

Common Property Resource Management in Transitional Villages

(Sub-theme: Governance, Conflict and Institutional Reform)

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Abstract

Reality today is one of rapid and expanding processes of urbanization, globalization and industrialization resulting in a constant flow of information, money, objects, ideologies, and people. It is crucial to understand the ambiguous complexity that arises from the nexus of such flows and dynamics. These flows increase interactions and heterogeneity, change social relations and communities, and reshape identities and boundaries. Within this nexus, societies are becoming more and more transitional, to varying degrees and forms. It tends to complicate social transformations, each and every society, to various degrees and brings significant changes in almost every aspect of social life.

This paper is an attempt to grasp the complex dynamics that characterize transitional societies in relation to the impact on the management of common property resources due to the transitions in social, economic, political, and cultural processes and conditions. The study of common property resources today focus on communities those are reasonably free of the influence of significant externally induced change. These external interactions bring changes that, directly or indirectly, undermine common property systems and weaken the possibility for collective action. The transitions are economic socio-cultural and political in nature and tend to influence all spheres of village life.

This paper helps to identify potential vulnerable areas in the management of common property resources in the transitional villages especially the decrease in the perceived need to rely on local resources; change in the individual preferences; enhanced economic, social, and geographical mobility of the villagers; high opportunity costs of social arrangements to manage local resources; gradual loss of common interests and group identity, and integration to the market that encourages higher spending and an increasing desire for immediate consumption. The shape and the role of the institutions managing commons under such circumstances have been under-conceptualized. The paper attempts to examine the characteristics of the CPR institutions in the changing scenarios and the need for support mechanisms for effective governance of the commons.

Key words: Commons, Globalization, Transition, Institutions, India

Theme: The Commons in an age of Global Transition: Challenges, Risks and Opportunities

Sub-theme: Governance, Conflict and Institutional Reform

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Introduction: The Importance of the Context

According to the Oxford Companion to Politics, globalization can be conceived as a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions, expressed in transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction and power (David Held and Anthony McGrew, 2003). Globalization constitutes a multiplicity of linkages and interconnections that transcend the nation states (and by implication the societies) which make up the modern world system. It defines a process through which events, decisions and activities in one part of the world can come to have a significant consequence for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the globe (Anthony McGrew). While Anthony Giddens² defines globalization as a decoupling of space and time, emphasizing that with instantaneous communications, knowledge and culture can be shared around the world simultaneously. According to Ruud Lubbers, globalization is the process in which geographic distance becomes a factor of diminishing importance in the establishment and maintenance of cross border economic, political and socio-cultural relations.

In the current debate on globalization, some assert that globalization will spread economic prosperity; others conclude that it will improve lives; still others believe that it will promote cultural exchange; and some suggest that globalization carries an array of non-economic benefits, notably, an accelerated transition towards democratization. Globalization, according to development theory and policy, gives rise to a concomitant cultural disintegration, economic inequality and the fragmentation of governance. While many authors offer analyses of globalization's political, economic, and cultural failings; the exploitative and volatile features still persist; and the present systems continue to deepen existing inequalities and create new ones, the present trend in globalization process still continues to perpetuate the patterns of unequal development, environmental deterioration, and hegemonic cultural influence as in the post-industrial revolution era.

Globalization intensifies coupling and renders local institutions increasingly vulnerable. Within this nexus, societies are becoming more and more transitional, to varying degrees and forms. Present-day transitional societies are uniquely at the expression of and catalyst for contemporary globalization processes. The transitions we experience are economic, political as well as socio-cultural in nature. The imperatives of marketization, privatization, and liberalization coincide with the development of

² Giddens defines globalization as a social process which results in: "... larger and larger numbers of people living in circumstances in which disembedded institutions, linking local practices with globalised social relations, organise major aspects of day-to-day life." B.B.C. Reith Lecture 1999 titled: [A Runaway World](#).

multicultural/multi-ethnic societies created by urbanization and immigration. Local rules with emphasis on “how” people should use rather than “how much” break down in most modern circumstances subject to market pressures (Berkes, 2002). To grasp the complex dynamics that characterize transitional societies, and the way that they influence/affect common property resource management is a matter of study in terms of the manifestations in social, economic, political, and cultural processes at various levels.

Present reality in India and elsewhere, is one of rapid, expanding, and diverse global flows of objects, information, money, images, ideologies, and people. These flows increase interactions and heterogeneity, change social relations and communities, and reshape identities and boundaries. In a globalizing world, it is crucial to understand the ambiguous complexity that arises from the nexus of these rapid flows and dynamics. In a time when rapid global flows intensify and complicate social transformations, each and every society, to various degrees, face significant changes in almost every aspect of social life.

With such influences, societies are becoming more and more transitional, to varying degrees and forms. In this respect, I think transitional villages are a general indication of the fundamental changes of the societies in which we live and they reflect the dilemmas that the contemporary globalization processes bring along. This paper attempts to analyze the impact of globalization on the common property resources and the institutions managing the same. The shape and the role of the institutions managing commons under such circumstances have been under-conceptualized, though some work has gone into the management of urban commons. Most of the studies of common property resources focus on communities those are reasonably free of the influence of significant externally induced change, i.e. the studies present a relative isolation of the insiders from the outside world. These external interactions bring changes that, directly or indirectly, undermine common property systems and weaken the possibility for collective action. The transitions tend to influence all spheres of village life.

The first part of this paper attempts the deconstruction of the concept of “community” in transitional villages, the second part attempts to examine the characteristics of the CPR institutions in the changing scenarios and the third part looks at the institutional design and their fit with the communities and the resources involved.

Understanding Transitional Villages

Drawing on Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined Communities"³, recent work in anthropology and sociology has begun to explore the relationship between culture and community. Central to new understanding of community is the re-imagining of community not as homogeneous group of people with shared values and interests but rather as an arena of contestation and the struggles that makes up people's everyday lives. In this process of contestation, communities are created, not as remnants of perceived primordial relations characteristic to an earlier era, but as fluid associations formed through processes of cultural struggles in the contest of unequal power.

Critical to the understanding of common property and the resources is the concept of community. According to the general feasibility theorem⁴, if the individual in a group know one another well, can observe one another's behaviours, and anticipate a continuing relationship with one another, then social norms can sustain any pattern of group behaviour, provided it makes each individual better off than he would be without the group. When we go from small groups into larger social structures, however the assumption that every one can observe everyone else may cease to hold, and general feasibility can fail (Myerson 1999)⁵. Further Ostrom (1998) also puts it as "if appropriators can engage in face-to-face bargaining and have autonomy to change their rules, they may attempt to organize themselves. Whether they organize depends on attributes of the resource system and the appropriators themselves that affect the benefits to be achieved and the costs of achieving them".

To analyze the context of transitional villages, it is essential to define the community - as the notion of community lies in the very concept of commons. By "transitional villages", I refer to the villages which are moving towards urbanization or under urban influence. These villages, under an influence of urbanization, are in complex interaction with the external factors bring in transitions in social, economic, political, and cultural processes and conditions. The transitions are manifolds impacting economic, socio-cultural and political spheres of community life.

³ Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism by Benedict Anderson Verso Books; Revised edition (July 1991)

⁴ The general feasibility theorem (otherwise called "*Folk theorem*") can be interpreted as a statement about the power of social norms in small groups, such as families, partnerships, and cliques (groups).

⁵ Myerson, Roger B. (1991) Game Theory, Analysis of conflict, Cambridge, Harvard University Press in Marco Casari, 2000, Who needs Formal Regulations to Manage the Commons? The Rural Charters in Northern Italy.

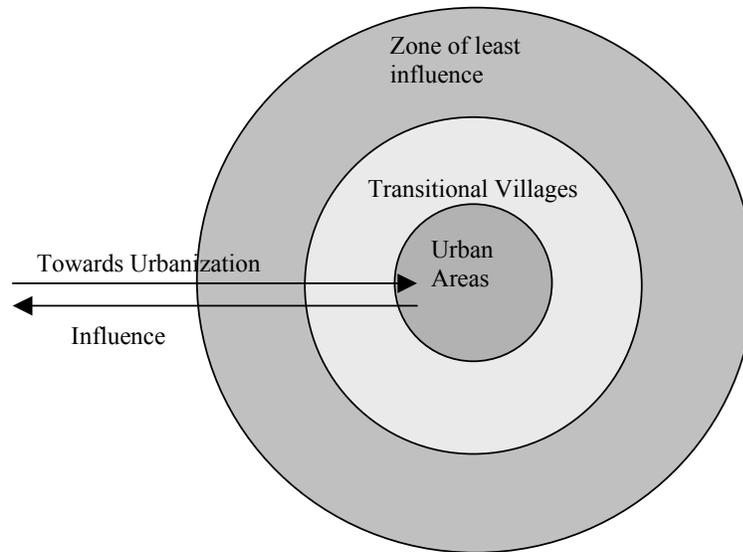


Figure-1: The figure is a simplistic depiction of the segregation of the societal structure in terms of urban areas, the interior rural villages and the mainstream/ transitional villages sandwiched in between. These villages are in continuous interaction with the urban areas and are in transition towards urbanization. The market and the processes of globalization are the major influencing factors in the change.

Market integration tends to impact local social relations in three ways that undermine the potential for local common property resource management by expanding non-local demand for local resources; by enhancing economic, social, and geographical mobility, and thereby decreasing the perceived need to rely on local resources or social arrangements with local people; and by bringing changes in individual preferences that require higher spending and an increasing desire for immediate consumption (Baland and Platteau 1986). As group members become integrated to the market in different ways and to different extents, the group may become increasingly differentiated and members may lose their common interests and group identity.

As I delve further into understanding the differentiation in the communities - influenced by a constant flow of information, money, objects, and ideologies; greater physical mobility of the villagers, the togetherness (collective action) seems to whither away and individual preferences gain prominence. These tend to change social relations, weaken the possibility for collective action and even fragment once cohesive groups because of high opportunity cost of social arrangements to manage local resources. As the mobility of villagers' increase towards the urban areas, there is also an influence of ideas and perspectives from the potential role models. The world views of globalization and consumerism, the emerging viewpoint of profits, monetization and economic orientation of goods and services together with the influence of growing thoughts of environmentalism and conservationist.

These differentiation increase the chances of conflict among market-oriented and subsistence-oriented producers with the emergence of additional pressure on resources from the external forces.

Institutions and Institutional Evolution

This paper explores the effects of the rural transformations in India, with a particular focus on the institutional dynamics surrounding the use of common-pool resources and is conceived to provide a comparative assessment of change in the approach to the management of common property resources in the interior villages, urban areas and the transitional villages. This paper looks specifically into how the institutional evolution caused by globalization and liberalization that has brought a reconfiguration of 'governance' on common-pool resources.

Natural resources, in general, can be held under any one of the three property regimes: Communal Property, Private property and State Property. The policy in India has assumed two options: Private or State Property: and all the natural resources are held under state property guided by various laws and guidelines. The emergence of Joint Forest Management in India has brought in another form of property regime - "Contractual Property Regime" where agreements are negotiated between the forest department and the communities to form Van Suraksha Samitis (VSS) for managing the resources (Singh 2004). In such an environment where the forests continue to be managed by the forest department and the revenue lands by the revenue department, the resources are "**assumed commons**" and not commons in reality (Singh 2003, 2004). The state property continue to be used either as open access or as common property resources by the people in the interior rural areas but the type of property regime plays a significant factor in the use of the resources especially in the urban areas and in the transitional villages.

The management of these resources is multi-faceted and vast differences exist from place to place in socio-cultural, political, economic and environmental contexts. Natural resource base, patterns of use, institutional arrangements and values that shape management decisions contrast markedly across the different levels of urban influence. As privatization and decentralization transform the rural landscapes and agrarian relations, the commons in the transitional villages are susceptible to get over-exploited, degraded or encroached. In socialist states like India, the state has taken up large-scale initiative in land reforms, often as a measure to provide the land-less with some land for subsistence. The state has even gone in for the regularization of encroachments of government lands as welfare measures. The process of regularization has further triggered more encroachments, thus reducing the availability of commons. Under such circumstances, powerful actors extend their control over commons beyond the

level foreseen in property reforms. They tend to refuse to assume responsibility for duties associated with resource rights and are subject to an enclosure-type movement, as powerful private actors seize control over valuable resources to the detriment of collective and public interests (Stark 1996⁶). While this has led to a breakdown of the CPR systems in many transitional villages, the pragmatic evolutions of institutional mechanisms in some have resulted in reviving and managing the commons in many other villages.

Table-1: A comparative analysis of institutional attributes across the management of common property resources in remote (uninfluenced) villages, transitional villages and in the urban areas.

Attributes	Interior / Remote Villages	Transitional Villages	Urban Areas
Orientation of use	Subsistence view point, Distribution orientation	Economic view point, monetary orientation	Aesthetic view point, Conservation orientation
Institution	Informal Institutions	Formal/Legitimate Institutions	State/ State sponsored Institutions
Decision Making	General Body	Executive Committee	Elected Representatives (1/10000 or more)
Conflict Resolution	Within	Resolved by support structures	State sponsored support structure
Protection	(Rotational Protection) Thengapali	Watchman/Social Watch	State
Influence of Market	Little/No influence	Moderate/ Increasing influence	Market Controlled
Property Rights (tenure)	Assumed commons	Legal tenure – uncontested regimes	State as tenurial right holder
Governance	Self-Governance	Governance through state recognized legitimate institutions	Governance by State
Dependence on biophysical resource	High dependence – economically and culturally across various strata	Dependence varies across various strata – poor are still dependent for subsistence and economic needs, rich may not be dependent or see as economic opportunity.	No direct dependence, dependence is for aesthetic reasons or for pleasure.
Reaction of Stakeholders to damage (Broken CPRs)	Livelihood Crisis – Revival	No Impact, Tend to seize rights on the resources in small and interior villages either through force or influence.	No Impact
Nestation	Self governed, natural nesting – watershed, caste groups, marriage boundary	Apathy	State Structures nested in larger governance structures

⁶ In “The Commons In Transition” by Thomas Sikor in 'Central and Eastern European Sustainable Agriculture' (CEESA) Discussion Paper no. 10 | 2002

The shape and the role of the institutions managing commons under such circumstances have been under-conceptualized. The paper attempts to examine the characteristics of the institutions in the changing scenarios for effective governance of the commons with a comparative analysis of institutional attributes across the management of common property resources in remote (uninfluenced) villages, transitional villages and in the urban areas.

The evolution of institutional mechanisms depend on contextual factors that define -

- What is physically, legally, economically and socially *feasible* in terms of the improved communication and interaction with urban centers,
- What is economically, socially and culturally *desirable*, in the changing individual preferences due to enhanced mobility of the villagers, high opportunity costs of social arrangements to manage local resources and gradual loss of common interests and group identity, and
- What is institutionally *viable*, especially with the decrease in the perceived need to rely on local resources and a revision of the *decision-making arrangements* governing the resource.

In this section I attempt to see how the evolution of the institutions have taken place and attempt to identify potential vulnerable areas in the management of common property resources in the transitional villages. The paper attempts to examine the characteristics of the CPR institutions in the changing scenarios and the need for support mechanisms for effective governance of the commons.

Social Transformation and Governance of Commons

Whenever a society is moving from one stage of development to the next, it involves a major transformation. It isn't just an incremental improvement or the healing of a dysfunction. It isn't just learning a new skill or adopting a better public policy. For individuals, it involves a profound change in the fundamental way the person perceives themselves and the world and their behavior. For societies, it involves an equally profound change in fundamental values and social structures. The transformation may be painful because it involves the breakdown of many of our current ways of operating; there may be breakdown of the existing institutional structures; and much that exists may fail and be lost.

The social transformations characterized by collectivity, interconnectedness and inclusiveness help in building on the existing structures and avoid environmental or other destruction. In the realm of such transition, the incremental accumulation of day to day decisions represents the social transformation as communities have evolved through time. The bits and pieces become a part of a whole fabric by virtue of a coordinated unfolding of the transition. The social structures and the operations affect the physical

transformation of resource systems, and by virtue of the incremental addition of agreements, decisions and their implementing actions lead to social transformation of the society.

The communities especially nearer to the urban areas are always in the midst of a transition brought about by the influence of the urbanization and globalization processes that have captured the thinking of the urban minds. The social transformations brought about by such processes are characterized by dispersed growth, individual focussed, driven by external factors and confrontation of existing policies often lead to breakdown of existing structures, destruction of resources and inequitable growth. In such cases the common property resources are susceptible to a high probability of the destruction.

	Attributes	Changes occurring in Transitional Villages	Impact on the Governance of Common Property resources
Social Transformation	Changing cultural attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tends to be individualistic, • neglect of collectivity – the economics of coming together is quite high. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure of collective choice arrangements
	Changing actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urges for personal growth, • competition, break down of relationships – friendship, personal, work relationships etc. • Conflicts go beyond communities for resolution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal power struggles, breakdown of or serious threat to the existing structures. • Need for agreement/ coherence between village rules with the laws that govern the state.
	Changing practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monetization of commodities, • simpler practices like auctions, over-pricing to reduce use, • sale for increasing village funds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in Conflicts, • Destruction of the resources, • Increase in inequity
	Changing policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confrontation of existing policies, existence of informal rules denied or over-ruled. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for rationalization of rules and regulations
	Changing social structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple leaders, internal power struggles, • unresolved personal conflicts, and • poor understanding of organizational process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges for informal institutions, • need for legitimate institutions, • breakdown of conflict resolution mechanisms- need for the state to step in.

According to Vincent Ostrom (1968) every new physical solution, every new technological development must be accompanied by a new political solution, a new institutional arrangement. Meeting the criteria of technical feasibility is only one condition to be met in developing any resource system as part of the human endeavor. The criteria of economic feasibility, financial feasibility, legal feasibility, and political feasibility must all be met. These criteria relate primarily to the coordination and integration of each new enterprise into the institutional configuration of human society as a going concern.

There is a need to foster social transformation in order to create healthy alternatives to the current society—in attitudes, actions, practices, policy or social structures. Organisations are an integral part of society as they assume the responsibility for growth and development of the domain in which they operate (Khandwalla, 1988)⁷. Continuous improvement in the application of the alternatives helps in developing and designing effective social structures. In smaller institutions, individuals have considerable autonomy, considerable voice in community affairs, and can enforce fair, responsive and even self-effacing decisions (Richerson, *etal* 2001). These institutions have self-enforcing rules that are applied without external authority interventions and is acceptable among the users.

In the other extreme are the institutions in the urban settings where governments act as common property institutions (Bromley 1991, Clapp & Meyer 2000). The rules of the institutions comply with the state laws and the communities and individuals have little autonomy or voice in affairs of the management of the resources. However, individuals have considerable autonomy to participate in the larger democratic processes of representation to influence the institutions through larger consensus. The resources are usually managed for public purpose or for larger good, as the resources are either of global, national or regional significance.

The mainstream/transitional villages religious leaders, village elders, local politicians or the influential elites in the village often are in the seat of decision making and they are in a position to convince villagers that these decisions are in the interests of the larger community. The larger community also accepts the arrangement as it enables low-cost compliance with management decisions, and the results are achievable by means of ordinary political activities or the clout of the leaders. At their most functional, symbolic institutions, formal rules and regulations⁸, effective leadership, and smooth

⁷ Khandwalla, P.N. 1988. Organisational Behaviour for Social Development: a position paper. International Studies of management and organization, 18: 6-44 in **Rekha Singal and Parul Rishi, Conflicts in institutional development: implications for joint forest management. Forests, Trees and Livelihoods, Volume 13 No 3 (2003)**

⁸ With the term formal regulations I refer to the presence of rules with legal value whose enforcement is guaranteed by the threat of a court injunction. In general, formal regulations can either come from an authority external to the users or be set

articulation of social segments can roughly simulate the governance mechanisms as conceptualized for ideal communities that are reasonably free of the influence of significant externally induced change.

Institutions in these mainstream/transitional villages are seldom in their ideal states. Individuals, especially the disadvantaged groups lose their voice or get sidelined in the process of decision-making processes. More still, the trust in the institution by individuals and within groups declines with the centralization of powers in a few hands resulting in the reduction of cooperation among individuals and/or groups. Trust varies considerably in these transitional institutions/villages, and variation in trust seems to be the main cause of differences in the robustness of the self-managed institutions. Where the trust breaks down, conflicts begin to occur more frequently and the resolution of such conflicts becomes difficult to manage within the local institutions. As a result of the evolutionary history of such institutions, it is almost difficult to revive the trust and demand cooperation among its constituent members. In such contours, the survival of the institutions and the resources lie in their adaptability to migrate into the formal/legitimate institutions adequately supported by the larger governance structures of the state. It has been well established that successful commons management on any scale requires a system of legitimate institutions (Richerson, *et al* 2001).

Markets and Governance of Commons

Increasing integration with market usually has an adverse impact on the management of common pool resources, especially when roads begin to integrate distant resource systems and their users with other users and market. As local economies become better connected to larger markets and common property systems confront cash exchanges, subsistence users are likely to increase harvesting levels because they can exploit resources for cash income as well (Agarwal 2003). The commons today are in grave danger as the market relentlessly attacks it - the market takes valuable stuff from the commons and tends to privatize it. Much that is called 'growth' today is actually a form of cannibalization in which the market diminishes the commons, more so in the transitional villages which are particularly exposed.

The arrival of market and the change it arouses in existing resource management regimes, is not a smooth transformation. Usually, it is likely to create different incentives for different people for the products that it generates. It is likely to bring about a change in the local power relations as different subgroups within a group using a common pool resource gain different types of access and maneuver

up by the users themselves. On the contrary, informal institutions are self-enforcing rules that can be applied without external authority interventions. In short, they are equilibria of a game among the users (Casari, 2000).

to ensure their share. In many cases, like in India, the market tends to gain access to a particular common pool resource in alliance with state to privatise the commons or defend the primacy of their claims. The state itself gets involved in the privatization of commons and promotes the sale of products from resources that were earlier under common property arrangements. The assumed nature of the common property resources facilitates such privatization by the state with ease.

	Attributes	Changes occurring in Transitional Villages	Impact on the Governance of Common Property resources
Markets	Increasing economic benefits/profits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monetization of resources, • Market dominance - low priority for subsistence needs, New demand pressures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deterioration/degradation of resources as consumer behavior is guided mainly by demand function • Privatization of commons/ resources,
	Increasing Communication Patterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid influence of urbanization, • multiplicity of linkages and interconnections, geographic distance becomes less important, promote cultural exchange, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hegemonic cultural influence, • promotion of contemporary globalization processes,
	Increasing alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge and culture shared • rapid, expanding, and diverse global flows of objects, information, money, images, ideologies, and people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • economic inequality, • gain from different types of access,
	Increasing threat to collectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gives rise to a concomitant cultural disintegration, • deepen existing inequalities and create new ones, • perpetuate the patterns of unequal development, the exploitative and volatile features still persist; • fragmentation of governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • change in social relations and communities • Increased interactions leading to heterogeneity, • Local institutions increasingly vulnerable
	Increasing Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in local power relations, coercive governance, environmental deterioration, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept of global commons, national/ State property coming in • Centralization in decision-making,

The manifestation of the market influence is seen in the change in individual preferences; enhanced economic, social, and geographical mobility of the villagers; high opportunity costs of social arrangements to manage local resources; gradual loss of common interests and group identity, and decrease in the perceived need to rely on local resources. The market forces use coercion in transitional societies to build on or create imperfections in social arrangements. The large-scale benefits of collectivity, depicted through cooperation, coordination, and interconnectedness cease to exist in the alluring temptations of the coercive market forces to dispossess the community by individuals, reciprocators, organized groups, and people with special access. Many of the transitional villages tend to get coerced and the people tend to accept subaltern structures as a permanent state of affairs without protest.

A number of social scientists from different disciplines have noted that problems in markets, or exchange systems, lead to the creation of non-market institutions. That is, when people can obtain the goods and services they require by direct exchange with others, they will do so, but when exchange or transactions are difficult, people will turn to other kinds of institutions to do the same (Sikor 2002). The threat in the transitional villages lie in the fact that with globalization people tend to obtain goods and services more easily and therefore the individuals tend to lose interest in the institutions meant to regulate the use and availability of goods and services. This is a gradual process and is often difficult to identify a point where the change occurs.

The process of globalization has brought about larger stakes in the local resources. For example, the forests within the village are no longer a local resource/ property instead they have gained importance as state property conserved for benefit of the nation as a whole and at the larger level it is conserved as global commons for the larger benefit/survival of mankind. The market, in most cases, is responsible for determining the stakeholders on the resource. The scarcer the goods are and more important the goods become for human beings, more complex is the stakeholder regime on the resource.

Property regime and Governance of Commons

According to the public trust doctrine, the concept that government owes its citizens special duties of stewardship regarding common property resources, which the state holds in trust for the public. At this most basic level, the public trust doctrine holds that government must act as a trustworthy in its management of the resources which constitute the corpus of the trust. The beneficiaries of the trust are the citizens of the state, including future generations. Common property resources are held by the

states in their sovereign capacity and are subject to the public trust (Cook 1993). The tragedy of the situation lies in the fact that most state property regimes are examples of state's reach exceeding its grasp. The state has taken on far more resource management authority than they can be expected to carry out effectively (Bromley & Cernea 1988, Singh 2003). On one hand, the communities in different parts took control of the resources to protect and use the resources for its benefits (which I refer to as "*assumed commons*") and on the other hand, with the state realizing it difficult to manage the resources itself has initiated the process of decentralization or devolution of the management of the resources.

The other tenet of the theory of common property resources is that private property rights conserve natural resources because the owners of those resources have an incentive to protect them. By contrast, the absence of secure property rights results in high transaction costs, mal-distribution and overexploitation. It is generally felt that the threats from externalities emerge from incomplete, insecure property rights or a complete absence of property rights. Unfortunately, private property rights do not always result in the conservation of resources and people can and will over-exploit resources they own privately, even when property rights are secure under influence of the external sources especially markets.

It requires to be understood that property rights may not be the panacea that can solve the problems of commons, but I think that solution works for the large majority. It should certainly be the first thing tried, as it is a solution that promotes liberty and rule of law. It provides groups and individuals with the rights to access, reduction in conflicts, development of a bundle of rights and duties and determine the distribution of benefit and cost originating from a natural resource. Property rights have become the site of political negotiations between governments and communities, as illustrated by the debates between self-initiated forest protection groups and the state in terms of the ownership over the forest resources in the eastern regions India (Singh 2003, Nayak 2003).

In areas where the reach of the State is weak, local actors defy state property claims in an outright manner. The communities in various parts of the country have shown examples of such claims and have even challenged the state of its rights to stake a claim over the resources protected by the forests (Singh 2003).

	Attributes of Property regimes	Changes occurring in Transitional Villages	Impact on the Governance of Common Property resources
Property Regime	Territorialization⁹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decollectivisation, classification and allocation of resources • Conflicts due the failure of recognition of overlapping boundaries and claims at multiple levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instead of complete shift from public to private property ownership-a complex hybrid of the two emerge – Contractual Property Regimes. • Fragmentation of the resource, difficult to manage as landscapes.
	Ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tends to get privatized in case of state controlled commons (encroachments). • Local institution controlled resources tend to survive better. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling legislation for tenure/ state initiative to conserve. • State legitimatization of local institutions • Long term plans and investments.
	Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encroachment as a right • Decreasing respect for others' rights • Rights without duties – increasing dependence on state 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shrinking commons • Contestation of rights • Opportunities for evolution in governance
	Access¹⁰	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polarization of access, • powerful tends to dominate. • Contestation of traditional and legal rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inequities • Breakdown of governance mechanisms
	Regulated behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competing demands – contrasting view points • High transaction cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutions for cross-scale linkages • Resource base may suffer

In case of transitional villages, conflicts between various groups and stakeholders bring the role of the state into prominence. Clearer property regimes and legitimate institutions have been observed to help in managing the commons better and to be able to retain the commons as commons. In the absence of such clear property regimes the commons get dismantled and the rural people increasingly contest legal property rights over commons. And those with sufficient power have expanded their appropriation of resource benefits and control over resource assets beyond the degree defined by any legislation.

⁹ Territorialisation has been referred to by Sowerwine, Jennifer C. 2004, Nancy Lee Peluso 2003.

¹⁰ Ribot, Jesse C. and Nancy Lee Peluso define access as “the ability to derive benefits from things,” broadening from property’s classical definition as “the right to benefit from things.”

With increasing influence of market, individuals tend to grab more lands to hold extensive rights and they tend to justify their claims with a vision of land restitution by the state (as in India) that does not only return land to its encroachers but also guarantees them the same rights as they enjoy for private property. Differences in governance systems are juxtaposed by variation in the gap between property legislation and rights-in-practice (Sikor 2002).

Conclusion

According to Baden and Noonan (1998) “As commons become imperiled, overexploited, or otherwise degraded, entrepreneurs and managers see opportunities to implement creative conservation rules. ... Political entrepreneurs frequently promulgate laws and regulations in response to the onset of the tragedy. ... Also, business entrepreneurs, community leaders, and other private parties create value for themselves, their community, and society at large by inventing new practices in the commons”. Though the statement holds good for most of the villages, it is seldom true for the mainstream / transitional villages.

The transitional villages put forth a problem of unique complexity and diversity and bring in contextual factors that define the shape and behavior of the common property resource institutions. External factors such as inappropriate state laws and interventions, market integration, and increased encroachment by individuals threaten the existence of the common property resources. Certain questions emerge – Should the state take over the management of the commons as in the case of the urban areas? Should the property be devolved to the communities? Would such communities be able to manage the resources? These questions present a dilemma in the institutional structure governing commons in such villages. The transitional villages need to respond to the challenges of social transformation brought about due to globalization, market forces and the changing property regimes.

Firstly, the transitional villages present a mediocre form of institution usually dominated by local politicians or the influential elites in the village, who are often in the seat of decision making and they are in a position to convince villagers that these decisions are in the interests of the larger community. Though such institutions enable low-cost compliance with management decisions, the institutions deteriorate in terms of participation of its members in decision making, transparency and accountability to its own members. This is because of the social transformations taking place due to the influx of people and ideas both from the urban areas and the interior rural villages, these villages lose their basic character of small groups and thereby the processes. With increasing population and diversity of people coming in, it is difficult on the individuals in a group to know one another well, observe one

another's behaviours, and anticipate a continuing relationship with one another. The market tends to influence such institutions negatively by promoting individualism and the concept of profits. The common property institutions require institutional adjustments to cope with the economic and political assault of the markets. In such evolutionary nature of such villages, it is almost difficult to command trust and demand cooperation among its constituent members. In such situations, the survival of the institutions and the resources lie in their ability to migrate into the formal/legitimate institutions adequately supported by the larger governance structures of the state. By legitimate institutions I mean structures approved under law where the rules and regulations have legal value whose enforcement is guaranteed by the threat of a court injunction.

Secondly, there is a need for the village laws to be in consonance with the 'constitutional' rules accepted by the state. When conflicts occur, the resolution of conflicts becomes difficult to manage within the local institutions and there is a need for strong support structures of the state to resolve the conflicts and help the village institutions survive. The lack of such support may threaten the existence of the resource and the institutional arrangements. The conflicts in the interests also may lead individuals to loose interest in the institutions and thereby leading to the breakdown of the common property institutions. Clearer property regimes and legitimate institutions may help in managing the commons better. The threat lies in the fact that with social transformation in such villages globalization is leading individuals to protect the resource with diverse objectives varying from aesthetic reasons to that of basic needs.

Thirdly, the dominant market forces tend to put extreme pressure on the limited resources – mainly promoting economic opportunity and profits. The transitional villages are under moderate to increasing influences of the market and tend to consider the urban communities as role models. Under such circumstances, where the dependence varies across various strata – poor are still dependent for subsistence and economic needs while the rich see it as an economic opportunity. With the rich and the rural elites in the seat of decision making, the use usually compromises on the needs of the poor and ecological benefits the resource provides. It is difficult on the part of the communities to protect their resources from the regular pressure exerted by the market forces with rules and regulations at their end. What is needed is the state to recognise the importance of such resources – both for ecosystem functioning and the social and economic security of the poor. There is a need on the part of the state to come up with protective regulations to protect such resources only for economic gains. For example, the Joint Forest Management programme could incorporate such principles in order to protect the forests from getting converted into high value timber plantations.

Finally, as already discussed in the paper, the common property resource management in transitional villages requires clear and uncontested property regimes to survive. Clear rules and regulations regarding rights to access, distribution of benefits and sharing of responsibilities for the groups and individuals to function. In the absence of such clear and enforceable property rights and rules for use, the resources may get appropriated for individual benefits. The governance of the resources is also largely dependent on the property legislation and rules-in-practice. In such cases too, the role of the state to decide on broad policies and principles of managing such resources and bring clarity in the property regime for the resources becomes crucial, without which such resources may be lost forever. The communities in these villages without attempting to revive the resources tend to make arrangements or seize the rights on the resources in small and interior villages either through force or influence.

The natural resources especially those relating to land are valuable resources to be managed for providing certain basic needs to the communities and crucial ecological functions for the larger society at large. Managing such resources in transitional villages is quite complex and requires to be studied in further details. To sum up, this paper attempts to look into the influence of globalization and market forces on the transitional villages and what attempts could be made to help the effective management of common property resources in such villages.

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