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**Contradictory Class Locations in the Rural Environmental Movement:
A Theoretical Examination of Marxist Class Analysis**

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Abstract

This study theoretically investigates the possibility of using class analysis in environmental politics, specifically in rural areas. Amid promising developments at the praxis level, environmental politics still need solid collective imagination to pinpoint capitalism, the root of environmental degradation and conflicts, as the main problem. At the same time, class analysis in Marxism, the strongest anti-capitalist current in academia, has been underdeveloped in the fields relating to environmental politics. Departing from a general question on the possibility of applying Marxist class analysis in understanding class dynamics in rural politics, this study question further the way Marxist class analysis could situate diverse class locations and class structures in rural environmental politics and to what extent that diversity affects internal dynamics and external dynamics in organizational level in terms of politics, strategy, and ideology.

To answer those questions, this study examines Erik Olin Wright's theory of class via his Contradictory Class Location in a narrow environmental political context, namely the Rural Environmental Movement (REM). As a result, this study offers two level of analysis, by situating CCL in *location of interest* of individuals actors involved in REM, whether as *actor in direct interest* of *actor in indirect interest*. This study also offers the theoretical to understand the position of REM in class struggle.

Keywords

Rural Environmental Movement, Marxist Class Analysis, Contradictory Class Locations, Location of Interest, Actor in Direct Interest, Actor in Indirect Interest, Class Struggle, Struggle about Class, Environmental Conflict, Rural Conflict, Rural Environmental Politics.

Chapter 1 — Introduction

This study aims to theoretically investigate the possibility of understanding class dynamics within the environmental movement specifically in the rural area. Amid promising developments at the praxis level, environmental politics have suffered from lacking solid collective imagination to pinpoint capitalism, the root of environmental degradation and conflicts, as the main problem (Fraser, 2021). At the same time, class analysis in Marxism, the strongest anti-capitalist current in academia, has been underdeveloped in the fields relating to environmental politics. To make a small contribution to this academic gap, by examining Erik Olin Wright's theory of class via his Contradictory Class Location, this study offers the possibility of using Marxist class analysis in a narrow environmental political context, namely the Rural Environmental Movement.

Class and Proletarian Politics in Academia

For a long time, environmental politics has been identified as lacking in class analysis. Arsel (Arsel 2022), in his elaboration on the possibility of framing climate conflicts (and politics) as class issues, argued that this shortage can be identified through the closest academic fields that have not provided adequate theories for approaching class issues in environmental conflict. Agrarian political economy, which has abundant debates and theories on class, has not had a specific and significant concern “with the implications of the Anthropocene in general and the political implications of catastrophic climate change.” Political ecology, on the other hand, has had a narrowed focus on class approach (alongside “other dimensions of socio-political and cultural differentiation”) in the impact of environmental change on society (Arsel, 2022, p.3). In specific regard to environmental studies in general, and political ecology in particular, Arsel highlighted the lack of class analysis in those fields that have been affected by the tide of post-modernism and post-structuralist thought—which has driven political ecology toward a focus on decoloniality, leaving behind Marxist orthodox concern with class struggle. The underlying issue behind that turn, as mentioned by Arsel, ironically has been placed on the challenge of Marxist orthodox class analysis (Arsel, 2022, p.6).

In the broader field of academia, the question of Marxist class (orthodox) propositions had ignited intellectual current inside the left-leaning scholar groups that were identified by Meiksins Wood (Meiksins Wood, 2016) as the New True Socialism (NTS). For Meiksins

Wood, this intellectual group was responsible for abandoning the proletariat's "privileged position in the struggle for socialism" and bringing deep impact and influence on broader Marxist academia. Consequently, amongst Marxist scholars and inspired Marxist scholars, the proletariat or working-class struggle has no longer been regarded as the decisive factor in building socialism. It has been replaced by the struggle of a broader alliance of mass or popular movements (Meiksins Wood, 2016, p.3-6).

Class analysis, however, has never been completely absent in the NTS. Poulantzas, the most important and influential figure in this academic movement, initiated this trend by addressing the emergence of new positions under contemporary capitalism development that, for him, cannot be regarded as proletariat due to their specific characteristics through the problematization of class structure. Poulantzas further differentiated people working in the capitalist system into three components and categories¹ and coined the concept of "new-petty bourgeoisie".² His strategy, as recognised by Meiksins Wood, was not intended to abandon proletarian political agenda. Moreover, Poulantzas' theory of class was an attempt to attack "the theoretical foundations of 'reformism' and the political strategy of social democracy Wood, 2016, p.3-6), even though at the same time, it is responsible for replacing exploitation with "ideology as principal determinant" to identify class structure (Wood, 2016, p.48).

Aside from problematising Poulantzas's theory of class, it is difficult to refute that the emergence of Poulantzas in academia marked a revival of class analysis. Starting from the 70s until the 90s, problematising new positions in capitalism has sparked widespread debate among sociologists, not solely from Marxist tradition.³ It is important to note that not all of the prescriptions from those long debates have a similar analytical, ideological, and political stance as Poulantzas.⁴ Those debates, regardless of the different analytical, ideological and political stances, showed that the existence of a new-petty bourgeoisie or middle class⁵ is

¹ Those are economic aspect (productive vs unproductive), political aspect (supervision vs non-supervision), and ideological aspect (mental vs manual labour). See Poulantzas (1978).

² For longer elaboration on Poulantzas notion and its relation with NTS, read chapter three on Meiksins Wood' work (2016).

³ Erik Olin Wright summarised that debate in *Classes* (1989a). I bring that debate in my elaboration on his theory in chapter 2.

⁴ Carchedi (1975) for instance, built his analysis on new-petty bourgeoisie (he used term "middle class") through the exploration of functional aspects in capital-labour relation. Different with Poulantzas, he focused his analysis on the political economy aspect around global production without considering non-exploitative factor as determinant in analysing political character of that class. Wright (1989a), that his work will be examined in this book, also shift his initial approach that was influenced by Poulantzas into new-approach based on exploitation relation in capital.

⁵ These words of new petty bourgeoisie in this study is used interchangeably without referring different definition.

significant as sociological fact. This significance in social movements, particularly in environmental politics, has posed a serious problem for positioning proletarian politics on a broader movement stage.

The involvement of the middle class in environmentalism, for a long time, has been considered ambiguous and, at the same time, problematic. They are ambiguous due to their position in the economy (in terms of their aspiration on the level of affluence and consumption), but also due to their domination in the movement (Hirsch and Warren, 1998, p. 4). At the same time, the involvement of the middle class, particularly in the Global South context where environmentalism was born from developmentalism, raises problems regarding their capabilities to hijack the political agenda or the interest of the proletariat or people who become the most victimised by development projects for their own interests (Aditjondro, 1998, pp. 47–48). However, it should be recognised that involvement in social movements is unavoidable and often does not necessarily bring damaging impacts. Advocates of middle-class activism, such as Scott (2014), even argue that the involvement of middle-class in the movement, particularly at the community level, could be the backbone of resistance due to their "deep desire for full cultural citizenship in their small community" (Scott, 2014, pp. 90–91). However, recognizing the role of the middle class in the environmental movement should be more than showing their role as damaging or supporting the development of popular or proletarian politics. Middle-class position in the environmental movement, beyond agreement or disagreement, has ultimately brought a significant impact on the movement in terms of politics and ideology. The only way to understand their position is by analysing their role (Mawdsley, 2004, pp. 81–82). In this context, endeavoring the development of class analysis in environmental politics is necessary.

Research Question, Justification, and Structure of the Essay

This study aims to make minuscule contributions to developing class analysis in environmental politics in the specific locus of rural areas. This study will use Marxist class theory by departing from the main question of *how Marxist class analysis can explain class dynamics in rural environmental politics*. Three sub-questions will follow that question:

1. How does Marxist class analysis understand and situate diverse class locations and class structures in rural environmental politics?
2. To what extent do those different backgrounds affect internal dynamics in rural environmental politics?

3. To what extent do different classes affect organizational capacity at the level of politics, strategy, and ideology?

For answering the above questions, this study examines Erik Olin Wright's (EOW) class theory in rural environmental politics to answer the above questions. Contradictory Class Location (CCL), as a main feature of EOW's theory, will be a departure point to look at the possibility and challenge of using that theory to inform class structure and class dynamics in rural environmental politics. As a further endeavour, the discussion on how to incorporate EOW's theory to comprehend rural environmental politics in the relationship between class structure and class struggle will be added.

Including the introduction, the structure of this essay consists of five parts. In the second part, this study will make a general assessment of the possibility of using Marxism in rural environmental politics. This study offers the concept of the Rural Environmental Movement (REM) as a conceptual alternative from which the elaboration of EOW's theory of class is possible to do. Hence, this part will include the discussion of this concept and its relation with themes in Marxism. In the third part, the discussion on the conceptual bodies of Contradictory Class Location will be delivered with some critical notes on its relation with REM. In the last part, CCL will be elaborated on its capabilities to inform class structure and class dynamics in REM. Class dynamics here will be elaborate more in the interaction process within what this study called actors *in direct interest* and *actors in indirect interest*. In the conclusion, the resume of this study will be discussed in the context of the role of middle-class actors in social and environmental movement.

As an initial clarification, the reasons underlying the decision to use EOW's class theory should be explained here. As mentioned before, the emergence of middle-class position has been the central issue of class-analysis revivalism in academia. In that sense, EOW's certainly is only one of Marxist scholars who taken that issues in their project, even though EOW is considered the most influential name (Chibber, 2019 p.354). This study uses EOW's class theory due to its three distinctive capacities, comparing to other Marxist's class theory, in relation to REM.

First, EOW's class theory provides analytical framework to deal with middle-class problems without falling into the debate about the existence or inexistence of middle-class. This theory doesn't look into the relevance of the middle-class as a phenomenon *per se*. Moreover, this theory put consideration on the logic and form of exploitation in contemporary capitalism situated the emergence of middle-class position. This can be seen in how EOW carefully

treats the diverse occupations in middle-class positions that put them into different (contradictory) classes following their status in production relation (see more in Chapter 3).

Second, EOW's class-theory, even though like other Marxist class theory is intended to clarify class structure as he admitted, provide theoretical discussion to understand the linkages between class structure, class formation, and class struggle. In relation with rural politics, this is important due to the long negligence of class political dimension in class analysis, as we can identified in agrarian Marxism—the most developed field on rural politics who take class as core issues, and focuses the internal dynamics of rural society (Bernstein, 2021; Bernstein and Byres, 2001; Borrás *et al.*, 2022). At the same time, the development of solid class analysis in rural politics is important to build the new front anti-capitalism struggle (Borrás Jr. *et al.*, 2018; Fraser, 2021; Taşdemir Yaşın, 2022, p. 1379–1380); van der Ploeg, 2009)

Lastly, EOW's class theory offers theoretical components that fit with the materiality of REM. In understanding this point, we will make brief comparisons with Guglielmo Carchedi's class analysis, that has closest similarities with EOW.⁶ In his main work on class analysis, Carchedi (1987) launched harsh criticism on EOW's class theory that he accused having epistemological false in individualism, distributional and ahistorical in explaining exploitation, glorifying status of ownership relations rather than status of production relations in classifying classes. I will briefly explain those critiques alongside Carchedi's position.

First, on the critique on epistemological individualism, Carchedi highlighted that, EOW's class theory merely sees capitalism at the individual level. EOW's class theory furthermore threat capitalism as an individual phenomenon rather than social phenomenon and, therefore, has an “inability to social change” (Carchedi, 1987, p. 112-114). Second, Carchedi regarded that EOW's class theory as an attempt to shift Marxist' concept of exploitation from the level of production to distribution. This shift, for Carchedi, make EOW's class theory miss the historical aspects of Marxist theory, which is fundamental. More substantial, this shift brings EOW's into the simplification on regarding exploitation inherently exist capitalism (Carchedi, 1987, p. 115-116). Lastly, Carchedi accusation on the focus on ownership in EOW's categorisation of class was rooted in the expanded unit of analysis that EOW used to clarify the degree of contradictory level in middle class by recognising three different

⁶ EOW itself aware with the proximity with Carchedi in terms of focus of their theory on the contradictory character of middle-class position. However, EOW regard Carchedi has “functionalist” explanation by the strict argument on the relation between class character and its function into global capital. See more in Wright (1980).

control of assets (means of production, skill/credential, and organisational). For Carchedi, that way of categorisation out of Marxist's core ideas in categorising classes that is strict on the status of production relations.

In a nutshell, it can be said that Carchedi has oppositional position with EOW's theoretically. In his theory, Carchedi examined middle class position in capitalism through three "point of view" namely ownership, expropriation of value, and function.⁷ Three of them qualitatively different with EOW's class theory on the tendency of Carchedi to follow an orthodoxy in Marxist theory. We can see this tendency, for instance, on his accusation to EOW, who recognised three different controls of assets (means of production, skill/credential, and organisational) in categorisation of class, as an attempt to blur two eternal statuses in capitalist production relation, i.e., owner and non-owner; bourgeoisie and non-bourgeoisie. This study is not the right place to engage into the theoretical debate that started by Carchedi toward EOW's theory, but as you can see in Chapter 3, the accusation of Carchedi is far from accurate.

The importance point that must stated here is that the different positions of EOW's class theory comparing to Carchedi's class theory, make the former more suitable with the materiality of REM. Fundamental problem underlying REM could not be assessed directly through the analysis of production relation. REM, from the beginning, as other form of environmental politics, should be understood as response of the problem of capitalism as the capitalism itself. In this regard, having an assumption that REM as form of struggle is fundamentally class struggle might be problematic (I discuss this in Chapter 4). On the other hand, it is impossible to neglect that class issues are centre problem in REM. EOW's class theory (particularly via CCL) through its consideration on subjectivity of individual' class position and experimental analysis on three control of assets offers the possibility to bring phenomenon that not directly related to production relation of capitalism (such as REM) into solid class analysis. Moreover, EOW's class theory offers theoretical framework beyond the problematisation of class structure but also the possibility to connect it into class struggle.

⁷ For dense explanation on Carchedi theory, see Carchedi (1975).

Chapter 2 — How is Marxism reliable for the Rural Environmental Movement?

Understanding Class and Rural Environmental Movement

Spatial measure or imagination is an essential part in defining class dimensions in environmental politics. In most of debates around the impact or perpetrator of environmental cost, as summarised by Arsel (2022), the explanation of space is vital when it comes to class issues. The question of whether the entire population is in the “same ship” or not in a sense bearing of the curse, for instance, will lead to specific details on which position groups or classes are standing. Likewise, the debate on to response of environmental impact is connected to how classes and social groups address a spatial problem in their interest (Arsel 2022, p.1-2).

The logic underlying the importance of space is the materiality in which any environmental usage and extraction occurs. Land, sea, river, and all parts of our earth are directly linked to “unrepairable” metabolic rift processes under capitalist production. Moreover, in that process, space is historical *in situ* from which relation between human and nature encased in exploitative production could be traced, including class struggle (Foster, 1999; Saito, 2017; Schneider and McMichael, 2010). The significance of “place” has also taken position on definition attempt on *environmentalism* and *environmental movement*.

Locus and Interest on Spatial Measure

Classical criticism by Buttel and Larson (1980) of the dominant definition of both terms could be good examples. Environmentalism, for them, has been defined as “overly restricted”, without proper explanation, by overemphasising the voluntary aspect.⁸ That way of definition has brought limitations to explain the variation of environmentalism structures

⁸ It is important to note that perspective that was criticized by Buttel and Larson has still had resonance in contemporary scholarship of environmental movement. Rootes (Rootes (2007)), for instance, described environmental movement as “non-institutionalized network of informal interaction” by emphasizing on “shared identity or concern about environmental issues” that appeared outside the formality of process. Although distinguished environmental movement as a concept (close to *environmentalism*) and its manifestation (into specific environmental movement and protest), Rootes gave no detail that refer the importance to differ locus and (political) interest (Rootes 2007, p. 610-611).

and interactions in terms of “tactics and ideology ... between class composition and interest.” For broadening and clarifying “whither environmentalism”, as an alternative, Buttel and Larson offered to divide environmentalism into three categories, namely *public environmentalism*, *organized or voluntary environmentalism*, and *institutional environmental movement organisation*. Those categories clearly distinguish two locus on environmentalism. *Public environmentalism* is characterised by preferences of the public who live in specific locations for improvement of the quality of their surroundings. This environmentalism is different from two others on which the actors have had distance, particularly in terms of locus, from the issues that are addressed (Buttel and Larson 1980, p.324-326). More than locus differentiation, through their criticism, Buttel and Larson intentionally tried to posit various actors in environmentalism and the environmental movement into different degrees of burden: people who bear environmental change directly and indirectly.

Another example could be seen in the concept of *Environmentalism of the Poor (EP)*. Martínez Alier (2012), one of the prominent thinkers behind this concept, explained that EP has rooted conceptually in the “discipline of social history” with the spirit of advocating justice for people against the expansion of capital that directly harms the nature, as a site of livelihood or basic needs of the people. Indeed, EP has a tight connection with a particular locus, rural area, even though in some dimensions the involvement of people from outside at every level of the movement (local, national, and international) is still perceptible (Martínez Alier 2012, p. 514). This is because EP places particular emphasis on the relationship between environmental resources, which are harmed in the process of economic production, and the people in rural areas who are dependent on them. Through that emphasis, the thinkers behind EP then juxtaposed that with other concepts.

Guha (1989 (1996)), another foremost thinker of EP, in his seminal oeuvre of EP scholarship compared EP with *Western environmentalism* that for him has different philosophical leanings. While EP holds the intention to defend traditional values and livelihoods, but at the same time seeks a possibility to have a harmonious life in everyday life with nature, *Western environmentalism* tends to hold separate assumptions about the inability of nature to bear human necessity and the importance of conserving the pristine of nature (Guha, 1989 (1996), p. 196). In further development of this concept, EP scholars have expanded *Western environmentalism* terms into several concept, among them *cult of wilderness*, *gospel of eco-efficiency* (Martínez Alier 2012), and *First World environmentalism* (Guha and Martínez Alier, 2013). All of those concepts, in each definition, summarise similar arguments that propose spatial differentiation with EP, which illustrates exploitative relationships in capitalist production. EP

and *Western environmentalism*, in this context, not only represent two distinct loci (third world and first world), but also people who live interconnectedly in relation to the productions of those loci.

Defining Rural Environmental Movement

The Rural Environmental Movement (REM) exhibited certain characteristics of both *public environmentalism* (PE) and *environmentalism of the poor* (EP). Similar PE and EP, REM advocated for the *interests* of affected individuals or communities who demonstrate against environmental degradation. However, REM goes beyond PE by linking environmental issues to the extraction process of natural resources under capitalism which impacts the fundamental needs and livelihoods (of affected individuals and communities). However, compared with the previous two concepts, REM has its own distinctive feature related to spatial imagination.

As the name suggests, REM solely refers to rural areas encompassing not only the countryside, but also the coastal region (including traditional or communal fishing zone), and the forest. At first glance, this limitation of spatial imagination might make REM appear unique only in terms of its measurement concerning EP. Although EP, as recognised by Martínez Alier and Guha (Guha and Martínez Alier, 2013; Martínez Alier, 2012), focuses on the Global South, it shares some characteristic with other forms of environmentalism in the Global North—such as *environmental justice*. EP also shares similar ontological characteristics in its materialist approaches. Both of EP and environmental justice were born in response to the degradation of the material dimension in the environment (see Figure 2.1). The key difference between EP and environmental justice, for Guha and Martínez Alier, is the emphasis on livelihood. As explained, REM takes a different spatial position from EP by excluding urban spaces. Moreover, REM's stance on treating actors involved in the movement is more decisive than EP's, which goes beyond spatial consideration.

Figure 2.1 Some Varieties of environmentalism

| Some Varieties of Environmentalism | | |
|---|--|---|
| | Materialist | Non-materialist |
| In affluent countries | Reaction against the increased impact of the effluents of affluence, e. g. the environmental justice movement in the United States, the anti-nuclear movement | Cultural shift to postmaterial 'quality of life' values and increased appreciation of natural amenities because of declining marginal utility of abundant, easily obtained material commodities |
| In poor countries | The environmentalism of the poor, i. e. the defence of livelihood and communal access to natural resources, threatened by the state or by the expansion of the market Reaction against environmental degradation caused by unequal exchange, poverty, population growth | 'Biocentric' eastern religions (as distinct from western 'anthropocentric' religions) Essentialist eco-feminism (poor women intrinsically closer to nature) |

Source: (Guha and Martínez Alier, 2013, p. 36)

REM assigns a unique role to individuals or groups who reside in specific areas (rural) where capitalist penetration occurs. In REM, actors from rural areas are seen as a vital part of the movement. Therefore, any environmental movement initiated or conducted (not only participated) by individuals from a rural background can be classified as REM.

Figure 2.2 Features of Environmental Movements

| | Features | PE | EP | REM |
|---|---|----|----|-----|
| 1 | Embracing <i>interest</i> of ordinary people who are affected, protest, and urge the change on (any attempts lead to) environment degradation | ☒ | ☒ | ☒ |
| 2 | Connecting public interest on environmental issues in the extraction process of capitalism on natural resources that affect basic needs and livelihoods | ☐ | ☒ | ☒ |

| | | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 3 | Having limitation of spatial imagination on rural area or countryside | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 | Giving exclusive position to local-level activism and to people (actors) who live in rural area or countryside in environmental movement | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 | Possessing assumption on common (class or group) interest on environmental movement | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Source: author

The distinct positioning of rural individuals sets REM apart from EP, which considers varying actor backgrounds and concentrates on the issue of nature extraction and processes of struggle (Martínez Alier 2012, p. 514). The impact of this differing position affects the way in which REM views processes of struggle, categorizing all levels of struggle (local, national, and international) as not being a part of REM, unless it is initiated by a rural environmental group or organization. Instead, REM contends that if environmental struggle is not led by rural environmental group or organization, it becomes part of a wider political agenda (beyond REM); as a component of a larger alliance.

REM borrows, conceptually, from Hirsch and Warren (1998) in defining its relationship with broader environmental political agenda. Hirsch and Warren posit that environmentalism in rural areas as a means of articulating the interests of marginalized groups against the dispossession of their rights. Furthermore, in this context the “environment serves as a legitimised arena of resistance, or as part of accepted discourses on alternative paths to development” (Hirsch and Warren 1998, p. 2). Departing from these conceptualisations, REM regards local rural people as the most legitimate part of rural environmentalism.

The specific positioning of local-rural people clearly impacts the role of the middle-class in rural environmentalism. Historically, the middle-class role has been viewed as ambiguous due to pursue opportunistic behaviour (Aditjondro, 1998; Hirsch and Warren, 1998, p. 10). On the other hand, the middle class whether from local-rural backgrounds (Guha, 1989 (1996)) or urban backgrounds (Aditjondro, 1998, 2003) is deemed to have significant contributions. REM provides an unique opportunity to analyse different interest further by distinguishing the position of local-rural people from that of the middle class within the movement. Unlike EP, REM does not assume that local-rural people share similar interest (despite class differentiations). Instead, REM examines the varying class positions and layers

of interest of vary classes within the movement (see Figure 2.2 for a summary of the comparison between PE, EP, and REM).

It is now necessary to compare REM with another concept from broader social movement scholarship that has some relation to the environment. It should be noted that REM intersects with the concepts in the rejecting the populist assumption. In relation to this, the concept of REM may be compared to Harvey's idea of *struggle over accumulation by dispossession*. When defining this struggle, *Harvey* explains that that concept aims to bridge two separated dimensions in socialist struggles, namely the anti-capitalist struggle that is part of the traditional left political agenda and the anti-imperialist struggles of contemporary agenda. *Struggle over accumulation*, according to Harvey, must uphold traditional agenda of the left while avoiding "the trap of 'my community, locality, or social group right or wrong'" (Harvey, 2003, p. 178–180). Such a commitment embodies a resolute anti-populist sentiment. Nevertheless, anti-imperialist struggles are not bound to a specific location, as in the case of REM. Instead, "struggles over dispossession occurs ...on a variety of scales", whether local, regional, or global, without necessarily being interconnected.

In similar rural locations, REM shares similarities with other concepts. At some point, REM may appear indistinguishable from other rural movements when they adopt an environmentalism agenda. However, there are distinct factors that set REM apart from these movements. Firstly, REM prioritises the environment as fundamental issue underlying all political expression of struggle. In the case of struggle against mining exploration, for instance, this can be categorised as REM due to its root (of issue) on the natural loss or degradations (waters contamination, depleted soil conditions, air pollution, etc). This distinction sets REM apart qualitatively from peasant movement which despite recognising environmental concerns in their demands and strategies (Taşdemir Yaşın, 2022). Substantially, this differentiation is related to the composition of actors on which REM regard the underlying issues (environment) as an issues of all populations.

Class Issue

The question of how to define the "political force behind political ... struggle" is a key topic in academic discussions of class issues in rural politics. As Borrás et al., argue, this task is made difficult by the fracture of rural class formation under contemporary capitalism (Borrás *et al.*, 2022, p.16). With regard to environmental concerns, this study agrees that movements in rural areas are rarely "consistently anti-capitalist and categorically class-

oriented.” Nonetheless, this does not imply that analysing rural environmental politics through a class lens is impossible.

It is evident that rural environmental politics has seldom been driven by a strong anti-capitalist agenda. In addition, plethora of empirical evidence, as exemplified in EP scholarship (Guha, 1989 (1996)), had demonstrated that a populist agenda has become “idiom of protest”. Campaign jargons such as “save mother earth” “no coal mining”, for instance may not explicitly address class issue. However, the creation of these slogans, along with other strategies, is always tied to the class dynamics within an organisation. It is therefore important to identify the layers of class interest within organization as a significant aspect of the class issue in REM.

With focus on environmental problems, class issues in REM have broader spectrum beyond other form of political struggle in rural areas. In the agrarian movement, for instance, the problem faced by peasants are narrowly linked to their own interest. This limitation means that while the organisational body of peasant politics must address class issues, it remains limited to actors within specific occupations. REM, on the other hand, must deal with a more diverse set of class position. The issue with REM lies in the fundamental need of the various social classes and occupations in rural areas. However, there are many facts that REM is not supported by majority of population or even is occupied by little number of proletariat class. In reference to this, understanding class interest and how it contributes to dynamics in internal affair of the movement is essentially important.

Marxism and Rural Environmental Politics

In Marxism, class, defined as social structures that inherent in the social relation of production, is explained through three level of abstraction: “class structure”, “labour process”, and “class formation/class struggle” (Chibber, 2009). At first glance, REM seems fit to be treated as a form of the latest level. Looking at the organisational level, REM comprises multiple actors from diverse classes backgrounds who aim to deliver the common interest against environmental destruction in rural areas. At the same time, REM represents a manifestation of the struggle that the organisational consolidation process is striving towards. Nevertheless, the connection between Marxism and its class theory with REM goes beyond what is observed in the final phase of political force establishment through class formation and class struggle. Marxism views the relationship between rural areas and capitalism as a context that locates every class issue in that sphere.

In part 8 of *Capital* (vol. 1) Marx wrote about *primitive accumulation* which in capitalism development he described as having similar role with *original sin*. For Marx, primitive accumulation is essential to comprehend the cycle of capital (m-c-m) that “seems to turn around in a never-ending circle.” In this sense, *primitive accumulation* marked the departure point—and for Marx, it starts from “the expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant from the soil” (Marx, 1990 (1867), p. 875-876).

In Chapter 27 (entitled *the Expropriation of the Agricultural Population from the Land*), Marx elaborated on how expropriation in the countryside has occurred through two levels. The first level is related to the ruling classes' move to maintain their power in response to broader economic change and development. In the context of what happened in England's countryside during the 15th-16th centuries, it corresponded with “the rapid expansion of wool manufacture in Flanders and the corresponding the rise price of wool in England,” (Marx, 1990 (1867) p.878-879) that then drove England nobility to seize lands from yeomanry (the class of independent peasant) and small farmers and transform them according to production need. In the second level, the usurpation process conducted by nobility in collaboration with the minority of classes (rapacious royal favourites, speculating (big) farmers, townsmen, bankocracy, and large manufacturers) by giving them special treatment through free or “ridiculous price” of land. Therefore, Marx regarded the capitalist system imposed in the country as not giving “a degraded and almost servile condition of the mass of the people..., and the transformation of their means of labour into capital (Marx, 1990 (1867), p.881). Moreover, Marx also situated the penetration of capital in rural into the struggle between two class alliance, i.e., a) class alliance of traditional community (yeomanry and small farmers) and b) “new and more powerful class alliance” in which state facilitate the latter (Harvey, 2018a, p.296-297).

It is important to note that what Marx coined as *primitive accumulation* in an actual form of capitalist economy is “organically linked” and hand in hand with “the exploitation of living labour in production” (Harvey, 2018b p.xvi-xvii). Instead, as a pre-historical process of capitalism, the mechanism of *primitive accumulation* has been repeated whenever capital needs to be expanded, with or without predation, fraud, and violence through what Harvey termed as accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2003, p.137-182).

Indeed, the account of the relationship between rural appropriation and rural political force is not exclusively coined by Marx. Slightly similar to Marx, Polanyi explained the emergence of political force in rural areas through a concept of double movement. This concept illustrated a conflictual position of two “organizing principles in society,” between one who

has an interest on “the conservation of man and nature as well as productive organization” and another who aims at the establishment of a self-regulating market (Polanyi, 2001, p.138). In this concept, Polanyi considered class issues in the sense that the movement is necessarily built into a form of alliance. For him, the struggle against the appropriator is not exclusively the domain of “the working and the landed classes”, even though they are the most “victim” of capital penetration.

On the other hand, not all classes in rural areas will immediately join in the struggle due to different class interests (such as middle class and “trader classes”) (Polanyi, 2001, p.139). Through this consideration, Polanyi intended to argue that the struggle in double movement cannot be simplified through specific locus nor occupation. Nonetheless, Polanyi’s treatment of class is somewhat contradictory.

While considering class as an essential part of the double movement explanation, Polanyi refused to take the notion of “class interest” as a basic explanation of movement. In this position, he overtly criticizes Marxist proposition. Class interest, for Polanyi, “offer only a limited explanation of long run movements in society.” Moreover, he problematizes concept of class interest as “mistaken doctrine of the essentially economic nature.” In explaining those, he gave historical arguments that the involvement of actors (particularly those against appropriators) in movement cannot be simplified into class interest. Instead, those involvement has been situated by various cultural and role positions (including class) in society (Polanyi 2001, p. 159–162). Polanyi’s assessment of class interest, however, must be understood as the critical position based on the interpretation to classical Marxist notions.

In *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Marx wrote,

“Economic conditions had first transformed the mass of the people of the country into workers. The domination of capital has created for this mass a common situation, common interests. This mass is thus already a class as against capital, but not yet for itself. In the struggle, of which we have pointed out only a few phases, this mass becomes united, and constitutes itself as a class for itself. The interests it defends become class interests. But the struggle of class against class is a political struggle. (Marx and Engels, 2010, p. 241)”

In that passage, Marx explained that the working class arises through economic conditions (oppositional to bourgeois in production relations). Moreover, Marx conceptualised what he called “class for itself”, a condition where the working class involves themselves in class struggle. Here, class interest has an important position in driving the political desire of

workers into political struggle. For some contemporary Marxist thinkers, however, Marx's (and also Engel's) explanation of the way the proletariat builds their political front of struggle has not been satisfied.⁹

Przeworski (1976), for instance, argued that Marx gave no further information about how the emergence of the political force of the working class correlated with class struggle, whether it emerged “spontaneously and uniquely from relations of production or to require a voluntaristic” from “external agent in the form of a vanguard party.” This situation, for Przeworski, creates theoretical obstacles to explain “why carriers of economic relations do not act politically as class members. (Przeworski 1976, p. 384)” In this regard, class interest position in class struggle cannot adequately explain whether it is ignited from merely economic relation or other variables. For Przeworski, the limitation of scientific socialism founded on *class-for-itself* could be transcended by placing those notions in “ideological and political relations” and viewing these relations “as being socially produced in the course of class struggles.” Instead, they become determined factor of class struggle (through their class interest); classes are then “viewed as continual effects of struggles enclosed within the structure of economic, ideological, and political relations upon the organisation and consciousness of the carriers of the relations of production (Przeworski, 1976, p. 384–385).”

Przeworski's attempt to interpret the relation between class and class formation above shows that Marxism (beyond Marx and Engels's original oeuvres) possess solid analytical tools to understand class dynamics, including class interest, in rural political environmental appropriation. Rather than being economically deterministic and viewing class struggle in narrow proletariat terms, Marxism promises a broader understanding of the relationship between class structure, class formation, and class struggle in REM, which is populated by vary of actors and layers of interest.

In the following chapter, we will see features of Marxism in the body of Erik Olin Wright's theory of class, particularly through his CCL. Departing from its genealogy, that theory will be elaborated further on its promising part in relation to REM.

⁹ Further elaboration about this point, see Andrew (1983).

Chapter 3 — Setting Limitation: Contradictory Class Locations and the Rural Environmental Movement

Problematization of Middle-Class and Development of Concept

As part of the revivalism of Marxist theory of class, Erik Olin Wright's (EOW) theory of class was born to deal with contemporary phenomena of the late development of capitalism, which has brought out the existence of the middle class. It began with his initial empirical research on social stratification and income determination. Using Marxist framework, EOW realised a challenge to “categorize people with respect to class”. However, as EOW identified, instead of the problem of categorisation, the actual problem of that case is a conceptual shortcoming explained by the position of “numerous cases of people who did not really seem to be either bourgeois or proletarian”. To answer this problem, in turn, it is necessary to develop a “class concept for concrete analysis” that is in line with “general assumptions and framework of Marxist class analysis” (Wright, 1989a, p.25-26). Contradictory class locations had been begun from this task.

EOW formulated six features of Marxist theory of class relation (he called as a *conceptual constraint*) that he put into two different types: *explanatory role* of the concept and structural properties (see Figure 3.1) to make a bracket for the new concept he developed. The decent conceptualisation of the middle class should fulfil those constraints accordingly. And that was absent in the existing alternative concepts in Marxist scholarship, which EOW categorises into four strands (Wright 1989, p. 27-37).

Figure 3. 1 Six conceptual constraints of Marxist Theory of Class Relation

| Constraints | Function |
|--|--------------------------------|
| I. Class structure imposes limits on class formation, class consciousness and class struggle. | Explanatory Principle |
| II. Class structures constitute the essential qualitative lines of social demarcation in the historical trajectories of social change. | |
| III. The concept of class is a relational concept. | Defining Structural Properties |
| IV. The social relations which define classes are intrinsically antagonistic rather than symmetrical. | |
| V. The objective basis of these antagonistic interests is exploitation. | |
| VI. The fundamental basis of exploitation is to be found in the social relations of production. | |

Source: Summarised from Wright (1989)

The first alternative regarded that the emergence of a new position in contemporary capitalism has remained the same in the traditional class category in Marxism. Instead of making a new category, this strand advocated simple polarisation in Marxism by bringing professionals and managers either into the working class or the bourgeoisie, with the majority of them in the former. The logic behind this argument is that, except they possess some part of ownership (like top executives in corporations), most of them are capitalistically exploited. For EOW, even though this way of categorisation is compatible with nearly all constraints (II, III, IV, V, VI), it has not provided “satisfactory structural basis for explaining class formation, class consciousness and class struggle.” EOW gave an example of top managers that

in simple polarisation, categorized as working class, tend to support the bourgeoisie interest in class struggle (Wright 1989, p. 38-39).

The second alternative accommodated middle-class to the category of petty bourgeoisie due to their similarity qualitatively with the traditional bourgeoisie. If the traditional possess their physical mean of production, middle-class posses “skills or ‘human capital’”. Another character that this strand put to “the new petty bourgeoisie” is unproductive labour that is defined as “wage labour which does not produce surplus-value.” For EOW, this strand has a similar problem with the first in a different direction. The new petty bourgeoisie is insufficient to explain that various occupations inside that category have a homogenous position on class formation, class consciousness, and class struggle. Another problem with this category is its blurry position that “share none of the salient relational properties” of the old-petty bourgeoisie. This puts the new petty bourgeoisie in uncertain position in the social relation of production (Wright 1989, p. 38-39).

The third alternative put the middle-class as a distinct category from the working class, bourgeoisie, and petty bourgeoisie by regarding them as a “new class.” The characters of this class expand from their similarity in possession of ‘cultural capital’ and in position “within the social relations of *reproduction* of capitalist class relation”. Those characters make this class conform to some of the constraints, particularly the first one. The distinct position as a class makes the new class might form their collective-action, separately from the working class and the bourgeoisie. However, as a distinct class, the new class has its own problem by mingling different positions in terms of exploitation in relation to production—this makes the new class not conform with the constraints V and VI (Wright 1989, p. 40-41).

Different with previous alternatives, the fourth takes “agnostic position” or “retreat from theoretical position” to threat the middle-class. This alternative regards that middle-class does not fit into the category of working-class or middle-class, putting them not in a specific class but in “middle strata.” This positioning sees that people in middle strata exist outside basic class relation, and politically has to decide whether to support the bourgeoisie or working-class. For EOW, this explanation is far from satisfactory because ignore the involvement of some of position in middle strata in production (constraint III and VI) and “relation of domination and exploitation within the production system” (constraint IV and V) (Wright 1989, p. 42).

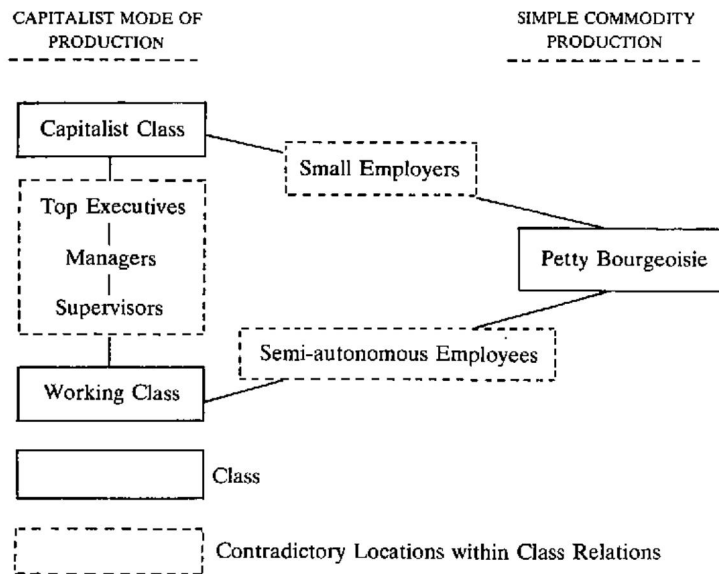
With all unsatisfactory status of existing alternatives above, EOW proposed his own concept that he called ‘contradictory locations within class relation’ or in the short name Contradictory Class Location (CCL). This concept has a different basic assumption with

previous alternatives. Suppose the other alternatives regarded components of middle-class as having similar thesis. In that case, possess “isomorphic relationship between the categories of the class structure and the actual locations filled by individuals” even though it is not always explicit, EOW’s new concept regarded that some positions in middle class as having “multiple class character” (Wright 1989, p. 43). Those multiple class character is considered “contradictory” due to two locations in basic relation of capitalism which some positions possess. Capitalism has perpetual contradictory interests between workers and capitalists. Therefore, some positions in the middle-class derive interest from both classes (which is contradictory) (Wright 1989, p. 43-44).

Transformation of Contradictory Class Locations

Contradictory Class Location (CCL) had had several phases of development. Initially, this concept merely put managers in a position considered contradictory due to their capacity in supervision and, to some degree, decision making (as bourgeois) but at the same time possess the quality of proletariat on their non-owner status. Nevertheless, EOW regarded that the capacity of managers in control (which become base of their contradictory status) cannot be differentiated properly from other middle positions (supervisor) and top executive. Moreover, many similar middle positions have no supervisory function in the production process (technician, expert/professional jobs) (Wright 1989, p. 45). EOW subsequently modified his concept (and class scheme as well) by expanding middle positions into three categories of class (see Figure 3.2) managers (including top executives and supervisors) who possess bourgeoisie and proletarian characters, 2) technical/professional positions (such as lawyer, consultant) who possess petty-bourgeoisie and proletariat characters, and 3) small-employers who possess bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie characters (Wright 1989, p. 43-47).

Figure 3.2 Basic Class Map of Capitalist Society



Source: (Wright, 1989a, p. 48)

The modifications mentioned above for EOW cannot explain the middle-class position in society in simple single maps. It is because particular types of production relation define class in that scheme. Therefore, that scheme will be working to be applied in actual society only if the analysis is conducted to some sets and divided into two parts (within a mode of production and between modes of production) (Wright 1989, p. 49). For solving this shortcoming, EOW argued that status of control in production (in the scheme) should be detailed to “over the operation of the physical means of production and direct control over work” and this can be done through recognition of “types of appropriation and domination relations”. In this new scheme, the middle-position's contradictory aspects can be explained more nuance and precisely as actual class relation (see Figure 3.3). In EOW class analysis, this model will lead to the final model after some modification by appropriating Roemer’s concept of exploitation (Wright 1989, p. 51).

Figure 3.3 Second phase of EOW’s class typology of contradictory locations

| | <i>Capitalist Mode of Production</i> | | | | <i>Simple Commodity Production</i> | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------------|---|---|
| | <i>Domination</i> | | <i>Appropriation</i> | | <i>Domination</i> | <i>Appropriation</i> |
| | <i>Dominant</i> | <i>Subordinate</i> | <i>exploiter</i> | <i>exploited</i> | <i>self-direction within the labour process</i> | <i>individual self-appropriation of surplus</i> |
| <i>Bourgeoisie</i> | + | - | + | - | | |
| Top managers | + | + | + | + | | |
| Lower managers and supervisors | + | + | - | + | | |
| <i>Workers</i> | - | + | - | + | | |
| Semi-autonomous Employees | - | + | - | + | + | - |
| <i>Petty Bourgeoisie</i> | | | | | + | + |
| Small Employers | + | - | + | - | + | + |

+ = criterion present
- = criterion absent

Bourgeoisie: Basic Class Location
Top managers: Contradictory Locations within Class Relations

Source: (Wright, 1989a, p. 50)

EOW's class analysis before its encounter with Roemer anchored on the assumption that domination is a determinant factor conditioning class position and class structure. Exploitation (appropriation), in the last development before Roemers, functioned "more as a background concept" or additional analytical tool to explain the domination logic of class. By centring domination over-exploitation, contradictory location consequently left traditional Marxist assumptions of class that is bounded in the exploitation of social relation of production. In other hand, as highlighted by EOW, those situations brought two fundamental problems to Contradictory Location by weakening "the link between the analysis of class locations and the analysis of objective interest" and inclining into "multiple oppression' approach to understanding society". Therefore, for EOW, to reinstall Contradictory Class Location's function as in its initial research agenda, exploitation should be restored in the body of theory (Wright 1989, p. 56-57).

Roemer, in this sense, contributed to the development of Contradictory Class Location in two way. First, clarifying the difference between economic exploitation and economic oppression. Roemer in his own work, reviewing traditional Marx's view of exploitation, that centred in the "transfer of labour", by rejecting it completely in an argument that every case of transfer of labour could not be sufficiently framing as exploitation. Transfer of labour through rich peasant to the poor in form of rent, as exemplified by EOW, is not sufficient to be regarded as exploitation. From this point, EOW then distinguishes two situations, i.e., 'economic oppression' and exploitation. The situation between rich and poor peasants above is regarded as economic oppression, the former to the latter, rather than economic

exploitation. 'Exploitation, even though contain economic oppression involve "the appropriation of the fruits the labour of one class by another". In this regard, EOW highlighted the internal antagonism (of material interest) and inter-dependency relation that potentially ignite class struggle (Wright 1989, p.74-75). From those antagonistic and inter-dependency relations, then EOW argues that possession of skill or credentials status in production relation can be regarded as exploitation in the argument that employees with certain skills or credentials gain more surplus value than "ordinary" employees. Furthermore, skill or credentials is not only justified by supervisory position or appropriation of surplus value, but also impetus for "possessor of credentials" to maintain their status (Wright 1989, p.74-75).

Second, Roemer's account gave a conceptual basis for the concept of *organization asset exploitation* through what he termed as "status exploitation" to explain the base of exploitation conducted through credentials and skills. EOW criticised this concept as detaching status of exploitation from "material condition of production" and have no distinguished properties with feudal exploitation (for instance basis exploitation of "lord"). As an alternative, EOW proposes *organization asset exploitation*. The logic underlying organization asset is two layers that occur in production relation: in "technical division of labour among producers", which is "source of productivity" and the organizing sector of those technical divisions (Wright 1989, p.78). By centring organization asset exploitation, EOW showed that the exploitation conducted by managers comes not only from their possession of certain credentials, but it is embedded in relation to production. In further explanation, EOW clarified that organization should be differentiated from authority and hierarchy. Organization could be regarded as an asset in its position that needs to be controlled through authority and hierarchy (Wright 1989, p.80), therefore, it is organization that conditions authority and hierarchy and not vice versa. To strengthen his conceptualisation on organization asset exploitation, EOW stressed that organization is still justified as constituting the basis of property relations. Organisation in this context is equal to one of a kind of ownership in Marxist contemporary discussion, namely "effective economic control. Moreover, organization is also justified as an asset in terms of means of production in its ability to facilitate aggregation of surplus production for the occupant.

The shift of basic assumptions of EOW's class analysis brought it to a more complex class scheme. For now, classes in the scheme are divided into two categories, namely owners and non-owners of the means of production, and in the side of non-owners classes of non-owners are defined by organization assets and skill/credential assets (see Figure 3.4). Through this complex scheme, the contradictory of middle-positions is explained in more

detail and nuanced that makes the possibility to differentiate the degree of interest by each class. This detail, at the same time, shows that not all positions in contradictory locations possess the same interest regarding class relations. Managers, who possess the highest status in organisational assets, become positions that tend to be contrary in their interest to the working class due to their secure position in the relation of production. However, as highlighted by EOW, the opposite situation is still possible following the specific “historical condition” that managers regard anti-capitalist ideas as compelling (Wright 1989, p.90-91).

Figure 3.4 Final scheme of EOW's Typology of Class Locations

| | | <i>Assets in the means of production</i> | | | | |
|--|---------------------|--|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|----|
| | | Owners of means of production | | Non-owners [wage labourers] | | |
| Owns sufficient capital to hire workers and not work | 1 Bourgeoisie | 4 Expert Managers | 7 Semi-Credentialed Managers | 10 Uncredentialed Managers | | + |
| Owns sufficient capital to hire workers but must work | 2 Small Employers | 5 Expert Supervisors | 8 Semi-Credentialed Supervisors | 11 Uncredentialed Supervisors | | >0 |
| Owns sufficient capital to work for self but not to hire workers | 3 Petty Bourgeoisie | 6 Experts non-managers | 9 Semi-Credentialed Workers | 12 Proletarians | | - |
| | | + | >0 | - | | |
| | | <i>Skill/credential assets</i> | | | | |

Source: (Wright, 1989a, p. 88)

Furthermore, as claimed by EOW, the transformation of CCL to exploitation-based overcame uncertainty of some positions that in contradictory positions but before, in the initials scheme, appeared as “more proletarianized than many unskilled workers (such as pilots)”. Exploitation-based analysis also puts all classes possible in “theoretical status in all class system.” Those, in the end, clarify the class interest of each class and bring a possibility to identify “the problems of class alliances (and class formation) in a much more systematic” (Wright 1989, p.90-91).

Critical Notes

Following the above elaboration, at first glance, it is not difficult to identify that CCL theoretically has a strong capacity to comprehend class dynamics in Rural Environmental Movement (REM). Indeed, in this regard, the strongest aspect is how CCL puts central

considerations on the role of contradictory positions. As mentioned in Chapter 2, in the heart of class issues, REM has been coloured with the involvement of people in contradictory positions that has significant contributions on one hand, but on the other hand, it raises the question about their domination on the movement. However, the compatibility of CCL with REM should be regarded more than its capacity to comprehend contradictory positions. In doing so, therefore, it is important to look at, at least three characters of REM related to class.

First, the emergence of REM, as explained in Chapter 2, is ignited by the destruction or threat of the rural sphere making the background of individuals in REM is necessarily diverse, and more nuanced than what we can call as “diverse class position”. Capital penetration in rural sphere, theoretically, has always brought impact to all rural populations. Therefore, it could be assumed that people who join the organisation of REM come from multiple organisations of production in the rural sphere—it is not necessarily a different kind of organisation of production (for instance could be similar in agriculture), but still, every organisation has their own dynamics (in terms of class).

Second, for the same reason there is a case where people in contradictory positions, even people in the highest position on the organisation of production, are boldly supported REM and become significant part of the movement. Guha (1989 (1996)), for instance, gave an example of how Chandi Prasad Bhatt and Sunderlal Bahuguna played their role as the formal and cultural leaders of the Chipko Movement in India. While Prasad Bhatt was the leader of local NGO who worked in the area of the project, (Guha 1989 (1996), pp. 156), Bahuguna held the position of local cultural-spiritual leader who has a direct connection with Mahatma Gandhi (therefore has a national reputation) long time before the initiation of the movement (Guha, 1989 (1996), pp. 170–171).

Third, the organisation of REM on many occasions is also coloured with the involvement of people from outside rural areas. They join the movement for different reason than people from the rural area, who could be argued as direct “victim” of capital penetration, that is to support the movement (for sure, there is room for debate these people has similar motive to rural people in thinner dose, however in this place that will not be discussed more). These people also have diverse backgrounds, in terms of classes, from proletariat, salariat, professional workers, managers, bourgeoisie, and even bureaucrats. Those characteristics, in turn, raise the problem that can be called as *problem of focus and locus*.

Problem of Focus and Locus

Theoretically speaking, above characteristics makes REM seems beyond the capabilities of CCL in some reasons. First, although offers comprehensive tools to analyse class position in capitalist society through its detail on genealogy of class interest related to exploitation in production relation, CCL's focus on clarifying contradictory positions make this theory has no enough room for explaining how class struggle (or if we borrow Przeworski, struggle about class) could happen with participations of vary kinds position in different organizations of capital. In consequence, this theory is just powerful to explain class struggle in similar locus of production, namely in the factory. REM, otherwise, might have actors from diverse class positions and organisations of capital.

Second, while CCL offers a convincing argument about the genealogy of class interest related to exploitation in production relation, and clarifies the contradictory position of some classes, in the context of REM, there is plenty of evidence that people in contradictory positions joined the movement. Moreover, some bourgeoisie positions might take a significant role in the movement. Any environmental problem, in the end, never becomes exclusively a class problem. Indeed, in the context where the environmental problem has a direct connection with class relations, the interest from broader society will always be imbedded. The utilisation of toxic materials or processes in the agricultural industry, for instance, could possibly ignite protest not only from the workers (especially if the worker and family live around the site of production such in palm oil plantation), but also people in the area who are affected by the production process. In that case, people from outside might join the protest in many reasons. CCL provide an inadequate explanation for dealing with that situation.

Third, as mentioned in Chapter 2, REM has specific spatial imagination, compared with other environmentalism, that comes down to different treatment of different actors. While giving special treatment to actors in rural areas, REM still considers the involvement of outsider actors in the movement. This condition creates some challenges to CCL, that is developed without similar spatial imagination as REM.

The specific treatment on locus, as we find in REM, is never in theoretical explanation nor the operational capability of CCL explained by EOW. In CCL, each class position in diverse relation of production (managerial position in one site of production of another,

for instance) seems to be treated in a similar capacity.¹⁰ Whereas, in some real cases of class struggle (or struggle about class), such as REM, the problematisation of spatial is relevant to reveal the complexity of class issues. In many historical cases, for instance, the existence of two variant backgrounds of actors in REM (insiders and outsiders) as mentioned by SEA scholars) has popped up the question on different interests between them¹¹ (Aditjondro, 1998, 2003; Hirsch and Warren, 1998). Hypothetically speaking, those differentiations will allow us to argue that the involvement of contradictory locations position of outsider's actors could be easily imagined compared to the insider actors. The reason is insider actors from contradictory positions, if anything, must face some obstacles due to their position in relation to production. In this situation, the question about the way to measure the class interest of outsiders and insiders (and how each class positions of them) will be unavoidable.

Class Formation, Class Alliance, Class Struggle

CCL, in relating with REM, has the minuscule detail on how to utilise the body of theory on further explanation on class formation, class alliance, and class struggle. This shortcoming can be understood if it is referred to what EOW acknowledged that his theoretical project on class is about class structure. Since the beginning, CCL was built to clarify the position of CCL, that in EOW identification, become missing puzzle to understand class structure in contemporary capitalist society (Wright 1989, p.15). However, EOW's further explanation and abstraction on his theory of class contains some promising arguments on the implications of CCL in analysing class formation, class alliance and class struggle.

One of these argument, for instance, appears in the first systematic works on earlier development of CCL in which EOW (Wright, 1979) propose logical framework on understanding the relation between class struggle, state and economic structure (Wright 1979, p. 27) and class structure with class formation and class struggle (Wright 1979, p.104). For EOW, the relation of each part has been determined by the process of mediation, limitation, and transformation. Still, to operationalise those schemes in analysing REM, it is required to adjust CCL into the materiality of REM, as explained in the previous parts.

Another promising details on EOW's class theory that might be useful to answer the question of class formation, class alliance, and class structure is on his consideration to the role of some individuals that are often not directly involved in the capitalist production

¹⁰ It is true, that in his comparative research on Sweden and the USA, EOW make differentiation on the class positions in two countries, still those kind of differentiation is not what I refer in this context.

¹¹ See Aditjondro (2003) in chapter 7 for longer conversation on the context of Indonesia.

(children or youth, women, and elderly) (for instance in Wright 1989b, p.126-130). Bringing to REM context, those details could be theoretical departure to make longer conversation about the justification of the involvement “non-productive” individuals in the movement through the class analytical lens.

In next chapter, we will see further how EOW theory of class, particularly via CCL, could be used to clarify REM with those three main themes (class structure, class formation, and class struggle) in class analysis. Particularly, on how those are interrelated with the existence of REM’s organisational body. The discussion will also involve the possibility of framing REM’s organisational body into the definition of class formation.

Chapter 4 — Quest for the Pathway

This research has no aim to build a new theory of class. Nor does this research intend to seek a “ready-to-use theory” of class in environmental movement. Instead, as stated in the introduction, this work proposes a way to operationalise (Marxist) class analysis on comprehending environmental movement in a particular setting, i.e., Rural Environmental Movement (REM). By this objective, while agreeing with the argument about the difficulty of regarding environmental movement as a class struggle (Arsel, 2022), this work wants to bring the possibility to capture class issues in the (rural) environmental movement.

This chapter does not examine Contradictory Class Location (CCL) to identify class structure in REM. Although that kind of task is not impossible, putting class structure as a spotlight on REM could lead to some level of obscurity because it requires empirical analysis rather than theoretical examination works, which is out of the scope of this study.

. As mentioned in Chapter 2, REM is a form of either class formation or class alliance which means it consists of possibly individuals with diverse class locations (and, for sure, class structure). Class structure becomes relevant in conversations about REM on its influence on class position in relation to class formation and class struggle.

For this reason, this chapter will focus on the operationalisation of CCL in understanding the relation between class structure (via class position and class interest), class formation/class alliance, and class struggle. In doing so, this chapter will deal with two steps. The first part of this chapter will explore class interest and position in the Rural Environmental movement. CCL will be examined to comprehend to what extent class interest and class position correlate with the participation of actors in the movement. The second part will investigate the relationship between class formation/class alliance and class struggle, looking for those interconnections with class structures in REM. Reflection on the role of contradictory class positions in REM will conclude the discussion in this section.

Investigating Class Position and Class Interest

In the previous chapter, it is explained that REM has some challenges—that is rooted in two main conditions, namely 1) differentiation of actors in terms of their origin and 2) the existence of diverse class position—for Contradictory Class Location (CCL) in research agenda. To some extent, those explanations bring sufficient detail to the limitations of CCL,

as a theory, in its operationalisation in the research agenda. However, they gave no further information about the possibility of bringing CCL in analysing REM: in which case and in what detail this theory could be applied.

As a theoretical framework designed to investigate and clarify class structure in society, CCL always deals with interest and class position. Applying CCL in any social phenomenon means dealing with the *interests* of individuals and, at the same time, proving that those interests belong to certain class positions. That is because not all of interest in the society could be identified as class interest that in Marxism is defined as interest that is embedded in the relation of production.

In the context of REM, CCL has to prove that the interest of any actors in the movement relates to their class position. This task could be accomplished merely by placing the position of actors in the locations that are relevant with two main conditions of REM's challenge. In doing so, I suggest, in the first place, any actors in REM should analyse all actors into what I call as *location of interest*.

Location of Interest

Location of interest refers to the attachment of actors to environmental problems. In REM, the attachment of actors could be differed in two ways, i.e., *direct interest* and *indirect interest*. Therefore we could also differentiate actors into two categories, namely *actor in direct interest* and *actor in indirect interest*.

The direct and indirect status of actor's interest is determined by the relation of each actor with the process of destruction by penetration of capital in rural areas. In actor in direct interest, the relation occurs simultaneously in the material and immaterial form. It is because they are the ones who are impacted or threatened directly by environmental destruction conducted (or planned to be conducted) by capital. In this sense, their interest is not only in their possession of material things such as means of production, housing, and physical health (pollution, waste, etc.) but also in immaterial things such as mental health and condition, social or political position, cultural/religious practices, rites etc. In contrast, actor in indirect interest who receive no direct impact of penetration of capital relates to the movement only through immaterial factors, such as moral value, primordial ties, value of organisation, professional commitment, etc.

At this point, we can see that spatial measure plays a decisive role in determining the direct and indirect status of an actor's interest. However, two different conditions could apply

to each status. In actor in indirect interest, the indirect status of interest is always determined by the physical distance of actors from the area in which the exploitation of nature is being conducted. In other words, all of them must come from a place outside the area of struggle. Conversely, in actor in direct interest, the direct status of interest could be given to individuals who do not live in the location of struggle.

We could see in the case, for instance, where one village is threatened by natural destruction of a mega project installation. In that case, certainly, most of actor in interest is the inhabitant of the village. However, there is some situation that makes individuals who live outside the village could be regarded as actor in interest. Familial ties with people in the location of struggle are one condition that makes individuals could be categorised as actor in direct interest. In this case, familial ties explain more than psychological attachment that ignites feelings of worriedness about family fate and safety (when the capital is coming) but also material attachment. Studies of circular migration in Java, Indonesia, explain that rural areas is still become a source of income (occasionally) for the migrant. Rural area also functions as a latest defence of occasional workers when they are expelled from the workforce in urban or peri-urban due to political economy processes, such as gentrification. Moreover, rural areas are the place where they harbour their hope to build better life whenever they fail or succeed in overseas.¹²

Class Location, Class Interest, and Reason for Struggle

Identifying the *location of interest*, as mentioned above, is an initial step that must be passed before operationalising Contradictory Class Location (CCL) in REM. The purpose of using *location of interest*, however, is not merely to understand the interest of each actor in the movement, whether they possess direct interest or indirect interest. Moreover, as we will see, the purpose is to separate the actors in two different analyses; hence CCL could clarify to what extent class plays a role in REM's organisation internally and externally, as we will elaborate below.

However, CCL, in its application, is not exercised differently for actors in direct and indirect interest. Either in actors in direct or indirect interest, CCL is used to identify class location, to comprehend class interest that brings the effect on the way each actors interact in the movement. The difference, if anything, is in objective of applying theory rooted in the

¹² Azuma (2001) elaborate this issue his research on history of beca drivers in Jakarta Capital provide narration (especially in Chapter 8). In different context in Java society, Breman and Wiradi (2004) more detail information about the connection of circular migrant with their homeland in rural areas.

interactional process between actors in direct interest and indirect interest in the level of organisation.

The problem of class location and class interest in relation to actors in direct interest can be seen as a two-fold process. Firstly, it lies in the genealogy of the actors themselves. This includes the story of their circumstances, such as those situating them to resist and join REM's organisation, as well as the narratives of those in opposite positions, whether neutral or supporting the penetration of capital in rural areas. Secondly, it occurs in interaction among actors at the organizational level of REM, whether regarding the division of roles within the organization, internal political affairs, or the decision-making process. Otherwise, in actors with indirect interests, class locations and class interests are linked to the interaction process between those actors with the actor in direct interest through the organisational level.

In applying CCL to understand the genealogy of the movement, it should be noted that utilisation of CCL to REM could be challenging due to the model of analysis in CCL is out of capacity to capture class dynamics in rural areas, particularly for the mode of production-related directly with nature such as agriculture, aquaculture, etc. In most rural areas, those modes of production are decorated with simpler but at the same time, more nuance class locations than what is offered by CCL class mapping. Agricultural mode of production, for instance, is run in the level of household in terms of land ownership that making class position inside limited to the three class locations that in Marxian categories closed to the bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, and proletariat.¹³ In other hand, CCL should deal with diverse class composition in REM decorated beyond class positions from nature-related of relation of production. Covering those shortcomings, I argue that utilisation of CCL in REM, in most cases, should be combined with another “Marxist” theory of class, at least in the level of class mapping.¹⁴

To concretize challenge above, and bringing it into a longer elaboration, we could imagine the case where REM is manifested in one rural location (we could refer this as **village A**) which has various mode of production and occupation, even though majority of population work in agricultural sector. When big investment come to that village and

¹³ In the context of Central Java and North Sumatra, Habibi (2022) provide an analysis by forming class-mapping using this three class categories through some adaptation of Bernsteinian class-theory (Bernstein (2021)—we will have longer discussion about this class mapping later. Classical publication on West Java by Pincus (1996) dan Central Java by Hüsken (1998) use Weberian categories, namely large farmers, middle farmers, small farmers, and wage labourers.

¹⁴ This thesis, however, is not place for elaborating the possibility to make solid theoretical framework which allowed combination between CCL and another Marxist class-theory.

endanger main natural resources, particularly livelihood of farmers, we found that REM's organisation that the inhabitants initiate is occupied not only by individuals with farmer's background or from farmer's households. While most people who join REM's organisation is agricultural workers (proletariat) and farmers with non-significant land ownership (petty bourgeoisie), some farmers with large land ownership (bourgeoisie) become important figure in the movement. The position of these bourgeoisie farmers is anomaly because most of the bourgeoisie farmers in village A are in a contrarian position.

Looking at the case Village A, CCL's class scheme will face some difficulties to deal with that kind of materiality in explaining the connection between class position and class interest because in CCL (look at Figure 3.4 in chapter 3), the class of bourgeoisie is defined narrowly on assets in *the means of production*. To know more detail about the shortcomings of CCL in analysing the above class, we will make comparisons with Bernsteinian class mapping that was built by Habibi (Habibi, 2022). In his class mapping, Habibi parsed the position of the bourgeoisie class into two categories of classes (i.e., landlord Capitalist, Capitalist Farmers), proletariat class into three categories of classes (i.e., semi-proletariat farmers, proletariat farmers, and full-fledged proletariat) alongside with PCP, analyse class structure through the investigation of land ownership, land relation, labour relation, product relation, and means of production relation. This way of categorizing is a consequence of consideration about the scale of control of means of production. In CCL, that kind of consideration is not exist. As a consequence, in CCL, class of the bourgeoisie is not differed into more than one class position¹⁵ (see the comparison with EOW's class scheme in figure 4.3).

In the context of Village A, nuanced class mapping offered by Habibi seems promising to give us an argument, for instance, that the involvement of farmers with large land ownership is situated by their possession of land by assuming that those farmers try to maintain and defend their class position before capital penetration. However, those arguments would be look far from solid if we consider some conditions that real cases in rural politics and class dynamics.

Figure 4.1 Comparison between Habibi class-scheme and EOW's class mapping

¹⁵ This way of categorisation is understandable if we refer the historical context behind the development of CCL as explained in Chapter 3.

| Habibi's class mapping | Land relation | Labour relation | EOW Class Categories which equal with Habibi's class mapping | Labour relation | Means of production |
|---|---------------------------|--|--|---|--|
| Landlord Capitalist (ruling class) | Owns large amount of land | Not to hire workers, not work for other bourgeoisie, and not work for self | Bourgeoisie | Hire workers and not work | Owns capital |
| Capitalist Farmer (ruling class) | Owns large amount of land | Hires workers, not work for bourgeoisie, and work for himself | Bourgeoisie | Hire workers and not work | Owns capital |
| Petty Commodity Producers (classes of labour) | Owns considerable of land | Hire workers and work for bourgeoisie, and work for self | Petty Bourgeoisie | Work for self but not to hire workers | Owns capital |
| Semi-Proletariat Farmers (classes of labour) | Owns tiny plot of land | not to hire workers and working for landlord, capitalist or PCP | Proletarians | Working for Bourgeoisie or small employer | No control of asset in means of production, organisation assets, and |

| | | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|--------------|---|--|
| | | | | | skill/credential assets |
| Proletariat-farmer (classes of labour) | Owns no land but control tiny of land | not to hire workers and working for landlord, capitalist or PCP, work for self | Proletarians | Working for Bourgeoisie or small employer | No control of asset in means of production, organisation assets, and skill/credential assets |
| Full-Fledge Proletariat Farmer (classes of labour) | Owns and controls no land | not to hire workers and working for landlord, capitalist or PCP | Proletarians | Working for Bourgeoisie or small employer | No control of asset in means of production, organisation assets, and skill/credential assets |

Source: author

Traditional livelihood such as agriculture in rural areas, which related with nature, often determines the development of labour relation in other mode of production or occupation.¹⁶ In the similar book, Habibi informed that in rural areas occupations such as teacher, nurse, doctor, bureaucrat, mason, etc. has direct connection with class dynamics in agriculture. Good occupation, in terms of income and power, in most cases is possessed by people from ruling class. At this point, I will add some detail on the illustration case of Village A before discussing the linkage between non-agricultural class positions or occupation with the organisational issues in REM.

In REM's organisation in Village A, there are some actors with different class position and occupation as shown below:

- Actor A: Landlord-capitalist. Possess some skill from high level of education, having another occupation as supervisor in the construction corporation in

¹⁶ Mode of production is differentiated with occupation to make distinction between manual work based economy (such as in home industry) and salariat

capital city and also having children with good occupation in terms of class position and income in the city. Having important position in REM's organization.

- Actor B: Landlord capitalist. Possessing occupation in the village, holding important positions in local bureaucracy. Having children who have important position culturally and possess middle-scale business. Opposing the movement and REM's organization.
- Actor C: Petty Commodity Producers. Have no skill or credentials that could make him shift occupation in outside the agricultural sectors, which is the main source of income for his household. An active member of REM's organization.

Looking into the above illustration, we can see that using only Habibi's class scheme is insufficient to comprehend class interest in the movement, even for people working in the agricultural sector. The difference in position between Actor A and Actor B could not be clarified merely from their control of means of production and their position in labour relations, even though those are significantly important. Their position in other occupation certainly need to be considered as factor determinants. In this sense, CCL could give a light.

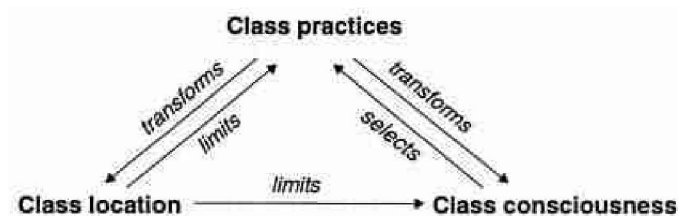
Through CCL, we could clarify that the non-agricultural occupation that he possesses situates his position with the movement. Holding a position in the village bureaucracy, Actor B for sure is part of the non-owners, but his high position (in managerial) allows him to possess significant control in organisation assets and skill/credential assets. As wage labourer who also works for government, the landlord-capitalist's opposition to the movement could be interpreted as part of his class position, which tend to defend employer interest, therefore it could be said as part of his class interest. The government, his employer, as facilitator of penetration of capital certainly has a strong interest to the success of an investment. As a land-lord capitalist, who possess a significant of land, the penetration of capital for sure could threaten Actor B economically. However, while the managerial position in the village government body puts some pressure not to oppose the plan, at the same time also give Actor B more beneficial option to response the penetration of capital (such as selling the land at a good price). Actor A, otherwise, even though shares a similar class position with Actor B as a landlord capitalist, has no such pressure nor benefit to oppose the construction plan. In this case, Actor A can be expected to become a strong supporter of the movement.

Certainly, there are other determinant motives of actors to join or oppose the movement could be varied. The involvement of Actor A in the movement, for instance, could be influenced by moral impetus (for instance, he has an environmental activist background) or family network (let's say that Actor A has distant relatives who lead and mobilise protest the development project). Still, the class position of Actor A situates his capacity to choose political positions.

The determination of class position in situating position of actors in the movement, however, should be differed in the occupation that is related and not related to nature. In the case of petty bourgeoisie in agricultural production (Petty Commodity Producer, such as Actor C), for instance, the decision to join the movement seems the only option available. The penetration of capital, if successful, could make people like him (or people from lower class positions; proletariat) destitute and become lumpen-proletariat.

The different picture could be found in individuals (whether from petty-bourgeoisie, small employer, or non-owner classes) who possess non-nature-related occupational sectors unaffected by capital penetration. The political stance regarding the movement could not be seen as directly related to their class position. This is because the influx of capital in the rural area, despite bringing environmental destruction, also promises an influx of opportunities, such as local labour absorption, improvement of public facilities, etc. In many cases of development, an influx of opportunities indeed is used by the capitalist or state as a tool of propaganda or justification for the investment.¹⁷ In this regard, individuals who possess non-nature related occupation is the one who prone to accept this propaganda in the name of social or economic ladder because the penetration of capital does not endanger their source of income.¹⁸ In this case, the existence of tiny numbers of these individuals in the movement could be regarded as exceptional by virtue their class position..

Figure 4.2 Micro-model of class locations, class consciousness and class practice



¹⁷ See for instance in Arofat (2016).

¹⁸ It is important to note, that in some cases, the environmental destruction's appear as not serious problem for individuals who possess non-nature related occupation because it is mediated by some conditions, one of them is the propaganda itself (need source). However, detail discussion about this is out the purpose of this study.

Source: (Wright, 2000, p. 200)

From the above explanation, we can identify that the process which determine individuals to join the movement is related to three variables, i.e., class location, class consciousness, and class practices. It is important to understand that in REM, those variables are interrelated and interconnected. To understand further the relationship between those variables, we can use the EOW formulation that he called as *micro-model of class location, class consciousness and class practice* (see Figure 4.4).

Through this conceptualisation, we could identify the political stance (class consciousness) of individuals such as Actor C is driven (limit) by his status as petty-bourgeoisie (or PCP) with tiny plot of land but also his daily struggle (class practice), as petty-bourgeoisie, in the relation of production or broader socio-political activities in the villages. As petty bourgeoisie who work in a mode of production related to nature preservation, Actor C naturally has political aspiration to join a movement. His class location also situates him into specific production process (that ignite the threatening feeling on the capital penetration) that, in turn, manifests to the interaction with other people in similar class or people from other class position (whether in nature or non-nature related occupational sector) who also share similar concerns on the construction plan.¹⁹ Those interaction (class practice) is also accompanied by Actor C's political aspiration, hence the process of interaction shape (transforms) Actor C's political aspiration. Similar explanations also could be applied to another class constituting the organisation.

Class Formation, Class Alliance, and Class Struggle in REM

It was explained previously that class position and class interest also play decisive factors in forming the interaction between actors in the organisational level of REM. To look further role of class position and class interest in the organisational level of REM, it is important to comprehend the REM organisation's position in class struggle. In previous part, we identified that the participation of actors into the organisational level of REM does not come from single-class positions. Proletarians could constitute the organisation of REM

¹⁹ In the explanation of micro-model, (individual) class practices is mentioned to transforms class location in the context of class mobility (Wright 2000, p.201). The transformation, then, occurred in the economy-relation that is not part of this discussion.

alongside petty bourgeoisie (as the main components of the movement) and other owner and non-owner classes. Considering those class compositions, therefore, treating REM organisation directly as a form of class formation might be problematic according to Marxist interpretation in general²⁰. Instead of class formation, REM organisation seems to fit into the definition of class alliance. However, as we saw in the previous part, class issues is an integral part of REM. If REM's organisation cannot be regarded as class formation, the next question that arises then is the possibility of regarding REM as a class struggle. Przeworski (1976) offered an alternative point of view to solve this problem.

Przeworski (Przeworski, 1976) highlighted that class struggle should not be regarded merely as the situation in which classes fight each other in solid formation following their position in relation to production. Attributing classes (and class formation as well) as the existence of determinant of class struggle “may be irrelevant for the understanding of history, such as when these classes do not develop solidarity and consciousness or when they have no political effects (Przeworski 1976, p.369).” For Przeworski, “classes are not a datum prior to political and ideological practice.” Instead, as social forces, classes have formed by ideological or political struggle. In Przeworski's language, those struggles are “struggle about class before it is struggle among class”. Through the above conceptualisation (of class struggle), Przeworski actually want to emphasise that, even though classes always exist as objective reality in relation to production, classes as social forces “are formed as an effect of struggles.” Likewise with classes, class formation never appears from vacuum spaces; it is always entangled with a creation process of classes (that “are continually organized, disorganized, and reorganized”); class struggle. As a consequence, for Przeworski, class formation should be regarded as “ an effect of the totality of struggles in which multiple historical actors attempt to organize the same people as class members, as members of collectivities defined in other terms, sometimes simply as members of ‘the society.’” (Przeworski 1976, p.371-373).

Two things from Przeworski's conceptualisation above should be considered in the context of REM. *First*, through that conceptualisation, we could argue that even though REM cannot be categorized as a class struggle, it still could be interpreted as a struggle about class. Therefore, REM is the arena in which the development of class formation occurs. REM's organization, in this regard, could be seen as the organisational body of class formation in the making.

²⁰ Need citation about that

Second, on the process of development of class formation, Przeworski mentioned “multiple historical actors” as a determining variable in organising individuals into classes. Bringing into REM, we can find that these terms could be associated with some individuals whether from actors in direct interest or indirect interest.²¹ To be more concrete, in REM’s organisation the existence of those “multiple historical actors” is related with some individual or groups who direct and manage organizations.

At this point, we can return in the discussion about the role of class position and class interest on the interaction between actors in the organisational level of REM. In REM’s organization, interaction between actors occur in two level. *First*, interaction between actors in direct interest, that we can call as internal dynamic. Regardless of the formality status, even ideological or political leaning, internal dynamic in REM’s organisation is always operated by division of role. Most of actors, certainly, take a role as “ordinary” member who involved in organisational activities such as campaign, consolidation, etc. Some actors, however, take a specific position that we can call as “leadership body” in which some individual involved in decision making process.

Using CCL, we could comprehend that class position play a role in deciding position of actors in the movement, whether as “ordinary” members or in “leadership body”. Control of assets, in this regard, is not only define class position of individuals in class structure, but also the position in the movement. Control of the means of production assets make actors have better opportunities to perform in the organisation. By possessing control of the means of production assets, certain actor can have flexibility in terms of time and/or resources to support their activity in organisation that will drive them to important positions in organisations. And so is control of organisation assets and skill/credentials assets. Actors who own better control on both assets in most case receive better income (and better social status) rather than other actors from lower class status.

However, the position in the organisational level is not directly related to class position. Family background also could bring certain actors to gain important position in organisation. A teacher, for instance, could get a better position in organisation such as in “leadership body” if they came from landlord capitalist family background (parents or spouse). EOW conceptualised this situation as *mediated-class location* to “recognizes that people are

²¹ There is no additional detail on whether that phrase refers to the Gramscian idea of intellectual-moral bloc or Lenin’s vanguardism. However, both conceptions could be found in the context of REM. For an explanation of the difference between intellectual moral bloc and vanguardism, see Rupert (2005) (p.328) for a more extended elaboration of this theme.

linked to the class structure through social relations other than their immediate ‘jobs’” (Wright 1993, pp. 30–31). Using that concept, we could identify that the teacher could not only be regarded as part of class that they gain through production relation (that in EOW class map could be in expert non-managers), but also part of landlord capitalist through mediated-class location.²²

Second level of interaction, that we can call as external dynamics or REM’s organisation, between actors in direct interest and indirect interest has direct correlation with the first level of interaction. In REM, actors in indirect interest are outside of REM’s organisation regardless the formality status of organisation; in other words, they are treated as “non-member” of organisation. As an outsider, actors in indirect interest could not make any activity in organisations directly as actors in direct interest. They could still participate on the event or action organised by organisations, for example, but cannot do further activity as organisation members, such as giving a vote in organisation’s decision. However, this does not mean that they cannot do any substantial contribution to the organisational level (more than casual participation in organisation events or activities).

Some actors in indirect interest have particular position, in terms of their contribution, to REM’s organisation. In many cases, these actors could make important contributions to influence organisations decision-making, even in the political ideology level. However, as actors in indirect interest, they could not deliver their contributions directly to organisations. These actors could contribute to organisations only through their interactions with “leadership body.” However, it is important to note that actors in indirect interest could be very diverse (in terms of class position, particularly) and uncountable.

Class position, in this regard, plays significant role in determining position of actors in indirect interest on their interactions with REM’s organization. Class positions determine the extent to which actors in indirect interest could participate actively or not in the movement and this is not always equivalent to the degree of prosperity of the actors by virtue of their class position. There are qualitative dimensions on their control of assets (means of

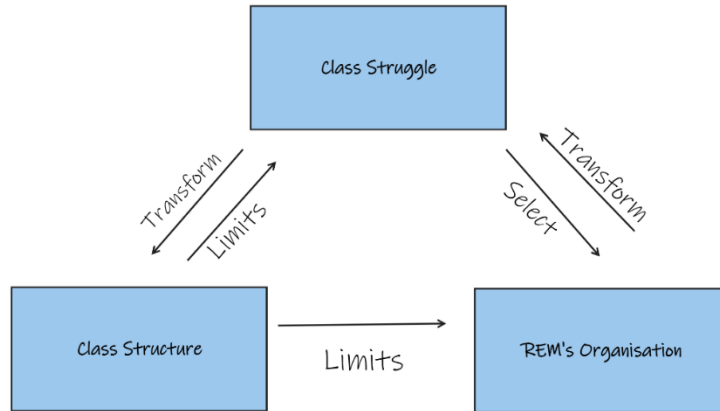
²² It should be noted here that not all of interaction in internal level is determined merely by class position. Certainly, there would be a case where social and cultural capital, in Bourdieusian term, play a role in deciding actor’s position, alongside by virtue of their class position, in REM’s organisation. However, that non-capitalist position (or capital) must not be put as a single determinant factor of certain position in organisation. In more general context in rural Java, Warouw (2014) showed the religious or cultural figures significant position in local politics is backed-up with their relation with political economic factors, whether through their interaction with local elite (in terms of class) or their position as part of local elite.

productions, organisation, and skill/credential) that will determine their position in the movement. And it is related with the level to which the capacity of actors in indirect interest (that embedded on their class position) in accordance with organisational needs. To comprehend this explanation further, we should look at five relations that occur between class structures, class struggle, and REM's organisation (*see figure 4.5*).²³ Those relations could be explained below:

1. Class structures *limit* Rem's Organisation: explaining how class position and class interest relate to participation. It is included an explanation about the relationship between relation of production and its proximity to the mode of production with nature.
2. Class structures *limit* Class Struggle: specific class relations (and broader social relations) determine the form of class struggle. Class struggle (or struggle about class) against mining capital in rural communities that populated by people working in agricultural production, for instance, will be different from in agropastoral society.
3. REM's organisations *select* class struggle: In this interaction, REM's organisation deal with situation with the problem that they fight for through the encounter with capital and/or state and actors in indirect interest. The conflictual relation between classes also determines this interaction constituted organisation.
4. Class Struggle transforms class structure: The dynamics of class struggle will affect class relations or, in more practical ways, class composition in the struggle. In the relation between petty bourgeoisie, bourgeoisie, and agricultural workers, for instance, the class struggle could bring ideas that nature in its management should be governed collectively. The class struggle could bring the consciousness that the root of the problem is in the inequality of access to natural resources (in terms of ownership or utilisation).
5. Class Struggle transforms REM's organisation: The encounter with capital and/or state, and actors in indirect interest (through external interaction) is responded to by people in the organisation, through the organisational process.

Figure 4.3 Model of relations between class structures, class struggle, and REM's Organisation

²³ I adapt EOW's macro-model of class structure, class formation and class struggle (Wright 2000, p. 205) for explaining these interactions.



Source: author

Referring to the *model of interaction* above, the interaction between actors in direct interest and indirect interest occur in the process of *select* and *transform* between REM's organization and class struggle. Through those process, we could identify at least three conditions that situate the interaction of both parts. i.e., organizational interest, individual capacity, and broader political economy context. Organizational interest, formulated by class dynamics in REM's organization, will *select* whose actors (in indirect interest) could be involved closely with organizations. At the same time, a broader political economy would affect (transform) the selection process. The deep involvement of government officials cum figures of national NGOs in supporting the movement, for instance, would only be possible if one of the challenges in the struggle is required to deal with the negotiation process with the state. In other hand, that challenge should be fit with organizational interests that drive REM's organization to pursue the organizational agenda through the negotiation process with the state. Since internal class dynamics (in REM's organization) play an important role in forming organizational interest, the process of the formulation will determine whether REM's organization brings the agenda of the most affected class or vice-versa, advocating the interests of "elite groups or individuals" in the movement, whether actors in direct or indirect interest.

Chapter 5 — Possible Path towards Proletarian Politics?

Concluding Remarks

In this study, I have demonstrated that Marxist Class Analysis, via Erik Olin Wright's Contradictory Class Location (CCL), can be utilised to comprehend the importance of class-related problems in the internal and external dynamics of rural environmental politics. By situating CCL in a particular context, namely Rural Environmental Movement (REM), I show that CCL could clarify material conditions from which individuals gain significant positions in REM's organisation. In this study I propose two levels of analysis, in operationalising CCL, in internal and external levels of REM's organisation by identifying the location of interest of each actor involved in the REM.

In general, this examination has given small contributions to broader theoretical conversation about class and environmental politics. In more particular aspects, while agreeing view of impossibility to frame environmental movement as class struggle, this study offered formulation that could be used to unpack the political agenda of REM and put in on broader discussion of proletarian politics.

REM, and rural environmental politics in general, as mentioned in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 respectively, has coloured by the involvement of the middle class, which has a consequence on the obscurity of political agenda. As a movement with a problematical root in rural space, REM is pictured as prone to be hijacked by middle-class political agenda (Aditjondro, 1998, 2003; Hirsch and Warren, 1998). However, it would be unfair to state that influence of middle class in the movement inherently harms the interests of proletarians.

In a broader historical political context in the Global South, in fact, the middle class hold an important role in opposing the authoritarian old regime, contributing to toppling dictatorship, and advocating democracy (Robison, 2004b). At the end of Soeharto's rule, one research showed majority of middle-class Indonesia supported legal empowerment, people sovereignty, good governance, and democracy (Anwar *et al.*, 1998). While that research doubted the aspiration of middle class has manifested in political praxis, the significant role of middle class in struggles about class has been obvious. In Kedung Ombo case, the first most prominent and biggest rural environmental movement in Indonesia, for instance, the role of individual from middle-class backgrounds could be identified in every level of political praxis (Prasetyo, 1994). Moreover, in Indonesia the role of middle-class in rural environmental politics class politics in post-Soeharto era seems show a consistent picture such as in

Kedung Ombo (Syam, 2016) even though political aspiration of middle-class in Indonesia was identified shifting to be more individualistic and having no more concern with social justice issues (Robison, 2004a, p. 85). Therefore, the substantial discussion on the middle-class politics should be directed to the model or mechanism of interaction and its political consequences.

In the specific context of middle-class agency in the movement, assessment conducted by Borrás and Franco (2023) showed that academic discussion on the involvement of scholar activist in agrarian movement has been dominated by vanguardism and tailism view. For them, those views are instrumental and problematic and belittle both “the expertise of scholar activist” and “the autonomy of agrarian movements” in political dynamics. As an alternative, they suggest that scholar activist’s encounters with agrarian movement should be seen as “two-way, mutually reinforcing, interactive.” (Borrás and Franco, 2023, p. 87–95).

Nevertheless, if we refer to the context of proletarian and middle-class politics in rural politics, the big problem on the relation between middle-class and rural politics is beyond the recognition of the contribution of middle-class and the autonomy of rural movement. Mintz (Mintz, 1974), in her classic on rural proletariat in the Caribbean society reminded that the interaction process of rural proletariat in the class alliance politics played a significant role in development of rural proletariat’s class consciousness. In the context of the rural politics, class alliance politics is not necessarily merely between rural communities or movement and the middle class that in many studies, is pictured as distant from the internal dynamics of rural politics.²⁴ In fact, the middle class position is also exist in rural communities and playing an important role, including as intermediary, between local level with higher level politics (Young, 1990) In this situation, therefore, giving recognition to mutual contribution between middle class and rural politics entity in the movement will not provide any prescription on how proletarian politics should be advanced in social movements.²⁵ In this context, the small contribution of this study should be placed. The possibility (or impossibility) of framing rural politics as class struggle, at the end, should be put as a challenge in the praxis

²⁴ In the Indonesia context, Heryanto (2005) argued that the root of this depiction is laid in the poor explanation in terms of empiric, conceptual-theoretic, epistemology, and discursive and the obsession with the expected role of the middle class in political economy realms and democracy, and heavily dose in "technocratic view" (Heryanto, 1990, pp. 57–58).

²⁵ In Indonesia context, we can see the contextualisation of this argument in the recent studies on REM by Arofat (2016); Syam (2016) that showed that elitist agendas that is adapted by organisation is driven by middle-class actors in both urban middle class and rural middle class.

level or research agenda. In the case that the political struggle is still “struggle about class”, Marxist class analysis should always be taken into account to transform it to “class struggle”.

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