



Energy Justice in India

The Land Politics of Megasolar Projects

Never Stand Still

Built Environment

LCEDN Annual Conference

30th May – 1st June 2018

Dr. Komali Yenneti

k.yenneti@unsw.edu.au

Yenneti, K., Day, R., and Golubchikov, O. (2016). Spatial Justice and The Land Politics of Renewables: Dispossessing Vulnerable Communities Through Solar Energy Mega-Projects. *Geoforum*, 76: 90-99

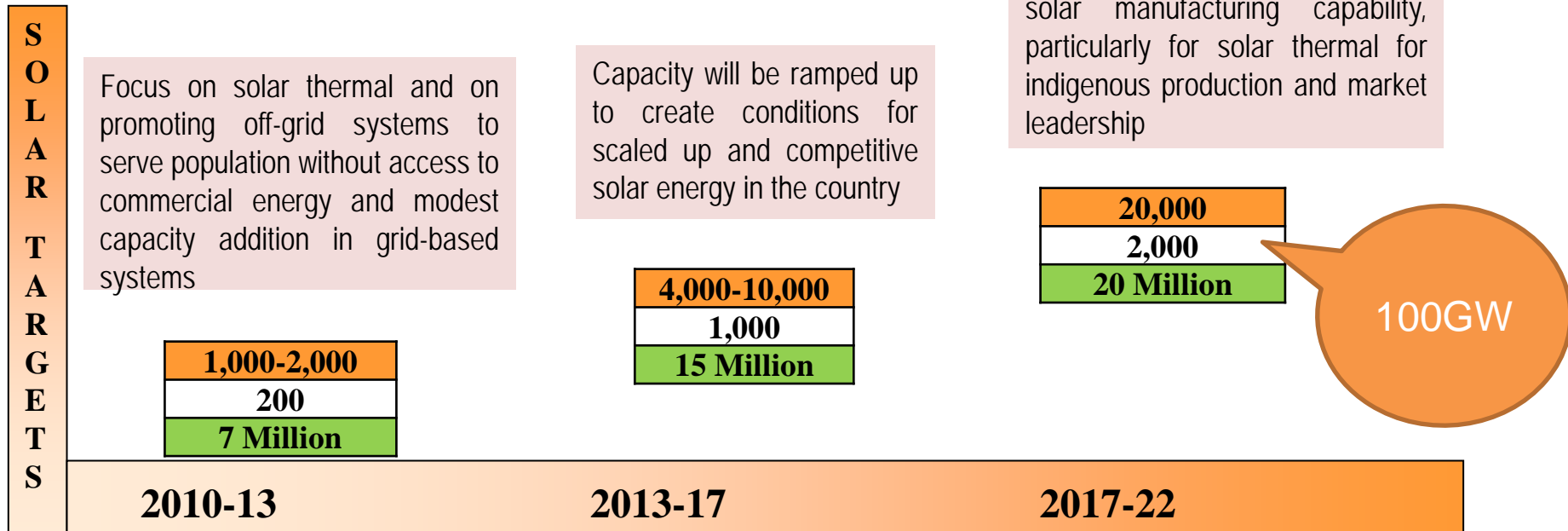
Yenneti, K. and Day, R. (2016). Distributional Justice in Solar Energy Implementation in India: The Case Of Charanka Solar Park. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 46:35-46

Yenneti, K. and Day, R. (2015). Procedural (In)Justice in The Implementation of Solar Energy: A Case of Charanka Solar Park, Gujarat, India. *Energy Policy*, 86: 664-673.

The Context for Megasolar Projects

At the COP21, while officially launching the 'International Solar Alliance', India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi said:

"Democratic India must grow rapidly to **meet the aspirations of 1.25 billion people, 300 million of whom are without access to energy...** We have set ambitious targets. By 2030, we will **reduce emissions by 33 to 35% per cent of 2005 levels,** and **40% of our installed capacity will be from our non- fossil fuels.** We will achieve it by expanding renewable energy – for, example, by adding 175GW of renewable generation by 2022...."



Utility grid power, including roof top (MW)

Off grid solar applications (MW)

Solar collectors (sq.meters)

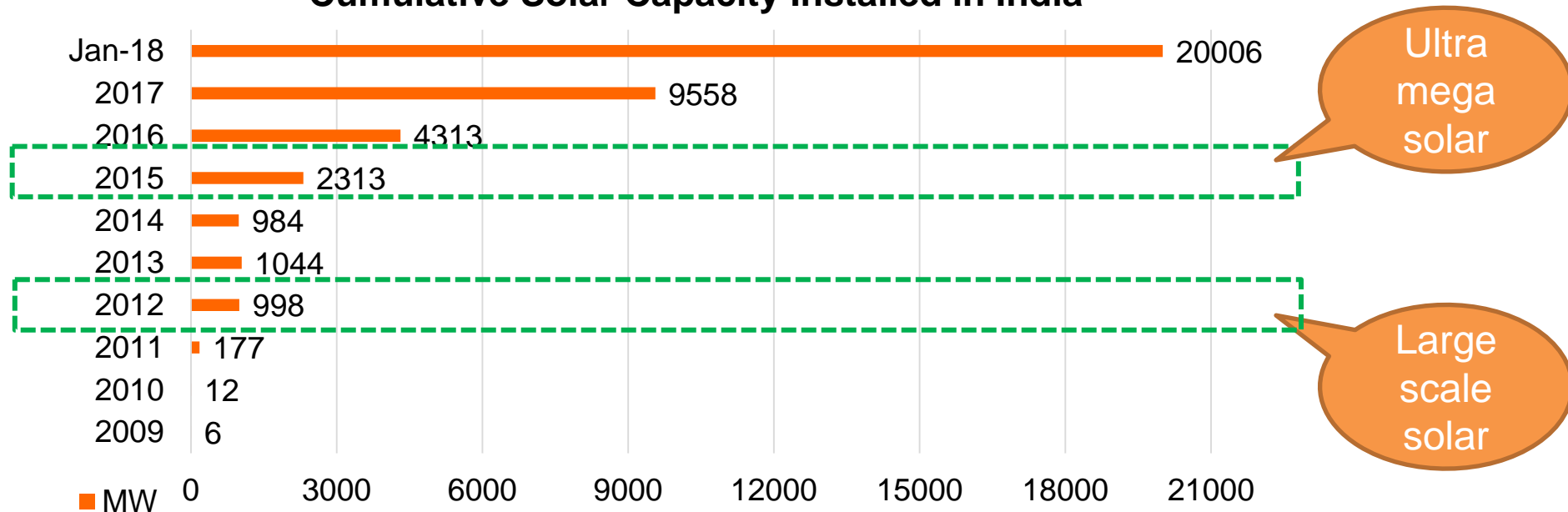


UNSW
AUSTRALIA

Current Capacity

- Growth of installed capacity from a mere **6MW** prior to the release of **JNNSM** to more than **20GW** as on **January 2018**.
- Initial grid power target of **20GW** has been achieved **four years ahead of schedule**.
- Solar capacity has increased **370% in the last three years** from around **2.3GW** in **2015** to more than **20GW** as on **January 2018**.
- The country has added **3GW** in **2015-16** and **5GW** in **2016-17**, the highest in any year ever since the initiation of the JNNSM.

Cumulative Solar Capacity Installed in India



Justice and mega solar energy projects

MNRE (NSM Phase –I review, 2012):

Local communities, largely village-based, are critical to the success of solar projects. Developers and local officials must involve village members in all stages, from planning to operation. Villagers' concerns and preferences need to be considered to maximise the benefits of solar power and to avoid adversely affecting communities in the scale-up of operations. Successful solar projects are integrated into the community fabric, providing local jobs and building community pride in renewable energy development. Ineffective community involvement can create contentious conditions for permitting and for solar operations (p.26).

Land politics of mega solar projects



Charanka Solar Park (250MW) – The Then Asian's largest solar project

Land politics of mega solar projects

COMMON LANDS AND RIGHTS OF LAND USE

- Issue in land acquisition and **land rights** – a waste land and by de jure no rights (right to access).
- Institutional mechanisms are convoluted with **layers of statutory and customary practices**
 - ✓ *That is government land, but Rabaris have been using it for grazing for years and years. (community).*
 - ✓ *One issue I think is the issue of pastoral lands... But apart from that I cannot really see any negative impacts. (industry).*



Land politics of mega solar projects

INEQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF BENEFITS/BURDENS

- Even the social justice concerns (as In Rawlsian principles of benefits for least disadvantaged) are compromised
- **Dispossession** as worthy of **sacrifice for societally beneficial green energy transitions.**
 - ✓ *"..You know every coin has two sides. But then for a greater good, solar projects should be considered the first step of many other steps to follow."* (industry)



Land politics of mega solar projects

INJUSTICES IN PROCEDURES (ILLEGAL AND EXTRA-LEGAL INSTRUMENTS)

- Lack of access to **Information and local knowledge** as an issue in institutional processes
 - Lack of **education** as a language of **power/collective action** and enfranchisement in the nomadic community
 - Exclusion and disenfranchisement of the marginalised communities in the procedural processes
- ✓ *Mamlatdar and collector came during a public meeting and took signature of all people... People were illiterate; they didn't get to know what was written inside. Most of the people signed that 'this is a waste land and we don't have right on it'. (community).*
 - ✓ *Some people sold before the project at so much lower prices. No one knows about it, some mediators bought it. (local government)*



Land politics of mega solar projects

SPATIAL JUSTICE CONCERNS

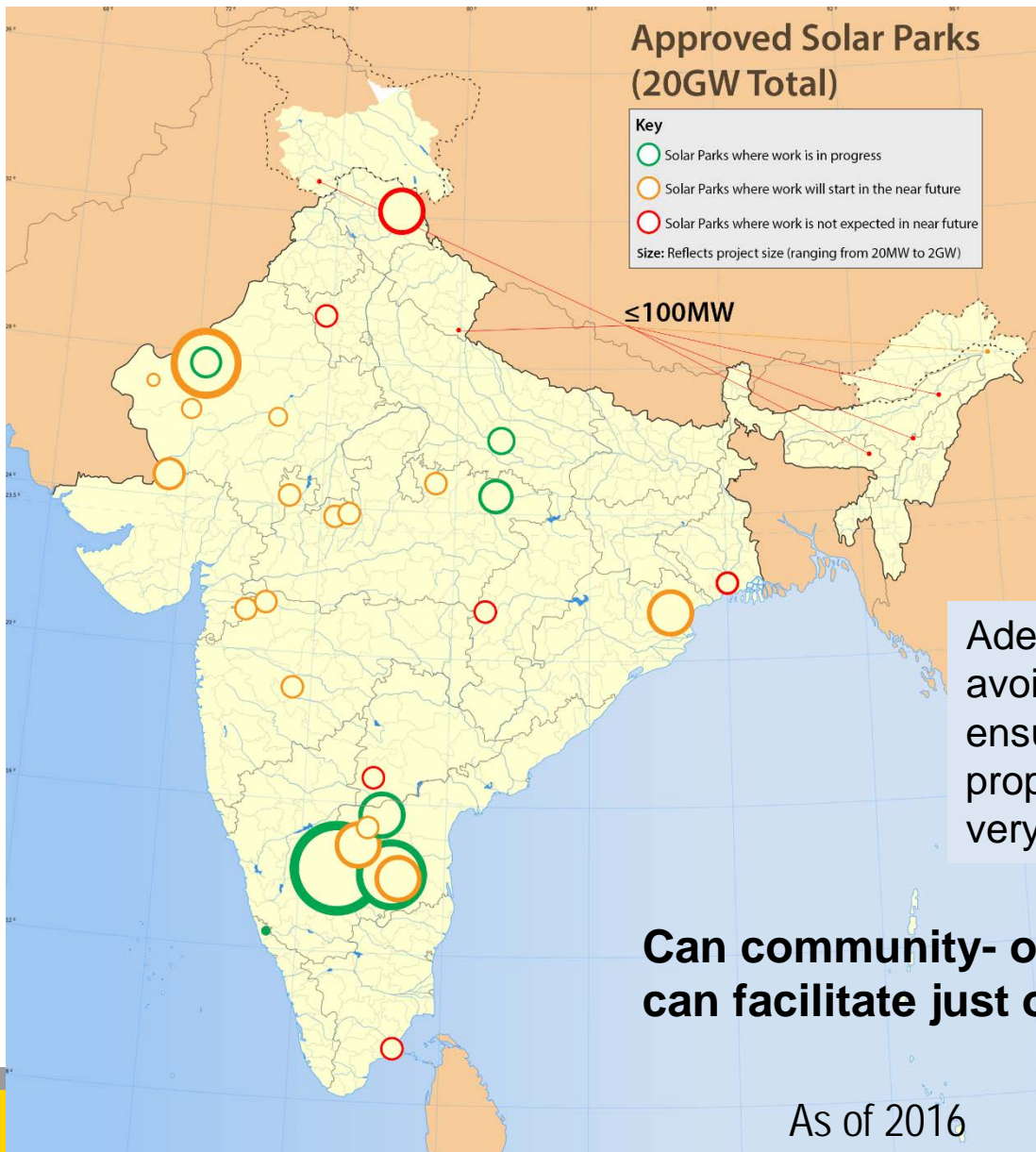
- Landless Rabaris and agricultural labourers - major victims
- Smaller land-owning farmers – another group of the dispossessed
 - *Benami* (speculative) land dealings and lack of information – livelihood dispossession
- Small sector of larger landowners retained their land through collective action and organised resistance
- Use of multiple instruments of power – legal, illegal and extra-legal - instruments of the cumulative spatial injustices

Narratives

- ✓ Using waste government land available in plenty for solar to address state's energy security and also generate economic activities locally [Govt]
- ✓ Generating solar energy for government benefits by dispossessing communities of their livelihoods and inequitable burden sharing (rich-poor gap) [communities]



Justice and mega solar energy projects

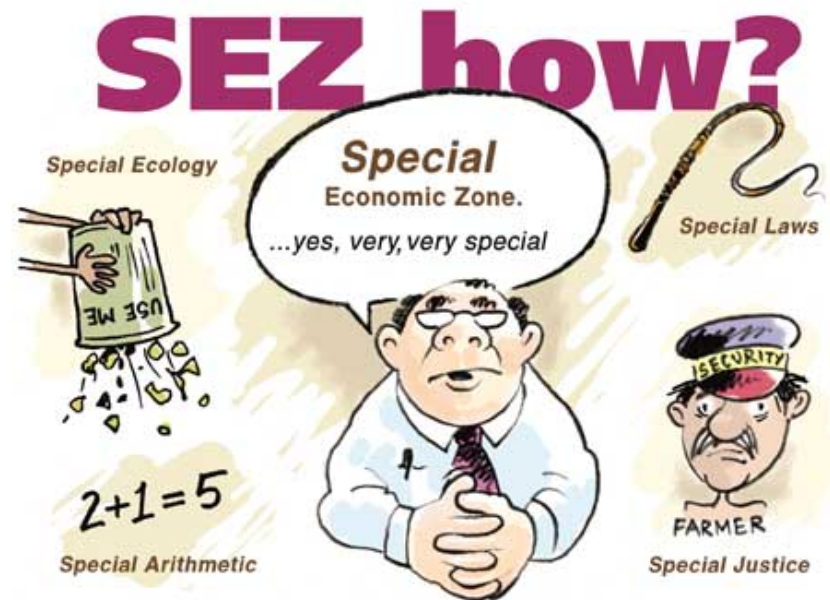


- December 2014 – Ultra Mega Projects (UPP) scheme introduced.
 - **25 solar parks and UPP projects (20GW)**
- February 2017 – **50 solar parks (40GW)**
- April 2017 – 34 solar parks under construction in 21 states
- Dominant states – AP, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, MP, Rajasthan, TN, Gujarat, Odisha

Adequate provisions should be made to avoid accumulation by dispossession and ensure justice in land acquisition, through proper compensatory mechanisms at the very least.

Can community- or co-ownership of these projects can facilitate just outcomes?

As of 2016



The product has changed.....not the processes....

THANK YOU...