Environmentalism in China and India

A thesis submitted to the University of Sussex for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Development Studies

by

Pin-Hsien Wu

September 2015

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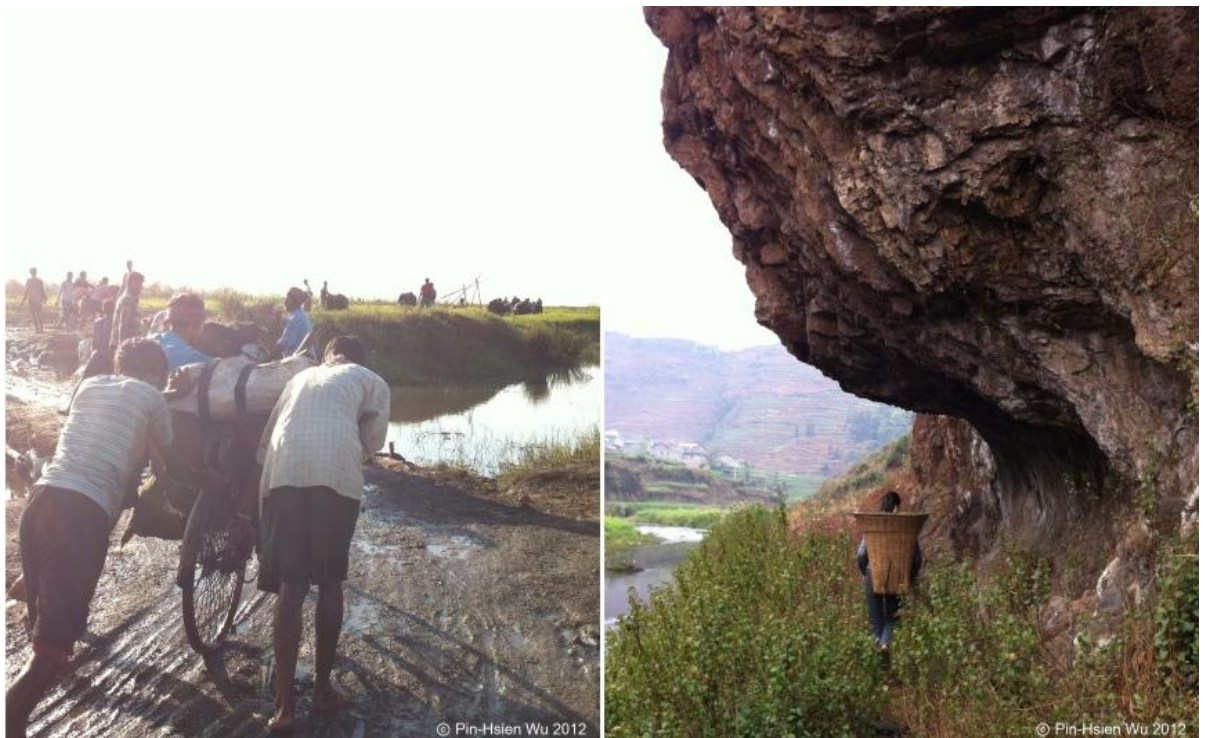## A comparative analysis of people and politics in two Coal Capitals

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Summary

This dissertation presents the results of an interdisciplinary environmental study that focuses on the formation of environmental discourse at the grassroots level of society. Case studies on the 'Coal Capitals' in Guizhou of China and Jharkhand of India were conducted in order to examine the question: why do people appear to react in different ways when encountering environmental problems, such as those caused by mining? This thesis investigates how the environment – and the participation space for discussing it – has been socio-culturally, historically and politically defined in the two countries. It is one of the few initiatives to have assessed environmental development issues based on comparative literature reviews and empirical fieldwork in coal villages in China and India. It has critically examined the literature related to the two locations studied by encompassing environmental governance, political discourses and historical studies about environmental development, media productions and daily life conversations about the environment.

By examining the representations of environmentalism in the Chinese and Indian cases, this study deals with different dynamics of discourse construction in the two societies – including the power of the state, the influences of media and social elites, and the emergence of grassroots movements. The investigation of the interactions between these dynamics enhances our understanding of, on the one hand, the social settings of the two Coal Capitals in the two countries, and, on the other hand, the relationship between nature and the people, especially those with limited social and economic resources. By bringing in the voices of the marginalised social groups, this thesis adds to a growing body of research on the diversity of environmentalism within developing countries. In particular, the analysis helps explain how popular environmentalism and the concept of environmental participation in India and China have become recognised differently, in the discussions created by researchers and media commentators in conjunction with actors with power in the state machinery.

For my parents
Tsai Bi-Kuei and Wu Shou-Po
蔡碧貴　&　吳守博

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Chapter 1: A study on representations and interpretations of environmentalism

Introduction

Earlier last year, an article entitled '*Beijing or New Delhi: who has the worst air pollution?*' (Gupta, 2014) published on the *chinadialogue*,[1] a web-media focusing on the environmental crisis in China and its neighbouring countries, triggered a discussion between my colleagues and I. Referring to the *2014 Environmental Performance Index* report published by Yale University (2014) with figures obtained by NASA,[2] the article pointed out that the air quality of New Delhi was as bad as that of Beijing and raised the question of why Beijing had witnessed a series of campaigns against air pollution yet the issue seemed to have not been addressed as much in New Delhi. In reality, Delhi has witnessed campaigns against air pollution, and introduced regulations in 2001, which made compressed natural gas mandatory for public transport vehicles. However, the critique put forward in the article is not groundless. By the end of 2011, a 'PM$_{2.5}$ campaign' initiated by elite environmentalists appeared in Beijing (Boyd, 2013). PM$_{2.5}$ is fine particulate matter that is less than 2.5 microns in diameter. It is prone to carrying heavy metals and chemicals, and its small particle size allows it to reach a large surface area and penetrate deeper into the lungs. These features make PM$_{2.5}$ a significant health threat. The campaign gained significant attention from citizens and some English-language media as well as Beijing-based international entities including the US embassy (Boyd, 2013); consequently, urban air quality became a key theme of environmental governance for Chinese state leaders. On the other hand, when the article was published on the *chinadialogue* in February 2014, New Delhi had just seen the formation of a new government as a result of the 2013 Delhi Legislative Assembly election, and the country was preparing for its 2014 general election. This was the political context in which most politicians paid little attention to environmental issues.

Poor air quality has emerged as an issue in both China and India. According to the *2014 Environmental Performance Index* report (Yale, 2014), both of them were ranked in the

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[1] The *chinadialogue.net* is an international organisation based in London and Beijing, and funded by a range of institutional supporters. See: https://www.chinadialogue.net/ [Accessed 19 July 2015].
[2] From the *Global Rural Urban Mapping Project* run by NASA Socioeconomic Data and Applications Center. See: http://sedac.ciesin.columbia.edu/ [Accessed 19 July 2015].

bottom five among 178 countries. This is no surprise considering that coal makes up 78% of the domestic energy balance in China and 68% in India, while for the European Union countries as a whole, coal-burning contributes less than 30% to their energy supply (IEA, 2012). The rapidly expanding industry and transport sectors in China and India have become critical sources of air pollution (Hsu and Schwartz, 2014). However, previous media article (Gupta, 2014) shows that the formation and development of environmental campaigns is an outcome not only of natural conditions but is also affected by socio-political and cultural factors.

While each single media story or academic account reveals some part of social reality, this dissertation pursues a question – about the context in which these stories are produced: why do we not find campaigns in some areas where there are high environmental risks? Drawing on a selection of materials that provide different representations of Chinese and Indian environmental campaigns, this thesis intends to explore how various social actors/agencies define an 'environmental campaign' differently.

The similarities between China and India in terms of their large populations, high rate of inequality, and hunger for economic growth have made them subjects worth investigating within a study on environmental discourses. Rather than focusing on the two national capitals, Beijing and New Delhi, my research focuses on the Coal Capitals of China and India respectively – areas that provide one of the most environmentally controversial sources of energy for these two developing countries.

Regarding the environmental cost of coal use, in China – according to official figures – coal is responsible for 70% of black carbon[3] and 80% of carbon emissions (Mao et al., 2008). In India, coal combustion accounts for 70% of black carbon and carbon dioxide emissions (Raghuvanshi et al., 2006; Sloss, 2012). On a global scale, China and India put together contribute around 40% of global anthropogenic black carbon emissions. This explains why burning coal in these two countries has always been a hot topic internationally (Menon et al., 2002; Sloss, 2012; Worldwatch, 2005). Optimists hold out great expectations toward innovative energy technologies and point to China and India

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[3] Black carbon, also known as soot, is a solid carbon particle formed through the incomplete combustion of biomass and fossil fuels. Scientists believe that it contributes about one-fifth to the observed global warming (Carl, 2009), and some have even suggested that it may affect the atmospheric environment far more rapidly than carbon emissions (Sloss, 2012).

as countries that should adjust to the low carbon development route in order to bring down global emissions, however there is no evidence that this is being achieved (Newell, 2012). Conversely, on the national development agendas of both countries, coal mining has constantly played an essential role and there has been no significant decline in its importance over the last decades.

Meanwhile, coal development in both countries has resulted in an issue of distributive justice between the places of production and consumption of ecological resources. Both Chinese and Indian scholars (Cao, 2007; Moody, 2005) have identified the environmental and social impacts caused by mining. They show that while mineral extraction takes place in specific locations, its 'footprint' sprawls around in the form of air, water and soil pollution, and physical wounds to the landscape, all of which cause health and safety risks to mine workers and residents. Focusing specifically on the areas directly affected by the coal industry, I have selected the 'Coal Capital of Southern China' located in Guizhou Province and the 'Coal Capital of India' in Jharkhand State as my case-studies. The problematic environmental conditions to some extent were illustrated by the stereotypical images of Guizhou and Jharkhand. When mentioning Guizhou in Chinese society, a historical saying is frequently invoked to describe the place: 'No three sunny days continuously, no three miles of flat land continuously, and no single person owns three taels of silver'. This implies that the area is characterised by a cool and cloudy climate, a rocky plateau and a social condition characterised by low-incomes. As for Jharkhand, the name of the state literally means the 'land of jungles'. Several times on the train, while heading out to do my fieldwork, I was asked: 'Why do you want to visit Jharkhand? It has nothing but forests, rocks and mafias'. In some cases, even people from Jharkhand said this to me. As a stereotype, it reflects the limitations and poor conditions faced by local communities. In practice, as 'Coal Capitals', the living standards of the people in both Guizhou and Jharkhand are on the low end of the of inequality spectrum. Despite being one of the leading mineral producers in China, the GDP per capita of Guizhou is still below $2,000 while some Chinese regions have achieved a higher GDP per capita than the world average of $8,594 (Yu, 2011). Meanwhile, Jharkhand accounts for about 30% of the country's coal production; however, according to the latest official statistics released in 2013,[4] it ranks 5th from bottom in terms of per capita income (around $720) among 32 states and union

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[4] Available at: http://pib.nic.in/archieve/others/2013/dec/d2013121703.pdf [Accessed 19 July 2015].

territories, while the figure for the top regions like Delhi and Goa is about four times higher.

The similarities between the environmental issues in both Coal Capitals have necessitated both of them confronting the tensions between developmental and environmental considerations. The two Coal Capitals as case studies can provide valuable data to explore how different social actors responded to the environmental impacts that have arisen alongside development, or, in short, to compare environmentalism in China and India. 'Environmentalism' here refers not only to environmentally oriented ideas, but also to those settings in which the environment has been conceptualised through actions in specific socio-cultural contexts. Epistemologically speaking, this research deals with environmentalism as interpreted in various ways depending on one's social position. The examination of how environmentalism has been constructed, interpreted and represented differently forms a key theme of this dissertation.

Investigating environmentalism as cultural constructions of nature

Historical geographers (Glacken, 1967; Worster, 1985) have investigated how our view of nature – as a product of culture – reflects human society's changing concerns. The development of ecological disciplines shows that humankind and nature modify each other, as the observer and the observed (Worster, 1985), and most of the time, the environment has been interpreted as serving mankind. Similarly, the social anthropologist Kay Milton (1996) argued that environmental issues and environmentalism have to be examined as cultural phenomena embodied in social interactions and groupings. The work of the anthropologist Mary Douglas (1966) pointed out that the conceptualisation of nature is a key theme at the heart of the social order. Nature is harnessed by mankind's attempts to discipline people into moral governance by mobilising their fear of danger, whether this is in regard to dirt, risk or environmental harm. In sum, as indicated by historical geographer Clarence James Glacken (1967: 3), 'What is most striking in conceptions of nature, even mythological ones, is the yearning for purpose and order'. By examining the different interpretations of the environment, this study intends to elaborate the orders or motives that drive such discourse constructions.

Different views of environmentalism in political science provide a demonstration of how nature is interpreted by a variety of discourses in order to justify the socio-political purposes of policy makers, social elites, academics or activists. Diverse perspectives have been identified (Clapp, 2005) – including the views of market liberals, institutionalists, bio-environmentalists, and social greens – each of which differently evaluates environmental change and its relationship to the global political economy.

Market liberals believe in environmental improvement through market-based mechanisms and economic efficiency (Zelli et al., 2013). The idea of emission trading promoted in the Kyoto Protocol is an example that reflects the viewpoint of market liberal environmentalism (Bernstein, 2001; Driesen, 2008). Institutionalists emphasise the state's capacity to influence social and economic activities by means of regulations on, for instance, the adoption of green innovations by industries and firms (Aguilera-Caracuel and Ortiz-de-Mandojana, 2013; Hoffman, 1999; Prakash, 2000). Influenced by the ideas of demographer Thomas Robert Malthus, who stated that 'The power of population is indefinitely greater than the power of the earth to produce subsistence for man',[5] bio-environmentalism, or Malthusian environmentalism, explains the environmental crisis by emphasising an impending clash between population growth and biological limits (Linnér, 2003). The 'tragedy of the commons' debate, brought up by ecologist Garrett Hardin (1968), provides one of the discussions concerning the issue of natural resources and sustainability as linked to the problem of over-population. Research, derived from Hardin's argument, has been developed to analyse common property resource management and the stock of natural capital (Adams and Hutton, 2007; Adams et al., 2002).

Drawing on critical theories, social greens believe that social and environmental problems are inseparable and consider social conflict as a central topic in discussions (Clapp, 2005). In these debates, it is argued that social realities such as globalisation, inequality and domination are leading to environmental harm. Many social greens hold an activist stance. Environmentalist Edward Goldsmith (2008), who criticises of industrialisation and modernism, is one example of this tendency while feminist environmentalist, Vandana Shiva, is another. Shiva's work (1988) concerns the femininity in ecology movements and places women at the heart of an inclusive

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[5] This is a quote from Thomas Robert Malthus' influential book, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, first published in 1798.

development discourse. The works of Subaltern Studies scholars and those authors influenced by them, which address environmental issues and people's struggles in post-colonial India (Agrawal, 2005; Guha, 2006), share similar concerns with the social green approach in that they consider environmental politics and social change to be intimately linked. Environmental political scientist Arun Agrawal (2005), for example, examined the technologies of government in regulating nature as well as humans. Agrawal's work highlights the possibility of a decentralised approach that changes the relations between decision makers, common residents of local communities and the environment.

What makes the perspective of social greens different from the previous three approaches is that they challenge the social structures dominated by vested interests instead of reinforcing existing socio-political orders. Social greens evaluate the experience of social minorities in relation to environmental problems. This aids our understanding of how their critical environmentalism has been used by scholars to prompt debates about the environment and development while also fuelling environmental movements. In the Indian environmental arena, the works of the Subaltern Studies scholars and those drawn from ecological Marxism (e.g. Baviskar, 1996; 2005; Gadgil and Guha, 1995) demonstrate this approach. This leads to the question: how can we explain the reasons why approaches similar to critical environmentalism have not been highlighted to the same degree in Chinese society? In reality, in most societies the four (and more) political views discussed above are held by a variety of socio-economic and political groups. Founded on socio-anthropological and historical approaches, this research aims to enhance our knowledge of the various interactions between these groups and the environmental problems they face in terms of 'nature'. In this context, the critical environmentalism perspective that emphasises popular agency (as argued by Subaltern Studies scholars) and the state environmentalism perspective that values the government role (as held by scholars with an institutionalist tendency) are some of the interpretations of environmentalism that will be deconstructed in this dissertation. In the next section, I will introduce the literature to elaborate how certain perspectives have gained more influence and attention in society.

Environmentalism and the flow of power

Although environmentalism in developed countries has been the subject of many studies (e.g. Righter, 2006; Schreurs, 2002; Seel et al., 2000; Wallace, 1995), environmentalism in developing countries, such as China and India, has received relatively little attention (e.g. Agrawal, 2005; Guha, 2006; Weller, 2006; Zhang and Barr, 2013). Whilst there are a few studies that contrast environmentalism between developing countries (e.g. Bryant and Bailey, 1997; EJOLT, 2015;[6] Peet and Watts, 1996), a key objective of this research is to enrich the literature by making analytical comparisons based on empirical case studies of China and India.

Some researchers have tried to trace and illustrate the evolution of environmentalism over time in the developed world (Rosen, 1994; Shellenberger and Nordhaus, 2004). It is worth noting that by the end of the 20th century, the issue of environmental inequality had been raised in several articles. The work of historian Ruth Rosen (1994) illustrates that in the developed countries like the United States, in addition to mainstream environmental interest in wilderness and overabundance, there are also movements led by poor people who are struggling with the environmental hazards and structural inequalities ravaging their communities (Rosen, 1994). In her work, Rosen makes distinctions between the approaches to environmentalism taken by different social groups within one society. Rosen's work together with other articles (Bullard, 1993; 2000; Cole and Foster, 2001; Hurley, 1995; Lavelle and Coyle, 1992; Rosen, 1994) have contributed to the critiques of environmental racism in a Western context since the late 1980s and early 1990s, mostly in the United States. They address environmental problems with a particular focus on how white middle-class communities see more action taken and better results arising from their endeavours with regard to environmental risks affecting their neighbourhoods when compared to minority communities. It is argued that one fundamental reason for this is that the minority communities often lack access to political power to determine development agendas.

Environmental philosopher Carolyn Merchant (2003) analysed environmental racism in America as having dual forms: one is the enslavement of ethnic others (the African

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[6] An open access database by the *Environmental Justice Organisations, Liabilities and Trade* project (www.ejatlas.org [Accessed 19 July 2015]), under the direction of Joan Martínez-Alier and Leah Temper, that gathers and presents data on environmental conflicts in different countries concerning different commodities around the world.

Americans for instance), which is linked to the problem of environmental exploitation, and the other is the environmental genocide of native others (the American Indians for instance) by impairing their autonomy and access to natural resources. The case of environmental enslavement and environmental genocide is not isolated. In the case of overseas colonies, despite the narrative of 'conservation'[7] gaining ground, numerous kinds of minorities have been required to exploit nature for their dominators and have suffered from environmental degradation in their neighbourhoods.

The works of environmental historian Richard Hugh Grove (1992; 1995) introduced a global perspective by studying the history of environmentalism and the colonial ecological footprint. In the colonial context, Grove (1992; 1995) identified Western conservationism as a project with its roots in the tropics, which can be traced back at least to the early 1860s. The worries over the effects of artificial activities upon the newly 'discovered' nature reached a peak when the Western economic forces encountered the tropics through colonial expansion. Although the botanical projects, for instance, had somehow illustrated the idea of 'preserving the wilderness', the discourse of conservation initiated by the colonial scientists and administrators was to a certain degree based on their intention to secure natural resources in order to meet the requirements of the colonial economy (Grove, 1995; Philip, 2004). As a result, the colonies witnessed the rapid exploitation and commodification of natural resources and the alienation of the relationship between nature and humanity; meanwhile, at the other end of the chain, these natural products combined with labour power facilitated the growth of global capitalist markets. These historical episodes illustrate the ecological footprint caused jointly by colonialism and capitalism.

Grove's analysis suggested that there was a dialectical interplay between the colonised and the colonisers in terms of culture and knowledge construction (Grove, 1995; Kumar et al., 2011). To some extent, the environmentalism of both former colonial empires and postcolonial societies could be considered as an inter-construction of two cultures sharing a colonial history. The legacy of imperial encounters still influences modern societies and prompts contemporary anxieties about environmental issues such as deforestation and global warming (Kumar et al., 2011). Meanwhile, as revealed by

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[7] 'Conservation' is another controversial idea in the field of environmental studies, especially with regard to the tensions between indigenous livelihoods and protected-area schemes. Relevant discussions can be found in several works; e.g. Agrawal and Redford (2009), Brockington (2009), Chatty and Colchester (2002), Merchant (1980b) and Neumann (1998).

Grove's later work and other articles of environmental social scientists (Grove, 2003; Newell, 2012; Sikor and Newell, 2014; Walker and Bulkeley, 2006), the environmental threats to poor communities/countries on a global scale caused by private capital or corporate interests, is an historic issue but nevertheless still demands attention and new initiatives in terms of local-global collaborations.

If Grove's work (1992) calls attention to the reality that 'Western environmentalism' is to a certain extent a production of those countries' colonial experiences in the tropics, the work of historians Ramachandra Guha and Joan Martínez-Alier (1997) provides the other half of the puzzle, by 'contrasting the "environmentalism of the poor" with the more closely studied phenomenon of First World environmentalism' (1997: 16). Guha and Martínez-Alier differentiated between the environmentalism of the global 'North' and 'South'. Taken together with the works discussed above, these represent a swing from the growing current of environmental justice and environmental racism noted in the discussions of various communities of a single country – as revealed by Ruth Rosen (1994) and Merchant (2003) – to an outlook that highlights inequality as a consequence of global development. Martínez-Alier (2001; 2002) pointed out that, the language of anti-racism is politically powerful in the United States because of its historical background within the civil rights struggle; in the global 'South', also during the 1980s and 1990s, a similar concern with regard to socio-environmental justice has been put forward in terms of 'environmentalism of the poor' – first in India and, later, in Latin America and Africa (Guha and Martínez-Alier, 1997; 1999), to convey the indigenous and peasant struggles for common property resources against the state authorities or the capitalist market.

From this contrasting viewpoint, Guha (2006) compared the environmentalism in India and the United States and argued that ecological movements in developed countries are more closely related to the emergence of a post-materialist society (wherein lies the source of popular support to protect 'nature' for leisure pursuits), while those in developing countries are more directly related to livelihoods, survival and related questions of equity and justice (such as the Chipko Movement[8] in India). However, I consider that the environmentalism of the poor or the environmentalism of developing

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[8] A series of protests initiated in 1973 by peasants to prevent local trees from being chopped for outside commercial investors. Details about the Chipko Movement will be presented in Chapter 3 in the discussion on the ecological history of India.

countries has multiple presentations that should not be limited to a socialist or radical tendency. If we recall the different theoretical threads set out in the previous section, the approach of social greens or critical environmentalism is only one of several views to examine environmental challenges.

In some recent studies, political scientists such as Mark Beeson (2010) and Bruce Gilley (2012) outline the concept of 'authoritarian environmentalism' based on the Chinese experience. This concept draws out another feature of environmentalism within Asia, or that of the so-called 'global South' – if China is considered to belong to the 'South'. 'Authoritarian environmentalism' adopts quite a different approach from the environmentalism proposed by Indian historian Guha (2006); my understanding of Guha's popular environmentalism is that it is characterised by the spontaneous movements that are, to a certain extent, conditioned by the democratic background of India. On the other hand, authoritarian environmentalism is shaped by the enforcements of official regulations on environmental governance. While China and India appear to be facing similar development-environmental dilemmas, as suggested in the introduction section, the different tendencies shown in the (re)presentations of environmentalism in the two societies are my concerns here. By elaborating potential factors affecting the differences between how the two cultures deal with human-nature relationships, and considering in what way they conceptualise environmental issues, this research aspires to go beyond the existing labels and enrich the literature on the various features of environmentalism.

Learning from the perspectives of ordinary people: *laobaixing* and *adivasis*

Inspired by the critiques of environmental racism and environmental colonisation (Guha, 2006; Merchant, 2003; Philip, 2004; Rosen, 1994), this study pays extra attention to how those people filtered out and left behind in the progress of regional development made their decisions to protest or to keep silent – either individually or collectively – in response to environmental degradation. This research has a clear purpose to learn from the 'ordinary people' and their interactions with the environment. By 'ordinary people' I refer to the members of the local communities where I carried out my fieldwork. My research objects are the social actors living in those regions which are rich in natural resources but who have, however, few resources by which to avoid the negative effects

of the coal industry. Compared with political leaders or intellectual activists, they are less endowed with social capital and discursive power and their voices have seldom been presented in the official agendas.

The ordinary people in the Chinese context are called, and themselves claim the name, *laobaixing*, which literally means 'old hundred surnames'. It is a collective noun that conveys the idea that the masses are composed of a number of families living in proximity for a long period of time. Meanwhile, in the case of India, it is the *adivasi* people who are one of my key research objects. *Adivasi* in Hindi stands for 'original inhabitants', it refers to the aboriginal peoples of the Indian subcontinent. Some researchers suggest that the *adivasis* have developed their lifestyle and social structures over many centuries in accordance with the law of nature (Padel and Das, 2010). Their animistic spiritual traditions are one characteristic that distinguishes them from other Indians. The way in which people identify themselves as belonging to a social category/group more or less reflects their social position in response to the power structure. Unlike the term 'public' or 'citizens', '*laobaixing*' hints at the inactive attitude and powerless condition of these Chinese folk, as it is often written/said alongside leading adjectives that have passive meanings such as 'small-people (xiǎo-lǎobǎixìng)' or 'deadly-people (sǐ-lǎobǎixìng)' (which will be further discussed in Chapter 4). Additionally, while the universality of the term *laobaixing* in Chinese society could be explained partly by its history over the millenniums,[9] it partly reflects the effects of mono-lingualism in modern China. On the other hand, the term '*adivasi*' in Indian society is used in relation to claiming the autonomous rights and distinct identity of indigenous communities from other ethno-cultural groups.

In this dissertation, I consider that the concept of 'ordinary people' better describes the condition of my study objects than 'community'. A 'community' is defined as a group of people having something in common which distinguishes them in a significant way from others (Cohen, 1985). The consciousness of community is encapsulated in the perception of its boundaries from a cultural perspective. The idea of 'community'

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[9] The use of '*baixing*' (hundred surnames) as a contrast to dominators has a long history that can be traced back to at least the *Analects* by Confucius (551 B.C. – 479 B.C.) and the works of Mencius (372 B.C. – 289 B.C.). During the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. – 220 A.D.), due to the territorial extension, new surnames were arranged for the immigrants; therefore, there was a division between the '*lao* (meaning old)-*baixing*' and '*sin* (meaning new)-*baixing*'. However, the distinction gradually blurred and the term *laobaixing* became a popular usage to refer to the ordinary people in China.

explains the condition of *adivasis*, but not *laobaixing*. In colonial and post-colonial contexts, *adivasi* refers to those who are culturally different from others. However, the identity of *laobaixing* in the Chinese context, as I have experienced it during the fieldwork, contains little intention towards cultural discrimination and differentiation. This is not to say that my Chinese respondents had no specific individual or group identities at all; nevertheless, *laobaixing* is the category that was referred to most frequently during our interactions, and this term indicates the 'ordinary people' in a more general manner than 'community'. Therefore, I choose to use the notion of 'ordinary people' to cover this broader range of objects. Additionally, because the economic standard of people is not a particular difference between my respondents that is to be highlighted in this dissertation, I do not, therefore, employ the concept of 'class' to categorise my research objects.

As an aside, there are also ethnic communities in China, called *shǎoshù mínzú*, which is usually translated as 'national minorities', and literally means 'ethnic communities with a small population'. Guizhou is one of the Chinese provinces that have a relatively high proportion of *shǎoshù mínzú* (Elvin, 2006; Fan, 1993). However, in this dissertation, I use the term *laobaixing* rather than *shǎoshù mínzú* as a key concept. There are two reasons for this. The decisive reason is that, historically, there has not been a significant presence of ethnic minorities around my primary Chinese field site specifically (Li et al, 1998).[10] The region of my main field site in Guizhou was mostly the residence of Han Chinese,[11] therefore Han Chinese formed the majority of my interviewees. Another reason is that, unlike the condition of '*adivasi*' in India, the terminology '*shǎoshù mínzú*' in modern China has not been used markedly with a sense of belonging and a radical identity. Instead, the ideology of assimilation and anti-separatism has constantly been enforced in China's policy towards ethnic communities under the Chinese Communist Party leadership (Park, 2013). The assimilation policy has had demonstrable effects in the southwest, as evidenced by the work of sociologist Jonathan Unger (2002: 188); he observed that many of the ethnic peoples 'regarded themselves as being a type of poor second-class Chinese', and for them the essential 'ethnic' distinction was the fact that

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[10] Although there are significant ethnic communities in Guizhou Province, the ethnic residences and Han Chinese residences have been separated since the Ming Dynasty due to official regulations (issued since 1382) and this is still the case now (Li et al., 1998).

[11] I became aware of this only after I started my fieldwork in the village; and since it was difficult for me to access a field site in Chinese coal areas, I decided to stick with the same village while, at the same time, doing some supplementary interviews in other regions with ethnic people.

they 'hold the disadvantages associated with impoverishment' rather than this arising from their cultural traditions. As argued by historian Frank Dikötter (1990), modern China from the early 20th century onwards has projected a nationalistic vision that emphasised the original purity and genetic foundation of its members. The discourse of unified national consciousness has suppressed internal divisions with claims that, for example, even the 'peasants with weather-beaten faces' are the 'descendants of the Yellow Emperor' (Dikötter, 2008: 1489). The intention was to dissolve the boundaries between ethnic groups; although, as Dikötter suggests (2008), divisions and classifications have re-emerged in other forms of social differences, such as class. In practice, my interviewees from ethnic groups also referred to themselves as *laobaixing* or peasants of rural areas. In this manner, although in many cases they have suffered to a greater extent, the ethnic communities in China share similar structural difficulties with the marginalised common *laobaixing*, and minimal discursive and social resources are at hand to support them to challenge the structure.

Admittedly, *laobaixing* and *adivasi* are not the perfect counterparts to each other in Chinese and Indian society. Nor do I intend to coin them as two clear-cut different types of actors that can represent all interviewees or even all resource-poor individuals in the two societies. Nevertheless, by studying the discursive politics and ideologies linked to them, I use the two notions as conceptual tools to elaborate how the subordinate status has been contextualised or problematised differently in the two socio-political contexts. While both the members of *laobaixing* and *adivasis* have historically experienced social and economic marginalisation, each of the two concepts bears different socio-political and cultural contexts. To some extent, the identity of the people in the categories of '*laobaixing*' and '*adivasi*' reveals their reaction to the state-people relationship constructed by the state leaders of their country. By studying the '*laobaixing*' and '*adivasi*', I intend to learn how the marginalised social members of the two countries are conceptualised politically and academically, and how people respond to nationalism being evoked.

Research questions

This thesis addresses how political and social institutions in both China and India influence the practices of ecological governance and the formation of environmental campaigns. Specifically, I propose three research questions:

How do environment-development agendas influence people in the 'Coal Capitals'?

Political ecology is a broad body of literature that 'examines the interrelations of politics and power, structures and discourses with the environment' (Newell, 2012: 8). As a study on human-nature relationships that aims to investigate the social, political and cultural contexts in environmentally fragile regions, the questions in this thesis, to a certain extent, share the same point of departure as many political ecologists in terms of the consideration that ecological and environmental issues are also deeply political (Forsyth, 2003; Newell, 2012; Peet and Watts, 1996; Stott and Sullivan, 2000). That is, in geographer David Harvey's words (1993: 25), 'Ecological arguments are never socially neutral any more than socio-political arguments are ecologically neutral'. Political ecology studies can be broadly classified into two forms (Brosius, 1999; Walker, 2005): ones that engage with ecology and environmental change with a material approach (e.g. Turner, 1999; 2004; Zimmerer, 1991; 2003), and those that question 'nature' with an ideological or discursive approach (e.g. Escobar, 1999; Fortmann, 1995). Works based on the latter approach pay attention to how socio-political power and knowledge construction interrelate. In particular, accounts that draw on ecology in combination with anthropological studies (e.g. Fairhead and Leach, 1995; 1996; Fraser et al., 2014; Frausin et al., 2014) are quite inspiring in terms of the research design and analytical perspective that build on local experiences with usually marginalised communities. Despite the fact that I share a similar interest in community practices and discourses to anthropological political ecology scholarship, while a key objective of political ecology is to explain environmental change (Jarosz, 1996; Newell, 2012; Nygren and Rikoon, 2008; Peet and Watts, 1996; Zimmerer, 1996), my study focuses on explaining social realities.

Issues associated with human-nature relationships appear in various ways at different stages of development. For instance, debates over 'coal' in highly developed countries are often concerned with clean energy innovations (Hein and Bemtgen, 1998; Popp,

2006), while in rapidly developing countries, satisfying energy needs for industry and the transport sector is a crucial topic (Hsu and Schwartz, 2014). The public agendas for the 'development' of mining villages are often directed by official authorities (details of the cases I studied will be introduced in Chapter 3). At the same time, the socio-political agendas for the 'environment' often seem to be guided by the government as well – i.e. what are the environmental problems that urgently need to be dealt with and in what way are they to be handled? There will be more discussions on this theme in Chapter 2. However, does the debate discussed in the official agendas reflect the problems faced by people in the field? Does the definition of 'development' remain the same for different social actors/agencies? Similar to the condition observed in the United States (Bullard, 1993; Rosen, 1994), in many cases, local residents are the primary victims of pollution, yet they are not the major beneficiaries of the development projects. How do ordinary people negotiate the potential advantages and disadvantages in response to the official agendas? What is the ultimate force that can define and secure people's 'environmental rights' that this research is going to explore – is it the power of nature or the power of political authority?

Specifically, there are a variety of aspects to consider with regard to the side-effects of mining. These include the infringement of people's right to land, pollution and health threats, over-industrialisation and unbalanced urban-rural development, and daily struggles in the lives of the villagers. However, not all of these aspects are considered and reported as problems in cases in both countries. Furthermore, the political and economic elites hold viewpoints that differ from the resource-poor people. The different interpretations of coal development and related environmental issues will be elaborated in later chapters, and this brings out my next research question.

Who speaks for the environment, how and why?

The literature on environmentalism concerning power and resource distribution was reviewed in the previous section on *environmentalism and the flow of power*. Some works have focused on 'environmental racism' and grassroots community-based struggles in a global North setting (e.g. Bullard, 1993; 2000; Cole and Foster, 2001; Merchant, 2003), and others have paid attention to unequal environmental burdens borne by marginalised communities, particularly from a global South perspective (e.g. Carruthers, 2008; Guha and Martínez-Alier, 1997; Martínez-Alier, 2002; McDonald,

2002). They share the same motivation of investigating debates concerning environmental justice. It has been recognised that 'the core issues at the heart of environmental justice struggles are universal' (Schroeder et al., 2008: 547) and increasingly operate at a transnational scale along with the development of global capitalism (Sikor and Newell, 2014). Besides, the rhetoric of 'environmental justice' provides useful conceptual frames for the mobilisation of communities with diverse grievances (Holifield, 2001). Nevertheless, many have suggested the importance of a context-specific perspective in examining the politics, practices and discourses associated with environmental justice (Holifield, 2001; Lake, 1996; Schlosberg, 2004; Stanley, 2009; Warren, 1999). That is to say, the understanding of environmental justice or how to evaluate environment-related arrangements is not universal but can differ between different social actors in different contexts. Therefore, the question is, by whom and for whom were the meanings and evaluations given?

Empirical studies concerned with environmental issues generally cover three areas: challenges and movements, law and policy, and the construction of knowledge (Yearley, 2009). My dissertation aims to interpret the interaction of these elements within a socio-political context through the study of different scenarios involving environmental campaigns or distribution conflicts in China and India, with a special focus on the forces that facilitate or impede social movements. In this context, the roles of governments, individuals, and NGOs or other social elites – in terms of producing and interpreting environmental discourses – will be discussed. As suggested by philosophers Rom Harré, Jens Brockmeier and Peter Mühlhäuser (1999), socio-cultural and linguistic factors are able to conspire to make a certain ideology or concept inaccessible, or, in other cases, easily accessible. This explains the value of investigating environmental discourses and the socio-political dynamics behind them. The work of Thomas Sikor and Peter Newell (2014) indicates the importance of analysing the discourses of 'environmental justice' by considering the political-economic contexts within which they were produced and are deployed. As pointed out by Sikor and Newell (2014), 'environmental justice' provides a 'vocabulary' for activism; however, the language of justice is invoked not only by activists and NGOs, but also by state actors and corporations. Therefore, by studying the narratives and multiple languages of development and environment applied by different actors and agents in a society, this thesis takes environment-related discourses/terminologies to be problematic and worthy of question.

While none of the three groups of actors/agencies – the government, individuals and NGOs – can fully represent nature or adequately protect the environment from degradation, political authorities, specialists and middle-class civil agencies are often more capable to exercise the power over discourses (Harré et al., 1999). Take the 'PM$_{2.5}$ campaign' in Beijing as an example. Environmentalists and NGO members active on Chinese microblogs [12] and Twitter initiated the campaign. It was 'an extraordinary citizen-led campaign' (Boyd, 2013: 40) in which scientific terminology (in this case the PM$_{2.5}$) was deployed to enhance the power of environmental discourse so as to problematise the issue of air quality in urban China. While environmentalist discourses are, to a certain extent, constructed for the purpose of mobilising the 'public' into action, there is a range of social members who might hold different thoughts relating to the environment. Rather than investigating campaigns led by intellectuals or elites, I am more interested in studying how environmental discourses reach the marginalised spaces of society and how ordinary people explain the environmental issues that they face day-to-day.

Who speaks for the environment, how and why? This research question is driven by a concern for environmental injustice between different social groups, with a special intention to include the ordinary people who are living a more intimate life with 'nature'.[13] What are their approaches to environmentalism? How do they live with the environment and make use of it in either a functional, experiential or symbolic manner? Instead of assessing the natural environment itself, based on case studies of coal mining villages, this thesis provides an investigation into how people interpret 'the environment' differently within their social/cultural context. In this study, the enquiry into environmental justice focuses not only on people of different races or ethnic groups (for example, the *adivasis* in the Indian case), but also on common people who have fewer

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[12] A microblog is a social networking platform that allows users to exchange small elements of content via mobile devices with an Internet connection. While most of the popular international networking services like Twitter, Facebook and Google+ are censored or banned in China, there are some active Chinese microblog services, such as Sina Weibo and Tencent Weibo.

[13] The 'intimate life with nature' in my context indicates the condition that certain groups of people lack social or economic resources and in many cases nature is the essential resource for them to make their living. This is different from a romantic approach to environmentalism as can be sensed, for instance, in the poem by William Wordsworth (1770-1850), 'Come forth into the light of things, let nature be your teacher'. Instead, intimacy might be seen in indigenous knowledge and skills related to the environment, illustrated by the way *adivasis* secure food during periods of scarcity, as noted in the work of historian Vinita Damodaran (1998).

resources (such as the *laobaixing* in the Chinese case). The structural similarities and differences between the two societies will also be examined.

What conditions give rise to environmental activities/movements?

Much of the literature on social movement theory has analysed the factors that can facilitate or restrain the occurrence and continuance of protest movements. Sociologists point out that certain political contexts (or political opportunity structures), social networks and collective claims/actions are critical prerequisites for social movements (McAdam, 1982; McAdam et al., 2001; Tarrow, 1998; Tilly, 1978). These factors are important dimensions to be examined when contrasting my two case studies. Based on anthropological studies in coal regions, this research aims to understand how common people interact with the given environmental conditions. However, I consider that people's responses to the coal mine environment are not limited to the form of protest movements, but also include various deployments of 'weapons of the weak' (Scott, 1985). In some cases, there could be a similar application of what environmental researcher Dara O'Rourke (2004) calls community-driven regulation, whereby local communities play a crucial role in pushing the state authorities to improve environmental governance. However, the 'regulation', or 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1977) may not always fit the conventional understanding of 'environmental regulation' in terms of aiming at natural resource preservation or pollution prevention. In situations in which there is a lack of social and economic capital, resource-poor individuals may use whatever they have to hand in the environment to make profits. Many grassroots activities can be identified neither as struggles for political power (so-called 'old' social movements) (e.g. Gamson, 1975; Oberschall, 1973; Tilly, 1978) nor identity-focused struggles (so-called 'new' social movements) (e.g. Habermas, 1981; Scott, 1990). However, identifying whether or not local people's behaviours fit the conventional scope of environmental activism is not the main task of this research. Instead, its focus is to study the social, cultural and political opportunities that are allowed, or absent, for the people to define and integrate their lives with the environment.

That is, I adopt an expanded concept of environmentalism in this thesis, which not only refers to the ideology or activism that focuses on the preservation of nature, but also includes different sorts of practice or performance associated with the environment. With such an approach, I will examine the interaction between different social actors

and agents in a more integrated environmental arena, and the reasons why certain members of the environment have been less represented in the debating arena.

When indigenous and traditional economies are confronted with corporate investments and industrial development, I suggest, from my empirical experience, that a difference in attitudes between countries can be observed. Taiwanese activists, for example, tend to raise debates on administrative procedures, and the people demand to play a role in public hearings or Environmental Impact Assessment procedures, in order to balance the narrow interest of the groups/investors in the decision-making process. In contrast, for the activists I interviewed in Jharkhand in 2009,[14] with regard to their fight against outside investors and industrial development, their main argument was the *adivasis'* appeal for their right to land and livelihood. At the same time, the literature shows (Tang and Zhan, 2008) that most Chinese environmental campaigns tend to be reactive rather than preventative; they react to apparent situations such as problematic water quality or high rates of cancer among residents.

The above examples explain the value of a comparative perspective. In practice, some comparative studies have been conducted on these two giant Asian countries. Most of these have focused on the economic system and performance of each country (Lal, 1995; Livernash, 1995; Matson and Selden, 1992; Rosen, 1992), while others have paid attention to the effects of their political ideologies (Mohanty, 1991; Drèze and Sen, 2010). One rare exception is the interdisciplinary research by anthropologists Margaret Sleeboom-Faulkner and Prasanna Kumar Patra (2008) that investigates how China and India's governments created socio-political and cultural spaces for (bio)technological development. There are some works in the field of environmental studies that have evaluated the increasing ecological impacts on the global environment, caused by China and India (Flavin and Gandner, 2006; Galli et al., 2012; Menon et al., 2002). A few articles have attempted to contrast the environmental governance between the two countries (Shinkuma and Managi, 2010; Tang et al., 1998) but have focussed either on their domestic laws or on urban environmental issues. However, so far there has been a lack of environmental studies based on socio-anthropological case studies of rural China and India. In the case of coal, while the environmental conditions of coal sites are usually questionable (Cao, 2007; Moody, 2005), they may not always be defined as

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[14] This was when I worked as an intern in an Indian NGO between 2008 and 2009.

problems and result in the emergence of concrete movements. This research aims to discover the reasons why actors tend to initiate certain actions rather than others, or make appeals through certain approaches/agencies rather than others. My enquiry aims to further analyse the social structures that affect these social activities, which might be explained by elements such as individuals' obedience to the authorities, discursive and social resources offered by elite actors or NGOs, and the extent of different degrees of freedom in the social arenas.

Methodological issues and limitations

I will now describe the methodology I used to carry out the China-India comparisons, discuss the research design, and explain how I gained access to my informants in the rural areas. After that, some methodological limitations will be discussed. In particular, I will illustrate the issues of 'sensitivity' and the language barriers I encountered in my Chinese and Indian fieldwork.

Research design: innovative methods of carrying out the China-India comparisons

> Only comparison shows that there is a real problem here, and this in itself is a step forward: for is there a greater danger in any branch of science than the temptation to think that everything happens 'quite naturally'?
>
> (Marc Bloch, *Land and Work in Medieval Europe*, 1967: 67)

For social research, a comparative perspective is best suited to the goal of exploring diversity (Ragin et al., 2010); in the case of this dissertation it is the diversity of environmentalism that is being examined. While there are studies on ecological history and environmental movements in China (Elvin, 2006; Geall, 2013b; Smil, 1993; Weller, 2006) and India (Agrawal, 2005; Guha, 2006; Shah, 2010; Shiva, 1991), the lack of a comparative perspective has resulted in a tendency to review single cases without awareness of others that are couched in different context-specific terms. Regarding the conceptualisation of 'nature' by different cultures, anthropologist Margaret Sleeboom's (2004) work has, using China and Japan as examples, demonstrated an analysis of how socio-political factors and academic politics have influenced the deployment of discourses concerning nature. In my study, I use examples from China and India, because the differences between their socio-political systems highlight the value of

investigating environmentalism and narratives concerning the respective campaigns in these two countries.

Turning now to the logic of comparison, comparative studies can be designed to study the differences between mostly similar systems or mostly different systems; while the former kind of design aims to identify the specific independent variable that leads to differences between cases with lots of similarities, the latter design addresses cases with plenty of differences, which perhaps share one feature that leads to the same outcome in the dependent variable (Peters, 1998). Dealing with the case studies of China and India, while their similarities discussed in the introduction section have brought about the value of a comparative analysis of their environmental discourses, this project examines also their differences. In particular, by studying the two different socio-political systems, it aims to identify how environmental campaigns arise within these different surroundings. I look at several causal variables, including the political regime, the social and ideological construction, and the cultural history and transformation of each country. With regard to the role of NGOs and elite activists as significant – though questionable (Shah, 2010) – civic agents in the public sphere, their role is analysed as an intervening variable, while the environmental movements and participations in grassroots spaces are the phenomenon to be explained.

It must be noted that, because this project deals with two case studies that are based primarily on qualitative data, it does not aim to present a systematically perfect model that allows the researcher to keep certain variables under control and then assess the dependent variable. Instead, my idea of a comparative perspective is to constantly look back and forth between the two cases and use each one as a reference for the other so that none of the occurrences will be taken for granted without considering the complex causalities or conditionalities that are operating. This research intends to develop innovative methods that combine social, political and historical factors to contrast Chinese and Indian societies in order to undertake a better scrutiny of the relationships between those factors and the forms that environmentalism takes. The impacts of these factors are represented through the terminology of certain concepts; for example, through the *laobaixing* and *adivasi* that were discussed previously and the conceptualisations of '*tiān*' (sky, heaven) and 'soil' in the two cultures that will be addressed in Chapter 3. By studying how people interpret the concepts associated with

human-nature relationships, the influence of various factors can be observed. This is how my cross-cultural socio-anthropological study intends to fulfil its comparative mission: to learn by detailing the differences and to revaluate their similarities.

Admittedly, it is problematic for any research to generalise the conditions of China or India on the basis of one limited site in each country, as both countries are huge in scope and rich in variety. This dissertation has no intention of simplifying these two countries into a binary model; rather, with the case studies, my objective is to portray some clusters of characteristics of the two societies, or 'ideal types' in sociologist Max Weber's term (1949), and contrast them with each other. The ideal types may offer 'guidance to the construction of hypotheses' (Weber, 1949: 90) and enhance researchers' understanding of the characteristic uniqueness of social actors, their actions, and the social context. The observed contrasts may enable us to learn more about the social structures of the countries and reconsider whether the conventional understanding of authoritarian and democratic systems can sufficiently explain the differences between the two societies. As a comparative study on environmental development, which is based not only on official statements and data but also on ordinary people's experiences and interpretations, its innovative methods will enrich our knowledge of regional studies, and this could be valuable for both researchers and policy makers by bringing in reflections on participatory environmental governance.

With regard to the research design, this dissertation draws to a great extent on mixed methods case study research to demonstrate the multiple dimensions of social realities. First-hand materials collected via participative observation and interviews during my fieldwork in China and India between 2011 and 2012 provide my main sources of data. The fieldwork intended to explore the daily struggles of ordinary people and this information was essential for answering my research question about people's practices and intentions regarding whether to speak out or keep silent in response to their challenging environment. The interviewees included residents of coal villages, civil activists and researchers. In addition to the primary data, policy documents, news articles and media productions serve as supportive data sources for my analyses. Taken together the materials demonstrate a variety of practices of environmentalism and how the discourses of environmentalism are inter-constructed by various social dynamics.

To access the 'local stakeholders', whose lives are influenced by the development-environment conflicts in a relatively direct manner, socio-anthropological research was conducted in two locations. One site consisted of villages in the regions of the 'Coal Capital of Southern China', which is located in Panxian County at the border of Guizhou and Yunnan Provinces. The other site was the 'Coal Capital of India', which is located in Dhanbad District of Jharkhand – a state in eastern India. For brevity, in the remainder of this dissertation the site in rural Guizhou will be called *Weilongcun* Village and the one in Jharkhand will be called *Navadih* Village (both are anonyms; see Map 1.1 and Map 1.2 for the locations of these two field sites within China and India).
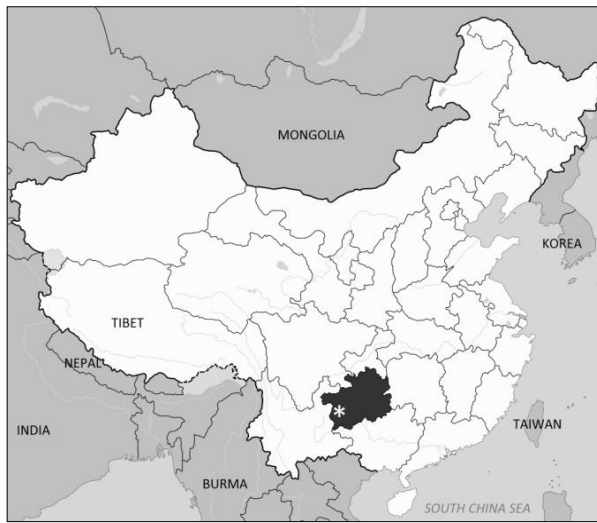
Map 1.1 China (Guizhou highlighted)　　　Map 1.2 India (Jharkhand highlighted)

With *Weilongcun* and *Navadih* as the respective centres, the areas that were explored during my fieldwork covered about 120 square kilometres – in which there were coal mining sites and several coal-related industries, such as coal-washing plants or coking plants. To gain people's trust, many of the informants were found by snowball sampling, while some were chosen through random encounters during my stays in the field – this can reduce the effects of selective sampling based on the researcher's and informants' social connections. In each of the two cases, I have interviewed over 30 individuals at village level (in *Weilongcun*, *Navadih* and also their neighbouring villages), of both genders, varying ages, and in different occupations; I specifically and intentionally involved some who were working in coal-related jobs.

The majority of the field data were acquired by means of semi-structured and informal interviews along with site observations. Semi-structured interviews are well suited for

the exploration of attitudes, values and opinions of respondents regarding certain topics (which sometimes may be sensitive) (Barriball and While, 1994) – this approach is consistent with my research interests. By observing non-verbal expressions of the respondents during informal interactions, researchers might be able to evaluate the validity of the narratives provided (Gorden, 1987). Since my study question relates to people's subjective viewpoints of the environment and identifying environmental problems, putting these points into frank questions would hardly lead the researcher to rewarding responses. Conversely, the use of probes allows relevant issues to be raised by the respondents and may lead to valuable information (Barriball and While, 1994) and it also increases the reliability of the data (Hutchinson and Wilson, 1992). Probing has been applied in environmental studies to assess individuals' values and officials' attitudes (Hutchinson et al., 1995; Tuler et al., 2002). In my case, I initiated the interviews by introducing my study interests and then continued the conversation by discussing some daily-life topics relative to the environment. Throughout the conversations, my main purpose was to figure out how people defined 'the environment' and what their main worries were in relation to the environment in the coal villages and to understand their opinions on local development.

Through my observations I intended to discover people's 'presentation of self in everyday life' (Goffman, 1959) to see how they dealt with environmental and health threats, although in some cases the individuals did not report feelings of threat. Thus, the practices represented a kind of self-governance in terms of maintaining one's private environment instead of campaigning against the degradation of the entire public environment. Sociologist Erving Goffman (1959) suggested that all social interactions are staged performances; people confront each other playing certain roles, and through their daily interactions individuals give meaning to themselves, others and social realities. In anthropologist Victor Turner's words (1986), 'the basic stuff of social life is performance'. Turner called for attention to studying performance as a socio-anthropological theme: 'whether as speech behaviour, the presentation of self in everyday life', means performance deserves 'observation and hermeneutical attention' (1986: 77). It provides researchers with 'magical mirrors' of social reality, which represent not only what a culture is but also what a culture wants to be. 'Performance' is concerned with representing collective tradition and social rules and sometimes 'unprecedented performances may be generated' (Turner, 1986: 22). This research

studies performance as a process that allows the possibility of redefining, changing and negotiating. It is this performative reflexivity that I want to investigate to find out how individuals form their public and private selves in relation to the environment.

In addition to the interviewees at the coal sites, elite civil actors in environmental arenas formed another group of my informants. These included NGO workers, activists, journalists and researchers. These actors were not exclusively from the coal areas. I made contact with more than 20 elite actors in each country to collect their opinions about coal development and environmental issues relating to it, and most of my meetings with them took place in the capital of the country or in cities near to my fieldwork sites: in China, Beijing and Kunming (capital of Yunnan),[15] while in India meetings took place in Delhi and Ranchi (capital of Jharkhand). These actors played a crucial role in my research in three ways. First, the exchanges with them enriched the 'viewpoints of social elites', which is an important dimension in the study of environmental discourses. Some of these elite actors worked at the national level and this fact enhanced the analytical scope of this research. Second, to a certain extent they were 'country experts', whose opinions could facilitate my ability to cross-check with the information provided by different respondents in the country (Dogan and Pélassy, 1990; Peters, 1998), and hence reduce preconceptions or inevitable bias from me as a foreign researcher. Admittedly, on the other hand, their ideas and comments might have caused my study to incorporate other kinds of bias (examples and further discussion on this can be found in Chapter 4). Finally but importantly, it was through the interactions with them that I reached my field sites. The interactions that occurred can be understood as representing a piece of the network that would reflect the dynamics of the environmental arenas of that country (see Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2).

I selected the regions of southwest China and eastern India as the bases for my fieldwork. As argued previously, both locations are rich in mineral production and suffer from economic and social marginalisation. However, no specific cases were selected prior to commencing the fieldwork. The key reason for this was that instead of targeting a specific site with clear environmental campaigns, my research interest lay in tracing the process of discourse construction and how ordinary residents responded to

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[15] There are reasons why I interviewed activists in Kunming instead of Guiyang, the capital of Guizhou. *Weilongcun* is part of Guizhou administratively; however, it is located at the border of Guizhou and Yunnan and in terms of distance it is closer to Kunming than to Guiyang. Furthermore, to my knowledge, there are more activists and branch units of NGOs in Kunming than in Guiyang.

the environmental conditions in their regular lives. I tried to find 'the site' for my case study by making connections and looked for a path that would lead me to a mining site. The connections started through professional ties. Thus, I contacted professors, NGO workers, journalists and individual researchers whose work was related to environmental issues and rural development in order to find projects operating in mining regions for me to examine. At this early stage, I experienced some of the differences between the environmental arenas in the two countries, which are reflected in the conceptualisations of 'sensitivity' that I discuss in detail in the next section.

The issue of 'sensitivity' and the different elaborations of networking

When I started my fieldwork in China, I attended a conference on health, the environment and development in Beijing. Nearly a hundred scholars, NGO members and policy makers in related fields participated. During and after the conference, I talked with several of the attendees and that was when I kept being reminded of the concept of 'sensitive/sensitivity' (mǐngǎn) with regard to my research topic on mining and the environment. One expert on environmental health in southwest China put it clearly to me: the environmental impact of mining is a 'sensitive issue' as mineral resources are important to national economic development and usually operate under state control; it becomes even more 'sensitive' when a foreign researcher is involved. An expert on coal development in Shanxi Province (the top coal supplier in China) held a similar opinion and commented that the issue would be even more 'sensitive' if it was studied by a foreigner in Shanxi, as Shanxi is more censored by the state authority due to its critical role in coal production and its central location. Through these comments, I learned that being aware of the issue of 'sensitivity' in the Chinese context implies being aware of the power of the political authorities with regard to mineral (and environmental) development. Politically 'sensitive topics' can be a potential source of worry to researchers, and therefore are likely to be avoided. A journalist who had worked on environmental campaigns in China informed me that some environmental movements against mine operations are ethnically based. She recommended avoiding these areas, as my Taiwanese background could lead the authorities to label me as a promoter of ethnic separatism.

The issue of 'sensitivity' also influences the activities of non-governmental actors. In China, many of the environmental NGO projects are located in urban areas; others have

some programmes in rural areas but these tend to focus on nature conservation, environmental education, household waste recycling, or indigenous culture and eco-tourism.[16] Studies (Spires, 2011; Zhang and Barr, 2013) pointed out that, to survive, environmental organisations, as well as other types of NGOs, must refrain from making claims related to democratisation and avoid 'sensitive' issues that might lead to serious grievances that threaten the socio-political structural status quo. One environmental NGO activist (shown as NGO Luyang in Figure 1.1) offered me a chance to join the organisation's programmes in rural Yunnan. The organisation played a significant role in the campaign against the Nu River dam construction at the beginning of this century. Nowadays their projects link poverty alleviation to environmental conservation, and they are introducing sewerage systems, solar power projects and eco-tourism to the remote villages. I did not take this as my main field site, because there are no mines around it; it is possible that this is why they had fewer concerns about 'sensitivity'.
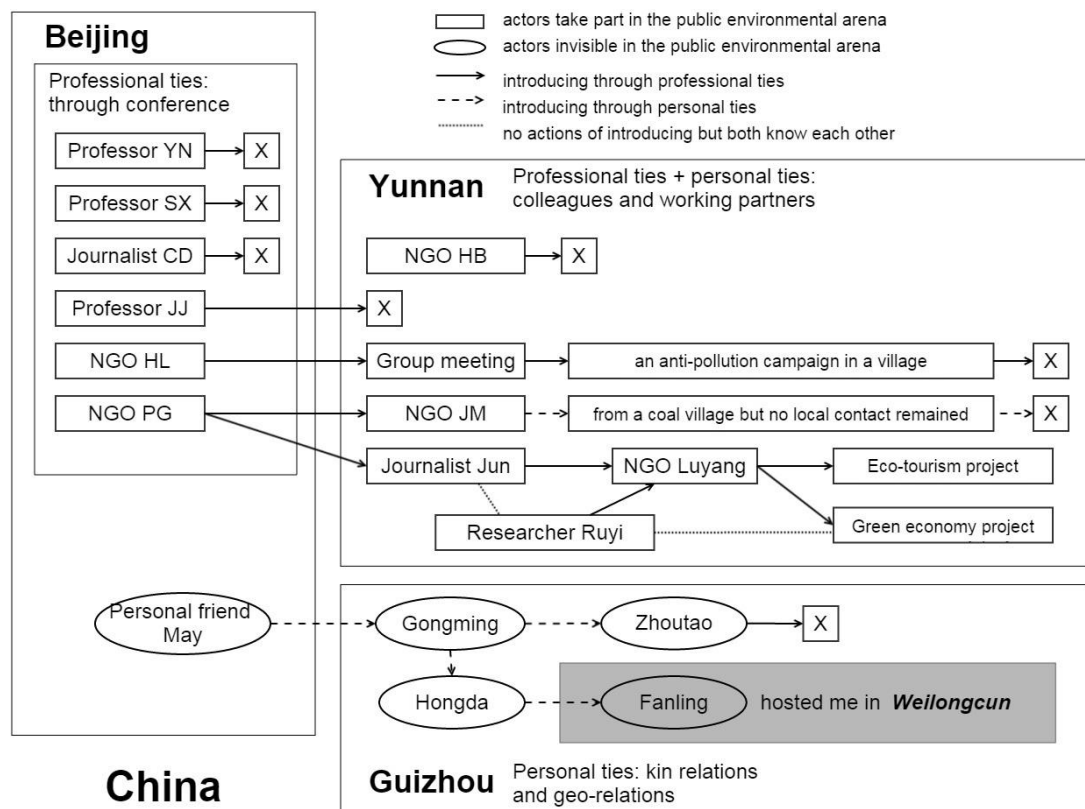
Figure 1.1 Part of the network in the Chinese environmental arena (all names are anonyms)

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[16] This statement is based on my exchanges with informants and my observations as, so far, there is a lack of relevant statistical data.

However, Luyang might be one of the few exceptions in this open attitude towards me. The manager of another organisation showed hesitation in presenting their publications to me when he realised that I was not from China. Ironically, it was an internationally funded NGO, yet it seemed extraordinarily conservative in terms of self-censoring. Another experience of note was when I went along when a civil advocate (shown as NGO HL in Figure 1.1) was visiting a village for pollution fact-finding. I was told to keep silent because otherwise the villagers and the local government censors might come to know that a Taiwanese citizen was involved – which would not be welcomed.

As illustrated in Figure 1.1, many of my encounters with Chinese social elites in the environmental arena brought me to a dead-end during my field journey (indicated by '×'). The literature mentions the conservative attitude of Chinese environmental NGOs and civil society (Ho, 2001a; Tang and Zhan, 2008), and I found that the conservative attitude had a noticeable effect on networking between these actors. People spoke about the environment in a cautious manner. The environmental discourse is not open to free debate, and the environment is not a neutral subject in which everybody can take part universally; rather, the environment is an issue that must be discussed with a sense of (political) 'sensitivity' in the Chinese context. In addition, the debating arena is not equally accessible to those who may lack the 'cautious language' skills to present critiques on environmental issues without challenging the political status quo.

One thing worth mentioning is that the 'sensitivity', which seemed obvious among the social elites, was not so obvious when it came to the ordinary people. As can be seen in Figure 1.1, I finally found my field site through an introduction by a personal friend, May. She migrated from Guizhou to Beijing after graduation and now rarely visited Guizhou. I was put in contact with her childhood friend Gongming, who was doing business in a city near their hometown, Panxian County, which is famous for its coal mines. Through this route I reached *Weilongcun* Village and from then on I hardly heard anyone talking about 'sensitivity'. The villagers spoke about the environment in a different way from either the elite activists or those I had encountered in 'public discussion spaces' such as the conference in Beijing. In the folk narratives, by which I mean the expressions made by the ordinary people I encountered during the fieldwork, the pollution caused by the mining industry was neither a secret nor a sensitive topic. From the perspective of most of the *laobaixing* I met around *Weilongcun*, 'the

environment' was one of the many terms they used to indicate their living condition, for example, in terms of the 'economic environment'. From their viewpoint, the coal industry was the main factor that secured the 'economic environment' of the village, regardless of the fact that is also caused pollution (for more discussions see Chapter 4).

While the elite members of the Chinese public environmental arena seemed to follow the agenda of the political authorities in discussing and studying 'the environment', in India the environment appeared to be an issue that could be related to numerous topics and it is an arena that was open to discussion to a greater extent than in China. I visited several NGOs and researchers working on diverse themes, and most of them considered environmental issues to be an area of concern. These actors/agencies included organisations working on human rights, social justice or education, researchers in history and rural development, and journalists focusing on economic or development issues. For example, I asked: 'Do you know anyone or any project that concerns mining and environment issues that I can visit?' When asking the same question, in China I received many passive responses concerning the political 'sensitivity' of my research topic, while in India many of them gave me clues and introductions and helped me to expand or refine my network (see the Figure 1.2).
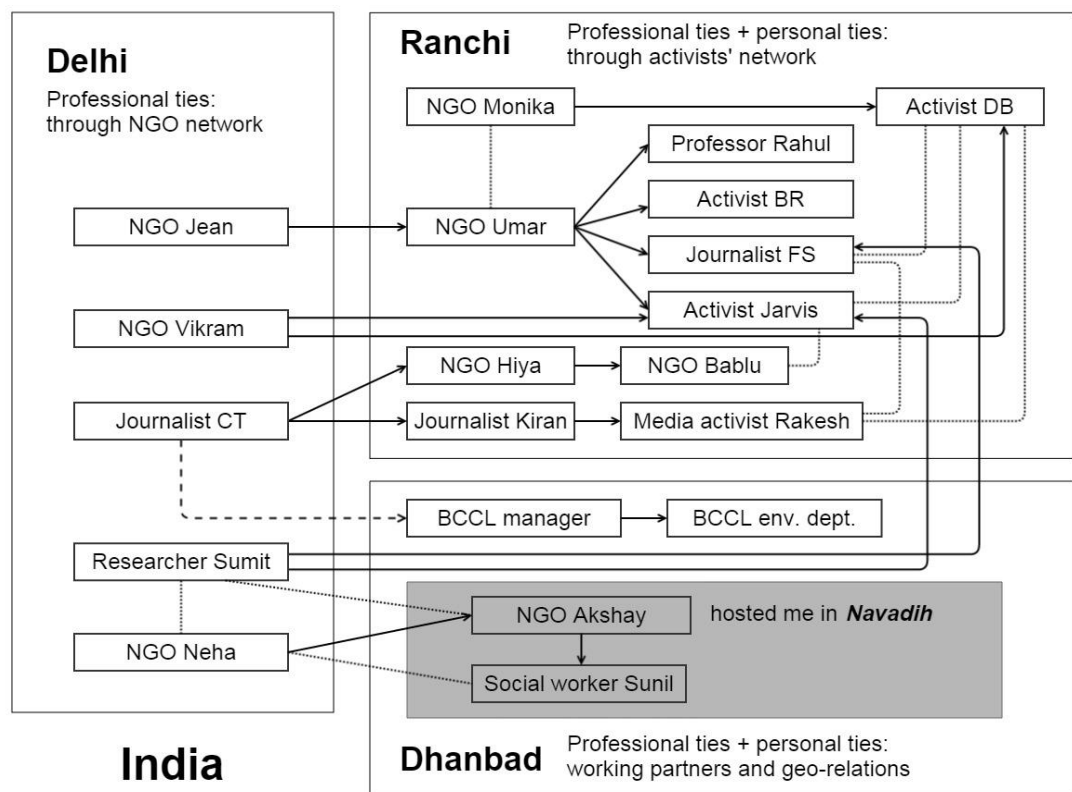
Figure 1.2 Part of the network in the Indian environmental arena (all names are anonyms)

Comparing the illustrations of the 'network' of the public environmental arenas in the two countries, the interactions between the actors and the cross-references shown in Figure 1.2 demonstrate a far more active condition than in Figure 1.1, in which many dead-ends ('×' marks) can be seen. This is not to argue that Chinese social actors are inactive in networking – considering the importance of '*guānxì*' (relationships, connections, social network) and social resources in Chinese culture (Lin, 1982; Lin et al., 2001); it would be a huge risk to assume these played no role. Rather, what can be argued is that Chinese actors are more cautious in sharing connections. In particular, the topic of mining and related environmental controversies, and my identity as a foreign researcher, all caused alarm and raised the issue of 'sensitivity' among the Chinese social actors that took part in the public environmental arena.

Indian society displays the issue of 'sensitivity' too, however, it was revealed to me in a different manner. While the considerations of sensitivity in China often concern political politics in association with the state leadership, in India, they are more relevant to socio-cultural customs and personal politics. In contrast with the experience in China, where I was reminded or taught (mainly by intellectuals) about the political 'sensitivity' of environmental issues at the initial stage of fieldwork; in India, I gradually came to be aware of some of the 'sensitive' social norms and expectations during the process of fieldwork.

The first 'sensitive' issue I faced during my Indian fieldwork was due to my gender. Considering 'sensitive issues' as a barrier built by local informants to prevent outsiders from accessing certain topics or areas incautiously, the fact that I was female was a sensitive issue to my Indian informants, especially to those who assisted me in arranging my field work. Several NGO members and social workers (of both genders) suggested me that I should neither move around unaccompanied, nor talk with people by myself. I also received some comments regarding my appearance: 'Why don't you wear jeans and shirts [instead of Indian-styled *kurtas* (collarless shirts)], which would suit you better as a foreign researcher?' As a foreign visitor, I received comments or hints about acceptable behaviours in the studied society. However, the interesting difference was that most of the comments I received in China were related to political correctness and had little to do with my gender or appearance. Moreover, while the concerns of political correctness expressed by the people around me seemed to ease

when I entered the rural areas in China, the issues relating to gender expectations became more intense when I stayed in rural India compared with the urban areas in that country. Some of these suggestions were based on security concerns. However, they reflect this society's concerns with gender and 'practices of gender coherence' (Butler, 1990) as being a sensitive issue that deserved extra attention (discussions about gender performances can be found in Chapter 6).

Ethnic and caste divisions caused another issue with regard to sensitivity that turned out to be an unavoidable limitation of this study. As will be further elaborated in Chapter 4, informants tended to put me in touch with others belonging to the same social groups; at the same time, they would not disclose their caste or ethnic identity in a clear manner. Imperceptibly, it caused a bias to my sampling. Despite contacting as many different people as possible through various interpreters, to some extent the condition of social differentiation prevented me from accessing comprehensive data. This issue appeared to be more noticeable in India than in China.

Language barriers

I tried to behave in the same manner in the two countries to 'network' and reach 'my sites', however, there were still some problems related to my personal identity and this caused incontestable differences in my conduct in the two case studies. The fact that I am from Taiwan facilitated my ability to overcome the language and cultural gap when I was in China, although it complicated the issue of 'sensitivity' in some cases. Nevertheless, my experience working with Taiwanese environmental activists and researchers gave me an insight which was helpful in elaborating the characteristics of authoritarian and democratic systems in terms of their impacts on the freedom of discourse in their socio-environmental arenas.

In India, the language limitation was one of the fundamental problems (the other was the fact that I was a woman, as addressed earlier) that weakened my agency and mobility as an individual researcher, especially during my stays in *Navadih*. However, since my field site was located in a rural area where people used dialects[17] rather than official languages, I found that the energy necessary to learn the dialects was so high

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[17] In the area around the *Navadih*, as well as Hindi, the most commonly spoken language in north India, there are many Bengali speakers. Meanwhile, local *adivasis* mostly use the dialogue of Santali, while there are also Nagpuri and Mundari speakers in rural Jharkhand.

that it justified my decision not to give priority to this. English was used as the shared language between most of the elite civil actors and myself – and with little problem – and meanwhile my conversations with ordinary people in the village to a great extent depended on interpreters. To avoid the personal bias of specific interpreters, during the fieldwork, I worked with different interpreters and explored multiple tracks of enquiry/questioning instead of following a single pathway. Meanwhile, my case studies drew on multiple sources of data and not all of the information was gained via interpreters, therefore my knowledge of the field was not framed or limited by any particular interpreter's view. Moreover, although the linguistic understanding was limited, the research methods of semi-structured interviews and informal interactions improved both my, and the respondents', participation in our communications.

Theoretical framework

By examining the representations of environmentalism in the Chinese and Indian cases, this dissertation deals with different dynamics (e.g. of the state, media and social elites, and grassroots actors) involved in discourse construction in the two societies. At this point, I will introduce the analytical concepts that refer to different dynamics of power with regard to the formation of environmentalism, and then present the theoretical framework that will be used to analyse the interactions of various dynamics across different social realms. This will provide us with a lens through which to compare the social settings of the two case studies.

Scholars have identified various dynamics that appear in a society to protect the environment, including top-down, bottom-up and middle-out approaches (John et al., 2006). The top-down dynamic refers to campaigns led by governments, for example, through issuing environmental regulations. On the other hand, the bottom-up dynamic usually points to actions that are initiated at grassroots level. This can take different forms including community protests and self-governance requests. The middle-out dynamic represents civic environmentalism that often involves mobilising social resources and engaging in debates between local communities and official agencies. NGOs or professional environmentalists could be considered as some components of this dynamic. These three dynamics usually coexist in single societies. However, they

were conceptualised and interpreted differently in societies with varied socio-political contexts.

For example, in a combined article (John et al., 2006), Chinese scholar Changhua Wu states that the top-down campaigns are the backbone of environmental governance in China, and interprets the idea of a 'bottom-up' approach as the bargaining power of 'local governments' that has lately 'been developed from Beijing to local officials'. It is quite different from conventional understandings of 'bottom-up' dynamics involving grassroots actors' spontaneous or independent activities. In the meantime, Indian researcher Vinish Kathuria emphasised the bottom-up dynamic that emerged as a reflection on the top-down approach of a traditional regulatory model, in many developing countries in the early 1990s. From Kathuria's viewpoint, grassroots elements are required for any environmental governance to achieve its goals. It could be sensed that Wu is concerned more with state environmentalism while Kathuria's concerns are with the importance of a popular environmentalism. How are we to understand the different tendencies? This study intends to observe how diverse dynamics work in the two cases studied and to examine the representations of these three dynamics in each social context. For instance, how do ordinary Chinese people understand the bottom-up dynamic and its correlation with the power of local officials? Moreover, if 'civil power' means something emerging from the 'middle-out', as in the term used by John, then in what manner will it be realised in a society with an inactive middle class or hierarchical divisions? More in-depth studies on the Chinese and Indian societies will be needed to clarify these enquiries further.

As this research concerns environmentalism as an inter-construction of a variety of dynamics, there are some theories available, which may facilitate researchers in their examination of the debating arenas within which the inter-gradations of diverse social and political dynamics take place. The notion of the public sphere, suggested by sociologist Jürgen Habermas (1991), is one of the most well-known in this field; many other scholars have also developed ideas in dialogue with that position. Here, I will briefly discuss some of them. I have structured my theoretical framework for this dissertation based on these approaches (see Figure 1.3).
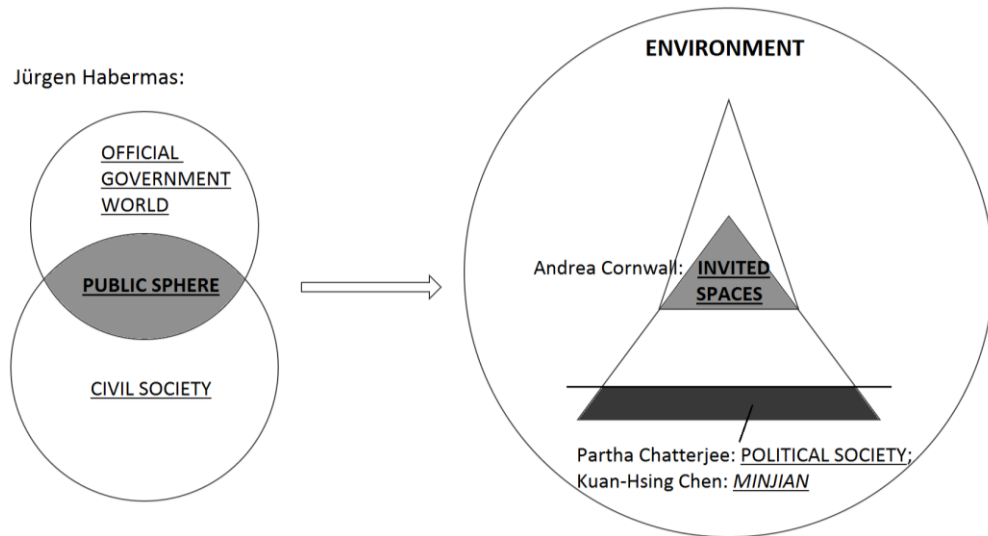
Figure 1.3 Theoretical framework for this research

Ideally, the public sphere is a location where the interests of political authorities meet with the interests of the people; the opinion carriers take part in the public sphere and represent citizens, either to oppose or legitimise existing power (Habermas, 1991). As illustrated in the left half of Figure 1.3, a society can be conceptualised as having three realms: the official government world, the public sphere and civil society. An elite tendency can be sensed within Habermas' initial conception, which defined the public sphere in his historical analysis of the development of capitalist society. According to Habermas (1996; 2006), to influence political actions, one should be capable of communication abilities and political insights, like journalists or politicians. The bourgeois public sphere is where these elite actors can present critical reasoning supported by logical arguments in political debates.

While from Habermas' perspective bourgeois actors are capable of agency, his ideal type of public sphere is one that is independent of economic and authoritarian influences (Habermas, 2006). In other words, little consideration has been given to the situation in which top-down dynamics of governance may influence the activities of bottom-up and middle-out dynamics. Many discussions have followed the work of Habermas with the intention of better explaining social reality. From these, I find the notion of 'invited spaces' introduced by Andrea Cornwall (2004) helpful in analysing the issues raised when constructing China-India comparisons. The concept of 'invited' draws attention to the fact that the space is defined, necessarily, by those doing the inviting, so that the active agency of those who are invited into the debates becomes

relatively passive. According to Cornwall (2004), invited spaces bring together 'a very heterogeneous set of actors among whom there might be expected to be significant differences in status' (Cornwall, 2004: 76). Habermas identifies the participants as those who join in the political debates, who have critical abilities and can exercise the power to legitimise or even oppose authoritarian decisions. Cornwall (2004), however, describes them as being 'invited' to take part in the arenas and required to act out their roles as envisaged by the authorities, and to fulfil the image of heterogeneousness so as to legitimise the ready-made official policy decisions.

The above theories provide a lens through which to study the possibilities and limitations of the 'middle-out' dynamic in response to the top-down decisions. How then can we understand the bottom-up approach? I propose the term 'uninvited participations' to cover those activities that happen but are not expected by the authorities. The 'uninvited participations' might have the potential to contribute to 'claimed spaces' – the concept suggested by sociologist John Gaventa (2006) referring to the spaces created by less powerful social actors as a result of popular mobilisation. However, while Gaventa proposed the 'claimed spaces' as a setting adjacent to institutionalised policy arenas, where actors come into debates around identity or issue-based concerns, I use the notion of 'uninvited participations' to cover an even broader range of activities, many of which happen far away from the public sphere and sometimes passively. The uninvited participants may not necessarily hold the intention to make claims or debate policy, although, some of their uninvited yet quotidian activities can be understood as illustrations of 'performative reflexivity', in Victor Turner's (1986: 24) words, in which people may 'be active agencies of change'. As suggested by Alberto Melucci, 'conflict takes place principally on symbolic ground' (1988: 248) that exists outside the conventional political arena but submerges in everyday life spaces, and the 'existence of a symbolic challenge is in itself a method of unmasking the dominant codes, a different way of perceiving and naming the world' (Melucci, 1988: 248). The concept of performative or symbolic reflexivity is to assess people's daily life activities in terms of their ideological potential (rather than physical and political power) to challenge the hegemony of the dominant thought that 'shattered people to arouse and organise its collective will' (Gramsci, 1971: 126).

Outside of the invited spaces, certain attention has been paid to the margins of civil society where struggles and daily performances of resistance emerge. In dialogue with the existing theories on civil society, Indian political scientist Partha Chatterjee (2004) develops the notion of 'political society' to indicate the realm in which grassroots movements happen. The 'political society' is outside of the public sphere; it is a space for ordinary people whose voices can barely direct political reactions in the official world. From Chatterjee's perspective, these activists are excluded from the debating arenas. They are the weak of the society, the 'tenuously right-bearing citizens' (Chatterjee, 2004: 38) who rarely benefit from the notion of rights, but who need to bear the obligations that come with citizenship. As demonstrated in Figure 1.3, this realm is located at the bottom of civil society.

As a counterpart to Chatterjee's 'political society', Kuan-Hsing Chen (2010b) proposes the term '*minjian*' to describe the marginal space of civil society in the Chinese context. *Minjian* in Chinese literally means 'among the people' and indicates the popular spaces where folk activities take place. In fact, Chen was not the only person to introduce this notion into discussions about Chinese civil society. However, other analysts have considered the merits and limitations of applying 'civil society' to explain the social system in the Chinese context, and used *minjian* as one of the descriptive terms to address the space of civil society where there are few sociological or political reflections (Liang, 2003). Giving a more specific definition, Chen considers *minjian* as a concept that corresponds with Chatterjee's 'political society'; in this manner he emphasises its marginality. *Minjian*, in Chen's interpretation, is the grassroots space of civil society, which according to Chatterjee's interpretation of the 'political society', is distant from the centre of 'civil society'. Chen identifies *minjian* as the space 'where traditions are maintained as resources to help common people survive the violent rupture brought about by the modernizing of state and civil society' (Chen, 2010b: 240). However, although the notions of political society and *minjian* both emphasise the struggles of the people, I argue that, since the space is nevertheless contextualised in a specific society, how the grassroots realm facilitates its members to compose their actions may vary and will depend on the whole socio-political context. Some differences can be sensed in the terminology applied by Chatterjee and Chen. From my understanding, the term *minjian* is concerned more with cultural diversities than political mobility, while Chatterjee's emphasis on political struggles seems quite

noticeable in the way he names and interprets this space. Furthermore, I observed some different tendencies between my two case studies in terms of how the grassroots actors make alignments with elite civil activists or appeal to authoritarian institutions for assistance in order to make changes happen. More discussions on the different practices of these dynamics can be found in the coming chapters, for the most part in Chapter 5.

It is worth noting that *minjian* and political society, as well as Habermas' (1991) theory of the public sphere and Cornwall's (2004) concept of 'invited spaces', apply the metaphor of space to explain the social realms where certain social realities take place. I will continue to use the metaphor of space in this study, with a special focus on the space of *minjian* and political society, and will also investigate in this dissertation not only the variety of 'practices' but also the 'performances' (Turner, 1986) that could be analysed to illuminate the reflexivity of authoritarian rules or social norms. For example, uninvited participations (these will be discussed further in Chapter 6) are a type of performance that happens in popular spaces and are different from the expected practices that are motivated by powerful ideologies. In this manner, researchers might be able to distinguish notions such as 'class struggle' from the bottom-up dynamic that emerges from *minjian* in the Chinese context. The former is rather an ideological construction imposed by the Chinese Communist Party authority, which was enforced (especially during the Cultural Revolution, 1966-1976) by restricting the variety of social dynamics and suppressing the possibility of *minjian*. Ideological propaganda endorsed the dictatorial 'rules', yet the rules may be performed in alternative ways in the grassroots spaces where some folk resources are maintained to support people's daily negotiations. Thus, reflexive performances/transformations are objects that will also be explored in this study.

Considering the differences between the Chinese and Indian societies, one thing that needs to be mentioned is that both Habermas and Cornwall used their ideas to study a democratic society, or specifically a deliberative democracy. My two case studies, especially the Chinese one, may not fit with this presupposition. However, as indicated in Cornwall's (2004) work, biases and an exclusive mechanism exist (even) in the architecture of a democratic participatory arena. It is thus worth examining how such kinds of exclusive mechanisms work in different political regimes to prevent or suppress certain social actors/agencies from taking part in the debating arenas and

exercising the power over discourse. In these cases, the similarity proposed by Kuan-Hsing Chen (2010b) between the *minjian* in Chinese society and the political society in the Indian context may need to be reconsidered, as well as whether the notions of the 'public sphere/civil society' or 'invited spaces' can be applied when explaining the current environmental campaigns that are happening in these two Asian countries.

Last but not least, one important point that is essential in the framework that supports this dissertation is that 'the environment' is the surrounding in which social realities take place. In other words, society is part of the environment rather than vice versa. All of the realms discussed above are involved in the vast scope of the environment. Therefore, the discussions on environmentalism in this dissertation will not only concern topics related to environmental policies, but will also involve taking into consideration civil movements, grassroots practices and daily-life performances. Interactions between people and the environment are happening in diverse realms of every single society, initiated by various kinds of social members, whether those are invited or uninvited by official authorities, legal or illegal, open or secret. No matter how, those are all practices of environmentalism. By this I refer to the way people deal with environment-development conflicts and the way that people struggle with the environment for their living. This explains the need for all of the above theoretical concepts to be placed within the large frame of the 'environment' (illustrated by the largest circle in Figure 1.3). In this way they can enrich the understandings set out in this study on environmentalism.

The other parts of this study

To meet the purpose of demonstrating the variety of environmentalism in China and India, a range of materials is used to make analytical comparisons. Together with the first-hand observations and interviews, I will introduce secondary materials including literature dealing with the environmental politics of the two countries, historical writings on the coal regions, and media productions that present stories of regional development and environmental campaigns in China and India. Analytical discussions based on various sources of materials will be elaborated in the coming chapters, all of which try to respond to the core concern of this research: the issues of representation and subjectivity in terms of different social actors' interactions with the environment.

Chapter 2 reviews the relevant academic literature with a special focus on the role of state authority, not only in applying regulatory governance, but also in constructing the discourses about 'environmental movements'. First, I raise concerns about the concept of 'authoritarian environmentalism' as an approach to addressing human-nature conflicts. Scholars (Beeson, 2010; Gilley, 2012) use the concept to describe the condition of contemporary China and suggest that its non-participatory nature distinguishes it from democratic environmentalism. However, in reality, one can neither assume that the Chinese authoritarian leadership is leading environmentally-oriented governance, nor argue that there is no practice of public participation in the Chinese environmental arena. The second part of the chapter takes the notion of 'NIMBY' (Not In My Back Yard) as an example to argue that state authorities together with mainstream media may step into discursive constructions. Therefore, similar actions against pollution or risky projects might be labelled as NIMBYism in China, yet in India they may be considered as appeals to the autonomous rights of indigenous communities. In this way, an authoritarian government may prevent grassroots struggles from being conceptualised as a practice of environmentalism. In sum, this chapter suggests that environmentalism cannot be separated from the dynamic of people or civil society and defined merely by state power and the techniques of governance. I will use empirical materials to support this argument in the following chapters.

Development discourses constructed by governments often apply certain terminology that promotes an inclusive ideology to mobilise the periphery to join in 'national development'. However, in many cases, natural resources have been mobilised and included in the projects while the ordinary people have experienced marginalisation or exclusive force during the process of so-called development. In Chapter 3, I present some historical events, government statements and statistical data in relation to environmental development in China and India in order to support my evaluations of the development agendas of the 'Coal Capitals' in my case studies. The discussions can be summarised as being twofold. First, the conceptualisation of 'Coal Capital' is a governance technique that intends to involve the remote areas in the great vision of 'national development'. The terminology invites the periphery to identify with the ideology shared by the centre. However, Chinese and Indian historical writings have revealed that the mechanism of 'involving' and 'unifying' has been operated and represented differently in the two countries, and thus to a certain extent has influenced

people's experiences of the official agendas. Second, land issues are a critical example that illustrates the conflict between the interests of the state and the interests of ordinary people that often arise from coal development. If the government claim state-ownership of the resource, then an unavoidable tension arises over the land that contains the coal. The debates on proprietorship bring to our attention the gap between the 'inclusive ideology' and the 'exclusive force' from the ideological level to the practical level; this is when people witness their losses under the frame of national development. Actors influenced by various ideologies may react differently in response to these losses. I highlight the Chinese conceptualisation of the power of heaven (tiān) and the Indian philosophy that emphasises the rights of the 'sons of the soil' to examine the human-nature relationships in my two case studies.

Chapter 4 is primarily based on people's narratives and it enquiries into questions such as: 'who speaks for the environment, how and why'. My data, which was collected through interviews and observations, indicates that stories of remote China and India cannot be explained by conventional perspectives as activities driven by a top-down versus bottom-up motivation or by responsive versus preventive environmental movements. The first-hand information diminishes the impact of ideological biases that might be caused by the limited media coverage of demonstrations under political censorship or by the differences in the atmosphere of the public sphere and academia in the two countries. In this chapter, I argue that people are demanding 'participation' in the environment-development dilemma; however, this could be realised in various forms. Many of my Chinese respondents were concerned about economic benefits as a payback for environmental degradation; to seek economic sharing within local development seems the minimum form of participation for them. While non-governmental activities are more energetic in Indian grassroots society, ordinary people in India are better armed with knowledge and social capital than those in China to enable them to take part in the public arena. Although the people's narratives might reflect the impressions of the discourses introduced by NGOs or elite activists, individuals from local communities are encouraged to join, or to think of joining, the public discussions in relation to their environment.

In Chapter 5, I introduce four films to support my arguments concerning the differences between Chinese and Indian civil society. These films illustrate the stories of coal

development and environmental campaigns in the two societies. Two of them are feature movies shot in Panxian and Dhanbad respectively, which correspond to the locations of my case studies, and the other two are documentaries of environmental movements that happened in rural China and rural India. These media productions serve as narratives to illustrate the problems of coal villages and the occurrence of environmental movements; furthermore, they provide a lens through which researchers can study the media politics of representation. Chapter 5 exemplifies how the authoritarian government, conservative civil society and unadventurous media inter-construct each other, as in China's case, and contribute to a relatively passive atmosphere for campaigners. Based on comparative analyses, I argue that the ideological cultivation of a society – the harmonious orientation in China and the conflict perspective in India – has a significant impact on the practices of contemporary campaigns and people's daily struggles. In the Chinese case, those with limited resources may tend to adopt an obedient posture and make their appeals concerning the environment through official institutions in order to achieve some means to solve their problems. In the Indian cases, alliances between grassroots activists and members of elite civil society can be observed more frequently, thus the voice of the 'people' can be enlarged; in many cases the voice is criticising the government's actions. Such different tendencies are presented in the films and can be evidenced in my observations as well. However, bearing in mind that media productions reproduce the ideological beliefs and reinforce the tendencies by representing the images of 'happenings', they need to be understood as more or less biased by political and social dynamics.

More materials gathered via socio-anthropological observations are applied in Chapter 6 to draw the analytical distinctions between the two case studies with regard to how ordinary people interact with the environment in order to maintain their life within it. In this chapter I develop further my arguments in terms of 'uninvited participations'. This idea, inspired by the notion of 'invited spaces' coined by Cornwall (2004), is used to discuss the unavoidably exclusive mechanisms of participatory arenas. Although the issues around environmental governance are mostly legitimised in the invited spaces where participants are expected to act out their roles as envisaged by the authorities, there are a variety of reflexive performances and re-enactments (Butler, 1988; Turner, 1986) by uninvited participants that happen in relation to the environment, some of which are above-board while others are surreptitious. However, regardless of whether in

the arena where participatory environmental governance is discussed, or in the popular space where daily struggles are staged, Chinese society, from my observations, showed its tendency to adopt the value system that was introduced by the authorities while Indian society displayed the coexistence of diverse social values including some conflict with the state. I argue that the idea of a 'reversible order', or carnival element, in philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin's term (1984), which exists in Indian society, makes the two scenarios different. It is the democratic system of India that cultivates the dynamic of reversing order – with its uncertainty regarding the stability of domination – which is lacking in China. Such a dynamic of revision, or revolution, can be observed in the Indian environmental arena where some lawbreakers are respected as the idols of activists. Coal miners earn their living in an illegal yet quotidian manner, and women with babies in their arms lead the demonstrations in the first row and are fighting for their land with their lives.

Chapter 7 concludes this study by summarising the potential contributions of the thesis. Empirically, I hope that this dissertation will contribute to enriching the varieties of environmentalism exercised by the people in the two developing countries by means of the case studies. I use the empirical materials to enlarge the range of 'environmentalism' as some activities might not have been studied or represented previously as a practice of 'environmentalism'. Since economic life is inseparable from the environment, daily life behaviours that intend to gain benefits from coal (as will be discussed in Chapter 6) should also be examined as folk practices struggling for socio-environmental justice. As a type of non-renewable resource, coal is usually excluded from the discussions of ecosystem goods and services (de Groot et al., 2002). This explains why the 'ecological value' of coal has rarely been constructed as an issue, and much more attention has been devoted to its 'economic value' (Chaitanya, 1997; Lahiri-Dutt, 1999; Shen and Andrews-Speed, 2001; Vivoda, 2011) and post-mining pollution (Bastida, 2002; Cao, 2007). Meanwhile, coal development agendas are usually based on efficiency and cost-effectiveness considerations and are rarely linked to the idea of sustainable management. In this setting, where pollution problems seem destined to persist for the foreseeable future, debates about coal in rural villages take the form of struggles between local communities and powerful stakeholders – government and corporative investors – for the right to gain the economic value of coal.

Theoretically, I question the significance of the notion of 'authoritarian environmentalism' in order to start a conversation with the environmental politics literature. Based on my empirical findings, I suggest that there are no means of dealing with environment-development conflicts without involving the voices of 'ordinary people'. To recognise the political authorities as the dominant agency with the power to define 'environmentalism' without examining the legitimacy of its monopoly power over discourse can hardly enhance the ability of researchers or policy makers to address the challenges that are happening with the environment and to the people living intimately within it. Methodologically, this study applies some innovative methods to compare the socio-political and cultural factors of Chinese and Indian societies in relation to the environment. This research also enriches certain conceptual terms that could be applied in other related studies, for instance, the reflections about 'participatory environmentalism' and the 'uninvited participations'. My methodological design, based to some extent on studies of the *laobaixing* in Chinese society and the *adivasis* in Indian society, brings valuable data to contrast the social structures between the two countries and investigate the topic of environmental development. I would like to go on to suggest, with some degree of caution, that a similar design could be applied to contrasting the conditions in other geographical areas, or relating to different social topics between China and India, or even other countries, so as to enrich the literature on development studies.

Chapter 2: Authoritarian environmentalism and democratic environmentalism – reflections on the role of the state in constructions of the language of development and environment

Introduction: environmentalism and the politics of invited/uninvited participation

To extend the theoretical framework proposed in Chapter 1, this chapter provides a literature review on the politics of '(environmental) participation' with a special focus on the role of state authority in China and India. Chapter 1 has discussed the value of a comparative perspective examining the environmental arena in different political regimes as an 'invited space' (Cornwall, 2004) and to consider the effects of the inevitable exclusive mechanisms. This chapter investigates the influences caused by an authoritarian practice of governance on the formation and representation of environmentalism, and the participation space for discussing it. Specifically, the literature review in this chapter attempts to deal with three themes of interest: the politics of 'participation', the impact of the political regime on environmental governance, and the environmentalism of developing countries.

Firstly, the politics of 'participation'. The debates surrounding 'participation' in development studies to a certain degree emerged with critiques of state failures, or, with the worries about top-down governance approaches (Hickey and Mohan, 2004). Robert Chambers (e.g. 1983; 1993; 2006), the pioneering proponent of participatory development, and David Mosse (e.g. 2001; 2006) have made reflections on the power relationship in the process of knowledge production, or the planning and execution of international aid projects. Subsequent works put a greater emphasis on the politics of 'citizenship' and 'political capabilities' (e.g. Cornwall, 2004; Williams, 2004) while related discussions have mostly had a regard for the setting of democracy. Therefore, it is worth investigating China's politics of environmental participation, in contrast with that of India. The metaphor of 'invited spaces' (Cornwall, 2004) is employed to demonstrate how the agencies doing the inviting arrange a participatory arena to include or exclude certain actors. The literature that I am going to introduce in this chapter will focus primarily on the functions of the top-down dynamic, and less on the politics of resistance or popular environmentalism. This does not mean that the agents of civil society and grassroots activists are to be neglected; instead, the potential of bottom-up

dynamics is one of the factors that will be utilised in the argument in order to explain the limitations of state-led 'participation'. Nevertheless, the various forms of bottom-up, or grassroots initiatives, will be further elaborated in other chapters of the dissertation.

A second theme of interest concerns the debate regarding the impact of the political regime on environmental governance. The debate has long been a critical theme in writings on environmental politics (Doherty and Geus, 1996; Eckersley, 2004; Fotopoulos, 1997; Taylor, 1998). Political scientist Hugh Ward (2008) developed statistical analyses to evaluate the relationship between democracy and the performances of sustainability and found that stable autocratic systems perform worse in terms of their ecological footprint than democracies. Ward indicated that this outcome may be partly due to the state leaders not being subject to challenges from the people and pressure to change. Other studies (Faust, 2008; Lake and Baum, 2001) also suggest that democratic political institutions show more response to the encompassing interests of the public and hence have a positive influence, particularly, on the construction of public services. In other words, the critical factor that makes the democratic systems different from authoritarian ones is that the democratic states' leadership has the need/obligation to involve the bottom-up or civil opinions into the governance decision-making. Meanwhile, studies on East Asian countries (e.g. Gilley, 2012; Rock, 2002; Tang et al., 2005) indicate that sometimes an authoritarian government with good intentions towards the environment might enforce regulations more stringently and this may therefore lead to effective pollution controls. However, whilst there are comparative studies within certain regions, such as East Asia (Kim, 2000) or Europe (Weale and Pridham, 2003), there is a shortage of studies that compare authoritarian and democratic systems. Nevertheless, my two qualitative case studies intend to provide materials for researchers to contrast how the two regimes define and govern the environment in different manners, rather than to assess a competition between their 'environmental performances'.

Thirdly, the discussion in chapter intends to provide a reflection on the existing literature on the environmentalism of developing countries. As mentioned in Chapter 1, a vision of environmentalism that concerns the debate over environmental justice and inequality between different ethnic groups or global regions has been evident since the 1990s (Martinez-Alier, 2002; Merchant, 2003; Rosen, 1994). As part of this trend,

Indian historian Ramachandra Guha in his work (2006) argued that the environmentalism of the 'Global South', or developing countries, has a tendency to address issues related to development justice and people's survival. In other words, popular environmentalism, or the bottom-up dynamic that emerges from grassroots activism, is considered as a significant element of the campaigns in the 'South'. However, scholars studying China's environmental arena for the last decades seem to hold different views; their works (e.g. Gilley, 2012; John et al., 2006; Johnson, 2010) rather illustrate the tendency that more attention has been paid to the role of state authority in the country's environmental initiatives. Accordingly, the notion of 'authoritarian environmentalism' has been proposed to explain the influence of the role of the state in the Chinese environmental arena (Beeson, 2010, Gilley, 2012). 'Environmentalism' seems to be interpreted differently in India and China, in terms of giving extra attention to the bottom-up or the top-down dynamic. A critical literature review from a comparative perspective, added to empirical case studies, will allow researchers to examine this difference and discuss the triangular relationship between the state, the people and the environment.

Moreover, it is also arguable whether the existing ideas of authoritarianism and democracy can be applied to explain the conditions of contemporary China and India in terms of their ability to respond to environmental degradation. In particular, as the world's largest democracy, India's social hierarchy and religious divisions distinguish its postcolonial democratic condition from the well-developed core democracies (Chatterjee, 1993). In the 1980s, following a series of elections, India witnessed the political success of Hindu nationalism. As argued by political anthropologist Thomas Hansen (1999), a tendency towards ethnic intolerance developed at the heart of the so-called liberal middle class, which was supposed to provide the backbone of the democracy. Even now, the Indian hegemonic democratic system is questioned in terms of its failure to fairly represent the voices of the people due to the social stratification, as India's elections tend to reinforce the interests of the upper classes/castes (Williams and Mawdsley, 2006). In short, there are authoritarian tendencies even in a democracy, such as in contemporary India. At the same time, authoritarianism in China has experienced some transformation during the period of economic reform since the 1980s. Additionally, scholars (He and Warren, 2011) suggest that the contemporary Chinese government is taking the initiative in advocating 'authoritarian deliberation' – 'the use

of actual deliberative practices by the authoritarian state to improve governance and enhance its authority' (He, 2014: 58), which also aims to have an effect on its environmental governance. Some discussions presented in this dissertation may enable researchers to better reframe the ideas of authoritarianism and democracy.

The first section of this chapter presents a dialogue with the supposition that the practices of participation as its critical component makes democratic environmentalism distinct from authoritarian environmentalism in the context of China, as sketched by some articles (Beeson, 2010; Gilley, 2012). I will also introduce other studies that point out the insufficiency of the Chinese authoritarian government's approach to conducting its environmental governance to enrich the dialogue. At the same time, several reflections regarding the idea of 'participation' will be brought into the discussion, including the question of the implementation of public participation in decision-making processes and the question of the unavoidably exclusive mechanism of public opinion formation. The review aims to draw out the considerations as to whether the idea of participation could be realised in an authoritarian state, or whether decisions relevant to the environment can be made without considering the individuals who live in that state. The second section of the chapter takes the (re)production of the language of NIMBYism (Not In My Back Yard) in contemporary China as the example, in contrast with the indigenous discourse in the Indian context, to demonstrate the conceptualisations of 'environmental movements' by state authorities. The different approaches by states to these conceptualisation might result in some actions being recognised as a practice of 'environmentalism' while others are not – this explains why I propose the concept of 'uninvited participation' in evaluating the spontaneous/popular environmental movements outside the 'invited' (Cornwall, 2004) participatory arenas.

'Participation' – what characterises environmentalism as authoritarian or democratic?

The potential of Asian authoritarian governments such as that in Singapore to improve their national 'environmental performance', in terms of pollution control specifically, has been argued by some scholars (Rock, 2002; Tang et al., 2005). For instance, economist Michael Rock (2002) suggested that the affirmed commitment of the first Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, aided by a coherent policy making

structure, has led the country towards a relatively clean economy during the second half of the 20th century. This can be compared with other East Asian newly industrialising countries (like South Korea or Taiwan) that took the path of 'grow first, clean up later'. Following this strand, political scientists (e.g. Beeson, 2012; Gilley, 2012; Shearman and Smith, 2007; Wells, 2007) developed their arguments focusing on the role of state leadership and the impact of regulation impacts on environmental governance. It is believed by scholars (Beeson, 2010; Shearman and Smith, 2007) that authoritarian rule, to a certain extent, may enhance the state's capacity to deal with environmental problems in countries with a long history of authoritarian regimes, in particular countries of East and Southeast Asia, including China. Bruce Gilley (2012) suggests that 'authoritarian environmentalism' is an emerging theory of public policy-making in response to environmental challenges, and its non-participatory nature is the characteristic that distinguishes it from democratic environmentalism.

However, this is a controversial argument that requires revaluation in several aspects. First, an authoritarian system does not necessarily guarantee the efficiency of the regulatory process in terms of environmental governance. There is literature evidencing such a problem in China that will be reviewed in the coming paragraphs. Second, 'public participation' has become a sort of universal value in dealing with environmental issues and has been promoted and institutionalised, more or less, by both the Chinese and Indian governments. At the same time, the implementation, in reality, has been questioned in both countries. Thus, it is difficult to claim that 'participation' is either absent in China or present in India. Third, except for the official designs that try to motivate the practice of 'invited' participation, the realities of 'uninvited participation' can be conducted spontaneously by the people rather than merely being motivated by the authorities. With regard to this aspect, although Chinese civil society does not seem to be as radically active as that in India (Ho, 2001a; Huang, 1993), both societies impose some (yet different) restrictions on the common people, with regard to 'participation' in public debates. In sum, based on the reviews presented in this section, I will draw out the question: can 'participation' be non-democratic/non-politicised? Moreover, considering the environment as a fundamental element of society, which is the organic combination of human beings, is it possible to have an approach to dealing with environmental issues without individuals taking part in it? By 'organic', I emphasise the functional relationship between the environment and human beings and

that both of them are basic parts of a society. In the coming chapters of this dissertation I will use empirical material to argue the impossibility of excluding individuals from involvement. In other words, I suggest that there are limitations in conducting (authoritarian) environmental governance without working on improving personal and collective environmental awareness among the people. At this point, I will detail these aspects as follows.

Miscarriages of authoritarian implementations in environmental governance

Before proceeding, it is important to point out that taking Singapore as an example in order to argue in favour of the capacity of the state alone in relation to environmental management was questionable. 'Environmental performance' should be assessed by reference to several aspects and pollution control is only one of them; this is why the concepts of participation and sustainability have gained attention over the past decades. Scholars have pointed out the limitation of conventional scientific approaches in addressing contemporary environmental problems. For example, Kate Showers (1996) argues for the value of involving the methods of field observation and interview with local communities in order to improve the techniques of environmental assessment and conservation programme design. Ian Cooper (1999) points out the inadequacy of assessing only environmental protection and resource efficiency to estimating the sustainability of buildings, and highlights the principles of 'futurity', 'public participation' and 'equity' when evaluating the ecological footprint of construction projects. A government that limits people's rights of dissent might run the risk of neglecting social dimensions of environmental issues. Moreover, despite its achievements in the implementation of regulation and pollution management, the story of Singapore told by Rock (2002) did not sufficiently explain how Singapore's experience might be applied in larger nations (Batabyal, 2003).

According to the hypothesis argued by the advocates for the potential of authoritarian environmentalism (Beeson, 2010; Wells, 2007), China, a country where the government holds centralised authoritarian power, ought to be capable of achieving a highly respected environmental performance. However, such a hypothesis has been reasoned as being problematic by many academics.

As a developing country, China can refer to the governance techniques regarding environmental protection and pollution prevention that are present in the well-developed countries. Environmental policy experts Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus (2004: 28), in their work share the viewpoint that the developed countries, such as the USA, have already experienced two waves of environmentalism: the first was framed around conservation and the second around regulation. A series of powerful environmental laws were issued and advanced from the 1960s onwards; the banning of DDT throughout the developed world in the 1970s, propelled by Rachel Carson's Silent Spring (1962), was an example. Acknowledging this progress, the government leaders of China – as well as those in other modern developing countries who are attempting to create their own national legal codes and administrative structures – may consult the Western models.

However, in practice, this kind of adoption often fails to achieve the desired results. This view is shared by those law scholars (van Rooij, 2008; van Rooij and Lo, 2010) and environmental anthropologists (Lora-Wainwright, 2011; Weller, 2006) who have conducted studies of China. In particular, many of the criticisms are directed at the inefficiency of governmental authorities. One of the fundamental problems is that environmental protection often appears to have less importance than economic growth on governmental agendas in many developing countries. One belief that is shared by the government leaders is that economic growth is essential for maintaining political stability; later on, it may facilitate the financing of an environmental clean-up. This tendency has been identified internationally (Clapp, 2005) and has been evidenced by empirical studies conducted in China (Hertsgaard, 1997; Zhang and Barr, 2013). Accordingly, the presence of a corresponding political will is one critical factor in enforcing environmental governance. In spite of the existence of regulatory systems under the authoritarian regime, policies cannot be truly implemented due to the lack of a determined will among the Chinese political leaders (Cao, 2007; Zhao and Ortolano, 2003). In other words, the potential for so-called 'authoritarian environmentalism' is not determined by the authoritarian system itself; rather, it is determined by the law-executors.

The above review suggests that in many cases the lack of willingness among government leaders to construct and implement a sound regulatory system with regard

to the environment has had a significant impact. In such a context, the assumption upon which Gilley (2012) and others make their argument – that China is a model of 'authoritarian environmentalism' – is challengeable. If the leadership of an authoritarian regime shows a preference for economic growth and conducts its governance without emphasising environmental awareness (to either its officials or to the public), the society will unsurprisingly reinforce or adopt the ideology of the leadership – i.e. an (economic) growth-oriented perspective. As identified in a recent study (Zhang and Barr, 2013), many business managers may have the intention to introduce environmentally-oriented innovations to improve the production procedure, but they are trapped by a lack of financial or administrative resources. Even though most factory managers are aware of the technologies that are needed for solving the existing problems of pollution, they also play a role in the larger society and in the Chinese administrative system and, in that role, they are pressured to maintain the economic growth and generate revenue (Zhang and Barr, 2013).

What can be argued is that such a growth-oriented approach is both displayed by the authorities and adopted by businesses and thus will be learned by the audiences of the official policies: the common people. This is reflected in how the public interpreted the official ideology and embodied it in their everyday behaviour (which will be illustrated in the coming chapters). Shellenberger and Nordhaus (2004), in their work, warn of '*The Death of Environmentalism*' in a Western trajectory, and express their worries that '[e]nvironmentalism is today more about protecting a supposed "thing" – "the environment"' rather than advancing a certain kind of worldview/philosophy about the nature-people relationship (2004: 9). In this case, modern China or others that copy the outcomes of the Western models might, in terms of environmental governance, duplicate the apathetic attitude towards the environment found in the present-day developed societies, without firstly experiencing the earlier stages of the formulation of environmentalism. Thus, the idea of 'authoritarian environmentalism' will be questionable. In an authoritarian regime such as that in China, if its development policy aims to protect the environment as a 'thing' and its people cannot recognise the objective of environmental sustainability in the official policy, in the long-term this will result in the public lacking environmental awareness and being apathetic about environmentalism. By apathetic here I mean the situation in which that government leaders import the regulations without considering and explaining to the people the

ecological values of the environment, and thus the law-abiding citizens take environmental protection as a passive obligation. As argued by anthropologist Arturo Escobar (1992; 1995) about 'the invention of development', the social reality of the poor is inscribed by the discourses of economists, policy makers and modernisers, 'making it difficult for people to define their own interests in their own terms' (1992: 25). The authoritarian environmental regulations can be seen as the discourse that (re)invents the environment and makes it difficult for people to define the environment in their own language. From my viewpoint, it is doubtful whether this trend can be called a practice of 'environmentalism', regardless of whether it is conditioned as an authoritarian one.

The institutionalisation of 'public participation' in environmental governance and its shortages

Another problem regarding the use of 'participation' as the key element to judge authoritarian versus democratic environmentalism is that, nowadays, the concept of public participation is acknowledged in a general manner as a politically correct value and is adopted even by authoritarian countries in their environmental policies. Although the Indian government has historically displayed a more positive attitude towards the idea of public participation, Chinese government leaders have also begun to recognise the importance of it in recent times.

In India, the idea of public participation has been promoted for decades. According to the Introduction to India's *1st Five-Year Plan* (GOI, 1950), 'Planning in a democratic State is a social process in which, in some part, every citizen should have the opportunity to participate. … [I]t should embody the impact of public opinion and the needs of the community'. However, the issue of public participation cannot be judged simply by whether people are free to express their ideas. Rather, there should be a review of whether the people's ideas are incorporated into the policy and followed up.

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process can be viewed as a demonstration of this process. The Chinese government has begun to recognise the weakness of its EIA system and some attempts to institutionalise the idea of public participation in official regulations have been made. A new EIA Law promulgated in 2002 specifically mentions that the State encourages the public to take part in the EIA. A statement of

public opinion must be appended to a project's final environmental impact statement when it is submitted for approval (Tang et al., 2005). At the same time, there are articles addressing the guidelines to improve public participation in the decision-making process (Chang and Wu, 2008; Zeng et al., 2006). However, case studies show that this has not been achieved in practice (Gu and Sheate, 2005; Tang and Zhan, 2008), as it is difficult to realise the ideal for the EIA codes in terms of giving power to the people to contribute to, and have an influence upon, decision-making by participating in the various stages of the EIA process.

In contrast, the foundation of the EIA in India can be traced back to the 1970s, only a few years after it first obtained formal status in the US (in 1969). As one of the indirect outcomes of the Stockholm Conference held in 1972 – which emphasised environmental protection as a cross-border issue, the India National Committee on Environmental Planning and Coordination was established. One of its tasks was to evaluate the environmental impact of major development projects. The first EIA was carried out in the early 1980s on the Silent River Valley Hydroelectric Project in Kerala; the assessment pointed out that the project might cause significant damage to the ecosystem of the Valley and this later resulted in the project being withdrawn (Paliwal, 2006; Panigrahi and Amirapu, 2012). After this case, the EIA was applied to various projects including mining, power plants and transportation constructions. In 1994, EIA Clearance for setting up new projects was made mandatory based on the *Environmental Protection Act* (issued in 1986), and a public hearing[18] was required as part of the EIA procedure. Since then, the EIA has gained legal support in India, rather than being merely an administrative practice. Despite the fact that the ideas of EIA were developed in India earlier than in China, India's inadequate implementation of public participation has invited criticisms similar to those received by the Chinese government. Although a public hearing is one requirement in order to propose new projects, in many cases this happens just before the final stage, prior to the conclusion. And even during the process of a public hearing, the public interaction is weak because of insufficient information

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[18] The 'public hearings' are one of the exercises to ensure people have a right to information. These meetings provide local communities with an approach to assemble and review detail accounts, official expenditure records or other supporting documents in regard to local development. Some activists and scholars (Bhatia and Drèze, 1998; Jenkins and Goetz, 1999) considered it as a step towards the transition from representative to participatory democracy in rural development in India – as ideally, the meetings should be organised independently and government officials are invited to attend instead of dominating the meetings. However, in practice, its implementation has received many criticisms as will be argued later.

and a lack of awareness regarding environmental matters (Sinclair and Diduck, 2000). It has often been argued that, in the end, the points raised in public hearings are rarely taken into account in planning and decision-making (Paliwal, 2006). Regardless of whether it is an authoritarian or democratic system, as O'Faircheallaigh (2010) points out, government leaders may well be keen to promote public participation if it improves the quality of information collecting for decision-makers, but they may not respond at all to the people's demands. In other words, an invited participatory space that seeks to increase the presence of social actors within it may not necessarily encourage the actors to participate substantively nor to have their voice heard (Cornwell, 2004).

'Public participation' initiated by the civil society

It would be remiss to consider only the official dynamic in forming the practices of participation. There is another dynamic of participatory environmentalism, which emerges from society in relatively spontaneous ways and represents the agents of popular environmentalism. In Jürgen Habermas' (1991) term, this is the dynamic of civil society; in the contemporary international development context, the activities initiated by non-government organisations might provide examples. According to Habermas (1991), society can be divided into the realm of civil society and the official government world. There is a tension between the dynamic of the official world and civil society, and therefore some social members with political capital might meet together to participate in the debate over the general rules. The debating arena where the two dynamics encounter each other is called the public sphere (Habermas, 1991; 2006). The three realms can be applied to understand the dynamics that jointly-construct the environmentalism of a society. The official dynamic forms the state's environmentalism; civil society is the realm where the popular environmentalism exists; in between, the public sphere is the participatory arena where the dialogues representing the concept of 'participatory environmentalism' take place. The previous subsection illustrated how the participatory arena is institutionalised by the state. However, in practice, civil dynamics show attempts to join in so as to define the debating space. The activities of NGOs are one embodiment of the dynamic of civil society that seeks participation with regard to various issues.

However, related concepts, such as 'civil society' and 'NGOs', have been interpreted differently between societies. In particular, the idea of NGOs, which are supposed to be

agencies that are distinct from the government, has experienced a transformation in China and has a special form of representation, known as GONGO (Government-Organised Non-Governmental Organisation). According to the *China Development Brief* (Shieh and Knutson, 2012: 7):

> In the late 1970s Chinese civil society began to grow as social resources flowed from a "government-controlled structure into a more multifaceted social structure". … Chinese government realized it could not meet all citizen needs through "planned economy" governance. NGO-like organizations called government-organized NGOs (GONGOs) were established during the 1980s…

Certainly, there are some civil organisations arising in Chinese society. For instance, the *Friends of Nature*, founded in 1994, became the first environmental organisation in China; and later on several of its early members set up their own organisations (Zhang and Barr, 2013). However, considering that, to a certain extent, civil organisations play the role of discourse agents in society, their activities take place under state censorship and this has resulted in a conservative attitude among Chinese NGOs – with regard to the cases they choose to support and the topics to which they dedicate their energies. Such a corporatist tendency exists in both local groups and branches of international organisations (Ho, 2001a; Tang and Zhan, 2008). Additionally, there are numerous of grassroots associations in China that operate without being registered with an official supervision and survive with an illegal statue. As suggested by sociologist Anthony Spires (2011), these organisations, under a constant threat of suppression, survive by making limited democratic claims and also relieving the state of some of its social welfare obligations. Furthermore, since the state authorities pay extraordinary attention to foreign influences, Chinese activists with international connections can attract unwanted attention from the government (Chen, 2010a). Up until now, the Chinese government has not developed a clear regulatory system for international NGOs (INGOs), for 'this policy of having no policy is convenient for [the] authorities because it allows them to ban INGOs if their work is seen as threatening to state security or social stability' (Shieh and Knutson, 2012: 19). This is another angle from which to reconsider the impact caused by the authoritarian regime – in terms of discouraging active participation that is initiated from the people's side in the Chinese environmental arena.

Historian Philip Huang (1993) suggests that the binary opposition between the state and society is inappropriate for China as its 'third realm' is actually an indivisible combination of the state and society. According to Huang, during the state-making process of modern China, its state power has been extended in an invasive manner. The bureaucratic administration has been extended downwards to commune and village level through the party organisation and has institutionalised the co-involvement of state and community. In such a context, as Huang concluded in his article in 1993: 'Contrary to the vision of the public sphere/civil society models, actual socio-political change in China has really never come from any lasting assertion of societal autonomy against the state' (1993: 238).

Other studies have been done since whose authors have similar viewpoints to Huang. Environmental political scientist Peter Ho (2001a) points out that the state authority is the critical dynamic that contributes to the formation of China's environmentalism. On the one hand, its attempt at promoting its green image is demonstrated in its environmental codes; on the other hand, it carries out the alternating politics of toleration and strict control with regard to the social dynamic. As a result, the environmental organisations organised or guided by the government have developed in China, such as in the form of GONGOs. Although 'environmentalism' seems to have formed progressively, the conservative government-oriented organisations rob people of the opportunity to confront the government in a more direct manner (Ho, 2001a). Such a tendency towards non-conflictual actions can now still be observed in the Chinese environmental arena. As stated in Zhang and Barr's recent work (2013), it may be missing the point to measure the power of environmental NGOs against the government. In this country, the emergence of civil society is not to form an alternative force; 'Rather, NGOs serve to help pluralise the political process' (2013: 12). Even in the cases of unregistered grassroots organisations, there is an acquiescence with their illegal status as long as their works promote the social welfare goals of the state and contribute positively to local officials' (political) achievements (zhèngjì) shown in their annual reviews (Spires, 2011).

In fact, creating campaigns by taking a cooperative approach with the state authority might be a feasible strategy for civil efforts in China in order to have an impact on environmental governance. Researchers suggest that this kind of rules-based activism is

vital to ensuring 'public participation' in official procedures such as the EIA, even though in many cases activists have had to wait to be invited to participate (Johnson, 2010). This observation, to a great extent, corresponds with the concept of the 'invited participatory space' suggested by development anthropologist Andrea Cornwall (2004).

Nevertheless, the context in which Cornwall (2004) discusses the concept of 'invited spaces' is mainly to argue that even in democratic systems, the deliberative participatory arena is designed by particular actors for particular purposes and thus inescapably entrenches biases and exclusions. The public sphere in India is an illustration of this setting. To a certain extent, exclusion and social stratification are enhanced in Indian society due to its experience of colonisation. During the colonial era, when the economic resources of the subcontinent were for the most part, controlled by the colonisers, the cultural tradition and native identity were carried by national elites. Therefore, nationalism lay in the Indian cultural domain well before its political battle with the imperial power (Chatterjee, 1993). Once the foreign coloniser disappeared, the resourceful local elites took over the power and became the modern cultural and political elites of independent India. Indian political scientist Partha Chatterjee (2004) points out that in such a context, Indian civil society is dominated by these bourgeois elites that are capable of participating in the public sphere. In addition, there is the realm of 'political society' where the grassroots campaigns are taking place – these can be understood as the practices of 'uninvited participation'.

Possibility of a form of non-democratic and non-politicised participation?

Although deliberative participation is normally considered as a complementary model in a democratic political system, the concept has been well acknowledged by policy makers worldwide and adopted in governmental technologies to improve the justification of decision-making, even in some authoritarian regimes like China. Meanwhile, despite the fact that 'participation' in the Chinese environmental arena has in many cases occurred on the government's own terms; a few 'uninvited participations' have taken place outside the invited spaces. To what degree have these spontaneous movements advanced people's right to participate? Or, to put it another way, is it possible to enhance the practices of (environmental) 'participation' without promoting democratisation and people's political engagement?

In his reflection that aimed to promote an alternative approach to evaluating participatory development in developing countries, environmental geographer Glyn Williams (2004) adds some emphasis to the concept of 'political capabilities'. In this context, political capabilities refer to 'the institutional and organisational resources as well as collective ideas available for effective political action' (Whitehead and Gray-Molina, 1999; Williams, 2004).

After reviewing relevant claims, Williams suggests that the degree to which the political capabilities of the poor have been enhanced should be a key concern when evaluating development projects. In particular, some key questions need to be addressed in this evaluation, such as, 'To what extent do participatory development programmes contribute to processes of political learning among the poor' or 'reshape political networks', that link the poor to a discourse of rights (Williams, 2004: 568)? Williams' reflection is partly based on his empirical research experience in India at village level, where he observed some development projects initiated by international NGOs and the government – which perhaps had improved the food security and economic condition in the villages – had nevertheless reproduced the power of the village elites without radically challenging the status quo (2004: 569). This is not to argue that the political capital or the concept of participatory decision-making had not existed in the society before the advent of the NGO projects. Rather, what I am arguing here is that the sense of politics, rights and power is an agenda to be debated in Indian civil society. I find this aspect of Williams' – and other relevant works – quite inspiring, particularly in terms of the analyses for my Indian case study; nevertheless, on the other hand, I cannot help thinking that such an approach to evaluation might be difficult to apply in the Chinese context.

As the reviews have shown in the previous subsections, participatory development in China has a great tendency to be talked about and performed as something that is de-politicised. Undeniably and ironically, such a tendency towards de-politicisation seems to be a political outcome. While the development of civil society along with the trend towards individualisation can be observed in China, contrary to the orientation proposed by Williams (2004), there is an absence of cultural democracy and there has been little improvement in political capabilities. Anthropologist Yanxiang Yan (2009: 288), in his

work, gives quite a precise description of this fundamental characteristic of Chinese society, in contrast to the more familiar Western model.

> In Western Europe, the individualization process relies on … "cultural democratization," meaning that democracy has been widely accepted and practiced as a principle in everyday life and social relations for so long that it has become part of the culture, instead of merely a political regime. … These social conditions are not found in China. … [T]he individualization process in China does give the individual more mobility, choice and freedom, but it does so with little institutional protection and support from the state (Yan, 2009: 288).

Although I recognise this social reality, in this dissertation I intend to argue that such an established political outcome turns out to be part of the social structure in which there might remain some possibility of bottom-up agency: no matter that it is realised in the form of cooperation with the authorities or other performances of 'uninvited participation'. This will be argued in relation to empirical data in later chapters. Researchers might see, through observing a range of practices of participation, how social actors adopt the de-politicised language, and this to a certain degree reflects the fact that people are aware of the political setting and the politics of performance. Hopefully, the case studies in China and India may facilitate us to either revaluate the characteristics of authoritarian China and democratic India or to reconsider the idea of participatory environmentalism as a joint construction of state environmentalism and popular environmentalism, or it may enable us to review both of these pursuits.

Authoritarian force in discourse constructions: the language of NIMBY and indigenous rights

To study the formation of environmental movements in China and India, researchers need to learn how 'environmental movements' are identified in these countries. The existence of environmental movements is the consequence of an interaction of elements, including the actors' awareness of the problems and the social structure that facilitates their actions. However, there is another element that should not be neglected: the discursive construction of 'environmentalism'. Through the constructive process, certain issues are conceptualised as a threat to the environment and certain actions are recognised as 'environmental movements' (Hajer, 1995). As suggested by environmental anthropologist Peter Brosius (1999: 284), 'the process by which discursive and institutional linkages evolve between environmental concerns and other

issues or debates' is a critical dynamic of environmentalism that needs to be measured. The previous section has sketched some issues about the politics of 'participation' in Chinese and Indian environmental arenas. In this section, I will use 'NIMBYism' as the example to illustrate the exclusive mechanism in terms of how certain movements were excluded from being recognised as practices of environmentalism.

The term NIMBY was first used in the 1980s by the British official Nicholas Ridley, in a nuclear debate (Welsh, 1993). Typical NIMBY cases usually involve public service constructions and local communities' concerns with regard to the potential side-effects of the projects. However, as I am going to argue in the coming sections, it is more and more difficult to define 'public interest', especially considering many projects nowadays involve private investors (Lu, 2013; McLachlan, 2009). Meanwhile, the selection of sites for controversial constructions may reflect the environmental racism in that minority communities are subjected to environmental risks because they lack the resources to alter the agendas (Merchant, 2003; Rosen, 1994). These considerations made 'NIMBY' a problematic label. The NIMBYism discourse has, however, been deployed by the state authority in China to alienate social members. By way of contrast, in rural India the discourse of indigenous rights has often been used to support environmental movements initiated by local communities (Agrawal, 2005; Guha, 2006).[19] Yet in China, the spontaneous movements initiated by residents or activists against certain planned projects in their regions tended to be stigmatised by the state authority and the government-censored media as selfish NIMBYist behaviours and were therefore excluded from 'orthodox' environmental movements (Li, 2014; Lu, 2013; Qian, 2012).

Different conceptualisations of environmental movements in China and India

Information conveyed by media can influence people's understanding of social realities. According to the images shown in the public media, environmental movements appear to be more active in India than in China. However, it should be borne in mind that media coverage of demonstrations is filtered/inhibited to a certain extent by the authorities, particularly in China. The '2013 *Southern Weekly* incident' provides an illustration. During the process of composing the 2013 New Year special edition, the

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[19] The association between indigenous rights and environmentalism in Indian context will be discussed in Chapter 3 and 4.

Propaganda Department of the Guangdong Provincial Party Committee modified the edition several times. One major modification was removing the section of '2012 Hot News', which included a report concerning the young generation of protesters (many were born after the 1990s) at the Shifang environmental campaign (in Sichuan Province) who were protesting against the construction of a copper plant. As pointed out by scholars (Li, 2014; Lu, 2013; Qian, 2012), in Chinese traditional media, events such as the Shifang protest were usually presented/tagged with the label of 'NIMBY', with the absence of official response to the procedural flaws in the process of site selection; and once the conflicts were scaled up, the mainstream media was often strangled by political authorities and fell silent, which thus left an information vacuum for the public.

In the case of India, reports on a variety of demonstrations could be found nearly every day in their newspapers. For example, in the Calcutta Telegraph on Friday 28 September 2012 – a random day of my fieldwork, there was a report about a blockade that had disrupted the dispatch of coal at several collieries, due to land-related conflicts between local residents and a state-owned coal enterprise. Simultaneously, an article regarding a daylong strike by auto-rickshaw drivers who were demanding a check on the highhandedness of the police could also be found, together with a story that mentioned the continuing strike initiated by Circle Inspectors/Officers [20] who were demanding improvements to their employment conditions.

Differences could be noticed between the media coverage in India and China when contrasting the two scenarios above, meanwhile the accessibility of current affairs information can affect the overall outcome of knowledge construction concerning environmental movements.

Besides media, academia is another field to observe the construction of environmental discourses. Studies on environmental movements in China and India show differences in various respects. The people of India appeared to have demonstrated their agency in terms of popular environmentalism throughout its history of ecological activism. A series of spontaneous movements have emerged from among the people in the country as they have striven to battle the privatisation of natural resources: the Chipko Movement in the 1970s and the Narmada Movement in the 1980s are examples, as well as the *adivasis'* activities that can be observed nowadays in rural Jharkhand. As

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[20] Government officials who undertake revenue administration and land records at the village level.

suggested by Guha (2006), one shared theme can be recognised between these campaigns: the indigenous peoples' autonomous rights to land and the natural resources therein. As a side note, although not all of these movements were initiated by '*adivasis*' – for example, the Chipko was a movement started by local peasants (e.g. Guha, 2000), we can still find the language of indigenous or local communities' right to self-determination being deployed for the purpose of activism. In short, the discourse shows a tendency to highlight and value the connection between the environment and the local community.

However, if we consider discourses of environmental movements as the inter-construction of researchers' ideologies and social realities then, to a certain degree, such a tendency is due to the approaches shared by the public intellectuals in the society. In this case, the tradition of Subaltern Studies and critical theory in Indian academia might partly explain why the bottom-up dynamic has been emphasised in works analysing the Indian environmental campaigns (Agrawal, 2005; Banuri and Apffel-Marglin, 1993; Guha, 2006; Shiva, 1991). Thus, it is not surprising to find discourses underlining the relationships between nature and the poor as well as the unequal distribution of capitalism and privatisation. Since the 1990s, India has witnessed the rise of market liberalism and institutionalism. Such a trend has influenced not only the economic model of the country but also the interpretation of environmentalism. Thus, a change in direction can be observed, from the Marxist or socialist perspective, towards a tendency to consider the fundamental problems of the Indian environmental crisis as being mismanagement, poor maintenance and antiquated technology (Guha, 2006). However, ecological Marxism (Baviskar, 1996; O'Connor, 1988; 1998; Peet et al., 2010) has continued to be an important approach in the toolkit of activists in their attempts to criticise government policies.

In China meanwhile, the state authorities banned any debates on environmental issues and other civil-rights concerns for decades in the second half of the 20th century (Ho, 2007). Between the 1950s and the 1980s, under the leadership of Chinese Communist Party, China experienced a suppression and censorship of expression (further discussions can be found in Chapter 3). In contrast with the centralised government, citizen-organised campaigns are a relatively new phenomenon initiated in the last decade of the 20th century. Within a very different social context from that in India,

studies conducted by Chinese scholars tend to provide suggestions that are possible within the system (rather than making criticisms outside the system and considering the alternatives) and have, for example, identified that the problems are due to the gap between central and local government (Chang and Wu, 2008; Lo and Tang, 2006; Ran, 2013; Wanga et al., 2003). In other words, most of these studies address the top-down approach as the key (if not only) dynamic of the environmental arena with little criticism and serve to enhance the governing power and regulating authorities rather than transform the socio-political system. Such a condition of academia actually corresponds with the conservative tendency of civil society, as discussed in the previous section.

In spite of the peoples' campaigns that have come to light in China more frequently over recent years (Geall, 2013a), the government remains acknowledged as being the dominant actor with regard to the environment in this authoritarian country. This view is shared by environmental activists interviewed in several studies, and is also reflected in the statements made by researchers (Johnson, 2010; Zhang and Barr, 2013: 10-12). Meanwhile, Chinese sociologist Jian Lu (2013) points out that, in association with the emergence of a series of environmental events and collective actions that happened in 2012, the idea of NIMBY has become a fashionable term in the Chinese media and academia.

If the two contexts are compared, the idea of NIMBY seems not to have received as much emphasis in studies on India as in those on China. To give some examples, in the database, the *International Bibliography of the Social Sciences* (IBSS),[21] from 1951 to the present, there is not a single article that mentions 'NIMBY' with regard to 'India'. As for the *Web of Knowledge*,[22] there are three articles for the case of India (Chaerul et al., 2008; Chokshi, 2012; Garud, 2012) while in total eight articles are listed that refer to both 'NIMBY' and 'China' in their title or abstract (Buekens and Cen, 2011; Cao et al., 2012; Deng and Yang, 2013; Garud, 2012; Johnson, 2010; Johnson, 2013a; Lang and Xu, 2013; McLachlan, 2009); all of these were published in the past five years. 'NIMBY' can be understood as an idea that relates to the geographic factor in movements, at the same time it demonstrates certain concerns regarding property rights. However, to describe an action as being for the purpose of 'NIMBY' somehow adds

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[21] http://search.proquest.com/ibss/index?accountid=14182 [Last checked in November 2013].
[22] http://thomsonreuters.com/web-of-knowledge/ [Last checked in November 2013].

condemnation as it suggests being irrational and motivated by self-interest. Local communities that oppose the construction of infrastructure that may benefit the 'public' are often portrayed as motivated by selfish parochialism (Glaberson, 1988; Kraft and Clary, 1991; Mazmanian and Morell, 1990). While many environmental movements involve issues of geographic identity and property rights (especially land rights), those in India seem, to a greater degree, to be discussed together with the idea of indigenousness (e.g. Agrawal, 2005; Mosse, 1997; Shah, 2010) rather than NIMBYism. How can we explain such a difference, except through the Indian tradition of Subaltern Studies mentioned above? Is it because Indian environmental movements have few 'NIMBY' intentions? This is not a simple yes-no question. Rather, the difference reveals a need for researchers to find out why those actions have taken place – against pollution or against risky projects – and why they tend to be labelled as NIMBYism in China instead of as an appeal to the autonomous rights of indigenous peoples or local communities.

'NIMBY' in the Western context and its limited explanatory value

As well as NIMBY, there are several other acronyms that represent relevant ideas. LULU is another example; it stands for 'Locally Unwanted Land Use'. Both NIMBY and LULU represent a similar mindset, which is the desire to live in an environment that is geographically distanced from any source of pollution. What makes the conceptualisation of NIMBY or LULU different from mainstream 'environmentalism' is the element of 'my/mine' or 'locality'. In fact, this is how the division of environmental movements has been brought out historically in the Western context. In typical NIMBY cases, there are construction projects that are essential for public services or implementations of necessary social welfare, such as power plants, waste landfill sites or sewage treatment plants. While these projects are meant to serve the public interests, the residents in the neighbourhood who oppose the building of these constructions are known as NIMBYists. They intend to avoid the negative impacts on their locality by opposing the projects and so their personal opinions appear to conflict with the public interests. In such a context, Western scholars like Kristy Michaud et al. (2008) summarised the dual conceptual division of environmental movements as environmentalism and NIMBYism: the former is more ideologically-oriented, advocates environmental justice and prioritises the natural environment as being important to

human life, while the latter refers to movements composed of those engaged in localised opposition to a specific development in the name of environmental protection. This conceptual division is cited by Thomas Johnson in his study on China (2010: 431), in which he argues that NIMBYists as activists differ from members of NGOs.

However, the article by Johnson (2010) fails to mention that in the study by Michaud et al. (2008), a survey was conducted in California, USA, on residents' attitudes to oil drilling projects, and this empirical study found that NIMBYism does not affect people's opinions significantly. In other words, having an objectionable facility in their community may drive someone who originally intended to object to such a facility to take part in relevant campaigns; however, it shows no significant influence on changing people's attitudes, with regard to whether to support or oppose the facility in their area (Michaud et al., 2008: 34-5). The reason why I call attention to this is to clarify that, over the past decades, the concept of NIMBY has been widely criticised (by researchers studying Western societies), not only because of its implicit derogatory implications but also because of its limited explanatory value due to its lack of empirical foundation (Bell et al., 2005; Devine-Wright, 2013; McLachlan, 2009; Wolsink, 2006). Specifically, empirical studies have revealed that although NIMBY actions have some features of geographical designation, as they take place in regions where certain projects are planned, the features of localism or selfishness are not reflected significantly in the activists' opinions as implied by the stigmatised image of 'NIMBYists'. The study by Michaud et al. (2008) is a relatively recent example. Even before that, political scientists Michael Kraft and Bruce Clary (1991: 322-3) had reviewed public responses to radioactive waste disposal projects in multiple states of America and delivered a similar statement based on their findings:

> Although a local geographic orientation ("my backyard") was evident, such a parochial outlook was not characteristic of the majority of those testifying. In addition, we found that the vast majority of the statements made at these hearings were not highly emotive; only a small number could be so described.

In short, as suggested by Michaud et al. (2008), NIMBY can be used to explain why certain activism appears in a specific area; however it cannot be used to interpret the opinions of those activists. It explains the actions but does not limit the perspective of the spontaneous actions. In such a context, it is worth considering the forces that cause the Chinese environmental arena to use this idea so often these days.

Complexities in scoping the public interest and one's backyard

Recalling the debate of the eco-racism or the imbalanced environmental distribution between different communities, as addressed in the introduction chapter, scholars have noticed that the white middle-class communities in America, for instance, have a better chance to alter the official agendas so as to avoid being influenced by the pollution (Rosen, 1994). However, as the constructions are still required, they have to be set-up somewhere, and they have a better chance of being completed in the neighbourhoods of resource-poor communities. Meanwhile, to justify the official arrangements, certain discourses were employed. I will now return to the context of China and elaborate how the state authority has deployed/hijacked the language of 'NIMBY' to alienate certain communities from other social members. One of the potential 'advantages' for developing countries in dealing with environment-development debates is that they can refer to the experiences of developed countries (and replicate their ideology of 'development'). These kinds of references can be made in diverse aspects, in terms of technology, regulation and discourse. To some degree, this explains why China (and also India) has applied some radical laws and techniques in terms of environmental governance, as discussed in the previous section. However, while the concept of NIMBY has been argued to be problematic in Western literature to a significant extent, it is still applied frequently in the Chinese environmental arena in labelling many regional campaigns, such as the Shifang environmental campaign. There are two aspects to think about with regard to this issue. In this subsection, I will introduce some literature to argue about the complexities of scoping the 'public' interest and the private/personal interest. The ambiguity actually results from the fact that common people cannot feel involved in the beneficial objects of the projects in the name of social development. Thus, the NIMBY label loses its explanatory value in the contemporary context. In the next subsection, the tendency of inner-colonisation that lies in the NIMBY discourse (and which sets certain social members' rights against the 'social good') will be discussed.

To begin with, it is difficult to define the range of public interest. As identified by Lu (2013), nowadays it is more and more difficult to judge whether a project is in the 'public' interest or not, for many projects unavoidably involve private investors and bring financial benefits to both the investors and the government. In the example of the

Shifang protest, the main investor (the Sichuan Hongda Co. Ltd.) was a private-owned company, although the Sichuan local government claimed that the proposed copper smelting plant would spur economic growth of the province. In any similar setting like the case of Shifang, one can hardly accuse the residents who refuse to support the projects of opposing the 'public interest'; these may be projects operating in the name of the public interest, but at the same time, they may result in non-public profits for capitalist investors. Moreover, it is also difficult to judge whether the public interest is necessary fundamental or whether it is a 'false need', to use Herbert Marcuse's term (1964). A similar argument has also been suggested by Western researchers. In a case study on wave energy, environmental scientist Carly McLachlan (2009) points out that those who oppose such renewable energy projects are often labelled as NIMBY by stakeholders within the development projects as well as by academics. Nevertheless, McLachlan found that 'many respondents feel they are being asked to accept a personal sacrifice (e.g., surf loss) for the personal gain of others (i.e., developers and energy companies)' rather than for a social good (McLachlan, 2009: 5347-8). When the trade-off is between residents and investors, it is unsurprising that some natives feel that it is unacceptable.

In their study, Kraft and Clary (1991) asked, 'How large a backyard?' This is actually a question regarding how conclusive is the public interest and how negligible is an individual's opinion. The link between NIMBY actions and selfishness is debatable as there are varying definitions of the size of one's 'backyard'. Fairly speaking, geographical attachment is only one of the factors that cause the actions to occur around the planned site. Kraft and Clary (1991) pointed out that there are other factors including cognitive, affective and political factors. Their study shows that the political factor plays an important role in constructing how broad or limited the geographic implications are in the understanding of the residents. In particular, in projects in which governments are major policy actors, the acts and attitudes of these governments, in terms of defining the scope of the projects and consulting or cooperating with community groups, can in fact involve more people, beyond the local residents, than those who would be most directly affected by the projects (Kraft and Clary, 1991: 315). In other words, it is a governance decision, whether to involve more social members and empower them as stakeholders, or whether to target the activist residents as 'NIMBYists' or 'others' who do not agree with the assessment that a project is for the 'social good'.

A case study in China also demonstrates the flexible definition of locality, and that this flexibility has social, cultural and emotional causes. As Mary Douglas (1966) puts it in her classic saying 'dirt is matter out of place'; pollution and its threat to the environment and health can be interpreted differently in various cultural orders. The study on environmental protection in rural China reveals that the attitudes of villagers towards outside investments and local businesses can be quite different. In villages that have achieved outstanding success in protesting against chemical pollution caused by outside investors, when it comes to pollution produced by community members, the villagers have tended to keep silent (Deng and Yang, 2011). This is an example that shows that the idea of 'conservation' and a 'place to be conserved', or the so-called 'backyard', changes with social preference. Sometimes we see 'protect our town from pollution', and at other times we see the more specific 'protect our town from pollution produced by them'. In some cases, it can even appear as the more personal 'protect my body from pollution' (Klein, 2011; Wu and Wang, 2007). I argue that we need to understand these as various practices of environmentalism undertaken by a single social actor, instead of regarding the tendency of NIMBY and environmentalism as two alternative approaches.

The complexities in scoping the 'backyard' are also evidenced by my empirical study in the south-western coal mining villages of China. When projects are run by the locals, villagers tend not to protest openly against them. Furthermore, when the locals have a chance, feel they may get the chance, or need the chance to work in the project in the future, they tend to bear with the environmental degradation as a necessary cost. On the other hand, when none of the locals benefit from the project, either directly or indirectly, even though the coal is being extracted for the national energy requirement, it is difficult to convince the villagers to identify with the project as being in the 'public interest' or for the 'social good' because they do not feel that they are involved. In particular, Chinese state leaders rarely consult with local groups and involve communities, as suggested by Kraft and Clary (1991), and thus it is difficult to let people feel that they are part of the public that shares the benefits, in spite of the fact that the state leaders keep promoting a harmonious unified image of the whole population. The debate about NIMBY is actually about exclusive/inclusive development, and this suggests why the idea of, and the implementation of, participation is important in development studies. Instead of targeting the activists as selfish NIMBYists, a critical question should be answered by the planners or the investors who proposed the

development projects, namely: whose public interest is it? Or, as raised by Chambers (1997): *Whose Reality Counts?*

NIMBY discourse and the issue of inner-colonisation

The process of scoping the public interest and locating projects at specific sites might unavoidably cause social inequality and raise issues of environmental racism in terms of inner-colonisation. Projects relating to energy are examples of this. In the national development agendas of both countries, coal mining has always played a critical role. In both China and India, domestically mined coal makes up more than or nearly 70% of their energy balances respectively (IEA, 2012); however, most of their coal-fired power plants are located in rural places near the sources of the coal, instead of in the urban areas that demand a more stable power supply. Thus, it is very difficult to justify the intention to fulfil the continually increasing national energy requirement as something that is in the 'public interest', in particular, if the local communities who tend to bear the brunt of environmental costs will not benefit from the development of the power schemes. This has been observed in both countries on many occasions. In India, approximately 80 million tonnes of coal are extracted in Jharkhand every year out of which, more than 40% is accounted for by Dhanbad alone (Bhushan and Hazra, 2008). The coal capital of the country, Dhanbad, is also known for its power plants, which generate electricity from coal. However, according to my experience of staying in the area, its grid remains insufficient and unstable; blackouts happen on a regular basis and sometimes occur randomly. An Indian economist (Rahul, 50s, male) made the following statement in an interview: 'we people don't own the coal. …The coal business is not run by the local people; we are not primarily involved. So, they will have electricity in Punjab[23] because of Dumka[24] coal, but no electricity here'. From this viewpoint, local communities in many cases were not protesting against 'development' but against the constructions or schemes that would harm the environment without benefiting them.

Notably, the Indian environmental discourse has a tendency to debate the issue of inner-colonisation, and this tendency is reflected in its emphasis on indigenous rights. As mentioned earlier, many scholars have questioned the democracy of India. One example

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[23] Punjab, located in north-west India, is considered well-developed, especially when compared with most eastern states.
[24] Dumka is one district of Jharkhand next to Dhanbad where around 40% of the population belong to the Scheduled Tribes and more than 90% of the population live in rural areas.

is the emergence of Hindu Nationalism; its political success was the consequence of a series of democratic elections (Hansen, 1999). This evidences the existence of the democratic system yet with the 'necessary evil' inherent in it: the public violence. In this context, the idea of democracy is realised or performed in the process of conversations, in the process of debating that is open to be judged, as well as in the socio-environmental arena where various voices coexist. The value of democracy is reflected in the condition that even the official system (administrative or judicial) is questionable. The imperial colonial experience to some extent contributes to the neo-colonialism in modern India; however, criticisms of this inner-colonisation also seem to be fuelled by the same experience (see Chapter 3 for further discussions).

How about China? The condition of inner-colonisation can evidently be seen in rural China as well. For instance, under the famous policy of the '*Great Development of Western China'*, there is a scheme to transmit electricity from Western to Eastern China. Electricity as well as a huge amount of natural resources have been extracted from the south-western areas and exported to well-developed coastal China at a low price; meanwhile, environmental side products have been left behind in the local communities. Despite this, the Chinese mainstream environmental discourse has not reflected this issue well. Historically, China has never been colonised as a whole by Western imperial powers,[25] which may explain to a certain extent its lack of a basis on which to elaborate its anti-colonisation discourse.

However, inner-colonisation happens in the Chinese continent. Historian Mark Elvin (2006) identifies this issue: 'Guizhou was Chinese colonialism in action' (2006: 218), and, as a typical colonial scenario, it was linked to the quest for raw materials. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the indigenous people living in Guizhou, the Miao ethnics, were labelled as the 'most lawless' and a thorough administrative and ideological assimilation was applied to 'civilise' them (2006: 218-20). Similar to the *adivasi* culture in India, the Miao tradition also contains an environmental perspective in which human beings are also animals and should follow the natural norms to maintain the cycle of life. However, assimilation has been enforced for centuries and Miao ethnics' austere tradition could not withstand the power of the dominating Han Chinese culture (Elvin, 2006). Furthermore, throughout the state-making process of modern China, the state

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[25] It has merely been divided by the authority and conceded or leased to the Western countries; the experience of Hong Kong with the British is an example.

power has been extended pervasively. Evidence suggests that the Chinese government makes a great effort in the ideological construction of the people. The development of a single national language and the firm enforcement of public 'education' are operative methods (Price, 1979) to unify its people and repress the internal diversity. Another example is the continuous emphasis on moral education and the 'love of China's Communist Party' (Li et al., 2004).

In China, the conceptualisation of NIMBYism can be seen as a mirror image of the ideological construction of the unified identity. They share the same mechanism, which is to form the legitimacy of the state authority to represent unity, to define the public interest and to speak for the environment. Thus, it is not surprising to find narratives that criticise NIMBYists or that see their intentions as being merely out of personal interest rather than due to their environmental concerns. In a country without a democratic ideological construction, the idea of the 'public' is not formed as a collective presence of numerous individuals; rather, the Chinese idea of the 'public' is to a great extent defined by its authoritarian government, which is led by the Party. In this case, the interest of the Party is suggested as being the same as the interest of the State, the interest of the People and the 'public interest'. What qualifies as the public interest is defined and stated by official schemes and national plans, rather than being decided collectively by individuals. The interests of individuals are disconnected from the public interest.

In contrast, in India, which appreciates the value of democracy to a greater extent, the local campaigns are a practice of democracy that presents the right of the people to seek to participate in the decision-making process for the 'public interest'. Even though democratic participation in politics is still quite arguable in its public sphere, its democratic ideological construction allows individuals to debate with the 'public interest' and their campaigns are justified by their 'local value' or indigenousness. Individuals have the right to share their opinions about the value of the public interest and the extent to which they are happy to sacrifice their personal interest in exchange for the public one – the collective entity in which they take part. For example, one *adivasi* activist expressed to me her viewpoints with regard to a steel plant proposed to be built in Jharkhand: indigenous communities need development as well, but in the manner that balances industrial and agricultural development and concerns also local

communities' livelihood. *Adivasis* initiated a series of protests against the land acquisition, because the project was planned on their agricultural land rather that the infertile land in the region. The indigenous campaigners were against outsider investments and emphasised community-based development. Hence, despite the possibility that the state authority or the capitalist investors might label the protesters as selfish or naive actors, there remained the space for the language of self-governance, and their voice was relatively fairly represented (undeniably, it might have been better heard with the support of middle class activists). Nevertheless, there are also examples of authoritarian realities in India. For instance, in some cases, the state authority can appeal for compulsory acquisition for the sake of 'public development' under the doctrine of eminent domain embedded in the *Land Acquisition Act (1894)* inherited from the colonial government (Mearns, 1999; Sud, 2007). However, the legitimated violence of the compulsory acquisition process is open to debate and has been criticised a great deal in public-interest litigation courts and social arenas.

Conclusion

The literature review presented in this chapter aimed to demonstrate that 'environmental movements' are identified and constructed differently in the two countries in academic and media discourses. This reveals the limitations of applying certain labels, such as authoritarian environmentalism and democratic environmentalism, to explain the social realities.

The first section discussed the limitations of using 'participation' to label the differences between the practices of environmentalism in the two countries. Over-emphasising the non-participatory nature of the environmentalism in Chinese society may limit not only the practical possibilities of the idea of 'participation', but also how we can understand environmentalism as it is practiced in diverse socio-cultural contexts. To evaluate the practices and performances of environmentalism, one should not only consider the nature of a regime; it is also essential to understand the social dynamics that facilitate the movements both practically and ideologically. Furthermore, in order to evaluate the quality of an authoritarian state or a democracy, one of the important aspects to be studied is its people's different views about the environment, social spaces, and the state. For example, the authoritarianism of China makes it necessary for

academics to consider its '(civil) society' as an extension of the 'state' (Huang, 1993), rather than as a relatively independent realm to balance the state power, or as a location where people express their opposing opinions to the official authorities.

Some scholars argued that 'authoritarian environmentalism' is a position of public policy-making held by the Chinese government in response to environmental challenges (Gilley, 2012); however I doubt the correctness of this argument. One critical reason is that, the 'pollute now, clean later' strategy is still reflected in its growth-oriented development policies. In the context, Chinese common people, the basic peasants or miners living in the villages, may hardly sense the spirit of 'environmentalism' in the policies authorised by government. Rather, as will be shown in Chapter 4, my respondents view China's environmental policy as being about pollution management (afterwards). According to their understanding, environmental regulation is something that endorses officials to visit local businesses regularly to collect fines – no matter whether this is for the private interest of the officials or in the name of the public interest for the national finances. Another fundamental reason is that Chinese state authority has limited other dynamics or actors from participating in environmental debates; in this manner it has made itself most influential in the environmental arena and restricted the possibility of popular environmentalism.

In the second section, I furthered the discussion regarding authoritarianism that is reflected in discursive constructions. Regarding the environmental issue, in China, its authoritarianism is demonstrated by how the officials and mainstream media misuse the idea of NIMBY, thus causing some self-help activists to be labelled as selfish and irrational actors. The idea of NIMBY has already been debated a great deal in Western societies, and is not used as much in India. Thus, this example illustrates the tendency of the Chinese government to hold certain dictatorial intentions to lead the discourse regarding 'the environment', as well as other civil rights issues – with a governmental technique of alternating between toleration and strict control of environmental organisations and civic activities (Ho, 2001a). The Chinese style of environmental governance shows little consideration in terms of the social greens approach or critical environmentalism, which emphasises development justice. By reviewing the potential of inner-colonisation that lies in the construction of the NIMBY discourse, the discussion in the second section also pointed to the same enquiry brought out by the

first section: can we deal with environmental problems without considering the social and political rationales behind people's voices and silences? Who has the right to set the local environmental development agenda and define 'public interest'? These questions will be debated further in the remaining chapters, using the primary data (from the fieldwork) and secondary materials (from cultural productions such as films).

Chapter 3: Reflections on historical representations, regional politics and ideological roots with regard to the environment

Introduction: development, the environment, and ecological distribution conflicts

The natural environment is the underlying basis upon which development and civilisation have been built. As mentioned in Chapter 1, coal is a critical source of energy that fuels the national 'development' of China and India, particular the growing industry and transport sectors (Hsu and Schwartz, 2014). Similarly, other natural resources also facilitate the progress of development, in one form or another. However, this chapter is concerned more with people's responses to the side-effects of the so-called 'development' in terms of ecological distribution conflicts and how these responses had been disclosed or presented.

Before starting to analyse how the official development agendas have influenced the people of the two Coal Capitals, it is important to know how people define 'development'. During my field trip through rural Jharkhand, when people came to know that I was doing a study on environment and development, they showed me the schools and medical services in villages, introduced me to local milk and dairy producers (see the Figure 3.1 for examples), and some of them explained to me about *adivasi* movements against land acquisition and involuntary resettlement.

Figure 3.1 From left to right: the *Mid-Day Meal Scheme*,[26] a milk producer, coal miners, and a doctor and the village clinic.

A variety of ideas were presented, to illustrate a broad definition of 'development', which could be summarised by the sentences given by a villager interviewed in the documentary *Earth Worm: Company Man* (Das and Das, 2005): 'Give us medicines. Give us schools and teachers. Provide us with lands and forests. The forests we want.

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[26] It is a scheme linked to education rights that provides free lunch meals for primary school students.

We don't need the company … we all want development. But what we need is stable development'. The film was shot in rural Orissa; however, similar ideas were reflected in my experiences in Jharkhand.

While in Guizhou, I asked people the same question with regard to development. Some respondents suggested that I talk to the village cadres. According to a school teacher, 'The cadres are in charge of the village development, and they should be able to answer your questions'. Other informants told me to review the data recorded in the official historical archives. In their considerations, 'development' appeared to be an official business; and when I mentioned 'the environment' (huánjìng), it was usually firstly interpreted as 'economic environment' instead of 'natural environment'. Here is a part of a conversation between one of my respondents Jiangjie (J) and I:

> I: How do you feel about the change of the environment?
> J: Our environment is so poor.
> I: What is poor for you?
> J: Lack of development it is poor – no development, no business.
> I: What is development for you?
> J: Enterprise! A lot of enterprises and everyone gets business to do – that is called development.

Figure 3.2 A coking plant nearby *Weilongcun* and the neighbouring train station and elementary school

The above two stories suggest the importance of a comparative viewpoint in development studies, and invite researchers to further investigate the potential socio-cultural factors that influence the production of meanings about 'development' and its side-effects on the environment and native communities.

In Chapter 2, when discussing reflections on the NIMBY discourse, I pointed out that the imperial colonial experience of India to some extent empowers and endorses criticisms of inner-colonisation in terms of development and environmental justice. In this chapter, I will further investigate the historical contexts of Chinese and Indian societies to elaborate this argument, and contrast how the differences in their colonial experience – together with their individual political structures – influence the narratives and practices of environmentalism in my two case studies. This chapter contains three sections. The first section examines the historical representations of nature and environmental campaigns (particularly from the 1950s to 1990s) in the two countries. By 'representation' I refer to the reports and constructions of selective events that summarise the viewpoints of the influential agents/actors of a society. As recognised by political scientist James Scott (1985: 36), 'everyday forms of resistance make no headlines'. The official agendas do not always cover ordinary people's concerns; meanwhile, even the historical writings of public campaigns can hardly present the radical or daily struggles of those living at the grassroots level of the society. Despite this, I do examine historical representations as one social element that has the potential to influence the socio-cultural atmosphere and discourse construction, and which can also inspire later generations' decision-making in response to environmental degradation.

The second section will elaborate upon the socio-political contexts regarding the centre-region relationships of the two regions (Jharkhand of India and Guizhou of China) of my case studies. Jharkhand and Guizhou are important coal producers of the two countries. However, living standards there are disproportionately low. Therefore, it is important to examine the gap/contradiction between the official discourses of 'development' – that often assume a trickle-down effect of national (economic) development – and the practical realities. Nevertheless, the different centre-region relationships are another social factor that influences how local communities respond to developmental injustice. Then, in the third section, I will recap and further my discussion about how these background factors contributed to the ideological constructions of the two societies and how these are reflected nowadays in ordinary people's practices or narratives of environmentalism.

Admittedly, there are numerous historical events related to environmental development as well as plenty of ideologies and narratives in the two countries that I cannot cover – some of these may demonstrate a different scenario from those that I set out in support of my analyses. What I am going to present in this chapter is the mainstream trend of each country's usage of the term 'the environment' in historical writings and political propaganda, which I observed as influential during my fieldwork. There is no intention of reinforcing a binary opposition between China and India. Rather, the purpose of this dissertation is to provide a reflective perspective on the representations and constructions of environmental discourses. Therefore, my discussions will address the ideological differences that are able to explain the context, and the representations, of contemporary events in the two countries and analyse the effects.

Historical representations of 'the environment': to be protected or to be defeated

Historical geographer Carolyn Merchant, in *The Death of Nature* (1980a), suggests that the mainstream values of development, endorsed by Western civilisation and modern science, have contributed to 'the death of nature as a living being and the accelerating exploitation of both human and natural resources in the name of culture and progress' (1980a: xviii). Merchant's work provides a critical review on the feminisation of 'nature' as a passive object in a Western context, and challenges such a perception from the viewpoint of women and socially marginalised groups. My study intends to show, in the contexts of India and China, the different ways of conceptualising nature and its relation with development. By reviewing the historical representations of the environment in the two countries, this section examines how environmental discourses have been historically defined to a considerable extent by a centralised state authority; or, in other cases, how they have been inter-constructed by various initiatives, including some by civil dynamics. In particular, some iconic events that happened in India and China with regard to the environment in the second half of the 20th century will be introduced to provide a contrast between the historical contexts of the two countries.

In several historical representations (e.g. Baviskar, 1995; Gadgil and Guha, 1994; Guha, 2000; Pandey, 1991; Parajuli, 1996; Swain, 1997), bottom-up mobilisation and popular protests characterised the environmental movements in India. In these movements, 'people are resisting an "exploitative" state structure and a development model that they

presume excludes them' (Swain, 1997: 819); therefore, these are not only ecological movements but 'movements for survival and against exploitation by the developmentalist state' (Parajuli, 1996: 16). There were numerous campaigns during the post-Independence period and I will briefly discuss two of these: the Chipko Movement and the Save Narmada Movement.

In the early 1970s, modern India witnessed a series of protests, which were started by peasants in remote Himalayan forests, Uttarakhand (of North India). The peasants wanted to prevent local trees from being felled by loggers acting on behalf of outside commercial investors. These protests collectively constituted the 'Chipko Movement' (Chipko, meaning to embrace or to stick, indicates the act of tree-hugging as a means of protest), which was widely recognised later as a landmark in the fight against deforestation. Historians Ramachandra Guha and Joan Martínez-Alier (1997: 5) consider it as 'the forerunner of and in some cases the direct inspiration for a series of popular movements in defence of community rights to natural resources'. Additionally (not alternatively), ecofeminist Vandana Shiva (1988) puts emphasis on the role women played in the movement, as those who sought to re-establish a harmonious relationship with nature, in contrast to men who were interested in commercial activity based on forest products. As suggested by geographer Emma Mawdsley (1998), the Chipko Movement can be acknowledged as one of the most frequently cited movements in the literature on socio-environmental mobilisations in the Global South, and the interpretations made by scholars such as Guha or Shiva might have provided a certain strategic inspiration for later activists both inside and outside the country. However, Mawdsley goes on to argue that it will be too one-dimensional to turn the radical movement for self-management of local resources into a purely conservationist one. Initiated as an economic struggle by both female and male activists from the local community with a concern for the survival of the forests as a fundamental and functional condition for a local economy, the Chipko Movement, in the viewpoint of Mawdsley (1998: 11), resulted in a 'failure to achieve the changes that were desired by many in the hills'. Nevertheless, it demonstrated the dimension of 'cognitive praxis' of Indian social movements, in anthropologist Pramod Parajuli's (1996: 32-3) words, by offering 'a site where historical conjunctures are shifting, new envisioning processes are occurring, and new knowledge is articulated and practiced'. In other words, the various

interpretations of the movement became a rich source of inspiration for later community-based ecological campaigns.

The Save Narmada Movement (also known as the NBA: *Narmada Bachao Andolan* in Hindi) is another iconic environment-related movement of India, which was formally initiated in 1989 and lasted for nearly a decade. In its first campaign, around 8,000 people gathered at the dam site in Gujarat to protest against the project. However, many of the non-violent protestors were beaten and arrested by the police. From then on, many thousands of activists and villagers joined the movement and it has come to be known as 'the coming of age of the Indian environmental movement' (Baviskar, 1995: 206). Their slogans included, 'We want development; not destruction' and 'Self-rule in our villages'. Similar to the Chipko Movement, several discourses or meanings have been associated to the NBA Movement for a variety of purposes. As pointed out by Indian sociologist Amita Baviskar (1995), the link between *adivasi* struggles and the Gandhian spirit of decentralisation might be engendered with the intention of boosting or driving the campaign; moreover, the ideological connection between the indigenous culture and sustainability (that do not necessarily exist in *adivasi* people's consciousness) was upheld strategically by elite activists in the NBA Movement to gain the sympathy of urban and international supporters. This may explain why the NBA Movement has drawn more attention from the government and middle-class social members than the several tribal rebellions over land that had happened over previous centuries.

Funded partly by a World Bank loan and partly by bilateral aid, its financial composition made the Narmada dam project a typical example for critics who could argue that the agenda of 'national development' was an arm of international capitalism rather than an Indian construction alone. In particular, Baviskar (1995) states that the newly independent India was emulating 'the model of development … [that] was derived from the historical trajectory of former colonial powers'. Such capital-intensive projects based on external borrowing may ironically undermine the objective of national development in several dimensions: reducing the state's autonomy due to the indebtedness to foreign capital, transferring natural resources into commodities and alienating native communities from their resources (Baviskar, 1995: 35-36). The discourses associated with the NBA Movement illustrated the idea that considerations

of autonomy involve both external and internal debates, for instance, India versus foreign forces and the indigenous communities versus the state authority and urban consumers.

Recognising the reality that both of these movements, as well as the other major conflicts over natural resources, were taking place in the regions that were inhabited by *adivasis*, Parajuli (1996) applies the concept of 'environmental racism'[27] to analyse the development experience of post-Independence India and to point out the congruence between ecological and ethno-regional movements. Parajuli (1996) argues that both of these movements were demanding regional autonomy, development justice and self-management of local resources: in the Chipko Movement the debates surrounded accessibility of forest resources while in the Save Narmada Movement it was the distribution of water resources between native communities and outside investors that was contested. Specifically, in the latter case, the scale of the debate was upgraded to a globalised level. Compared with the Chipko Movement or the NBA Movement, the *adivasi* campaigns that happened in Jharkhand might be a better example to demonstrate the self-governance and anti-colonial orientation (the Jharkhand movements will be further discussed in the next section). The concern, however, with regard to internal colonialism and the tension between the plains-based planners or state officials versus the hill population were never absent in Uttarakhand (Mawdsley, 1998) or the Narmada Valley (Baviskar, 1995; Parajuli, 1996). In short, the representations of these indigenous movements implied that a community-based participatory economy was demanded by the people, while at the same time these movements were frequently taken as metaphors for subaltern environmental resistance against the centralisation of (state) power.

The historical representations of 'the environment' in China reveal a very different picture from that of India. As stated frankly by Chinese historian Wenhui Hou, 'In China, few people know the term "environmental history"' (1990: 151); 'Very few Chinese historians have considered that the study of history is inseparable from the

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[27] Noting that, as mentioned in Chapter 1, the critiques of 'environmental racism' have been made mostly in a Western context, particularly in the United State (e.g. Merchant, 2003; Rosen, 1994), while in the countries of the 'South', like India, the notion of 'environmentalism of the poor' (e.g. Guha and Martínez-Alier, 1997) has been applied more frequently to convey a similar concern about environmental conflicts between communities, corporations and states. Nevertheless, examining the postcolonial settings from an anti-racism perspective, as demonstrated by Parajuli's work (1996), can foreground the social structures that embed environmental inequality and internal colonialism.

study of the relationship between man and nature, society and nature' (Hou, 1990: 158). As for the civil activism, the collectivist period (1956-1978) in communist China has witnessed, in the words of political scientist Peter Ho (2007: 192), an 'absence of civil society'. After that, a few social movements emerged from the late 1970s to the late 1990s; however, the protesters that took part in the mass-mobilisations 'have without exception been repressed and/or forced into exile' (Ho, 2007: 187-8). The coming paragraphs will briefly illustrate how the discursive power over 'the environment' was historically monopolised by the political leadership in China.

To study the nature-humanity relation in Chinese culture, the notion of *tiān* (sky, heaven) is closest to the meaning of 'god nature' (Weller, 2006). During the ancient Chinese dynasties, the Emperor of the country was referred to as '*tiān-zǐ*', which means 'the son of heaven', because the Emperor had the power to rule 'everything under the sky/heaven' (tiānxià).[28] In this system, the power of the Emperor is given by the *tiān*; in other words, the inherent force of nature was applied to endorse the dominators' power over people. Similarly, historian Mark Elvin (2006) has suggested that, throughout the modern history of China, 'nature' has been strategically deployed by Chinese politicians and modernisers. It is also argued by Elvin (2006) that the effects Chinese beliefs or perceptions had on maintaining the natural environment appeared to be relatively small when compared with the negative impacts caused due to the pursuit of power and profit upon nature by anthropogenic interactions. The experiences witnessed in the second half of the 20th century in China may serve as examples.

Since the 1950s, China has experienced the political propaganda, imposed by Mao Zedong, the first state leader of the People's Republic of China, of 'man can/must conquer nature' (réndìngshèngtiān: to improve the lives of the poor, nature should be defeated). As argued by political scientist Judith Shapiro (2001), as well as other scholars (Economy, 2011; Xu, 2007; Zhang, 2008), Mao's approach to the natural environment showed little respect towards nature as a life support system, and his attitude, which was rooted in his military mentality, has influenced China for decades (Shapiro, 2001). In reality, the idea of humanity's domination over nature was heard not only in China but also in the former Soviet Union simultaneously (Ho, 2001a). These

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[28] The concepts of *tiān-zǐ* and *tiānxià* can be traced back to the Zhou Dynasty (also translated as Chou Dynasty in some works), prior to 221 BC, and were used by subsequent Chinese emperors (Ching, 1997; Feng, 1983); scholars suggest that they provided an ideological foundation for the Chinese system of empire (Zhao, 2006).

countries' industrialism has its roots in Marxist-Leninist ideology, which considers that industrialisation creates the power base of the state and nature is subordinate to human beings and ought to be overcome through science and technology.

This was to some extent similar to the experiences of the colonies in regard to the alienation between nature and humanity, however, drawing on the ideology of 'struggle' in the case of China during the 1950s and early 1980s, nature was constructed as a barrier that limited human development. It was, therefore, described more as something that had to be overcome than a valuable resource (or commodity) for human advantage. For instance, during the Great Leap Forward campaign (1958-1961), the Chinese Communist Party under Mao's leadership promoted the idea of exploring and exploiting the environment in an exhaustive manner; the notion of overcoming natural limitations with human strength was represented in the slogan 'Explore the wasteland till the top of the hill' (Luo, 2001). The Great Leap Forward was followed by (and criticised as one crucial cause of) the great famine in the 1960s (Ding, 1996). In response to the famine, Mao announced the notion of 'Open the wilderness to plant grain'. This caused another disaster in terms of the deforestation in mountain areas. The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) brought about another trend, in terms of collectivisation of farmland and forests. In summary, the campaign of '*man can/must conquer nature*' has resulted in the abrogation of the human-nature connection and this is why Shapiro (2001) calls it a 'war' that set the two in opposition to each other. Moreover, as I will further elaborate in a later section, such an ideology not only caused damage to nature but also placed the mass population at a lower level of the socio-political hierarchy as an object to be made use of for state building.

During the first decades of China's post-Mao era, the effects of this ideology, man can/must conquer nature, remained and were reflected in the methods adopted for natural resource management. The state leadership still believed that environmental problems could be resolved by deploying enormous human effort. However, most of these attempts were not as successful as expected and one of the crucial reasons was, ironically, the suppression of the voices of the people. This governance approach has been criticised by Elizabeth C. Economy (2011: 56), a researcher on Chinese policy, who argued 'without the freedom to question scientific beliefs and practices and to

propose alternatives, the Chinese expert community was stifled in its ability to provide informed and useful analysis to the political elites'.

The Three Gorges Dam is one example of the huge constructions that symbolised the ideology of 'man can/must conquer nature' in China. Its construction began in 1994 by which time the problems of large-scale dam building had already invited reflections from a selection of scholars. In the 1980s, international organisations devoted to monitoring and fighting against large dam projects had been established and had gained increased attention. *The Social and Environmental Effects of Large Dams* published by Goldsmith and Hildyard (1984) was one product of that trend, as was the International Rivers Network founded in 1985, which gathered a following of several anti-dam activists and researchers internationally. The Save Narmada Movement of India was one milestone in the global-wide dynamic that led to the World Bank withdrawing its involvement in the project by 1995. Apparently, China was not one of the countries that slowed down its construction of dams. On the contrary, its decision to build the Three Gorges Dam invited many critiques from researchers and is recognised as an illustration of China's authoritarian and bureaucratic structure (Lieberthal and Oksenberg, 1988; McDonald, 2007). Its technical, financial, social and environmental failings were argued forth by a range of scholars before its construction, but their voices were either overruled or ignored, and silenced (McDonald, 2007; Shapiro, 2001). Anti-dam campaigns did not show obvious effects on official decision-making in China until the beginning of the 21st century.[29]

The ideology that set nature and human beings in opposition to each other was adjusted during the Chinese reform-era (from 1979 on) under the rule of Deng Xiaoping; yet then there was the tendency towards capitalisation and commodification. The notion of 'putting money above everything else' turned out to be the new catchphrase of the propaganda; however, it did not signify a break in exploiting environmental resources (Shapiro, 2001). Moreover, the economic reform did not bring about social reform. In the same year that the Save Narmada Movement was initiated in India – 1989 – China witnessed a crucial conflict between the people and the state authority during the Tiananmen Square protests. The military suppression of the demonstration has resulted

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[29] The Save the Nu River Movement is one example initiated in 2002. The project was 'paused' in 2004 by Wen Jiabao (the Premier of the State Council then); however, the government is attempting to restart it following the policy of promoting hydropower, mentioned in its *12th Five-Year Plan*.

in many intellectuals and ordinary Chinese people being silenced for daring to disagree with the political orthodoxy.

Together all the events discussed in this section reveal a part of the historical contexts of the two countries before the year 2000 and provide researchers with a lens through which to evaluate the formation and form of 'environmentalism' in both of them. Historian Richard Grove (1992) indicates that the encounters between the colonial empires and the colonies, such as India, have contributed to the evolution of environmentalism (in Western societies). Previous historical examples lead me to further suggest that the environmentalism, as well as other socio-political ideologies, in the post-colonial states, is an inter-construction of the forces of colonialist domination and anti-colonialist resistance. As implied by Parajail (1996), in the indigenous/environmental movements that have taken place in post-colonial India, the discourses applied to support the campaigns demonstrated, to some extent, criticisms and reflections on the colonial-style state-centred development paradigm.

To a certain degree, the independence experience of India has provided the foundation for the language of anti-colonialism and self-determination. In this context, indigenous rights and community autonomy have a greater degree of political correctness, even if they have not been more appreciated, in Indian society. This background, together with the critical approaches inspired by socialism or ecological Marxism among intellectuals, contributed to the relatively critical social atmosphere in India and provided a justification for environmental rights campaigns, especially those emphasising autonomous rights and community values. On the other hand, the establishment of the People's Republic of China was a result of a revolution in the name of the people's struggles. However, amid the tendency towards authoritarian communism, the result was a series of policies that turned their back on nature. During the state-enforced collectivisation campaigns, people's rights (to land and property) had been withdrawn.

While Indian society allowed space for the endorsement and diverse interpretations of the Chipko Movement and the NBA Movement by academic and civil society, the spirit of the 'people's struggle' in Chinese society was not realised in fighting for one's rights. Instead, this spirit of struggle was channelled by the discourse of a unified national identity and set in the frame of a 'nation-building' process; accordingly, there was a lack of narrative about community-based development. Voices concerned with personal

rights were faded out from the discourse about development and the environment. The Tiananmen event and the decision to build the Three Gorges Dam demonstrated the suppression of intellectuals/civil society (Ho, 2007; McDonald, 2007), and a monopolisation of power over the discourse. By censoring media contents, regulating academic discussions and restricting NGO activities and public gatherings (Geall, 2013a; Sleeboom-Faulkner, 2007; Spires, 2011), the authoritarian restrictions by the Chinese leadership on discursive constructions within society have remained an issue in the early 21st century.

Regional politics of development: comparing Jharkhand of India with Guizhou of China

When it comes to 'regional development', one important issue to be addressed is development justice, which can cause criticisms with regard to internal colonialism as hinted at in the previous section. Thus, a critical task of state leaders is to promote an inclusive national identity in order to mobilise local resources to join the state-building agendas. The embodiments of these inclusive discourses are the official schemes of regional development in each country. However, at the other end, many social realities reflect the outcome of exclusivity or marginalising mechanisms at the regional level.

Coal development in Jharkhand and Guizhou provides an example. In 2012, 28% of the coal resource of India was accounted for by Jharkhand – the largest coal producer among the states of the country,[30] however, it ranked 5th from bottom with regard to its per capita income among the 32 states and union territories.[31] At district level, Dhanbad, as the Coal Capital that accounts for more than 10% of the national coal extraction,[32] remains one of the relatively poorer districts of India.[33] As for the Chinese case, Guizhou ranked 4th in the production of raw coal among all Chinese provinces in 2012;[34] nevertheless, it had the lowest Gross National Income per capita in the

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[30] According to the *Indian Minerals Yearbook 2012*, produced by the Government of India, together with the Ministry of Mines and the Indian Bureau of Mines. Available at: http://ismenvis.nic.in/ Database/Indian_Minerals_Yearbook_2012_Vol-III_4734.aspx [Accessed 19 July 2015].
[31] The figures were released by the Government of India in December 2013. Available at: http://pib.nic.in/archieve/others/2013/dec/d2013121703.pdf [Accessed 19 July 2015].
[32] Dhanbad accounts for more than 40% of the coal extracted in Jharkhand (Bhushan and Hazra, 2008), while Jharkhand accounts for 28% of India's output, Dhanbad accounts for more than 10%.
[33] According to the Backward Regions Grant Fund. See: http://www.nird.org.in/brgf/aboutus.html [Accessed 19 July 2015].
[34] The rankings were announced by the China National Coal Association in 2013.

country.[35] At county level, Panxian was one of the top fifteen counties nationwide in terms of the production of raw coal in 2012,[36] and the main coal company of Panxian is on the list of the top 500 businesses of China.[37] However, at the same time, Panxian is recognised as one of the 'national-level poverty-stricken counties'.[38]

Basic statistical data supports the statement that marginalisation has happened in the regions of both of my case studies. However, some clues hint at the fact that state-region relations appear to be different in the two regions, and these differences have caused the ordinary people in the regions to respond in different ways to the environmental degradation that has come along with 'development'.

Jharkhand has the largest coal deposits in India together with various other mineral resources. Throughout its development history, evidence of ethnic division and social stratification is easy to find and this can be traced back to even before the colonial era. 'The history of the Indian coalfield was determined by the zamindars, feudal lords who controlled land and labour and held the sub-soil rights of the region, and by the British managing agencies which extended their operations to this area' (Rothermund and Wadhwa, 1978: xv). Many would argue that colonialism has never been absent in the Indian subcontinent, especially in tribal areas such as Jharkhand (Corbridge, 2002; Devalle, 1992; Jewitt, 2004). As pointed out by historian Vinita Damodaran (1998: 856):

> The waves of Hindu and Muslim migration in the medieval period had already seen the gradual alienation of tribal lands and the growth of a new landlord and moneylending class. This process was hastened dramatically with the advent of the British. Landlords and moneylenders were then able to strengthen their position by using the new institutions of the colonial state, particularly the police and the courts, to dispossess the tribal groups and finally to oust them from their lands.

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http://www.coalchina.org.cn/detail/13/09/25/00000033/content.html?path=13/09/25/00000033 [Accessed 19 July 2015].

[35] According to the *China National Human Development Report 2013*, a collaboration between UNDP China and the Institute for Urban and Environmental Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Available at: http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/sustainable-and-liveable-cities-toward-ecological-civilization [Accessed 19 July 2015].

[36] See Footnote 34.

[37] The Guizhou Panjian Refined Coal Co., Ltd was ranked 469 on the list of *Top 500 Chinese Enterprises in 2013* published by the Fortune Magazine. Available at: http://www.fortunechina.com/fortune500/c/2013-07/16/2013C500.htm [Accessed 19 July 2015].

[38] The list of Poverty Alleviation and Development was announced by the State Council of the People's Republic of China in 2012. Available at: http://www.cpad.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/FPB/fpqy/201203/175445.html [Accessed 19 July 2015].

In a quote mentioned in a study on India's ethnic conflict issue, a tribal member of the Bihar Legislative Assembly also described the situation in this way: 'All our problems come from colonization. … The British were here for a hundred and eighty years, before them Muslims for seven hundred years, and before them the Hindus for a thousand years' (Weiner, 1978: 157). Tribal lands came under the control of outsiders, and the British colonial state aided the dispossession.

After the British colonisers left, the most resourceful of the national elites occupied the dominant positions of policy making – just as the landlords remained the dominators of the tenants of the region – thereby constructing a neo-colony (Fanon, 2004). In post-colonial India, the idea of colonialism was re-enacted and reinforced through forest policies, land acquisitions and resource distributions (Corbridge, 1991; Jewitt, 2004), which in turn were enforced by both the immigrant investors and new dominators of the native peoples. This might explain the reason why anti-colonialism became a key theme of the campaigning discourses in Jharkhand. In the words of a socio-political activist in Jharkhand:

> 100% of the issues concerned with land rights in Jharkhand are connected with tribal peoples. It is a question of colonisation. It is a question of powerful people, maybe from the majority, who have the political and economic and state power … [who] were using their power to subjugate another group of people, who were denied power.

The *adivasis* in north India have fought for their land over the centuries, it was relatively late that these campaigning activities were linked with the discourses of indigenous rights and environmentalism.

To study the development of modern Jharkhand, one event that should not be ignored is its independence from Bihar, which occurred in 2000. This was the result of a series of political campaigns; however, it revealed the relation between the centre and the regions in terms of how the state government gave space to the locals to debate their regional identity, question resource distribution and demand self-determination. When I asked people what they knew about the independence struggle, here is one example from the answers I received from college students in Ranchi (the capital of Jharkhand after its independence): 'Jharkhand was the most productive area within Bihar, but a relatively less developed region in terms of public construction. As we know, most of the revenue was spent mainly in Patna (the capital of Bihar) but not here'. However, even after

independence, the social hierarchy did not change the understanding of the locals very much. The conditions of the Jharkhand State might have improved, yet the marginalisation of the indigenous people remained just as bad, if not worse than before. To achieve independence, campaigners and politicians at the time mobilised the residents of Jharkhand with discourses that evoked the people's identity. Many of the residents were the *adivasis* and they gave their support to the independence movement. However, a few months after independence, the *adivasi* communities suffered violent repression from the Jharkhand police force during their land rights campaigns against outside investments. Criticisms regarding the 'betrayal' by politicians can be heard in the ongoing *adivasi* campaigns, as I learned through my informants who took part in these movements.

Unsurprisingly, regional development tends to copy the established social structure from well-developed settings, which is then applied to other settings. What happened after the 1950s was that thousands of acres of *adivasi* land were lost to new industries along with the rapid growth of immigration (Damodaran, 2006; Parajuli, 1996); a similar scenario happened by the time Jharkhand gained independence from Bihar. The new dominators took over power, retained the hierarchical structure and reinforced the governance technique that alienated *adivasis* and native communities from their land. As argued by a resident of Ranchi (Rakesh, 20s, male):

> Before the independence of Jharkhand, more than 80% of the people here were *adivasis*. Today, it might be less than 40%. By the time of independence, people out there realised that there would be benefits in terms of economic opportunities that would come along with independence. So a lot of immigrants moved into Jharkhand who are not the indigenous; they are the comparatively rich people, people with money, businessmen or politicians.

As part of the process of gentrification, these economic immigrants turned out to be new dominators; they enforced their rules – market-based mechanisms – over *adivasis* and reinforced the social divisions. Despite the fact that the timing and numbers presented in Rakesh's narrative may not concur with the historical record, the narrative reflects the continuous anxiety of the local communities regarding the immigration of dominating elites and harassment by landlords and moneylenders. At the same time, Rakesh's opinion demonstrates the concerns about the value of 'the sons of the soil'. Similar criticisms, and the emphasis on locality, were noticed among the narratives given by several activists (despite the fact that there might be no significant outcome that can

alter the ongoing trend). Economic exclusion reinforced the marginalisation of the indigenous people and the forced migration has resulted in their 'cultural genocide', to quote a term used by a respondent (Jarvis, activist):

> Today, many tribes have cell phones. Before, they had nothing. I mean, people will say they have benefited. …Their [traditional] economic activities are minimal because they never create 'surpluses' … and in mainstream Indian Hindu culture, profit is God, money is God.

Tracing the trajectory of these happenings, it is understandable that in the local campaigns there are land-rights appeals, environmental and cultural concerns of the indigenous communities, as well as political appeals. In a documentary record of the *adivasi* campaigns (Prakash, 2012), one interviewee said, 'We are also citizens of India; the *Constitution* applies to us too. Fine, if you don't want to help us in any form, give us independence, we will run our lives in our own way'. To put this in the context of Jharkhand's independence in 2000, many of those who took part in the independence campaign had already been, and are still fighting for the *adivasis'* rights. In other words, the success of the independence movement was achieved by a range of activists, including those concerned about indigenous rights alongside other political issues. As pointed out by Corbridge (2004), both the ideology that emphasises the value of 'the sons of the soil' and the anti-(internal-)colonialism perspective can be recognised as being used to support the Jharkhand independence movement. Therefore, these concepts/perspectives are – unsurprisingly – well acknowledged amongst the activists and remain empowering to their ongoing movements within different interest groups. Furthermore, to consider the situation in the historical context of India, the self-determination ideology has its roots in the anti-colonial experience and has been developed over generations.

To provide a contrast, it is important to ask: what happened in Guizhou during 2000? In 2000, the Chinese government announced a development scheme called the *Great Development of Western China* policy; Guizhou is one of the 11 provinces covered by the scheme. According to the official statement, the purpose of this policy was to 'use the surplus economic development capability of the Eastern coastal regions to enhance the economic and social standards of the Western regions and stabilise the national defence'. However, after a decade, Guizhou, together with most of the Western provinces, remains one of the poorest provinces of China in terms of GNI per capita as

well as by the Human Development Index.[39] An activist based in Yunnan Province (which also belongs to the 'Western' regions under the scheme) argued that the policy has widened the gap between the core and periphery rather than narrowing it:

> Governmental policy for the 'Great Development' has led to a great 'resource curse' for Western China. It gives, on the one hand, permission to corporations to grab natural resources in the Western regions, while serving as an excuse for polluting industries located along the coast or in the East to relocate to the West.

Similar to Jharkhand, Guizhou has historically been experiencing (inner-)colonisation in terms of the exploitation and exportation of raw materials. The extension of Chinese imperial domination of the region can be traced back to the 17th century (Elvin, 2006). Over the centuries, Guizhou has witnessed exhaustive cultural assimilation imposed through various means, including extreme episodes such as genocide, which happened several times during the Qing Dynasty, and gradual events such as official immigration schemes (that can be traced back to the Ming Dynasty) and public education enforcement (Fan, 1993; Li et al., 1998). Elvin (2006) suggested that the dominating structure ruled over by the Han Chinese has come to be quite stable in modern China. In fact, throughout history, the imperial rulers of the Chinese continent were not always Han Chinese; for example, the Qing Dynasty was dominated by the Manchu (also called Man) ethnic group based primarily in northeast China. However, the ideology of integrating the continent as a unified nation-state has constantly been emphasised (Ching, 1997; Lal, 1995; Zhao, 2006), which may partly explain why the assimilation and anti-separatism policy has been achieved to such an extent in modern China.

Regarding the regional governance, throughout the development history of modern China, the regions of Guizhou and Yunnan have been mobilised to join the national development plans with master policies such as the '*Third-Tier City Construction*' (begun in the 1960s) and the '*Great Development of Western China*' (announced in 2000). Their coal and other mineral resources are recognised as crucial supplies for the country. In the latest (12th) *Five-Year Plan* of national development, announced in 2012, the functionalist perspective that always lies in the core-periphery model remains and is even stated literally, in the notion of 'Major Function-oriented Zones'. Although the Plan claims that sustainable development is its ultimate goal (Fan et al., 2012) and requires each region to achieve certain ecological functions or carbon emission controls,

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[39] See Footnote 35.

this is still with the precondition that certain zones have their operational role in providing raw materials or energy for national growth.

This functionalism is reflected in the state-region relationship, as well as in how the state considers environmental governance. Political scientist Bruce Gilley (2012) uses climate change as an example to argue that it is the development agency (the National Development and Reform Commission) rather than the environmental agency (the Ministry of Environmental Protection) that is leading the formulation of climate change policy in China. Accordingly, such a fact has resulted in an emphasis on economic goals rather than on environmental sustainability (Gilley, 2012). Thus, in spite of the consultants of the Major Function-oriented Zones policy claiming that its intention is to increase sustainability (Fan et al., 2012), its practical effect in improving regional environmental performance is doubtful. 'Sustainability' as a motto, might be considered by the leadership as a matter of international diplomacy, as observed by Gilley (2012), and this could give way to GDP growth if necessary. This doubt is based on other studies and my field observations. As pointed out by Zhang and Barr (2013) in their book on Chinese environmental politics, local businesses are framed by the administrative structure in terms of their '(political) achievements' (zhèngjì) as requested by local officials, which to a great extent are evaluated by economic growth. Even though they have the aspiration to introduce environmentally-oriented innovations, their decisions are ruled/limited by the official regulations.

For the ordinary people I encountered in the Coal Capital in Guizhou, their ideas about local development refer also, to a great extent, to the policy announced by the state authorities.

> For investors, even small businessmen like us, we will consider the state policy before making our decision. The power of state policy always speaks louder than the provincial ones, because the provincial leaders may change every few years. … That's why the state policy is important. And even the provincial leaders will refer to or follow the central policy considering their political careers (Gongming, 30s, male).

In 2012, after the *12th Five-Year Plan* was issued, the Chinese central government announced a document that focused especially on Guizhou, named the *No.2 Document of the State Council*. Local businessmen expressed their thoughts on it: 'finally our province [Guizhou] receives some attention from the state leaders' (Hongda, 30s, male).

This is neither to argue that all actors in Jharkhand are holding a critical viewpoint and are ready to challenge the state policy or any dominating power, nor to hint that Chinese ordinary people are ignorant due to obscurantism. Instead, with the comparison I am presenting the difference lies in the languages of development. The condition to a certain extent reveals that, corresponding to what was brought out in the first section, Indian society, compared to Chinese society, has some relatively well-established discourses which are ready to be applied by social actors to pose critiques against socio-environmental injustice and in favour of demands for self-determination. In the Chinese scenario, the notion of self-determination or self-governance is lacking; to put it in another way, the language of unified national identity is relatively well-constructed in Chinese society. While historical collective experience has an effect on constructing national identity, language also plays an important functional role in including regions in the centralised discourse of development.

Language, as argued by social scientist Benedict Anderson (2006), is an effective tool that helps the authorities to construct a particular nationalism and imagine a 'nation', especially the national print-language whose power of centralisation has been enlarged as the technology of communications (for example, the medium of print) has progressed. Anderson goes on to argue that, '… from the start the nation was conceived in language, not in blood, and that one could be "invited into" the imagined community' (2006: 149-150). Language is an instrument of inclusion. Anderson proposes English in India as one example to support this argument and implies that as long as radical India speaks English, English is to a certain extent the medium through which India is imagined. To further the argument, since modern India maintains its multilingualism, it allows space for multiple identities and prevents the construction of a centralised unified nationalism. Admittedly, the decentralisation tendency also reflects the historical condition that the Indian subcontinent contains numerous self-sufficient communities and was regionally fragmented before it was encompassed under British Imperial rule (Lal, 1995).

On the other hand, the Chinese continent has a history of being politically controlled by certain absolutist authorities in a more centralised manner (Elvin, 2006; Lal, 1995; Shabad, 1972); this has been reinforced continuously in the 20th century through the language policy and education reform (Aziz, 1978; Li et al., 2004; Price, 1979). While the Peking (Beijing) dialect was constructed as the only 'national language' across the

country, the other languages were all sub-categorised as 'dialects'. This reveals that the Chinese state authority is reinforcing its dominating power, and that tendency is also reflected in the fact that it keeps claiming the country is unified regardless of its multi-ethnic nature. According to the most up-to-date national surveys (2010 for China and 2011 for India), the adult literacy rate in Guizhou is 91% (while for Jharkhand it is 67.63%). More importantly, these 91% have all learned the same national print-language in China. Sociologist Jonathan Unger's (2002) empirical studies in the southwest China illustrate a similar scenario, which suggest that most of the ethnic people are becoming acculturated to the Han customs and are gradually losing their own cultural and language identity.

As argued by Anderson (2006), such a condition laid the basis for a national consciousness. The unified language created fields of exchange and communication, so that people became capable of comprehending one another and felt as if they belonged. At the same time, it reinforced the administrative power of language that was reflected in the propaganda from the government in promoting policies and in the adoption of these messages by the public. The influence of the propaganda that enforced a unified consciousness in shaping the individual sense of a national identity could still be perceived, especially among the senior generation. One of my interviewees expressed his faith in the '(imagined) community' in the interview: 'there is no difference among the various places as long as that is found within the Motherland'. This example illustrates an imagination of a unified 'Motherland' that generalises the continent of China. It is different from the idea of 'the sons of the soil' that emphasises the origin and belongingness of different (cultural) communities and their attachment to a specific area of land, which was often referred to in the Indian context.

Ideological constructions: the ethic of *tiān* and the value of land

The events discussed above, at the national and regional levels, are the relatively well-studied discourses and events. In this section, I will introduce the materials collected in my fieldwork in response to the mainstream discourses – these are the stories of the ordinary people. While the government leaders justify the official development agendas with the discourse of 'inclusive development', when it comes to land acquisition, the locals experience an exclusive mechanism that prevents them from benefiting from the

development plans. In relation to this, I include the narratives/expressions shared by the ordinary people to enrich the analyses regarding the ideological factors that either facilitate campaigns to grow or dissolve people's attempts to have some power.

The previous section reviewed some statistical data to evidence the imbalance between resource exporting and the relatively poor living standards in the regions of the two Coal Capitals. Although their coal industries have achieved a critical proportion of the national requirement, the trickle-down effect is not significant. Even worse, in some cases the local people have encountered a centrifugal mechanism. The land issue is a critical example of the conflict between the interests of the state and those of ordinary people. When the government enforces the nationalisation of mineral deposits and applies the doctrine of 'eminent domain' to access the mines, this leads unavoidably to a striving for the land and the coal it contains. When there are land acquisitions or relative debates on proprietorship, individuals suffer their losses under the framework of 'national development'.

At certain stages throughout history, people have been mobilised and local resources have been utilised to help in nation building. As the coal industry developed over the course of Chinese history, privately run small coal mines (SCMs) experienced two peaks (Shen and Andrews-Speed, 2001). One was in 1985, when SCMs were responsible for one third of the national coal output as a result of their response to a call made by the former Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang. The theme of the call was 'state-operated, collectively-operated, and privately-operated enterprises must move forward together'. The second peak occurred from 1992 to 1995, following Deng Xiaoping's 'Southern Inspection Tour' and his speech of encouragement delivered during the tour in 1992.[40] Accordingly, 1985 to 1994 marked a boom, a period in which villagers could make money easily. Small-scale businesses sprang up everywhere. People in the villages had an expression which ran, 'You could make money just walking around. Money was there to be made'. Both pride and sadness could be sensed when listening to the villagers recalling that period. The sadness stemmed from the fact that the policy was changed in the late 1990s. The Party introduced a closure policy and rescinded permission to private SCMs to mine without a licence.

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[40] The speech is available at: http://cpc.people.com.cn/BIG5/33837/2535034.html [Accessed 19 July 2015].

According to the interviewees, this policy was enforced suddenly. Within a few years, plenty of families who used to earn from the coal in their land lost their legal source of income. Villagers found there was no space for negotiation.

> Once state policy is enforced, people cannot argue. …We didn't have a licence. Officials came with the explosives and checked around; if one dared to open the coal site again, the government would soon come to know, they would catch you and bomb it (Fanling, 30s, female).

People had to follow the regulation and shut down the mines, even those on the land in their backyards. Researchers (Shen and Andrews-Speed, 2001) point out that the tightening of this policy corresponded with the time when coal production in China had met its market demand. State leaders applied the licence system to slow down 'mobilisation' and control production in order to safeguard the profits of state-owned businesses.

Why was there no campaign to challenge the official agenda that harmed people's livelihoods and to appeal for environmental and developmental justice? There was one catchphrase that I heard commonly amongst the ordinary people in the village: 'Humans should not fight against heaven (tiān), people should not fight against mandarin, privately-owned businesses should not fight against state-owned businesses'. I heard this saying in an interview with a family living by a proposed construction site for a coal washing plant. The site did not overlap with their land, so there was no deal available in terms of replacement in their case, even though their house was less than 50 metres from the site and the impact of the pollution was predictable. 'We can do nothing until it starts operation and the pollution becomes evident. Maybe by that time we can argue for some compensation', said a member of the family. Although it was a privately owned project, in the understanding of the villagers, as long as an investment is permitted it is backed up by the official force and 'people should not fight against mandarin'.

A similar attitude was observed in stories shared by other informants, whether in relation to land acquisition for road widening to enhance coal transportation, replacement for coal exploration, or damage to houses caused by land subsidence due to mining. In all of these cases, the villagers took a passive position until the conflicts came to light and then they appealed to the village administrative office for a settlement. This condition reflects the traditional Chinese philosophy with its tendency towards

moderation and adaption in response to the inherent force, for example, in terms of 'harmony between the heaven and mankind' (tiān rén hé yī) (Shapiro, 2001; Weller, 2006) or 'obey the power of heaven and work in concert with destiny' (shùn tiān yìng mín). However, this ethic seems to be very different from the struggle-oriented philosophy 'man can/must conquer nature' that was promoted by the leadership when establishing modern China. How can we understand the gap between the official propaganda and the narratives shared among ordinary people?

My experience in rural Guizhou reveals that people still hold a harmonious attitude when faced with environmental problems (that are usually categorised as 'public' issues) and this attitude is represented in the form of obedience to the power of heaven/nature. Another folk saying regarding the environment that I learned during my fieldwork was: 'Human's work cannot compete with nature's work, as the grain will get mature at the same time no matter whether it's planted earlier or later'. On the one hand this shows the tendency to rely on natural power, while on the other hand it shows the passive attitude towards achieving a change with the human arm. Furthermore, while this harmonious attitude towards nature remains in contemporary Chinese culture – in spite of the ideological revaluation led by the authoritarian state leaders – at the same time the linkage between *tiān*/nature and the political leadership also continues. Thus, the inactivity and powerlessness can be sensed in their responses to official decisions.

One key theme that must be evaluated is how Chinese development agendas mobilise natural resources to promote industrialisation and modernisation while on the other hand they de-mobilise the people. In particular, the development discourse emphasises the force of moving forwards or progressing and involving natural resources; however, it disempowers the ordinary people from moving forwards – it silences the public voice, breaks *laobaixing's* accessibility to natural resources and makes some of them feel that they have been left behind. The ideology of 'man can/must conquer nature' emphasises the battle between humans and the difficult environment; however, despite the fact that great harm to the environment in China was realised, at the same time it failed to empower the poor in their struggle for rights.

From my observations, in the idea of 'man can/must conquer nature', the 'man' indicates the mandarins and the political leaders. It is the political leaders who have the power to deliver narratives regarding environment-development agendas and distribute

natural resources. The 'man' in this context does not include those ordinary people who actually live with nature and whose livelihoods are influenced by the environment in a relatively direct manner. While the authorities hold the belief that 'man can/must conquer nature', on the people's side there is more of an identification with the concept of, 'Humans should not fight against heaven (tiān)'. While the social hierarchy has constantly been a debatable issue in Indian society, there is also – in the understanding of the people – a socio-political hierarchy in Chinese society. Although the modern Chinese revolution has notionally overthrown imperialism, the connection between *tiān* and the rulers remains, as does the belief in, and obedience towards, the 'inherent force'. Several issues could be identified here. First, the idea of hierarchy remains from the viewpoint of the people. The hierarchy, as a mixture of an official motto and folk ethic, is interpreted among the public as: the political elite, followed by the environment, and after that the ordinary people. Within such a hierarchy, ordinary people's rights have to be sacrificed for the interests of national development. Under the official propaganda and with coercion, natural resources are mobilised to serve the purpose of national development, which is something arranged and controlled by the political dominators rather than serving the needs of the people. Second, the modern officials are still called 'mandarins' in the spoken language, and the inherent force of heaven towards human beings is used as a metaphor to illustrate that the power of the political authorities overrides the rights of ordinary people. Third, the hierarchy is acknowledged in both the political and economic spheres; it could be argued that the two are highly indivisible in contemporary Chinese society and that political privilege can determine economic privilege.

It would be wrong to expect that ordinary Chinese people are ignorant about public policy. In fact, my fieldwork experiences show that some of the Chinese peasants are quite aware of certain official schemes; for example, the micro credit and living allowances for senior citizens. The extent of their awareness may partly be based on the presence of the governmental force in their daily lives. Take the power supply as an example. The power supply system in *Weilongcun*, the Chinese village where I stayed during my fieldwork, is quite stable. It is a totally official business; every month the cadre who represents the village unit will collect the charges door-to-door. The administrative arm of the government is quite visible and concrete even in the remote areas. Besides the power services, it is also present in many other forms. Their

experiences of the government prohibiting unlicensed coal mines, as discussed earlier, is one example. Another illustration lies in how the one-child policy was enforced. Villagers told me that cadres would visit the family and urge the woman to have the operation done within a few months of the childbirth.

My field experiences, in some ways correspond to the statement made by Philip Huang (1993): the rural administration illustrates the pervasive and intrusive network of state power. It was established during the state-making process of modern China and extended downwards to commune level and village level during the decades of despotic ruling. Huang's description was made for China in the last century. In my observation, at present, in spite of the centralised power easing, or losing its justification as the civil society gradually becomes active, some ordinary people in the remote areas still hold an image of an absolute centralised power or, the cadres maintain their role as the agency of an unquestioned authority in order to maintain their influence. The authoritarian discourse of 'struggle' does not cause empowerment on the people's side. Even thought there was a radical revolution that caused an exhaustive transformation in China (Moore, 1967; White et al., 1996), the social realities, in my case study, seem to reflect that the ideology of harmony and obedience remains. Meanwhile, some of the ordinary people more or less still link the power of authority to the unquestioned inherent power of nature.

In the Indian case, the anti-colonisation discourse does enrich and empower the weak to take action to campaign and form diverse discourses; however, does it ease the distributive injustice that is happening? Following the trajectory of the ecological history of India, contemporary rural Jharkhand, during my fieldwork period, witnessed campaigns against river pollution, land acquisition and the *adivasi* community displacement. At the same time, modern environmental governance approaches have been proposed by the coal industries as well, according to my interviewees who worked in the environmental department of the coal company in the region.

However, awareness about, and implementation of, rural development schemes are criticised for being quite problematic in Indian villages. Many non-governmental organisations or social workers are devoted to promoting governmental schemes, such

as the NREGA[41] or 'Mid-Day Meal'; some activists provide health care in the villages voluntarily. The family that hosted me during my fieldwork was trying to make an agreement with all of the households in the area to set up an electric pole in their village to improve the stability of the existing power grid. Interestingly, although the power service is usually considered as a public service, in the Indian case, I found that people can (and have to) take the initiative non-governmentally to improve the condition of this service. This is an obvious example that demonstrates the idea of self-governance in decision-making and action-taking; yet this is a case of middle class actors. When it comes to the more marginalised communities – some *adivasi* groups for example – the exercise of the right of self-governance is not so achievable.

In *adivasi* movements, indigenous people often claim their justification for self-determination with slogans emphasising the undividable relation between human beings and nature. 'The water, land and forests are ours, you cannot rule over us'; 'We would rather die than give our land'. This saying reveals that nature is seen as an extension of their life, or vice versa. In contrast with the belief of the power of *tiān* out there, these slogans reflect the Indian concept of 'sons of the soil', which conveys the idea of collective rights of certain ethnic groups over their territories (Weiner, 1978). I heard a story from the *adivasis*, which is shared among their community. When a senior member of the family dies, the body is buried in the land and one piece of stone is settled above it. Therefore, by counting the numbers of the standing stones, people come to know that their ancients have been living there for several hundreds of years. In the *adivasis'* traditional belief, the spirit of the ancients becomes part of nature and this is one of the reasons why they consider the land to be an element of their life that should be carried on from generation to generation. This traditional belief forms the base of the value of the sons of the soil and provides ideological support for indigenous communities to fight for participation in the development. This explains why, in many cases, these campaigns are initiated by *adivasis*, who ethnologists believe are the descendants of the Indian subcontinent's original population; with 'animistic' religious philosophies, these communities adequately represent the concept of sons of the soil (Weiner, 1978). Within such a mindset, the legal regulation that mentions the local indigenous communities' rights to forest management or the rights of indigenous

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[41] NREGA, also known as MGNREGA, is an abbreviation for the *Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (2005)*, an Indian law that aims to guarantee the rural population's right to work.

peoples declared by the United Nations seem to be references (added by outsiders) that provide a supplementary explanation of the reality; meanwhile their environmental rights are natural rights and justify themselves.

As elaborated by historians and geographers (Corbridge, 2002; Damodaran, 2006; Devalle, 1992; Jewitt, 2004), the indigenous consciousness and the link between tribes and territory in Jharkhand was a historical construction and has been fuelled by different discourses during the 19th and 20th century to serve the purpose of several political or social campaigns. For instance, the global environmentalism discourse has been associated with *adivasis'* right to forest in support of Jharkhand's separatist movement in the 20th century. It is worth noting that, the community spirit of the sons of the soil reflected actually more the cultural and language identity than the blood and ethnic aspect, and thus the value of the sons of the soil was a concern not only of *adivasis*, but also of the ordinary Jharkhand people – as exemplified in the previous section when the residents of Ranchi shared their opinions with me about why they should gain independence from Bihar.

The concept of the 'sons of the soil' – which concerns the differences between members of different territories, or of ethnic or cultural groups – is dissimilar to the notion of 'everything under the sky/heaven' (tiānxià), which promotes homogeneity among the *laobaixing*. As a consequence, in contrast to China, the Indian scenario reveals several critical notions with concerns of belongingness and the spirit of resistance, such as indigenous land rights, reflective ideas about civil rights, and an alternative approach of self-governance.

However, similar to the description made by Elvin (2006) of how the indigenous Miao ethnics in Guizhou were assimilated by Chinese Han culture, the animistic worldview cannot forever resist the pressures of assimilation and modernisation. Features of the indigenous subcultures could leave them vulnerable when they come into contact with market liberalisation. One Indian journalist shared with me an experience that happened to him in 2008. An *adivasi* woman was tempted to accept compensation to leave her land. For several acres of land, the company offered two lakhs (around $3600) – that appeared to be a massive sum of money for her since the biggest amount of money she had ever seen was 50 rupees (around $1). In the absence of cultural assimilation by means of public education, it is difficult for remote indigenous individuals to negotiate

with regard to development projects. *Adivasis* traditionally value land in a different way than capitalist investors. An economist based in Jharkhand who had supported environmental campaigns for more than 10 years, expressed his opinion on the gap between the two different value systems during the interview:

> The market came only after the industries came. Before that, there was no market. So, how do people value the land? Should it be valued for how many years? … These fields might have existed for 200 years and might exist for another 200 years. Why are you valuing it for only 10 or 50 years? So what is the evaluation? There are economic evaluations and there are non-economic evaluations. How do you measure the non-economic ones?

The discourses shared by the elite civil activists that criticise colonialism and claim the rights to self-determination for the *adivasi* communities, on the one hand provide ideological support for indigenous movements. However, on the other hand, the tendency towards oriental imaging and romanticism can be sensed in how the indigenous culture is described as 'never creating surpluses' and cherishing the value of nature in a non-economic manner. These kinds of descriptions might slowly lose their explanatory value in reflecting the realities. When the *adivasi* subculture loses its animistic aura, the linkage between the preservation of indigenous cultures and environmental conservation might become questionable. Such concern increases the importance of further discussing the debate on participatory development, which will be elaborated on in the next chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter intended to evaluate how the environment-development agenda influenced ordinary people and how its impacts were represented. The first section of this chapter discussed historical events in relation to deforestation and dam construction. The contrast between the two countries revealed that environmental activists in Indian society, in supporting contemporary popular campaigns, make reference to the critical ideology that was established earlier when combating the colonial empire. Although the discourse that links the poor and nature on the one hand represents environmental movements as having socialist tendencies, on the other hand, it provides endorsement to the later movements (e.g. the *adivasi* land-rights campaigns in rural Jharkhand today) and enlarges the network of actors involved. In China case, the political authority enforced the ideology of exploiting nature in the name of fulfilling the people's

requirements. Critics argue that it was undertaken to fulfil the needs of the nation state under the domination of the Party leaders. Deforestation and dam construction were enforced extensively with little reflection on the social and environmental impact, as the voices of intellectuals and the public were silenced.

The second section of this chapter was concerned with regional politics in the two countries, especially in Jharkhand and Guizhou. I argued that anti-colonialist ideology in India has resulted in the political concept of self-determination that is commonly applied among the activists in Jharkhand. However, in Guizhou the ordinary people tend to regard authoritarian policies as guideline for regional development. The difference between the two is partly a product of India's (anti-)colonial experience, but it is also partly due to the effect of language unification in China, together with their difference in socio-political politics. As argued previously, applying Anderson's (2006) theory about nationalism and the politics of language, the Chinese unified national language – imposed through public education – together with its high-handed governance, has successfully unified its identity towards a more centralised authority. In the Indian case, however, the debating space has been left open for the public to claim their right to self-governance. Its multilingualism, together with its fragmentary origin, have allowed the regional communities more critical abilities when considering the centre-region relationship as a questionable dominating construction.

Finally, both historical and cultural political factors have influenced personal understandings and actions. Ordinary Chinese people still have faith in the power of *tiān*, and more or less associate state leaders with this natural power. Thus, in response to the environmental problems caused by development agendas issued by the official authorities, they tend to obey and raise complaints responsively only after the pollution or harm is evidenced. The Chinese *laobaixing* in this study consider their 'rights' as endowed and protected by political authority. On the other hand, in the Indian case, especially with regard to the indigenous communities, their environmental rights are given by heaven/nature, naturally. The *adivasi* ethic and the concept of the sons of the soil make them feel protected by nature and at the same time these aspects make them the protectors who have the right to speak for the environment. This is based on, and enforces, the idea of self-determination of local resources and development governance.

These factors allow us to understand why more campaigns are visible in India, in many cases in a predictive manner, while in China few widespread actions come to light. My writing has no intention of arguing that Chinese people are ignorant or satisfied with their existing condition; rather, the literature and case study suggest that they are discouraged, and sometimes blocked or even forbidden, from challenging the authoritarian agendas and expressing suspicions regarding the later outcome before it occurs. As for the case of India, the absence of high-handed authorities has allowed activists to deploy metaphors and discourses in connection with the environment and speak out for their rights. In sum, the Chinese pattern of development shows more intention of involving or homogenising the public with the centralised government power; meanwhile, the Indian pattern allows for more diversity, and as a result, social exclusion might be more apparent. Indian society allows more active participation; however the bottom-up movements might be initiated or mobilised by educated urban elites rather than the lower classes. The possibilities and limitations of participatory development and the different formations of environmentalism will be elaborated particularly in Chapters 4 and 6.

Chapter 4: Who speaks for the environment, how and why? Interpretations of environmentalism by the ordinary people

Introduction: the environment and environmentalism at the source end of coal

Previous chapters have shed light on the argument that an authoritarian leadership which gives minimal consideration to developing people's rights and environmental awareness might discourage the formation of popular environmentalism while the effectiveness of state environmentalism remains limited. To better examine the influences of the bottom-up and top-down dynamics that might motivate the formulation of people's environmentalism, I conducted fieldwork in rural China and India during 2011 and 2012 to learn from the voices of ordinary people. The discussions in this chapter are primarily based on my anthropological observations and interviews in coal villages of the two countries.

My informants (more than 30 in each case) were those who lived/worked in the areas of my survey, including coal miners, shop keepers, social workers and activists. Additionally, I interviewed several environmental NGO members and activists outside of coal villages; their opinions will be introduced at times to support my arguments in this chapter. In some discussions, I will make a distinction between 'elite' activists and common people or activists of the native communities – by elite I mean those that had 'urban, educated, middle-class backgrounds' (Shah, 2010: 184). The distinction was out of the concern that, as observed by anthropologist Alpa Shah (2010) in rural Jharkhand, the elite activists' visions and values might be very different from that of the local communities. Since my study is about the variety of environmentalism discourses, this distinction provides a lens to assess 'who is speaking for the environment with whose language' in different cases. However, to my knowledge, there was a lack of environmental activists working in the region of my Chinese case study; thus, the distinction between languages of elites and common people may not be addressed as a significant topic here.

Regarding the areas of survey, my main field site in China was the area surrounding the *Weilongcun* Village, administratively belonging to the 'Coal Capital of Southern China' – Panxian County of Guizhou. The Indian one was the region with *Navadih* Village as

the centre, in Dhanbad District of Jharkhand, also known as the 'Coal Capital of India'. While the appellation 'Coal Capital' illustrates a functionalist approach held by policy makers, in practice, the coal in the land, industrialisation and modernisation of coal industry have affected the local economy and people's living in a direct manner. As shown in the Map 4.1 and Map 4.2 (and the photos attached), in each of the areas of 120 square kilometres,[42] there were several coal-related industries, such as coking plants or coal-washing plants. Consequently, environmental problems such as landslides, air and water pollution were observed in both areas.
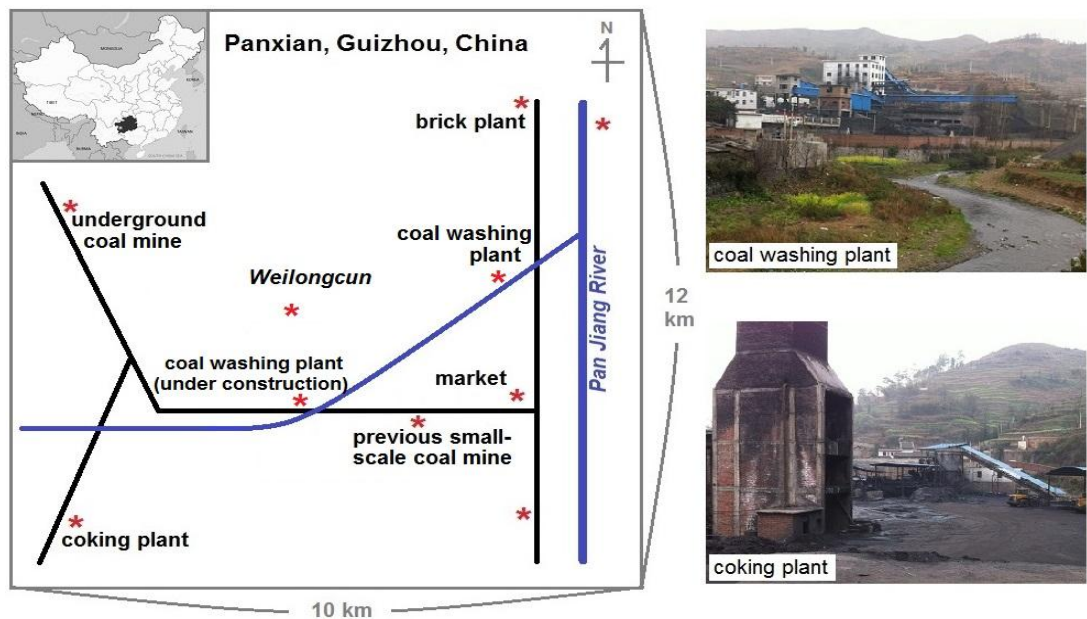
Map 4.1 The area around the Weilongcun in Panxian, Guizhou, China
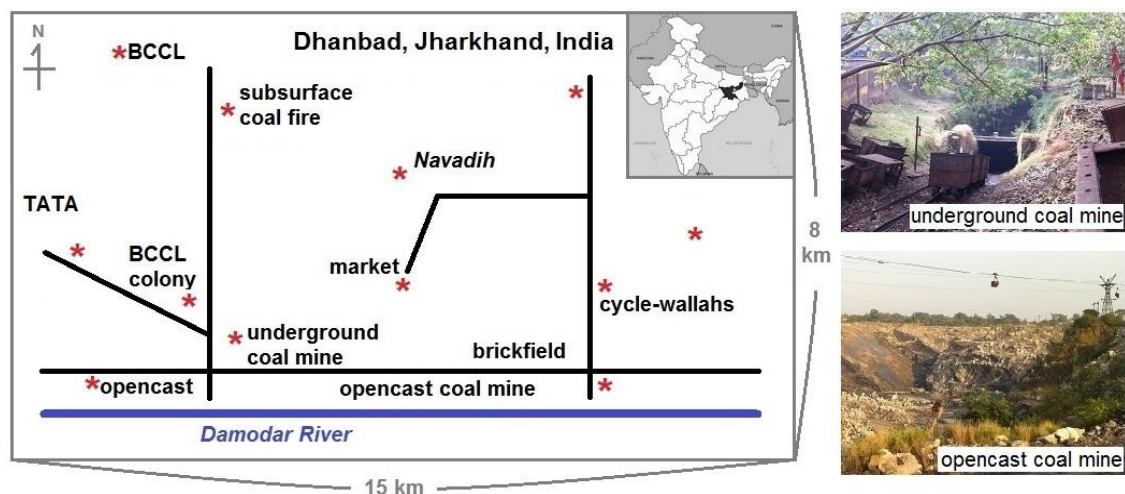
Map 4.2 The area around the Navadih in Dhanbad, Jharkhand, India

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[42] 120 square kilometres was the area that I have explored by walking or motorcycle (as in the Indian case) during my field stays. Although I lived in *Weilongcun* and *Navadih*, my investigations were not limited to the territory of a single village.

While in both countries coal is regulated as a nationalised resource, the two governments allow different ranges of space for private corporations. Specifically, in China, according to the *Coal Industry Law of the People's Republic of China (1996)*,

> The coal resources are owned by the State. The State ownership of the coal resources, either on the surface or underground, shall not change with the ownership or right to use of the land which the coal resources are attached to.

The State holds the ultimate power over the coal resources, and actually also the land carrying them. China's *1996 Coal Industry Law* allows privately-operated mines, however, the licence system regulated by the Act requires modernised operation processes and instruments, and therefore it has hijacked common people's rights to access the coal in the land. The license regulation was implemented intensively in the late 1990s; some effects it caused on people's life will be demonstrated later in the first section of this chapter. Nowadays in Panxian, the state-owned company (The Guizhou Panjian Refined Coal Co., Ltd) is the major stakeholder of coal resources, and several licensed privately-operated enterprises exist as well. However, the industrialisation has sharply reduced the labour involvement in the coal industry, especially at the grassroots level.

Coal recourses were nationalised in India as well. Although the market mechanism is there, India's *Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act (1993)* regulates that,

> … the coal reserves covered by the sub-lease are in isolated small pockets or are not sufficient for scientific and economic development in a coordinated manner and that the coal produced by the sub-lessee will not be required to be transported by rail.

As pointed out by geographer Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt (2007), India's *Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act (1993)* made the coal resources in India 'only for the big boys' in terms which spell out that 'only two groups are eligible to mine coal: a central or state government company or corporation' (Lahiri-Dutt, 2007: 60). Lahiri-Dutt's words describe the case of Dhanbad, where the 'big boys' include the central company (Bharat Coking Coal Limited, BCCL) and a giant corporation (TATA Steel Limited) – both have caused significant impacts on the environment and indigenous communities (Areeparampil, 1996; Padel, 2012; Padel and Das, 2010).

Methodologically speaking, the two sites are not meant to represent China and India. Instead, they are used as a source of materials to exemplify environmental discourses. Since my research interests lie in analysing the representation and (de)construction of environmentalism, the descriptions of the two case studies presented here will serve the analytical need rather than a representative purpose. In particular, I will use the narratives collected at the grassroots level to further illustrate the different extents of freedom to discourse and richness of language (concerning environmental issues) between the two cases. Here I use 'language' with a broad definition that does not only limit it to a systematic means of communicating ideas by signs and symbols, but also as a carrier of concepts, thinking and ideology.

The two photos below may exemplify the idea of 'the richness of language'. On the left side is a photo I took in April 2012, in the house of a Chinese family of four and both of the parents were coal miners; they used dated newspapers as wallpaper to cover the unpainted walls. On the newspaper was the handwriting of some slogans:

> What are the excellent traditions of our patriotism in China?
> 1. Maintain the unity of the country and promote ethnical unity.
> 2. Resist foreign intrusion and defend national sovereignty.
> 3. Concern for people's livelihood, difficulties and happiness; and promote historical progress.

These were written by one of the daughters (in their twenties) of the family, quoting from some articles in the newspapers. She duplicated these nationalist slogans in order to memorise them, when she was preparing for the job application to work in the state-owned company in town.

Figure 4.1 A snapshot in a villager's house in *Weilongcun*
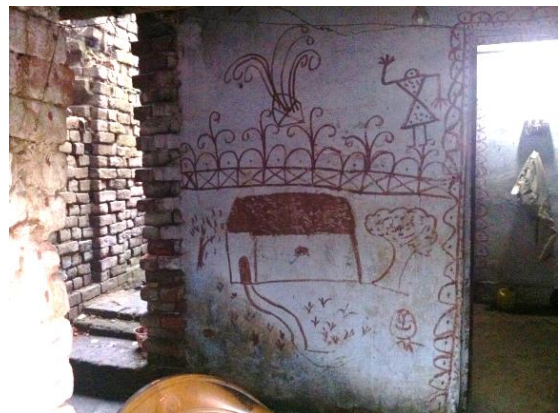
Figure 4.2 A snapshot in a villager's house in *Navadih*

The photo on the right side was taken in December 2012, showing the painting on the wall of an Indian family in rural Dhanbad. Also a family of four members, with two sons in their twenties – both are graduated students. The father used to be a coal mining foreman and is nowadays a social worker. This was drawn by the boys in earlier years, and it reflected the scene of the garden in front of the house.

Two photos can tell little about the two massive and complicated countries. However, with them I intend to explain my concerns about the construction of language and its effects at the grassroots level – in terms of how the socio-political structure of a society, through different extents of assimilation and propaganda, can cause influences on the imaginations and daily performances with regard to the surroundings of common people.

Discussions in the last chapter imply that the land acquisition was a setting where the exclusive mechanism of state-led development agendas became visible. To evaluate the richness of language about environmentalism, this chapter will introduce the concept of 'capital' to explain people's responses and interpretations of the environment and development in coal area. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1986) uses the notion of capital to analyse the practices of social actors in the field of power. He suggests three forms of capital: economic, cultural and social capital. While the economic capital can be directly converted into money or property rights, the cultural and social capitals that one gains through knowledge exchange or social connections may be concretised into forms of educational qualifications or social position – these also increase one's symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1986) in conducting daily practices. In the situation of land acquisition, when the rights to the fundamental economic capital (land) was unsecured or even violated by the state, it was social and cultural capitals that became particularly important to facilitate people's resistance or the adoption of resistant language. By analysing how people of coal mining areas talk about 'the environment', this chapter will also enhance our understanding of the capitals at their hands to be deployed. In the coming two sections of this chapter, based on my Chinese and Indian fieldwork respectively, I will illustrate how people living in coal villages understand/interpret 'the environment'; after that, some differences between the two cases will be foregrounded and discussed in the third section.

What is the 'environment' for Chinese *laobaixing*?

Some scholars (Gilley, 2012; Johnson, 2010; Johnson, 2013b) suggest that the top-down dynamic plays a critical role in Chinese environmental governance; however, the environmental condition 'down' on the ground continues to degrade, and is particularly bad for those living 'down' at the local level. Shortcomings in the local implementation of regulations and civil society participation have been identified by researchers (Kostka and Mol, 2013; Ran, 2013). By analysing how the rural population interpret the environment and understand the government's policies, this section intends to contribute to a new understanding of the problem of Chinese environmentalism.

Before moving on to discuss people's interpretations of 'the environment', I would like to explain my reason for choosing to stick with the Chinese term '*laobaixing*' instead of using notions such as 'public' or 'citizen'.[43] While the concept of 'public' more or less expresses 'wholeness' or 'collectiveness' and the word 'citizen' connotes the inter-responsibility between the state and its people,[44] I find '*laobaixing*' the best term to describe the people I encountered in my fieldwork compared with those concepts that were developed mostly in the Western or English-language context. Meanwhile, the terms 'public' and 'citizen' have their own translations in Chinese as '*gōngzhòng*' and '*shìmín*' respectively. According to my experiences in rural China, terms such like '*gōngzhòng*' and '*shìmín*' were hardly ever heard, but '*laobaixing*' was used quite commonly in daily conservations.[45] The 'folk' or 'common people' might be the expression in English that most closely corresponds to '*laobaixing*'. Frequently, it was used with leading adjectives such as '*sǐ-lǎobǎixìng*' (deadly-people) or '*xiǎo-lǎobǎixìng*' (small-people); the former denotes the inactivity of the common people and the latter suggests their powerless condition. These adjectives were applied both in objective descriptions and self-references. Common people's inactivity and powerlessness were observed in their responses to my questions about the environment, as I am going to elaborate.

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[43] However, the term '*laobaixing*' might be used interchangeably with 'ordinary people', 'common people', 'peasants' or the 'public' when the Chinese context is not emphasised.
[44] According to the definition given in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (11th edition), for example, 'public' is 'relating to, or affecting all the people or the whole area of a nation or state'; and 'citizen' means 'a person owing allegiance to and entitled to the protection of a sovereign state' (Retrieved November 29, 2014, from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/).
[45] 'The man in the street' (shìjǐng xiǎo mín) is another term that has a similar meaning to '*laobaixing*'; however, it showed up more frequently in written narratives, while '*laobaixing*' was used more often in daily dialogues at grassroots level, especially in the case of describing oneself.

The three sub-sections below bring out environmentalism from the perspective of Chinese *laobaixing* living in the mining area around *Weilongcun*. First, their economic concerns, which come above everything, will be discussed. Second, their understanding of the policies and the role of government in environmental governance will be presented. Third, with limited (economic, social and cultural/discursive) capitals for them to deploy, their practices of environmentalism in the private sphere – family life and housekeeping – will be discussed.

Economic values of the environment: 'live by the mountain, eat the mountain'

I started Chapter 3 by citing a conversation between an interviewee (Jiangjie, 50s, female) and me to illustrate the understanding of 'development' by some Chinese *laobaixing*; the quotation shows a perception that considers the quantity of enterprises as an important element to evaluate the extent of 'development' and the condition of the '(living) environment'. Although the traditional philosophy regarding respect for the *tiān* (sky, god nature) remains to some extent (Weller, 2006), the *tiān* and its force is understood in a more practical manner; as an unchangeable destination, rather than as an ecosystem requiring preservation. The modern history of China, as suggested by historian Mark Elvin (2006), has witnessed the deployments of nature by human beings for the reinforcement of political power and economic profit. Constantly, the pragmatism and utilitarianism that exists in the human-nature relationship has influenced Chinese attitudes towards the environment. Despite the worrisome environmental condition of the coal mining area, the *laobaixing* residents expressed little concern about the 'environment' itself, and most of them tended to link the 'environment' to 'economic conditions' and livelihood rather than 'nature' in the first place during our conversations. As for 'nature', it is considered by them as the given condition of their living. The Chinese idiom, 'live by the mountain, eat the mountain' (kào shān chī shān: people earn their living with the resources that come with their living surroundings), was said to me frequently during my fieldwork to explain everything that happens in the villages, especially the economic activities that degrade the environment. It seems that making the best use of natural resources to earn a living is the fundamental practice of 'environmental rights' for the villagers.

Fanling (30s, female) has lived in *Weilongcun* her whole life. In response to my enquiry about the environment, her answer – similar to that of Jiangjie – also pertained to

economic prosperity: 'Nowadays living conditions are improved but earning money is more difficult'. She said this based on her family's experience of the booms and busts of the coal mining business, which is a sort of collective memory shared by villagers of the area. Fanling's father used to be a teacher. During the 1980s, he left a job in the school and became a miner. 'At that time anyone could earn some if you had a little money to invest in your land.[46] With a small coal mine he could earn more than being a teacher'. The family made some money at the time, but it did not last long. When her father tried to enlarge the scale of their mine site, some problems arose. First, the soil moisture of the extended area was high and there were frequent landslides; thus the production of coal was limited. Second, some ancestral graveyards of other families were located on the land of the extended mining area, and Fanling's family could not afford the compensation required by these families. The third and most decisive problem was that the government enforced the regulation that prohibited the private operation of unlicensed coal mines. For these reasons, Fanling's father finished his coal business in the 1990s and became a wage labourer (miner). After elementary school, Fanling joined the wage labour market as well, and married Hanting (30s, male) in few years. 'I chose Hanting because his family had a decent coal business. They owned[47] coal mines and coking furnaces, and ran the coal transportation by themselves too'. Little did she know that later Hanting's family business would also experience huge contraction due to the new licensing regulation.

Fanling's story was typical among the peasants, which reflected the development of a Chinese coal village over the past few decades. The expression of the 'environment' in terms of economic conditions reflected the perspective of an ordinary '*xiǎo-lǎobǎixìng*' (small-people) from a Chinese village with limited social resources. Considering her life story and the ups and downs her family had experienced due to the coal development policies, it was not surprising to find them thinking about the environment in a utilitarian manner.

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[46] Although she said 'your land', however, in rural China, people only have the land-use rights rather than the land ownership. Under the Household Responsibility System, during the 1990s, the tenure was 15 to 30 years. Meanwhile, the State is the ultimate owner of all land (Ho, 2001b; 2005).

[47] As mentioned in Introduction section, according to the *Coal Industry Law of the People's Republic of China (1996)*, all coal resources in China are owned by the State. In this case, strictly speaking, Hanting's family owned only the 'use right' of the land and was temporarily allowed to access the coal before the enforcement of the license system. Also see Footnote 46.

Talking about development and the environment, Fanling, along with many of the villagers, commonly referred to the idioms '*kào shān chī shān*' and 'It's better to die dirty than to die hungry'. Although Fanling mocked herself and the villagers: 'we peasants are lacking foresight, we *laobaixing* worry for the moment only', this passive attitude was essentially based on a certain awareness of the limits of the natural conditions. Another interviewee, Dengyi (late 20s, male), in a clearer way, expressed a similar consideration of nature in terms of its ecological versus economic values:

> Our environment here is different from provinces such as Henan or Jiangsu. Those places are 'the town of fish and rice' (yúmǐzhīxiāng),[48] where to protect the environment makes sense because the nature can feed the locals with good quality and quantity of food. But here, we cannot earn our living with agriculture itself. That makes the condition of our lifestyle.

In short, the villagers are aware about the value of the ecosystems with which they conduct their daily exchange practices. To protect the environment or not, that is the question of life's struggles. Dengyi gave a clear statement indicating that environmental degradation is the unavoidable cost of development:

> One has to lose something to gain something. Gold will never fall from the sky on your way. …This is our natural condition and limitation. The quality of land here cannot produce as many crops as elsewhere. What we have is coal, we do coal businesses naturally and this [the cost] is how it is [environmental degradation].

There was a functionalist or utilitarian tendency shared by Jiangjie, Fanling and Dengyi, as well as most of the other villagers I encountered around *Weilongcun*. It is worth noting that, as illustrated in Dengyi's narratives, the ecological value of the environment was sensed by the villagers. However, while *kào shān chī shān* is a notion that can be applied in a general manner across China, people are conscious of the differences between various geographic regions in terms of the ecosystem goods or services offered. Specifically, there are some regions where the land is rich with ecological capital that can provide sufficient agricultural productions, while in Panxian the land gives coal and 'this is how it is'. The basic difference between a 'town of fish and rice' and a coal region is that the former offers renewable goods and the latter has coal resource that is not renewable in a short time frame. Non-renewable mineral resources are usually excluded from considerations of ecological goods and services (de Groot et al., 2002).

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[48] This is used to describe the place where the land is rich in nature, with rivers and proper irrigation systems, so it is very productive in terms of agriculture and aquaculture.

Additionally, I have also observed villagers' powerlessness with regard to unsecured land rights under the authoritarian regime. The State's power of eminent domain gives common people another reason to be short-sighted. Eminent domain represents the power of land acquisition exercised by the government to claim private land, or privately-used land, for use by or for the public. Historian Zhaohui Hong (2006) points out that peasants' poverty in land property rights may lead to their material poverty, because in contemporary China, projects either for public construction or private estate could lead to land acquisition by the government. In rural areas, even the tenure (rather than ownership) was not always well-defined and there was enormous heterogeneity throughout villages. Scholars (Brandt et al., 2002) suggest that uncertainty over the tenure rights can lower farmers' investment in land-saving. In other words, the long-term quality of the land/environment would not be of interest to people. In fact, the situation of unstable land-use rights was only worse in the case when the land contains mineral resources. As mentioned previously, according to China's *1996 Coal Industry Law*, the Chinese state holds the absolute power over coal resources and the land carrying them; add to this the authoritarian governance – permission for private economic activities associated with coal can unexpectedly be withdrawn – means that common people can hardly argue against the state. In this context, their concerns about the environment pertained to economic distribution and the question of who has the rights to share the economic value, and '*kào shān chī shān*' illustrated their attitude of earning a living with anything that came to hand at present.

Environmental issues in the public sphere: government's business?

Despite the fact that state leaders' decision-making has occasionally violated local people's rights to land and resources, and contributed to their insecurity with regard to economic capital, *laobaixing's* respect towards the inherent force of *tian* and the association between *tian* and the state leadership (Weller, 2006; Zhao, 2006) remains evident in my observation (as discussed in Chapter 3). Regarding the role of government in environmental governance, according to my interviews and observations, the authorities are expected to be there to deal with public issues, while at the same time they are considered as corrupt by the *laobaixing*. In other words, my fieldwork in rural Guizhou suggests that the *laobaixing* living around the coal mines feel that the government officials do not always take environmental issues seriously. Furthermore,

the feeling of powerlessness and respect/awe has resulted in *laobaixing's* apathetic attitude towards policies determined by the political authorities. In particular, the enforcement of authoritarian regulations without improving environmental awareness among the common people has caused the villagers to be apathetic about the public environment.

As identified by some studies on China, there is a culture that counts on authoritarian solutions to take care of public problems (Gilley, 2012; Johnson, 2010). The issue regarding the environment or land is one such public problem: the *laobaixing* do not consider it as their business. In response to my question regarding the 'change in the NATURAL environment', a common response I received repeatedly among the villagers was, 'since the policies exist, then the situation should have somehow been improved'. There was only a weak interest in the detail of the policies. Nevertheless, a twofold interpretation of the role of the authorities from their viewpoint could be identified.

One the one hand, the *laobaixing* welcomed the presence of authority in dealing with public affairs or conflicts. One villager identified the problem clearly when most of the villagers showed little interest in talking about the environment.

> The operations of the plants are so dusty and have influenced the environment badly. We as neighbours are suffering, in terms of our crop farming and the health of the seniors. There should be some treatments. You can report this situation to the higher authorities for us, right? Will you? (Jiangjie)

It is believed that the authorities should be there to deal with public environmental problems.

Another example is the land issue. During my stay in the village, there were some conflicts between the peasants and an outside company that was setting up a new coal washing plant. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Chinese villagers showed less hesitation to express their objections toward the projects by outside investment, than towards those by local business (Deng and Yang, 2011). Despite this difference, a euphemistic manner was preferred to deal with the conflict of interests. For a few days, some of the villagers gathered near the entrance of the construction site: however, it looked like an ordinary get-together, with neither posters nor any approach to the manager of the plant. 'The negotiation will start only when the cadres show up; the villagers and the businessmen

won't discuss the land and compensation issues by themselves' (Fanling). Although, from the 1980s on, Chinese policy makers opened up a new market track for commercial exchange of 'land use rights' (Lin and Ho, 2005) – that explains the emergence of privately-operated plants run by external investors in villages; however, conflicts over the land were considered to remain as problems belong to the public sphere; therefore the authorities were expected to handle any disagreements. The structural reason behind this was that the Chinese State is the ultimate owner of coal and land, and 'shall apply the principle of unified planning, rational geographical distribution and comprehensive utilization', as stated in the *Coal Industry Law of the People's Republic of China (1996)*.

On the other hand, people questioned the administration because they suspected that there must be serious corruption in policy implementation. Statements were made on corruption, instead of judging the accomplishments of environmental governance directly. I asked the residents whether they had ever heard of any river management or waste disposal scheme in the village.

> Never. The role the [township] government plays is that the officials visit the coal washing plant, for example, to check the sewage and impose a fine; then they keep the money in their pocket. How could it be possible for the money to be put forward and used for the public good? Impossible! (Liben, 50s, male)

Liben shared with me his personal experience of corruption. Years ago, when the road in front of his house was built, the higher authority announced that there would be compensation at twenty thousand yuán[49] per acre. However, in the end the residents received only eight thousand yuán per acre. In such a context it is understandable that the *laobaixing* lose their interest in the content of the policies and at the same time they lose their trust in the procedure of policy implementation.

Dengyi was an engineer working for the biggest state-owned coal enterprise in the area. Even to him, the corrupt image of the political authorities was similar to the expression made by Liben.

> It is so-called 'paying the price to avoid problems' (huā qián xiāo zāi). Every year the company gives the Environmental Protection Bureau so much money for nothing else but to have the troubles removed. … One can imagine the

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[49] The 'yuán' (元) is the principal unit of the Renminbi, the currency of China. One Chinese yuán is worth about 0.15 US dollars.

money feeding into the pockets of each level of the bureaucracy. … It will be surprising if one-tenth of the amount is used to improve the living conditions of *laobaixing* (Dengyi).

There was one exception that is worth mentioning. One of my interviewees placed a positive emphasis on the importance of environmental governance as well as having great confidence in its implementation. Zhutao (late 20s, male), who also worked in the coal industry but as a manager of the mines that were run privately by his family, provided an interesting contrast with Dengyi and other *xiǎo-lǎobǎixìng* in the villages.[50] During our interview, Zhutao gave me details of the progress of the regulations about pollution control over the past decades, as if he was making an objective presentation. The narrative from him, a manager of a private-operated enterprise, sounded more like official propaganda than a personal judgement. I asked Zhutao whether it would be possible for me to visit the work places; he turned me down saying 'there is nothing to see. What are you up to? … There is nobody but miners who know nothing about the environment. The situation of environmental governance is just like that, as I told you'. In spite of his narratives providing a good-looking image of the environmental governance and the implementation of industrial safety, his hesitation in showing me the reality directly was obvious.

For most of the common villagers, their suspicions of bureaucratic corruption did not mean that the power of the authorities could be questioned, as they still expected the cadres to be present to deal with the conflicts. The *laobaixing's* understanding of the authoritarian power is reflected in the idiom 'Humans should not fight against heaven (tiān), people should not fight against mandarin', which I heard frequently, as well as in other statements. 'When the government wants to strangle something, it can do so in a second. Once state policy is enforced, you cannot argue' (Fanling). These sentences disclose the lack of bargaining power that the people have against the authorities.

In fact, as implied in Chapter 2, it was partly from the authoritarian developmentalist state leadership that the *laobaixing* learned to evaluate the environment with an economic/growth-oriented perspective. In *Weilongcun*, people learned the idea of pollution control together with industrial safety, and the two ideas were bound together and then put into practice in the form of the coal mining licensing system. However, in

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[50] Zhutao, along with his parents, had migrated to the city many years previously, although the coal factories were still located in the villages.

practice, the licence system favours big mining enterprises and strangles the small-scale private mining businesses. It has caused significant impact on villagers' economic life; therefore, unsurprisingly, it was mainly known as an economic scheme rather than an environmental-oriented design. The negative effects on villagers' living conditions have resulted in them being disinterested in the environment, pollution and related regulations. While Zhutao's family had benefited from the licence system and resource distribution by government, he spoke of the environment and coal development with the language learned from the authorities. Other families, such as that of Fanling and Hanting, could hardly have been persuaded by the 'positive' influences resulting from the policy. They were made the 'nobody' that 'know nothing about the environment', in Zhutao's words; they were the passive receptors/objects of the environment and the authorities. When villagers cannot agree with the value introduced by official power, whether there was alternative discourse/language available at hand became an important factor in influencing the grassroots society to be silent or critical.

Complaints, mainly about the private environment: dusty!

The feeling of powerlessness in the public sphere pushes people to turn back to the private sphere. Being apathetic about the public environment does not mean that villagers have no knowledge of the environment or that they are satisfied with the environment. The word 'dusty' (huī) was often used to describe the environment. This reminds me of anthropologist Mary Douglas' work on '*Purity and Danger*' (1966), which indicates the ideas of cleanliness and dirt are linked to the construction of social order. While people's fear of dirt can be deployed to reinforce social and moral orders, on the other hand, individuals' practices in the private sphere can be seen as a method to maintain a boundary in which one can secure some certainty on the environment. The talks about dust reflect the fact that the villagers do have complaints about their surroundings, but they are more empowered to judge the phenomenon in private sphere terms. Furthermore, they are more comfortable in identifying the visible rather than chemical impact of the pollution. Meanwhile, villagers have practical knowledge of the environment but this relates more to the domesticated products of plants and animals.

Fanling, like many other villagers, worked in small-scale coking furnaces for a few years before the enforcement of the licence system. During that period, the density of this kind of small-scale coking furnace[51] was so high that,

> … if you look down the village from the hillside in the night, it looked all red, as if it was covered in a sea of fire; however, when you move close to the furnaces, you can hardly see anything more than one metre away (Liangyin, 26, female).

Fanling's health had deteriorated after her years working in coking. However, the reason she gave sounds biased and not too convincing to me − she linked it with her own behaviour instead of the environment influenced by the highly polluting coking process.

> The work was very labour-demanding. I was over-worked during that period of time. I used to be very healthy beforehand but during those years I lost a lot of weight and caught a cold very often, and every time it took me too long to recover.

'How about the air pollution, do you feel that was problematic?' I asked.

> When there was a big coking plant opposite my house, sometimes the smell made me feel too sick to eat. Ooh, the worst thing was that the vegetables growing on my land turned black and I could not remove the dust from the surface no matter how I washed it (Fanling).

Dusty/dust (huī) was the main (if not the only) term that I heard the villagers use to describe the physical environment. Apparently, it caused many complaints, including making it hard for the *laobaixing* to maintain the 'cleanness' of their house, clothes and food.[52] 'I feel the natural environment hasn't changed much! Decades ago, it was dusty; and it is still just as dusty now', said a senior villager (70s, male). The terminology and complaints regarding the dust reveal two things. First, the 'dust' is something that is visible and requires little scientific knowledge to criticise. The wording of the complaint to some extent corresponds with Lora-Wainwright's study (2011) that states that peasants are hesitant to identify the relationship between their sicknesses and the problematic environment, due to their lack of confidence in making scientific judgements. I heard a few stories of villagers who had met an untimely death in their twenties. Villagers told me not to be surprised: 'so many people died of cancer in the

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[51] This kind of coking furnace is known as a 'Mongolian yurt' (Ménggǔbāo) in Chinese, because of its appearance.

[52] While in India the 'cleanness' of food is more or less maintained through religious rituals and related matters in daily life.

villages, which is quite common'. However, in *Weilongcun* and the neighbouring area, it was not linked to the problematic environmental conditions among the locals. Fanling's case, where she linked her health issues to her laborious working experience instead of the working environment, was more typical.

Second, peasants are more confident in – and more concerned with – the private sphere. While health is a personal issue, the problem of illness ought to be dealt with through personal decisions such as choice of work, instead of public affairs such as environmental conditions. In any event, to think of bodily health as an issue within the private sphere can prevent one from feeling powerless – as the public sphere cannot be decided by *laobaixing*. Considering the everyday duty of Fanling, a village housewife – to maintain the living environment and to prepare meals for her family – it is understandable that people like her recognise the environmental problems in so far as they relate to the practicalities of housekeeping. They have knowledge about the environment, but it relates more closely to their domesticated products of plants and animals. For example, many women I met in the village can tell the difference between genetically modified corn and original corn at a glance, and they judge the modified corn to be not as good because the 'pigs don't like them, those are not as tasty'. They complain about the environment when it influences their private sphere visibly; otherwise, most of the time they remain silent.

However, similar thinking exists not only among housekeepers but also among retired cadres, businessmen, undergraduate students, etc. It actually reflects a mind-set in which the 'environment' is divided into the public sphere and the private sphere. In this context, the *laobaixing* take care of their personal environment in terms of maintaining cleanness; when it comes to the public environment, they look up to the authoritarian government. 'As the regulations are there, nowadays the sewage must more or less run through some treatment process to be discharged', said Dengyi, after he had just posed judgments on the corruption to me. 'For us, the *laobaixing*, as long as the situation is not so bad that we are living in dust the whole day long, no one cares too much' (Dengyi).

Multiple languages of the 'environment' in rural India

To study the environmental movements in Jharkhand, a brief review of the terminology of the '*adivasi*' and the politics of social division is essential. During the colonial era, for administration and governance, Indian communities were (re)constructed and a range of groups living in remote hills or forests were categorised as the 'aboriginals' or 'tribes' by the British. They were distinguished by their animistic religious beliefs and habitat, and a body of knowledge about the so-called 'tribes of India' was produced since then (Bhukya, 2008). During the 20th century, other names for them emerged, alongside movements for the right to self-determination around India. The groups were claimed to be the 'original' or 'indigenous' settlers of the subcontinent; in Hindi the term used for them is '*adivasi*' (Bhukya, 2008). Despite the fact that there are also ethnic communities in southwest China, as mentioned in Chapter 1, my dissertation examines the conceptualisations of *laobaixing* in Chinese context and *adivasi* in Indian society and the subordinate status of both, rather than attempting to compare the practical conditions of ethnic minorities in the two countries. Such a design is partly limited by the demographic reality of my field site;[53] nevertheless, it provides data for investigating how environmentalism in Indian society could be linked with various issues regarding the politics of social differentiation, while in China the representation of environmentalism appeared to be relatively uniform in the public arena (this will be further argued in the next section).

The colonial constructions of categorised/structuralised society still affect the country in many ways, including how people understand the 'environment'. While economic value appeared to be the first consideration of the Chinese *laobaixing* regarding the environment, in the case of India, whenever I mentioned my research interest in environmental campaigns with the interviewees, the responses either highlighted the association between environmental issues and indigenous rights, or clarified the two as being independent of each other. In other words, while some informants emphasised their belief that the environmental problems in rural Jharkhand could not be understood without considering indigenous politics – corresponding with many studies on environmental movements in eastern India (e.g. Corbridge et al., 2004; Damodaran, 2006; Padel and Das, 2010) – there was another group of respondents who took the

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[53] As mentioned in the introduction chapter, there was no significant presence of ethnic communities around *Weilongcun*.

stance that reviewing environmental topics should be done separately from studying indigenous issues. However, the division of these two groups did not mirror the original ethnicity of the respondents. Instead, what I observed was rather an ideological division between those whose thoughts were supported by different discourses.

How the 'environment' of an Indian coal region is constructed without, or with, an association to indigenous issues will be presented and discussed in the next two sub-sections. The differences between the two reinforce the argument that the conceptualisation of nature is subjective (Brosius, 1999; Harper, 2001). In practice, the 'environment', as well as the '*adivasi*', are used as a source of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) that is deployed by various actors and can influence a socio-cognitive construction of environmentalism. Each of the stories given by the different individuals reflects his/her distribution of symbolic power and social position in the field.

One kind of language: 'Your study is not about the adivasis, right?'

While most of my Chinese interviewees showed hesitation in answering my questions, my Indian interviewees took the initiative in the conversation.[54] In this way, the deploying of ideas and the flow of power became more visible to me. In particular, as mentioned in the introduction chapter, my Indian fieldwork disclosed a more active condition of social-networking between the various actors (compared with the case of China). By observing the social network, in terms of how discursive power was passed between members belonging to the same groups or sharing similar values, I became aware of diverse interpretations of the environment within Indian society.

It is recognised in the literature that indigenous rights to land play a significant role in the environmental campaigns in rural India (Guha, 2006; Padel and Das, 2010), including the area of Jharkhand (Chandra, 2013; Corbridge et al., 2004). Remarkably, some residents of *Navadih* who I encountered during my fieldwork gave me quite a different impression. I noticed a kind of language had been applied to talk about the environment with a tendency to minimise the voice of the ethnic others, the *adivasis* in this case. This experience illustrates that the rules-based governance approach appears not only in China, as shown above, but also in India – where certain members of society

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[54] This could partly be due to my Taiwanese background and people's considerations about political 'sensitivity' in Chinese society, as discussed in Chapter 1.

hold the belief that 'environmental issues' basically mean pollution management, and most of the problems could be solved within the institutional system and without referring to the *adivasi* issues.

In rural Dhanbad, I worked with a local resident who helped me with accommodation and interpretation. As an informer and interpreter, Akshay (50s, Hindu male) explained to me the environmental issues of Dhanbad from his viewpoint. The influences he brought to my work could be analysed in a few ways. First, he regarded the environmental issues as separate from the indigenous issues. Second, the right to speak was passed onto his Hindu friends instead of his *adivasi* friends. Third, the interpretation was conducted differently when the story came from an *adivasi* interviewee. Finally, my questions regarding 'experiences in coal businesses' were modified by him to mean 'experiences in the BCCL' – the Bharat Coking Coal Limited company, a subsidiary of Coal India Limited, which was the major state-owned coal business in Jharkhand. Consciously or unconsciously, Akshay's translation and modification to some extent limited the responses I gained when working with him.[55] I will demonstrate these four aspects in turn as follows.

Akshay was the father of a pious Hindu family. Both Akshay and his wife, Karuna (50s, Hindu female), were government school teachers. Ravi (40s, Hindu male) was introduced to me through Akshay to provide information for my study. Ravi was an engineer working for the BCCL. 'It is very difficult to get a permanent job in the BCCL', Akshay said proudly about his friend. 'Let me confirm it first, you want to study environmental movements, NOT the *adivasi* movements, right?' Before discussing anything Ravi and Akshay wanted clarification from me regarding my research interest. After that, Ravi talked a lot about the efforts at pollution control made by the BCCL over the past few years in terms of advanced technical facilities and innovations (similar with Zhutao in the Chinese case). The perspective displayed here was very different from popular environmentalism or social-green approach, which argues for a critical association between environmental degradation and social injustice (Clapp, 2005). Instead, during my exchange with Akshay and Ravi, a tendency towards institutionalism could be sensed in their responses.

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[55] Since I was aware of the potential bias that might be caused due to translation, I attempted to work with different interpreters and cross-checked the information between various sources.

What was left unsaid by Akshay was that another friend of theirs, Joseph (40s, male), was also a BCCL engineer. I came to know about this indirectly and confirmed it with Akshay, 'Joseph is also a BCCL employee? You never mentioned it'. 'Yes, he is', he answered with a meaningful smile and no explanation. 'Plus he is a Christian who allows his daughter to ride a motorbike and hang around the town'; this was added by Karuna in a judgmental manner. 'What do you mean?' I asked, as the topic seemed to have changed all of a sudden. 'Look at how he named his daughters; those are typical Christian names. They are Christians' (Karuna). Another thing that was never put into words was that Joseph was an *adivasi*. Although Ravi and Joseph were both BCCL engineers, Ravi was presented to me as having a good reputation, while Joseph was never even formally introduced. This example illustrates the practice of selective distribution of discursive power. The right to speak had been passed between the members of the same social group, in this case the Hindus, and not the ethnic others.

Joseph was not the only example of the *adivasis* that I encountered during the fieldwork with Akshay. By chance I met a senior *adivasi* (70s, female) who had retired from the BCCL a few months previously. I tried to establish a conversation with her: 'Was it difficult to get a position in BCCL? What kind of work did you do?' My enquiry was not translated. Instead, Akshay himself gave me the answer: 'when BCCL started the business here, this area was not so crowded and most of the residents were the *adivasis*. BCCL faced huge labour shortages so it was easy for ANYONE to work for the company then'. During this conversation, not only the voice of the senior *adivasi* lady but also my voice, was ignored. Both this *adivasi* family in *Navadih* and I as a foreign visitor were symbolised and deployed to enhance Akshay's voice and the ideology he represented.

One more influence that Akshay brought to my study was the modification of meanings due to his translation. In my general question 'Do you have any experience (working) in coal businesses?' the term 'coal businesses' was always translated/replaced by the term 'BCCL' by him. I asked Akshay why he did this. 'BCCL has always been here; it stands for what you mean by "coal businesses" in this area. It is easier to make people understand your question'. To some extent, this modification shows Akshay's preference to favour governmental projects, or, to recognise the official institutions as a main stakeholder of coal development. Through institutionalist eyes, the environmental

issues regarding coal in the area could be improved by proper regulatory management. In other words, the state-owned enterprise together with the government could handle the responsibility. If the environmental conditions still appear problematic, 'that is because there are so many corrupt clerks and agents. Good policies are there but they have not been implemented well', said another villager, who was introduced to me through Akshay (Sunil, early 50s, male). Members of this cluster of interviewees shared the opinion that environmental conditions could be improved with official schemes, training and public education.

It is worth mentioning that, even in the case of Joseph, my interactions with his (*adivasi*) family gave me very limited impressions of extraordinary concerns regarding nature – one conventional image of '*adivasis*'. Joseph had worked in a nearby fertiliser plant until it was shut down at the beginning of this century. 'Did the fertiliser plant have some controversial environmental issues?' I asked, because I had heard about this from other informants. 'There were no crucial environmental effects; the plant was closed based on an economic efficiency consideration … the demand for fertilisers went down so it was closed to save the money of people – because it's a state-owned company'. In this narrative, a belief in institutional power to manage economic or environmental impacts could be noticed. In addition, some of my interviewees who I met randomly (not through Akshay) also demonstrated their reliance on technology and institutional power. Aamir (40s, Muslim male), an engineer working for BCCL in the area, kept emphasising how the mining procedure as well as waste management had been improved over the past two decades and that the BCCL had contributed significantly to the public development of the country.

Despite this, Akshay's interpretation might have reduced the variety of information that I could have collected while working with him. Almost everybody living in the area had some experience with the coal business – legally or illegally, formally or informally; however, only a very few of these experiences related to the BCCL. BCCL monopolises the coal businesses of the area to a considerable extent yet it is not the sole company. For instance, there are the mines and plants of the TATA group,[56] not to mention coal mafias and unlicensed coal transportation – which are all well known among the local residents. Diverse voices could have been heard to a greater extent if my questions had

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[56] The Mittal and the Jindal as well.

been kept open. In Chinese words, I was 'harmonised' (bèi héxié, censored and adjusted) when working with Akshay. However, from my experience with him (and some other interviewees such as Aamir) I learned about an alternative perspective on environmentalism in rural India, which was quite different from the case of bottom-up resistance endorsed by the discourse shared amongst many campaigners – as I am going to argue in the next sub-section.

Another kind of language: 'One cannot study the environment without considering the adivasis!'

The construction of environmentalism happens not only through the exclusion of the *adivasi* communities. In contrast, the other cluster of interviewees, mainly elite activists who were more involved in people's movements, emphasised the rights of the *adivasis* in environmental campaigns. In particular, the discourse that emphasises the linkage between the environment, land rights and indigenous rights is at the core of many demonstrative activities. Contrary to the perspective discussed in the previous sub-section, which separates environmental management from indigenous issues, the language that speaks of *adivasis* together with the environment in the coal mining area, brings out the criticism of existing power structures, was shared among several of my other interviewees. In other words, these respondents focused their attention on the dominating-submissive relationship in environmental debates. This perception is the feature that led me to distinguish the two languages of the environment in my Indian case study. While one expresses a belief in 'environmental management' with an institutionalist tendency (which is similar to the idea observed among some Chinese '*laobaixing*'), the other criticises the exploitation conducted by the powerful authorities, regarding it as the crucial reason leading to ecological injustice. The latter perspective is shared among the activists drawing on radical social and economic theories.

To formulate the drivers of environmental campaigns, a number of conceptual elements are necessary to construct a supportive discourse. These elements were observed through the interviews and will be analysed as follows. First, a narrative of 'other' is required when mobilising a campaign. The second essential element for a motivating discourse is the justification to sustain certain actors/agencies as the 'subjects' who have the right to speak for the environment. Third, as mentioned previously, the power structure in which the unjust dominating relationship exists needs to be identified.

First, in the representations of the ideology that supports many environmental movements in rural India, the discursive 'other' is capitalism and its diverse practices, including the commoditisation of natural resources. To study the formation of environmental movements, I was told by a campaigner[57] that Dhanbad was the wrong place for me, because 'Dhanbad has finished long back. It's too late, they have lost everything. People are still fighting, but not strongly like other places' (Vikram, 40s, male). In short, 'Dhanbad has already been taken'. The question is, taken by whom? Who is the 'other' in this context?

> Mining was there even during the British time, TATA also. After independence, TATA were given the power … they are like the kings of that area. So the [common] people were sacrificed for the 'national development'. Now, TATA and all the mining businesses are there (Vikram).

In other words, Dhanbad has experienced over-development. What has been presented here in the narratives is the idea of combat between two forces of ideology. On one side is the radical socialism which appreciates community cultures, the value of common property resources and the rights of ordinary people; while on the opposite side is capitalism and the mainstream culture, which appreciates privatisation and the social hierarchy.

Second, according to this cluster of interviewees, the *adivasis* are identified, with little doubt, as the subjects of environmental campaigns, who have the right to speak for nature. As mentioned, some scholars (Bhukya, 2008; Weiner, 1978) have argued that the 'animistic' religious belief is one of the features that distinguish the *adivasis* from the rest of the Indian population. The *adivasis* are recognised as being the descendants of the original population of the Indian subcontinent who have developed their social norms in accordance with the law of the ecosystem (Padel and Das, 2010; Weiner, 1978). These ideas were reflected in the narratives given by the activists I interviewed in Jharkhand:

> We use the term 'natural resources', but they [indigenous people] don't. When we think of minerals, wood, water and air, we think about separate things of commodities. Indigenous people don't think of them as commodities, they think of it as the Mother (Jarvis, 60s, male).

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[57] He was based in Delhi and worked at both the national and international levels.

Different views of 'the environment' were emphasised. The *adivasis* are constructed as those who treat the environment with respect instead of in a materialist manner. 'This is what sustains them as a distinct identity', said Jarvis, and this is what justifies the *adivasis* as the subjects of environmental campaigns. As an aside, neither Jarvis nor Vikram were *adivasis* in terms of ethnicity; however, the value of *adivasis* as the 'sons of the soil' seemed to be more emphasised by certain elite activists than by the native communities themselves. Or, in other words, the meaning of the 'sons of the soil', just like the meaning of the environment, could be interpreted in various ways. As implied by Shah (2007, 2010), how *adivasi* people interpret nature, lifestyle and their connection with nature might be different from that by elite activists. Nevertheless, there are differentiations within *adivasi* communities, and the differentiations have made the association between environmentalism and indigenousness arguable. As suggested by sociologist Amita Baviskar (1997), the emerging middle class *adivasis'* lifestyle may no more be influenced directly by the sustainability of ecosystem. Despite that, and considering the different scales of effects caused by corporations and local communities, Baviskar (1995: 239) argued, taking a campaigning stand, that '*adivasis* are not sustainable resource managers, but in this grossly imperfect world, they come closest to that ideal'.

Some *adivasi* activists I interviewed shared a similar critical stance with Jarvis; however, the *adivasi* respondents added rather more emphasis to their right to take part in the decision-making regarding land use and environmental management and mentioned less (if at all) about 'Mother-nature' or their 'animistic' religion. In this manner, Vikram said something that was consistent with what I observed in my *adivasi* interviewees: 'They are also demanding democracy; they are demanding the control of the land and forest, so it's far beyond the environmental issue' (Vikram). In short, while the *adivasi* activists I met requested to be treated equally, some of the narratives shared by the elite activists showed a tendency to treat the *adivasis* differently – although with an intention to justify them as the 'most authentic' sons of the soil (Weiner, 1978).

The third element required in constructing a mobilising discourse is a problematised situation. In this case, the unjust social structure was identified as the problem, and the terminology of colonisation was applied.

> It's a question of colonisation. It's a question of a group of powerful people, from the majority who have the political and economic and the state power, using their power to subjugate another group of people, who are denied power. … It is because these people are ethnically vulnerable; they are seen by the upper caste or upper class people as less human (Jarvis).

In this case, according to his opinion, the *adivasis* are automatically organised instead of being mobilised, because 'when you attack people, our act of attacking brings them together. … If they have consciousness, political consciousness, about what self-respect is, they will fight back' (Jarvis). Significantly, the spontaneity was emphasised. Unlike the activities of NGOs funded by foreign organisations, these campaigns raised by the *adivasis* are a demonstration of '"people's movements", they are connected to NGOs but they are not funded. No funding, so they are on their own' (Vikram). What Vikram tried to say is that these so-called 'people's movements' may have gained ideological support from NGOs, but not financial support. Such a condition of independence[58] and self-determination ensures the justification of the *adivasi* campaigns – they do not receive funding, to avoid the risk of NGOs being accused of being agents of the (neo)colonisation of the indigenous people.

Through the analysis of the three elements above, what I try to argue here is that these viewpoints constitute the construction of a discourse that is similar to the situation discussed in the previous sub-section, when my interpreter, Akshay tried to guide me to learn about 'the environment' from his viewpoint. Vikram and Jarvis also intended to show me their viewpoint about the environment – a popular environmentalism perspective. It is difficult for me to state that Vikram and Jarvis had a strong interest in maintaining the quality of the natural environment; rather, the discourse about 'people's movements' that I learned from them, as well as from some other activists, appeared to be more like aiming for political campaigns for the purpose of (or, in the name of) maintaining the rights of indigenous communities. As the 'subjects' of the campaigns, the wholeness of the *adivasi* subjectivity was emphasised over and above any single issue, regardless of whether it was environmental, economic or political. While Akshay had muted the *adivasis* as the 'other' in the environmental arena, activists like Vikram and Jarvis had deployed the symbolic capital of *adivasi* to 'empower' the indigenous communities and had to some extent posed them as the 'subjects' in the discourse.

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[58] This meant independence from any members of the mainstream culture.

The discourse delivered by any individual actually shows that person's social position. For instance, Jarvis declared his Marxist orientation in our interview; used to be a politician, and he moved to Jharkhand because he saw the potential for campaigning here. The lifestyle of the *adivasis* was characterised in a statement made by Jarvis in which he used Marxist terminology: 'Their economic activity is "minimum economy"; they never create "surplus" or extra for making profit. In tribal culture, profit is sin; in mainstream Indian Hindu culture, profit is god' (Jarvis). It is interesting to compare what Jarvis said with the narrative of another interviewee, Rahul (50s, male), who was a professor in economics.

> People are protesting to get their fair share. … They are asking for jobs, good compensation for land, merited compensation. They might ask for a small piece of land and a house. … And there must be drinking water, schools, and hospital facilities, like the ones you [enterprises] give to your employees (Rahul).

Rahul also participated in campaigns as an activist, and at the same time he was an economist. From Rahul's perspective, the requirements of the *adivasis* showed no significant difference from the poor of the mainstream Hindu culture. In other words, Rahul's narrative showed little interest in symbolising the *adivasis* as distinguished from other marginalised ordinary people.

Although the idea of self-determination was strongly emphasised in the bottom-up resistance emerging among the subaltern people, most of the interviewees who delivered the discourse in formulated narratives to me were activists or NGO members – more or less the social elites holding an alternative perspective to that of the mainstream ideology. Rakesh (20s, male), a visual activist who worked in documentaries concerned with the *adivasi* cultures, said that there was a huge gap between the ordinary *adivasi* people and the mainstream stakeholders. That is why NGO workers or activists are needed as the medium to carry the information and enhance communication in order to merge the diverse opinions and interests. Rakesh's opinion also shows that his approach was influenced by his background in media.

Despite these actors attempting to speak for the environment or for the *adivasis* with good intentions, still, there was a process of conceptualisation of 'the environment' as well as 'the *adivasis*'. Admittedly, NGO members and social workers provide certain discursive support to the *adivasis* in the movements. I interviewed *adivasi* activists who

had participated in a series of campaigns against land acquisition and displacement.[59] A strong connection between natural resources and the community identity could be observed. Meanwhile, the claim for the right to maintain their original lifestyle on the land they had inhabited for generations was given a strong emphasis. However, my field experiences also exemplified that 'the *adivasi*' is not a fixed idea; nor is 'the environment' in the Indian context. The ordinary *adivasi* people (those who are not particularly known as 'activists') who I encountered during the fieldwork were a diverse group: some were coal workers living in rural villages, while some were new immigrants based in urban areas. Each of them had diverse ideas about the environment; in particular, whether they worked for coal businesses or in commercial jobs, none of them used terms like 'the Mother eco-system' or the 'minimum lifestyle'. An *adivasi* as an individual person may be mobilised or 'educated' in more than one way – with a radical perspective or with a rather mainstream approach. What has been observed was the 'multilingualism' in terms of environmentalism discourse in the Indian field. The ecological Marxist language was not the exclusive, but certainly remained an important and supportive, discourse within this realm.

NGOs as the medium/agent in formulating environmentalism

The previous two sections of this chapter revealed that the difference between the Chinese and Indian cases lies in the absence or presence of NGOs or alternative social groups working on environmental campaigns in the coal villages in my case studies. Comparing the scenarios of rural China and rural India, NGOs or social workers who play a critical role as mediums/agents introducing discourses from the outside[60] into the locality, appeared to be more active in India than in China. Before analysing the effects of NGOs and elite activists on the ordinary people, it is important to consider the socio-political backgrounds that have conditioned the civil society and non-government activities.

While the institutionalist approach was noticed in both countries, greater diversity of discourse was found in India. Hence in India, compared with China, more varieties of

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[59] This includes some interviews conducted before starting my doctoral project; this was during 2009, when I was working in India as an intern in an Indian NGO providing legal assistance for people's movements.
[60] Internationally or domestically.

discourses coexisted among the public than simply those that emphasised the top-down dynamic. Comparing the two types of respondents, as mentioned earlier, the division between the two did not reflect the ethnic grouping: it was not that most of the *adivasi* interviewees considered that environmental issues should be dealt together with indigenous politics and that non-*adivasi* informants attempted to exclude the discussions of the *adivasi* issues. Instead, the fieldwork in India revealed a scenario of multiple interpretations of environmentalism, and each interpretation was influenced by certain political or social scientific discourses.

This brings us back to the case of China. Although *Weilongcun* is a village of Han Chinese, the region of Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau has many residences of other ethnic groups – similar to the case of Jharkhand. However, in Guizhou, the association between the environment and ethnic issues was not highlighted in a similar manner with Jharkhand. We may find the potential explanation for this difference by reviewing the conceptualisations of the 'ethnic groups' in China and India. In China, members of the ethnic communities are called the *shǎoshù mínzú* (ethnic minorities), which literally describes nothing more than their small population size. On the contrary, in India, regardless of whether the term aboriginals, tribes or the *adivasis* was used, I found that the 'native-ness', 'belongingness' or the spirit of the 'sons of the soil' was hinted at. The different methods of discourse construction have resulted in the *shǎoshù mínzú* in the Chinese context – a notion that conveys little about either the sense of 'original inhabitants' or their relationship with the land. Some members of the ethnic groups expressed their identity as second-class *laobaixing* (Unger, 2002) instead of as original residents of the Chinese continent with a particular ethnicity. This corresponds with my experiences with the ethnic people (Yi and Buyi)[61] I met at my supplementary field site.[62] When they expressed their living difficulties, they similarly called themselves *laobaixing* or peasants, and they expressed their admiration for the livelihood in a coal village: 'it must be easier for people there to earn money', said by my Yi respondents.

According to historian Mark Elvin (2006), the ethnic communities in rural Guizhou traditionally have an austere lifestyle that follows the law of the ecosystem. In fact, even nowadays, some connection between natural resources and the ethnic community cultures can be observed in some regions of China, and some spontaneous movements

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[61] Two ethnic communities in China.
[62] This site was located in rural Yunnan where there are some NGO programmes but no coal mines.

have begun fighting back against the unwelcomed 'development' – for example, the campaigns initiated by the Tibetan people in Qinghai and Gansu Provinces against mining operations.[63] However, most of these activities have been muted in the media and they tend to be excluded from public discussions (according to my field experiences). The Chinese political authorities and the censorship enforcement have contributed to a conservative civil society with a lack of freedom regarding discourse (more discussions on media politics will be presented in Chapter 5). Short of the discursive linkage between the ethnic minorities and environmental rights or autonomous rights, indigenous politics has neither been acknowledged (at least not openly) as a critical issue in the environmental arena, nor well-considered among the common *laobaixing*. For members of the ethnic communities, in particular, their ethnicity and concerns about nature were mentioned only when we were discussing certain government schemes or NGO programmes that subsidised them. The discourse regarding ethnicity and autonomy in Chinese society was believed to be highly censored by the political authorities (Park, 2013), and the ethnic community members were cautious about playing a part in protests that might be labelled as 'undermining national unity', which is a crime against the state (Litzinger, 2009: 295).

Regarding the role of NGOs, there are historical and political reasons that have contributed to the different practices of NGOs both in China (Chen, 2010a; Ho, 2001a; Spires, 2011; Tang and Zhan, 2008) and in India (Ebrahim, 2005; Williams, 2004), yet little attention has been paid to comparing the cases of the two countries. In the remainder of this section I will focus on how the different conditions for NGO activities in the two countries have influenced the formation of environmentalism among the common people in my study cases. Two main effects will be discussed. On the one hand, as argued in some of the literature, NGOs play a critical role in constructing alternative ideas – inspired by the organisations based in well-developed societies – among the public (Ebrahim, 2005). The adoption of these discourses helps the local community to increase their knowledge capital. Furthermore, the presence of these organisations or social workers demonstrates to the common people how to form action groups. The practice of grouping to a certain extent results in an improvement in the social capital of individuals.

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[63] Since 2009, several conflicts between the Tibetan campaigners against the mining operations in the mountain areas in Qinghai and Gansu Provinces have been heard yet have not received balanced media coverage.

Generally speaking, Chinese NGOs are more conservative in their behaviour due to the censorship applied by the authorities; Indian activists introduce more ideas that can be traced back to the international discourse. India witnessed formalised/legalised collaborations between international and local organisations earlier than China. For instance, NGO programmes that receive funds directly from European institutions have been present in India since the early 1980s.[64] Receiving funding inevitably results in some importing of foreign ideologies (Ebrahim, 2005). In the case of China, although multilateral agencies began to set up operations in the country and worked in partnership with the NGO-like organisations established by the government[65] following the reform and openness policies during the 1980s, until now, the state authorities have remained wedded to 'the policy of having no policy' in dealing with international NGO affairs. This allows the state to ban these organisations if any of their work is considered to threaten social stability (Shieh and Knutson, 2012).

In my case studies, Indian activists who hold the concept that environmental rights are one manifestation of the rights of indigenous people mostly have some connection with NGOs receiving international funds. One interviewee expressed his belief in the importance of international funding[66] as it allows his organisation to be more critical and radical in fighting against the enterprises. This corresponds with the argument made by other researchers – that funding normally comes with an ideological impact (Ebrahim, 2005). In China too there are examples of local organisations attempting to introduce foreign ideologies into their projects – especially those funded by international NGOs. These ideologies include democracy, participatory development and the self-governance of local communities; these are quite similar to the ideas shared by the Indian activists as discussed in the last section. However, lacking the freedom of discourse, Chinese civil activists and NGOs have to stay away from addressing social needs that might raise people's grievances against the government and they have to avoid democratic claim-making (Spires, 2011); in this context, ethnic autonomy is a (politically) 'sensitive' topic. Additionally, transnational connections can invite unwarranted attention from the Chinese government, especially when it comes to actual collaboration with foreign organisations (Chen, 2010a).

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[64] One example is the AKRSP (Aga Khan Rural Support Programme). This was established in 1983, and was one of the first NGO programmes to receive bilateral funds directly from the European Commission (Ebrahim, 2005).

[65] GONGOs, government-organised non-governmental organisations.

[66] This is funding from international organisations.

Here is an example to illustrate the multiple dynamics influencing discourse construction (including the official restrictions) experienced by NGOs. During my supplementary field study in a Yi village in rural Yunnan, an interviewee who was the manager of a solar power project supported by a German institution said that the idea of democracy and self-determination of indigenous communities was obligatory in the proposal, even though it was a so-called 'environmental project' (Luyang, 50s, male). To fulfil the requirement, the local community had to hold a series of meetings to decide where to set up the power plant and organised a team to monitor its construction and operation. Meanwhile, in order to gain acceptance from the local communities, in practice, the project had to show its efforts towards poverty alleviation. As a result, the Yi *laobaixing* of this area adopted the narrative that environmental governance is an issue for everyone, and that there is the possibility of sustainable development: life improvement can be achieved without harming nature.

> We are peasants; if we give our land with which we earn our living to the investors for compensation, how can we and our next generation survive after the compensation has been spent? How can the natural environment maintain its eco-value like it does now? (Yuwen, late 30s, male)

Yuwen, a Yi male in his thirties, was only one example from his community, but the majority expressed similar sentiments. However, according to Yuwen, their people were 'reminded' about environmentalism only after the NGO teams came to the village, for they have experienced cultural and ideological assimilation by political authorities for generations. Compared with the case of *Weilongcun* in Guizhou where there was no NGO project around, the informants of Yi village have had experiences with NGOs and social activists gradually internalising the discourse as their opinion. The process of adoption improves the cultural or discursive capital of these individuals and inspires their perspective regarding environmental governance and daily-life decisions.

Certainly, some may argue that the ethnic differences between the *laobaixing* of Yi village and those of *Weilongcun* have resulted in their different interpretations of the values of the environment. However, as shown in the previous section, what I am arguing is not whether the *adivasi* communities have different beliefs about nature or not; my arguments concern the influences added by discursive constructions. The two (or even more) cultures of the environment in Indian society have been well presented in the spectrum of environmentalism and are open to be debated by scholars, activists

and the public. On the contrary side, environmental (or other forms of) campaigns in connection with ethnic communities remain a politically sensitive topic in Chinese society that may invite extraordinary censorship regarding publications and communications. There are NGOs with programmes in areas with ethnic minorities, most of which are devoted to initiatives regarding indigenous cultural traditions. In the case of Luyang, his organisation had to include some politically sensitive terms (such as democracy and self-determination) in its proposal to foreign organisations to get international funding, while at the same time, they composed another version of the proposal to be reviewed by the Chinese government agencies. In this manner, I may argue that the differences between my Chinese and Indian case studies do not depend heavily on whether one has significant indigenous cultures or not; rather, ordinary people's different interpretations of environmentalism are due to the different degrees of authoritarian censorship imposed on people's usage of language and discourse, which affect the public through the NGOs and civil activists as a medium.

Alongside the discursive capital, the networks of NGOs or social groups at the local level can develop social capital for the public. As illustrated in the section discussing the two languages in India, discourses shared among certain people work as a demonstration of social networking. The strong dynamic of Indian NGOs and activists can be seen not only in the introduction of various ideas but also in their performances of grouping together. In contrast, although there is a well-known culture of 'connection' (guanxi)[67] in China (Lin et al., 2001), the function of social connection does not work as radically as in India. The idea of 'connection' (guanxi) in the Chinese context reflects more or less the capacity to gain access to the authorities in order to solve problems and arrange plans. As in India, the influences of social networks are reflected not only in solving bureaucratic problems, but also in distributing resources in everyday life. A simple example is that my interviewees in India often came as a cluster; as long as I got in touch with a single person, others who belonged to the same social group, or, shared the same 'language', would be introduced to me in a snowball manner. Meanwhile, in China, only in very few cases did my interviewees take the initiative to put me in contact with others during the fieldwork.

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[67] *Guanxi* means 'connection'; it is understood as the practice of social capital with which one can gain benefits from social connections or social networks.

Moreover, the stakeholders in India formed diverse groups, sharing interests, beliefs and discursive power; this kind of activity was almost invisible in China as its political culture discourages the practice of mobilising or gathering among the public through a shared ideology. An experience mentioned by the founder of one Chinese NGO provides an illustration of this. As the organisation had worked at the grassroots level in rural Yunnan for more than ten years and brought a certain amount of benefit to the people, the founder had some fame and influence among the locals – this invited attention from the authorities. Both NGO workers and scholars suggest that the increasing collaborations between the local community-based organisations and international funders are not welcomed by the official authorities; in Yunnan, energetic civil activities have to a certain extent contributed to its provincial government issuing a set of regulations (by the end of 2009) directed specifically at international non-government collaborations (Shieh and Knutson, 2012). The regulations require NGOs to file documents of every project carried out and detail all of the partners involved; in some cases, officials can impose overly restrictive rules. Since the issue of the regulations, any proposal from NGOs for international fundraising has to be reviewed by the provincial government in advance and some projects have been taken over by government institutions. In short, the Chinese authorities prefer the social connection to take the form of linear links between individuals and official agencies, rather than a network involving diverse interest groups. In such a context, it is not surprising to find that the support that a non-government network can provide is more available in rural India than in rural China.

Conclusion: people are demanding 'participation' in diverse forms

The first section of this chapter presented a discussion about how the environment is considered in China among the *laobaixing*. Generally speaking, the environment is treated as a resource for living with a practical economic approach. With this approach, the degradation of the environment is understood as one of the costs of development. While the *laobaixing* I encountered could not find a role in public affairs, they expressed a greater sense of power in the private sphere in terms of maintaining daily cleanliness in the dusty surroundings. The second section showed how the idea of the environment has been built into the discourses of environmentalism in India. Whether the discourse has an institutionalist tendency that overlooks the element of indigenous

communities in environmental governance, or it is one with a social-green perspective that emphasises the rights of indigenous people in land and self-determination, rural India has witnessed the deployment of nature and ethnic identity in formulating languages of environmentalism. As discussed in the third section, the fundamental difference between the two is the freedom to construct discourses and the involvement of activists or social elites, whether these are in the form of individuals or organisations like NGOs.

To sum up, while in China the narratives shared by the interviewees seem to reflect the relationship between the people and the authorities, the Indian narratives reveal more about social connections and divisions among the public. The question now is, whether we apply the ideal types of authoritarian environmentalism and democratic environmentalism to understand the difference between these two Asian countries. The discussions and arguments will be further brought out in the coming chapters in an attempt to answer this question.

Meanwhile, both cases lead us to reconsider the struggle for livelihood by the marginalised populations within the development-environment debate. I argued that individuals are demanding 'participation' in development. However, this 'participation' can be realised in diverse forms. Broadly speaking, there is the form of 'participatory governance' and there is the other form of 'economic sharing'. The first form, 'participatory governance', is more readily recognised by literature concerned with the idea of 'participation'. Based on the cases of the two countries, I argue that NGOs or social activists – viewed as a critical medium – play an important role for individuals and increase their capacity to participate in public affairs in terms of constructing/introducing discourses. In Bourdieu's terms (1986), the discourses turn into a source of 'cultural capital', and at the same time, the associations with activists turn into 'social capital'; together these empower the individuals to join (or to think of joining) the arena of public issues, such as environmental governance.

The second form of participation, economic sharing (which has been less discussed conventionally in connection with the politics of 'participation') can be practised or performed in a more individualised way. On the one hand, seeking economic sharing within local development is a battle of everyday life that can take place in a very individual manner (without grouping into a network). On the other hand, the delivery of

economic sharing from investors to separate individuals is in most cases one way to defuse the idea of the local community initiating campaigns. With this understanding, it is not surprising to find that the Chinese *laobaixing* hold the economic perspective: they want, at the very least, to gain their share of economic development, as payback for the environmental degradation. The political regime and censorship enforcement of China discourage the intent to organise or form a group based on a shared ideology among the public. In this case, lacking discursive capital and social capital to take part in the public arena, the *laobaixing*, like the *adivasis*, are left with little space in which to bargain. They can only seek to enhance their economic capital/condition, as they have little ability to stop themselves from losing environmental capital in the process of development.

In addition, aside from the public environment and social economic activities, what can be controlled is the domestic environment. This could be seen as the third type of environmental participation: it takes the form of trying to regain power by maintaining the cleanness/purity of the environment in everyday life, in terms of food, the house and the body.

All of these could be understood as diverse practices of 'participation' that exist, in one way or another, among my study cases: the local stakeholders in mining villages, who have limited resources. How can these help us to rethink the idea of 'participation' in environmental governance? Is the definition of 'participation' in the relevant literature sufficient to explain the situations in the two countries? In the coming chapters, for the most part in Chapter 6, I will discuss this further.

Chapter 5: Media representations of 'rights' in coal development and environmental campaigns

Introduction

Previous chapters illustrated my concerns regarding the politics of 'participation' in environmental arenas under different regimes. Some researchers consider that democracies involve a greater degree of public participation in decision-making when compared to environmental governance in authoritarian regimes, which is mainly guided (or, I would say shaped) by governments (Beeson, 2010; Gilley, 2012). However, from my considerations, the authoritarian or democratic tendencies of the environmental arena of a country should be valued not only by the evidence of participation but also by other social factors that enhance or inhibit the participatory actions, such as selective information disclosure and the extent of freedom of expression. Therefore, this chapter will further explore the politics of expression and image building by looking at some media productions, in particular, films, so that the way environmental rights are exercised and performed in a society can be better understood. Such an understanding may allow us to reconsider the socio-political conditions of each of the two countries that could have given rise to their environmental campaigns.

Furthermore, considering the recent emergence of environmental movements in China[68] the assumption that Chinese environmentalism lacks the practice of participation is questionable. In contrast, as shown in Chapter 4 (and will be further elaborated in Chapter 6), there are practices of participation in the Chinese environmental arena, which contradict what political scientist Bruce Gilley (2012) has suggested, namely, that Chinese environmentalism has a non-participatory nature. Yet their practices of participation or exercises of rights may have been composed and interpreted based on the socio-political ideology in China, which is not the same as that pertaining in the Western context. Meanwhile, the contemporary Chinese leaders have reaffirmed the value of Great Harmony (dàtóng)[69] in Chinese culture,[70] at the same time as the

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[68] The large-scale protest that happened in Shifang, Sichuan Province, in July 2012 (as mentioned in Chapter 2) is one example; the movement of Quigang (which I am going to discuss in this chapter) in Anhui Province is another. Other examples can be found in the work edited by Sam Geall (2013b).

[69] *Dàtóng* (Great Harmony) is a Confucian ideal vision of the world in which everyone and everything is at peace with no conflict.

[70] I use the term 'reaffirm' because the use of the idea of 'Great Harmony' as well as many other

government continues to modify knowledge-production, discourage radical political debates among intellectuals (McDonald, 2007; Sleeboom-Faulkner, 2007), and censors media information flow about people's (environmental) movements (Geall, 2013a; Li, 2014; Qian, 2012). Such an ideological construction impacts upon the political practices of individuals and is also reflected in how people respond to their problematic living conditions.

Films are a type of cultural production that is very accessible to ordinary people, compared with history or other discourse constructions. Their potential influence on the way common people learn about the issue of coal development justifies my purpose of including them in this study. As suggested by anthropologists Cowan et al. (2001: 4), 'culture, rather than being solely an object of analysis, can be employed as a means of analysing and better understanding the particular ways that rights to processes operate as situated social action'. Films, as well as other cultural presentations of development issues, provide fictional representations of real life, through which some clues about social reality can be found. They can be valuable sources of knowledge about the development process and lead us to examine the politics of image construction (Lewis et al., 2014). Through the films, media politics can be observed and analysed so as to enrich the discussion on the ideological construction of environmentalism in the two countries.

In the first section of this chapter, I will introduce two feature films shot in the coal regions which correspond respectively with the locations of my case studies – Panxian of China and Dhanbad of India. The two films, *Shancun Fengyun: The Storm Riders of Mountain Village* (Bei-Bei, 2011) and *Gangs of Wasseypur* (Kashyap, 2012), demonstrate how the lives and problems of coal mining villages are presented differently through the mass media. Together they may exemplify a difference showing that the harmonious-oriented cultivation shapes a key storyline in Chinese mainstream media, while Indian media practitioners seem to have more space to address or ciriticise social conflicts.

Confucianism notions was suppressed during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). There was a series of campaigns against the 'Four Olds': old thought, old culture, old tradition and old custom. Confucianism was considered as a type of old culture that conflicted with the new socialist doctrine of 'class struggles'.

The discussions of the second section of this chapter will be based on another two films: *The Warriors of Qiugang: A Chinese Village Fights Back* (Yang, 2010) and *Hul Sengel Aguwa: Unsung Heroes of Revolt* (Prakash, 2012). They are documentaries that report on the environmental movements that happened in rural China and India,[71] which reflect grassroots participation. Both of them were produced by alternative media; therefore, they provide perspectives different from the 'mainstream' films – those might be influenced to a larger extent by the political propaganda or dominating ethnic groups. In other words, the documentaries could be seen as another form of environmental participation that has been initiated by cultural elites, who took a relatively radical position and sought to present the environmental campaigns of people. If we divide society into three realms: civil society, the public sphere and the official government world, borrowing the ideas of Jürgen Habermas (1991), the grassroots environmental activities of the two countries seem to show different tendencies in approaching different realms of society for help. I will use the documentaries as supportive materials to further examine my argument that emerged and extended from my fieldwork as elaborated in the last chapter. That argument was that the Indian campaigners tend to seek allies in civil society in order to formulate a joint voice in the public sphere, while the Chinese campaigners aim to gain assistance directly from the official institutions.

While some of my arguments may appear to reinforce the binary stereotypes between the two societies, I would like to clarify that, what I am trying to do is to point out the features highlighted respectively in Chinese and Indian media productions (or in historical writings or academic works discussed in other chapters). These features, or ideal types, in Max Weber's term (1949), were 'formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, concrete individual phenomena' (1949: 90). Thus, they may provide an analytical approach to the study of the complexity of social reality. My research aims to examine how the images of environmental problems or campaigns have been presented in a society by social members influenced by various ideologies. Recognising the stereotypes or ideal types will allow researchers to further analyse the reasons why – to

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[71] Only one Chinese documentary will be involved in the discussions; however, for India, one documentary has been selected as the main resource but some other Indian documentaries will be discussed too. This is because there are plenty of works addressing people's environmental campaigns in India, while they are quite rare in China. Both of the two main documentaries report on movements that happened at village level in the country; however, they are not exclusively related to the coal mining areas of my field sites.

take this chapter for instance – the Chinese media representations emphasise the value of 'harmony', while the Indian depictions reveal more types of conflicts in their society; although, in fact, there are conflicting campaigns in Chinese society as well. In practice, to study films allows us to deconstruct the stereotypes and to reflect on not only what was said in the media but also what was left unsaid, which is important for enhancing our understanding of social reality – especially in China where media censorship is continuously a critical issue.

Ideology of 'rights': harmonious orientation and conflict perspectives

The two films I am going to introduce in this section both present some 'conflicts' in relation to coal resources. This led me to look at the conceptualisations of 'rights' in the two societies. By 'rights', following the theme that deals with people-state relationship/conflicts, my concerns are with the agreement between the state and its people. From my perspective, it is only after the conceptualisations and interpretations of 'rights' (people-state relationship) as an integrative concept have been examined to some extent, that we can be in a position to further understand some of the dialogues reported in the fieldwork. Specifically, this can aid an understanding of the reasons why the practices of diverse categories of rights, such as land right and common property rights (e.g. Chakravarty-Kaul, 1996; Chandra, 2013; Mosse, 1997), were brought into discussions (in the literature and daily-life conversations) significantly more frequently in Indian than in Chinese environmental arena.

Similarly to 'the environment', China and India have witnessed different interpretations and practices in relation to the idea of 'rights'. The conceptualisation of 'rights' to a certain degree has Western origins and has been better studied in the English context (Bruun and Jacobsen, 2000; Williams, 2004; Williams and Mawdsley, 2006). Thus, ironically yet inspiringly, the different constructions of 'rights' in the two Asian countries can be studied by reviewing their distinct historical trajectories in response to the Western counterpart of the idea of 'rights'. In the coming discussions, I will first explain how the idea of 'rights' was introduced to China as a 'cultural translation' that has been interpreted in terms of Confucianism, which emphasises the state-citizen relationship and considers social harmony as the precondition for the fulfilment of individual rights. As for India, its history of colonisation and anti-colonisation has

resulted in a culture that emphasises social conflict and the importance of fighting for individual freedom against the intrusive State. The distinct histories of the two countries have contributed to the different performances of rights from the people's side. In addition, I will use two feature films as examples to support my argument regarding the differences between China and India with regard to their socio-political ideology. Through the cultural production of mass media it can be observed that there is harmonious orientation in Chinese culture, which contrasts with the conflict perspective in Indian culture. The discussion might provide us with a lens through which to reconsider the characteristics of their authoritarian and democratic appearances.

Ideological origins of 'rights' in Chinese and Indian societies

The cultural constructions in the process of modernisation regarding the ideas of governance, national identity and the state-public relationship reveal significant differences between China and India. To a certain degree, these differences can be explained by the reality that China has never been colonised as a whole by Western imperial powers,[72] while India has had a long experience of colonial rule. Hence, the idea of 'rights' was not a by-product of having foreign authorities on its territory; rather, it was introduced to the society by returning overseas Chinese scholars and politicians, such as Sun Yat-sen who later became an important political leader.

Confucianism and other traditional philosophies were suppressed during certain periods of time in modern China, in particular during the Cultural Revolution decade (1966-1976). Nonetheless, the Confucian attitude has influenced Chinese intellectuals for more than 2000 years (Yu, 1987) and some of the concepts are selectively recalled and reinterpreted from time to time to serve the needs of ideological construction. In contemporary China, as pointed out by political scientist Joseph Chan (1999), Confucianism in a reconstructed form has turned into an influential source for cultural regeneration, which fills an ideological and moral vacuum in the society and serves the strategy of nationalism to reshape its image on the international scene.

During the process of political modernisation, the idea of 'rights' has interacted with the Confucian ideology of governance that pre-existed it among Chinese elites and was

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[72] It has merely been divided by the authority and conceded or leased to the Western countries; the experience of Hong Kong with the British is an example.

embodied in the term of 'civil rights' (mínquán: the rights as a citizen ruled by the state authority). The idea was used as an ideological tool to overthrow the power of the monarchy in pre-modern China, the Qing Dynasty. However, the importance of a ruling authority remains and can be observed in the famous work of Sun Yat-sen, the *San Min Zhu Yi: Three People's Principles* (1974).

When Sun Yat-sen introduced the principles of 'liberty, equality, and fraternity' – which formed the motto of the 1789 French Revolution – into Chinese society, he interpreted them as the principle of nationalism (mínzú zhǔyì), the principle of the people's power (mínquán zhǔyì) [73] and the principle of the people's livelihood (mínshēng zhǔyì). According to Sun Yat-sen, 'nationalism' is defined in the Chinese context as a national consciousness,[74] which is a production of *wángdào* (the rule of a benevolent government); while in contrast, the Western nation-state is the production of *bàdào* (the rule of military force). Sun emphasised that the Chinese nationality is an aggregation that has developed through natural and harmonious growth; the majority of its population share the same racial heredity, religion and traditional customs.[75]

The people's power (mínquán) was introduced as an idea that included two dimensions: the political force of the people (zhèngquán), and the power of governance or the administrative force (zhìquán). Meanwhile, the state is the most powerful social organisation to operate the power of the people, and the rights of the people are granted by the state. As for the aim of the Chinese principle of livelihood (mínshēng), this is to provide sufficient food and necessities to the four hundred million people together as a whole.

To sum up, Sun used the hybrid of the Confucianism idea of '*wángdào* (or ruling by kindness)' and the Western idea of 'civil rights' to justify the legitimacy of the modern state, the Republic of China. All of the three principles are based on the belief in

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[73] One thing worthy of mention is that *mínquán zhǔyì* (民權主義) is translated back into English as the 'principle of democracy' most of the time. However, such a translation might cause a misunderstanding because 'democracy' corresponds more to the term *mínzhǔ* (民主) in Mandarin Chinese than *mínquán* (民權). There is a small yet significant difference between the term *mínquán* and *mínzhǔ*. As mentioned, *mínquán* (民權: civil rights) merely describes the rights of citizens under a state, while *mínzhǔ* (民主: democracy) adds some emphasis on the self-determination power of the citizens.

[74] As extended beyond family or clan relationships.

[75] 'Although there are a little over ten million non-Chinese in China … their number is small compared with the purely Chinese population, who number four hundred million' (Sun, 1974).

collectiveness, which emphasises the social existence of individuals. Later, such a harmonious perspective of rights and collective perspective of livelihood was applied and redefined again in terms of communism in the revolution led by Mao Zedong (Yuzo, 1999: 11-13).

In Mao's interpretation, the individual practice of rights was judged to be a privilege of the elites. In place of 'civil rights', Mao used the term 'people's rights', which was always followed by 'people's obligations' – in this manner the harmonious orientation was realised in the practices of communalism and socialism and detached from Confucianism discursively. Such an adjustment in some way influenced the society to highlight the linkage between the people and the nation state instead of activities in the civil realm. Between rights and obligations, Mao emphasised the latter. Between the three principles, referring to nationalism to mobilise people joining in the communist revolution, Mao's policy showed a great focus on the principle of people's livelihood in terms of advancing the national economy. The embodiment of this thought was evidenced in China's *First Five-Year Plan (1953-1957)*, announced in 1955, and its theme could be summarised by the slogan 'Promote industrialisation, overtake Britain and catch up with America' (chāo yīng gǎn měi). Since then, instead of rights in the political and socio-cultural spheres, the Chinese authorities have drawn public attention to their rights in terms of livelihood along with their obligations in promoting the national economy. This can also explain why, as discussed in Chapter 4, the 'participation' of the common people in China tends to take the form of requesting economic sharing as the national economy develops rather than seeking participatory governance regarding public affairs.

Comparing the contexts of the first Five-Year Plan of each of the two countries, India's *1ˢᵗ Five-Year Plan* (GOI, 1950) presented quite a different emphasis on the role of the people from that in the Chinese Plan. 'To set the patterns of future development is a task of such magnitude and significance that it should embody the impact of public opinion and the needs of the community' (GOI, 1950). The rights of individuals in terms of their opinions being included in the national development were highlighted in its Introduction section, 'every citizen should have the opportunity to participate'.

The differences between the socio-political ideologies of the two countries can be explained to some extent by the different routes through which they became modern

nation-states. For China, on the one hand, Mao's revolution can be seen as an exhaustive social transformation (Moore, 1967) in both the temporal and spatial dimensions. It witnessed the destruction of the monarchy and the privileged class and the establishment of a communist state and a new set of rules, although the new rules may be still characterised as dictatorial. The revolutionary social transformation has led to significant strides in public education and ideological (re)construction; although it needs to be born in mind that actions to this end were sometimes carried out violently with a power that was barely challenged (Drèze and Sen, 2010). New doctrines were introduced into the society. In modern China, the legitimacy of domination to a certain degree has been based on the experience of working in the countryside (xià xiāng), so that the governance could be justified as an actualisation of 'people as masters' (rénmín zuò zhǔ). On the other hand, under the appearance of such an absolute 'revolution', Chinese culture never witnessed a revolutionary change regarding the admiration of authority, regardless of whether it had a monarchical, republican or communist tendency. The term 'harmony' or other Confucianism notions were once suppressed and later reconstructed to endorse new doctrines promoted by new authority – the Chinese Communist Party leadership in this case. To ensure the state's influence would be extended further down to the village level, during the post-revolutionary period, the party-state institutionalised the society through administrative collaboration between party secretary, party branch committee and community cadres (Huang, 1993). The influence of authority and the expressions of admiration can be evidenced by the government documents that always start by referring to the narratives delivered by Mao or Deng as the guiding principle of their policies.[76]

As for India, the idea of 'rights' (reflected in the people-state relationship) was not interpreted in the country in the interest of serving as a tool to advance governance, but as a tool to battle authority. For a long time before its independence, the population of this subcontinent had the status of subjects instead of citizens. In Partha Chatterjee's words, the colonial power was 'a rule of colonial difference, namely, the preservation of the alienness of the ruling group' (Chatterjee, 1993: 10). The ideology of 'difference' was reinforced in Indian society through colonial domination; at the same time, the

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[76] For example, at the end of 2012, the Nation Development and Reform Commission of China issued the '*No.2 Document*' that aims to promote the sound and rapid economic and social development of Guizhou Province. It identifies the ideology of Deng Xiaoping as its guiding principle.

nationalist revolution could not avoid invoking the politics of 'difference' by talking about the rights of difference in order to organise people to join the anti-colonial movement. The conceptualisation of 'rights' in the Indian context combines both the ideas of civil rights and human rights in terms of self-determination and rights against discrimination. Meanwhile, as a democratic country, the contract of 'rights' between the Indian citizens and the state is to be reviewed regularly, based on its election system, to make sure the obligation of government (rather than 'people's obligation' as in China's case) has been addressed to some extent.

The authority of modern China always claims itself to be a unity with components sharing the same racial heredity, religion and customs, whereas the Indian government expresses the tendency to appreciate the 'difference'. There are distinct perspectives concerning how their state leaders enforce the ideological construction regarding the consistencies or differences amongst their people. Take ethnical diversity as an example. According to its national census data (2010),[77] 8.49% of the Chinese population are ethnic minorities other than the Han Chinese. In fact, this number is similar to the percentage of the population termed 'Scheduled Tribes'[78] in the total population of India (8.6% in 2011).[79] In this context, India has a long history of dealing with inner differences – whether they are ethnic, religious, cultural or linguistic differences. A multilingual policy is one of India's measures to address the issue of diversity, which recognises the importance of indigenous languages in official policy and accepts the value of mother-tongue education (Spolsky, 2004). Alternatively, the Chinese government continuously emphasises that China is a united unity in which all ethnic communities are 'as close as brothers belonging to the same family of the motherland'[80] and which share a single national language. Although India's hegemonic public sphere has witnessed the emergence of Hindu Nationalism, which is partly due to the social stratification and its reinforcement (Williams and Mawdsley, 2006), that development is

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[77] *2010 Sixth National population census data Gazette (No. 1)*, by the Chinese government. Available at: http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/tjgb/rkpcgb/qgrkpcgb/201104/t20110428_30327.html [Accessed 19 July 2015].
[78] 'Scheduled Tribes (STs)' is the official designation given to the ethnic minority groups by the Indian Constitution.
[79] According to the *Demographic Status of Scheduled Tribe Population of India*, by the Indian government. Available at: http://www.tribal.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/Demographic.pdf [Accessed 19 July 2015].
[80] According to the official statement '*Unified Multi-ethnic Country*' published by the Chinese government. Available at: http://www.gov.cn/test/2005-06/24/content_9200.htm [Accessed 19 July 2015].

nevertheless the outcome of a democratic system (Hansen, 1999). Hence, there remains uncertainty in the process of competition between various stances and the politics of difference is one of the issues that is addressed in that realm.

During the time of the Indian independence movement, the discourse that consisted of questioning the legitimacy of the authorities and criticising discrimination was popularised. However, this critical discourse was not reflected later in the post-colonial institutions. As suggested by Moore (1967), due to the lack of a violent revolution in India to facilitate the establishment of an opposing position between the public and the government, democracy in India appears carnival-like, in Bakhtin's term (1984), and the power of the people tends to be unfocussed. From Partha Chatterjee's viewpoint (2004), the local elites took over power and the associated colonial technologies of governmentality and went on to formulate, in the process of becoming independent, the inner-colonisation condition in the society. In this context, India witnessed a (peaceful) political revolution but not a (radical) socio-cultural revolution. The hierarchical society and exclusive domination – in terms of not only caste and ethnic divisions, but also the unjust distribution of land and other resources – remain despite the transfer of political power. The modern Indian regime justifies itself with the institution of democracy and policies with participatory ideas, and allows all kinds of criticism of social conflict with little threat to the official institutions.

Cultural representations of coal villages

Cinemas provide fictional representations of real life, through which some clues about social reality can be found. Generally speaking, for the rural population with little resources, media productions about their area more or less serve as an introduction for the world to see rural living conditions, although there might also be disagreements over these representations. This is how these two films were introduced to me: the *Shancun Fengyun* (2011) and *Gangs of Wasseypur* (2012). Before visiting my Chinese field site in rural Guizhou, I was told, 'You may want to watch the movie *Shancun Fengyun* beforehand. It was taken in one village nearby and will provide you with a broad idea of the living conditions of the villagers' (Gongming, 30s, male). Similar things were said to me about the *Gangs of Wasseypur* (2012) during my Indian fieldwork, 'Some of the characters are inspired by real people from the area; although things are exaggerated in

a fictional manner, you will learn a bit about the development and coal issue of Dhanbad' (Sunita, 29, female).

Shancun Fengyun (2011) is a contemporary story set in Panxian County, Guizhou. Undergraduate student Liu Fei takes part in the 'University Student Volunteer Service Program for Western Regions'[81] and is assigned to teach in an elementary school in the rural village of Guizhou. Soon after she arrives, she realises that the school's construction is at great risk due to the coal path running underground beneath the school. It is the time of the village committee director elections, in which the coal business owner Hua is participating and aims to win. Hua owns the major (if not only) coal business in the area (in terms of the mining title and the related activities); he is originally from the village and has donated a lot to public constructions in the village over the past years. His contributions have covered the building of this elementary school, the highway and the nursing home. Liu Fei comes to Hua to discuss the safety issue. Hua also wants to secure the school students and villagers but except for shutting down the coal mine there is only one alternative, which is to replace the coal path under the school so that it passes through the area of the village cemetery.

Finally, Liu Fei, with the help of the respected cadre and villager leader, persuades the villagers that to replace the tombs of their ancestors would actually be an improvement with the consideration of *fēngshuǐ* (a Chinese traditional belief that emphasises the harmony of the human existence with the surrounding environment). In addition, she reminds the villagers that the education of the coming generations should be considered as more important than the settlement of past generations. Basically, the villagers do not want the coal business to shut down as they earn their living from it. At the end, both the villagers and Hua are happy to arrange the replacement of the coal path – to pass through the current graveyard. Later, Hua is elected as the new leader of the village committee, without a bribe.

As part of an experimental new wave of Bollywood cinema, the scale of the *Gangs of Wasseypur* (2012) is much bigger than that of *Shancun Fengyun* (2011) and it has many of the trappings of an entertaining gangster film. The background presents the history of development in terms of the formation of coal mafias in the area. The story follows the trajectory of three generations of a Muslim family, the Khans, that struggles generation

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[81] This is a real program.

by generation with the Hindu capitalist-turned-politician, Ramadhir Singh. Another Muslin family, the Qureshis, are also motivated by Singh to take part in the power battles. Singh uses the social divide between the two Muslim families to consolidate his political and economic interests. Mafia gangs form and gunfights take place. At the end of the movie, Ramadhir Singh is killed in a bloodbath by Faisal Khan, whose grandfather and father were both murdered by Singh. However, Faisal himself is shot dead soon afterwards. This is set up by the son of Ramadhir and the half-brother of Faisal who are tempted to take over the power to control the coal business and gangs in the region.

With regard to the issue of social order, the two films illustrate an essential difference between the Chinese and Indian cultures: *Shancun Fengyun* promotes the principle of harmony while *Gangs of Wasseypur* expresses the conflicts in society without hesitation. For instance, in reality, mafia and kinship groupings also exist in Chinese coal villages, and they have a role in the film *Shancun Fengyun* as well. The film shows that Hua's activities in the coal business and the election campaign are partly organised through a network of gangs; nevertheless, Hua wants to be a legitimate businessman and cadre and he insists that he wants to win the election with neither bribe nor other illegal activity involved. In this manner, the image of the mafia is 'harmonised' (censored and adjusted) through the representation. In sum, the Chinese film shows a problem-solving orientation and demonstrates success. From the beginning to the end, every single person shares a unified goal: to achieve a secured and sustainable development in the coal village. In contrast, the Indian movie has a mission-completing orientation. However, more than one mission can be observed in the movie and together these demonstrate the complications of social divisions.

In other words, the Chinese work emphasises a big 'I' (dà wǒ) that represents the collective interest, while the Indian one focuses more on various individuals and their personal concerns. In the movie, the voices of the Chinese individuals are presented in a way that seeks maximum public interest: Liu Fei is a volunteer teacher who wants to ensure the right to education for the students, the villagers want a sustainable development with the coal business, and Hua, after earning a lot from the natural resource, wants to contribute to public service. The rational considerations of each person lead to a single aim that is to enrich the biggest interest of the big 'I', to fulfil the

ideal of Great Harmony. The aim that is shared amongst everybody in the movie actually corresponds with the idea of 'people's obligations' in advancing national development in real life. As analysed earlier, in Chinese culture where collectiveness has precedence over individuality, people's rights are considered only after the achievement of richness for the public as a whole.

On the other hand, the Indian movie puts more focus on the power struggles in the social environment – in terms of one's battles for family honour, ethnic pride and upward class mobility. It also presents the debatable aspects in the coal region, in terms of the economic and political monopoly by the ruling elite – the Hindu family. While the Khans consider revenge as their goal, Ramadhir Singh takes advantage of others' mental weakness and hatred for the sake of ensuring his own interests. At the same time, the diverse sub-groups and individuals all hold different desires, whether rational or irrational. The movie demonstrates various aspects of humanity: greed, betrayal, naivety and heroism, and, at the same time, it illustrates the significance of family and clan relationships in Indian culture. There are numerous individuals each of whom has his/her voice in the story; these performances of humanity together result in the gangs and violent conflicts in the area, whether intentionally or not. To a certain extent, *Gangs of Wasseypur* (2012) can be seen as a tragi-comedy that mirrors the 'carnival-style' (Bakhtin, 1984) democracy. It presents a society of differences where the rights of individuals are not always harmonious with each other but rather, are conflicting.

While the Chinese scenario seems located in a wonderland with little historical context, the Indian one is well contextualised. The social structure, or in other words, the social causes of the formation of gangs around an area rich in natural resources is hinted at: that is, the British colonisation and the inner-colonisation after India's independence. However, as one of my interviewees (Rakesh, 20s) commented, *Gangs of Wasseypur* (2012) fails to address the *adivasis*, whose rights might have been most severely violated in the region. This might correspond to the view of another respondent (Vikram, 40s) who said, with regard to the 'development' and people's movements in contemporary Dhanbad: 'It's too late, they have lost everything'. If the director of the film had tried to sketch the coal development of rural Dhanbad now by drawing on the inspirations of current politicians and by considering the social structure of the area, what would have been the result? The presence of the *adivasi* community today – in the

arena where social groups compete for interests concerning coal development – might have been already too vague to be recognised by the filmmakers.

On the one hand, the historical factor identified by Barrington Moore (1967) may be applied as an explanation for the differences in the stories' composition. Moore uses the social origins of a country – whether there has been a thorough revolution or not – to explain whether the political system can become strong enough to support the modernisation of the country (Moore, 1967). Following Moore's point of view, the experiences of a violent revolution and a dictatorship in China would be understood as having contributed to a radical transformation (whether positive or negative) in Chinese society. To a certain extent this allows the leadership of the modern state to introduce its ideology in a thorough manner – whether to promote state-building and industrialisation or to create a unified national consciousness. As for India, the revolutionary transformation seems not to have been accomplished by its independence. Colonial conflicts have thus continuously been invoked to judge current affairs and modern dominations. India has lacked a radical revolution to unify its people (in a forced or voluntary manner) with a collectiveness that can preponderate over its inner differences regarding religion, kinship and social stratification.

On the other hand, the different ways of story-telling represent the media politics of the two countries. The Chinese media are nationalised to a great extent and cannot avoid the tendency towards propaganda under the government censorship, whereas the Indian media are more commercialised in the market and more capable of reporting diverse voices including those which pin blame on the authorities.

The media politics of a country may result in the embodiment of its socio-political ideology in the content of the story. The core ideas of these two stories show distinct approaches regarding the issue of development progress: the Chinese story focuses on a pro-development orientation while the Indian tale displays the confrontations between the conflicting powers. In *Shancun Fengyun* (2011), the attitude of looking forward takes the form of sacrificing the dignity of former generations for the education of latter ones: the villagers agree to replace the graveyard in order to secure the operation of the school. In contrast, the Indian characters cannot help looking backwards as time moves on and are determined to get revenge; in this case, the lives of new generations can be sacrificed for earlier generations in order to rebuild the family's dignity.

The cultural productions correspond with the analyses provided by the literature regarding the socio-political history of the two countries (Moore, 1967). They represent the current media politics, and most importantly, they also reflect the social reality that I encountered during my fieldwork, in particular, in terms of decision-making and the attitude of the common people towards the authorities or institutional systems. 'Generation' is an important idea when thinking about 'rights' in terms of generational justice, regardless of whether this is in relation to development or environment issues. In the movie *Shancun Fengyun* (2011), the villagers choose to follow the famous Chinese saying, 'education should not be sacrificed for poverty'. In my case study, the Chinese villagers emphasised development without much consideration for the (environmental) cost of it as long as it could improve their lives. They rarely criticised the official system for causing the problematic environmental conditions.

As discussed in Chapter 4, common people who have limited economic and social capitals can only make decisions from limited choices. Chinese *laobaixing* tend to make decisions following rational/economic concerns: when environmental degradation is unarguable, one can only choose the way with most benefits, or with least harm. In contrast, various cultural factors are present in Indian society that emphasise the value of religion, bloodline, *adivasi* tradition, or community life-style; all of these values might influence one's decision making. At the same time, people are empowered by diverse discourses to criticise the stakeholders with dominant power, whether these are the government or politicians, the police or the mafia, or agents/middle men.

These discussions do not intend to simplify the two cultures but instead aim to feature some clusters of characteristics of them, or provide the 'ideal types' (Weber, 1949), to enhance a better understanding of how their cultivation of harmony or conflict oriented ideology facilitates the contemporary campaigns and people's daily struggles in the two countries. In social analysis, researchers attempt to offer an explanation of certain social actions by 'fitting them into a purposeful pattern which reveals how the act was warranted, given the actor, his social and physical situation and his beliefs and wants' (Fay, 1975). The ideal types discussed above are serving as the 'purposeful pattern' that facilitates this research to classify study materials and verify the hypotheses.

Environmental rights: secured by the authorities or by the assistance of the public sphere

Feature films produced by the mass media show little interest in reporting current events, yet they still mirror the societies where they were produced in a fictional manner. In this aspect, documentaries that literally attempt to expose social realities might allow further analyses of the reported stories and the politics of representation. In this section, two documentaries reporting the environmental movements at village level in China and India will be introduced to support my analyses. Both of the campaigns recorded in the two documentaries lasted several years; the processes of the campaigns that happened in the two cases reveal altered trajectories in terms of how the common people accessed the agent who could help them realise their demands.

In the coming discussions, the two documentaries and movements reported will be introduced; afterwards, I will elaborate my argument that the environmental campaigns that arose contemporarily in the two countries took different paths in order to achieve some force for change. Inspired by Habermas' idea regarding the public sphere (1991) and the applications made by Asian political scientists (Chatterjee, 2004; Chen, 2010b), the study aims to enrich the understanding of the grassroots movements in the two countries. This is undertaken, in particular, by examining their social positions and how they differ from middle class activists in the way they participate in civil society and form opinions in relation to institutional reform.

Representations of environmental movements

During my fieldwork in China, a documentary reporting the environmental campaigns of Quigang village in Anhui Province had just been made public, and it was brought up in discussions amongst the activists and scholars working on health and environment issues. *The Warriors of Quigang: A Chinese Village Fights Back* (2010) records a campaign that lasted for more than five years and was brought about by villagers against a polluting chemical company. It was directed by a Chinese American filmmaker, Ruby Yang, and produced by Thomas F. Lennon. This documentary came to the attention of the environmental activists and researchers partly because it was a media initiative that records and presents a movement organised in the common people. Meanwhile, the fact that this film was produced and released originally in the United

States, rather than China, makes this report relatively independent from the influences of Chinese media censorship and the propaganda department. However, as the actors/activists are Chinese *laobaixing*, we can still observe how the cultural construction influences people's actions through the film.

In India, numerous documentaries report all kinds of environmental and land campaigns that are happening around the country;[82] most of these documentaries are available for the public to review. Many of these were introduced to me by my interviewees, and out of them I chose the latest one that was shot in Jharkhand to form the supportive material for the coming discussion. The *Hul Sengel Aguwa: Unsung Heroes of Revolt* (2012) is a documentary that covers nearly two decades of the history of the *adivasi* campaigns against land acquisition and community displacement in rural Jharkhand. Meanwhile, it represents the reflections of the film director in terms of the role of the media in grassroots movements. Seventeen years ago, the director visited the location for another documentary, '*Kis Ki Raksha? (In Whose Defence?)*' (Prakash, 1994). More than ten years after the publication of the first film, the director visited the place again and talked with the same activists and villagers as a follow-up to see the changes in the area over the past decade.

In China, due to the harmonious ideology that is promoted by the political authorities and shared by the social members, those who raise opposing opinions can invite not only attention from the government but also pressure from civil communities. In such a context, the *laobaixing* tend to keep silent until a situation that violates their rights has evidently caused harm. In this case, they tend to appeal to the authorities to resolve the problem. These kinds of complaints cause small conflicts with the Great Harmony but the petitioners merely require the maintenance of their passive rights. The lenient attitude towards the 'insiders' (could be relatives, friends and others with whom one has established a social connection), or the worry about the pressures arising from 'community harmony', has been indicated by researchers in a study on an environmental campaign in Huaxi Town, Zhejiang Province (Deng and Yang, 2011). Out of the 13 factories in the chemical industrial park, only two that were operated by

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[82] Besides the *Hul Sengel Aguwa* (2012) mentioned here, there are other documentaries about *adivasi* campaigns including *Development Flows from the Barrel of the Gun Point* (2003) and *Loha Garam Hai: The Iron is Hot* (2008), both of which were directed by Meghnath Banerjee and Biju Toppo. An example of a film on water campaigns is *Capital Water: the Story of Delhi's 24x7* (2006) directed by Sumit Roy.

local people survived the protest. The tendency towards maintaining harmony can also be evidenced by *The Warriors of Quigang* (2010). In the Quigang campaign, the key activist Zhang Gongli, who leads the villagers' fight to shut down the chemical plant, says, 'I really don't want to be a hero. … but the next generation will suffer' (Yang, 2010). This statement corresponds with and furthers the argument I made in a previous section: consideration of the welfare of the next generation is one dimension of 'development', and this right should be supported by the state. To raise complaint based on such a reason reveals the action to be a performance of obedience to the authorities rather than opposition.

In contrast, the more preventive campaigns that appear in India can be partly explained by its culture, which promotes the diverse positive rights of the people. According to law scholar Sandra Fredman (2008), the Indian Court has interpreted the 'right to life' in its *Constitution*. Justice Bhagwati stated in the Supreme Court of India that 'the right of life includes the right to live with human dignity and all that goes along with it … expressing oneself in diverse forms'.[83] Such an idea of 'rights' with multiple varieties is presented in the *Hul Sengel Aguwa* (2012). In the documentary, the *adivasis* express their claims not only for environmental rights, but also for the right to information, the right to express opinions, the right to maintain traditional culture and the right to land.

Different ideologies regarding 'rights' are reflected in the rational or emotional appeals that are applied in the two movements. *The Warriors of Quigang* (2010) uses more rational appeals in justifying the action of Zhang; it adopts a descriptive manner and tries to present the line of causality between the chemical plant, the pollution and the villagers' movement in its narratives. However, audiences can find more emotional appeals in the *adivasi* campaigns that are presented in the *Hul Sengel Aguwa* (2012). In India, some shared elements can easily be observed in most of the *adivasi* movements, including: dancing and singing that stands for the indigenous cultural characteristics; crowd scenes that illustrate the consolidation of the *adivasis*; and the participation of women and children, which indicates that the issue is threatening the survival of the community.

In contrast with the Chinese documentary, the Indian film reveals that there are a greater variety of rights present in the social/environmental movements; at the same time, more

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[83] Francis Coralie Mullin vs. The Administrator, *Union Territory of Delhi (1981)* 1 SCC 608.

characters' voices were involved in it, including social workers/activists, journalists, politicians and the *adivasis*. Meanwhile, the role of the director, who holds the power of the media, is visible as well. In the film, the director even tries to discuss the effects of the media as an alternative tool for representing or empowering social movements. This actually corresponds with the particular types of actors that Habermas mentions as requirements for the public sphere: journalists and politicians with communicative ability (Habermas, 2006: 416). To some extent, it could be argued that this documentary tries to bring up/present the arena of the public sphere.

However, if we focus on the *adivasis* in the documentary as the subjects of the movement, we may find that they are not the main characters of this public sphere. Rather, in Chatterjee's term (2004), their campaign happened in a 'political society' that is out of the public sphere; their voice can hardly direct the political reactions in the official world. In the documentary we can also observe the division that exists between the grassroots campaigners and the bourgeois activists. However, only by being mediated by these bourgeois activists can the voices of the *adivasis* be heard by the political actors; then change might be possible. 'Movements raise leaders, leaders soon join politics'; however, 'we need a political solution too'. This is said by an *adivasi* activist in the documentary (Prakash, 2012).

The politicians, as well as the social elites and NGO workers identified in Chapter 4, play a critical role in the construction of environmentalism in Indian society, and they represent the power of the culturally equipped members of civil society; those who are capable of participating in the public sphere. In contrast with 'civil society', Chatterjee (2004) introduces the idea of the 'political society', which is inhabited by 'tenuously right-bearing citizens'. Chatterjee uses the word 'political' because the inhabitants of the political society are looked after and controlled by official agencies; for example, the land acquisition issued by the government to the *adivasis*. The *adivasis* as the 'Scheduled Tribes' have a certain political relationship with the state, but this is quite different from the relationship that exists between the state and the 'proper members of the civil society' (Chatterjee, 2004: 38).

In contrast, in *The Warriors of Quigang* (2010), the role of the film director is relatively invisible. Audiences can hardly hear the voice behind the camera in the film. In addition, there are two NGO workers who accompany the villagers throughout the movement,

whose voices are also muted out most of the time in the documentary as are those of the film-makers. In the film, Zhang visits Beijing with one of the NGO workers. The NGO worker introduces Zhang to many other members of environmental NGOs in a meeting; however, in the scene, it seems more like a get-together to share experiences rather than a process of political debating or opinion forming. Compared with the *Hul Sengel Aguwa* (2012), the presence of an active public sphere in the Chinese environmental arena is relatively invisible in *The Warriors of Quigang* (2010). On the one hand, this reveals the social reality that the power of the public sphere does not critically determine the success of a people's campaign. On the other hand, it reflects the tendency of the film-makers in this representation to weaken the extent of the involvement of elite citizens in this 'spontaneous self-help movement'.

The documentary by some means presents the event as being initiated by the villager Zhang himself. The movement seems more like a personal initiative rather than something related to a public debate. Zhang is presented as a single character who decides about the activities and continues the process until the authorities decide to shut down the chemical plant. He studies the regulations by himself and files the complaint. However, when reviewing the content of the documentary in detail, it could be said that the movement would not have been a success without the cooperation of most of the villagers. Here are some examples. Zhang once calls a neighbour in secret and asks her to organise a meeting. He intends to collect the signatures of the villagers. 'Call everyone – more is better', he says, 'even get the signatures [or fingerprints] from the kids as kids also breathe'. In reality, there were 1867 villagers living in Quigang, and during the movement 1801 of them added their signatures to file the complaint. On another day, forty compositions written by elementary school students are collected and provided as a complaint to the Environmental Protection Bureau. These compositions would not have been written if the school teacher had not been involved in the movement.

The above collective actions that happened in the Quigang village may be understood with the help of the idea of *minjian* (民間)[84] proposed by Kuan-Hsing Chen in his work (2010b) as a counterpart to Chatterjee's 'political society' in the context of Chinese

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[84] '*Mín*' (民) literally means 'people' and '*jiān*' (間) means 'space' or 'time period'. Generally, '*Minjian*' indicates the social realm or space where the activities of traditional customs and folk cultures take place.

culture. In fact, Chen was neither the first nor the only person who suggested using the term '*minjian*' to render 'civil society' in Chinese context. However, Chen is one of the few who adds some radical potential to this space, and probably the only one who uses the notion in dialogue with Chatterjee's concept of 'political society'. In general, *minjian* has been applied with a minimal resistance meaning as the rendering is of 'civil (society)' or 'popular space' to describe a realm different from the official world. For example, White et al. (1996) used the notion of '*mínjiān tuántĭ* (group)' to render the non-government organisations without adding sociological reflections on the term. However, '*mín*' (people/citizens) as a corresponding term with '*guān*' (mandarins/officials), means that *minjian* actually hints at a hierarchical system in which the space of the ordinary people is dominated by the official institutions. In this context, Chen identifies *minjian* as the space 'where traditions are maintained as resources to help common people survive the violent rupture brought about by the modernizing of state and civil society' (2010b: 240). *Minjian* is the realm where those suffering the side effects of modernisation get together and join the action as grassroots activists; they are those that lack the possibility of gaining the full benefits as citizens of the state. In this context, the common people have to resist both pressure from mainstream civil society and violence from the state (2010b: 240). This can be evidenced by what happens to Zhang in the Quigang campaign. During the process, he is threatened with gunshots several times, not to mention the angry menace and bribes delivered by those who pursue a common interest in the chemical plant. As for the institutional violence, the Environmental Protection Bureau asks Zhang, as a peasant, to provide 'scientific evidence' to detail the pollution and harm to make the petition effective; a similar situation happens in the Court as well (Yang, 2010). The official institutions have created a barrier to exclude the bottom-up participants; the barrier can be realised in the form of scientific terminology, a knowledge gap or other procedural specifications. While a communicative gap exists between the common people and the official government world, there also seems to be a lack of a medium by which communication can take place. NGOs are represented as passive in the documentary. Whether this reflects the reality or not, it concurs with my argument made in Chapter 4 that Chinese ordinary people have, in many cases, been discouraged from being organised by non-government elites.

Political approaches: build alliances with groups in civil society or appeal to official institutions

When Habermas (1991: 27) introduced the idea of the public sphere in a discussion about the possibility of the engagement of civil society in the official government world, 'civil society' was considered as having a bourgeois tendency.

> The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules … .

The importance of particular social actors who are able to recognise and formulate issues that are worthy of being discussed publicly is emphasised. Meanwhile, networks of these bourgeois actors are capable of communicating information and viewpoints with the potential to influence political actions (Habermas, 1996). In short, it is the bourgeois social groups that represent the agents who will have the possibility of engaging in political debates among individuals to oppose or legitimise the official governance.

The literature has contributed to furthering the discussion regarding the idea of civil society and the public sphere. Some scholars have tried to apply the idea of civil society to explain the social transformation of modern China (Chen, 2010a; Tang and Zhan, 2008) or the social movements in India (Randeria, 2003; Whitehead, 2007); in these cases, a broader usage of the term is applied to involve the multiple varieties of civil society in the discussion. On the other hand, some hold a narrower interpretation of Habermas' idea and try to understand the distance between the movements initiated amongst the common people and the political debates that have taken place in the public sphere; Partha Chatterjee and Kuan-Hsing Chen are examples. As discussed above, their works introduce the ideas of public society/*minjian* (Chatterjee, 2004; Chen, 2010b) and distinguish between the characteristics of the grassroots movements and bourgeois campaigns; their arguments give helpful inspiration to aid an understanding of the people's movements in China and India. Retaining the Marxist idea of 'civil society' as a bourgeois-dominated field, both Chatterjee (2004) and Chen's (2010b) works indicate the social division that exists among the public, which has contributed to a conceptual break in the ideal of civil society. In other words, there is a glass ceiling in both Chinese

and Indian society that blocks the grassroots voices from forming opinions regarding institutional reform.

Furthermore, Chen suggests that the terminology 'political society' and '*minjian*' from a cultural-translation perspective provide a way to study the transformation of civil society in Asian contexts, which differ from that of the West (Chen, 2010b: 244). In Chatterjee's words, this is an attempt to 'provide a conceptualization map of the emerging practices of the new political societies of the East' (Chatterjee, 1998: 282; Chen, 2010b: 243). However, before coming to an agreement on the 'political society' and the '*minjian*' and the similarities shared by the two developing Asian countries, I would like to discuss further some differences between the Indian and Chinese scenarios.

The first difference relates to 'illegality'. When Chatterjee talks about the political society, there are some paragraphs that mention the illegality of the activities that happen within it. For instance, 'These groups on their part accept that their activities are often illegal and contrary to good civic behaviour, but they make a claim to a habitation and a livelihood as a matter of right' (Chatterjee, 2004: 40). This illegality of the Indian movements was observed in my fieldwork, and is also represented in the documentary *Hul Sengel Aguwa* (2012). As Chatterjee explains later in the book, it is understandable that the 'legal arm of the state in a country like India cannot reach into a vast range of social practices that continue to be regulated by other beliefs' (Chatterjee, 2004: 50). The conflict between these alternative beliefs and the state regularities can easily be found in the *adivasis'* land campaigns. Under the Indian *Land Acquisition Act (1894)*, *adivasis* are like squatters that occupy the land and hold back state development. However, they are obeying their religious beliefs by remaining in the habitat of their ancestors' souls. In short, in a country that allows multiple cultural customs, the boundary between legality and illegality is relatively indistinct or negotiable.

This illegality is not emphasised as much in the Chinese context. When Chen talks about *minjian*, he notes its ability to provide assistance to public services in society, its 'moral obligations' (Chen, 2010b: 239). For instance, when natural disasters happen, *minjian* groups (civil groups) often move into the stricken area and are much more efficient than the official institutions at providing food and clothing, financial and

physical aid.[85] The difference in facing up to the illegality and avoiding it leads to the second difference that exists, I am going to argue, between the movements in political society and *minjian*.

The second difference shows in the strategy of obedience versus opposition. Most of the Chinese movements, whether initiated by civil society or by the *minjian*, appear to have a tendency to seek assistance from the authorities rather than fighting against them. The authoritarian orientation adopted by the Chinese public has been mentioned by researchers (Gilley, 2012; Johnson, 2010) and was discussed in Chapter 4. This characteristic contributes to the fundamental difference between the activities that arise from the *minjian* in the Chinese context and political society in the Indian context: the former use their obedience to the authorities as bargaining power while the latter tend to challenge the authorities. In spite of the fact that most members of the *minjian* are *laobaixing* with little chance of benefiting from the development, they still attempt to become proper citizens of the state. And this can explain why the Chinese care about the education of the next generations, for that is the approach of 'civilisation'. On the other hand, although the right to education is emphasised as an issue in India, many who hold alternative customs/beliefs remain suspicious of the assimilation and discipline that is enforced by education.

Obedience to the authorities is well evidenced in *The Warriors of Quigang* (2010). When composing the complaint, Zhang refers to the speech delivered by previous President Hu Jintao in 2004,[86] which emphasised the importance of environmental governance and punishing polluters. Zhang considers this to be an absolute truth and uses it to persuade the villagers, 'This is said by our state leader, President Hu!' One day during Zhang's visit to Beijing, there is a shot of Zhang standing by the side of Tiananmen Square and looking at the portrait of Mao Zedong. These elements together show the attempt to describe the action taken by Zhang as appealing to the authorities to 'redress the grievance' (shēnyuān, 伸冤) instead of anything anti-government. The activists in the documentary carry out the role of petitioners. As stated by the villagers

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[85] With a broader definition of 'Chinese society', Chen refers to the earthquake that happened in Taiwan on 21 September 1999 as an example. However, a similar situation happened in China afterwards as well. When the serious earthquake happened in Sichuan in 2008, much aid was delivered by the *minjian* (groups and individuals) from Taiwan and this reached the stricken area soon after it happened.

[86] This is the speech delivered by the former Chinese President Hu Jintao in 2004 at the Central Government Symposium on Population, Resources and Environment.

in the documentary, they petitioned directly to Beijing in order to maintain the stability of the village and the stability of the nation – which, to a great extent, corresponds with the Chinese government's ideological constructions that emphasise harmony and social stability.

Other evidence of this difference lies in the representations of the 'crowd' offered by the two documentaries. In *The Warriors of Quigang* (2010), the meetings in the village mostly happen in an indoor space with little lighting. The visual impression hints at the tendency of these 'meetings' to be held in private. In contrast with the crowd scenes that are often displayed outdoors in the sun with everybody raising their hands and crying out slogans in many Indian documentaries, including the *Hul Sengel Aguwa* (2012), the visual language and narrative style applied in *The Warriors of Quigang* (2010) shows the attempt to present the event that happened in Quigang as arising out of Zhang's individual choice rather than from a collective movement. The Chinese political regime under the Chinese Communist Party leadership has discouraged 'mobilising' or 'gathering' among the public by means of media censorship, regulating intellectual debates, the criminalisation of civil protests and suppressing independent non-government associations (Sleeboom-Faulkner, 2007; Spires, 2011). For social actors images that might be labelled as 'mass movements/protests' are better avoided if they want to gain the support of the authorities.

In this case, the 'social actors' mentioned include both the environmental campaigners and the media reporters. The representation of the Quigang event in this documentary is a co-construction that reflects both the attitudes of the activists who took part in the movement and the thoughts of the film director. In other words, the tendency towards taking action in a compliant manner rather than a challenging manner is recognised by both the *laobaixing* and the social elites in China.

Following the discussion on obedience versus opposition and meeting privately versus gathering openly, I will discuss the third argument with regard to these differences. Due to the different presentations of the public sphere in the two societies, the movements of political society and the *minjian* hold different political approaches. In other words, they follow different trajectories to access the agent of 'rights' that might be able to help them to achieve change. The Indian campaigners tend to build alliances with members of civil society to create a joint voice in the public sphere, while those in China aim to

gain solutions directly from the official institutions. This is partly due to the public sphere being more active in India than in China, as demonstrated by the two documentaries and also evidenced by my fieldwork.[87] The works of scholars like Partha Chatterjee (2004) and Kuan-Hsing Chen (2010b) call attention to the situation that the public sphere is not the realm where these grassroots movements take place, and is practically inaccessible for the common people who lack resources. To a certain extent, Chatterjee and Chen's arguments explain what I observed among the campaigners and in daily strugglers in response to the coal development: despite living in an environment rich in resources in many cases they lack the resources to achieve their aims. However, in India, the public sphere, at least in some ways, plays the role of an agent that mediates the voice of the common people.[88] In China, this medium/agent is rather absent or appears relatively weak in radical movements.[89]

Conclusion

Film is a form of cultural production and an important platform for public discourses. Chapter 4 discussed how ordinary people understand and interpret the public discourses with regard to the environment. In this chapter, I used media productions as materials to analyse how environmentalism and rural development were represented in the two societies. In particular, I considered how ordinary people interpret and practice their (environmental) 'rights' in different manners. As suggested by Cowan et al. (2001), a cultural-anthropological study can allow us to examine the politics of rights in a comparative perspective. The narratives produced by the two cultures in the form of films provided a lens for me to examine the tendencies of these two civil societies and how common people in each society conceptualise 'rights' and negotiate their demands through different approaches. In sum, a review of the four films added to the findings of my primary fieldwork in mining villages to suggest that Chinese common people with minimal economic and social capitals share the tendency to appeal to the official authorities to manage environmental conflicts (as shown by the outer arrows in the Figure 5.1). Meanwhile discursive and practical alliances between the civil society and

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[87] As discussed in Chapter 4 regarding the role of NGOs or social elites in the two societies.

[88] And also provide discursive and social support to the common people, as discussed in Chapter 4.

[89] Amongst the Chinese authoritarian elites, a tendency to judge/stigmatise the civil movements as a factor that might put the society into disorder can be observed. More discussion will be elaborated on this theme in Chapter 6.

the grassroots society could be identified in the Indian case (as shown by the inner arrows in the Figure 5.1).
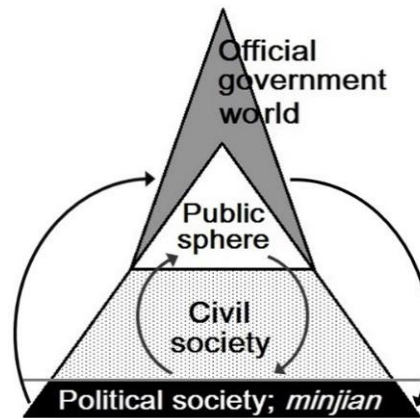
Figure 5.1 Two patterns of assistance accessing between different realms of society

Regarding the conceptualisation of 'rights', it seems that in Indian culture, more categories of positive rights were required to be assured among the common people concerning the environment-development debates, such as the right to land, food, housing, and maintaining a traditional life-style. In contrast, the Chinese *laobaixing* have a relatively passive attitude towards appealing for 'rights'; they rarely took action until they encountered problems that threatened their security in the private sphere. This tendency may explain why some rights (those considered essential for developed societies) such as freedom of speech and freedom to information have yet to become significant elements in campaigns inside China. In most of the environmental movements, Chinese campaigners tended to focus only on requesting a solution to the pollution instead of requiring access to information about the pollution and potential risks, or demanding a public hearing to enhance people's engagement and involvement in the decision making processes. In the long term, the poor information disclosure and the lack of freedom of expression among the public may result in a passive civil society and a shortage of critical discourses in support of people's movements. Inversely, this could lead to weaknesses in the legitimacy of 'public participation' in the environmental arena.

In this chapter, some social conditions that influenced why the common people either raise complaints or keep silent, and why grassroots movements appeared to be more visible in the media in India than China have been pointed out. These included the

differences in their socio-political ideologies in terms of how to react when one's rights were violated, and the common people's relationship with the authorities and civil society. In response to my enquiries, based on the reviews of the literature and historical writings, the cultural productions add more details to my understandings of the constructions of the 'harmony' ideology in Chinese society, and offer different representations of 'conflicts' in Indian society. Meanwhile, significant structural conflicts may not always be readily observed during fieldwork; in reality, my field sites were located in ordinary villages without ongoing environmental movements. Therefore, another critical value of the films was that they have provided the research with supportive materials to study the features of 'conflicts' with regard to the environment and coal development.

The presentations of conflicts and rights practices reflect the 'politics of representation' of a society. The films of China hint that there are also mafia and violence in Chinese coal villages and there are also mass protests in Chinese environmental campaigns. But, they were presented in a different manner when contrasted with the presentations shown in Indian films. As argued previously, examples including the different ways of presenting the image of 'crowd' and the role of civil activists. The mafia were 'harmonised' in *Shancun Fengyun* (Bei-Bei, 2011) and turned into law followers; in the documentary *The Warriors of Quigang* (Yang, 2010), the scenarios of mass protests were touched on lightly and the key activist was presented more like a strong headed individual. On the other hand, the Indian movie *Gangs of Wasseypur* (Kashyap, 2012) displayed many scenes of gunfights; these gunfights were due to conflicts of interest between different religions and gang groups. *Hul Sengel Aguwa* (Prakash, 2012) demonstrated several images of the crowd and also presented numerous individual activists.

Through these examples, we can be better aware of the implementation of ideological 'harmonisation'. The Indian films have demonstrated the problematic scenarios of the society, including the fights between gangs, social differentiations, and criticisms or reflections of the roles of state, politicians and social elites. Multiple voices were presented, and in this manner we find the politics of representation in Indian society allow diversity to a greater extent – the films illustrated a range of collective and individual activities. Considering films are the 'productions' of elites, they offer a

means to understand the atmosphere of the civil society. This provides another piece of the puzzle, when taken together with my discussions based on fieldwork, to further investigate how civil society with active and passive tendencies can facilitate the grassroots environmentalist activities in a different manner.

Chapter 6: Uninvited participations – People's daily negotiations of natural resources

Introduction

Chapter 4 identified the diverse forms of participation that coexist among the stakeholders in the coal mining villages of rural China and India. Chapter 5 analysed how the *laobaixing* complainers or *adivasi* activists took different trajectories, by appealing to official institutions or building alliances with civil groups/activists, to achieve changes with the strategies of obedience or opposition. In this chapter, based on the arguments made in the previous chapters, I will bring the practices of 'uninvited participation' and 'performative participation', observed in my fieldwork, into the discussion to enrich the current literature on participatory development.

The idea of uninvited participation is inspired by the concept of 'invited spaces' suggested by Andrea Cornwall (2004) in her discussion of participatory arenas. According to Cornwall (2004: 76-79), invited spaces bring together 'a very heterogeneous set of actors among whom there might be expected to be significant differences in status', and the development of participatory arenas aims to 'provide opportunities for poor and marginalized people to contribute to development activities intended to benefit them'. However, its unavoidable persistent exclusion invites critiques as it results in these arenas permitting only particular voices entering into the debate and leaves limited space for negotiation (Kohn, 2000; Stewart, 2009; Turnhout et al., 2010). In short, to achieve this so-called heterogeneousness, the participants are required to act out the roles envisaged by the authorities so as to legitimise official policy decisions. Following the arguments made in Chapter 5, invited spaces can be understood as spaces in which disciplined citizens interact on selected political topics. On the other hand, my research interests here are in those practices taking place outside of the invited spaces of the environmental arenas. Hence, in this chapter I use the notion of 'uninvited spaces' to discuss those activities which are not recognised by the authorities or envisaged as 'participation', for instance, activities that conflict with the law or that are considered to be irrational behaviours.

The idea of performative participation has been applied by some researchers in their studies on environmental participation to argue for the agency of individuals (Turnhout et al., 2010; Williams et al., 2011). To a degree, this concept gains some inspiration from Judith Butler (1990) and can be traced back to the theatre metaphors introduced by Erving Goffman (1959) and the socio-anthropological concerns regarding performative reflexivity elaborated by Victor Turner (1986). Butler (1990) introduces the notion of 'performativity' in her argument regarding the strategic artificiality in gender politics; recent researchers in environmental studies have applied this idea in their analysis of citizen identity, stating that individuals can negotiate with the institutional expectations of 'proper citizens' and include their interests in the participatory arena (Turnhout et al., 2010; Williams et al., 2011). The performative practices, or performances, of *adivasis* or eco-feminists in environmental campaigns can be considered as examples; however, those of Chinese civil activists might be another type. In this chapter, I will introduce materials collected during the fieldwork in terms of 'proper' or 'improper' participatory citizens to enrich the discussion of performative participation. Furthermore, I will add the carnival element (Bakhtin, 1984; Turner, 1987), which attempts to break the boundary of space and the rules of order, in order to go back over the democratic performances of participation in Indian society.

In short, this chapter focuses on the politics of categorisation of participants in environmental arenas. Following the critiques of the exclusion mechanism that unavoidably exist in participatory arenas, in the first section of this chapter I will compare how the tendency of 'elitism' is reflected differently in the environmental arenas in China and India. Regarding elitism, I here focus on the ideology or value system that is introduced by political authorities or powerful social elites to enforce social categorisation. I intend to elaborate how the ideology of elitism was used/articulated to allow certain categories of social members extra legitimacy to take part in environmental debates. In my Chinese case study, what I observed is that many of the activists are called *lǎoshī* (teacher, sir/madam). Moreover, those with special professions are identified as *lǜshī* (lawyer) or *yīshī* (doctor). While the term '*shī*' (师) is a typical Chinese honorific used to express respect to someone, at the same time it stands for a professionalised or institutionalised social position. On the other hand, my experiences in India provide evidence that some activists who hold radical viewpoints on hierarchical power have even attempted to abolish the social habit of applying '*ji*'

(sir/madam) as an honorific term and insist on equality in campaign arenas. While the tendency of elitism is highlighted by the authorities and adopted among the Chinese public to a certain degree, the carnival element that exists in Indian society reflects the varieties of value systems operating that are judging the 'proper citizens' to the extent that even those with criminal records can be respected as the idols of activists as well.

Besides professional qualification or social status, legality/illegality is another value system that is frequently applied by political authorities to categorise social actors. However, different societies may adopt the values introduced by authorities in different manners; and I have observed a significant difference between my Chinese and Indian case studies. In the second section, I will discuss the illegal coal transportation that I observed in my field sites and analyse the reflexive meanings of the law-breaking activities. Coal transportation is one of the basic economic activities of those living in the coal villages. In rural Guizhou, China, this illegality normally remains unsaid and unseen; Chinese truckers who want to avoid paying tax will deliver coal at midnight in a secret manner. On the other hand, illegal coal transportation carried out by Indian cyclists was observed as being as open as a carnival rally. The daily practice of these *cycle-wallahs* (cyclists: coal paddlers who gather and transport coal illegally on bicycles) [90] seems to be a huge parade, challenging the industrialisation and institutionalisation of the coal business. How this 'illegality' was exposed to me as being a part of daily life and the common people's attitudes towards it will be discussed to further the arguments made in Chapter 5 regarding the performances of obedience and opposition.

Law is one of the institutional tools enforced by the authorities to judge the behaviours of people. The division between legal and illegal behaviours results in lawbreakers being doubted with regard to whether they serve as 'proper' participants in public debates. There are some other social divisions that are not always legitimised by law but which still show their effects in categorising people as proper/improper participants in the environmental arena. '*Adivasi*' is one of these categories. The link between *adivasis* and environmentalism was discussed in Chapter 4. In the third section of this chapter, I will bring in 'gender' as another category to discuss and exemplify the institutionalisation and conceptualisation of 'participation'. Different from the

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[90] See the photo on the left side of the cover page.

ideologies of elitism or legality/illegality, the *adivasi* identity or gender politics can be deployed strategically, to a certain extent, by activists in order to support people's movements. The discursive link between femininity and environmentalism (which will be discussed in the third section) has given women's participation in environmental arenas some symbolic meaning. However, the linkage is debatable and has different appearances in the two cultures. Practically, I will illustrate the role/image of 'women' in the Chinese and Indian environmental arenas in this section and analyse the radical potential of performative participation. The discussion aims to enable researchers to reconsider how marginalised social members apply their performative strategies in order to take part in the participatory arenas.

'Elite' participants? *Lǎoshī* in the Chinese environmental arena versus the lawbreakers in the Indian arena

In 2011, I was in a conference held in Beijing; it focused on the topics of health, the environment and development. Nearly a hundred scholars, NGO members and policy makers in related fields attended. During a panel on 'public participation', a discussion took place between a professor (Wu) in political science and a researcher (Su) at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, an institution that plays an important role as a consultant to Chinese government leaders.

> Wu: During the process of environment and health risk assessments, might there be a need to contemplate a process of public participation? If yes, how is such participation to take place?
>
> Su: Firstly, if these were to participate, it seems that their knowledge of institutional construction (zhìdù jiànshè) remains somewhat insufficient. … In a case such as China, with the current quality (sùzhì) of our population, democratising China within such a context would be a disaster.
>
> Wu: I am NOT talking about decision-making or democracy, I am talking merely about 'participation'.
>
> Su: 'Participation', to a great extent depends on 'awareness' and the quality of awareness; its implementation is decided by people's level of awareness (rènzhī shuǐpíng).[91] If people could participate in a rational manner, that would be fine. However, in contemporary China, many so-called 'participatory actions' are irrational; this is the first problem in enforcing public participation. Secondly, it

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[91] It is a common saying that Chinese officials consider the quality of Chinese people to be low and use this as a reason to legitimate some authoritarian policies.

is true that the disclosures of information [about the environmental impact and health risk of certain projects and programmes] has been done very badly while there also exist some structural barriers to the implementation of public participation in related issues. Of course, there are many elites among the public who might be privy to particular information and who are able to represent the public. However, our implementation of information disclosure is really poor, especially information relating to political and economic interests. In this context, how could it be possible for people to participate based on a rational foundation? With such an understanding, I think this may explain why we do not consider public participation in terms of environmental and health risk management. … Professor, you work in Hong Kong where the awareness of public participation is stronger. But, you must know, if you have had some experiences of dealing with them in China … you will find that there are troublemakers among the public who have ulterior motives. Then you will tend to think that public participation is not a particularly good technique to be applied in China.

After this heated discussion, during the tea break I talked with the professor (Wu) and she made some further comments:

I always knew that they don't appreciate the idea of public participation. However, I didn't expect that he would disclose this attitude so directly. After all, the Chinese Academy of Science is the crucial institution that provides consultancy to the state leaders such as Wen Jiabao. Now we know where the government's ideas about 'irrational participation' come from.

A sociological analysis (Ying, 2001) on a series of people's campaign back in the 1980s with regard to land acquisition indicated the tendency of Chinese officials to label/categorise protesters either as irrational troublemakers or ignorant minority (who were mobilised by troublemakers). This way of categorisation is still reflected in Chinese society today, as demonstrated by the expression made by Su. Furthermore, this episode illustrates the appearance of elitism in Chinese society and the tendency to disconnect democracy and participation. The ideology of elitism, that over-praises or privileges members of the institutional professions to participate in public debates while excludes the rest, has been enforced in Chinese society and adopted by both middle class activists and the common people who I encountered in the field. Although elitism is also observed in Indian society, the ways by which people evaluate the ideas of 'elites' seems to consist of many values (such as caste and religious), rather than just one unified ideology. As a consequence, the practices of 'uninvited participation' appear to be recognised to a greater extent in the environmental arena in India.

According to the narratives delivered by Su, as cited above, the elitism of civil society is acknowledged and even endorsed by the institutional world in the Chinese case. As an invited space, the Chinese environmental arena requires participants to perform behaviours conceived by the state; it welcomes rational elites with 'information' who are able to represent the public. In the context of the thinking represented by Su, 'information' specifically means that disclosed in a limited manner by the authorities; or in other words, the politically correct ones. The value of elites depends on whether one can behave rationally and adopt the official distribution of knowledge.

Such an authoritarian tendency of valuing 'elites' results in (and is reinforced by) the Chinese culture appreciating institutional figures. In the environmental arena, people who have certain experience of campaigns including NGO workers and journalists are called *lǎoshī*, a term that is traditionally used to refer to teachers and nowadays is applied to those who are senior in the field and respected. Furthermore, those in special professions are identified in particular to justify their participation, for example *lǜshī* (lawyers) or *yīshī* (doctors). While the term '*shī*' is a typical Chinese honorific to express respect to someone, at the same time it stands for a professionalised or institutionalised social position. To emphasise these kinds of positions in the participatory arena is, to some extent, to accept the ideology of elitism that is delivered by the authority in order to reproduce the social stratification in the invited space.

The components that are highlighted in valuing 'proper citizens' evidence the fact that elitism in Chinese society concurs with the official ideology. As well as professional knowledge, political capital is another component that is prized in the Chinese context and one presentation of political capital is a connection with the Chinese Communist Party. A Chinese environmental NGO organiser once said to me in a joking manner: 'I'm not only respected as a *lǎoshī*, I'm even an excellent Party member' (50s, male), which served to justify his opinions on government policies. Whilst he gave several critiques on environmental issues, the adoption of the value of being a *lǎoshī* and a member of the Chinese Communist Party to a certain degree ensured his elitist position in the 'invited' participatory arena.

Appreciation of a connection with the Party can be observed not only among middle class activists but also among the common people. Villagers prefer to work for the state-owned coal businesses as that ensures their economic status and moreover shows their

political connection. One engineer I interviewed in my Chinese field site introduced himself with the statement 'The Party feeds me' (late 20s, male), in a manner full of pride. Given this premise, he held a couple of suspicions of bureaucratic corruption and critiqued the implementation of pollution management regulations as being 'inside' – by which he implied inside the invited space as a disciplined citizen, and inside the value system shared by the authorities.

Compared with India, the harmonious tendency and the unified ideology of Chinese society result in its people appreciating the institutional viewpoint when considering social status. Such a tendency is reflected in the emphasis on institutional knowledge rather than folk custom. The story presented in *Shancun Fengyun* (Bei-Bei, 2011) (one of the movies discussed in Chapter 5) is an example. Liu lǎoshī comes from an urban university and convinces the villagers to relocate the tombs of their ancestors for mining purposes. In the story, Liu lǎoshī stands for modern knowledge and battles and overcomes 'irrational myths' such as the traditional belief in *fēngshuǐ*.

The stigma of the coal workers I experienced amongst the villagers is another example. I heard parents warning the kids 'if you don't study properly, later you can do nothing but join the coal workers'; or the school girls would say to me 'You should come to our school and interview the teachers. Otherwise, whom are you going to interview? Don't tell me that you want to INTERVIEW the coal miners!' This appreciation of official jobs, modern knowledge and a political connection with the party in power reflects the potent impact caused by the ideological manipulation.

The adoption of the official ideology was even displayed in the enquiry made by professor Wu in the conversation cited at the beginning of this section, 'I am NOT talking about decision making or democracy, I am talking merely about "participation"'. The question she raised was properly located in the 'invited space' that conflicts little with the value of the authoritarian political system. A similar condition has been observed in research articles addressing guidelines to improve public participation in the decision-making process (Chang and Wu, 2008; Zeng et al., 2006) that appear more like advice with the purpose of refining the legitimacy of the standing system than critiques that are looking for more radical reforms. As stated by one of China's well-known environmental journalists in a 2010 interview, Liu Jianqiang, 'The environment in China is not politics; politics is very sensitive' (Geall, 2013a). Liu, as a journalist finds

it easier to report on the environment – in the way envisaged by the state in the invited arena.

Studies on India point out that the involvement of the public in participatory arenas such as public hearings tends to be weak due to insufficient information on the environmental and social impacts of proposed projects and poor transparency (Paliwal, 2006; Sinclair and Diduck, 2000). These problems appear similar to those mentioned by Su in the Chinese context. However, the difference is that the problems raised in the Indian context take a more critical angle towards the authorities, and often demand reforms to enhance public involvement; while Su's statement gives the impression that these problems are the reason to justify why public participation may not be an option for Chinese government leaders in dealing with current affairs. While the opportunity for 'every citizen' to participate has historically been highlighted in Indian political ideology (GOI, 1950), in contemporary China, according to the semi-official member, 'knowledge of institutional construction' and sufficient 'quality' of individuals are considered as the prerequisites for citizens to take part in public debates without which their participation might be 'irrational'.

Undeniably, each and every society has its social order and norms. Some societies are influenced more by the official ideology while others allow more flexibility among the public to have a dialogue with the institutional power. Compared with India, Chinese society shows a lack of what I like to call – using Bakhtin's (1984) idea – the 'carnival element', which is the performance of playing with the (even tiny) possibility of turning the world upside-down. The reverse is noticeable in Indian society. In the Indian environmental arena, similarly, I met some activists who are *lǎoshī* (teachers) and *lǜshī* (lawyers). At the same time, I encountered quite a few who, according to the official regulations, are 'irrational activists' – actors who have broken the law. These occasional lawbreakers could be honoured as idols of activists in the Indian context.

Xavier Dias (60s, male) was a consultant for a Jharkhand based NGO working on *adivasi* rights. He was also a senior member of a national NGO that was devoted to facilitating networks between Indian people's movements. I met Xavier a few days after he came out of jail (December 2012). The reason why he was in jail was related to an event that happened in 1991. A group of *adivasi* female labourers were molested by employees of the TATA mining company. However, he said to me, both the company

and the police refused to file a case against the employees who had conducted the harassment. Xavier, together with around 15 activists initiated a protest. During the event, villagers put locks on the mines for a few days and caused some disturbance to the operation of the railway lines. Lawsuits were filed against the activists involved, and one of these resulted in their imprisonment. I came to Xavier because several interviewees mentioned his name during our conversations, including researchers, journalists and NGO workers. 'Xavier has been devoted to the movements in Jharkhand for decades. You should talk to him' (Sumit, 30s, male; Umar, 30s, male; Vikram, 40s, male). This is how he was usually introduced. It was only when I came to seek some help to arrange the meeting with Xavier that people told me about his recent imprisonment. The fact that he was a lawbreaker did not cause a stain on him. Rather, it drew people's attention to the problematic official system.

Dayamani Barla (late 40s, female *adivasi*) was another big name that was mentioned to me by many. Dayamani had taken part in several campaigns against the displacement of *adivasis* and was an honoured member of numerous NGOs working on indigenous movements. On 16th October 2012, she was remanded in judicial custody due to a campaign in 2006 when she raised the issue of the NREGA scams (NREGA: *National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005*). After few days of imprisonment, just before she was about to leave jail on bail, she was arrested again in relation to another case regarding the protest against land acquisition for industrial purposes. The critical problem of the land acquisition, she said to me, was that such constructions could be planned for infertile land rather than – as in this case – fertile land on which the indigenous people depended. In the campaign arena, Dayamani was known as the 'Iron Lady of Jharkhand' and she could be seen in a number of documentaries relating to *adivasi* struggles.[92] The fact that she was imprisoned did not harm her reputation in the environmental arena; rather, it reinforced her image as the idol of *adivasi* activists. Her imprisonment was recognised by some people as a trick to keep her from organising further actions and prevent her from causing any more delay to the land acquisition. However, it did not stop her from taking part in the 2014 Lok Sabha Elections as a candidate representing the Aam Aadmi Party in Jharkhand (Yadav, 2014). The practices

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[92] One of the films discussed in Chapter 5, the *Hul Sengel Aguwa* (Prakash, 2012), is an example. *Still I Rise* (2012), directed by Leena Manimekalai, is another.

of 'illegality' in these cases illustrate the unreasonableness of state rules rather than the irrationality of activists' actions.

As well as individuals it is also environmental organisations that demonstrate conflicts with the official ruling system. During my fieldwork in India (2012-2013), the *Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA)* issued in 2010 was discussed a great deal among the NGOs. The Act states that Indian organisations that receive foreign financial support must keep their distance from campaigns that might conflict with the official authorities, as this might – according to the Indian government – cause diplomatic issues. To many activists and NGO workers, the *Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (2010)* is a problematic law that serves the interests of the authorities.

A senior campaigner (Vikram, 40s, male) said in an interview, that the purpose of this Act was to weaken the people's movements by preventing the marginalised common people from accessing organisational support, both financially and discursively. A lawyer (Umar, 30s, male) who worked for an organisation providing legal assistance to the poor held a similar opinion. According to Umar, NGOs that like to maintain their working patterns through cooperation with radical movements need to be more prudent in accepting foreign funding. In India, NGO programmes that receive funds from international institutions have been around since the early 1980s (Ebrahim, 2005) and are still quite common today. What has changed is the attitude and acts of the Indian government leaders, who nowadays accuse these international collaborations of being problematic affiliations that might imply foreign forces being involved in India's internal affairs (TOI, 2014). This accusation will be made if an organisation is present in a campaign that conflicts with the government's intention in a serious manner; if this happens, the financial statements of the organisation in the case will be reviewed with extreme care and prejudiced interpretations of them will be given. In the case of Umar's organisation, due to the *2010 FCRA* it had ruled out a significant proportion of foreign funding and cut the budget of its judicial department. At the time of the interview only its publishing department was receiving foreign donations.

One of the NGOs that I contacted had actually experienced the weight of the *2010 FCRA*.[93] The *Hug Nature* organisation (anonym) grew out of another organisation, the

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[93] After returning from the fieldwork, I learned from news articles that another organisation (a national one based in Delhi) that I have interviewed had also faced the same fate of de-registration.

JK Network (anonym), which was de-registered by the Jharkhand state government under the *Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (2010)*. *JK Network* was an organisation based in Jharkhand that had been devoted to indigenous issues for decades. I had experience working with *JK Network* in 2009 during a case study on *adivasi* land acquisition. At the time, the villagers had organised a huge rally that ended with a conflict with the police and armed forces. During the conflict, one police officer was injured in the hand by an arrow and several villagers suffered gunshot wounds – one died on the spot and another was blinded. According to members of *JK Network*, although they had some connection with the villagers they did not initiate or organise this demonstration. However, due to this event, *JK Network*, which had received some foreign donations, was impeached as mobilising people to revolt against the state authority. Months after its compulsory de-registration, some of its members re-registered an organisation in another name, *Hug Nature*. The new organisation focused more on environmental education than radical activities or protests. Nevertheless, its illegal record had not harmed its social position as an educational agency in the arena, especially among those who were concerned about *adivasi* cultural preservation and environmental conservation.

This is not to say that the activists or NGOs I encountered in China had no illegal record at all or had never conducted law-challenging actions. There are more and more campaigns (some of which include physical conflict) emerging in China. The activities associated with those campaigns are not all approved by the authorities and the law. However, the key difference is that people have to be extremely cautious if they want to mention law-breaking events in discussion in public. In the Chinese environmental arena, what has been appreciated amongst the public and the civil activists is the strategy of performing as properly educated rational citizens.

To be fair, elitism is nothing unusual amongst societies worldwide. At the same time, law breaking as a form of protest exists not only in Indian society, but also in China. However, the purpose of this comparative study is to show that these two cases reveal a significant difference in their cultural preferences. Regarding the debate about participatory environmental governance, Chinese society shows a tendency to adopt the system of judgments that was introduced by the authorities, while Indian society exposes the coexistence of diverse social values including some conflict with the state.

Uninvited participants: illegal coal transportation in the form of Indian *cycle-wallahs* and Chinese tax-dodging truckers

The previous section discussed the elitism and illegality demonstrated by environmental activists in the participatory arena. In this section, I will present the unlawful daily-life practices observed in the popular space among the common people. These practices might not be conducted with the intention of 'participation', however, they are conducted by some essential stakeholders in the coal villages – the labourers.

I encountered the *cycle-wallahs* for the first time in early 2009 when I visited rural Jharkhand as a member of a fact-finding team investigating the land conflict between the *adivasis* and the state. At the time, I had a chance to visit an opencast site, and I was shocked when I witnessed the spectacle of miners digging and chopping raw coal manually and transporting the coal on shabby bikes. The team were there to understand how the *adivasis* would suffer from forced migration. The 'owner' of the coal site showed us this as evidence of the *adivasis'* daily economic activities, in order to claim that the land acquisition would have a serious impact on the locals. Later, I learned that the coalfield might have been operated by this *adivasi* family in an illegal manner – under India's *Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act (1993)*, as it was only permissible for the coal in the country to be extracted by enterprises in cooperation with the state rather than by individuals (Lahiri-Dutt, 2007).

When I returned to Jharkhand in 2012 for fieldwork, I did not expect to see a similar scenario, but on the very first day I arrived in the countryside in Dhanbad I came across a march of *cycle-wallahs* moving determinedly onward with huge packets of coal on tiny bikes. The existence of *cycle-wallahs* in rural India is neither new nor a secret; stories of them have been reported by researchers (Lahiri-Dutt, 2008) as well as by international journalists (Singh, 2013). In my understanding, it is a systematised business. In the village, there are shops where people can increase the anchorage loading of their bicycles. On the route of transportation, there are *dhabas* (eateries by the roadside) where meals and rice wine are available for *cycle-wallahs* to refresh themselves.

According to my observations and interviews, the *cycle-wallahs* range from teenagers to people in their forties. Many of them work in groups of two or three people; yet, in a

few cases the people work individually. Many of the groups involve family members. They set off early in the morning before sunrise and finish before the middle of the day. On the route where I conducted my interviews, the coal was loaded in Jharkhand and transported across the Damodar River to reach West Bengal. In the early morning, the *cycle-wallahs* collected/bought the coal from the mine site, where they paid around 1.5 to 2 rupees[94] per kilogram. Once they reached the coking plants in West Bengal, they could sell the coal for around 750 rupees for 100 kilograms. Generally speaking, each *cycle-wallah* could earn between several hundred and a thousand rupees for every journey, depending on the loading capacity.

Being *cycle-wallahs* is a kind of 'uninvited participation' as they are taking part in the coal business – illegally – and both the public and the state acknowledge their existence. Furthermore, their working time depends on the schedule of nature/sun and the agricultural season – this demonstrates their obedience to the rules of nature rather than to modernity. The timetable of their journeys is set to avoid the heat rather than to avoid the police, for the local authorities tacitly acquiesce in this 'business'. According to the *cycle-wallahs* I talked to, on each trip they might meet several checkpoints and be required to pay a bribe of 20 rupees to each police man, although in reality such matters varied depending on the loading and the situation.

The existence of *cycle-wallahs* is also recognised by the formal coal business. They provide cheaper labour power and a cheaper coal resource to related industries such as coking plants and steel plants – those that are legalised or illegal. This is part of the industries' programme to cut costs, and at the same time it secures the labourers' livelihoods outside of the agricultural season. For the *cycle-wallahs* including *adivasis* and non-*adivasis*, 'as long as one needs money the work is there' (late 20s, male *adivasi*). This kind of coal transportation is simply a seasonal job. Villagers do farming and other agricultural work too, but during the period when there is little demand for labour on the farmland, some may join the crew of *cycle-wallahs* to earn extra income.

On the way back from an unloading point, a boy (Ajay, 16, male) came to me and started a conversation spontaneously:

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[94] The rupee is the common name for the currencies of several south and south-east Asian countries including India. One Indian rupee is worth about 0.016 US dollars.

> Ajay: It is not difficult to understand. Of course people here have to be involved in this kind of work because they have no other choice. People don't care about education.
> I: So what are you doing here? Coal cycling?
> Ajay: NO, I am not involved with this. I am in education. I am in class 11. … I am here only to help my father. He is involved in this.

Ajay's father was 45 years old and his health was not very good. Therefore he needed help from his son to carry the coal. However, their loading was not impressive. The boy told me that his father had earned around 300 rupees on that particular day and said that this was 'because father brings only a little coal. He cannot load much'.

One of my interviewees (Ravi, late 20s, male *adivasi*) who had experience as a *cycle-wallah* said he used to earn around 800 to 1200 rupees every day at the time. Later he became a driver for a middle-class Hindu family. As a driver he earned only few thousand each month; however, this job was less physically demanding.

> I cannot be a *cycle-wallah* for my whole life. I earned that much earlier because I was young and I could carry a lot. The loading capacity and the money earned per trip go down sharply as one ages. With the skill I learned as a driver, I can work until 40 or 50 without a problem (Ravi).

From what he said, the main difference between being a driver and a *cycle-wallah* was that the former worked with a machine while the latter worked with their body. A car driver appeared to be a more 'proper' job in terms of the skilful operation of a vehicle plus the stable accommodation provided by the middle-class employers. Being a driver was a better alternative for Ravi as it would allow a longer career and cause less damage to his body. However, being a *cycle-wallah* was still an option for him: 'If I need money urgently, I may do *cycle-wallah* again anytime' (Ravi).

The way people present and talk about illegal activities mirrors the effect of authoritarian power. In my conversations with locals in rural Jharkhand, there were many other important issues that were addressed before illegality, including the economic difficulties, the physical limitations and harm, and the lack of education and working opportunities for the people. When I talked with the troops of *cycle-wallahs*, the illegality was an issue but never the primary one. In other words, the correctness of law seems obscure through its ambiguous presence. Being a *cycle-wallah* is an economic activity, through which the lower caste or tribal labourers earn their living at the margins of the coal business. Its illegality is not their main concern (and there was

no mention of the environmental impact). Only when I asked 'is it illegal?' I was told, 'Yes, what they do is illegal … and that is a regular happening. This is not a bad option considering the money they earn from it, compared with the other jobs accessible to them' (Anuj, late 20s, Hindu male).

In my Chinese field site, the issue of 'illegality' was mentioned in a very different manner. After my experience in rural India, I supposed that there might be similarities with the *cycle-wallahs* regarding coal collecting and peddling in rural China. However, I did not witness such similarities.

Legality was pretty much acknowledged amongst the villagers in my Chinese field site. One important reason for this might be that there is a particular regulation, by the *Coal Industry Law of the People's Republic of China (1996)*, which has had a serious influence on their livelihood. The period between the 1980s and 1990s was considered as the boom phase for the village. This was when privately-operated small coal mines were allowed or even encouraged in order to satisfy the national requirement for raw materials. Following the announcement of the *1996 Coal Industry Law*, in the late 1990s, the licence system was enforced and this limited the operation of small-scale mines. Over a few years, plenty of families who used to earn from the coal in their land lost their legitimate source of income. Suspecting that the legal arm of the state may not reach the vast range of the remote area efficiently, I asked the villagers: 'people DID follow the new rule? You shut down the mines even those, for example, hiding in your backyard?' 'Not immediately, but gradually. … Someone will come and check; if one dares to open the coal site again in private, the government will soon come to know and bomb it' (Fanling, 30s, female; Hujie, 60s, female; Liben, 50s, male). In this case, the villagers mentioned the legal regulation and the power of the state authority with a respectful/fearful manner.

It was only after I gained trust from the villagers that some of them told me vaguely that unlicensed coal digging was still happening on a small-scale, here and there, on privately-used land. In this study, I am not arguing positively that the illegal coal exploration runs on a bigger-scale in India than in China; rather, my discussion aims to focus on how people react to the authoritarian power represented by the law. While the illegitimate activities are exposed with less sense of embarrassment in India, in China this comes with an anxious feeling, full of concern. The power of law is constructed and

realised in the mindset of the people. What supports the Indians as lawbreakers might be the alternatives sustained by the various folk beliefs and religions. In contrast, what puts the Chinese in the position of law-abiders is the ideoligical conviction of the authoritarian power that stands behind the law.

This authoritarian power is illustrated in Chinese society by the reality that the common people are hesitant to make comments on the ruling dominance. The illegality is unspeakable; it is better hidden and left unsaid. In China, according to my informants, it has been decades since anybody used bicycles to transport coal for industrial or business use, and there was no mention of an illegal collective activity such as that of the *cycle-wallahs* in the Indian context. For the *laobaixing*, some illegality exists in daily life, and one example is the coal transportation in terms of the tax-dodging truckers. After staying in rural Guizhou for a few months, I learned that the truckers sometimes deliver the coal at midnight outside of the office hours of the checkpoints – in this way they can avoid the transportation tax. However, this is something that should not be mentioned. Compared with the Indian scenario, the condition experienced in rural China raises two arguments. On the one hand, it shows the tendency towards secrecy in the Chinese culture when dishonest activities are involved. On the other hand, it evidences the effectiveness of the nationalisation of the coal business in China. As a result of the authoritative nationalisation, the specialisation and production at scale have been promoted and enforced completely. Thus, there is little space left for the *laobaixing* to use the natural resource privately so as to bargain to improve their livelihood.

In addition, and contradictorily, the 'illegality' is visible in other aspects regarding the coal business. The water and air pollution in the area of my case study is as evident as the air pollution in Beijing (Boyd, 2013) or the cadmium pollution in Quijing (a city of Yunnan). Take the case of Quijing as an example: even though this problematic condition is well recognised by the public and also acknowledged by experts and officials (Chun, 2013), the legal process is pending while the de facto illegality remains (the huge amount of cadmium industrial waste stored openly without treatment). What has been seen in these cases is that more space exists for negotiation between government and enterprises (in comparison to the situation between government and common people).

While this negotiating power seems to be demonstrated at various levels of society in India, in China, the *laobaixing* express their feeling of powerlessness towards the authoritarian rule. For instance, as discussed in Chapter 4 regarding the *laobaixing's* withdrawal from the public sphere, the interviewees expressed their fear of the absolute power, 'Once state policy is enforced, you cannot argue'. However, in contrast to the lack of bargaining power on the people's side, the *laobaixing* are aware of the negotiating capacity of the enterprise operators.

> The development agenda has absolutely nothing to do with the welfare or demand of the *laobaixing*. If anyone wants to set up a business in a village, as long as the investor can access the government officials and persuade them, the permission is there (Liben).

Another example is the case relating to the environment, where the regulatory power appears to allow more negotiating space for industries than individuals. The *laobaixing* suspect that industrial pollution monitoring is implemented in a corrupt manner; however, when it comes to land acquisition, the determination to implement is never questioned. 'If you don't accept the relocation, the three major public security authorities[95] will visit you and "fix you"' (Fanling). The *laobaixing* are quite aware of the selective law-enforcement that gives more bargaining power to those with 'connections' (guānxì) and less to the *xiǎo-lǎobǎixìng* (nobodies). In short, the determination of the authority speaks louder than the law or regulations. When it comes to the common people, they still believe in the existence of the absolute authority of the Chinese government.

The corruption, the tendency towards social inequality and arranging things with special 'connections' are phenomena shared by the two developing societies, and this study is short of evidence to judge the difference in the extent of this between the two. However, from the common people's perspective, according to my case studies, those in China have less bargaining power with the institutional regulations while the public in India sense they have more of a capacity to make use of the weapon of the weak. A middle-caste Indian told me that he feels that the custom of bribery in India in some ways is not bad as it provides a certain accessibility to everyone; 'the bribe allows the lower caste people to sometimes have the same chance to negotiate with the rules' (Darshan, 30s,

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[95] The three authorities are the Public Security Organs, the Procuratorial Organs, and the People's Courts of China.

male). They seem more able and more willing to play with the regulations, to rephrase and reinterpret the so-called rules. And this may to a certain extent result from the diversity of the society, in that there are several sub-cultural norms / values / customs / traditions in Indian society that support alternatives to the law for individuals.

Performative participants

The two previous sections identified the different types of actors in the environmental arenas of the two countries. In the public spaces, civil activists, in the Chinese context, perform obedience to deliver their opinions or achieve changes, whereas in India more radical lawbreakers who attempt to challenge the justification of the official system can be witnessed. In the popular spaces, where people can join together spontaneously for everyday sociality or collective action (Cornwall, 2004: 76), the Indian *cycle-wallahs* conduct illegal economic activities in public, every day, in the coal villages. They might issue no specific appeals or judgements towards the authorities; however, their collective activity in itself demonstrates their performative power.

The performances of the *cycle-wallahs* may not fit the image of participatory citizens; however, they act out the role of the weak. Their daily rallies expose the crisis of the system: a system that fails in regulating its members in following the law and furthermore fails to allow them to benefit from the vast business based on local mineral resources. As identified by Williams et al. (2011), the idea of performative participation highlights the ways in which identity and agency are expressed through one's actions (Williams et al., 2011: 1279). If the notion behind their actions could be put into words, it might correspond with what was said by one *adivasi* interviewed by Shri Prakash in his documentary (2012):

> We are also citizens of India; the *Constitution* applies to us too. Fine, if you don't want to help us in any form, give us independence, we will run our lives in our own way. But given that we are Indian citizens, why won't the Indian Government help us?

In this aspect, the Chinese *laobaixing* who are faced with some conflicts with the system tend to take action in a private manner or keep silent, thus demonstrating less performative power.

As well as the law, gender politics is another norm that fundamentally categorises and regulates the acts of people. I will discuss the performative power of the role of 'women' in the environmental arena in the following paragraphs.

Women as environmentalists and the power of performative femininity

In the documentary *Hul Sengel Aguwa* (Prakash, 2012) there is a recorded conversation between the director and an *adivasi* female activist, Pushpa Toppo (*adivasi* female, early 40s), who is at the forefront of a campaign against land acquisition and is later supported by the people and becomes the '*mukhiya*' (head of the *panchayat*, the basic administrative unit of a village).

> Director: You people had forced the army to step back. What is the reason that the same people are failing to combat hunger, unemployment, human trafficking?
> Toppo: People are not aware. Some of them are aware. But that is not enough.
> Director: Have you heard about Medha Patkar?[96]
> Toppo: No ... I haven't heard…
> Director: Dayamani Barla? There is a woman called 'Irom Sharmila (Iron Lady)'…
> Toppo: No ... I don't know about them...

Following this conversation, a short clip of another film entitled '*Kis Ki Raksha? (In Whose Defence?)*' (Prakash, 1994) has been inserted; it presents the figure of younger Toppo in the earlier movement and she is crying out the slogan amongst a crowd: 'We will give our lives! ... Go back!!' After the clip there is a text plate, which argues:

> It seems these laws and their implementations are meant only for temporary relief. On the other hand, people's movements struggling for their existence often cannot look beyond.

It is worth noting that Pushpa Toppo is asked whether she knows those female environmentalist idols while none of the other male activists in the documentary are asked similar questions. It is reasonable to argue that she is faced with this enquiry because she is a woman. The presence of females in environmental movements has been emphasised historically in India, from those who took part in the tree-hugging in the Chipko Movement in the early 1970s and Medha Patkar in the Narmada Movement in the 1980s, to outstanding contemporary activists such as Dayamani Barla. This kind of

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[96] Medha Patkar is the female activist who plays an important role in the Narmada Movement.

emphasis actually reflects a distinct expectation of female and male actors and an appreciation of femininity that facilitates women to sympathise with the environment.

The debate regarding 'femininity' has been studied through different theoretical approaches. Some place more emphasis on the equality between women and men (such as equal access to education and political rights) and thus pay less attention to the characteristics of femininity and its value for the public sector; early liberal feminism (e.g. Mill, 1869; Wollstonecraft, 1985/1792) is one example. However, the liberal feminist approach invites critiques, due to its tendency to overlook class and other differences that exist amongst pluralist women (Mackinnon, 1982; Mills, 1998). Marxist or socialist feminism is a perspective with a critical approach and is shared by those who emphasise class homogeneity between women and other underdogs in society (Bandarage, 1984; Barrett, 1988). The two kinds of political approaches, liberalism and criticism, result in some feminists' work on a 'unisex' culture discarding gender differences and discriminations, while others have learned that people can hardly abandon the differences between females and males. Thus, it could be an empowerment approach to identify 'femininity' and encourage its power – for example, the power of reproduction. In this context, the approach of eco-feminism arises (e.g. Rocheleau et al., 1996; Shiva, 1988), which praises the features of femininity, especially those that are relevant to nature and that empower female participants in environmental debates.

Feminine metaphors have been applied a great deal when describing nature, for example the ideas of Mother Earth and the virginal forest. Nature, in contrast with the human being, as well as the female in contrast with the male, demonstrate the inter-related position of the object versus the subject, the passive side versus the active side, and the victims versus the inflictors. On the one hand, accepting the dualistic imagery and the contraposition seems to be admitting the stereotypes of weakness and passivity of women, while on the other hand, in this context females are legitimatised to speak for the environment based on a kind of structural similarity. To use this weakness as a weapon to campaign is to apply performative power. To some extent, the act of speaking out reverses the stereotyped imagery that a woman is a passive object like nature. Hence, in a contrary way, women speak out for themselves and for the environment.

Judith Butler, as a gender theorist, considers femininity as a performance with a deconstructive perspective. Gender is about what we DO rather than what we ARE (Butler, 1990); and while what we ARE is to a large extent already determined, what we DO is, more or less, a matter of individual wish – although is still associated with one's social position. Her idea of performativity to some extent recognises the social construction of gender traits and their power, while at the same time it points out the agency of individuals to make use of social expectation. This approach of a performative strategy is useful in reconsidering the performances of female activists in the environmental arena in relation to their interpretations of femininity.

In many *adivasi* environmental campaigns, one familiar scene is a huge group of women leading at the forefront of the rally; this can be seen in documentaries such as *Hul Sengel Aguwa* (Prakash, 2012) and news reports. This kind of arrangement raises several concerns. On the one hand, the presentation of women at the beginning of the troop illustrates their intention to have a peaceful protest. In some cases, women show up with kitchenware in their hands to use as musical instruments for the rally, in an attempt to reinforce the image that the participants are unarmed. On the other hand, the kitchenware as a demonstrative tool is a symbol of nourishing. In addition, sometimes women show up with infants in their arms so that they present an even stronger image of nurturing children. Being peaceful, caring, and bearing the household responsibility and the role of providing reproduction are all characteristics that might be linked to femininity. However, these female activists act out these stereotypic features through public participation in order to voice their socio-political opinions. Their femininity does not weaken them or limit them from joining public debates; rather, it empowers their presence in the public sphere.

Moreover, the performances of these stereotypical features make these female activists more likely to be recognised as 'proper women' and 'proper citizens' in the participatory arena; meanwhile, what they have acted out is beyond the boundaries of femininity. As identified by researchers in the field of environmental politics, this kind of performative participation enhances the agency of individuals in the debating arena (Turnhout et al., 2010; Williams et al., 2011). For instance, in documentaries or media reports (e.g. Prakash, 2012), we may find mothers breast-feeding their babies in a crowd marching forward. These women carrying babies in their arms, participating in

demonstrations and shouting 'we would rather die than give our land' reveal the contradictions of power and life and the threat of death at the same time. These kinds of performances remind me of the carnival scene mentioned by Bakhtin (1984) in which the dichotomy between life and death and the boundary between private and public are ambivalent.

Gender-neutral participants and the representation of modernity

While in *adivasi* environmental movements the femininity of women is often highlighted, the role of 'women' in Chinese environmental debates is not very noticeable. In fact, I encountered several female activists involved in environmental movements during my Chinese fieldwork, including lawyers, journalists, researchers and campaigners. However, in my observation, a single activist would not be introduced to, or linked with, another activist because both of them were female. In short, they would be treated more as human beings than as women. In most cases, their arguments appeared to be backed up by their professions not by their gender; their presence represented the practice of 'rational participation'. Meanwhile, the fact that most of these gender-neutralised participants were professional intellectuals once again evidences the notion that the Chinese environmental arena emphasises modernity power rather than the power of nature or femininity.

The neuturalisation of women and the tendency to abandon the power of femininity is evidenced in the fertility policy of China. The ideology reflected in its one-child policy is the importance attached to national modernisation, for which purpose the state can apply techniques of governance to control the natural capacity of the human body and functionalise the power of reproduction. One further example is the heroine of the Chinese movie *Shancun Fengyun* (Bei-Bei, 2011) who cares about industrial safety, economic sustainbality and the education of the next generation; however, these ideas of 'sustainability' and 'generation justice' have little (if anything) to do with the environment. As an outstanding female actor in a coal village, she demonstrates no link with environmentalism or the value of nature; rather, she represents the power of modern knowledge. In other words, the ideological link between femininity and environmentalism is not programmed into her role, or rather, it is not constructed in the mind of the film director – a (female) member of Chinese civil society.

Generally speaking, female individuals participating in a movement can play their role, on the one hand, as representing ideas that are then supplemented with viewpoints and arguments, while on the other hand they are a symbolic source with a performative identity. In the former case, whether the actor is female or male makes little difference, and for the latter condition they are considered not only as human beings but also as 'women'. They represent the power of reproduction that justifies the purpose of the movement as being for people's survival. For each individual, the roles can coexist.

Dayamani Balra's story can provide one good example. Born in an *adivasi* family from a remote village, Dayamani and her brother migrated to Ranchi for the purpose of their education. In Ranchi, she had worked as a domestic worker since her childhood to earn a living. However, during her teenage-years in Ranchi, she witnessed gender discrimination and ethnic violence, which made her one day decided to leave the city and withdrew back to her village. From then on, she left the institutional education system and taught herself about the discriminations imposed on women and the *adivasis* following which she devoted herself to the people's movements. In her story, there is a trajectory. She starts out as a girl who yearns for the power of 'knowledge' and joins the institutional system. Later, her experience of discriminations recalls her feeling of 'power' that is structured in all kinds of hierarchies; power is enforced by the privileged classes in an aggressive manner and should be able to be practised by the weak as well. Her presence in the environmental arena represents both the power of femininity and the power of reflective knowledge.

Not every woman is capable of the two performances of power and they should not be expected to do so. It is important to recall the movie clip cited at the beginning of this section. The director asked the female *adivasi* activist Toppo whether or not she knew about the female environmentalists' idols. When she gave a negative answer, the director, in the following narratives (as stated in the text plate) hinted at her ignorance and implied that her unawareness was an expression of the tendency towards short-sightedness that exists amongst villagers and limits the achievements of people's movements. From my viewpoint, the director to some extent became trapped by the dualism that associates femininity with stereotypes of 'ignorance' and 'indigenous backwardness'.

When adopting the structural similarity of the oppression of women and nature, this does not mean that the dualistic structure of women-men or nature-human or weak-strong is accepted as being correct. One has to be careful not to become trapped by dualism and join forces in reinforcing the categorisation of the weak as if their relative backwardness or lack of information is the reason for their suffering instead of the outcome.

Conclusion

How should participation in environmental politics be evaluated? As argued in Chapter 4, participation demanded by the common people can take place in the form of taking part in governance, seeking an economic share, or maintaining one's daily-life environment. All of these forms could be observed in both China and India. However, one of the fundamental differences, as argued in Chapter 5, is that the participation of Chinese *laobaixing* tends to apply the expression of obedience while the Indian subalterns are more capable of introducing diverse discourses including those with a tendency to oppose the authorities. In this chapter, I applied the idea of performative power (Butler, 1990) and the carnival element (Bakhtin, 1984) to elaborate my argument that compares the grassroots movements of the two countries. I argued that there is a significant difference between the environmental arenas of the two countries; that is, there is a dynamic carnival potential, which is demonstrated noticeably among the Indian campaigns in the coal areas, but which is relatively absent from the Chinese actions.

As identified by Bakhtin (1984), the carnival practices exist not only in the public sphere or town squares but also in the adjacent lanes. In these carnivals, the dualistic imagery is presented. However the hierarchy is reversed and the boundary (or categorisation) is ambivalent, not only the down and up but also the public and private: household items can serve as weapons in mocking the clown-turned-king.

In this chapter, I argue that the carnival element is represented in three forms of practices that have taken place in the Indian environmental arena. First, the clown-turned-king in the form of lawbreakers can be seen as the idols of activists. Second, the eccentric behaviours in terms of the *cycle-wallahs* in rural India, lacking legitimacy under the law, are normalised by their rally-style daily performances. The third is the

performance of reproductive power in the form of women carrying babies, who take part in the environmental demonstrations shouting 'we would rather die than give our land'. As illustrated in the previous sections, there are also illegal practices relating to coal mining in rural China, and women are also involved in the environmental issues there. However, I observed the absence of the carnival element in the Chinese case study, or in other words, the lack of the idea of reversing the usual order. To some extent, this corresponds with the situation of Chinese grassroots groups as argued by sociologist Anthony Spires (2011): they exist under a constant threat of suppression and they are far too weak to be the agents of transformation. Accordingly, it is not surprising to find a lack of a challenging agent among the ordinary people.

Considering that the two countries both have huge populations and need to deal with the debate between people's livelihoods and environmental conservation, are they confronted with '*The Tragedy of the Commons*' as cautioned by Garrett Hardin (1968)? In particular, is the reproductive power of the carnival society in conflict with Hardin's concern? As a biologist-turned-ecologist, Hardin's argument shows more concern for the natural environment than for the social dimension of the environment. According to Hardin (1968), the growth of the population is one of the main causes of environmental degradation, which needs to be controlled. Regarding this point, let us take China and India as examples. China, which is known for its stringent family planning and population policies, has not demonstrated a significant difference in the improvement of its environmental performance over the past decades compared with India (Yale, 2005; 2010).

Furthermore, Hardin's warning demands better management of nature, as the freewill of individuals might lead to an overloading of the common land on which everyone seeks to maximise their gains by exploiting the environment. From his viewpoint, this can be achieved by the privatisation of common property. Again, in China, the trend of land privatisation (of land-use rights) that came along with the economic reforms initiated in the 1980s has actually resulted in serious pollution and even poisonous land throughout the country (Muldavin, 1997). As suggested by Minoti Chakravarty-Kaul (1996), an economist studying the common property resources in South Asia, Hardin omitted considering folk knowledge and the customs of the herdsmen and peasants. Those who live on the land might have the greatest motivation to ensure the sustainability of it:

generational justice is not a political ideology for the peasants but an economic consideration which is quite practical and basic, and which will influence their decision-making in terms of rational choice.

Contrast the perspective of 'carnival-style democracy' with the idea of the 'tragedy of the commons'; the distinction lies fundamentally in the perspectives of the two scholars. Hardin (1968) as a natural scientist tries to propose a solution (to be implemented socially and economically) to conserve the environment; in contrast, Bakhtin (1984) holds a humanistic perspective that is more concerned with the potential of folk culture in which the environment is a playground rather than a goal. The discussion about the carnival aims to bring out the important idea of 'reversing'. While similar practices exist in both China and India, those in India are performed with the potential dynamic of reversing, or with the purpose of challenging, the top-down order. In contrast, even though the Chinese *laobaixing* have their own perspective about nature, folk customs have not been used as a performative weapon of the poor in environmental debates in most cases in China.

I consider that the carnival element is facilitated by the democratic system of India, and the electoral system also brings about the uncertainty in the stability of governors. The bargaining space left open between the people and the authoritarian power may be permitted by a democratic mechanism such as the elections – even though in many cases the outcome of the elections might be decided by the social elites rather than by the common people or the poor. The carnival element is not realised by the fact that a clown becomes king and remains king; rather, it is played between the ambiguity of the politicians and jokers, with the uncertainty of the stability of domination. In contrast, the Chinese political authority uses every method to maintain the so-called political and social stability, which in fact is the stability of the single Party representing the state power.

With its lack of a carnival element, institutionalism shows better effects in the coal villages of China in terms of its grassroots society adopting the rule of harmony and stability with little apparent challenge. While in India, although the environmental governance of the coal mining issue still shows a great tendency towards institutionalism, its people demonstrate more ways of questioning the authorities. Although the positive effects of the people's movements are hard to evaluate, the

tendency towards carnival-style democracy is evident both in the civil society and in the grassroots in India. The bargaining power of the common people is better observed.

Does democratic environmentalism exist in India? The answer might be 'no' if we take a similar perspective to Hardin and consider environmentalism as a technique of resource management. In the example of coal mining, the mineral resource is to a great extent governed by the authoritarian institutions in correspondence with either the government or enterprises or both. However, if we consider the environment as one dimension of nature, together with its social and economic dimensions, there might be a better chance of obtaining a positive answer. In India, I observed diverse social and economic practices that enable people to make use of the natural resource to bargain for their living. In my understanding, this is one form of participation that is different from the idea of participatory governance, however it is realised in people's daily-lives.

Democracy in rural India in terms of the environment does not take 'the environment' as the fixed purpose or the goal; rather, this is only one factor of popular life. The carnival-style democratic element exists in rural India as a possibility, a challenge, a threat to the authoritarian decisions, and an uncertainty in the stability of the power holders. It does not fit the mainstream ideology of environmental governance and it does not aim to become that. Never ask whether the clown wants to become the king, but the existence of the clown always mirrors the instability of the kingship/leadership – this is the people's viewpoint of 'participation' that I learned from my Indian and Chinese case studies. The people do not want to 'manage' the environment; they want to maintain their living on it.

Chapter 7: Reflective epilogues and an outlook on future research

Introduction

This thesis has been a journey that has explored issues associated with the representation of the environment in China and India through a cultural anthropological and historical route. The journey started with a preliminary enquiry into 'why' – why the people of China and India appear to respond differently to similar environmental conditions – and this was then elaborated further with enquiries into 'how'. How was 'the environment' presented? How were the people's activities reported in the two societies? Based on a literature review and fieldwork, in this dissertation I built up a picture of how the differences between the Chinese and Indian environmental arenas have been formed and represented, and what factors might have affected the occurrence of environmental movements among ordinary people. The process of addressing these enquiries contributes to a better understanding of human-nature conflicts and the various interpretations of participatory environmentalism.

This dissertation draws on mixed methods case research to demonstrate the multiple dimensions of social realities. My main sources of data are first-hand materials collected via fieldwork in China and India between 2011 and 2012. My informants included local residents of the coal mining villages of my case studies, and also elite civil actors in environmental arenas, such as NGO members, activists, journalists and researchers – so that the networking and interactions between different realms of the societies were observed. These realms include the official world, public sphere, civil society (Habermas, 1991), and grassroots society (Chatterjee, 2004; Chen, 2010b). Additionally, other sources of data, such as historical writings and films, were introduced to support my analyses. The approach and research design make this project not only an environmental study but also an interdisciplinary cross-cultural study. The findings from my empirical case studies in China and India, concerning the two 'Coal Capitals', provide the research community in this field with valuable materials to analyse the formations of environmentalism and why it appears fragile in some cases. At the same time, besides the subject matter, the cross-regional research design and execution might be a significant practical initiative that this dissertation contributes to academia. By 'cross-regional', I refer to the geographic/academic custom that categorises China as

part of East Asia and India as part of South Asia. Further reflections on the issue of 'cross-regional' will be discussed as one of the themes of the coming sections.

A socio-anthropological study can be valued for its originality and individuality; to my knowledge, this is the first investigation that studies the environmental issues of China and India within such a complicated scope, and whose writing is based on comparative literature reviews and empirical fieldwork in coal villages in both countries. This aspect could be one of the potential contributions of this research. Using material from case studies, my intention was to understand or question the 'environmental discourses', rather than to sketch two 'representative' sites of the two huge and complicated countries. Despite this, I have contextualised my case studies on the Chinese and Indian coal regions in their national trajectories of environmental history and rural development so as to enhance the diachronic and geographic explanations of my analyses. Historically speaking, internal colonial structures have been present in both regions of my case studies – Guizhou of China (Elvin, 2006; Oakes, 1998) and Jharkhand of India (Corbridge, 2004; Damodaran, 1992). However, the cultural assimilation policy and anti-separatism has been carried out continuously and intensively in China (Park, 2013), while in India the effects of anti-colonial discourses remain. The tribal politics and indigenous identity is still deployed by Indian activists (from both outside and inside *adivasi* communities) in motivating movements for autonomy and environmental campaigns (Baviskar, 1997; Damodaran, 2006; Shah, 2010). The historical backgrounds have influenced the centre-region politics and ideological constructions of the two societies, and this is reflected in the ordinary people's daily practices and narratives. Besides historical literatures, films (Bei-Bei, 2011; Kashyap, 2012; Prakash, 2012; Yang, 2010) were also used as supportive materials to advance the synchronic comprehensions in this research. The media productions illustrate how the development of the coal industry and the related environment conflicts are presented in each society, and at the same time demonstrate in both contexts the different extent of freedom of expression.

As clarified previously, this study does not aim to generalise the phenomena observed in the case studies of mining villages to a national level, nor does it intend to place China and India in a binary relationship. On the contrary, this research is concerned with the realities as inter-subjective and I am interested in the various interpretations

that coexist in one society. In practice, I have focused on the theme of 'environmental discourse' and found ways to study socio-cultural, historical and political aspects of the settings of the two societies. The dissertation does not intend to simplify a society or define any subject within a positivistic approach; rather, its intention is to feature some clusters of characteristics of the two societies to extend researchers' knowledge of how the contemporary cultivations or social ideologies facilitate people's campaigns. In other words, the case studies of the Chinese and Indian 'Coal Capitals' are not the object of this research, but rather the path through which I have put forward theoretical arguments. One of the key arguments to emerge from my investigation on the environmental discourse is that, applying the notion of 'authoritarian environmentalism' to explain the socio-environmental condition of contemporary China is questionable if the causal relationships behind it are neglected. My suspicion was not based on whether China's current condition is typical of an authoritarian country. Rather, it was based on the considerations that, stemming from the contrast between the case studies from China and India, the concept of 'authoritarian environmentalism' is to a certain extent a self-fulfilling consequence of the state authority. I will summarise the argument more thoroughly in the coming sections.

Key findings

In this dissertation I draw on the works of socio-anthropologists and historians (e.g. Brosius, 1999; Douglas, 1966; Merchant, 1980a; Worster, 1985) with regard to ideas about the inter-constructive relationship between human beings and nature. I do this in order to examine 'environmentalism' as a constructive output concerning what is 'the environment', what sorts of conditions are 'environmentally problematic' and what kinds of actions are 'environmental movements'. The constructions of discourses about environmentalism differ depending on socio-cultural contexts. Empirical studies about ordinary people living in coal villages have shown the necessity of being more aware of the influences of discourse constructions on the formation of environmentalism in China and India, and, specifically, the roles of the state and elite activists in employing such discourses in environmental movements.

To recap on the question posed at the beginning of this dissertation: how are we to understand the different social practices in two societies when their environmental

conditions appear to be similar (e.g. mining)? To answer this question, I investigated the formation and practices of environmentalism in China and India. My findings can be summarised by two dimensions, one concerns the effects of discourse construction by powerful agencies and influential actors and the other concerns the grassroots performances.

The effects of the state and social elites on environmentalism discourse construction

To a certain degree, this study supports the conventional understanding of the two countries, as suggested by the literature, that a top-down dynamic plays a significant role in the Chinese environmental arena (Beeson, 2010; John et al., 2006; Johnson, 2010) and that environmentalism in Indian society is better characterised by a bottom-up dynamic (Guha, 2006; John et al., 2006). Moreover, my findings lead me to advance the argument that the top-down and bottom-up dynamics have influenced the emergence of environmental movements in the two societies. Nevertheless, those different dynamics may have had a far greater influence on the discourse constructions of 'environmental movements'. In other words, I argue that the existing understanding of the different tendencies of the environmental movements in the two countries are, to an important extent, an effect – directly and indirectly – of discourse constructions, as I will explain by reference to my findings.

The impact of discourse constructions about environmentalism can be evaluated in a relatively direct manner by reviewing the literature and historical representations of the environmental campaigns in the two countries. As illustrated in Chapters 2 and 3, the rather authoritarian top-down dynamic has restricted discursive constructions in Chinese society. The discursive capital to conduct environmental or socio-political debates was dominated, to a great extent, by the state leaders, while other agencies such as academic institutions or NGOs were regulated by the government in terms of producing knowledge or raising discussions (Economy, 2011; Sleeboom-Faulkner, 2007; Spires, 2011). This is not to say that there is no space for other social actors/agents to engage in campaigning in the Chinese environmental arena. In fact, China, in the latest decade, has witnessed the emergence of several civic campaigns. A series of protests against paraxylene chemical plants happened in 2007 (in Xiamen of Fujian Province), 2011 (in Dalian of Liaoning Province), 2013 (in Kunming of Yunnan Province) and 2015 (in Shanghai). The phenomenon of cancer villages (aizheng cun) has drawn attention from

scholars (Liu, 2010; Lora-Wainwright, 2011; 2013) as well as media practitioners (e.g. China Daily, 10 May 2004). Last but not least, earlier this year, the documentary produced by Chai Jing, *Under the Dome* (2015), brought another peak in the discussion about smog and $PM_{2.5}$ in the country. The documentary got more than 100 million hits on Chinese websites. From this, we find that civic media and actors seem to be allowed a certain space nowadays in China to produce alternative expertise; however, it is also a harsh reality that *Under the Dome* (Chai, 2015) and related discussions were banned by the state in one week. While the coverage of Chinese publications has been restricted by the political leadership, the ideology promoted by the authority might be reflected in, and reinforced by, the publication outputs. An example of its effects is that, due to a lack of sufficient access to alternative discourses, although the villagers in my case study are familiar with the notion of *aizheng cun* (cancer villages), they shrugged and said that 'it is nothing novel, we have plenty of cancer villagers in the area' and showed little reflection on the unbalanced distribution of environmental benefits and burdens. They either make no link between the environmental risks and their illnesses, or hold no intention/hope of altering the situation by pressuring state agencies.

In Chapter 2, I argued how a narrower definition has been applied to the interpretations of '(public) participation' in China and that this has in turn limited the diversity of environmental participations. For example, certain civil campaigns were reported as self-interested NIMBY movements and excluded from being acknowledged as environmentalist movements. Historically, as argued in Chapter 3, the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party has (re)defined the notions of *tiān* (heaven/nature), and promoted a competitive relationship between nature and human beings in terms of 'man can/must conquer nature'. The state leadership has promoted such an ideological construction to alienate nature and human beings from each other and affirm its dominating power over both natural resources and manpower. Studying the literature and historical writings about nature in China and India drew my attention to the causal relationship behind the conventional understanding of the formation of environmentalism in the two societies. Instead of offering another endorsement of the argument that the top-down dynamic has played (and is playing) a significant role in promoting the environmental policy in China (Gilley, 2012; Johnson, 2010), I argue that the Chinese political authorities have dominated the construction of environmentalism and have suppressed alternative constructions.

Taking the case of India as a comparison has enabled the above argument to be better supported. The case of India allows us to see that the situation can be quite different if the top-down dynamic has not been backed up by an authoritarian political system. Further, in this case, differences also emerge if there are more spaces in which resourceful social members can devote energies to constructing critical discourses that facilitate the academic and public debates in order to question the dominating power. In India, the state also, in many cases, plays a role whereby it can selectively 'invite' participants (Cornwall, 2004; Williams et al., 2011) to take part in environmental debates. There are also other dynamics present, however, which can help examine or question the arrangements imposed by the government on the environmental arena. Ecological Marxism has constantly been a significant approach applied by Indian activists to challenge the state-led developmentalism (Baviskar, 1997). Other examples include the criticisms raised by scholars on the problematic implementation of public participation (Paliwal, 2006; Panigrahi and Amirapu, 2012), and the complaints expressed by some of my respondents regarding the official regulation that restricts civil dynamics (such as the implementation of the *Foreign Contribution Regulation Act* of 2010 that suppresses NGO activities, as discussed in Chapter 6). As argued in Chapter 5, people's rights in Indian society are to some extent founded on the agreement between the government and people through democratic processes, namely, elections. Although election campaigns and the outcomes often reinforce ethnic conflicts or reflect the interests of resourceful communities (Hansen, 1999; Varshney, 1998), the cultural diversity and the distribution of discursive power between various social groups have been better recognised as a debatable issue in India. This is exemplified by the literature that presents the reflections on the tribal politics, indigenous identity and the distribution of discursive power in environmental movements (Baviskar, 1995; 1997; Shah, 2007; 2010). In other words, as has been evidenced by my empirical studies, Indian society has seen a broader definition of '(public) participation', therefore the emergence of bottom-up and civil activities has been recognised (either in an endorsed or criticism manner) to a greater extent in academic and historical writings. Compared with Chinese civil society, which is awakening from silence (Ho, 2007; McDonald, 2007; Shapiro, 2001), Indian civil society has a better potential to balance/challenge the power of state, though it still faces difficulties in achieving certain goals. This is why Partha Chatterjee (1993) pointed out that there is a marginalised grassroots society where people's movements can hardly alter the official agendas.

There are historical and cultural causes – apart from distinctive political regimes – to explain differences between the situations in the two countries. In China, the state leadership acts as the monopoly agency to produce a unified centralised nationalism while Indian society is better seen as having a multi-cultural national consciousness. We may identify several features of the two societies that have contributed to the different constructions of nationalism and regional politics in Guizhou and Jharkhand. One of these features is, as argued in previous chapters, China and India's different experiences in relation to foreign colonial powers. Another feature lies in the exhaustive assimilation policy enforced by the Han Chinese state authority in Guizhou (Elvin, 2006) in contrast to the formation of *adivasi* autonomous consciousness in Jharkhand (Damodaran, 2006; Parajuli, 1996). While the social differentiation exhibited in hierarchy can be criticised as being a remnant of the colonial experience of India, at the same time, the ideology that contains ideas about challenging the rules and dominating power structures has also been inherited from (anti-) colonisation. Its historical and political experience has offered justifications for a variety of autonomous campaigns in India, and these campaigns have been presented in the media, literature and history (such as the Chipko Movement and Safe Narmada Movement discussed in Chapter 3, and the *adivasi* campaigns represented in documentaries that were introduced in Chapter 5). In short, a critical approach of environmentalism is better tolerated in India's post-colonial democratic system. In Jharkhand, we still have to pay attention to the discursive gap between middle-class elite activists and the native communities (Shah, 2007). Nevertheless, as I have noted from the literature (e.g. Baviskar, 1995; Damodaran, 2006; Mawdsley, 1998) and field observations, local communities have obtained social and discursive capital through their interactions with elite activists during waves of popular movements. These experiences reinforced their identity and this was reflected later in other local campaigns or daily-life performances. For example, *adivasis* – who once took part in fighting for Jharkhand's independence from Bihar – protested against the newly established Jharkhand state government with regard to problematic land acquisition. In both waves of movements, the discourse of self-governance of the environment was deployed. The richness of language/discourse in civil and grassroots society does not guarantee India has achieved greater environmental justice or better environmental performance. More evidence would be needed to make that claim and that is not the main task of this research. What can be argued from my findings is that the uncertainty of the stability of any single domination in the democracy has allowed

its people more space for negotiating their demands and rights in the environmental arena in India.

As for Guizhou, the cultural assimilation has been imposed on the region for hundreds of years and this can be traced back at least to the 17th century (Elvin, 2006; Fan, 1993). The establishment of modern China was based on a radical violent revolution after which the state leadership enforced a revolutionary social transformation (Drèze and Sen, 2010; Moore, 1967) and a centralised unified nationalism through ideological construction by various measures including ideological struggles, political propaganda, language unification and ethnic assimilation policy (Park, 2013; Price, 1979). These applications, to a certain extent, have brought about the establishment of an anti-separatist national consciousness. Consequently, members of the Chinese public sphere are well aware of the political correctness that is preferred by the state authority. These considerations have affected people's expression and decision making. Sociologist Anthony Spires (2011) suggested that Chinese grassroots NGOs' survival policy is to avoid democratic claim-making and to devote itself to works that are agreed with official agendas. In practice, during my fieldwork, I met some scholars and journalists whose comments have amounted to a cautious consideration of politically 'sensitive' issues.

In sum, drawing on reviews of the literature and historical writings, and supported by my empirical studies, I argue that the altered political systems of the two countries have provided different degrees of freedom of discourse to their civil societies. As a result, the representation of environmentalism in China is projected to a greater extent by the state authority while in India it is rather inter-constructed by various dynamics (including radical and conservative ones) and their discursive collaborations. In this manner, the authoritarianism or democracy of the given regime has demonstrated its effects on the formation of environmentalism in the two societies.

Enlarge the participatory arena with grassroots practices and reflexive performances

Official power and resourceful social elites may influence or define but not fully decide the nature of that environmentalism. One important objective of this research is to learn from ordinary people's everyday life regarding environmental issues and to synthesise people's experiences in conversation with the theories. With this intention, I analysed

the grassroots 'performances' (Turner, 1986) that reflect official rules and social norms through an alternative perception.

As described in the previous section, to a certain extent, different manners of environmental discourse construction affect the practices and performances at the bottom levels of a society. Chapter 4 has demonstrated that the richness of discourse and the activeness of social networking in civil society can have causal effects on people's campaigns. While a variety of languages with regard to environmentalism seem to be accessible to members of Indian grassroots society, Chinese elite activists in the environmental arena are more cautious in the way they express ideas due to political considerations, thus there is a lack of discursive support for grassroots activities. For instance, one of the scholars I met in China agreed that the implementation of public participation is an important aspect of environmental governance. That scholar however, went on to cautiously claim that the discussions on public participation have little to do with issues of democracy. Similarly, at grassroots level, Chinese *laobaixing* rarely consider 'the environment' as an issue upon which they would make comments. My fieldwork provides evidence of the inter-constructions between elite civil society and grassroots society, and moreover, how the official world can – through regulating the ideology of civil society and elite social members – use its hand to influence utterances of ordinary people. The narratives shared by *laobaixing* in the case of the Chinese coal villages in some way represent the ideology constructed by the authority, in terms of valuing the environment with its economic uses and considering nature as a thing to be exploited for making profits. In the case of Indian coal villages, embedded in a society that has more freedom of discourse, the reflections on social differentiation have resulted in multiple interpretations of environment-development debates. To clarify once again, I am not suggesting that social differentiation is something to be celebrated. What is worth highlighting is the power or tools people have at their disposal to argue for different perspectives and to question the unjust distribution of risks and benefits – both of which are reduced (or lacking) in Chinese society due to the anti-separatism ideology enforced by the political authority.

In addition, using films as examples, Chapter 5 revealed how the ideology of harmony has been reclaimed and imposed by the top-down forces in China, and reflected in the grassroots campaigners who acted/performed as petitioners in an obedient manner. On

the contrary, the ideology that respects conflict – that was acquired by the Indian people during the (anti-)colonial period – has cultivated an Indian society willing to criticise various kinds of dominators. The ideological construction of 'harmony' has to some extent harmonised the behaviours of elites and ordinary people. Nevertheless, reflexive performances still exist. There are campaigning activities in Chinese grassroots society as well as in India – and some also take the forms of violent conflicts. However, activists in China tend to be censored and reported as being either 'petitioners' or 'irrational mobs'. Sociologist Ying Xing (2001) in his study, about the campaign history of a southwest Chinese village with regard to a dam construction and land acquisition during the 1980s and 1990s, pointed out that the local government tended to divide and alienate civil activists into single individuals with strategic narratives. Specifically, the public would be categorised into three types, namely the individual troublemakers who hold ulterior motives, the ignorant minority, and the rational majority who wish for a stable society and development (Ying, 2001). Such kinds of strategic narratives are still employed today (see first section of Chapter 6). Through categorising social actors, the official authorities 'invite' the elites/intellectuals – who agree with the information endorsed by the government – to participate in environmental debates specifically, while they label other actors as irrational individuals and troublemakers.

Common people who have adapted to the rule of categorisation, to avoid being labelled as selfish individuals or irrational mobs, may therefore tend to perform by following the route of raising complaints within the system instead of challenging the official authorities and the dominating structure. The peasant activist Zhang Gongli in the film *The Warriors of Quigang* (Yang, 2010) demonstrates the performance of a 'petitioner' – who claimed he was looking for 'social stability' and referred to the speeches given by the political leaders to justify his petitioning behaviours. Despite this, the movement has involved some activities that were not welcomed by the government, such as gathering the villagers together secretly and organising mass protests. These are what I mean by the term 'reflexive performances' that reflect authoritarian rules through a 'magic mirror' (Turner, 1986). The petitioners neither challenge the official regulations directly, nor obey all of them perfectly. The tax-dodging truckers are another example of the reflexive performances that offend the authoritarian discourses in a rather obscure way. I consider all these roundabout daily-life 'tricks' as reflexive performances that should be understood as belonging to a broader definition of public participation. Evaluating

these tricks of common people as reflexive performances may provide researchers a lens through which to reconsider the politics of defining 'public participation'.

This explains why the dissertation calls attention to the causal relationship in conventional understandings regarding the formation of environmentalism in the two societies. This is because in a country with an authoritarian regime (as a pre-condition), the state authority has the power/influences to define a narrow participatory arena for discussions. The narrower definition of participation has justified certain social and political elites as the (politically) 'correct' participatants and excluded the other actors from being addressed as environmental activists. In this context, I argue that the notion of 'participation' is itself a political construction, thus we can hardly have debates on 'participation' in a de-politicalised manner. Moreover, only with a broader definition of participation may we examine grassroots and marginalised daily practices as a type of response to environmental injustice. In this aspect, we see the similarities between the coal transporters of rural Guizhou and Jharkhand that are trying to make extra money through illegal transportation (even if through different performances).

Despite the fact that the Chinese participants showed attempts to avoid politically sensitive issues, their performances are their responses to political constructions. Specifically, the actions of the *laobaixing* take the form of 'raising petitions' to present to cadres or official institutions to regain their 'environmental rights' (as discussed in Chapter 4 and 5). Such a tendency does not mean that Chinese ordinary people lack a sense of rights or politics; instead, people are conscious of the socio-political structure that is biased towards/by official institutions, and this explains their performances of obedience in order to make changes possible. If we neglect the fact that petitioners are also environmental activists (who protest in a 'harmonised' way), we may adopt the interpretation of environmentalism promoted by the state authority and underestimate the potential of grassroots environmentalism in the country.

In short, this dissertation illustrates how 'environmental participation' in the Chinese and Indian coal mining areas was differently conceptualised by powerful agencies/actors and differently performed by ordinary people. With the support of empirical data, I argue that it is impossible to have a form of de-participatory environmentalism: there will always be a variety of practices and performances of environmentalism, even though the state authority will manage to exclude some of them

from the (narrower) definition of 'participation'. Meanwhile, there is no de-politicalised participation, because the conceptualisation of participation is itself a political process.

Reclaiming the value of participation

One of the reflective arguments of this dissertation concerns the conceptualisation of 'participation'. The findings of this research support the suspicion that when a discourse is produced, the definition of a certain concept is promoted, and such a promotion may, on the contrary, narrow the capability of the concept in the given case. The two societies have witnessed different discursive constructions regarding the idea of 'participation'; this is one example that demonstrates the effects of the top-down dynamic in China. A more authoritarian leadership, by censoring media contents, regulating academic discussions and restricting public gatherings (Geall, 2013a; Sleeboom-Faulkner, 2007; Spires, 2011), has contributed to a narrower definition of participation in China than in India. Together with this narrow definition of participation, elitism is highlighted by the authorities and adopted among the Chinese common people to a certain degree. By elitism here I mean the ideology that evaluates social participants in relation to their professionalised or institutionalised positions and which marginalises some social members through its biased evaluations. As mentioned in the previous section, the exclusive mechanism of the participatory arenas or spaces, along with the categorisation of participants has resulted in some activists being labelled as irrational mobs. Others, however, have chosen to appeal to the authorities as petitioners in an obedient manner instead of carrying out any anti-government activities in order to obtain some positive aid.

It is important to now recap the theoretical framework for this study (see Figure 7.1). In Chapter 1, I introduced this framework which is founded on the conceptual distinction between the state, public sphere and civil society (Habermas, 1991) – as shown in the left half of Figure 7.1 – and the interactions between the top-down (official), middle-out (civil) and bottom-up (grassroots) dynamics (John et al., 2006). Being particularly concerned with the ordinary people, this framework focuses more on the bottom level of the society – this can be called the political society in the Indian context (Chatterjee, 2004) or the *minjian* in the Chinese context (Chen, 2010b).
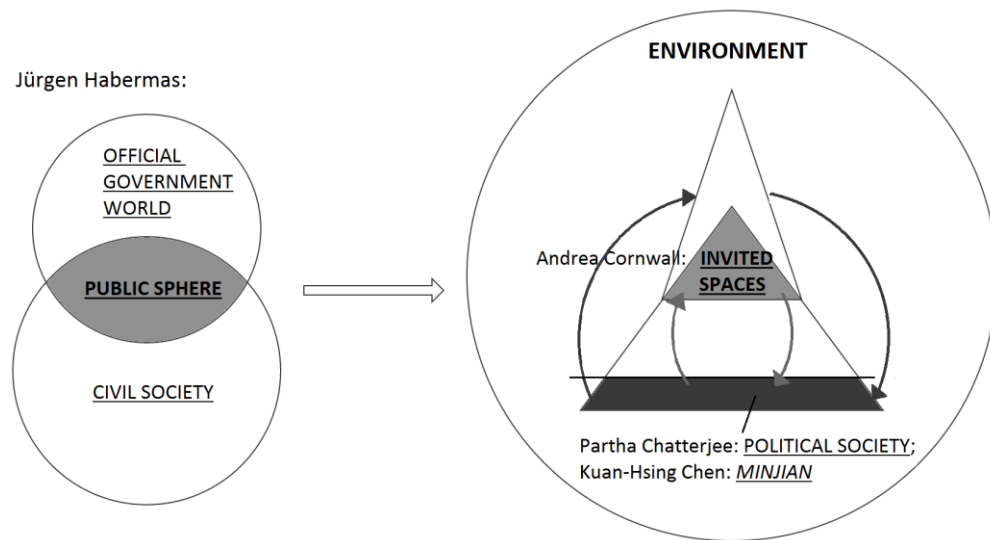
Figure 7.1 Theoretical framework

My reflections on the politics of public participation and the interactions between the various dynamics are drawn from several scholars' work. The idea of 'invited spaces' suggested by Cornwall (2004) is helpful to illustrate the problem here. The concept 'invited' poses critiques about the selective mechanism for entering the public sphere – the mechanism through which the active agency of participants who seek to take part in public debates has in fact been regulated so that it can only happen in a relatively passive manner. To reaffirm the active agency of social actors, as a response to the notion of 'invited spaces', I propose the concept of 'uninvited participations'; this emphasises the possibility of civil and grassroots activities, especially regarding the environment (in the context of this dissertation). Uninvited participants conduct their daily practices/performances in a proactive manner outside of the expectations of the authorities; they carry out bottom-up dynamics. The concept of 'uninvited participations' looks for a more inclusive definition of participation; the broader definition of participation is developed by those participants rather than by a specific host of a regulated debating space.

While in most cases, whether in China or India, the discourse of environmentalism reflects the ideas of those – mainly elite activists – who are capable of deploying ideas from the international environmentalist lexicon to make links with 'the environment', my research has illustrated some folk-style usage of environmental resources to bargain for one's livelihood, such as the daily-life performances of the (illegal) coal carriers, as discussed earlier. These illustrate different faces of the 'weak' and how they operate

with the 'weapons' accessible to them, in James Scott's terms (1985). These popular practices of participation are indivisible from the environment; thus, as I have argued in this dissertation, they are a form of practice of environmentalism. If we neglect the practical power of these uninvited participations and accept the fixed/narrow definition of participation introduced by the authorities which welcome only invited participants, this may cripple the possibility of 'participation' and underestimate the power of 'environmentalism'.

Such a problem needs to be addressed not only in China and authoritarian countries, but also in India and other democracies. Elitism, exclusive mechanisms – as well as popular movements and violent grassroots activities – all coexist in both of the societies. However, this dissertation addresses how these dynamics and activities were represented or modified in different manners through different ideological programming, and how common people responded to the ideology/discourse constructions. Actually, Cornwall (2004) and other scholars (Turnhout et al., 2010; Williams et al., 2011) have applied the idea of 'invited' to criticising the selective participatory politics of democratic institutions; however, the condition also exists in authoritarian systems where it is even more obvious. As was demonstrated in Chapters 5 and 6, the top-down forces in China promote elitism. It is also adopted to a greater extent by the common people and campaigners/activists in the Chinese case, who therefore look forward to assistance from the official institutions (as shown by the larger arrows in the right half of Figure 7.1). As for the case of India, as mentioned earlier, interactive dynamics and multiple value systems coexist in the civil society. Despite this, in an evaluation of the 'elite', notice must be taken of the critical role that elite activists play as agents that mediate the voices of the grassroots campaigners (as shown by the smaller/inner arrows in the right half of Figure 7.1) so that they can be heard in the public sphere. In short, the problem of an exclusive mechanism of participation exists in both democracies and authoritarian regimes. By defining the participatory debating sphere, the government may engage people's voices selectively for the interest of those in power.

I agree that the government can serve as one crucial dynamic that boosts the environmental governance in a country by, for example, issuing some fashionable environmental codes. Despite this, we should be cautious about evaluating whether the orientation of the state authority in this case is driven by environmentally-oriented ideas.

According to my respondents living in the coal villages, regardless of the poor environmental conditions and serious air and water pollution, in many cases the official agendas appear to be oriented to economic growth rather than the environment. Examples include situations where land acquisitions were sought by authorities that asked for fertile land to be used for steel and power plant constructions, as happened in rural Jharkhand. Meanwhile, in China, officials visited the coal washing plants regularly to collect the environmental fines but introduced no treatment to deal with the pollution. In short, my case studies on coal mining villages in both China and India have uncovered a tendency in official agendas towards state-led 'developmentalism' instead of state-led environmentalism. When the authorities promote 'GDP growth' as the main goal of development, this ideology will be observed and adopted by the ordinary people. This tendency is quite noticeable in my Chinese case study. Villagers do not feel the government is taking environmental governance seriously; therefore, it is not surprising to find the people lacking environmental awareness and, in addition, the achievement of environmental regulations appears like a fragile gain.

Echoing the conclusion made in the first section, the environment should not be understood as an object that is separated from cultural contexts and social activities. Moreover, to deal with environmental challenges, it is impossible for the state authorities to exclude the participation of the people, for their practices may anyway happen in both an invited and uninvited manner. Meanwhile, they will be inspired by campaigners of counterpart countries and will not always take an obedient stance. At the same time, it is worth paying attention to the condition that government leaders (whether in democracies or authoritarian states) can occasionally undertake neo-authoritarian approaches. This is why I tend to be cautious with regard to certain potentially controversial notions, such as 'authoritarian environmentalism'. In sum, authoritarian environmentalism and democratic environmentalism are ideal types and stereotypes that can be applied to understand the two countries; however, when applying them, care should be taken to not reinforce the justification of them. They should be understood as dynamic processes rather than being fixed mechanisms. Otherwise, we may run the risk of justifying the Chinese leadership as practicing (authoritarian) environmentalism; this may cause the Chinese leaders and international scholars to neglect the challenging voices in society, and reinforce the state leaders' role of imposing its developmentalism without paying more attention to the environment and

the grassroots population. On the other hand, we should not consider India as a place where environmental activities are active and bottom-up voices are always well heeded. In fact, the democracy in India is questionable, as we have seen the emergence of the nationalist political institutions and, as suggested by Damodaran (1992), whoever takes over the power in the country constantly tends to apply conservative policies and reinforce the existing power structures.

It is worth noting that, although this dissertation calls attention to the agency of individual performances, over emphasising the agency of daily-life performance may somehow run the risk of re-marginalising the 'ordinary people'. In other words, the problems of exclusion remain if one can only practice his/her political power in popular spaces while being excluded from participating in public debating arenas. For instance, there is a danger in over-emphasising unlicensed coal transportation (whether this is the case of Indian *cycle-wallahs* or Chinese tax-avoiding truckers) as a form of grassroots practice of 'environmentalism'. This may result in under-emphasising the need to pursue a more powerful language of popular environmentalism in order to demand significant structural reforms and equal access to natural resources.

Environmentalism can be understood as an ideological discourse set up in response to the effects of development. The influences it can have, to a great extent, have to rely on public discourses and an active civil society – and these can fuel grassroots activities. The capacity to engage with discourse construction is important. Individuals' grassroots behaviours, such as the illegal coal transportation or the indigenous use of the forest, might be challenged as causing harm to the environment. In this case, certain activist discourses may offer explanations to justify these activities. For instance, as suggested by economist Minoti Chakravarty-Kaul (1996), in response to Hardin's propositions in relation to 'the tragedy of the commons' (1968), we can point out that Hardin omitted to consider the folk knowledge and the customs of native communities. In particular, it is important to note that those who live on the land might have the greatest motivation to ensure its sustainability. Despite this, in practice, in the case of illegal transportation of coal, it is difficult to compare the environmental footprint caused by this activity with that caused by regular big-scale transportation. Similarly, it requires more data to evaluate the effects caused by indigenous usage of forest and land, compared with large scale deforestation and commercialisation. However, this dissertation neither has

sufficient evidence, nor is it the major concern here, to make judgements on these comparisons. What I am concerned with is the importance of discursive power and an active civil society in terms of supporting ordinary people's daily struggles with the problematic environment.

Local communities have their ways to use natural resources through a practice of 'uninvited participation'. They may earn money from forest, land or mineral resources in their own way. At the same time, as suggested by Amita Baviskar (1995: 239), '*adivasis*' use of resources appears miniscule in its impact. Thus *adivasis* are not sustainable resource managers, but in this grossly imperfect world, they come closest to that ideal. Similar ideas can be sensed in a statement made by an Indian activist to me: the indigenous campaigns with regard to their land rights have resulted in the postponing or withdrawing of several power plants and mining projects and, in this manner, the indigenous communities have contributed to reducing a significant amount of carbon emissions that might have created global environment threats in terms of climate change. By blocking the construction of new projects, local activists exercised their material power and thus eased the environmental degradation. In this aspect, this is similar to the community-driven impact of environmental preservation observed by Dara O'Rourke (2004) in his Vietnam case studies. Local people's collective actions can have an important role as a brake to suppress the 'development' agenda in favour of private corporations. Meanwhile, the statement mentioned here, provided by the interviewee, is an illustration of the discursive power that successfully links local communities' actions with global environmental concerns. When considering the politics of participation, while drawing attention to the individual practices or performances, we should still keep in mind the right to discourse construction and its potential for motivating the public to reconsider the value of nature and to take part in defining the environment.

Breaking the boundary of regional studies, in particular, in Asia

The necessity to study the environment from a cultural perspective can hardly be claimed as an original idea; however, there is a lack of empirical studies that put this idea into practice. In particular, there is a lack of book-length studies that compare

Chinese and Indian societies.[97] This gap in the literature is understandable for practical and theoretical reasons. As shown in this dissertation, the two countries are quite different in terms of their culture, historical trajectory and language, and all of these factors make them difficult to compare. However, while acknowledging these difficulties, I believe that there is a need for academic research that investigates the similarities and differences between China and India, especially regarding environmental matters, and I hope that this dissertation may serve as a spur for further research.

Traditionally, Asia has been divided into regions in terms of sub-regional studies; these regions often include East Asia, Inner Asia, South Asia and Southeast Asia. Since China and India have been seen as belonging to different sub-regions, the two have been relatively rarely analysed as a pair. This, to a certain degree, is due to the cultural origins shared within each sub-region. For example, Chinese culture is usually defined as having historically impacted on Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Singapore and other countries through the large amount of Chinese migration. Meanwhile the core countries which make up South Asia were formerly part of the British Empire, such as India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Further, the institutionalisation of academia has enhanced the division between the two. Such a tendency can be observed in the categorisations used for the annual conferences of the *Association for Asian Studies*, for example, and in the existence of many sub-regional oriented research institutions such as the *British Association for South Asian Studies*. Admittedly, together with the cultural division, the language boundary is an added factor that causes this division (and this will be discussed in the next section). Encouragingly, there have been some initiatives, at the institutional level, to construct cross-regional projects in Asia and build international collaborations in diverse research fields. Examples are the *India China Institute* based at the New School in the USA and the *Centre for Bionetworking* based at the University of Sussex in the UK. The former has run a series of research projects in the Himalayas[98] since 2010 to uncover the complexity of trans-boundary work with regard to how diverse socio-cultural beliefs influence the conceptualisation

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[97] The work of economist George Rosen (1992) that contrasts economic reform styles in China and India during the 1980s is one of the rare examples of a comparison between the two within the scope of a book.
[98] See: http://www.indiachinainstitute.org/initiatives/sacred-himalaya-initiative/ [Accessed 19 July 2015].

of the environment and sustainability. The *Bionetworking in Asia* project[99] is concerned with the importance of building familiarity with the socio-economic and cultural conditions of different countries – including the regulation and knowledge infrastructures – in order to understand life science (bio)networks in Asia. Similar understandings are needed to improve the regional environmental collaborations.

Some work on the environment has been done comparing China and India. However, instead of focusing on the societies of the countries themselves and how specific characteristics of China and India (those that are different from each other) have resulted in impacts on their people, most of these studies deal with China and India as independent economic bodies and emphasise their roles as powerful players on the international stage (Galli et al., 2012; Livernash, 1995). The recently published edited volume *China-India* (Davin and Harriss-White, 2014) attempts to address how the politics of the two countries have impacted on their inner societies. As a collection of essays, some on China and some on India, this up-to-date publication is an example that demonstrates the immense importance of China-India comparisons in modern academia. At the same time, it reveals the urgent need for single pieces of work that cover both countries and can analyse the two using the same enquiry framework – as this dissertation has set out to do.

Using empirical case studies, this dissertation has demonstrated an attempt to break the boundaries of regional divisions by shedding light on these frontiers through comparing the two countries. The relevance of doing this in a study on the environment lies in its implications for conceptualising the environment. While many environmental studies may suggest that environmental problems have cross-boundary features, this comparative study proves that the conceptualisation of the environment is not unified universally between different cultural contexts. At the same time, I must emphasise that this is not to question the cross-boundary features of environmental crises, such as air or water pollution. Rather, I would suggest that, in order to deal with environmental crises better, the cultural and social dimensions should be taken into consideration. This will be crucial to aiding our understanding of such crises, especially the impacts faced by the people. Perhaps this will allow NGOs, governments and private corporations to

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[99] See: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/anthropology/research/bionetworking [Accessed 19 July 2015].

introduce better approaches to understanding the environmental challenges and also help facilitate regional collaborations to address trans-boundary problems.

Reflections on language boundaries, terminology and conceptualisations in cross-cultural studies

Language turned out to be a critical issue during various stages of this research. First, it caused a methodological limitation in this comparative project. As a response, a critical stand on the language barrier was taken in my analyses. Second, this critical stand has helped me to reconsider language as an analytical tool in studying different conceptualisations of environment-related terms. Third, different conceptualisations were observed, not only between China and India. Hence, when conducting the case studies on the two countries, the differences between what are perceived as Asian and Western societies also came into focus. The limitations of applying existing environmentalist notions that are conventionally used in a Western context in order to explain the conditions of Chinese or Indian society became apparent. In this section, I will summarise the three dimensions of the effects caused by language.

To begin with, as mentioned in the previous section, the language boundary can be one factor that separates China and India into two distinct study areas, and this has had an influence on my project too. At the beginning, it appeared to be a methodological limitation that hindered me in my data collection during the fieldwork, especially in rural India. For instance, as discussed in Chapter 4, there are multiple views on environmentalism in Indian society and each of them has certain ideological supports, such as ecological Marxism (Baviskar, 1997; Guha, 2006) or the institutionalist tendency that gives great credence to the effects of environmental regulations and new technologies. When language assistance was required between the interviewees and me, as was true in most of the cases in rural Jharkhand, the conversations could have been translated in a biased manner due to the interpreter's own viewpoint. Acknowledging this limitation, I adopted a critical stance and evaluated the role of interpreters: on the one hand they can facilitate a researcher to break through the language boundary but on the other hand they might filter out some information based on their social preferences, consciously or not. Later, when analysing my research notes, this critical approach was useful in understanding the issue of political or social 'sensitivity' in the two cases.

Through the behaviours of the interpreters and informants during my fieldwork, I learned about different concerns regarding 'sensitivity' in the Chinese and Indian contexts. The issues of 'sensitivity' were often related to political correction and censorship in China, while in India, they were related more to social differentiation such as ethnic stratification or personal politics such as gender expectations. For example, one interpreter who assisted me in my work showed little interest in the indigenous politics and tended to neglect the subjectivity of my *adivasi* interviewees.

Using a cross-regional perspective, I observed in this study that some issues are discussed in one society more than in another. Although certain issues may exist in another society, they are not the subject of comparable concerns or explanations. In particular, the censorship that is enforced by the political authorities is a controversial topic in Chinese studies, and the phrase 'harmonised' (censored and adjusted) is used frequently in Chinese society as a term to hint at the government leaders' attempts to silence the challenging speeches emerging among the people and to block discussions of (politically) sensitive issues. However, I also experienced the effects of being 'harmonised' during my fieldwork in India. Some of my enquiries posed to the interviewees were adjusted, or 'harmonised', by the translator I worked with, out of his/her own sense of 'sensitivity' regarding the environment issues and the *adivasi* identity. One of the potential contributions of comparative studies is that, if one can cross the language barrier and target comparable happenings in two different societies (such as sensitivity or harmonisation in the above example), then cross-regional studies may extend our knowledge of international development. For instance, the discourse of *adivasis* has been addressed a lot in Indian academia and it is indeed a smart strategy to cite ethnic autonomy in order to gain attention and justification within environmental campaigns. By contrasting the situation of the *adivasis* in India with the common *laobaixing* in China, we may find that eco-racism is an angle from which to understand/criticise the injustice in situations not only involving the *adivasis*, but also the Chinese *laobaixing*. We should not ignore the view that eco-racism is a reflection of social stratification, therefore eco-racism and eco-colonialism also exist in the society where indigenous rights have not yet gained sufficient attention, or where they cannot be debated in public arenas, such as in the case of China.

Secondly, as well as its effects on me as a researcher, language has its impacts upon society in terms of ideological constructions. Concretely speaking, one challenging yet inspiring part of this comparative study was to match the terms and contrast the conceptualisations between Chinese and Indian society. Social and environmental issues occurred and were expressed in different ways in each country. In some cases, different terms were used in each society, and they bear similar (but not identical) meanings or tackle and uncover similar problems. The Chinese term *laobaixing* and the Indian term *adivasi* provide a good example of this situation. Both are collective nouns used to refer to common people who are far from being the privileged in society. Another example is the theoretical concept of *minjian* proposed in the Chinese context by Kuan-Hsing Chen (2010b) and the idea of 'political society' suggested by Indian scholar, Partha Chatterjee (2004). According to the theoretical framework provided by Chen (2010b) and Chatterjee (2004), both '*minjian*' and 'political society' refer to the social realm at the margins of society where grassroots activities take place. In other cases, the issue of language and altered conceptualisations has happened though one single term that was interpreted quite differently in the two societies. For example, the notion of 'participation', that existed in both the Chinese and Indian societies, but was interpreted and practised rather differently in the two.

If we consider language as a container that carries the embodiment of certain social values, then studying the different terminologies can be an approach to learning about these conceptualisations. Again, I like to use *laobaixing* and *adivasi* as examples. Ordinary Chinese people are called *laobaixing* and most of those I encountered during my fieldwork showed an affiliation with this term. They use it to state their social status, and by identifying with it they have somehow adopted the conservative meanings traditionally attached to the term – which may imply passive or apathetic common people. On the other hand, *adivasi* represents the autonomous rights of indigenous people, and is held above the national identity. It emphasises the rights of natives that existed long before the independence of modern India. Since the term *adivasi* has been joined with the notion of campaigning intentions in reaction to nationalist power, activists who declare themselves as *adivasis* are often more empowered to question the modern power of the state and are ready to claim their environmental or political rights regarding whatever they require in order to secure their living.

It is worth noting that the term *adivasi*, compared with *laobaixing*, is equipped with more radical meanings, partly due to its discursive connection with international indigenous and environmental campaigns (Baviskar, 1995; Damodaran, 2006). This brings out the third dimension of language: Western/English terminology. Ideas like indigenous rights, environmental rights and participation are concepts that either have their roots in the European socio-political context or were inspired by other cultures but have been developed more in English-language academia. This raises an important angle for studies on environmentalism in the two Asian countries and how these concepts have been associated with equivalent or similar local ideas. Investigations like this need to, first, consider the historical trajectories of the two countries in terms of their relationships with what they perceive as Western dominance. Second, they need to understand how such countries have reacted to what they perceive as Western ideologies.

While colonial experiences reinforced the social divisions and the power of elites in Indian society, they also resulted in Indian civil society better acknowledging the anti-colonial discourse – which can be applied in diverse campaigns against the dominators, regardless of whether they are political, cultural, ethnic or environmental. On the other hand, the centralisation tradition that has existed in China for centuries, taken together with the authoritarian approach of the contemporary government leaders, have resulted in its civil society being short of conspicuous criticisms. Admittedly, referring to Benedict Anderson's (2006) theory, their altered language policy has steadied the different tendencies – one towards centralisation and the other allowing diversity to a larger extent – with regard to their construction of nationalism. India has multiple official languages amongst which English is still one; for China, Standard Chinese is the only official national language in the People's Republic of China, while others are only recognised as local dialects. This difference in language policy has several effects. On the one hand, it has resulted in there being differential compositions of people's national identity and divergent reflections towards the authoritarian power. Additionally, it has given each of the societies a different degree of openness towards social diversity. On the other hand, the different language situation in the two societies allows the people to connect with international discourses to a different extent. These effects taken together contributed to an Indian civil society better facilitated and equipped with a variety of discourses and a Chinese civil society that relatively lacks a freedom of discourse. As

discussed previously, the discourse construction has played an important role in the formation of environmentalism. The key difference between the discourse constructions of the two countries was reflected in their language policy (multilingualism or monolingualism) and nationalism programming (multiculturalism or anti-separatism). This, together with their different political regimes, may explain why India has a more active civil society than China and Indian people have more ways of accessing the discourses of environmentalism, public participation and decentralised politics.

Recommendations for future research work

While international development is an interdisciplinary field in itself, to involve the issue of the environment makes it even more so. This sometimes results in research projects in the field being seen as ambitious, such as this dissertation – by addressing the development of two huge Asian countries and by making philosophical reflections on environmentalism. In practice, due to concerns regarding the feasibility and also time limitations, I have chosen to put more focus on the triangular relationship between the ordinary people (*laobaixing* and *adivasis*), the state, and the environment. However, there are other stakeholders involved in coal development and other angles that are wroth addressing. During the process of the research, many aspects emerged that are worthy of further investigation.

First, I took a leap in comparing the rural environmental-development of the two societies. However, although the civil environmental activities in urban China and India have been better studied (compared to those of the rural populations) (Dembowski, 1999; Klein, 2011; Lang and Xu, 2013; Véron, 2006; Zhong and Mol, 2008), there remains a gap in the literature with regard to comparing the urban environmental movements of the two countries. It would be interesting to further assess the environmental challenges that come with urbanisation and the effects this has on different communities; for example, air pollution and urban waste management issues. Some articles have addressed the urban environmental campaigns in Beijing (Boyd, 2013; Johnson, 2013b) or Delhi (Dreyfus, 2013; Véron, 2006), and other cities in the two countries (Johnson, 2013a; Siddiqui and Pandey, 2003); but there is a lack of studies that compare cities between the two countries.[100] While the issue of waste

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[100] One rare exception is a paper (Tang et al., 1998) that contrasts the policy of pollution control in

management, for instance, is a common problem faced by almost every modern country, it has been contextualised differently in Chinese and Indian society. Corresponding with my analysis of environmental discourse drawn on rural studies, I have also noticed that the 'waste management' issue in Delhi has been better connected with a variety of social debates; for instance, there is an NGO dealing with the urban environmental issue by collaborating with the lower caste communities who are closely involved in waste treatment in New Delhi.[101] According to an activist involved in the initiative, their consideration is that by providing social support and improving the awareness of the labourers who are taking care of the urban waste, as a consequence, environmental conditions will be improved. Concerns about waste management have been reflected in several campaigns in Beijing lately; however, in most of these cases, the discussions concern citizens' rights for a green neighbourhood[102] and critiques of incineration as a problematic waste management policy (Johnson, 2013a). The anti-incinerator campaigns to some extent have adopted a top-down approach in terms of considering regulatory efficiency as a key element of environmental governance, and have had minimal discursive connections with other social justice discussions. Despite the existence of studies on urban environmental campaigns in each of the two countries, as I have mentioned (e.g. Chaturvedi, 2015; Johnson, 2013b), I believe that there is still a need for more empirical case studies in both countries with a comparative perspective. To investigate environmental debates concerning the problems along with the rapid and usually unbalanced urban-rural development, studies drawing on local experiences and comparing the political opportunity structures of different societies can be helpful to better examine the structural factors behind environmental problems and to establish a greater degree of accuracy on the matter of environmental politics.

Second, driven by my theoretical framework (as the Figure 7.1), this research was concerned more with the relationships between the state and the people, and less with the role of the market. As an initiative that compares China and India, their differences in terms of their political regimes stood out as the primary factor for me to investigate. However, in coal development and environmental inequality debates, the role of the private sector and the market is certainly another crucial dimension to be elaborated. As

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Guangzhou (China), Delhi (India), and Taipei (Taiwan).

[101] The NGO 'Chintan' is an example. Visit their webpage for details: http://www.chintan-india.org/ [Accessed 19 July 2015].

[102] The initiative of 'Green Map' in Beijing is an example. Visit their webpage for details: http://www.fon.org.cn/index.php/Index/cate/id/42 [Accessed 19 July 2015].

environmental political scientist Peter Newell (2012) has suggested, the power of private actors over environmental politics is worth investigating, which – in many cases – is the power to resist changes that would address environmental degradation. Newell's work (2012) calls attention to the need to examine environmental crises with an understanding of the links between environmental governance and (global) capitalism.

While coal resources are nationalised in both China and India, and state-owned enterprises have played a significant role in local coal development, privately owned/operated companies also have a noteworthy influence. In the Chinese case, there is one state-owned enterprise that holds a relatively monopolistic position in Guizhou. In India, there are Indian based and international enterprises, such as the TATA and the ArcelorMittal, which play a critical role in the development of Jharkhand – no less than the state-owned BCCL. Further comparative investigations regarding the relationships between the role of state, and these national and international companies, in terms of regulation implementations, market strategies, development discourse construction and resource distributions, would be worthwhile.

Third, with the limited sample size of interviewees, which was based mainly on snowball sampling, the current study was unable to systematically analyse the variables of gender, ethnicity and (in the Indian case) caste. Regarding gender, in one section of chapter 6, I addressed the issue of femininity and the performative power of women in the environmental arena (especially in India). As for the indigenous identity, while the notion of *adivasi* and the discursive link between indigenous rights and ecological ideology was discussed in the Indian context, this project could not include much information about the interpretations of environmentalism by Chinese ethnic communities (shǎoshù mínzú). A future study should therefore concentrate on investigating the different discursive construction of the *adivasi* in India and the *shǎoshù mínzú* in China. These can be considered as different categories of citizens in the society, and studies could examine the discursive linkage (if there is one) between the discourses concerning *shǎoshù mínzú* and environmentalism. Although I interviewed a few members of ethnic communities in China in this study, a focused field study with *shǎoshù mínzú* and *adivasi* communities is required to gain a better understanding of their thoughts and interpretations of environmentalism. This could lead to another China-India comparative study on the environment, with a special focus

on the association between the conceptualisations of indigenousness and the environment.

In sum, the China-India comparison is certainly a useful perspective to be applied in development studies, environmental studies or other fields that concern discursive constructions and cultural conceptualisations. This would be a productive area to develop. The comparative perspective used in this study may be applied to other fields or elsewhere in the world. The different conceptualisations of 'the environment' and 'participation' that have been discussed in this research, for example, could be developed to review a variety of civil/grassroots movements and inequality issues between two societies. The comparative perspective could, on the one hand, extend knowledge of two Asian countries and, on the other hand, yield reflections on the existing English concepts that have been used in academia up until now.

Final remarks

This comparative project has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of how the factors of language, culture and historical experience bring about differences in localised interpretations and practices of environmentalism. In writing this dissertation I reconsidered the inter-causality relationship between the authoritarian power and the formation of environmentalism. The reality that the top-down dynamic has played a critical role in the Chinese environmental arena should be evaluated as an outcome of the authoritarian government, which has excluded other dynamics from becoming active and therefore limited the occurrence of bottom-up campaigns. In particular, the top-down dynamic, i.e. the political authoritarian force, has established its influences in ordinary people's understanding of the power of *tiān* (heaven; nature), and their interpretation of environmental governance and environmental rights. It has limited the definition of 'participation' and 'environmentalist movements'. These limitations have resulted in the country having a limited range of 'environmentalism', while many of the bottom-up movements have been excluded from being known as environmental movements in the media, academia and historical communications, and these are means through which an ideology has been established.

On the other hand, Indian society has been highly criticised for its social division and hierarchy in terms of its imbalanced power and resource distribution; however, it

reveals (at least to a great extent) its diversity as well as its conflicts. Therefore, more diverse 'environmental movements', including those initiated from the bottom-up, have been reported and spread. This is how researchers have come to recognise popular environmentalism as representing Indian environmental politics – because even though there is an authoritarian approach within the society, it is merely one (maybe influential yet not dictatorial) voice among many that sit together with critical approaches. In an arena that allows diverse voices, there exist certain rules and certain power flows; it is a popular space that allows 'possibility', 'challenges', 'conflicts' and 'differences' to be spelled out openly.

The conceptual discussions set out in this dissertation enrich our consideration about the idea of authoritarian and democratic governance regarding environmental issues and can be summarised, by way of a conclusion, as follows. First, the authoritarian orientation in dealing with the development-environment issue is not only present in China but also in India. In other words, state environmentalism is one approach of environmentalism that exists in any single society, although the influences of the state authority may be demonstrated in various ways. In the case of India, as suggested by Williams and Mawdsley (2006), the state remains a critical player in producing and resolving environmental issues. Being a democratic political institution, the Indian public sphere is relatively exclusive – as an 'invited spaces', in Cornwall's words (2004). Such a tendency has been presented in the documentary (Prakash, 2012) that deals with *adivasi* campaigns in Jharkhand and neighbouring states. As suggested by Chatterjee (2004), the grassroots movements are taking place within political society, which is located at the margin of civil society. Although elite activists play the role as a medium that introduce discourses to local communities and voice grassroots opinions to policy makers, the mindsets of middle-class activists do not always agree with that of the ordinary people (Shah, 2010). In this aspect, the practice of participation in the Indian context is rather a 'representative participation', which is distant from the ideal of deliberative democracy or participatory democracy. In this case, we may have to reconsider whether the environmental movements that have taken place in rural India, particular those amongst the *adivasis*, can be referred to as the model of 'democratic environmentalism'. In other words, in those developing countries that follow the route of institutional economy, whether authoritarian or democratic paths, a critical approach is always required for researchers to examine the effects of state environmentalism. This

is because the government authority is the main player as well as the banker in the game, which directs the economic development with the right hand and rules the environmental governance with the left hand – as in the case of coal exploitation and unjust distribution of environmental costs. This is why a relatively independent and active civil society is important to debate the development and environmental governance agendas.

Second, researchers suggest that the contemporary Chinese government is taking initiatives to improve the environmental condition by means of 'authoritarian environmentalism' (Gilley, 2012) and seeking to advance participatory governance by means of 'authoritarian deliberation' (He and Warren, 2011). It is debatable whether these integrated ideas (i.e. authoritarian-environmentalism and authoritarian-deliberation) are effective in offering an explanation of the phenomenon that actually occurred. This is not because I consider environmentalism or deliberation as must-be opposites and antithetical to the idea of authoritarian. Rather, it is based on the analyses of the purposes of the authority: the government leaders. I accept that the authoritarian orientation will become more and more important in considering the environmental issues of the two countries, just as institutionalism is becoming more and more debatable. However, what occurs if the authority does not aim to make environmentally-oriented decisions, but rather aims to deal with the conflicts (whether grassroots or international in nature) and continues following its track record of economic-development-oriented policy? In such a case, can we still justify its approach as being (authoritarian) environmentalism? Alternatively, perhaps researchers need to examine more carefully whether this is an approach of green-washed developmentalism, in terms of authorities practising environmentally destructive behaviours while attempting to change their image by posing as being environmentally-friendly. What can be argued is that, no matter how such a pro-development approach is displayed by the authorities it will be learned and adapted by the audience of the official policies: the common people or those following a legal route. This point refers to how the public interpret the official ideology and embody it in their everyday behaviours (as discussed in Chapter 4). The authoritarian approach of 'green development' with 'green' as an additional condition and 'development' as the principal goal has been learned well by the public and the narrative that 'we are not against development' has become a common saying amongst the (environmental) campaigners in both the Chinese and Indian cases.

Third, regarding the idea of 'democracy', then, is the 'government-led deliberation democracy' a practice of democratic principles? Is a democratic institution based on an exclusive public sphere with a practice of democratic principles? I would argue that we will either need to accept it as a form of democracy with Asian characteristics, or to give up trying to apply these ideas, that have been well-developed in a Western context, in order to label these two developing Asian countries. In particular, environmentalism is a reflection of development that is formulated in a certain social context. In developing countries, there are lessons from developed countries, which can be referred to with regard to development. At the same time, there are also more innovative political approaches and scientific technologies that are ready to be adopted. Meanwhile, the environmental challenges faced by developing countries are, to a serious degree, associated with the side effects of international development. Therefore, in any scenario their development route will certainly be quite different from, and draw on different experiences to, those of the Western/developed countries. Thus, it is not surprising to find the formation of environmental movements and environmentalism discourses arising outside of the explanation of established terminologies, such as the well-recognised linking idea of democratic-participation or participatory-environmentalism. This is what makes empirical studies with Asian countries valuable, for it provides reflections on the existing English terminology that is conventionally used in environmental studies.

This study suggests that both the ideas of participation and environmentalism should keep challenging and breaking through the often invisible boundaries set by the authoritarian practices of inviting and defining. Humans and nature conflict and inter-construct with each other, and will continue to do so. Only with an open-ended definition of people's participatory activities will we witness more inclusive practices of environmentalism in pursuit of addressing the variety of contemporary human-nature conflicts worldwide. This approach is likely to be more fruitful than framing certain communities' interests as 'public interest' and reinforcing environmental colonisation upon other communities in the name of development. In this aspect, the inclusive discourse of environmentalism has been better formed in India, with regard to people's campaigns for self-governance and criticisms of exclusive decision-making, privatisation and commoditisation. China today has witnessed an increasing range of radical grassroots campaigns fighting against polluting industries and the exploitation of

nature. Although these campaigns still demand more balanced media coverage and academic attention, they reveal an urgent need for a participatory environmentalism that better considers the distribution of environmental costs and supports ordinary people to have a say in environmental decisions/policies.

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