

PROTESTING CONSERVATION BY PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT:
A CASE STUDY FROM THE INDIAN HIMALAYAS

BY

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THESIS

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Abstract

The enforcement of restrictions relating to the Dhauladhar Wildlife Sanctuary (DWLS) in Himachal Pradesh, India has catalyzed local resource users into vigorous political action. Through a series of dramatic non-violent protests, villagers have expressed their opposition passionately and prominently. Paradoxically, the fight against the sanctuary appears to have galvanized area residents to protect their resources; villagers recently decided to create their own forest management committee. Based on data collect during two months' intensive fieldwork in January 2009 and December 2010, I explore how environmental discourse has become embroiled in resource politics at the village level. Emanating from centers of knowledge production and disseminated to the village level through mass media, children's education, and other means, modern environmental discourses have shaped villagers' most intimate understanding about their relationship to the natural world. The widespread social consensus about the need to protect the environment has, in turn, set the discursive stage upon which political battles for resource access must now be fought. Villagers' decision to create a forest management system serves to legitimize the social movement against the sanctuary while simultaneously serving as a potent symbol of local resistance, autonomy, and management capability. More than purely instrumental, however, villagers' decision is the natural realization of their moral conviction about the need to protect their environment – accentuated through participation in the movement itself. In this thesis, I examine the way that discourse can function within democratic politics to engender pro-environmental behavior, theorize about the ability of the democratic system to promote governance innovations by enabling collective dissent, and explore the useful distinction between cognition and action in examining the environmental subject. In the case of DWLS, environmental ideals and democratic politics have converged in the context of the battle against the sanctuary. Nevertheless, the necessary ingredients for similar outcomes may be present within many routine struggles for political power in resource dependent communities worldwide – perhaps more prevalently than is presently recognized.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The enforcement of restrictions relating to the Dhauladhar Wildlife Sanctuary (DWLS) has catalyzed local resource users into vigorous political action. Originally established in 1994, residents of the 44 villages within the sanctuary's boundaries were unaware of its existence for its first ten years. Quite unexpectedly, in 2005, the forest department began to issue fines for routine use of local forests. A nascent social movement has since crystallized in response to imposed restrictions. Through a series of dramatic non-violent protests, villagers have expressed their opposition passionately – and prominently.

Paradoxically, the fight against the sanctuary appears to have galvanized villagers to protect their resources. A Mahila Mandel (women's group) in one of the villages recently passed a resolution to form a local forest management committee. A powerful act of protest, this decision is laden with significance in the context of villagers' struggle. It is, I contend, the natural activation of the communities' broader process of *environmentalization*. Environmentally oriented behavior has become a source of power and legitimacy for political activity, while morally disciplined actors are compelled to act in accordance with their sense of environmental 'right'.

Building upon Foucault's notion of *Governmentality* as a frame of analysis (Foucault, 1991a), this thesis explores how environmental ideals have become embroiled in resource politics at the village level. Emanating from centers of knowledge production and disseminated through a global network of institutions, a modern environmental awareness has, I argue, infiltrated villagers' most intimate sense of understanding about their relationship to the world

around them. The environment has emerged as a critical conceptual domain in relation to which personal identity is constituted and actions are performed (cf. Agrawal, 2005; Foucault, 1972). Achieving a broad social consensus within the study communities, environmental ideals have set the discursive stage upon which battles for resource access must now be fought. Yet, the challenge of environmental governance remains unresolved; the most appropriate and just institutional formations for the realization environmental objectives are now the site of bitter contestation.

In the case of DWLS, environmental ideals and democratic politics have converged in the context of the battle against the sanctuary. Nevertheless, the necessary ingredients for similar outcomes may be present within many routine struggles for political power in resource dependent communities worldwide. In the context of a commanding environmental discursive regime, moral authority can be captured through deference to a shared sense of the environmental values; in such situations, environmental outcomes may be more prevalent than is presently recognized.

This paper proceeds in the following manner. First, I outline Foucault's notion of governmentality and examine recent theoretical developments that explore the emergence of the environment as a critical domain of governance in modern society. Then, I theorize about a modern environmental awareness that has become commonplace the world around. I frame conservation as a problem of governance, and take a critical look at the social and ecological limitations of the protected area conservation model. Next, I unpack the notion of the environmental subject vis-à-vis Agrawal (2005) and identify the theoretical terrain I seek to advance.

Diving into case material, I provide a basic description of the study communities, previous forest management interventions within them, the history of DWLS and its impacts, and the protests against it. I discuss the Mahila Mandel's decision to form a management committee, and explore its multiple motivations in the context of the battle against the sanctuary. I then discuss the interface between the study communities and global environmental discourses. Finally, I examine how environmental ideals have acquired power when enmeshed in local politics, theorize about the ability of a liberal democratic system to promote governance innovations by enabling collective dissent, and map a more nuanced terrain to examine the environmental subject.

Chapter 2

Government and the Environment

2.1 Environmental Governmentality:

The point of departure for this paper is Foucault's notion of Governmentality (Foucault, 1991a). Originally articulated during his lectures at the College de France 1978-79, Governmentality was an attempt to examine how the micro-dynamics of power relate to the state and society as a whole (Gordon, 1991). Famously summarized as an inquiry into the "conduct of conduct", it is a useful framework for analyzing the complex networks of power relationships that govern modern social life.

In his lecture, Foucault (1991a) traces the evolution of modern government in Europe between the sixteenth and eighteenth century. He focuses on the transition beyond the limited objectives of previous forms of government – ensuring obedience to the sovereign and preservation of territory – to a mode of government oriented toward a plurality of objectives, where "government has as its purpose... the welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition" (Foucault, 1991a:100). Modern government increasingly assumes the broad role of optimizing the lives of its population through the meticulous and often subtle management of health, reproduction, safety, productivity, and prosperity. This expansion of aims necessitated the development of an 'art of government' that, being less concerned with the enforcement of law per se, sought to employ a multiplicity of tactics in order to arrange people and situations to achieve ends sought. Far more than formidable displays of force, the most subtle and powerful forms of government lie in its constitution of governable, self-regulating subjects. Governmentality is thus a framework for analyzing the "ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and

reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power” (Foucault, 1991a:102).

In modern society, a variety of institutional assemblages exert social control over human populations in a diverse array of behavioral domains, including human-environment relations. In a society organized toward the welfare of its population, new forms of knowledge generate new governance imperatives, precipitating the institutionalization of new forms of management and control. In the second half of the twentieth century, increasing recognition of environmental problems extended the necessity of governance and regulation to environmental behavior and, indeed, the planet itself (Backstrand & Lovbrand, 2006; Luke, 1999; Rutherford, 2007). *The Environment* – and the human interactions with it – emerged as a critical domain of management and regulation.

In conjunction with the ascendance of the environment as a domain of regulations, modern government has itself undergone a significant shift as it entered a new era of neoliberalism (Dean, 1999). Increasingly, a “de-statized” governmentality disciplines behavior through market incentives and non-state organizations (Fraser, 2003). Meanwhile, globalization has further diminished the primacy of the state in governing the population as a variety of multinational corporations, international agencies, and other bodies have assumed increasing prominence (Larner & Walters, 2004). This is not to say that state institutions are no longer vital; they remain central to the regulation of many aspects of social life. “What is emerging...” suggests Nancy Fraser (2003:165-166), “is a new type of regulatory structure, a multi-layered system of globalized governmentality”. This globalized regulatory structure has attended to the governance of the environment through the production and dissemination of modern ecological

sciences and environmental ideals and the creation of institutional formations to manage human environmental behavior (Zimmerer, 2006).

Foucault himself never saw the state as a nucleus of regulatory power from which governance radiates through the social body. The very notion of Governmentality problematizes the prominent conceptualization of the state as a unified entity (Rose & Miller, 1992). Foucault saw the embodied institution of the state as a product of the practices emanating out of a regimes of rationality and relations of power – not some inherent properties of the state itself (Foucault, 1984; Foucault, 1991). Simply put, for Foucault, “the state has no essence” (Gordon, 1991:4). Governmentality forces us to examine the micro-dynamics of power relations that constitute state and society. By attending to the workings of the dispersed network of global institutions, actors, and centers of knowledge production involved in promoting conservation objectives, it is possible to grasp how this governance imperative has become enmeshed in the internal workings of modern states, including India (Lewis, 2004).

This paper focuses especially on the localized interface between rural communities, different forms of environmental governance, and the environmental ‘mentalities’ from which they arise. I seek especially to trace the messy and complex terrain by which environmental governance is contested and reshaped through political processes at the local level. Despite the large body of scholarship that has extended the concept of governmentality to many diverse realms of modern society, scholars have often failed to attend to the ways that particular projects aimed at shaping social conduct have been resisted and even reshaped (Hargreaves, 2010). As a consequence, such projects have often appeared unidirectional and finished (Rutherford, 2007). Yet, if governance is constituted out of a dispersed matrix of institutions, actors, and forms of knowledge, there is space for the subjects of governance to contest and shape the mechanisms by

which they and others are governed. The social movement protesting DWLS was subject to political and material conditions that necessitated environmental management. Nevertheless, they were able to contest the status quo – advancing alternatives instead.

2.2 Of Protected Areas and Environmentalism:

Rose and Miller (1992) highlight two central and interrelated conceptual elements for analyzing government. *Political rationalities* are born out of political discourse – “a domain for the formulation and justification of idealized schemata for representing reality, analyzing it, and rectifying it” (Rose & Miller, 1992: 178). Political rationalities characteristically have a moral character, define the group or object to be governed, and render the issue to be governed understandable and relevant to the policy deliberations. Foucault, for example, describes a prominent theme of his scholarship as seeking to understand “how men govern (themselves and others) by the production of truth” (Foucault 1991b: 79). *Governmental technologies*, on the other hand, are the multifarious techniques utilized for realizing governance ambitions (Rose & Miller, 1992).

The discursive construction of the environment as a critical domain of government has been accompanied by a host of management schemes and government initiatives. The broad umbrella of environmentalism is anything but uniform, covering as it does the whole gamut of modern environmental problems. Each unique issue assumes a unique set of biological implications, aesthetic values, and ethical considerations. Moreover, there are numerous and conflicting paradigms of thought prescribing solutions to environmental problems and elaborating upon the appropriate way for humans to relate to the environment. Nevertheless, in

the minds of the general public, environmental concerns have come to claim the same broad space of moral authority.

The environment has become a powerful conceptual category of modern consciousness. A long Western philosophical tradition has conceived of nature as distinct and separate from any human interference, possessing an inherent value transcending utilitarian functions (Cronon, 1996). More recently, modern ecological sciences have demonstrated the interdependence of living organisms and biological processes. Upon these conceptual underpinnings, discrete living objects – trees, plants, insects, animals, and the like – came to be conceptually unified under the term ‘The Environment’ in the mid-twentieth century (Dryzek, 2005). Knowledge of human effects on the ecosphere has caused this domain to be viewed as inherently fragile and in need of human protection. Calls for action are marked by a sense of urgency.

Similar to many conservation areas around the world, The Dhauladhar Wildlife Sanctuary seeks to conserve wildlife through a particular regulatory regime – the protected area (PA) model. The PA model seeks to protect flora and fauna by restricting human use and access within particular geographic boundaries. The western notion of pristine wilderness divorced of human interference formed the conceptual basis upon which such arrangements were first constituted (Adams & Hutton, 2007). In the second half of the twentieth century, the ‘global extinction crisis’ invigorated the global conservation community. This crisis, coupled with narratives about population growth and ecological degradation, precipitated calls for biodiversity conservation and further legitimized the need to restrict human access of protected zones (Adams, 2004). PA formation accelerated dramatically (West, Igoe, & Brockington, 2006).

The rationale for protected area conservation is both moral and prescriptive: plants and animals, especially those that are ‘endangered’ *should* be protected from the humans that

threaten them. Under this logic, the rights of plants and animals supersede that of humans to continue to reside in designated conservation locations. With the crisis defined, culprits identified, and moral implications framed, the nature of the problem becomes amenable to rational governance. In this way, fixed conservation territories are constructed; nature becomes subject to rational administration.

But this vision and its underlying assumptions has itself become subject to increasing criticism. A large body of scholarship has documented how restrictive conservation regimes often come at extraordinary social cost, disproportionately borne by the rural poor of developing countries (Adams & Hutton, 2007; West, Igoe, & Brockington, 2006). Protected areas frequently exacerbate local poverty by denying local resource users access to the resources they rely upon for their basic livelihood needs. Human migration may be mandated, and even forced by threat or violence. Impacted communities frequently have little or no de facto representation in the decision-making process, in violation of their basic political rights (Chhatre & Saberwal, 2006; Zimmerer & Young, 1998).

Even on conservation's own terms, protected areas frequently fall short of achieving their expressed objectives. Due to an absence of alternatives, affected communities often continue to use protected areas for their basic livelihood needs. Enforcement authorities commonly lack sufficient resources and funding. Continued resource use and pervasive non-enforcement are often highly institutionalized in nature, thus presenting serious barriers to enforcement reform (Robbins, Chhangani, Rice, Trigosa, & Mohnot, 2007; Robbins, McSweeney, Chhangani, & Rice, 2009). These problems have lead to the widespread existence of so-called 'paper parks' – protected areas in name and legal designation that remain unenforced in practice (Brandon, Redford, & Sanderson, 1998; Bruner, Gullison, Rice, & da Fonseca, 2001). Moreover, as the

case of DWLS demonstrates (elaborated below), there are even instances where the constitution of protected areas can accelerate degradation.

There is also increasing awareness that human delineation of fixed territories often does not sufficiently correspond with the fluidity of broad, landscape-wide ecological processes. The ecology inside of protected areas is intimately intertwined with lands outside of them (Anderson & Jenkins, 2006; DeFries, Hansen, Newton, & Hansen, 2005; Hansen & DeFries, 2007). A paradigm of conservation that does not account for environmental condition of lands outside of protected areas may thus be ill-equipped to protect the environment present within them (Chazdon et al., 2009; Perfecto & Vandermeer, 2008; Persha, Fischer, Chhatre, Agrawal, & Benson, 2010). This is particularly true in an era of global climate change. Fixed conservation territories are by design unable to adjust for the changing needs of protected biota experiencing climate change induced range shifts (Hannah et al., 2007). Moreover, the needs of carbon sequestration for climate change mitigation are distinct and separate from that of biodiversity conservation, necessitating a reexamination and reprioritization of environmental governance regimes appropriate to these objectives (Chhatre & Agrawal, 2009).

In sum, environmental management is a problem of governance. Regimes of practice emanate out of particular political rationalities, which are rooted in the creation of knowledges that produce ways of understanding the world. Techniques of government that can link rural livelihood needs, biodiversity conservation, and carbon sequestration are sorely needed.

2.3 Dissecting the Environmental Subject: Cognition and Behavior

Conflicting views about the appropriate means to protect the environment is a central element of local politics for villages within the boundaries of DWLS. Yet, everyone avows a

commitment to environmental conservation. In this respect, communities in DWLS are far from unique. How such a pervasive consensus about the need to protect the environment has spread the world around has only been partially theorized.

At the community level, a number of scholars have posited partial answers. The large body of scholarship examining the management of common property arrangements has located the impulse to protect the environment from the overharvesting of resources within appropriately tuned institutional mechanisms for collective action (Dietz, Ostrom, & Stern, 2003; Ostrom, 1990). Yet, with its focus on micro-institutional elements of regulation, this body of work tells us very little about how actors are ‘primed’ for participation in regulatory schemes. It generally conceptualizes behavioral change as an outcome of institutional change, but fails to examine how institutions are themselves shaped by changes in relations of power and spheres of knowledge that mold social behavior (Agrawal, 2005).

Agrawal (2005) has sought to examine how local resource management systems not only mold behavior by institutionalizing a set of incentives and regulations, but shape actors’ very perspectives about the environment. Examining community forest management arrangements in the Kumaon region of the Indian Himalayas, he asserts that participation in local regulation can engender what he calls *environmental subjects* – villagers that not only care about the environment, but also shape their actions to accord with these beliefs. For these subjects, “the environment constitutes a conceptual category that organizes some of their thinking; it is also a domain in conscious relation to which they perform some of their actions... self-interest comes to be cognized and realized in terms of the environment” (Agrawal, 2005: 165). In Kumaon, the state initiated the devolution of management to communities in the early part of the twentieth century. Local surveillance and regulation proved far more effective than state-administered

management. Villagers active in the forest regulation system internalized environmental objectives and became agents for their advancement. These technologies of government made communities complicit in achieving the state's forest regulation objectives (Agrawal, 2005).

Laying a firm theoretical foundation for analyzing environmental governmentality, Agrawal's analysis is nevertheless very context specific. How might environmental subject be formed in other situations? What is the relationship between environmental regulation and pro-environmental perspectives in other contexts? Moreover, given the ubiquity of pro-environment sentiments and paucity of effective environmental regulation in many modern contexts, to what extent can such sentiments promote environmental actions – even in the absence of a behavioral regulatory regime?

To date, there remains a significant lack of understanding and disagreement about the extent toward which environmental concern precipitates pro-environmental behavior (Bamberg, 2003; Poortinga, Steg, & Vlek, 2004; Stern, 2000). Undoubtedly, the relationship between them is complex, and very likely highly context specific. Most research on the issue has occurred within social psychology, and largely fails to attend to the role of politics and social power in stimulating environmental behavior (Hargreaves, 2010).

It is undeniable that the environment has emerged as a central realm of worldwide concern in the present century. Through the media, children's education, and public awareness campaigns, this concern has come to shape actors' perceptions of the world. True, other societal factors may shape individuals' beliefs of the severity or existence of such problems¹, but even counterarguments are constructed upon the shared modern conceptual category that has made 'the environment' legible and amenable to debate. The moral authority that pro-environment

¹ The way in which climate change and other environmental concerns have become embroiled in national politics in the United States underscores the potent role of politics in shaping environmental perspectives.

sentiment has assumed is inescapable, as the ‘green’ focus of many oil company advertisements easily demonstrates. Yet, even individuals that recognize the human consequences of environmental problems may be unable or unwilling to adopt pro-environmental behavior. The political and economic constraints to undertaking environmentally oriented behavior frequently overpower actors’ higher moral sentiments (Robbins, 2007). At the same time, there are numerous social and political factors that can promote and stimulate environmentally oriented actions. The question, therefore, is not just how people come to care about the environment, but what contextual conditions constrain and foster the realization of these sentiments into pro-environmental behavior.

Seeking to highlight the complex and multiple forms of knowledge and power at play in shaping actors’ perspectives and actions, I propose to dissect Agrawal’s notion of the environmental subject into two analytically related domains. First, I will consider the realm of cognition – whether the environment has become a critical domain of thought, and the extent that it attracts concern. This is the realm where the production of knowledge, conceptual foundations for comprehending the environment, and the framing of environmental issues shapes actors’ understandings of their relationship to the world, and themselves (Foucault, 1972). Second, I consider the realm of action, and the multiple contextual factors that promote and constrain pro-environmental actions. Here, politics, tactics of power, and surveillance shape actors’ actions, with the possibility of bringing about self-regulation (Foucault, 1977). These two domains are irrevocably intertwined. Cognition may shape behavior, although not necessarily in a straightforward manner. Conversely, behavior may enforce or precipitate change in actors’ perceptions (Agrawal, 2005). Each actor is embedded in a complex web of power relations that may pull him or her in multiple and contradictory directions. Likewise, each actor is a

constituent element of that web, and chooses to employ his own tactics of power to achieve desired ends.

Chapter 3

The Dhauladhar Wildlife Sanctuary

3.1 Study Area:

The fieldwork that forms the basis for this paper was conducted in December 2009 and January 2010. Of the forty-four villages inside of DWLS, I performed a majority of my fieldwork in several of the largest, most diverse, and most infrastructurally developed villages: Bir, Bari, and Gunerh. They are all located within 5 km of each other. I selected them because of the diversity of views among village residents concerning the sanctuary, a wide variation in the level of resource dependency among residents, and the presence of vibrant political activity associated with the movement opposing the sanctuary. In this paper, I focus especially on the resolution to form a forest management system made by the upper Bir Mahila Mandel (women's group), one of the two Mahila Mandels within the Bir village.

Several thousand people reside within DWLS. The primary livelihoods are agriculture and pastoralism. Most households are highly dependent on local natural resources for their survival. A large proportion of the villages within the sanctuary area do not possess a road, but most are within a few hours walking distance from the nearest road. Villages within DWLS range in population from fewer than 500 residents to more than 2000.

In 2001, Bir, Bari, and Gunerh had populations of approximately 1400, 90, and 1250 respectively (Census of India 2001). The forthcoming 2011 census will show moderate growth in each village's population, but no substantial demographic shifts. The conditions in the study villages differ in some key ways from villages in other parts of the sanctuary. Significantly, they are served by regular busses to a nearby regional town. More employment opportunities are thus

available. Due to their proximity to a famous paragliding site, there is also a small to moderate sized local tourist industry. Only a small fraction of the village's population is employed by the tourist industry.

Owing to the superior infrastructure and employment opportunities in these villages, a significant number of households from other parts of the sanctuary area have chosen resettle in these villages over the past 50 years. Of the villagers with non-farm employment, some have only minimal reliance on local natural resources. Moreover, there is a greater diversity of sentiments about DWLS within these particular villages; some residents express support toward the sanctuary, in addition to the much more vocal and active opposition movement.

A majority of residents remain highly dependent upon fuelwood and fodder derived from local forests. Forest use is particularly widespread in the winter months when heat is needed. During this time, a member of most households – usually a woman in charge of household chores – typically visits the forest 2-4 times a week. Forest use decreases during other times of the year, but some wood and fodder is required year-round. Migratory pastoralists are dependent upon resources over a much wider resource catchment. Small herds of sheep and goats frequently graze in nearby forests, particularly during the winter. During the summer months, hired shepherds guide herds of several hundred animals to more distant high alpine pastures deep within the sanctuary's interior.

3.2 Previous Forest Management Interventions:

The problem of forest management is not new to the area. Several projects have been enacted during the past thirty years aimed at improving forest management. First, a large-scale forestry and development initiative known as The Dhauladhar Project – a joint effort of the

Indian and German governments – operated through the 1980s and 90s. This project ranged over a wide geographic area that included some parts of what is now DWLS. The project sought, among other things, to promote sustainable forest management, reforestation, and reductions in fuel wood use. Area residents recall various aspects of this project, such as staged plays promoting energy efficient stoves and forest management and regeneration initiatives. During this period, each village had a forest management committee of local women that regulated use of forest commons. The Dhauladhar Project worked with these committees and may even have initiated their formation in some villages. Other management systems, such as Gunerh's, predated The Dhauladhar Project and continued after its discontinuation. It is likely that other traditional systems existed in the villages at various times in the past; details were difficult to trace.

In the late 1990s, a Joint Forest Management (JFM) project was launched by the forest department. It lasted a mere five years. During this project, the forest department partnered with village-level forest management committees on a variety of activities. Rotational closures of local forests were enacted and committees of women guarded forests to ensure that restrictions were obeyed. In addition to these projects, the forest department has had a large role in shaping area forests. It has a nursery outside of Bir Village and plants large numbers of trees in local forests annually.

Today, no local management committees exist. The last committees dissolved approximately eight years ago according to villagers' reports. Explanations of the causes of dissolution vary, but appear to be a combination of some villagers' disapproval of management restrictions, internal quarrels over the management committee's money, and allegedly even political pressure from then elected local authorities.

3.3 History of the Dhauladhar Wildlife Sanctuary:

The Dhauladhar Wildlife Sanctuary (DWLS) was first established 1994. Riding a wave of global environmentalism, it was born out of a political context in which the national and state governments were seeking to cultivate an environmental image through the establishment of new spaces for conservation. Yet, few politicians and bureaucrats were willing to risk the political hazards of actually enforcing the new parks' restrictions. As late as the 1990s, few – if any – protected areas in India had reached the stage of final notification, an action which declares the formal process of constituting a park complete, and the park acquires full legal status as a conservation area. It was in response to the widespread existence of paper parks that states were impelled to adopt stricter enforcement measures by a 1997 Indian Supreme Court case filed by the World Wildlife Fund India (Chhatre & Saberwal, 2006).

The legality of the sanctuary's process of establishment is dubious. India's Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 (WLPA) established, among other things, an official process for protected area creation through the formal acquisition of all land rights within the park's territory. The act stipulates that a document written in the regional language must be circulated to inform area residents about the proposed protected area and its territorial extents, providing residents an opportunity to articulate claims to territory included (Wildlife Protection Act 1972). Of the people I interviewed during fieldwork, not a single person had ever seen such a document, nor did they know of anyone who had.

DWLS finally received its final notification in 1999, making it a fully constituted wildlife sanctuary. Perhaps state actors reaped political benefits from its formation. Regardless, it was not

enforced at that time. This is not uncharacteristic of protected areas in the area.² Nobody I spoke with knows why, in 2005, the forest department began fining villagers for using local forests. During interviews, the forest department staff itself claimed no knowledge of DWLS's enforcement history. Perhaps a well-intentioned bureaucrat ascended to a position of authority and decided he had an obligation to enact the law.

3.4 The Social Impacts of Forest Restrictions

Area residents are angered by the fines and harassment of forest guards. They perceive it to be their right to access the forests surrounding their villages. With few alternatives available, they rely upon local forests for their daily needs. They feel as though their very lives have been made illegal.

Few arrangements have been made to help address the needs of villagers dependent upon the resources now restricted. Typical fines for collecting fodder and fuelwood may be a hardship for local villagers, but they are not high enough to be a significant deterrent. Several villagers reported changing the time of day they go into the forest to avoid forest guards. A few villagers indicated that the threat of fines had moderately reduced their forest use. Most villagers, however, continue to use local forests as frequently as they had before.

The impact of DWLS on many pastoral communities has been especially devastating. Many pastoralists have received massive fines for grazing livestock in the sanctuary area. Members of a local Gujjar community – pastoralists specializing in milk production – report being charged between 500 and 1000 rupees per cow or buffalo to gain permission to graze their animals in the forest for the season. The total amount for all animals owned is an incredible sum to bear for area residents. With no receipt provided, it is no secret that this 'fine' is actually a

² Indeed, Nargu Wildlife Sanctuary abutting DWLS is very much a similar situation.

steep bribe extracted by forest guards. Although forms of culturally ingrained corruption are frequently unjust, an opportunity to bribe is better than no forest access at all.

3.5 The Ecological Impacts of Forest Restrictions:

Forest users widely report increasing degradation of forest areas close to their villages. Migratory herders report that the condition of more remote forests within DWLS have has not changed appreciably. Far from improving the ecological quality of local forests, DWLS has very likely accelerated forest degradation. All resource users interviewed believe that this to be true.

Most prominently, an unfounded but widespread rumor that local forests may soon be blocked by a barbed wire fence has caused some forest users to collect and store inordinate amounts of fuelwood. This simple act of self-interest carries no incentive to guard the long-term quality of the forest, reportedly causing some resource users to harvest resources recklessly – for example, by cutting entire trees rather than branches. Although the rumor is simply untrue, one can imagine that general anxiety incubating in the context of increased resource restrictions might exacerbate such fears.

Villagers in Gunerh indicated that they no longer perceived it to be their duty to act as managers of the forest; the forest department, they contend, has assumed that role. Their long-term forest management system appears to have largely disintegrated, likely at least in part due to the enforcement of the sanctuary's restrictions. They reportedly did not bother to put out a forest fire last summer, despite their long-term practice of collectively doing so. A few villagers interviewed suggested that anger toward the forest department has exacerbated the carelessness of resource users.

In one sense, these phenomena seem indicative of a general change in perspectives toward resource management within the area since the formation of the sanctuary; resource alienation seems to have diminished incentives to protect the long-term ecology of forest. On the other hand, as my interviews with villagers demonstrate, there remains a widespread recognition of the necessity to protect the environment – even for reasons transcending material benefits. The tension between these two impulses demonstrates how contextual constraints can impede the realization of environmental concern as pro-environmental behavior. The dominance of one environmental governance mode, however ineffective, can obstruct the realization of others.

Chapter 4

Protests, Forest Protection, and Shared Environmental Ideals

4.1 Protesting the Dhauladhar Wildlife Sanctuary

For local resource users, the formation of DWLS is an indisputable failure of the democratic political system to represent their needs. No opportunity was given to dissent at the time of the sanctuary's formation, nor was there an opportunity to make claims on the territory included. Both major political parties – BJP and Congress – actively support Himachal Pradesh's environmental agenda; both were in power at different times during the sanctuary's formation.

In the stultifying context of patronage politics, local politicians often act as 'agents' of their party rather than as representatives of their constituents' needs. Politicians seek primarily to gain votes for their party, and attempt to quell the concerns of their constituents when the party's stance does not correspond with local demands, as in the case of DWLS. By playing this role, politicians acquire the lucrative position of contractor for the implementation of state-sponsored development projects when their party is in power. Villagers, in turn, are motivated to maintain loyalty toward specific politicians and parties for the various benefits that they receive from such relationships, including favor for development projects. Deeply embedded within the practice of local politics, this system produces a passive populace that does not exercise the full extent of their democratic rights – the ability to demand and hold politicians accountable to their needs.

It is not surprising that regarding the inflammatory issue of DWLS, local politicians appear motivated primarily to placate their constituents and prevent overt political expression of their opposition. They insist that 'working within the system' (such as writing letters to higher administrative domains) can lead to satisfactory reforms. Politicians advocate patience,

attempting to reassure villagers that they, and their party, are fighting the bureaucracy on the villagers' behalf. By taking this position, local politicians hope to calm the political pressure within their villages and maintain a grip on power.

It is in this context that the movement against the sanctuary should be viewed as particularly radical. Villagers have endangered their patronage-based political relationships to outwardly express their demands. An activist from a nearby town, who claims no party affiliation and currently serves as the head of the area's local farmers' organization (Kisan Sabha), and a small group of local activists have helped mobilize residents in protest. Many villagers have joined in the fight, which is being organized through village-level farmers' groups.

The group of activists has played an integral role in the movement. Their motivations are surely diverse, and likely include a mixture of genuine concern and a hunger for self-importance. Yet, their motivations are less important than the outcomes that they effect. They have stimulated participation and political expression, and have been a valuable source of knowledge about the legal status of the sanctuary and the means by which the movement might secure rights to access their forests. The activists have also strategically guided the movement by planning rallies, boycotts, and other forms of civil disobedience. As members of the communities themselves, they have local credibility, and are able to disseminate knowledge and attract the participation of their neighbors. They are a countervailing force against the political status quo, encouraging residents to actively seek change, even while local politicians advocate 'working within the system' and patiently waiting for results.

Acts of protest against DWLS have been dramatic and visible, occasionally obtaining coverage in statewide media. In May 2009, a remarkable act of protest against the failure of local politicians to confront the issue of the sanctuary occurred through the boycott of a local election

for state legislative assembly. Not a single vote was cast in the entire Multhan subdistrict, an administrative region that claims a majority of the sanctuary area. Other major acts of protest have included rallies in the regional administrative capital (Dharamshala) and the blocking of a major state highway.

Explicitly non-partisan, the movement seeks to motivate politicians from both parties at multiple levels to actively represent their demands for legal access to area forests. Indeed, due allegedly to the protests, there has been a slow rumbling of reconsideration of the sanctuary's present boundaries within the government bureaucracy.³ At the time of writing, no satisfactory outcome has yet emerged. One promising avenue that the activists are seeking is to circumvent the Wildlife Protection Act to acquire legal communal tenure for lands in the sanctuary through the Forest Rights Act of 2006. This Act provides the legal machinery for scheduled tribes and traditional forest dwellers (such as those within DWLS) to acquire rights to the forests they depend upon.

Although the movement against the sanctuary is strong, there is a diversity of views about the sanctuary within the study communities. Within villages in more remote areas of DWLS, almost all residents oppose the sanctuary and its restrictions upon forest use and access. However, in the study communities, there are many residents that do support the sanctuary, although most would admit that there is a need to amend the present boundaries to exclude homes and even some forested land, and to provide fuelwood and fodder alternatives to resource dependent households. Sanctuary supporters claim moral authority for the virtue of their pro-environmental support. A number of residents look upon the movement with disdain, especially

³ There are proposals to amend DWLS's boundaries on the table. At the time of fieldwork, they reportedly did not sufficiently protect the forest rights of all who the movement represents and were unconvincing to the members of the movement. Even if satisfactory, there is no certainty that any of the proposals will come into effect.

politicians and their close affiliates, claiming that it is ill-conceived and unnecessarily excites the masses. Nevertheless, support for the movement is widespread. Moreover, it has served to bring the sanctuary issue onto the political map.

4.2 A New Local Management System?

In January 2010, the Upper Bir Mahila Mandel held their usual monthly meeting. During the meeting, the women made a resolution to form a forest management system. Support for the idea, which appears to be the culmination of a broader consensus intensifying within area communities, was unanimous. The proposed system would create a rotational cycle for forest closure, where certain areas would be closed from use for several years at a time to allow regeneration. Other areas would remain open, but certain types of activities would likely be restricted. Women in the committee would patrol the forests in groups of three, issuing fines for infringements on the rules. The details of such a system were, at the time, not yet comprehensively outlined. It was agreed that the system would be instituted in the future, depending upon the ongoing struggle against the sanctuary; estimates varied. The women believe it would be impossible to institute a system at the present time, when area residents are amassing wood for fear of losing access to resources (discussed above).

Talk about setting up a new system for forest protection is not a recent reemergence. One woman not in attendance during the meeting told me, “women always talk about protecting the forest”, insinuating that they nevertheless fail to take action. Yet, even villagers that had not yet heard of the women’s recent resolution agreed that there had been an increase in environmental concern across the villages in recent times. Moreover, when I interviewed women involved in the decision to protect local forests, they articulated a seriousness and enthusiasm that seemed to

indicate a genuine intention to implement such a system. Their decision was clearly not idle talk between a few women; it was a collective resolution arrived at during official discussion at the Mahila Mandel meeting. Of course, the actual realization of such a system remains uncertain.

4.3 Motivations for Local Forest Management:

I did not attend the meeting where the decision to form a management committee occurred, but in the days following I interviewed many women that had. I asked them why they had decided to form a management system. They responded by expressing concern about the degradation of local forests. When pressed further, almost everyone replied, “Because of the sanctuary, *we want to protect the forest our own way*”. The decision to form a management system appears in the minds of the Mahila Mandel members directly associated with the fight against DWLS.

This decision, I contend, has different significance for different actors involved. How did it come about? I believe that there are four primary motivations: (1) it is an important legitimizing element in the battle against the sanctuary, (2) it is a form of symbolic protest to re-colonize territories from which villagers are now being excluded, and (3) the potency of DWLS within local politics has drawn increasing attention to the need for conservation, all of which presuppose (4) a general social consensus – among supporters and opponents of the sanctuary alike – that there is a need to protect the forests. These motivations may be overlapping and present to different degrees in different actors involved. Their relative importance is difficult to assess. I will, therefore, refrain from giving primacy to any single motivation, instead examining the different roles that each may have played in the decision to protect local forests. Together,

they form a powerful suite of motivations that has served to galvanize the social body toward the decision to form a forest management system. I will discuss each in turn.

Importantly, all members of the Mahila Mandel are active in the movement against the sanctuary. The women claim that the decision was made solely through the Mahila Mandel's internal deliberation and mutual agreement. Nevertheless, the primary activist leading the movement against DWLS implied to me during interviews that it was, at least in part, his idea to form a forest management committee. If he did suggest the idea or contribute to its germination, which remains uncertain, the women appear to have forgotten and now take full ownership for the decision⁴. While the activist undoubtedly understands the strategic importance of forming a management committee in the context of the protests, it is not clear the degree toward which the women who ultimately made the decision are cognizant of this fact.

Nevertheless, it seems that the decision to form a management committee can help legitimize the movement against the sanctuary. The formation of a management committee publically demonstrates that residents do not want unfettered access to resources, and that they believe that access must be prudently regulated to maintain the long-term ecological quality of the forests. This counters dominant narratives that necessitate restrictive resource protection. Legitimation is needed not only to promote the movement's objectives among high-level bureaucrats, but also within the eyes of the general public all the way down to the affected villages. That many residents within the study villages continue to support the sanctuary underscores the importance for the movement of adopting a pro-environmental stance, even at

⁴ One day I witnessed the activist strategically stage discussions with some local farmers aimed to increase awareness of the current poor state of local irrigation. He told me afterward that his preferred tactic for social change is lead villagers to organize their own collective action by increasing discussion of critical issues, believing that endogenous initiation of change is ultimately more enduring. He may have applied a similar tactic for forest management. Or, perhaps he was not even involved in the decision.

the village level. In the local political arena, politicians are attempting to retain power and support amidst vibrant protests by maintaining the moral high ground by espousing pro-environmental convictions. The orientation of the social movement around forest regulation vis-à-vis a local Mahila Mandel not only promotes a favorable public image, but lends the conviction to the movement's participants that they are, in fact, the moral superiors. Some members of the Mahila Mandel likely recognize this fact.

But the power of this decision should not be over-estimated. Moreover, forest regulation instituted by a Mahila Mandel in one village would still leaves a majority of used forests within DWLS unregulated. There are also significant impediments to the realization of the regulation committee until more residents gain assurance of their continued ability to access forests (discussed above). Moreover, this motivation cannot alone explain the motivation and commitment toward a new system conveyed to me during interviews with local women.

The decision to manage local forests is also, I believe, a potent form of symbolic resistance. Many villagers had resigned from the duty of forest management, feeling as though the forest department had usurped that role (see above). Thus, the decision to actively manage the forest should be read as a symbolic act of recolonization, where villagers are reasserting their control, dominance, and consequently ownership over resources they perceive as their own. It is a powerful statement of local autonomy, management capability, and resource sovereignty that inspired those involved in the battle against DWLS. The Mahila Mandel's enthusiasm over the decision was palpable.

Further, local debate around DWLS thrust into center stage the importance of environmental conservation. While most villagers probably already recognized the importance of protecting local forests, the ongoing battle against DWLS served to make it a daily issue. Fresh

in the minds of local residents, the centrality of the issue has likely given it extra momentum when brought up for discussion. Moreover, well-meaning environmentally cognizant residents aware of local degradation but opposed to restrictive conservation likely felt a moral imperative to support a viable alternative.

All of the above motivations for forest regulation – political legitimation, symbolic resistance, increasing prominence of environmental concern – are predicated upon a strong collective recognition of the need to protect local resources, both at the local level and broader political domains. Environmental awareness is being realized in the social domain, triggered by more immediate political objectives. This does not necessarily suggest that internally held environmental beliefs are not for many individuals deep and substantial. In this case, political motivators may have unified the social body to solve the problem of collective action, however transient these solutions may potentially be.

4.4 Global and Local Environmental Perspectives

The production of knowledge shapes how reality is apprehended. Knowledges become inculcated into individuals as an effect of power, shaping their experiences and sense of self (Foucault, 1972). As discussed above, the notion of ‘the environment’ emerged mid-twentieth century as critical area of concern (Dryzek, 2005). It has become a distinct and important domain of governance within the modern globalized world. Although this transition is rooted in the production of scientific knowledge primarily in the West, it has also come to shape modern environmentalism in India. Most prominent Indian ecologists, for example, were either educated at US universities or by those who attended US universities, and academic journals based in the Anglo world retain preeminence in the field (Lewis, 2004). Global environmental NGOs have

tremendous influence in setting the global conservation agenda (Zimmerer, 2006). Moreover, India has been compelled to embrace environmental conservation to achieve favorable environmental recognition on the international political stage. Himachal Pradesh has also sought to cultivate an environmental image for favor at the national level (Chhatre & Saberwal, 2006).

Pro-environmental awareness has spread widely through Indian society and is actively promoted in numerous public spheres. Emblematic of the extent of this diffusion is a sign painted on a primary schoolhouse in a town not far from DWLS, which proclaims, “We care about nature, do you?” The sign communicates a moral imperative familiar to each passerby. The environment – or in this case ‘nature’ – is a pervasive yet abstract concept, easily understood by all. It conjures a broad array of associated environmental concerns and scientific knowledges.

Such environmental perspectives appear to have diffused all the way down to the village level. In the study villages, everyone acknowledges that forests, and the environment in general, must be protected. When asked why, the most common response was, “for the benefit of future generations”. Pressed further, villagers' answers were often surprising. They most often articulated their answers not in terms of the limited needs that the forests fulfill, but by expressing how local (and global) ecology forms the foundational basis of and remains intimately interconnected with their livelihoods, physical health, and general quality of life. During interviews, their responses were in many ways substantively similar to general characteristics of modern environmental ideas, suggesting that these ideas have, at least in part, come to frame their interpretation of the world. This is not to suggest that villagers' environmental perspectives have been entirely and absolutely conditioned by modern scientific knowledges. To the contrary, there is surely plenty of conceptual space to blend modern concepts with more traditional beliefs and personal environmental experiences. Villagers' responses to my

questions were also far from uniform, indicating variation in individuals' interpretations and perspectives.

Villagers often highlighted how different elements of the environment are interconnected. Commonly, they would respond to my questions by saying things such as, “Trees provide us oxygen, and they control the climate.” Or, “cutting trees disrupts nature”. Some expressed an awareness of how deforestation would lead to soil erosion. Most interviewees expressed recognition of the potential of species disappearance, and a few articulated how it could lead to the disruption of the delicate balance of nature. Explanations of degradation may also have been shaped by broader discourses. When I asked villagers about the causes of forest degradation, the unequivocal first response was population growth, a widespread concern in India.⁵

Undoubtedly, most villagers interpret modern science-based ideas according to their lived experiences. For example, the link between deforestation and global climate change was often invoked. The notion of climate change seems to have acquired particular validity in light of a dramatic decrease in winter snowfall in the area. Also, the experience of polluted air in nearby regional towns where few trees exist seemed to substantiate the notion that trees produce oxygen. Some environmental understandings were simply erroneous – a few villagers seemed to be positing a direct relation between local tree cover and local rainfall. Unsurprisingly, wealthy and better-educated villagers generally had a better, although still very basic, understanding of the science behind environmental problems. Indeed, scientific understandings appear to have ordered, to a greater or lesser degree, villagers' perceptions of their environment. These understandings are oriented around particular environmental problems (e.g. deforestation,

⁵ Population growth in the area has been modest over the past decades. At the same time, local dependence on forest resources has decreased during that period. I mention this only to highlight how villagers' perceptions have likely been shaped by broader discourses, where villagers' empirical observations would not have necessarily lead to the identification of population as a central issue relating to forest degradation.

species extinction, climate change) and imply a particular conception of the environment itself. They strengthen villagers' convictions that forests should be protected. Significantly, this broad set of ideas about the environment and the need for its protection is invoked by supporters and opponents of the sanctuary alike.

There can be little doubt that the core of many of these ideas originated from outside of their villages. From where did they come? Ideas and understandings are in a continual state of evolution through dynamic interaction with multiple stimuli. Personal beliefs can fuse with new understandings that have originated far outside individuals' immediate context, altering actors' sense of reality, slightly or substantially. New ideas that resonate strongly with personal experiences, correspond with other sets of ideas to which one subscribes, or appear generally plausible, may challenge actors to modify existing beliefs. Alternatively, new ideas may be resisted or misunderstood and not become assimilated within an actor's broader worldview.

At the local level, an assemblage of government and nongovernment institutions have likely facilitated the inculcation of a modern environmental awareness into villagers' consciousness. Children's education is prominent, as is the media; public awareness commercials with environmental messages are exceedingly common. The schoolhouse's sign is a fine example of the ubiquity of pro-environmental messages in the area. The study villages have also been subject to two external environmental management projects – The Dhauladhar Project and Joint Forestry Management with the Forest Department (discussed above). The Dhauladhar Project included knowledge dissemination efforts aimed to promote sustainable forest management and reduced forest consumption, and both projects ostensibly supported institutional arrangements for forest management and use regulation. These projects undoubtedly carried with them certain ideas about the environment and the need for its protection. Moreover,

just as Agrawal (2005) suggests that involvement in regulatory regimes can foster the inculcation of environmental perspectives into participating actors, the ideas promulgated by the two projects were subject to reinforcement in the minds of the villagers involved.

More than just ideas, however, residents were also exposed to tangible institutional formations for resource management through these programs. The contours of these arrangements are visible in the Mahila Mandel's proposed management arrangement, which includes teams of villagers patrolling the forests on frequent undisclosed days and a system of rotational closure. These projects taught villagers modern techniques for forest management.

Insofar as environmental ideas are generally accepted by society, they begin to construct a normalizing standard that specifies socially acceptable behavior. When an actor is placed within a particular context – whether in the schoolhouse, in the village council, or as a participant in a development project – assemblages of power relations and procedures shape individuals' perspectives and mold their sense of self, causing them to behave in particular ways and identify strongly with certain ideas. Foucault has examined in great detail the functioning of such micro-dynamics of power elsewhere (Foucault, 1977). Suffice it to say that the sum of such interactions in different social contexts produces a society oriented toward particular values and standards of behavior.

Chapter 5

Discussion

5.1 Environmental Politics: Discourse and Democracy

Environmental discourse about biodiversity conservation has become manifest in the formation of DWLS and many other parks around the world. That such views are held and promoted by strategic groups and influential organizations makes the formation of conservation areas politically beneficial both on the international stage and within domestic politics.

Discourses about the need to protect biodiversity carry with them a particular administrative rational and institutional formation that has dominated the governance of such territories around the world. It is this formation – the protected area – and its social consequences that now is the subject of bitter contestation for villagers living inside of DWLS. The need to protect the environment is nevertheless agreed upon by most, if not all, players involved.

The political system of India and its relation to the international community function to promote conservation and environmental objectives through the formation of policy aimed to accomplish these goals. Government and non-government actors have facilitated the diffusion of such ideals down to the village level through multiple means. But the political system of India also provides the space to contest ideas and institutions; it is one of the celebrated features of liberal democracy that citizens are able to shape governance by protesting unfair policies. Social movements exercise their own tactics of power by defining particular situations as unjust, making visible the practices that perpetrate this injustice, and rendering them amendable to reform through change in government policy. But, like all nodes of power, social movements are limited by numerous constraints within a given context. In the case of the fight against DWLS,

the dominant pro-environment discursive regime would not easily be argued or opposed; these ideas have acquired moral authority on both sides of the fight. They possess this authority precisely because they have come to shape the way that the world is apprehended by all involved, consequently inscribing moral imperatives into publically observed social behavior.

This is not to suggest that such discourse is totalizing; it too would be amendable to refutation and redefinition. But such redefinition would require a large-scale disruption of the dominant worldview. The endurance of these views and the social consent they have engendered is remarkably demonstrated by the fact that resource alienation has not caused villagers to question or oppose the notion of environmental conservation. Instead, villagers have identified DWLS itself as being morally objectionable, and have sought to frame it as such in the public domain. Moreover, by demonstrating that they seek to manage their resources carefully, villagers are countering dominant narratives which proclaim that population growth and resource use will inevitably lead to degradation. DWLS is, they claim, unjust, unnecessary, and counterproductive. These public discursive strategies grant moral authority to the movement and promote its objectives by targeting bureaucrats, other members of the protesting communities, and the general public. Simultaneously, villagers' acts of civil disobedience target elected representatives and seek to compel them, by threat of losing popular support, to represent their needs. But the decision to protect resources should not be viewed as purely strategic. Indeed, the decision is politically salient precisely because it is built upon a firm bedrock of shared environmental values. Likewise, these values impel actors to protect their resources for moral reasons while simultaneously granting their decision to form a management committee symbolic meaning as a form of local resistance.

Liberal democracy is a mode of governance that, under the certain conditions – in this case, the disruption of the dominant system of patronage politics prevalent within the study communities – provides political space to shape governance from the bottom-up. While members of the movement against the sanctuary subscribe, at least in part, to the environmental ideals emanating from global sources of knowledge production and networks of top-down dissemination, they are simultaneously protesting the mode of environmental governance that typically accompany these ideals – fixed territories with highly restrictive access. Adherence to these two positions counters the Western ideal of pristine wilderness, promoting instead a middle course of a used but regulated landscape. In a liberal democracy, bottom-up political expression is one way that governance is continually refined. In this way, social consent of the governed is gained, and government practices become shaped by the feasible.

Significantly, the Mahila Mandel's decision to form a management committee borrows upon institutional formations and administrative rationale of modern forest management that is most probably traced to participation in past forest management regimes – The Dhauladhar Project and Joint Forest Management (discussed above). In response to the political battle against DWLS and as a result of articulation with higher levels of administration and government, the proposed management plan marks the increasing Governmentalization of the study communities – both in terms of government rationalities and technologies of government in the realm of forest management. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that the realization of the plan would result in a full-scale adoption of state administrative techniques. Rather, local systems of influence and accountability would likely blend with rational techniques of management derived from higher levels of government that, to quote Agrawal (2005: 16), would “extend the reach of power into the finest spaces of the social body”.

If the proposed system is brought into existence, it might well further strengthen particular ideals about the environment in the study communities through the formation of a regulatory community, just as Agrawal (2005) has observed in Kumaon. But, in the case of DWLS, the potential for the realization of shared environmental ideas into a management system is intimately related to the battle against DWLS. Indeed, environmental ideals themselves will not necessarily ensure the long-term endurance of a local forest management system, even if impediments to their realization (i.e. DWLS) are lessened. In Agrawal's analysis of Kumaon, the success of community forest management groups and the formation of environmental subjects was contingent on a very particular relationship with the state government set forth by the state's official Forest Council Rules that ensured that village forest committees effectively managed local forests. If the DWLS issue is resolved, will the commitment and passion toward forest management persist? What will hold communities accountable toward to an acceptable level of environmental regulation? What will guard against the weaknesses that befell previous local forest management systems?

Foucault (1977) emphasizes the role of surveillance and the creation of norms upon which societal judgments are based as a means of shaping social conduct. In the case of DWLS, the way power is expressed through society's interaction in the political domain performs those functions at the village level, however weakly. Each side in the battle is under public moral scrutiny: the protesting communities must act in accordance with environmental ideals and bureaucrats and politicians must address social consequences of DWLS. The political system turns the general public into active observers and judges of the performance of each side, while particular ideals for the environment and human rights set a standard upon which to formulate judgments of success, failure, and relative merit.

But ultimately this is a very transient form of accountability as far as forest management is concerned. The villagers' protests may well bring about a resolution to DWLS that they find satisfactory. But even if the forest management committee is realized, it will be vulnerable to the same type of political pressures currently rallying against DWLS. It is more than likely that some members of the study communities will find restrictions on resource access burdensome, and there is no guarantee that environmental objectives will retain primacy in future local political battles; politicians may see opportunity for favor to be gained by abolishing unpopular regulations. Further, even though communities espouse pro-environmental ideals, villagers' standards of acceptable ecological condition may diverge substantially from the experts in the field. Villagers' standards may also waver according to their immediate needs or greed. As with many ostensibly pro-environmental behaviors, it is often easier to suppose that one is acting in accordance with moral ideals than to make meaningful lifestyle changes. In sum, there is no normalized standard or outside force to judge communities' forest management, or a means to discipline communities to achieve such standards. Robust institutional regimes that can help marry communities to broader environmental governance objectives may ultimately be needed.

5.2 On the Environmental Subject

The case of DWLS suggests new terrain upon which to further elaborate the notion of the environmental subject and to theorize the mechanisms of its production. There are two developments in particular that I believe will lead to fruitful avenues for further inquiry that can promote a more nuanced understanding of the complex relationships between different fields of power on one hand, and pro-environmental behavior and cognition on the other: (1) to analytically dissect the notion of the environmental subject into two domains – cognition and

action, and (2) to consider the numerous fields of power in any given context involved in the production of a multiplicity of subjectivities.

For Agrawal (2005), the notion of the environmental subject encompasses both action and cognition, which are the outcome of participation in an environmental institutional regime. But his analysis does not consider the other factors that promote environmental ideas in modern society. The broad historical period he traces includes the period of birth of a modern environmental awareness. His surveys may well have occurred amidst increasing dissemination of such ideas to the village level. It is more than possible that the dissemination of modern environmental ideals through multiple channels played a role in the production of environmental subjects, primed particular actors to participate in forests management, or ‘greased’ the wheel of social consent to institutional regulation in Kumaon.

Although partially illuminated, the question remains: What gives rise to pro-environmental behavior? As the case of DWLS demonstrates, the dissemination of environmental ideas is the easy part, as the widespread adoption of such ideas shows. The problem of government is turning environmental ideas into behavior. All actions occur within a political, economic, and social context; more attention to the factors that promote and impede realization of environmental behaviors is needed. Agrawal’s focus on the technologies of government that bridge the gap between state bureaucracy and local regulation is critical in this respect. It remains to be seen what other types of relationships can clear away constraints, entice environmental behavior, and hold local resource users accountable to broader ideas of environmental management.

This analysis underscores the importance of conceptualizing the environmental subject not as a unified entity, where beliefs and actions come to harmoniously exist within a social

actor. To the contrary, the environmental subject may encompass multiple and conflicting impulses and perspectives. Human beings are by nature fragmented and contradictory, especially in relation to multiple fields of power that an actor may be subjected to at any particular moment in time, and the varying social roles that he must assume in different contexts. If the environmental subject is defined in terms of pro-environmental behavior undertaken (not simply to adoption of perspectives), he or she may be temporarily stabilized only to the extent that an institutional context can minimize constraints or channel his conduct toward pro-environmental objectives. In this sense, institutional architecture is still vital to align incentives. Nevertheless, environmental ideals may determine the degree to which actors submit to institutional regulation. And, as the case of DWLS demonstrates, discourse can be especially potent because it has the power to assign acceptable standards of behavior within particular social and political contexts.

It is thus necessary to begin to unpack the multiple forms of subjectivity that an actor possesses, examine the tensions and synergies between them, and to study how these sub-elements of an individual's personality articulate with different fields of power in a given social context. The different and multiple motivations of Mahila Mandel members explored above may have been present to varying degrees within different individuals that participated in the decision for protect the forests; the sum of these variations at the individual level nevertheless produced a group unified in purpose.

The project of environmental governance – even in localized situations – is neither complete nor finished. It is a complex and messy terrain, replete with contradictions, that may nevertheless be marching slowly, if unsteadily, toward the realization of pro-environmental behavior where favorable conditions exist.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Thus, the Governmentalization of communities around the environment – the regimes of rationality and the techniques for their realization – trickle down from global centers of knowledge production through various assemblages of institutions and power relations within the global community, through the social body, ultimately – in the case of DWLS – to stumble at the village level. The problem of forest governance remains unsolved; there are no magic bullets to harmonize the need for environmental behavioral constraint with the right to local autonomy, or the short-term material needs of humans and the long-term environmental condition of the planet. Nevertheless, the case of DWLS may point to areas where some progress toward these objectives may be made.

The PA model for conservation is, in the case of DWLS, a failed governance model; its formation appears to actually have exacerbated the problems that it was designed to ameliorate, at least in the short term. In theory it should de incentivize forest use by inflicting monetary punishment. However, when implemented by the Forest Department bureaucracy, the PA governance model often fails to manifest on-the-ground forest use restrictions. When finally implemented, DWLS failed to align incentives according to on-the-ground realities. At the broader scale, the PA model is under attack for these types of failings and more. There is increasing awareness of the social consequences associated with protected areas, the mismatch between the management of limited territories and broader ecological processes, and the limitations of fixed spaces to protect biodiversity in the context of climate change. The distinct requirements of carbon mitigation further complicate the quest for appropriate and effective environmental governance. While the PA model will undoubtedly retain its importance in many

conservation situations, new and innovative strategies for environmental governance are required.

In certain contexts, community-based resource management may be more effective (Agrawal, 2005). As a large body of literature has already demonstrated, communities can effectively and sustainably manage their resources, given appropriate institutional configurations (Dietz, Ostrom, & Stern, 2003; Ostrom, 1990). Forest commons have been shown to often have biodiversity value, and to effectively promote carbon sequestration for climate change mitigation (Chhatre & Agrawal, 2009; Persha, Fischer, Chhatre, Agrawal, & Benson, 2010). Such arrangements can be more democratic than more restrictive approaches, if the system is responsive to the demands of local users. Moreover, they are typically not accompanied by the devastating social consequences of protected areas. Yet, despite the vast literature on this topic, it is not yet well understood how the initiation of local forest management regimes may be related to broader political and social processes and pro-environmental discourses. The systemic conditions that promote pro-environmental ideas and behavior require further examination.

In the case of DWLS, the governmentalization of communities around the issue of resource management occurs as nested within a broader political system, that of liberal democracy. As an ideal, liberal democracy provides the governance flexibility that can enable individuals to prescribe localized governance solutions. In practice, this only occurs within the constraints set forth by a broader matrix of government and non-government actors and the knowledges they employ. In this way, villagers in the DWLS area have been able to advocate an alternative to restrictive conservation methods that, if realized, would have a greater potential for positive impacts than the application of a standard cookie-cutter protected area approach. Nevertheless, the long-term social and ecological outcomes of the study communities remain

highly uncertain. There remains little possibility that DWLS will ever be realized as a pristine people-less wilderness. Whether the Mahila Mandel's proposed management system will ever be realized has yet to be determined. Even if realized, there is no guarantee that the system will be successful and endure sustainably.

The case of DWLS carries important lessons about the way that shared environmental ideals are captured and deployed in political battles for resource access. More than mere discursive tools, collective agreement about these ideals has the potential to promote actual resource management outcomes. At the very least, we can expect to see many more political battles around the world centered upon the environment and the need for its protection. In the presence of a commanding environmental discursive regime, moral authority can and will be captured through deference to a shared sense of the environmental values; many social movements and politicians will surely capitalize upon this opportunity. In some cases, a desirable side effect – intended or not – may be the actual advancement of environmental objectives.

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