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Red-Green Rows: Exploring the Conflict between Labor and Environmental Movements in Kerala, India

Silpa Satheesh
University of South Florida

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Red-Green Rows: Exploring the Conflict between Labor and Environmental

Movements in Kerala, India

by

Silpa Satheesh

DEDICATION

To my son, *Aadi*, grandparents and parents.

To all the people fighting against social, economic and environmental injustices.

In Solidarity!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My doctoral journey was no less than a roller coaster ride, and I have not enough words to thank everyone who helped me as I finish this ride.

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power of selfless love, forgiveness, and laughter. Heartfelt gratitude to my *amma* (mother) and *achan* (father) for your unending love. Thank you, Mon, for being there throughout. And most importantly, thank you, my dearest Aadi. I embarked on this doctoral journey with you in my hands, as a newborn, and I feel an immense sense of accomplishment as I finish this project. Life has thrown many challenges at us, but we managed to survive them all together, until now. Every day you amaze me with your love, understanding, and kindness, my dear. Thanks for helping me fall back in love with life. This is for you!

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ABSTRACT

Popularly referred to as "blue-green" conflicts, the stand-off between labor and environmental movements is often understood as a class-based conflict between working-class labor unions and middle-class environmental movements. Such singular conceptions fail to explain labor-environmental conflicts in the context of countries in the Global South, where working-class participants constitute both these movements. In this backdrop, my dissertation seeks to explore the conflicts between labor and green movements surrounding an issue of industrial pollution in Kerala, a south Indian state with a unique trajectory of development and working-class movements.

I adopt a qualitative methodological approach to understand the nature and dynamics of the conflicts between labor and green movements in Kerala. The ethnographic methods used in this dissertation is informed by a combination of the extended case logic and constructivist grounded theory. The field study for this project was carried out from May to July 2018 in Kerala. I conducted 38 ethnographic interviews with the leaders and rank-and-file members of the two movement organizations, an environmental non-governmental organization (ENGO) and local environmentalists.

Relying on a mixed-method approach combining ethnography and document analysis, I explain the ongoing conflicts in terms of the heterogeneity of working-class interests, the frame-disputes between unions and greens, and the hegemony of industrial capitalism. Most importantly, this project establishes the need to move beyond generative class-based analyses to understand and

explain labor-environmental conflicts in Kerala. The project underscores the need to situate labor-environmental conflicts within the backdrop of industrial capitalism, the political economy of development, and the nexus between state and capitalists. The findings of this research highlight the ways in which industrial capitalism influences the mobilization processes and outcomes of social movements in the Global South. Additionally, the study explores how the class compromise between labor and capital exacerbates the ongoing tensions between labor and environmental movements surrounding industrial pollution. The frame-disputes between the two movements expose how trade unions engage in counterframing tactics and strategies to delegitimize, discredit, and demobilize the local environmental movement. Thus, using the case of labor-environmental conflicts in the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt, this project delves into the linkages between labor, nature, and capital in Kerala's social movement landscape. In doing so, this study re-evaluates the much-acclaimed 'Kerala Model' of development from the standpoints of environmental justice and sustainability. The findings of this study make contributions to the study of postcolonial social movements, inter-movement conflicts, frame-disputes, sociology of development, and the interactions between capitalism and social movements in the Global South.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

On January 10, 2002, a newspaper supplement published in the Kochi edition of a leading Malayalam newspaper, *Metro Manorama*, carried the image of the River Periyar with the title, "As the river burns, the land weeps." The image published on the front page of the supplement was accompanied by a feature highlighting the issue of pollution and reduced oxygen supply in the river. The image depicted River Periyar, the longest river in Kerala, flowing in two different colors on either side of the Pathalam regular-cum-bridge in the Eloor-Edayar industrial region. The image was reposted and shared widely on Facebook, and one such post pasted the new image alongside an old photograph of the river.

Figure 1: River Periyar flowing in two different colors on either side of Pathaalam bridge near Eloor, Ernakulam. Published in *Metro Manorama*, July 10, 2020

Figure 2: An image depicting the discoloration of River Periyar due to pollution.
Courtesy: Sainudheen Edayar, 2005

An image (Figure 2) of River Periyar from 2005, taken by Sainudheen Edayar, soon became the symbol of industrial pollution in the region and helped in gaining legitimacy for the local fight against industrial pollution. The image represents the reality of pollution by focusing on the intersection of two stretches of River Periyar, one that flows through the industrial section and another. The stretch of River Periyar circling the industrial sector flows in a brick red color, whereas the other flows in green, reflecting the lush green landscape surrounding it. The images of River Periyar taken almost 15 years apart carry striking similarities in terms of the discoloration of the river water.

However, despite the symbolism of the image and the central role it occupies in the anti-pollution campaign, the issue of pollution and the role of local industries in creating the same remain unsettled in the movement landscape. Furthermore, the contested interpretations

surrounding the issue and causes of pollution has ignited a "jobs versus the environment" conflict between trade-unions and green movements in the Eloor-Edayar industrial region. Attempting to refute the claims created by the other, each of these movements creates opposing frames to establish their respective version of movement reality. And the river flowing in many shades form the backdrop of collective action events and frame-disputes between the trade-unions and the local environmental movement in the region.

Focusing on the tensions between Standing Council of Trade Unions (SCTU hereafter), a union collective, and the local environmental movement led by *Periyar Malineekarana Virudha Samithi* (Periyar Anti-Pollution Committee, PMVS hereafter), I seek to understand these framing contestations or frame-disputes between labor and green movements in the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt in Kerala. In doing so, I situate these conflicts within the larger backdrop of structural and political-economic factors, including the advent of industrial capitalism, the political economy of development, the ideology of capitalism, and the nexus between state and local industries.

The stand-off between labor and environmental organizations, popularly known as the 'Blue-Green conflicts,' offers a classic case that represents the impasse between the dominant model of economic growth and environmental protection. Reflecting the scuffle between the economy and the environment, the "jobs versus environment" trade-off has been a focal point of tension in the relationship between trade unions and environmental movements across the globe. Previous research looking at the tensions between trade unions and environmental movements has largely explained their antagonistic relationship as a "class-conflict" between working-class trade unions and middle-class environmental movements (Rose 2000). Such class-based explanations fail to uncover the reasons behind labor-environmental conflicts when both these movements have participants from the same socio-economic background.

In other words, the existing theoretical explanations, solely rooted in class, fall short in explaining the conflicts between trade unions and environmental movements, particularly in the context of countries in the Global South[1], where working-class participants mainly constitute both these movements. Highlighting the singular and reductive focus of the extant literature on labor-environmental conflicts, this project establishes the need for fresh inquiries that move beyond western contexts and class-based explanations. Additionally, by situating the conflict between labor and environmental movements within the backdrop of capitalist development, this project calls for the need to integrate the role of political economy, the state, and industrial capital for comprehensively understanding the conflict between labor and environmental movements. Using the case of labor-environmental conflicts in the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt, this project delves into the linkages between labor, nature, and capital in Kerala's social movement landscape, offering a re-reading of the much-acclaimed Kerala Model from the standpoints of environmental justice and sustainability.

SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH

Labor and environmental movements are often portrayed as the two powerful social movements, which by joining hands could create a formidable alliance to fight against the impending climate crises (Barca 2012, 2016; Snell and Fairbrother 2011; Kojola et al. 2014) and can advance policies that protect both working people and the natural environment (Obach 2004a, 2004b; Liu 2006; Mayer 2009). Hence, labor and environmental movements are often held as natural or potential allies considering their structural and contradictory positions with industrial

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[1]The use of Global South in this project is not intended as a sweeping label that reduces the social movement dynamics (Almeida 2019) across the countries in the Southern hemisphere or to erase the social and cultural diversity of the people and settings. Instead, it is used as a term to convey the similitude in nature and characteristics of the local environmental movements organized by the poor and marginalized people.

capital within the capitalist production system (Foster 1993; Jakapovich 2009; Huan 2014). Eco-socialist and social justice perspectives highlight the need to bring labor and environmental movements together for achieving socio-ecological transformation (Sarkar 1999; Pepper 2002), and this is particularly so in a context where coalition formation has become an essential strategy of social movement organizations (Yandle 1983; Van Dyke and McCammon 2010; McCammon and Moon 2015). According to Jakopovich:

> Environmentalists are workers' obvious potential allies in their efforts to advance workplace health and safety, and also to tackle environmental concerns of working-class communities: for workers bear the brunt of environmental degradation and destruction, both in terms of health and quality-of-life issues. (Jakopovich 2009:75)

The mounting threats from climate change and global environmental crises also call for coalitions among social movements focusing on environmental issues and social justice grievances (race, gender, class, disability, and sexuality), reiterating the need for an intersectional approach. However, the commitment to the ideology of economic growth and structural situatedness in the treadmill of production brings labor at odds with environmental organizations in matters related to environmental protection or regulations (Buechler 1995; Gould et al. .2004; Räthzel and Uzzell 2011, 2012). In other words, labor unions and environmental organizations form an exemplar of a complicated relationship between organizations, where there exist some overlapping and some conflicting interests making it difficult to form inter-movement ties. According to Obach:

> These so-called jobs-versus-the-environment disputes have fractured progressive forces, preventing the implementation of government policies that are sensitive to both the environment and the needs of workers. A just and sustainable economy is the goal of both unions and environmentalists, yet still, divisions between these two groups are common. (Obach 2004a:7)

The conflicts between labor and environmental movements assume significance in a context where both labor and nature face exploitation under the capitalist treadmill of production

(Gould et al. 1996; Obach 2004b). Both labor and environmental movements are similar in offering active challenges to capitalism and its mode of production but for different reasons.

Contrary to labor movements that are associated with the "first contradiction of capital," the environmental movements can be seen as emanating from the "second contradiction of capital" where capitalism destroys the conditions of production (O'Connor 1998; Foster 2002). In this backdrop, inquiries into the relationship between labor, nature, and capital, the three agencies of the green economy would certainly expand the discussions on just transition (Barca 2015). Moreover, given the ubiquitous presence of conflictual relationships between trade unions and environmental movements across the globe (Obach 2004a; Räthzel and Uzzell 2011, 2013), a careful exploration of the factors creating such antagonisms and dynamics of contentions are important while striving to build sustainable alliances between progressive movement groups.

LABOR-ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICTS: A CRITICAL REVIEW

Why do trade unions and environmental movements treat each other as enemies? Many studies that have explored labor-environmental conflicts have pointed out that policies designed to protect the natural environment impose a greater economic burden on the working-class causing tensions in the relationship between labor and environmental movements (Buttel and Larson 1980; Buttel, Geisler and Wiswall 1984; Zimmerman 1986; Gottlieb 1993). Research on labor-environmental conflicts can be broadly divided into two: (1) class-based theoretical analyses and (2) empirical economic analyses. The class-based theories root their explanation on the interest-based and cultural differences between working-class trade unions and middle-class environmental movements, whereas economic analyses engage in cost-benefit analyses highlighting the jobs versus the environment trade-off.

Jobs versus the Environment: Exploring the Trade-Off

The trade-off between jobs and environmental protection remains in the literature as one of the primary reasons for labor-environmental stand-off across the globe (Buttel 1986; Dewey 1998; Dreiling 1998; Gladwin 1980; Gordon 1998; Gottlieb 1993; Jones and Dunlap 1992; Kazis and Grossman 1991; Morrison 1986; Potier 1986; Ringquist 1995; Siegmann 1986; Watts 1986). Popularly referred to as the blue-green conflicts, these jobs vs. the environment represent situations where the blue-collar workers suffer for the benefit of the environment and its primarily middle-class advocates (Cooper 1992; Gray 1995; Obach 2002). According to Obach (2004a:10), "virtually every instance of labor-environmental conflict involves either a threat to existing jobs or the loss of potential jobs." Even when the conflict is often presented as a trade-off between jobs and environment, studies have explained how environmental protection is simply not the 'job killer' it has made out to be (Kazis and Grossman 1982; Goodstein 1999:7; Obach 2002). In fact, there exist many empirical studies that confirm the positive effect of environmental protection on levels of employment (Kazis and Grossman 1982; Meyer 1992, 1993; OECD 1997; Jakopovich, 2009).

According to Siegmann (1985:186), the "jobs versus environment" explanation of the conflict between labor and environmental groups is generally unsound and often based on "ideological perception." According to Kazis and Grossman (1982), the claims of job losses stemming from environmental regulation are often politically motivated. Debunking the claims of job loss, the authors point out that:

> Environmental protection not only creates jobs, it also saves jobs. Fishing, forestry, tourism, agriculture, and the growing leisure and outdoor recreation industries are all important sources of jobs which depend directly upon clean water, clean air, and wilderness for their continuation and growth. (Kazis and Grossman 1982:18)

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Eban Goodstein (1999:9) debunks the "job-loss" claim in his book *The Trade-Off Myth: Fact and Fiction about Jobs and the Environment* where he reviews two decades of research on jobs and the environment and finds no factual basis for the conventional wisdom which assumes a trade-off between jobs and environmental regulations. The author critically explores the claim that environmental protection creates large-scale unemployment by calling it a "fiction" that needs to be understood in the American context of ever-increasing job insecurity and growing income inequality.

Many scholars have pointed out that the "jobs versus environment" trade-off has been used by corporate and state power to discursively construct employment and environmental goals in opposition to each other (Adkin 1998; Kazis and Grossman 1982, 1991; Kojola 2017). Accordingly, the discursive construction of the "job versus the environment" myth should be critically explored in the context of expanding global capital and neoliberal economic policies (Jakopovich 2009). Kojola's (2017) study makes significant strides in this regard, where it explores the role of media discourse in constructing the taken-for-granted division between the economy and the environment using the case of the Keystone XL pipeline controversy.

Although previous research has shown that the claims surrounding job-loss are close to a myth, the "jobs versus environment" trade-off continues to be one of the popular tropes invoked in labor-environmental conflicts (Räthzel and Uzzel 2011, 2012). The popularity of the job vs. the environment trade-off despite the presence of scientific studies undermining the claims stands testimony to the era of post-truth politics where facts seldom form part of grievance construction for social movements. In addition, such binary framings often are deployed to exacerbate the conflicts between labor and green movements so as to silence any discussions about alternative models of development and economic growth (Kojola 2017). Hao and Van Brown (2019) reaffirm

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this point in the context of the U.S, by highlighting the non-significant contribution of coal production to economic-wellbeing. In this study, exploring the economic impacts of fossil fuel production in the U.S from 2001 to 2015, the authors highlight how the production of coal has only resulted in increased CO_2 emissions with insignificant impacts on the local economy. The findings of this study are extremely important considering the amplified disputes and political debates surrounding coal production and local economic wellbeing in the U.S. In sum, the studies underscore the political sensibilities associated with the use of jobs-loss as a counterframing strategy to discredit environmental movements fighting for a greener alternative.

Class-Based Theoretical Analyses

Many scholars identify the tension between labor and environmental groups as a class issue between working-class trade unions and middle-class environmental movements, where differences in class interests and cultures produce conflicting identities (Buttel and Larson 1980; Buttel, Geisler and Wiswall 1984; Zimmerman 1986; Gottlieb 1993; Foster 1993; Rose 2000; Gould et al. 2004). According to Brian Mayer (2009: 219), "attempts to forge ties across cross-movement divides face challenges that are rooted in class and ideological differences that have historically generated conflict" between labor and environmental movements." For Gould et al. (2004), "the divergent foci and origins of the environmentalism of the working class and the upper and middle class dominated mainstream environmental organizations present major obstacles to the emergence of a successful blue-green coalition.". In his book *Coalition across Class-Divide,* Fred Rose (2000: 107) identifies class and cultural differences existing between working-class trade unions and middle-class environmental movements as the primary factors that prevent the formation of an alliance between these two movements. All five cases in this study featured

educated and middle-class environmental movements that are politically and culturally distinct from working-class trade unions.

This distinction based on class lines in the extant literature can be traced back to the mainstream literature on movements that conceive environmentalism as a middle-class phenomenon. The social base of educated new-middle class, origins in postindustrial society and postmaterial value orientations have all been identified as the characteristic features of environmental movements in the mainstream literature (Inglehart 1981; Cohen 1985; Buechler 1995; Rootes 2004). And this has been the predominant characterization in the present literature that explores the conflict between trade unions and environmental movements (Gottlieb 1993; Rose 2000; Gould et al. 2004; Obach 2004a; Mayer 2009).

As a response to such sweeping class-based explanations, a few studies have highlighted the inadequacy of class-based explanations to understand the relations between labor and environmental movements (Obach 2002, 2004a; Norton, 2003). Obach argues that, "given the array of interests within social-class categories, no broad class alliances can be anticipated in regard to the environment and that only ad hoc coalitions around particular issues will emerge" (Obach 2002: 84). According to him, "class-based theoretical assessments may oversimplify the political coalitions that emerge around environmental issues" and argues for a "more fine-grained empirical analysis of the distributional effects of environmental policy" to comprehensively understand labor-environmental relations[2]. Following a similar line of argument, Norton points out that "class accounts of environmentalism, and the thesis of class as a determinant of conflict in the LER, presume a 'generative' class theory (class theory as explanation of the purported causal

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[2] In his later work, Obach points out that "the cultural gap identified others is better understood as a manifestation of organizational differences rooted in legal and structural pressures as opposed to class culture" (Obach 2004a: 24).

processes) by which social structures give rise to collective political consciousness and action" (Norton, 2003: 97), which is not backed by sociological evidence.

There also have been some efforts to highlight the role of structural and political-economic factors in engendering labor-environmental conflicts. Studies by Obach (2004a), Jakopovich (2009), Huan (2014) and Liu (2015) highlight the role of structural and political-economic factors while exploring the relationship between labor and environmental movements. For example, Jakopovich (2009) holds neoliberal capitalism responsible for the absence of a progressive alliance between labor and the environment. According to him, "the growing insecurities and competition caused by the neoliberal 'race to the bottom' have provoked outbursts of chauvinism, xenophobia and parochialism among the working class, which has hindered the potential for meaningful progressive action and the development of broad, inclusive and creative alliances" (Jakopovich 2009: 77).

Despite the selective reservations on class-based explanations, almost all these studies have unitarily considered environmental movements as middle-class phenomena. Such singular conception stems from the fact that almost all these studies have focused on western cases of labor-environmental conflicts, where the environmental movements involved in the conflict were largely led by middle-class participants holding postmaterialist value orientations. Even studies by Huan (2014)[3] and Liu (2015) that considered non-western cases of labor-environmental relations

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[3] Huan (2014) explores the confluence of red and green movements in the Chinese context and points out that labor and environmental movements in China have not taken steps to interact or promote ties with each other. Huan argues that the inherent ideological conflict between "ecologism" and "socialism" makes the formation of an alliance between labor and environmental movements difficult if not impossible. According to him, the formation of an alliance in the Chinese context is determined neither by political openness or the willingness of individual movements for collaboration; rather it is contingent upon the historical process of Chinese modernization stage and choices of the CPC (Communist Party of China) and the Chinese government. Here the author highlights the role of context-specific structural and political-economic factors in determining the nature of relationship between labor and environmental movements.

followed these broad patterns by considering environmentalism as a middle-class phenomenon, thereby reaffirming the class-based differentiation.

In the book *Leverage of the Weak: Labor and Environmental Movements in Taiwan and South Korea* (2015), Hwa-Jen Liu explores the sequence of labor and environmental movements in both these countries trying to explain why these movements appear at different times in a nation's development. This is one of the most systematic explorations of the interactions between labor and environmental movements in Asia that is grounded in the theories of social movements. Moving beyond the sole focus on class and highlighting the role of power bases, Liu explores the origin of movement sequences and the role of institutions and development practice in a country-specific manner. Yet, quite similar to other class-based studies, Liu distinguishes between labor and environmental movements along class lines, where the labor movement is constituted of wage laborers and environmental movements having participants from among pollution victims and educated class.

The class-based explanations fall short in explaining the emergence of an antagonistic relationship between labor and green movements when both these movements are constituted by working-class participants. Much of the extant conceptions of environmentalism as a middle-class phenomenon in the mainstream literature on labor-environmental relations can be critiqued for two reasons. One, it completely omits cases of labor-environmental conflicts from the Global South, and two, it overlooks the environmental justice movements in the Global North (Taylor 1997, 2017). As explicated by the discussion above, most existing studies on labor-environmental conflicts are confined to Western contexts, exploring postindustrial societies. Even when there are studies that move beyond western contexts, the case studies used in such works continue to fit within the class-based distinction between working-class trade unions and middle-class

environmental movements. The singular conception of environmentalism as a middle-class phenomenon is problematic considering the "empty-stomach" variant of environmentalism (Martinez-Alier 2003,2013) in developing countries that have participants from poor and working-class backgrounds. More so, considering the complete omission of postcolonial settings, where the history of colonization and the legacy of colonial models of development have profound and long-standing influences on the nature and trajectory of social movement mobilizations.

Besides, there are no systematic attempts to capture the relationship between labor and environmental movements in the global South. The study by Chomsky and Striffler (2014) exploring the relationship between labor and environmental movements in Latin America deals exclusively with coalitions. The neglect of conflicts is rampant even within mainstream literature, where most of the studies published in the last two decades focused on coalitions. This includes seminal works (Rose 2000; Obach 2004a; Mayer 2009) that have all focused exclusively on labor-environmental coalitions. Even when Liu (2015) and Huan (2014) embark on promising projects exploring the interface between labor and environmental movements in the Asian context, their studies are situated within or built around the class-based distinction between labor and environmental movements.

The omission of working-class environmentalism and environmentalism of the poor from the existing research highlights the role of non-western contexts or lack thereof in sociological research. This project strives to fill this void in the extant literature by focusing on a case of labor-environmental conflict located in Kerala, a south Indian state, where working-class participants constitute both these movements. To set the background for such an inquiry, the rest of the review explains the resource-poor environmental movements of the Global South, with a special focus on

postcolonial India, by highlighting the confluence of material and environmental grievances in their protest vocabularies.

ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

As evident from the discussion above, the mainstream literature on social movements largely characterizes the environmental movement as a middle-class phenomenon that is grounded in postmaterial values. Contrary to such theoretical conceptions, many developing and less developed countries such as India, Brazil, Malaysia and Kenya all have growing environmental movements[4] with markedly lower-class constituencies and social justice orientations (Dwivedi 2001; Rootes 2009; Motta and Nilsen 2011; Guha and Martinez-Alier 2013). Addressing the reductive exposition of environmentalism, Dwivedi points out the need to consider environmental movements as an "envelope" encompassing a "variety of socially and discursively constructed ideologies and actions, theories, and practices" (Dwivedi 2001: 12). Breaking the myth of environmentalism as middle-class phenomena, Gadgil and Guha (1994: 131) argue that "poor countries…poor individuals and poor communities within them, have shown a strong interest in environmental issues." Challenging the dominant narrative, these studies establish the poor and working-class base of the local environmental movements, where people fight to preserve the natural resource base that is crucial for their daily survival (Karan 1994; Guha 1989). Thus, these struggles incorporate both material and ecological grievances into their protest lexicons. Moreover, Martinez-Alier et al. (2016) invoke the idea of a global environmental justice movement, drawing

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[4]As a matter of fact, the history of environmental movements in a country like India can be dated back to the forest conflicts during the colonial time period thereby challenging the claims of "newness" upheld by contemporary New Social Movements (Guha 1989; Bandyopadhyay and Shiva 1988).

parallels between the environmental movements in the Global South and environmental justice movements in the Global North, establishing the need to think beyond the North-South binary.

Popularly dubbed as "environmentalism of the poor" (Martinez-Alier 2003) in the literature on ecology movements from the Global South[5], these resource-poor and working-class movements are often organized by socially and economically marginalized people to fight against the plunder of natural resources. The environmentalism of the poor or the "empty-belly" variant of environmentalism is quite distinct from the "full-stomach" environmentalism (featured extensively in the literature on labor-environmental conflicts) in its focus on environmental inequalities, material grievances and unequal distribution of burdens (Martinez-Alier 2014). When the mainstream environmentalism is often portrayed as a fight to preserve pristine environments and natural resources, the working-class environmentalism seeks to expose the underlying inequalities and selective environmental vulnerabilities of people at the margins. The vibrant presence of environmental movements, both radical and reformative, across the developing world debunks the theoretical claims that characterize environmental movements as a middle-class phenomenon situated in a postindustrial society.

In other words, the environmentalism of the poor has very different agendas than the environmentalism of the rich (Gadgil and Guha 1994). The integration of material grievances alongside culture and identity within these movements makes these ecology movements incomprehensible within the mainstream framework. The environmental movements in many developing countries are not postmaterial in any sense but are livelihood struggles with clearly defined material grievances, that weave red and green concerns together (Baviskar 2005, 1997).

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[5] This is not to preclude the environmental justice struggles in the United States or other developed countries, where marginalized communities fight against the unequal distribution of environmental burdens. However, the extant research on labor-environmental conflicts does not feature cases including the environmental justice movements.

The structural problems and chronic poverty in a developing country context should be taken into consideration while understanding the material aspects of these ecological struggles. The model of resource-intensive development has led to the narrowing down of the natural resource base for the survival of the economically poor and powerless, where they are left with no choice but to mobilize against the mass dispossession of their means to livelihood (Shiva 1991). Baviskar (1997) argues that in the case of Indian environmental movements, struggles over nature have an inherent class dimension because nature also provides resources that are the bases of production[6]. The unexamined presumption, she argues, that conflict over forest and water is environmental and that over agricultural land is not, stems from the class background of the scholars who tend to see forests and rivers as 'wilderness' and not primarily as a source of livelihood. The inseparability of and continuity between 'red' and 'green' agenda is emphasized by Ramachandra Guha (1989) when he observes that ecological specificities limit and modify social relations; therefore, a better understanding of movements should include the economic landscape and ecological landscape within which it is placed (Guha 1989).

Apart from the confluence of material and ideational aspects of natural resource conservation, the environmentalism of the poor offers an active rebuttal to the dominant idioms, concepts, and indicators of economic development (Karan 1994). Exploring this proposition in the context of Indian environmental movements, Bandyopadhyay and Shiva (1988) point out that:

> The ecology movements that have emerged as major social movements in many parts of India are making visible many invisible externalities and pressing for their internalization to the economic evaluation of the elite-oriented development process. In the context of a limited resource base and unlimited development aspirations, the ecology movements have initiated a new political struggle for safeguarding the interest and survival of the poor, the

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[6]According to O'Connor, the meanings attributed to nature are not exhausted by its use as natural resource; ecological politics are about "class issues even though they are more than class issues" (O'Connor 1988:37 as cited in Baviskar 1997:40).

marginalised, among whom are women, tribals and the poor peasants. (Bandyopadhyay and Shiva 1988: 224)

As the excerpt explicates, many such environmental movements have strong social-justice orientations that challenge the distribution of environmental inequality in the immediate surroundings of people and have a direct impact on their everyday lived experiences (Karan 1994; Dwivedi 2001; Shiva 1991; Gadgil and Guha 1994, 1995). Such traits make these movements different from the mainstream environmental movements that are values-centered and organized around universalistic demands. Exploring the North-South distinctions, Dwivedi observes how the difference in approach between the South and the North centers around "the preference for a *political economy approach* to resource distribution and use in the former as opposed to either an *organizational or NSM approach* in the North. In the case of southern movements, equity issues feature as important as sustainability and efficiency" (Dwivedi 2001: 16). Comparing the environmental movements in Indian and the U.S, Gadgil and Guha (1994) observe that many environmental conflicts in developing countries are part of economic conflicts, which also translates into their chosen mode of action. In short, the extensive literature on environmental movements in countries such as India highlights the poor and working-class origins of environmental movements and the confluence of material and ecological grievances in their protest vocabularies.

AGENDA FOR RESEARCH

There are no systematic explorations of labor-environmental conflicts in a context where they both are constituted within the same social class. Except for the studies by Liu (2015) and Huan (2014), the relationship between labor and environmental movements remains largely unexamined in the South-Asian context. Systematic inquiries into the relationship between labor

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and environmental movements in India are limited (except Baviskar 1995). More importantly, none of the current studies make an effort to connect the study of labor-environmental conflict to the larger scholarship on social movements, particularly in postcolonial settings. Apart from Liu's (2015) study that explores the differences in the power bases of the two movements, which focuses largely on movement sequencing, there are not many studies that probe into the differences in mobilizing structures, protest strategies, ideologies, framing processes and grievance interpretation or emotions while trying to explain labor-environmental conflicts. Trying to fill this lacuna in the literature, my study seeks to explore the conflict between labor and environmental movements using the framing perspective.

The current studies either focus on structural factors or narrowly focus on individual movement attributes, creating a wedge in the literature that could only be bridged by combining structural and individual factors. My study aims to explore labor-environmental conflicts by uncovering the frame disputes (Benford 1993a) between the two movements, attending to both the framing processes at the level of the individual participants and the role of structural factors in influencing the frames produced and collective identities constructed by movement participants. I focus on the processes underlying the production of contradictory realities and the construction of opposing frames in the labor-environmental conflict. This study closely examines the framing processes underlying the production of competing frames between the two movement groups, in addition to the role of structural factors (class, political economy) in the construction of individual movement frames and collective identities (Benford and Snow 2000; Hunt and Benford 2004).

In short, in a social context where poor and working-class people largely organize environmental movements, the conflict between labor and environmental movement becomes a stand-off between two movements constituted by people from the same social class. As explicated

in the above review, the existing theories on labor-environmental conflicts fall short in comprehensively addressing the conflict involving environmental movements that are markedly constituted by the poor and working-class sections of society. Class-based interests and class-based cultures fail as explanatory factors when working-class participants constitute both these movements. Many ongoing issues of labor-environmental conflicts in countries such as India call for new theoretical perspectives that move beyond the traditional and generative class-based binaries. Only a comprehensive approach that considers the political economy of development, economic growth and the nexus between labor and capitalist forces can expose the dynamics of labor-environmental conflicts in the Global South. Despite the replete presence of conflicts between working-class trade unions and environmental movements, the issue remains largely unexamined in the context of the Global South. Furthermore, the absence of ethnographic and qualitative inquiries into the nature and dynamics of inter-movement relations in the context of Global South preempts the inclusion of voices and cases from the margins to the center of social research on labor-environmental conflicts.

In this context, this project seeks to expand the existing literature on labor-environmental conflicts by exploring the factors producing conflictual relationships between labor and green movements in India, when both these movements are constituted by working-class participants. Relying on a case that directly challenges the extant conceptions of labor-environmental conflicts, I explore the puzzle in the context of Kerala, a south Indian state of 34.8 million people. This inquiry aims to expand the scholarship on social movements by bringing postcolonial movements and settings to the center of social inquiry.

THEORETICAL APPROACH AND INTERDISCIPLINARY ORIENTATIONS

Sociology has actively contributed to uncovering the processes that underlie the origin and growth of social movements, ranging from structural and rationalist analyses to social constructionist and cultural approaches (della Porta and Diani 2020). As it has been made clear in the above review, the majority of the existing research on labor and environmental conflicts have largely confined their analyses to structural factors (class, economic and political factors) overlooking the role of individual grievance interpretations, cultural aspects, emotions or the dialectics between structural and individual factors in explaining the conflicts between labor and environmental movements. Even when the studies have relied on structural factors, no attempt has been made to integrate these findings into the theories of social movement research such as resource mobilization or political process model; instead, they stand alone in a separate niche of studies exploring labor-environmental relations. There are no systematic inquiries into the processes that articulate the framing and counter-framing around the conflicts between the two movement groups. The scope for examining inter-movement dynamics, framing processes, and the linkages between structural factors and movement-frames all make the case of immense potential for social movement research. I employ frame analysis to uncover the framing processes[7] and frame disputes[8] between the movements (Benford 1993a; Benford and Snow 2000). This assists in bringing forth competing frames or frame disputes between the two groups. Being a perspective that has "lent itself to addressing and synthesizing static and dynamic dimensions of

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[7]Frame analysis represents the social constructionist approach to the study of social movements. The concept frame used here is derived from the work of Goffman (1974:21) who defines frames as "schemata of interpretation" that enable individuals to "locate, perceive, identify, and label" occurrences within their life space and world at large. Frames are crucial to social movements as they guide individual and collective action. According to Benford and Snow (2000), framing is "an active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction." (Benford and Snow 2000:614).

[8]However, not all movements share the same the same frame or interpretation of reality. Frame disputes between social movements emerge over such disparate interpretation of reality (Benford 1993a).

social movements" frame analysis enables the researcher to examine the processes by which grievances are "constructed, contested, and disseminated (*framing*) as well as describe, assess, and compare the products of those interactions or ideational work (*frame*)" (Snow et al. .2014:30). Also, the situatedness of the issue within the backdrop of industrial capitalism in a state with a very long communist history provides an excellent opportunity to reintroduce capitalism into social movement research and understand the effects of neoliberal capitalism on the relationship between contemporary social movements (Hetland and Goodwin 2013; della Porta 2015). The project makes contributions to the critique of economic development and growth, environment, the political left and development studies.

Additionally, this study is informed by a combination of constructionist and post-Marxian theoretical approaches (including Critical theory, Marxian Ecology (O'Connor 1988; Foster 2000) and Treadmill of Production (Gould et al. 1996), which aid in situating the project within the backdrop of the expanding capitalist accumulation and its effects on the environment. I employ a political ecology lens to analyze the situated nature of environmental issues within differential fields of power and politics, which in turn aids in exploring the processes underlying the unequal distribution of environmental burdens among the working-class sections of society (Peet and Watts 2004). The study generously draws from postcolonial theory (Haynes and Prakash 1992; Chakrabarty 2000) to move beyond the domain of class interests while understanding and explaining the conflict between labor and environmental movements in a postcolonial setting.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

Kerala has a unique history of communist governments and egalitarian politics that is well represented in the scholarly literature (Jeffrey 1992; Franke and Chasin 1994; Heller 1999). The

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working-class struggles and redistributive policies played an instrumental role in creating what is now known as the Kerala Model of Development (Drèze and Sen 2002), a model with moderate economic growth and very high social indicators. The trajectory of labor and environmental movements in the state makes it an excellent context to explore the conflict between these two groups.

The labor movements in the state, which started off as anti-capitalist (class) struggle later embraced the politics of class compromise with capital and furthered accumulationist strategies of development in the state (Heller 1995). According to Heller, this transformation of politics has conferred upon labor the status as the 'agent of development' (Heller 1999). However, the proliferation of subaltern and working-class environmental movements[9] in the state challenges the monolithic narratives surrounding the 'Kerala model' from the standpoints of environmental justice and resource access rights (Kurien 1995; Raman 2010; Satheesh 2017). These environmental movements pose active challenges to the model of resource-intensive development that labor strives to promote in the state. Despite extensive discussions about the vindication of labor movements, few scholars have discussed the effects of labor mobilization on other social movements. Moreover, they fail to look at how the shifting class politics of labor has affected other lower-class movements.

A unique model of development, the transformation of labor politics, and the advent of environmental movements against this model make the inquiry into the relationship between labor and environment significant in the context of Kerala. There are no systematic studies that explore the interactions between these two movements in the region, and my study fills this gap in the

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[9] **T**hese environmental movements are part of the larger oppositional movements that have emerged against the redundant class politics of labor that precludes concerns related to gender, ecology, caste and sexualities.

literature. This study makes original contributions to the study of labor-environment interactions from a developing country perspective by contextualizing the labor-environmental relations beyond class-based explanations. The findings of this research, grounded in a social context lauded for its communist orientations, add to the debates and discussions around labor, nature, and capitalism.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In this dissertation, I study the conflicts between labor and environmental movements in Kerala. Relying on an analysis of movement frames and individual movement actor's interpretations, I explore how structural and individual factors intersect to determine the relationship between labor and environmental movements in Kerala. My primary objective in this project focus on two aspects; (1) the structural and individual factors that create a conflictual relationship between labor and green movements, and (2) the framing-processes and frame-disputes between the two movement groups. Building on the research objectives and grounded in the dominant themes emergent during the analysis, the upcoming chapters are organized to answer the following questions:

- How do structural and political-economic factors such as capitalism and the state-capitalist nexus influence the conflicts between labor and green movements?

- How can we explain labor-environmental movements when working-class participants constitute both these movements?

- What are the dominant themes in the frame-disputes between labor and green movements in Kerala? What influence do ideologies have in creating and accentuating the frame-disputes between the two movements?

In Chapter Two, I lay out the methodological approach underlying this project. The chapter introduces the settings, movements, actors, and varied methods used in this inquiry. The chapter explicates the rationale behind adopting a hybrid approach to ethnography, that draws from the extended case method and constructivist grounded theory. Aside from detailing the setting and the varied methods and strategies used in this project, I reflect on the issues of objectivity and positionality and its possible influences on the research design and analysis. Moreover, the study explicates the ways in which it strives to decenter and decolonize the process of knowledge production by resituating the focus on a postcolonial setting. In doing so, this chapter also seeks to address some issues involved while researching the left, environment, and social movements in Kerala from a critical standpoint.

Chapter Three sets the backdrop for understanding labor-environmental conflicts in the Eloor-Edayar region. In this chapter, I offer a brief overview of the history of industrialization in the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt. Using interviews and oral history narratives, this chapter maps the origins of the local environmental movement and explains how the emergence can be explained as a response to the environmental grievance resulting from industrial pollution. More so, the chapter illuminates the conditions that led to the emergence of the local environmental movement and maps the process of mobilization. This chapter presents a periodization of the local environmental movement, marking periods of emergence, growth, and decline. In doing so, the chapter reaffirms the importance of grievances in engendering social movements, especially in the context of issues such as environmental pollution, where the grievances often interfere in daily lives, causing quotidian disruption.

In Chapter Four, I examine the influence of industrial capitalism on social movement mobilization processes in Kerala. Adding to the ongoing discussions surrounding capitalism and

social movements, the chapter uncovers an empirical case study illuminating the operations of capitalist forces in a postcolonial movement landscape. Using interviews, oral histories, and documents, I examine how the political economy of industrial development and a variant of crony capitalism characterized by the nexus between the state, trade unions, and capitalists impact the social movement landscape in the region. Grounded in the frames and narratives of movement actors, the chapter expounds the strategies deployed by local industries to co-opt the leadership of trade unions, pump capital into the landscape of mobilization and successfully manufacture consent among the local people. Most importantly, the chapter highlights how capital buys participation by introducing monetary incentives and constrains local environmental activism of factory workers using the trope of *job blackmail*. Additionally, the chapter embellishes how the monopoly over monetary resources or "capital" attributes unique privileges to industrial capitalists over resource-poor environmental movements in the movement field. Such operations of capital highlight the need to move beyond the traditional resource mobilization perspective that overlooks the structural inequality in the distribution of resources. The findings of this chapter highlight the importance of situating studies on postcolonial environmental movements within the backdrop of capitalism, the political economy of development, and state-capitalist nexus.

In Chapter Five, I examine the tensions between labor and green movements in the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt, despite belonging to similar class-backgrounds. The chapter explicates the continued tensions between the two movements relying on two aspects: (1) the heterogeneity of working-class and worker's interest and (2) the shift in labor politics in Kerala. Analyzing the use of worker's grievances in the movement frames and interpretations, I illustrate how the two movements employ the interests of workers to legitimize their movement goals. When greens legitimize their movements, highlighting the fallouts of industrial pollution on inland fish-workers

and farmworkers, the unions fight against pollution regulation citing the economic interests of factory workers. The presence of worker's interest on either side of the conflict challenges reductive and universal conceptions of working-class as a single category. Instead, it uncovers how the economic interests of different types of workers are contingent upon sectoral location, resource dependence, and the embeddedness within the political economy of industrial development.

Additionally, the chapter explains the ongoing tensions in the backdrop of the shift in labor politics in Kerala. I use the class compromise between labor and capital to explicate the antagonism between the movements, despite belonging to similar class-backgrounds. Also, highlighting the contested interpretations of class and class-consciousness, this chapter brings out the polarized understandings and interpretations by distinguishing between inclusive and exclusive definitions of left politics. I argue that the competing interpretations surrounding communism and left politics produced by green movements and unions signify the divide between radical and reformist versions of left politics operating in Kerala.

In Chapter Six, I uncover the frame-disputes between labor and environmental movement in the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt. Focusing on the opposing and competing frames constructed by the two movement groups surrounding the issue of pollution, this chapter investigates how structural factors and varied ideologies of development influence the micromobilization processes of social movements. The chapter explains labor-environmental conflicts as also a conflict of ideas and realities, where the movements engage in an ontological dispute regarding the existence and causes of industrial pollution. The analysis of movement frames and discussions in this chapter illuminates the ideological disputes surrounding environment, development, and economic growth underlying the frame-disputes between the two movements. More so, the chapter also identifies how the ideological roots of the unions are ingrained in the lexicons of economic growth, whereas

the green movement is guided by the ethos of environmental justice, resource rights, and sustainability. Additionally, the chapter explains how the union collective fits the definition of countermovement and analyzes the counter-frames. Most importantly, the chapter presents the implications of the counter-frames created by the union collective in discrediting, demobilizing, and delegitimizing the green movement. The chapter exposes how the counterframing tactics used by the unions, which labeled the environmental activists as "pseudo-environmentalists," "anti-developmentalist," and "extremists" seek to repress the local environmental movement.

In Chapter Seven, I offer a summary of the major findings discussed in the previous chapters, discuss the implications of this study for social movement theory and research, identify the limitations, and delineate future research.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

It is the task of methodology to explicate methods of turning observations into explanations, data into theory. (Burawoy in Burawoy et al. 1991:5)

This chapter lays out the methodological approach underlying this project. I explicate the rationale for choosing the setting, methods of research, data sources and analytic tools used as part of this inquiry. The chapter explains how the ethnographic methods used in this project is a hybrid approach, informed by a combination of the extended case method and constructionist grounded theory. Aside from detailing the setting and the varied methods and strategies used in this project, I also reflect on the issues of objectivity, and positionality and its influence on the research process. Moreover, the study explicates the ways in which it strives to decenter and decolonize the process of knowledge production by resituating the focus on a postcolonial setting. In doing so, this chapter also seeks to address some issues involved while researching the left, environment and social movements in Kerala from a critical standpoint.

THE SETTING: ELOOR-EDAYAR INDUSTRIAL BELT

The study was conducted in the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt, the 24th most polluted industrial zones in India (Nambudiri 2017; Perinchery 2019). The industrial zone, which is the largest industrial belt in Kerala, spans across Eloor and Edayar, a municipality and a village in Koothattukulam, respectively. Situated in the Ernakulam district, Eloor is an island on River

Periyar located almost 17 km (10.56 miles) from Cochin. Describing the geography of the setting, Ravi, a trade union leader, remarked:

> Eloor, the present Municipality, an old Panchayath, is actually an island that is surrounded by the river, Periyar. Bridges connect this land to the mainland...we have almost 11 bridges connecting us to the outside...this is an island. (Ravi, personal interview, May 16, 2018)

A region surrounded by the River Periyar and many small streams and canals, the Eloor-Edayar region formed the setting for this study. Home to more than 247 chemical industries, the region was declared as a "toxic-hotspot" by a study published by the Greenpeace (Greenpeace 2003). As a site of pollution, the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt also made it into the EJ (Environmental Justice) Atlas in 2014 (Patra 2014; Temper et al. 2015). Many scientific and academic studies have explored the issue of pollution and the inaction of local elected bodies in curbing the same (Stringer et al.2003; LAEC 2006; NIIST 2011; Times of India 2012; Devika and Narayanan 2019; Joseph 2020).

My field trips also illustrated the extent to which industries became an integral part of the place and its identity. A place named Binanipuram, named after Binani Industries that operated from the region until it was closed down recently, or the junction named after "company" signifies how the lives and livelihoods of the people are embedded within the lexicons connected to the local industries. The region was often dubbed as a "*graveyard of industries*" by the union leaders as they talked about the decline of industrial growth in the region. A bus journey from Ernakulam to Eloor would take one on a trip through this "graveyard" where remnants of old and corroded plants and housing complexes constructed by industries could be seen tangled in creepers and greens. However, the trip also gives a sense of the industrial hub, with major public industries such as FACT, IRE and TCS lining the sides of the road to the Eloor bus depot. And the lamentations regarding the demise of industries seemed complicated as I started discovering the place better.

With the help of a local worker, working in a bone mill factory, I could see the insides of an industrial unit processing animal bones into fertilizer. The visit to the region exposed the extent of industrial growth along the banks of the River Periyar and pointed towards the abysmal working conditions of workers in some of these private industries. Interestingly, the visits conveyed how the decline of public industries is compensated by a new surge in private industries, employing workers with limited income and benefits, who are forced to work in abysmal and unsafe conditions. It also illustrated the decline of permanent factory jobs, as they got replaced with temporary and contractual work and a larger influx of migrant workforce. In other words, the combination of interviews, field observations and documents helped establish a systematic model of data collection enabling triangulation (Geertz 2004; Lofland and Lofland 2006).

I relied on theoretical sampling (Breckenridge and Derek 2009; Glasser and Strauss 2017) to identify the case[1] "specific" enough to meet the characteristics and theoretical constructs mandated in my questions (Ragin 1992). The conflicts between the union collective and the local environmental movement in this setting fit the conceptual and theoretical questions laid out in the introduction. The unique history of working-class mobilizations in Kerala is marked by efforts to build political solidarity among the working-class members of the society. This included teach-ins and study classes aimed at consciousness-raising and collective empowerment of the people. Such group processes exposed and familiarized people to Marxian theory and concepts so much so that these terms and constructs carry interpretations rooted in Kerala's social and cultural context. Moreover, the presence of public and private industries, the state-owned Kerala State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) and the local movements created a unique combination of structural and political-economic factors, thereby aiding a process of inquiry that seeks to

understand the interaction between political economy and individual factors in social movement mobilization.

RESEARCHING LABOR-ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICTS: MOVEMENTS AND PARTICIPANTS

The study explores two social movement groups in the Eloor-Edayar region, that are mobilized surrounding the issue of industrial pollution. The local environmental movement is constituted by different local green groups, the most prominent of them being the P*eriyar Malineekarana Virudha Samithi* (Periyar Anti-Pollution Committee, PMVS hereafter). The local environmental movement also includes two other green groups; Green Action Force and *Janajagratha* (People's Vigilante). Green Action Force played an instrumental role in initiating a legal battle against the polluting companies in the region, whereas *Janajagratha* emerged in a context where the frontline leaders of PMVS were selectively attacked and victimized for fighting against pollution. Standing Council of Trade Unions (SCTU) is the union-collective featured in this study. SCTU is a collective organized by the major trade unions for factory workers in the industrial belt, initially to fight against the issue of rising energy prices. The collective remained dormant for a while but got revamped when the local environmental movements intensified their fight against pollution. Thus, the project examines the interactions between the green movement led by the PMVS and the trade union collective, SCTU.

The participants featured in this study are the members of these two respective movements. The movements and movement actors, as mentioned above, were selected by theoretical sampling. A local Environmental NGO, named, Thanal provided entry to the field and introduced me to Kumar, the Research Coordinator of PMVS. Kumar *chettan* put me in touch with other members

of the local environmental movement in the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt. I tried to gain access to members of the trade-union collective, SCTU. Initially, I tried to gain entry and access to the union members by going through the District Committee (DC hereafter) in my district, Kottayam. I requested the Secretary of DC to introduce me to the trade union leaders in the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt. When I summarized the project objectives during our first meeting, Kumar happily agreed to share the contact details of the trade union leaders in the region. I contacted Padmanabhan, the Secretary of the SCTU first and he then put me in touch with other trade union leaders and members in the region. After being in touch with the leaders of the two movement groups, subsequent participants were identified using snowball sampling. The frontline leaders of the two movement groups were extremely helpful in passing over information about potential participants for this study. To eliminate the bias in choosing members and to increase the validity of the findings, the study used snowball sampling techniques (Noy 2008; Handcock and Gile 2011) to expand the sample of participants to include members who were not initially suggested by the frontline leaders.

However, as my research progressed, I encountered some difficulty gaining entry into the labor movement. With some effort and perseverance, I was able to establish some rapport with the leader of the union collective and that was instrumental in opening my window to meet other union leaders. Despite gaining entry, my access to these settings was severely limited. Almost all union leaders maintained a very formal structure to their responses, and after the first few interviews, I realized that the construction of responses started sounding similar. By the middle of my initial schedule, I realized that union leaders were being informed about my project and were encouraged to be consistent in their responses. One industry in particular was prompt in establishing strong mechanisms of surveillance over my project via informal social networks and denied access to its

workers and union leaders. I was recorded and photographed during one such encounter, where a person randomly confronted me and started questioning me about my project and its alleged focus on this particular industry. I contacted union representatives in this industry like many others; however, the union representatives working for this industry decided not to part take in this study at the last minute and informed me that the decision to withdraw was taken collectively by all unions in this particular industry.

DETAILING THE METHODS OF RESEARCH

I adopt a qualitative methodological approach in this project. This methodological choice is guided by the epistemological and ontological premises within which my research questions have sprouted and grown. A combination of ethnographic observations, in-depth interviews, ethnographic interviews, and document analysis is used here. Most importantly, the ethnographic method used in this project relies on a combination of the extended case logic (Burawoy 1998,2019; Burawoy et al.2000) and constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz 2014). In other words, I employed both theory-driven (Lichterman 2002; Burawoy 2019) and grounded theory approaches while gathering data. Also, building on Lichterman's (2002:141) call to use multiple methods, I used observation and interviews to pursue questions surrounding the interaction between social and cultural structures and movements. Such a hybrid approach is important to examine the questions outlined in the preceding chapter that look at the intersection of structure and agency. The field research spanned over a period of three months ranging from May to July 2018.

Types of Interviews and Interview Strategies

A total of 38 movement actors were interviewed during the course of this project. Of the 38 participants, 19 participants signed the consent form, and 19 participants provided verbal consent before taking part in the study. The participants included 36 respondents who identified as male and two respondents who identified as female. The absence of women from the leadership position of the two movements is further discussed in Chapter seven. All the interviews were conducted at locations chosen by the participants. The majority of the interviews with the environmental actors were conducted at their homes or during movement events, whereas interviews with union leaders were conducted in union offices. The interview sites varied from the Eloor-Edayar industrial region to Ernakulam city. All names used in this project are pseudonyms, though real names are also used while citing published articles written by participants. Many environmentalists and union members expressed interest in using their real names in the study. This request is reasonable, particularly, in the context of social movements where movement actors are popular among the community. Moreover, the prominence of the local environmental movement and activists in mainstream and social media also make hiding the identity of the actors futile. However, to be compliant with the IRB regulations, pseudonyms are used while talking about all participants.

I used different interview strategies within each interview session to elicit information on multiple aspects pertaining to the conflict and processes of mobilization. Oral history interview strategies and probes were used to "elicit description of a historical period or situation from the perspective of those who lived through that time" (Blee and Taylor 2002:102). Since oral history interviews shed light on the "past periods of current social movements" (Staggenborg 1991; Blee and Taylor 2002:102), this strategy was particularly helpful to reconstruct the history of

industrialization, fight against pollution, the formation of collective identity, the emergence of movements, timeline of protests and collective action, specific instances of conflicts, etc. The absence of documented evidence surrounding the history of conflicts between the two movements groups presented a major roadblock in the initial research process. However, oral history interviews facilitated entry into these past events through the memories of the participants. For example, many interviewees recollected how Kuhappan, a firebrand leader, staged the first protest against the issue of pollution in Eloor by holding a sign saying, "Welcome to the Gas Chamber in Eloor." That incident, a protest staged by a radical activist, marks the beginning of fights against pollution in the region, yet this act of protest is seldom present in the limited documents and media reports available on the movement. Similarly, many events that serve as very crucial to understanding the emergence of the trade union collective or the unfolding of the red-green conflicts came up during the interviews.

The collective memory of the people helped reconstruct the history of the place, pollution, and social movement mobilization. The interview narratives from people belonging to opposing groups, such as the unions and the green movements, corroborated each other in building these shared remembrances of the past. Beyond these two movement groups, interviews with people living in the region aided in widening the social base and location of participants to some extent. Thus, collecting historical data based on multiple interviews and featuring the perspective of participants belonging to varied social groups and social positions (Blee and Taylor 2002; Janesick 2010) build the validity of these narratives. This step was crucial, considering the importance of comparing oral history accounts from differently situated persons or other sources in social movement research (Naples 1999). While discussing the utility of oral history interviewing for social movement research, Kathleen Blee and Verta Taylor observe that this strategy of

interviewing serves "as a technique of bridging, seeking to understand social contexts through stories of the individual experiences and to comprehend experiences of the past through stories of the present" (Blee and Taylor 2002: 102).

In addition to oral history accounts, life history interview was also used to understand the mobilizing experiences of individual members, personal consequences and to tease out the interactions between macro and micro-processes of social movement mobilization (Rubin and Rubin 1995). Situated within the tradition of ethnography and oral history, life history interviewing "is designed to record an individual's' biography" in his/her/their own words (Faraday and Plummer 1979; Heyl 2001; Jackson and Russell 2010: 172). This strategy aided in understanding the ways in which structural factors influenced the construction of shared grievances, collective identities and frames within the two movement groups.

Apart from oral and life histories, the interviews also included semi-structured and ethnographic interview techniques. Distinguishing ethnographic interviews[10] (Heyl 2001) from other interviews is helpful in the context of the methodological discussion of this project as I carefully picked these strategies depending on the social movement group I was interviewing. I relied on ethnographic interviewing technique to gather the narratives of environmental movements, where I had gained immediate access, but almost exclusively relied on semi-structured interviews (which were invariably formal except one or two) with members of the trade union. Additionally, native language explanations are considered as one among the important forms of ethnographic explanations (Spradley 2016:59) that needs to be sought during interviews.

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[10] Heyl (2001:369) defines ethnographic interviewing in the context of projects were "researchers have established respectful, on-going relationships with their interviewees, including enough rapport for there to be a genuine exchange of views and enough time and openness in the interviews for the interviewees to explore purposefully with the researcher the meanings they place on events in their worlds."

Being a native speaker has helped me in explaining and understanding the emotional, social and cultural contexts within which many of the responses are embedded in.

Theory-Driven Participant Observation

The participant observation research conducted here draws from Lichterman's (2002) idea of *theory-driven participant observations* for studying movements. In the article titled "Seeing Structure Happen", Lichterman (2002: 142) suggests how participant observers can use the extended case logic to "understand social movements in their ongoing relations to larger contexts." Such an approach is capable of finding answers to theoretical questions surrounding social and cultural structures. Moreover, the combination of interviews and observations adopted here also stems from the author's suggestion to consider using multiple methods while exploring questions related to structure and social movements. Additionally, a mixed-method approach helps to accomplish the triangulation (Flick 2004) of methods used in this project. I recorded observations in my field journal and later developed them into reflexive field notes (Lofland 2004; Emerson et al. 2011).

Apart from interviews, participant observations were conducted in and around the industrial region and this includes observations conducted on River Periyar in a country boat on July 6, 2018. This trip on a country boat covered the stretch of the river running behind some of the most polluting industries, including TMRL and another industry that remained closed following an order from PCB citing violation of pollution regulation. Observations of movement events include a campaign event in Edayar that featured speeches from local environmentalists as well as other leading environmentalists in Kerala (July 7, 2018), and a meeting organized in Ernakulam, by leading environmental and cultural organizations/movements in Kerala, to

brainstorm the possibility of organizing a collective protest against KSPCB (June 16, 2018). My

trips to the industrial region included important sites repeated in the narratives such as Pathalam

regulator-cum-bridge, company junction (*company padi*), Kuzhikandam *Thodu* (canal), Periyar

River etc. Field observations and interviews were conducted until the interviews contained

repeated narration of the same incidents and themes indicating theoretical saturation (Breckenridge

and Jones 2009).

Document Analysis: Campaign Materials, Media reports, and Social Media Handles

Apart from ethnographic methods, the study also collected the campaign materials

produced by the two movement groups, and this includes posters, flyers, pamphlets, booklets and

newsletters. In addition to the campaign materials produced by the two movement groups, I

collected media reports on the issue of industrial pollution and labor-environmental tensions, as

well as the scientific reports produced by government agencies and civil society organizations on

the extent and impact of pollution. All the documents collected were coded and synchronized based

on themes. The text relevant to the study contained around 1000 pages and procedures of selective

coding were employed for the government reports that ran more than 150 pages. All the collected

documented included around 500 pages, excluding the scientific study reports and media

documents. Video documentaries and online news discussions were also included as part of the

survey of media reports. Additionally, the Facebook profile handles of all prominent

environmentalists were used to understand the online campaigns organized by the green

movement. This method was not extensively used in the case of SCTU as their online presence

was limited. Moreover, the Live feature on Facebook was often used by the green movement to

live stream collective action events and protest meetings. All these live videos were analyzed and

included as data in this inquiry. These live streaming also expanded the scope of ethnographic research to include virtual ethnographic methods and data (Hine 2000; 2008).

CODING AND ANALYSIS

The major data sources used here include interview transcripts, field notes, media documents (print, social media, and digital media), government documents, civil society reports, and campaign materials of the two movement groups (flyers, booklets, brochures, pamphlets etc.). The interviews were translated from Malayalam to English and transcribed before conducting the analysis. All the data were converted to texts (including video documentaries, news discussions) (Gibbs 2004), which were coded and analyzed using traditional hand-coding techniques and NVivo. The NCapture feature available within the NVivo software facilitated data scrapping from social media and news media websites. The data in the form of text were coded and analyzed using a constructivist grounded theory approach to find out the dominant themes and patterns emerging from the data (Charmaz 2014). In the words of Charmaz, when constructionist approaches limit itself to the *what* and *how* questions, grounded theory engages not only what and how questions but why questions as well. Thus, subjecting all the data to this method of analysis helped me to ask the *what*, *why* and *how* questions surrounding labor and environmental conflicts in the settings. I followed the structure of coding, schemes and practices presented by Kathy Charmaz (2014). I conducted the line-by-line (Charmaz 2014:124) coding initially on all transcribed and translated data to identify the initial codes. The initial phase of coding helped in identifying the main ideas and codes. Once the initial coding was completed, I moved on to the second stage, 'focused coding' (139), where I explored the possibilities of axial and theoretical coding to separate and sort the available data based on recurring codes and themes. Throughout the stages, analytic

memos were used to embellish ideas about the codes, make comparisons, mark theoretical significance, or to sensitize concepts and direct further data-gathering (Charmaz 2014: 164)). Analysis of the data was guided by a combination of political economy and framing perspectives to identify the collective action frames constructed by the two movement groups and to map the role of structural and ideological factors in creating the same. In that respect, the project used a combination of inductive and deductive approaches to unearth the dominant themes from the data. My document analysis (Bowen 2009) was largely inspired by the method of textual deconstruction as employed in the works of Subaltern Studies scholars (Guha 1987; Oldenburg 1990). All the interviews were transcribed and translated. Throughout the transcription process, steps were taken to ensure the quality of the transcripts (Poland 1995) and adopted a reflexive approach to be attentive to the issues surrounding representation (Oliver et al.2005). Aside from interviews, video documentaries and news discussions were also transcribed. However, translating them from Malayalam to English posed unique challenges due to the possibility of losing meanings and emotions in translation (Van Nes et al.2010). As a non-native speaker of English, who grew up in Kerala, language presented impediments in terms of converting ideas to words. The validity of the findings (Cook and Campbell 2004) and reliability of the data are ensured by using a multi-method approach, offering a chance to cross-check findings derived from data gathered from multiple methods and sources (Seale 2004). The use of a multi-method approach also enabled triangulation.

SUBJECTIVITY AND POSITIONALITY IN MOVEMENT RESEARCH

My experiences growing up in Thiruvarppu, a village in Kerala, on the banks of River Meenachil have deeply influenced my understanding surrounding the interaction between people and nature. My grandfather, an avid reader and a communist used to take my brother and me for

long walks through the unpaved village roads. More than just walks, they took me on trips to nature tangled in stories about the history of the place, people and nature. Through stories, my grandparents reconstructed the past, filled with detailed accounts of how they built their lives surrounding the local environment. And quite unknowingly nature formed the backdrop of my lived experiences; it shaped my memories as a child and continues to influence my thoughts and imaginations of the future. The local ecology was deeply embedded in stories describing the daily lived experience of my grandparents and they ranged from swimming across the river, planting orchards and processing grains, yuca and yams as a community for the future. These stories also were laden with the dynamics of caste, class and gender in Kerala's history. They included references to the land reform policy implemented by the first communist ministry and its manifestations in the region. All these narratives vivified nature not just as the pristine environment, but as a source of livelihood, like the commons, and also the site of conflicts.

My own lived experiences in the village brought me closer to nature in terms of the extensive time I spent wandering through the orchards, the repeated events of floods, the giant Colocasia leaves under which we hid as we played hide and seek and many more. The old well at the end of our *muttam* (courtyard) had walls lined with green moss, the soft satin-like the texture of the moss always invited us to run our little hands over it. My childhood memories of playing outside the home are laden with images of the red spinach orchard next to the small brick wall separating the courtyard from the compound, surrounded by coconut trees, plantains and yams. One could argue that my idea of nature is ingrained within the built environment, an environment created and modified by people.

However, the stories swiftly changed as I grew up, the ecology transformed in front of my eyes by replacing the water in our wells, "water that used to be as clean as an eye drop" in the

words of my grandmother, with red and muddy water. The privilege of class helped my family to install a water filter to circumvent the problem of muddy water in our taps and pretend as if the issue never happened. My father laid clay tiles on top of our roofs so that we can survive the scorching summer and the heat. My grandmother, over the phone, complains about the dust from ongoing roadwork in front of our home. The public works department is raising the roads that were destroyed in the deluge of 2018 so that it can survive the floods. Such changes in my immediate environment, or the places I have always known, influence my inquiries into the impact of socio-environmental issues on people and communities. In other words, the centrality of nature in all these stories and experiences got carried forward to my life as a research student and continue to shape my research interests. As I sit writing about this project, which I undertook almost twenty-five years from when I went on these walks to nature, I realize how these memories and experiences form an integral part of my identity as a scholar studying postcolonial environmental issues and environmental movements.

The project idea, thus, stems from the experiential knowledge and lived experiences (Smith 1992) surrounding the interaction between people and nature in a postcolonial setting. In doing so, I recognize the important role played by natural resources in facilitating and constraining everyday life. More so, the project is grounded in my observations, as both an insider and an outsider (Collins 1986; Naples 1996). The remainder of this project and inquiries are guided by these lived experiences in Kerala as well as my training in American Sociology. So, it would be a mistake not to acknowledge the influence of my subjective experiences and lived experiences might have had on the conception and design of this project. However, acknowledging my positionality and critical standpoint should not erode the legitimacy of the scientific data surrounding pollution presented in this project. More so, the use of postmodern sensibilities here should not imply that the material

reality of pollution or environmental grievances, as experienced by the people in the Eloor-Edayar region is debatable. In other words, in spite of my focus on frame-disputes or the contested interpretations surrounding pollution, I do not venture into portraying these disputing frames as two alternative realities, having equal standing. This project rests on the ontological reality of "industrial pollution in Eloor-Edayar region," and it does not in any way try to negate decades of struggle put together by people at the margins to produce rigorous scientific evidence. Rather my project endeavors to understand the complexities and underlying factors influencing the ways in which social movement groups/individuals construct opposing claims and narratives surrounding the same event, pollution in this context.

It is also important to reflect on the ways in which my social location has affected the process of research and data collection. My position as a divorcee, born into an upper-caste and living with my upper-middle-class family, might have influenced the interviews and observations I conducted. Despite practicing reflexivity, the privilege ingrained in my status and positionality would significantly affect my ability in understanding and relating to the complexity of experiences narrated during the interviews, particularly the operation of intersectional systems of oppression and stratification. Besides, my social location might also limit me from forming extensive relationships based on trust, especially considering the historical violence unleashed by casteism and Brahmanical patriarchy (Chakravarti 1993; Omvedt 2000). More importantly, as a researcher, I had the ability to take myself outside the setting as I ended my field research, whereas the participants of this study have their lives and livelihoods ingrained in the system of production and local pollution. Since the majority of the participants in this study identified as men, gender structured the dialogues and situations in unique ways (Arendell 1997). Navigating the field as a divorcee and single mother also produced interactions where some participants interpreted my

identity as 'deviant.' After the issue repeated throughout a few of my initial interviews, I relied on a strategy where I avoided answering questions surrounding my relationship status.

DECOLONIZING RESEARCH ON ENVIRONMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND SOCICAL MOVEMENTS

Since the project is designed and operationalized from the standpoint of environmental justice and sustainability, the discussions here appear and can be interpreted as being sympathetic to the issue of environmental sustainability. The project adopts a critical standpoint to understand the environmental damages created as a result of economic growth and development. Moreover, the project is committed to bringing movements from the margins, particularly surrounding the discussions on environment and development, to the center of the mainstream literature on movements. This in no way is an attempt to "be the voice" of the environmental movement actors or union members, whereas the attempt here is to retell the stories they were kind enough to share with me. As a researcher, I am mindful and reflexive about the epistemic violence (Spivak 1988) involved in "giving voice" or claiming to represent the voice of the people I studied. Such an approach is significant considering the lack of representation of voices or movements organized by people, who are excluded by the dominant model of development from the center of the mainstream academic discourse on development (Shiva 1991; Peet and Watts 1993; Sachs 1997; Escobar 2011). Against this backdrop, this study also strives to explain the need to reinterpret these environmental movements as ontological disputes, that seek to challenge the reality of "progress and prosperity" associated with the idioms and practices of development (Shiva 2014). Moreover, focusing on experiences and stories of people outside the western contexts is important in

decolonizing (Rodriguez et al. 2016; Go 2017; Connell 2018) the process of sociological knowledge production.

However, this does not imply that the integration of experiences of development and movements to western academia is required to provide legitimacy to these struggles or experiences. The movements I study have a long history of mobilization and collective action experiences and outcomes, and I am not sure if this project is going to offer any real and tangible benefits to the lives of the people who participated in this study. Instead, I argue that these experiences would help in decentering and decolonizing the process of academic knowledge production and break the Eurocentric understandings surrounding development and social movements.

POSTCOLONIAL MOVEMENTS, SETTINGS AND ETHNOGRAPHY

This project focuses on a postcolonial setting and two postcolonial movements. An empirical inquiry into the mobilization processes of movements in the Global South is pertinent considering the near-complete absence of postcolonial movements from the theorization of mainstream social movements. Apart from a few studies exploring the dynamics of social movements in India (Shah 2004; Ray and Katzenstein 2005, Agarwala 2006; Nair 2016), the experience of movement mobilization, particularly the issues surrounding grievance interpretation is largely missing from the mainstream literature. The claims about the generalizability of many of these theories across settings stand problematic considering the exclusive focus on western settings and cases. One of the primary mandates of this project is to expand the scope of movement studies to include movements from the Global South. The history of colonial domination and modernization and its reverberations felt through the postcolonial development projects shape the

backdrop for understanding postcolonial societies and movements. To fill this void in the extant literature, this project seeks to understand the interactions between two social movements in Kerala, a south Indian state with a unique history.

This project adopts a combination of political economy and social constructionism. In doing so, the analysis of the production of meanings and interpretations are informed by a postcolonial reading of sociological theories (Bhambra 2007, 2010, 2011; Patil 2013, 2007; Go 2013). Being mindful about the continuities of colonial modernities and sensibilities (Agarwal and Sivaramakrishnan 2003) embedded within the dominant theories and methods will help in working towards creating alternative sociology (Smith 1987,1990,1999) that brings postcolonial experiences and movements to the center of sociology. Building on Bhambra's (2016) call to undertake a postcolonial reflection of sociology, this project aims to see if the mainstream theories of labor-environmental conflicts and social movements can explicate the case of labor-environmental conflicts in the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt. In doing so, I do not plan to commit the same mistake where I reduce "postcolonial setting and movements" into a single and homogenous experience. Though this study does not undertake an in-depth inquiry into the diverse experiences and axes of inequality (caste, gender, class and sexuality) prevailing in postcolonial India, the study design is extremely mindful of these differential experiences and movements and point out the need for future research. Thus, the aim here is not to uncover grandiose theories or findings that would hold true across social contexts and cultures. Instead, the aim here is to see the extent to which mainstream theories can or cannot aid the process of understanding the mobilization processes of social movements in the setting.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND: INDUSTRIALIZATION AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

This chapter sets the backdrop for understanding labor-environmental conflicts in the Eloor-Edayar region. In this chapter, I trace the advent of industrial development in the region and explain how industrial pollution affected the local ecology and created adverse health impacts for the people living in the region. The chapter explicates how the availability of water, accessibility to seaport and provision of subsidized electricity played a prominent role in making the region the site for local industrial development. Using oral histories and documents, this chapter attempts to retell the stories of navigating industrial pollution and illustrates how pollution affected the daily lives of people in the region. The narratives also highlight the changing nature of the river, underscoring how greens perceive and interpret the "death" of the river in the hands of industries. More so, the chapter illuminates the conditions that led to the emergence of the local environmental movement and maps the process of mobilization. This chapter presents a periodization of the local environmental movement, marking periods of emergence, growth, and decline. In doing so, the chapter reaffirms the importance of grievances in engendering social movements, especially in the context of issues such as environmental pollution, where the grievances often interfere in daily lives, causing quotidian disruption. In addition to the presence of environmental threats, the chapter also highlights the importance of prior organizational experience in facilitating the emergence and spread of the local environmental movement. The political and economic

conditions faced by the green movement can be best described using a hybrid environment model, where the conditions changed from being favorable to unfavorable.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AS A VEHICLE OF MODERNIZATION

An oral history exploration on the advent of industrialization in the region uncovers how the industries entered the region as vehicles of modernization—promising a path to break away from the traditional modes of living to embrace the more modern and industrialized organization of production and social life. In the words of Madhu, a prominent trade union leader, the industrial area was developed under the Travancore princely rule. Tracing back the history, Madhu explained the context and background as follows:

> The industrial area was set up during the period of the Travancore King, as part of planned industrial development. We had started to generate electricity at Pallivasal using hydel power by then and the companies were promised cheap electricity, prices as low as 9 paise for each unit…that's what they offered the industries to come and operate in our state. I think the state was worried as to what they will do with all the electricity generated from this project. So, in this backdrop, Sir. C. P. Ramaswamy, the Divan of Travancore[11] invited two companies to the state--Indian Aluminum Company (ALCAN), which is a Canadian Company...and another one from Chennai, Sheshasaayi Business Group. These two companies were brought here. (Madhu, union leader, personal interview, June 5, 2018)

As the excerpt points out, the setting up of industries was inspired by a model of planned industrial development. Besides, the surplus availability of cheap inputs such as electricity served as one of the instrumental factors fueling the drive for local industrialization. The princely state invited energy-intensive industries to the region by offering them crucial inputs such as electricity for a reduced price. The surplus availability of electricity generated from the Pallivasal

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[11] A designated (powerful) government official who held revenue collecting-power, vested by the British East India Company.

hydroelectric power project kept the price as low as nine paise per unit for the industries. The reduced rates for electricity during the initial phase was crucial for many of these power-intensive industries and the subsequent hike in energy prices later in history often created ruckus between the industries and the State Electricity Board. Planning to tap into the favorable conditions, the Divan of Travancore invited two companies, one foreign and one domestic, to form industries in the region. ALCAN was a foreign company, and Sheshasaayi Business Group from Chennai was the domestic enterprise. ALCAN later became Hindalco (previously known as the Hindustan Aluminum Corporation) and Sheshasaayi company later transformed into the present Fertilizers and Chemicals Travancore Limited (FACT hereafter) (field notes and interviews 2018; SCTU 2012, 2013).

Apart from the cheap supply of electricity, the availability of water in plenty played an instrumental role in determining Eloor-Edayar as the cite of local industrialization in Kerala. River Periyar, a perennial river, is the longest river in the state with a length of 244 kilometers (151.6 miles) (Government of Kerala 2020). Popularly known as "The Lifeline of Kerala," the river provides drinking water to many towns and houses major dams and hydroelectric projects. The presence of Periyar River surrounding the proposed industrial region, which also enhanced the accessibility to the seaport, influenced the decision to pick the region as the "industrial capital" of the state. Highlighting the importance of water for industries, Krishnan, a trade union leader, elaborated how Periyar played a strategic role in making the region desirable as the center of industrialization:

> So, the location that was identified for the industries is almost at the edge of the river Periyar, where it joins the backwaters…they picked the riverside and this was done by the Travancore King, the Diwan, and the governing body. Water is easily available, and it was easy to reach electricity and that's why the riverside of Periyar was chosen. Eloor, the present Municipality, an old Panchayath, is actually an island that is surrounded by the

river, Periyar. Bridges connect this land to the mainland...we have almost 11 bridges connecting us to the outside...this is an island...Periyar river flows into Vembanad *Kayal* (lake). The river flows from Tamil Nadu...it is one of the longest rivers and this river runs to the West...there are not many rivers that run to the West. So, this direction of flow from East to West also played an important part in choosing this region for the industrial area. (Krishnan, union leader, personal interview, May 30,2018)

The strategic location of Eloor, an island, surrounded by water bodies, was a decisive factor in making Eloor the hub of local industries. As illustrated in the excerpt above, the riverside was picked to house the industries because the water was available in plenty and it was easy to bring electricity. The reference to the direction of flow in the excerpt is particularly important as it is strategically included in the narrative to reaffirm the union's position of denial of pollution. According to the unions, the industrial effluents will never reach the stations that pump out drinking water for the river only flows in one direction; East to West. This is discussed in greater detail in one of the subsequent chapters exploring the disputing frames surrounding pollution.

During the interviews, many participants, particularly the trade union members, interpreted the entry of industries as a step towards modernization. For example, discussing the growth of industries and the subsequent social and economic changes in the region, James observed:

Before 1945, the Eloor-Edayar region remained underdeveloped…A group of underdeveloped islands surrounded by small streams and rivers. Later many development initiatives, including roads and bridges to Alwaye and Ernakulam, electrification, schools, hospitals, etc. came to this region. The villagers who eked out a living from primitive agricultural practices and fisheries became factory workers, changed their lifestyle. The face of the place changed. The village atmosphere gave way to urban style and setting. The demography of the population changed. People started having access to modern amenities. (James, union leader, personal interview June 7, 2018)

According to these narratives, as the one detailed above, the arrival of industries fostered local development in the form of modern infrastructure, promoting connectivity to nearby towns and improved amenities such as electricity, schools, and hospitals. As illustrated above, the process

of development steered by industrialization transformed the local economy and society where traditional or "primitive" agrarian practices, in the words of the union member, got replaced with more modern forms of production and work. This process of modernization was, in turn, reflected in the shift in employment patterns where people in the villages moved away from agrarian work to join the industries as factory workers. More so, the process of modernization transcended the realm of production and worked to affect the social organization of life and local demography. In other words, the process of industrialization in the region holds semblance to the history of modern development projects and the associated narrative that ostensibly frame developmentalism as the rescue route that seeks to modernize and bring progress to the so-called "underdeveloped" regions. Clearly, this dominant narrative articulates modern industrialized modes of life, and the organization of production is portrayed as more desirable when compared to the rural and agrarian forms of production and social life. Following such patterns of regional modernization, the project of industrialization in the Eloor-Edayar region evolved into a project that facilitated the transformation of the local economy and society from traditional and agrarian-based to "modern" and industrialized organization of work and society. In other words, the history of industrialization and regional transformation in Eloor closely illustrate how the binary understandings surrounding development and progress translate into practice.

Smog, Toxins and A River on Fire: How Industrialization turned Eloor into a Toxic Hotspot

The hub soon expanded in scale and scope to house more than 400 chemical industries in and around the Eloor-Edayar region. The expansion of industries led to a concomitant rise in the

release of industrial effluents into the local ecology. Thus, what was promised as a project of modernization and progress soon ended up creating negative environmental externalities and started distributing pollution burdens instead of economic benefits among the local people. Soon as the industries started growing in number, the issue of pollution resulting from the industrial effluents came to the forefront. The fallouts of pollution became largely visible in the form of industrial smog, acute air pollution, and discolored river. The section below documents the adverse environmental and health effects of industrial pollution in the words of the disaffected people and union members in the region, where they recount their horrific experience surviving pollution. An extensive discussion of the contested claims surrounding pollution is provided in Chapter Six. However, the narratives presented below illustrate how the collective action frames of the unions transformed over the years. It expounds on how the polarized frames evolved over the years from a point in history where both the movements (unions and greens) collectively accepted and protested against pollution.

In a booklet titled "To those Who Confirm the Death of Periyar" published by the *Periyar Malineekarana Virudha Samiti* (Periyar Anti-Pollution Campaign) lays out a detailed account of how pollution devastated the ecology by spewing gases into ambient air, filling the river with toxic chemicals and adversely affected the health of people living in the region. The narratives elaborated on how the advent of industries and the continuous release of untreated effluents changed the nature and composition of the river. A section describing the changes in the river due to pollution reads:

> Periyar no longer remains the same. The Periyar of the 1940s had water available in plenty, but now the river flow has declined to almost 10 percent of what it used to be in the 1980s. Our ancestors illustrated the strength of water current in Periyar using analogies, they said the water currents in Periyar during monsoons were so strong to chop off your index finger. To put it more scientifically, the river flow dwindled from 257 cubic meters per second to

a meager nine cubic meters per second over the years. In other words, the death of Periyar has become a reality. Around five crore liters (approximately 185818 gallons) of treated and partially treated industrial effluents reach Periyar every day. This river does not have the ability to dilute all these pollutants. In fact, it has ended up being a poisonous river, a river laden with toxins. (PMVS 2012)

During the interviews, activists clearly laid out how the release of untreated industrial effluents adversely affected the flow and made the river more acidic over the years, where the Ph levels wen up from 2.5 to 4.5. The excerpts expose how the continuous release of toxic effluents affected the flow of the river considerably as the effluents released could not be diluted by the river water. Moreover, the interviews explained how the constant release of acids changed the PH value of the river water. A study conducted by the Supreme Court Monitoring Committee (SCMC hereafter) identified many dangerous metals including lead, cadmium, chromium, zinc, magnesium, nickel, copper, iron and fluoride in the stretch of River Periyar from Chittoor to Eloor.

Local environmentalists were vocal about how mindless dumping of toxic effluents into the river has resulted in the death of the river, Periyar. The narratives were emotional, laden with feelings of loss and despair, surrounding the river which once played an integral part in their daily lives. Ibrahim, a frontline leader of the PMVS became emotional and nostalgic as he started recollecting memories about the river and explained how pollution changed the river once they knew into something different. Ibrahim remarked:

> I was born and brought up here in this place, our *naadu*. My family was born and brought up here. When I say, my family…I mean one or two generations of my family lived in this place…at least I can recollect more than two generations from my memory, and I am sure they have been living here even before that. I was born and raised on the banks of this river. My house was on the sides/banks of the river…the river, Periyar. When I say that I was born and raised on the banks of Periyar, I can also say that all my life happened here in Periyar….because even at a very young age, I had strong connections with the river…I used to swim, play, take a bath, throw stones, or go fishing…I mean I used to do all these things in this river. Not just me, all the people then used to swim and take a bath in this river. I have heard my father and grandfather said that they relied on this river for drinking

water…I mean the water was as clean as tears. It was so pure then. We drank the water, so, you can imagine, we all can imagine how clean the river was.

During my childhood, I have seen people collecting clams from the river. A person next to my home used to sell these clams dug up from the river. This river that meant so much to all of us, that we were so familiar with changed with the entry of these industries. And that's sad. (Ibrahim, founding member of PMVS, personal interview, May 27, 2018)

Similar to the above excerpt, most members of the environmental movement narrated stories elaborating their emotional connections with the river and how it was something more than a resource, but something more personal playing an integral part in their life histories. They talked about the river and how pollution has devastated it with a lot of passion and disappointment. During the interviews, they highlighted how disappointed they are "to see the river die." While explaining how the effects of pollution started becoming more prominent in terms of fish-kills or discoloration of the river water, the greens also illuminated how such visible effects of pollution were perceived by the people in the region. The people in the region called industrial effluents as "company water" and issued strong directives to the community to exercise caution while coming in contact with company water. In the words of Muneer:

So, we have companies like FACT, HIL, TCC, etc. operating from here…and once in a while, dead fishes floated over the river. So, when we inquire about what happened, people would tell that "See, there's company water in the river today, so don't swim in the river today." Older people would give us strict directions not to play in the river today as there is "company water" in the river. So, we won't dare to swim or play in the river that day. Note that this day is quite special because there are a lot of dead fishes floating around in the river. People used to take these dead fishes and turn them into fish curries, while some others took the dead fishes and buried them around coconut trees as manure. We have "company water" in the river and we cannot play in the river for a couple more days because it will be really bad. The fish kill was caused by the release of acids from FACT. (Muneer, member of PMVS, personal interview, May 13, 2018)

The excerpt explicates how people perceived "company water" as potentially dangerous and, thus, issued warnings to the children in their community about playing in the river. However, the excerpt also highlights how, despite these warnings, the fish killed by industrial effluents was used as food by some, showing the ambiguity surrounding the extent of potential damage from

industrial effluents. The excerpt also elaborates on a monitoring system created by people surrounding the issue of industrial pollution, much before any institutions or authorities started taking steps. Through a series of informal and community networks, people spread the message about the potential danger of "company water" and then put a system in place to monitor and help the people in the region from being exposed to the negative fallouts. In addition to these community-based monitoring and control mechanisms, the people in the region also used everyday experiences to underscore the changes nature of the river. For example, Akbar, a local environmentalist, used the changing colors of his (originally) white-colored bath towel (*Thorthu*) to embellish the extent of pollution and discoloration of the river. In Akbar's words:

> During the 90s, especially in 1998…apart from the fish kills, the river started flowing in different colors. The TMRL Company, which started operating from Edayar, changed the character of this river. So, if you ask a kid who was born during this time period…to identify the color of the river, the answer would be red. The river started flowing red and the gradient of this red varied drastically from dark orange to black…the colors changed. This wasn't all…the fish kills became much scarier. The white bath towel (*thorthu*) we used for taking a bath was turned to yellow. That was the situation. (Akbar, member of PMVS, personal interview, May 27, 2018)

> Apart from the pollution from acidic and liquid wastes, the region also experienced a series of issues from the gases leaked from the local industrial units. Members of unions, as well as the green movements, observed that the Sulphur dioxide gas expelled from FACT often engulfed the ambient air and created smog. Recounting the days where Eloor was engulfed in industrial smog, Johnson, an ex-trade union leader, remarked:

> It would be unimaginable to drive a vehicle through Eloor without switching on the fog lamp...that is even after the sun rises, you need to have a fog lamp to drive through Eloor, even between 6 am to 10 am. The roads were all filled with smoke from the factories. This changed after the companies installed the above mechanisms. (Johnson, ex-union leader, June 5, 2018)

A booklet published by PMVS reconstructed an incident of gas leakage as follows:

The gas leak in HIL on June 23, 1979, was one of the biggest disasters ever happened in this industrial region. A pipeline installed to transport chlorine gas from TCC to HIL burst leaking the gas to the village. Strong winds blowing from the east and west fast spread the poisonous gas across the region. People who inhaled the toxic gas collapsed inside factories, in their homes and by the sides of the road. People fled their homes and their *nadu* (place, domicile) to stay alive. A person lost his life fleeing the poisons. (PMVS 2012: 35)

According to the report in the newsletter published by PMVS, no serious inquiry was initiated about this incident, but the trees started shedding their leaves in a week, perhaps as an act of joining the shared-grievances of the people. This was only just one in a series of incidents that filled the air in the Eloor region with toxic gases. The line ruptured again in 1978 sending around 156 people into hospitals to alleviate the discomfort and illnesses from inhaling poisonous gases. Similar gas leaks had happened in 1969 and 1974. In June 1985, a truck carrying Hexachlorocyclopentadine (an organochlorine compound), a toxic chemical, to the HIL factory met with an accident and exposure to the toxic chemical impaired the vision of more than 250 individuals. The narratives of the local people were laden with such memories of unpleasant incidents as they tried to remember the old days of pollution. It should also be noted that many of these instances were carefully documented in the newsletters published by the PMVS. The green activists talked about these incidents with close attention to the details, including the names of the chemicals, the nature of the chemical compound, the kind of harm inflicted on the local people and the number of disaffected people. Such narratives bring out the philosophy of activism adopted by the green movement, which Kumar, the lead activists describe as a combination of "study and activism." This also distinguishes the green movement from the trade union movement, where they make claims based on scientific evidence and follow a very rigorous model of fact-keeping and documentation. Despite being a resource-poor movement with very little infrastructure to operate or collect information, fact-based activism, documentation of incidents and organization of the

PMVS is impressive. Much of the visibility and legitimacy gained by this movement can be attributed to the vibrant and systematic organization strategies adopted by the frontline community leaders. Their determination and devotion to understanding the issue of pollution, scientific temper and the attentiveness to evidence play out throughout their narration of their experience navigating pollution.

Much of the interviews and oral history narratives confirmed how pollution choked the people living in the industrial belt. Talking about the frequent gas leaks from industries, Padmanabhan, a noted union leader working in a public sector enterprise noted that, " During the initial days there were issues with SO_2 in air…children had issues soon after being exposed to the SO_2 spread in the atmosphere because the PCB during then was not very vigilant about the operation of industries or release of pollutants." Continued exposure to pollution also caused health impacts among people. A survey conducted in 2008 by the state government among 327 households living around Kuzhikandam *thodu* found that more than 322 households reported having individuals with health issues related to pollution. The average incidence of many ailments including Asthma, heath diseases, reproductive issues, kidney-related issues, nervous disorders and cancer was much higher among Eloor residents when compared to Pindimana village, which served as the control group (PMVS 2012).

Though pollution-related issues have become the new normal for the residents of the Eloor-Edayar industrial region, things started more intense after an incident where a local stream was on fire. In 1990, Kuzhikkandam stream lit up in fire when Toluene, a highly flammable chemical, leaked into the stream from HIL. The river on fire caused many health issues for the people living by the sides of the stream and burned down houses. This incident sparked a wave of dissent and people gathered in a village upper-primary school and formed an "action council" to protest

pollution. This marked the beginning of an organized struggle against industrial pollution (Booklet: To those who ensure the death of Periyar River, the lifeline of South Kerala: 36). Interviews with local environmentalists and frontline leaders of PMVS portrayed a more intense and elaborate picture of the region facing the fallouts from industrial pollution. The members of the green movements often recollected memories of navigating the negative effects of pollution by connecting the instances with subsequent episodes of organized collective action against pollution. Nevertheless, the history of resistance to pollution can be traced back much before the formation of an action council. It started as early as 1972, when Kunhappan, a former Naxalite, decided to stage a one-man protest against pollution. This marked the beginning of an era of grassroots movements, under the leadership of the *Periyar Malineekaran Virdha Samithi (PMVS)*, against the issue of industrial pollution in the Eloor-Edayar region. The following section offers a brief history and timeline of the Anti-Pollution Campaign in the Eloor-Edayar region and elaborates on the conditions that led to the emergence of organized collective action.

A BRIEF HISTORY AND TIMELINE OF THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

In 1972, K.M. Kuhappan[12], a formed Naxalite stood with a placard that read "Welcome to the Eloor Gas Chamber" near the Kalamasserry bridge. He was protesting the menace of industrial pollution in the region by engaging in a one-man protest. Recollecting memories surrounding his one-man protest in the 70s, the first-ever act of protest against pollution in the region, Kunjappan

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[12] Kunhappan is currently serving as a municipal counselor and the Convener of *Periyar Malineekaran Virudha Samithi* (PMVS).

remembered the incidents that led him to stage this act of resistance and elucidated the history and context in which such an act took place.

> During my childhood, the river used to overflow. The flow would be so strong that sometimes it was impossible to steer canoes. The water was as clear as glass. The rivulets and streams were plentiful. [It's all gone now]. Fish were abundant during the 1950s…My mother would keep rice on the firewood stove…there's a prawn basket…with that basket she would then go to the river to catch fish and prawn. She would come back in no time. By the time she cleans and cooks the fish and prawns into a curry, the rice would be cooked. Many varieties of fish, prawns and shrimp used to live under the mosses layering the surface of the river. But today many varieties of fish that were once available in plenty, such as *Kolan*, *Kanambu*, *Poolan,* have all disappeared. After 1975 the river started to change bit by bit and much of that change was related to the growing number of factories in the region. The industries have turned this river into its drainage….and by the 80s, the river was almost entirely polluted. The factories had no pipelines and they released all the effluents into the river, and we had to use that dirty water for cooking rice porridge (food)…and there were fish-kills. And whenever fish-kills happened, people would gather all the dead fish floating on top of the river, and then they would cook and eat it. They didn't recognize the dead fish as poison. That was the situation.

> I first reacted in 1971…after the floods. The area was inundated, and the smoke from the FACT would cover the region. Thick smoke engulfed the region so much so that even buses had to stop and wait until the smoke subsides. I soon realized that this was a danger, a dangerous situation…a situation that threatens the entire population living in this area…and I realized that the precarity of the situation was such that there was no choice but to react. So, I went to Ernakulam and wrote a board that read "Welcome to the Eloor Gas Chamber" and then kept that board/placard near the Kalamassery bridge. (The Newsminute, July 15, 2017)

In this excerpt, taken from a video interview with The News Minute (an online English news portal), Kunhappan vividly narrates the transformation of the river under the regime of industrial capitalism in the region and how that influenced him to take action.[13] The excerpt clearly portrays how the river changed over the years, using the example of fish. By starting from a period when fish was available in plenty, so much so that his mother could catch them with a basket right before a meal to one where dead fish float on the surface of the river. It embellishes the condition

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[13] I conducted an interview with Kunhappan on June 5, 2018. However, the prevalence of this video interview online is extremely important and was published much before my research. Hence, I am using the video interview over my own transcripts where he shares his experience fighting pollution.

of the people struggling with both water and ambient air pollution in terms of smog etc. and explains how these environmental grievances interrupted the daily routines and lives of people. The narratives highlight how the act of protest is intertwined with everyday lives and experiences, as he carefully explains how pollution disrupted the quotidian. Having realized the connection between the local environmental grievances and industrial pollution. Kunhappan decided to call out the danger in the form of a placard, where he characterized the region as a "gas chamber" filled with the toxic fumes from the industry. The narrative also highlights how Kunhappan's act of protest is extremely influenced by his everyday experiences navigating pollution and seeing how the effects torment people in his village (Auyero 2004).

What started as a one-person protest organized by Kunhappan in 1972 marks the beginning of local resistance that later galvanized into a powerful movement that put together a sturdy fight against the polluting industries, a fight that spans across almost half a century. During an interview with Kumar, the frontline leader and Research Coordinator of *Periyar Malineekarana Virudha Samithi* (PMVS hereafter, Periyar Anti-Pollution Campaign), a grassroots organization that played an instrumental role in intensifying, and amplifying the issue of pollution in the using creative and powerful modes of collective protests, media outreach events, and campaigning. Kumar is a man in his early fifties, very lean and athletic. He wore a light green kurta, blue jeans, and black shoes when we met first. He wore a red bandana over his heard; his voice radiated confidence and clarity as he talked about his experience fighting industrial pollution and in being victimized at the hand of the state machinery and local industries. Narrating the history of the local environmental movement and his role in establishing an organized form of collective action through the setting up of the PMVS, Kumar remarked:

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PMVS (*Periya Malineekarana Virudha Samithi*) as an organization has been in the movement field for the last 20 years or so, but our protests in Eloor have a longer history than that. The protests in Eloor started in 1972. In 1972 the present Chairman of PMVS, M.K.Kunjappan, who is also presently a counselor in Eloor, led intervention against pollution in 1972. He erected a board in Kalamasserry saying, "Welcome to the Gas Chamber in Eloor" (Welcome to Eloor, the Gas Chamber) and initiated the protests in Eloor. But that didn't last for long. In my memory, the protests re-emerged in 1990, that's when I became part of the movement/ protests. But then again, PMVS hasn't come into operation; we protested under a *Janakeeya Action Council* (People's Action Council). The Action council was formed in 1990 following an incident in *Kuzhikkandam Thodu (canal)* when the canal caught fire. This burning canal caused severe damages to the homes on the banks and caused suffocation in people who inhaled the toxic air coming from the burned chemicals. The people's intervention in the 1990s was organized to protest this incident, which subsided after 1 or 2 years.

The protests re-emerged in 1997 when a new private company, called Mercum, started the trial run. During the trial run, Hydrogen Sulphide gas leaked into the atmosphere, and people started experiencing breathing problems, asthmatic attacks and health discomforts; many people were hospitalized. The toxic gas stayed in the atmosphere for hours and caused severe health troubles for the people staying in the region. This event led to fresh protests in the region, which remained active for about 4 to 5 years. Around the same time in June (11, 1998) a fish kill happened in Eloor. Though many such events like the discoloration of river Periyar or fish-kill were happening in the backdrop, this particular incident of a fish kill that happened during the monsoons (*varshakalam*) was the largest in the history of Periyar. Around 5 crores worth of fishes were killed in the river for over a stretch of 12 km. Big fishes, I mean fishes that were as big as adult human beings were among those that were killed. The intervention took the form of a massive protest following this incident. We organized a convention in Varapuzha, bringing together fish-workers, local workers, elected representatives of local self-government institutions, and other local people. This meeting was attended by many eminent environmentalists such as Dr. M.K.Prasad. PMVS was announced during this meeting on June 15, 1998. The meeting decided to intensify protest activities. (Kumar, founding member and Research Coordinator of PMVS, May 26, 2018)

As detailed in the excerpt above, PMVS was constituted on June 15, 1998, with the aim of strengthening the fight against industrial pollution in the region. The convention detailed in the excerpt above also stood out in terms of mass participation. People from across the region attended this event organized to brainstorm about the ways in which people can address the issue of pollution. Remembering the participants of the event, Ibrahim described the event as follows:

This convention was attended by a lot of people who relied on the fishing sector for their subsistence, not just those workers, but the Convention was attended by political

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parties…because the people then had realized…that this cannot be left unchallenged. Then Eloor was a Panchayath…Alangad was a block[14] (panchayath)…the president from there attended…Varappuzha panchayath, Eloor panchayath, Kadamakkudi panchayath…many Panchayath Presidents and Panchayath members attended and participated in this Convention. This ended up being a massive Convention that saw participation from across many sections of people. And it's there we decided to form and name our organization. I mean this is a group, right? So we would need a name moving forward. So then, Kumar suggested the name '*Periyar Malineekarana Virudha Samithi*" (Periyar Anti-Pollution Campaign). That's how this name came into being. (Ibrahim, founding member of PMVS, personal interview May 27, 2019)

The excerpt clearly expounds on how the anti-pollution campaign in the region started as a movement with mass participation. It is also notable considering how participation dwindled in the later periods of mobilization. Pollution was established as a shared grievance among the people, where everyone believed that collective action could resolve the issue they are facing. In other words, the participants, including elected representatives, felt the need to organize action against pollution. This is significant considering the recent decline of the environmental movement, and targeted attacks from local politicians and elected representatives. More so, it highlights how the initial organization of the movement received an atmosphere of political *opportunity*, where they largely received the support of local politicians, including the unions. This is interesting considering how this atmosphere of opportunity later transformed into a political *threat*. In other words, a close analysis of the trajectory of the local environmental movement indicates how a *hybrid-model* (Almeida 2019) characterized by a combination of threats and opportunities helps better explain the political and economic atmosphere faced by the local environmental movement. The vicious and targeted attacks faced by the green activists from the

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[14] Block Panchayath is one of the tiers in the three tier Panchayathi Raj system in India.

state-industry nexus expounds how political support disappears when the movement challenges

the status-quo or attack the centers of power and development. [15]

During the convention, the founding members of PMVS also decided to organize a human

chain to protest the adverse health and environmental effects of industrial toxins. This human-

chain, organized on August 1st, 1998, played a crucial role in making the fight against pollution

more visible and resonant among the mainstream society in the state. Kumar started talking about

the organization of human-chain with a lot of enthusiasm and pride because the protest event was

massive and occupies a unique position in the history of protest politics in the state. Elaborating

the event Kumar stated:

> During this meeting, we decided that on August 1st (1998), we will organize a protest…we decided to organize a protest on the River. So, what protest? We decided to form a human chain on boats, by parking boats together. So that's how we came to the idea of forming a human chain linking Varappuzha and Cheranalloor…so that we can block the waterways through which industrial barges reach Eloor…these barges carry input loads to FACT and other industries. So, we decided to block the waterway by forming this human chain. Varappuzha, Kadamakkudi, Chennoor, Cheranalloor, Eloor…these are all regions where people earn a living from the fisheries…it's not like how we see here…areas like Varappuzha etc. heavily dependent on the fisheries sector…therefore all fish workers from these regions came for this protest…they came in thousands of giant boats…we tied a giant rope (*Vadam*) between the two lands. You should imagine this. This protest happened during the rainy season, so unlike today due to the heavy rains we received during June and July, the water level was really high, and the currents were pretty strong. So, this rope helped people to park the boats in a line and then the people boarded these boats, …and this included women and small children. They all volunteered to stand in these boats and the boats were all filled up with the people from all these regions. (Kumar, founding member and Research Coordinator of PMVS, personal interview, May 5, 2018)

As explicated in the excerpt, the massive human chain formed across the river Periyar was

operationalized with the help of fish workers, where they brought their fishing boats to form the

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[15] The periodization of the movement indicates how the successful outcomes accomplished by the green movement through the LAEC directly challenged the domination of industrial capitalism, and often caused loss of profits. This played a crucial role in unleashing the counterattack on the greens and helped the industries to gather the support of unions.

protest platform. A series of fishing boats were parked across the river, where people formed human-chains by holding their hands in solidarity. The act of protest became symbolic when people held their hands across the river as if to protect it from the fallouts of pollution. Right from this protest, the river has always played a central role in the mobilizing practices and tactics of the local environmental movement, ranging from occupying the center of environmental grievances to be the field of protest.

Drawing from the protest events and incidents detailed above, the section below provides a timeline analyzing the trajectory of the local environmental movement, marking its origin, growth, and decline.

Periodization

The trajectory can be divided into three time periods to signify the three phases the movement has undergone: the initial period of emergence, the growth, and mobilization of the movement, significant outcomes, and success in terms of installing regulatory mechanisms and a period of decline (where the green movement was repressed and discredited by the trade union collective and state-industrial nexus).

Table 1. Periodization of the Local Environmental Movements in the Eloor-Edayar Region

Phase I (1972-1998)	Emergence
Phase II(2004-2009)	Growth and Outcomes
Phase III (2010-2013)	Period of Quiescence
Phase IV (2013-present)	Revival

The periodization provided above divides the environmental movement against industrial pollution into four distinct phases. The initial phase, spanning from1972 to 1998, is marked by the emergence of grassroots resistance against the environmental grievances created by industrial pollution. As illustrated in the sections above, the origin can be traced back to the one-person protest organized by Kunhappan. The protests soon transformed into more organized forms of resistance with mass participation. The series of protest events and incidents from 1972 to 1998 culminated in the formation of the *Periyar Malineerkara Virudha Samithi* (PMVS), marking the beginning of an organized grassroots environmental movement against the issue of pollution. The region witnessed many protest events, demonstrations, and campaigns condemning the ill-effects of pollution throughout the period from 1998 until 2004. The region saw intense movement activities from 1998 and these acts of protests and sustained campaigns aided in bringing more visibility and public support to the Anti-Pollution Campaign in the region and played an instrumental role in bringing the issue of pollution in the Eloor-Edayar belt under the consideration of the Supreme Court Monitoring Committee (SCMC).

The second phase ranging from 2004 to 2009, witnesses the growth of the environmental movement, where the movement actors achieve successful interventions to ameliorate pollution. With the intervention of the SCMC and the subsequent constitution of the Local Area Environment Committee (LAEC) marked a new phase in the struggle against pollution by initiating institutional and legal interventions against polluting industries (Shrivastava 2007). The LAEC had members from industrial organizations, the local environmental movement, and the civil society. Kumar, the frontline leader of PMVS, was one of the members of this committee. (LAEC 2006). Representation at the LAEC offered the local environmentalists a platform to effectively raise their grievances and part take in the process of proposing solutions that can alleviate the issue of

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pollution. In this regard, participation in the LAEC provided access to institutional power to the local environmentalists, which they used to take constructive actions to ameliorate and regulate the release of untreated industrial waste into the local ecology. With powers vested by the Supreme Court, the LAEC conducted environmental compliance audits in more than 100 industries in the region. The LAEC was granted the power to take action against polluting industries caught with grave violations of the environmental guidelines and regulations (LAEC 2006). Following this, the LAEC issued closure notices to the companies that violated environmental guidelines. The operations of LAEC led to significant improvements in the local atmosphere as the companies started taking pollution control mechanisms more seriously. However, the heightened power of the LAEC members that enabled them to issue closure notices[16] to more than 30 industries irked many local trade union leaders and they started mobilizing resistance to the operations of the committee and filed complaints with the state government. The swift operations of the LEAC in alleviating local environmental issues were thwarted when the state government ordered to reconstitute the committee by adding trade union leaders in 2010 (Shrivastava 2007, Interviews 2018). The changes in the structure and composition of the LAEC soon diluted and curtailed its scope of operations.

The entry of trade union leaders into the LAEC also marked the beginning of the decline of the local environmental movement pushing the movement into a period of quiescence (Earl 2013). Subsequent years witnessed the revamping of the union collective, SCTU, where the SCTU launched a well-organized counter-campaign against the local environmental movement by discrediting the frontline leaders. A detailed analysis of the counterframes as provided in Chapter

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[16] More details about the industries against which the LAEC recommended action can found in the Environmental Audit Report (LAEC 2006).

Six, which examines the frame-disputes between the union and the green movement. The period also transformed the fight against pollution into a "jobs vs. the environment" trade-off. SCTU attempted to discredit and delegitimize the local environmental movement by framing the frontline leaders as "anti-national," "extremist," and "foreign-funded" (SCTU 2013; Sunil 2016). These malicious campaigns combined by surveillance from the state adversely affected the mass support base of the movement, pushing the green movement into a phase of quiescence. The revamping of SCTU plays a crucial role in causing the temporary decline of the local environmental movement when the movement landscape filled with claims attacking the character and motives of the local environmental activists.

However, the emergence of new environmental groups such as *Janajagratha* (People's Vigilante) as a response to the constant attacks against local environmentalists marks the beginning of a period of re-emergence, where the local environmental movement intensifies the fight against pollution. Though many of these legal fights have been ongoing for the last several decades, favorable orders from the court make them significant in reaffirming the relevance of the green movement. The intensification of legal battle and a higher rate of success in litigations (NGT 2018) against polluting industries distinguish this phase from other phases, marking the revival of the green movement. According to the environmentalists, the use of a multi-pronged strategy that combines both direct action methods and legal fights, bring them back in the movement field. The detailed analyses of the phases uncover many important aspects surrounding the emergence of the green movement. The following section uncloaks how extant theories explain the emergence and growth of the local environmental movement.

WHAT LED TO THE EMERGENCE OF THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT?

A few factors played an important role in facilitating the emergence and growth of the local environmental movements such as the presence of shared environmental grievances, the prior organizational experience of the frontline leaders, the presence of wide base support, and the use of creative protest tactics. Interestingly, it appears that grievances played as much a role as prior organizational experience and political opportunities/threats as far as the conditions of emergence are concerned.

The operation of grievances in the context of this movement highlights the importance of subjective and emotional interpretations of grievances aside from the disruption of the quotidian (Snow et al. 1998). Aside from causing disruptions to everyday lives, the grievances also elicited emotional responses from people as they started living with fear and anxiety about the effects of exposure to pollution and lamenting over the loss of the river to pollution. The interpretation of environmental grievances by making it relevant to everyday lives, emotions, and well-being enabled the local activists to motivate collective action (Auyero 2004). Elucidating the strategies adopted to raise awareness about the environmental grievances among the people in the region, Kumar said, "There were only a few of us. Actually, we did not have to tell much because people were experiencing it already. The river is polluted…there is pollution in the air…there are cancer patients." Confirming the presence of environmental threat and heightened awareness about pollution among the people Akbar opined:

> People are experiencing this you know. And it's not like we did no campaigning at all. We did visit houses; in fact, we would visit every house…to talk and educate people about the issues we encounter here. Most participants in our first protest were fish workers, fishermen from Varappuzha, Kadamakkudy from all these regions…they needed no convincing of

the issue; you know…they were struggling with it and was looking out for options…openings, to express their dissent….and perhaps, a leadership to fight against this…and that's when. (Akbar, member of PMVS, personal interview, May 27, 2018)

As explicated by the excerpts, the day to day exposure to the fallouts of pollution amplified by visible effects such as smog or polluted river eased the process of raising awareness about the issue among the local people. Everyone in the region experienced and struggled with the effects of pollution and, thus, shared the grievances. By reiterating the importance of grievances in disrupting everyday lives and thereby galvanizing organized resistance, the evidence presented above establishes the continued relevance of grievances in explaining movement emergence.

More so, being a resource-poor movement organized by an environmentally excluded social group, the exemplar of PMVS also challenges the conceptions of resource-mobilization theory (RMT hereafter) (McCarthy and Zald 1977; 2001). Despite being poor in terms of resources, the PMVS uses "negative inducements" (Buechler 2011: 133) such as strikes, protests and other disruptive tactics to garner the attention of the target and the larger audience. In doing so, the exemplar of PMVS leans more towards the Piven and Cloward's model (1991) and reaffirms how RMT downplayed the role of the mass-base of social movements (McAdam 1982).

Prior organizational experience also played a prominent role in helping the local environmental activists to form the PMVS and lead the green movement with a series of sustained collective action events. Working with progressive organizations such as the *Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad* (KSSP hereafter, The People's Science Movement) helped the leaders to strategize and plan action against the polluting industries. While talking prior experiences with KSSP, Ibrahim detailed how KSSP was oblivious when they raised issues of pollution within the group; however, they encouraged the greens to gather more information and organize some form of collective action. It also helped the frontline leaders to establish informal and personal networks

across the region (Literacy Mission campaign etc.), so much so that people recognized them by the name of this organization. Talking about their association with KSSP, Ibrahim, a founding member of PMVS, explained how people referred to them as "Parishad people" because of their active participation. Elaborating their experience working with KSSP, Ibrahim remarked:

> We were branded as "Parishad people" then; even today there are people who recognize us as the guys who were active in Parishad. We were pretty active in the social front then, especially in connection to the Literacy Mission. It was through the activities of Literacy Mission that we became more connected to the activities of KSSP (Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad, The People's Science Movement). It was during our association with Parishad that we realized the issues with our river. I repeatedly asked for greater involvement from Parishad for solving the issue with Periyar. Not just me, many of us, me, Kumar, George… in fact, started demanding greater involvement from Parishad on the issue of pollution here in our region. I mean this was the water we were all drinking and we were convinced that something needs to be done about this. Our joining the Parishad played a huge role in developing this realization. However, Parishad did not do anything about this but instead told us that, 'you people must study more about this issue and submit a report. Once you study, we will consider further action.' As far as I understand this or we have understood this…most of the leading members of Parishad then also worked in these industries, so that must have been a reason for inaction or this kind of response. We were very active members of this organization then. And it was during such a time that he suggested us to form another organization. (Ibrahim, founding member of PMVS, personal interview, July 20, 2018)

As the excerpt explicates, all leading members of the local green movement were part of the People's Science Movement in Kerala (KSSP). They had experience organizing and were introduced to the importance of scientific analysis and understanding of social problems. However, the interviews highlighted how Parishad (a common name used to refer to KSSP) even after repeated requests refused to take the lead in organizing collective action. Some environmentalists observed how this lack of interest would be rooted in the fact that Parishad was led by people who were employed in the industries. The green activists, however, decided to form an organization and initiate collective action against the issue of pollution. More importantly, the excerpts also underscore the cognitive liberation (McAdam 1982) attained by the green activists, where they articulate the importance of organized action to fight pollution and reaffirm it as the only way out.

They establish the importance of action throughout the interviews when they describe the conditions of pollutions and how that convinced them "to do something." The majority of the interviews with the local environmentalists involved an incident of pollution that convinced the actor to take up action. This incident sometimes varied across narratives based on the location of the activists in the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt. Also, the emergence of the local movement fits McAdam's political process model (1982) in many respects, in terms of the presence of a conducive political atmosphere, subjective and emotional interpretation of shared grievances, indigenous organization strength, and cognitive liberation. However, the later phases of the movement shift from this model in terms of the variability of the political and economic atmosphere. For example, while talking about the withdrawal of unions and mainstream political parties from the Anti-Pollution Campaign, Muneer observed:

> You must also remember that all these people were cooperative during the initial days…including the Panchayats and Trade Unions were supportive of that protest. Representatives from the Village and Block panchayaths, members of CPIM and Congress party, all these people cooperated you know. They sold themselves out after this protest. They were all part of this movement; then, they had all realized how the local industries wreaked havoc in the region. (Muneer, member of PMVS, personal interview, May 13, 2018)

As explicated in the excerpt and discussed in the sections above, what prevailed as an opportunity for building alliances soon transformed into a threat. In other words, the qualitative evidence provided in this chapter reaffirms that a model of hybrid political environment (Almeida 2019; Meyer 2004) would be useful in explaining the political and economic conditions faced by the local environmental movement. Furthermore, explorations into the motivations for collective action as embellished in the excerpts provided here would indicate how the formation of the local green movement is rooted in a collective-logic as opposed to utilitarian self-interest. Participation

was often rooted in feelings of solidarity and shared interests with other people as they fight against pollution.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I traced the history of local industrial development in the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt. The chapter explored how the advent of local industries as vehicles of modernization and consequent pollution created the conditions for the emergence of the local environmental movement. Relying on oral histories and documents, this chapter reconstructed the effects of industrial pollution on the local ecology and the people through narratives. The excerpts presented in the here explicated how environmental grievances caused disruptions to the everyday lives of the people and ignited grassroots resistance against pollution. Most importantly, the chapter traced the trajectory and created a periodization of the local environmental movement. The four phases identified in the chapter explains how the trajectory of the local environmental movement was not linear and that its initial phase of growth and development was followed by a period of quiescence after a few years. However, the periodization underscored how the green movement is reviving collective action in the present with the emergence of new environmental groups and intensifying legal battles.

Most importantly, the chapter examined the factors that could explain the emergence and spread of the local environmental movement and found that grievances, political opportunities, prior organizational experiences, and networks played equal roles. By focusing on grievances, the data presented in this chapter reiterates the continued relevance of grievances in understanding the emergence of environmental movements. More so, as a resource poor-movement with a wide

social base of support, the green movement challenges the traditional theories of resource mobilization. Moving away from the old political opportunity model, the shifting political-economic conditions, featuring both opportunities and constraints, faced by the green movement established the need for a hybrid model of the political environment (Almeida 2019).

In sum, the chapter sets the background for understanding the conflicts between labor-environmental conflicts by tracing the emergence of polarized interests between unions and green movements over the years. The chapter embellishes how the political economy of development and industrial capitalism plays a prominent role in shaping the origin and trajectory of the local environmental movement. Building on the findings presented in this chapter, the next chapter explores the influence of industrial capitalism on the social movement mobilization processes in the region. Furthermore, the succeeding chapter also explicates how inequality in access to resources plays out in the movement field.

CHAPTER FOUR

"EVERYONE KNOWS WHAT CAPITALISM DOES TO MOVEMENTS":

EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF CAPITALISM ON SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

A recent trend in the research on social movements seeks to bring capitalism back to the center of social movement studies (Hetland and Goodwin; della Porta 2015). Focusing largely on the strange absence of capitalism, these projects aim at bridging political economy and social movement theories to understand the structural factors underlying the processes of mobilization. This chapter is an attempt to expand this scholarship by undertaking an empirical study exploring the influence of capitalism on social movement mobilization processes. Situated in the backdrop of the labor-environmental conflicts in the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt, this chapter highlights the multitudes of ways in which capitalist forces join the local state to influence the origin, trajectory, and outcomes of social movements in Kerala.

Using interviews, oral histories, and documents, I examine the ways in which the political economy of industrial development and a variant of crony capitalism characterized by the nexus between the state, trade unions, and capitalists impact the social movement landscape in the region. Grounded in the frames and narratives of movement actors, the chapter expounds the strategies deployed by local industries to co-opt the leadership of trade unions, pump capital into the landscape of mobilization and successfully manufacture consent among the local people. Most importantly, the chapter highlights how capital buys participation by introducing monetary incentives and constrains local environmental activism of factory workers using the trope of *job blackmail*. The chapter demonstrates how the co-optation of trade union leadership and the nexus

between state and the industrialists create a formidable alliance against the local environmental movement fighting industrial pollution.

Adding to the ongoing discussions surrounding capitalism and social movements, the chapter uncovers an empirical case study illuminating the operations of capitalist forces in a postcolonial movement landscape. More so, the environmental movement featured here joins the fleet of resource-poor movements organized to fight against the threats posed by capitalist exploitation globally. The data presented in this chapter underscores how the monopoly over monetary resources or "capital" attributes unique privileges to industrial capitalists over resource-poor environmental movements in the movement field. Such operations of capital highlight the need to move beyond the traditional resource mobilization perspective that overlooks the structural inequality in the distribution of resources, and how such inequities can offer unfair advantages to movements favoring the capitalist economic system and logic. Rooted in the neoclassical economic traditions, resource mobilization theory (RMT hereafter) conceives the potential to mobilizing resources as a parameter determining movement success (Buechler 2000) when clearly the field of resource mobilization is skewed in favor of actors with more institutional and structural power. Also, the unique trajectory of development, working-class movements, and the class-compromise between labor and capital in Kerala provide an opportunity to understand labor-environmental conflicts in the milieu of capitalist production. The findings of this chapter highlight the importance of situating studies on postcolonial environmental movements within the backdrop of capitalism, the political economy of development, and state-capitalist nexus.

I would say that trade unions or working-class in general have lost their bargaining power...this explicates how capitalism...or capital...has been successful in rendering the worker powerless. The union leadership has heavily aided this process, I would say...In fact, they have established a friendly relationship with capitalism, a friendship often named as crony capitalism...yes, crony capitalism is a reality...it has spread to almost all facets of life including the spaces and processes of collective resistance. (Kumar, frontline leader and Research Coordinator of PMVS)

INTRODUCTION

Building on the discussion presented in the previous chapter surrounding the conditions that engendered organized grassroots resistance against industrial pollution, this chapter underlines the importance of resituating industrial capitalism for understanding the process of social movement mobilization and labor-environmental conflicts in the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt. In doing so, this chapter contributes to the ongoing debates within social movement research on the "strange disappearance of capitalism" and the need to bring the political economy back to social movement research (Hetland and Goodwin 2013; Barker et al. 2013, Barker 2013; della Porta 2015). Many of the extant critiques of dominant theoretical paradigms explain how the omission of the world capitalist economic system or dominant ideologies has resulted in producing studies that lose the "big picture". Following this line of thought regarding the need to consider systemic and structural forces underlying social movement processes, this chapter seeks to uncover the myriad ways in which capitalist forces influence the mobilization processes of labor and environmental movements in the context of my project. Besides the focus on structure, the inquiry presented in this chapter seeks to understand the role of agency by carefully analyzing how movement actors interpret, attribute blame, or make sense of the structural aspects elaborated in here. To put it differently, the method of inquiry elaborated in the rest of this project strives to understand the intersection of structural forces and individual movement actors. I accomplish this by examining the effects of capitalism on macro aspects such as political opportunities and the

local state, as well as its effects in influencing the micromobilization processes such as individual recruitment, consensus mobilization, framing, and grievance interpretation. More importantly, the discussion below highlights how movement actors interpret the role of capitalism in the social movement landscape of the state.

The findings presented in this chapter illuminates the many ways in which industrial capitalism influences social movement mobilization processes and outcomes. Bridging the theories of political economy and social movements, this chapter argues how the process of industrialization implemented in the region manifested into a model of accumulation through dispossession, thereby creating environmental and economic grievances for the local people. Using interviews and campaign materials, the chapter demonstrates how members of the local environmental movement frame their fight against industrial pollution as a fight against the mindless pursuit of profits under capitalism. The historic presence of anti-capitalist framings illustrates the prominent presence of capitalism as the target of postcolonial movements despite its "strange absence" in the mainstream literature. Delineating the role of capitalism in the local movement landscape, this chapter identifies the strategies and tactics used by local industrialists to repress the local environmental movement by creating schisms within unions and green movements, co-opting the union leadership, offering monetary incentives for participation and pumping capital into the movement landscape. The formidable alliance formed between trade unions and industries exposes how the labor in the state has transformed into an agent of capitalist development that proactively engages in the process of coercing workers and manufacturing consent in favor of local industries.

Furthermore, the chapter unravels the nexus between state, capitalists, and trade unions resulting in a model of crony capitalism that actively seeks to repress and demobilize the local

environmental movement. In doing so, the chapter reaffirms how the monopoly over monetary resources or "capital" attributes unique privileges to industrial capitalists over resource-poor environmental movements in the movement field. Such operations of capital highlight the need to move beyond traditional resource mobilization perspectives that overlook the structural inequality in the distribution of resources, and access to centers to power via the state. Rooted in the neoclassical economic traditions, RMT conceives the potential to mobilizing resources as a parameter determining movement success, when clearly the field of resource mobilization is skewed in favor of actors with more institutional and structural power. The findings of this chapter highlight the importance of situating studies on postcolonial social movements and inter-movement relationships within the backdrop of capitalism, the political economy of development and state-capitalist nexus.

CAPITALISM AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The arguments and data presented in this chapter demonstrate the benefits of combining political economy and social constructionist approaches to understanding social movement processes and outcomes. Extant critiques of the mainstream social movement theories have highlighted the neglect of political economy perspectives (Nilsen 2008; della Porta 2015, 2017; Barker et al. 2013), particularly Marxian theories while studying varied aspects of movement (Barker et al.,2013). Calling out the strange disappearance of the term capitalism from the mainstream literature on movements, Hetland and Goodwin (2013) observe that, "While capitalism has spread to nearly every corner of the globe, scholars who specialize in the study of social movements, especially in the United States, have increasingly ignored the ways in which capitalism shapes social movements" (Hetland and Goodwin 2013: 83). della Porta (2017)

identifies similar problems with the "old toolkit" developed within mainstream social movement theories for comprehensively analyzing the anti-austerity protests that emerged in the wake of the global financial crisis (2008). Examining the social base of the anti-austerity movements, della Porta (2015; 2017) reemphasizes the need for considering socio-economic conditions while studying protests. To explain the class-based nature of anti-austerity protests, della Porta (2017: 456) relies on a new toolkit, by using Marxist and post-Marxist approaches to "relevant capitalist transformations." Aiming to fill the void, scholars have (Nilsen 2008. 2009; Nilsen and Cox 2013) proposed a Marxist theory of social movements.

Furthermore, grounded in existing studies that explore the intersection of capitalism and collective action, Hetland and Goodwin (2013) reaffirm the important ways in which capitalist institutions intervene and influence the movement landscape as follows:

> Capitalist institutions (factories, railroads, banks, and so on) or institutions that capitalists may come to control (such as legislatures, courts and police) are often the source or target of popular grievances, especially (but not only) during times of economic crisis; these institutions, moreover, shape collective identities and solidarities – and not just class solidarities – in particular ways; they also distribute power and resources unevenly to different social classes and fractions of classes; they both facilitate and inhibit specific group alliances based on common or divergent interests; class divisions, furthermore, often penetrate and fracture particular movements; and ideologies and cultural assumptions linked to capitalism powerfully shape movement strategies and demands. (Hetland and Goodwin 2013:85)

Because of the profound impacts of capitalist institutions on mobilization processes and movement landscape, the failure to consider capitalist system limits and more often than adversely affect movement analysis (Hetland and Goodwin 2013). Hetland and Goodwin (2013) further demonstrate the importance of the capitalist system for better understanding the identity movements using the "hard" case of the LGBT movements. More so, the exclusion of the term capitalism can be traced back to the absence of a well-refined Marxist theory of social movements and the general neglect of Marxian approaches to understanding movements within the dominant

theoretical paradigms. In *Marxism and Social Movements*, Barker et al. (2013) identify a distinct

lack of activist and scholarly work that deals with developing a Marxist theory of social

movements. According to Barker et al. (2013):

> There is a…distinct lack of work—scholarly or activist—devoted to thinking through what an integrated Marxist theory of social movements…This situation is compounded by the fact that mainstream social movement theory—whether it emerges from American or European academia—consistently avoids debates with Marxist perspectives, although they constitute by some margin the largest alternative body of research on popular movements. Instead, what can only be described as caricatures or straw-man versions of Marxist theory are as widespread in scholarship as in some forms of anti-Marxist activism. (Barker et al. 2013: 2)

Aside from calling attention to the lack of a well-refined Marxist theory of movements, Barker et

al. (2013) describe how movement scholarship and theories have often chosen to interact, engage

and debate with versions of Marxist theory that can be described best as "caricatures or straw-man

versions" of Marxist theory. In addition to problematizing the absence of capitalism and Marxian

political economy, many of these critiques point out how this omission preempts movement

theories from understanding the influence of structural and political-economic factors on

movements, thereby losing a sense of the big picture. (Barker et al. 2013; Hetland and Goodwin

2013; della Porta 2015). Besides, the avoidance of systemic aspects, according to these authors,

has resulted in producing studies that overlook "people's potential to make their own history."

Elaborating the effects of the omission of political economy from movement analysis Barker et al.

(2013:7) observe:

> Social movement theory risks losing not only a sense of 'the big picture' and especially its economic aspects, but also a sense of 'ordinary' people's potential to make their own history, to form and nurture oppositional cultures, and to contest – and, of course, sometimes to succumb to or support – dominant ideological and organizational ways of interpreting and acting in the world.

In a way, many of these critiques expose how the dominant theories completely ignore the

effects of the world capitalist system in creating, sustaining, or repressing many of the movements

or collective action events across the world. Problematizing the lack of focus on the larger picture, Barker et al. (2013) observe:

> Does this mean that social movement scholars must always treat these struggles as discrete and disconnected instances of protest? ...If we did, it would seem odd, at the very least, not to inquire if the world capitalist system is not somehow responsible for generating them. (Barker et al. 2013: 2-3)

More importantly, such exclusions are problematic if not outrageous considering the multitudes of ways in which the world capitalist economic systems (Barker 2013; Barker et al. 2013), logics of accumulation (Motta and Nilsen 2011), neoliberal globalization (Cox and Nilsen 2007; Benski et al. 2013; della Porta 2015), and colonial and neocolonial forms of domination (Friedmann 2005; Nilsen 2008; Motta and Nilsen 2011; Singh 2013) engender social, economic and environmental grievances for people across the world. Drawing attention to this lack of engagement with "the system" within movement analysis, Barker et al. (2013) say:

> There is, in short, 'a system' against which so many of today's protests are pitched, even if they are not articulated solely, or event at all, in the language of 'class'. Yet there seems to be little recognition of this in contemporary literature on social movements. (Barker et al. 2013:2)

Reading this critique alongside the postcolonial re-reading of sociological theory, one can easily perceive how this lack of focus on "system" within movement theories can be understood as part of the dominant trend in sociological theories that often preclude inquiries into the ways in which the structure or the "system" produces social inequalities. Elucidating this limited interaction between the 'system' and the 'social' Bhambra (2016) observes:

> I argue that the historical record is different to that found within standard sociological understandings. What is missing in the latter is a systematic consideration of the world-historical processes of dispossession, appropriation, genocide, and enslavement as central to the emergence and development of modernity and its institutional forms (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014; Fanon, 1963; Gilroy, 1993). Sociology's orientation to history has generally been based around an implicit consensus on the emergence of modernity and the related 'rise of the West,' as well as around a stadial idea of progressive development and the privileging of Eurocentered histories in the construction of such an account.   (Bhambra 2016:962)

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In short, the critiques of dominant theories of social movements underscore the lack of focus on political-economic factors while studying movements and explain how such omissions affect movement analysis. In the context of these emerging studies pointing out the disappearance of capitalism and discussion of structural and socio-economic factors within movement theories, this chapter aims at understanding the myriad ways in which capitalism influences social movement mobilization and inter-movement relationships in Kerala. More importantly, though the extant critiques eloquently point out the absence of capitalism and neglect of Marxian theoretical perspectives, there is not enough discussion on the need for inquiries that simultaneously consider the structure and the individual. In other words, there is a dearth of studies and literature proposing the need to engage with multiple levels of analysis so as to understand the effects of structural and political-economic factors on the micromobilization processes and movement decisions at the level of the individual movement actor. The remainder of this chapter is an attempt to understand the effects of political economy on movements through individual movement framings. The evidence presented here argues how understanding the effects of capitalism using the individual movement frames can expand the scholarship on ideologies and movement framings (Oliver and Johnston 2000; Johnston and Oliver 2005; Snow and Benford 2005), or rather the ways in which dominant ideologies and frames intrude on the movement frames and fields of progressive grassroots movements.

MANDATE

Building on these emerging critiques regarding the lack of focus on socio-economic factors in movement analysis, this chapter strives to understand the interaction between the level of individual and the socio-political structure. In that regard, the analysis presented in this chapter

seeks to understand the influence of capitalism on the processes of movement mobilization in the setting and how movement actors frame such involvements of capitalist forces in the movement field. In doing so, this inquiry also strives to expand the contours of frame analysis to include explorations into the ways in which structural forces and dominant ideologies influence the framing processes of social movements.

Having said that, this chapter is not an attempt to defend or develop a traditional Marxist theory of movements in the context of the extant critiques surrounding the reductionist tendencies or top-down theorization. Nevertheless, the chapter argues that the problematics or reductionist tendencies, if any, present in the traditional Marxian theory, should not deter us from exploring the effects of capitalism on social movement mobilization processes and outcomes. In that sense, the inquiry pursued in the remainder of this chapter is informed by Marxian theory and draws heavily from the "treadmill of production" perspective. The study is situated within a theoretical framework that recognizes and explicates the effects of industrial capitalism on the environment and the resultant social and environmental grievances suffered by the people. Apart from the focus on capitalism's influence on material conditions of movements, in terms of creating deprivations and grievances, the chapter also explores the ideological interventions through which capitalism intrudes into the movement frames. In that sense, the analysis presented here relies on a combination of Marxian political economy and frame analysis to understand how political-economic factors influence movements and how movement actors interpret such interventions. Such an approach helps in studying the effects of structural factors on movements and mobilization processes without losing sight of the effects it engenders at the level of the individual movement actor.

In short, the analysis presented here demonstrates the ways in which industrial capitalism creates the conditions/deprivations/grievances, which led to the emergence of the grassroots environmental movement. However, as the environmental movement expanded enough to intervene in the capitalist system of production and propose ameliorative action to restore the damages, the industries resorted to various strategies to repress and demobilize the green movement. The chapter identifies the strategies and tactics used by the local industries to disrupt and derail local environmental action. In doing so, the chapter highlights the myriad ways in which capitalism intervenes and exacerbates the schism between labor and green movements and resort to using labor as an agent or "protector" of industrial capitalism. The chapter identifies that these strategies target both the mobilization processes and ideological/discursive aspects of the movements. The chapter undertakes this task of elaborating on the effects of capitalism on the mobilization and discursive processes of social movements using the collective action frames and framing processes of the union and green movements. To put it differently, the "structure" analyzed here comes to the scene via the narratives of the movement actors and the campaign materials produced by the movement groups. My attempt here is to combine the political economy and framing perspective to understand how structural factors and dominant ideologies influence movement processes and how individual movement actors interpret these impacts through collective action frames.

INTERPRETING THE LINKAGE BETWEEN CAPITALISM AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

One of the important issues concerning the absence of capitalism from the mainstream literature is the replete presence of frames that depict capitalism or capitalist institutions as the

source or target of the movement grievances. This establishes how the disappearance or omission of capitalism is largely a characteristic of the literature and not so much of the real-world movements. This section elucidates this further by demonstrating how movement actors, particularly members of the local environmental movement, interpret and embellish the role of capitalism and capitalist logics of production and profits in creating the environmental grievances and inequalities experienced in the region.

Articulating the linkages between capitalism and social movements in the context of the struggle around industrial pollution, Kumar, the founding member and Research Coordinator of PMVS, remarked, "The industrial lobby and the political leadership of trade unions have joined hands to repress the environmental movements in Kerala. Such alliances or coalitions happen in the context of almost all progressive movements." Almost all members of the green movement characterized the relationship between capitalist forces and progressive social movement, particularly the environmental movement as an antagonistic relationship. They explained how capitalist institutions and forces deployed varied strategies to derail, repress, and demobilize the local environmental movements across the state. According to the environmentalists, the ways in which the industrial capitalists repress and attack the local environmental movement follow some dominant patterns and, more importantly, are part of a larger trend in Kerala's movement landscape. Expounding the connections between the capitalist forces and movements, Kumar continued:

> There is a tendency to repress all dissenting voices that challenge the exploitation of nature...capital is being extensively used to repress such movements...in fact, the trade unions are merely a tool in the hands of the capitalist forces...that's the truth...if you look any case of environmental violation or exploitation in Kerala or India broadly, you can see how capitalism engenders many of such crises...also, you can find the unions and "working-class" parties wholeheartedly supporting such capitalists. That's an open secret. Everyone knows that. Everyone knows what capitalism does to movements. ...(Kumar, founding member and Research Coordinator of PMVS, May 26, 2018)

By calling the interactions between capitalism and social movements "an open secret," Kumar expounds on how the relationship is obvious to members of various social movements in the state. In other words, the framing of this relationship as an open secret signifies how the linkage between capitalism and social movements is part of the common knowledge among movement actors in the state. This also problematizes the claims within movement literature regarding the portrayal of this connection as a discovery (della Porta2017), especially when capitalism was openly characterized as the primary opponent or adversary by social movements in the Global South. The recognition of structural and political-economic factors is apparent and clearly marked in the campaign materials such as posters, newsletters, and handouts that date back to as early as the beginning of the local environmental movement.

Illustrating the reductive ways in which capitalism defines investment to the total exclusion of considering nature as a form of "capital," Ibrahim expounds the reasons why organized trade unions overlook the issues of workers in the primary sector as followed:

> People who work in the primary sector, the fish workers and farmers...it is an investment in nature...their survival is dependent on this natural capital. But the unions are interested in capital investment...protecting an industry means protecting and sustaining capital...these trade unions are all about protecting the interests of the capital and that's why they ignore the issues affecting the workers in the primary sector. (Ibrahim, member of PMVS, personal interview, July 20, 2018)

The excerpt presented above clearly showcases and stands testimony to the extensive presence of references to the political economy of development and capitalist accumulation such as investment, capital, the importance of "natural capital", and the sectoral organization of the economy. The members explain how a system that rests on a logic of production, which prioritizes profits over the well-being of people, would inevitably produce more pollution. According to Akbar:

Capitalism will always prioritize profits...such an approach to production that places profits above everything would inevitably lead to issues such as pollution...and this also encourage industries to undermine environmental regulatory mechanisms and laws. No industry perceives pollution control as a part of capital investment. This, in turn, would incentivize them to hide pollution....It is only when they start considering pollution control as part of their overall investment; they will take some proactive steps to eliminate pollution. (Akbar, member of PMVS, May 10, 2018)

As detailed in the excerpt above, driven by a production rationale based solely on profits and cost reduction, the industries will find little incentives to adopt or invest in measures that would regulate or reduce pollution. Even worse, the twisted logic of profits would incentivize the industries to hide pollution instead of trying to curb it. Using terminologies in economics, the excerpt vividly argues how the neglect of natural capital or the lack of understanding nature as a form of investment is an issue that prevents the unions from understanding or perceiving the issues faced by workers in the primary sector. More so, the excerpt highlights how unions seek to "protect" industries by facilitating the accumulation of more capital. In sum, it explicates how organized trade unions act as agents of capital who are committed to protecting the industries and facilitating greater accumulation and investment of capital. Kumar further extrapolates this argument by explaining how private capitalists situate themselves away from the negative environmental effects, insulating from the ills of capitalism so that they feel movements challenging pollution as unnecessary or disruptive. Anas remarked:

These private capitalists do not realize that we have the same resources, we share the same ecology...anything that affects this ecology would affect us all equally...many of these capitalists would be living away from these sites of pollution, so they don't experience the ill effects of pollution. As people living next to these sites of pollution, we experience the adverse effects on a daily basis. That's why movements happen. An outsider would say that the movement is unnecessary, or that we are taking money or that we are disruptive, etc. Usually, such narratives would help delegitimize the frontline leaders of the movement. (Anas, a local environmentalist and member of Janajagratha, personal interview, July 6, 2018)

In an excerpt presented above, Kumar, eloquently explains how the capitalist logic of production, which places profits above people's well-being, ends up creating a vicious cycle where people are left to suffer the adverse environmental effects when capital actively denies the existence of the problem altogether. More importantly, despite creating the problem in the pursuit of profits, capitalism actively seeks to deny and delegitimize any struggles that challenge the process of accumulation. Talking about the tactics of capitalism to repress movements, Roopesh observed:

> If you ask any industry, they would outrightly deny pollution. All of them would vouch that their product or production processes are not causing pollution. They would also say that claims about pollution are mere allegations aimed at killing the industries, you know. Once they discredit the claims as attempts to close the industries down, then it becomes our responsibility to prove that we are not trying to close the industries but are fighting to curb pollution. That is their tactic. So now it is our responsibility to disprove the claim that we are trying to close the industries down. It is quite similar to how people often get framed as anti-nationals. Once you get that tag, it is your responsibility to disprove the claim that you are not a traitor. (Roopesh, member of PMVS, personal interview, May 27, 2018)

The above narrative breaks-down the strategy of denial and deflection adopted by the local industry. It clearly describes how the industries relegate the fight against pollution by framing them as "allegations aimed at killing the industries." Using counterframes, the industries tactfully shift the responsibility on to the local environmentalists. This tactic is extremely effective in attacking the environmental movement because now the local greens have to disprove the allegations made by the industries and establish the credibility of their action before they could fight against the spread of pollution. More so, counterframes that depict the greens as "anti-nationals" or "traitors" would receive greater resonance among the people in a political climate characterized by Hindu nationalism and fascist tendencies. More importantly, under such circumstances marked by polarized politics, the onus of disproving such tags questioning one's

allegiance to the nation invariably falls on the individual. In that sense, such strategies aim at discrediting and delegitimizing movements that challenge the capitalist process of accumulation.

Additionally, the local environmentalists tie all these strategies back to the logic of capitalist production that is rooted in profits, which perceive anti-capitalists struggles as nothing but adversaries. Simplifying the connection between capitalism, profits and social movements, Kumar stated:

> This has been a strategy that capitalism has been using for so long. Greed and profits are the driving forces. They are not satisfied no matter how much you accumulate...such greed would lead to the accumulation of more and more profits...and they lose all ethics in this mindless pursuit of profits...they would start circumventing the ethics of capitalism even if any...so, people who engage in anti-capitalist struggles would be a constant target...they would spend more energy on repressing such movements, more money than what would be needed to stop pollution, you see. (Kumar, founding member and Research Coordinator of PMVS, personal interview, May 26, 2018)

As illuminated in the excerpt above, the members of the local environmental movement, particularly the PMVS, explicitly state how capitalist "greed" and "profits" are responsible for the adverse environmental effects in the region. The unsatiated nature of capitalist accumulations tendencies, they argue, force the capitalist system to violate its own ethical standards. Additionally, the excerpt spells out how this logic of profits guide capitalism into spending more money repressing movements that call out the issues created by capitalism, instead of fixing them. The interviews with the green activists underscore how the environmental action is organized surrounding a critical understanding of capitalism and its logic of production. Moreover, the excerpt deciphers the ways in which capitalism responds to anti-capitalist struggles or movements that seek to challenge or constrain the logics of accumulation. The rationale rooted in "more and more accumulation" puts capitalism in an ironic position where it spends money or incurs costs to repress movements rather than spending a lesser amount on fixing the environmental issues it created.

Breaking away from the exclusionary tendencies within the mainstream literature, these movement actors draw explicit connections between the structure of capitalist production and accumulation and social movement mobilization. In other words, the evidence presented here creates an epistemological and ontological irony, where the theory rejects the real world. As illustrated by the excerpts above, the critiques of capitalism and logics of profits have always remained a central focus of the local environmental movement led by the PMVS. By reaffirming how capitalism and its excesses occupy movement interests, grievances, and mobilization processes, these excerpts demonstrate how capitalism and its critiques have always occupied the center of many movements, irrespective of whether the mainstream literature cared to feature this or not. Also, this distinct lack of representation in theories when compared to the reality points fingers at the near-complete absence of postcolonial movements and actors from the center of social movement research. Apart from acknowledging the presence and impact of capitalism on movements, the rest of this chapter delineates the different strategies used by capitalism to invade the space occupied by local movements and create schisms between trade unions and the local green movement. More importantly, the chapter uncovers how the access to capital confer unique advantages to industrial capitalists to repress environmental movements by funding and sponsoring opponent social movements.

CAPITAL AND POWER: RE-READING THE RESOURCE MOBILIZATION PERSPECTIVE

This section details how the stand-off between the local environmental movement and the trade unions in the Eloor-Edayar region should be conceived as a fight between David and Goliath. I make this argument on the basis of both movement resources and access to the centers of political

and economic power. The differential approach to resources adopted by the two movement groups is illuminated here using interviews with movement actors and campaign materials. In the rest of this section, I explicate the inequality in the distribution and access to resources and power, and how that manifests in the movement landscape.

The differential access to resources enjoyed by the local environmental movement and the trade union collective will be the pivotal point in this chapter. An extensive discussion of the working-class characteristics and resource crunch of the green movement is provided in the subsequent chapter. To undertake an inquiry into the role of resources and power in determining the trajectory of labor-environmental conflicts, this chapter narrowly focuses more on how the resource-poor nature of the local environmental movement influence the mobilization processes in contrast to the formidable alliance formed by trade unions and the local industries and their heightened capabilities to mobilize resources. Again, the analysis presented here centers around the interpretations and frames constructed by the members of the two movement groups.

PMVS As a Resource-Poor Movement

The local green movement led by the PMVS is a grassroots environmental movement with limited financial resources at its disposal. Led by working-class members, PMVS mobilize events using their own money and resource pooled from the movement participants and the larger community. The movement forms part of the many progressive and popular movements that have grassroots origins and fights against the injustices created and distributed by the state, development projects, or multinational corporations (cite environmentalism of the poor). Many such movements succeed on the vigor and commitment of the leaders and participants and the legitimacy of their demands, and not on the basis of the resources they could amass. The starting presence of such

resource-poor movements making long-standing impacts in the movement landscape forces one to question the traditional conceptions of resource mobilization theory, which deems resource infrastructure as the most important factor for successful mobilization.

When inquired about the influence of resources on the mobilization potential, Kumar, the leader of PMVS, immediately brushed aside resource as a constraint as follows:

> I do not think the resource is a constraint, as far as mobilizing people is concerned...people's movements have always been like this...they are something that is not built on money...it derives strength from the physical and mental tortures or oppressions these people have faced...See, if I am someone who has to struggle with pollution and the smell of Sulphur dioxide or if I see my kids struggle with these issues of pollution...so under such circumstances, I will react as a human being...money is not a factor eliciting that reaction...as Marx told, see the workers have nothing to lose but chains...the shackles of slavery...(Kumar, founding member and Research Coordinator of PMVS, personal interview, May 26, 2018)

After a brief pause, Kumar continued to explicate how *Janakeeya Samarangal* (People's Movements) was never led by money but driven entirely by the power of people in the following words:

> We mobilize resources from the people...it is not a factor guiding our movement...it is not a precondition as far as we are concerned...at the same time, a movement like the union collective, they need to focus on resources, because they need to distribute money to recruit people for their events...they need to pay them and provide them with biryani and alcohol...we don't do that. When we call a bus to take protestors to somewhere, we collect money from our own participants to pay towards that. Yes, we have incurred personal losses, but that is very usual for all frontline leaders. We have incurred losses trying to chip in when there are deficits. But having said that, a *Janakeeya samaram (people's movement)* is never led by money, it is driven entirely by the power acquired by people by going through severe adversities in the society...it is the grievance that drives us, the impacts created by the grievance leads them to the movement, not money... (Kumar, founding member and Research Coordinator of PMVS, personal interview, May 26, 2018)

Kumar's narrative signifies how grassroots movements, organized by people who are at the receiving end of severe adversities, often engage in fierce battles with the state and corporates in their fight for social and environmental justice. Such movements also rely on a decentralized model of resource mobilization where each collective action is planned and executed using

resources crowdsourced from the participants. Breaking away from a centralized model of organization and resource mobilization that is built around an elite model of power (McAdam 1982), the PMVS mobilizes resources from the community without reaching out to the political or economic elites in the region for money. In doing so, the movement challenges the singular narrative surrounding resources and movements laid out in the mainstream literature.

However, this does not imply that the movement actors and leadership completely deny or overlook the importance of resources entirely. When inquired about the way in which money operates within the SCTU (the union collective), members of the green movement were quick to point out how money provides unique advantages to the union collective. According to Abdu:

> Yes, resources often help counter campaigns to get an upper hand. For example, the union collective placed boards worth Rs. 10,00,000 across the state alleging that I own illegal assets or own property in Wayanad. If 100000 people happen to see and read that board, at least 100 people would believe the allegations presented on the board. If we were to do something, all we could do would be to print 1000 notices or posters worth Rs. 500 or print a few pamphlets...if we spent Rs. 5000 we may get 1000 pamphlets, that's all we could do. Having said all that, we still believe that the truth will triumph. No matter how strong these campaigns are...all of them can survive only for a few months or years because what we say is based on facts. All of these allegations would be disproved because we do not add any masala into our claims...All the things we say are backed by facts, based on scientific studies and findings. We are presenting the raw data...we say "this is the situation in Eloor, with regards to our water, our air, our land, our blood" no matter who does the research they would be able to confirm what we say...it is hard for people to challenge this with money...science would remain...yes, perhaps they can try to twist the facts, but science would prevail no matter what. (Abdu, member of PMVS, personal interview, May 30, 2017)

The excerpt clarifies how access to resources can offer unfair advantages to movements and campaigns endowed with more money. Describing how the union collective manages to unleash massive countercampaigns to discredit the members of the green movement, Kumar illustrates how the unions spend lakhs of rupees in terms of installing billboards and posters that carry allegations against the environmentalists. As the excerpt shows, having greater access to money enables movements to expand the scope of the campaign beyond the region and can also

aid the diffusion of the movement and movement frames across the state. In comparison, the resource crunch affecting the local environmental movement forces them to reduce the spread of their campaign as they can only produce only a limited set of campaign materials. For example, Kumar spells out the comparison in terms of the money spent on campaigns. When the union spends Rs.10,00,000 (around $14,000) on a single campaign, the greens scramble to make a decision between spending on posters worth Rs. 500 ($7) or pamphlets worth Rs.5000 ($70). This lays out the staggering difference between the local environmental movement and the trade-union collective in terms of the resources at disposal. However, the leaders of the environmental movement are confident that these disparities in resources will not have longstanding consequences as they believe that "the truth will triumph." The movement actors explained how money could not beat science or scientific facts underlying the local environmental movement. With great anticipation and confidence, the local environmentalists believe that "science will prevail no matter what." This reaffirms their belief in the import of scientific facts, evidence, and an approach to movement that is guided by scientific temper. The centrality of scientific evidence prevailing in the local environmental movement also opens greater avenues to inquire about the relations between science and activism surrounding environmental issues, particularly in a political climate characterized by the prevalence of post-truth rhetoric and climate change denial, etc.

More so, some green activists even expressed how the lack of monetary resources constrains the mobilization efforts of PMVS at times. Members presented money as an issue, particularly in the context of maintaining organizational infrastructures such as office space or archiving campaign materials, etc., that requires a recurring payment. The acute resource crunch facing the local environmental movement led by PMVS is evidenced by its recent loss of the office space for continuously defaulting the payment of rent. The lack of office space has forced the

movement to move all the campaign materials and documents the movement has created over many years to a small shed next to Ibrahim's house. The crunch prevents them from archiving or carefully securing the remnants of their longstanding fight against pollution. When I inquired if they have still retained all the old posters and other campaign materials, Ibrahim started talking with enthusiasm:

> Oh, that we actually have. I don't know why, but we have actually saved a copy of all our notices and flyers. I don't know why, but we have this habit. The other day I was going through a few. When we had an office and all we had such files. Now we don't have an office. We were forced to move everything to a room next to my home since we did not have enough money to pay the rent. We don't have money to pay the rent, so we have now shifted everything to a room adjacent to my home. (Ibrahim, member, PMVS, personal interview, July 20, 2018)

The excerpt below further exemplifies how the lack of resources impede the mobilization processes and document archiving of the green movement. An entry from my field note (date) that describes the plight of a make-shift office set up in a shabby old room next to Ibrahim's house reads as follows:

> I visited Ibrahim *chettan*'s home to see their old files, poster, and flyers. The files were stored in a small shed next to his house...a shabby old room that was once part of his old house...the old house was demolished, but this room stays alone as a remnant of the old memories. The room was so small with damp walls on all sides. The moisture inside the walls made prominent marks across the walls. My visit was immediately after the flood, and by the time we checked the files, most of them were damaged…from mold and mildew. Ibrahim *chettan* told me that it'd been a while since they checked the files after shifting them to this room. The room was so wet that the pages started to wilt and tear apart, and the white mildew has started spreading across the pages, fading their fights from history. As we checked the files, Ibrahim leaned on a broken chair in the room, looking at a newspaper cutting on the human-chain protest in 1998. Running his fingers over the photograph published alongside the report, he said, "These remain the only documents that carry the story of our struggles over all these years…yes, other than our vivid memories. It's sad to lose them." After a brief pause, he continued, "Earlier things were in order, now that we have shifted it's all a mess, it's all jumbled up. I was trying to look at a few things the other day. So, the other day when I was checking a few documents, I was asking myself…did we manage to do all this!!! That's something great, unbelievable. I mean, there were thousands of news reports…thousands of them, you know. So many of them, we had collected them all. 1998, 1997, 1996…even before that from 1994. We had started

collecting documents even before we started organizing this movement. (Field Notes, July 25, 2018)

The excerpts above underscore the resource constraints faced by the local environmental movement. The lack of financial resources has impeded the movement's ability to document their struggles than spans over 20 years with many sacksful outcomes and legal wins or archive the campaign materials produced over these years. The loss of office space has shifted their meetings into public spaces or in the houses of the movement members. In addition, the scarcity of monetary resources also limits the ability of the environmentalists to organize collective action events against pollution. When asked about the impact of this resource crunch on the campaign, Rafeeq explained the financial situation of the green movement using the following example:

> Unlike the unions or industries, we are forced to request money from the people who participate. To be honest, there are people who avoid our events because we ask for money (laughs). That's our situation. We don't have money!! We struggled to organize so many events only because we did not have enough funds…We avoided FACT junction for a while because there was a Press there, you know…and we owed him money for printing our pamphlets from there…We did not have money to pay off. So, after a point, we stopped printing notices; instead, we took photostat (laughs)…you know, we would take DTP and then take Photostat, which would cost something 35 paise, lower than the printing charge, you know. When you see our notices, you would understand this, that most of them are not printed…that's how we have managed to take this movement forward. That's how we have managed to keep this thing going for all these years. Despite all such constraints, our struggle received international attention, and that's a huge thing. (Rafeeq, member of PMVS, personal interview, May 13, 2018)

As the excerpt highlights, the local environmental movement led by the PMVS joins a fleet of international movements that shook the system of industrial production and the business as usual model of environmental regulation in the region. However, the dearth of resources significantly impacts the mobilizing processes and action events of the local green movement. The resource constraints faced by the local green movement becomes more apparent and prominent when they are placed alongside the resource sufficient or surplus conditions faced by the union collective, Standing Council. Resources were never a point of discussion during the interviews with any of

the union leaders or members. The interviews are laden with narrations of the grandiose nature of the protests or other collective action events organized by the union collective or the industries. More importantly, the discussion above indicates the need to expand resource mobilization to include the complex ways in which resources influence in facilitating and constraining movement emergence and mobilization. It points out the need to challenge the tendency to consider resource infrastructure as a pre-requisite for successful mobilization. The exemplar of PMVS establishes how resource-poor movements emerge in response to quotidian disruption, grow, situate themselves against the industries and the state, and accomplish successful outcomes. Having said that, it also becomes imperative to understand how resources can also constrain, thereby rendering the movement landscape uneven. In other words, the omission of structural inequality in the distribution and access to resources is overlooked in the traditional perspective, wherein evidence presented here explains how easy access to monetary resources and political power enable and offer unfair advantages to movements.

Financing Protests and Collective Action: Understanding the Import of Resources in the Mobilization of the Countermovement

Stemming from the discussion surrounding the issue of structural inequality in the access and distribution of resources, the following sections uncover how the alliance between industries and unions, and the monopoly over "capital" enjoyed by the industries due to their structural location provide a unique advantage to the union collective. Additionally, the inquiries also unearth the distinct strategies used by the union-industry nexus, where they employ "capital" or monetary resources to create and sustain collective action while trying to repress and demobilize the opponent movement. The analysis proposes a few key strategies employed by the union collective

with active support from the industries. These include recruiting participants for collective action events by offering them monetary incentives and perks, co-opting the union leadership by providing financial incentives, and bribing the state-owned PCB to deter punitive actions for the violation of pollution regulation.

Paid protests and paid participants

One of the important contrasts between the collective action events organized by the local green movement and the trade union collective (Standing Council) pertains to the nature of their participants. When the green activists mobilize people disaffected by industrial pollution, the trade union collective often pays participants for the events organized to defend the industries. Throughout the interviews, green activists elaborated on the process of participant recruitment used by the union collective and the local industries. Illustrating one such instance where people from the region were paid to partake in protests, Anas, a green activist, stated:

> Unions are pretty sure that they won't have many participants for the events they organize. Whenever they organize events in S.C.S Menon Hall, they are pretty sure that they would not have many people showing up. So, what they instead do is that…they would make *Kudumbashree*[17] members attend the events, you know. These people cannot really say "No" to the party. So, they need to show up if they are told to attend. So, similarly, their workers …they would make their attendance mandatory. They would give a dictum, you know. They lure people with money. (Anas, a local environmentalist, and member of *Janajagratha*, personal interview, July 6, 2018)

As detailed in the excerpt above, according to green activists, the unions and the industries often use tactics of coercion to recruit participants for the events organized in defense of the industries. More so, interviews signaled how the unions often tap into the party members or

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[17] A microfinance endeavor started by the Kerala State Government with the twin aims of poverty alleviation and women's empowerment. Roughly translated as "The Wealth of Family" (denoting women as the family's wealth or source of prosperity) this program (Devika and Thampi 2007).

affiliates in addition to members of state-sponsored schemes such as *Kudumbasree* to bolster the number of participants. A nexus between the local state becomes apparent in the union's access to self-help groups such as *Kudumbashree*. From the standpoint of the unions, having mass-based participation is important to convince the public that the issue raised by the unions receive widespread support among the people in the region. Besides, the union collective aims to counter the local green movement, known for its wide-based movement events.

Besides resorting to the *bloc recruitment* from state-sponsored programs, the unions also recruit from among workers. In such instances, jobs are often used as control mechanisms to elicit the participation and support of factory workers for these collective action events. Narratives highlighted how the unions use the "token system" (this is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter) to blackmail workers from joining local environmental action events. The token system required workers to have daily tokens issued from the unions for being able to work in factories. This system enabled unions to blackmail workers and force them to be compliant with the industries and constrained them from participating in the local environmental movement. Sathyan, a factory worker, explained how he was forced to partake in a protest event that happened in Thiruvananthapuram.

> When they (union leaders) asked me to participate, I just told them that I cannot do this and expressed my reservations. But you should understand one thing, I am a factory worker, a worker who finds work in the factory through the union. So, even though the company is our employer, we join as union members. We get the job as union members. The bus to Thiruvanathapuram was scheduled to leave at 4. Around 3 am in the morning, I received a call from a union leader. He said, "Look Sathyan, if you do not come for this event, you should not come to work from tomorrow." So, I participated. This is my only source of income; I have a lot of debt from building my house etc. And I don't want to leave my kids hungry. (Sathyan, a factory worker, personal interview, July 22, 2018)

The excerpt clearly explicates the ways in which jobs are used to coercively recruit factory workers for the collective action events organized by the unions. The fear of losing jobs forced

workers to participate in the event in larger numbers. According to another participant, the march

primarily focused on the privatization of mineral sand mining in Kerala, an issue affecting the

prospects of private industry in the Edayar region. He stated how this industrialist "has bought out

almost all the unions. I participated in this march as a member of the AITUC. There were many

other unions." Moreover, the cost, according to many participants of this protest, was borne

entirely by the industrialist. Responding to questions regarding the funding received by this event,

Sathyan responded as follows:

> It is further interesting to see how the industries and unions portray this march. So, they argue that the march was funded using the money mobilized from factory workers. That is not true. Each worker was paid Rs.1000 or more for participating in this march, and the leaders got way more than that. (Sathyan, a factory worker, personal interview, July 22, 2018)

Elaborating further about the incentives and perks distributed during the event, Sathyan offered a

glimpse of what each participant was offered to partake in the protest:

> They had arranged two buses for us. Each person entering the bus was given Rs.200 on the doorsteps as "lunch money." I was offered the money, but I didn't take it. I felt it is better to stay hungry to eat with his (says the name of the industrialist) money. (Sathyan, a factory worker, personal interview, July 22, 2018)

While recounting the instances where unions managed to organize "paid protests," Ibrahim

described the Secretariat March organized in Thiruvananthapuram as a march where "everyone

was given money." Breaking down the incentives and perks offered to protestors and elucidating

the reward-system, Ibrahim remarked:

> They organized a Secretariat March in Thiruvananthapuram; everybody was given money. They were provided with food, transportation, etc., and each participant was offered around Rs.1500 (around $21). They arranged vehicles to transport the participants…that included CMRL workers and many other people from here…so, this bus would cost around Rs.7000 ($98.2) per day, …and each of these buses can carry around 17-20 people…so, 17 multiplied by 1500, they make this calculation and hand over the money, then and there. Even then not all participants received money…what they are saying is this, "Let's go to Thiruvananthapuram, let's go and tour the place." Once they reached the place, they would say, "Hey, since we are here, let's take part in this event and then we can see the place,"

you know. That was how deceitful these people were. Most of the people did not receive the money as the middlemen managed to take it. They were taken to Thiruvananthapuram, were offered with food…food was lavish is what I heard throughout the journey…banana, bread, and liquor for people who wanted that…but the money did not reach them…yes, the company provided money, but all of it did not reach the participants…I mean these are all stories told by party members from other regions who attended this particular event. So, that's how they organize protests. Paying to organize protests, you see. (Ibrahim, member of PMVS, personal interview, July 20, 2018)

The excerpt above presents a clear breakdown of the amount allotted to each person for participating in the march. It exemplifies the kind of money pumped into the movement landscape to organize this collective action event, thereby also giving the false impression of the support base of the movement to the media, the bystanders, and the larger society. Yet this is an important strategy to convince the people and the media that the grievances or issues presented by the industry have wider support among its own workers and the larger community. More importantly, the idea of paid protests and paid participation problematize the general understandings and theories surrounding movements. That is, if the success of movements is determined on the basis of the potential to mobilize resources and recruit participants, then this model of paid protests derail such factors as indicators for the mass-support base (resource and participants) of the movement. However, the large number of participants in this context specifies nothing about the success of mobilization processes of the union collective in terms of framing, building of solidarity or collective identity, or the extent of organizational efficiency. All it indicates is surrounding the power of monetary capital in bringing together other forms of capital necessary to put together a collective action event or protest.

Beyond the issue of paid protest and participants, the excerpt also highlights the issue of middle-men who operated as suppliers of participants. Detailing how the union leaders managed to siphon off the money offered to the participants, Sathyan explained a scenario as follows:

I was sitting in a hotel to eat lunch. So, everyone was given Rs.200 for lunch on the bus I came in. As I was eating lunch, I heard a union leader scolding a worker for ordering fish curry for lunch. The leader said, "See, if you order a fish curry and all, you have to pay for that yourself. We would only pay for a normal lunch, that is Rs.60 ($0.84)." That was news to me. Even among the participants, the ones traveled on the bus led by that particular leader got only a meal worth Rs.60 (whereas people on my bus got Rs.200 ($2.8) each. In other words, the leader in that bus managed to take Rs. 140 ($1.92) from the lunch money allotted to each participant. (Sathyan, factory worker, personal interview, July 22, 2018)

Similar to the excerpts presented above, during the majority of the interviews conducted with the green activists included detailed accounts regarding the paid protest events organized by the industries in connection with the union collective. Apart from green activists, some union members, particularly those members who openly disagreed with the politics of the frontline union leaders, talked about the issue of paid protests and recruitment of participation with seriousness. The excerpts above explicate how, aside from money, participants were offered perks such as free transportation, food, and liquor to participate in the events.

Further detailing the process of recruitment to union events by providing incentives, Roopesh elaborated on the recruitment processes used to form a human chain to support the industries. Recounting the exact amount of money and other incentives made available to the participants, he said, "They organized a human chain; it started at FACT junction and ended at Muppathadam…and the people who participated in this chain were offered money…TMRL offered them food, tea, and everything." While narrating the ways in which the union collective organizes protest events, Muneer, a local environmentalist tried to pit this against the model followed by the greens to illustrate the contrast as follows:

See, you should understand that this [referring to the recruitment practices of the union collective] is not how we get our participants. Even when the turnout is low like ten or so…these ten people attending our event attend because they think this is an important issue and they are aware of the concern…they are participating voluntarily and there is no kind of force or pressure on them to participate, you know. These are not people who are lured into participation with money. (Muneer, member of PMVS, personal interview, May 13, 2018)

The case presented here shows the stark contrast in the recruitment process of the local environmental movement and the trade union collective. The data presented here show the different factors that determine the recruitment of people to collective action events and movements for these movement groups. When the direct exposure to pollution, emotions, and subjective interpretation of grievances dominated the narratives of the green members, the idea of monetary incentives is often used to galvanize participants for the events organized by the union collective.

Co-optation of the unions/ buying out the leadership

One of the important modes through which industrial capitalism infiltrated the movement landscape is through the co-optation of the trade union groups operating inside the industries, which have strong affiliations to mainstream political parties. Analysis of interview transcripts and text from campaign materials of the green movements indicate how the local industries managed to buy out the main leaders of the local trade unions. Problematizing this nexus, the green activists allege that the industries offer financial incentives for union leaders to fight for the industries. Singling out the process of incentive distribution adopted by an industry called TMRL, one of the leading polluters in the region, Roopesh observed:

> Even now, most of the trade union leaders here go to their office by the end of every month to collect a cover from industrial offices. This is quite the same as someone who would receive their monthly salary from that office. There are people who they're taking autos, some of them go in their own vehicles, and all of them receive money enclosed in envelopes that carry their respective names. Even now, this is happening. (Roopesh, factory employee and member of PMVS, personal interview, May 27, 2018)

The buying out of the local unions, as alleged in the above excerpt, is the primary factor accentuating labor-environmental conflicts in the region, according to the green activists. The

interviews with green activists and some trade union members indicated how this buy out of unions had played an instrumental role in fueling the countermovement led by the union collective and subsequent red-green conflicts. In other words, these narrations highlight how the industrial capitalists deployed a strategy of dividing the working-class by co-opting the union leadership and then pitting them against the local environmental movements. Moreover, leaning on a detailed analysis of the timeline of the origin and growth of the union collective, many green activists argued that the collective was revamped to attack and repress the local green movement. Many leaders of the local trade union movement confirmed this hypothesis by pointing out how the collective was strengthened to protect the industries by countering the anti-pollution campaign.

According to many green activists and some union members, the industries infiltrated the movement landscape by co-opting the trade unions. Explaining this process of buying out, local environmentalists and some members of the trade union indicated how monetary incentives enabled the process of co-optation. In the words of Pramod, a local union leader:

> Talking about trade unions, they have a tendency to protect the interests of workers and industries at the same time, and this create some unique scenarios. See, when they strive to protect the interest of workers, there isn't much available to them in the form of "rewards." So, they had to rely on the industries to meet many of their daily financial needs. When I say financial needs, many of them are related to acquiring more material comforts. They rely on the industries to fulfill those. And that explains their servitude to industrialists. (Pramod, local union leader, personal interview, June 4, 2018)
>
> When I asked if there were any discussion or tensions within the union movement the flow

of monetary rewards from industries to the union leaders, Pramod responded in affirmative and described the tensions as follows:

> Yes, yes. People have questioned this inside the union many times. But many a time such localized go futile because they are very powerful with strong relationships with people above. Therefore, local resistance or challenges won't even affect them. Also, all of this is strengthened by the government policy offering more protection to industries. Yes, it is important to protect industries. However, it is also important to protect the environment. For example, a company called Binani Zinc operated from Edayar. A lot of people had jobs in the company, and they lost it when the company was closed. However, the pollution it

has left behind is going to stay there for another 100 years or 1000 years. He made his profit and left the place. (Pramod, local union leader, personal interview, June 4, 2018)

While briefing the buyout of unions by the local industries, Roopesh referred to the financial incentives for union members as "hush money" for remaining silent on the issue of pollution. Elaborating the extent of co-optation of unions and its manifestation in disabling the fight against pollution, Akbar remarked:

> We don't even have to name them [unions], all of them; you know, all of them go there and receive this hush money. We will have no pollution if the trade unions here take a favorable stand. Because they work in these industries…all the workers will be part of some trade union. CITU, if CITU takes a firm stand against pollution, then there won't be any more pollution. During a news discussion, I asked the leader of a major trade union this question, "Isn't it easy for CITU to stop the pollution here? If your workers (members of CITU) take a stand where they refuse to release pollutants into this river, then we can stop this issue, right?" He was trapped. He told that "See, the capitalist is operating on profits blah blah blah." (Akbar, member of PMVS, personal interview, May 10, 2018)

Exposing the intricate linkage between capitalists and trade unions, the excerpt highlights how the shifting politics of unions to the right is not just ideological but also influenced by monetary incentives. It should be noted that these allegations about unions taking money from the industries are not raised by green activists alone, but a few union members on conditions of complete anonymity spoke at lengths about how capital has flooded the movement landscape by using unions as an agent. More so, the green activists also presented the issue of pollution as easily resolvable if tackled by the unions, PCB, and the local environmentalists. However, little gets done to fight pollution since all of them have "succumbed to the capitalists." Lamenting about the lack of support from unions and PCB officials to fight pollution Ibrahim remarked:

> So, the trade unions can put an end to this pollution, if they wish to do so. That's' one thing. Second, the Pollution Control Board (PCB) can put an end to this, if we have honest officials who would dare to enforce the laws that we already have—there won't be pollution. It's a curse that we don't have honest officials. A lot of this can be fixed if we have a proper police system. But all of these people have succumbed (*vazhanguka*) to the capitalists (industrialist), and that create most of our issues. (Ibrahim, a founding member of PMVS, personal interview, July 20, 2018)

The interview excerpts, as the one presented above, embellish how the trade unions and the state jointly aligned with the industries to cover up the issue of pollution. It also demonstrates the efficacy of the strategies adopted by the local industries to target unions and the state institution responsible for monitoring pollution to defuse the anti-pollution campaign. This complete and open alignment with industries has made the unions and PCB the subjects of intense scrutiny and criticism in the eyes of the local environmental movement. Interviews and analysis of the campaign materials produced by the SCTU highlight how this shift is reflected in the portrayal of local industries as a "benevolent capitalist," working towards developing the region. Efforts were also made by the collective to organize events surrounding the issue of the environment, such as "Earth Day Celebrations" or "tree planting events" in an attempt to greenwash capitalism and create a counter to the local environmental movement. A union leader, during an interview, stated that the local greens do not have a monopoly over the environment and these campaigns stand testimony to that. Almost all campaign materials published by the unions are engaged in a constant attempt to portray TMRL as a "clean" and "green" industry.

"Environmental Excellence Award for a Company that Pollutes with Excellence":
Exploring the Nexus between State, Parties, and Industries

The statements issued by the Pollution Control Board denying or downplaying the role of industries in the pollution of the River Periyar have played a huge role in legitimizing the frames of the industries and the union collective. Even during instances when the effects of pollution were apparent in the region, the Kerala Pollution Control Board (KPCB/PCB hereafter) sought to distract and divert the focus away from the industries as a source of pollution. Such a strategy, according to the local environmentalists, stand testimony to the strong nexus between industries

and the Kerala Pollution Control Board officials. This alliance, according to the interviews, is built on the continuous flow of monetary incentives from industries as bribes. Throughout the interviews, the members of the green movement recounted many instances where PCB, the institution in charge of monitoring and regulating pollution, ended up facilitating pollution by defecting to the other side. The local environmentalists originally started much of the punitive actions issued on polluting companies in the region. The PCB intervened in and engaged in taking actions such as issuing show-cause or closure notices only when the greens pressurized. This lack of interest in regulating pollution, according to the environmentalists, can be explicated in terms of the bribes offered to the officials by some of the private industries in the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt.

Members of the green movement, including PMVS and *Janajagratha*, often post on social media condemning and ridiculing the inaction on the part of PCB. In one such posts, Adv. Khader, a leading environmental activist and legal counsel for the local environmental movements, said, "The Water Coloring Competition Continues. The PCB is busy giving marks!!" The post carried a snapshot of news that was reported on The Hindu (2019), an English news daily, where the title read "PCB examining white discharge spotted in Periyar." The report carried a story about a "thick white substance," which was spotted "floating along the stretch of Periyar near the Pathalam regulator-cum-bund in the Edayar industrial area." These posts form part of many hundreds of posts and Facebook Live videos on Facebook where local people and members of the green movement post pictures of the polluted river, industrial sludge floating along the surface, or of fish-kills. The continuous campaigns online expose the fact that pollution continues to make the lives and livelihoods of the people in the region difficult and suffocates the aquatic life in the river. Moreover, the many colors of the river stand testimony to the rampant release of untreated

industrial effluents into the river. And this continues despite the installation of regulatory mechanisms and the constitution of the PCB to monitor pollution.

Despite the negligence in preventing pollution, the nexus becomes more apparent when the PCB gives awards to the industries, that occupy the list of top polluters in the campaigns organized by the greens and in legal fights, for "environmental excellence." Pointing out the irony in giving awards to a company that tops the list of polluters, Pramod, a union member, who also is a member of CPIM remarked:

> This company, located on the other side of the Pathaalam bund, I don't mind naming it, you know…TMRL…out of all others, this company has been receiving the award for environmental excellence from the PCB. How ironic is that? There are public sector industries here that have installed extensive pollution regulation mechanisms over the years. But surpassing them all, this private company gets the award every year. I am not saying that industries in the public sector are not polluting, you see. (Pramod, local union leader and member of CPIM, personal interview, June 4, 2018)

These awards play a huge role in legitimizing the counterframes produced by the industries and the union collective, denying the existence of industrial pollution. Moreover, the environmentalists highlight how such "clean chits" issued by a state-agency also conveys the strong nexus between state the local industrialists. Furthermore, the industry itself has adopted strategic frames to depict the industry, products, and production processes as environmentally friendly. The tag line used by the industry, "From Nature, With Nature, Into Nature" stands testimony to this attempt. Quite ironic that the slogan also can be read as a form of cultural jamming where the pollution is released "into nature." And it is further interesting to see how the unions work towards establishing the industry as a model of "green capitalism" where every activity or process is framed as "clean," "safe," and "natural." Every discussion surrounding the company in the newsletter published by the union collective includes words such as "pure," and

"safe" and "nature." However, the green activists allege that the pollution resulting from this "clean" production processes are given back to "nature."

Similar to the contents in the newsletter, and on the industry website, union leaders also talked extensively about the "safer" processes of production adopted by TMRL. In an article published in the union newsletter written, Padmanabhan, a union leader and Secretary of the SCTU reemphasizes the environmentally sensitive operations of this industry as follows:

> The main input used in TMRL is ilmenite (a black iron titanium oxide), a safe and non-hazardous mineral, which they secure from IRE. Similar to ordinary sand, this sand is a natural material that is present in the river and beaches…Another input is hydrochloric acid, which is produced by combining common salt that we use for cooking and electricity. Again, this is non-toxic and non-hazardous…lime (calcium hydroxide), which is of supreme quality and made from natural components…all inputs are secured from nature. (SCTU 2013: 13)

The combined efforts undertaken by the PCB and the Standing Council, testify for the strong nexus between unions, PCB and the industries in trying to portray TMRL as a "green" company. It also underscores how the PCB facilitates the manufacturing of consent in favor of the local industries, particularly when other scientific studies confirm the presence of industrial pollutants in the river. Through bribes and incentives, the industries use PCB as a mechanism to counter the claims and scientific facts by producing alternative facts. The fact that PCB is a state enterprise would offer greater traction to such alternative facts and statements issued by the PCB. Regardless of the scientific credibility of such statements, the PCB's acts of support would go a long way to at least challenge the frames built by the local environmental movement surrounding pollution.

The inefficiency of the KPCB, a state institution, is called out by the local environmentalists by highlighting how the PCB does nothing to control pollution or take action against the polluting industries despite having all state-of-the-art mechanisms to monitor pollution

including 24/7 CCTV monitoring. Roopesh, a green activist, mentioned how the CCTVs go magically off or breakdown whenever an industry releases effluent, changing the color of the river. In Chapter---, I have argued how the statements issued by the KPCB shift the blame of pollution on to factors other than industrial pollution. Mocking the efforts by PCB to save the polluting industries, Ibrahim, a green activist, shared the snapshot of a news report regarding the issue of discoloration with a statement, "Fishing continues to make the river muddy and red!!" The snapshot carries a news report in Malayalam titled, "Chemical Pollution: The river in Pathalam flew in Red." Right beneath the article title, a bullet point highlighted the PCB's response to the discoloration as follows: "The PCB says the discoloration is caused by fishing." So, the statement by Ibrahim above the snapshot is intended to call out the PCB for overlooking the issue of chemical pollution by blaming the fish workers. Using comedy and sarcasm, the members of the green movement call out the negligence of PCB to finding solutions to the issue of pollution, particularly on social media platforms. More so, these posts expose the compliance of a state institution to furthering local pollution.

As explicated in the case above, the PCB shifts the burden of causing pollution on to the inland fish workers or on urban sewage, but not on the industries. This inability to pin the blame down on industries becomes more apparent in the form of complete inaction to regulate or control the release of untreated industrial effluents into the river. Interviews also mentioned the case of a PCB official who was tormented and transferred from the office for taking action against pollution industries. Remembering how the industries and unions drove him away, Roopesh stated:

> That official was straight forward and righteous, but then he was transferred. In fact, cases were charged against this particular official. The two police officers who were recently charged for a custody murder was behind framing a case against this PCB official. The case alleged that this officer violated laws while the sampling procedure. They won't let an honest official do his duty. They won't leave him off their hook. They will hunt him down using

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the very same police force that's put in place to maintain law and order, that's the irony. (Roopesh, factory employee and member of PMVS, personal interview, July 7, 2018)

The above narratives clearly indicate how the local industries have managed to buy out a state agency and pay for their continued complacency. More so, they have power enough to attack and eliminate officials who dare to initiate action against the polluting industries. Interviews with the local environmentalists are replete with such instances where the PCB officials jeopardized or gave secret information about inspections or searches scheduled in various industries. Members often complained about the extent to which they had to go so that they could get some attention from the PCB and bring an official on-site during the mass release of effluents. The discussion points to a system that is rigged by the industries using their nexus with political parties, unions, and the state so that they could get away with everything. Despite the statements from the local environmentalists, the Supreme Court Monitoring Committee (SCMC) also made similar observations regarding the inefficiency of PCB in monitoring pollution as follows (Shrivastava 2007). In sum, the operation of PCB in the region exemplifies the ways in which capital can influence the state for its benefit, despite the ramifications it could produce to the people and the local resources.

Shifting Political Opportunities, Hybrid Environments

Apart from the stand-offs between unions and greens, capital also plays an important role in turning the majority of the mainstream political parties against the local environmental movement by causing their withdrawal over the years. The changing political climate in the region is evidenced by the increasing rift between environmental activists and local politicians and elected representatives. Interviews highlighted that the extensive support received from the local political parties, and elected representatives of the local self-government bodies during the initial phases of

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the Anti-pollution campaign declined over time. According to the interview narratives, the shift has been so extreme that the political party members and local elites who supported the fight against pollution later started condemning and openly attacking the green movement. Many local environmentalists flagged the role of local industries in causing this rift between green activists and local politicians. While talking about the shifting political structures, Zacharia highlighted the opportunism displayed by many local politicians in matters related to industrial pollution and place it alongside the nexus between industries and political parties. Zacharia describes how the local industries control political parties in Kerala and its ramifications for the fight against pollution as follows:

> The initial acts of protest against pollution received widespread support…I mean mass support. This protest (human-chain) …everyone participated in this event…I mean, everyone from the Panchayath president, members of the block panchayath, and all political parties participated and cooperated in this event. And that's one contrast between now and then. In the past, all political parties and members co-operated with environmental struggles, in fact, they wanted to improve the river. But today it's the reverse; Today they have taken a stand to protect themselves, and it doesn't matter if that would cost the river or the soil or even the entire earth. That's the stand taken by all political parties and it is not just enough to use a blanket statement, rather one should name them…CPM, CPI, BJP, Congress…all those scoundrel political party members…all of them…they have politics only in their names, they have absolutely no concern about the nation. So far as Eloor is concerned…or as far as Ernakulam is concerned…industries control all the political parties here. In fact, we can pinpoint one company, TMRL. By offering money, the owner of this industry makes political parties work only in his interest. See, now I am talking to you in May. They will announce the award from PCB in June, on the 5th of June to be precise. They are going to give that award to TMRL, and they have been receiving this award for more than ten years, in a line. Environmental Excellence Award for a company that Pollutes with Excellence!!! The river flows in many different colors because of its operation, and yet this company receives this award. All political parties, all of them, would organize events and build stages to talk in favor of TMRL, and that's our bane. (Zacharia, a local environmentalist from Edayar, personal interview, July 7, 2018)

As detailed in the excerpt above, the growing affinity between industries and local politicians is evidenced in the withdrawal of trade unions, which are affiliated to political parties and local elected representatives from the Anti-Pollution Campaign. The narratives detail how the

politics of unions and parties have shifted from protecting the river to protecting themselves. More

so, the excerpt alleges that all leading political parties are controlled by the local industries and

single out one industry as the leading player buying out the political parties. The excerpt also seeks

to establish the backdoor alliance between the industries and politicians in terms of the repeated

awards received by TMRL, a leading polluter in the region, for "Environmental Excellence." The

sarcasm laden statement "Environmental Excellence Award for a company that pollutes with

Excellence" strives to highlight how a state-institution such as PCB working for greenwashing the

image of a polluting industry stand testimony for the state-industrial nexus. The bane alluded to

in the above excerpt, is this co-optation of the local political parties by industries such as TMRL.

This tactic of co-optation and hijacking is not confined to political parties, but also expands to

unions, who have strong affiliations to political parties and thus, have strong access to the centers

of power. Clarifying the nexus between unions, political parties, and the industries, Martin, a green

activist, observed:

> This what trade unions and political parties are doing. All of them are aligning to protect
> the interests of TML. None of them would raise a voice against TML. He has bought all of
> them for money. From a point where all the political parties cooperated with the
> movement…now we have reached a phase where none of them stand with our movement
> or for the environment. That's a massive change. After a while, the owner of TML realized
> that it's only by buying the voices of the people who hold power can he curtail the issues
> caused by this movement. Since he has bought all the politicians, now he owns their power.
> See if a media person approaches him to talk about the issues here, he will first hand them
> over a CD. It has all the information that he wants to be on the media. This includes
> allegations against Kumar also. He would also ask you, "How much money would you
> take? 10 lakhs ($14,023) …20 lakhs ($28,047). You can have any amount, but you have to
> write about me." He is willing to spend any amount for he is getting crores of turn-over
> from the mineral-sand industry. (Martin, member of PMVS, personal interview, July 9,
> 2018)

The excerpt presented above also touches upon the issue of paid news, which came up

often during the interviews. Many green activists explained how a few weekly magazines publish

stories demeaning the local environmental movement when almost all leading newspapers and

weeklies publish stories that accurately depict the struggles with pollution. This intricate linkage

between industries, unions, and local political parties explicates how money and access to the

centers of power enable the industries to engage in pollution without fear of retribution.

Most protests organized by the unions to protect the industries also received huge support from

the state and the ruling government. Describing one such protests that were attended by the then

Chief Minister of the state, Kumar observed:

> Every time the trade unions organized a protest…it's hard to pinpoint a date and say in 2010 or 2012…because this happened all the time…someone from the state committee or sometimes the ministry attended. If Achuthanathan came one year to address the protest organized, then Pinarayi came to the other, and someone else will address the event the year after, you know? In 2015 or 2012, I think, all of them, all of them attended the events. This was featured in all media outlets. In fact, huge sums of money were given to media houses to cover the protest live and had asked them to park their OB (outside broadcasting) vans near the protest site. Whether such the event was covered live or not is a different issue, I think one or two featured this news? But you imagine, they offered money to bring and park the OB van. (Kumar, founding member and Research Coordinator of PMVS, May 26, 2018)

The open declaration of support by the prominent communist leaders of the state to the

countermovement organized by the unions disappointed the green activists, many of whom

continue to be members of the communist party. As detailed in the excerpt above, the support from

state and mainstream political parties reaffirmed the power and visibility of the countermovement

organized by unions against the green movement. Moreover, the support of states and industries

enabled the countermovement to occupy a position of privilege in terms of both resources and

institutional power.

OTHER MODES OF REPRESSION

Aside from the strategies and tactics elaborated in the sections above, the industries also

resort to other modes of repression and demobilization of the local environmental movement. This

includes the use of violent means such as physical attacks on the green members, surveillance mechanisms to monitor the actions and constrain monitoring of the industrial premises, and unleashing defamatory campaigns against the frontline leaders of the local environmental movement. The role of industries in funding and spreading counterframes against the environmental movement is explored in detail in the chapter on frame disputes. Deciphering the role of ideology in the union collective's frames, this chapter explains how the unions strive towards legitimizing the ideology of capitalist development and growth.

One of the members of the environmental movement, Binu, who also lead a local environmental group, was brutally attacked in his home. Members of the green movement allege that he was attacked for leading the fight against pollution and for initiating a legal battle against the polluting companies. Apart from the local environmentalists, media personnel who visited the region to report on the issue of pollution also faced brutal attacks from the workers of the local industries. The staggering number of cases filed against the local environmentalists, cases that even include charges linking them to extremist organizations and anti-national activities, exemplifies how the nexus between state and the industries result in the use of state machinery to repress and silence the local environmentalists. Describing his experience surviving the vicious attacks from the state and the false cases charged by the unions and local industries, Kumar remarked:

> They go way beyond our imaginations to manipulate and plant stories against me. I mean, they have been making very serious allegations. The police came after me for seven long years, and it is ongoing. This wasn't how I looked like. This wasn't how my body was before. I lost 18 kgs. Even though I am not scared, the constant threat of going under arrest affected me. I had no serious ailments before, but now I have many, including cholesterol, diabetics, high blood pressure, etc. I mean, the mental stress is quite a lot. They are doing everything to abuse and traumatize me for the last 7-8 years. They are using the entire state machinery. The same goes for the cases. (Kumar, founding member and Research Coordinator of PMVS, May 26, 2018)

Narrating the nightmarish encounter of coming face to face to investigation agencies such as Crime

Branch, NIA, etc., Kumar continued:

> Many conspiracies were manufactured [by the unions] to influence the process of inquiry, and that involved framing of stories that alleged my connection to banned organizations like SIMI (Students' Islamic Movement of India), which was given in writing. They also made allegations that claimed that I am an anti-national and that I have involved in activities that disrespect Indian nationality...The inquiry was taken up by the Crime Branch. The Crime branch SP called me to the office (3-4 times) for interrogations. I handed my Facebook ID and Password to them and told them that they can check for themselves and if they can find out that I have done or engaged in any such activities Next the NIA came to the scene (National Investigation Agency), where they alleged that I have Maoist connections. They said that I have connections with Roopesh and Shina who are in jail now. They claimed that I have participated in activities with them and at the same time, many media outlets reported that I will be arrested soon for my Maoists connections. The mainstream newspaper *Malayala Manorama* carried news which stated that a "prominent environmental activist in Kerala has strong Maoists connections and will be under arrest soon". This included many agencies, Division of State Police, local Police, two wings of Special Branch, NIA, and Crime Branch. They inquired about my financial sources. …After all of this, I approached the Cyber Cell and filed a complaint to find the origin of such allegations. The cyber police inquired for eight months and found that all such allegations came from an IP address located in the head office of TMRL Company. They had created a fake ID to propagate such false allegations against me. (Kumar, founding member and Research Coordinator of PMVS, May 26, 2018)

The gravity of some of these cases is made apparent by the investigation agencies involved

in the inquiries. For example, the National Investigation Agency (NIA hereafter) is a state agency

set up to combat terrorism in India. Agencies such as Crime Branch (Criminal Investigation

Department) and Special Branch are entrusted with the responsibility of inquiries into serious

crimes and issues related to national security. In a context where all charges against Kumar got

dropped, the involvement of these agencies explicates the extent of trauma and strain he had to

undergo to prove innocence. More importantly, many of the draconian laws in India charging

sedition or anti-national activism put the entire responsibility of disproving allegations on the

individual being accused. Besides, other than dropping charges, there were no initiatives to offer

compensation or reparations to Kumar for the trauma he endured.

Moreover, investigation done on a complaint filed by Kumar revealed how the changes made to his social media profile, that made a case for anti-national activity against him, was done from a computer insider a local industry, TMRL (Khader 2013). Even after tracing the IP address of the computer from which the alleged activities (pictures) were posted, no action was taken. These instances expose the close nexus between the state and industries, so much so that the state machinery comply with and work towards accomplishing the industries' interests and agenda.

The attacks also extended to people outside the region, such as media personnel or researchers, who visited the region to gather more information on the issue of pollution. During the interview, members of the green movement often started their response by saying, "attacks happen all the time." Most interviews included descriptions of certain events in particular, where media personnel and journalists were attacked. Recollecting one such instance of attack, Ibrahim says that "attack happens all the time." He described the incident as follows:

> One other time…we got attacked...me, Kumar and someone else, and we were trying to help Kairali channel (a regional television channel) cover the issues here for a report.... we were at Chauka…and they attacked us. They did not hit us, but they attacked the channel personnel; they were party people you know (Kairali is a TV channel owned by the CPIM), so they informed the police and all immediately. Because they were party affiliates, the issue was settled within the party, you know. They had taken a visual and distributed among other channels, so this was streamed in almost all TV channels. This became a huge issue, you know. Because one of the goons introduced himself as the Police Commissioner's brother in law. So, the media persons approached the Police, and this became an issue for the Commissioner personally, especially after the news started scrolling on TV. So, then all top-level party and trade union leaders intervened to settle this issue...attacks happen all the time. (Ibrahim, a founding member of PMVS, personal interview, July 20, 2018)

Roopesh described another incident where a woman reporter got attacked in front of an industry, while they tried to get some footage for an upcoming feature in their channel on the issue of industrial pollution. Also, as a researcher, I have personally experienced the extensive personal and technological surveillance mechanisms introduced by the local industries. More so, one industry, in particular, came up in all my interviews even when I had not asked any questions

regarding the industry or tried to bring the name up. This was interesting considering how the green activists portrayed this industry, TMRL, as the industry unleashing attacks on the environmentalists. My attempts to interact with workers of TMRL also substantiated some of these allegations. I was introduced to some workers at TMRL by a union leader, and he said I could contact them requesting interviews. A few workers happily agreed to talk to me and asked me to call them a few days later to fix a time and place for the interviews. However, when I reached out to these workers later, all of them informed me that they could no longer cooperate with the project. One of the workers asked me to contact a union leader to know more about their decision. I contacted this person who is leading one of the unions inside the industry. Immediately after the greetings, he said:

> See, don't think we are not aware of what you are doing. We know everything. So, what is your agenda? Why do you want to meet our workers? We know that we are contacting them, and please be assured that none of them are going to talk to you. And why are you asking about TMRL? I am not warning or anything, but please don't engage in activities that would bring trouble to the company. (Binu, union leader, TMRL, telephone conversation, May 30, 2018)

And this happened weeks after I had started fieldwork in Kerala. A few weeks after this interaction, I went to Ernakulam for an interview with John, who is an erstwhile factory worker and union leader, now working with a law firm. During my interview, a person who introduced himself as the owner of the firm barged into the room and started inquiring about me. John tried to explain that I am a researcher who had fixed an appointment with him for an interview. The owner of the firm asked me if I am researching TMRL. And this was completely unexpected as I did not bring up any questions pertaining to this industry during the conversation. The person further advised me to steer clear from the company. The most alarming aspect of this exchange was that this person knew everything about me. That was puzzling to me and scary. It also gave me a small glimpse into what the green activists are enduring by engaging in movement actions

that call out the issues of industrial pollution. My privileges as a researcher and an outsider gave me an easy way out after I completed the fieldwork, but the local environmentalists continue their fight against pollution with more power and determination. They do not have a way out, and they do not want a way out. All they want is to help restore the local ecology and let the people in the area live with peace and health, again.

DISCUSSION

Capitalism and Social Movements

The data and analysis presented in the chapter uncover the ways in which capitalism infiltrates the movement landscape and influences the mobilization tactics and processes of social movements. Despite the absence of capitalism from the mainstream literature, the narratives presented here underscore how capitalism and anti-capitalist framings were and continue to be an important part of the local environmental movement. The strong presence of anti-capitalist sentiments in the movement frames highlights how capitalism has long been part of the mobilization and framing processes of the local environmental movement led by the PMVS. Moreover, the discussions portray how capitalism and capitalist institutions have long been the source of environmental grievances and hence, the primary target of local environmental movements (Hetland and Goodwin 2013) in the Global South. In a way, these excerpts point fingers at the prominent absence of movements from the global South, particularly postcolonial settings, in the mainstream literature on social movements (Almedia 2019).

Aside from uncovering the centrality of capitalism in studying movements, the chapter also identifies the unique ways in which capitalism has influenced and exacerbated the conflicts

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between labor and green movements in the region. Particularly, the cooptation of unions as detailed in this chapter created longstanding consequences in the region by nurturing schisms between the two movements and creating a vacuum in the movement landscape by ensuring that the unions remain silent on issues pertaining to the rights, life and resource access of the factory workers and larger community. This is important considering the long history of working-class movements in the state and the emancipatory and social justice image and tags people often associate with the trade union movement in the state. The data presented in this chapter indicate and confirm a drastic shift in labor politics in Kerala (Heller 1995). The shift in labor politics plays a prominent role in affecting and derailing the relationship between labor and green movements, a process which will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. The ways in which unions act as "defender" or "protectors" of the local industries, resorting to organize paid protests and creating frames to establish the industries as "green capitalists," thereby trying to manufacture consent for industrial capitalism signifies the extent and depth of the nexus between unions and industrial capitalists.

Moreover, the use of state machinery to silence the green activists and PCB to manufacture evidence in favor of industries exposes the access enjoyed by the industries to the higher echelons of power. Future research is required to uncover the ways to understand how people, who are not directly involved with the green movement or unions, perceive capitalism and its role in engendering the crisis in the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt. The discussions presented in this chapter exemplify how capitalism manages to repress and demobilize social movements challenging the accumulations logics. It demonstrates how capitalism co-opts progressive social movements, bribes state institutions, and build nexus with the state machinery to make sure accumulation happens without impediments. In other words, the evidence presented here shows the extent to which crony capitalism has occupied the movement space and entrenched itself into the social and

political fabric of a state like Kerala, with a very long history of working-class and anti-capitalist struggles.

Resources, Rationality, and Participation

Another important factor highlighted in this chapter is the issue of resource mobilization. The chapter demonstrates the benefits of having a political economy lens to understand the ways in which structural inequality impedes the access and distribution of resources and power. In order to legitimize the operation of industries in the region, the local industries openly back many of the events organized by the trade union collective. This discrepancy in resource access between the two movements should be considered in the context of the theoretical discussions surrounding the importance of resource mobilization and social movements as expounded in the RMT (McCarthy and Zald 1977; 2001). Even when the excerpts above reaffirm the importance of resources in successful mobilization and organization of collective action, it exposes the problematics associated with the RMT perspective in precluding or omitting the issue of structural inequality in the distribution and access to various modes of resources (Ferree 1992). In other words, resources play a prominent role in enabling the emergence, growth, and sustenance of social movements. However, it would be a grave error then to not recognize the structural advantage enjoyed by movements organized by individuals or organizations that have privileged access to the centers of power and financial resources. For example, when the local green movement struggles to mobilize resources, the union collective backed by the industries organize collective action events across the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt. The access to "capital" enables the industries to fund widespread campaigns to support the interest of industries by paying local people to participate in collective action.

The model of participation built on monetary rewards and coercion, discussed in this chapter, should be placed in opposition to the theories of recruitment and participation that explain participation as something rooted in being exposed to the grievances or being sympathetic to the cause for which the protest is organized. One can extrapolate the discussions of participation within RMT rooted in neoclassical rationality (Buechler 2000,2016) to explicate how money is the selective incentive here (Olson 1965), that encourages participation or that participation is the result of the cost-benefit calculation where the cost of losing job outweighs the benefits of non-participation. To put it differently, none of these perspectives highlights the influence of the political economy and a local political structure characterized by a strong nexus between state-capital and the unions. The excerpts presented here embellish the importance of considering political and economic factors as oppressive systems or systems of dominations that could elicit or demand participation from workers. The use of money would make the transaction appear voluntary and make the participants feel that they have benefited from participating in the event. In other words, using money, the industries and unions create a false consciousness, where the participants feel as if they are benefiting from the event monetarily, whereas they are enhancing the process of building hegemony and consent surrounding the capitalist model of natural resource exploitation.

Also, the idea of luring people with money should not be interpreted as a stellar case for supporting neoclassical economic rationality and instrumental action (Ferree 1992; Buechler 2000). In other words, the fact that capitalism could recruit people by paying them should not be viewed as a complete vindication of a rational choice model, but perhaps, as a consequence of capitalism rupturing social relations, communities, and group solidarities. It would be erroneous to assume that people are guided by rational self-interest based on this exemplar, as it ignores how

the entry of industrial capitalism bolstered a system of economic dependence where the everyday lives of the people are reliant on the economic success of the industries. One of the shortcomings of this analysis is the limited number of interviews conducted with the people who participated in the paid protests so as to make subjective interpretations surrounding the rationalization of participation in these paid events. Despite such limitations, the data presents a clear variety of factors and forms in which movements operate, recruit participants, frame grievances and environmental problems, organize protests, and engage in other mobilization processes. And that establishes the need for future research to understand the subjective aspects of participation.

The analysis of paid protests is centered around only a few cases of protests and marches organized by the unions. This could be pointed out as another limitation of this analysis. However, the extensive data surrounding the presence of other similar instances in Kerala underscore the need to conduct more in-depth analyses to understand the extent and dynamics of paid protests in the state. Also, despite the limited instances and cases, paying participants open new avenues inquiry and enable the construction of clear contrasts between the mobilization processes of trade unions and the local green movements in the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt.

Despite the limitations involved in bringing a few events of protest to the center of this analysis and argumentation, it is hard to ignore how access to money can create incentives for participation. Moreover, the examples and narratives reaffirm how the monopoly over capital and nature of economic relations enable industries and affiliated unions to deploy coercive mechanisms to elicit the support of people. In other words, the control over capital and the embeddedness of the region and its workers within the capitalist economy create a particular form of dependent relationship that forces the workers to participate in the events organized in favor of the industries

and display support. More research can answer questions about the motives of participation and thus engage with the theoretical debates surrounding rationality and social context (Ferree 1992).

Expanding on the nexus between trade unions and local industries presented in this chapter, the next chapter explores the impact it has on the relationship between labor and green movements. Grounded in the discussions surrounding the shifting labor politics in Kerala, the next chapter examines how a shift in class politics has impacted labor movements' relationship with other social movements in Kerala. In doing so, the chapter seeks to debate the continued relevance of class in understanding social movement mobilization and explicates the heterogeneity of working-class as a category. In doing so, the chapter seeks to understand why two-movement groups, despite their similar class backgrounds, share a conflictual relationship.

CHAPTER FIVE

MOVING BEYOND CLASS?

This chapter explores the reasons for the conflicts between two working-class movements, trade unions, and the local environmental movement. Firstly, this chapter problematizes 'working-class' as a universal category by demonstrating the heterogeneity of interests among workers. Analyzing the use of worker's grievances in the movement frames and interpretations, I illustrate how the two movements employ the interests of workers to legitimize their cause. When greens legitimize their movements, highlighting the fallouts of industrial pollution on inland fish-workers and farmworkers, the unions fight against pollution regulation citing the economic interests of factory workers. The presence of worker's interest on either side of the conflict challenges reductive and universal conceptions of working-class as a single category. Instead, it uncovers how the economic interests of different types of workers are contingent upon sectoral location, resource dependence, and the embeddedness within the political economy of industrial development. Secondly, the chapter explains the ongoing tensions in the backdrop of the shift in labor politics in Kerala. I use the class compromise between labor and capital to explicate the antagonism between the movements, despite belonging to similar class-backgrounds. Also, highlighting the contested interpretations of class and class-consciousness, this chapter brings out the polarized understandings and interpretations of what it means to be on the left of the political spectrum. I argue that the competing interpretations of communism and left politics produced by green movements and unions signify the divide between the different versions of left politics operating in Kerala.

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INTRODUCTION

"We too would have been victims (Gandhi-Marx)" reads the caption of an image posted on Facebook by Kumar Eloor, the frontline leader of the *Periyar Malineekarana Virudha Samithi.* The photograph showcases a graffiti (Figure 3) created by *Kalaakakshi* (a progressive group of artists combining art and protest) as a protest-art during the concluding meeting of "The Rivers Must Flow,"[18] a state-level campaign organized to spread awareness about the importance of conserving rivers and as a tribute to the late environmentalist Dr. Latha Anatha. The graffiti condemns the effects of pollution using images of two philosophers who played instrumental roles in the history of movements against oppression. Painted in the shades of blue and pink, the graffiti depicts Mahatma Gandhi and Karl Marx wearing industrial masks to avoid the deadly effects of pollution. The artists also wrote these quotes above the respective images: "Life is linked to nature for man is part of NATURE" (Marx) and "Earth provides enough to satisfy everyone's needs, but not everyman's GREED" (Gandhi). A member of the legal counsel writes, "Green Salute," as a comment on Facebook, beneath the image.

The graffiti (Figure 3) conveys the environmental politics in Eloor and its strong roots within the traditions of Marxism. A careful exploration of the history of environmentalism in the region shows that the local environmental movement draws heavily from the left ideology while employing Gandhian modes of non-violent protest/direct action. The image succinctly brings out the red shades of green politics in Kerala in general and the Eloor-Edayar region in particular. Moreover, the very long history of working-class movements and the red-shades of green politics

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[18] Originally named as the "Rivers Should Flow" (Ozhukanam Puzhakal), this campaign organized under the aegis of the River Research Center (NGO) by "Friends of Latha", a group formed to commemorate late Dr.Latha Anantha, a passionate environmentalist. The idea of the campaign spanned across two months (Jan 22 to March 22, 2019) was to "sensitize the public on the importance of maintaining flow in rivers" by exploring the many ways to collectively revive the flow of rivers.

in Kerala complicates preexisting readings and interpretations of labor-environmental conflicts. It shifts the discussion of labor-environmental conflicts from the realm of "red-green conflicts" to that of "red-red conflicts," where both movements declare their ideological affiliations to Marxism.

Figure 3: Graffiti portraying Karl Marx and M.K. Gandhi in industrial masks
Courtesy: Purushan Eloor, *Kalaakakshi*

The working-class base of the local environmental movement, in this case, defies the class-based theories that expound such conflicts merely as tensions between opposing class interests and cultures. This is mainly because the presence of individuals from working-class backgrounds on either side of the conflict would imply that the antagonism can no longer be explained or interpreted as a square-off between middle-class environmentalists and working-class trade unions. For that reason, it becomes imperative to reconceive labor-environmental conflicts in the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt by moving beyond generalized class-based explanations. Because if both movements belong to working-class backgrounds, why do they still fight instead of forming an alliance along class lines? Why does class fail to operate as a factor that unifies the interests of unions and green movements? or How can we explain the absence of class-solidarity among workers on either side of this conflict? The rest of this chapter aims to answer these questions by

examining the narratives of unions and green movements as they try to explain the ongoing conflicts, the role of class, and the problematics of left politics in Kerala.

MANDATE: THEORY BUILDING FROM BELOW

The literature on social movements in the post-1960s is replete with claims about the demise of class in social movement mobilization. These claims surrounding the "death of class" largely stemmed from the emergence and growth of non-class based social movements during the 1960s and 70s (Cohen 1985; Buechler 1995; Rootes 2004). However, much of the research on labor-environmental conflicts focuses largely on class as an explanatory factor, and this is particularly notable, given the declining popularity of class within social movement studies. Such studies argue that the difference in class-based interests engenders the conflicts between labor and green movements. Much of this divergence can also be attributed to the existence of these fields as separate and exclusive with very little interactions (except for Obach 2004 and Mayer 2009).

Besides, a major share of studies on labor-environmental conflicts is confined to western contexts. The exclusive focus on western contexts and cases have led to a reductive conception of environmentalism as a middle-class phenomenon guided by postmaterial value orientations. This proposition is guided by the new social movement theories that infer the presence of a "New-Class" operating beyond class-based grievances or identities (Buechler 1995; 2008). Accordingly, the extant studies explain labor-environmental conflicts as one between working-class labor movements and middle-class environmental movements: popularly referred to as the jobs vs. the environment trade-off. Because the studies[19] consider western contexts or rather some western

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[19] This is not to overlook the emergent literature on working-class environmentalism that explores the environmental struggles organized by working-class groups including organized trade unions (Gordon 2004; Barca 2012; Vanchon and Brecher 2016). Yet, the conflicts between working-class environmental movements and working-class trade-unions are not a focus of these studies.

cases, they leave out the historical and contemporary environmental movements in the Global South[20], led by poor and working-class people (Guha 1989; Guha and Gadgil 1993, 2013; Martinez-Alier 2003; Guha and Martinez-Alier 2013). In other words, the singular conception of environmentalism as a middle-class phenomenon, devoid of material grievances originates from the complete exclusion of non-western cases and social contexts. In this backdrop, this chapter envisions to challenge and expand extant studies on labor-environmental movements by bringing a case of labor-environmental conflicts in India to the center of this inquiry. Hence, this chapter is also an attempt to decolonize the research examining labor-environmental conflicts by identifying a postcolonial setting and participants.

This chapter aims to fill this void in the existing literature by focusing on the labor-environmental conflicts in the Eloor-Edayar industrial region in Kerala, where both movements have working-class backgrounds. Such an inquiry assumes relevance given the pivotal role occupied by worker-grievances in the mobilization processes and collective action frames of both labor and green movements. Also, the chapter addresses the shortcomings of structural social research paradigms that attempt theory construction from above by exposing the intersections of structure and agency using a combination of political economy and grounded theory approaches. The attempt here is to update and expand the theoretical understanding pertaining to labor-environmental conflicts using ethnographic data. Guided by a combination of the extended case method (Burawoy 1998, 2009, 2019) and grounded theory approach (Charmz 2014), I seek to identify the limitations and expand class-based theories by shedding light on the diversity of working-class interest and identities, and how that makes generalized class-based explanations

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[20] This is not to preclude the working-class origins of environmental justice movement in the U.S or indigenous environmental movements across the world.

redundant in the context of Kerala. In doing so, this chapter contributes to the field of labor-environmental conflicts, social movement studies, and intra-class conflicts.

CLASS AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN KERALA

Class has played and continues to play a central role in the movement field of Kerala and that makes this inquiry all the more important. The legacy of class-based movements continued through the organized resistance against the capitalist-class, making the state infamous for its 'militant' trade unions. However, the class politics of labor transformed during the 1980s and embraced a relationship of compromise instead of conflict (Heller 1999). This shift in class politics implies that labor would join hands with capital in expanding the process of accumulation in the state. Though this shift in class-politics was studied intensively, the impacts of this shift on the environment or its implications on unions' relationship with other movements remain unexamined. The present chapter probes how this shift in politics has influenced labor's relationship with environmental movements.

Thus, it is impossible to dismiss the prominence of class in the context of Kerala, a region where class politics and class-based framing of movement grievances have played a significant role in creating its unique trajectory of social development and public action. However, the interpretation of these class categories and interests has not always been the same, and this project is an attempt to trace out the varied interpretations surrounding class, class-interests, and class-conflicts. By using the extant literature on the shift in class-politics in Kerala as a reference point, this chapter examines the nature of class-politics in the Eloor-Edayar industrial regions and how that informs and extends the debates surrounding class, class-consciousness and class-compromise in Kerala's socio-political landscape (Heller 1995,1999; Wright 2000; Chibber 2005).

Keeping the unique history of class politics and class-based social movements in the state in perspective, this chapter highlights the continued relevance of class in understanding movements by exposing the limitations of singular and reductive definitions and interpretations attached to class categories. I want to reiterate the fact that the call to move beyond class here does not render class as an irrelevant aspect of social movement mobilization or imply its complete dismissal. This is particularly so given the centrality of work and workers invoked in the narratives constructed by unions and green movements while interpreting their grievances and constructing frames. Class and class consciousness emerged as some of the dominant themes in the interview transcripts as the members of the respective movements tried to unpack their demands, goals, and motivations. Though much of these references involved critiques of the ongoing model of class-politics, the participants continued to construct their stories using the lexicons of class.

 Given such profound presence of class in the narratives and the long history of class-based politics in Kerala, the aim here is to engage with class and class interests by paying greater attention to uncover the ways in which sectoral location and resource dependence contribute to the heterogeneity of interests held by workers belonging to the same social class categories. Breaking away from the structuralist tendencies to impose themes on to people's narratives, the attempt here is to let categories emerge from narratives. Class, for that reason, is treated as both an emergent and theoretical category in the rest of this chapter. In sum, this chapter strives to challenge and expand class-based understandings of labor-environmental conflicts by recognizing the importance of class while underscoring the differences between objective interests and subjective interpretations, and the limitations of monolithic conceptions.

The remainder of this chapter demonstrates how the labor-environmental conflict transforms into a stand-off where both movements highlight the grievances and interests of

workers, who occupy divergent sectoral locations. In other words, the divergent interpretations surrounding class, work, and interests emergent from the movement frames exemplify the heterogeneity of working-class interests and how that generates schisms within the same class. Building on theories of political economy, this chapter also probes into the nexus between unions and industries and how unions manufacture consent and defend the hegemony of industrial capitalism. In doing so, I explain how the shift in class politics in Kerala facilitates the formation of this nexus, where the unions and industries join hands to repress the greens. In short, I establish the need to move beyond class-based interests and consider the political economy of industrial development to understand the tensions between unions and green movements. The chapter finds that the environmental movement is guided by a broader conception of class that encompasses toiling workers across the sectors, whereas the unions abide by a narrow conception of class that is confined to sectoral interests and loyalties. The opposing interpretations of communism and left politics in Kerala also unravel the many shades of left politics in the state.

TRACING THE WORKING-CLASS ORIGINS OF THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

In this section, I reaffirm[21] the working-class roots of the local environmental movement constituted by different green groups, including PMVS, *Janajagratha* (People's Vigilance) and the Green Action Force and how that problematizes existing conceptions of labor-environmental conflicts. As explained in the previous chapters, the local environmental movement in the Eloor-Edayar region is a movement constituted by poor and marginalized people who bear the brunt of

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[21] The method used in here to elicit class location of movement participants involves self-identification and identification from members of the opponent movement.

industrial pollution. Joining a long list of poor and working-class environmental movements of the

global South, the movement embodies a variant of "empty-belly"[22] environmentalism, where it

fights against the environmental burdens of industrial pollution with limited resource

infrastructure.

Detailed ethnographic profiling of the members suggests the fact that the people who

mobilize and lead the local environmental struggles all come from working-class backgrounds.

Most of the participants engage in daily wage labor or contract labor, thereby making them

precarious and vulnerable in terms of having a steady flow of income and benefits. Considering

the absence of a secure job and benefits, engaging in environmental activism often implies finding

money to run the campaign in addition to finding resources to manage household expenditure.

Narrating the financial difficulties, Ibrahim, a founding member of the green movement, remarked:

> None of us have permanent jobs. I mean, earlier, we did not have many issues to take care of…I mean, we did not take care of anything…we did not consider anything but worked for this movement. To be honest, we did not provide well for our families…we were all invested in this movement. That was full-time activism. But today that's not the case. I had recently taken out a loan to build my house. The loan got defaulted, and right now we are on the verge of eviction. I couldn't repay the loan, I had no means. I tried to sell this in between. So that's my situation. Kumar's situation is no different. His wife works and that's how he managed, and now he has also started taking up small works. Each one of us goes through such struggles. So, we cannot continue many activities under such circumstances and not just that we are involved with many other movements and activities. (Ibrahim, a founding member of PMVS, personal interview, July 20, 2018)

The above excerpt elaborates how the local environmental movement, constituted by

people who struggle to make ends meet, faces acute resource scarcity. And it is further important

to notice that members of the unions identified local environmentalists as working-class

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[22] In their seminal book, *Varieties of Environmentalism*, Ramachandra Guha and Martinez-Alier succinctly point out the contrast between the "full-stomach" environmentalism of the North and the "empty-belly" environmentalism of the South. (Guha and Martinez-Alier 2013). The environmentalism of the poor, they argue, originates "in social conflicts over access to and control over natural resources: conflicts between peasants and industry over forest produce, for example, or between rural and urban populations over water and energy." (xxi)

participants. When inquired about the social class composition of the local environmental movement, Padmanabhan, the Convener of SCTU, the union-collective, said, "They are all working-class people…people who thrive on daily wage or contract jobs. I would never say that they are rich or middle-class, even. These are people who struggle to eke out a living." This working-class base of the green movement and the strong presence of unions affiliated to the communist parties within the Standing Council dub the conflicts as a "red-green" conflict as opposed to the more prominent label; *blue-green conflicts*.

The deep commitment to the Marxian philosophy and idioms of class-consciousness is emergent in the campaign materials produced by the local environmental movement. Introducing a discussion forum on *Marxism, Environment, and Development*, Kumar explains the relevance of Marx in understanding the environmental crisis. The essay reads:

> The capitalist forces that plunder soil, water, and all the natural resources to reap profits threaten the survival of human beings and our nature. The state, on the other hand, is invested in devising policies and programs to facilitate the transfer of the title deeds for our natural resources to such capitalistic forces…Though such blatant conquests on nature or state-capital nexus were not prominent during the period in which Marx formulated his philosophy, Marx and Engels actively questioned the invasion of nature by human beings. Conceiving the class struggle as the conflicts between workers and the capitalists, or to believe that environmental conservation does not form part of the class struggle…such assumptions are only going to embolden and aid the capitalist forces. (Eloor 2008)

In addition to establishing the continued relevance of Marx's writings in understanding environmental issues, the excerpt identifies how the state facilitates the capitalist onslaught of nature by creating public policies that help the capitalist project of appropriation. Kumar argues that the state hands-over the ownership to natural resources to the forces of capitalism and therefore is complicit in the resulting environmental damages produced in the process of making profits. More importantly, the narrative underscores the need to consider environmental grievances as a working-class struggle. The excerpt urges to break-away from reductive conceptions of class-

struggle as one between only workers and capitalists. Kumar reaffirms how the environmental movement is part of the class-struggle, highlighting the intersection of environmental grievances and working-class issues. The excerpt clearly brings forth the working-class origins and anti-capitalist orientations of the local environmental movement in the region.

Further, the narratives constructed by the PMVS argues that attempts to negate the working-class roots of the environmental movement would only help the capitalists to create a schism between the workers and the environmental activists. Another pamphlet circulated by the PMVS in 2002 stated:

> Development should improve people's standard of living. Looking for differences between workers and the environmental activists or establishing them as separate groups only serve the interests of the capitalist. Workers become class conscious only when they start demanding the conservation of the environment and the community in which they live, in addition to standing for the protection of industries. That's their *douthyam* (mission). It's only then one becomes a class-conscious worker.

The excerpt lucidly presents the green movement's interpretations of class and class-consciousness. The understandings of class-based and grievances transcend the realm of production and work to include environmental grievances. As pointed out in the above narrative, the mandate of class-politics, as defined by the green movement, includes environmental conservation and the betterment of the community. A class-conscious worker, according to this narrative, would consider the health of the environment as important as the protection of the industries. In other words, the excerpt vividly depicts the broader definition of class guiding the actions of the green movement, a definition that moves beyond the boundaries of work, production, and the economy.

When inquired about the presence of working-class on either side of this conflict, Kumar exclaimed, "What is the working-class? Who is a worker? There is a certain definition. They [trade unions] are seeing things outside of this definition now. Everyone who toils is a worker. Anyone

who sells his labor power is a worker." Kumar's words bring out broader definitions of 'work' and 'worker' definitions that transgress the shop floor of a factory. Besides, among the green movement groups, PMVS is pronounced in its affiliations to Marxian ideology, and this mainly traces back to the members' strong ties to the communist movement, communist party, KSSP, and other organizations affiliated to the political left. As discussed in the previous chapter, the frontline leaders of the PMVS were engaged in social justice activism in the region. They had extensive organizational experiences being part of the communist movement, communist party, KSSP, and other organizations affiliated to the political left. Perhaps, due to the long history and experience with mobilization, PMVS is the movement group that actively invests and engages in the interpretive and framing tasks.

By combining environmental conservation with livelihood issues, the green movement reaffirms the working-class roots of local environmental politics. Quite similar to the environmental justice movement in the US and indigenous environmental movements across the world, this movement breaks away from the dominant categorization of environmentalism as a middle-class phenomenon. In other words, this movement resembles the features attributed to environmental movements organized in the Global South, where they combine environmentalism and livelihood issues. Fitting Martinez-Alier's description of 'environmentalism of the poor,' the local environmental movement in the Eloor-Edayar region is a fight against the loss of livelihoods, thus a struggle for survival. In other words, the social base of the movement and the collective action frames make this a movement organized by and for working-class members. The participants' profile and the nature of grievances detailed in the sections below embellish the working-class orientations of the local environmental movement.

However, the presence of movements that have participants from working-class backgrounds on either side of the conflict complicates the existing explanation for this no longer is a conflict between two competing class interests or cultures in the current context. More so, if class-based interests explain tensions between labor and green movements, then the same class location of the members of these respective movements must eliminate any reasons for conflicts in terms of economic interests. The ongoing tensions indicate the need to move beyond class-based explanations to understand the tensions between labor and green movements. And this is mainly accomplished by problematizing the reductive attribution of generalized economic interests to classes. The data presented in this chapter shakes pre-existing assumptions about the presence of shared economic interests and cultures that unify people located in the same class positions.

FIGHTING IN THE NAME OF WORKERS

One of the interesting aspects of the conflicts between the unions and green movements in Kerala is that both movements invoke the interests of workers to legitimize their goals and tactics. According to the collective action frames and narratives of frontline leaders, the conflict between labor and environmental movements is one *for and among* workers who hold opposing interests. In other words, the movements legitimize their actions in the name of workers and, therefore, frame their goals so as to defend the interests of the respective group of workers they (these movements) seek to represent. The contested framing of grievances grounded in the economic interests of workers belonging to distinct sectors highlights how these movements differently interpret the categories of work, workers, and their interests.

The thematic analysis of the frames constructed by the environmental movement presented below explains how the green activists interpret the issue of pollution by focusing on its negative

implications to the livelihoods of resource-dependent workers such as the inland fish workers and the farmworkers, whereas the unions focus on the income and job security of the factory workers. Thus, this section highlights the heterogeneity of "workers' interest" emergent from the interview narratives of the unions and green movements. The divergent interpretations of worker's interest expose how singular class categorizations fall short of explaining schisms within movements constituted by members belonging to the same social class. The aim here is to uncloak the diversity of "working-class" interests and their interpretations and use it to explain the opposition between unions and green movements. In doing so, this section explicates how sectoral location, dependence on natural resources, and vulnerability to environmental damages produce distinctly different interests and outcomes for "workers."

In the Name of Fisherfolk and Farm Workers

According to Kumar, the frontline leader of PMVS, the fight against pollution is also a fight to secure the livelihoods of the inland fisherfolk and the farm-workers who cultivate the unique rice variety called *Pokkali*. The resource-dependent nature of these forms of work makes them more vulnerable to the negative fallouts of industrial pollution. During an interview session, Kumar elaborated on how the fight against industrial pollution in the Eloor-Edayar region is also a fight for securing the livelihoods of fish workers and *Pokkali* farmers. In his words:

> The present circumstances prevent these workers from selling their labor power. A fish worker going to the river to catch fish is returning barehanded. He is not getting enough fish to catch… If you go to the harbor area, you can see most of the boats returning empty-handed. The situation is pretty much the same for in-land fish-workers. Pollution has brought us here... It has also adversely affected the organic agriculture and aquaculture. Pollution has severely affected *Pokkali*[23] culture [a unique saline tolerant rice variety that

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[23]Pokkali rice is a salt tolerant traditional rice cultivar grown in the coastal saline soils of Kerala. For more information on Pokkali rice and farming system please refer the report "Pokkali Rice: An Organic Farming System for Rice", prepared by the River Research Station, Vyttila.

is cultivated using extensive aquaculture in an organic way]. They cultivate *Pokkali* with *chemmeen* [prawn infiltration] in 6 months interval. The intrusion of chemical contaminants prevents these agrarian rice varieties from growing to its full potential. (Kumar, founding member and Research Coordinator of PMVS, personal interview, May 26, 2018)

The excerpt highlights how pollution of the river threatens the livelihoods of fish workers and traditional farmworkers, who eke out their living from the availability of natural resources. Heightened levels of pollutants in the river have resulted in a dramatic decline in the availability and diversity of fish in the River Periyar. Constant fish-kills and dwindling supply have resulted in poor catchment across the local fisheries sector. This is particularly so for the inland fish-workers who are often forced to return barehanded after a day's labor. The excerpt also sheds light on the extent of damage inflicted by pollution on agriculture and aquaculture and its effects on agrarian workers. *Pokkali* farming, the disaffected agrarian practice mentioned in the narrative, stands out as a unique, organic farming system for cultivating *Pokkali* rice, which has been recognized by the Geographical Indication (GI) Registry. The narrative explains how the impending issues from industrial pollution adversely affect the cultivators of this unique rice variety.

Reminiscing the origins of an organized movement against industrial pollution, Muneer, a local environmentalist, recollected his interaction with a local fish vendor and how that motivated him to organize collective action. He said:

So, one day as we were standing here and chatting by the side of this village road right in front of Abdu's home, a woman in our neighborhood walked past us... She used to sell fish to make a living and carried her woven basket on top of her head...she walked back to us and said the supply of fish is really low in the market. She said the supply is low because of the company water. Company water, that's what we used to call the toxic effluents from the industry. And that struck me. (Muneer, member of PMVS, personal interview, May 13, 2018)

(http://ipindiaservices.gov.in/GirPublic/Application/ViewDocument). Also please see the Geographical Indication Registry for more details.http://ipindiaservices.gov.in/GirPublic/Application/Details/81

This brief interaction, according to Ibrahim, helped him see the adverse effects of pollution on people's livelihoods. The workers who lost their daily catchment was one of the initial victims of industrial pollution. Though the direct effects of pollution such as severe ambient pollution and chronic health effects became more prominent later, the dwindling supply of fish sent out initial warning signals. During the initial phase of the anti-pollution campaign, the increased vulnerability experienced by these workers played a crucial role in motivating them to participate in the movement events. Reconstructing the emergence of the movement, Abdu talked about the movement's strong support base among the inland fish workers as follows:

> The majority of participants in our first protest were fish workers. Fishermen from Varappuzha, Kadamakkudy from all these regions…they need no convincing of the issue, you know…they were struggling with it and was looking out for options…openings, to express their dissent….and perhaps, a leadership to fight against this…(Abdu, member of PMVS, personal interview, May 30, 2018)

As the excerpt points out, the fish workers were aggrieved by the fallouts of pollution that it required little effort on the part of the green activists to recruit them to the movement against pollution. The PMVS led by Kumar mobilized the collective grievances of these workers and the people in the industrial belt to form organized collective action against the polluting industries. The first protest organized by the PMVS was also an ode to the struggles of the fish workers where members formed a *human chain* by standing on an array of fishing boats parked across the River Periyar (This protest event is discussed in detail in the preceding chapter). The protest orchestrated across the river Periyar was also a display of the widespread support received by the anti-pollution movement and the pivotal role of fish-workers among the disaffected people.

The narratives of green activists also attempt to bust the claims surrounding "job loss" as a myth. Comparing the number of fish workers and factory workers, the greens argue that the loss of livelihoods from continued pollution is much higher than the number of jobs lost from the

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closure of polluting factories. The excerpt also questions the dominant model of development, where the mainstream logic that would associate 'job' only with employment opportunities in the organized sector. Explaining how these 'jobs' are available with zero investment, the excerpt below highlights the importance of preserving them. Contrasting the number of factory workers to the workers who make a living from the River Periyar, Kumar remarked:

> I mean, all these reveal the failure associated with development as a concept, that we have tried implementing. I mean a river is a place where many thousands of people are engaging in work with zero investment. We might have to spend 1000-2000 crores to produce 100 job opportunities, but here you don't even spend 100 paisa (lowest denomination of Indian currency). In one of the studies we had conducted, we found 22,000 in-land fish-workers; this is in comparison to the 8,800 workers in the industries operating in Eloor. Such comparisons could vary in terms of value addition or contribution to GDP, but still, the difference in numbers is stark. But still, the primary productive side of our society includes agriculture and fishing. The present model of development is eliminating these two sectors of primary production, and that's when things become problematic. (Kumar, founding member and Research Coordinator of PMVS, personal interview, May 26, 2018)

Using the economic rationales of cost and benefits, Kumar carefully exposes how the conversations about securing jobs are always skewed in favor of organized factory employment. The excerpt points out how pollution jeopardizes the lives and livelihoods of more than 22,000 inland fish workers, livelihoods that do not require huge capital investments or infrastructure. He presents this number against the 8,800 factory workers against the 1000-2000 crores spent in creating them to show the stark differentials in the number of workers in each of these sectors. The excerpt poignantly exposes how the model of modern development conceives progress in a scheme of valuation that prioritizes the secondary sector over the primary sector. In other words, despite the actual number of people employed, the industry is considered desirable because progress, defined in the modern economic sense, would entail the transition of an economy from primary (agriculture) to secondary (industry). According to the local environmentalists, the model of development that ordain industry and ignore agriculture and allied activities are responsible for the

ongoing pollution in the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt. The attribution of blame transcends the level of individuals and organizations when the politics of modern development is held responsible for the negative environmental burdens.

Unions and the Interests of Factory Workers

Quite similar to the green movements, the union's attempt to legitimize their opposition by highlighting the interests of another set of workers, the factory workers. Focusing on the grievances of the workers employed in the industries, unions argue that any measure to regulate pollution will adversely affect the jobs and income of factory workers. According to the union leaders, the collective action against pollution organized by the local environmental movement hurts the economic interests of the factory workers as well as the political economy of industrial development. In Padmanabhan's words, "An industry closing down would first affect its workers." Often, they used stories of industrial closures to embellish the effects of environmental activism on factory workers. Expressing anguish over an industry ordered to stop operation due to non-compliance to pollution regulation, Kabeer, another union leader, remarked:

> A set of so-called environmentalists have taken a stand to stop the operation of even the industries that comply with all the guidelines put forward by the PCB and they manage to use such pseudo activism in the name of the environment. The most recent victim of such activism was Sree Sakthi Paper Mills… So, what outcome did this action produce? The company is closed, all its machinery left to rusting and more than 700 workers…the factory workers, that includes allied and contract workers, lost their jobs. An enterprise has disappeared altogether. But if these people, these pseudo environmentalists had approached this issue with some equivalence, then this wouldn't have happened…that enterprise would have continued to operate…more than 700 families would have survived. (Kabeer, a union leader and member of the CPIM, personal interview, July 3, 2018)

The excerpt highlights how unions portray workers of closed industrial units as victims of local environmentalism. By focusing on the plight of 700 workers and their families, Kabeer explicates the issue of job-loss associated with closing non-compliant industries. The excerpt even

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argues that the industry was compliant and followed the guidelines issued by the PCB and attributes the closure to the pseudo-activism of environmentalists. Citing the story of Sree Sakthi Paper Mills, the narrative brings out the resentment against the closure through the images of 'rusting' machinery as a sign of an enterprise disappearing altogether. It harshly critiques the model of local environmentalism for disregarding the interests of the 700 workers who lost their means to livelihood. The excerpt clearly uncovers the diagnostic frames of the unions that pin the blame for job loss on pseudo-environmentalism. In other words, the unions legitimize their resentment against greens citing the interests of factory workers.

Throughout the interviews, union members reaffirmed the centrality of factory workers and industries to the larger economy. The frames and interpretations of the union leaders omitted the grievances of other workers, such as inland fish-workers and farmworkers. Inquired about the presence of working-class or workers on either side of these conflicts, Padmanabhan, a union leader, who is also a member of the communist party, tried to put things into perspective as follows:

> In India, the majority of workers are in the unorganized sector. The economy is not run by a few industries on the banks of the river, but the economy is run by the innumerable number of workers who work and later spend their wages in the market, thereby creating demand for products...the market moves as the purchasing power of the people changes. See, if the workers get no bonus or salary, then that will get reflected in the market. So, this affects all the workers who make a living from the river such as the fish workers...even the fishworkers who catch fish from the river sell this fish to the families of the industrial worker...so that's a symbiotic relationship. So, the labor of the factory workers also affects other workers who largely remain in the unorganized sector. It affects all. So, to preserve the means of livelihood for all these workers...we need to secure the industries...the river and the environment in which the industry operates...it is a joint responsibility of all these people. We need to move that direction. (Padmanabhan, union leader and the Convener of SCTU, May 21, 2018)

The excerpt succinctly presents the union's argument about taking the side of industrial workers. Even though it starts with reaffirming the importance of unorganized workers, the narrative soon shifts to expounding the importance of factory workers for other workers and the

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rest of the economy. The narrative underlines the centrality of industries and factory workers in the creation of market demand. Explaining how the wages of factory workers create demand for the product of the fish workers and thereby get pumped back into the economy, the excerpt strives to emphasize the symbiotic nature of their interests and relations. And it is interesting to note that when the environmentalists focus on the opposing interests, focusing on how the factory workers economic interests hurt the fish workers when industries pollute, the union leader chooses to completely ignore pollution and focus exclusively on how the factory worker creates a market for the catchment of local fish workers. However, the excerpt leaves out an important point raised by the local environmentalists, "What happens when there are no more fishes?". Certainly, this poses a serious issue when the impending issues of pollution have proved to affect the diversity of fishes and the supply of fish.

Challenging the dominant interpretations of the working-class as a uniform category, the narratives hint at the multitudes of interests present within this class. As explicated, industrial production is in the interest of the factory worker, irrespective of it creating pollution. However, pollution hurts the fish worker or the local farmworker. As a move to enhance the victimhood of factory workers, the union leaders often referred to factory workers as the primary victims of both industrial pollution and pollution mitigation measures. This was counterintuitive considering the complete denial of industrial pollution and the overarching absence of the issues affecting the inland fish workers and farm workers in their movement frames.

Jobs as a consent manufacturing mechanism

The complicity of unions and factory workers in impeding anti-pollution action should also be considered in the backdrop of the political economy of industrial development in the region and

the use of jobs as a form of consent manufacturing mechanism. As he talked about the strategies industries should use to curb local activism, Madhu, a veteran trade union leader, talked about how jobs can provide the much-needed local support for industries. Explaining the psychology of people, Madhu explained the closure of an industry in terms of its lack of domestic workers:

> Let me offer a psychological explanation. When a private enterprise comes here, they employ local people…in the case of Mercum, they had 139 permanent employees…among the 139 only 9 were workers from this region, all the rest came from outside. Instead, if 50 among this 139 had been from Eloor then these workers and their families would fight for the industries…they would act as protectors for Merchem because I as a person won't prefer the closing down of a company that employs my son. He would not prefer that, nor would his wife, my wife or our entire family. So they will get the support of that whole family and if there were 50 workers, they will get the support of 50 families. The blunder Mercum committed is this…they had employed workers from outside of this region. (Madhu, union leader and member of BJP, personal interview, June 7, 2018)

The excerpt explains how workers can act as 'protectors' of industries as families will find it hard to fight against an enterprise that sustains the income of the local people. Using the example of Mercum, a company where only 6% of the workforce constituted workers from the region, the excerpt illustrates how the absence of local employees would imply a lack of support from families in the region. Not many will favor striking against an industry that offers bread and butter to the members of their community. Hence, having a large pool of workers from the region appear to be the strongest mechanism to arrest protests against a polluting industry as jobs would buy the consent and support of the local people to continue production and engage in pollution. More importantly, it will prevent or curtail the emergence of resistance movements against industries. In fact, the narratives explain how the social psychology of workers' non-participation is deeply ingrained to their situatedness within the industrial system of production, making their income contingent upon the smooth operation of the industries. Understanding the potential of jobs as a mechanism to win the support of the local people and curb anti-pollution activism, the industries actively highlighted the potential job-loss of factory workers in their counterframes. Having a

stronger worker base in the locality often helped industries escape the culpability of pollution. Citing one such example, Krishnan continued:

> In the case of HIL, there was an incident where Toluene leaked from the plant into the river…the leaked Toluene (chemical) spread across the river as a film on top…it caught fire when someone threw a cigarette butt into the river…and many houses burned down in the fire….the chemical is highly inflammable and many of these houses were thatched with coconut leaves, so that accentuated the extent of this fire…but none of the people marched to HIL. And that happened because all the people affected by this fire worked in HIL…they were all employees of HIL. It is true that the leaked chemical might have burned their homes, but if they demand closure of the industry then that would affect their daily bread and butter. They cannot survive without a job; therefore, they did not protest. (Krishnan, union member, personal interview, May 30, 2018)

The jobs operated as a control mechanism that enabled the silencing of any form of dissent among the local people. As detailed in the excerpt, jobs operated as a form of blackmail that deterred resistance against pollution from many local individuals even in the wake of visible pollution and associated damages. It explains how the local base of employees in HIL contained any direct action against the company despite causing environmental damages as many of the employees lived in and around the company. In other words, the lack of participation in mobilization can largely be explained by the political economy of industrial development, where the local economy and jobs are deeply ingrained in the industries. People chose not to participate as their economic stakes proved higher in the event of industrial closures.

Many industries capitalized this by using jobs as a direct control mechanism to demobilize the support for the local environmental movement among factory workers. Despite the apparent effects of pollution as narrated above, the workers chose to side with the industries and maintain silence for fear of losing jobs. Other manifestations of this consent manufacturing process are discussed in the upcoming sections when I explain how unions defend the logic of industrial capitalism through their frames and narratives. The efforts to manufacture consent and legitimize the logics of capital become evident in the context of the "token-system" discussed here. When

tokens are issued only for those workers who maintain silence and refrain from environmental activism, the unions are using the jobs as a control mechanism to contain dissent. In other words, the countermobilization organized by unions and the industries actively engages in creating an ideological rebuttal to the local environmental movement.

IN DEFENSE OF INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM: UNDERSTANDING THE CLASS COMPROMISE BETWEEN LABOR AND CAPITAL

Quite contrary to the green's interpretation surrounding capitalism and the environment, the union frames strive to depict pollution as a latent consequence of industrial development. Analyzed in the backdrop of the shift in class politics in Kerala, these narratives embellish the interpretive work underlying the transformed politics. The following section deciphers this shift in Kerala's class politics, from a politics of class struggle to one of class compromise between labor and capital, using the perspectives of trade union leaders. The dominant themes emergent from these narratives include (1) establishing the desirability of capital accumulation and profits for promoting the interests of workers, (2) *doing facework* for the state in order to revamp its "tainted" image as a location hostile to capital due to its militant trade unions, and (3) *manufacturing consent* in favor of capitalism by defending capitalist production and rendering pollution as a latent and unavoidable consequence. The frames presented below explicates how the shift in labor politics in the state plays a significant role in creating the rift between trade unions and green movements in Kerala.

Capital is Good: Manufacturing Consent for Industrial Capitalism

The shift in Kerala's labor politics becomes explicit in the narratives of the union leaders and other representatives. And the transformation in frames is more apparent and noteworthy when

analyzed against the backdrop of the umpteen anti-capitalist frames used by the communist movement in the state, including "Let capitalism be doomed" (*Muthalalitham Thulayatte*). The unions consider natural resources as natural capital, that play a crucial role in furthering the country's economic growth. Talking about the issue of mineral sand mining Raheem, a local trade union leader, explained his discontent towards the protest against extractive sand mining in Kerala as follows:

> Across the world, people are using mineral beach sand to extract the minerals and byproducts to foster their economies; some people in Kerala are dead against such a move. Let me ask one thing, the Arabian countries which once struggled with poverty rose to economic prosperity with the discovery of crude oil or that of gold. If people there had obstructed the mining of crude oil, gold, or coal, would they be enjoying the economic prosperity they have now? We should understand that despite having a material that is more valuable than gold or crude oil along the shores of our state, we are unable to make use of that and transform our economy only because of these fake or pseudo environmentalists. We are a state that continues to rely on remittances from the Gulf. (Raheem, union leader, personal interview, May 23, 2018)

The excerpt clearly explains how the unions equalize natural resources to capital that can lead the state to economic prosperity. Elucidating examples of Arabian (middle-eastern) countries that have used their natural resources to achieve economic growth, the narrative suggests how the state should use its resources as a vehicle to prosperity. The leaders also suggest industries as the only resolution to solve the financial crisis in the face of reduced remittances. Proposing industries as the way out, Raghu continued, "The state will be facing a financial crisis if the remittances start to dwindle. So naturally, without having more industries, we won't be able to accommodate Gulf returnees or the younger generation of our state that is entering the job market…"

The analysis uncovers that the conflicts are not based solely on economic interests, but they are ideological. The following interview illustrates how unions reproduce and defend the ideology of capitalism. During the interview, Padmanabhan, a union leader, lucidly expressed their stand

on capitalism and the desirability of increased capitalist accumulation in Kerala. Explaining the shift in politics, Padmanabhan opined:

> There is nothing wrong with the institutionalized and systematic accumulation of capital. See, Kerala is a region where the organized trade union is very strong...it also happens to be a place where communist and left values receive acceptance… "investors will not come in such contexts" this is a remark often made against our state. The organized trade union movement in this state has a responsibility to answer this question...because they are shouldering an unnecessary blame...we need to make more wealth by increasing the production efficiency and better wage earnings...this can be done by reducing the per head costs ...but in doing so we are not willing to compromise on reductions in wages or bonus. (Padmanabhan, union leaders, personal interview, May 21, 2018)

As explicated by the excerpt, the organized trade union movement in Kerala is vouched to repair the tainted image of the state, "as a location where capital flees fearing militant trade unionism." This commitment to shed the investment-unfriendly tag and rebuild its image as an investment-friendly location dominates among the union narratives. Since the "militant trade union" movement of the state was blamed the most for this negative image, the unions are working hard to not shoulder the "unnecessary blame" in the state's development trajectory. However, the leader was quick to dismiss any interpretations of this class compromise as a form of surrender or submission before capitalist forces. Instead, they explained the friendly relation as an effort in rebuilding the image of the state as an 'investment-friendly' location. The narratives also uncovered the facework undertaken by the unions while trying to depict Kerala as a state inviting capital accumulation. Saleel, a CITU leader, explained:

> No union organization has surrendered or submitted before the capitalists...we are just trying to remove this negative tag attached to our state, which says that we are not an investor-friendly state only because we have a left government...we are trying to respond to this baseless attack. This tag is also leading to the slowdown of development in our state...we are trying best to get our state on the development trajectory and to make the benefits of modern capitalist technology and capitalist advancements in production and distribution available to the people of Kerala...that is our responsibility...this is the responsibility of the trade unions, the communist party and its leadership and the left government of our state. We need to end that mischaracterization. (Saleel, union leader, personal interview, May 12, 2018)

Clarifying their compromise with capital as not an act of surrender or submission, the narratives explain how this shift in politics aims at establishing the benefits of capitalist advancements in production and distribution in the mainstream society. In a way, such attempts to produce ideas in favor of capitalism are interesting considering the history of anti-capitalist struggles. "Using the snake to take the venom off." goes a local adage, which essentially hints at resolving an issue using the thing that caused the issue in the first place. This appears to be what the industries are doing as they deploy unions to manufacture consent in favor of capitalist accumulation in Kerala. In other words, the unions engage in producing frames that legitimize the ideology of capitalism and, in turn, directs workers to support a system that exploits their labor power.

Unions argue that to claim Kerala as a location hostile to capital is a "mischaracterization," and it is the responsibility of the unions, the communist party, and the left government to end such distorted depictions. According to the excerpts, the efforts undertaken by unions to transform the image of Kerala as an investment-friendly location is also redemptive, considering how the negative image was often attributed to the 'militant trade union politics.' The narratives illustrate the need for a facework and focus on union's onus in accomplishing this through its unconditional support to investments.

> We are not compromising with the primitive accumulation strategies deployed by capital. No compromise. Make profits without exploiting the workers. Naturally, there will be profits and more capital as a result of the investment, without which there won't be any private investment. But then more people should get jobs with better pays...for that the way in which we organize the system of production and production relations must change. (Mathew, union leader, May 29, 2018)

Moving a step closer to the global economic order, members of the unions identified the need for greater privatization in the industrial sector. The advocacy for private industries

complicates the left parties declared stand against privatization. Yet it is interesting to note that the strong support for privatization and defense for the interests of private industries come from unions that are affiliated to the Left parties, CPI and CPM. The articles printed in the newsletter of the Standing Council was replete with calls to defend the interests of KMRL a private company that occupies the top list of polluters as per the civil society groups and a company that works to find a segway to enter the mineral sand mining sector in the state. Advocating for privatization one union spokesperson established the case for a larger private sector in extractive mining as follows:

> People are smuggling this sand outside of our state. If not smugglers, the next tide and winds will take this soil to the shores of Sri Lanka. The sea will wash it away. Don't we want to utilize this? There is so much deposit that it can feed generations, you know. We will get so much money, but we are not using it. As a policy, the left front also is hesitant to give mining rights to the private sector. But such rights are given to the private sector in all other states. If we say to give mining rights to the private sector in Kerala, we will become idiots in the eyes of the society. The private sector is making a very big contribution to Kerala's development. (Basheer, union leader, personal interview, June 20, 2018)

This "privatization is good" argument is more problematic considering the longstanding grassroots resistance against mineral sand mining in the state led by people whose villages are delipidated by extractive mining operations. The union leader comes across as a spokesperson for private industries, not just the companies in which they are employed but also about other opportunities for extraction and accumulation. It also appears ironic considering the fact the statement was made by a trade union leader belonging to the political left, which has declared its opposition to privatization associated with the neoliberal economic order. These excerpts indicate how the rhetoric and ideology of left politics in the state are shifting to embrace privatization, one of the pivotal goals of neoliberal capitalism. By advocating for the privatization of natural resource extraction, the unions openly declare their allegiance to a capitalist model of accumulation and economic growth, which prioritizes the private ownership of property, resources, and capital.

Destruction of Nature as a Latent Consequence of Industrial Development

Unions, particularly the unions affiliated to the left parties, engage in the active process of manufacturing consent in favor of industrial development and, in doing so, attempt to downplay the adverse effects of industrial pollution. One of the prominent strategies used to defend the industrial capitalist system of production is to brush aside industrial pollution as an inevitable outcome, an outcome that is insignificant when compared to development's promise of economic growth and material comforts. Accepting the exploitative effects of capitalist production and accumulation on the environment, the union leaders interpreted this as an inevitable or latent consequence of development and progress. Mathew, a representative of the AITUC, explained:

> The mindless exploitation and accumulation of profits under a capitalist system might lead to environmental issues. It can lead to large scale exploitation of nature. But can we say that industries should not use water because they exploit the environment? We now know how to generate electricity from water, but should we learn to live in the darkness and not produce electricity from water. That does not make sense. Shouldn't we make use of nature to build comfort for humanity? (Mathew, union leader, personal interview, June 8, 2018)

Even when the narrative recognizes the negative effects of capitalist production on nature, the excerpt indicates how it is impossible to engage in production without altering nature. Using water as an example, the excerpt indicates the complexity of choosing between material "comforts" in the form of electricity or industrial products and environmental conservation. The excerpt exemplifies how the unions recognize the impasse between capitalism and the environment but continue to justify the environmental damages in the name of material comforts. This often turned into a complicated exercise because the unions must nudge their declared commitment to anti-capitalist ideology to gain legitimacy for the industries operating along the banks of the River Periyar.

> New industries are inevitable to offer gainful employment to such a pool of workers. Derailing the growth of industries in the name of environment…environment is important of course, we certainly have to preserve Kerala's rivers, and Kerala's paddy lands…but to

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dismantle industries in the name of environment will do little good for industrial development. (Kabeer union leader, personal interview, July 3, 2018)

In other words, though pollution is deleterious to nature, it is still worthwhile considering the positive outcomes from production, particularly in the form of material comforts, in terms of the unions. When inquired if the unions perceive the movement organized by the greens as a fight against the capitalist system of production and its fallouts on the environment, Ramachandran, a union leader, opined:

> See, environmental degradation can happen even in a socialist production system...there will obviously be environmental issues and other issues related to pollution. No system of social organization can survive without an economic system that generates wealth. The production of wealth basically entails three components-- labor, basic infrastructure, and capital...we call an economic system capitalist when these three components are privately owned. The transition to socialism happens after altering the relations of production...in a socialist system you can distribute the economic wealth without exploitation...because the working-class has risen to power here. Understand? (Ramachandran, union leader, personal interview, July 3, 2018)

It is interesting to notice how the excerpt seeks to defend capitalism by explaining how environmental degradation is not a characteristic of capitalism but can be identified even in socialist production systems. By shifting the focus away from capitalism, the union member here is trying to deflect the question on the anti-capitalist nature of the local environmental movement. This strategy of deflection was present throughout the narratives whenever they responded to questions about the role of capitalism in creating environmental crises or the anti-capitalist orientations of the local environmental movement.

The emergent themes from these narratives reaffirm the importance of generating wealth in an economic system. According to the excerpts, the creation of economic wealth is inherent for the survival of socialism and capitalism, and it is about the distributional aspects of this wealth that these two systems differ. As explicated by KS, these narratives explicate how the economic system envisioned by these left lenient trade union leaders bears striking similarities to the

capitalist economic system and the idea of economic growth. Elucidating the failure of the left movement in Kerala, K.S explained how much of it can be attributed to the movement's failure to envision an alternative economic system. While talking about Anthony.C.Sutton's (1974) seminal book, *Wallstreet, and the Bolshevik Revolution*, K.S compared the current economic model in Kerala to that of a capitalist economy as follows:

> No revolutionary government could bring about significant changes to the economy…you know, they failed in constructing an alternative economy. Despite minor changes at the distribution front, the economy in spirit remains the same. I am not saying that this is unimportant…I am all for dreams…we did have some dreams and we did make strides in the distribution front but other than that the structure of our economy remains the same (capitalist) despite the claims of communist spirits. Regarding aspects of resource usage, or material aspects of development, consumerism, etc. our model is not very different from the other model. (capitalist model) (K.S, environmentalist, personal interview, July 8, 2018)

The narratives from the union members corroborate K. S's observations about the capitalist orientations of Kerala's economy. Despite donning the image of a communist society and reporting lower rates of economic growth, one of the dominant characteristics of the state's economic behavior was a conspicuous model of consumption financed by remittances (Kurien 1994; Osella and Osella 1999; Osella and Osella 2000). Studies that shed light on Malayali's consumption pattern establish the affinity for material comforts and highlight the underlying inequality along caste and class axes. This affinity for economic progress defined in terms of material assets and infrastructure stands out in the narratives of the union representatives as they discussed the shift in labor politics in the state, a shift away from the politics of *class-struggle* to one of *class-compromise*. According to Heller (1999), this class compromise has enabled Kerala's transition into social-democratic capitalism. The discussions surrounding industries and the need for greater investments confirm Heller's observations about the shift in class politics. However, the effect of this shift in deepening the democratic process is challenged here by uncovering how such a nexus

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between labor and capital works together to repress and demobilize movements that challenge the adverse effects of capitalist development in Kerala.

The excerpts highlight how the union leaders, who represent trade unions affiliated to communist parties (CPI and CPIM), interpret capitalist accumulation, profits, and economic growth as desirable and necessary for the advancement of the interests of workers and the larger society. The position, when evaluated against the professed anti-capitalist ideology of the communist movement in the state, presents an irony where the leaders engage in an active defense and facework to attract capitalist accumulation. Besides, this shift in politics also explains the ongoing rift between labor and green movements despite their working-class orientations. The excerpts above depict how the ideological orientations of trade unions have moved away from Marxian ideology to embrace the 'benefits' of capitalism and profits. I argue that this shift in politics has longstanding consequences to the environment in the state and plays a decisive role in shaping the nature of the relationship between unions and other progressive social and environmental movements. In the case of Eloor, the unions' transformed orientations in favor of capital feed into the ongoing schism between unions and greens.

The interpretation of class and class-solidarity for the unions is now confined to the sector and is deeply ingrained in the prospects of the economy. Guided by renewed politics, unions interpret greater accumulation and profits as desirable for the workers because it will fetch them higher wages and benefits. However, what remains out of this equation is the interests of many thousands of workers who eke out a living outside the shop floor of the factories. The union frames are narrow and confined in that sense, to consider only the interests of the workers who are employed in the industrial sector. This presents a very narrow viewpoint of work, worker, and class-solidarity, where all these words operate as a unifying factor within the bounds of the sector

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or within the boundaries of capitalism. This is not a tendency limited to the unions, but it transcends to the larger society and political parties. It is telling about the changing political landscape in the state where the political left alienates progressive social movements fighting capitalism.

BREAKING THE MYTH OF UNIVERSAL WORKING-CLASS SOLIDARITY AND CONSCIOUSNESS

Greens call out the class-compromise between labor and capital and how that destabilizes the idea of a universal working-class as ingrained in the writings of Marx and Engels. They argued that the lack of co-operation among the different types of workers clearly indicates how the ideas of class consciousness and solidarity have proven to be a myth in this context. For example, Maqbool elaborates the demise of a universal idea of working-class as follows:

> Even when we say that we are all working-class…in a broad-sense…it is still a matter of perspective…for a trade union operating in an industrial area, workers include only 'factory workers'…an industry, barely supporting 1000 workers, is destroying the livelihoods of tens and thousands of inland fish workers who eke out a living from the river…even there these trade unions have formed unions…but they seldom link these union activities. Unions here will cater to the interests of factory workers and unions there will serve the interests of fish workers…that's the arrangement. I mean they don't bother to form an alliance between these two unions that operate within the same party even. They are purely issue-based…the idea of a universal working class is a myth…you can say "workers of the world" and all but it's just compartmentalized. (Maqbool, member of PMVS, personal interview, June 18, 2018)

A recurrent theme amongst the interviews with the environmentalist was this demise of class-solidarity understood in the traditional sense. The greens elaborated on how this idea of solidarity among pure class lines is a myth by highlighting the lack of coalition even among trade unions working for different categories/types of workers. As the excerpt points out, even the branches of the same union working among factory workers and fish workers failed to collaborate and find amicable solutions that would ameliorate the issues faced by both categories of workers.

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The interviews with environmentalists highlighted the narrow and issue-based nature of trade union politics, that completely fail to consider working-class as a broad category comprising of all toiling workers. Invoking the broad-based call to unify the "workers of the world" in the Manifesto of the Communist Party, the environmentalists point out how the trade union leaders, even belonging to the political left, parochially interprets and operates on working-class as a sectoral identity and category. Commenting on the lack of a broad-based conception of the rights of workers and working-class solidarity, Ibrahim noted:

> See, if this is just about protecting the rights of workers, then there should only be one union for all the workers…but in reality, such labor activism is issue-based, work-based and sometimes place-based. See that's why a factory worker releases pollutants into the river…without such sectoral affiliations, a worker cannot put pollutants in the river when he thinks about the inland fish workers who is a member of the same union. (Ibrahim, a founding member of PMVS, personal interview, July 20, 2018)

In addition, the interviews also explored how the communist reality in Kerala drifts away from the idealist version that conceives all workers as equal and envisions unification among the working-class. Exploring the issue-based, work-based and place-based politics of trade unions, the interviews expound how the reality breaks away from the ideal model of class-consciousness and solidarity along class lines. The narrow or exclusive interpretations of working-class that confine it to sectoral boundaries enable factory workers to defend and legitimize the act of releasing pollutants into the river even when the act derails the livelihoods of fellow workers (fish worker and farmworker). In other words, the absence of class solidarity is apparent when the factory workers join the industries in polluting the environment, which is the primary source of sustenance for many workers. Thus, the green activists who have declared affiliations to the communist party and the Marxian ideology argued that the idea of universal working-class is a myth in the context of Kerala's trade union politics. Another member of the local environmental movement alluded to the divisive nature of unions even in the context of factory workers using the following words:

Even when you say that the unions are for all factory workers, there are clear divisions within right…a union at FACT would also represent the interest of FACT workers. If there happens to be a conflict of interest between Merchum and HIL…then the respective unions will fight to protect the workers in each of these industries…I mean you can think of a broad alliance among all working-class, but that's just in definitions…in practice, such alliances seldom happen even within the same category of workers. (Zacharia, member of *Janajagratha*, personal interview, July 7, 2018)

The parochial and sectoral orientation of unions in defining and protecting workers' rights is further embellished in the territorial definition of workers' rights within industries. The environmentalists pointed out that a trade union at FACT would not bother to fight for the right of fellow factory workers employed in a different industry. Despite the failure to achieve class-alliance between sectors, the examples presented in the narrative above suggest the absence of a sense of solidarity even within the same sector. In sum, the definition and enforcement of workers' rights are often contingent upon the sectoral location (primary/secondary), resource dependence, and even the exact industry in which the workers are employed, thereby challenging the idea of a universal working-class and class-solidarity. More importantly, the discussions about the failure of trade unions affiliated with the political left to operate with a broader definition of working-class lead to questions about the ongoing definitions and interpretations of communism and left politics in Kerala.

"The real leftists are in sleeping mode": Contested Interpretations Surrounding Left Politics

One of the common themes that emerged during the interviews was the divergent and contested interpretations surrounding left politics in Kerala. The interviews, particularly with the environmentalists, presented compelling questions about the framing of the left politics in Kerala as a communist. When compared to the interviews with union leaders, these narratives offer a stark

contrast to the union's priorities. Exposing the problematics underlying the definition of left politics and communism, Kumar asked:

> Who is on the left? Who is a communist? A person who can understand the sufferings of fellow human beings, I would say. It doesn't require a brand to be a communist…we don't have to have this idea of "bracket communism"…if I realize what you are going through, then I would say that a person believing in left ideology would help you as a friend without even telling you…or telling anyone for that matter…that's a mentality that one would look for in a communist…in other words, a selfless and sincere mind is what makes one part of the left movement. (Kumar, founding member and Research Coordinator of PMVS, May 26, 2018)

The excerpt presents the clear divide in the nature of left politics adopted by the environmentalists and the trade unions in Kerala. When the unions strived to establish their openness to receiving investments and nurturing capitalist accumulation, the environmentalists stand close to a more humane and rights-based approach to politics, by declaring their allegiance to the people who face oppression. They call out the variant of "bracket communism" practiced in Kerala, which according to the environmentalists, uses communism as a 'brand.' Instead of following a namesake variety of communism, the local environmentalists interpret communism as a movement led by selfless and sincere individuals to help people without expecting returns. A comparative analysis of the narratives constructed by unions and greens, thus offer a contrast between two varieties of communism: idealist and pragmatist. As the greens reaffirm their commitment to the most disadvantaged sections of society, the unions underline their commitment to embracing the logic of capitalism.

Interviews with the environmentalists pointed out the adverse effects of this shift in politics on the environment. The nexus between labor and capital has proven costly to the environment and workers whose livelihoods are directly dependent on the availability of clean natural resources. Discussing the anti-environmental policies of the state government, Kumar pointed out the bias

operating within government decision-making mechanisms in favor of corporations and capitalist value-system. Kumar opined:

> One cannot ignore the fact that majority of the policies adopted by the left government in Kerala is against the environment…and that happens because this government is guided by corporate logics and value-system…they think, "this is the only path to development"…they are biased and so are their policies…none of these politicians are thinking with their own minds…they are guided by a set of bureaucrats…see if an official and a company say that having a central waste management facility, that will convert waste to energy (referring to Brahmapuram plant) is the solution…the government does not care to hear the opinions of the people or other experts but will take the opinions of these officials and this company. I feel that's not how governments should function, this is not good governance…(Kumar, founding member and Research Coordinator of PMVS, May 26, 2018)

The anti-environmental nature of state policies can be traced to the corporate logics and value-systems operating within the government mechanisms. As argued in the excerpt above, the decision-making apparatuses, including the bureaucracy, consider corporate interests while formulating policies. For example, the proposition of waste to energy project over proposals to manage waste at the source explains the stand adopted by the state, where often companies are approached to solve socio-environmental problems. The issue of the Bhramapuram plant mentioned in the excerpt must be considered in the backdrop of the growing protest against incinerators and waste-to-energy projects in Kerala. This apparent absence of the ordinary individuals who bear the brunt of development projects in the decision-making mechanism, according to these environmentalists, stand testimony to the issues ingrained in the system of governance in Kerala. According to the interviews, these overarching logics of capitalism and corporate power are replete in almost all development decisions undertaken by the state in Kerala, irrespective of their political orientations. The interviews also suggested that left parties do not have any monopoly over leftist ideology, for it is much broader than party politics.

> I firmly believe that communism as an idea is not confined to a particular party or an institutionalized organization, and I am very clear about that. I don't believe that the left

parties enjoy any monopoly over the left ideology…I don't believe these parties constitute the political left because most of its leaders are commodified…their minds are marketized, and that gets reflected in their policies as well…. for sure. (Roopesh, member of PMVS, personal interview, July 7, 2018)

Despite the critiques of shifting politics, some environmentalists strived to explain the shift in terms of the spread of global capitalism and the promotion of neoliberal economic policies in India. Considering how globalization has left local economies entrenched with the global capitalist economy, the interviews pointed out that it is hard for a state to choose an alternative path and follow an exclusively anti-capitalist model. According to Ravi, an environmentalist leading Thanal an ENGO, the shift of left politics in Kerala, a shift away from the marginalized and towards the capitalists, has to do with the federal system where a state could not tread separate paths for long. Explaining the shift in left politics Ravi explained how a "hodgepodge federalism" would lead to a "hodgepodge variety of communism" remarked:

It is unreasonable to demand a lot from the left parties in India or in Kerala for we have a federal system…in a federal system, the states face a lot of constraints and are mandated to abide by the laws, decisions, and policies formed at the center. We have to form a separate country if we are to follow a policy framework that's entirely different from the central government…So, in a federal system…we will only have hodgepodge federalism, and a hodgepodge socialism leaving us with a hodgepodge variety of communism…so there is no point in engaging in aggressive critiques. (Ravi, member of Thanal an ENGO, personal interview, May 3, 2018)

Resonating the concerns mentioned in the excerpt above, some environmentalists blamed the federal system for Kerala's inability to continue on the communist path and this more so, considering the increased integration of Indian economy to the global neoliberal capitalist economic order. However, despite the attempts to rationalize the shift away from anti-capitalist policies, the environmentalists clearly voiced their difference with the current model of left politics in the state masquerading as communism. The interviews were vocal about the stark contrast

between "real leftists" and the people who masquerade as leftists, who form part of the government. Illuminating the polarity between these two variants of leftists, Kumar noted:

> I would say there are two varieties of leftist...one the real leftist, who has left consciousness...and the second ones are those people who just wear the attire of a leftist...the latter form part of the government. When such people assume power, governance is laden with gimmicks and with overt attempts to establish that they are correct. The "real leftists" are almost silent and dormant in almost all leftist organizations...to put that in a decorated way, they are all in sleeping mode...if they dare say something they will be ousted from the party. So, both these variants are of little help to the state. These "real leftists" should instead be engaging in a revolt...a revolt to build a new left in our state. So instead of that, they are choosing to stick on to party saying that "we are stuck here, or we have done so much for the party, we have sacrificed so much for the party that we deserve at least a red party flag on our corpse" ... their mood has changed to that...when I, as an ordinary person engaging in social action, see all of this, I am disheartened...I am saddened...(Kumar, founding member and Research Coordinator of PMVS, May 26, 2018)

The excerpt clearly separates two varieties of leftists in the state: the real leftists and the leftists who run the government and hence, have access to political and state power. This has been a common theme among the interviews conducted with local environmentalists, including the leaders of ENGOs. According to this narrative, the real leftists are silent and dormant, and this is largely due to the fear of retribution from the communist party, where views challenging the leadership are often countered with expulsion from the party. Fearing such punitive measures, the excerpt argues that the 'real leftists' in Kerala are in a "sleeping mode." However, the excerpt also points out how both these variants of left politics do not help in alleviating the social and environmental inequalities in the state.

The excerpt clearly diagnoses the problem with left politics in Kerala as follows: the real leftists are embracing a path of silence and inaction for fear of retribution when the leftists who have access to power use it as an "attire" or label and are not bothered to change the system through social action. The environmentalists also highlight their radical standpoint by calling the 'real leftists" to break the silence, wake from slumber, and revolt to build a "new left" politics in Kerala

(prognosis). Much of the inaction on the part of the "real leftists" is also guided by the emotional and nostalgic association with the communist party and party membership and this is explored in the narrative that explains the silence as the price for securing "a red flag" on the corpse. It highlights the connections between emotions, pride, status, and symbolic aspects fetched by communist activism in Kerala, where the red flag over the dead body signifies being part of the long legacy of revolutionary social movements.

> I won't call this a Socialist party...the party has changed massively...massively, I mean. This has nothing to do with socialism now. These are not minor changes, these are huge changes. I mean, such people can act like this and that's no surprise. The branch Secretary once told me that "Marx (Karl Marx) and Lenin might have written many things, but we need to change those to suit the present." In such contexts, there is no need to think about the communist roots of this party, that's long gone. (Akbar, founding member of PMVS, personal interview, May 27, 2018)

Many interviews elaborated about the punitive actions imposed by the communist party for engaging in environmental activism. The interviews also pointed out that it is ironic to witness a left government repressing movement for social and environmental justice so that it can facilitate capitalist accumulation. Narrating his experience of being expelled from the party for joining the green movement and critiquing the unions' stand on the issue of pollution, Roopesh observed, "When I was a party member whenever I had participated in some issues I was constantly questioned by members and local leaders within the party. They would straight up ask me, 'Why did you go there? Or Why did you take part in this protest?' etc." Roopesh's experience was not singular, as many environmentalists who used to be part of the left parties in the state expressed similar instances.

Anas is a young environmental activist who has long been a part of the local environmental movement narrated a similar incident uncovering the contempt expressed by the left parties towards local environmental activism. Since the environmentalist exposed the open release of

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effluents into the river by TMRL, the company started collecting wastes inside the factory premises. These wastes, called clay, would often be sent outside on large dump trucks and got dumped in paddy fields. When the environmentalists caught the company dumping in paddy fields, the company started sending this to faraway places. The environmentalists had agreed to monitor such transportation of toxic wastes and suggested all members remain vigil. Since most of the environmentalists were active in local events, they maintained a very strong and extensive personal network. And one day, a member from this personal network informed of trucks parked outside of the company ready to carry the wastes away. The environmentalists were mainly upset about the lack of accountability on the part of this company to responsibly manage its wastes instead of just sending them to other locations. It also signifies how the local environmentalists were not just against environmental pollution in their immediate backyard but everywhere. Their idea of environmentalism transcended the Eloor-Edayar region, and that motivated them to closely watch the movement of toxic wastes outside of their region as well.

Soon after receiving the call, members of the environmental group organized a blockade outside the company and informed that they would not let the trucks leave the industry premises. The situation soon flared up into open and direct conflict when company workers came to defend the transportation of wastes outside. It was further aggravated when a local union leader who also is a party member came to the scene and sided with the workers and the company. Police were called, and many local environmentalists were arrested and removed from the site. Anas, who was also a member of the communist party then, was particularly frustrated with the presence of a party leader and how he offered open support to the industry without listening to the grievances of the environmentalist. He said:

> Saleel rushed to the scene and supported the company...and came against the protestors.
> He says that being an inside union leader he cannot help but support the company. I mean

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that makes no sense, he can be an inside leader, and if he feels that things are going out of control he can call the police...it is not right for a public figure like him to come out in the open and physically attack and oppose the people who had participated in the blockade. He came to the spot. Please mind that he is a democratic leader, a public figure, who holds office as the Area Secretary. He needs to have some political perspective. I have my own perspective and that helps me thrive... (Anas, local environmentalist, personal interview, July 6, 2018)

To protest the backlash and attack from unions and workers, the environmentalist pasted posters across the region, condemning the attack against environmentalists and calling out the party leader for supporting the industries. Anas explained how he was disturbed by the way in which the party leader declared open support to the companies and why he decided to join the campaign against the attack as follows:

When Mr. Saleel showed up, even though I was then a party member, I couldn't tolerate that. None of us could tolerate that. So, we pasted posters across this area, condemning his participation and the alignment of CPIM with CMRL. This was done on behalf of the organization *Janajagratha* (People's Vigilance). They called me and asked me if I would be willing to join. They were unsure if I would join because I was a party member, and the poster was clearly calling out the party, CPIM. I said I am perfectly fine in doing this, pasting the posters, as I stand for truth. I joined them and we started pasting the posters from around eight at night. (Anas, local environmentalist, personal interview, July 6, 2018)

Anas was expelled from the party following this poster campaign after he openly joined and participated in the campaign and pasted posters. He said the party never openly acknowledged this as the reason for his expulsion instead attributed it to his lack of "regular attendance" in party events. Despite his long-standing association with the communist movement ranging from a student organization, youth organization, and the party, Anas was ousted immediately following his active participation in local environmental politics and protest. This example exemplifies the centralized structure of the organization within left parties that curbs dissent immediately by expelling the members who raised the issue. This incident clearly proves the 'fear of retribution' mentioned in the excerpts true, where any dissenting voice is eliminated through expulsion from the party outfits.

Surviving the initial disenchantment with the shifting class politics, the environmentalists have adopted a critical stand and tone to call out the changing left politics in the state. The disappearance of left parties from the social movement landscape in Kerala, happens at a time when the movement landscape is replete with grassroots movements organized by the socially, economically and environmentally marginalized sections of society. The obvious distance maintained by the left parties and unions from the grassroots movements in Kerala often referred to as "*janakeeya samarangal*", often came up during the interviews as the participants tried to explicate how the left movement is drifting away from the issues and grievances faced by the marginalized sections of society. Interestingly, this shift is recognized by individuals who continue to be part of the left movement, including union members. A senior trade union leader, who is also a member of the communist party, said, "See if you are asking if the party needs to change in terms of offering more support to grassroots movements, I would say, absolutely!! The party of late has completely failed to associate and offer solidarity to the popular movements in Kerala. And I would say many organizations are slowly occupying the space left vacant by the left in Kerala's social movement field."

DISCUSSION

This chapter seeks to explain the conflicts between trade unions and the environmental movements in the Eloor-Edayar industrial region despite belonging to similar class backgrounds. Highlighting the heterogeneity of working-class interests, the chapter examines why the attribution of generalized interests and politics over working-class groups is problematics as the interests of different workers are often contingent upon the sector in which they are employed and the resource dependency of such vocations. In doing so, I also bring forth the divergent conceptions of class

underlying the unions and green movements. Distinguishing between an inclusive and exclusive conception of the working-class, this chapter uncovers the differential interpretations of class, class-consciousness, and solidarity within these two movement groups. Also, the chapter demonstrates how the class-compromise between labor and capital play a huge role in accentuating the conflicts between labor and green movements. More importantly, this shift in politics becomes evident in the contested interpretations surrounding left politics in Kerala. In other words, the chapter exposes the "illusion of homogeneity" attributed to left politics in the context of Kerala.

The interests of the organized unions are influenced by their embeddedness in the industrial capitalist system of production where their survival and economic security are contingent upon profits. Their economic interests are strictly intertwined with their jobs, the security of which is contingent upon the progress and growth of the industrial sector. Unions consider pollution as an inevitable outcome of production, for they are concerned about the potential loss of income from industrial closures than the damage inflicted on nature. Whereas, the inland fish workers and Pokkali farmers are adversely affected by the rampant pollution as their means of livelihood are directly threatened by the mounting levels of toxins in the River Periyar. Despite belonging to the generalized category of workers, they hold opposing interests as far as the issue of pollution control is concerned. This is greatly influenced by the extent to which their economic interests and livelihoods are dependent on the availability of clean natural resources. A polluted Periyar (River) derails the livelihoods of inland fishworkers by affecting the supply of fish and harms *Pokkali* farming. Also, the analysis sheds light on the class-compromise between the unions and the industrial capitalists, where the unions take up the ideological work to manufacture consent in favor of industrial capitalism.

In addition to the diversity of interests among workers, the analysis also sheds light on the inclusive vs. exclusive definition of class. Even though the members of the green movement are not directly engaging in fishing or farming, they too are working-class who make a living from doing contractual and daily wage employment. As unraveled in the analysis, the green movement's ideology and philosophy are deeply ingrained in the sustainable use of resources, and hence, they are disturbed when the industries poison their immediate environment. The local environmental politics explored here is inclusive as it moves beyond the level of the individual and spans the level of the community. This inclusivity is reflected in their goals that include the interests of the inland fish workers and farmworkers. In sum, the conception of 'working-class' used by the unions is exclusive in being confined to individuals working in their own sector. The excerpts above showed how this exclusive conception often only includes organized workers who are members of the unions and pay a union fee. In contrast, the understanding of 'working-class' for the green movement is much broader than that of the unions, where they consider all toiling people as working class. Guided by this inclusive and intersectional definition and interpretation, the environmentalists represent the interests of migrant workers, inland fish workers, farmworkers, contractual workers, and all other individuals in the region who are affected by the negative effects of industrial pollution.

The class-compromise between labor and capital is emergent throughout the analysis, where unions declare their allegiance to the logics of capitalism and actively engage in producing an ideological defense of capitalism. This further leads to the emergence of two variants of left politics in Kerala: real leftists vs. leftists who support capitalism. As ironic as it might sound, the categories uncover the underlying contradiction in claiming affiliation to left politics without supporting grassroots mobilizations for social and environmental justice while aligning with

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industries. More so, this chapter highlights the despair and disappointment felt by environmentalists who uphold leftist ideologies to fight against social and environmental inequalities in Kerala. In a context where the political leftists divided between complete inaction and total submission to the logics of capitalism, the environmentalists in Kerala struggle to make sense of this seeming contradiction of left politics in the state. The chapter concludes that the class-compromise between labor and capital has had profound consequences on unions' relationship with other social movements, particularly environmental movements. Besides, the compromise between labor and capital has transformed left politics in the state by pushing the marginalized social groups and movements away from the center of left politics. The plethora of environmental justice movements in Kerala highlights the implications of this shift in politics on the environment. In sum, the drastic shift in left politics in the state raises important questions about the decentralized model of democratization in Kerala and the need to question the Kerala model from the standpoints of social and environmental justice.

The last few chapters discussed the influence of political-economic factors in influencing the relationship between labor and environmental conflicts. The next chapter explores the conflicts between labor and green movements at an interpretive level. Delving deep into the ways in which the two movements construct competing for frames and interpretations surrounding the issue of pollution, the chapter identifies the frame-disputes between the movements and explicate how the dominant ideology of development manifests in such disputes.

CHAPTER SIX

FRAME-DISPUTES BETWEEN LABOR AND ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS:

MOVEMENT, COUNTERMOVEMENT, AND FRAMING

If you dig a well near my home…the water will taste like DDT…the river is dying, and our drinking water sources are poisoned by heavy metals from the industries. (Kumar, Research Coordinator, PMVS)

The claim surrounding drinking water pollution is absurd. This can never happen as the river never flows to the East… No industry on the banks of Periyar can pollute it!! (Padmanbhan, union leader and Secretary of SCTU)

One of the prominent features of the conflict between unions and green movements in the Eloor-Edayar region has been the opposing interpretations and meanings constructed by the two movements around the issue of industrial pollution. This chapter examines labor-environmental conflicts at the interpretive level by focusing on the contested frames created by labor and green movements. Using interviews, campaign materials, and documents, this chapter uncovers how the two movements strive to create opposing versions of reality through the respective movement frames. The movements compete against each other in constructing frames that attack and dispute the grievances featured in the opponent movement's frames. By engaging in a continuous process of creating competing frames, both these movements enter into an ontological dispute about the existence and causes of industrial pollution. In this chapter, I focus on the disputing frames produced by unions and green movements by identifying the diagnostic, prognostic, and frame resonance disputes between labor and green movements in the region.

A central focus of this chapter is the contested *development-frames* adopted by the movements. I elucidate the tensions between unions and the environmentalists in terms of their divergent interpretations of development, where unions regard development as 'economic progress' and the greens highlight 'environmental justice and sustainability.' Additionally, the chapter identifies the union collective, Standing Council of Trade Unions, as a countermovement and analyzes its counterframes and framing strategies. Detailed analyses reveal that the unions aim at discrediting, delegitimizing, and demobilizing the green movement by unleashing smear campaigns against the local environmentalists through the frames. In doing so, I highlight the consequences of frame disputes and counterframing tactics on social movement mobilization processes and outcomes. In sum, the contests between unions and green movements animate into a conflict of ideologies when the unions frame the line of action adopted by the greens as "pseudo environmentalist," "anti-nationalist," "extremists" and "anti-developmentalist." Thus, the analysis of movement-countermovement (M/CM) interactions reveals a complex model of relationships involving the unions, greens, industries, local authorities, and the state. Most importantly, the evidence presented in this chapter highlights the nexus between unions and industries and establishes the political-economic underpinnings of disputing frames. Thus, the findings of this chapter reiterate how structural and political-economic factors influence the micromobilization processes and grievance interpretations of local social movements.

INTRODUCTION

Social movements engage in the active process of constructing and challenging aspects of reality. As Benford and Snow observe, "the very existence of social movement indicates differences within society regarding the meaning of some aspect of reality" (Benford and Snow

2000:626). Lofland (1996:3) conceives social movements as "a special case of the study of contention among deeply conflicting realities." The disputes over reality get enhanced in the context of movement fields involving movements and countermovements, where negotiating reality becomes a contested process as each movement constructs its version in opposition to that of its adversary's. Examining the interactions between social movements and countermovements (M/CM hereafter) reveal that this difference regarding reality will result in the production of collective action frames that dispute or rather reject altogether the version of reality presented in the opponent's frames (Benford 1993a; Ellingson 1995; McCaffrey and Keys 2000). Thus, negotiating reality becomes a contested process where the movements and countermovements compete against each other to garner legitimacy to their respective version of reality. Though the presence of frame disputes is considered ubiquitous within movements (Benford 1993a), the frame disputes between movements and countermovements remain less examined, particularly in the context of movements in the Global South.

In this chapter, I explore the competing narratives constructed through the collective action frames adopted by unions and the green movements surrounding the issue of industrial pollution in the Eloor-Edayar region. The chapter also conceives the conflicts between the Standing Council and the local environmental movement using an M/CM framework. The frames constructed by the unions and greens seek to establish multiple realities surrounding the issue of industrial pollution in the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt. Using narratives, I argue that the union collective, as a countermovement, deploys the ideologies of nationalism and development in their counterframes to delegitimize and demobilize the green movements. Aside from denying the existence of industrial pollution in the region, the counterframes produced by the union-collective attack the credibility of the frontline activists of the green movement and question the nature of

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environmental action. The discussion presented in this chapter delves into the politics of denial and highlights how the denial stems from the embeddedness of unions and workers in the political economy of industrial capitalism.

MAPPING COUNTERFRAMING

Frames are an interpretive package of messages aimed at recruiting adherents, garnering media attention, demobilizing antagonists, and achieving movement victories. They play an important role in persuasion as they demarcate and punctuate important aspects of movement reality (Gamson 1988; Snow and Benford 1988; Benford and Snow 2000; Polletta and Ho 2006:2). Frames or "schemata of interpretation" enable an individual "to locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms" (Goffman 1974:21). Rooted in the social constructionist and symbolic interactionist traditions, meanings, and interpretations play a pivotal role in this perspective. Frame analysts uncloak the "meaning work," defined as the "struggle over the production of mobilizing and countermobilizing ideas and meanings" (Benford and Snow 2000:613).

Though frames are central to social movement dynamics, not all movements "share the same frame or interpretation of reality" thus, creating disputes in frames (Benford 1993a:678). Benford identifies three general types of intra-movement frame disputes, diagnostic frame disputes, prognostic frame disputes, and frame resonance disputes (Benford 1993a). Diagnostic frame disputes erupt within movements over interpretations of reality (Benford 1993a:679). So, the dispute here is over the shared *diagnosis* of the problem. Prognostic disputes emerge from "disparate visions of an alternate reality" when movements disagree about *what ought to be done* to transform the problematic aspect of reality. Frame resonance disputes are constituted as debates

over the effectiveness of particular frames or framing strategies. I extrapolate these types of disputes to understand the contesting frames created by the unions and the environmental movement.

The interactive nature of framing is also discussed in the extant literature, and this aspect is extremely relevant in the context of movement-countermovement interactions. Steinberg (1999) lays the foundations of a dialogic model by conceiving "collective action discourse as a joint product of actor's agency and discourse dynamics, including its multivocal nature" (Steinberg 1999:736). Esacove (2004:70) reiterates the interactive nature of framing and counterframing processes by proposing a "dialogic model of framing" in which meaning is created and recreated through an iterative, discursive process. Using the case of "partial-birth" abortion (PBA), Esacove explicates how frames and counterframes evolve in close relationship to each other, so much so that it is hard to disentangle them.

Defined as attempts "to rebut, or neutralize a person's or group's myths, versions of reality, or interpretive work" (Benford 1987:75), counterframing entails the interpretive process of constructing disputing frames by movements and countermovements. Such counterframes will bolster the efforts of the movement to attack, discredit, or demobilize the opponent movement and thereby, create adverse consequences (Klandermans 1992). McCaffrey and Keys (2000:42) observe that frame alignment helps in better understanding M-CM (movement-countermovement) dynamics as "the struggle over ideological supremacy" is central to this interaction. The authors identify three counterframing strategies used by the National Organization for Women (NOW) to neutralize antiabortion movements and their allegations in the public space. They propose three counterframing concepts that identify the responses of movements to the ideological challenges of the opponents, namely, polarization-vilification, frame saving, and frame debunking (McCaffrey

and Keys 2000). Many other studies focus on the description and exploration of counterframing strategies employed by social movements (Benford and Hunt 1994; Zuo and Benford 1995; Esacove 2004; Gallo-Cruz 2012). However, the "competitive framing processes" in M-CM situations remain largely unexamined (Klandermans 1992). McCright and Dunlap (2000:500) observe that "there is very little work on the framing processes of countermovements."

Zald and Useem (1983:2) point out how movements provide countermovements the impetus to mobilize by creating the conditions for its mobilization. Defining countermovement as "the mobilization of sentiments initiated to some degree in opposition to a movement," Zald and Useem (1983:2) conceive M/CM relation as a "loosely coupled conflict." The factors they consider crucial for enabling the emergence of a countermovement include- movement success, appropriate ideology, availability of resources, and constraints, and opportunities. Furthermore, the authors also explicate the strategic goals and tactics guiding M/CM interactions, where they engage in (a) damaging action, (b) information gathering, and (c) efforts to produce a negative image to attack the opponent movement. Extant research also highlights the ideological underpinnings of counterframing processes (Zald and Useem 1987; McCright and Dunlap 2000; McCaffrey and Keys 2000; Rohlinger 2002). Zald and Useem (1987:45) explain how counterframing efforts seek to create an "ideological impact by discrediting leaders, creating an unpopular image of movement goals and disseminating counterideologies." McCaffrey and Keys (2000) highlight the importance of religious ideologies and values in counterframes by focusing on how the antiabortion movement used frames rooted in religious ideologies such as the traditional family values and sanctity of human life to counter the claims made by the abortion rights movement. Rohlinger (2002) further emphasizes the role of ideology in movement frames by focusing on the media coverage received by the pro-life and pro-choice movements during crucial moments of the abortion debate.

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However, none of the extant literature on movements and countermovements explore cases from the developing world where the history of colonization and the postcolonial architecture of the state and authority make the equation problematic.

Here, I examine the ongoing tensions between the Standing Council of Trade Unions (SCTU hereafter), the union collective, and the green movements composed of the *Periyar Malineekarana Virudha Samithi* (PMVS hereafter) and *Janajagratha* (People's Vigilante) in the Eloor-Edayar industrial region. The conflicts between the two movements are conceived as a contestation surrounding meanings and interpretations on the issue of pollution and industrial development. I do so by uncovering the frame disputes between the two movements as they try to persuade their audiences and gain legitimacy for their respective versions of reality. The chapter also conceives the square-offs between unions and the green movement as a case of movement-countermovement (M-CM) interactions, where the SCTU grew as a countermovement to damage and discredit the anti-pollution mobilization organized by the local environmentalists through myriad counterframing strategies. Findings from this chapter expound that the interaction between labor and green movements in the region fits the "closed model" of M/CM interactions, which feature the movement, countermovement, and the authorities (Zald and Useem 1983).

In the remainder of this chapter, I explore the conflicts between unions and green movements and find that SCTU engaged in calculated attempts at delegitimizing the green movement by unleashing smear campaigns against the frontline leaders and challenging the claims made by the green movement. By subjecting the credibility of the key leaders to suspicion and through spreading allegations that claim the greens as "anti-nationals," "pseudo environmentalist," "extremists," and "anti-developmentalist," the unions aim at demobilizing the green movement using ideological counterframes. The chapter argues that the counterframing strategies of SCTU

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had profound effects on changing the trajectory and outcome of the green movements. Moreover, the analysis of data and discussion presented here underscores the importance of the political economy of development and the contested ideological standpoints held by the two movement groups manifest in the frame-disputes.

FRAME DISPUTES BETWEEN LABOR AND ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS

Collective action frames sift through the incidents and focus on what is relevant, articulate a particular set of meanings, and transform grievances into injustices in the context of collective action (Snow 2004: 384). The efforts to convey alternative versions of reality to the constituents, audience and bystanders result in the production of disputing frames that compete with the meanings and interpretations presented in the opponent's frames (Benford 1993a; Benford and Snow 2000; McCaffrey and Keys 2000). The interpretive processes leading to the identification of the problem (*what is at stake*) influence the potential solutions (*what ought to be done*) and how it should be articulated to gain the support of the audience (*call to action*) (Benford 1993a; Benford 1993b; Benford and Snow 2000).

The analysis presented below identifies and explicates the ontological and ideological disputes prevailing between trade unions and green movements in the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt.

Ontological Disputes between SCTU and PMVS

A careful examination of the contesting frames produced by the unions and green movements reveals that the majority of the diagnostic frame disputes are ontological in nature. The disputes in ontology[24] emerge, in a context where the two movements debate "reality" as they

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[24] Ontology here refers to the "study of being – the study of the basic building blocks of existence" (Moses and Knutsen 2012:4)

construct competing meanings and interpretations surrounding the existence of environmental issues or lack thereof. The union collective (SCTU) and green movements in the Eloor-Edayar region, through their respective collective action frames, seek to establish their version of reality about the issue of pollution and negate the alternative version constructed by the opponent.

In the next sections, I explore the framing processes and examine the disputing claims made by unions and green movements regarding the existence and causes of pollution. The section demonstrates how the diagnostic disputes further create disputes at the level of prognosis and frame resonance, as the movements contest each other about the potential course of action to fix the problem identified. Thus, these ontological disputes surrounding the existence of industrial pollution pass on to the prognostic and frame resonance disputes between the unions and the greens. This section identifies and explores the diagnostic (existence and causes of pollution) and prognostic frame disputes (potential solutions) between the SCTU and the green movement in the region.

The river is polluted Vs. The river isn't: Disputes about the existence of pollution

A flyer announcing the public meeting "A Confluence to Save Periyar" organized by the green activists in August 2012 ended with "*Save Periyar, don't let the river die*." One of the discernible effects of pollution in the region was the contamination of drinking water sources (*The Hindu* 2004; Suchitra 2004). From the beginning days of organized environmental activism, the movement frames produced by the greens were tailored around the mandate to "Save Periyar." As shown in this slogan, the frames of the green movements recognized the centrality of the river in sustaining human life and hence, were constructed around the pollution of River Periyar. The "critical and alarmist frame" urges constituents, audience, and bystanders to join the collective

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effort to "save" the river from dying (Gamson and Modigliani 1989). Explicitly stating the vocabulary of motive, the green movements focus on the plight of the river to mobilize support and adopt an injustice frame that features pollution as an issue of resource access and rights. The call here is to save the river from dying, thereby characterizing the river as an actor with life, rights, and agency. A pamphlet circulated to inform the local people about a "*Jala Satyagraham*" (Water Satyagraha) organized by the PMVS (*Periyar Malineekaran Virudha Samithi)* on June 14, 2013, said:

> We are engaged in a Herculean task to save the river from pollution and to let Periyar flow as a river again. If we do not get enough rain this year, the drinking water supply for the district of Ernakulam would be in jeopardy. We had to drink salty water many times this year and we are yet to know about the amount of chemicals we took in along with this salty water. Access to safe drinking water is our right, and we need to take to the streets to secure our rights to live as guaranteed in our constitution. We request all of you to join this event to fight against pollution.

The excerpt seeks to identify pollution as the problem and proposes the ways in which collective action can effectively change this condition of pollution. The statement underscores their vocabulary of motive (Benford 1993b) by calling people to save the river and drinking water sources from the imminent danger of pollution. The injustice frames constructed by the greens establish a compelling case of "injustice" by bringing access to safe drinking water under the purview of justiciable rights and establishing how this right is violated by the presence of pollutants. Articulating the lack of access to safe drinking water as a violation of the right to life guaranteed by the Indian constitution, the statement successfully interprets this as unjust. Also, the choice of *Jala Satyagraham* (Water Satyagraha) as a mode of protests reveals the centrality of the river as both the object and field of protest in this context. As illustrated by a pamphlet circulated by PMVS featuring a letter from the river calling people to fight against pollution, the frames treat the River Periyar as a person with rights, duties, and agency (Latour 2005). In this "letter written

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by a dying river,"[25] the greens creatively and imaginatively used the voice of the river to gain

participation and support from the audience. The letter calls the people to action by portraying this

as a fight to save life. The river spoke:

> Dear Friend,
> I hope you have not forgotten me. I travel 244 kilometers before reaching the Arabian sea. Too many dams have chained my limbs that it so hard for me to move and I have transformed into a lagoon now. You might still remember the old stories about my medicinal properties. The many varieties of fishes that played in my lap used to be your main source of food and livelihood. Many crops flourished on my banks including the unique *Pokkali*[26] cultivation. I provide drinking water to more than 33 lakhs of people. All these will soon form part of history as I am too tired. This rabid development has changed me into a demon carrying poison in my breasts. I have lost my medicinal values, fishes are fast dying, crops are failing. People are becoming slaves to chronic illnesses. Are you staying silent after knowing all this? If so, your life is in danger. If not to save me, can't you at least be a part of the activities organized by Periyar Malineekaran Virudha Samithi to save your life? …hoping that you will join the bus carrying our protest warriors.

Frames constructed by the green movements are replete with instances where the river is

treated as a person. Using a mythological reference to a demoness, *Bhoothana*, who carried poison

in her breast to kill *Krishna*, the frame attempts to establish a connection to the people by making

an appeal in the voice of a dying river with which people cherish fond memories. By interpreting

the river as "mother" who feeds and nurtures all living beings, the frames attempt at invoking

personal and emotional connections in addition to bringing in mythological references. Another

pamphlet published by PMVS identifies the problem they are fighting against and attributes the

blame on the industries and the PCB. The excerpt read:

> We are organizing a People's Convention on this World Environment Day protest against the adamant and haughty industries in the Eloor-Edayar industrial region, who are polluting Periyar, a river that sustains the life of many lakhs of people…This convention also aims

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[25] This letter was recovered while collecting and archiving the campaign material of PMVS. The letter was written by Yohannan Varappuzha, a leading member of the PMVS and dated June 19, 2000. This letter was widely circulated in the form of a pamphlet by the campaign.

[26]*Pokkali* is a GI tagged (Geographic Indication) e? and saline tolerant rice variety that is cultivated using aquaculture in the water-logged coastal regions. Pokkali rice and prawn cultivation are complementary, where the rice draws nutrients from prawn's excrement.

to chart out the plan for picketing the Pollution Control Board (PCB), in order to tame this white elephant who is facilitating the cruel and dismal act of industrial pollution….we are organizing this protest by standing on the side of the people affected by this menace…we will always stand by the people marginalized by this rabid approach to development…

Clearly distinguishing "us" fighters against pollution from "them" industrial polluters, the framing process identifies and delineates boundaries surrounding the identity and motives of the protagonists and the antagonists. (Gamson 1988; Gamson et al. 1992; Steuter 1992; Benford and Hunt 1994; Polletta and Ho 2006: 5). The pollution of the river and the lack of access to clean and safe drinking water have been crucial aspects of the diagnostic frames constructed by the green movements. Much of the grievance construction seeks to establish the existence of pollution and the potential danger involved in consuming water that contains high levels of toxic contaminants. The use of scientific findings embellishes the green movement's claims surrounding pollution. The combination of scientific evidence and stories of pollution garner the greens' frames "empirical credibility" and "experiential commensurability" (Snow and Benford 1988;1992; Benford and Snow 2000:619), thus making them more resonant among the people. A pamphlet published by PMVS on March 28, 2010, announcing a policy discussion on environmental issues stated:

> In 2010 January, the Ministry of Environment and Forest [MoEF] at the Center issued a statement detailing the findings of the study conducted in 43 industrial cities. The statement lists the Greater Cochin area as one among the heavily polluted regions…. On March 15, 2010, the Ministry informed that the Eloor-Edayar industrial area and Ambalamukal are the most polluted sites in Kochi…the region, including Eloor and Edayar, is ranked 24th among other critically polluted areas in India.

Using studies undertaken by the Central Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, PMVS seeks to draw the attention of the audience to the extent of pollution by highlighting the fact that the Eloor-Edayar region is ranked 24th among the list of "critically polluted areas" in India. The reference to scientific findings and studies in the construction of collective action frames is part of the strategy of activism adopted by the local environmental

movement, where it strives to combine "study and struggle" as discussed in the previous chapters. Scientific information that measures and quantifies the extent of pollution, nature, and toxicity of pollutants and ranking of the region among other polluted areas are used extensively to gain legitimacy and receive the attention of local audiences and media. Roopesh, a young and enthusiastic activist of the PMVS described how the accumulated wastes inside industrial units that were closed for violating environmental guidelines join the pollution bandwagon. In his words:

> If you come with me, I can show you plastic waste heaps inside the premises of Sree Sakthi Paper Mills...these are plastic waste mountains that span approximately 1 acre (43530 sq.ft)...and as tall as a three-floor building...I mean this is my approximate calculation. It was the photo of this waste heap that I had taken to the RDO during the discussion. It is still there and none of the politicians or party affiliates are asking the company to clear that out. PCB [Pollution Control Board] had put a notice asking someone to remove this waste for Rs.35 lakhs ($48,044), but no one took this offer. This plastic waste is slowly leaching into our drinking water. The Muppathadom Drinking Water plant is roughly 2.5 km (1.55 miles) away from the company's land. The waste will inevitably get into the drinking water, and all these people are consuming it. (Roopesh, member of PMVS, personal interview, May 27, 2018)

As explained in the above narrative, the closure of industries does not end the problem of leaking industrial wastes. Lack of proper enforcement of environmental regulations by a negligent PCB leads to the seepage of polluting materials into the river. The presence of state authorities such as the PCB highlights the issue of institutional power and the unequal access to such centers of power in the movement field occupied by unions and greens in the region. However, these claims surrounding the existence of pollution and the contamination of drinking water sources receive vehement attacks from the trade unions and industries. The SCTU systematically denies the claims surrounding the pollution of drinking water sources. Countering the claims about the influx of pollutants into the drinking water supply system, an excerpt from an article in the union newsletter denies this possibility altogether:

The stretch of the river that runs under the Pathaalam bund comprises only 2% of the entire river that is 244 kilometers long. The drinking water is not collected from this stretch. In other words, almost all major industries operate in the estuary area that amounts to only 2% of the entire length of this river…The water treatment plant in Alwaye, which provides drinking water to the Greater Cochin area is situated 15 kilometers above the industrial stretch of Periyar (the stretch of the river flowing through the industrial belt). People who spread lies like "The drinking water is poisoned" conveniently hide this fact. Framing stories about Periyar running to the East is like claiming that "a crow can fly upside-down" [a local adynaton, having meanings similar to the phrase "when pigs fly"]. (SCTU 2012:2)

The debates surrounding the flow of the river and the possibility of drinking water contamination highlight the extent to which the two movements engage in contesting claims. A sarcastic remark often made from the union collective regarding the contamination of drinking water sources was that "the river should jump quite a few bunds to make its way back into the drinking water pumping station" (Sunil 2013). When the greens explain how the pollutants flow to the drinking water supply station, the unions use the direction of flow as a condition that would negate this possibility of contamination altogether. The narratives by union leaders assert that it is impossible for the polluted stretch of the river to meet the unpolluted or cleaner stretch, whereas the green activists challenge this position by highlighting the fact that water gets pushed against its natural course during high tides and floods. This assumes significance in the context of the massive and devastating deluge that affected the state in August 2018, where the floodwaters filled the chemical industries and carried industrial effluents in and around the region. During an interview with a local television channel Kumar, the Research Coordinator of PMVS, described the effects of the flood as follows:

Finally, the flood that happened in 2018…it was different for us here because it was a toxic flood…The floodwater rose to around 7.5 feet in my home…so we had to leave home and when we returned there was silt deposited in and around my home…this was not ordinary silt, but silt containing toxic chemical pollutants. I have repainted my house, but still, acidic particles seep through the walls. If I keep a piece of cloth near the wall it would wither away, you know, because there is acid. That's why we call this toxic flooding. See, the flood water came inside or rather washed inside all the industries here…including industries like IRE that manage radioactive products…they manufacture uranium…when

the deluge happened here, IRE was flooded, and water flowed outside of this industry…without any doubt, this means that the water flowing outside of this industry contained radioactive materials…so this reached the lakes, rivers, and the homes that are in and around, right? Similarly, when HIL (Hindustan Insecticides Limited) was flooded…the BHC stored inside the factory reached our homes and water bodies…in other words, the flood here was highly toxic…we don't yet know about the possible environmental or health impacts of being exposed such chemical compounds, right?…so future alone can tell us the extent of the damage. (Kumar, a founding member of PMVS, Interview on *Malanadu News,* February 19, 2019)

This excerpt also highlights the increased vulnerability of the region to natural disasters. The looming crises of climate change increase the incidence and intensity of such erratic weather events for countries such as India. This contest over reality expands to influence the ways in which the movements understand and perceive the river. The SCTU attempts to legitimize its denial of drinking water contamination and pollution at large by highlighting the zoning of the river and how that ensures the safety of the water pumped through the drinking water supply station (SCTU 2012). Advocate Aseef, a member of the legal counsel representing the green movements, expressed his dismay and frustration as he talked about the unscientific and unrealistic classification of the River Periyar into various zones based on "designated best use".

The State Pollution Control Board always makes an absurd averment that river water in the Eloor–Edayar industrial area at the tail end of Eloor branch of river Periyar, within 1 km from the confluence point is classified as "E" class and best designated for irrigation, industrial cooling, and controlled waste disposal and not for domestic purpose. Can we compartmentalize and classify a river based on the whims and fantasies of the mighty exploiters of its water?.... Though it seems possible to sort the river into separate compartments or zones, the river is an entity much larger than that conception…the river is a comprehensive flow of organic life that cannot be confined into compartments…it flows. And by the time we have this realization, there will be no river left to save…by then, Periyar will just be a river that exists in the pages of history. (Adv. Aseef, lawyer, personal interview, June 15, 2018)

The greens have openly responded and called out the union's "impossibility thesis" using multiple examples and explanations. One of the prominent instances used by the green activists is the increase in salinity levels in drinking water supplies during high tides. Recollecting an instance

of verbal altercation with the Chairman of the PCB through telephone, Anas, a middle-aged member of *Janajagratha* (People's Vigilante) stated this:

> During the conversation, he told me that the river water is not polluted, and I asked him if he can prove that. He repeated the same line that the pump house is kilometers away. I pointed out to him that we had salty water in our pipes last year, that salty water can get here only through the regulator if water can from that side to this side, it's quite possible that water flows from here to there. All these hazardous wastes are getting into the pumping station because there are huge deposits in the river. Then the Chairman told that this river won't run to the east. Yes, that's true, but what happens when there is a high tide. It will get mixed, and the river will move to the east. All these chemical and hazardous wastes are getting mixed into the drinking water. Then he told me that I shouldn't try and be a scientist and then we started shouting at each other. (Anas, member of Janajagratha, personal interview, July 6, 2018)

The claims and counter-claims narrated above respectively attempt to accept and deny the contamination of drinking water sources by industrial effluents. By relying on the direction of flow of the river the unions seek to establish that it is impossible for the river to flow against its usual course (east to west) and thus, rejects the claims about contamination citing that the river does not flow from west to east. Contrary to this, the Greens argue that it is not easy for us to classify the river into zones and then order the river to maintain its flows complying with our zoning. In their views, the river is a flowing water body that seldom remains within the boundaries we draw. Citing the influx of saline water during high tides and the elevation of water levels during floods, the green activists seek to point out the issues of SCTU's claim that the river water will never flow backward (to reach the drinking water supply system). And this explanation assumes greater significance because a deluge hit the state in August 2018. During this natural calamity, floodwaters rose to historic levels and washed out the input stocks of almost all chemical industries in the region. As narratives convey, the SCTU and green movements are at once trying to persuade two versions of reality surrounding the issue of drinking water contamination, thereby engaging

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in an ontological dispute. When the green movements strive to establish the contamination of drinking water as a problem, SCTU completely rejects the possibility of any contamination. In short, these debates over pollution uncover an ontological dispute where the movements debate reality through their respective movement frames.

A River that Flows in Many Colors: Exploring the disputes regarding the causes of pollution

"Periyar River Turns Black Again", "No end to discoloration of Periyar" were some of the title used in reports describing the visible effects of pollution in River Periyar in leading newspapers (*The Times of India*, 2018; *The Hindu* 2019). These titles signify how the river remains as a symbol or indicator of pollution in the region. As discussed in the previous chapters, the photographs of River Periyar running in many colors played a significant role in gaining support for the cause from the media and mainstream society. The river stands as a testimony to the years of industrial pollution that happened in the Eloor-Edayar region. Discoloration of the river and fish kills have been two manifest effects or visible indicators of the release of industrial discharges into the river[27] (The Times of India 2017; Narayanan 2019). The unions and green movements drift apart and create competing explanations while trying to pin down the causes for these environmental anomalies. They attribute the blame for the discoloration of the river and fish kills on different actors and entities.

According to the local environmental movement, the discoloration of the river is the one of most discernible effects of the release of untreated industrial effluents into the river. "The river

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[27] For more details of specific incidents see Paul and Pillai (1978), Patra (2014)*The New Indian Express (*2017), *The Times of India* (2019).

was running in 365 colors in 365 days and that's when we decided to jump in and do something to

stop this", commented Maqbool a green activist when asked about the many shades of the river.

Figure 4: An aerial image of River Periyar flowing in Different Colors
Courtesy: Sainudheen Edayar

The river no longer runs discolored year-round as the number of such effects have come

down drastically as part of the astute interventions from the local environmental activists. In the

words of Shibu:

> The river we see today is not the same as the one I had seen 10 years ago...because then
> (10 years back) the river runs in a different color every day...immediately after the color of
> the river changes, someone would call us, there will be hue and cry...then we all will go to
> PCB...fights, issues, altercations, arguments, cases etc...all of that has changed now…we
> have come a long way ahead...and that has happened because of our activities...no
> politician or political party can make any claims about the changes here. I mean, even if
> they take credit we don't mind...all we want is to see the river run clear...that's our only
> aim, that the river runs clear and people get clean drinking water. (Shibu, local
> environmentalist, personal interview, May 10, 2018)

The improvement in the local environmental quality is ascribed to the relentless fights and

struggles carried by the local environmental movement. As discussed in the preceding chapters,

ranging from the regulation of industrial discharges, installation of effluent treatment plants and

the distribution of free-drinking water to the local people, the environmental movement has accomplished many positive outcomes in the region. However, despite these substantive changes, the river continues to flow in many colors and the green activists attribute this to the release of untreated effluents into the river through hidden discharge pipes installed by the industries. The photograph attached below was published by *Deccan Chronicle* a newspaper (printed in English) that reported the changing color of the river and massive fish-kills on April 9, 2019.

Figure 5: Industrial Effluents spreading across the river water
Published in *Deccan Chronicle*, April 9, 2019

The narratives produced by the green activists assign the blame of discoloration on one industry in particular, the TMRL company. The green activists made many attempts to identify and unearth the discharge pipes hidden by this industry, but the factory workers stalled all such efforts by barricading the industrial premises. After repeated instances of discoloration Binu, a green activist and the leader of Green Action Force, filed a petition before the court. The court issued an order vesting power on him to monitor the river and collect samples so as to identify potential industries that breach the zero discharge guidelines. He monitored the river in a country

boat and many local environmental activists volunteered to help him in this venture. Recollecting one such instance of helping this process of narrowing down source of discharges Roopesh described:

> So, one day on my way back from work, I stopped at the pathalam bridge as I could see Binu chettan and his boat. I stopped there, waved at him…I told him that I will join him down. I parked my bike and went to the boat …Soon as we reached a point where we spotted discoloration a couple months ago, I told him, "*Chetta*[28], I think I have a doubt. Let's dig this area and see what we find". We dropped the anchor and moved forward. The anchor suddenly got stuck on something. There was something beneath for sure. We had an expert in underwater diving on our boat. He confirmed that "there's a pipe". I asked him to locate the other end of the pipe. The pipe was running till the center of the river. The pipe started at TMRL's compound and ran till the center of the river. They had hidden the pipe under the riverbed. It was hard for him [the diver] to stay underwater as it was night. I asked him to go one more time and see if he can get some material at the end of the pipe. I was pretty sure that there will be clay as that's CMRL's main discharge. I told Binu *chettan* to not tell anyone and asked the diver to mark the location using a white thermocole tied to a brick. Binu tried to unearth this pipe next day morning in front of officials and a representative from the court, but the workers attacked. (Roopesh, member of PMVS, personal interview, May 27, 2018)

The discharge from TMRL is held responsible for the changing colors of the river. In addition to TMRL, leather and other pharmaceutical industries have also made to the greens' list of industries polluting the river (Joseph, 2019). However, the unions completely deny the claim that the change in color of the river has anything to do with industrial discharge. According to Dixon a union representative, the discoloration is an issue staged by the green activists to maintain the issue of pollution live and active. He opined that "we have clear evidence to implicate the green activists in connection to the discoloration. They bring chemicals in bottles and mix them in the river and orchestrate all of this…they are creating the discoloration." Abu a local environmental activist brushed aside the allegations pertaining to sabotage by stating that, "they allege that we

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[28] *Chettan* refers to elder brother in Malayalam. This term is used to refer to all older men irrespective of being blood related or not. The word signifies respect given to age.

carried chemicals in a bottle and poured it in the river. I mean it must have made more sense to say that we dumped a barrel full of chemicals…because only such massive amounts can cause discoloration over a massive stretch of river". Such incidents uncover the frames and counterframes produced by the two movements while trying to settle the debate surrounding pollution. One of the key strategies of denial deployed by the unions include counterframing tactics that aim at challenging and discrediting the green activists. An article written by a union leader actively defends TMRL by shifting the blame on to the plots orchestrated by the local environmental movement. An excerpt from the article reinforce the above argument:

> Green activists have fabricated images by using digital technology to paint the clean water released from company drains in green. They then used these pictures to frame news reports against the company…Most environmentalists are ready to stoop to any levels to implicate the company…Later, it was proved that the photograph was fabricated during an investigation conducted by the PCB. The PCB also confirmed that this was not water released from TMRL's drain (how can they do that from a photograph). So, there is an active conspiracy to dismantle this company. Despite many failed attempts such plots are ongoing. (Gopinath 2012: 18)

In addition to denying the responsibility of industries the Standing Council actively pursues a strategy to deflect the cause of pollution on to other factors. Over the course of years, the union frames have transformed from complete denial to selective denial, where the frames accept the claim that River Periyar is polluted and that the pollution can be traced to sources other than the industries. According to the SCTU newsletter the poor quality of water in the river can be attributed to many factors other than the industries. Narrowing down the factors causing pollution an article in the newsletter pointed out that:

> The changes in the river ecosystem are not caused entirely by the industries. The main reasons for reduced water flows are the decline in rainfall, and the multiple hydro-electric projects constructed across the river. The reduced flow is primarily responsible for the changes in water quality, the diversity of aquatic organisms, availability of fishes, and the infiltration of saline water. In other words, even if there were no industries all these issues would remain. However, it is impossible to eliminate any of these causes. For example, electricity generation, irrigation, drinking water supply are all inevitable things for a

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modern society. Similarly, plantations, the use of pesticides are all necessary. The booming construction sector adversely affected the river. The untreated wastewater from nearby hospitals, theaters, flats etc. are flowing to the river and that has adversely affected the quality of water. (Environment Cell 2012)

As demonstrated in the narrative above, the SCTU and union members have adopted a strategy of denial and deflection as they discuss the issue of pollution and river discoloration. The allegiance to industries is conveyed through the movement frames, and many a times the frames created by the union collective have close semblances to the claims made by the industries. A careful comparison of the booklets published by the Standing Council, articles written by union leaders and pamphlets published by the industries demonstrates a coherence in terms of the frames used against the green movement. This frame coherence points us to the wider connections between industries and the framing processes of the union and green movements in this context. The influence of industries and the PCB in constructing the union frames highlight the influence of the political economy of development and industrialization in constructing movement frames. Further the Standing Council at times declare their allegiance to particular industries while framing narratives of denial. Responding to the allegations surrounding the release of untreated effluents from TMRL and the resultant change of color, an article in one of the booklets circulated by the Standing Council state that:

> When the river changed color in 2003, the green activists attacked TMRL by declaring war on the company. They were soon disappointed when another company came forward and took on the blame for the discoloration of the river. The management confessed that the change in color was caused by acids and furnace oil released from the company.

The effort to draw connections between pollution to industries other than TMRL substantiate the claims made by green movements regarding the strong nexus between Standing Council and this industry. The above excerpt carefully absolves TMRL from the responsibility of pollution by tactfully implicating other industries operating along the banks of the river. In other

words, the union collective is concerned more about the interests of certain industries and hence, work towards portraying such industries in a positive light. Such construction of grievances alludes to the role of industries and its logics of profits in influencing the frames constructed by the unions while aiming to damage and attack the credibility of the green movements. As an extension of the discussion in the preceding chapter, the alliance of the Standing Council with the industries conveys the complexities underlying the conflictual relationship between unions and green movements.

What kills the fish?

Another discernible effect of river pollution has been fish kills. The release of untreated and toxic effluents into the river often results in massive fish kill along the industrial stretch of the river. Recollecting memories about the largest fish kills that happened in River Periyar, Ibrahim noted:

> On June 11, 1998 fish kills happened in Eloor. This was unlike any other incidents that happened in the region before…this particular instance that happened during the monsoons was the largest in the history of Periyar…around 5 crores (50 million USD) worth of fishes were killed in the river for over a stretch of 12 kms (7.5 miles). Big fishes, I mean fishes that were as big as adult human beings were among those that were killed.(Ibrahim, member of PMVS, personal interview, July 10, 2018)

Such massive fish kills were often treated as an indicator of the abysmal quality of water and its adverse effects on the river ecosystem. However, the Standing Council and union members maintain a different perspective regarding the origin and causes of fish kills. According to Periyar Action Plan, a document published by the Standing Council:

> *Fish kills have been reported from the river Periyar as well as many other rivers in Kerala. This has always have been attributed to industrial pollution, by the public as well as a section of the media. The exact reason of fish kills could not be found out so far. It is easy to blame industries for all evils because they are inherently polluting.* Presence of toxic chemicals from industrial or agricultural discharges, sudden environmental changes during

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the onset of monsoon, depletion of dissolved oxygen due to the dumping of organic wastes like seepage or a combination of these factors can be the possible reasons for fish kills. A detailed investigation is required to find out the exact reason of fish kill in the river Periyar before jumping into conclusions or pointing fingers. [Italics added](Environment Cell, SCTU 2012: 3)

Figure 6: A person holding dead fish that float on the surface of the river due to pollution. Published in *The New Indian Express,* 9 April 2019.

Fish kills are not a thing of the past. On 7th April 2019 the river Periyar flowed in a different color and dead fish covered the surface of the river. The green activists protested the visible effects of pollution and poor water quality by posting images of River Periyar that flowed in multiple colors during a week. The activists also used the Live feature on Facebook to spread the live coverage of pollution to the outside world. Confirming the narrative presented by the unions, the Chairman of the Kerala State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) issued the following press release:

> We have already informed the two municipalities of this and will shortly issue directions to them to ready sewage-treatment plants at the earliest. This is because fish kill is more probable due to the discharge of untreated sewage into the waterbody upstream than due to effluents from factories being discharged downstream… Eutrophication of the Periyar

and the regulator [bunds] that restrict tidal flushing during summer are leading to fish kill. (Paul, 2019)

In other words, the Standing Council and the State PCB join hands in deflecting the blame away from industries onto other factors such as "algal bloom" (The Hindu 2019; The News Minute 2019), "sewage problems", "eutrophication" and "low oxygen levels". The careful elimination of industrial pollutants or any mention of industries exposes the vigil deployed by the industries, union and PCB to not implicate industries or render them culpable for the observed effects of pollution in the river. The frame disputes regarding the existence and cause of pollution clearly articulate the ontological disputes replete in the construction of reality by the two movement groups. Both the movements seek to establish competing versions surrounding the prevalence and causes of pollution and the condition of the River Periyar. As observed by Esacove (2004), the framing and counterframing processes are interactive here, as the two movements attempt to imbue "pollution" with such meanings that will motivate direct action to "support their overarching political goals."

Save Periyar Vs. Save Industries: Ideological Disputes in Frames

The frame disputes between unions and the green movements contest over the issue of "pollution" and draw meaning from different values, interests and ideologies (Esacove 2004; Mooney and Hunt 1996; Benford 1997). Distinguishing between frames and ideologies, Oliver and Johnston (2000) point out that ideology move beyond cognitive focus to include normative and value dimensions. These ideologies transcend beyond the level of the individual to include aspects of the economy, the political economy of development, jobs, the environment and industrialization. This section demonstrates how the frame disputes between unions and the green movements are ideological in nature, where the contests are also over the value hierarchies and

beliefs that produce a distinct theory of society and social events for each of these movements. Unions and green movements make sense of and interpret the idea and process of development in very different ways, which manifest as frame-disputes.

The frames constructed by the unions call for actions to "save the industries" from the ulterior motives and the attacks of the green movements. A clear divide exists between the unions and the environmental movement in their approaches to understanding the connections between the environment and the processes of industrial development. While discussing the conflicts with the green movements, Raheem, a union leader complained that the green movements portray the industries as "anti-environmental":

> There is a calculated attempt to portray industries in Kerala as anti-environmental…such an atmosphere is being created so that it becomes difficult for industries to operate in the state. This is mainly aimed at stalling/impeding all production activities in the state. Kerala is a commercial state… a consumer state that depends on other states and even other countries for everything ranging from salt to camphor. The attempts to hinder whatever little industrial production in the state and import these very products from outside are part of a hidden agenda operated by some outside monopolies. (Raheem, union leader, personal interview, May 23, 2018)

The narrative portrays environmentalism as a form of activism that jeopardizes the process of production, industrialization and commerce. In addition to observing that the green movements are driven by "anti-industrial" spirits, it also alleges that they are funded by rival industries seeking to gain monopoly over the production operations and markets. The local environmental movement repeatedly state that their mobilization is not against industries, but against polluting the environment with toxic and hazardous product. In the words of Kumar:

> We have never taken a stand against industries or have asked for their close downs. We have never said anywhere that we do not want industries!! Though we are not against industries, the advancements in science, technology and progress urge us to rethink about industries…which also implies that we have to phase out a few industries…For example, consider DDT, the global community decided not to use DDT and Endosulphan. Such decisions stem from international campaigns and realizations that Endosulphan is a genotoxin. When such incidents happen, many industries must abandon the production of

deadly chemicals. That should be a welcome step in our way to progress. There are some Sunset industries; we may have to abandon such industries. But at the same time, an industry becomes a meaningful activity when we can create new job opportunities through restructuring and revamping of industrial operations. I mean we cannot be adamant and say that we will only produce Urea or DDT. We have to re-think and re-imagine the products and production mechanisms in a timely manner. (Kumar, Research Coordinator of PMVS, personal interview, May 26, 2018)

The description above underlies the stand adopted by the local environmental movement on industries and pollution. When the Standing Council labels the green movement as a movement "against industries" the greens clearly explain that they are not fighting industries, but their fight is against and pollution and the production of pesticides that pose serious threat to the health and well-being of people as well as the environment. The conflict in narratives moves to the conceptual and ideational terrains of the economy and economic growth and their complicated relationship with the environment. When inquired about a potential impasse between development and the environment, Akbar, a union representative stated that:

Environment and development are like two beads in a necklace. Both are important, and we need to strike a healthy balance between the two. Ours is a small state, we need industries and we need to protect our environment. Development can take many forms. If we look at industrial development…has our state's environment suffered from industrial development? No. The destruction of the environment in our state is not due to industrial development. The wetlands and paddy fields in our state face destruction from builders. Construction activities are taking a toll on our environment. The environmental damage due to industries in our state is scant…a very small percentage of loss when compared to the total. (Akbar, member of PMVS, personal interview, May 27, 2018)

Despite presenting as two equally important beads in a necklace, the unions clearly prefer one bead over the other. A booklet published by the Standing Council carried the title, My Periyar, My Industry: We Need Both (2012, *Ente Periyar Ente Vyavassayam: Venam Namukku Randum*). This title conveys the increased attention devoted to discussing the interactions between industries and the environment within the union collective. An excerpt from an article in this booklet argues that, "There is no alternative to drinking water and jobs. We cannot let anyone rob us off these

necessities. Land, air, water, agriculture, development, and jobs-- these are all birth rights. There are intricate connections between the river that is the source of our drinking water and industries, which offer us jobs." (Gopinath 2012:3). This statement carefully equates jobs and drinking water as necessities. The tactful framing call development and jobs as "birth rights" in an attempt to call its denial as an issue of injustice and portray the conflict as a trade-off between jobs and the environment. Attempts to introduce river as a source of both drinking water and industries expose the strategic counterframing tactics employed by the unions, where they hone their frames to include "river" so as to resonate with people who care for the river. Also, by explicating the river as a source of both drinking water and industries, the unions strive hard to attack the frames of the green movement calling to save the river from the imminent dangers posed by the chemical industries and pollution. The Standing Council actively works to feature the ongoing tensions in the region as a trade-off between *jobs vs. the environment*. In fact, the concern of workers constitutes a major aspect of the counterframes constructed by the Standing Council to challenge the green movements and their frames surrounding pollution. Pitting jobs against the environment, Ganesh, a union leader states that "…new industries are inevitable to offer gainful employment to a pool of workers. Derailing the growth of industries in the name of the environment cannot be tolerated…environment is important, of course, we certainly have to preserve Kerala's rivers and Kerala's paddy lands…but to dismantle industries in the name of environment will do little good for industrial development." As argued in this excerpt, the unions suggest that the preservation of the rivers should not be done at the expense of industrial development. Union narratives are replete with such attempts to categorize the impasse between pollution and development as a requital between jobs and the environment. The terms used to describe the green movement included "environmental fundamentalists", "eco-terrorists" and "anti-developmentalist". Clearly, the

standing council expounds an ideology of development that is grounded in economic determinism that fails to consider nature as part of the equation and relegates such concerns as less important.

Talking about the alternative model of industrial development suggested by the environmental movement, Kumar (the leader of the green movements) reaffirmed the need to think about diversifying the existing industries. In his opinion, "Diversification alone can bring new initiatives and new jobs. This has been the concept we have been trying to implement in Eloor. Despite that the parities on the other side are not able to see this in a tolerant manner. That's the biggest danger. Instead of exploring options to diversify or engage in a dialogue to ameliorate the issues, they are in a rush to label our movement as 'anti-development' or 'anti-industries'."

Explaining their stand on development, Akbar, a member of the green movement highlighted the need to "redefine our conception of development" as the current model caters only to the interests of "corporate capitalism". Defining the possibilities of an alternative model of development, Kumar pointed out the need to embrace a sustainable mode of development that is based on "production and not speculation". The call to reimagine development is guided by a vision to strengthen the primary sector of the economy, agriculture. According to Kumar, "we need to focus on the cultivation of food crops…as a society we need to make a choice among deadly industrial products vs. safe and organic food." Rooted in an ideology of progress defined in terms of agrarian self-sufficiency and environmental sustainability, the movement calls for a revamping of the system and structures to create and nurture expertise to bolster a sustainable, safe and organic agrarian practices. Connecting this alternative approach to envisioning development, Muneer, an avid reader and movie enthusiast in the green group, explained how the current model of development goes against the spirits of the state and hence, is likely to soon become a liability:

> Kerala is called "The God's own Country" …so when you envision to bring development here, such practices should not destroy this place and its people…rather it should nurture

the things that make Kerala God's own country. We don't have to be adamant about defining development in terms of building four lane roads…development can come as three lane roads…neither do we have to be resolute about defining development in terms of having more vehicles on the streets…I mean we are going to face a period of environmental crises and we cannot afford to put more vehicles on the streets of our state… and we have to envision development by figuring in the many constraints we face as a state…there is a limit until which we can build roads…some companies here were forced to close when pollution became a liability…similarly, this model of development is soon going to become a liability for us…development should not become a liability for us…(Muneer, a member of PMVS, personal interview, May 13, 2018)

As discussed in the preceding chapters, the plunder of nature in the name of progress is considered (by the greens) as an aberration that derails the state from its own much acclaimed model of egalitarian development, the *Kerala Model*. The excerpt highlights the differential priorities with which different stakeholders approach development, both as idea and practice. As Mohseen, a local environmental activist opined, "when drinking water becomes an issue…we should not obsess over economic growth…we should not be blinded by this mindless pursuit for rabid development where we fill up the wetlands and paddy field to build roads and airports." The disconnect between the economy and the environment also gets reflected in the ways in which the two movements construct meaning surrounding the river and its purposes (Schnaiberg 1980). The dissimilar weightage attributed to economic progress and environmental conservation becomes apparent as the two movements explicate what the river means to them. According to the union representatives constituting the Standing Council, the primary function of the river is as a sink. In the words of a union leader, "the industries came here, because of the river Periyar…water remains crucial for the production processes…millions of tons (gallons) of water get taken from and released back into the river everyday". The function of the river as a crucial input in the production process and as a sink to collect the industrial effluents are central to the frames produced by the unions. In one of the newsletters published by the unions, the river was interpreted as follows, "Life originated in water. All human civilizations flourished on the banks of rivers and lakes. So

is the case with industrial development. Water and electricity are two essential requirements of all kinds [of] industries. Many of the industrial belts are developing along the river banks." (*Karmapadham* 2012: 3). A utilitarian approach stands out from these narratives where water gains value from its role in creating electricity or in providing the necessary circumstances for carrying out industrial production. Thus, the river assumes value from its significance in the process of production or energy generation, hence, is tied to the economic role it fulfills in the schema of economic development.

A comparative analysis of the two sets of narratives produced around industries and development by these two movement groups reveals that the Standing Council discerns the "fight against pollution" as a "fight against industries", whereas the green movements reiterate their standpoint that their movement is not against industries but "against pollution". The opposing narratives explicate the differential focus of the two movements, where the unions narrowly focus on the economic and monetary aspects of production, the green movements adopt a broader framework to understand the operation of industries in conjunction with its impact on nature and the people. This divergent view also stems from the disparate value hierarchies guiding the two movement groups. The thematic discussions spanning these narratives can be read as a "tug of war" between the economy and the environment. The union narratives echo a deterministic understanding of industries and the economy that is fixated around monetary aspects and interests such as jobs, wage, profits etc. These descriptions are devoid of any consideration about the negative externalities of industrial production on the environment. In other words, it is possible to read these conflicts as a conflict of ideology, where the two movement groups work towards establishing their respective ideologies pertaining to the idea of development and economic progress. And the excerpts clearly indicate that the unions adopt an ideology of "development as

progress" tying largely into the neoliberal and capitalistic understandings of economic growth and development.

COUNTERFRAMING STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

The union collective, Standing Council of Trade Unions, gained significance and attracted media attention after it started attacking the frontline leaders and goals set by the local environmental movements. The revival of the trade union collective must be conceived as a countermovement aimed solely at contesting the frames constructed by the green movement. The organization was revamped in a context where the local environmental movement accomplished positive movement outcomes[29] (success) in the form of institutional and judicial intervention to curb the effects of industrial pollution. This section identifies the major counterframing strategies and themes employed by the Standing Council to damage the local environmental movement.

I argue that using a series of accusations and allegations, the standing council resorts to attacking the credibility of the frontline leaders, challenges the legitimacy of the movement goals and actively seeks to demobilize the green movement. The major counterframing strategies identified include discrediting the leaders of the green movement and the movement goals through smear campaigns, delegitimizing the movement by levelling allegations pertaining to nationalism and receiving funding from foreign organizations, damaging the credibility of the members by gathering "dirt" and stigmatizing the members by labelling them "extremists". Using the tags of "pseudo environmentalism". "anti-nationalists", "imperial agents", and "extremists", the

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[29]Mottl (1980) and Zald and Useem (1987) explain how countermovement emerges as a response to the success achieved by the movement.

counterframes used by the Standing Council damage the reputation of the green movement and its members.

"Pseudo environmentalism": Discrediting the Green Movement and Activists

One of the prominent counterframing strategies used by the unions to damage and discredit the environmental movement is to tag the actions of the greens as "pseudo-environmentalism". Such counterframes deployed by the Standing council seek to denigrate the greens by creating a binary between real and faux environmentalists and calling the local environmental activists the latter. Disparaging the green movement Mohammed, a local union leader stated:

> Within Kerala, in general, there's a very conscious attempt to portray industries as an adversary and get listed as one among the state's nemesis. The pseudo environmentalists, who claim to be environmental advocates and activists, have played a huge role in spreading such a narrative. It is very normal for industries to cause environmental pollution. The government has instituted PCB to prevent and regulate such pollution from industries and the board has been operating to curb environmental pollution. (Mohammed, union leader, personal interview, June 4, 2018)

The excerpt above illustrates the ways in which unions frame the actions of the local green movement as deliberate attempts to "portray industries as an adversary". By setting the green movements against the industries, the Standing Council argue that the principles of environmentalism guiding the local green movement are ungenuine. In addition to normalizing industrial pollution, the frames allege that the greens indulge in unfair targeting of industries "that comply with all the guidelines put forward by the PCB". Critiquing the green movement, a local union representative remarked that, "their strategy is simple…first they will call a goat a dog and then they will argue that this dog a rabid dog only to kill it" (SCTU 2012: 7). In other words, the claims constructed by the union collective allege that the fake environmentalism guiding the greens victimizes and maligns the industries. The counterframes strive to establish that the industries that

were issued closure notice (including Sree Shakthi Paper Mills) are "victims" of this pseudo-environmentalist practices adopted by the local environmental movement. Adopting a moderate approach, a senior union leader explicated that the unions are not against the environment but oppose what he termed as "environmental fundamentalism":

> See the common man is suffering from the pollution or the pollutants released from the industries…the only thing they would want is an escape route or a solution that could stop pollution. Tapping on this sentiment, environmental fundamentalists are organizing these people, exploiting their fear and sufferings and are then blackmailing the industries…such environmental fundamentalists will leave the scene of protest soon as they receive money…the common man remains there, so does his problem with pollution. (Madhu, union leader, personal interview, June 7, 2018)

In sum, the counterframes vilify the green activists by depicting them as "ungenuine and malevolent advocates" (Vanderford 1989:166; McCaffrey and Keys 2000). McCaffrey and Keys (2000) terms this strategy as "vilification", where a movement frames "an adversary as corrupt, hypocritical or a reprobate" so that the alleging movement can present itself as "a moral agent fighting against evil" (McCaffrey and Keys 2000:44).

"Funded Activism": Alleging Foreign Linkages

Highlighting the spurious nature of green activism, the unions complain about the participation of frontline leaders of the environmental movement in international conferences including the ones organized by international organizations such as the United Nations and International Labor Organization (ILO) (SCTU 2012). Levelling allegations of suspicious international linkages against the frontline leaders of the green movement, Padmanabhan the Chairperson of Standing Council observed that:

> Kumar had gone abroad to attend conferences like the ILO conference...and many other environmental conferences…yes, he went to Stockholm conference. In reality, these papers he presents in such conferences are against the Third World Countries...they are written in

a way to help developed-capitalist countries as they oppose domestic industries and other local enterprises. These papers carry very negative arguments and campaign against our industries. His negative campaign is sponsored by international agencies such as the Greenpeace. These people have certain agendas. (Padmanabhan, union leader, personal interview, May 21, 2018)

The strategic representation of the standoff between unions and green movements as a North-South issue is apparent in these narratives, where the union member argues that the papers presented by the green leader are against the interests of "Third World Countries". Unions characterized these papers and participation as attempts to help "developed capitalist countries" to destroy domestic industries. The frames tactfully twisted the "us" versus "them" narrative constructed by the green movement, by othering the environmentalists as "outsiders" who align with foreign forces trying to dismantle the local economy and industries. The unions further challenge the demands and goals set by the green movements by accusing that they are inspired by "foreign agendas".

Such claims of suspicion are levelled against the environmental movement citing their connections with Greenpeace, an international Environmental Non-governmental Organization (ENGO). Greenpeace has been one of the initial organizations to step in and offer technical and scientific help to the local environmental movements to quantify and measure the extent of pollution. Ever since its initial intervention, Greenpeace has remained as a center focus of the counterframes produced by the unions against the greens. Sharing concerns about Greenpeace's role in creating schisms in the region, Krishnan, a union representative commented:

> Greenpeace is deadlier than PMVS (*Periyar Malineekarana Virudha Samithi*), I would say. They have set up some sponsored organizations here. We must be wary of these international organizations. See they care less to agitate against the industries on the banks of the Danube river, a river into which almost all these industries open their discharge pipes...they will remain silent there but will come here to fight against pollution and declare Eloor as a toxic hotspot. (Krishnan, union leader, personal interview, May 30, 2018)

Interestingly, the excerpt above accuses Greenpeace for unfairly focusing on the environmental issues in developing countries, while refusing to intervene in the industrial pollution of River Danube. In 1999 Greenpeace declared Eloor as a toxic-hotspot and this has remained landmark event in the history of the local environmental movement. This tag helped in gaining legitimacy to the claims made by the local environmental movement by offering scientific evidence that reaffirmed the extent and damage of industrial pollution. Problematizing the linkages to foreign organizations and participation in international conferences the unions claim that the green movements received funds from foreign organizations. Explicating the foreign connections, Indran, a union leader claimed that, "these movements focus only on industries completely omitting all other causes because they are busy focusing on collecting funds from imperial and foreign organizations such as Greenpeace, Ford Foundation etc. to destroy industries in our country." He further argued that the mobilization of the greens are based on "faulty reports" prepared by western organizations that stand "banned for engaging in anti-national activities" cannot be considered as an activity that "serves the interest of our nation".

The union collective draws heavily from the existing political frames that have been historically used by the communist movement in the state. Frames opposing the "imperialist agenda" and capitalism have gained traction and resonate well with the people in Kerala, particularly among affiliates of the Communist Party (CPM and CPI). Hence, by representing the environmental movement as traitors using "foreign funded" or "spies of the empire" the unions strategize its counterframes in a way to garner the attention of such left constituents who continue to apprehend Western intervention to derail the domestic communist movement. Responding to the allegations regarding foreign linkages, a booklet published by PMVS stated:

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Unions label our members as "agents of the empire" and allege that we resort to "imperial spy work", implementing "a conspiracy to dismantle domestic industries" and call us anti-nationals. Our organization has always stood by the oppressed and marginalized people in the society and to attach such labels on our activism is disheartening. Time alone can tell on which side are they standing. The people who unleash such campaigns should remember that we were part of the anti-privatization movements organized in many industrial units including F.A.C.T.(PMVS 2012)

Reiterating its commitment to the struggles of people at the margin, the excerpt expresses their dismay over the negative frames that question the green movements' allegiance to egalitarian and anti-capitalist sentiments. Citing an exemplar, where the greens stood by the unions and factory workers to resist the move to privatize public sector enterprises, the environmental movement seeks to demonstrate its continued solidarity to anti-capitalist ethos. Here, the green movement strives hard to depict itself as a movement not inspired by imperial agendas but guided by the politics of emancipation. Apparent in these frames, is the ideological disputes surrounding the political economy of development in the state where the two movements compete to secure a position in the long legacy of emancipatory movements in Kerala. Invoking the nationalist rhetoric, the Standing Council engages in the active pursuit to depict the greens as committing treason by working against the interest of the nation. The counterframes and frames also elucidate the interactive nature of framing processes, where the frames evolve in a dialectic manner.

"Their campaign is based on fearmongering": Denying the Effects of Pollution

The Standing Council alleges that the green movements spread fear about pollution and then tap on this fear to mobilize people to fight against the industries. The narratives argue that the greens adopt a tactic of "fearmongering" to garner adherents' support for their movement and thus, accuse them of moral relegation for exploiting the emotions and sentiments of the local people. In the context of the framing and counterframing disputes between the two movements,

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scientific studies and findings were not exempt from debates. The disputes between the two movements challenged the "objectivity" of scientific facts by subjecting the findings of the same study to divergent interpretations.

According to the Standing Council, the local environmental movements exaggerated the effects of pollution using the frame of "scientific facts" on pollution. One of the prominent counterframing strategy adopted by the union collective was to challenge the narratives constructed by the environmentalists by co-opting this frame of "objective scientific facts." Attempting to downplay the effects of pollution, the union collective argued that the results of the scientific studies cited by the green movements are biased. Tying this argument to other national organizations that frame scientific studies critical of chemical industries and pesticides as "biased-analysis," the Standing Council expressed its apprehension on the scientific evidence used by the green movement. The counterframes that challenged the greens interpretation of existing studies produced diametrically opposite interferences of the same scientific results. For example, the findings of a follow-up study conducted by Greenpeace (2003) comparing the health outcomes of the people in Eloor with a reference group in a nearby Panchayath, Pindimana,[30] received competing and contradictory interpretations from the two movements. The environmentalists had used this survey to highlight the higher incidence of many chronic diseases, including cancer among the people in the industrial region when compared to the reference group (Gopinath, 2012). However, the unions hold a very different perspective and argument pertaining to this study and its findings. In the words of Imtiaz, the Secretary of Standing Council:

> One of the prominent slogans used to garner attention was "The alarming surge in the number of cancer patients in Eloor." This title was soon taken up by most media houses and news dailies…In fact, we had to write an article to counter this claim as such biased news and faulty claims are adversely affecting the people here…the workers and their

[30] Pindimana is a nearby Panchayath that matched the socio-demographic and geographic characteristics of Eloor.

families… They spread fear among people by claiming that the consumption of polluted water caused kidney ailments in around 13600 people in this region. What they have actually done is this, they have blown up the number of dialysis done by 257 kidney patients in this region. Earlier they had claimed that the number of cancer patients is increasing in this region. However, a comparative study conducted between Eloor and Pindimana, a panchayath with no industries, found that the number of cancer patients is higher in Pindimana. (Imtiaz, union leader, personal interview, June 5, 2018)

According to the Standing Council, the green movements resort to fearmongering by overestimating the number of people with chronic ailments. The excerpt also argues that the comparative survey finds a higher incidence of cancer in Pindimana when compared to Eloor. Nevertheless, the study and findings receive a different interpretation in the campaign materials produced by PMVS. According to Kumar, the leader of PMVS the findings of this study can be summarized as follows:

> The study basically looked into the health impacts of pollution among the people in Eloor by focusing on nine wards. The study was conducted by doing a comparative study by taking another Panchayath called Pindimana in Kothamangalam as the control population... In that study, people in Eloor were found to be 1.5-10% more prone to around 18 diseases, including asthma, allergy, renal failure, bone-related and muscle-related ailments, heart diseases, illness related to the reproductive system and cancer when compared to the control population in Pindimana. The follow-up study conducted in Eloor also found that the level of pollution went up in 2003 when compared to the level in 1999. (Kumar, founding member and Research Coordinator of PMVS, May 26, 2018)

Though the incidence of cancer had been a major issue highlighted in the campaigns organized by the green movement, cancer does not make it into the list of diseases in connection to this particular study. The differential and divergent interpretations of the results from the same scientific survey elucidate the ways in which the framing and counterframing processes debate research in natural science disciplines, built on objectivity, validity and scientific realism (Moses and Knutsen 2012). In other words, the contesting frames between unions and green movements adopt the "scientific frame" so as to garner the legitimacy and acceptance received by science. The epistemological and ontological principle of science rule out the possibility of many interpretations

and many realities, yet, ironically the two movement groups trying to establish alternative versions of reality use "science" as a way to gain legitimacy to their respective versions.

To counter the claims surrounding the toxic nature of the products manufactured in the industries, the unions also rely on the singular lived experience of workers employed in these units of production. Following the Endosulphan pesticide disaster in Kasaragod, the local environmental movement in Eloor had raised concerns about manufacturing the pesticide Endosulfan, an organochlorine, and a Persistent Organic Pollutant (POPs), in the plants owned by Hindustan Insecticides Limited (HIL). As a result of the continued resistance movements and judicial intervention banning the use of the pesticide, HIL's Endosulphan plant was ordered to close down. However, the unions are not yet convinced about the claims surrounding the toxicity of Endosulfan. Explaining their stand, Ramachandran, a union leader, laid the case as follows:

> HIL has shut-down the plant manufacturing Endosulphan following a Supreme Court order. The people who worked there became jobless, that's all…I am still the President of our union in HIL and have known many brilliant and healthy people worked here. For example, K.C.Yesudasan, he was a champion in the 100-meter race at the National Games. If Endosulphan is as problematic as these people claim, then it should affect the workers as well, right? So, these are nothing but allegations that people spread outside. Again, like our veteran leader said, "the dose makes the poison," …but that does not prevent us from taking medicines, you see…and that's the logic. (Ramachandran, union leader, personal interview, July 3, 2018)

The strategy to present denial as logical is ingrained in the frames constructed by the unions. Examples of healthy factory workers are used here to deny the claims and scientific evidence about the toxicity and hazardous nature of Endosulfan. A careful analysis of the union newsletter uncovers the repeated labeling of the frames used by the greens as "illogical," and this is substantiated by arguing that the claims raised by the environmentalists "defy all principles of reasoning and logic." This tendency to demean and denigrate the green activists as illogical remain as a dominant strategy used by the Standing Council in its frames.

"Horse with Blinders": Blaming Myopic Focus

Attacking the green movement for their narrow focus on the environment, Padmanabhan, the leader of the Standing Council, compared the green movement to a "horse with blinders." Padmanabhan argues that the politics of the unions consider not just the environment but adopts a comprehensive approach towards understanding the economic necessities of the workers and the industries. Differentiating the stand taken by the two movement groups, he observed:

> Trade unions have to stand for and protect workers' wages, bonuses etc. When an industry complains about a crisis there may be some organizations willing to negotiate for a lower wage. But we stand for the workers, we don't settle for any wage reductions…so, in such a context, it will be difficult for us to prioritize these issues (environmental). We have certain limitations. You can record this and write that I have said this because we have those limitations. Priority…. I mean, we have to prioritize. Environmental organizations can function like a horse with blinders. We cannot do that. They don't worry about any of these...should we protect the jobs of workers? How would their families survive? They are not bothered. All they are worried about is the environment. How many families depend on these industries for their survival? (Padmanabhan, union leader, personal interview, May 21, 2018)

Reviving the jobs vs. the environment frame discussed in the section on ideological disputes, the unions call out the greens for their parochial activism centered only around environmental issues. As illustrated in the excerpt above, the unions claim that as an organization representing the interests of workers, unions are forced to prioritize the issues of workers. The counterframes produced by the unions accuse the greens about their exclusive focus on the environment and the complete exclusion of worker issues. "It is impossible to move forward if we think only about the environment," commented Nelson, a union representative when talking about the campaign run by the environmentalists. The union frames seek to establish that the focus on the environment can be pursued only by neglecting other important aspects that serve the interests

of the workers. In other words, the counterframing tactfully accuse the greens of prioritizing environmental issues over issues affecting the interests of the workers.

In addition to causing an ideological impact on the audience (Zald and Useem 1987), the Standing Council deploys a strategy of polarization by creating a dichotomy between "us" versus "them" (Gamson et al.1992; Ryan 1991; Steuter 1992). Thus, by vilifying the members of the local environmental movement, and by separating the unions from the greens citing moral grounds, the Standing Council adopts a counterframing strategy of "polarization-vilification" to respond to the ideological challenges posed by the green movement (McCaffrey and Keys 2000).

Suspecting the Motives

Questioning the motives of the environmental movement, the unions also allege that the greens walk away from almost every proposal to revamp the river or ameliorate the effects of pollution. A union representative remarked, "They don't want solutions, all they want are problems…The issue of pollution justifies their existence and for that reason, they want the issue to remain unresolved, forever". Inquiring about the possible course of action to ameliorate the tensions between the two movements, the union leaders repeatedly pointed out that the stalemate is caused by the greens' refusal to accept any solutions and added that they "suspect the presence of secret groups to orchestrate pollution along the stretch of the river that flows through the industrial region." Padmanabhan, the Secretary of the Standing Council, illustrated this further by recollecting how the greens opposed to a plan proposed by a local self-government (LSG) body to clean-up the Kuzhikandam stream (*thodu[31]*).

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[31] *Thodu* is the Malayalam word used to describe streams. The original word is retained instead of a translation as "Kuzhikkandam thodu" is a term that assumes a significant role in the movement frames and litigations.

Let me give you an example…the Eloor Municipal Panchayat decided to clean the Kuzhikkandam *thodu* (stream)...these people (PMVS) blocked this move...they said this cannot be done. They allege that the move to clean this *thodu* is to help the industries. Because if the thodu is cleaned, then it will fetch a good certificate for the industries. So, this cannot be cleaned, they said. My wife then was the Panchayat President (she is the Chairperson now). She, after extensive consultation with all of us, sought contribution from each industry...also the Panchayat offered funds worth of Rs.5 lakhs ($ 7161). The environmentalists opposed this...one, they said that "the 5 lakhs allotted from the Panchayat is the taxpayer's money...it's from the government treasury and that should not be spent on behalf of the industry...instead, by following the "polluter pays principle", the industries must bear the cost of cleaning up the *thodu* (stream)". That's their demand…. see all these are mere technical issues...It doesn't matter who cleans, the point is, someone should clean.(Padmanbhan, union leader, personal interview, May 21, 2018)

The Standing Council questions the commitment of the green movement towards finding solutions to the problem. Citing incidents as quoted above, the unions actively try to challenge the sincerity of the movement goals and agendas set forth by the environmental movement. However, such counterframes receive strong responses and opposition from the environmental movement. The local environmental movement systematically exposes the apparent fallacy underlying the claims made by the unions (narrated above), citing court orders and scientific reports published by central and state authorities. Kumar, the research coordinator of PMVS, vividly explains their approach to resolving the issue of pollution and points out the issues they have identified with the plan proposed by the Municipality. The greens explicate how a clean-up proposal worth a few lakhs will not help revamp the river or resolve the issue of pollution that has accumulated at the river bed over the years. The National Green Tribunal recently ordered to constitute a clean-up fund worth 26 crores (approximately $3.9 million) to revamp and remediate Kuzhikandam *thodu*. Kumar broke down the plan as follows:

Following the report from the German Technical Corporation and as a result of the constant request from our side, the National Green Tribunal directed to form a DPR (Detailed Project Report). The DPR assessed the initial amount to be 26 crores ($3.9 million). Ten crores ($1.5 million) should be spent by the central government and 16 crores ($2.4 million) from the state government for the remediation plans and should call international tender. Such studies confirm, accept, and legitimize what we have been raising for over

these years. In fact, everyone has accepted that issues in Kuzhikkandam Thodu are real…the government itself has accepted that the issues we have been raising is real…and that happened because these studies are factual and accurate. (Kumar, Research Coordinator PMVS, personal interview, May 26, 2018)

The back and forth exchanges between the unions and the greens illuminate the tension prevailing in their understanding surrounding the problem as well as the solutions. The plan adjudicated by the National Green Tribunal also requires the polluting companies to contribute towards the clean-up fund detailed above. In other words, in addition to remediating pollution, the solution proposed by the judiciary reaffirms the culpability of the industries. When the unions adopt a managerial approach to fixing the issue of pollution, the greens through their framings and actions seek to bring scientific solutions that reaffirm the industries' culpability and ensures sustainable revamping of the local environment.

Gathering "dirt" on the Green Movement

One of the most damaging counterframing strategies deployed by the Standing Council had been to gather malicious information on the frontline leaders of the green movement. This was mainly intended to construct frames that would delegitimize the actions of the environmental movement by alleging that the members received bribes for mobilizing against the industries. The union started intensive smear campaigns against the green movement, making use of such information. Summing the results of one such surveillance programs, Krishnan a senior trade union leader remarked:

> If we investigate about these environmentalists, it becomes clear that they are doing such activism to serve some other individuals or interests. There are many allegations against these people. The people who have led this movement were not very rich, but they have managed to secure resorts in places like Wayanad and own plantations. Their assets are increasing at exponential rates. How is that possible considering the fact that these people hardly work? This proves to us that huge monopoly corporate powers are behind them and it is important to investigate further about the financial sources. In our examination of such sources, it also appeared that they are taking an anti-national stand. It is anti-

national/treacherous to destroy domestic industries to serve the interests of international monopolies. They are misinforming and fearmongering people. (Krishnan, union leader, personal interview, May 30, 2018)

Divulging about the surveillance program put in place to gather inside stories on the leaders of the environmental movement, Rmanachandran explained the constant vigil with which he monitored the social media handles and other activities of the green activists to get some "dirty" information. During an interview session, Ramachandran shared that his wait turned successful when he found some suspicious images "Liked" by Kumar on Facebook. These images included photographs that insulted the Indian National flag and disgraced the nation. Narrating this investigation, he exclaimed:

> See, this allegation stemmed when Kumar was unleashing attacks against us in international platforms. I mean, he was becoming so smart by attacking the unions and the industries…That obviously disturbed us and we started to look into their motives and found some things. This was one among those. I found an image on his Facebook page that disrespected our national flag. The image also tagged someone else named Muhammed Ali or something, he was wearing a cap. So, I took this image to the Panchayath President to inquire about the issue...so they laughingly said "who is this Muhammed Ali...he may be an Iraqi or Saudi Arabian?". So, we thought of reporting this to the police. (Ramachandran, union leader, personal interview, July 3, 2018)

The excerpt above demonstrates the underlying tones of Islamophobia that led the individuals featured in this scenario to the conclusion that a Muslim name would inevitably imply connections to Iraq or Saudi Arabia. It also explicates the othering experienced by Muslims in their own country where they have to prove their allegiance to nation and nationalism by going the extra mile. Two major allegations formed part of the unions' frames as a result of these "investigations": (1) land owned by the members of the green movement and LAEC (Local Area Environmental Committee) in Wayanad and (2) sharing anti-national content on social media handles. During the interview, Padmanabhan sounded extremely proud about leading these surveillance programs on behalf of the union collective and claimed that these smear campaigns proved "the most successful

in discrediting and demobilizing the environmental movement." However, soon after they started

framing Kumar into this label of "committing anti-national actions," the union leader realized that

the images were not posted by Kumar or Mohammed, but was a technical glitch (This is explained

in detail in a book written by Ashkar Khader(2013)). Explaining the scenario, Padmanbhan

remarked:

> …Pressure started building up and SCTU decided to report this to the police…we filed a complaint to the Chief Minister, which led to an inquiry by the Vigilance and then Crime Branch…As this was progressing, an employee from FACT called me and complained, "Hey Comrade, why are you implicating us in this issue? You are putting our own in trouble now!" I did not quite understand at first. I asked him to tell me more about the incident. He continued, "Don't you remember my nephew, Muhammed Ali, who was a member of DYFI (Democratic Youth Federation of India, the youth wing of CPIM). He is in the Gulf now. The police are constantly visiting his ailing mother to inquire about him." We did not recognize him. He was wearing a cap and all, so we thought he is an Iraqi or something. He informed me that he did not post the image. See, that's the problem with social media right. We should be careful about what gets on our profiles. (Padmanabhan, union leader and Convener of the SCTU, May 27, 2018)

Despite knowing the truth, the unions decided to move forward with the plan to make these

allegations part of their campaign by erecting huge billboards carrying this allegation connected

to the purchase of land and the posting of anti-national content. The narrative clearly uncovers the

ruthless strategies deployed by the unions to counter the green movement by bringing the

movement agendas under suspicion by discrediting their credentials as citizens and activists. The

unions here are deploying the frame of nationalism, a master frame (Snow and Benford 1992) used

to attack and repress all dissident voices and movements against the status-quo, including the state.

In fact, much of the counterframes used by the unions are part of a larger lexicon of repression

used on movements that challenge the centers of power. Such master frames strive to portray these

movements in a negative shade by calling them "anti-national," "Maoists," "extremists," and "anti-

developmentalist." Much of the environmental movements and other progressive social

movements organized from the margins are repressed, delegitimized and demobilized by these

grandiose frames. Given the draconian laws prevailing against offenses pertaining to treason and terrorist activities, these frames help the countermovements to easily demobilize the green movements by intimidating adherents and bystanders. In other words, the counterframing attacks faced by the green movement in Eloor are not a singular issue; neither are these frames. These frames form part of the dominant master frames adopted by centers of power to dismantle grassroots movements challenging the business as usual model implemented by the status-quo. When inquired about the allegations posed against him and the green movement, Kumar, the leader of PMVS, who bore the brunt of most of these allegations responded as follows:

> If they are making up all these allegations to demobilize our movement, then that will remain as their dream forever. For us, the fight against pollution is a fight for our rights to live. We will move forward with this protest so long as the emotions of a layman, whose water, air and land are polluted and who battles with diseases, kindle our hearts and burn our souls. It is our aim to have a river that flows clear, the air that's clean to breathe and water that's not poisoned. Kumar, founding member and Research Coordinator of PMVS, May 26, 2018)

The above incident demonstrates the personal and biographical consequences of these counterframing strategies[32]. In addition to discrediting and demobilizing the green movement, these frames further developed into police cases, that stigmatized and victimized the members of the green movement for crimes they did not commit.

The exchange between unions and the green movements presented above illustrates the nature of movement-countermovement interactions between the two movements, where the tactful

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[32]This is discussed in the preceding chapters where I detail out the adverse consequences and victimization borne by the members of the green movement. Many of these counterframes later were filed as police cases and used to hunt down the green activists using state machineries. The frontline leaders were victimized and stigmatized by the continuous circulation of allegations, which were later proved wrong by police inquiries. However, these negative claims had an impact in derailing the image of the movement and members as it eroded the credibility of the members in front of the public.

strategies used by the unions attacked the credibility and legitimacy of the green movement. The counterframing strategies had profound consequences on the members of the green movements.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The counterframes used by the unions against the green movement are not singular collective action frames that operate only in the context of the square offs between the two movements in Eloor. Rather these are generic frames that are used to repress, attack and delegitimize movements that challenge the status-quo, organized by people from the margins. The frames used by the Standing Council to discredit, delegitimize and demobilize the environmental movements are widely used by unions and state mechanisms to counter the claims raised by grassroots environmental movements that fight against the negative fallouts of pollution. In other words, these countermovements form part of a cluster of movement groups that work towards demobilizing movements that are organized to desist the pursuit of development projects without considering the adverse impacts endured from such projects by poor and marginalized people. The frames adopted by this "cluster" (Snow and Benford 1992) of countermovements aimed at discrediting "people's movements" (*Janakeeya Samarangal*, a struggle organized by the people) are strikingly similar and are built from a generic template that weaves the frames around the rhetoric of nationalism and portrays the dissenters as "terrorists" and "extremists." Thus, it is possible to identify "master frames" that span beyond the specific context in the Eloor-Edayar region of Kerala, guiding the framing and counterframing processes (Benford 2013). Kumar, a victim of many such smear campaigns from the unions, explains this as follows:

> The plundering of natural resources and environmental pollution is happening across the state of Kerala. The people who protest against these activities are being framed in police cases and labeled as terrorists and foreign agents. To engage in such slander against people who fight injustice is fascism. Such trends will continue to face strong opposition from the

people's movement. (Kumar, founding member of PMVS and Research Coordinator, personal interview, May 5, 2018)

The aim here is to stigmatize the members of these oppositional movements (movements that oppose the centers of power and business as usual model of development). In other words, these countermovements form part of a cycle of protest, where a proliferation of grassroots environmental movements has seen a concomitant surge in countermobilization practices to repress and eliminate such dissenting voices from the movement field and political landscape of the state. This countermobilization cluster is led mostly by trade unions and state machinery, including the police forces and other correctional mechanisms under the aegis of the state.

The most recent attacks against the protestors in Puthuvype Island (fighting against a proposed LPG (Liquid Petroleum Gas) plant by Indian Oil Corporation) and Keezhattoor led by the *Vayak Kilikal* (Farm Birds, protesting the filling up of wetlands and paddy fields for road construction) stand as testimony to the generic adoption of collective action frames to discredit social movements. The Puthuvype protest was repressed using police forces where the protestors, including children, were brutally beaten by the police force. In addition to the use of violence, the government alleged that the protest was "infiltrated" and backed "forces with extremist nature" (Outlook India 2017; PTI 2017). The Keezhattoor movement faced similar opposition from both the state and the local communist party leadership, where the countermobilization alleged that the resistance movement is backed by "Maoists." A Minister admonished the protestors by calling them "anti-developmentalists" and argued in the State legislatures that the movement should be called "vultures hovering over the paddy fields" instead of "farm birds" (Ameerudheen 2018; Mathew 2018; Paul 2018). A striking congruence between the frames used to attack these protests and the frames used by the unions against the green movement in Eloor reveal the presence of a

generic template from which these countermovements draw their frames from. In a way, these particular master frames are picked as they "are culturally resonant to their historical milieu" (Swart 1995; 619). The popularity of the neoliberal model of development and the increased traction of nationalist rhetoric (Adnan 2015; Desai 2016; Chatterji et al. 2019; Anand 2019) make these themes the most efficient choices to attack and demobilize movements.

The exploration of the frame disputes around the alternative approaches to development (Shiva 1991; Escobar 2011) and the economy (Patnaik 2018) unveil the ideological disputes between the unions and the green movement. Such disputes uncloak the ways in which values and beliefs surrounding structural and political-economic aspects such as the economy, jobs, or the model of development produce conflicts in the frames constructed by the two movement groups. The contesting claims surrounding jobs and the environment in the collective action frames signify the structural origins of frame disputes, where the differences stem from the divergent ideologies adopted by the movements about the idea of progress, development, and the interaction of such processes with the environment. The schism between the economy and the environment (Schnaiberg 1980), as laid out in these disputing frames, affirm the structural roots of frame construction, interpretation, and disputes between movement groups. The shift in the ideology of development in favor of the economy and neoliberal capital (Peet and Watts 2004), as explicated in the previous chapter, signifies the ways in which structural factors, including global economic order, influences the framing processes and cause frame disputes.

The examination of the disputing frames constructed by the Standing Council and the local environmental movement reveals the opposing realities constructed by the two movement groups surrounding industrial pollution. This chapter exposed the ontological disputes ingrained in the frames constructed by the two movement groups as they sought to establish and deny the

existence of pollution and in the attribution of blame on to multiple entities. The constant negation of industrial pollution apparent in the frames adopted by the Standing Council represent socially organized denial (Norgaard 2006a; 2006b; 2011). Norgaard (2006) observes that the non-response to climate change in Norway can be explained as a matter of socially organized denial, where the economic prosperity of the community is tied to the oil industry. On a similar note, being embedded within the industrial system of production, the economic interests of the unions are tied to industrial development and prosperity. Given this situation, it is in the interest of unions to collectively deny the existence of pollution and the role of industries in engendering it. In other words, preserving the political economy of industrial development serves the economic interest of the workers as any move that adversely affects the profits of the industries would mean lower wages and erosion of income security for the workers. In order to preserve the economic interests of the workers and union leaders, the Standing Council deploys a strategy of denial. Thus, the frames and counterframes adopted by the unions are influenced by the political economy of industrial development, the embeddedness of workers' interests within the system of industrial production and profits.

In addition, the empirical evidence discussed in this chapter challenges the argument that frames distinguish the identities of the protagonists from the antagonists as "human decision-makers" rather than "impersonal forces such as industrialization or the demands of the market" (Gamson 1988; Hunt et al.1994; Polletta and Ho 2006:5). The empirical evidence presented in this chapter illustrates that the frames interpret the antagonist not as a human decision-maker but rather as structural and political-economic forces such as the vices of mindless capitalism or industrialization. Such portrayal of antagonistic forces is typical in countries of the global South where people face off against capitalist forces by recognizing and labeling their struggles as "anti-

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capitalist mobilizations." The frames and counterframes discussed in this chapter vividly explicate the ways in which movements depict industrialization, development, capitalism, or imperialist agendas as adversaries or antagonistic forces against which the call for arms is produced. The ample references surrounding capitalism, industrialization, development, and imperialism can be traced back to the unique history of the state and the legacy of communist public action. This unique history of social movements and increased political participation from the people have rendered these terms familiar and native to the people in Kerala, where people found resonance in the general meanings attributed to these terms. The proficiency of the people with such lexicons enables the portrayal of such forces as antagonists in local conflicts. Many grassroots and indigenous struggles against Multinational Corporations (MNCs) have cared less to humanize the entity rather they present these corporations as faceless and "psychopathic" entities functioning with the sole pursuit of profit (Bakan 2004; Clark 2002; Martinez-Alier 2003; Kirsch 2007: Harvey 2010; Stibbe 2013). In other words, the significance of structural and political-economic processes in the frames is determined by the cultural and socio-political context of mobilization and the ideological standpoints and political participation of the people involved.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I offer a summary of the major findings discussed in the previous chapters, discuss the implications of this study for social movement theory and research, identify the limitations, and delineate future research.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this project, I examined a case of labor-environmental conflicts surrounding an issue of industrial pollution in the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt in Kerala, a south Indian state. The main purpose of this study was to understand the factors that produce conflicts between trade unions and environmental movements when both these movements are constituted by working-class participants. Such an inquiry assumes importance in a context where cases of labor-environmental conflicts (or coalitions) from the Global South are largely missing from the mainstream literature. More so, the singular conception of labor-environmental conflicts as a class-based issue between working-class labor movements and middle-class environmental movements make this inquiry significant. The findings of this project clearly identify the need to situate labor-environmental conflicts within the larger backdrop of the political economy of development, industrial capitalism and the nexus between trade unions, industries and the state.

My primary goal in this project was to explore labor-environmental conflicts by focusing on two aspects, (1) the structural and individual factors creating a conflictual relationship, and (2) the framing-processes and frame-disputes between the two movement groups. Relying on an

analysis of movement frames and individual movement actor's interpretations, I examined how structural and individual factors intersect to determine the relationship between labor and environmental movements in the preceding chapters.

In Chapter Two, I laid the methodological approach adopted in this project and explicated the advantages ingrained in using a combination of the extended case method (Burawoy 1998; 2019) and constructionist approaches (Charmaz 2014) to ethnographic research and data analysis. Since the questions guiding this inquiry operate at the intersection of structure and agency, a combination of these two approaches to ethnography was beneficial in uncovering the dialectical relationship between these two levels of analysis. Also, the discussions presented here point towards the omission of postcolonial social movements and settings within the mainstream literature on social movements. Attempting to recenter the focus of this inquiry on postcolonial movement and actors, the practice of ethnographic inquiry in this research was reflexive about the colonial roots of the methods and the issue of power differentials and the influence of my positionality. Besides, I debated my positionality as both an insider and outsider in the research setting and the possible implications of this hybrid status and positionality on the data collection processes and analysis. The chapter also reflected on the ramifications of researching left movements from a critical standpoint considering the emergent Hindutva onslaught on the rights of marginalized people in India, while also problematizing the idea of interpreting or confining states with left governments within broad-based strokes of "hopes." I challenge such monolithic narratives surrounding the state of Kerala, by uncovering how the left state and parties lean to the right on matters related to economic growth, development, and the environment.

In Chapter Three, I offered a brief overview of the history of industrialization in the Eloor-Edayar industrial belt. The interviews and oral history narratives presented in this chapter

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demonstrated how the emergence of the local environmental movement could be interpreted as a response to the environmental grievances engendered by industrialization. The chapter explored how members of the unions and the green movement reminisced the entry of industries and concomitant changes in the environment. The discussions portrayed how the two movement groups are in agreement while discussing the initial period of industrial pollution, whereas they drift to the poles while discussing the issue of pollution in the present. The chapter explained the emergence of the local environmental movement, the shifting political opportunities, and mapped a trajectory of the local environmental movement.

In Chapter Four, I pursued the first aspect, the influence of structural and political-economic factors in influencing the social movement mobilization processes and its influence of labor-environmental relations. Tracing the myriad ways in which capitalism influences the mobilization processes of trade-unions and green movements in the region, this chapter reaffirmed the need to bring capitalism back to the center of social movement studies. Using interviews with movement actors and analysis of the campaign materials, this chapter sheds light upon the varied tactics and strategies used by the local industries to infiltrate the movement landscape and manipulate the mobilization processes of social movements. Furthermore, the members of the local environmental movement, in particular, explicated how capitalism has always been a central focus of their movement frames. The profound presence of anti-capitalist frames in the protest lexicons of the local environmental movement embellished how the absence of capitalism from movement research can also be explicated in terms of the near-complete omission of postcolonial social movements. Interviews with both union members and green activists expounded how industrialists co-opted the trade union collective and union leaders and organized paid protests to facilitate their entry to the movement field. Moreover, the data traced a model of crony capitalism operating in

the region, which is characterized by a strong nexus between the local industries, unions, and the state. Participants argued how the formidable alliance between state, capitalists, and the unions work together to repress local environmental movements against pollution. Drawing on the strong contrast in the resource mobilization potential of unions and the local environmental movement, this chapter problematizes the traditional resource mobilization theories in social movement research by highlighting how the monopoly over resources or "capital" and access to power provide unfair advantages to capitalists in the movement landscape.

In Chapter Five, I explored the *why* question surrounding the conflicts between labor and green movements. The chapter examined the reasons that create schisms between labor and environmental movement, two progressive social movements, that are ostensibly constituted by working-class participants. The chapter adopted a two-pronged approach to answering this question: first, it problematized the homogenous conception of workers and working-class based on economic interests, and second, it deciphered the shift in labor politics in Kerala and its implications for labor's relationship with other social movements in Kerala. Highlighting the heterogeneity of working-class interests, the chapter probed why the attribution of generalized interests and politics over working-class groups is problematic as the interests of different workers are often contingent upon the sector in which they are employed and the resource dependency of such vocations. Distinguishing between an inclusive and exclusive conception of the working-class, this chapter uncovered the differential interpretations of class, class-consciousness, and solidarity within these two movement groups. In doing so, I bring forth the divergent conceptions of class underlying the unions and green movements and how that manifests in their relationship with each other and with the local industries. Moreover, the chapter demonstrated how the class-compromise between labor and capital play a huge role in accentuating the conflicts between labor

and green movements. By exposing the "illusion of homogeneity" prevailing among the circles of working-class and left politics in Kerala, the chapter raised pertinent questions about the relationship between left, environment, and development in Kerala. Furthermore, the findings in this chapter establish the need to undertake future research into the shift in left politics, where the left leans more to the "right" on matters related to economic development. By embellishing the working-class origins and left politics of the local environmental movement, this chapter played an instrumental role in relabeling the conflicts between labor and environmental movement from "Red-Green Conflicts" to "Red-Red Conflicts."

In Chapter Six, I explored the interpretive aspects of the conflicts between labor and green movements. Focusing on the opposing and competing frames constructed by the two movement groups surrounding the issue of pollution, this chapter demonstrated how structural factors and varied ideologies of development influence the micromobilization processes of social movements. Quite different from the other two chapters, the focus here was on the construction of meanings and interpretations surrounding the issue of pollution. The chapter strived to explain labor-environmental conflicts as also a conflict of ideas and realities, where the movements engage in an ontological dispute regarding the existence of industrial pollution and the role of the industries in engendering the same. The analysis of movement frames unraveled the opposing realities constructed by the two movement groups, thereby underscoring the processes through which movement actors engage in reality construction and the implications of the same. One of the interesting aspects of the discussion surrounding frames and frame-disputes was the role of ideologies. The discussions in this chapter explained how the disputes in frames could also be explicated as a dispute in ideology surrounding the issues of environment, development and economic growth. The chapter explicated how the union collective fits the definition of

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countermovement and analyzed the counter-frames. The detailed analysis of the frames is used to explicate how the union collective sought to discredit, delegitimize and demobilize the local environmental movements using varied counterframing tactics that involved labeling the frontline leaders of the green movement as "pseudo-environmentalist," "anti-nationalist," "anti-developmentalist," and "extremists."

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY AND RESEARCH

The project started as an inquiry into the factors that produce conflicts between labor and environmental movements when working-class participants constitute both these movements. Considering the singular conception of labor-environmental conflicts as a class-issue in the extant literature, this project embarked on a journey by reconceptualizing "blue-green conflicts" as "red-green conflicts" considering the left allegiance of the trade union collective in question. However, as the research progressed, "red-green" got reconceptualized into "red-red" conflicts considering the working-class and Marxist orientations of the local environmental movement. Thus, this project traverses an eventful world of movement fields, actors, and interpretations yielding several original findings and insights that have longstanding consequences to the study of labor-environmental relations, social movement theory, and research. The findings, in particular, engage and make contributions to the fields of social movements, labor-environmental relations, development studies, labor studies, and postcolonial sociology.

The case of labor-environmental conflicts explored in this chapter and the resultant findings make contributions to the field of labor-environmental relations. The study fills a void in the extant literature, given the stark absence of cases from the Global-South from the existing studies on labor-environmental relations (both conflict and coalition). This project, thus, aspires to

be part of a new trajectory of research exploring labor-environmental relations in countries in the Global South. In doing so, the study also challenges the mainstream literature on labor-environmental conflicts by problematizing the singular conception of environmentalism as a middle-class phenomenon. By highlighting the working-class and leftist affiliations of the local environmental movement, the study also emphasizes the importance of considering environmentalism as a class-issue, where inequalities often fall heavily on people at the lower rungs of the social ladder. The explorations showcasing the heterogeneity of workers and working-class interests challenge singular and homogenous definitions of working-class as a category and expands the contours of labor studies to include the diversity of workers and class-interests.

The discussions surrounding the continued importance of capitalism and class in social movement research presented in this project assume greater import considering the exclusion of postcolonial movements and movement actors from mainstream literature. The dismissal of class from movement research can be pinned down to the omission of movement experiences and actors in the Global South. Using the case of Kerala, a state with a unique history of working-class movements and public action, the study exposes the problematics of generative class-based analysis, but at the same time reaffirms the continued relevance of class in understanding social movement mobilization and participation. In doing so, the findings of this project contribute to the emergent literature within movement studies that seeks to bring capitalism and class to the center of movement analysis (della Porta 2015, 2017; Hetland and Goodwin 2013). Furthermore, the project contributes to these ongoing discussions by presenting an empirical case-study from a postcolonial setting that establishes the historical and continued influence of capitalism on social movement mobilization. Additionally, the project critiques traditional resource mobilization theories (RMT) by underscoring the structural inequalities in the distribution and access to

resources (Piven and Cloward 1991; Ferrree 1992). The project also underscores the need for future research to uncover the motives behind movement participation and how that complicates the understandings of rationality and social context.

Methodologically, the study undertook a hybrid approach to ethnography, where the theory and practice of ethnography were informed by the extended case method and constructionist grounded theory. The risk involved in combining the domain assumptions underlying these approaches is outweighed by the benefits accrued to this project with the simultaneous explorations of movement events at the micro and macro level. Moreover, a research question situated on a theoretical framework rooted in both political economy and frame analysis, demands a hybrid methodology that can examine the interaction between political-economic factors and micromobilization processes. Furthermore, such an approach enables one to undertake inquiries that simultaneously examine structure and agency, or in Habermasian terms, the "system" and the "social" (Bhambra 2016; Habermas 1988). Given the complex social and political-economic structure faced by postcolonial movements and movement actors, inquiries that consider only the system or the social might fall short in offering a comprehensive understanding of the socio-environmental problem or uncover explanations. Thus, the findings of this study enable to expand the literature on postcolonial sociology by vivifying the processes of social movement mobilization and participation in the context of labor and environmental movement in the Eloor-Edayar region. The claim made here is less about the generalizability of social movement mobilization experience in Kerala to the rest of India, which would be erroneous considering the unique position of Kerala when compared to the rest of the Indian state. However, the effort here is to expand the theories by bringing movements, movement actors and experiences outside the

west or the Global North and problematize dominant assumptions and theorizations that are based solely on western movements and social settings.

An important aspect of this project is the parallel or synchronous focus on structural and individual aspects of social movement mobilization. The findings featured in the preceding chapters establish the myriad ways in which the structure affects the processes of social movement mobilization at multiple levels. The data and arguments presented in these chapters reaffirm how the ideology of capitalism and capitalist institutions influence the mobilization processes of movements. Aside from showcasing the influence of the political economy on the meso level, the chapters also exemplify how the ideology of development and logic of capitalism influences the micromobilization processes of movements. Particularly, the findings embellishing the influence of ideologies on framing and frame-disputes seek to contribute to the longstanding discussions and debates surrounding framing and ideology (Oliver and Johnston 2000; Snow and Benford 2005).

LIMITATIONS

One of the important limitations of this study is that it focuses only on labor-environmental conflicts and completely omits coalitions. The lack of focus on coalitions prevents this inquiry from making a comprehensive analysis of labor-environmental relations in the Global South. Therefore, the case presented here should not be considered as a typification of labor-environmental relations in the Global South or even in Kerala. The focus on a single case study also limits the generalization of the findings presented above. The attempt here has been largely to problematize and update the existing research by focusing on a case located in the Global South, that features labor and green movements with participants from the same class-background. This does not preclude the possibility of inter-class conflicts between labor and green movements. In

other words, the choice of the movements presented here does not imply that all labor and environmental movements in India fit these class characteristics or ideological orientations.

The grassroots environmental movement, PMVS, explored in this project signifies how the majority of grassroots environmental movements in countries such as India carry a close resemblance to the environmental justice movement in the United States. Even though the project emphasizes the differences between the North and South, the similarities between the North and South in terms of the environmental justice movements are not adequately pursued or analyzed in this project. The project thus proposes this as one of the future directions for research, where the similarities between the working-class environmental movements in the Global South are examined alongside the environmental justice movement in the North. Such an inquiry will help us understand the similarities in movements across the two settings by breaking away from the North-South binary. Perhaps, such an inquiry would uncover the operation of a South within the North, in terms of the structural and institutional inequality in the distribution of power, resources, and wealth. It will also enable a comprehensive understanding of the resistance to the capitalist system of production and exploitation across the globe while being mindful of the differences. Having said that, the use of the Global South in this setting is limiting considering how it confines all movement experiences within the binary of North and South. More so, it oversimplifies the social, political, and economic contexts and realities of the numerous countries clubbed under the umbrella category of "Global South." The study still retains the term as an attempt to engage with the larger research and dialogue surrounding the North-South distinction operative or prevailing in academia.

The examination of class in the project could also be critiqued for not following the rubrics laid out in a standard Marxian class-analysis. The heightened focus on interpretations and the

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meanings attributed by the participants, who are movement actors, have precluded discussions into the operation of these terms within traditional Marxist theory and literature. Moreover, the use of class as binary while discussing the shift in class-politics of the labor movement is also problematic when distinguishing union leaders from the workers. The interviews conducted in this project primarily feature union leaders, and hence, a similar inquiry among factory workers might produce a different outcome. However, the observations surrounding the sectoral origins of economic interests among workers would still hold.

Another important limitation of this study pertains to the complete omission of other social axes such as caste and gender. The excessive focus on class preempts this study from making meaningful inquiries into other social aspects and identities about the movement actors. The movement field I studied is dominated by men, and this applies to both the unions and the local environmental movement. When compared to the unions, the local environmental movement had a few women members. However, it should be noted that men held all key positions. I failed to pursue or problematize the missing women from Kerala's movement field as part of this project. The absence of movement from the movement field is significant, considering the history of the state and the advances in gender empowerment often attributed to the Kerala Model. However, it also confirms the critical feminist critiques on Kerala's development model (Devika and Thampi 2007) that often dubs "empowerment" within the contours of the traditional family and thus maintain the systems of patriarchy. This lack of focus on "liberation" is apparent in the present study, and this would be taken up for further inquiry.

My positionality and standpoint could also be a point of critique for this study. My feeling committed to social and environmental justice has played an instrumental role in the shaping of this project. My previous research with environmental movements in Kerala and other

environmental organizations has influenced the design and execution of this project. In other words, this study is influenced by my critical standpoint and prior research experiences. A combination of ethnography and document analysis is adopted to offer validity to the findings and to enable triangulation. Still, the observations and discussions presented here are subjective as much as objective, in terms of my presence and role as the researcher and a participant. In that respect, this project should be considered as a journey through the narratives and interpretations of the members of two movement groups. More often than not, I felt that my task here is to retell the stories my participants told me. In doing so, I realized that the text presented here is co-produced. This does not discount my position of power and privilege in terms of demanding which stories or excerpts made it into the dissertation. However, the systematic process of coding ensured the emergence of dominant themes from the different forms of data, transformed into text, collected throughout this inquiry. Moreover, the increased reception and ease of entry to the movement settings of the environmental movement enabled in-depth inquiries into the mobilization processes and rationale of the movement when compared to the unions. Having said that, my positionality and biography are also strengths, contributing to my local insights into the ecology of the region, the importance of the river and the lived experiences of the people.

INCOMPLETE INQUIRIES AND FUTURE RESEARCH

A few important aspects that emerged during the ethnographic research and analysis had to be reluctantly shelved for want of time. These are briefly introduced here to set the agenda for future inquires.

The intersection of class, caste, and environmental inequalities in movement mobilization and grievance interpretation should be examined to understand how they influence labor-

environmental relations. More importantly, the class-disparity between union leaders and rank and file members should be subjected to a detailed inquiry. While understanding the shifting class-politics within the labor movement, an extensive inquiry is required to understand how workers as opposed to the union leaders, interpret these shifts in politics. These questions are not adequately explored in this project, but are extremely important and should be pursued in future projects. Similarly, the role of working-class movements in climate justice activism is touched upon here and there should be more in-depth analysis into the ways in which working-class environmental movements interpret the threat from climate disruptions in the Global South and their role in organizing climate action.

A careful analysis of the media and news reports indicate that Kerala's movement field is replete with environmental struggles resisting the destruction of nature in the name of development. The proliferation[33] of such movements in the last few years raises pertinent questions about the relationship between the left and the environment as the state currently is governed by a coalition led by the Left Democratic Front (LDF) led by the Communist Party of India, Marxist (CPIM). More detailed inquiries are required to understand the commonalities of these movements. Furthermore, in-depth studies are required to understand how the shift in class politics in the state manifest in the relationship between labor and other progressive social movements in Kerala (caste, environment, gender). Such inquiries will raise questions about the Kerala model of development from the standpoints of social and environmental justice and sustainability.

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[33] The protests in Puthuvype against the proposed LPG terminal (PTI 2017; The Hindu 2017), the *Vayalkili* (Farm Birds) movement in Keezhattoor fighting against the filling up of wet and paddy lands (Ameerudheen 2018) the movement to save Santhivanam from the proposed 110 KV electricity supply line (Balan 2019) are just a few among the many dissenting collectives that fights against the adverse environmental impacts of state-led development projects.

Moreover, an extension of this project to include more cases will help understand the relationship between labor, nature, and capital in Kerala.

Amartya Sen's (2003) seminal article, "missing women," talked about the issue of "sex-selective abortions" in Asia and Africa. Borrowing the tile from Sen, future research should focus on the issue of "missing women" from Kerala's social movement landscape. This should be subjected to an in-depth inquiry considering the strides Kerala made in achieving gender equality and implementing programs for women empowerment. Such an inquiry will uncover how the Kerala Model performs in terms of the political participation of women and their access to public spaces and public action avenues.

One of the important aspects that surfaced during research and analysis was the central role played by the River Periyar. Periyar River is present in almost all narratives included in the chapters in myriad ways. The river assumes different meanings as an object and as an actor. Throughout the narratives, the river is interpreted differently as (1) a raw material or an input of production,(2) a reminiscence of memories and emotions, and (3) a field of protest. The emergence of River Periyar as an actor is important and should be further explored, particularly considering how the river tells a story surrounding the issue of pollution in its many colors. *A river that flows in many colors* is often used as a symbolic representation of the trials and tribulations of the people and the region as they face the effects of industrial pollution. The river, in its many shades, offers an excellent empirical example to situate the debate between realist and constructionist approaches to understanding environmental issues. In light of the ongoing debates between Andreas Malm (2018) and Bruno Latour (2018) surrounding the realist and constructionist philosophical approaches to understanding the reality of climate change, this exemplar operates as a case to

establish the need to strike a balance between critical realist and constructionist approaches while undertaking socio-environmental inquires.

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APPENDIX A

ABBREVIATIONS

AITUC- All India Trade Union Congress

BJP-Bharatiya Janata Party

BMS-Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh

CITU-Center of Indian Trade Unions

CPI(M)-Communist Party of India (Marxist)

CPI-Communist Party of India

ENGO-Environmental Non-Governmental Organization

FACT-The Fertilizers and Chemicals Travancore Ltd

IRE-Indian Rare Earths

KSPCB-Kerala State Pollution Control Board

LAEC-Local Area Environment Committee

LDF-Left Democratic Front

NIIST-National Institute of Interdisciplinary Science and Technology

OECD-Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

PMVS-*Periyar Malineekarana Virudha Samithi* (Periyar Anti-Pollution Committee)

PTI-Press Trust of India

SCMC-Supreme Court Monitoring Committee

SCTU-Standing Council for Trade Unions

TCC-The Travancore Cochin Chemicals Ltd

UDF-United Democratic Front

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE

Participant	Interview Date
Abdu, member, PMVS	May 30, 2018
Akbar, founding member, PMVS	May 27, 2018, May 10, 2018
Anas, a local environmentalist	July 6, 2018
Aseef, member of legal counsel representing the green movement	June 15, 2018
Basheer, Trade union leader	June 20, 2018
Binu, Trade union leader	May 30, 2018
Ibrahim, founding member, PMVS	July 20, 2018
Imtiaz, Trade union leader	June 5. 2018
Kabeer, Trade union leader	July 3, 018
Krishnan, Trade union leader	May 30, 2018
K.S, Author, and Environmentalist	July 8, 2018
Madhu, Trade union leader	June 7, 2018
Martin, member of PMVS	July 9, 2018
Mathew, Trade union leader	June 18, 2018
Maqbool, member of PMVS	June 4, 2018
Mohammed, Trade union member	June 4, 2018
Muneer, member of PMVS	May 13, 2018
Padmanabhan, Trade union leader and Convener of SCTU	May 21, 2018
Pramod, Trade union leader	June 4, 2018
Rafeeq, member, PMVS	May 13, 2018
Raheem, Trade union leader	May 23, 2018
Ramachandran, Trade union leader	July 3, 2018
Ravi, Member of Thanal an ENGO	May 3, 2018
Roopesh, member, PMVS	July 7, 2018
Saleel, Trade union leader	May 12, 2018
Sathyan, a factory worker	July 22, 2018
Shibu, a local environmentalist	May 10, 2018
Zacharia, a member of *Janajagratha*,	July 7, 2018

APPENDIX C

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

The interviews will be conducted in Malayalam, the native language. All these questions will be posed in the regional language.

<u>Origins, Grievances, and Framings</u>

- o When did you join this movement? How did you become a part of this movement? Can you please tell me the story?
- o Can you recollect from your memory about the origins of this movement? Like, when did this start? Who started? Was there any particular event or incident that led to its emergence?
- o Why did you join this group? Was there any particular issue that inspired you or forced you to join this movement? I mean, what was (were) the factor (s) that drove you to this collective? If I may ask more specifically, what was (were) the motivation(s)?
- o What are the main agendas (demands/issues that the movement considers important) of your movement?
- o What are you protesting against? What is at stake? How did you arrive at this position on the issue (pollution/highway development)?
- o Why do you think your opponent (red/green movement depending on the respondent) holds a different take on this issue (pollution/highway development)? How do you interpret their stand? Why do they take such a position?
- o Do you/how do you connect the issue with the larger debates on development?
- o Why do trade-unions call green movements 'anti-development'?
- o Why do green movements call the state and its mode 'development terrorism'?
- o Do you consider your movements as a success? (What are those?) Why? Why not?
- o How would you read the state's response to the movement and tensions here? Are you happy about the quality of intervention? What role has it played?
- o Does someone gain from an enduring conflict? How?

- o Can we assign value to resources? On what basis?

- o What are your thoughts on environmental conservation? How should one go about that?

- o Do you think there is any connection between development and the environment? How do you define or make sense of this connection?

- o What according to you is the issue in Eloor/Keezhattoor? What should be done to resolve the problem?

Social Base of Movements

- o Which social class (economic class) do you identify with? Why do you make or what are the reasons guiding the choice or identification you have made?

- o Do all participants of this movement belong to the class you have identified with? If not what are the classes represented in this movement?

- o Who do you think your opponents are? Which class do they belong to? Would you identify this tension as one between two-working class groups? (Why?)

Inter-movement relations between trade unions and green movements

- o Do you think there are tensions in the relationship between trade unions and environmental movements? If yes, why do such tensions appear? What are some of the reasons or issues around which conflicts emerge?

- o Can you recollect any particular incidents of tension/ direct conflict/altercation between the two movements? What was the issue?

- o Are there any similarities between the two movements? I mean, in terms of socio-economic status of the participants, party affiliations, demands, culture, caste, religion, etc. Are there any issues around which these two movements share the same opinion or position? For example, say occupational health?

- o Are there differences? What are they?

- o Do you think you can hold hands with the other movement on any issue (broadly)?

- o If there are strong similarities, why do you think there are no talks about a possible alliance or cooperation?

- o If you think both the movements belong to the same class, working-class, despite this similarity, why do you think there is a near-complete absence of co-operation or an alliance?

o   Were you/any other member in any way attacked (physical/verbal/ad hominem) by the other movement group? Can you please narrate such incidents?

o   Do you think the state or local industries play an active role in accentuating the conflicts here? If yes, why do you think so? If they do, how do they influence? If not, why do you think they have absolutely no influence?

Movement leaders

o   What are the recruitment processes employed within your organization? Are there any particular strategies at play that will help people connect with the movement's agendas or demands? Is there any particular plan of action to garner more support for the green movement (trade union) from the general public?

o   Do you use any stories or incidents to connect with people, so that they end up being a part of your movement? What are those and how do you think they help?

o   Why do you think the tension between red and green movements endures? Are there any distant possibilities for forming an alliance?

APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REWVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

April 26, 2018

Silpa Satheesh
Sociology
Department of Sociology
4202 E Fowler Avenue, University of South Florida
Tampa, FL 33620

RE: **Expedited Approval for Initial Review**

IRB#: Pro00034981

Title: Red-Green Rows: Exploring the Conflict between Labor and Environmental Movements in Kerala, India

Study Approval Period: 4/26/2018 to 4/26/2019

Dear Mrs. Satheesh:

On 4/26/2018, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above application and all documents contained within, including those outlined below.

Approved Item(s):

Protocol Document(s):

Satheesh_IRB Protocol_version 1.docx

Consent/Assent Document(s)*:

Satheesh_Silpa_Informed consent form.docx.pdf
Satheesh_Informed_Verbal_Consent form.docx

*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent documents are valid until the consent document is amended and approved. The Verbal Consent is not a stamped form.

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your study qualifies for a waiver of the requirements for the documentation of informed consent as outlined in the federal regulations at 45CFR46.117(c) which states that an IRB may waive the requirement for the investigator to obtain a signed consent form for some or all subjects if it finds either: (1) That the only record linking the subject and the research would be the consent document and the principal risk would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. Each subject will be asked whether the subject wants documentation linking the subject with the research, and the subject's wishes will govern; or (2) That the research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context. (Verbal consent).

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval via an amendment. Additionally, all unanticipated problems must be reported to the USF IRB within five (5) calendar days.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

John A Schinka, Ph.D.

John Schinka, Ph.D., Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board