Chapter I
Theoretical Framework on Political Ecology and Social Movements

Political ecology analyses the complexity of social and environmental change as some thing produced by intersecting and conflicting economic, social, and ecological processes operating at different scales. Political ecology as an analytical framework originated in the 1970s with a paper by Eric Wolf is seen as the earliest work of political ecology.

The path breaking work of Piers Blaikie powerfully and explicitly merged environmental studies with political economy. The book focused on the ways in which the development of capitalism affects the peasants and pastoralists and thereby the ways in which they use the environment. He argued that capitalism extracted surpluses from peasants and pastoralists who then, in their need for money, over utilized their natural resources, “taking out of the soil, pastures and forests what they cannot afford to put back. This tendency was exacerbated by land-users, displacement and often confinement into a small land area”. In this way, Blaikie attributed environmental events and environmental status to political economy, understood in terms of world system theory. They connect local struggles and changes related to land, labour which are contested are drawn upon the historical background of the current process, highlight the dynamics related to inequality, and attend to critical developments in the larger political economies. It also emphasizes the importance of asymmetries of power, the unequal relations between different actors, in explaining the interaction of society and environment.

The multidisciplinary, multilevel scope of political ecology has been used as a rubric to explain environmental degradation or environmental change, and to understand their significance for different groups within society. Political ecology approach is an inquiry into the political sources, conditions and ramification of environmental change while embracing different social and ecological scales, and

---

relates to inter-related research areas. The other influential book in the growth of political ecology by Blaikie, Piers and Harold Brookfield argued for the deeper causes of land degradation was more in the social problem rather in terms of characteristics of soil, geology and climate and purely physical constraints of natural sciences.

Political ecology is grounded less in a coherent theory and seek to integrate its analysis and encompasses a wide variety of interpretations drawn from ideological spectrum from the political right (Neo-classical thought) to the political left (Neo-Marxism) based on ideas drawn from political economy. Blakie and Brookfield has suggested that third world political ecology is about the combined “concerns of ecology and broadly defined political economy”. Political ecology argues for consideration of environmental degradation within its ‘historical, political and economic context’ as well as its ecological one.

The constantly shifting dialectic between society and land based resources with regular attention to the role of the ‘marginalized’ peasants and the interaction of scales – or chains of exploitation that radiate outward from individual resource users to peasant communities and to regional, national, and global political and economic relations. It stresses that the most effective way of addressing this problem is not through a grand theoretical exposition, but rather through a selective engagement with the political-economy literature as and when it is appropriate. The aim is built on a multiple interpretation of ‘political economy’ rather than to assert in a single ‘correct’ interpretation.

Political ecology explores the complexities by taking into account the contextual sources of environmental impacts of the state and its policies, inter state relations and global capitalism. The second approach investigates the local – specific peasants and other socially disadvantaged groups in struggles to protect the environmental foundations of their livelihood. It also tries to understand both historical and contemporary dynamics of struggle. The third approach were political

---

ramifications of environment change has been guided by what extent are the costs of environment change are borne by socially disadvantaged groups, and how does this unequal distribution of costs mediate existing socio-economic inequalities and does this modify political process.

There were several reasons for the slow development of the field of political ecology because of the negative connotations it had on the political left and also due to the association with the works at that time. Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* which showed the inter-connectedness between seemingly minute levels of pesticides which could become concentrated in food chains and thus pose a serious environmental problem. But banning for the few toxins, the chemical industry triumphed, seeing an expansion of the production of chemicals. She influenced many works like Hardin’s ‘The tragedy of Commons’ model has been influenced by William Forster Lloyd (1794-1852) was made on the two critical assumptions: First common property resources are open access and second that such resources held in common leads to over-exploitation since resources are individualistic and unable to co-operate in favor of a common interest. The Hardin model concludes that resources must be either privatized or state controlled by the state to ensure sustainable use. This had influenced the third world countries and the dominant models of development had far reaching implications in the management of national parks as they are open to all without limit the parks themselves are limited in extent and whereas population seems to grow without limit.

An extreme ecological stand was taken by the *Limits to Growth* study produced by the Club of Rome. It predicted that unless technology changed its current course, the world was in danger and running out of its resources. This was supported with Paul Ehrlich (1968) predicted that the world faced imminent social and

---

environmental catastrophe due to high population growth\textsuperscript{10} presumes that resource scarcities and consequent limits to growth and population pressure is the heart of the environmental and ecological issue. The widely held notion that the principle cause of environmental destruction is the alarming growth of population.

It was against this backdrop that the UN decided to hold the famous conference on the environment at Stockholm in 1972. The economic growth was considered to have taken place at the expense of ecological integrity and ecological sustainability was viewed as separate from economic growth. The political debate during that time was centered as a crisis of participation whereby excluded groups sought to ensure a more equitable distribution of goods but it tended to reinforce, rather than challenge the prevailing view of environment as being just another resource there for human consumption. In recent years, however authoritarian solutions to the environmental crisis have been abandoned, but there is always an authoritarian edge somewhere in ecological politics which rests upon scientific-technical rationality that is science-led solutions within an administrative state armed with strong regulatory bureaucratic process of political-economic decision making.\textsuperscript{11}

Hans Magnus Enzensberger an influential and comparatively early critic on the left raised the central question that why did “environment movements” emerge only in the 1970s, but the conditions of the working poor deteriorated after the industrial revolution. The latter were termed as neo-Malthusians because for its anxiety over the population question like environmental degradation, food insecurity, famine and land conflicts have looked to population pressures which lead to the burden on scarce resources.\textsuperscript{12} The emergence of cultural ecology or ecological


\textsuperscript{12} The arguments of uncontrolled population growth is exclusively from North American sources and the liberation movements in 1950 and 1960s of the third world countries began to become a central problem for imperialist power. On the other hand the rate of increase in population had begun to rise much earlier, in the 1930s and 1940s. See Hans Magnus, Enzensberger (1974): “A critique of political ecology”, \textit{New Left Review}, 84, 3-31. The effects of neo-malthus in India in the work of D’Souza,
anthropology as a separate strand in the evolution of third world political ecology in 1960s sought to explain the links between cultural form and management practices in terms of adaptive behavior within a closed ecosystem.¹³

The environment was seen as an additional structural feature of the analysis, often portrayed as fixed, or subject to major, disruptive change due to capitalist penetration of peasant societies due to market integration, commercialization, and the dislocation of customary forms of resource management-rather than adaptation and homeostasis-became the cornerstone of a critical alternative to older cultural or human ecology. The major criticism against cultural ecology, which stressed the self-regulatory characteristics and stability, and by determining the boundaries of the systems and minimizing the defined local populations by social conflict was excluded and as the territoriality in which they are embedded are politically and economically constructed. The word "ecology" was used to emphasize the homeostatic and apolitical nature of human-environmental interaction. This critique also promoted a growing interest in the connection between politics and environmental change in the third world as a political process.

In combing political economy with ecology, political ecology tried to rectify the deficiencies in both frameworks, which resulted in the emergence of political ecology. The relationship between politics and ecology is not in equal terms but the role of politics in shaping ecology in the Third World environmental problems is much greater today and it is only through political means that a solution will be devised.¹⁴ Political ecologist seeking to integrate place and non-place-based analysis

---

¹³ In anthropology the ecological issue has stimulated in the field of ecological anthropology, cultural ecology and human ecology around questions about non-western societies live with nature. A significant body of work emerged in the 1950s with cultural ecology; the ecosystems approach (Rappaport) and cultural materialism. The major work of Roy Rappaport’s argued that the ritual cycles were used to regulate the growth of pig populations, swidden fallow cycles and the cyclical patterns of war and peace with neighboring Maring groups argued for the close interaction of natural and social systems as a functional whole. David, Harvey, (1993): “The Nature of Environment-Dialectics of Social and Environmental Change”, Socialist Register, pp. 1-51.

turned mainly to Neo-Marxism\textsuperscript{15} as a way of avoiding a-politicism of cultural ecologist and Neo-Malthusian work. The neo-Marxism based on dependency theory\textsuperscript{16} of Andre Gunder Frank, focused on the power relations between regions in analyzing uneven development on a world scale – described as development and underdevelopment. The dependency theorist like Frank believed that the underdevelopment of Third World countries was a consequence of unequal exchange with the developed countries with the west characterized by dual societies divided between dynamic zones into modern capitalism and backward zones in relation to feudal isolation. The dependency approach had eclipsed modernization theory and lacked adequate conceptualization of the class structure and state to accompany its economic analysis.

Political ecology turned to the “World System theory” of Immanuel Wallerstein\textsuperscript{17} focused on the different stages or levels of national development within what appears to be a global political economy. The world-system theorists opposed the ‘dualism’ in development studies on the basis that the countries could achieve modernization of resources could be shifted from the traditional sector of their economies into the modern sector and opposed the tactics of the communist parties which favored alliances with the national bourgeoisies of the developing countries against feudal land owners and multinational corporations. This basic categories of analysis were core/semi-periphery/, periphery/ core/ periphery, metropolis or satellite and its rejection of the development model (the west as ideal type) of modernization theory. They countered such dualist analysis with ‘monist’ analysis as a single whole, which is the capitalist world economy. The general weakness of world system through its formal stratification criteria of differentiation subsumes specific class differences into general developmental categories and subordinates notions of class conflict to


\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., p-132. The World System theory points out that neither the socialist countries nor those of third world constituted distinct by non-capitalist economic relations. The states never exist in isolation, like but rather participate in capitalist world system forged by the expansion of commerce and maintained by an enforced international division of labour shaped economic structures and directed change.
mechanisms of international social mobility. The World System theory points out that neither the socialist countries nor those of third world constituted distinct by non-capitalist economic relations. The states never exist in isolation, like but rather participate in capitalist world system forged by the expansion of commerce and maintained by an enforced international division of labour shaped economic structures and directed change.

The first generation of political ecology wedded ecology to system theory that envisioned the world as organized into a single class system, first-world nations owning the means of production and third world nations supplying the labour and producing the surplus value tended to think in terms of structures, systems, and interlocking variables and did not focus on the local-global articulation, the emphasis of today. The Indian Environmentalism of political ecology started with chipko movement from the 1970s referred as social movement because much of the work theorizing social movements begins with Marxism, Historical materialism, and dialectical theory of social and environmental change saw collective mobilization from the perspective of class based drawing on the classical Marxist, neo-Marxist and functionalist traditions like the trade union politics, peasant, tribal, and other movements. The expansion occurred in the 1980s with integrating environment and political activism for the environment problems of the Third world countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Social Movements

Social movement’s studies on the collective action can be defined as a collective effort of a section of people to pursue certain shared objectives, goals, and values

19 Ibid., p. 4.
even in the face of opposition and conflict are seen in an isolated form rather than interconnectedness. Collective conflicts may assume various forms of actions ranging from organized modes of protest such as dharnas (sit-ins), boycotts, hartals (strikes), picketing and peaceful slogan shouting protest marches to active and violent outbursts of people in the non-institutions means of resistance through “revolution” in a social movement. But many forms of interpersonal, dispersed and unshared conflicts, even when involving groups do not lead to collective action. The major divide which differentiates mobilizations of different types directed towards change with reference to a social system is based on the question whether the collective mobilizations is seeking to bargain for a greater share of the rewards and facilities by the existing system or alter the system itself.

The social structures are described by more than one variant like caste, class, religious groups, stratification in terms of education, wealth and so on. The collective actions which are generally manifested more in a society with social structure defined by hierarchy, harsh social inequality and social injustice. Thus scholars have drawn on actor-oriented approach which seeks to understand conflicts as an outcome of the interaction of different actors pursuing often quite distinctive aims and interests. The potential power of grassroots actors such as poor farmers and shifting cultivators in environmental conflicts has been emphasized with reference to everyday resistance as part of an attempt to link political ecology to developments in social movements theorizing to demonstrate the more complex understanding of power relations mediate between human-environment interactions.

The major works were influenced by everyday resistance with the critique of structural variant of Marxist theories which widens the spectrum of social movements opposing hegemony-of productive resources to include culture, ideology and way of

---


life. Gramsi made a distinction between three interconnected spheres: civil society, political society and economic formations.\textsuperscript{25} Civil society refers to organizations that are neither part of the process of material production in the economy nor part of state-funded organizations that are relatively long-lasting institutions supported and run by people outside the other two major spheres. Political society (the “state”) consists of the means of violence (such as the police and army) within a given territory, together with the state-funded bureaucracies, such as the civil service, legal, welfare and educational institutions. Economic formations refer to the dominant mode of production in a territory that is built upon the differential ways classes are related to the ownership of the means of production. The most important factor for social movements to emerge is to challenge hegemonic ideas in society and to make public debates that were previously taken for granted.\textsuperscript{26}

Ramachandra Guha must be credited for firmly establishing this field in India and uses the term social ecology modelled on the discipline of ‘ecology’ in the natural science were social ecology systematically includes the human species within this framework. The Chipko marked the beginning of a public debate on the environment and emergence of alternative solutions to environment management is placed within the historical framework of India’s colonial legacy. The British are seen as having undermined pre-colonial community based environmental management systems, and as having treated nature as a resource to be exploited for the benefit of evolving colonial economy. Chipko has been widely regarded as the assertion of the rights of villagers against the urban industrial sector for the right to practice traditional values in forest use, which represents a fundamental critique of development process.

The Dasholi Gram Swaraja Mandal (DGSM) led by C.P.Bhat\textsuperscript{27}, which was instrumental in the first protest was formed in 1964 to promote concepts of gramdan


\textsuperscript{27} It may be noted that Mr. Chandi Prasad Bhat activism was a low profile and democratic and well known figure in the region. But Sundarlal Bahuguna is more popular among the metropolitan environmentalist.
of a non-violent, self reliant village society, based on cottage industries. However competition from established firms led the forest department to supply raw materials to industrialists rather than local enterprises. The another strand of chipko represented by Uttarakhand Sangharsh Vahini (USV) who disassociate themselves from what they perceive as the conservationist of mainstream and considered uneven development in Uttarakhand in forests and wider economy. The numerous shades of the movement brings out critical facets like chipko as a women’s movement and the religious dimensions had received attention due to the support of Vandana Shiva eco-feminist analyses that Indian attitude to nature differs significantly from the west. She sees the crisis of the environment which is a manifestation of a process in which the feminine principle has been subjugated in favour of a male-centered idea of development.28

The chipko movement had its influence in other movements like Appiko movement in Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka which was against the commercial demands in the context of ecological stability and survival and the activists believed that basic products of forests in the Western Ghats are soil, water and pure air. The protest was led by the rural elite to protect arecanut, a highly commercialised garden crop.29

The popular defence of customary rights against the allotment of village pastures by the state government to Polyfibre industry which intended to grow eucalyptus saplings. The peasants of kusnur organized a 'pluck and plant' satyagraha demonstrations on November 14 1987 in Karnataka.30 In the Indian environment debate, major has quickly filled the space vacated by forests dams and mining. The river valley projects like Silent Valley crusade which was never a people’s struggle to save the valley, because the local people were not convinced by the knowledge of nature conservation, which they had never experienced. The Silent Valley Hydro project was a symbol of the aspirations of the people of Malabar for a long period and mass organizations and political parties were committed to its implementation long

before the ecological questions were raised by the scientists. The silent valley is one of the richest biospheres in the whole world, but the people of Malabar were more interested in the question of energy, employment and development than the necessity of protecting the unique biosphere of silent valley.31 The opposition to the project was led by Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad, an organization dedicated to popular science education. The reasons cited for opposing due to the techno economic appraisal of energy generating alternatives. In another example, groups affected by large dams have not always been tribal like the Bedthi project in Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka, which abandoned due to the protest from the influential commercial farming whose lands were to be submerged, by the project. The protests against the koel-karo hydroelectric project in Jharkhand have been one of the most sustained struggles for identity and justice. The project targeted to generate a 710 Mw of electricity, comprises of two dams, one each on the river koel and its tributary, kar. According to the official estimates, the project would displace 7063 families from 112 villages in the predominantly adivasi districts of Rachi, Gumla and Singbhuum. The community estimates suggest that the actual displacement will be of about 20,000 people. The estimate regarding the people affected is always contentious in the environment movement. In India, the two thirds of mineral resources exist in the three states of Orissa, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. The major struggles against the mining industry, imposed with ruthlessness and insensitivity towards its tribal people and the environment. The Memorandum of understandings signed by these states to hand over the country’s forests, rivers and wildlife resources and to sacrifice the lives of its local people to big corporate companies. People’s resistance to these projects is suppressed like the firing in Maikanch, Kalinganagar and the repressive Salwa Judum in Chattisgarh.

The development of Indian Environmentalism has moved forward even as it acknowledged Guha’s Contribution which tried to build distinct environmentalism that seeks to redress injustices through state led capitalism but posts moral economy or Gandhian way of reshaping development projects to the local level. The defense of

common property resources and the restoration of community-based environment management which gives priority to the subsistence of the poor farmers, forest gatherers against the extractive state with different ideological groups that co-exist within the movement. The criticism against Guha's work as it embraces ideas of the 'indigenous' and the 'traditional' that are dubious because of its political agenda. In its more extreme forms, this valorization of tradition can lead to readings of the environment based upon Hindu metaphors which have uneasy relationships with the Hindu right. For example in the 1990s, many Bhilala adivasis in western Madhya Pradesh joined the battle for Hindu supremacy, attacking Christian adivasis and later Muslims. The protests against the Tehri Dam were people protests against the closure of two tunnels and demanded full and final settlements of their claims. Ashok Singal from the Vishwa Hindu Parishad also joined the fast for preserving the purity of river Ganga bringing the work to standstill for few days. The second criticism is that by posting the rural poor as its principal subject and their livelihoods as the principal site of their struggles, has its social and geographical restrictions. By implicitly locating its concerns with the 'marginal' populations have failed to demonstrate that middle-class actors forcing their view of the good or simple life. The ecological traditions of local-self sufficiency offer little in the way of solutions for city dwellers, rich or poor were political action is unlikely to be found in an idealized, colonial and rural past.

The environmental activism involves the growing participation of Courts in environmental matters through Public Interest litigation cases in a process that has ambivalent consequences for environmental justice and sustainability. The emerging research against pollution seeks to uncover the complex class dynamics involved. Amita Baviskar has shown the complex and contradictory linkages that exist between Delhi's Master plan and the presence of slums, and forms of environmental cleansing


through ‘city beautification’. The beautification plan speaks to versions of ‘authoritarian environmentalism’ that appeal to the middle class which is eager to distance itself from their own environmental footprints and from the poor. The role of the state in the neo-liberal era is not to deny the major and often threatening role that the state plays in the lives of the rural poor. However, some early political ecology analyses were criticized for their ‘overly deterministic vision of social structure and an overemphasis of material struggles. Moore has criticized political ecology as being insufficiently political in nature because of its structuralist legacy and too little effort given to ‘micro politics’ and further the interests and actions of the actors involved in such conflict like state, elites, peasants or workers which were portrayed as ‘monolithic’ as little effort made to study the internal complexity or differentiated concerns of the state or other actors. However State continues to act as a major player, but we need to look beyond as it is not a single or uniform actor, in projects of resource extraction from the rural poor.36

New Social Movements

In the 1980s, European and American societies witnessed the emergence of large-scale movements around issues which were basically humanist, cultural and non-materialistic in nature have been referred to as “new social movements.” The Post-development refers not to the theoretical conviction instead questions ‘development’ itself and the critic against post-development have often restricted their analysis to critique without exploring alternatives. Escobar argues that local concerns and politics, as articulated by new social movements are portrayed as reflecting the


37 Social movements may be expressions of cultural struggles over meaning, but the meanings for which they fight are not always clear when we consider the material struggles alongside these cultural contestations. See Anthony, Bebbington, (2007): “Social Movements and the Politicization of Chronic Poverty”, Development and Change, Vol.38, No.5, p- 740.
immediate place-based concerns of local communities and able to respond to these concerns in the future. The site of radical and plural struggle is used to fill the gap created by the withdrawal of artificially naturalized ideal state, modeled upon the ‘developed’ west comprised of institutions, processes, practices, languages has diversified the diverse range of social, cultural, political systems which have failed to deliver their promises for better societies. Escobar argues for a post structural political ecology because of the retheorizing political economy and environment at different levels. The traditional Marxist theory of Capitalism relates to the contradictions between capitalist productive forces and production relations. Whereas political economy looks at the historical intersection of capital and the state, political ecology adds nature to the equation and addresses the lack of attention paid to the natural world by traditional political economy approaches and avoids making unnecessary assumption about forms of integration or previous ecological equilibrium, but examines how real political and economic systems interact with nature through time. At this junction the central question of nature which is transformed into commodities in terms of Karl Polanyi as ‘fictitious commodities’ because the land and labour are not produced and reproduced in accordance with market forces or the law of nature are transformed into pseudo commodities made available for sale, which is termed as second contradiction of capitalism that has aggravated to ecological crisis and the social forms of protest.

In India under the rubric of new social movements like civil rights, farmers, and environment movements have been taken up by civil society against the state which is seen an oppressive and unable to solve the problems of exploitation, poverty, and uneven development. The issue-based politics of movements based on shared


identities and common characteristics of not only class, but also gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and other cultural criteria have developed "new oppositional counter-discursive forms of consciousness and action".

These 'new' social movements claimed to be a new way of doing politics amounting to social change without state power. The social bases of these new social movements saw the emergence and the strengthening of middle class-led NGOs which joined with the International Financial Institutions in attacking public welfare and promoting private ownership in the public policy formulation. New Social movements may be expressions of cultural struggles over meaning, ideas and practices constitute one of the most important terrains in which social movements operate and which seek to change is not always clear but complicated alongside with material struggles. The claim to achieve empowerment by NGOs at the grassroots by using non-party/ 'a-political' has lead to de-politicized mobilization towards the existing class structure and diverting mobilization from each other. This has resulted in the emergence of varied NGOs like Green peace, Friend of the Earth, the Sierra Club, Earth First, World Wild Fund for Nature and a whole variety of less formal organizations and groups. They received substantial funding from International Financial Institutions despite their occasional bursts against neo-liberalism. These associations with globally based networks are allied with each other through their overlapping membership, frequent communication and joint campaigns with one


42 Ibid., p-742.


another and form coalitions and seek to establish claims on national and global civil society.\(^{45}\)

The interface of movements would have to foster complex learning that does not happen locally. The numerous organizations also raises the questions of accountability, democracy and representation which is far from clear as they are open structures which are able to expand without limits, integrating new modes as long as they are able to communicate within the network of organizations through internet to its own evolution in shaping the development of privatizing dynamics that remain unaccountable.\(^{46}\) The focus on the local-global nexus becomes more compelling given the interconnections between environmental issues and those pertaining to rights.\(^{47}\)

According to Fuentes and Frank these NSMs are popular social movements and expressions of people’s struggles against exploitation and oppression in a complex dependent society.\(^{48}\) Omvedt in contrast has argued that the shift in the traditional class-based movements towards those of women, lower castes, indigenous groups are a process of redefining those spheres of exploitation mainly economic which has not been addressed by conventional Marxist analysis.\(^{49}\) We have used the term social movements because the claims of the new social movements may be contested, but the question of land continues to be on the agenda in different forms.

The first phase of political ecology focused exclusively on rural areas in analysis of land degradation in peasant societies. This rural emphasis makes sense but

---

\(^{45}\) Global civil society as the sphere of ideas, values, institutions, organizations, networks, and individual located between the family, the state and the market and operating beyond the confines of national societies, politics and economies. Jogdand, P.G and S.M. Michael (2003): *Globalization and Social Movements: Struggle for a Humane Society*, (Ed) Rawat publications, Jaipur.


\(^{49}\) The traditional social movements drawing on the Marxist traditions unlike the trade union politics which is class based, but differing significantly regarding the connection between contradictions, crises and urban social conflicts which led to the rise of protest movements in 1960s and 70s like civil rights, students, feminist, environmental which came to be referred as the new social movements: Gail, Omvedt (1993): *Reinventing Revolution: New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India*, East Gate Book, London, pp. 127-153.
gives an incomplete picture, so political ecology has begun room for the ‘nuances of different social actors’ livelihood struggles and uses of ‘cultural idioms in the changed context of local politics’ and also paying attention to social actors in urban settings and their connection with degradation process. Political ecology has also centered on urban issues has shown that “environment movements” is not that they represent an environmentalism of the poor but emerge through collaborations of the middle-class actors and audiences. The middle class is very fragile and it is hard to access accurately the size and significantly of the urban middle class in India is heterogeneous and encompasses a range of attributes in terms of income and consumption, education, occupation and property ownership. Different waves of environmentalism brought in different actors with varying social projects. If the earlier social movements revolved around social issues of equity and justice the urban movements have deployed “Environmental law” as a tool for dominating the masses and controlling their resistance which operates at multiple levels in framing their demands and engaging in action from International, National and local level context.

The theoretical coherence remains in question identified under the political ecology because of its diverse objectives, epistemologies, and method that can be discussed under various ‘subfield’ with diverse areas lacking any single coherent theoretical approach or message. The way social movements today link local struggles with international networks- for example in the environmental movements

---


seems to imply a completely new agenda for research on social movements. The social movements have perceived the opportunities posed by these global trends and mobilized resistance against their consequences at the local level exploitation of natural resources and the reassertion of traditional rights at the community level. The political ecology as a field that emerged from the critique of the Hardins 'Tragedy of the Commons' and Ehrlich's 'Population Bomb' still largely dominates policy discourses because it has not able to provide alternative to the mainstream policies has resulted in marginalization of political ecology in the broader public debate.55

The political ecology of the 2000s has moved forward along with different fronts like “violent environments” as an arena of contested entitlements in which conflicts and claims over property, assets, labour and the politics of recognition are played out. It addresses alternate ways of understanding the relations between environment and violence as a site-specific phenomenon rooted in environment histories and social relation, particularly in power relations.56 Michael Watts in reference to political ecology has argued that that the subfield should celebrate its diversity by saying ‘Let the flowers of openness and dialogue bloom’, which has blossomed in a wide assortment of colures who wish to engage policy may find useful to point out when communicating with the ‘messy, constrained world outside’.57

The political ecology framework for analysis centered on the idea of a ‘politically environment’ is used to understand the politics of environmental change in the third world. It explores the types of actors that are involved in environmental conflict like discussion of states, multilateral institutions, businesses, environmental non-governmental organizations and grassroot actors. This addresses the comprehensive picture of the motivations, interests and actions of the actors in

manners that is not possible through local studies, but tends to obscure the complexities and contradictions associated with the actions of all actors.\textsuperscript{58}

Political ecology inspired perspective has been successfully utilized in analyses of the historical circumstances leading to local patterns of resource use and control to understand the contemporary struggles. In order to reveal the changing social relationships that broadens the corresponding economic and political events on the regional, national and global scales that affect local systems of production.\textsuperscript{59}
