Summary and Conclusions

When I explained my research topic to someone in Kerala during casual conversation, I invariably received a grim look followed by more or less the same comment: 'No Malayalam newspaper reports science as seriously, adequately and professionally as The Hindu does'. This totally baffled me and I slowly recovered from the blow by trying to explain that the study is based on the public controversies on the tremors and well collapses, the coloured rains, and the RCC clinical trial, and then the preliminary scepticism slowly transformed into an animated recollection of the events associated with the disputes. All the respondents were cognisant of the controversies, and the Malayalam dailies were identified as their major source of information about the disputes. Many of them shared their personal views on the issues, asking for my opinion. The cases were indubitably understood as 'science-related'. That is, the disputes were identified as involving scientists and scientific institutions. At the same time, the respondents never framed the controversies as related to 'modern science' because they considered science to be a monolithic, socially disembodied and progressive enterprise; as something sacrosanct, which had nothing to do with the regional scientists and their mundane interaction with the people!

It is evident from this description of my personal experience that there is a strong social memory existent in Kerala regarding the controversies we have examined in the thesis, and it was the regional press that played a crucial role in the creation of the same. The contemporary social reality of ours is deeply shaped and reproduced by modern science and the media, more than any other social institutions. As a result of this, the public critically engages with both the institutions. At the same time, our understanding of how the publics understand science predominantly conforms to the diffusionist model. From this viewpoint, the media is understood as distorting science, or of possessing a poor understanding of science. Therefore, our quotidian interactions with science always contradict our own understanding of our understanding of 'modern science'. Unfortunately, the hegemony of the latter discourse deters the public from participating in the day-to-day politics of science they are engaged in as part of the wider political process of democratisation of science and society.
actively participates in constructing reality along with science, analysis of the functioning of the public-science-media complex and conscious political interventions in the media-generated scientific public sphere are critical to further shape the space more inclusive of the new political discourses.