



WWF
BROCHURE

IND

2017

URBAN EXPANSION IN WESTERN GHATS LANDSCAPE

CASE STUDY ON COIMBATORE



URBANIZATION IN WESTERN GHATS

WWF India adopted the Western Ghats and Nilgiris Landscape which is a global biodiversity hotspot. The focus has been on identifying and mapping critical wildlife corridors, mitigating human-elephant conflict, strengthening protected area management, promoting sustainable livelihoods and assessing the status of key species like the Tiger, Asian Elephants and Nilgiri Tahr outside protected areas to develop conservation strategies.



As an entry point to any discussion on alternatives, whether it is for development, infrastructure or conservation, a detailed spatial planning strategy is crucial. Rapid urbanisation is leading to cities expanding beyond capacities, resulting in unsustainable footprints on water, land and biodiversity. The rate of urbanisation in the Western Ghats region has shown a rapid increase on account of industrialisation. Cities such as Thrissur, Malappuram, Kannur and others have turned into urban agglomerations or a million plus cities in the last two decades.

The population of Coimbatore urban agglomeration has nearly doubled with a growth rate of 46.25% and its area has expanded from 105.6 Sq.km to 275.04 Sq.km as 4 municipalities and 7 panchayats were merged into the local planning area. The city currently has over 30,000 small, medium and large scale industries that provide employment to 40% of the city's population. The industrial growth, however, is not just limited to Coimbatore city but has also engulfed the neighbouring areas of Coonoor, Palakkad, Tirupur, Mettupalayam, and Pollachi, thus forming a politically and economically connected 'urban network'.

WESTERN GHATS LANDSCAPE HIGHLIGHTS



Priority Landscape for WWF India



Global Bio-diversity hotspot



Bio Geographically unique due to its geographical positioning



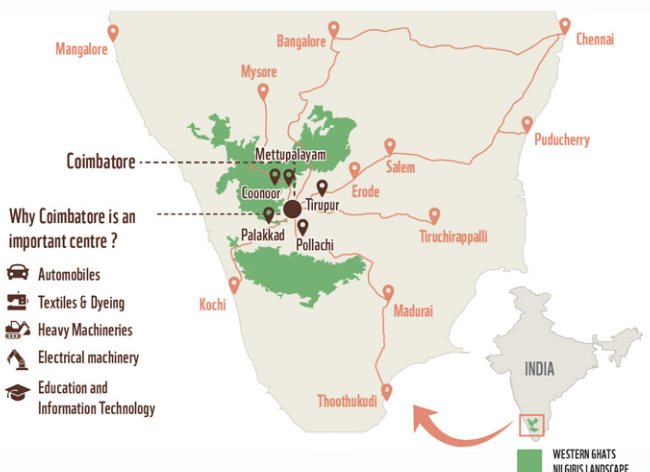
Contains more than 30% of all plant, fish, herpeto-fauna, bird, and mammal species found in India



NilgiriTahr (*Hemitragushyloerius*) and the Lion tailed macaque (*MacacasWilenus*) are endemic species of the region

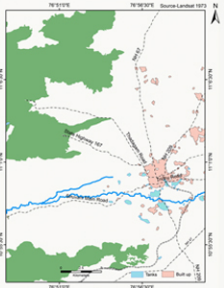


50% of India's amphibians and 67% of fish species are endemic to this region.

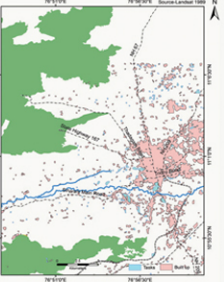


WESTERN GHATS
NILGIRIS LANDSCAPE

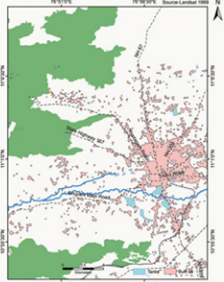
URBAN GROWTH IN COIMBATORE



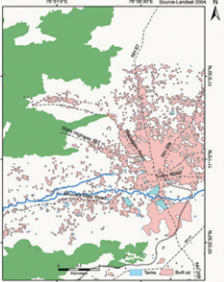
1973



1989



1999



2004



Urban expansion is towards the ecologically vulnerable areas of Western Ghats.



As per Master Plan 2021 significant increase in industrial and residential land-use is proposed for accommodating the growing population and economy. The additional land has been provisioned by converting agricultural land for the respective uses. Area under residential category has been projected to increase from 17% to 33%.



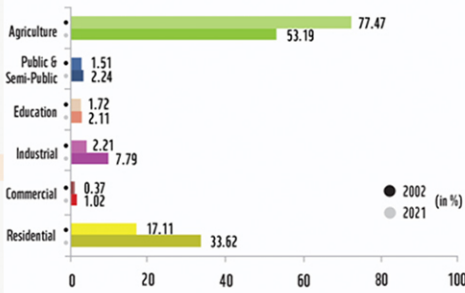
Agricultural land within the Local Planning Area will reduce from the current 77% to 53% as per the Master Plan 2021 landuse allocation.



Many fold increase in industrial area, as per the Master Plan 2021, from 2% to 8%.



Adjoining forest sections are traditional elephant movement corridors and areas in its vicinity are showing increased human activities. Banana cultivation on the fringes also invites pachyderms in search for easy food. This area presents itself as a high human-elephant conflict zone with over 55 human and 5 elephant deaths over the last 5 years. There has also been an increase of 62% in ex-gratia payments made on account of the human animal interaction.



COIMBATORE LANDUSE 2002 AND PROJECTION 2021

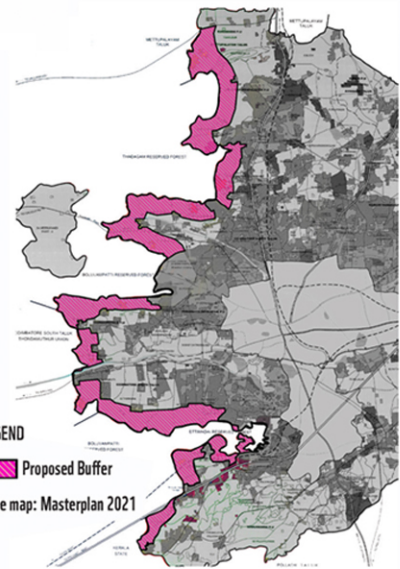
Source masterplan 2021



ALL IS NOT LOST

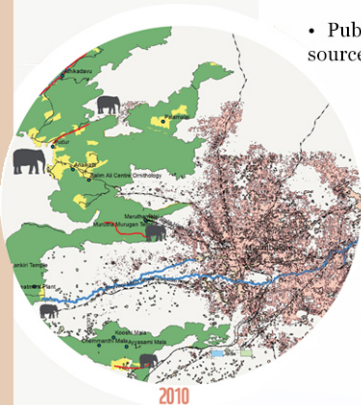
Coimbatore, the second largest city in Tamil Nadu, is still in its growing stage and has not reached its saturation point like the other million cities in the country. It still has the scope for planned development, ensuring green growth with reduced environmental footprint. The failure to recognize the importance of environment as an integral part of urban planning is seen as a reason for the degradation of environment. Based on the following principals, practical administrative proposals could be developed and incorporated into the development plans.

- Compatibility of landuses alongside preservation of the environment should be considered while planning.
- Unplanned urbanisation to be restrained by suitably revising the Master Plan.
- Public utility services to plan for re-source efficiency in delivery of services.



PROPOSED BUFFER ZONE DEMARCATION FOR COIMBATORE LPA

A suitable buffer zone may be earmarked as no construction area between the forest area and the city limits. The area earmarked for buffer could be treated as a city level urban green area or as area for urban services like water reservoirs, as required by the town planning norms. It is recommended that certain compatible activities may be allowed, that does not involve high density development in this region within the Local planning area. The proposed buffer zone is of varying dimension ranging from 500m to 1500m from the LPA boundary.



2010

LEGAL PROVISIONS FOR URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARIES

The Tamil Nadu Town and Country Planning Act, 1971 (the Act) (Section 17) provides provision for demarcating and securing Urban Growth Boundaries (UGBs). Chapter IV further allows for land to be used/ reserved as per plan, to be acquired under the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (within which an additional protection exists, in section 99, against changing the purpose for which the land is originally acquired).

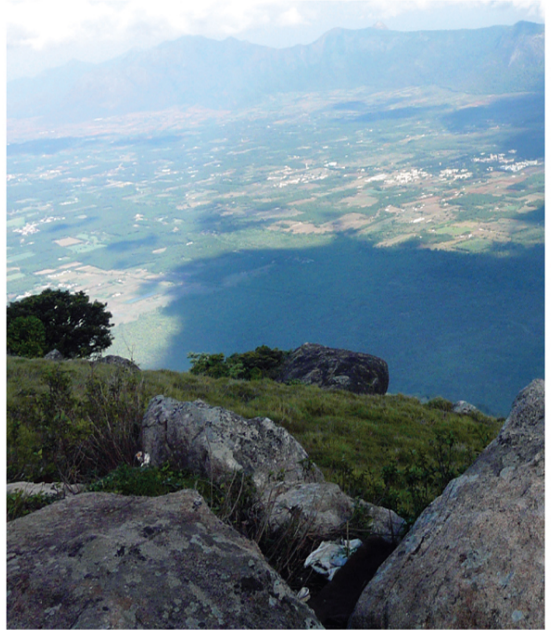
Adequate spaces exist for enforcement and security of the UGB in the Act after the inclusion of UGB provision in the plan, sections 47 and 48 in chapter VI of the Act provide for control and restrictions on 'non-plan' use of land. Further, sections 56 and 57 give the planning authority the power to stop and remove unauthorized developments. Punitive actions are available for enforcement, in sections 85 and 88.

A two-pronged strategy – in terms of approaching the issue from the forest side, in addition to the UGB – is legally viable. The proposed strategy is as under:

- Eco-sensitive zones may be proposed around the Silent Valley National Park² as per the ESZ Guidelines of 2011 notified by the MoEFCC – up to a maximum radius of 10 km from the periphery of the National Park. While this may not protect all of the reserve forest or the elephant corridors to the west of the LPA, it is a space which will help secure some part of their habitat at least.
- Sathyamangalam was notified as a Tiger Reserve in 2013 – the buffer zones have not yet been notified (as per our information). Investing in/catalyzing this process will help in securing a natural barrier to northwards growth of the Coimbatore LPA (owing to the high degree of conservation security, and the strict restrictions w.r.t land use change under the WLPA, 1972 for tiger reserves).

¹It may also be noted that the exemption under Section 113-B of the Act, from application of the regulatory regime under the Act, cannot be taken for the LPA (it may only be taken by the Coimbatore municipal area – the proposed UGB site falls outside this).

² In the RF divisions to the west, between the LPA and Silent Valley.



URBAN AREA AND URBANIZATION

Census of India 2011, defines an Urban area as-

All places with a municipality, corporation, cantonment board or notified town area committee, etc.

- *All other places which satisfied the following criteria:*



*A minimum population of **5,000***



*At least **75%** of the male main working population engaged in non-agricultural pursuits*



*A density of population of at least **400** persons per sq. km.*



Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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