DEBATE

A glimpse of Similipal Tiger Reserve. Photo by Aditya Panda.

Protecting Wildlife Habitats: Fortress Conservation and the Role of Local Communities

---

The concept of protected areas is not a new one. Countries all over the world have established their own versions of these human-free zones. In India, a protected area or PA is meant to be a place where human occupation and the use of, and access to, resources are limited. PAs in India are areas designated under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 for the purpose of conserving wildlife and its habitats. There are currently 1022 PAs, covering 5.43% of India's total geographical area.

In the second instalment of "Cat Fight", a part of our larger *Cataplisms* project that allows us to unsheath our claws and fiercely debate issues that intersect with our larger themes: cats and capitalism, we share two entirely different perspectives on PAs and discuss the concerns raised by "fortress conservation." We explore the social, cultural, ecological, and legal issues faced by Adivasi and other forest dwelling communities, communities displaced by PAs, the proven concerns of conservationists trying desperately to preserve native species, and more.

Join Aditya Panda, wildlife conservationist, professional naturalist, wildlife photographer and Akshay Chettri, Ishika Patodi and Neema Pathak Broome, of the environmental action group, Kalpavriksh, to learn more.

Read on for Aditya's essay, and click here to jump to the essay by the Kalpavriksh team.

FOR: Aditya Panda

Most megafauna—large mammals in particular—happen to be large ranging, traversing hundreds, even thousands of kilometres over their lives foraging, migrating and dispersing. India, despite being a highly land starved country, is the last bastion of most of Asia's megafauna including the tiger, Asiatic lion, four species of bears, elephants, rhinos, wild buffalo, gaur, and snow leopards.

Today's India is a sea of humanity with ever shrinking natural landscapes existing in pockets. There are far too many stakeholders involved—farmers, forest dwelling communities, graziers, villages, towns, mines, factories, dams, and more—with conflicting interests to "set aside" entire natural landscapes for wildlife. However, protected area pockets within these spaces are our last wilderness refuges, where, if managed properly, wildlife can live free from threats of human interference. India's 1022 PAs might sound like a lot, but most of them are tiny—averaging around 100-200 sq kms for wildlife sanctuaries and national parks. Even smaller units such as conservation reserves are often less than 10 sq kms.

There is a contemporary narrative that refers to the model of conservation which aims to secure chunks of habitat free of human habitation as "fortress" conservation. This term was coined out of derision for being "exclusionary" and "keeping people out". It is based on some overly simplistic assumptions: that "indigenous people" are "natural conservationists" that have "traditionally

protected nature" because they are less extractive and consumptive than other communities, and that these communities "worship nature". The narrative claims that these communities are being "displaced" and "evicted" across India's PAs. It prescribes "harmonious coexistence" as the conservation model arguing that indigenous communities live in utopian peace with wildlife around them, and that forest departments and conservationists are disrupting this way of life.

How accurate is that narrative?

People in these communities are no different from other humans. They have aspirations and desires. Within them are law-abiding people, and also hardened criminal elements. To claim otherwise is inherently discriminatory and similar to the orientalist colonial trope of viewing these communities as "noble savages".

Jenabil village in Similipal, 2010. Today, it is a rich wildlife habitat with rolling grasslands, breeding tigresses, a revived population of spotted deer and elephants that no longer need to raid crops. Photo by Aditya Panda.

Members of forest dwelling communities—in regionally varying numbers—partake in poaching, timber felling, land encroachment, and wildlife trade. Snares, bait bombs, poison and electrified trip wires are widely used ways to kill bushmeat, besides guns and arrows. Collateral poaching of tigers, leopards, elephants, livestock and even humans are common in these methods.

Some marginal off-take through illegal hunting can be replenished by normal reproductive ecologies of species. Unfortunately, large parts of India, in particular Eastern Central India (Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand, parts of southern Bengal and northern Andhra Pradesh) and Northeast India, see such excessive poaching that it has created what biologists call the “Empty Forest Syndrome”. These are vast swathes of forests, looking well preserved at first glance, but bereft of almost all large and medium sized mammalian fauna.

Let us examine tiger conservation in India. India’s first national attempt at species revival began with Project Tiger in 1973 with the vision of identifying and securing key tiger source sites across varied ecosystems and “fortressing” them against human impact. These “tiger reserves” were envisioned to help tiger populations recover with strict protection and careful management into “source populations” that would help repopulate former tiger ranges that had begun to see an alarming decrease in tiger presence by the 1960s. Project Tiger began with nine tiger reserves, seven of which made excellent progress in achieving their objective of tiger revival. The only two in Eastern Central India—Similipal and Palamu—were chronic laggards. Today India has 55 tiger reserves, and still more in the pipeline. Many of the newer tiger reserves have turned out to be spectacular successes. Tiger numbers across India doubled between 2010 and 2018. However, in Eastern Central India–in Similipal, Satkosia, Palamu, Udanti-Sitanadi, Achanakmar and Indravati tiger reserves–they steadily slipped.

What is unique about Eastern Central Indian states is that there are large tribal and other forest dweller communities. In addition, ritual hunting, recreational hunting, commercial hunting, and a desire for bushmeat (as a delicacy) has been much higher in these regions than in others. Additionally, village relocation, which received a lot of impetus across most tiger reserves of India, had been neglected in Similipal and Palamu. Perhaps no government wanted to risk it given the massive tribal vote banks in these states. In Palamu, not a single village has ever been relocated. Villages exist deep inside the reserves, even in the core areas, farming and raising livestock in the forests. People engaged in unsustainable levels of bushmeat hunting, forest produce collection and timber felling. With lack of prey and profusion of cattle, livestock kills by big cats were inevitable. Poisoning of big cats using pesticides became rampant.

If the arguments of the critics of fortress conservation held merit, Palamu should have been a flagship wildlife reserve. However, tigers have been functionally extinct in Palamu for more than two decades. As are wild dogs. Gaur have been wiped out from 98.5 percent of the reserve. Palamu is now the only tiger reserve in India (among those that fall under the distribution range of sambar deer) where an ungulate as common as the sambar, a key prey species of the big cats, has been rendered extinct through bushmeat hunting.

It’s also important to note that people in these areas weren’t living an ideal life. Basic infrastructure remained a pipe-dream. The nearest hospital or market would rarely be less than a day’s walk through forests. Mains electricity and mobile phone connectivity couldn’t even be dreamt of. Every harvest was a struggle against the elements and the wildlife.

A tigress stalking through the grass in Bandhavgarh. Photo by Aditya Panda.

Similar cultures and demographics exist in Central India as well. However, states like Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra focused on incentivised, voluntary relocation of families from their tiger reserves. The core areas were targeted first. With villages relocating, valleys and plains were returned to wildlife. Farmlands returned to grasslands and swamps. The number of wild ungulates skyrocketed. Tigers revived.

One state in Eastern Central India has quietly been working on turning the tide since 2018—Odisha. In 2009, the state started to focus on incentivised, voluntary village relocation within its PAs. No relocation was to happen without first settling rights under the Forest Rights Act, 2006 and a life changing amount of money—Rs 10 lakh—as compensation was mandated. Today this figure has been increased to Rs 15 lakh with additions by the states (Odisha adding Rs 5 lakhs) per nuclear family unit. A single adult may also qualify as a nuclear family unit. In addition, there is compensation either in cash or kind, for land owned. Under this scheme, a large number of families not only in Similipal, but also in Satkosia Tiger Reserve and Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary, vied to move closer to mainstream society, and away from the hardships of a life trapped within PAs. With anyone above 18 qualifying as a beneficiary, the interest among youngsters has been particularly enormous. Article 19(1)(e) of the Constitution of India empowers anyone to move freely and settle or reside anywhere in the country. Choice should be granted to the people who live in wilderness areas as much as any other community. Whether it pleases those who pass judgements from their

urban living rooms or not, the younger generations are more interested in having access to the rest of the world than they are in the romanticised “indigenous lifestyle”.

As with the rest of India, the numbers do not lie in Odisha’s case. The prey density in Similipal has increased from an unsustainably low 5.99 animals per square kilometre in 2014 to 31 animals per square kilometre in 2022. For the first time in decades, Similipal’s tiger numbers are growing. North Similipal, where there were no signs of tigers for years, now has breeding tigresses.

The story of Satkosia Tiger Reserve in central Odisha is even more encouraging. The reserve, which lost its entire tiger population, has seen five major villages relocating and several more flooding the reserve headquarters with petitions to relocate over the past six years. As a result, wildlife populations are bouncing back like never before. Deer, wild pig and gaur have increased to the extent that today Satkosia’s prey base is comparable to any of India’s top tiger reserves. Leopards have rebounded like never before and the reserve is now ready for the reintroduction of tigers. There is no question that the key behind successful relocation of villages from Odisha’s tiger reserves has been the careful, sensitive and committed manner in which the State Wildlife Wing, tiger reserve managements, and district administrations have executed the process.

The above examples in no way deny that there have been examples of poorly executed relocation exercises where communities have been left in a lurch. Such unpleasant examples from other states where corruption has derailed the relocation opportunities has caused tremendous loss of faith in the people with the Forest Department, and understandably so. The poor execution of an idea does not negate the merit of the idea itself. There is no doubt that successful, carefully and sensitively executed relocations not only change people’s lives, but also encourage other villages and families in the region. By law in India, relocation of people from PAs can only be voluntary. To sweepingly call it “eviction” can only be called naive, ignorant or downright misleading. The beauty of the policies and the law regarding relocation in India are such that no one can force people out of forests. It is ultimately for the people themselves to choose whether they want to continue an ancestral way of life or whether they aspire for a future of upward mobility.

For those professing a “coexistence” model of wildlife conservation without “fortresses”, I beg to be shown any successful example from a densely populated region with large carnivores and population data to back the claim. As far as India is concerned, from Corbett to Kanha and Kaziranga to Periyar, the Protected Area model has stood the test of time by doing a stellar job of “fortressing” the future of our wildlife and wildlife habitats for over half a century now.

About the author

Aditya Panda is a wildlife conservationist, professional naturalist and wildlife photographer. His day job is in leading conservation, natural history and photography themed wildlife expeditions across

India. He is based in Odisha where he has passionately involved himself in conservation for nearly two decades. A believer in advocacy over activism, he has been working closely with the Odisha Wildlife Wing for many years. He is particularly keenly involved in the revival of tiger and elephant landscapes in the state. He is associated with the State Wildlife Wing in many capacities including Honorary Wildlife Warden (Angul), Member, Joint Task Force for Wildlife and multiple committees. For years he has been a voice for wildlife conservation in this relatively ignored region of India's conservation conversation. You can find him on Instagram @aditya.panda.

AGAINST: Akshay Chettri, Ishika Patodi and Neema Pathak Broome

Protected Areas are envisioned to be human-free spaces with little possibility of coexistence between humans and wildlife, even though historical evidence suggests that traditional forest dwellers should be included in conservation efforts as crucial stakeholders, both in recognition of their rights and the usefulness of the knowledge they have.

Failing to be inclusive of the local people, their forest and human rights, agency, skills, worldviews, knowledge systems, and governance systems, has marginalized the people living in and around these PAs. Communities such as the Van Gujjars and Soligas are labelled as 'illegal occupiers' of their lands, find that everyday living is made extremely difficult, and live in constant fear of being displaced. They are criminalized for resisting and dissenting, false cases are registered against them, and they are subjected to abuse by forest officials. Living with such insecurities and uncertainties, they have found little space to practice, revive and strengthen their traditional ways of life.

In December 2023, Kalpavriksh (an organisation which the authors are part of) facilitated an exchange program between the Van Gujjar pastoralist youth from Rajaji Tiger Reserve in Uttarakhand, and the local Soliga tribe in the Biligiri Ranganathaswamy Temple Tiger Reserve in Karnataka. The objective was to facilitate conversations between the two communities about each other's processes of self-organization, sustainable forest-based enterprise, community-conservation mechanisms, and their experiences and challenges of claiming individual and community forest resource rights (CFR).

An exchange between the Van Gujjar and Soliga youth, on indigenous knowledge and the use of social media to document their traditional systems of conservation and livelihoods. Photo by Akshay Chettri.

This exclusion of traditional forest dwellers from conservation efforts has also limited the conservation potential of the PAs by failing to draw from the knowledge that exists within these communities. For example, both the Van Gujjars and Soligas described the lack of ecological wisdom in some of the current mainstream forest management practices. According to them, commercial felling and plantations, choice of species, and methods of tree plantation were drastically changing the forest's characteristics and composition, depleting biodiversity, limiting food for wildlife, and exacerbating human-wildlife conflicts.

Both communities, despite having differences in their languages, cultures, and food, have strikingly similar interactions with the forests they reside in, such as their honey harvesting practices and taboos on sale. One of the major reasons they mentioned for overexploitation of forest produce was open bidding for government contracts for timber and non-timber forest produce by people who neither understood nor respected the taboos.

Conservation Induced Displacement

There are 55 PAs that have been designated as tiger reserves as of 2024. Official records show that more than 25,000 families from 257 villages have already been relocated from just the core areas of these Tiger Reserves since the inception of Project Tiger in 1973. A tiger reserve includes the “Core” and the surrounding areas called the “Buffer”. Core areas are places within national parks and wildlife sanctuaries that are designated as human-free. These figures, concerning relocation, have increased.

राष्ट्रीय व्याघ्र संरक्षण प्राधिकरण

NATIONAL TIGER CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

(पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार के अन्तर्गत सांविधिक निकाय)

(Statutory Body under Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Govt. of India)

डॉ. जी. एस. भारद्वाज
Dr. G. S. Bhardwaj
Addl. DGF (Project Tiger) &
Member Secretary (NTCA)

B-1 Wing, 7th Floor, Pt. Deendayal Antyodaya Bhawan,
CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi - 110003
Tel : 011-2436 7835
E-mail : ms-ntca@nic.in

New Delhi, June 19, 2024

D.O. No. 15-3/2008-NTCA

Respected Malkede Sir

With reference to the above subject, it is to mention that, Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and further amendment in 2006, section 38V (4)(i) stipulates that "*the core or critical tiger habitat and the process of its notification have been explained as 'core or critical tiger habitat areas of National Park and Sanctuaries, where it has been established, on the basis of scientific and objective criteria, that such areas are required to be kept as inviolate for the purposes of tiger conservation, ...'*.

2. Under the WPA, 1972, as amended in 2006, requirements have been laid down for voluntary relocation of people on 'mutually agreed terms and conditions', for the purpose of creating inviolate areas for tiger conservation.

3. Further, Protocol/Guidelines have been issued vide F. No. 15-4/2010-NTCA (Part-III) and enhancement in the village relocation package issued vide F. No. 15-3/2018-NTCA (Vol-III) Part dated 8th April,2021. The status of Village relocation of all Tiger Reserves has been compiled and enclosed at **Annexure I.** If there is any correction / update please communicate.

4. It has been observed that, around 591 no. of Villages comprising 64801 families are still residing in the core area. The progress of village relocation is very slow and it poses grave concern in light of Tiger conservation.

5. It will be highly appreciated, if the issue of village relocation may be taken up on priority basis and also time line may be framed for smooth relocation of the villages from the Core/Critical Tiger Habitat Areas of the Tiger Reserves under your jurisdiction.

6. I would also request you to kindly intimate this authority about your action plan and thereafter the progress may be reviewed regularly.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

(Dr. G. S. Bhardwaj)

Encl: As above.

Shri Subhash K. Malkede,
Chief Wildlife Warden,
Govt. of Karnataka.

Letter from the ADGF (Project Tiger), and Member Secretary (NTCA) to the Chief Wildlife Warden Karnataka, asking them to expedite relocation from core areas of tiger reserves.

A letter from the NTCA to State governments in June this year urged states to expedite the relocation of the 64801 families residing in 591 villages from the core areas. The order was opposed by local communities as well as organisations and individuals as it yet again disregards the forest dwelling communities' cultural, legislative and constitutional rights. As per the Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA) and FRA, free prior informed consent of the local communities is mandatory for relocation. However, past relocations from the majority of the tiger reserves and other protected areas have often been unjust, involving coercion, intimidation and criminalization of those opposing relocation, and other violations that have led to the further marginalization of the concerned communities.

There are numerous examples of evictions—from the Kanha Tiger Reserve, Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, Manas Tiger Reserve, Nagarhole Tiger Reserve, Orang National Park and Tiger Reserve, and several other areas—where what is referred to as "voluntary relocation" has, in reality, been brutal evictions, resulting in serious injuries and even fatalities, including among women and young people. In Achanakmar Tiger Reserve, Chhattisgarh, 10 months after the reserve was notified under the WLPA, around 250 Baiga Adivasis were evicted and moved into temporary sheds in the peak of winter. The poor conditions led to the death of a man in the temporary camps.

The actual evictions and relocations from buffer areas and other PAs are often reported to be much higher in number than the official records. Compensation packages are either not disbursed in full or are very delayed. For example, around 1600 Van Gujjar families, who were displaced from Rajaji in the late 90s, are yet to receive any form of meaningful compensation that can help them rebuild their lives.

There are often no provisions to address the common property resource needs of these forest dependent communities. In many instances, the promised facilities at the relocation site are not completed, as is legally required before eviction. Post-relocation, it has been observed that the land provided is often not fertile for agriculture; that the proper housing and community facilities, including water and electricity, were not provided. Mechanisms are not put in place to ensure livelihoods at the new site, even though these sites are usually not conducive to the practice of traditional livelihoods. Additionally, in many cases the land allocated to the relocated communities are still legally forest lands, which makes it difficult for communities to access welfare schemes due to restrictions under the Indian Forest Act, 1927.

In Nobody's Best Interests

Even with all this cost to human communities, for the animals who are supposed to benefit, living in a PA does not necessarily ensure an undisturbed habitat. PA lands are persistently diverted. A 2021 report by the Legal Initiative for Forests and Environment showed that, of the 189 projects such as

linear infrastructure (such as roads and railway lines), quarrying, and mining, and hydel-power projects, considered by the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife, 129 proposals were inside PAs. All 129 were accepted. The current conservation policy is two-faced. With a stroke of a pen, it could destroy the lives and cultures of thousands of families in the name of conservation, and yet, with equal ease, the same forest could be diverted for mega projects causing destruction and fragmentation.

The Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), a historic agreement adopted by 196 countries, acknowledges that recognising the rights and contributions of indigenous and local communities is a prerequisite to working towards any conservation effort. At a national level, an inclusive and equitable conservation policy and practice aligns with the fundamental right to life and liberty recognised by Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

A global analysis in 2018, found that indigenous peoples and local communities hold management and tenure rights on approximately ¼ of the Earth's terrestrial surface. This 25% of land accounts for at least 37% of the remaining natural lands worldwide. 1/3rd of the world's intact forest lands (including 25% of tropical forests) also fall within these territories. The analysis also found that not only is the rate of degradation and fragmentation slower as compared to other completely "non protected areas", these lands have 30% less invasive species as compared to PAs. 60% of the terrestrial mammals for whom reliable data exists have over 10% of their range within these lands and 76.8% of vertebrates' range overlap with these territories.

A similar analysis in India, of the underscored but oversized role of Adivasi and other local communities' cultural practices in ensuring the country's current and past wildlife populations, is long overdue. However, that there is much to learn from the ways of being of these communities is evident from the overlap of their traditional lands with PAs and non-PA wildlife corridors. Their lands have high densities of otherwise highly threatened wildlife populations, including tigers. These populations are protected, for example, by the traditional taboo systems followed by the Mishmi community in Dibang Valley in Arunachal Pradesh, the living territories of the Kurumbas, Todas and other Adivasi communities in the Nilgiris Hills, the management and conservation practices enshrined in the cultures of the Soliga tribe in the Biligiri Rangaswamy Hills; and many others which remain largely either undocumented or undervalued and invisibilized.

The motive for Adivasi and other forest dwelling communities to conserve their land is seldom driven by whether legal protection is provided or not. In several wildlife corridors which are not designated as PAs, when there have been proposals for mining, river-linking, infrastructure, or green energy projects that threaten these habitats, it is the local villages that have come together and taken a strong stand to resist.

The best way to ensure healthy wildlife habitats is for those involved in governance and conservation to learn from and work with communities who still have (but are rapidly losing) traditional wisdom, knowledge and practices of conservation.

Community Rights

One of the most radical laws to recognise the rights of the Adivasi and other traditional forest dwellers is the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA). The FRA recognises the Community Forest Resource (CFR) Rights of tribals and other traditional forest dwelling communities, i.e. to use, access, manage, and govern their traditional forests. CFR areas are to be governed by the local Gram Sabha, and by a CFR Management Committee that it constitutes. These committees are empowered to create plans for CFR management. State authorities are legally mandated to collaborate and integrate these plans into the larger PA Management Plans. However, the implementation of the FRA in general, and in PAs in particular, has been very poor.

New Rantalodhi in the process of building at the relocation site after relocation from Tadoba-Andheri Tiger Reserve, Maharashtra, 2023. Photo by Prerna Singh Bindra.

Of the 1022 PAs, in only a handful of instances have either individual or CFR rights been recognised (exact numbers cannot be ascertained in the absence of available official records). And even in the PAs where CFR titles have been legally recognised, such as the BRT Tiger Reserve and Melghat Tiger Reserve, the Forest Department has been unwilling to devolve power to the Gram Sabhas and

CFR Management Committees, or to incorporate their CFR Management strategies into the larger PA Management Plan.

Despite this, where rights have been recognised, inside or outside PAs, positive results are evident. BRT, where Soligas continue to reside in the Core, with their CFR rights being recognised in 2011, boasts of increasing tiger numbers. Hundreds of Gram Sabhas whose CFR rights have been recognised, such as in Mendha-Lekha and Korchi Taluka[1] in Vidarbha region of Maharashtra, are sustainably harvesting forest produce to strengthen local livelihoods and restore and improve forest quality and wildlife habitat. The Van Gujjar youth in Rajaji and Corbett Tiger Reserves have formed the Van Gujjar Tribal Yuva Sangathan, to work towards securing their forest rights, and reviving and revitalizing ecologically sound traditional practices. They are exploring new ways of exchanging knowledge between the youth and the elders, and have established volunteer-based schools for children to foster modern as well as traditional knowledge. The group is also collaborating with civil society organizations, academic institutions, and ecologists to arrive at ecological questions, methodologies and monitoring tools for the restoration and management of their CFR forests.

Conservation is as much, if not more, a social and political issue as it is an ecological concern. There is a growing recognition that ecological security cannot be achieved by undermining cultural and political considerations, particularly the politics of power. In fact, cultural values and practices have been the oldest pathways to sustain biodiversity and wildlife, and are being increasingly recognised as among the most important pathways for addressing biodiversity loss and climate change. Fortress conservation, by excluding local communities from their traditional lands, is not only unjust, inequitable and violative of fundamental human rights but also a cause for destroying the very cultures and systems which have been, and could continue to be, the strongest forces to achieve conservation goals. Rather than excluding traditional forest dwelling communities in order to "conserve", recognising their rights to land and resources, and learning from their traditional knowledge, management and governance systems, are prerequisites to work together to meaningfully protect both the communities and biodiversity.

Reference:
1. https://wri-india.org/blog/korchis-forest-communities-and-mahagramsabha

About the authors

Neema P. Broome is a member of Kalpavriksh, coordinating the Conservation and Livelihoods programme. She is part of the team monitoring implementation of conservation laws and policies in particular the Wildlife Protection Act and the Scheduled Areas and Other Traditional Forest

Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006. Her main area of interest is conservation governance, particularly Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Conserved Territories and Areas (ICCAs). She has been involved with documentation, research, analysis and advocacy related to inclusive conservation governance and ICCAs in India and South Asia.

Ishika Patodi is a lawyer and researcher, currently working with the Conservation and Livelihoods team at Kalpavriksh. Her work centres on research and advocacy around Protected Area conservation, with a focus on the intersection of forest and wildlife laws and policies, and the rights of tribal communities. Her work focuses on issues concerning access, management, and governance in protected areas. You can follow her on Linkedin @ishikapatodi.

Akshay Chettri is currently involved with the Conservation and Livelihoods team at Kalpavriksh working on political ecology of conservation. His work on Protected Areas focuses on issues of displacement, wildlife diversion and the implementation of the Forest Rights Act. He is also involved with a landscape level intervention with the Van Gujjar Yuve Tribal Sangathan, in Uttarakhand. You can follow him on X @chettri_akshay and on Instagram.