera, August 2017.

[259] Interview with Shankar, Dholera, December 2017.

Having established the role of Hindutva actors in the local functioning of the state, Chapter 6 analysed the second proposition of the AES that a number of actors simultaneously constitute the shadow and formal elements of the state. Essentially introducing the actors of the AES, the middlemen who work in the shadow of the state while undertaking multiple roles, the chapter analysed the state through their practices. These middlemen mimic the state and straddle roles in both the formal and shadow state spaces. The impact of their practices is key to understanding the role of Hindutva in helping the neoliberal project. Through these practices, Hindutva is strengthened on the ground while the project of neoliberalism takes shape. Through the study of the middlemen's two relationships: one with the state and the second with Hindutva organisations, the chapter showed how neoliberalism and Hindutva come together on the ground. Middlemen mimic the state to appear state-like while banal forms of Hindutva provide networks that connect these actors even if they come from diverse backgrounds with disparate state or societal origins and associations. Through these practices, Hindutva is strengthened on the ground while the project of neoliberalism takes shape.

Chapter 7 undertook an ethnography at the higher echelons of the state to analyse the third proposition of the AES, that the blurred boundaries of the formal and the shadow state work together to diffuse resistance against the project or to smoothen business deals. The chapter studied the functioning of the Special Purpose Vehicle based in Gandhinagar. As its bureaucrats interact with national and transnational organisations, donor agencies and private corporations that are tasked with delivering 'development' in Dholera, a host of shadow practices emerge at multiple levels of the state. Along with the bureaucrats, the ethnography also followed the staff of AECOM, the American private consultant undertaking Programme Management of the Dholera project and based inside the DSIRDA office. This was an instance of how state entities and private corporations

straddle between state and non-state roles as lines that would have earlier demarcated such distinctions have been blurred with the coming of the neoliberal agenda. The chapter illustrated that even at the higher echelons of the state, the actors of the AES undertake a host of shadow practices to take forward the project of neoliberalism while also being guided by ideologies of Hindutva. A number of usual processes are bypassed due to the demand from the entrepreneurial zeal of the state, a key facet of neoliberalism.

While this chapter discussed how the AES undertakes shadow practices to make business deals happen, Chapter 8 documented the strategies of AES actors to mitigate farmer protests. In doing so, it focused on the fourth proposition of the Actually Existing State. The chapter explained the cause of the dispersed and weak farmers' resistance against the SIR project as well as the continued support for the BJP party in the region despite heading the provincial government that threatens the farmers' imminent dispossession. Both these causes can be attributed to the factor of disjuncture in neoliberalism and Hindutva. The strategies that the AES actors adopt to obfuscate the farmers' resistance mark a departure from the foundational principles of neoliberalism and Hindutva. In doing so, they link back to the key research question of how and why the two economic and cultural ideologies come together and help each other take root in a particular place. In the process, the chapter also contributed towards the concept of authoritarian populism and its continued relevance in rural areas that has garnered renewed scholarly attention.

Lastly, the strategies that may come across as a compromised Hindutva or as James Ferguson's (2015) 'redistributive neoliberalism' should not lead us into believing that the Gujarat state does not resort to other means (such as violence) to intimidate its subjects into compliance. As I have mentioned, there are a few accounts of farmer leaders still behind bars, while protests are strictly banned prior to political rallies or business summits.

Attacks on protestors by ‘goons’ are not uncommon. Hence, right-wing political leaders also resort to authoritarian tactics when confronted with challenges.

9.3 Scope, limitations and directions for future research

The scope of the project was to understand the role of the state in the making of Dholera smart city. In this section, I will explore the scope and limitations of the dissertation that will then lead us towards the possible directions for future research. I restricted the scope of the dissertation to answering the research questions because of the time frame within which the fieldwork and research was conducted. The Dholera project is still ongoing with some constituents put on hold and some others completely shelved. My main research was limited to the issues and events since the launch of Dholera SIR in 2009 until the time of research and writing.

The project also faces economic and investment uncertainties along with contestations from various quarters. Thus, the future of the project is unclear and with such a background, the nature of the project is likely to change. New governments at either the federal or the provincial level led by other parties may yield to the pressure of the farmers as was promised by the national leader of the Congress party, Rahul Gandhi, to the farmers of Dholera before the 2017 provincial assembly election. It may not move ahead thus resembling development projects such as the sea port or the Kalpasar dam. On the other hand, the relationship of the locals may change with the Dholera SIR authorities and some concessions could ensure further weakening of farmers’ resistance. Scholars like Levien (2018) in other case studies have previously documented such instances. This may lead to a situation where the government goes all guns blazing to implement it, as in the case of GIFT city in Gandhinagar. Hence, I do not claim that the dissertation is a complete account

of the process of delivering the project from the beginning until completion. However, the dissertation does present an elaborate picture to understand the process.

Dholera, as a case study, has its own limitations due to its unique location, both historically and geographically, in Gujarat. Hence, we cannot be sure that the politics and planning around development across the province will continue in the same manner as I have presented regarding Dholera in the dissertation. Such development projects (infrastructure projects, smart cities) ultimately represent a wide range of regulations, planning processes, and politicking with respect to resource allocations, and each one of these are peculiar to the location or the actors involved. Given the peculiarities of any place, the generalisability of many of the findings of my research can be argued to be limited. For example, one may argue that the type of land market in Dholera may not be found in another place. The history of Dholera's development has played a key role in the making of Dholera's land market. The ability to generalise can also be questioned due to the groundbreaking nature of the Dholera project. It is the first smart city to be built in greenfield in India. Notwithstanding Modi's false comparisons with Singapore or Delhi (Newsd, 2020), Dholera's scale and size is massive at 920 square kilometres, double the size of present day Mumbai.

What is however, important to underline is the fact that the specificity of a case does not prevent its usability or generalisability. I have earlier clarified (in Chapter 3) that such peculiarities of a place make it generalisable due to their links to macro-forces (Burawoy, 1998). Again, such specificity was key to the theoretical groundings around the key themes: state, neoliberalism and Hindutva. In fact, to defend the central conceptual framework of the dissertation, one needs to analyse the micro-context, be it social or political, to understand a phenomenon like Dholera. In all, should I claim that the processes

of development, the nature of the actually existing state or the disjuncture in neoliberalism or Hindutva that we witnessed in Dholera are common across Gujarat or across India? Given the history of Dholera, which is neither remarkably unique nor fully replicated, there will surely be certain elements in common with the everyday practices of neoliberalism and Hindutva elsewhere in India. More importantly perhaps, this study has shown the lengths to which neoliberalism and Hindutva can go to hegemonise the culture of both society and state, providing insights as to how India's future may be directed by both forces in the years to come.

Due to constraints of space and time, a number of possible avenues for research could not be explored in this dissertation. In elements of the fieldwork dealing with the practices of the state, I ultimately found certain shadow spaces and data to be impervious and inaccessible. For example, looking at the land buyers or the investors in the real estate projects, who exactly were the buyers? With so much black money or *benami* transactions, it was impossible to produce any paper trails in many cases. Many of the official documents on land hide more than they expose, while gossip abounds. More investigation into investment patterns concerning land in Dholera would shed more light on the Actually Existing State.

With respect to the study of Hindutva, my identity as a Muslim may have affected many of the opinions of interviewees. They may have tried to hide many of the underlying features or intentions of the project. At the same time, they may have also felt emboldened to make strong remarks knowing that I could never get closer to the facts within their organisations. Hence, many reasons underlying the actions of respondents, such as why a Talati was working with BJP leaders – was it because he was a firm believer in Hindutva or was it purely due to material needs – could not be ascertained easily. Whether

respondents held genuine beliefs in the ideologies they espoused may remain unanswered even by the most in-depth research. More pragmatically, my limited access to Hindutva networks meant that I was unable to interview some of their national level ideologues. Such interviews would have given the dissertation a much clearer picture of how central the disjuncture of Hindutva is to the ideology, or how much banal Hindutva is intended from the top, while also letting me present a clearer picture of the disjuncture.

In similar ways, more interviews with provincial cabinet ministers the bureaucrats from the higher echelons of the state who were involved in the planning of the project could shed more light on the workings of the neoliberal state. While I managed to access a few of the bureaucrats, many of them moved to the federal level once Modi became Prime Minister in 2014. I also tried to seek interviews with the Chief Minister or similar high-ranking Cabinet level ministers without success. As the heads of the DSIRDA (the SPV behind the Dholera project) kept changing each year, no one had a clear idea of where the project was heading and in that case, I focused on the governing body members' interviews. Hence, the story of neoliberal development and Hindutva's role within it may be challenged as being incomplete. However, the research doesn't claim a multi-scalar view. It is an on-the-ground perspective and hence these limitations should also be be seen from a realistic perspective.

The case of urban governance is going to be a significant issue as India goes on an urbanisation drive through its smart cities, industrial corridor or similar infrastructure projects. While I have briefly mentioned the importance of the governance model that is likely to emerge in Dholera in the form of a privately governed city jumping the usual democratic model of municipal governance in India, I did not explore it in greater detail. Closely aligned with the themes of the state, neoliberalism and even Hindutva, governance

in a smart city in the age of surveillance will be a topic of great relevance in the future. Similarly, I did not focus on aspects such as the use of smart technologies (ICTs) in the city that is to be built. The environmental questions regarding such a massive construction project are very important and certainly deserve greater research.

Another key dimension that could be explored is labour. Dholera witnesses outward migration during the non-farming months, that is three quarters of the year. A substantial number of locals, especially amongst the Kolis, travel to places such as Bhavnagar, Surat, Ahmedabad or even Mumbai in search of work. They come to back to Dholera only after the monsoon to sow crops while attending the Hindu festival of Diwali. It will be interesting to explore how the new project has affected the labour patterns of the area. This outward migration remained a historical complaint amongst local farmers who have argued that if they had access to irrigation, they could grow two-three crops a year generating sufficient livelihood. Beyond the locals' outward migration, the new constructions for the Activation Area or the real-estate townships have caused inward migration with labourers coming from other provinces to work in these construction sites. Often poorly paid and housed in shanty slums, they present a precarious existence ready to be thrown out of the sites once the construction is completed, while there is always an undercurrent tension with the locals who feel hard done by as the presence of these migrants shut out the few avenues for jobs that could open up for them.

The theme of authoritarian populism has also become significant with the rise of right-wing leaders across the world. While I did not explore the theme in this dissertation, the increasing importance of the phenomenon means that a study of Dholera or similar infrastructure projects through the lense of authoritarian populism will shed further light on our understanding of the direction in which most societies worldwide are moving.

Similarly, greater focus could be placed in telling the story of the most marginalised groups with respect to income, caste, religion as well as gender: the landless, Dalits, Muslims, or women to name a few. While I have covered some aspects of this, I did not particularly focus the study from this perspective. Amongst the marginalised, I certainly acknowledge the lack of a gendered narrative in this dissertation. I have explained the constraints with respect to accessing female interviewees and hearing their stories in Chapter 3 and I agree that their involvement in the research would have opened many more avenues. Women are part of a whole set of discourses – their purity being a marker for community honour, especially amongst Darbars. The right-wing Hindutva followers use the same narrative of cultural purity. However, in the few occasions when women use their agency to oppose the smart city project (as illustrated in Chapter 8), they provide a crucial understanding of the dynamics and a possible stronger window to resistance. Thus, the story remains partial and the perspective offered on the project may come across as limited.

These limitations or gaps in the dissertation open up the scope for future research, be it on the Dholera smart city or on the three themes of the dissertation. Further research may provide more refined versions of the project that can complement the research I have submitted. The specific role or the outcome of these themes will be of great interest across a number of disciplines and relevant to a wide global audience.

In similar ways, a number of questions emerge from my dissertation that may require further validation opening up opportunities for future research. The first question that could be asked is about the changes that must have taken place over the last few years, as BJP becomes a hegemonic power across the country winning elections in province after province. Does this mean a replication of the pattern of Hindutva and neoliberalism capturing the state in other provinces? Or does this mean we will have similar disjuncture

although across different variables? How will development projects in the form of infrastructure building or smart cities bring out new modes of state practices amid disjuncture in neoliberalism or Hindutva? At the same time, as both Hindutva and neoliberalism become hegemonic and as the state and society are captured by these forces, do these ideologies go back to their orthodox foundations to usher in a 'purer' form when the compulsion to negotiate does not remain? How do these forces act in places (for example in the province of Assam) where the arrival of Hindutva forces is much more recent, while political compulsions ensure the continuation of many provisions of the welfare state? The reach of Hindutva is becoming increasingly tangible as these newly conquered places too witness the leviathan that the state is, acquiring massive tracts of land for private corporations that have close associations with Hindutva forces. Answers to such questions will become increasingly important in what is probably going to be be a gloomy future when these forces retain and strengthen their hold in power. However, the answers may possibly provide some ammunition to disparate groups to fight, resist or at least register their existence.

Appendix: The composition of Dholera Special Investment Region Development Authority

Introduction

Dholera Special Investment Region Development Authority (DSIRDA) came into existence soon after the launch of the Dholera SIR project in early 2009. The provincial Government constituted the DSIRDA *for the development of Dholera SIR and to prepare the land use plan, town-planning scheme and the development plan for the SIR* (GoG, 2009). Another important institution, Dholera Industrial City Development Limited (DICDL) was formed in January 2016, as a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) that will take the project forward as the role of DSIRDA will be over after the preparation of the above documents. The staffs as well as the responsibilities of the DSIRDA were to be transferred to DICDL. This was also required because the federal government announced INR 900 crores in 2015 for the start of work on site and an institutional structure was required to give the federal government its stake in the project. The SPV has a 51% stake of the Government of Gujarat (through DSIRDA) and a 49% stake of Government of India through Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor Development Corporation Ltd (DMICDC). DMICDC is the SPV formed to deliver the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor. Figure 1 illustrates the ownership of the DICDL.



Figure 10.1: Ownership structure of DSIRDA/DICDL

However, recurrent delays in every stage meant that the DICDL was not functional until Shivahare joined in August 2017. Hence, when I was studying the organization, Shivahare was working to structure the DICDL and getting the staff onboard. I prefer to use DSIRDA, as it was more representative of what was going on. The composition of the Governing Body Members for DICDL has changed from the DSIRDA. While DSIRDA had mostly bureaucrats and advisors of the provincial government, the DICDL has three representatives from provincial administrations (Serial number 1 to 3), another three from the DMICDC (serial number 4 to 6) and two independent directors representing the Planning department and private sector Industries individually.

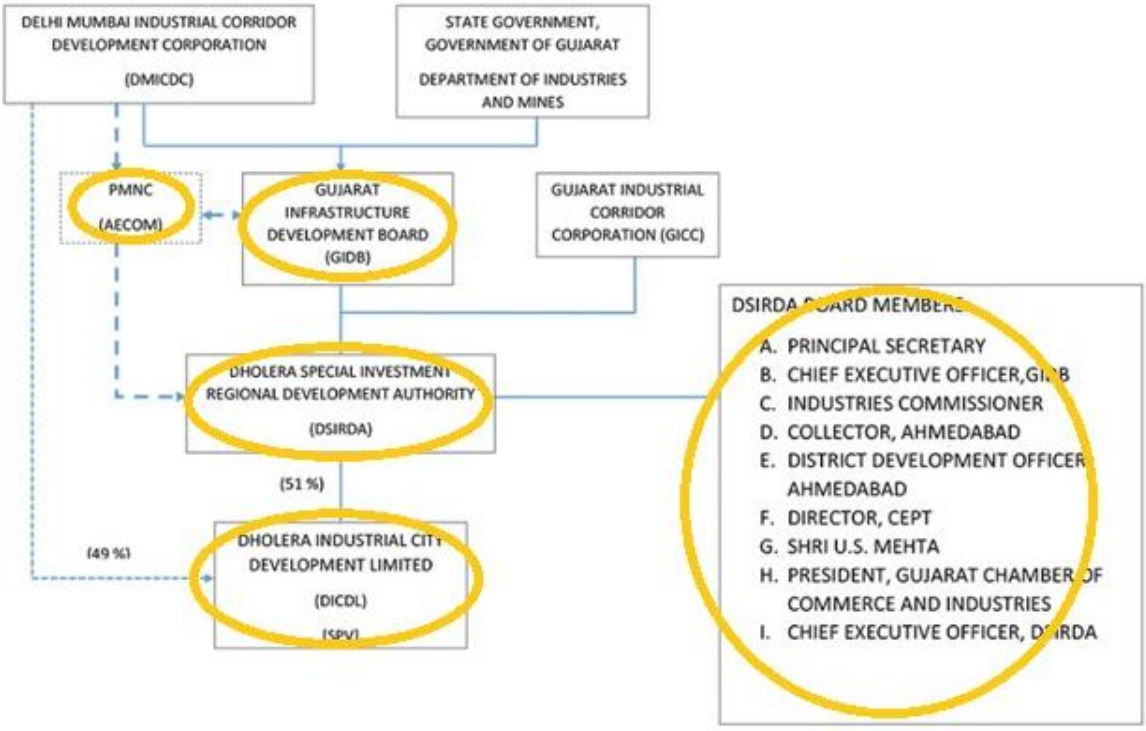


Figure 10.2: Organisational structure of DSIRDA. I interviewed officials and bureaucrats working in the units circled in yellow

Board Members of DSIRDA/DICDL (as of January 2020)

Sr. No.	Title	Position
1	Principal Chief Secretary Industries and Mines department Government of Gujarat	Chairperson
2.	Chief Executive Officer Gujarat Infrastructure Development Board	Member
3.	Industries Commissioner	Member
4.	Collector, Ahmedabad	Member
5.	District Development Officer, Ahmedabad	Member
6.	Director, School of Planning, Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology (CEPT), Ahmedabad	Member
7.	U. S. Mehta (retired Town Planner)	Member
8.	President, Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industries	Member
9.	**Chief Executive Officer, DSIRDA**	**Member Secretary**

Table 10.1: Board Members of DSIRDA/DICDL

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