

GRASSROOTS ACTOR  
INDIA

**Grassroots Environmental Claim Making and the State:  
The 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act in Kolkata, India**

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**Thesis submitted to the University of London for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**



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### **Abstract**

This research aims to understand the environmental claim making of urban grassroots women and men, and to compare it with institutional designs for increasing the access of municipal channels to a wider base of people. The gap between environmental claim making as it happens ‘on the ground’, and institutional provisions for inclusive and accessible formal claim making is hypothesised to cause the exclusion of grassroots actors’ claims from formal channels.

The Indian case was used for the research, focussing on the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act (74<sup>th</sup> CAA) enacted in 1993 by the Indian state for devolving power to urban municipalities. The environmental agenda of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA introduced a new understanding of the urban environment for municipal governments, while the inclusion agenda introduced new channels to increase municipal access to a larger number and variety of voices. Formal channels studied include new channels instituted by the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA and existing channels such as elected municipal representatives and appointed officials. Fieldwork was conducted in Kolkata city for two cases, in which grassroots groups were in conflict with surrounding communities over access to and control over urban waterbodies.

The Third World Political Ecology approach was adopted for this research. The research focused on the discursive field and the political field of the city to understand grassroots environmental claim making. Qualitative analysis of the data established the importance of political and bureaucratic culture of the state, and the identity of the claim makers. The impact of this on shaping environmental discourses and formation of discourse coalitions and solidarity groupings; and the impact of these on the politics of environmental claim making in the formal channels was also observed. The claim making process was observed as being embedded in various moments of social processes, unlike as understood by the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA.

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## Glossary

- *Bazaar*- market area
- *Bangaal*- of East Bengal origin
- *Basti*- low-income informal settlement- with or without legal rights
- *Bhadralok*- refined people (class- caste combine)
- *Bihari*- from the state of Bihar
- *Bisarjan*- idol immersion- usually in the Ganges but also carried out in local waterbodies
- *Chhotolok*- unrefined, marginal and uncouth people
- *Durga Puja*- Bengali community festival celebrated over five days involving worship of idols of the Goddess *Durga* and her family
- *Ghat*- brick or cemented bathing platform on the banks of a pond
- *Ghoti*- of West Bengal origin
- *Hindustani*- slang term to identify non-Bengali speakers in Kolkata
- *Jhil*- large pond
- *Mahila*- woman
- *Puja*- worship
- *Pukur*- pond
- *Purush*- man
- *Sangrakshan*- Preservation

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### **List of Acronyms**

- 74<sup>th</sup> CAA- 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act
- ADB- Asian Development Bank
- AITC- All India Trinamool Congress
- BC- Borough Committee
- BJP-Bharatiya Janata Party
- BX- Borough X
- BXII- Borough XII
- CDA- Critical Discourse Analysis
- CITU- Centre of Indian Trade Unions
- CMTPA- Chief Municipal Town Planner and Architect's Department
- CPI-Communist Party of India
- CPI (M)- Communist Party of India (Marxist)
- CPI-ML- Communist Party of India - Marxist Leninist
- DCO- District Conservancy Officer
- EJ- Environmental Justice
- FB- Forward Block
- GoWB- Government of West Bengal
- INC-Indian National Congress
- JPI- Jodhpur Park Institute
- JSC- Jhil Sangrakshan Committee
- KEIP- Kolkata Environmental Improvement Programme
- KMC-Kolkata Municipal Corporation
- KMDA- Kolkata Municipal Development Authority
- LF- Left Front
- MLA- Member of Legislative Assembly
- MIC- Mayor in Council
- MMIC-Member of Mayor in Council
- MP- Member of Parliament
- MWA- Morning Walkers' Association
- NC- Nagarik Committee
- NGO- Non Governmental Organisation
- PCB- Pollution Control Board
- PGI- Practical Gender Interests
- POS- Political Opportunity Structure
- PPFPE- Principle of Prima-Facie Political Equality
- PWD- Public Works Department
- RSP- Revolutionary Socialist Party
- SC- Scheduled Caste
- SGI- Strategic Gender Interests
- ST- Scheduled Tribe
- TC-Trinamool Congress
- TWPE- Third World Political Ecology
- ULB- Urban local body
- WBM Act- West Bengal Municipal Act
- WBPCB- West Bengal Pollution Control Board
- WC- Ward Committee

## **Introduction**

Environmental conflicts are a growing phenomenon in the cities and villages of the Third World. These conflicts concern issues as diverse as citizens' protests against siting of municipal dumps near their homes, workers' protests against government orders to shut down polluting industries, environmental NGOs protesting the use of urban parks for animal grazing etc. Thus, environmental conflicts range from conflicts over pollution distribution and preservation of nature to those over livelihood and lifestyle issues and access to and control over environmental resources. The existence of environmental conflicts suggests that actors involved in a conflict may make claims regarding the issues of the conflict.

Claim making around an environmental conflict can happen through various channels-formal, non-formal and semi-formal; and involve a variety of actors, including the state. The channel chosen by different actors depends upon the one most amenable for their claim-making abilities and most responsive to their claims. In some instances, claim-making is not a viable option for some actors due to their position with respect to the claim accepting channels or the latter's understanding of the conflict. Claim-making through formal municipal channels in a liberal democratic context implies the involvement of politically elected municipal representatives and lower level municipal officials to represent, accept and forward the claims to decision makers from higher municipal levels and other government levels for consideration and action. The aim of this research is to understand environmental claim making as handled by grassroots women and men and to compare it with the state's institutional designs for increasing the accessibility of formal municipal claim-making channels to a wider base of people.

This research focuses on the gap between environmental claim making as it happens 'on the ground' and institutional provisions and procedural innovations for inclusive and accessible formal claim making. It is hypothesised that this gap between complex real world environmental claim making, compared to its characterisation by the formal sphere, is instrumental in causing and perpetuating the exclusion of urban grassroots actors' claims from formal channels. The discursive field, which shapes the range of environmental claims considered acceptable by the formal channels; and the political field, within which claim-making takes place, are studied in this research as crucial for shaping the politics of environmental claim-making. This politics determines the degree of access the claims of any actor have to the formal municipal channels and the channel they use.

Institutional designs for increasing municipal accessibility to a wider base of people are often attempts at decentralisation, part of the 'good governance' paradigm of the 1990s. As part of these attempts, spatial and non-spatial strategies are used to design formal structures. These either increase direct participation of people in local governance or increase the funnel of representation to include those groups in governance considered by the state to be on the margins of social power (Burns, 1994), (Healey, 1997). In this research, environmental claim making of urban grassroots actors is studied in the context of one such procedural innovation by the Indian government to increase the number and variety of voices that engage with and participate in local governance. This combination of research variables allows highlighting constraints to grassroots environmental claim making in a context where the state attempted to encourage such access of marginalised groups to local governance structures.

Urban grassroots actors are defined for the purpose of this research (from discussions with Andre Beteille, 2002), (Bryant and Bailey, 1997) as urban residents having a direct relationship with some element of the urban natural environment like water bodies, land etc. for fulfilling their livelihood and/or lifestyle requirements. This definition also considers aspects of income, lifestyle and position of power. Hence those who are forced to live in degraded urban surroundings because of lack of viable alternative choices and are considered socially marginal are defined as part of the grassroots group. This definition is a combination of dependence on environmental elements in the urban setting for livelihood and/or lifestyle, combined with identification as one of the urban subalterns.

### **Structuring of the research- the discursive field and the political field:**

Discourse is defined here as a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts and categorizations that are produced, reproduced and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities (Hajer, 1997). The discursive field comprises of all the possible and present discourses about an issue articulated by different actors within a particular social and political context. Understanding the discursive field is important here since in an environmental conflict the discourses that conflicting actors ascribe to and the schools of thought these discourses emerge from, shape the actors' claims and definitions of the conflict. The discursive field of an environmental conflict may contain multiple varieties of environmentalism with differing agendas ranging from nature preservation to human rights of using environmental resources (Humphreys, 2002). These can affect the outcomes of claim making by influencing the formation of discourse coalitions and the range of possible reactions towards claims that claim accepting channels may exhibit (Bryant and Bailey, 1997), (Hajer, 1997), (Marston, 2004). Understanding the discursive field requires analysing

the discourses ascribed to by various actors and analysing power and dominance between actors who have differentiated access to discourse practices (Marston, 2004). This research uses the Argumentative Approach (Hajer, 1997) of discourse analysis, conforming to concerns of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Examining factors that influence how an environmental problematic is conceived involves not just *what* is being said, but also the institutional context *within which* it is being said, and which co-determines what can be said meaningfully (Hajer, 1997). Hence the discursive field needs to be studied in conjunction with the political field.

The political field within which the claim-making process unfolds, is understood by analysing the political culture and the distribution of power in a particular context (Ray, 1999). The political field is affected when procedural innovations aimed at increasing peoples' participation in governance are introduced by the state. The nature of the political field influences the *ability* of actors with diverse positions of power to engage in the practices of claim making, and for their claims to access claim accepting channels. Political culture is understood as a combination of the formal aspects of institutional behaviour as predicated by High Politics and the informal aspects of it as seen in everyday politics. Understanding the practices of power- affected by identity, social relations, past history and material practices, is essential for analysing these aspects. This power-laden understanding of the political field, in a dialectical relationship with the discursive field, is crucial for this research topic. It helps unravel the politics of environmental claim making, affected by the agency of actors as well as structuring effects of both the political field and discursive field.

### **Context of the research:**

First, the research's focus on formal channels is justified. In the absence of approachable formal channels, some claim-making channels used by grassroots women and men involve relationships of subordination with exploitative persons and organisations. Members of non-formal channels- like politicians- can exploit this dependency of the grassroots group for regime renewal and its perpetuation. Other non-formal claim-making options- through community based collective action structures- can also be exclusionary by mirroring a community's own norms, social inequalities and prejudices arising out of social relations of class, caste, gender, religion and regional origin.

The state's access to a larger resource pool than citizens and its de-jure right over most of the non-privately owned environment make it the actor with the largest resource ability and mandated responsibility for environmental matters. The liberal democratic state's functions

are theoretically open to public scrutiny and inclusive governance is a mandated function of elected governments. These arguments bolster the case for focussing on greater inclusion of grassroots women and men's claim making through the formal system.

The research focuses on one of the democratic procedural innovations introduced by the Indian government- the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act (74<sup>th</sup> CAA) and 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act (73<sup>rd</sup> CAA) in 1993, aimed at devolution of power to the local level. The 73<sup>rd</sup> CAA legislated a hierarchy of rural local governance structures starting from the village level and was fairly successful in strengthening village level democratic processes and the inclusion of grassroots women and men in local governance. However, the focus of this research- the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA, has had much less success in urban areas (Ghosh, 1996). The 74<sup>th</sup> CAA was chosen as the case to understand the impact of procedural innovations on increasing access of environmental claims of grassroots actors to formal channels, because it contains both an environmental agenda and inclusion agenda- elements that this research wanted to combine and study.

The environmental agenda of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA introduced a new understanding of the urban environment for municipalities. The legislation suggested expanding the municipal functional ambit from their traditional 'line services' focus, with environmental issues figuring as municipal subjects for the first time. It provided municipalities with the opportunity to creatively interpret the subject of the urban environment. The inclusion agenda of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA introduced new formal channels- Ward Committees (WCs) and reservations for women and members of scheduled castes and tribes<sup>1</sup> (SC-STs) in municipal governance. The aim of these new channels was to increase the access of municipal governance to a larger number of people and wider variety of voices. The 74<sup>th</sup> CAA is a legislation of the Central Government in the Indian federation. Each state government enacted conformity legislations derived from this Central legislation with modifications to suit its own context.

West Bengal was chosen as the focus state. There has been a Marxist government in uninterrupted power for the last three decades in the state. This government laid the foundations for local governance much before the Central Act. The state also had uninterrupted local body elections and reservations for women in municipal elections long before the Central Act made these mandatory. As any innovation's impact can be felt only after some time has elapsed, the length of time these conditions have existed in West Bengal

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<sup>1</sup> Enlisted in articles 341 and 342 of the Indian constitution. They are targeted for affirmative action to address their socially marginal positions.

made it suitable for the study. Since many of the innovations of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA existed beforehand in West Bengal, the possibility of the legislation's success in the state was very high. Hence any shortfalls in such a favourable atmosphere would be able to clearly point to the gaps in the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA. Within West Bengal, Kolkata was chosen as the city for study, due to its status as the state capital, where the state government apparatus is in direct contact with the local government structures. Further, the preliminary fieldwork and secondary literature study revealed a higher level of environmental awareness and environmental claims in Kolkata than in other cities in West Bengal. Some of the factors hypothesised in causing the exclusion of grassroots actors from formal channels in Kolkata have been outlined and concerns relevant to the research explained in the following paragraphs

### **Components of the research:**

The basic questions fuelling this research were: What is the nature of grassroots environmental claim making? What is the process by which it occurs? What are the factors that influence grassroots environmental claim making through formal municipal channels? How does the environmental claim making of other actors influence the success of grassroots claim making using formal channels? How do procedural innovations, like the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA, affect the ability of grassroots environmental claims to access formal channels? The discursive field and political field of Kolkata, along with the micro-politics of environmental claim making in two cases chosen in Kolkata were examined to answer these questions.

To understand the political and discursive fields with respect to the topic's concerns, the case studies were used to understand the particular character of environmental claims, and claim-making processes of grassroots actors in comparison to other actors part of environmental conflicts. Understanding the particular character of actors' environmental claims meant investigating the kind of environmental discourses these actors ascribed to, their choice of channels of claim making and understanding a claim-making process closely linked to and reflecting the effect of different social relations. The assumptions inherent in the procedural innovation overlook these particularities, hypothesised to cause the grassroots group's exclusion from the formal channels. The basic schism between the environmentalism of the grassroots groups and that of the formal channels and other actors further affects the possibility of grassroots success in claim making. It was hypothesised that due to the incompatibility between procedural designs and the reality of environmental claim making, procedural innovations remain unable to increase access of grassroots claims to formal channels. Hence characterisation of the nature of environmental claim-making by urban grassroots groups, without homogenising them, was an important part of the research. For

this, urban grassroots groups were compared with other groups to see how they framed their environmental claims, the channels and strategies they used; the social, political and other resources they perceived and used in claim making; the constraints they faced and costs they incurred in such activity.

Within the discursive field, the schism between the environmentalisms of grassroots and formal channel actors was explained as having an exclusionary outcome for the former from formal channels. Therefore it was also important to understand how the latter understood environmental claims. In many liberal democratic contexts, formal structures ascribe to the discourse of administrative rationalism. This is a discourse in which environmental claims are seen to be amenable to management and concerning objective conditions of the natural environment, without any political dimension to them (Dryzek, 1997). The discourse of administrative rationalism often overlooks the environmental claims of grassroots actors, which arise from a different discursive rationale. The formation of discourse coalitions between formal channels and actors having environmental discourses similar to those of members of these channels further exclude grassroots discourses from formal channels. The research explores this domination of the formal channels by discourse coalitions as one of the reasons for the exclusion of grassroots environmental claims from formal channels.

Social relations of power, as manifest through language and social relations between actors are crucial to research aiming to understand politics of claim making (Marston, 2004). Hence, not just the differing ways in which the environmental problematic is conceptualised by the formal channels and grassroots actors, but also the social identity of the grassroots actors is hypothesised to cause their exclusion from formal channels. Hence it becomes important to establish the extent to which structural factors<sup>2</sup> (contributing to create the social identity of actors) affect the formal channel's receptivity to their claims. Formal channel members may form solidarity groupings with those claim-makers with whom they have a similarity of identity. The impact of these solidarity groupings is overcome only by the active agency of the formal channel members. The discussion on structure and agency is crucial to the politics of environmental claim making and sheds light on the constraints and behaviour of various actors important to the claim-making process. The relative importance of structural factors and the agency of formal channel members are analysed to understand the way grassroots claims are treated by formal channels.

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<sup>2</sup> such as gender, class, caste, regional origin etc

Much of the focus on inclusive governance is based on efforts to include 'disadvantaged and marginalised' groups into governance through quotas, concessions and other tactics (Niranjana, 2001), (Rai, 1999). The various 'categories' of marginalisation considered for procedural innovations include those based on gender, tribal identity, caste etc. A comparison of categorisations as conceptualised for administrative reforms with the 'sites of subalternity' that exist in the perceptions and social practice of people is done, to understand the continued exclusion of 'the marginalised' from the formal channels crafted to increase participation. This is a continuation of the focus on identity and social relations for understanding the discursive and political fields. Studying the non-participation of some actors in claim making can also point to the perceived and actual impediments faced by actors in this activity.

As seen in the discussion on the political field, the state's political culture affects the functioning of the formal structures. It shapes the attitudes of the formal channel members towards environmental claims and claim-makers from different backgrounds. The political culture determines the formal channels' functioning in terms of their efficiency, corruption, self-interest etc. The political identities and ideologies of elected representatives impact their receptivity to ideas of inclusion based on categories of marginalization and towards environmental issues. A bureaucratic culture of rigid hierarchies, procedural complexities and domination over less powerful actors additionally inhibits grassroots women and men from using formal channels for environmental claim making. The political and bureaucratic culture of the state in Kolkata are investigated to see how these aspects of the political field affect the utilisation of the political opportunity created by democratic procedural innovations for increasing the inclusion of a wider variety of people in municipal governance.

Most literature on grassroots environmental claim-making, especially in Third World contexts, is based primarily in rural areas concerning access to natural resources for livelihood concerns (Bryant & Bailey, 1997), (Evans, 2002), (Ghai & Vivian, 1995), (Guha & Alier, 2000), (Peluso, 1992), (Rocheleau et.al, 1996). This study tries to address this gap through its focus on grassroots environmental claim making in a Third World urban context. This research has tried to create an innovative enquiry by examining the politics of grassroots environmental claim making within the framework of a procedural innovation. The research also contributes to scholarship on the context of the research- both regarding the procedural innovation and the geographical context. There have been few studies on the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA, and none to the researcher's knowledge focussing on the environmental agenda and inclusion agenda of the innovation. Environmental issues in West Bengal have been studied largely in rural areas, and related to land or forests. The choice of Kolkata for studying environmental



claim-making, focussing not on its peri-urban wetlands, but on waterbodies interwoven in the city fabric, is also how this research attempts to contribute to scholarship on environmental issues in Kolkata.

### **The approach and methods:**

The approach of Third World Political Ecology has been adopted for this research. Third World Political Ecology looks at environmental conflicts with an appreciation of the complex interests and actions of place and non-place based actors, mediated by their relations of power, dominance, control and access in Third World contexts. Political ecologists share a broad political economy perspective but adopt a variety of approaches in applying that perspective to investigation of human-environmental interactions in the Third World. Of the various approaches, the actor-oriented approach has been used in this study, which allowed investigation into the power relationships between the primary actors of this research—grassroots women and men, other claim-makers and the formal channels members. The formal channels include both new channels instituted by the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA and the existing municipal channels. This approach also allowed studying the roles and resources of each group of actors, their access to and control over the natural resource relative to each other and their attitudes towards the project of increasing access to formal channels for environmental claims of grassroots women and men.

The research was conducted through the following conceptual steps. First, a characterisation of the nature of environmental claims of grassroots women and men was undertaken, within the ambit of environmental conflicts between grassroots and other actors. The claim-making process and strategies used by other actors were also understood. Next, factors inhibiting grassroots women and men's use of formal channels for claim making were examined from both the political and discursive fields. These included factors internal to the group such as elements of social identity like caste, class, regional origin and gender which interact to create community power dynamics; interaction of the group with repressive forces and the group's perceptions of its own agency. Factors external to the group included discourses about the environment dominating the local bureaucracy, the claims and claim-making efforts of other groups in the conflict, the political culture of the state, political ideologies of representatives and political space for change.

The fieldwork for this research was conducted in Kolkata in two parts— a preliminary phase for identifying the case studies in 2001 followed by the main fieldwork over nine months in 2002-03 and four months in 2004. Two case studies were chosen in the southern part of

Kolkata, in adjacent wards of the city in Pal Bazaar and Jodhpur Park. They had separate bureaucratic structures and political representatives. These cases were selected since they had similar environmental conflicts pitting grassroots groups against larger communities over the issue of local waterbodies. The outcome of the claim-making efforts of the grassroots group in the two areas was very different. The Pal Bazaar case exhibited the grassroots group's failure in accessing the formal channels, with the converse in Jodhpur Park. The cases helped understand the impact of political culture, bureaucratic culture and environmental discourses in determining the success of grassroots environmental claims in accessing formal channels.

The primary method used was semi-structured interviews with 160 respondents selected through snowballing, listed in appendix G. Secondary data sources such as newspapers and radio were used to understand popular middle class discourses about the urban environment and environmental conflicts. Study of the political literature of various parties helped understand the political field as shaped by these varying party ideologies. Media reportage on actions and statements of political party members about issues of concern to the study were used to understand the political and discursive fields of the context. Quantitative tools such as questionnaires were used in a limited way in pondside observations, and helped understand use patterns and user profiles of case study waterbodies, detailed in appendix F. Pondside observations helped understand power dynamics between local conflicting groups and the relationship of each group with the waterbody in question. Observations of municipal councillor surgeries and municipal meetings clarified the relationship between urban residents and political representatives. Municipal records were accessed to understand the environmental discourse dominant in the municipality.

A few focus groups were conducted to understand community dynamics among conflicting groups in the case studies. The presence in these focus groups of formal channel members allowed observing the power dynamics between various actors. A study of community publications and presentations about the conflicts was useful to see how the communities understood the environmental conflict and how they represented these to others. Conclusions from the preliminary data analysis were presented to academic and activist audiences in Kolkata to observe the reaction of persons with specific discourse positions and structural positions towards the arguments forwarded. The presence in these presentations of persons from the case studies and from political parties helped gauge their reaction to the research arguments. This was important in understanding the degree of discursive space in middle class, upper caste, educated spaces for alternate understandings of the urban environment.

The analytical process included discourse analysis of the interviews and document extracts using the Argumentative Approach (Hajer, 1997) and concerns of CDA (Marston, 2004). This micro-level analysis from the case studies was located in the context of the macro-level analysis of the environmental discourse of the formal channels and the political field in the city. The resultant combination of the micro and macro level analyses provided interesting answers to the questions about the ability of procedural innovations in creating more accessible and inclusive formal channels for environmental claims of grassroots groups.

### **The chapters:**

In the chapter one, the theoretical concepts important for studying this topic have been elaborated. The three main components of the research are expanded as separate sections in this chapter. These components deal with- environmental claim making through formal and non-formal channels; sites of subsidiarity that create grassroots exclusion from formal channels, and institutional formal claim making. These three components are analysed as part of the focus on the discursive field and the political field that shape the environmental claim-making process. The chapter selectively visits the literature around each of these three core areas. The chapter ends with an elaboration of the framework of Third World Political Ecology within which the research is conducted. The research hypothesis and research methodology are outlined in this chapter. The subsequent chapters relate to different parts of the hypothesis and the analytical chapters re-visit the hypothesis to examine its validity.

Chapter two explains the context in which this research was conducted. This contains an analysis of the salient features of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA, especially with regards to its inclusion agenda and environmental agenda. This is followed by an introduction to the state of West Bengal, briefly examining its political history. The structure of municipal government in Kolkata is outlined, recounting the history of the innovation and the conformity legislation's impact on Kolkata's urban governance. A brief introduction to the case studies concludes the chapter.

Chapters three and four form the macro analytic part of the thesis dealing with issues at the city level and their interaction with the state level. The analysis here is broad stroked, with finer-grained analysis conducted in the two case study chapters. Case study lessons are synthesised in chapter seven with the macro level analysis of chapters three and four.

Chapter three focuses on the macro analysis of Kolkata's political field. The spatial and non-spatial strategies of decentralisation adopted by the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA are discussed using the case of grassroots environmental claim making. This chapter discusses the external exclusions faced

by grassroots actors in using formal municipal channels in Kolkata. This includes analysing the existing channels such as municipal officials and councillors, as well as new channels like Ward Committees and reservations for women. The political opportunity structure (POS) is analysed to understand grassroots claim making using these channels. The aspects of the POS discussed are the character of the formal institutional structure and the political context within public authorities. The third aspect of POS, the informal procedures and prevailing strategies of the relationship between formal (state) and informal (community) channels is expanded in later chapters. This chapter analyses the High Politics and everyday politics of the political culture of Kolkata, which affect the way formal channels function. The analysis involves understanding the political field in Kolkata by comparing the political culture of the Left Front parties (in power at the state level) with that of the Trinamool Congress, the main opposition party in the state and which was ruling the Kolkata Municipal Corporation at the time of the fieldwork. The influence of the political culture on the bureaucratic culture is analysed to understand the attitude of municipal officials towards issues like decentralisation.

Chapter four discusses the discursive field at the macro city level in Kolkata. It focuses on environmental discourses ascribed to and discursive practices followed by various actors at city level. An analysis is carried out of discourses of middle class and grassroots claim-makers as compared with that of formal channels. This helps to understand how different actors conceptualise the urban environment and to what degree their environmental claims, arising from this conception, are able to access the formal channels at the city level. The different emphases placed by different actors on nature preservation versus rights to access urban natural resources for their livelihood and lifestyle activities are expanded here. Though it seems to imply a class-based focus, the terms middle class and grassroots are used to highlight the primacy of class-based identity in the city's discursive field. There is an attempt to disaggregate the other elements of identity such as gender, caste, regional origin etc. that form part of the subject positions of actors and shape their discursive positions as well. The way subject positions and environmental discourses can result in the formation of solidarity groupings and discourse coalitions, causing exclusion of some environmental claims from the formal channels is also discussed in this chapter. The various laws and procedures concerning the environment in Kolkata in general and waterbodies in particular are also briefly analysed. Hajer's (1997) Argumentative Approach of discourse analysis and CDA are used to analyse these issues.

Chapters five and six deal with the two case studies. Chapter five details the Pal Bazaar case study while chapter six details the Jodhpur Park case. These analyses focus on understanding

the political field and discursive field of the two cases. The claims of various claim-making groups, their discourses towards the environment, the strategies followed by them to make their environmental claims, the constraints they face in this effort and the outcomes of such claim-making are analysed. Formation of solidarity groupings and discourse coalitions, as products of perceived similarities in identity and discursive parity between claim-making groups and formal channels, are also analysed. This is done to understand their impact on the access of environmental claims of grassroots groups to the formal channels. Formal channels and non-formal channels are analysed to understand their relationship with the claim-making process, shaped by structural factors and their own agency. The impact of past history on the formation of cognitive commitments of claim-makers and the changing discursive commitments of claim-makers resulting from changing subject positions are also examined.

Chapter seven weaves together the macro level analyses of chapters three and four and the micro level analyses of chapters five and six. It conducts a comparative analysis of the two case studies to understand the relative importance of the discursive field and the political field, in deciding the accessibility of environmental claims of claim-making groups. It examines each field separately, while looking at the two case studies simultaneously, to unearth the learning about the discursive and political fields from this comparison. The research hypothesis outlined in the chapter one is re-examined in the light of this learning. The discussion of structure versus agency, of the discursive field and political field and the impact of identity and subject position on the politics of environmental claim making are some of the main discussions that take place.

The last chapter, details the overall conclusions from the research. It moves beyond the specifics of the cases and the Indian context to draw larger level conclusions relating to the theoretical discussions in chapter one. The chapter discusses discourses and discourse analysis, the varieties of environmentalism shaping the conflict between preservation of nature and human access to environmental resources and the resultant need to locate oneself within the discursive possibilities. Written from a reflexive position, it moves on to learning from the study about the political field. It looks at the impact of High Politics and everyday politics on the claim-making process, and claim making through non-formal channels. The chapter tries to build a schematic 'model' of environmental claim making, fully aware of the reductionism inherent in such an exercise. The model helps combine the various strands of learning about environmental claim-making that emerge from the study. The chapter contains conclusions about procedural innovations and the success of their inclusionary agendas. The comparison of governance agendas of positivist policy making with the schematic model of

the environmental claim-making process helps highlight limitations of procedural innovations in creating inclusive space for environmental claim making. The chapter ends by proposing ideas for further research, taking off from where this research ends.

## **Chapter 1: Theoretical Underpinnings**

This chapter discusses the theoretical issues on which the research arguments and hypothesis are based. It begins with explaining the concept of environmental conflicts and claim making being followed in the research. Since environmental conflicts do not always give rise to overt claim making, factors causing overt claim making by grassroots actors are discussed after this section. Efforts by liberal democratic governments for enhancing participation of marginalised groups in governance through procedural innovations, and the problems associated with this are then analyzed. Factors hypothesised to be causing the schism between grassroots and formal environmental claim-making, and causing exclusion of environmental claims of grassroots actors using formal state based channels are expanded next. These factors include environmental discourses of these actors and elements of their identity. The chapter ends with the research hypothesis and a description of the research framework adopted.

### **Part A: Environmental claim making: formal and informal channels**

#### **1.1 Theoretical characterisation of environmental conflicts:**

The environmental conceptions of different groups in society derive from varying schools of thought having differing understandings of environmental conflicts and hence of environmental claims. Hence, the historical development of the concept of environmental claims and conflicts is briefly and selectively examined to understand the roots of the schisms between conceptualisations of the environment by grassroots actors, state channels and others.

A Judeo-Christian view of nature was prevalent in the pre-enlightenment West. This accepted no other environmental conflict except that of humanity's constant conflict against hostile nature, which needed to be 'tamed' for its instrumental use by humans. In Enlightenment thought, this religious basis made way for a mechanistic view of nature encouraging its rational, scientific, logical use. Environmentally based social conflicts were significant in this era due to enclosure of commons and reinforcement of the individual right to property. Loss of rural livelihoods and consequent poverty, and social unrest among the new urban working classes was seen as a 'natural' part of industrial growth by the thinkers of this time, with an inevitable division between the 'winners' and 'losers' (Polanyi, 1957). Though the material conditions of environmental conflicts existed, environmental claim making was not considered a legitimate activity. The beginnings of imperialism added a new dimension to environmental conflicts. State management of environmental 'resources' through Forestry Departments in the colonised world caused large-scale social unrest and environmental conflicts between indigenous populations and colonial bureaucracies (Arnold and Guha, 1996), (Rangarajan, 1996). Such conflicts grew over time with increasing enclosure of commons by the state or economic forces.

From the industrial era on, environmental conflicts emerged around issues of social injustice regarding access, control, and livelihoods. Despite this, their conceptualisation by the dominant political economy of the era was a predecessor of the High Modernist view of environmental conflicts- as apolitical environmental problems symptomatic of ‘irrationality’ and open to managed outcomes. Enlightenment<sup>1</sup> theories were based on extreme individualism, hierarchy in society, conflict and competition- combined with an instrumental view of nature. These values are still visible in neo-liberal market rationale of environmental conflicts (Dryzek, 1997).

The modernist, materialist theory of classical Marxism had an instrumental view of nature with human-nature interactions based on scientific, technical exploitation of resources. Productivist in its economic aspects, classical Marxism ascribed to the ‘Promethean project’ arguing that all of nature’s potential for production should be exploited for human benefit. Classical Marxism’s ideas about human-nature interactions include focus on human species-being, humanisation of nature and the use of material nature for creating abundance for communist society (Humphrey, 2002). Marxism focuses on ‘mastery’ over nature, assuming that productive interactions of humans with nature would alert them to conditions of its exploitation. However, Marxism concedes that this would be contained by the historically shaped capacity of the productive process to understand the limits of exploitation of nature (ibid). Through its core concerns with a theory of production and related class conflict, classical Marxist thought implied conflict between the bourgeoisie and proletariat over natural resources as a necessary part of the capture of means of production by the proletariat. The strongly productivist ethic and transformation of social relations based on liberation of productive forces in classical Marxism denied the possibility of environmental conflicts other than related to capture of conditions of production (Harvey, 1996) and ignored environmental claims arising from non-productive sources.

Maturing from Enlightenment thinking, the Modernist paradigm ascribed to scientific and technical rationality revealing ‘objective truths’ about society and nature, accompanied by a belief in human progress through instrumental exploitation of natural resources. The main problem solving discourses in High Modernity<sup>2</sup> ascribed to either administrative rationalism, economic rationalism or democratic pragmatism, expanded in section 1.3. Within these

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<sup>1</sup> like Malthusianism (doom due to population growth) and Social Darwinism (survival of the fittest)

<sup>2</sup> ranging from problem solving to radical discourses like Survivalism (finite natural resources, danger of overshoot and collapse) and its anti-environmentalist response- Prometheanism (overcoming limits through technology).



discourses, conflict over environmental resources among different actors is accepted as a product of structural conflicts in a hierarchical society. These are modernistic since they

*...recognise the existence of ecological problems, but treat them as **tractable** within the basic framework of the political economy of industrial society... to which **human problem solving devices** need to be turned.* (bold added), (Dryzek 1997:61)

Modernist survivalism led to the elaboration of environmental conflicts as ‘environmentally induced conflicts’ arising out of scarcity, thus recognising their political nature. However, these models have a largely Malthusian view- of population growth causing scarcity-induced migration, ethnic conflicts and military disputes. They focus on macro conflicts like inter-state water disputes, civil wars over access to land etc. (Ehlich et. al, 2000). An example, the Homer-Dixon model links decreases in the quality and quantity of renewable resources, population growth, and unequal resource access to increased natural resource scarcity; resulting in migration triggering ethnic conflicts, insurgency and rural rebellion, eventually weakening the ability of states to contain such conflicts (ibid). Such models have limited understandings of environmental conflicts as violent conflicts involving populations and large-scale actors, while claiming to have an ‘objective’ approach looking at rigid causalities and solutions. There is little appreciation of the conflict potential at the micro scale and of the nuances of power apart from the overt manifestation of power through brute strength. The role of discourses and the covert, idea manipulation modes of power exertion are ignored.

The scarcity based models of environmental conflicts point to the difference between environmental *problems* and environmental *conflicts*, revealed further through the Third World Political Ecology framework expanded later in this section. Environmental problems may be considered as social, economic or political problems occurring with the environment as their backdrop- the ‘objective’ state of natural resources prodding conflict and open to managerial remedies. Contrastingly, environmental conflicts have a strong understanding of various facets of power and social negotiation, rejecting pluralistic assumptions of equally empowered groups competing in the public arena. The difference between ‘environmentally induced conflict’ and environmental conflict is thus that the latter is seen as a product of the political and social power manipulation of the environment, which may or may not result in observable overt conflict. In this view, understanding environmental ‘problems’ as technical problems requiring expert intervention is seen as limiting and uni-dimensional (Bryant and Bailey, 1997), (Hajer, 1997), (Stott and Sullivan, 2000).

As modernity changed in character- from High Modernity propagating ‘eternal and immutable’ truths- to late modernity, an emphasis on a new reflexivity was seen through the

works of Beck, Giddens and Hajer (Thomas and Walsh, 1998). These authors are studied in some detail here as they have influenced much contemporary thinking on global environmental issues.

Though the work of late modern thinkers Habermas, Giddens and Beck have similarities in explaining causes of environmental degradation and sources of environmental conflicts, each author's focus is different. Beck re-defined ecological conflicts as having at stake the negatives- losses, devastation and threats emerging from effects of 'social progress' in general and scientific and technologically based production in particular. In Beck's 'risk society', the dominant focus of politics is the distribution of costs and risks of socio-economic development, fuelled by the emergence of unexpected ecological and health hazards (Barry, 1999). This view of equitable distribution of only environmental bads throughout society overlooks the iniquitous distribution of environmental goods. It ignores the environmental politics involving variously empowered sectors in society, instead concentrating on the politics and ethics of the laboratory through issues like genetically modified crops.

Habermas and Giddens stress the structural, institutional causes of environmental problems. Habermas considers late modernist society's environmental conflicts not as problems of distribution but concerning the 'grammar of forms of life'. He argues against the scientisation of politics so that the political discourse of environmental conflicts is not reduced to the technical discourse of environmental problems. Giddens' idea of environmental politics and conflicts is concerned with 'created environments' and alienation from nature (Giddens and Casell, 1993), (Goldbaltt, 1996). He argues that changing life patterns of late modernity result in environmental conflicts being generated at a global scale while neglecting the environmental impact of modern consumption and technologies (Goldbaltt, 1996).

The authors' views on human-nature interactions and prescriptions for handling environmental conflicts emerge from their conceptions of risk and global environmental change. Giddens investigates the sociological nature of urbanism and globalisation and their contribution to environmental degradation. In his view the agenda of the new global green politics is and should be related to late modern issues like globalisation, detraditionalisation, and manufactured uncertainty which combine together to create a process of reflexive modernisation (ibid). Beck argues that modernist society has transformed into a fundamentally different type, the risk society, driven in part by pervasive and historically unique levels of environmental danger and risk of unprecedented magnitude (Barry, 1999). Giddens' model of a radicalised late modernity parallels this, in which environmental social movements respond to newly perceived environmental risks and dangers. Giddens and Beck

propose alternate, radicalised social theories in relation to environmental degradation and consequent conflicts, though differently describing the nature and sources of this conflict. Giddens' framework for an alternate radical politics is about repair of damaged solidarities, different from Beck's focus on control of obsessive global, technological and ecological change (Giddens and Casell, 1993), (Goldblatt, 1996).

Beck criticises industrial society for its limited and limiting form of democracy and conceptualises environmental issues as moral issues that society needs to debate. Both Beck and Habermas argue for the democratisation of previously depoliticised arenas of economic decision-making (Barry, 1999), (Goldblatt, 1996). According to Habermas, only participatory debate at the widest level can actualise the level of moral articulation and power required to place the real implications, costs and consequences of environmental degradation on the political agenda. For this, he calls for defence of systematically threatened life-worlds. Modernisation, in his schema, takes the process of simultaneous and interconnected processes of social and cultural rationalisation (Goldblatt, 1996). Habermas generated a comprehensive reinterpretation of institutional organisations of modernity and used this framework to investigate the emergence of new social movements in response to environmental and other conflicts and gauge their potential political significance.

Thus, late modern thinking as exemplified by Giddens, Habermas and Beck shifts towards the theme of social, psychological and environmental costs, consequent of society's technical mastery over nature. The nature of modernity is redefined and is explained as a cause of the changed nature of environmental conflicts, though explained differently by the different authors. However, except Habermas, they overlook the politicised nature of the environment at a micro, local level, instead looking at the global politics of risk, urban habitus and destruction. Giddens' and Beck's conceptualisations seem to lack the immediate, political, power-related livelihoods dimension of ecological degradation- the struggle over natural resources and competing natural discourses - that is prominent in Third world contexts.

The Frankfurt school, of which Habermas was a proponent, contributed to the neo-Marxist critique of the possibility of environmental conflict. This critical theory pointed to the 'disenchantment of nature' that had occurred as a consequence of modernity, dangerous for both human society and the non-human world.

*Mastery over nature inevitably turns into mastery over men. A vicious circle results, imprisoning science and technology in a fateful dialectic of increasing mastery and increasing conflict* (Leiss, cited in Harvey, 1996:134)

This can be extrapolated to argue that the instrumental values affecting human-nature and human-human interactions can cause conflicts between differently positioned groups in society. Critical theorists of the Frankfurt school sought to make the cultural processes of capitalist reproduction more visible. Concerned that classical Marxism drew too rigid a distinction between the economic and the non-economic, Frankfurt schools' reappraisal of Marxism included a focus on ideology, culture and social transformations (Marston, 2004). The Frankfurt school's theory of ideology and focus on the 'culture industries' broadened Marxist analysis, while maintaining a narrow focus reducing social relations to class relations. Thus the Frankfurt school did not include voices of heterogeneously conceived 'others' in its arguments, though it refuted 'value free truths' arguing that all political and social activity is necessarily about contestations between competing claims and interests (ibid). The domination of weaker class groups through nature-transforming projects of capitalistic societies was a theme latent in the Frankfurt School's critical analysis (Harvey, 1996). Thus the Frankfurt School's critical theorists expanded Marxist thought to include environmental conflicts in dimensions other than those related to capture of conditions of production.

The more explicit discourse linking "otherness" to inequity resulting in environmental conflicts- emerged from the environmental justice (EJ) movement in America, based on the work of Western neo-Marxists like Barry Bluestone and Richard England. They argued that solving the environmental crisis by the market economy's rationality was impossible, as it ignored socially unequal costs of environmental degradation and burdens of pollution, giving rise to social conflicts (Gare, 1995). The concerns of the EJ movement are significant for this research since it focuses on environmental conflicts emerging due to environmental injustice towards grassroots groups. Understanding how the movement characterises justice will clarify how it characterises environmental injustice leading to conflicts. The central problem of environmental injustice considered by many in the movement is one of distributional inequity of environmental hazards and hazardous working conditions for people of certain race, class and gender because of "environmental racism" (Sandweiss, 1998),

*...any policy, practice, or directive that differently affects or disadvantages (whether intended or unintended) individuals, groups, or communities based on race or colour*  
(Bullard cited in Camacho, 1998:36)

This "racism" can be carried out on different bases of otherness like caste and regional origin. Though a structure-based explanation of environmental conflicts, it advocates group agency in challenging environmental injustice. Thus it recognises actors' claim-making abilities (Douglas, 1984), though in overt forms emphasising the moral basis for collective responsibility and action (Harvey, 1996). Though this approach can be criticised for

overlooking individual and micro-sites of injustice and not dis-aggregating beyond broad categories like race, gender or class, its explicit recognition of institutional racism is useful here.

However, equity alone does not complete the EJ movement's notion of justice. *Recognition*- of diversity of values towards the environment and of experiences of environmental injustice; and *participation*- in the process of environmental decision making- are integral to the EJ movement's conception of justice (Schlosberg, 2002). As Schlosberg (2002) and Shrader-Frechette (2002) explain, the movement integrates distributive equity and recognition by demanding greater public participation in the development, implementation and oversight of environmental policy-making.

This thesis focuses on the procedural or processual route to obtaining environmental justice in cases of environmental conflicts, arguing that this integrates concerns of equity and recognition. Without elevating participative justice above content or inequitable environmental risks, it is felt to be the route to attaining distributive justice (Schlosberg, 2002). In an environmental conflict the unmediated participation of all actors in collective decision making on environmental issues- without external influence, with *viable* choices, unaffected by force or the fear of reprisal- can lead to genuinely distributive outcomes satisfactory in their balance of trade-offs and benefits for the maximum number of actors.

Any conception of distributive justice is incomplete and unjust if it doesn't involve participation of the affected parties in arriving at solutions to the distributive problem in a collective, unmediated way. By accepting diversity- crucial for this topic as well as for environmental justice- the participative process also addresses the issue of recognition. In continuation of expanding the notion of justice in environmental justice, Shrader-Frechette (2002) elaborates on the Principles of Prima-Facie Political Equality (PPFPE), which focus on equality while admitting special treatment for some groups based on moral justifications. PPFPE focuses on the institutional and procedural norms for ensuring true justice, stating that  
*...a principle of participative justice is needed to help ensure that there are institutional and procedural norms that guarantee all people equal opportunity for consideration in decision-making (ibid:28).*

Hence due to the thesis's focus on assessing a procedural innovation and bolstered by the importance of procedural justice for achieving environmental justice in conflicts, this thesis argues for procedural justice as a means to achieving substantive justice. The theoretical and

practical concerns of the EJ movement are important here since environmental justice is a core concern of the thesis.

Coming to Postmodernity, its significant feature is the denial of modernist 'grand narratives'. Unlike modernity, postmodernity embraces the dissolution of structure and decentralisation in political, economic and cultural sites of life. Arguing that identity is a product of difference, post-structuralism demonstrates a new interest in voices of the 'other' suppressed in the modernist conception of society. As Derrida argues- racism, sexism, colonialism and normality violate the 'other' (Thomas and Walsh, 1998)

*Above all postmodern social theory takes a social constructionist approach, seeing nature and the environment, for example, as socially constructed categories, brought into being by the operation of discourses of power (Barry, 1999:167)*

The recognition of differences, experiences of the 'other' and non-instrumental valuation of nature led to green political thought focussing on voices of marginalised others like women, non-human nature etc. This has given rise to green radical discourses like ecofeminism, deep ecology etc., with their degree of anthropocentrism (importance of human interests) or ecocentrism (importance of nature's interests) determining their conceptualisation of environmental conflict (Eckersley, 1992). The more human-centered schools understand environmental conflicts as between competing human interests over nature, while more ecocentric schools understand these as between the rights of non-human nature and human interests. Humphrey (2002) demonstrates that the diverging conceptualisations of environmental conflicts- as between human rights to accessing nature, versus nature's rights for preservation- are resolvable by understanding the multiple humanisms shaping ecocentric and humanist schools of thought. Thus in postmodernity environmental conflicts are understood as arising from conflicting concerns and voices of the 'other'- whether they are marginalised human subjects in humanist theories like ecofeminism or eco-socialism; or the interest or 'voice' of nature itself – arguably also fulfilling certain human interests- in ecocentric theories like deep ecology.

Despite attaching varying values to human existence in relation to nature, the social construction of environmental conflicts is accepted in most postmodern schools of thought. This supports the idea of conflict arising from different actors' contesting environmental claims, agendas and conceptualisations. According to Hannigan, the conflicts themselves are not as important as how they are constructed by interactions of social actors, their power relations and types of knowledge deployed. What 'nature' and 'environment' mean varies

over different historical periods, from group to group and culture to culture (Hannigan, 1995). The nature of environmental conflict has changed,

*... “it has become discursive”. It can be seen as a “conflict of interpretation” in which a complex set of actors can be seen to participate in a debate in which the terms of the environmental discourse are set (Hajer, 1997:3)*

It is important here to address positivist criticism of postmodern thought. Functionalists have cautioned against the constructionist view's relativism, charging it with denying the existence of 'real' problems by making these problems subject to vagaries of social definition (Hannigan, 1995). However, the positivist critique of constructionism as substituting subjectivist and methodologically anarchist accounts of social and environmental phenomena in place of objective facts is misplaced. Constructivism does not reduce the social world to language narrowly understood as text or speech. Instead it makes an analogy between linguistic and social systems, thus providing a powerful means to conduct social and political analysis (Howarth, 2000).

Subscribing to social constructivism, Hajer (1997) views environmental conflicts as social conflicts over environmental emblems. Regulating environmental conflicts is seen not merely as matters of problem closure, but of power exertion by different actors to promote their discourse as the dominant environmental discourse. Within social constructivism, environmental claim making is imbued with multiple dimensions of power- overt and covert. However claim making is conceptualised as primarily an overt and visible activity targeted towards the state or scientific community. Hannigan (1995) outlines various tasks in framing environmental claims, audiences for these claims and factors influencing successful construction of environmental claims. However, he adopts a First World perspective examining global environmental issues like acid rain. This research follows a social constructivist view of environmental conflicts, accepting diverse conceptualisations of the environmental issue playing out in a political context and involving recognised claim making. The Third World Political Ecology (TWPE) approach is used to bring in a Third World focus.

Examining Bryant and Bailey (1997) clarifies the relevance of TWPE for this research. Over time the phrase political ecology has been used in different contexts and by authors with differing discipline backgrounds. In the 1970s it was identified with neo-Malthusian arguments about the human population's impact on the environment. As a reaction to these arguments radical geography developed in the 1980s, which was very influential for TWPE's development. This new face of political ecology inquired into interactions of political-economic structures with ecological processes. Extension of this political ecology to Third

World contexts drew on numerous theoretical sources, seeking a complex understanding of how power relations mediate human-nature interactions. TWPE has drawn on diverse theoretical sources like social movements theory, poststructuralist discourse analysis, globalisation theory etc. from varied research fields like cultural ecology, human ecology, environmental history etc (ibid). TWPE's social constructivism and concerns with the political dimension of human-environment interactions make it useful for this research.

TWPE understands Third World environmental conflicts as predominantly livelihood-based unlike the First World where aesthetic considerations often prevail (ibid). It continues the social constructivist argument of environmental conflicts being about the differential distribution of power and different constructs of conflicts. This livelihood-based view of environmental conflicts is linked with issues of environmental and social justice and the need for environmental democracy in Third World contexts.

*...environmental questions in the 'developing' world are so bound up with issues of poverty and distributive justice as to be virtually indistinguishable from them*  
(Dobson, 1998:17)

Thus TWPE lends itself to examining underlying inequities in environmental resources access and control. This is significant since a primary actor in environmental conflicts in this research is the state- with an ethical and legal mandate of impartial and just dealings with all citizens. The sophisticated conceptualisation of the various dimensions of power, expanded in section 1.5, including the covert dimensions of power is also useful for this topic.

This research focuses on grassroots and other actors' claim making in environmental conflicts using formal procedural mechanisms instituted for claim-making to local government bodies. Hence, differing conceptualisations of the urban environment and varying concerns shaping different actors' interactions with the urban environment are accepted here. Therefore environmental conflicts between actors are understood as derived from their differing conceptions of and values towards nature and the urban environment. This includes conflicts over livelihood and lifestyle issues and those derived from particular understandings of what constitutes the urban environment.

This conception of environmental conflicts fits within a TWPE approach, combined with a social constructivist and environmental justice approach. It recognises that environmental conflicts are sometimes not articulated overtly and that covert claim making can be recognised through activity indicating a claim. Such claim making through 'weapons of the weak' is expanded in section 1.2. Thus the concept of environmental conflicts used here is



primarily postmodernist, specifically post-structuralist- recognising multiple sites of power, voices of the 'other'- grassroots women and men, and multiple perceptions of issues. Since justice is central to this topic, the question arises of how to reconcile the idea of justice- commonly understood as a modernist idea- with a postmodern research framework. This is resolved here by drawing upon arguments for an action-oriented postmodernism with implications for political ecology with an action agenda straddling the modern and postmodern; and by using post-structural arguments of multiplicity of discourses and voices.

Gare (1995) argues for a new postmodernism which not only negates the cultural forms of modernity but which could *replace* these forms revealing the inadequacies of grand narratives that have dominated societies till now. He proposes the articulation of a new cosmology able to effectively challenge hegemonic cultures enabling it to orient people in *practice*, towards environmental sustainability. For this he proposes construction of a new 'grand narrative', formulated as a cosmology based on a philosophy of process. Unlike the mono-logical, oppressive modern grand narratives in which participants were subordinated to the rule of one, non-reflexive perspective; the new grand narrative would consist of polyphonic, dialogic narratives in which a multiplicity of perspectives are represented. This could

*... take into account the diversity of cultures and the multiplicity of local stories by which humanity has formed and is forming itself, and allow that any totalising perspective utilised to give coherence to the narrative must only be accepted provisionally, that it has rivals and it is always possible that in the future some better alternative might be developed (ibid:141).*

To reconcile postmodern multiplicity and need for action with concepts like justice, Gare (1995) argues for a reorientation of thinking away from the mechanistic world-orientation of present-day modern certainties as well as from the relativism of postmodern culture. In his version of the new postmodernism, activated through a new polyphonic and dialogic grand narrative, a 'politics of the rhizome' (ibid:161) is needed in which communities and regions come to terms with the uniqueness of their situation and act accordingly. The actions will be different according to decentralised, localised needs and time-based definitions of what is just.

Environmental justice is interpreted here using Gare's arguments, as justice that is not necessarily constant across time, space and context- but is a mutable, flexible and contextually changing 'truth' for which despite its changeability and multiplicity, action can be taken in different localised contexts to achieve certain participatively articulated goals of environmental justice *for that specific purpose and length of time*. The researcher argues for an understanding of action for environmental justice in a postmodern context as an action for

a momentary and specific truth- no longer the immutable, fixed 'truth' of modernity but its dissolution into multiplicity of definite 'truths' for specific purposes and times. Drawing upon Foucault's idea of regimes of truth, expanded in 1.5, Peet and Watts (1996) describe the post-structural view of truths, applicable to concepts like justice.

*In the poststructural view, truths are statements within socially produced discourses rather than objective "facts" about reality (ibid: 13).*

In continuation, Escobar (1996) clarifies the nature of post-structuralist political ecology, which while maintaining that nature is socially constructed maintains the *materiality* of political ecology's concerns. This parallels Peet and Watts (1996) arguing for a liberation ecology retaining the modernist notions of reasoned action on nature while maintaining a post-structural critique of capitalist rationality and wishing to substitute it with an 'environmental public sphere' in a transformed system of social and natural relations. In this they draw upon

*...that tradition of political ecology which sees imaginaries, discourses, and environmental practices as grounded in social relations of production and their attendant struggles (ibid: 263).*

Using these arguments it is possible to justify adopting a post-structuralist focus- on multiple perceptions, discursive constructions of environmental conflicts, voices of the 'other' and multiple sites of power- with an action agenda for environmental justice adapted from concerns of the environmental justice movement. Hence, concerns from the environmental justice movement, which accepts the possibility for action while accepting diversity and the 'other', were incorporated into the research framework.

Another justification for this framework derives from the argument that among the several truths accepted by a post-structuralist framework, it accept a concern for the apparently modernist notion of justice in environmental justice as one of the truths articulated by one of the voices in the research problem's universe. Here this voice is the researcher's, reflexively revealing her own position as an environmental justice advocate, as discussed above. By recognising multiple sites of discontent and power the environmental justice school is compatible with post-structural conceptions of environmental conflicts. Explicitly dealing with conflict due to material conditions of lives and livelihoods of 'marginalised' peoples, it includes a radical, democratic, green component wanting to incorporate ecological issues into a larger social justice agenda for change (Harvey, 1996), (Hofrichter, 1993). Thus, environmental conflicts are conceptualised here as concerned with claim-making by the 'other' in a social justice framework, while not overlooking the materialist considerations

affecting such actors' livelihoods and the politics inherent in claim-making. Still incomplete, this conception has been further elaborated.

Several authors suggest that Third World grassroots environmental claims are primarily livelihood related (Bryant and Bailey, 1997), (Ghai and Vivian, 1995). Notwithstanding an identification of a materialist focus with Third World grassroots environmental claims, evidence shows that multiple rationales exist for the 'environmentalism of the poor' (Guha et al, 1997), though a material primacy seems to exist. Guha has characterised Third World 'environmentalism of the poor' as conflicts between 'ecological omnivores'<sup>3</sup> and 'ecosystem people'<sup>4</sup>, often creating ecological refugees<sup>5</sup> (ibid). In this characterisation, a significant proportion of Third World grassroots environmental conflicts arise out of resource shortages between competing groups of resource users.

However, as Martinez-Alier illustrated, environmentalism of the poor is not always materialist and also contains non-material concerns. This characterisation explains Southern environmentalism in terms of non-material (especially religious) values and explains peasant women's environmentalism as non-material with essentialist identification with nature (ibid). This essentialist identification in Third World ecofeminism (Mies and Shiva, 1993) has been criticised as an idea imposed by outsiders on the motives and claims of peasant women (Leach et. al, 2000). However, most peasant women and men do exhibit some non-material solidarity with nature, with its strength determined by their level of interaction with nature and importance of nature-based religious rituals and spirituality for them (ibid). In light of rural actors' 'varieties of environmentalism' (Guha, et. al, 1997), this research assesses the importance of non-material concerns in the environmental claims of urban grassroots communities.

As highlighted earlier, most TWPE work has been in rural contexts, while this research looks at the urban context. Different rationales might prompt grassroots environmental claim making in Third World urban and rural areas- arising from the contextual differences in their livelihoods, and lifestyle links with the natural environment. Evans highlights this difference extending the political ecology framework to urban areas and the concept of livelihoods to liveability-marrying distributional equity and social justice with environmental sustainability in urban contexts (Evans, 2002). Using this conceptualisation of urban grassroots actors'

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<sup>3</sup> individuals and groups with the power to capture, transform and use natural resources from a catchment area much larger than their immediate locality (Guha et al, 1997:12)

<sup>4</sup> primarily rural grassroots actors heavily dependant on natural resources of their immediate locality (ibid)

<sup>5</sup> rural peasants turned urban slum dwellers making a living in cities in a relationship of dependency with omnivores (ibid)

environmental concerns, it can be argued that their rationales may not only be materialist. Under the influences of the post-material environmentalism of other actors or the politics of environmental claim-making, urban grassroots actors may alter or combine material and non-material rationales, or give up one in favour of the other.

## **1.2 Informal claim making: grassroots collective action for environmental claims:**

Moving to the practice of claim making, environmental claim making can be either overt or covert using formal or informal channels. The distinction between formal and informal channels is based here on the primary agent in the claim-making process.

*The terms 'formal' (modern, bureaucratic, organisational) and 'informal' (social, traditional) institutions are convenient but misleading. Traditional and social institutions may indeed be highly formalised, although not necessarily in the bureaucratic forms we recognise. Much literature also exists in organisational studies about the informal dimension of organisations. An alternate terminology might characterise institutions as 'organisational' and/or 'socially embedded', more nearly representing our actual usage of the terms. Obviously the two terms are not mutually exclusive, the dichotomy is a false one (Cleaver, 2000:55)*

Notwithstanding this argument, for ease of understanding and by popular convention, the research uses 'formal channels' as representing bureaucratic and legislative state-based channels, and 'informal channels' denoting community-based channels and non-state channels like political party mass organisations. However, these are not dichotomous categories regarding organisational functioning and organisational culture. Section 1.3 discusses formal channels, and this section expands informal community-based channels for Third World grassroots environmental claim making.

Third World grassroots actors use varied overt claim-making strategies ranging from relying on formal channels to direct action. Grassroots direct action for the environment is explained as not just for advancing or defending their economic and political interests, but also as struggles over meaning and moral values (Guha et.al, 1997). This 'vocabulary of protest' is both a statement of purpose and belief and comprises of a range of actions<sup>6</sup> (ibid), (Ghai and Vivian, 1995). Significant literature exists on grassroots direct action in environmental conflicts and will not be analysed here.

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<sup>6</sup> Like shows of strength through demonstrations; disruption of economic life through blockades; actions targeted at authority figures and actions like hunger strikes putting moral pressure on society.

Understanding grassroots covert claim-making strategies is important since actors who choose to ignore formal and informal channels of overt claim-making may indicate an environmental claim through covert strategies. This form of claim making, 'everyday resistance', is used by grassroots actors when open confrontation with powerful actors is difficult (Bryant and Bailey, 1997). Scott (1985) has called such everyday resistance the 'weapons of the weak', which he sees in a range of discursive and practical activities, such as in

*...ridicule, truculence, in irony, petty acts of non-compliance, in foot dragging, in dissimulation, in resistant mutuality, in the disbelief in elite homilies, in the steady, grinding efforts to hold one's own against overwhelming odds- a spirit and practice that prevents the worst and promises something better* (Scott, 1985:350)

Everyday resistance was widely used for asserting grassroots environmental claims against the enclosure of commons during the colonial era (Bryant, 1997), (Guha, 1989), (Peluso, 1992). However, everyday resistance has clear limits in indicating claims and expressing resistance. Overt claim making using collective action is a more frequently used grassroots strategy in Third World environmental conflicts (Bryant and Bailey, 1997). Hence, it is pertinent to understand collective action, the conditions for its success and its implications for environmental claim making.

Collective action is characterised as swinging between 'rational choice' (also called 'resource mobilisation paradigm') and 'social being' models. In the former, cumulative self-interest determines individual action (Olson, 1965), while in the latter, culture and social norms determine individual action (Putnam, 1993). The rational choice model proposes that individuals join collective action groups only when benefits outweigh costs of participation (Peet and Watts, 1996) (Rydin and Pennington, 2000). Collective action's 'free rider problem' involving large anonymous groups prompts rational, utility maximising individuals to free ride on other group members' efforts. Olson saw this problem overcome in small group situations by the possibility of mutual sanctions imposed by members known to each other (Rydin et al., 2000). Other barriers to collective action in this model are weak commitment, passive membership in collective action groups, capture by special interest groups and rational ignorance- where it is rational for people to remain ignorant about issues if the chances of success through collective action is low (ibid). The only way that collective action can function in such conditions is through mobilisation by outsiders using incentives and disincentives. However, Ostrom (1990) demonstrated local communities' capacity to supply their own mechanisms to overcome such problems in a dynamic process of institution building (ibid). Putnam demonstrated the importance of social networks and social relations in sustaining collective action.

*Voluntary co-operation is easier in a community which has inherited a substantial stock of social capital, in the form of norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement. Social capital here refers to features of social organisation, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating co-ordinated actions (Putnam, 1993:167)*

Hirschman (1982) called these networks, trust and norms as ‘moral resources’ which increase rather than decrease with use, depleting if not used (ibid). Also called communitarianism, this approach conceptualises people not as rational individuals but as socially embedded agents, emphasising the “web-like” horizontal networks in solving dilemmas of collective action as also important for claim making. Social capital is understood as created among grassroots actors for coping with social and economic subsidiarity through norms like mutual help and gift giving (Ghai and Vivian, 1995), (Rocheleau et. al, 1996). The status equivalence among grassroots actors has been hypothesised to create horizontal networks demonstrated to be stronger than vertical networks for sustaining collective action. In their study of development projects, Brown and Ashman (1996) found that social capital was positively associated with programme success. They found the two types of social capital they distinguished- grassroots co-operation and NGO mediated co-operation- acting as substitutes for each other, implying that grassroots co-operation could sustain collective action by itself.

Though the ‘rational choice’ and ‘social being’ models of collective action describe the rationale behind collective action differently, at the heart of both lies a pervasive functionalism and economism.

*It is assumed that people will find it in their rational interest to participate, due to assurances of benefits to ensue (particularly in relation to ‘productive projects’) or, to a much lesser extent, because they perceive this as socially responsible and in the interest of community development as a whole (particularly in relation to public good projects) (Cleaver, 2000:48)*

Cleaver instead characterises incentives for collective action as based on exigencies of daily life, primacy of reproductive concerns and complex and diffuse reciprocity occurring over life times. For Cleaver, incentives for collective action arise from overlaps between individual rationality and social embeddedness. Social structure and historical circumstances combine with the exercise of individual agency in influencing participation in collective action (ibid). In this characterisation, grassroots collective action for environmental claim-making is describable as embedded in social relations, requiring maintenance of numerous grey areas open to continuous negotiation and compromise between all actors, on a principle of conflict

avoidance and on significant decision-making occurring through the practical adaptation of customs, norms and the stimulus of everyday interactions (ibid). These processes are further qualified showing how norms are negotiated through manipulation of power relations in communities, and how actors hide their real rationales through ‘frontstage’ and ‘backstage’ behaviours (Scott, 1985). Thus grassroots actors make collective claims about environmental conflicts using collective action situated in multiple ways with respect to the environment, with their multi-dimensional identities increasing scope for variation, negotiation and accommodation.

Claim making through collective action is not always an unmitigated positive for grassroots actors. It can have high costs and may reinforce divisions among grassroots actors based on elements of their social identity, which act as sites around which claim making is negotiated in informal channels. For successful claim making and forwarding, informal channels extract social and economic costs from grassroots actors, as they work using patron-client relationships between community elites and grassroots actors (Fox, 1996). Social capital’s dark side emphasises the difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’ in communities- causing identity-based exclusions (Taylor, 2000). Collective action based on only community interests can have negative outcomes for environmental issues and sustainability. Evans (2002) highlights the problems of parochiality of communities and the tendency of romanticising community action by assuming grassroots communities’ ‘natural’ stewardship of the environment. The pitfalls of grassroots actors’ sole dependence on informal channels for environmental claim-making point to the need for increasing their access to formal channels.

Another important aspect of claim making through non-formal channels is that of negotiability, understood as

*...law as a social process, transactions as subject to multiple meaning and exchange as open-ended and multi-dimensional rather than single stranded and definitive.*  
(Berry 1993 cited in Roy, 2000:137)

Informal channels function using this negotiability, also mirrored in the informal aspect or the everyday politics of the formal channels’ behaviour towards grassroots and other marginalised groups (Roy, 2000). In section 1.7 the importance of this negotiability is explained in maintaining the regime and its presence as a characteristic of grassroots claim making. Here it is sufficient to stress negotiability as a significant factor causing vulnerability of Kolkata’s grassroots groups to control by political parties and other cliques.

Non-participation in claim making also needs consideration. Numerous examples exist where individuals find it more beneficial or habitually familiar to not participate in collective action (Adams et. al, 1997). Non-participation and non-compliance may be both a 'rational' strategy and an unconscious practice embedded in routine, social norms and acceptance of the status quo. Investigating non-participation in collective action is useful for this research as it would help point to those situations where this becomes a valid choice, thus indicating drawbacks of the informal channels for grassroots claim making.

### **1.3 Environmental discourses of formal channels:**

It is relevant to establish how formal channels understand environmental claims, as how they define and contest such 'categories of knowledge' (Roy 2000) shapes how they address them. The very mechanisms of knowledge gathering and policy implementation can create possibilities for interventions in fields of power (ibid) made of differently empowered actors. Hence, it is important to study the discourses that actively shape the formal channels' organisational culture (Levy, 1992) as well as its constitution of political actors, interests and institutions (Mason, 1999). Discourses shape motives for political action, including actors' perceptions of social and environmental needs (ibid). As already discussed, formal channels comprising of political representatives and bureaucrats continue to follow modernist discourses in majority of the world. Administrative rationalism is an important discourse shaping formal channels' conceptualisations of the environmental problematic and the possibility of claims arising. This modernist discourse is defined as

*...the problem-solving discourse emphasising the role of the expert rather than producer/consumer in social problem solving, stressing social relationships of hierarchy rather than equality or competition (Dryzek, 1997:63)*

In this discourse, society is viewed as made of rational utility-maximising individuals subordinated to a 'neutral and apolitical' state. Formal environmental regulations work through command and control regimes of pollution control agencies (ibid). Administrative rationalism is technocentric- putting faith in the application of rational and "value-free" scientific and managerial techniques by a professional elite, who regard the natural environments as exploitable 'resources' (Carter, 1999), (Eckersley, 1992), (Marston, 2004), (Mason, 1999), (Torgerson, 1998).

The drawbacks of this approach are apparent for the way formal channels understand and handle environmental issues. First, it creates an 'implementation deficit'- a substantial gap between what legislation and high level executive decisions declare will be achieved and what is actually achieved at street level in terms of environmental standards (Dryzek, 1997).



Secondly, its technocentric comprehension of environmental issues often does not match with other actors' understanding of the environmental problematic. Due to the centralised nature of decision making in this discourse, the complexity of an environmental problem understandable only by collating varied knowledge, gets ignored in favour of a single easily operationalisable understanding (Torgerson, 1998), (Dryzek, 1997). Insufficient focus on the various actors and conflicting interests who are part of the environmental policy and implementation process, and a de-politicised conception of this process (Marston, 2004) are further drawbacks of administrative rationalism.

Administrative rationalism's strategy of disaggregating a problem into components and then assigning these to different bureaucratic departments results in large bureaucratic structures with functionally differentiated departments, whose co-ordination become extremely difficult in multi-dimensional environmental issues. Negotiating these bureaucratic complexities proves to be a fundamental hurdle for grassroots claim-makers. Ignoring subtle but crucial local differences makes administrative rationalism largely ineffective in handling environmental claims. Lastly, administrative rationalism allows for pressures to be exerted upon the administration by external interests such as businesses and investors. This also occurs through 'back door' methods involving corruption of low paid officials in centralised, hierarchical structure of the bureaucracy (Bryant and Bailey, 1997)

Democratic pragmatism is another discourse important for formal channels in liberal democracies. Democratic Pragmatism recognises citizens debating issues through interactive political relationships mixing competition and co-operation. A pluralistic view of the citizen group recognises many different agents, with motivations that are a mix of material self-interest and multiple conceptions of public interest. However, political power manipulations by agents such as business remove the possibility of disinterested, public-spirited democratic arguments that democratic pragmatism ascribes to. When considering grassroots environmental claims, this discourse overlooks the reality of grassroots marginalisation due to its conceptualisation of a relationship of equality across citizens (Bryant and Bailey, 1997), (Doyle et. al, 2001), (Dryzek, 1997).

Economic rationalism, with its commitment to the intelligent deployment of market mechanisms to achieve public ends, also shapes formal discourse. The main argument of this discourse is that the environment (seen as natural resources) is best managed by privatisation or using market mechanisms like green taxes, tradable pollution permits, tradable quotas etc. Overlooking of citizens except as economically motivated individuals, denial of the state's agency, and inability to conceptualise any value for the environment other than economic

worth make this discourse unsuitable for appreciating grassroots actors' environmental claims (Bryant and Bailey, 1997), (Dryzek, 1997), (Goodin, 1992).

Of these discourses, administrative rationalism and democratic pragmatism are more relevant here, as the political channels of representation and bureaucracy that this research seeks to investigate subscribe primarily to these discourses. Evans sums up the problems of these discourses for grassroots environmental action and claims.

*The apparent inability of existing states to combine capacity for effective public action with openness to grassroots initiative and responsiveness to community needs defines what is lacking in existing public institutions* (Evans, 2002)

#### **1.4 Exclusions due to discursive hegemony and creation of discourse coalitions:**

The technocentric discourses of administrative rationalism and democratic pragmatism ascribe to the 'standard view' of environmental management (Harvey, 1996) and value 'scientific big talk' (Stott and Sullivan, 2000). The standard view of environmental management advocates a remedial science to deal with environmental 'incidents', regulation through economic and other incentives, reliance on scientific evidence to prove environmental impacts, and restricting environmental problems to the domain of expert discourse (ibid).

This reliance on scientific evidence is disempowering for non-scientists, as the language of science is a barrier to mutual understanding. The 'language games' of formal science are described as 'Big Talk'-important, 'male', metonymic, serious, official, correct, objective and emphatic. By contrast non-scientists' narrative knowledge is trivialised as 'small talk'-unimportant, 'female', metaphoric, trivial, popular, incorrect, subjective and phatic (Stott and Sullivan, 2000). This results in discursive hegemony of 'scientific big talk' in claim accepting channels ascribing to administrative rationalism and/or democratic pragmatism. This shapes conceptualisation of environmental issues for formal channels; resulting in marginalisation of actors not subscribing to these discourses.

Hence due to their inability to follow the claim-making format required by formal channels, grassroots actors' environmental claims can get excluded from these channels. By ignoring power relationships and discursive dimensions surrounding environmental claims, both the state-ascribed discourses overlook the impact of grassroots actors' subject positions on their environmental claim making. There is significant literature on the formation of hegemonic discursive coalitions between societal elite and formal channels. Apart from the discursive hegemony based on scientific big talk, these 'dominant actor coalitions' also affect the functioning of the formal channels. This is discussed next.

A discourse coalition consists of actors subscribing to a common discourse and hence sharing a particular way of thinking and talking. Discourse coalitions exist in the form of a coalition of actors ascribing to a discourse which often acts as the dominant discourse for the decision making state. Hajer explains that

*Discourse analysis then investigates... how a particular framing of a discussion makes certain elements appear fixed or appropriate while other elements appear problematic (Hajer, 1997)*

Coalitions formed in the political arena, such as 'natural' coalitions between states and businesses derive from a similarity of interests, shaped by the common discourses the seemingly 'natural' coalition partners ascribe to (Bryant and Bailey, 1997). Discourse coalitions shape the claim-making process accepted as valid by formal channels. Grassroots discourses may have little overlap with that of the state dominated by such coalitions, making them unlikely to understand each other's point of view.

In the liberal democratic state, the effectiveness of the participatory process in bringing about substantively just resolution of environmental conflicts depends on the *discursive ability* of the participant stakeholders in presenting their argument. According to Habermas, participatory conflict resolution occurs through the discursive form of communication.

*...the discussion and resolution of problematic validity claims, free of strategic influence or coercion, **by the better argument alone** (bold added) constitutes the discursive form of communication (ibid:60)*

This insistence on decisions made by the better argument alone can seriously undermine the effectiveness of certain actors in stating their claims and may push them towards extra-institutional resistive and opposing claim-making practices. At each stage of the claim-making process, the lack of discursive ability and claim making proficiency by grassroots actors or their representatives can alter the nature of their claim and reduce its effectiveness in presentation. The process by which any claims are made involves a degree of social and political savvy and ability to mould the claim according to the audience and occasion. Best has elaborated the components of claim making as

*...grounds or data which furnish the basic facts which shape the ensuing claims-making discourse... warrants (which) are justifications for demanding that action be taken...and conclusions (which) spell out the action which is needed to alleviate or eradicate a social problem (Best cited in Hannigan, 1995:35)*

According to this description, the claim-making process requires actors to have access to facts, produce justifications for claims and propose actions for them- steps requiring specific, multiple skills from the actor. Further, the entire exercise has to confirm to the institutional framework. The claim-making process has been shown to be strongly dependent on the claim-makers' identity and claim-making style. For a positive outcome, claim-makers must tailor this style to the situation and audience (ibid). These characteristics of the claim-making process illustrate its complexities. Though it cannot be automatically assumed that grassroots actors are not able to grasp these nuances, their weak structural positions in society can create many obstacles in their path.

Table 1.A outlines the various tasks involved in making effective environmental claims to formal channels. It reaffirms that environmental claim making to formal claim-accepting bodies is a complex activity requiring a range of skills and knowledge. Each of the activities outlined depends on technical knowledge, scientific and legal proof, ability to manipulate the media, need for networking and use of rhetorical strategies to capture popular imagination.

Grassroots environmental claims may suffer from the inability to capture 'popular imagination' and by their lower ability than other groups to manipulate the media or network with claim acceptors like bureaucrats and politicians. Further, grassroots claims may not be able to meet the crucial requirement of scientific and legal proof. Such a view of environmental claim making takes this activity away from grassroots actors, lodging it firmly within the sphere of experts, echoing arguments outlined previously. Such a view of environmental claim making necessitates involvement of representatives on behalf of grassroots actors, who may face representational hurdles of their own. Further, natural resources in liberal democratic frameworks are either state-owned or privately owned. There is no legal recognition of common pool resources, crucial for large numbers of grassroots actors. Consequently grassroots environmental claims regarding reduced access to such resources often do not have a valid legal standing (Fernandez, 1998).

In view of the constraints to claim making through formal and informal channels, states put in place procedural innovations for increasing the accessibility of formal channels for 'marginalised' actors, discussed further in section 1.8. The next section focuses on sites of subsidiarity- those elements of identity that cause actors' social marginalisation and subsidiarity.

Task	Assembling	Presenting	Contesting
<b>Primary Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discovering the problem</li> <li>• Naming the problem</li> <li>• Determining the basis of the claim</li> <li>• Establishing parameters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commanding attention</li> <li>• Legitimizing the claim</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invoking action</li> <li>• Mobilising support</li> <li>• Defending ownership</li> </ul>
<b>Central Forum</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Science</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mass Media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Politics</li> </ul>
<b>Predominant layer of proof</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scientific</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moral</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal</li> </ul>
<b>Predominant Scientific role(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trend Spotter</li> <li>• Theory Tester</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applied policy analyst</li> </ul>
<b>Potential Pitfalls</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of clarity</li> <li>• Ambiguity</li> <li>• Conflicting scientific evidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low visibility</li> <li>• Declining novelty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-optation</li> <li>• Issue fatigue</li> <li>• Countervailing claims</li> </ul>
<b>Strategies for success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating an experiential focus</li> <li>• Streamlining knowledge</li> <li>• Scientific division of labour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linkage to popular issues and causes</li> <li>• Use of dramatic verbal and visual imagery</li> <li>• Rhetorical tactics and strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking</li> <li>• Developing technical expertise</li> <li>• Opening policy windows</li> </ul>

**Table 1.A: Tasks involved in making effective formal environmental claims**

Source: Hannigan, 1995:42

## **Part B: Sites of subsidiarity: grassroots exclusion from formal channels**

### **1.5 Sites of exclusion- elements of identity:**

Exclusion of various social actors from political life, i.e., from political discussions and decision-making can be characterised as external and internal (Young, 2000). Most targeted by policy initiatives, external exclusion keeps some individuals and groups out of the fora of democratic debate or decision-making. Internal exclusions occur after individuals and groups overcome external exclusions and begin to be nominally included in discussion and decision-making. Despite this inclusion, their claims are sidelined from the formal decision making process because

*...terms of discourse make assumptions that some do not share, the interaction privileges specific styles of expression, the participation of some people is dismissed as out of order (ibid.:53)*

Foucault reveals the power dimension of these exclusions (Gledhill, 2000), arguing against reducing power to the negative control over the will of others through prohibition (Foucault, 1980), as in Young's concept of external exclusions. Foucault instead stresses the positive 'productive aspect of power' (ibid)- which produces discourse and forms knowledge. This leads to production of 'regimes of truth',

*Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics of truth': that is, the type of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (ibid: 131).*

Thus 'regimes of truth' define dominant forms of social knowledge in a particular context, actors whose knowledge is considered valid and valid articulations of this knowledge. More than merely ideologies legitimating oppressive relations, regimes of truth underpin 'technologies of domination' over people by defining a field of knowledge accepted as truth (ibid). Thus Foucault's arguments point to internal exclusions faced by grassroots actors, due to a regime of truth that invalidates grassroots knowledge, claim forms or the actors themselves.

Hence, grassroots actors face both kinds of exclusion- external, by being completely left out from decision-making fora; and from internal exclusion, by their claims being sidelined and not considered valid in such fora. This is expanded in section 1.7. A common institutional error while designing mechanisms for reducing external exclusion of grassroots actors is the emphasis on the similarities between them based on their subsidiarity from larger social life.

*The 'solidarity' models of community upon which much development intervention is based, may acknowledge social stratification but nevertheless assume some underlying commonality of interest... More realistically we may see the community as sites of both solidarity and conflict, shifting alliances, power and social structures (Cleaver, 2000:44).*

Homogenous conceptualisation of grassroots groups masks the multiple identities that exist for an individual, placing the individual within different social networks and affecting their agency differently. Structural social groups are collections of persons similarly positioned in interactive and institutional relations that condition their opportunities and life prospects (Young, 2000). Structural inequalities privilege some people, relatively disadvantaging others. Position in social structures conditions individual lives by enabling and constraining possibilities of action, and relations of superiority and deference. However subjects are not only conditioned by their positions in structured social relations but are also agents in their

own rights (ibid). The role of Agency's is crucial in processing experiences and shaping action, and the role of structure in both enabling and constraining such choices (Giddens, 1984), (Young, 2000). Kaviraj reaffirms the importance of structural factors and agency, stressing that structural factors shape and constrain agency and provide a horizon of historical possibilities,

*...yet these are not invulnerable to pressures, small, infinitesimal shifts caused by individual improvisation in face of historical or situational necessity. (Kaviraj, 1997:10)*

The concept of subject positions derived from positions in social structures is relevant here in understanding strategic deployment of identity in the infinitesimal struggles against binding structure. Törrönen (2001) describes the post-modern actor's dissolution into a multiplicity of subject positions, without any predetermined relation to one another and which cannot be fixed in any kind of stable unity. This does not imply dissolution into nothingness, but a multiplicity of subject positions breaking the notion of a fixed identity consistently shaping perceptions and actions in all situations. Subject positions provide actors viewpoints and classificatory schemas to think and act in concrete situations. Instead of assuming that identification occurs automatically, the view that one situationally identifies with the various subject positions circulating around (ibid) helps understand the fluidity of identity. Thus subject positions are chosen by persons strategically (though not always *consciously*) to address a situation (ibid), (Kaviraj, 1997). Subject positions provide guidelines for deciding what should be considered sanctioned, normal and desirable in a particular situation or cultural environment in which a subject acts (Sarup, 1996 cited in Törrönen, 2001).

Understanding subject positions as conditioning rather than determining identities addresses the misconception that social group members have some recipe of 'authentic' group identity with correct 'ingredients' of class, gender, religion etc. Mouffe questions the tendency of essentialising which reduces individuals to a common essence by fixing them in categories like "women", "men", "working class" etc,

*...the feeling of belonging to a group or community does not arise from the necessities of biology or social structure but evolves from "family resemblance", from partial and momentary identification with the subject positions that are articulated (bridged) in connection with each other by a theory which appeals successfully to common experiences (Mouffe, 1995 cited in Törrönen, 2001:317)*

The relevance of this fluidity and strategic organisation of identity becomes apparent in chapters five and six where actors in different claim making situations choose subject

positions strategically. Multiple elements of identity are not singular, independent entities, but are combined into a 'third term' or articulated into forming 'selfhood'. Articulation is not just how identities combine, but also consciousness of what one really is,

*..a product of historical processes to date which have deposited an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory. Identity marks the conjuncture of our past with the social, cultural and economic relations we live within. Each individual is a synthesis not only of existing relations but of the history of these relations. He is a précis of the past. Making our identities can only be understood within the context of this articulation, in the intersection of our everyday lives with the economic and political relations of subordination and domination. (Rutherford, 1990:19)*

Hence, history and the past are crucial in forming our articulated selves and shape our identity and praxis at an everyday level (Ray, 1999), emerging as catalysts for perceptions and actions in moments of conflict. Life histories are narrated as an interpretation of the past in the light of the present. This 'present history' (Roy, 2003) shaped by our articulated identities is drawn upon in moments of conflict providing justifications for present perceptions and action. Reactions of social actors to conflicting claims derive from such articulated selfhoods and are narrated as present histories. Earlier life history shapes the possible choices for a subject in identifying with subject positions while acting in a situation (Törrönen, 2001).

Along with fluidity of identities and their articulation, their potential as sites of political antagonism is important (Rutherford, 1998). This antagonism could take the form of the opposition between the centre (the identified Self) and margin (the Other). The centre expels its anxieties, contradictions and irrationalities onto the subordinate Other- filling it with the antithesis of its own identity. It is in the processes and representations of marginality (the defining of the Other) that the violence, antagonisms and aversion that are at the core of the dominant discourses and identities become manifest (ibid). Such boundaries reflecting the deep antagonisms between Self and Other and the impact of identities on discourse and practice are visible in the politics of claim making expanded in chapters five and six.

## **1.6 Elements of identity as nodes of negotiation:**

Having discussed the impact of subject positions and articulated identities on the possibility for structural changes and on agency of individuals and groups, it is relevant to examine a few elements of social structure that condition identity. In post-independence India caste, religious identities and regional loyalty were revitalised in political and social life (Kaviraj, 1997). Along with class and gender, this section examines some of these elements of identity.



**Class:** Class analysis begins with an account of positions in the functioning of systems of ownership, finance, investment, production and service provision (Young, 2000). People are born into a particular class position, having enormous consequences for the opportunities and privileges they have in their lives.

*Class position is defined first in terms of relations of production, class privilege also produces and is supported by an array of assets such as residence, social networks, access to high quality education and cultural supplements, and so on. All of these operate to reinforce the structural differentiation of class (ibid:96)*

Marxist theorising as well as liberal praxis illustrate the importance of class in defining identity. The Marxist emphasis on supremacy of the productive/economic layer among the various layers of hierarchic structuration in society stresses class above all other structures of society (Kaviraj, 1997). The economistic materialism of classical Marxism reduces all social relations to the determining presence of class, seeking to prove the underlying homogeneity of different identities. Bourdieu argues that Marxist theory produces analyses of ‘classes on paper’, which defines the positions of social groups in terms of an objective account of their place in a socio-economic structure (Gledhill, 2000). It then infers their *probable* actions in terms of material interests- based on the relationship of social groups to economic capital. Bourdieu criticises this view arguing that social identities and systems of social distinction are not based solely on this relationship to economic capital,

*The **actual** rather than **theoretical** consciousness of members of a class is the product of practical historical experiences of living-in-the-world. This involves all the different dimensions of power relations and not simply the economic ones. (bold added) (ibid)*

The ‘New Left’ in the West, which tried to assimilate foci other than just class in its politics, did not move away from the theoretical base of a classical Marxist conception (Rutherford, 1998). Neo-Marxist socialists alleged that new social movements like feminist, indigenous and anti-racist movements undermine class solidarity. For them, emancipatory politics required that people put aside all other differences and unite for an egalitarian society predicated on class equality and justice (Gitlin, 1995), (Harvey, 1996). The confusion lay in the assumption that other subject positions like gender, race etc. had no articulation with class (Rutherford, 1997). Such emphasis on class abounds.

In the Indian context, factors like caste, ethnicity and gender create further inequalities within the class structure (Sharma, 2000). Unlike the caste system, social stratification predicated on class is an ‘open system’ allowing social mobility where persons move more or less as free

agents from one stratum to another (Jayaraman, 1981). Indian Marxists also attempted to mould all elements of identity into class logic, most apparent in the case of caste, where attempts were made to translate caste difference into class distinction (Kaviraj, 1997). Class retains primacy in Indian Marxist discourse despite being modulated to show overlaps with other elements of structural positioning. Class also has a hegemonic presence in popular as well as policy discourse, reflected in the formal channel's attitudes towards gender and other elements of identity.

**Caste:** A system of social stratification, caste was and remains important in Indian political and social life. Caste is a 'closed system' such that members of the subordinate stratum cannot ascend to the level of superordinates (Runciman, 1968)<sup>7</sup>. The modern view of caste is derived from its characterisation by colonial administrators and academics. The colonial enumeration of caste groups and official tabulation of hierarchy highlighted the link of social and economic advantage with caste. New terms of discourse on caste were introduced and some changes in the caste system itself brought about, most importantly the formation of a collective, trans-local identity among 'lower castes' with the consciousness of being 'oppressed' by the traditional hierarchic system. The categories of ritual hierarchy were confronted by new categories like 'depressed' and 'oppressed' castes (Kaviraj, 1997), (Sheth, 2000).

The emergence of caste in politics started with affirmative action policies- 'reservations' for lower castes in jobs, education and economic allotments. By the late 1970s a small but significant section of lower-caste groups had entered the bureaucracy and other non-traditional occupations, including a highly vocal 'lower caste' political leadership. This accelerated in the 1980s with caste gaining socio-political stature, creating deep cleavages between 'upper caste' and 'lower caste' groups in bureaucracies and becoming increasingly important in electoral politics (Sheth, 2000). Consequently, Indian politics and administration show high influence of caste-based lobbies promoting their own interests. Though assuming caste-based rationale affecting the work of all bureaucrats would be fallacious, the significant strength of caste-based factions does cause caste-based discrimination (Guru, 2000).

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<sup>7</sup> In orthodox Hinduism caste determines people's position in a social hierarchy. Main features of the caste system are a) hierarchy, with the highest caste- Brahmins at the top and "untouchables" at the bottom, b) practice of untouchability premised on the idea of 'pollution', c) existence of a plurality of castes separated from each other by endogamy, occupation and commensality, d) a system where sanctions are applied to maintain customs and rules; and e) a relationship of caste with political organisation (Sheth, 2000:237).

The strong overlap between class and caste is seen through the colonisation, co-option and opposition characterising the relationship between dominant rural castes and local state officials and institutions in India (Jeffrey and Lerche, 2000), (Sheth, 2000). Jeffrey and Lerche's study in rural Uttar Pradesh demonstrated the impact of caste-class identity on patron-client relationships between local bureaucrats and non-state actors, as well as on political representation. Lower caste groups repeatedly belonged to lower class levels and had lesser ability than higher castes to access political or administrative favour due to inability to bribe in sufficient amounts, re-affirming the primacy of the caste-class combine for exclusion from formal channels. Similar results are seen in urban India. In Benjamin's (2000) study of Bangalore, class-caste similarities between politicians, bureaucrats and elite citizen groups made access to decision-making easier for elites than poorer groups. The elite formation process in India is predicated on caste alongside religion, language, networks, income, occupational background, education, family background etc (Sharma, 1998). Bearing the lower end of these elements of identity, grassroots actors' exclusion from formal claim accepting channels (dominated by middle class, upper caste bureaucrats) is based on the overlap of these elements of their social identity.

The caste discourse in post-independence India has remained bogged in the debate on 'tradition versus modernity' and 'caste versus class' (Kaviraj, 1997). Indian Marxists, important for this research, continue to deny at the theoretical level the importance of caste in Indian society (ibid). Contemporary writing argues that caste has got 'secularised' and detached from ritual-status hierarchy and acquired the character of a power-group functioning within competitive democratic politics. This has linked caste to new structures of representational power, making it possible for members of a caste to claim and achieve a class-like identity and new economic and political interests (ibid), (Sheth, 2000). Thus, caste has got stronger in Indian politics and seemingly weaker in everyday social practices (Kaviraj, 1997). However, the impact of caste is observable at the level of social practice in cases of conflict when actors may choose their caste subject position to justify a course of action, as seen in chapters five and six.

**Gender:** Gender has assumed a complex shape in India due to its intersection with caste, class, regional and religious considerations. The proliferation of such differences and escalation of tensions between them complicates the terms on which gender is understood (Niranjana, 2000). Ecofeminism's argument of structural position shaping gendered access to and control over natural resources is relevant when discussing environmental claim making. Razavi reiterates the multiple impacts of gendered identities articulated with class and power

relations in reference to land rights of poor women in developing countries, which is applicable to environmental rights of urban grassroots women.

*...the issue of land rights and its relation to women's poverty in developing countries, as elsewhere, is a very complex one, intimately bound up with at least three sets of issues: first, the politics of how women's interests are represented in both the state and civil society, and struggled for at the local level; second, the nature of rural livelihoods and women's place as distinct actors within the agrarian structures; third, the specificities of gender and conjugal relations. (Razavi, 2000:19)*

Conceptualisation (or non-recognition) of gender affects the definition of grassroots environmental concerns by formal and informal channels (Levy, 1992), (Niranjana, 2000). Sex-based representation is assumed to increasing gendered accessibility of formal channels, which in practice may not however create much space for gender issues (Rai, 1999). An overwhelming 'masculine' culture of bureaucratic channels causes gender biases in these channels' interactions with people (Faundez, 1997), (Rai, 1999), (UNCHS, 2000), (WEDO, 2001). The gender of claim-makers shapes the claims considered 'appropriate' for them by claim accepting channels (Cleaver, 2000).

Any interest expressed by grassroots women in overtly political activities like claim making is further hampered by 'double gendering' in society. This assigns the domestic realm and reproductive role as feminine, valorising a largely masculinist idiom in political mobilisation. There is discursive placement of women within domestic boundaries, with negotiation of domesticity inside and outside it further perpetuating their absence from politics. This masculinisation of politics is much more than simply the power exercised by men; instead it is the construction of a normalised (male) subject-citizen whose presence delimits the field and agenda of politics (Roy, 2003).

Women's gender roles<sup>8</sup> and interests shape their environmental claims and claim-making effectiveness; while domestic and social power relations, and social discourses about women's role as claim-makers affect their claim-making ability and access to formal channels. Urban grassroots women turn away from a political role as claim-makers, shunning the 'undomesticated' masculine public sphere of the municipal office as alien. This feeling of *inappropriateness* in addressing the 'masculine territory' of formal channels increases

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<sup>8</sup> The DPU framework analyses productive, reproductive, community management and constituency based politics roles of women (DPU Gender workshop, 2000). Other conceptual paradigms for gender analysis include: the Gender Roles Framework (GRF), the Social Relations Framework and the approaches of feminist economics. These approaches differ in their conceptualisation of gender, institutional analysis, implications for development, and issues of social and organisational change.

grassroots women's dependency on male community and family members for claim-making, reducing their access to formal channels and de-gendering environmental claims.

Inclusive claim-making is further hampered at the institutional level by the absence of conditions to meet claim-makers' practical and strategic gender needs and interests, while ignoring their various gender roles (Agarwal, 1998), (Kabeer, 2000), (Molyneux, 1985), (Moser, 1993). Grassroots women fulfil their various gender roles through interactions with nature- such as their productive role as farmers and fisherfolk and their reproductive role by using natural resources to obtain fuelwood, food etc. Hence their psychological, social and physical interaction with nature is greater than that of urban middle and upper class women with more 'de-natured' lifestyles. Hence, enclosure of environmental resources adversely affects grassroots women's income, nutrition, time, health, social support networks and indigenous knowledge (Agarwal, 1998). Agarwal's argument for rural grassroots women can be extrapolated to grassroots women living on marginal urban lands, since irrespective of context, grassroots women's lives are characterised by struggles for fulfilling their gender roles using natural and other resources.

The formal channels' focus on women's reproductive role essentialises the questions of gender. Institutional channels primarily emphasise the reproductive role of women, violence on women and related concerns. State mobilisation in a country like India has therefore been largely around issues of infanticide, rape and dowry; and on providing women with credit for income generation through cottage industries (Niranjana, 2000). Popular discourse also equates gender issues with women's reproductive issues. Though undeniably crucial for women, this uni-focal emphasis obviates their productive and other roles and related needs from the policy and social discourses (Rai, 1997), (Rocheleau, 1996).

*In particular, policies may reinforce sexual divisions of labour, overlook the role of differing incentives and ongoing household negotiations in people's livelihood decisions and perpetuate divisive generalisations about men and women (Cleaver 2000, b: 61)*

Gender as understood by most formal channels still derives from a 'Women in Development' (WID) perspective, excluding male gendered subject positions, which are addressed in the 'Gender and Development' framework (GAD) (Cleaver, 2000), (Levy et. al, 2000). This is useful for this research, as both women and men grassroots actors are excluded from formal claim-making channels, though this exclusion may be different for men than women.

**Religion:** Indian politics reveals that religious identity is very important in defining how the state interacts with citizens. Unlike Western democracies, Indian secularism is not the removal of religion from the state sphere, but sanctioned differences in the state's treatment of persons based on religious identities. This sometimes results in inequalities in how persons from different religions are treated by biased bureaucrats and political representatives. Differential treatment based on religious identity also keeps alive communal divisions in a country with history of communal tensions (Hasan, 2000), (Kabeer, 2002). The Indian state intervened in religion by framing personal laws for various Indian religious groups, significantly impacting gender and class within these groups (Hasan, 2000), mirrored by the case of caste-based identity groups. Kabeer criticises formal channels' identity-based definitions of citizens since

*...the highly partial, incomplete and fragmented notions of citizenship which result, often serves to reproduce rather than disrupt, the socially ascribed statuses of kinship, religion, ethnicity, race, castes, gender and so on in the public domain (Kabeer, 2000:15).*

As grassroots actors usually have identity profiles matching least with that of most of the bureaucratic and political structure, these elements of identity have significant impacts on their exclusion from formal channels. These elements of identity, which become bargaining currency for grassroots groups during elections, become exclusionary for their claims to formal channels in regular political discourse. Thus, identity acts as both a node of negotiation and exclusion.

The concepts of entitlements, capabilities and functionings help consolidate the research argument about grassroots abilities to access formal channels with their claims. Entitlements are the legal and legitimate claims that a group or individual can make on resources. Entitlements are relational and embedded within social relations and practices that govern possession, distribution and use in a society (Kabeer cited in Roy, 2003). Entitlements get curtailed and their legitimacy defined by prevailing social norms and discourses, which are products of power distributions in the social field. In case of grassroots groups, their environmental claims get sidelined from formal channels since they do not fit the frame of entitlements that formal channels accept. This pushes grassroots groups towards non-formal channels. Enfranchisement, the ability to shape entitlement mappings by taking part in decision-making processes (Appadurai, 1984 cited in Roy, 2003) is what is desired. Its beginnings for marginalised groups are attempted through institutional efforts to make municipal governance more accessible and participative for them (ibid).

The preceding discussion links with concepts of ‘functionings’ and ‘capabilities’ of grassroots actors. Functionings are the various things a person may value doing or being, which vary from elementary things like ability to access food, to more complex ones like ability to make claims upon the state. Capabilities are the alternative combinations of functionings that are feasible for a person to achieve. Capability is thus a kind of substantive freedom of a person to achieve alternative functionings combinations (Sen 1999). The two concepts together give information about things a person does and what a person is substantively free to do. This research argues that a grassroots actors’ capabilities to achieve their functioning- claim acceptance- are limited and shaped by the their identity. As capability is the combination of resources and agency (Roy, 2003), the impact of external and internal factors- political, social, economic- that reduce or limit access to resources, while affecting the perceived or actual agency of grassroots actors can reduce their capability to achieve the desired functioning of accessing municipal channels with their claims. Various strategies have been devised by states to help grassroots actors increase their capabilities and bring them in line with their functionings. The next section focuses on strategies by liberal democratic states for increasing the capability of grassroots actors to participate in urban governance and access state claim-making channels with environmental claims.

### **Part C: Institutionalised formal claim-making**

This section elaborates some concepts necessary for understanding formal channels before discussing liberal democracy as the terrain for grassroots environmental claim making.

#### **1.7 Political Opportunity Structure, Political Field:**

Some gaps remain in the previous conceptualisation of grassroots claim making using collective action. These are the role played by political structures and institutions in shaping the context of associational activity and hence the creation of social capital (Maloney et.al, 2000). The concept of Political Opportunity Structure (POS) relevant here is defined as the

*..consistent- but not necessarily formal or permanent - dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations of success or failure (Tarrow, 1994:85)*

The changes in the POS defined as important are opening up of access to power, shifting alignments, availability of influential allies, and cleavages within and among elites (ibid). In creating access to formal channels and political opportunity for peoples’ participation in urban governance, properties of the POS that need examination are the character of the formal institutional structure, informal procedures and prevailing strategies of the relationship between formal (state) and informal (community) channels, and the political context within

public authorities (Maloney et. al, 2000). These affect the ability of voluntary associations or community organisations like grassroots groups to engage with public authorities.

However, the concept of POS has been criticised as excessively utilitarian (Ray, 1999), with the concept of political field proposed as an alternative, which describes the political environment of associational activity taking account of the dimensions of power and culture. The concept of political field corrects the overtly resource oriented model of the political process by recognising the explanatory power of cultural factors- thus providing a frame of analysis that suits the needs of this topic.

*A Field can be thought of as a structured, unequal, and socially constructed environment **within** which organizations are embedded and **to** which organizations and activists constantly respond. Organizations are not autonomous or free agents, but rather they inherit a field and its accompanying social relations, and when they act, they act in response to it and within it...Fields are understood both as configurations of forces and as sites of struggle to maintain or transform those forces (bold added), (Bourdieu and Wacquant, cited in Ray, 1999:6-7).*

Fields, and by extension organisations' actions vary according to distribution of power and political culture (ibid). Political fields include actors like the state, political parties, citizens and social movement organisations tied together by a particular political culture (ibid). Political culture refers to the acceptable ways of doing politics in a society- strongly influenced by the complex web of social relations like class, gender, religion etc. that order society (ibid). It describes the attitudes, beliefs and rules that guide a political system, determined jointly by the history of the system and the experiences and ideologies of its members (Abercrombie et.al, 2000). If a system presents a history of elite domination, bureaucratic hegemony and grassroots marginalisation through an organisational culture predicated on hierarchy and authority, then this also affects the ideologies and experiences of its members. Hence, political culture tends to be self-perpetuating unless conscious efforts are made to alter it.

Political culture can be understood as composed of High Politics and everyday politics. Differentiation between everyday politics and High Politics mirrors the way 'politics' and 'Politics' are differentiated in political science literature. Everyday politics is the politics behind everyday interactions of formal channel members with the public. It reveals the inherent attitudes of formal channel members towards people from different social and economic backgrounds, when not in an explicitly Political situation (such as in a political party meeting) or controlled overtly by a political ideology. High Politics comprises of



elements of party politics like party organisational structure, party discipline etc. Behaviour under the direction of a defined political ideology in a defined political arena and for a defined political end, i.e. under the influence of High Politics, is different from that influenced by everyday politics. The multilayered complexity of political reality includes

*...political action in everyday life and the symbols and rituals associated with these everyday political actions, the concretisation of political culture at the point where power is affirmed and contested in social practice (Abélès 1992, cited in Geldhill 2000:20)*

Hence Abélès suggests that the autonomy of the political in everyday life is illusory, with power actually resting on everyday social practices- the concrete form taken by relations between the governed and the governing (ibid). Foucault has also theorised this grounding of power in everyday life. In situations of High Politics subjects are *conscious* of being under the influence of a political ideology. However, a Political ideology may be internalised by political party members and start influencing their everyday interactions, though this is dependant on the extent to which they understand the Political ideology.

Political culture is thus a combination of the formal aspects of institutional behaviour as predicated by High Politics and the informal aspects of it as seen in everyday politics. Opportunities for accessing formal channels may be available in theory, but often the informal aspects of the relationships between public authorities and non-state actors, generate trust and norms of reciprocity essential for the non-state actors accessing the formal channel. When formal channel members and non-state actors share similar characteristics and expectations, there is easier 'closure' of issues and opportunities of engagement (Maloney et. al., 2000). The tendency of bureaucratic and political elites to recruit new members in their own image, according to criteria validating elite status and justifying the unequal rewards enjoyed by elites, further creates exclusions for grassroots actors from formal claim-making channels (SLSA team b, 2003), (Wilson, 1992).

This reinforces the previous argument about discursive hegemony and coalitions due to shared common characteristics between bureaucrats, politicians and community elite (Ham and Hill, 1993), (SLSA team a, 2003). Hence the political culture of a bureaucratic department or of a political representation channel largely determines how it reacts to peoples' claims. Elite coalitions and exclusion of grassroots actors indicates concentration of power. A political field is considered homogenous if it has a rigid, inflexible and monolithic dominant discourse (Ray, 1999). The presence of a homogenous political field and

concentration of power make the political field hegemonic (ibid) and exclude weak actors from it, as may happen with grassroots actors' environmental claims.

Elite coalitions also result in formal channels having clientalistic or semi-clientalistic relations with grassroots actors who are unable to break into these coalitions (Fox, 1994, 1996), (SLSA team a, b, 2003). The concept of regime as a vessel for elite coalitions becomes important here. Introduced in section 1.2, regime is a specific power structure predicated on the simultaneous deployment of legal and extralegal mechanisms of control and discipline- like dispensing of selective patronage by political parties. The very process of political power can thus be informalised (Roy, 2003). Regime is operationalised through a mode of power where the state can be understood not as an 'actor' but as a congealing and knotting of power. The power-laden regime employs myriad mechanisms of populism and reveals multiple guises of state power (ibid). These have clear implications for those who are part of the 'congealing of power' that is the formal state, and for claims of those actors on whom the regime employs its populisms for its daily renewal. Elite coalitions and other mechanisms of regime-renewal illustrating the congealing of power become clearer in chapters five and six.

An important indicator of the transition of actors from clients to citizens is their ability to access the state without forfeiting the right to articulate interests autonomously (Fox, 1994). Often unable to articulate interests autonomously, grassroots actors have to rely on covert claim making through previously explained 'weapons of the weak'. This illustrates their often clientalistic relations with formal channels, influencing their exclusion from effective environmental claim-making through these channels. In some situations such elite hegemony can be so complete, that excluded actors may be socialised into believing its rightness and inevitability (Wilson, 1992). However, the presence of grassroots claims and social movements demonstrates grassroots actors' opposition to this aspect of the political culture of formal channels and to elite hegemony.

Having discussed the political field within which formal channels operate, shaping the claim-making ability of groups, the chapter moves to the processes by which liberal democracies attempt to disperse concentrations of power through strategies for power devolution- falling within the 'good governance' paradigm.

### **1.8 Liberal democracy- procedural innovations for inclusive governance:**

'Governance' departs from taking the state as the focal actor, instead including other actors like the private sector and civil society as partners in managing a community's affairs. Traditionally, government was seen as a separate sphere of social organisation- with

distinctions between 'state' and 'society' and governance was associated with what governments *do*, with the machinery of the 'state'. In shifting focus from government to governance<sup>9</sup>, the role of governments in liberal democracies<sup>10</sup> has evolved from modernist controller states to enabler states. Strategies such as quotas and crafted institutions are used to include voices of 'marginalised' sections into government.

*Governance involves the articulation of rules of behaviour with respect to the collective affairs of a political community; and of principles for allocating resources among community members... It legitimises initiatives taken on behalf of a political community and speaks for the collective concerns of political communities in the language of collective interests and values, embodied in such terms as the 'common good' or the 'public interest' (Healey, 1997:206)*

Here political community means those who are part of a collective entity by prior law, common consent or organisational membership- an association of those with common interests, a community of acknowledged stakeholders (Healey, 1997). Even within supposedly homogenous communities different identity elements create different subject positions, hence different political communities may be located within a grassroots group. Governance processes generate relational networks, which may cut across or draw together and interlink the relational webs of life of households and communities (ibid). Thus governance involves management of the common affairs of political communities involving more than the formal institutions of government. In the governance framework the state is seen as an essentially 'solved political problem', free of power contestations and as a neutral mediator in conflicts. However the state cannot be idealised as a source of justice or a neutral mediator as it is inevitably a site of everyday and extraordinary contestations (Roy, 2003). This was seen through its functioning as a regime and through the discussion of political culture in section 1.7.

The governance framework advocates people's participation in government emphasising flexibility in prioritising, integrating, and anchoring policies according to each particular and changing context. Within this framework, participation is said to increase citizen awareness, commitment, government transparency and accountability (OECD, 2001 & 2003) and

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<sup>9</sup> Of the various models of governance, the one discussed here and on which most liberal democracies function is the Regulatory model. This looks to the state utilising hierarchical and bureaucratic structures for bringing about social change and managing the affairs of a body of law-abiding citizens. It has hierarchical relations and uses an instrumental technical rationality.

<sup>10</sup> Broad characteristics of liberal democracy include political party based representative democracy regularly going through elections. The state is the source of power and guarantor of civil liberties for individual rights-bearing citizens. Recognised strategies for ushering change are primarily through state policy generated by competing political elites and by pressure groups operating from within civil society (Eschle, 2001:48).

improve the sense of ownership among citizens and government, while improving the quality of the policy produced (Bugingo, 2002 in Willems, 2003). Further, participation processes are said to provide space and opportunities for social learning (Korten, 1990 in Finger-Stich & Finger, 2003). Procedural innovations devolving greater power to municipal governments are an example of a strategy towards governance through a participatory concept of democracy.

Decentralisation can be operationalised through functional deconcentration or through devolution for redistribution of political power in society. Deconcentration is spurred by functional considerations of efficiency, speed and economy; while power sharing or social equalisation motivates devolution (Burns, 1994). Territorial devolution strategies focus on crafted institutions to access voices of territorially defined citizen groups, and non-territorially based strategies focus on quota-based representation for accessing voices of 'marginalised sections of society'. The strategy for augmenting participation by representation in local governance works through a territorial definition of wards and constituencies. Political institutions are significant in helping to sustain civic vibrancy and in stimulating its growth (Maloney et. al, 2000) and they help render communities legible, and codify the translation of individual into collective endeavour in a form that is visible, analysable and amenable to intervention and influence (Scott, 1998). Formalised institutions are considered more robust and enduring than informal ones (Ostrom, 1990). These insights on benefits of institutionalisation of community structures can be extrapolated to structures crafted by liberal democratic states for increasing citizens' participation in governance.

However, the assumptions behind such institutionalist strategies for accessing voices of the marginalised are problematic. Crafted institutions for claim-making ignore the various interactions between people outside of formal organisations that shape public discourse, claims and co-operation. This points to a schism between claim making as implied through crafted institutions, and grassroots environmental claim making as outlined in section 1.2. The narrow focus on establishing new institutional mechanisms may obscure actual grassroots activities through other well established, familiar and locally adapted channels (Cleaver, 2000). Further, the economistic thinking of crafted institutions allows little space for individual and group motivations outside of economic rationality.

*...the creation of dichotomies of power within participatory discourse (the haves and the have-nots) allows the revealing of power not as a social and political discourse or as embodied practice, but only as manifest in material relations (Kothari, 2000:141)*

The assumption that formally crafted institutions overcome the divisions and exclusions on which community channels function is negated by practice, as the wider structural factors

shaping such divisions and exclusions are often left untouched (ibid). Institutional channels work based on broad conceptions of 'community' and 'the marginalised', overlooking multiple sites of exclusion predicated upon elements of social identity. Crafted institutions based on geographic territories overlook that people might define their 'community' with little overlap with such geographical demarcations. The concept of 'permeability of boundaries' (Peter, 1994) is important here with Cleaver's additions of complex and fluctuating livelihood networks- implying webs of interrelationships of varying intensity related to but not constrained by administrative and resource boundaries (Cleaver, 2000).

Analyses of crafted participatory institutions often observe the mechanisms of participation rather than assessing the content of that participatory effort. Co-opting participatory structures can be used as a means of control by social or political elites (Fox, 1994), (Ham and Hill, 1993). Citizens can be incentivised to frame their needs and priorities to match administrative schemes in order to maintain legitimate access to them. While participation can challenge patterns of dominance, it may also entrench and reproduce existing power relations (White, 1996). Assessing how patterns of social differentiation affect the politics of inclusion in decentralisation is important to ensure that such efforts benefit a wide group, especially the marginalised and poor (SLSA team a, 2003).

Non-territorially based political devolution strategies have been described as

*...keyed to **groups** (specially the weaker sections) rather than areas, and its advocacy has rested on the grounds that vulnerable groups, most dependent on public services, are most often highly under represented in the local elected bodies (bold added)* (Sharma, 1996:243).

Such strategies include political quotas for groups considered marginal by the state due to specific elements of their identity like gender and caste. In liberal democracies claim making to the state is conducted through representatives- who are assumed to represent pre-existing collective interests accurately and without biases. Given grassroots actors' political marginalisation and their oft-borne burdens of low literacy and a language that is not "institutionally understood" (SLSA team b, 2003), mediation of representatives becomes crucial. As discussed subsequently, the state erroneously assumes that identity-based representation adequately increases accessibility of formal channels to various 'categories' of marginalised actors. Apart from the *ability* of representatives of grassroots actors in understanding, interpreting and stating grassroots claims, is also the question of their *desire* to do so. Sex-based representation is examined to illustrate problems with such identity-based representation.

In some contexts sex-based representation is through quotas for women councillors in local municipalities. The implicit assumption is that gender rather than class, caste, political ambition or religion will unify women. Part of state rhetoric about political quotas for women or other identity-based groups is their instrumentality in increasing inclusion of these voices in municipal government. This ignores party allegiances of elected municipal representatives, which may often overcome any other allegiances. Other questionable assumptions fuelling reservations for women are women's intrinsic compassion, fairness and incorruptibility-derived from the idealised 'feminine' values perceived by masculinist polities. This negates that similar to male councillors, women councillors can be politically motivated- having agendas that may not coincide with that of their constituency women, or with grassroots women in particular.

*Given the dispersal of identities across castes, religion and other axes, gender has rarely been the sole rallying point for women. Whether political reservations alone would be sufficient to transform them into political actors with clear-cut interests remains a doubtful matter (Niranjana, 2001:274)*

Though quotas may be empowering for individual women representatives and in enhancing the visibility of women in political life, they may not translate into greater empowerment for grassroots women in the general polity.

*...there is no simple correlation between an enhanced visibility of women in political institutions and a sense of empowerment of 'women' in the polity in general. In short, the question of empowerment cannot be disassociated from the question of relations of power within different socio-political systems. In order to challenge structural impediments to greater participation of women in political institutions, we need to have regard to the multi-faceted power relations which contextualise that challenge (Rai, 1999:98)*

A common shortcoming of empowerment strategies is equating visible material facets of an actor's life- like economic power or political visibility- with their position of power. They target the material conditions of an actor's life without altering underlying social power equations. For strengthening the position of grassroots women, enabling them to be effective claim-makers, their structural position would need to be strengthened- requiring challenges to social norms and gender and class hierarchies. Representational mechanisms for achieving justice-against gender or caste-based injustices- have been criticised for overlooking this need to challenge social structure. They are usually affirmative rather than transformative remedies. The selective inclusion of women in politics is important, but inadequate, to challenge established hierarchies of power relations (Rai, 1999). Other doubts about political

quotas for women range from fears of ghettoisation of women in politics, to women representatives becoming ‘dummies’ in the hands of the powerful. These arguments are equally applicable to SC/ST reservations.

The interaction of gendered subject positions with a primarily ‘masculinist’ bureaucratic and political culture also reveal examples of exclusion. These are attitudinal barriers deeply rooted in patriarchal socialisation (WEDO, 2001) which cause even women representatives to deny gender as a point of difference (Rai, 1999), arguing that emphasising gender in the political realm reduces the perception of women representatives as capable and unbiased. Despite women representatives supposedly there for representing women’s voices, the political field inhibits gender-based solidarity between women representatives and other women. Concerns about not homogenising the interests of all women and the importance of factors like caste, class, religion etc. in shaping the gendered positions of actors are also important.

Further, political quotas based on caste or gender identity deepen and harden social divides around these elements of identity. As benefits from identity-based reservations become available only by stressing these elements of difference, political groupings occur around them, which is retrogressive for creating an equal society. For example, gender-based quotas have resulted in a separate category of women as *recipients* of political power (Niranjana, 2001), (Ghosh, 1996); limiting women candidates to just the few reserved seats, restricting their political participation in non-reserved seats. Similarly, in the case of India’s caste-based reservations, politicians started being categorised based on caste thus deepening caste divisions and vitiating the political field by making identity more important than considerations like competence, honesty etc. Indian ‘caste politics’ demonstrates the negative impacts of identity politics.

Hence it seems that territorially and non-territorially based devolution strategies are not entirely effective in increasing citizens’ participation in the state and may create additional problems in social and political life. The need for state-society synergy becomes relevant here (Evans, 2002). This is a principle (and occasional practice), where engaged public agencies and mobilised communities enhance one another’s capacity to deliver collective goods, such as space for environmental claim making. It is only through an ‘ecology of agents’ and not through prescriptive procedures, that urban governance is possible (ibid). This ‘ecology of agents’ is a combination of the different channels and an interdependent network of actors,

*...an assemblage of actors whose prospects and capabilities cannot be assessed without taking into account the aims, strategies, and capabilities of the rest of the actors with whom they share a common arena* (Evans, 2002:23).

### **1.9 Costs of using informal channels:**

Sometimes non-participation and non-compliance through acts of ‘everyday resistance’ (Bryant & Bailey, 1997), (SLSA team a, 2003) can be understood as a ‘rational’ strategy for grassroots actors excluded from formal channels. Disadvantaged/ weaker actors often do not participate, remain silent or give socially conditioned responses during participatory activities like claim-making (Chandra, 2003). Limitations of formal channels often force grassroots actors to use non-formal channels for environmental claim making, which can extract high costs from grassroots actors (SLSA team a, 2003) by binding them in relationships of control and dependency with political parties and other non-formal channel actors. Grassroots regional or caste identity is what is often attractive to non-formal channels and forms the currency in exchange for which the non-formal channels support them. Hence, the use of such channels disadvantageously deepens social divides among grassroots groups.

Non-formal channels like party mass organisations and politicians function through negotiability, demanding high returns from grassroots actors like their support and involvement in the non-formal channel’s activities. Hence, grassroots actors may have to be involved in the daily work of party fronts- like taking part in party protest marches and demonstrations. Their high dependency on non-formal channel leaders keeps grassroots actors captive in their control. Non-formal channels use this dependency strategically, giving in to grassroots demands only when convenient. Roy’s research on Kolkata’s squatter settlements illustrates these points. She shows grassroots groups’ fragile access to urban shelter as a product of political patronage. This access is at best tenuous and dependent on the political expediency of the political party patronising the squatters, and these parties evict the squatters when it suits their political purpose. Thus dependence on non-formal channels is a fragile edifice constructed through daily negotiation of existence by grassroots groups (Roy, 2003).

The forced involvement in non-formal channels’ priorities negatively impact grassroots time-taking time away from productive or reproductive work, along with occasional financial impacts through paying bribes or protection money (SLSA, 2003). The impact on social relations- such as on domestic and community gender relations is also evident- as explained by Roy through the logic of double gendering, which causes male involvement in claim making, leaving women un-involved in this political act.

## **Part D: Research Design**

### **1.10 Research hypothesis and framework:**

So far, the three main components of this research- the nature of environmental claims, actors’ claim-making processes, and the formal channel as a conduit for these claims were



examined. Based on the concepts discussed, the research was conducted with the hypotheses that **“The Indian Democratic Procedural Innovation was unable to create the political opportunity for formal environmental claim-making by grassroots women and men as the innovation lacked understanding of environmental claim-making of grassroots actors and is hampered by the nature of the political field with its inherent identity-based exclusions.”**

Here it is useful to recount Harvey’s (1996) conception of discourse in a dialectic relationship with other moments of social processes- the moments of beliefs and values, power, institutions and rituals, material practices and social relations. Harvey’s dialectic cognitive map represents the flow of social processes, which helps understand how discursive and non-discursive aspects of social life are positioned with respect to each other.

*Each moment is constituted as an internal relation of the others within the flow of social and material life. Though each moment internalises forces from all of the others, the internalisation is always a translation or metamorphosis of those effects rather than an exact replica...I have so far construed the relations between “moments” as flows, as open processes that pass unhindered from one moment to all others...Reifications of free-flowing processes are always occurring to create actual permanences in the social and material world around us. (Harvey, 1996:81)*

This conception allows understanding any phenomenon as arising from a dialectic relationship between the moments- not only shaped by flows but also by permanence or structures. This conceptualisation of the moments of social processes influenced the choice of analysing the politics of environmental claim making by understanding the discursive and the political fields in the cases. In the analysis these two fields draw upon the various moments of social processes- though not explicitly stated so- and with different aspects of the analysis showing different levels of influence of the moments of social processes. Analysis of the discursive field focuses on the various actors’ discursive constructs of the environmental conflict, shaped in turn by the various other moments of social processes. Analysis of the political field address these other moments by looking through the lens of High Politics and everyday politics, though analysis of both fields are intertwined and interdependent.

Conceptualising environmental claim making as occurring through an ‘ecology of agents’ (Evans, 2002) points to the suitability of combining TWPE’s actor approach with environmental justice concepts in this topic. Examining unequal power relations is central to TWPE research (Bryant and Bailey, 1997). The attempt here is to explain how the main research variables and their interrelationships are conceptualised. Also studied is how TWPE

in combination with concerns of the environmental justice movement, deals with these variables. This framework studies the interactions of various actors with respect to the moments of various social processes underlying the interactions at the micro-sites of power exertion rather than the large-scale power struggles.

In the framework being used, environmental claim making is understood as a socially constructed activity, involving an ecology of agents and constructed differently by different claim-making groups, determined by their articulated identities and their agency. The different moments of social processes emerge as important in the politics of environmental claim making. The focus is on grassroots groups and other actors in conflict with them, and on their interactions based on their discourse formulations and identity-defined needs and relationships with the environment. However, the primary focus remains on grassroots environmental claim making, with other actors studied in reference to them. Environmental claim making is being understood as *political* exclusion of environmental claims of the grassroots actors- the 'others'- from the formal claim accepting channels. This points to the importance of dimensions of power in understanding how this claim-making activity is articulated, rationalised and legitimated by various actors participating and non-participating in the claim-making process. TWPE is concerned with precisely these issues of access and control mediated by power and discourse; and influenced by beliefs and values, institutions and rituals, material practices and social relations.

Environmental claim making of actors like grassroots actors, excluded from the formal process, occurs through non-formal channels using parallel systems of claim making. These systems are based in the community and utilise social capital networks, negotiated norms, 'backstage' behaviours and an informal 'politics of difference' predicated on structural and cultural differences. This research also focuses on the micro-politics within these non-formal channels of environmental claim making, thus conforming to TWPE's concerns. Environmental claim making is linked to the elements of identity forming the sites of exclusion from this activity. The politics of difference leading to exclusions is important for this research. Though TWPE does focus on injustice and inequality, the environmental justice movement focuses more specifically on the politics of difference coupled with its explicit dimension of both overt and covert exclusion. Hence, the TWPE framework is being bolstered for analysis by including the political agenda more vigorously predicated on sites of exclusion- as in the environmental justice movement.

Factors inherent in the political field that shape formal channels and inhibit grassroots environmental claim-making are the other important concerns of the topic. These factors like

political culture, bureaucratic culture, and solidarity groupings of community elites and formal channels demonstrate the exclusionary arsenal of the formal channels. Social constructivism's focus on the discursive aspect of environmental claim making combines seamlessly with TWPE concerns with exclusion. TWPE accepts the importance of discourse as a power exerting tool but the *explicit* politicisation of discourse is more apparent in social constructivism. Having been limited to First World contexts and global environmental issues, combining social constructivism with TWPE will provide analytical depth in a Third World context of local environmental issues and micro-politics of interactions between actors.

#### **1.11: Fieldwork and research design:**

This section examines the iterations in research design. The hypothesis focused on the provisions of an Indian municipal procedural innovation- to assess its ability to forward grassroots environmental claims to the municipality. The initial research design required studying the functioning of provisions of the innovation described in section 2.1. However, as explained in Appendix A, preliminary fieldwork in Kolkata revealed that these provisions had only been partially implemented. Rather than manipulate the research hypothesis to 'fit' these field realities, it seemed more relevant to study the reasons for the implementation failure of the procedural innovation's provisions in improving municipal access to grassroots environmental claims. A reworked research design focusing on this issue would help understand the impediments faced by governance initiatives like the Indian 74<sup>th</sup> CAA in adequately fulfilling their mandates.

Hence the research design was changed from a top-down study which used the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's provisions as the entry points to understanding access of grassroots claims to the municipality- to a bottom-up study which used actual claims as entry points into the municipal system. By looking at how claim makers negotiated the municipality in reality, the resources they used and impediments they faced, the channels they used as alternates to the municipal structures mandated by the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA could be identified. It was relevant to enquire why claim makers followed existing claim-making practices, the reasons for the nature of these practices and the costs they extracted from users. Thus, it would be possible to understand the system that functioned *in practice*, thus learning what was lacking in the innovation's procedures, why it failed to replace these established practices of claim-making. The focus thus was on **micro-politics** of claim-making as a vehicle to understand the minute details of claim-making as carried out 'on the ground' and identify obstacles the provisions of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA faced in emerging as significant channels of claim-making. Thus, the research design changed- while testing the same hypothesis the researcher followed the claim-making

processes from the claim makers' end, making **micro-politics** of claim-making the entry point into the enquiry.

As is true for all research, but especially for qualitative research, the researcher's own position- as someone interested in environmental justice through twin foci on political and discursive fields, and studying its achievement through a procedural innovation- influenced the research. The involvement of research assistants introduced further subjectivity. My subject position as a female, middle class, educated, upper caste person affected the fieldwork in several different ways. My predisposition towards middle class environmentalism and ease of access to people with backgrounds similar to myself could have limited my fieldwork. Keeping myself conscious of this possible bias, I tried to design a fieldwork that would encourage me to move beyond my comfort zone as a researcher- conceptualising the topic as pure urban policy research- which would have kept me within the familiar territory of investigating municipal offices, bureaucrats and councillors. Instead, a research design investigating the topic from the claim makers' end encouraged a bottom-up perspective and was the most practical route due to the status of policy implementation on the ground. I am conscious that my own subject position and predisposition towards conceptualising the topic in a certain way could have made me place more emphasis on certain utterances of the interviewees than others. Perhaps what I considered important was not what the interviewees themselves considered important. However, I defend my selective stress on certain utterances since I had a specific research problem and was focused on specific issues that the interviewees would not have been focused on.

My preliminary research showed that use of recording devices was very problematic in Kolkata, with most people uncomfortable or openly hostile to recording their interviews. Hence in the final fieldwork I had to resort to taking rapid notes of what people were saying and taking down exact quotations only for statements significant for the research. To avoid losing detail in the difficult task of interviewing and note taking simultaneously, I had the assistance of two research assistants. Both were middle class, college educated, upper caste Bengalis. One was a man with an economics degree and the other a woman artist. Their differing disciplinary backgrounds, not deliberately chosen, proved to be very useful. The notes they took to supplement my notes during the interviews and field observations were complementary with often one person picking up on details the other had overlooked or thought insignificant. Thus despite being unintentional, their different backgrounds proved to be a valuable addition to the fieldwork.

Another way in which my subject position affected the fieldwork was in how the people I interviewed viewed me. My gender and class seemed to have the maximum affect on the interviewees, as did my ability to speak the local language. In municipal offices and while interviewing middle class people I was perceived as 'harmless' since I was female and 'respectable' because of my class position and educational background. I chose to play up my favourable class-gender position by my mode of dress and deportment to ease my access to these Bengali *bhadralok* arenas. In interviewing the grassroots actors I also felt that my class-gender position was an advantage as majority of them perceived me as harmless and knowledgeable. However, I found that some interviewees, especially grassroots men and some middle class men found it easier to talk to my male research assistant than me. On the other hand he aroused maximum suspicion among municipal officials. As no research is 'value-free', the playing out of our subject positions and their effects on the way the research fieldwork occurred was not seen as a hindrance. Instead, our own position and values were stated clearly to allow the research analysis to be understood in the context of the researcher and assistant's own positionality. The reactions of the interviewees and the impact of the subject positions and identities of the interviewers were consciously observed in the fieldwork and helped in understanding the issues of subject position and identity with regards to many of the research issues.

The research methodology is detailed in Appendix A. In this research qualitative research methods were used, as the **micro-politics** of environmental claim making could not have been understood through quantitative methodologies. Argumentative analysis used in the study, in the tradition of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) requires the study of macro, meso and micro-levels of discourses. Textual analysis (micro) involves description of the form and meaning of the text, discourse practice (meso) focuses on the discursive production and interpretation of the text, and socio-cultural practice (macro) looks at broader social analysis (Marston, 2004). In this study, the texts used were semi-structured interviews and secondary data from municipal documents and media reports.

In the research design, discourse analysis focused primarily on the meso and macro levels- the interpretation and explanation of texts, with limited micro-level textual analysis. Since CDA differs from versions of discourse analysis that see the social as nothing but discourse- it provided a framework that admitted the structural concerns of social policy, while not viewing structures or subjectivities as stable, static entities. Its adoption of hegemony as a core concept allowed CDA to combine its focus on macro, meso and micro-levels of analysis to understand hegemonic formulations at different levels of discourse production and practice. This was useful for the research methodology where differing levels of data were collected

with the aim of uncovering hegemonic formulations- whether as contestations over multiple discourses and discursive positions or as attempts by policy actors to fix meanings and secure support for a particular agenda through covert means in addition to overt force.

Gledhill (2000) demonstrated how microanalysis of the symbolic dimensions of power in everyday life could be related to macro structural analyses. This approach of simultaneously analysing and linking the micro with the macro and vice-versa was attempted in the study's analysis of the political field. There was simultaneous focus on micro-level of everyday politics of claim making within the communities, on the meso-level looking at High Politics and its interface with everyday politics at the level of the city, and finally on the macro-level looking at the procedural innovation. The analysis was not just at varying spatial levels, but also a simultaneous investigation of issues at various conceptual macro and micro-levels.

A possible criticism of the final research design could be that procedural innovations in urban governance may seem somewhat marginalized in it, with a seemingly almost exclusive focus on micro-politics of claim-making. However, this criticism would not be valid. The research as conducted remained an urban policy study, though not using study of policy documents, governance proceedings and structures as the main research tools. The study instead focused on implementation of urban policy and barriers to its implementation. This operationalisation of urban policy required replacing standard urban policy methods with a more bottom-up approach focusing on claim makers- to understand their experiences of urban policy as operationalised on the ground. Hence standard urban policy research methods- i.e. studying policy documents, proceedings and governance structures- were used as secondary tools *in aid of* understanding how claim makers experienced the structures of urban governance. The research was from the perspective of the claim maker, rather than the municipal claim acceptor, in part due to the non-existence of the municipal structures themselves. Hence the hypothesis was approached through a creative redefinition of the research design. This reworked research design examined precisely what the hypothesis wanted to examine- the reasons for the low accessibility of grassroots claims to government channels, approaching the research through claim makers rather than through innovative structures.

The next chapter moves to the context within which this research is being conducted, to set the stage for the later analytical chapters dealing with the case studies.

## **Chapter 2: Setting the Context**

The chapter begins by analysing the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's salient features, especially its inclusion and environment agendas. The justifications for choosing West Bengal and Kolkata for the research based on the state's political and administrative culture follow this, as do Kolkata's social map, sites of subsidiarity and environmental conditions. The chapter ends with descriptions of the two case studies in Kolkata.

### **2.1 Salient features of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA and provisions indicating its environmental and inclusion agendas:**

- Redefined criteria of municipalisation:

Existing ULBs have been redefined as Nagar Panchayats, Municipal Councils and Municipal Corporations based on population, functional and revenue base, demographic features etc. This ensures that socio-economic variables are also considered while defining ULBs. Rural areas in transition to urban character are recognised as Nagar Panchayats.

- Redefined composition of municipalities:

Elected people's representatives have been made mandatory for urban areas. State governments can provide representation in ULBs of persons having special knowledge or experience in municipal administration, along with Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of Legislative Assemblies of the states (MLAs)<sup>1</sup>.

- Creation of Metropolitan Areas:

Newly-created metropolitan areas are defined as having a population of 100,000 or more comprised in one or more districts and consisting of two or more municipalities, panchayats or other contiguous areas. During planning, Metropolitan Areas help highlight links between rural, urban and peri-urban areas.

- Fiscal autonomy of ULBs:

State Financial Commissions have been formulated to enunciate principles for revenue assignments to ULBs, tax sharing between local and state governments and grants-in-aid by state government to local levels.

- Continuity of municipalities:

Establishing State Election Commissions has ensured that urban areas would not remain without an elected municipal body for more than six months.

- Increased and explicit functional domain of ULBs:

A part of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA, the Twelfth Schedule of the constitution<sup>2</sup> for the first time recommends subjects that should be under an ULB's jurisdiction. Examining the schedule

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<sup>1</sup>They have no voting powers- theoretically preventing interference in local government.

<sup>2</sup> Refer Appendix B

reveals the possibility for a municipality to combine the various functional mandates outlined to reach new interpretations of several functions. Though not explicitly mentioned in the CAA, yet its intentions are clear through provisions that point to what is called here its 'inclusion agenda' and its 'environmental agenda'. These provisions when operationalised together can lead to what the thesis wants to examine- the actual ability of marginalised grassroots actors being able to access the municipality with their environmental claims.

- Provisions making up the CAA's inclusion agenda:

- Ward Committees (WCs) –

These are new structures of representation at ward level (the smallest urban electoral and administrative unit). Composition of WCs and the manner of filling their seats is at the discretion of individual states. Elected ward councillors are given primacy in area level decisions. This has the potential for generating conflicts between the town hall and zonal committees (groups of WCs). In some states, inclusion of civil society actors in WCs has allowed representation of groups such as women and the disabled in ward level decision-making (Mehta, 1999). In West Bengal, WC members initially had the power to directly demand ward information and documents from municipal bureaucrats, making them effective citizen's bodies which could bypass ward councillors as the mediators between citizens and municipal government.

- Reservation of seats:

The inclusion agenda of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA is operationalised through reservation of one-third of councillors' seats in municipalities for women, including for the office of mayor. Reservation is also mandated for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), with number of seats determined by the proportion of SC/ST population to the overall municipal population.

- Provisions indicating an environmental agenda:

- Possibility of a redefined municipal environmental agenda:

The 12<sup>th</sup> schedule contains numerous functions like 'protection of the environment and promotion of ecological aspects', which when interpreted creatively together with items such as 'planning for economic and social development' and 'safeguarding interests of weaker sections of society' could lead the municipality (if it so desired) to move beyond its service delivery agenda that traditionally dealt with water supply, drainage, sewage and garbage disposal. The amendment's intentions are clear through it's including non line-service functions in the municipal functional ambit like 'protection of the environment and promotion of the ecological aspect'. This implies a holistic look at urban ecology- not just service delivery; potentially opening up existing municipal service-delivery based environmental



agendas to discussion and review. Together the inclusion and environmental agendas can lead to a more participative defining of municipal environmental priorities and issues. The potential seen by this thesis in the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's environmental agenda is expanded in 4.3.3

The CAA also places 'safeguarding interests of weaker sections of society' within the municipal functional domain, implying a mandate for delivering social justice. Hence the 12<sup>th</sup> schedule paves the way for a new municipal environmental agenda, open to creative reinterpretation through expanded participation of people in the municipality through its inclusion agenda. The inclusion agenda increases the funnel of representation through WCs, and through quotas encourages participation of voices hitherto marginalised from municipal governance. The inclusion and environmental agendas of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA point to its relevance for studying inclusive environmental representation and governance. This thesis examines the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's ability to engineer a reinterpretation of how ULBs define the urban environment and encourage participation of various voices in shaping this definition. The ability of grassroots environmental claims to enter into municipal environmental discourse is taken as a yardstick to measure the success of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's environmental agenda in conjunction with its inclusion agenda.

### **2.1.1 Outline of conformity legislation in West Bengal:**

West Bengal emerged as an interesting state for study due to its history of municipal reform and devolution of power even before the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA. It uses the well-regarded Mayor-in-Council system in the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC), and even before the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA it had Borough Committees<sup>3</sup> (BCs), composed of elected councillors from the wards in a borough. After the West Bengal Municipal (WBM) Act was passed, one WC per ward was mandated. This is significant as many states clubbed two or more wards for forming WCs. In Kolkata each WC covers a population of about 31,000, whereas in cities like Mumbai, each WC covers about 400,000-500,000 persons, reducing citizens' proximity with the WC (Nagarpalika Network Newsletter, March 2001). West Bengal also reserved a few WC seats for civil society and marginalised actors like "backward class" women.

Reservation for women was implemented by the state in ULB elections of 1993-94 and 1999-2000 with enthusiastic participation by women (Nagarpalika Network Newsletter, Nov 2000). The state had some reservations for SC/ST groups prior to this. Since women's reservations already existed in the rural panchayat system, extension of such reservations into urban areas created much less social discomfort than in other states. The state is one of the few with

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<sup>3</sup> The BC discusses borough and ward issues with borough municipal bureaucrats. It does not include any citizens, with councillors representing their concerns.

regular elections to rural and urban local bodies since the 1980s, giving the electorate experience of participation in local government. It is exceptional in having a comprehensive law devolving functions to municipalities with a listing of 49 obligatory and 40 discretionary functions. Of these, environment related functions like urban forestry, pollution prevention etc. are all obligatory (Nagarpalika Network Newsletter, Aug 1999) theoretically making these important priorities of ULBs. These attributes of West Bengal make it ideal to study the impacts of the CAA on urban municipalities.

## **2.2 West Bengal:**

### **2.2.1 Urban areas of West Bengal:**

With a 27.39 % urban population, West Bengal is among the most urbanised states in India. However, uneven spatial distribution<sup>4</sup> has led to acute problems in urban areas like the Kolkata metropolis. With the highest density in the world (24,760 persons/ sq.km), Kolkata experiences many social problems related to overcrowding. Appendix D contains statistics and discussions about West Bengal's social profile like it's religious profile, caste profile, and status of women in the state. Appendix E contains statistics on West Bengal's demographics and the sites of subsidiarity in the state, and in Kolkata and Madhyamgram municipalities.

ULBs in the state are of three types- corporations, municipalities and notified area authorities. Municipalities in the state follow the chairman-in-council system. The municipal authority is vested in the municipality, the chairman-in-council and the chairperson. The municipality refers to the board of councillors, which is the overall authority of municipal governance in the town. The chairman-in-council is the body corporate, which functions as the executive authority. The Chairperson is the executive head of the municipality. The chairman-in-council is collectively responsible to the municipality (Ghosh, 1996).

The concept of decentralisation underlying this system was extended further through Borough Committees (BCs) and Ward Committees (WCs) for towns with population greater than 300,000. Smaller municipalities could also form WCs if they desired. WC rules appoint the ward councillor as the chairperson who selects other WC members from within the ward. The municipal chairperson also has the power to nominate a certain number of members to each WC. These members are drawn from among ward residents who are educationists, social workers, sports persons, women from backward sections etc. The committee is to meet once a month with an annual general body meeting, open to the ward residents (ibid).

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<sup>4</sup> This refers to the concentration of very large urban areas in the southern parts of West Bengal.



**Figure 2.1: Location of West Bengal in India**

Source: [www.mapsofindia.com/westbengal](http://www.mapsofindia.com/westbengal)



**Figure 2.2: District Map of West Bengal**

Source: [www.mapsofindia.com/westbengal](http://www.mapsofindia.com/westbengal)

### **2.2.2 Brief Political History of West Bengal and implications for political culture:**

The Indian National Congress (INC) ruled West Bengal 1947 onwards. Left parties came to power in 1967 and after being toppled by the INC, returned in 1969. The economic crisis of the 1960s combined with the miserable rural situation provoked Naxalite<sup>5</sup> violence in the state. INC's brutal response to the Naxalites, combined with the national Emergency declared at the centre, led to its resounding defeat in the 1977 state elections (Basu, 1997), (Chatterjee, 1997). Left parties have stayed in power at the state level since then as the Left Front (LF). Due to this long LF stint under the leadership of the Communist Party of India- Marxist, CPI (M), the political culture, the bureaucratic discourse, the dominant social discourse, have all been influenced by the class-based rationale aggressively articulated and promoted by the Leftists (Bhattacharya, 1998).

Political practice in West Bengal revolves around mass movements, with the CPI (M)'s support base chiefly among the rural and urban poor. Despite its rhetoric, the CPI (M) government in West Bengal has shown departures from its pro-poor, class-based discourse; demonstrating religious, caste and ethnic biases in political practice (Chatterjee, 1997). The CPI (M) has maintained its hold over its support base by an elaborate hierarchical party structure functioning on the principles of democratic centralism. It consolidated grassroots penetration through rural and urban mass organisations so that claim making to the state is largely conducted through these bodies or their representatives in the community.

The way the CPI (M) and hence the dominant political discourse conceptualises the environmental problematic is derived from the party's version of Marxism. A 'productivist' view of nature dominates this discourse, important for this study as it was hypothesised that the political culture of formal channels influences their environmental conceptualisations.

Infighting within the West Bengal INC resulted in formation of a new political party- the Trinamool Congress (TC) in 1996, posing a big challenge to the LF. Former INC member, Mamata Banerjee's dissatisfaction with the INC's rapport with West Bengal's communists and low prominence for Bengal affairs at the INC's national discussions catalysed the party's formation. Numerous INC members defected to the TC in support of its Bengal-focussed, anti-Leftist agenda. The TC, renamed the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC), has the agenda of defeating the Leftists in the state and

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<sup>5</sup> A violent Leftist movement, the Naxalite movement gathered huge support among peasants and frustrated urban youth and caused heavy-handed police repression, leading to widespread resentment in West Bengal. ([www.bengalweb.com/calcutta/history](http://www.bengalweb.com/calcutta/history))

*ending once and for all the oppression and tyranny of the Communists.* (Mamata Banerjee's speech [www.trinamoolindia.org](http://www.trinamoolindia.org))

In the 1998 and 1999 national elections, the TC allied with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The TC won all four national parliamentary seats from Kolkata in these elections. In state-wide municipal elections in West Bengal in 2000, the TC won the prestigious Kolkata Corporation from the LF. The TC changed its political partners in successive state and local elections with one constant- its antipathy to the CPI (M) and all Left parties. During this research, a TC led alliance was running the KMC while the LF ran the state government. This had significant repercussions for decentralisation as acrimony between the two political coalitions resulted in the KMC and the state government passing the responsibility of decentralising Kolkata's municipal governance onto each other and hampering the others' efforts, elaborated further in chapter three. West Bengal's capital Kolkata has been selected as the case city due to the ease of accessing information here and the higher level of environmental claims and awareness than elsewhere in West Bengal.

## **2.3 Kolkata :<sup>6</sup>**

### **2.3.1 Urban governance in Kolkata:**

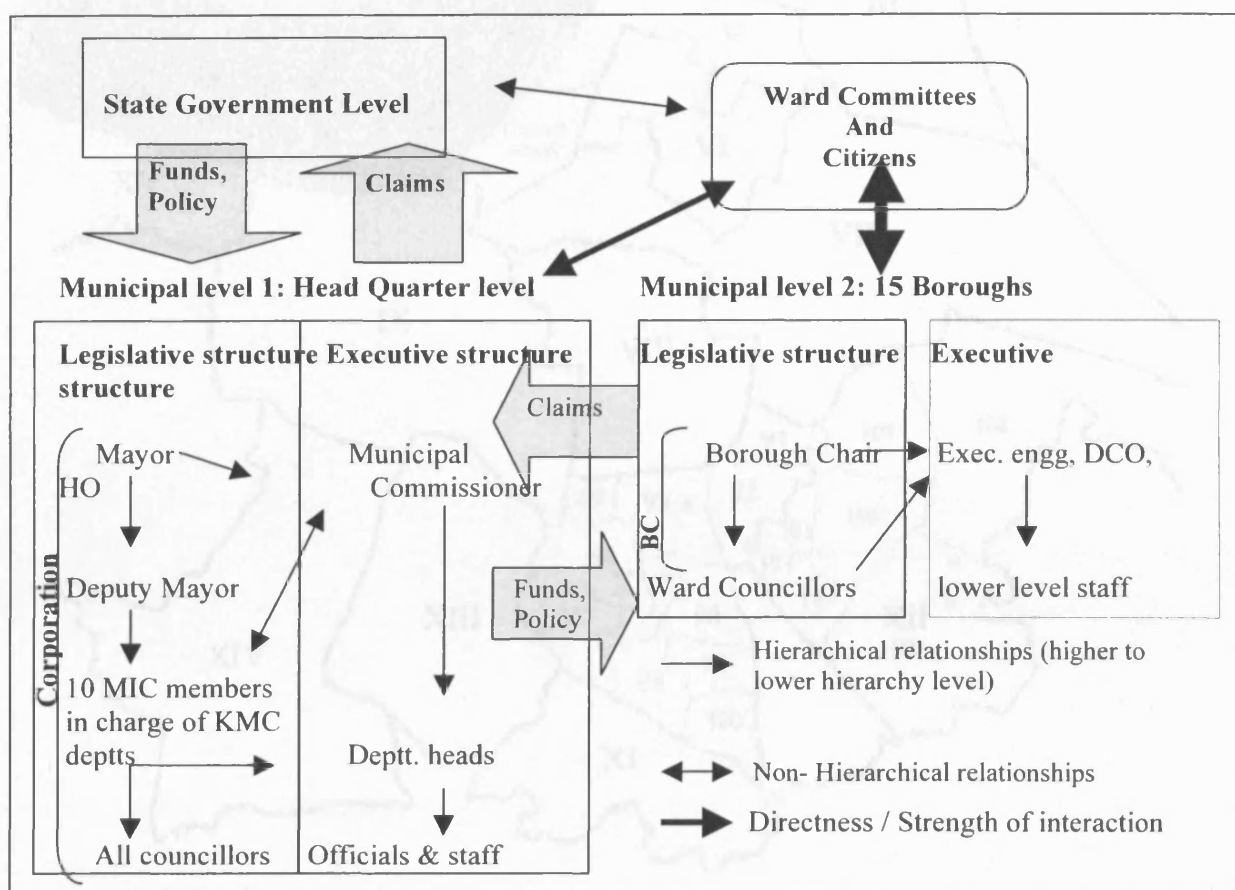
After independence in 1947, the Calcutta<sup>7</sup> Corporation was superseded, being reinstated in 1977 after the Left came into power. The Calcutta Corporation Act of 1980 sought to democratise municipal administration by providing a Mayor-in-Council system of government, since it emphasised accountability, transparency, responsiveness and greater inclusion of people in governance through involvement of their representatives in municipal issues (Pinto, 1999). As seen in figure 2.3, there are three authorities of city government in the KMC's Mayor-in-Council system - the Corporation comprising of the councillors, the Mayor-in-Council (MIC)- its full "cabinet", and the Mayor as the Chief Executive. There is a two-tier management structure- the central or headquarter level and the borough level. As seen in figure 2.4, the entire KMC area (367 sq.km) is divided into 141 wards and fifteen boroughs with a Borough Committee (BC) in each consisting of the elected councillors from the eight to ten municipal wards making up the borough. BCs act as a second tier, functioning as decentralised units of civic authority. BCs do not plan an area's development but discuss an area's needs and forward suggestions to the Mayor and MIC. Accountable to the Mayor, the Municipal Commissioner heads the municipal administration. Each MIC member is in-charge of a functional department of the KMC (Mukhopadhyaya, 2000).

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<sup>6</sup> Refer Appendix E for statistical information on Kolkata

<sup>7</sup> Calcutta was renamed Kolkata in 2001

This administrative system ensures that elected politicians have strong involvement in running the city. Before the MIC system was introduced in 1985, the Municipal Commissioner had all the powers, with a weak deliberative body in the Corporation council and a largely figurative Mayor (ibid). Due to the MIC system the city's political culture affects the KMC's working and the municipality's bureaucratic culture. Of the changes in the governance structures since enactment of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA in 1993, ones relevant here are the setting up of WCs, reservation for women in 47 out of 141 wards including three for SC/ST women and six more for SC/ST candidates irrespective of gender on a rotating basis (Lama-Rewal, 2001); and making environmental issues an obligatory municipal function.



**Figure 2.3: Relation between different structures of governance**

**Source: Author**

2.5.2. Status of social infrastructure in the 'hinterland'

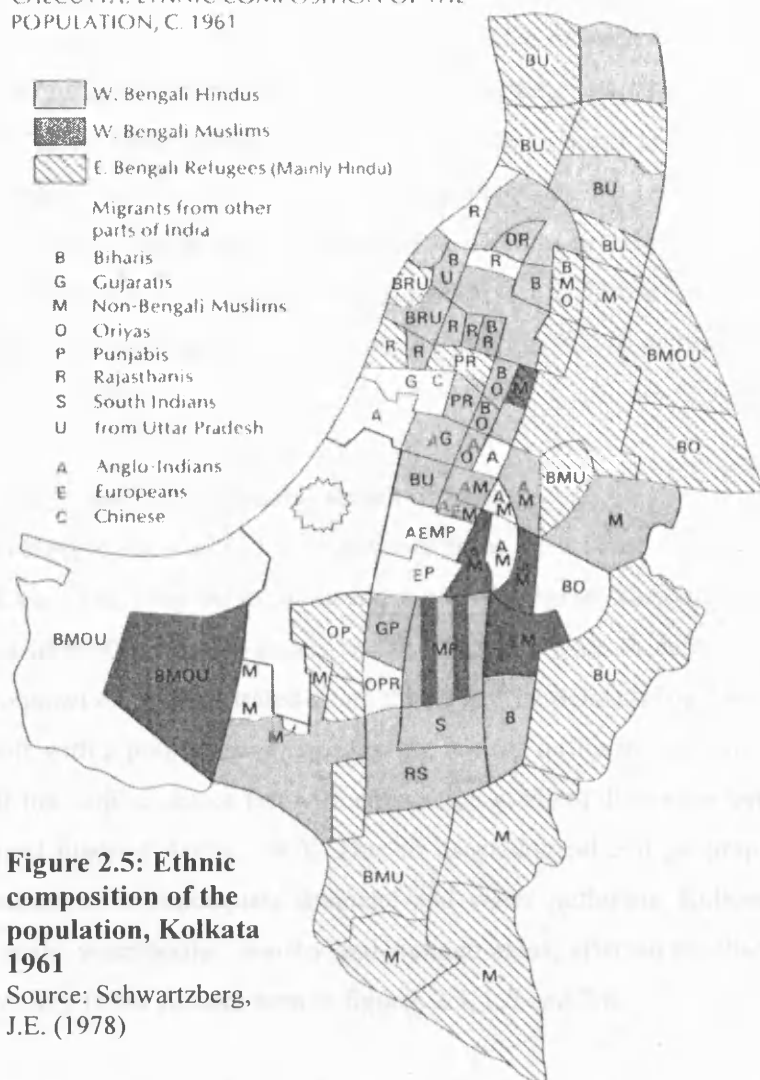
**Figure 2.4: Map of Kolkata with borough divisions**

Source: Author, based on 'Urban land use map of Kolkata city', National Atlas of India, Plate 296, 1998

\* Refer Appendix E, section D

### 2.3.2 Sites of social subsidiarity in Kolkata<sup>8</sup>:

CALCUTTA: ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF THE POPULATION, C. 1961



**Figure 2.5: Ethnic composition of the population, Kolkata 1961**

Source: Schwartzberg, J.E. (1978)

Kolkata attracts large numbers of migrants with different cultural identities from all over West Bengal and neighbouring states of Bihar, Orissa and the northeastern states. In the 2001 census the population of Kolkata was 4,580,544. The sex ratio is only 828 females per 1000 males indicating large number of single male migrants (Census of India, 2001). The large migrant population combined with the very high population density of 24,760 persons per sq.km, make it a stressful city for its residents.

Grassroots migrants tend to live together in groupings based on place of origin and caste to cope with these stresses (Roy, 1999). Apart from regional origin and language acting as a site of subsidiarity, the other important site of subsidiarity is religious identity. 80.6% of Kolkata's population is Hindu, with 17.7% Muslims. Lower income urban ghettos based on religious identity are prevalent in Kolkata. Though overtly caste does not appear to be as important among Kolkata's grassroots groups as in other parts of India like Bihar, its importance becomes apparent in practice. The state's dominant Marxist ideology has replaced caste with class in discourses on subsidiarity. The scheduled caste and scheduled tribe populations of Kolkata are small at 6.2% and 0.18% respectively. Gender remains an important aspect of social subsidiarity in Kolkata, especially among grassroots groups, where

<sup>8</sup> Refer Appendix E, section D



religious and regional identity shape gender relations within the groups. However, at the discursive level, gender's articulation as an element of subsidiarity is lower compared to other regions of India, due to the high level of literacy in Kolkata (81.31%- Census of India, 2001) and due to the Left's propagation of the idea of gender equality through its women's wings and political reservation for women. The large number of refugees who migrated till the 1970s to Kolkata from erstwhile East Bengal form an important group in the city. These refugees numbered 182,347 in the enumerated slums in Kolkata in 1959 (GoWB). The refugees settled in legal and squatter settlements in the city and in marshy areas to the eastern, southern and southeastern parts of Kolkata (refer figure 2.5). These areas were later legalised and included as added areas through Boroughs XI-XV within the boundaries of the city (refer figure 2.7).

### **2.3.3 An environmental sketch of Kolkata:**

Kolkata is located 154 km upstream from the Bay of Bengal on the banks of the Hooghly River. The river to its west and wetland marshes surrounding it on the east are the most significant ecological aspect of the city's site. Due to its marshy surroundings, Kolkata is a compact city concentrated along the river. The deltaic plain formed by the deposition of silt is soft with a poor bearing capacity but is very fertile for agriculture. The geological formation of the land is almost flat with an average gradient difference between three and six metres in most places (Maitra, 2000). Due to its geological and geographical characteristics, the city suffers from inadequate drainage and water pollution. Kolkata's wetland system includes canals, waterbodies, marshy and wetland areas, affected by changes in the city since the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present seen in figures 2.6, 2.7 and 2.8.

The East Calcutta Wetlands- an ecologically sensitive peri-urban wetland, preserves local flora and fauna, provides livelihoods to numerous people and is crucial for Kolkata's drainage. The housing crunch in Kolkata is causing encroachments into this area. The city's urban fabric has many waterbodies like ponds and tanks, which act as sinks for pollution and take care of storm water drainage. These are concentrated largely in Boroughs I, VII, X, XI - XV . In 2002 the KMC recorded a total of 3,668 such ponds in entire Kolkata. These are under pressure of being filled up by real estate developers for construction. The Fisheries Department of the West Bengal Government passed the Fisheries Act in the early 90s, banning the filling up of ponds in West Bengal, increasing people's awareness about urban ponds. The clash between the expanding city and this wetland system has given rise to several environmental conflicts in the city. Prominent among these are the eviction of squatter settlements from canal sides; opposition by some residents to pond-filling by real estate developers, and the removal of polluting industries like tanneries from parts of the East

Calcutta Wetlands. Construction in the East Calcutta Wetlands and development of new satellite townships like Rajarhaat are continuing to ignite environmental conflicts in the city.

In the following chapters, the changes brought about by the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA to Kolkata's urban governance are analysed for their implications for inclusion of grassroots women and men's environmental claims into the formal claim making channels. For this, a brief description of the two case studies follows. The institutional profile for the areas, their social history and the profile of the main actors in the conflicts are outlined here. Their location in the city is given in figures 2.4 and 2.9. Actors from the 'surrounding community' and 'grassroots groups' in the cases are not studied as homogenous entities. There were coalitions and antagonisms within these groups and with each other, dependent on the aspect of structure or agency that played a more important role in a particular scenario or interaction.

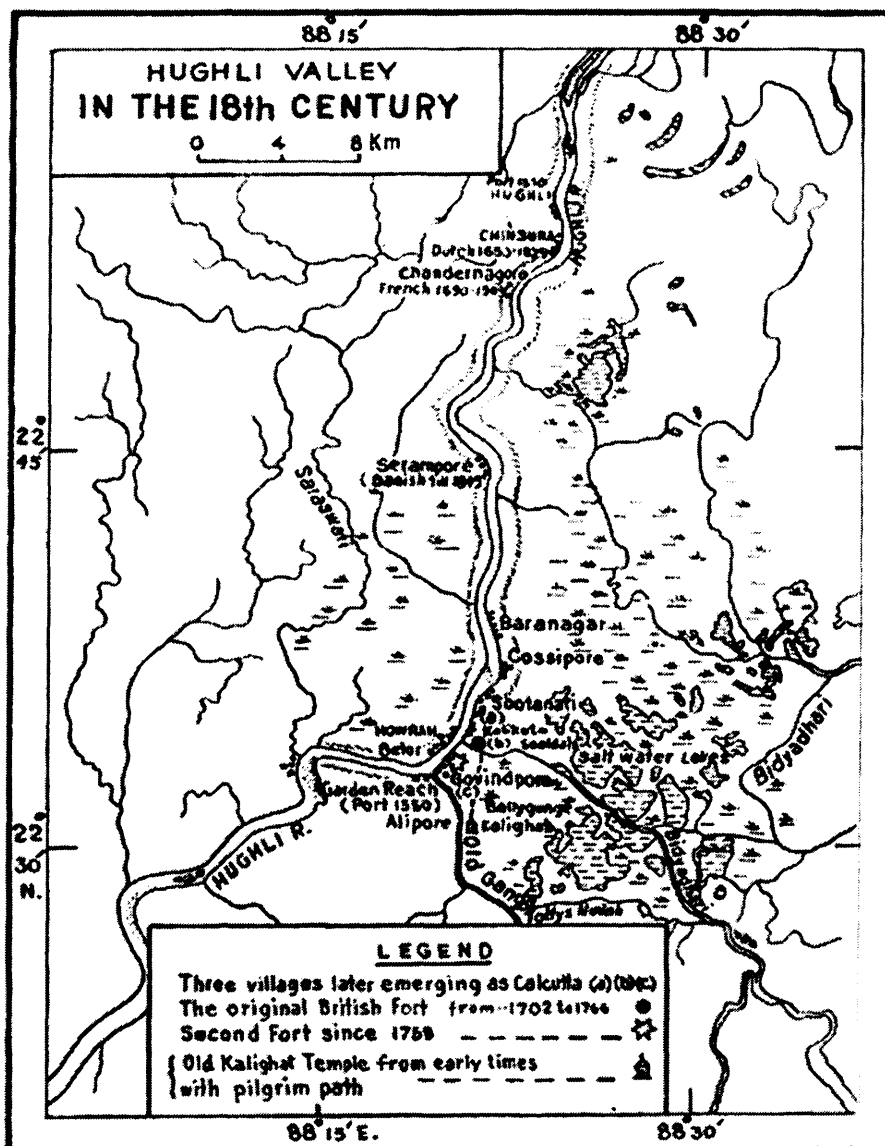
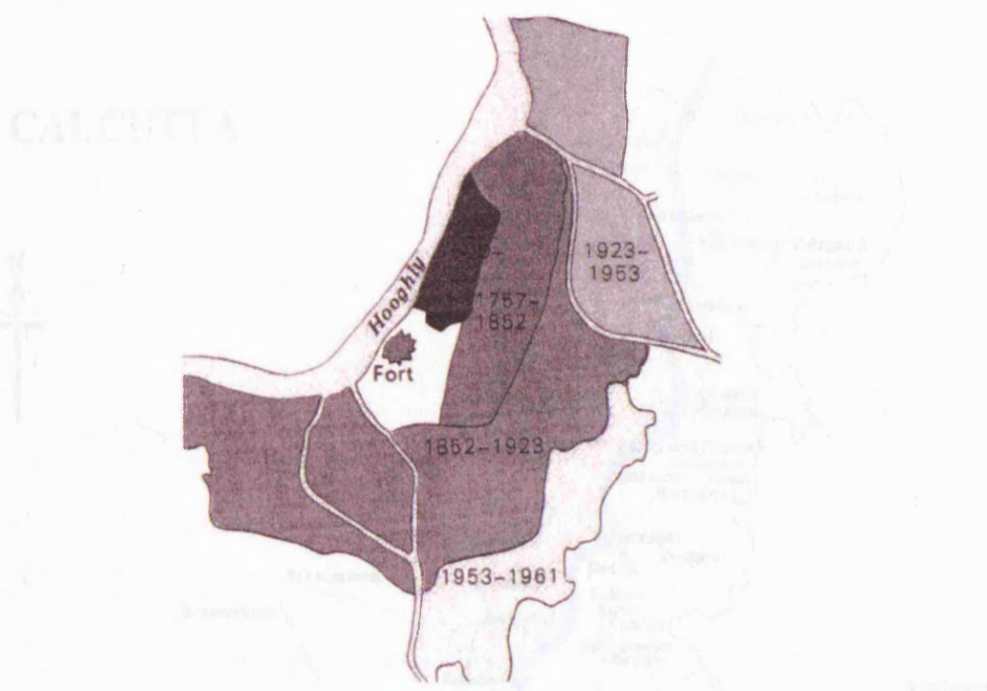


Figure 2.6: Physical Map of Kolkata in the 18<sup>th</sup> century

Source: Sinha, P. (1978)



**Figure 2.7: Growth of Kolkata 1690-1961**

Source: Schwartzberg, J.E. (1978)

**Figure 2.8: General Landuse** Source: National Atlas and Thematic Mapping Organization, 1998

**Figure 2.9:Map of Kolkata with case study locations**

Source:[www.mapsofindia.com](http://www.mapsofindia.com)

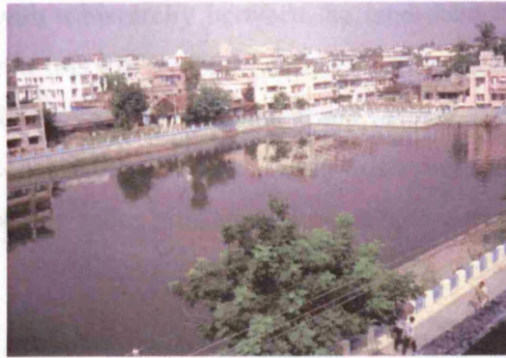
## 2.4 Reconnaissance of the case studies:

### 2.4.1 Pal Bazaar:



**Figure 2.10: Pond before rejuvenation**

Source: Vasundhara, 1999



**Figure 2.11: Rejuvenated Pond**

Source: Vasundhara, 2000

The Pal Bazaar case is an example of an unsuccessful attempt by grassroots dwellers of an informal settlement on the banks of a pond on Jhil Road to access the formal municipal channels with their claims about the pond. Till 1947, the Pal Bazaar area was full of marshes and waterbodies, part of the East Calcutta Wetlands system. Starting in the late 1940s and till the 70s, the southern suburbs of Kolkata received waves of refugee migrants from East Bengal due to the partition of Bengal. These refugees created squatter settlements by slow and systematic filling up of waterbodies and land capture in a series of well planned, overnight moves lead by a Left-leaning refugee rehabilitation organisation (Sinha, 2000). The conflict between the refugees from East Bengal and residents of West Bengal showed its ugliest face in these struggles over land. Echoes of the stereotypes and antagonisms this strife created and was created upon (ibid) can be glimpsed even today in moments of conflict- as in the case of Pal Bazaar, expanded further in chapter five.

These areas remained without municipal services for a long time and as a result waterbodies like the pond near Pal Bazaar became community water points, sinks for waste and sources of food. In Pal Bazaar, the water quality got degraded over time with effluents from the Pal Bazaar market, outflow from residential drains and effluents from the pond-side informal settlement. The regularisation and upward mobility of the former refugee colony Viveknagar and continuing informality of the settlement next to the degraded pond gave rise to a socio-political situation which formed the backdrop of the conflict under discussion.

#### **Profile of conflicting groups:**

In the Pal Bazaar case, the grassroots informal settlement had started more than fifty-five years ago. This settlement had slowly grown to thirteen families with about eighty people. Of

these, four families had some sort of land-deeds showing that they had bought the land they were living on. A fifth family had papers showing that the landowners had donated the land to them. The remaining families had previously been tenants of these five families. The grassroots group was divided within itself, with a hierarchy between the land-deed holding families and the ex-tenant families. Apart from this difference in entitlements to land, there were other differences based on economic ability, political affiliation and resources such as networks with powerful individuals, institutional affiliations etc. These differences affected the way the settlement people were treated before and during the evictions, and during their relocation.

Politically, the informal settlement dwellers had very divergent affiliations. Of the thirteen families, there was one deed-holding family- the HL family, which supported the CPI (M), with one of the family daughters a party worker. LD, from one of the tenant families, was considered most powerful in the settlement as he was employed in the Central Government and had strong political affiliations with the violent leftist political party, the CPI-ML. He had provided some leadership within the settlement at the time of the evictions. Of the remaining families, half had traditionally been supporters of the Congress (I), though with the marginalisation of this party they were swaying towards the Trinamool Congress. The remaining informal settlement people had no firm political commitments. Socially, the informal settlement dwellers all had SC, West Bengal peasant backgrounds and had migrated from nearby rural areas like Kakdweep and Lokkhikantapur. Most of the migration had been through kin networks and people in the settlement were related to each other. Over time as the pond had become less productive for fishery, most of the men had switched to working as rickshaw drivers and the women as domestic maids in surrounding community homes in Viveknagar and Newland. A few persons had taken up other occupations like cycle repairs, auto driving, petty trading etc. Education among the grassroots settlement dwellers was limited to basic literacy, with a few persons having received four to five years of formal schooling and only one boy having completed High School.

The term 'surrounding community' is being used here for people from the Pal Bazaar area who were opposed to the grassroots settlement on the banks of waterbody. The surrounding community was primarily middle class, upper caste with a long shared history. They had come together for the pond improvement and evictions of the informal settlement from its banks, and were drawn from a large geographical area<sup>9</sup>. However, the core of the movement was a community-based organisation- the Jhil Sangrakshan Committee (JSC). Initially having

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<sup>9</sup> At the time of the pond rejuvenation people from areas like Viveknagar, Santoshpur, Garfa, Shahid Nagar, Newland etc were active in the JSC.

numerous members, at the time of the fieldwork there were only about fifteen active members in the JSC, largely from Viveknagar.

The pond improvement effort had involved de-silting the pond, tackling a water hyacinth infestation, emptying the pond of dirty water allowing rainwater to fill it up, building a stepped concrete bathing platform with a seating area– a *ghat* on the pond banks, cementing the pond banks to prevent erosion, building a railing around the pond, starting fishery in it and creating a small garden by its banks. The grassroots settlement was evicted from the pond banks and relocated elsewhere. A caretaker was appointed and JSC committees created to look after various aspects of the maintenance work. Guidelines were established for eco-friendly idol immersion in the pond and its subsequent cleaning after the many annual religious festivals. At the time of the fieldwork upto eight hundred people used the pond daily for bathing. These people worked as maids, rickshaw drivers, chauffeurs in surrounding community homes; as workers in Pal Bazaar and the railway station, petty traders, truck drivers etc. Locality people used the seating area in the bathing platform as a gathering place. The JSC had established guidelines about behaviour and usage of the pond water, which were prominently displayed on a board in the bathing *ghat*.

This scenario seems to present an example of multiple use of a natural resource by cross section of users for a variety of purposes. The seemingly ‘perfect scenario’ seems to invite appreciation of the community effort that went into this egalitarian, environmental friendly step. However, a different interpretation of the politics of the entire situation arises if one examines the case closely, especially if the criteria for assessing the situation are the success of the formal channels as claim making channels for the grassroots actors who were present in the case study area before its current transformation.

Looking at the social history of the area, as recounted by older residents of Viveknagar, the entire area of Jadavpur (of which Viveknagar is a part), used to be full of waterbodies when the Viveknagar refugee colony was started in 1952-53. In 1955-56 the then Congress Chief Minister of West Bengal, pumped out water from Jadavpur area. The refugees were supported by the Left run UCRC and were able to occupy privately owned lands on the then outskirts of Kolkata due to tacit support of the INC government of West Bengal. Over time Viveknagar colony consolidated and became a middle class settlement. Newland, a new middle class residential area was created adjacent to Viveknagar and plots sold there by the government in the 70s. Antagonisms between people of Viveknagar and Newland simmer beneath the surface of everyday life, emerging during conflicts. In the 1980s, the LF government regularised refugee squatter colonies like Shahid Nagar, Adarsha Nagar, Viveknagar etc.



There was strong unity within refugee groups through which struggles for survival were won. Outcome of this unity, characteristic of the refugees in Kolkata, was mutual aid, joint community struggle and claim making. Community organisations such as youth clubs, colony committees and market associations were important unifying institutions which handled issues like security, creating habitable land and services like roads; and agitating for electrification, schools etc (Sinha, 2000). An important feature of the refugee communities was their emphasis on education, seen as the way towards progress (ibid). Due to this, the refugee group settled in Viveknagar was able to slowly move out of the abject poverty of their initial years. Their thatch huts slowly gave way to brick and tile houses and then to two and three storied brick structures. Concurrently, the area grew due to establishment of the Jadavpur train station, the Jadavpur University, Pal Bazaar and Jadavpur markets.

Socially, the refugee groups were quite homogenous with a middle class, upper caste background from adjacent districts of East Bengal. Their strong social unity resulted in united political affiliations, which they used strategically in negotiating with political parties. Initially the refugees had been Congress supporters. However, over time their political affiliation became firmly Leftist with numerous refugee leaders part of the Left parties. This picture was however beginning to change, and in the assembly elections of 2000, for the first time a Trinamool Congress candidate defeated the CPI (M) candidate from Jadavpur. The social unity of the area was also undergoing changes with the conversion of some houses into apartments, which brought in a floating population of renters with little affiliation for the people or concern for the area.

#### **Power Equations between the conflicting groups:**

The brief description of these issues here is further expanded in chapter five. The surrounding community had been familiar with the grassroots people and were approached by them for help relating to municipal and other matters. This familiarity was broken after the evictions, with the grassroots demonstrating antagonism in towards Viveknagar residents. Contrary to field observations, the JSC insisted they had good relations with the evicted persons.

The surrounding community had started in a situation similar to the informal settlement-living in thatch and bamboo houses, but changed their circumstances through an emphasis on education to gain higher employment. They considered themselves the social elite- *bhadralok*- considering the grassroots dwellers their social inferiors- the *chhotoloks*. As seen in the first extract, they had a patronising attitude towards the grassroots settlement dwellers and harboured an antipathy to their lifestyle, considering it polluting and dirty. As seen in the



second extract, the grassroots settlement dwellers felt that their eviction resulted from their lesser position of power and fewer networks with powerful politicians.

*By their third generation, (the former refugees had) very good education, lifestyle etc. The basti people stayed on at a lower level and didn't show any effort to rise up in life. (PS<sup>10</sup>, Newland resident, 6.4.03)*

*We are simple people whom no political party could bring into their fold therefore parties got angry and tried to take revenge this way. (HF, grassroots family relocated near Jadavpur station, 22.10.02)*

The grassroots group felt betrayed since despite having settled in the area as poor refugees who had also filled in waterbodies to create the colonies, the surrounding community people overlooked this part of their past. They also did not punish those surrounding community houses that had encroached upon the pond or emptied their sewage into it.

*Everything was done in their own interest. My grouse is that why (the JSC did) not break the houses of other people (middle class people) who also had built on land (reclaimed from the) pond. (TM, grassroots man relocated near Jadavpur station, 22.11.02)*

The power equations in the area are also indicated through access to and control over the waterbody. The surrounding community was able to evict the 'undesirable' grassroots group whose use of the pond water was considered environmentally harmful by them

*These basti people used to construct houses like pigpens and rent them out to people to live. Their waste disposal was also in pond. ...if the thirteen families (living there) were not removed, then this beautiful pond couldn't be sustained. (DB, TD, 22.11.02)*

The surrounding community framed the JSC's work as social work- negating the political, power angle of the pond rejuvenation effort, as seen in the extract below.

*The people who work for pond rejuvenation don't get any financial benefit from it. They do the work in their free time and as a contribution to society...This is pure social service because the financial aspect is not there. Since the effort is by non-professionals, therefore maybe there is less focus on poorer groups. However, this is a totally selfless social service. (MR, JSC member, 3.3.03)*

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<sup>10</sup> Names of interviewees have been camouflaged in extracts from field interviews.

Power differentials among claim-makers, further detailed in chapter five, existed due to different access to powerful politicians or affiliation to a political party; due to social identity and access to social networks. Those who had social networks with the formal channel members were able to better access them. The unifying element of refugee identity was very strong in determining dominant power positions in the area. KG, who was a middle level CPI (M) leader, a former refugee resident of the area as well as the MMIC (Conservancy) was instrumental in the eviction and relocation of the grassroots group. Social equations of the middle class residents with KG were crucial in increasing the acceptance of their claims by formal channels. The ability to negotiate bureaucratic department complexities, awareness of official rules and the ability to couch claims in the official discourse also dictated the power of claim making groups in accessing the formal channels, detailed in 5.2.2

#### **Description of formal channels involved in Pal Bazaar:**

The pond improvement work was started in 1999 and completed by 2000. Borough X was involved in the pond improvement work, while the resettlement of the evicted grassroots group happened in Boroughs X and XII. Departments from the KMC headquarters provided labour and materials for the pond improvement work. Some state government departments- the Public Works Department (PWD) and the Pollution Control Board (PCB) were actively involved in the pond improvement work. At the time of the rejuvenation work, the Left Front was in power in the KMC and at both Boroughs X and XII. In the 2000 municipal elections, the TC won the municipal elections defeating the LF. However, BXII remained dominated by the LF while BX changed over to TC dominance. The changed political context within the formal institutional structure altered the political field, impacting the POS for claim making.

#### **Identity of formal channel members:**

The primary formal channel members involved in the pond rejuvenation were

- Local councillors of the ward 92-PS and ward 104 –BCC, where BCC was also the MMIC (Market and Lighting)
- MMIC (Conservancy)- KG, an ex resident of the area
- MMIC (Roads and Drainage)- SS
- MMIC (Building)- SC, a local resident
- The mayor- PC
- The minister of the PWD- KGo from the state government,
- The chief engineer of the KMC – MM, who was a resident of the area
- The chairperson of the Borough X – SB and of Borough XII- GG
- The executive engineer from BX- DC and from BXII

Many of these key persons were residents of the area, and all were male, middle class, and upper-caste. Many of the formal channel members had been refugees themselves. At the time of the pond improvement work they had all been from the Left parties, in power at the KMC level and in the Borough level. This identity profile had significant impacts on the informal procedures and prevailing strategies between formal and informal channels.

#### **Power equations among formal channel members:**

Those with affiliation to Left parties had an advantage over others in accessing formal channels. At the time of the fieldwork, the power equations between the Left Front -in power at Borough XII level- and the TC at the KMC headquarter level also reflected in the claim making process. The evicted grassroots claim-makers had turned to DDT, a TC councillor in BXII to represent their claims for land-deeds to the TC ruled municipality. The JSC, popularly perceived as Left controlled, was facing a KMC investigation and its legitimacy was being questioned by DDT at the KMC level. It was also suffering a lack of co-operation from the KMC. The following extract of DDT's question raised in a KMC House Meeting illustrate the power tussle between the TC and LF over the JSC.

*... Five families of people who had bought land next to the pond and had been residing there for forty- fifty years- have been removed to 1 Vivekananda Road on Corporation land. A proposal from BXII to give land-deeds to these people had been sent to the Corporation. The people of these families are very unhappy since no decision has been taken regarding them since a long time, even though it is by the Corporation's involvement that they have been evicted from their homes. My question is what is the Corporation doing regarding this?...I would like to mention certain issues about the pond, which is being maintained by spending lakhs<sup>11</sup> of the Corporation's money, how some people are earning lakhs of rupees in the name of the maintenance of that pond. ... (Lists JSC's revenue raising activities)... They have never taken the permission of the Corporation to do these things. (DDT, KMC House Meeting of 17.2.03)*

#### **Non-formal channels in Pal Bazaar area:**

The non-formal channels comprised of

- Party mass organisations like the CPI (M) Nagarik Committee (NC)
- Political parties- from LF [CPI (M), RSP, CPI-ML, CPI]; the TC; the INC.
- Significant politicians and organisations not directly linked to the area or KMC like KGo, a minister in the state government and the PCB.

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<sup>11</sup> One lakh is 100,000 Indian Rupees

Here even those formal channel members have been included as part of the non-formal channels who would usually not have been involved in this work and were recruited into the pond rejuvenation work through the networks of the surrounding community. Hence, those state level politicians or departments are also included as part of the non-formal channels who are not from the level of government appropriate for dealing with this case. Like the formal channels, middle class persons from a refugee background also dominated these channels.

#### **Power equations of non-formal channel members:**

The non-formal channel members- party activists, party mass organisation members and local politicians were all upper caste persons with a refugee past. They had discursive parity with the surrounding community. The solidarity groupings through social and kinship networks and links to each other due to a common identity profile and shared history also united the non-formal channels with the surrounding community. The surrounding community had strong political links with the LF and many were party activists or involved in its mass organisations. The NC and other party bodies functioned as effective claim making channels for the area and had penetrated deep into the area creating a strong political base there. This was an attractive locality for LF politicians as they were assured of full support from the surrounding community. The LF had also penetrated into the local community organisations like clubs, the *puja* committee etc. Due to the scattered political affiliations of the informal settlement dwellers, they did not form a high interest group for the LF politicians. The small numbers of the grassroots dwellers as compared to the significantly larger surrounding community also reduced the political support for the former.

#### **2.4.2 Jodhpur Park:**



**Figure 2.12: Squatter settlement next to pond**

Source: Author, 2003



**Figure 2.13: Surrounding community homes**

Source: Author, 2003

This is a case where the grassroots group- from an informal settlement on the Jodhpur Park lakeside- was able to resist eviction efforts by the surrounding community. Jodhpur Park was

very different in its origins and social set up than Viveknagar, which was born and shaped by a struggle for survival. Jodhpur Park began as a upper middle class residential area in 1945 planned by the then Congress government of West Bengal. 492 plots were distributed among the members of a co-operative society of employees of the Government Secretariat. Jodhpur Park was planned as a mini township- with schools, a health centre, hospital and market. It had a modernist aesthetic with tree-lined roads, large plots and landscaping. Services like roads, water supply and sewerage were maintained by the co-operative society. In 1966 concluding that it could not maintain Jodhpur Park any longer, the co-operative society transferred the area to the Calcutta Municipal Corporation<sup>12</sup> (CMC). This transaction, not involving sale of land, had certain conditions associated with it. These included beautification of the lake area by the Corporation and construction of a formal market.

As part of the transfer to the CMC, the co-operative society transferred four sweepers it employed to the municipality. The Corporation gave verbal permission to these four families to live by the pondside. Migrants from Bihar, they attracted more Bihari migrants who found employment in the Corporation as well as outside. The lake also underwent changes. With the effluents from the lakeside informal settlement, siltation due to immersions of idols during numerous festivals, and garbage dumped by the surrounding community the lake gradually reached a degraded and dirty condition. It remained a constant reminder of the 'filth of poverty' for the affluent Jodhpur Park residents, creating the backdrop for their environmental claims. This scenario would seem an ideal candidate for the kind of 'improvement' effort that had happened in Pal Bazaar. However, as this research aims to investigate how environmental claim making occurs and how formal channels are used in this process by different claim making groups, hence the effort here is to use this situation to uncover the politics of the situation and not to advocate any remedy for a situation.

Of the approximately hundred families in the informal settlement, about eight were Bengali and the others Bihari. Exact numbers were difficult to ascertain, as fearing evictions the settlement residents were resistant to an actual count. An estimate was made from observations and a 1996 list made by the Borough X Conservancy Department. Ninety percent families were from the scheduled castes, with a few scheduled tribe families. Sixty-five residents, including five women were employed in the Corporation, mainly from the Conservancy department in the offices of Boroughs VIII and X. The squatter settlement was very conveniently located vis-à-vis the workplaces of these Corporation employees. About thirty-five families were not employed with the Corporation, of which some heads of

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<sup>12</sup> The then name of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation

household were seasonally unemployed and in about twenty families were unemployed most of the time. Persons not employed with the Corporation worked as masons, day labourers, sweepers, drivers, and housemaids in surrounding community homes and businesses.

### **Power Equations within the communities:**

These issues among others are expanded in chapters six and seven. There were multiple hierarchies within the grassroots group based on employment, caste, political and other resources. Politically, the united Corporation employee group was more powerful than other residents, due to their membership of the CITU– the CPI (M)’s labour union. In times of crisis, the *basti* Corporation employees could get redress through the CITU. Though the Corporation employees were long-term supporters of the CPI (M), they had also started supporting the TC since the party came to power in the borough and the KMC. The Corporation employees had close contacts with borough level municipal bureaucrats, increasing their resources in comparison to other *basti* residents. That BM- a Corporation employee was elected the leader of the *basti* illustrated the better power position of that group due to their networks and connections, as seen below. This power inequality between Corporation employees and others in the *basti* was illustrated in the former being able to access formal and non-formal channels more easily with their claims. The relation between the Corporation and non-Corporation employees was one of dependency towards the former.

*Those who have a say in the basti affairs are largely union leaders with party connections working in the Corporation. Since BM is related to one of these big union leaders we made him the secretary of the basti committee. (GJ, basti resident, 30.12.02)*

The non-Corporation employees were more divided within themselves and represented in the *basti* by GJ- working for a politically well connected local labour contractor. This local labour contractor was from the Jodhpur Park Institute (JPI), strengthening ties between the squatter settlement and the JPI. The non-Corporation group did not have firm political affiliations and approached persons from whichever party was in power in the Borough or in the KMC at a given time. Though a majority of the *basti* dwellers were SC-ST, yet there were hierarchies within them, with the *Dom*<sup>13</sup> families segregated from the rest of the *basti*. Regional origin also divided the *basti* residents. The majority of residents were Bihari with only eight Bengali families. The Bengali families consider themselves socially superior to the Biharis, reflecting the general attitude in Kolkata about Biharis. The Biharis in the *basti* were a fairly united community, linked to each other through kin networks.

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<sup>13</sup> SCs traditionally handling corpses for cremation. In this case, *Doms* were employed as sweepers in the Corporation.

The affluent surrounding community residents of Jodhpur Park were highly placed government employees, due to which they rarely had to rely on local social capital. Their networks were global- all outside the area- and their access to high level politicians and officials made them less reliant on local political structures. They had a low need to co-operate with each other, as tapping upon their global networks of contacts solved their problems. The disinterest of the area residents was compounded by increase in the number of tenants living in Jodhpur Park. Due to their short-term commitment to the area, these tenants had little interest in the long-term issues of Jodhpur Park. Hence community organisations in Jodhpur Park like the Jodhpur Park Society (Society), the JPI and the Residents Association (RA) showed a largely inactive membership.

*In Jodhpur Park, no one knows each other. Everyone lives in their own cocoon, busy with their own lives because this is the upper middle class. No one co-operates with others. Only people who are actually suffering from a problem go for community meetings.* (AB, BP, members of JPI, 19.2.03)

These community organisations- the JPI, the Society and RA- were in dispute with each other over handling the lake issue. They all made allegations of inefficiency and corruption against each other. Despite the Society being the original owner of Jodhpur Park, the JPI was at the forefront of making claims to the KMC regarding the state of the lake. The faction-plagued Society tried to bargain with the KMC about the lake and eviction of the *basti*.

The surrounding community residents demonstrated an antipathy to the *basti*, considering it dirty and its residents objectionable and criminal. The class antagonisms due to the spatial proximity of the upper middle class residents of Jodhpur Park with the informal settlement dwellers was barely subdued, boiling to the surface at every moment of conflict.

*There are huge problems because of the basti- it is a filthy sight, creates polluted water and polluted atmosphere.* (CP, Jodhpur Park resident, 19.2.03)

Most surrounding community residents, especially those living far from the lake, did not have any contact with the *basti* residents. Antipathy based on difference in regional origin of the primarily Bengali residents of Jodhpur Park towards the primarily Bihari residents of the *basti* was also apparent, which united the latter even further.

#### **Formal Channel Description:**

At the time of the fieldwork, the TC was in majority in Borough X and ward 93, which includes Jodhpur Park, had a TC councillor in power since two terms. The councillor before him was PSS from the CPI (M).

**Identity of formal channel members:**

The formal channel members and organisations from the municipal and state level involved in the area are as follows:

- Councillor of ward 93- RD from the TC
- Borough Chairman ABis, from the TC
- Borough X officials- RDa (Conservancy Department), GM (Engineering Department), DC- (Executive Engineer).
- The West Bengal Fisheries Department
- HG- the Parks and Gardens Department MMIC
- Officials from the KMC headquarters- SS, MM

The councillor, the Borough chairman, officials from Borough X and KMC headquarters were Bengali men, while HG- MMIC of the KMC's Parks and Gardens department was a Hindi speaking non-Bengali man.

**Power equations among formal channel members:**

The area witnessed the emergence of the TC as a powerful party. The TC dominated Borough X for the 2001-05 session. The local councillor, RD, had been in power for ten years. He had maintained strong links with the JPI. The area representative in the state assembly- the MLA from South Kolkata- had also been elected from the TC, defeating KGo- the powerful state PWD minister from the CPI (M). Hence, the LF was in a tussle with the emerging TC in this area, affecting the KMC's functioning, as is apparent from the extract below.

*The TC (municipal) Board doesn't talk frankly with us. It only keeps assuring us, but never does anything. There is difficulty in working with the TC board. When the CPI (M) board was there, it was simpler to work for us as well as for everyone else. It was easier to make ourselves heard. Here there is no possibility with the TC Board. If there is a problem whom can we tell? (SB, CPI M activist, 24.3.03)*

The surrounding community was against the CPI (M) because they supported the *basti* residents, as seen below. The *basti* remained fairly loyal supporters of the CPI (M), making the TC insecure and increasing efforts to create a *basti* base.

*Earlier when a CPI (M) councillor was there, then we removed pit latrines from the basti and made them into sanitary toilets. The surrounding Jodhpur Park people said "you have made them even more secure by doing this". They were very angry with us for providing the basti with facilities. (ARC, CPI-M NC leader, 30.12.02)*



The state government's Forest Department was involved in the upkeep of the park in which the lake was located. Since the LF ruled the state government, it was difficult for the Forest Department and the then borough administration to co-operate with each other, as seen below,

*The Forest Department has given up on the park. The park became a place for hooligans and vagabonds for their bathing, defecation, their basti etc. KMC doesn't do anything against this... On one hand the KMC is not interested in evictions; on the other the Society is also not doing anything. The local people don't show any interest therefore we too don't bother.* (SJB, Forest Department official, 3.3.03)

### **Identity of Non-Formal channels:**

The significant non-formal channels in the Jodhpur Park area include:

- CPI (M) party bodies- NC lead by ARC, *Mahila Samiti* with SB
- The CPI (M)'s trade union CITU lead by SM in the *basti*
- Community organisations like the Jodhpur Park Institute (JPI)
- The Jodhpur Park Society (Society)
- The Resident's Association (RA)
- Breakaway faction of Society.
- Significant individuals like BP and AB who have strong links with the *basti* and are part of the JPI as well.

The Society, JPI and RA are included among non-formal channels even though they were also claim-makers, because the surrounding community and the *basti* residents approached these organisations with their claims. Hence, they acted as claim-makers to the municipality and as non-formal channels to which claims were made by grassroots and surrounding community residents. Bengali middle class men dominated the non-formal channels in Jodhpur Park, except the CITU leader- a grassroots man from Bihar and BP from the JPI- who was also non-Bengali. Women had some role in the local CPI (M) women's branch, the *Mahila Samiti*, but they dealt mainly with women's domestic and health related issues.

### **Power equations of non-formal channel members:**

The party mass organisations of the CPI (M)- the NC and the trade union of the Left Front- the CITU, as well as the *Mahila Samiti* were the important non-formal channels in the area. Though the TC was in power at the Borough level, there were no significant mass organisations of the TC in the area. There were no significant community clubs in the area of the type present in Pal Bazaar, though the community organisations of the surrounding

community- the Society, the JPI and the RA were active to different degrees with the JPI having the most contact with the grassroots group in the *basti*.

## **2.5 The case studies in reference to the characterisation of environmental conflicts adopted:**

It is relevant to see the case studies in the light of the characterisation of environmental conflicts carried out in chapter one. This looked through a postmodern lense at the multiple sites of power, multiple perceptions, and the voices of the 'other'. The concerns of environmental justice combined diversity and the presence of the other while accepting the possibility of action towards securing justice. The discursive concerns required a focus on material and non-material discourses towards the environment espoused by the claim making groups. In the light of this characterisation, both Jodhpur Park and Pal Bazaar appear as appropriate case studies fitting into the characterisation.

Both cases were centered around a conflict between groups positioned differently in a socio-economic-political hierarchy, thus creating multiple sites of power and looking upon each other with the gaze of the 'other'. The historicity of these perceptions of 'otherness' was well established in both cases and not a new phenomenon arising out of the current conflict, thus making the divisions and schisms more obvious to the understanding of an outsider. The involvement of political parties and formal channels in both cases provides the opportunity for studying the questions of discourse, of coalition formation and hegemonic exclusions. An important characteristic relevant while selecting these cases was the local nature of these conflicts. Neither conflict had generated sustained media or outside interest so that the politics of the cases remained confined at the micro level within the communities and the formal channels linked with them. Apart from limiting the field of the work, this ensured that the micro level of politics was relevant without disruptions of macro level forces. This does not imply that the cases were neat self-contained entities without any link with the political and social currents beyond their boundaries. However, within the overall web of inter-linkages and urban flows, these cases remained contained in the interest they generated outside their areas and direct involvement of city level forces or media glare.

The main focus of the research is now assessing grassroots environmental claim making through formal local government channels. These channels include existing formal channels as well as the new channels introduced by the procedural innovation. Existing channels include Borough Committees, municipal departments and councillors. Urban ward-wise party-sponsored citizens' channels -Nagarik Committees (NCs)- which have a considerable sway in local politics are being treated as quasi-formal channels. The amount of influence

these NCs have on local politics and decisions in the municipality and their closeness with people of a ward make them channels regularly consulted by the councillors, municipal departments and BCs, and approached by citizens.

### **Chapter Three: Macro-Level Analysis- The Political Field and claim making through formal channels**

Having discussed decentralisation theoretically in chapter one and a procedural innovation for decentralisation- the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA in chapter two, this chapter examines Kolkata's political field to assess the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's spatial and non-spatial strategies of decentralisation for their impact on operationalising its inclusion agenda. External exclusions faced by grassroots actors in accessing municipal channels are examined, focussing on existing channels like councillors and municipal officials, and new channels instituted by the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA like Ward Committees and reservations for women as municipal councillors. The concept of political opportunity structure (POS) is used for analysing the political field of the city. As seen in chapter one, political fields vary due to distributions of power and political culture. The utilitarian concept of POS is modified for analysing the political culture, keeping distributions of power in mind. Aspects of the POS used as guidelines to analyse the political culture and distributions of power in Kolkata's political field are character of the formal institutional structure and the political context within public authorities. The third aspect, the informal procedures and prevailing strategies of the relationship between formal (state) and informal (community) channels is expanded in chapters five, six and seven.

This chapter argues that the political context within the city's public authority- used to describe its political culture; and the character of the formal institutional structure- described by its bureaucratic culture are antithetical to decentralisation and peoples' inclusion in governance. Political and bureaucratic cultures are seen as interdependent, due to close interactions between political representatives and municipal officials for municipal work. It is also argued that structurally subservient identities of grassroots claim-makers may act as hurdles in their ability to access formal channels. To illustrate these arguments, the functioning of Kolkata's political culture and bureaucratic culture are discussed with respect to grassroots claim-making to the municipality in two sections of the chapter.

Section 3.1 briefly outlines the political history of the state since this shaped Kolkata's political culture. The political culture of the city is analysed by studying High Politics and everyday politics in the city and municipality. Section 3.2 discusses impediments to accessing formal channels arising from High Politics in Kolkata's political field, for which LF parties are compared with non-Left parties based on their support bases, party structures and their penetration of local polity and bureaucracy. Political frictions between parties have considerably affected the success of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's inclusion agenda in Kolkata and that is also discussed here.

Section 3.3 analyses everyday politics in the city's political culture to understand how the informal practices of political parties- like using identity politics to shape vote banks and the criminalisation and bourgeoisification of parties- have impacted claim-makers' access to formal channels. Section 3.4 examines everyday politics in the bureaucratic culture of the KMC to see its effects on access of marginalised actors like grassroots groups to the KMC. The impact of everyday politics and High Politics on women's reservations and Ward Committees is examined to understand how Kolkata's political field affected the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's inclusion agenda and its outcomes for access of grassroots claims to municipal channels.

As was argued in chapter one, the structural subject position of actors significantly affects their ability to access municipal channels. However, personal values and desire of agents, i.e. their agency, also processes experiences and shapes actions, while structure both enables and constrains such choices. Applying this understanding to formal channel members helps understand impacts of their subject positions and agency on their behaviour towards claim-makers. Hence, councillors and bureaucrats may demonstrate biases emerging from differences between their subject positions and those of claimants. Some formal channel members may also demonstrate the ability and desire- as agents- to behave differently than as determined by their subject positions. Hence though we speak of political and bureaucratic culture, these are not monolithic concepts painting the entire political or bureaucratic system in a monotone, but allow play between formal channel members' subject positions, their agency and their calculations of personal gain and other social and personal benefits in determining their behaviour towards claim-makers. A significant impact of bureaucratic and political culture on claim making is reflected through formation of discourse coalitions and solidarity groupings at the municipal level. This can have exclusionary outcomes for grassroots or other groups, discussed here using the case studies outlined in chapter two.

### **3.1 Political History of West Bengal and its implications for political culture:**

Political culture is created by the history of a system and experiences and ideologies of its members. Hence understanding the state's political history is relevant for understanding the political culture of Kolkata's municipal system. The LF government led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist)- the CPI (M)- has governed West Bengal without a break since 1977. The LF describes itself as

*A coalition of democratic and progressive forces- not all of whom are Marxists- under the leadership of the CPI (M).* (Basu, 1997 :xxii)

Before the Front came to power in West Bengal, there were two periods of rule by a United Front government- a coalition of parties led by the CPI (M) (Williams, 2001). These were the

first instances of non-Congress rule in West Bengal since independence in 1947. In power since 1947, the Indian National Congress (INC) lost ground as the Left emerged in West Bengal. Left parties came into power for the first time in 1967 and returned in 1969. Outlined in chapter two, the state's Naxalite problem in the 1960s combined with the national Emergency declared by the INC at the centre, led to its resounding defeat in the state elections in 1977. The Left parties came into power in 1977 and since then have stayed in power at the state government level (Basu, 1997), (Chatterjee, 1997).

The CPI (M) has held together ten other like-minded parties in the LF coalition<sup>1</sup> using a code of conduct and learning from its experiences over the years. Despite this, relationships between LF parties are often problematic, with a degree of infighting between them. Schisms exist between LF constituents despite a hierarchy of LF bodies handling relationships between the different parties at various levels. For example, as had also occurred previously, in the 2003 local body polls in rural West Bengal, constituents of the LF -the RSP and the FB- contested elections independently against the CPI (M) as they had failed to reach a decision about candidates.

*Forward Bloc and CPI leaders said in public rallies that the CPI (M) was a party of "jotedar" (rich landowners) and infested with "lumpen proletariat", "anti-socials", "class enemies" and "the corrupt" who had unleashed terror and taken partners for granted. RSP's KG has reminded the Marxists not to consider the LF as their "paternal property". (The Statesman, 11.2003)*

Despite infighting, the LF's long stint under the CPI (M)'s leadership has influenced the political culture, the bureaucratic discourse and the dominant discourse in West Bengal. The class-based rationale articulated and aggressively promoted by the Leftists, especially the CPI (M), has dominated the state's social and political discourse (Bhattacharya, 1998). Discussed subsequently, this has affected decentralisation initiatives and the ability of disadvantaged sections like grassroots groups to access municipal government in West Bengal.

The Trinamool Congress<sup>2</sup> (TC) has been posing the biggest challenge to the LF in West Bengal. Emerging from a 1996 split in the West Bengal INC, the TC is lead by Mamata Banerjee. Dissatisfied with the INC's cordial relations with the state's communist government and the low attention Bengal affairs got in the INC's national level discussions, a number of

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the other LF parties are the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), Forward Block (FB), Communist Party of India (CPI), West Bengal Socialist Party (WBSP), the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP), the Forward Bloc (Marxist) (FB-M) (Chaudhuri, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Later renamed the All Indian Trinamool Congress (AITC).

INC members defected to the TC (TC manifesto, 1999). As detailed in chapter two, the TC has consistently focussed on defeating the Leftists in the state. According to the TC, the INC was not addressing this agenda, with Mamata Banerjee alleging that the INC had an 'outrageous adjustment' with the CPI (M) and was functioning as its 'stooge' ([www.trinamoolindia.org](http://www.trinamoolindia.org)). To defeat the Leftists, the TC allied with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the 1998 and 1999 national elections, and joined the BJP's National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government, with Mamata Banerjee made the national Railways Minister. In these elections the TC won all four national parliamentary seats from Kolkata, as well as the prestigious Kolkata Corporation from the LF in 2000. As of 2004, the TC was running the KMC in alliance with the BJP and supported by the INC.

For contesting the 2001 West Bengal state legislature elections, the TC broke its state level alliance with the BJP and allied with the INC. The LF won this election, returning to power for the sixth time, with the TC emerging as the largest opposition party. The TC broke its alliance with the INC after its electoral losses ([www.bengalweb.com/hist](http://www.bengalweb.com/hist)). For the 2004 national Parliamentary Elections, the party merged with the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) to form the Nationalist Trinamool Congress and went to polls as part of the BJP lead coalition. The TC's antipathy for the CPI (M) has remained constant in all these shifts and alliances. It has always tried to align with parties that could defeat the LF. For this, the TC unsuccessfully tried to float a 'grand alliance' of all non-Left parties before the 2001 West Bengal state legislature elections.

The history of the system in West Bengal reveals political opposition and clashes of political ideology, especially in Kolkata, which houses the state government and the city's municipal government. Elaborated further in 3.2.5, acrimony between the TC and the LF has led to the KMC and the state government passing the responsibility of decentralisation of Kolkata's municipal governance onto each other and hampering each other's decentralisation efforts. Furthermore, the LF's squabbling constituents as well as the TNC's infighting have had repercussions for the city's municipal governance, especially regarding the agendas of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA. The history of a system also lays the foundation for the experiences, values and beliefs of members of the system. This is expanded in section 3.4 where the state's history of Left rule is demonstrated to have had a strong impact on the way municipal officials function. The TC's takeover of Kolkata's municipal government has consequently created discomfort among officials, with resultant negative outcomes for municipal governance.

It is pertinent here to review the concept of political culture. Linked to POS, political culture combines the formalised aspects of the political context within public authorities- predicated

by High Politics- and its informal aspects, seen in everyday politics. High Politics comprises of elements of formal party politics such as party organisational structure, party discipline etc. Everyday politics is the politics behind everyday interactions of formal channel members with the public and is based on attitudes emerging from the former's subject positions and agency. Through the behaviour and ideologies of formal channel members, High Politics and everyday politics together describe the political context within the public authority and the character of the formal institution. The impacts of these elements of Kolkata's political culture on peoples' inclusion in municipal governance are explored in the following sections.

Though a coalition of parties, the political culture of the CPI (M) largely defines the LF's activities and policies, more so in areas of CPI (M) dominance (Chatterjee, 1997), like Kolkata. Hence the political culture of the Leftists in Kolkata is discussed with reference to the CPI (M). The Trinamool Congress (TC) is the most visible non-Left party in Kolkata and West Bengal; hence the non-Left political culture is discussed with reference to the TC. The aspects of political culture discussed include assessing the participation of a wider section of people in urban governance and increasing the accessibility of formal channels for the public, using tools like Ward Committees and reservations for women.

### **3.2 High Politics:**

Aspects of High Politics being considered include the support bases of the parties, the party structures, their mechanisms of penetrating the polity, and party discipline.

#### **3.2.1 Support Base:**

Description of a political party's support base has close links with its practices and policies. The LF gained its hold in West Bengal through 'Operation Barga'- its rural land reform programme for redistributing excess land owned by rich peasants among rural sharecroppers and the landless. This created a strong rural support base for the LF, which it has maintained and cultivated (Basu, 1997), (CPI (M) Programme, 2001), (Kohli, 1987). The LF and CPI (M)'s urban support base is weaker and they have been losing hold of municipal areas, as demonstrated by the Left's defeat in municipal polls in 1995 and 2001 in several areas of the state (Bhattacharya, 1998), (State Election Commission, 2001).

Though the TC has a growing support base, especially among the middle classes, it has still not overthrown the LF's hold over the polity. It is trying to emulate the Left's organisational structure, which has good mass penetration, as well as attempting to create a support base in the state's rural areas, as seen in the following extract,

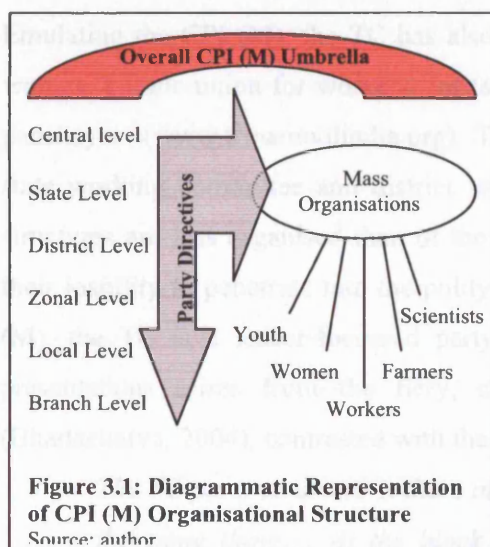


*The TC felt that its interests are best served by intervening around the issue of land conflicts between share croppers and land owners- an area which has traditionally been a centrepiece of CPI-M campaigns in West Bengal and an important basis of that party's Assembly election victories since 1977. (Rogaly cited in Vernon) Although the TC has made inroads into the labouring class, its main constituency is drawn from the middle class (Vernon, R. et. al, 2003:13)*

Though successful in capturing power in a number of urban local bodies in the 2000 elections, including the KMC, the TC failed to capitalise on these victories and sufficiently challenge the LF in the state (Bhattacharya, 2004). Its fractured and unsystematic workings reflected in results from a poll of 1793 respondents throughout the state after the 2001 assembly elections (refer Appendix E, part E), which illustrated the LF's higher popularity even in urban areas and the TC's popularity only among rich voters, with middle class and poorer groups supporting the LF. The LF and TC-INC combine were evenly placed among upper-castes, with OBCs, SC-STs and Muslims overwhelmingly supporting the LF (ibid). A lack of consistency and clarity in the TC's focus was evident from the fact that despite his party professing pro-poor focus, a Borough X TC councillor in Kolkata felt that

*...our party's focus (for votes) is the middle class and above. The votes of the lower classes were with the CPI (M), are with it and will remain with it (ABis, 10.4.03)*

### 3.2.2 Party structures and mechanisms of penetration:



The CPI (M) maintains a hold over its support base through an impressive party organisation comprising of core members at different levels of party hierarchy and mass organisations workers- all controlled by a centralised party discipline. The hierarchical structure of CPI (M) party committees includes the branch or 'shakha', followed by local, zonal, district, state and central level wings (Biswas, 2002), (Williams, 2001). The branch-a 'living link with the people', works to win masses for the political and organisational benefits of the party (CPI (M) Constitution, 2000).

A factor important in accepting CPI (M) mass organisation members into core party membership is their links with the public of their area (Biswas, 2002). Thus an important

party mechanism for penetrating the local polity is giving party membership to persons with strong local networks who would actively propagate the party's message and image in their locality. This has been very successful with the LF polling 53% votes in the 1990 KMC elections and 45% in the 1995 KMC elections (Ghosh, 1996). In state-wide municipal elections in 1995, the LF polled more than 60% votes in three of fourteen districts and more than 40% of votes in 6 more districts for which data was available (ibid). Of the 122 civic bodies in the state, 68 were Left controlled in 2000 (Statesman, 7.4.00).

The CPI (M) has a strong grassroots presence through mass organisations like farmers' groups or '*Kisan Sabhas*' in rural areas and through workers' wings, women's wings and youth wings in urban areas. The party's 'design of control' extends to social platforms in West Bengal such as literacy campaigns, the science movement, the library movement etc. to maximise its penetration of the polity (Bhattacharya, 1998). Despite overtly denying the political character of its mass organisations, core party members guide these according to the party's central commands (CPI (M) Constitution, 2000), and use them in canvassing during elections (Chatterjee, 1997). The involvement of mass organisations in expanding the CPI (M)'s support base is clear from the following statement by a CPI member,

*These wings actually exist in the party for cultivating vote banks. The party's overt discourse about these structures was to bring these people into the mainstream, to enter their worlds and understand their problems. (ANB, Kolkata, 21.3.03)*

Emulating the CPI (M), the TC has also established mass organisations for youth, students, women, a trade union for workers, for teachers, for SC-STs and a cell for municipalities and panchayats ([www.trinamoolindia.org](http://www.trinamoolindia.org)). The party structure includes a national committee, a state working committee and district level committees as seen below. However, the TC's structures are less organised than of the CPI (M), with some TC members blaming this for their inability to penetrate into the polity like the Left. Unlike the organisation-focussed CPI (M), the TC is a leader-focussed party (from fieldwork). The difference in their public presentations arises from the fiery, charismatic style of the TC's leader and cadres (Bhattacharya, 2004), contrasted with the CPI (M)'s organised, monolithic self-presentation.

*The TC party structure is there at Block or Ward level (in urban areas). These two are the same thing.... At the block level there is a president, vice president, general secretary etc. There are two other levels- the district and state levels, and focus wings for youth, women, students, workers etc (ABis, TC councillor, Kolkata, 10.4.03)*

In power at the state level since 1977, the LF, especially the CPI (M), routinely distributes government patronage to its supporters, thus increasing the number of party supporters and

members. This is illustrated by the fact that 80% of CPI (M) members joined the party after it came into power in 1977 (Chatterjee, 1997). Kohli (1987) and Williams (2001) reinforce advantages of supporting the LF by illustrating the greater benefits received by areas with larger numbers of CPI (M) supporters compared to other areas. The extracts below illustrate this aspect of the CPI (M)'s political culture. Kolkata newspapers also repeatedly report instances of the CPI (M) protecting its party members from prosecution when they commit a crime (The Statesman, The Telegraph, Ananda Bazara Patrika). For example, The Telegraph reported on the CPI (M)'s maxim of "Party First" which led to suppression of criminal cases against party members implicated in two separate incidents of rape (21.2.03, 12.3.03).

*CPI (M) has this 'paie dewar rajniti' (politics of getting things by force for people)- a politics that depends on grabbing from the well-off to appease the voter block in focus- to be the champion and deliver things to them (VR, activist, Kolkata, 14.3.03)*

*Many bad elements are joining the CPI (M) and are giving the party a bad name now. We can't understand this greedy mentality of the new generation. We went to jail; we sacrificed so much (for the party). Now people are only interested in what they can get for themselves (SB, CPI (M) member, Jodhpur Park, 24.3.03)*

The TC mirrors the Left's strategy for increasing their support base by distributing patronage to their supporters, while ignoring and sometimes actively opposing claims of other people. Several fieldwork interviewees repeated this, as is seen below,

*We face problems with the TC Corporation because the local councillor (from the TC) doesn't cooperate with us, though he talks nicely with us on the surface. He is also not doing any work for our ward because most of the ward people are Left leaning (PB, CPI (M) mass organisation, Borough X, Kolkata, 20.2.03)*

*The councillor doesn't help us because we are largely CPI (M) supporters and he says "you are not our people, why should I help your basti"? Some basti people support the TC now since it is currently in power in the KMC. (BL, Jodhpur Park basti <sup>3</sup> resident, Kolkata, 8.1.03)*

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<sup>3</sup> A *basti* is any informal settlement, whether a slum or squatter settlement. Kolkata's slums have regularised rights to land, while squatter settlements have tenuous and revocable claims to residence (Roy, 2003). The KMDA does not recognise squatter settlements. The LF government changed its policy towards slums from eviction to providing them with in-situ services. The KMC policy towards squatter settlements is eviction without rehabilitation. The word *basti* carries connotation of an unplanned, informal settlement with minimal or no urban services like water, sewerage and electricity.

Thus, political affiliations affect the Corporation's functioning and the way parties pass on patronage and benefits. The political identity of claimants is important to the way elected councillors react to a claimant or group of claimants.

*... We are simple people- without power, and political parties have not managed to 'paint us their colour' (make us their supporters), therefore they tried to take revenge by evicting us. (HF, grassroots family evicted from Pal Bazaar area, 22.10.02)*

This illustrates why people find it beneficial to use political parties for claim making instead of approaching formal municipal channels. Both Left and non-Left parties have similar mechanisms of penetration with distribution of party patronage dependant on the political affiliations of people in an area. The control of formal channels by partisan interests reduces opportunities for claim makers in accessing them, expanded in section 3.4 on everyday politics. The ability of political party structures to function parallel to municipal channels encourages claim makers to use them for claim making in preference to formal channels.

### **3.2.3 Party structures and their function as quasi-formal channels:**

A significant aspect of the CPI (M)'s political culture is the penetration of the polity and bureaucracy by its mass organisations so that they act as 'brokers' for peoples' claims and as oft-used channels of claim making. Their influence over and interference in the bureaucracy's work has given these channels a quasi-formal status, as seen in the fieldwork. Veron et. al's (2003) study of rural West Bengal found it customary for CPI (M) party cadres and organisations to assist the local bureaucracy, resulting in the party encroaching on the functions of the local administration, blurring boundaries between state and society. They found that this could deepen poor peoples' dependency on the party, broadening scope for political favouritism, and that people gave up trying to bypass this 'political society', finding it futile to directly approach the formal administration (ibid).

As apparent from the following extract from its party literature, the CPI (M) encourages its members to use the municipal administrative structures to increase the party's visibility and strengthen its relationship with the public,

*It is the organisational responsibility of our party members to utilise the administration in the interest of the people.... The levels of administrative infrastructures have been democratised to make the links between the party and the people more intimate. The party must utilise these arrangements appropriately. If the party is unaware of the peoples' convenience, inconvenience, needs, demands, proposals and advice then an administration controlled by the party will also not*

*function well.... This is an important task from the organisational point of view.*  
(Biswas, 2002:85)

The working of CPI (M) mass organisations- the Nagarik Committees<sup>4</sup> (NCs) of urban West Bengal is particularly interesting in this context

*Nagarik Committees were created to improve citizen's lives. (They deal with) roads, lights, drainage, water, transportation etc.... The functions of an NC include developing a local area and increasing citizens' participation (in managing their localities). (DB, TG- NC members, Pal Bazaar, 6.1.03)*

Following the CPI (M)'s exhortation to its members outlined in its party literature, NCs take on jobs meant for local municipalities. Combined with their patronage networks, this makes NCs appear easier to access; also since parties co-opt any non-party options available to people. From fieldwork interviews in Kolkata it emerged that a large proportion of people preferred approaching party channels like NCs rather than going to the local administration. Despite being conscious of the NCs' political identity, they felt these channels had more influence over local bureaucrats and local councillors

*We have not gone to the Mayor-in-Council members etc. People don't trust government officials. They believe only the political party can do things. (CP, Jodhpur Park resident, 19.2.03)*

Vernon et.al. (2003)'s study of rural West Bengal found that most poor households relied upon party patrons to access government projects and schemes. These households were unable to overcome their disadvantaged position in relation to rent-seeking forces in political society due to their reliance on party structures. This was also observed in this study's fieldwork. Thus, political party structures in West Bengal behave like quasi-formal channels, adding politically coloured distance between people and local government channels. Increasing people's dependence on party channels, this extracts costs from them by requiring participation in party events and loyalty to the party.

*We were told (by party people and neighbours) at Bhagat Singh Colony (where we were given alternate land) - you stay here only if you go to CPI (M) meetings. You have to attend their meetings, marches and demonstrations and do their party work. (UF, evicted from Pal Bazaar, 15.11.02)*

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<sup>4</sup>A state legislative assembly seat makes 1 zone with 6/7 councillor wards. Each ward has its own NC, followed by zonal level NCs, District level NCs and the state level NC. (PS, 6.4.03)

*One person from every family has to go for the party's demonstrations and meetings each month. (LD, evicted person, Pal Bazaar, 5.1.03)*

An additional drawback of using party channels is their uneven effectiveness in the city. The support NCs got from bureaucrats and councillors varied from ward to ward. TC councillors and municipal officials in TC dominated borough offices did not support the NC and other CPI (M) mass organisations in their areas. The opposite scenario existed in Left dominated boroughs and in Left councillors' wards.

*Since the NC is Left-oriented therefore there is a high level of help and co-operation between NCs and Left councillors. However councillors from other parties may not co-operate with (the NC) and think that the NC is trying to dictate them. (PS, LF ex-councillor, Borough X, 6.4.03)*

Thus party mass organisations function as the political society that mediates between higher-level government channels and the general populace (Vernon et. al, 2003). They reduce the importance of formal channels while extracting costs from people approaching them. However, the relationship between parties and claimants is not one of one-way dependency, as elaborated in chapter seven.

#### **3.2.4 Party discipline and organisation:**

Party discipline and ideology shape the overt values and official discourse of party members towards issues such as the environment, people's participation in governance etc. This may however be different from the more 'vernacular' readings of party agendas 'on the ground' (Williams, 2001).

The CPI (M)'s success has been attributed to its projection of itself as a party of 'discipline and development' (Chatterjee, 1997). Its organisational arrangement has been characterised as both centralised and decentralised- with decision-making being concentrated, though modifiable at local level based on knowledge and initiative. The balance created by dissipation of power among various wings of party leadership, within an overall unifying party umbrella, is credited in limiting power conflicts and disagreements at the top (Kohli, 1987). The party's discipline has been described as an ethic in which the ideals of scientific knowledge, bureaucratic rationality and efficacy of the structure and system are taken with utmost seriousness (Chatterjee, 1987). This discipline is derived from the principles of Democratic Centralism described by the party as

*...centralised leadership based on inner-party democracy and democracy under the guidance of the centralised leadership. (CPI (M) Constitution, 2000:7)*

The party 'line of control' ensures that lower party structures execute decisions and directives of higher party organs. Though lower party structures can voice their opinions to higher party structures, the latter are not compelled to follow these in formulating party directives binding on lower party organs.

*The Communist Party is run by democratic centralism... meaning that all the party's upper posts are democratically elected, though they must be obeyed once elected. In a cell one is able to express an opinion, but once the cell's decision is taken everyone has to follow it. It is a very centralised functioning. When you think in terms of decentralisation, every region shows its own peculiarities, but the party's higher-level decisions are based on an average condition (ANB, CPI member, 21.3.03)*

Thus, there is a dichotomous denial of specific local realities in formal party directives, though local level practice may sometimes be different. The CPI (M) being a party of strong centralised structure and discipline, is inherently undemocratic in its functioning, despite the emphasis on democracy in the party's programme and rules. The Leninist-Stalinist political theory influencing the CPI (M) inherently reduces scope for people's democratic participation in the state's governance (Bhattacharyya, 1998). It is thus more an apparatus for mobilisation and less a means for expressing the will of its base (Gledhill, 2000).

Combined with the corruption of the rank and file of the CPI (M) (Williams, 2001), this makes it difficult for intra-party decentralised functioning. This also negatively affects the party's practical support for decentralisation initiatives for the general polity.

*The CPI(M) has a monarchical pattern of functioning. Outgoing leaders suggest their replacement (in party committees) and people vote on these choices. Most people vote for them because they are scared to not do so, hence it is no longer democratic. CPI (M)'s thinking is inherently against decentralisation. When we tried to decentralise rural planning to lower than block level, CPI (M) cadres asked us – "Can lower levels plan?" We said "yes". Medinipur Zila Committee decided that not just the block level, but village people would do the planning. Then I heard party people saying, "if villagers do the planning, then what will happen to us?" They were worried where their power would come from and they stopped village level planning. (ANB, WB Planning Commission member, 21.3.03)*

The inner functioning of Left parties is seen to affect the decentralisation agenda since they have penetrated the polity deeply, and the bureaucracy has imbibed their functioning style. The bureaucracy has got used to receiving commands from party bosses, effectively centralising Kolkata's political and bureaucratic culture. In this scenario, for municipal

officials to accept decentralisation, for Left councillors to propagate decentralisation, this culture of centralised command and functioning needs changing.

Further, the CPI (M)'s structure and discipline which Kohli (1990) found salutary, does not prevent corruption, dissidence, self-serving greed and factionalism among party members (Chatterjee, 1997), (Williams, 2001). Sporadic corruption weeding drives in the party indicate the prevalence of such practices, as observed by Williams (2001) during his study. Tactical use of violence by CPI (M) leaders in creating and maintaining political support was observed in both rural (Williams, 2001) and urban contexts (Roy, 2003). Violence and intimidation by CPI (M) workers during elections to ensure the party's victory are examples of the schism between the 'higher level' discourse of the CPI (M) focussed on class struggle and transformation, and its vernacular practices of maintaining power (Williams, 2001).

This indicates the gap between CPI (M)'s party ideology, its theoretical emphasis on decentralisation and its practice. This gap weakens disciplinary barriers to autocratism and reduces democracy in party cadres' dealings with the public. Efforts of corrupt party cadres for power accumulation on the one hand, and the CPI (M)'s emphasis on vanguardism on the other, are inherently antithetical to decentralisation<sup>5</sup> (Vernon et. al., 2003), as seen in the extract below. Though the CPI (M)'s reformist goal has been altered by the party's own admission, yet it continues promoting vanguardism.

*The criteria should have been to make the working class self-sufficient, make them the vanguard and step back- an empowerment ideology. This does not happen now because working class dependence on party leaders is good for votes. (ANB, CPI member, 21.3.03)*

Unlike the CPI (M)'s organised party dictates, (howsoever non-participatory for its rank and file), the TC's party structures are ruled largely by the dictates of its leader, Mamata Banerjee. There is little theoretical grounding to the party's functioning comparable to that of the Left parties, which function at least on paper according to democratic centralism. This has resulted in the TC having a very centralised functioning, leading to dissatisfaction among its grassroots workers as seen below,

*Miss Mamata Banerjee was working in the style of the Congress by forming committees with her chosen men, disregarding the opinion of the grassroot-level worker (The Statesman, 20.10.03).*

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<sup>5</sup> In CPI (M)'s philosophy, a vanguard of party members will lead the public in the revolution to establish socialism



Lacking firm commitment to any agenda other than overthrowing the Leftist government (Bhattacharya, 2004), the TC has changed political partners from the overtly secular INC to the non-secular BJP. This was exemplified by the party's attempt at forming a grand alliance of mutually incompatible non-Left parties to overthrow the LF in the 2001 West Bengal state elections.

*Even Mamata, for all her fiery self-righteousness, has no programme, no principled agenda, except a pathological hatred of the CPM (sic). (Kishwar, 1999)*

This centralised functioning causes schisms within the party, especially between senior leaders and Mamata Banerjee (Bhattacharya, 2004). She is prone to dictating the TC's functioning, even forcing the TC mayor of Kolkata to overturn KMC decisions. Several such instances were observed in 2003, such as Mamata Banerjee forcing retraction of the water tax and other taxes imposed by the KMC for increasing its revenue base<sup>6</sup>; protests led by her against squatter evictions by the TC ruled KMC from the banks of a drainage canal named Tolly Nullah<sup>7</sup> etc.

*The functioning of the Calcutta (sic) Municipal Corporation, which is run by her (Mamata Banerjee's) party, is often held hostage to the Trinamool shenanigan. The Mayor of Kolkata, Mr. Subrata Mukherjee, would thus find himself at odds with members of his own council, who defy him in her name. Worse still important development schemes or administrative steps are sacrificed at the altar of the leaders' personality clashes. (The Telegraph, 1.4.03)*

Referring to the TC factions in the Tolly Nullah evictions, a TC councillor explained the workings of the party as seen below. This inconsistency in the party's agendas creates confusion among the polity and KMC bureaucrats

*In TC there is no overall planning of strategies. The reaction of the two groups was spontaneous. Our party's and the Corporation's split was not a thought-out strategy... Ours is a one-person vote- we all agree with Mamata. (ABis, Borough X councillor, 10.4.03)*

Emulating a CPI (M) strategy for electoral success, the TC promises grand civic projects to the Kolkata public before elections. The Left parties used this strategy in the Pal Bazaar pond

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<sup>6</sup> The water tax imposed by the mayor in 2002 was part of the KMC's revenue increasing efforts. Not wanting to alienate the TC's urban support base, Mamata Banerjee threatened the TC lead KMC Board with dissolution, forcing the mayor to withdraw this 'anti-people' tax in 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Tolly Nullah evictions created a schism in the TC. The TC mayor Subrata Mukherjee ordered the KMC to carry out evictions, while some TC cadres led by Mamata Banerjee opposed this. Ultimately the KMC carried out the evictions.

improvement project before the assembly and local elections of 2000, and the Jodhpur Park TC councillor was using it with the 2005 KMC elections in mind. Thus the TC uses vote gathering mechanisms often similar (and sometimes different) to the LF for increasing its support base.

The fiery personality of the TC's leader shapes its political culture. She takes to the streets calling upon citizens' support at injustices perceived by her on any section of the polity, though the TC professes a pro-poor focus ([www. trinamoolindia.org](http://www.trinamoolindia.org)). However, a lack of clarity in the party's agenda makes its actions seem sporadic, unconvincing and ultimately driven by the urge to buy quick attention (Bhattacharya, 2004).

The TC's organisational structure and discipline indicate centralisation and ideological confusion in the party, not conducive to inspiring confidence among KMC officials, used to the stable LF. Lack of a unified political direction from the TC reduces the administration's efficacy, while the TC's centralised political culture reinforces the centralisation inherited by the KMC's bureaucratic culture from previous Leftist governments. Reinforced by the party's ideological vacillations, TC members demonstrate corruption similar to Left parties, as reported in Kolkata newspapers. Similar to the Leftists, this corruption of the TC rank and file is not conducive to decentralisation initiatives for increasing public inclusion in governance.

So far the chapter has argued that despite surface differences in High Politics in the political culture of both parties, such as their public presentation and organisational structures, the party discipline and practices of both Left and non-Left parties are antithetical to decentralisation. Their impact on the KMC's bureaucratic culture is also not conducive to increasing access of governance structures to the public. The next section examines the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's provision of Ward Committees (WCs) for increasing people's access to the municipality and the reasons for their failure arising from the city's political culture.

### **3.2.5 Impact of political culture on the Ward Committees:**

WCs were envisioned as apolitical citizens' bodies increasing access of the public to the municipality. As intended by the national level policy makers,

*...Wards Committees would operate at the neighbourhood level and thereby enhance proximity between the people and their representatives. It would also be an important forum to establish accountability and provide an opportunity for the people to have a say in how the city governments perform in their own localities. (Sivaramakrishna, 2000:220)*

The ward was envisioned as a platform for citizen's participation and support. WCs were seen as counterparts of village-level *panchayats* (ibid) - structures of direct democracy in rural India strengthened by the 73<sup>rd</sup> CAA- a companion of the urban 74<sup>th</sup> CAA. Rural *panchayats* have functioned better than the WCs and it would be relevant to briefly explore why that has happened. However, we begin with the fate of WCs in Kolkata.

The West Bengal state government mandated one WC with four to fourteen members per ward, determined by the ward's actual population (Nagarpalika Network Newsletter, March 2001). The state legislated that some WC seats be reserved for social workers, educationists, cultural workers, backward class women etc (Ghosh, A., 1996). The TC-ruled KMC had recommended that WCs be made compulsory in a 2002 MIC recommendation and framed rules for the formation of WCs.

The LF government put significant emphasis on formation of WCs, trying to link them with various functions, as is evident from the following extracts- the first from the CPI(M)'s weekly organ and the second from an interview with a LF ex-councillor.

*In towns and cities, the WCs must be made the nodal agencies for the creation of active self-help and self-employment groups and for liasing with small entrepreneurs who may make investments in the urban sector. (People's Democracy, March 10, 2002)*

*The power of the WC is to supervise the councillor's work and advise the councillor. Unless a piece of work is passed in a WC meeting, it cannot happen. These things were the original rights of the WCs, (BCC, ex CPI(M) councillor, 12.4.03)*

As seen in WC rules (refer Appendix H), WCs were directed to help the BCs in identifying and prioritising problems of the ward, overseeing proper execution of municipal services works utilising people's participation, motivating ward people to pay taxes, planning and executing various obligatory and discretionary municipal functions, detecting violations of the KMC Act, arresting wasteful uses of municipal services, organizing civic participation, listening to ward residents' grievances and arranging for their redressal, and maintenance of the ward environment. Thus WCs had the potential to significantly contribute to citizen's participation and ward development. To assuage councillors' and bureaucrats' fears regarding WCs as alternate power centres, the rules allowed WC members to interact with KMC bureaucrats only through the councillor.

However, WCs were unable to emerge as working bodies in Kolkata primarily due to opposition by councillors, discussed here, and KMC officials, discussed in 3.4.2. Up to May 2004, only 73 of 144 WCs had been formed in Kolkata, of which few were functional (SB, municipal secretary, 29.5.04). Madhyamgram municipality (population=155,503) bordering Kolkata and declared the best municipality for 2002 in the district of 24 Parganas was chosen to study the functioning of WCs, as all WCs were formed and functioning there. In Kolkata, opposition by councillors to WCs cut across party lines- demonstrating their reluctance to increase people's access to the municipality. This opposition was fuelled by councillors' fears of losing power to the WCs and their suspicion of the state and municipal government's motives in mandating them. For example, despite the LF state government having mandated WC formation in compliance with the national law, a Left councillor felt that

*The TC has floated this idea of WCs, because it wants to know what is happening in each ward. WCs can bypass the councillor because they have a direct link with the Head Office and Borough Offices....Councillors will become puppets of WCs if they are formed. Therefore, we from the LF are trying to block their formation. (HC, Left councillor, Pal Bazaar, 13.12.02)*

Similarly despite the regulation being implemented by their own party in power in the municipality, TC councillors were also unhappy with the WCs.

*I have not created a WC in my ward, because they are useless and interfering things. Our party whips have forced some councillors to form the WCs in their areas.... However, if one gives too much democracy in India, work won't happen (ABis, TC councillor, Borough X, 21.3.03)*

Further, there was little allocation of funds or funds tied to WCs in Kolkata with funds being released to BCs instead. KMC allocated only a 250-rupee (3.5 pounds sterling) budget per month for WC functioning. This inadequate budget allocation reduced their ability to act as effective bodies and removed any financial impetus for councillors to form WCs. However, in smaller municipalities like Madhyamgram, funds were tied to WC formation, so that councillors there had an impetus to form WCs.

*If a councillor can't set up the WC, then only the councillor fund and chairman development fund is available. Many other funds like the Finance Commission funds, Basic Minimum Services fund, National Scheme Development Project fund, Housing and Urban Development Corporation fund- are only released to the councillor when a WC exists, because WC members' signatures are needed for the development projects related to these funds. (AB, MR. Madhyamgram councillors, 22.3.03)*

The KMC WC rules stated that councillors were to nominate few WC members (exact numbers based on actual ward populations) and the KMC the rest. Councillor's nominees were to be from among prominent ward residents like doctors, educationists etc. and from marginalised groups like women and SC-STs to adequately represent all sections of ward people. However as there were no reservations for any marginalised groups in the WCs, their domination by prominent ward residents was observed. For example, very few women were members of the WCs formed in Kolkata and Madhyamgram. Detailed data available for Madhyamgram showed that of a total of 219 WC members, only 11 (5%) were women. Gender solidarity by women councillors was not apparent, with 38% of women councillors and 27% of men councillors having women as WC members. 20% of men councillors and no women councillor had more than one woman WC member. It is likely that similar data would emerge for Kolkata based on a similar socio-cultural milieu.

A strategy Madhyamgram councillors used to reduce WC member's influence in ward matters was to nominate professionally very busy persons to WCs to ensure minimum interference by them in ward matters.

*WC members are chosen based on their professional work as doctors etc, since they are usually busy with their work and can't given sufficient time to WC work (AB, MR, Madhyamgram councillors, 22.3.03).*

Kolkata councillors tried to offset the influence of KMC nominees by nominating their party supporters as WC members. The following extracts illustrate councillors' fear of power sharing and their manipulations resulting in the WCs losing their intended character as apolitical citizens' bodies for increasing people's access to the municipality.

*If WCs are there then people other than the councillor come into the picture. Alternate power centres might emerge and undermine the councillor's position. Councillors are insecure and against WCs because the councillor nominates some WC members; the Corporation nominates others. (RD, TC councillor, Jodhpur Park, 27.10.02)*

*(In Madhyamgram) we were able to make WCs because councillors were given the liberty to select all WC members- even the municipality nominees. (RG, Madhyamgram municipal chairman, 6.3.03)*

Councillors also tried to use party mass organisations as replacements for WCs, with some Left councillors opining that WCs were unnecessary and LF mass organisations sufficient as citizens' bodies. The barring of WC members from meeting borough administrators without

the councillor made WCs even more inconsequential for the councillors. Since party mass organization members had no bar against meeting borough officials and further councillors could control them through their parties, there was an emphasis on using party mass organizations like NCs rather than WCs to act as citizen's bodies.

*Though WC members are supposed to be apolitical, but actually they will all be politically motivated individuals. The difference between the NC and the WC from this angle is that the NC can't do things alone and has to take the councillor's advice, (whereas) WCs can get permissions directly from the (KMC) Head Office. The WCs will have lots of power. Therefore we think that if councillors from surrounding wards, the NC and Mahila Sangha (mass organisations for women) are there, then WCs are not needed. (HC, LF councillor, Pal Bazaar, 13.12.02)*

Thus the councillors' showed resentment towards WCs and fear of the people's participation in ward matters so that where formed, they were reduced to token structures.

*Ultimately the councillor's view will prevail. The WC is (now only) for namesake. It is more for deciding what are the (ward's) different agenda items. They will not create much problem in a councillor's work. (BCC, ex LF councillor, 12.4.03)*

A brief comparison with West Bengal's rural local government structures - the *panchayats*- shows that these have been more successful than urban areas in engaging people's participation in rural governance (Chattopadhyaya and Duflo, 2003), (Lieten, 2003), Though there are no bodies like WCs in rural areas, yet the *gram sabha*- composed of all adult villagers- functions better as a participatory body involved in the *panchayat*'s functioning and monitoring than a ward population is in urban areas. A possible explanation may be the higher social cohesion in villages and their smaller populations than a typical urban ward in Kolkata. This ensures greater social capital among *gram sabha* members and hence easier awareness of *panchayat* activities and their monitoring by *gram sabha* members.

Though *panchayats* in West Bengal have shown better results in people's participation in rural governance than WCs in urban governance, they still show a *bhadralok* character with the leadership primarily with upper-class-upper-caste members (Lieten, 2003). This reflects the statements made earlier about the *bhadralok* character of the political parties in West Bengal. Further, similar to urban wards, political party mass organisations hold sway over rural *panchayats* (Bhattacharya, 1998), (Lieten, 2003) acting as mediators between citizens and formal governance structures.

The success of rural *panchayats* as participatory structures is also ascribed to the LF government focusing on structural changes alongwith development schemes in rural areas. Hence, changes such as land reforms and targeting rural marginalised groups as beneficiaries of development schemes has politicised the rural populace making them eager to participate in rural governance (Lieten, 2003). This LF strategy in rural West Bengal has ensured its deep penetration in the countryside, increasing the number of LF supporters. Parallel efforts at structural change and development have not been made to the same extent in urban areas, which are more heterogeneous due to migrant populations. The heterogeneity is reflected in the greater diversity of the migrant populations' ethnic origins, regional origins, religious and caste- class backgrounds. Hence, urban electoral victories for both the LF and TC are not as closely linked to ensuring people's developmental goals being met, since there are more avenues for manipulating electoral victories in urban West Bengal, as is seen in the explanation of urban informalisation and geographies of patronage described in chapter seven. Hence in West Bengal, urban residents' participation in governance through structures such as WCs is lower compared to villagers' participation in *panchayats*.

### **3.2.6 Impact of clashes between the TC and Left on the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's agenda:**

The 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's decentralisation efforts were also weakened by clashes between the CPI (M) and the TC and their strongly centralised functioning. As the Left had enacted the state's conformity legislation for the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA, many TC councillors expressed suspicion towards it. Unwilling to accept the LF state government's directives, a number of them tried stalling its implementation. Further, the Leftist state government's physical proximity with the non-Left municipal government in Kolkata presented challenges to decentralisation due to antagonisms between the LF and the TC leading the two levels of government. This had negative consequences for the KMC administration due to its partial financial dependence on the state government and also since it was subject to the state government's regulations regarding municipal governance. The TC-led KMC alleged that it was not released adequate funds due to clashes between the LF at the state level and TC at the local level. As seen before, this was repeated in Kolkata's boroughs and wards, where Left councillors alleged non co-operation by the TC's KMC Board.

*Yes there are conflicts between local and state governments. For example, the local body should get statutory funds from the state government but the KMC hasn't got the full amount because of conflicts due to party differences. (ABis, TC councillor, Borough X, 10.4.03)*

*The party in power (TC) does not overtly behave badly with us, but create problems in actually delivering thing to us. Mayor-in-council members take sides and favour*

*some people due to political reasons and subtly oppose (political opponents). Example: the MIC member overseeing Roads was to give us construction materials, but he supplied his own party first. (HC, Left councillor, Pal Bazaar, 13.12.02)*

### **3.3 Everyday politics in Kolkata:**

Governance processes themselves generate relational networks, which cut across or draw together and interlink the relational webs of communities and people (Healy, 1997). Studying everyday politics in a system provides insights into the domination systems operating in it. This has been linked to the formation of solidarity groupings between actors with dominant subject positions when the agency of actors does not overcome such formations. Such coalition formation would indicate a failure of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's inclusionary agenda predicated on factors other than of High Politics. Examining everyday politics includes studying interactions between formal channel members and claim making actors, which is explored in chapters five, six and seven.

#### **3.3.1 Everyday politics of identity - politicians and councillors:**

Using the CPI (M) and TC this section briefly examines the 'official' discourses of the state's Leftist and non-Left parties regarding elements of identity. A brief examination of the membership profiles of different parties is undertaken to understand the possibilities of solidarity grouping formation between members of different parties and the general public. Actual practices of politicians from these parties are examined at ground level.

The CPI (M) presents itself as a party of the working classes aiming to establish socialist society through class struggle. The CPI (M) describes its strategic objective

*... to be achieved by the revolutionary forces in the present stage of the revolutionary movement. The Party sets out a programme which will guide the workers, peasants, all sections of the working people and the progressive, democratic forces in their fight against the ruling classes to achieve People's Democracy as a step towards the goal of a socialist society. (CPI (M) Programme, 2001:4)*

The official discourse of West Bengal communists couches identity-based social issues related to caste, tribe etc. in a class-based logic, proposing class struggle as a solution for all ills. For example, the CPI (M) uses Marxist terminology and discursive patterns in discussing caste and atrocities on tribal people

*...caste system is the super structure of society and feudal and semi-feudal sections of society in their own interests are striving hard to maintain this system. Without abolition of feudalism, and semi-feudalism, it will not be possible to transform society*



*to a level where the Indian caste system could be abolished. Even the sufferings of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes cannot be mitigated without attacking this feudal and semi-feudal landlordism. (Basu, 1997:98)*

The CPI (M)'s official projection of itself as a class-based party has created a political culture overtly excluding 'primordial loyalties' of caste, ethnicity and religion from the political field. However, these very elements are covertly used to bolster the party's electoral prospects (Williams, 2001). The CPI (M) uses caste and other 'local loyalties' while selecting candidates for elections (Kohli, 1987). To maximise votes, candidates need to be politically appropriate, and attract support based on "primordial loyalties" (ibid). LF members explained such tactical uses of identity other than (and combined with) class as follows,

*Though there aren't any defined caste based organisations in the CPI (M), but it uses caste and religion in the working of politics. For example, it gives SC and Muslim candidates tickets for contesting elections from areas dominated by SCs or Muslims. In our youth we talked openly against religion, but now there is no such defiance of religion because of tactical and practical reasons (ANB and SB, 21.3.03)*

The profile of a party's members also influences their political practice as their subject positions may generate biases affecting the everyday practice of politics, away from the scrutiny of Political ideology and High Politics. Kohli (1987) states that the social backgrounds of political representatives point to the interests these actors may bring to their political roles, though the more incorporated political actors are into a party, the less significant their social backgrounds become as guides to their political behaviour. Kohli argues that the CPI (M) is a 'reasonably well-disciplined party'; hence its members are more likely to comply with their leadership's directives. However, the party has attracted numerous opportunistic and self-interested persons, with their commitment to party ideology conditional on it's fulfilling their personal interests (Williams, 2001), (Chatterjee, 1997). Further, Kohli only examined High Politics- the behaviour of party members in a defined Political situation and for a defined Political end, and not at the politics of their everyday interaction.

Investigating everyday interactions helps understand peoples' inclusion in governance. Inclusion as a project is not just achieved by Political ideologies of parties but is impacted by attitudes towards inclusion of people who make up the governance system. Kolkata's governance system is affected by quasi-formal claim making channels of the CPI (M) and the TC. Therefore, studying the politics of everyday interactions of the CPI (M) and TC members with the public is important, for which understanding the social profile of the members of these parties is necessary. Though subscribing to party ideologies may serve personal goals of

its members, it does not imply for example, that the CPI (M)'s class-focussed ideology denying the relevance of 'primordial loyalties' will translate into inclusive and class-focussed practice by CPI (M) members in all interactions with the public.

Impacts of class and other identity-based biases in unconscious (and occasionally conscious) ways were observed on everyday political practice in the fieldwork. Bhattacharya (1998) illustrates this by showing the virtual absence of the working class from CPI (M)-led municipal boards and committees in the state, which are predominantly middle class controlled. This middle class leadership is paralleled in party units in municipal areas. Despite its propaganda to the contrary, the CPI (M) government in West Bengal has shown departures in its political practice from its pro-poor, class-based discourse. Religious, caste, ethnic biases show up in political practice (Chatterjee, 1997). Williams (2001) argues that local understandings of political power in the state draw on a range of elements of identity and despite the importance of class, local CPI (M) leaders do not overlook alternate bases of identity such as caste and religious identity, thus demonstrating acts of translation between the party's 'official' centralised discourse and practice on the ground. This was reinforced in the field interviews.

*Though the CPI (M) claims to work for the dispossessed, it is actually another organisations of caste Hindus. It is fundamentally far from the Bengali folk. Very few lower castes, SCs and backward castes have reached positions of leadership or dominance in the party. Therefore, CPI (M) has downplayed caste as an issue...It is not a communal party but its rank and file is communal in its fibre. (Though) there are Muslim leaders in the CPI (M), Muslims have a strange feeling towards the party- it is for us yet not us. (VR, activist in Kolkata, 14.3.03)*

Statistics regarding Left councillors' social profiles from the 1995 KMC elections support this, showing that councillors were largely upper-caste, highly educated and from dominant religious groups. Only three of the sixty-nine councillors interviewed were SC and only five were from minority religions (Ghosh, 1996).

The TC also had a primarily middle class Hindu membership. A majority of the TC's leader profiles are middle class and upper-caste. They seem to focus on urban middle class voters, though providing opportunistic support to poorer groups for increasing their support base. The alliances that the TC had formed with the communal BJP alienated the Muslim minority from the party resulting in few Muslim members and low Muslim support for the TC (The Milli Gazette, June 2004), (Times of India 11.2.04), (The Telegraph 28.6.00). The brief profile of CPI (M) and TC membership shows similar upper class, upper-caste, and religious biases. It

is relevant to see how this impacts the attitudes of councillors from these parties towards claim-makers from the public.

In the fieldwork, a focus on elements of identity apart from class was observed in the Left's praxis and shaped the attitudes of LF party structures and councillors towards claim-makers to their party. TC politicians also demonstrated similar biases. Since most leaders and councillors were middle class and upper-caste as previously demonstrated, it was hypothesised that they would have 'natural' sympathies with claimants having similar social profiles. Several examples of this were observed in the fieldwork.

A typical example is from field observation of interactions of the middle class Left councillor from Pal Bazaar with claimants at her office. Though attentive to them, the councillor displayed a bias against poorer claimants- behaving differently with them from middle class claimants. She was more patronising when talking to poorer claimants and in the discursive patterns observed when she described her poorer constituents; she linked words like 'drunkards', 'scary' and other negative stereotypes with them. This was also observed among non-party middle class persons, supporting the hypothesis of discourse coalitions and attitudinal similarities between party councillors and their own social group. (Observations in HC's office, LF councillor, Kolkata, 12.1.02, 9.2.02, 12.2.02, 13.2.02, 12.4.03)

Another typical example was seen in conversations with a TC Ward Committee member from Madhyamgram, a Kolkata suburb. His comments on the profile of the community in his area demonstrated his biases as a middle class, upper-caste person. He stressed that the identity profile of his locality was almost uniformly Hindu, with a majority of middle or lower middle class Bengalis- resulting in greater community cohesion. He emphasised the few 'outsiders' in the community, stressing that minority community persons had to adapt to the majority community and 'blend' in (PB, 25.2.03). Such a view of cohesion stressing similarity, not tolerance and acceptance, reveals class-based differentiation, regionalism and religious bias. Such views were repeatedly encountered among middle class people in the fieldwork.

The next section examines attitudes of councillors from different parties towards gender inclusion in governance by studying their attitudes towards municipal reservations for women mandated by the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA.

### **3.3.2 Municipal reservations for women and engendered governance:**

The 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's logic for mandating reservations for women as councillors was to increase women's inclusion in governance. In Kolkata, Leftist discourse denied the importance of

gender as a significant pole of difference, observed even in the practice of women councillors from the Left. Though accepting that their presence in the municipality increased the profile of women in governance, women councillors did not raise issues addressing strategic gender interests (SGIs) of their constituency women in the KMC Board meetings, only occasionally raising questions relating to practical gender interests (PGIs). This was observed by studying the records of the KMC Board meetings from 2000 to 2002. Of the total 45 questions raised by women councillors (out of a total 217 questions raised in that period), only 2 were related to women's PGIs (in this case related to provision of maternity homes) and none related to their SGIs. As seen in chapter one, women councillors should have focussed on SGIs rather than PGIs to improve women's status, and by not doing so they failed to increase gender awareness in the KMC.

Levels of gender solidarity exhibited by women councillors also varied; with some denying that women could have problems different than men. They focussed on poverty in their wards and at most included issues related to municipal provisions for women's health and maternity. In her study on Kolkata's women councillors, Lama-Rewal (2001) found many women were 'dummy councillors'- holding the post for a male relative to take back once reservations in a ward expired. This was possible because wards were reserved for only one term, with reservation rotating between wards. These women were 'fronts' while previous male councillors continued interacting with ward people and the administration. This illustrated the amendment's short-term failure to provide women real political power.

Problems faced by women councillors in functioning effectively ranged from their self-discrimination and lack of confidence, to people's negative perceptions of their capability, knowledge and desire to work. They also faced domestic pressures and clashes between their domestic roles and their work outside. A lack of sensitivity to their practical needs was observed such as municipal meetings being held at times inconvenient for them. Women councillors faced discrimination at the three levels at which women in general face discrimination- the self, family and society. Only a few could overcome some of these problems through force of personality, education or support of a male family member. This was illustrated in the statement of a woman councillor from the TC,

*We have to face the ego of male councillors. People don't feel secure about a woman councillor as they think she'll go away in five years and won't stand again for elections... party decisions are also male-dominated. Many women even think "the party won't keep me after reservations are over in the ward". Therefore they may not work hard and feel like they are just caretakers. Some men tell us "in five years we*

*will again be doing the municipal work, so you should work according to us now as well” (MRo, woman councillor, Madhyamgram, 22.3.03)*

Attitudes of male officials and politicians across party lines were also found to be largely derogatory and condescending towards women councillors. Many complained of women councillors’ inability to handle municipal administrative work, while others essentialised the ‘womanly’ qualities of the councillors. Words and phrases such as ‘maternal’, ‘like a good housekeeper’ were used to describe women councillors, compared to the more aggressively described male councillors.

*Even men can speak freely to women councillors because of their “maternal” characteristics. Men councillors always talk about the law. Psychological, social and family matters- women councillors can take up all these issues. (KS, 12.1.03)*

Despite the fact that a fiery woman leader like Mamata Banerjee led the TC, attitudes of TC councillors towards other women leaders in the municipality was similar to that of Left councillors. Madhu Kishwar (1999) explains this due to Mamata Banerjee’s manipulation of the Bengali female stereotype derived from the powerful goddess *Durga* in her public presentation. Hence, her success does not challenge male councillors as it is couched in a traditional idiom of the avenging goddess.

### **3.4 Everyday politics in the municipal channels:**

This section examines the bureaucratic culture of the city to understand the impact of political culture and identity of claim-makers on the behaviour of municipal officials.

#### **3.4.1 Impact of political identity and political culture on bureaucratic culture:**

As seen earlier, party mass organisations have an important role in forwarding peoples’ claims to formal municipal channels. However, affiliation to a political party does not guarantee claims being forwarded or action taken. Attitudes of borough municipal officials towards party mass organisations like NCs vary with the party in majority at the borough level. In the extracts below, the chairman of a TC dominated borough refused to favour NCs, unlike his counterpart from a Left dominated borough.

*NCs are party bodies. We give them no legal status. We have no obligation to entertain them, since they are political bodies. Because the BXII chairman is a CPI (M) man- therefore he was praising the NCs. He was talking about the Nagarik Committee-Borough Committee link but NC has no rights regarding this...we do not give the NC special preference. (ABis, TC BX chairman, 10.4.03)*

*We are not able to proceed sometimes because we need councillors & Mayor-in-Council's co-operation. In the past when the CPI (M) Board was there, then Corporation officials were more co-operative (with us) than now. (PB, NC member, BX, 20.2.03)*

Thus party structures and political identity of claimants influence the attitudes and actions of bureaucrats. Clientelism between bureaucrats and parties ensures that bureaucrats respond to claim-makers based on their party affiliation and this response changes with changing political parties in power. This seemed verified by bureaucrats interviewed during the fieldwork. They were supportive of their political bosses, said little against them, only doing so very diplomatically, as illustrated by the following extract.

*Officials trained in the art of getting approvals, especially from their ministers, suggest that a verbal discussion with the minister and his aides before moving the file is not a bad idea. Like this secretary who heads a politically sensitive department is careful to ascertain the views of his minister before writing in his own on the file. This way, his views don't clash as they aren't his, anyway. (The Statesman, 7.12.02)*

Similarly, the following statement by a senior bureaucrat shows that the bureaucracy is aware that political party cadres would intervene in their work. Consequently there is a high degree of dialogue between political parties and the bureaucracy, further strengthening the link between the political and bureaucratic culture in the state.

*In the case of West Bengal (the bureaucracy's) adjustment level (toward decentralisation) has been better than in other states because they understood from the rural experience that (political) party cadres manage everything. These cadres don't really need officials to do anything. These cadres are themselves becoming political representatives. They are able to understand the process. The level of dialogue between bureaucrats, parties and politicians has always been good. (KCS, 28.3.03, London)*

Borough level bureaucrats, in frequent contact with councillors and local politicians, have close links with them. Higher-level bureaucrats are able to occasionally resist political influences. However, it appeared from interviews with some union leaders that bureaucrats displayed false camaraderie with their current political boss and as politicians changed they were ready to switch sides and be friendly with their next political boss. The compulsion of the bureaucracy to stay on good terms with their political bosses, irrespective of the party in power, is indicated in the following statement

*We as government employees will always say that the situation has become better and the speed of work has increased. (SEE 13.3.03)*

Thus, bureaucratic culture is influenced by the power and privilege equations of the political party in power- both at local and state government levels, also reinforced in Vernon et. al's study (2003). This further marginalizes the effectiveness of formal claim making channels. The effectiveness of a decentralising initiative like the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA, focussing on increasing the accessibility of formal channels, is reduced by such a political culture affecting the bureaucratic culture. The chapter now examines other aspects of bureaucratic culture that affect the implementation of such initiatives.

### **3.4.2 Impact of bureaucratic culture on Ward Committees:**

Kolkata's bureaucrats, especially from lower levels with more public dealings than higher-level officials, expressed reluctance towards the WCs. Higher-level officials had problems with the basic idea of decentralisation, as seen below.

*I have great doubt in India about public participation, because some amount of dictatorship is required to get work done here. Our public is very selfish and everyone looks after their own interests. The public has no overall vision of the city's planning. Public participation is therefore not possible in urban development. It is difficult to do things democratically in this country. (GM, high-ranking bureaucrat, KMC headquarters, 25.2.03)*

Bureaucratic reluctance towards decentralisation manifested itself in a 2003 KMC order barring WC members from independently approaching municipal officials, who were not obliged to entertain them. Consequently, WCs became practically irrelevant. However, since there was no ban on party structures approaching municipal bureaucrats, the effectiveness of channels like NCs remained intact. Thus, formal channels of citizens' claim making, the WCs, got sidelined; keeping party channels untouched. In most cases this did not significantly affect WCs, as they were composed of local party members, as seen in the following extract.

*As per the dictates of the KMC, the officials of the WC cannot meet the KMC officials. As a result there have been a number of bruised egos and so the Pal Bazaar WC refuses to work under this name and the NC does all work. There is no question of clashes between the WC and the NC, as the NC is in fact the WC. (HC and BCC, Kolkata, 19.5.04)*

Thus, the fieldwork revealed that the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's agenda of increasing access to municipal channels through the WCs was facing hurdles like the political culture of the parties in power at the state and municipal levels and the schisms between them. Politicians from both Left and

non-Left parties were attempting to co-opt the WCs and make them toothless as instruments of decentralised governance. The bureaucratic culture was largely in agreement with the political culture, though some KMC officials felt that properly constituted WCs could reduce political interference in their work. Weak WCs reduced peoples' abilities to approach municipal channels independently without using the influence of political parties.

### **3.4.3 Impact of subject positions and elements of identity on bureaucratic culture:**

The political culture's impact on the bureaucratic culture resulted in parties' attitude towards claim-makers' subject positions also affecting the state's bureaucrats. Bureaucrats in the fieldwork did not explicitly reveal a bias when directly questioned about claim-makers' identities, however their interview comments reflected biases about elements of social identity like class, caste etc. These biases arose from their own subject position or from their acquired subject position as bureaucrats. As explained by a senior bureaucrat,

*...the impact of the identity of claimants on bureaucrats depends on the claim in question. People at municipal level are products of the same society and part of the same social system and hence subject to similar prejudices and attitudes as the larger society (KCS, senior bureaucrat, 28.3.03).*

Fieldwork observations also reflected such biases. A typical example was of an engineer at the borough administration level, who repeatedly called richer claim makers 'high class', dismissing poorer people as 'these slum people' (SEE, BX engineer, 13.2.03). In another typical instance, in a focus group with officials and *basti* dwellers, officials demonstrated behaviour reflecting their sense of social superiority. They cut in while *basti* dwellers were speaking, refused to let them finish and manipulated the conversation trying to dominate it. They also slowly repeated questions put to *basti* dwellers even though the latter had understood the questions in the first place (RD, BX DCO, 28.2.03). Through such tactics, the officials tried to reinforce their social and professional superiority over the *basti* dwellers. Such behaviour was based on attitudes towards identity as the '*bhadralok*', an overlap of class with caste in Kolkata, explained in the next section.

The composition of the bureaucracy in West Bengal itself weighed against certain groups.

*Buddhadeb Bhattacharya (the chief minister of West Bengal) today regretted that though 23.6% of the state's population belonged to minority communities, they weren't adequately represented at Writers' Buildings (the state government headquarters) and other government offices or the police force. (The Statesman, 15.12.02)*



With respect to gender, as seen in section 3.3.2, in general male bureaucrats had low opinions of women representatives, with some feeling threatened by them. There were a few bureaucrats who thought otherwise and praised the dedication of women councillors.

*(Women) don't understand things, can't talk with people. People expect councillors to come (to their aid) at all times- in emergencies related to health, family, the law, even at night. Women can't do (these things). With all these reservations for SCs, women etc., where will men go? In KMC House meetings women councillors come all dressed up and don't show any interest in the proceedings. (ABis, BX, 21.3.03)*

The preceding discussions illustrated that Left parties profess a class-based understanding at a theoretical level. However, their praxis- tactically and influenced by members' biases arising from their subject positions, was different. This was also observed in the praxis of non-Left parties and in Kolkata's bureaucratic culture. In most cases, subject positions of claimants relative to those of formal channel members affected the political ideology or administrative rationality that the latter ascribed to, unless overcome by their agency. This was bolstered by the fact that the Left's political ideology had got diluted and corrupted and that of the TC was practically non-existent. Based on identity and similarity these biases resulted in coalition formation between municipal channels and claim makers.

*If a person has good contacts with Corporation officials- like has relatives in the Corporation- then it is easy (to approach the Corporation). Now we have to send a slip (into the official's office) and sit around for hours. As soon as they know whose people (we are), they don't listen to us, make us wait. (SB, CPI (M) member, 24.3.03)*

Thus we can conclude that elements of identity strongly impact the bureaucracy's dealings with people. Bureaucrats favour people having social backgrounds and networks similar to themselves (Veron et. al, 2003), (Vyasulu, 2004), (Ham and Hill 1996), which invariably influences their official work. This is expanded in the next section. The under-representation of minority communities in Kolkata's bureaucracy further affected official behaviour towards claim-makers from these communities.

However, coalitions are not always formed between persons with similar subject positions, sometimes forming between people with differing subject positions based on mutual advantage or relationships of clientelism (Fox, 1994), (Ruud, 1999). Further expanded in chapter six, this was seen in Jodhpur Park, where *basti* dwellers formed such coalitions with formal channels. Thus, people's agency and self-interest can overcome peer-based networks to form coalitions. Peer-based networks between formal channel members and claim-makers are characteristic of coalitions based on horizontal similarity of subject positions (Benjamin,

2000), as observed in Pal Bazaar. Discourse coalitions and solidarity groupings between KMC officials and the middle class surrounding community in Pal Bazaar were shaped by their common environmental agendas and due to social similarity.

#### **3.4.4 Comparison of general social attitude and of bureaucrats towards elements of identity:**

As seen in section 3.4.3, formation of peer-based coalitions based similarity in subject positions and networks is quite common. In this section, comments of bureaucrats are compared with comments from field interviews of non-bureaucrat middle class people towards class, caste, regional identity etc. The formation of coalitions between bureaucrats and other middle class people seems likely based on their discursive similarity. Such discursive coalitions weighed against grassroots groups while they attempted to access the municipality with their claims, as is expanded in later chapters.

Regarding caste, the middle class upper-caste salaried group in Kolkata is largely resentful of SC-ST persons due to reservations for them in education, politics and employment. This is illustrated in the following statement made by a middle class, upper-caste Bengali girl- typical of people seen in the fieldwork.

*These SCs get all the advantages. They don't need be meritorious but just because they have a SC certificate, they can get good jobs. What will happen to us- general candidates if everything is given to them on a platter? (RC, Kolkata, 15.12.02)*

Wankhade (1999) found such attitudes even among upwardly mobile SC groups, who dislike associating with other SCs and are discriminatory towards them. Similarly, bureaucrats not originally from middle class backgrounds and in many instances having socially subservient identities, tend to adopt attitudes of the middle class group of which they become members due to their post. The following extract illustrates negative attitudes of upwardly mobile SCs towards other SCs, which can be extrapolated to bureaucrats, as seen in the second extract.

*Those who move up the social ladder though education make up a small minority and elite among their caste fellows and are reluctant to identify with their castemen (sic). Their identification is with those from non-SC groups with a similar or better socio-economic status. (Wankhade, 1999:27)*

*The whole of the bureaucracy is dominated by caste Hindus so the situation is out of reach of the SCs to which they fall victim. (Abbasayalu, 1978:12)*

As discussed in chapter one, though class distinctions largely overcome caste distinctions, yet caste retains its importance even among people of similar class backgrounds. It is relevant to discuss how caste and class identities overlap, creating identity categories different from caste or class alone. The categories of *bhadralok* and *chhotolok* are important here. *Bhadralok* are persons with attributes combining high class- manifested through wealth, education, occupation etc.- with caste. The concept represents social hierarchy based on opposition between the '*bhadra*' or civilised and '*chhoto*' (literally the small), the uncivilised. '*Chhotolok*' implies those who are minor, unimportant, repulsive, uncivilised and uncouth. The tendency of upper class, upper-caste persons to identify themselves as *bhadralok* or civilised people, in opposition to poorer grassroots groups- with lower class and caste identities is a common discourse practice in Kolkata.

It would be wrong to assume a one-way relationship of subservience of those considered *chhotolok* under those considered *bhadralok*. Just like the 'weapons of the weak' described by James Scott (1985), active antagonisms of people identified by others as *chhotolok* are seen in moments of conflict between the groups. The so-called '*chhotolok*' use non-'*bhadra*' behaviour as a tool to repel *bhadraloks*, expressing their power through such behaviour. Parallel antagonisms towards the poor exist among Bengali middle classes- the *bhadraloks*- arising from the poor being considered the 'other'. These are all reflection of a hierarchy predicated on a combination of caste with class.

The derogatory view of those who consider themselves *bhadra* towards the 'other'-the non-*bhadraloks*, is seen in a typical instance outlined here in which a middle class girl in Kolkata recalled an incident in a train involving a poor woman. She generalised all poor people as talking in 'loud, *abhadra* tones- in impolite ways' and highlighted the class-caste combination when she described the woman on the train as 'immediately identifiable as a servant maid' from her dress. She described the two-way nature of this antagonism through this woman's breach of *bhadra* behaviour when she abused 'decent, *bhadra*' people on the train because they kept asking her for sitting place. This illustrates a code of behaviour reflecting caste-class status associated with being a *bhadralok*, and the mutual revulsion between *bhadraloks* and the 'other'. Such consciousness of social hierarchy was also observed among bureaucrats. This often affected their behaviour towards claim-makers, as illustrated through the example from the focus group involving grassroots actors and bureaucrats outlined in section 3.4.3.

Similarities were also observed in Kolkata between attitudes of non-bureaucrats and bureaucrats towards gender. The following extract from a phone-in radio discussion in Kolkata exemplifies typical comments of non-bureaucrats about women councillors and

women in general. The male speaker interprets women councillors' work through the lens of women's reproductive gender roles, describing them as mothers and caregivers, seeing them as honest, hardworking and incorruptible by virtue of these qualities. This undermines women councillors' work in areas unrelated to women's reproductive roles, concurrently ignoring their political ambitions. Saying that women need male support for work other than their reproductive roles reveals the speaker's paternalistic attitude. The overlap between general societal discourse on gender and of bureaucrats becomes apparent when these statements are compared to bureaucrats' attitudes towards women councillors from section 3.4.3.

*Actually woman is the source of all strength. You (women) are the mothers. Because we men respect motherhood therefore we have reached here (achieved this success), we are forever grateful for women. Therefore we have to push them forward, so that then they can do well. When women came to the fore (of politics) they are very good and corruption gets cut. If we all co-operate with them and direct women representatives in the right direction then women can cut out (municipal) wrongdoings. (SD, Kolkata FM radio, 14.3.03)*

In the quote below, a woman on the same radio programme pointed out most people's inherent biases towards women working outside their traditional roles. She also emphasised other elements of identity that overlap with gender and create exclusions for women from municipal governance and leadership positions.

*There are few women in our society's cultural, educational and literary revolutions ...today we benevolently say a woman artist, a women poet etc. (These women) are seen with a peculiar attitude (which shows that) "If it is a woman, we can accept a less perfect product from her". In leadership roles there is a caste bias too with largely upper-caste women there. Grassroots women and even poor men are unable to enter leadership positions. (SM, Kolkata FM radio, 14.3.03)*

In summary, political considerations of parties, councillors and officials collude with their inherent social biases to create an exclusionary political culture for those citizens who do not have either the resources emanating from High Politics (i.e. affiliation with a political party) or those that would help them negotiate everyday politics in the municipal channels.

### **3.5 Conclusions:**

The chapter argues that despite West Bengal and Kolkata being places where the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's inclusionary agenda had high chances of success due to their social, political and administrative characteristics; this agenda remained partly unfulfilled here. Kolkata's political culture- including its High Politics and everyday politics- influenced this failure. Hence,

Kolkata's municipal government remained exclusionary and weighed against grassroots claim-makers. Discourse coalitions- whether based on subject positions or agency- and other impediments for environmental claim making are expanded in later chapters.

Within High Politics, the ideology of the party in power did not significantly affect the inclusion agenda's success. Though the TC and CPI (M) appear to have different political styles and party structures, but closer examination reveals these differences to be superficial. Leftist and non-Leftists parties have similar centralised, exclusionary practices, creating barriers for success of decentralisation initiatives. They make the party so overarching and co-opt the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's mechanisms making them so weak that people, especially those with weaker subject positions like grassroots groups, are forced to bypass formal mechanisms and use party structures and patronage for accessing municipal channels, suffering party control in the process. Political culture impacts the city's bureaucratic culture and thus the decentralisation antipathy inherent in the political culture gets transferred to the bureaucratic culture. Consequently, municipal administration becomes exclusionary, limiting the polity's access to it. The exclusionary impacts of the political and bureaucratic cultures on grassroots claim-making abilities arise from their subservient identities. However, in certain instances, these groups are able to utilise their identity as bargaining chips with political parties.

These issues are clearly visible in the cases of Ward Committees and reservations for women in Kolkata. The failure of WCs resulted from the political and bureaucratic cultures antithetical to the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's inclusionary agenda. Politicians and bureaucrats found ways to bypass the WCs or co-opt them. The case of the women's reservations was less bleak, showing partial gains for women through their force of personality, work and from some sympathetic insiders. However, the deeper agenda of the law to increase access of women to municipal government had not been achieved. The 74<sup>th</sup> CAA faced barriers due to people's subject positions and perception and because of the bureaucratic culture and political culture encouraging exclusionary coalitions, corruption and greed. This continued to deny the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA in fully achieving its aim of increasing access and inclusion of a wider section of the public in municipal governance. The consequences of this for grassroots claim making is expanded in later chapters of the thesis.

#### **Chapter Four: The Discursive Field- Discourses and environmental claim making**

This chapter undertakes a macro city-level analysis with broad strokes, leaving fine-grained analysis for the case study chapters. The chapter examines environmental discourses and discursive practices of the various actors being studied to understand the degree of access their environmental claims, shaped by their environmental conceptions, have to formal channels. Discourse coalitions are examined to see how they cause exclusion of some environmental claims from formal channels. Actors analysed are municipal actors and grassroots and other groups of claim-makers. Each group defines the urban environment from its own cognitive commitments, derived in part from the subject positions of a majority of its members and the environmental discourses they ascribe to.

The first section briefly discusses discourse analysis and justifies the use of the Argumentative Approach of discourse analysis. The next section examines the environmental discourses of different actors being studied in Kolkata using the concepts of storylines, metaphors and images and the relation of these discourses to their subject positions. The environmental reportage of English and Bengali newspapers with largely middle class readerships is analysed for understanding the general middle class environmental discourse in Kolkata, as the media shapes and reflects the discourse of its readers. Though a phrase like 'middle class discourse' can seem reductionist, yet a pattern was observed when analysing the discourses of Kolkata's middle class. The intersection of class identity with other aspects of actors' identity- like gender, caste and regional origin are also addressed to understand their impacts on shaping discourses.

The next section focuses on the institutional sphere by examining the legal framework- the laws- related to urban waterbodies that reflect institutional cognitive commitments and discourses towards the urban environment. The system of administering the urban environment is examined by studying the division of environmental issues between the state and local government levels, as well as the schism between formalised institutional cognitive commitments and the agency of the components of these institutions. KMC records are analysed to understand the frequency and nature of environmental issues discussed at the municipal House level. The routine discourse of municipal officials towards the urban environment is compared to the new definition of environmental issues placed within the remit of local bodies by the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA, to understand the discursive challenge by KMC bureaucrats and councillors to these new definitions of urban environmental issues. The exclusionary impact of institutional procedures, and discursive and procedural skills required in environmental claim making are also analysed.

The last section examines the environmental discourse of the non-institutional sphere-political parties in power at the state and Kolkata's local level. Their political ideologies and discourses towards the urban environment influence the behaviour of councillors from these parties. Occurrence of discursive parity between political parties and environmental claim-makers indicates the possibility of formation of discourse coalitions between them. Impacts of such discourse coalitions on municipal access for environmental claims of various groups are discussed in chapters five and six through the case studies. This section examines the structuring impact of political ideology reflecting the realm of High Politics, as well as the agency of political party members in the everyday politics of their interactions with environmental claim-makers.

This chapter argues that the access that environmental claims of various conflicting claim-making groups have to formal municipal channels is shaped to a large extent by the degree of discursive affinity between environmental discourses of the claim-makers and formal channel members. Discursive affinity and identity similarity can result in discourse coalitions forming between some claim-makers and formal channel members. By interacting with the political and bureaucratic cultures of the formal channels these discourse coalitions may exclude other claim-makers from accessing these channels. Detailed analyses of the formation and effect of discourse coalitions and impact of subject positions on the ability of claim-making groups to access the municipal level are conducted through the case studies in chapters five and six.

#### **4.1 Discourse analysis and framework used:**

Of several approaches of discourse analysis, the Argumentative Approach confirming to concerns of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used as the analytical framework. The many approaches to discourse analysis can be categorised along two theoretical dimensions-concerning the relative importance of text versus context in the research and concerning the degree to which power dynamics form the research focus (Philips and Hardy, 2002). The choice is between

*Constructive approaches that produce fine-grained exploration of the ways in which a particular social reality has been constructed, and critical approaches, which focus more explicitly on the dynamics of power, knowledge, and ideology that surround discursive processes (ibid: 20)*

Following a critical approach, CDA focuses on how discursive activity structures the social space within which actors act (ibid). It focuses on how social relations, power and identity are constructed through written and spoken texts. Its aims to interrogate intended and unintended effects of language, often naturalised as 'the way things are' (Marston, 2004) encompass the

concerns of Hajer's Argumentative Approach (1997). CDA's tradition is useful for a topic investigating the politics of environmental claim making critically- by looking at discourses in their impacts on dynamics of power, knowledge, and ideology. The Argumentative Approach is used as it operationalises this agenda through specific analytical tools and

*...focuses on the constitutive role of discourses in political processes...and allocates a central role to the discoursing subject, although in the context of the idea of duality of structure (Hajer, 1997:58)*

In Hajer's (1997) Argumentative Approach discourses are examined through storylines, images, and concepts utilised to express and propagate a discourse. Storylines are essential discursive devices facilitating discursive closure. They fulfil essential roles in knowledge clustering, positioning of actors and in creation of discourse coalitions. Discursive practices of the metaphor, analogy, historical reference, cliché', appeal to collective fear or guilt- come under the umbrella of storylines. Discursive formats and cognitive commitments reflected through this examination help reveal discourse coalitions. Definitions of the environmental problematic, in their heterogenisation or homogenisation, reflect the power equations inherent in the interactions between the different actors in the process of environmental claim making. Analysis of the environmental discourse of institutional actors reflects their cognitive commitments. The routinized technocentric environmental discourse of most institutional actors reflects the discursive format of claims related to the environment that are acceptable to and understood by these actors. This has obvious consequences for the formation of discourse coalitions between those claim-makers whose cognitive commitments and discursive frame match that of the institutional actors.

## **4.2 Environmental discourses of various actors:**

### **4.2.1 Middle class environmental discourses- macro city-level:**

This section explores Kolkata's general middle class environmental discourse as reflected in and shaped by the print media. Newspaper<sup>1</sup> headlines representing a sample of environmental reporting in Kolkata are used to illustrate these points. The most prominent environmental reporting in Kolkata concerned the discourse of pollution and environmental protection from pollution. In a selection of newspaper articles taken from 1992 and 2000-2003, about 45% had a pollution prevention focus, which included civic services inadequacy in sewage, drainage and solid waste disposal and air, water and noise pollution. Arsenic poisoning of

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<sup>1</sup> Average Kolkata daily circulation (2002) of The Statesman was 146,800; The Telegraph was 287,187, The Times of India was 94,126; The Hindustan Times was 273,000 ([www.mediaware-infotech.com/June 02 newsletter](http://www.mediaware-infotech.com/June%20newsletter)). Daily circulation of the Bengali newspaper Ananda Bazar Patrika was 480,184 (<http://members.tripod.com/~SundeepDougal/press.html>)



drinking water was also prominent. Such articles used technical standards like emission counts, parts per million counts etc. to identify pollution. Analysing language use and phrasing in the headlines given below representative of general environmental reporting in Kolkata, we see that the discourse is firmly technocentric and uses technical and scientific vocabulary in describing pollution and its effects on human health, city flora and fauna. The social justice dimension of environmental problems in the city and the environment's close link with the livelihood and lifestyles of the city's grassroots groups were reported much less, and used a pollution regulatory storyline when reported. The reporting presented Kolkata's grassroots settlements as part of the problem, proposing their eviction to create a 'clean and green Kolkata'.

- *Bus owners' initiative towards pollution abatement*- mobile pollution unit started by joint council of bus syndicate. (Ananda Bazara Patrika, 18.1.01)
- *City gasps for breath- some areas more than others*- using ambient air quality data to show pollution levels in various parts of Kolkata (The Statesman, 20.12.02)
- *216 polluting factories shut down in two months* (Ananda Bazara Patrika, 3.6.00)
- *Ozone level in the city sets off alarm bells*- Using hourly average ground ozone levels to illustrate Kolkata's '*alarming ground ozone levels*'. (Hindustan Times, 2.10.01)
- *Large areas of South Calcutta under arsenic pollution*- percentage of arsenic in city's groundwater used to show '*alarmingly high levels of arsenic in groundwater*'. (4.7.01)
- *Tolly's Nullah breeding ground for germs*- using Central PCB data to show high concentration of disease-causing ecoli, faecal coliform content and toxins in water. (The Telegraph, 28.9.93)
- *Four years gone, no tree law*- High court rap for state delay in framing rules for urban felling (Telegraph, 15.2.03)

Regarding reportage of grassroots relationship with Kolkata's environment, 70% articles focussed on encroachments on the East Calcutta Wetlands in eastern Kolkata and on the city's drainage canal system, on wildlife loss and pond filling in the Kolkata region. These articles used scientific justifications for warranting legislative action and municipal crackdown on grassroots settlements to reclaim land these settlements had encroached upon. The storyline of risk and environmental doom was stressed through headlines like 'life being choked out of waterbodies' and 'wetlands essential to well-being of city'. These storylines played on fear and panic, stressing that convenience 'of a few' should be sacrificed for the 'greater good'. Recourse to the courts and law enforcement agencies, and use of municipal channels for claim

making for recreating a 'green Kolkata' was common in this reportage. Some reportage existed about the property developer-politician-criminal nexus in pond filling and wetlands encroachment, thus acknowledging variables other than grassroots settlements as also responsible for Kolkata's wetland loss.

→ *Calcutta's wetland lifeline – the wetlands are essential to the well-being of the city* (The Telegraph, 17.3.92)

→ *Five members of CPI (M) party suspended for pond filling* (Ananda Bazara Patrika, 16.4.02)

→ *A Tale of two lakes- unchecked urbanisation and dumping threaten to choke the life out of two large waterbodies in Kolkata.* (The Statesman, 19.12.02)

Reportage on the social justice dimension of environmental issues- as reflected by petitions, protests and demonstrations by claim-makers in environmental conflicts were largely neglected. Only about 15% of reporting was on the plight of people evicted from marginal lands such as canal sides, from next to railway lines, those forced to encroach on wetlands etc. The storyline emphasised the polluting nature of such squatter settlements and the anti-environment stance of these settlement dwellers in their protest against evictions. Reports on the plight of farmers and fisherfolk in the East Calcutta Wetlands were used to bolster pollution prevention and legislation storylines.

→ *Eviction of encroachers without rehabilitation.* State Government decision to re-excavate numerous Kolkata canals without rehabilitating the evictees. (Ananda Bazara Patrika, 20.2.03)

→ *Lack of political will may thwart Beliaghata canal evictions* (The Statesman, 22.10.02)

→ *Arson, protests mark evictions- Fire fighters pressed into service after angry encroachers set shanties on fire before leaving.* (The Statesman, 10.12.02)

As seen from these examples, environmental reportage in English and Bengali newspapers used storylines of pollution prevention framing grassroots groups as troublesome polluters and recommended technical tools for improving environmental quality. Such equation of environmental issues with pollution prevention and environmental management by middle class groups, especially those having access to higher education, was encountered repeatedly during the fieldwork. In a seminar in Kolkata University where the researcher made these arguments about urban waterbodies, a persistent comment from the educated, primarily middle class audience was that grassroots settlements were polluting waterbodies; hence they could not be considered to have any 'environmental' values at all. Material and non-material

interactions of grassroots actors with urban waterbodies were not admitted to be 'environmental' interactions. Grassroots actors' material and non-material values towards the waterbodies were sidelined, as they did not fit the discursive frame of the middle class group.

Further, Kolkata newspaper headlines also revealed that the city's middle class considered an 'appropriate' urban environment to be one that is beautiful- specifically one free of the squalor produced by the livelihood and lifestyle activities of the city's poor. Kolkata's English language newspapers projected KMC's efforts such as the 1996 eviction drive against roadside vendors from Kolkata's main roads- 'Operation Sunshine'- as crucial to create a sense of urban pride and dignity befitting a global city. As seen below, the efforts of Operation Sunshine were commemorated by newspaper articles decrying the slide back into urban chaos with the return of the vendors. Similarly, evictions of shantytowns from next to urban parks like the Dhakuria Lake gardens in 2005 were also hailed for creating a clean and beautiful urban environment. In such cases, the aspect of social justice got sidelined as the newspaper reportage continued to praise efforts removing unsightly 'eyesores' such as shantytowns and roadside hawkers.

→ *Sunshine fades in 2 years*- "hard to believe" that exactly two years ago the state government and the CMC's demolition squad had swept Hatibagan (an area of Kolkata) clean of hawkers. (The Statesman, 25.11.98)

These kind of middle class environmental values were also strengthened through changes in the CPI(M) Chief Minister's agenda for West Bengal. In an August 2005 interview to the Indonesian newspaper Jakarta Post he announced his government's willingness to allow FDI for setting up industrial parks and 'world class townships' on agricultural land. These desires of the state government, to compete with global cities like Shanghai and create a clean and green Kolkata without urban blight- are all examples of a middle class environmentalism that ties urban beautification to removal of land uses considered unsightly and inappropriate for a world class city- largely removal of urban landuse by the poor. The desire of the state government to promote the IT industry in Kolkata –a symbol of a globally competitive Indian city - has led to setting up of IT parks where the emphasis is on 'clean and green spaces'- where global capital investment defines a vision of sanitised urban space devoid of any reminders of the city's poor.

→ *IT sector readies for a green & clean makeover-* government to ensure all amenities of a state-of-the-art industrial town in Salt Lake city's IT hub, including a clean green locale with "a pleasant surrounding soothing to the eyes" (The Telegraph, 1.5. 05)

→ *Bengal has to reform or perish, says Buddha* (the CM) in Singapore hardsell-prospective deal with the Indonesian Salem Group to create a world-class township in 5000 acres in the South 24 Parganas district (Indian Express, 24.8.05)

Hence, the general middle class cognitive commitment of accepting pollution prevention, urban beautification and environmental quality storylines as 'environmental' was strong enough for this to have been reified. Reifications occur when the arbitrary character of peoples' cognitive commitments remains hidden (Hajer, 1997). Consequently the taking up of a cognitive position is not recognised as a moment of positioning but is simply assumed as this is 'the way one talks' on *this* sort of occasion. Hence although finding an appropriate storyline is an important form of agency, not all action and cognitive positioning are results of an active process of taking up or denying positionings. There is a considerable power in the structured way of seeing. This is illustrated in the following section through the reified cognitive commitments of the surrounding communities in the two cases.

#### **4.2.2 Surrounding community storylines in the case studies:**

The environmental discourse of actors can be deciphered from the storylines they use and the images they draw upon to make these storylines compelling. Metaphors help highlight the part of the storyline that makes it easy to grasp and hence propagate widely. This section analyses the environmental discourse of surrounding communities- largely middle class, upper caste- in the chosen case studies in Kolkata. This section demonstrates that the surrounding community in both case studies subscribed to an environmentalism born out of post-materialist concerns (Inglehart, 1977). Hirsch (1977) corrected Inglehart's psychologism with his social scarcity concept describing this as a more structural phenomenon, which related changing values to their structural origins and consequences. Eckersley (1989) added the influence of the higher educational experience in creating an environmentalism that is beyond materialist values, is less anthropocentric and provides intrinsic value to the environment. The environmentalism of the surrounding communities in the case studies can be understood from such a structural explanation with its attendant agency aspects. Their values towards the environment emerged from an objective separation from it, where fulfilling day-to-day materialistic concerns is not dependent on the environment.

Such cognitive commitments were seen among surrounding community groups in both case study areas. Both areas had environmental NGOs associated with the conflicts. The NGO in Pal Bazaar area- the Jhil Sangrakshan Committee (JSC)- was involved deeply with the pond rejuvenation work. It published annual surveys of Kolkata's environment with statistical and technical information, and articles written in non-specialist language propagating its environmental discourse. Similarly, the environmental NGO in Jodhpur Park also used technical indicators like wildlife counts to prove the pollution of the Jodhpur Park pond. It held seminars focussing on Jodhpur Park's environmental problems, with participants from the Ministry of Environment, the WBPCB etc. These NGOs had a primarily middle class, male membership with majority of members having experienced higher education. They shaped and reflected the cognitive commitments of the surrounding community rather than that of the grassroots communities in the case study areas.

An example illustrating the post-material cognitive commitments of the Pal Bazaar surrounding community was seen in the community booklet published and circulated widely during the annual *Durga Puja* festival there. The following extract from that publication written by a Viveknagar resident of refugee-origins, highlights the pollution prevention storyline mentioning pollutants like 'polluted water from Pal Bazaar and surrounding areas, garbage and water hyacinth.' The storyline related to health and hygiene is also used-mentioning attack of malaria-causing mosquitoes. The passage valorises community involvement in addressing the pond's long-term neglect, pointing to the unity that was a hallmark of Viveknagar from its refugee colony days. This illustrates recurrent discursive practices of Kolkata's middle classes and routinisation of the pollution and hygiene storylines such that they have become reified in middle class framings of urban environmental issues.

*Forty-nine years of idol immersions had resulted in the pond's siltation. There were no efforts to clean this....The pond owners did not care about saving this waterbody. Consequently, this pond got filled with polluted water from Pal Bazaar and surrounding areas, garbage and water hyacinth. Countless mosquitoes bred here, making life unliveable in the area. In short, the waterbody got polluted due to long-term neglect. For remedying this unhealthy situation, people from all walks of life came forward for the basic cleaning and rejuvenation of this waterbody. (To achieve this goal) the Jhil Sangrakshan Committee, Jhil Road, Jadavpur, was formed. (Bandopadhyaya, D., 2000)*

These themes are reinforced through the following extracts from field interviews. In the first, a middle class Pal Bazaar resident describes the pond's importance for the area's environmental quality drawing upon the storyline of quality of the environment, drainage and

pollution prevention. In the second extract, two local residents, also members of the local Nagarik Committee comment on the involvement of the largely middle class community with refugee origins in the events organised next to the pond, demonstrating the storyline of enjoyment of nature for personal and community recreation. The existence of a leisure-based organisation like the Morning Walkers Association (MWA) in Pal Bazaar reinforces the post-material concerns of the surrounding community.

*This pond is this area's life breath, keeping this area clean and fresh. It is necessary for breathing (pure air), (for a) good environment, fire fighting etc. (BCC, Pal Bazaar, Kolkata, 12.11.02)*

*Idol immersion (after religious festivals) attracts and involves many people...Rabindra Jayanti, Poila Baishak, Bijoya Sammelini (local cultural events), Jwalabhumii Diwas (wetlands day) organised by the MWA, are all celebrated next to the pond. The MWA say they like this location because there is a clean and beautiful environment near the pond. (TD, DB, Pal Bazaar, Kolkata, 22.11.02)*

Similar cognitive commitments towards the urban environment are seen in Jodhpur Park. In the first extract, while outlining the Jodhpur Park Society's (JPS) plans for the waterbody a JPS member uses the storyline of environment for recreation. The next quote, which reflects the area's power equations by revealing antagonism towards the *basti*, draws on the pollution prevention storyline.

*We want to make a water park and swimming pool after evicting these people (the squatters). ...Therefore we are trying to get back the lake and park and develop a coffee house, paddling, and a place for young people to relax because there are no open spaces for their recreation. (AK, Jodhpur Park, Kolkata, 17.12.02)*

*The basti creates problems for Jodhpur Park residents. ... You have seen how they live. They are expanding their houses right there and more are coming in. They throw garbage next to their own houses and use the pond banks as a urinal. (NH, Jodhpur Park, Kolkata, 15.2.03)*

However, a point that needs stressing is that the environmentalism of the surrounding community was not just class-based. Introduced in section 3.4.4 of chapter three, in West Bengal class and caste synthesise to create the subject position of the *bhadralok*. This identity as the *bhadralok*- the 'refined elite'- combines a high class-upper caste identity with markers of elitism like high levels of education, non-manual occupations and a professed interest in

arts. The *bhadralok* resentment towards those not considered *bhadra* was a subscript in the pollution prevention agendas of the surrounding communities in both areas.

The surrounding communities used the high impact and visibility of environmental claims strategically, camouflaging other agendas as environmental issues. The surrounding community in Pal Bazaar wanted eviction of the grassroots settlement not just to save the waterbody from pollution, but also because of their stated resentment of the an informal settlement in their 'clean, polite neighbourhood'. Similarly, the Jodhpur Park surrounding community also stated antipathy towards the 'dirty' squatter settlement and 'uncouth people' in their 'upper class' residential area. Thus environmental claims were used to achieve agendas of removing groups from the area towards which the surrounding community had an identity-based antipathy. Claims based on environmental justifications can be used to achieve ends other than purely environmental ones, as seen in both case studies.

Gender, another element of identity important for this study, did not show much impact on the surrounding community claims. Women from the surrounding community publicly made claims similar to men from that group. However, surrounding community women living near the ponds in both areas had a specific gendered *bhadra* view of the grassroots settlements and bathers. These women made claims illustrating their discomfort with the presence of grassroots actors near their homes, as seen below. They used the storyline of threat to the modesty of *bhadra* women from the behaviour of the Jodhpur Park grassroots settlement and the bathers in Pal Bazaar; and used environmental justifications to propose the removal of these groups. The overlaps of *bhadra* identity with gender identity reflect the flexibility and strategic use of identity. The first extract also demonstrates resistive practices of the grassroots *basti*, expanded later.

*Basti people filled up parts of the lake with debris to increase the land area... We all opposed this... These basti guys sit smoking on my front door and dirty it, but I can't say anything to them. I am scared of them. Despite staying in a bhadra area we can't walk on the pavement. When I complained, the basti people threw faeces on my balcony to harass my family and me. (RMu, surrounding community woman living next to Jodhpur Park pond, Kolkata, 18.12.02)*

*They used to live in the basti... Now they bathe right opposite our house. It is impossible for me to go onto our balcony because they bathe in very indecent ways. (MP, surrounding community woman living opposite bathing platform, Pal Bazaar, 24.11.02)*

However, differences existed among surrounding community women's perceptions of the grassroots settlements. For example while denouncing the pond's pollution by the grassroots settlement, PS- a woman from Newland in Pal Bazaar area, did not approve of the way grassroots settlement women were treated. She proposed starting childcare facilities for evicted grassroots women so that they could continue working as domestic helpers in homes in the area. Hence there was evidence of gender-based solidarity in this case, also a product of PS's need-based links with the grassroots women whom she employed as part-time domestic helpers. Though a class-based logic is discerned here, yet it also illustrates the use of gender solidarity to overcome functional difficulties brought about by fulfilling the post-material environmental agenda of the surrounding community.

In Pal Bazaar, the surrounding community's environmental discourse was significantly affected by their regional origin of East Bengal. This united the surrounding community and made them refer to their past in shaping their material practices, beliefs and values. Hence, they valued waterbodies more highly than people originally from West Bengal would and also emphasised community action for solving community problems- derived from their past history as refugees who had overcome significant problems through joint community action. Hence, actors' past history and material practices, beliefs and values emerging from this history and regional origin shape their environmental discourses and behaviour towards environmental claims, explored further in chapters five, six and seven.

#### **4.2.3 Grassroots group storylines in the case studies:**

This section illustrates that the environmental claims of the grassroots group were based on three storylines – fulfilling material needs using the pond water and pond-side location, non-material values for the waterbody, and injustice of the evictions based on material as well as non-material reasoning- whether against proposed evictions (in Jodhpur Park) or completed evictions (in Pal Bazaar).

The first storyline looks to nature for providing material resources for fulfilling grassroots livelihood and lifestyle requirements- in this case by providing access to pond water and locational advantages of living there. The second storyline looks at grassroots actors' non-material relationship with nature, stressing their long and deep links with the case study ponds through their past or current livelihoods, their living patterns and emotional attachment to the areas. This highlights their use of historical reference as a discursive practice. This storyline also mentions the grassroots groups' valuation of non-material positives of living next to the waterbodies like the cooling breezes, visual pleasure etc. The third storyline links grassroots environmental discourse with the discourse of social justice, framing their environmental



claims as the injustice of eviction from their homes. Thus, storylines used by the grassroots groups in the case studies combine their material and non-material valuation of the ponds for expressing their relationship with the urban natural environment.

In the first extract below, a grassroots man evicted from Pal Bazaar area expresses anguish at losing his links with the pond and his pond-side home, using the metaphor of his house's foundation soil- considered sacred and personal. He combines the storylines of non-material values for the area with the injustice of evictions. The extracts following that illustrate the storylines of non-material values towards the pond and links with it due to locational and lifestyle concerns. The grassroots groups' questioning of the justice of the eviction attempts and resulting antagonism between them and the surrounding community is also illustrated. The reason for a common materialistic thread between all these publicly articulated grassroots claims is explained further in chapter seven.

*Our foundation mud, our land, our houses, everything was taken away. But no one even asked for our suggestions or advice...I am ready for this beautiful pond but they didn't involve us in any decisions or any discussions. Suddenly they told us you have to go, started measuring the land and started threatening us with the bulldozer and used force to remove us. (TS, Pal Bazaar, Kolkata, 22.11.02)*

*We lived near the Pal Bazaar pond in difficult conditions, but we were happy. When it used to get very hot we would sleep on the road outside our home. There was no electricity there, the cool breeze from the pond used to cool our homes. (DU, Sapui Para, Kolkata, 17.12.02)*

*We don't have any other place to go. We like living here. We have been living here for fifteen years. We are attached to it. Also, we work here. We have strong local links...the only facility for us is the lake water. It is the only positive. (Woman and man from Jodhpur Park basti, Kolkata, 02.03.03)*

As seen in this section, storylines used by the surrounding community groups painted the grassroots groups as perpetrators of pollution, while storylines used by the grassroots groups positioned the surrounding community as unjust and interested in using the environment for their entertainment at the cost of the livelihood, lifestyle and other needs of the grassroots groups. As Hajer (1997) explained, storylines help construct a problem and also act as devices through which actors are positioned and through which specific ideas of blame, responsibility, urgency etc are attributed. Through storylines actors can be positioned as the victims of environmental oppression, the perpetrators of environmental pollution etc. The extracts above

illustrate that the storylines used by the conflicting groups helped define the environmental conflict for the speakers, while clarifying the roles the actors assigned to themselves and to others. This in turn reflected the power equations in the areas and inherent in the environmental conflict under discussion.

#### **4.2.4 Images used in discourse formation:**

Images are used to make storylines powerful and compelling. In Pal Bazaar, JSC- a local environmental NGO was closely involved in the pond rejuvenation effort. They devised a catchy slogan- “We want to save the last *jhil* (pond) on Jhil Road<sup>2</sup>”, on banners and posters used in community marches involving large numbers of surrounding community members. This presented a compelling image of men, women and children all marching under a banner proclaiming their desire to save the endangered ‘last’ pond on a road named after waterbodies that existed in that area. Drawing upon the discursive practice of stressing collective fear, this heightened a sense of urgency and conveyed to the *basti* dwellers that the larger community was united in wanting their removal from the banks of the area’s ‘last pond’, for saving it.

After the rejuvenation was completed, the JSC kept the memory of that community effort alive in the minds of the area people by annually exhibiting a slide show with images of the pond. This shows striking images of the ‘before’ and ‘after’ conditions of the pond, removal of the grassroots settlement, and united surrounding community members marching, arguing, lobbying politicians and working for the rejuvenation work late into the nights. These images send a powerful message stressing the success of the surrounding community’s efforts to ‘save the last pond’ on Jhil Road.

Another set of photographic images show the relocation package for the people evicted from the pond-side grassroots settlement. Photographs of houses partially constructed by the JSC for evicted persons propagate the message that the pond rejuvenation effort did not harm the interests of the grassroots group, instead making them property owners. That the current community-based organisation managing the pond, considers that justice was done to the grassroots group is apparent from these images as well as from its members’ statements. These images however, do not show the use of bulldozers and threats against the grassroots group and do not convey grassroots group’s sense of injustice at the forced evictions.

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<sup>2</sup> Name of the road on which the pond is located

### **4.3 The environmental discourse in the institutional sphere:**

Institutions have been characterised in the Argumentative Approach as functioning on the basis of specific cognitive commitments having a high degree of salience. Analysing the laws and procedures created by institutions to handle issues from a certain realm helps understand their cognitive commitments. Other than analysing contents of laws and procedures, their implementation, as well as attitudes of institutional actors need to be considered. Another thing to be remembered is that behaviour of institutional (or any) actors is not only a function of the structured discourse of the institution but also derives from the agency of individuals and groups part of the institution, who may have different personal cognitive commitment and may want to pose a discursive challenge to the institution's routinized discourse.

The Argumentative Approach draws on Giddens' idea of duality of structure stating that though the discoursing subject has a central role, their actions are in the context of social structures of various sort that both enable and constraint their agency (Hajer, 1997). Hence, both the structure and agency aspects of institutional discourse are considered in this section. Institutional cognitive commitments, leading to routinized institutional discourse is the structural factor constraining and enabling the agency of actors who make up institutions- councillors and bureaucrats in this case. The way institutional discourse gets translated into action- with attendant implementation deficits and individual agency of its members illustrates the agency aspect of the analysis. The section begins with understanding laws and procedures dealing with Kolkata's urban waterbodies, which are the focus of this research.

#### **4.3.1 Formal institutional cognitive commitments- the laws:**

Before the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA, environment was a state government subject with the local governments handling urban services affecting the urban environment- like sewerage, drainage, solid waste disposal, water supply etc. As seen in chapter two, the Twelfth schedule of the constitution, created by the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA placed emphasis on urban environmental management and transferred "protection of the environment and promotion of ecological aspects" to the functional domain of municipalities. Hence, the legal framework has a technocentric cognitive commitment, viewing the urban environment as amenable to management by expert bodies of bureaucrats and officials. It ascribes to the 'standard view' of environmental management (Harvey, 1996) and values 'scientific big talk' (Stott and Sullivan, 2000) over other ways of conceptualising environmental issues. The standard view of environmental management emphasises remedial science to deal with environmental 'incidents', regulation through economic and other incentives and disincentives, need for strong scientific evidence to prove environmental impacts of activities, and translation of the environmental problem to the domain of expert discourse.

The other laws applicable to the urban environment in Kolkata, specifically to urban waterbodies, are briefly described below.

→ The West Bengal Inland Fisheries Act (1993), under section 17A defines a waterbody as either natural or manmade with a minimum size of 5 cottahs (3600 sq ft), which holds water for minimum six months a year. Under this law such waterbodies cannot be filled-in or used for anything other than fish rearing. Any person found guilty of this is required to re-excavate and return the filled-in waterbody to its original size. Management of ill-managed waterbodies can be taken over by the government.

→ The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act (1974) is the chief legislation against pollution of waterbodies in the state. It defines water pollution as any activity that results in changes in the geologic, chemical or ecological character of water which are harmful for human health, flora and fauna and make the water unfit for consumption, trade and commerce, agriculture or other activities. Its sections 24, 25 and 26 address industrial pollution by effluents from industrial sources, by activities that change the flow of water resulting in the pollution of a waterbody and by release of substances above limits set by the PCB into a waterbody causing its pollution.

→ The Land Use and Development Control Plan for the Calcutta Municipal Corporation area (1996), in chapter 20 states that no canal, pond, waterbody or wetland can be filled up except by the CMDA for reasons related to drainage, ecology and environment, pisciculture, fire fighting or such considerations, and only with the prior written approval of the State Government.

→ The Kolkata Municipal Corporation Act (2000), specifies KMC departments like Parks and Gardens, Basti and Environment, and Vector Control that deal with specific environmental issues. The KMC's Conservancy Department handles environmental services like sewage, drainage and solid waste disposal and the Water Supply Department handles city water supply. The KMC can withhold planning permission for constructing buildings on land that is proved to have been created by filling-in a waterbody. Further, the KMC can take over the management of any waterbody being neglected by its owner.

As seen from this description, various laws and rules belonging to different levels of government deal with urban waterbodies using a technocentric view of the urban environment and following the environmental discourse of administrative rationalism. The laws focus primarily on pollution and pond filling, with little space for the kinds of claims made by grassroots actors. These laws demonstrate that the environmentalism of the formal channels is very different from that of grassroots actors.

#### **4.3.2 Urban environment – the implementation deficit:**

Other than the legislations' discursive frames, their actual functioning and of the various departments in relation to each other are also important. It was observed in the fieldwork that the state and local government departments were reluctant to deal with urban waterbodies. Though the state Fisheries Department accepted responsibility for urban waterbodies, the Inland Fisheries Act (1993) assigned this responsibility to the municipality in question. In the KMC the Chief Municipal Town Planners and Architect's department was assigned responsibility for urban waterbodies. However, other KMC departments were unsure of which department could takeover the management of a pond if found to be in a neglected condition or being filled-up. Further, many conditions governed different KMC departments taking over different kind of ponds. The rules were unclear for how claims were to be made, to whom and in which situations would the KMC take over a waterbody. As apparent from the extracts below, the functional jurisdiction was problematic, made further ambiguous by the fact that the KMC had not taken over any waterbody till 2003.

*The Corporation is responsible for the upkeep of urban ponds. It is very confused about which department they are under. The PCB should also look at the non-industrial pollution of ponds. (MMu, Fisheries Department, state government, 1.11.02)*

*Pond rejuvenation belongs to the municipality. The PCB only handles industrial pollution (of waterbodies). (HG, WBPCB, state government, 12.12.02)*

*There is no defined department but usually the (KMC's) Parks and Gardens Department looks after ponds. (MMah, councillor, KMC, 6.12.02)*

*The Parks and Gardens department has only eight ponds under it. The Chief Town Planner should look after ponds (HGu, MIC Parks and gardens, KMC, 10.12.02).*

*Municipality gives a notice to the owner to clean up a pond. If he doesn't do so, then the Corporation takes over management. The pond is vested to the commissioner and*

*managed by Architecture and Town Planning department. (KF, CMTPA deptt., KMC, 28.10.02)*

Other than functional multiplicity, the impact of political parties in power at the different levels of government was observed in the administration of the urban environment. An example is the pond filling issue. The local government level, ruled by the TC, was ready to act only if the state level ruled by the LF, kept track of issues like pond filling. This controversy between the KMC and the State Fisheries Department arising from their political differences became quite substantial (Ananda Bazara Patrika, 22.11.01, 26.11.01), (Vasundhara, 2002).

Thus despite an institutional cognitive commitment towards urban waterbodies observed through the multiple layers of laws at state and local level, the functional domain as shaped by the agency of its members exhibited a denial of this institutional discourse. This was due to poor operationalisation of the institutional discourse towards the urban environment at the level of practice.

#### **4.3.3 Discursive challenge and routinisation of institutional environmental discourse:**

This section examines the schism between the municipality's traditional line-services view of the urban environment and its new conceptualisation by laws like the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA and the Inland Fisheries Act. Through its emphasis on ecological aspects, on non-traditional issues such as urban forestry in conjunction with more participative municipal governance, the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA provided ULBs the chance to reinterpret the urban environment. For the first time, municipal officials and councillors could perceive urban environmental issues as more than the mechanistic fulfilling of line-service functions like water supply, sewage, drainage and solid waste disposal. They would have to include the voices of citizens- through Ward Committees and elected representatives- in setting environmental agendas for municipal areas.

This meant that content of claims acceptable to municipalities would have to include wider issues in the definition of the urban environment than a focus on just the few traditional line services. Along with the expanded content of issues considered valid urban environmental issues, claims would have to be assessed also on their merit in terms of justice towards different groups of citizens. Environmental issues as understood through the provisions of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA could range from justice of evictions justified on environmental grounds, to officially looking at environmental issues not as one-off single line-service 'items' but as complex interconnected webs of issues and actors. The 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's provisions when interpreted creatively had the potential for the municipality to conceive of municipal

environmental action as affecting justice towards urban actors as well as their health, lifestyle and livelihoods. Hence, the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA had the potential to change the way the urban environment was conceived by municipal functionaries. However the older civic services functions of the municipality were very firmly established in its institutional discourse and practice. Consequently, members of the municipality accepted the institutional equating of urban environmental issues with municipal line-services giving this view of the urban environment discursive hegemony in the municipality.

Discursive hegemony emerges not only from the structuration of discourse such that an actor retains credibility in a given domain only if they draw on the ideas and concepts of a given discourse, but also from discourse institutionalisation where the given discourse translates into institutional arrangements (Hajer, 1997). The traditional line-services view of the urban environment fulfilled both the criteria for discursive hegemony. Any discursive challenge to this discursive hegemony would have required a long time for institutional acceptance and acquiring the status of routinized discourse. This hurdle in overcoming the traditional view of the urban environment, part of the regular discursive frame of most municipal officials, was encountered by the new definitions of the urban environment. Other than urban waterbodies, which had a new legislative framework comprising of the laws mentioned earlier, no reflections of the new functions placed in the ambit of the local government through the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA were observed in the field. As seen below, no departments as mandated by the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA, dealt specifically with issues such as environmental protection.

*The 74th CAA has come into force, but no action has been taken. There has been no department created to implement it and no funds devolved regarding this. (SBh, KMC, Kolkata, 29.5.04)*

When asked, most KMC officials placed environmental issues within the functional jurisdiction of the Pollution Control Board. This further illustrates the reification of the institutional discourse by automatically equating environmental issues with pollution prevention and reinforcing the municipality's traditional civic services understanding of the urban environment.

*There is no real department in the KMC that looks after the environment. If there is any issue related to air pollution, we go to the PCB... If environmental issues come up in the (KMC) House, they may get some data from the PCB. (SBh, KMC, Kolkata, 29.5.04)*

As seen above, there was an implementation deficit even in the case of urban waterbodies, arising from the failure of the issue to enter into routinised discourse in the municipality. The

extract below illustrates the traditional civic line-services understanding of the urban environment by most bureaucrats in the municipality.

*Long-term questions on environmental issues are not raised often in the municipal House. Short-term questions like water contamination, dirty vats, health hazard etc (are raised). Only when a hazard is felt in a direct and imminent way, is it raised in the (Municipal) House. Issues that are not related to day-to-day crisis management are raised rarely. (The municipality is) not very environmentally aware. (KG, State government, Kolkata, 15.11.02)*

Other institutional actors relevant for this study are the councillors who represent people's claims to the municipality. Their discourse towards the environment is crucial, as it determines the possibility of the formation of discourse coalitions between councillors and claim-makers with whom they have discursive parity. The kind of questions a majority of councillors raised at the municipal House meetings pointed to their cognitive commitment largely towards the environmental discourse of administrative rationalism.

A fieldwork review of all questions raised by municipal councillors at the House level between the years 2000 and in 2002 revealed the following about the number of questions related to line-services raised vs. ones related to newer definitions of the environment, such as related to urban waterbodies, environmental improvement programmes carried out with Asian Development Bank funding etc. Of the total 217 questions and 97 motions about all issues-environmental and others- raised in the KMC House meetings in this period, 19 were related to the new definition of the environment- relating to parks, ponds and external donor agency funded environmental improvement programmes while 78 were related to the standard line-services issues like water supply and tubewells (45), garbage disposal (6), drainage (2) etc.

The discursive presentation of the municipal councillors was observed to favour certain kinds of claims rather than others. The councillors' discursive frames confirmed to the bureaucratic discourse of administrative rationalism. Hence, in borough records, all complaints were written in an impersonal manner- illustrating the discursive practice of passivisation. There was no mention of the claim-makers anywhere. The discursive style used framed the claims in an objective format looking at the administrative criteria of funds spent, allocated and needed. The extract below is from minutes of a Borough Committee meeting, which illustrate this bureaucratic discourse style stressing objectivity, efficiency and urban line-services.

*At the meeting councillor Mr. AM mentioned that a drain situated at Anandapur is not cleared everyday. AD (SWM) of Conservancy said that action would be taken very soon in Anandapur. Besides, members said container services are deteriorating day-by-day. The Chairman instructed AD (SWM) that this matter should be solved*



*very carefully and also instructed that no garbage should fall out of the container.*

(Borough Committee minutes of meeting, Borough XII, KMC)

Though the councillors spoke largely within the KMC's institutional discourse, yet the impact of the political party to which they belonged and its discourse towards the environment was observed on their actions. The impact of High Politics, as outlined in chapter three, was observed in the way party ideology affected discourse towards the urban environment. However, actual praxis of the councillors depended on the everyday politics of their interactions with people of their area, and on their own agency, often shaped by calculations of personal and political benefit.

#### **4.3.4 Discourse coalitions, power equations inherent in institutional procedures:**

In the argumentative approach to discourse analysis, discursive dominance is seen as a socio-cognitive product, whereby the social and cognitive are essentially intertwined (Hajer, 1997). Hence the structuring effects of institutional cognitive commitments to the environment, as well as the claim-accepting municipal official or councillor's personal social structural position and agency have impacts on the praxis of the municipality. There is a high possibility of discourse coalitions being formed when the social profile and cognitive commitments of formal channel members and claim-makers complement each other. The actual formation of discourse coalitions in the case studies and their outcomes for claim making are analysed in subsequent chapters.

The discursive parity that largely exists between the bureaucratic discourse and that of middle class claim-makers over the urban environment, can lead to exclusionary effects for grassroots actors if such discourse coalitions get formed. The extracts below illustrate the attitudes of formal channel members towards grassroots actors' environmental discourse and praxis. In both extracts, grassroots uses of urban waterbodies for their lifestyle and livelihood were regarded negatively as examples of unenlightened behaviour. In the first extract particularly, the PCB official found ponds to be unimportant to peoples' lifestyles and livelihoods in cities, thus betraying his attitudinal constraint of only accepting educated middle-class environmental values and needs as appropriate in urban areas.

*In urban areas, ponds are not like in villages- it doesn't matter whether a person has a pond next to their house or not in cities... My personal opinion is that the educated class has more awareness (about the environment). Often basti people take drinking water from the same pond where they wash (clothes and utensils). Such people don't have any health awareness. (CC, WBPCB, 12.12.02)*

*Misuse (of ponds) happens by washing of dirty clothes etc in the ponds wherever people with awareness and understanding are not there. Also people try and leave fish into ponds (thus dirtying them). (HG, KMC, 10.12.02)*

Further, institutional arrangements reflecting institutional cognitive commitments can also be exclusionary for those without discursive parity with the institution. There is little understanding among institutional actors of the degree to which discourse can become structured in institutional arrangements (Hajer, 1997). Hence, there can be an exclusionary impact of the municipality's procedures outlined by actors for environmental claim making, which are weighed in favour of certain types of discursive practices and understanding. These procedures often require skills that grassroots actors may not possess, requiring the assistance of intermediaries. This institutionalises their dependence on third parties like councillors or political party mass organisations- who may extract costs for this dependence. The following extracts illustrate the procedures for making environmental claims to the municipality and skills required from claim-makers. This was further complicated by discursive schisms between councillors and some claim-makers

*A complainant can give a letter to the Executive Engineer. If the letter comes through the councillor, (it is better as) then he follows up and reminds (us) repeatedly (DC, KMC, 15.03.03)*

*The complaint making procedure is that every zone has an executive engineer, people can complain to him. Parks and Gardens Department has two zones- North and South. For south zone issues, you can talk to the south zone head. However, talk to the Borough level DCO for solid waste management, as they are responsible to ensure that no one throws garbage in the lake. (MM, 23.2.03)*

Unlike other departments, the KMC's CMTPA Department is not present in every borough. Hence, assigning responsibility for urban waterbodies to this department was exclusionary for grassroots claim-makers, since to access this department they would need to make a special trip to KMC headquarters, taking time out from their daily wage-earning activities.

In summary, difficulties faced by grassroots claim-makers in accessing formal channels with environmental claims due to institutional procedures included -procedural complexity, skills required in environmental claim making and in the case of waterbodies, the distance between grassroots actors and the municipal department dealing with waterbodies.

#### **4.4 Environmental discourses of non-institutional actors- politicians and political parties:**

The importance of High Politics and everyday politics for the functioning of formal channels was discussed in chapter three. Hence, it is important to see how the sphere of High Politics-dealing with political ideology of the different political parties looks at the issue of the environment. Everyday politics also needs to be analysed to understand the agency aspect of the political culture, which prompts self-serving behaviour from political representatives, different from that dictated by High Politics, i.e. party ideology.

##### **4.4.1 Political Party discourses about the environment structuring party praxis:**

The following extract from an interview with a retired senior bureaucrat shows that most politicians were careful to follow the party discourse regarding the environment in their formal interactions with claim-makers and the municipality. Hence a party's discourse towards the urban environment is important in shaping the formal behaviour and praxis of elected representatives from that party regarding this issue.

*Elected representatives think that why should they make an issue of anything. It is better to ask their parties and talk to their party bosses. They think if I make an issue, I will either embarrass my party or give credit to a different party. (KCS, London, 28.3.03)*

Of the two political parties focussed on here, the CPI (M) had a definite political stand on the environment, derived from its Marxist ideological commitment. It conceptualised the environment as a resource to be exploited scientifically for maximising the efficiency with which these resources were utilised for human benefit, as seen in the first extract. The second extract, from the interview with a Left Front minister, illustrates the praxis of LF members based on this understanding of the environment. Despite being a party overtly for the poor and working classes and stressing the land rights of rural grassroots actors, the CPI (M)'s praxis opposed grassroots use of environmental resources in urban areas. This can be linked to chapter three's analysis pointing to the party's bourgeoisification, its strategic alteration of ideology for vote gathering and its *bhadralok* character.

*The government at the Centre and the states refuses to enforce environmental protection measures. Instead in the name of environmental protection, the higher judiciary has closed thousands of factories indiscriminately resulting in lakhs of workers losing jobs with no adequate compensation. People oriented development has to go along with environmental concerns for a strategy of sustainable development. (CPI (M) Political Resolution, Hyderabad, March 2002)*

*Environment movements use this (Pal Bazaar rejuvenation) as an example. In the areas that take up similar work, we (the JSC, the KMC and CPI-M) help to improve their water quality. In some areas- the water is so contaminated, still people bathe, wash clothes and utensils in it. Environment workers tell (these) people that you are getting diseases and are spoiling water quality, but they don't listen till we use force (KGo, 15.11.02)*

The Trinamool Congress had an ideological schism within its party regarding the environment. One faction had a pro-grassroots focus, which protested the eviction of squatters from the banks of Kolkata's Tolly Nullah canal in December 2002 on the grounds of social and environmental justice, also agitating for rehabilitation nearby for these squatters. The second party faction was in power in the KMC and carried out the evictions under the mayor's leadership, using arguments based on the pollution prevention storyline (newspaper reports- Statesman, Telegraph, Ananda Bazara Patrika, December 2002). This ideological schism was observed from the following extracts from the interview of a Trinamool councillor in Kolkata urging for squatter eviction from the Jodhpur Park *basti* and the other faction's reaction at the time of the Tolly Nullah evictions,

*We'll remove these (Jodhpur Park basti) squatters. They will be evicted, like the (Tolly Nullah) canal side dwellers were. (ABis, BX councillor, KMC, 21.3.03)*

*Mr. SR of Trinamool said it was unethical for the government to displace the squatters without providing rehabilitation. "The suicide of a slum-dweller of that area yesterday shows how miserable the people are in that area", SR said. (The Statesman, 10.12.02)*

#### **4.4.2 Everyday politics and self-serving agency of political representatives:**

Despite party ideologies, the everyday politics of greed and corrupt behaviour by the councillors and party members showed an opportunistic attitude towards the urban environment.

*Promoters, real estate dealers, local muscleman and influential politicians- both of the right and left- do this filling-up of ponds. It is very difficult to stop this. (BCC, Pal Bazaar, Kolkata, 12.11.02)*

Thus on the one hand was the structuring effect of the party ideology and on the other the agency of the individual politicians which could be at cross purposes with this ideology. This played an important role in determining which claims a councillor or party member supported in an environmental conflict. The structuring effect of party ideology and discursive parity

due to structural position could point to supporting one group, while the personal agency aspects of the everyday politics could point to another group. The balance of these factors determined the behaviour of formal channels.

#### **4.5 Conclusion:**

This chapter used concepts of the argumentative approach of discourse analysis to understand the discursive field at Kolkata's macro city level. This revealed the differing storylines, emerging from the differing cognitive commitments of various claim making groups and formal channels. Discourse coalitions that formed as a result of discursive and social parity between formal channel members and claim makers were also seen to be important in determining access of environmental claims to formal channels. The institutional sphere, as shaped by institutional praxis and procedures for environmental claim making was also seen to have the potential for excluding certain actors from the claim making process. Chapter one discussed the dialectic relation of discourses with other moments of social processes (Harvey, 1997). The impacts of the various moments of social processes- such as social relations, power, material practices were observed on environmental discourses. However,

*To privilege discourse above all other moments is insufficient, misleading and even dangerous. ...Errors arise when examination of one "moment" is held sufficient to understand the totality of the social process. (Harvey, 1997:80)*

Hence, the following chapters look at the political field and the discursive field in combination to understand the politics of environmental claim making. While the analysis in this chapter may appear to have made broad generalisations, this is necessarily so when looking at the macro city level. The micro-level analysis in chapters five, six and seven undertakes a more fine-grained examination of how discourses interact with other moments of social processes, by studying the political and discursive fields in the two case studies.

### **Chapter five: The politics of environmental claim making: Pal Bazaar**

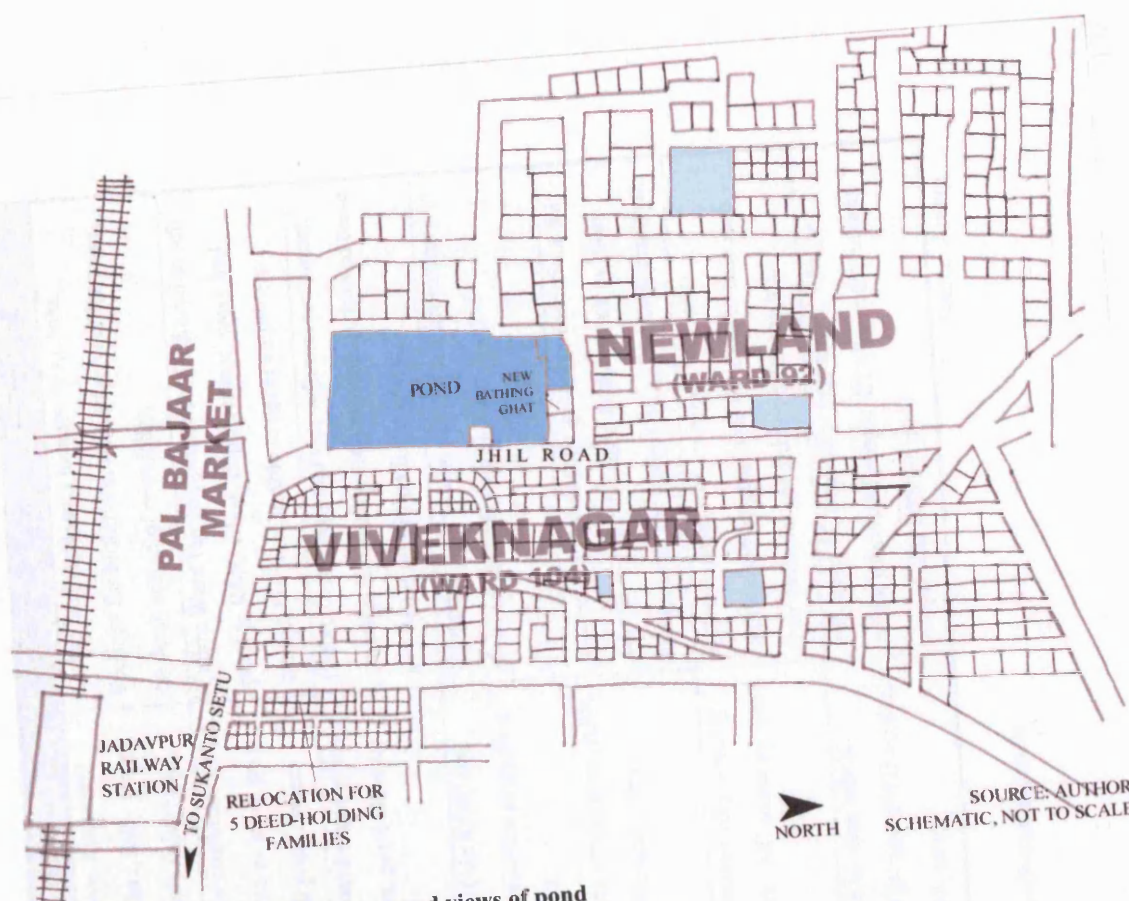
*The people who came to protect the environment were basically social workers and environmentalists. All they thought was that “we have to make the pond beautiful”.*

(DD, 21.11.02, owner of tea shop by the Pal Bazaar pond side)

So far, the macro city level was analysed to understand the impact of the political field (chapter three) and the discursive field (chapter four), on the accessibility of municipal channels towards different environmental claims. Chapter three demonstrated elite capture of the formal channels and impediments for grassroots actors in accessing them without an intermediary. Chapter four demonstrated that the ‘standard view’ of environmental management dominated municipal channel discourse. A micro-level analysis of environmental claim making will establish how various claim-makers negotiate these macro fields of the city in the actual practice of claim making. This chapter investigates micro politics of environmental claim making by studying the discursive field and political field for the conflict in Pal Bazaar. Introduced in chapter two, the main actors in the case are summarised in Table 5.A. The focus of the conflict, the pond is located within the densely populated Pal Bazaar area (refer figure 5.1). It is argued here that exclusions are a product not only of larger macro forces, but begin and are rooted in the micro everyday scale of daily interactions and social exchanges, influenced by past history and changing subject positions of people. Expanded in Appendix A, methods used in the field were observations, focus groups and semi-structured interviews with different claim making groups and formal and non-formal channel members.

#### **5.1 Discursive Field:**

The discursive field of the Pal Bazaar case comprised of the different actors’ discourses towards the pond, the relocations and towards each other. Claims made by actors reveal the discourses they ascribe to and issues at stake in the conflict. Used here for convenience, a classification into ‘materialist’ and ‘non-material’ claims is an oversimplification, as there exists a complex relationship between claims and claim-makers. Essentialist identification of any group with specific kinds of claims is thus erroneous. Different factors shape the nature of claims made- such as the claimant’s identity, their cognitive commitments and link of their discourse with social practice, expanded further in chapter seven. As seen in chapter four, grassroots environmental discourses and of the surrounding community differed due to their different structural positions, life histories, interactions with the environment etc. Environmental claims were employed as ‘scripts’ for other issues. These environmental claims found different levels of acceptability in the formal channels based on structure or agency that shaped their response.



**Figure 5.1: Map of Pal Bazaar area and views of pond**



**Figure 5.2: Recreational angling by the surrounding community**  
Source: Vasundhara, 2002



**Figure 5.3: Bathing at the improved ghat**  
Source: Author, 2002



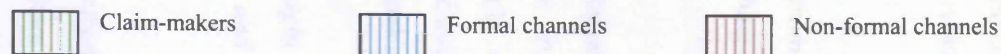
**Figure 5.4: Ghat side rules** Source: Vasundhara, 2002



Actors	Political affiliation	Profile of actor	Position about lake
<b>Evicted grassroots group</b>	Divided party loyalties, primarily non-Left.	13 families, all scheduled caste, from rural West Bengal. Rickshaw pullers, daily wage earners, housemaids. Formerly fisherfolk.	Claim: land rights and location w.r.t. jobs. Feelings for birthplace, relocation very far away, no deed, scared of re-eviction
<b>Original owner group</b> (3 sisters- from Pal family)	Political affiliation changing	Internal disputes over family properties in the area. Have moved out of area as are in poor financial state. Legally, still pond owners.	Claim: Want fair compensation. Had tried to sell pond to KMC when 'improvement' work had started, but were unable to agree on price
<b>Jhil Sangrakshan Committee (JSC)</b>	Largely Left dominated- initially multi-party collaborative body	Middle class community based organisation. Spearheaded entire eviction, pond clean up and beautification work.	Claim: removing pond side informal settlement, cleaning & beautification of pond. Achieved these and found relocation for evictees.
<b>Councillor</b>	From CPI(M) during evictions. Currently RSP councillor (part of Left Front)	Ex councillor was an MMIC in KMC and with refugee background. Current councillor is his wife. Both part of JSC	Supported the eviction of informal settlement and cleaning up and beautification of pond.
<b>Borough administrations</b> <b>Boroughs X, XII</b>	B X -TC majority during research, Left majority during evictions. BXII- Left majority throughout.	Bureaucrats with little area connections. KMC chief engineer from Viveknagar. Very involved in work.	Very convinced of the rightness of evictions for sake of the environment. Didn't think evictees had grounds for complaint, as had been resettled.
<b>Party organisations</b>	CPI(M) and other Left party bodies and mass organisations strong. TC mass organisations ineffective.	CPI(M)'s Nagarik Committee very strongly involved in the JSC work . NC secretary also a member of the JSC.	Actively supported evictions. Was also approached by pond side dwellers to help stop their eviction, but did not offer any help.
<b>Significant individuals or organisations</b>	CPI(M), Left individuals earlier. TC ward 108 councillor significant at time of research.	CPI(M) heavyweights KG- then MMIC, KMC, refugee past. KGo- then PWD minister. TC councillor 108 ward- new.	108 ward TC councillor petitioning KMC on behalf of evicted people. CPI(M) heavyweights part of JSC effort in past.

**Table 5.A: Actors and their claims: Pal Bazaar case study**

Source :Author





### 5.1.1 Environmental discourse and identity of the claim-makers:

As seen in table 5.A, the surrounding community had a largely middle class, upper caste profile with East Bengal regional origin. Their technocentric and pollution prevention discourse towards the environment, which framed an appropriate urban environment as an aesthetically appealing one –has been discussed in chapter four. The extracts below further qualify this so-called ‘middle class’ post-material environmentalism by highlighting social antagonisms based on identity differences hidden in these claims and a dislike of the ‘other’- the grassroots group with a low caste, West Bengal peasant origin. The antagonisms are highlighted by the surrounding community stressing the difference between ‘us- the public’ and ‘these *basti* people’, and by the description of the cleaned pond as a ‘place for joy’. The social antagonisms concealed in these statements link the moment of discourse with that of social relations, values and beliefs.

*These basti people kept coming in waves one after another. They kept throwing ash into the pond, dirtying it and filling it up. Many years ago the club boys and other boys even beat up these people. We realised nothing can be done like this. We got the public involved and submitted a mass petition to the government, the councillor. We were able to get our people organised and the basti removed (JS, Viveknagar resident, 12.11.02)*

*(Now) this has become a place for ‘ananda’ (joy). We use rods for fishing from little bamboo platforms set in the pond.... Every Sunday people buy tickets for fishing. (SC, Viveknagar resident, 19.11.02)*

As seen in chapter four and in table 5.A, grassroots environmental discourse in Pal Bazaar was of entitlements reflecting a lived experience of the environment. Disruptions in this relationship were framed in the discourse of oppression and loss. The publicly made grassroots material claims dealt with the lack of legal deeds for the land on which the evictees were relocated, problems in these new areas and breakdown or strain of long established livelihood links with the Pal Bazaar area.

*That area was my birth site. I had been living there since birth. I had bought land there. Why did they have to remove us from there...We had all our papers and land deeds etc. (LD, grassroots land-deed holding man, 5.1.03)*

As seen in chapter four, the publicly made non-material grassroots claims described the helplessness experienced by the evicted persons due to lack of any choice, also seen here. The use of threats in the eviction process and anguish at termination of long-term links with the Pal Bazaar area and with other people of the informal settlement was also a recurrent claim.

*We wanted to be given land close by. They (the JSC) said wherever we give you land, you will have to go there. We didn't have any other place to go to; therefore we had to go to the land provided by the JSC. (MMi, man from tenant family relocated to Bhagat Singh Colony, 22.11.02)*

The gendered nature of grassroots claim making was apparent in the public presentation of the claims. Unlike grassroots women, grassroots men seldom used emotional language except while using terms of the oppression discourse. Some of the grassroots women mentioned the distress of eviction and pain of departure from the pondside settlement. Grassroots women's claims were largely focussed on the problems they faced after the evictions in fulfilling their productive and reproductive roles, which affected their practical as well as strategic gender needs. The relocations far away significantly reduced grassroots women's mobility cutting them off from their sources of income as domestic help in Pal Bazaar area. This affected their status within their families, as seen in extract one below. Their other claims concerned the loss of community support networks on which they had depended and their resultant increased dependence on party mass organisations and local clubs. This vertical dependency increased their burden of obligations to the parties, unlike the more horizontal relationships of mutual aid used in Pal Bazaar. Extract two illustrates grassroots women's problems due to break up of their trusted social networks in the old area. However, women only made these claims in private, with male claim-makers presenting the public face of the grassroots claims.

*I have had to give up working since the last three years, because Viveknagar- where I worked earlier is too far now....We used to live there and earn by working in other peoples' homes as maids. (BM, woman relocated to Bhagat Singh Colony, 26.10.02)*

*I went to the new place but there people cheated me....My husband is dead and I have no children therefore I have to look after myself. It is too difficult to live there since there is no one to care for me. (RMA, widowed woman who didn't move, 21.11.02)*

An interesting facet of the discursive field that illustrated the flexibility of discourses over time and with situational context was the change in the discourse ascribed to by the surrounding community and the grassroots group with time and change in subject position. The link of discourse to social practice rather than to actors, and strategic use to suit the claim making context also explain the use of different discourses by actors at different occasions, further discussed in chapter seven.

When the current surrounding community residents of Pal Bazaar had migrated to Kolkata as refugees from East Bengal in dire poverty 1950s onwards, they had shown a largely

materialistic valuation of the natural environment in Kolkata. They had filled up extensive waterbodies in and around Pal Bazaar area to create land for refugee residential colonies like Viveknagar, Santoshpur, Garfa etc. This is apparent from old maps (refer Figure 2.6-2.8) and accounts of Kolkata's urbanisation.

*To make the colonies, refugees had filled up the marshes and in-filled the islands that were present here before the 50s. All colonies were made by filling up waterbodies.* (PS, old Viveknagar resident, 6.4.03)

The refugee group became more prosperous over time, reducing dependence on the environment for fulfilling their livelihood and lifestyle needs. Their 'middle class environmentalism' emerged ascribing to storylines of pollution prevention and nature for leisure. The surrounding community's shift from the environmentalism of their initial refugee years towards post-material environmentalism can be seen in the extract below, in which the surrounding community position themselves as the 'compelling force' behind the pond's upkeep. The extract also illustrates the discursive practice of drawing on collective fear – in this case of waterbody's destruction - to bolster a storyline.

*We are the compelling force (behind the upkeep of the lake). If we don't do anything (for its upkeep), things won't happen. They (the KMC) can't do the day-to-day management because they don't have that level of dedication, as the pond's condition is not a personal interest for them.* (RM, Jhil Road, 23.11 02)

With passing time and increased prosperity, memory and nostalgia played a part in changing the environmental discourse of the former refugees. Using the discursive practice of drawing on historical references, they recalled their love for waterbodies- significant in the geography of their past homeland- present day Bangladesh. Past history and memory influenced the attempt to save the waterbody in Pal Bazaar by drawing upon the identity of the surrounding community as former refugees alongside their acquired middle class environmentalism.

*You must understand the link between East Bengal refugees and waterbodies. Firstly, they settled in the external areas of Calcutta, which were full of ponds. Secondly, the refugees also created lots of ponds because they came from a land full of water. The colony people love water because of the land of their origin.* (MR, middle class, refugee origin man, Santoshpur, 12.4.03)

Similarly, changes were observed in the discourse of the grassroots group in Pal Bazaar. A large body of literature states that rural grassroots actors whose livelihoods are closely linked to the natural environment, articulate discourses reflecting a close personal link with nature, drawing upon non-material storylines as strongly as the material storylines (Bryant and

Bailey, 1997), (Ghai and Vivian, 1995), (Guha and Alier, 2000), (Hofrichter, 1993), (Keil, 1998), (Peet and Watts, 1996). However, the public claims of urban grassroots actors in Pal Bazaar emphasised the material aspects of their situation, reducing the importance of the non-material discourse, discussed further in chapter seven. In public they drew upon the material storyline stressing unhappiness due to material shortcomings in the relocation while mentioning their non-material attachment to the location and waterbody in passing.

*If they had to evict us, then they should have built flats for us and given us a proper place. They have given land so far away. We work there; our children's education is there. For us, travelling and returning home (so far away) is difficult.* (LD, Garfa, Kolkata, 5.1.03)

Further, the grassroots actors had been filling up the waterbody, allegedly for real estate developers wanting to convert the waterbody into land for construction, as well as to increase their own land area. This could lead to the conclusion that grassroots actors' attachment for the non-material aspects of their relationship with nature was reduced in the city. This change in grassroots valuation of nature from rural to urban context could be attributed to their occupations and lifestyles being less dependent on the primary natural environment in an urban scenario. However, this would be an oversimplification. The link of changing grassroots discourse to changing lived experiences, contexts and values, and strategic use of discourses are factors to be considered, which are expanded in chapter seven.

### **5.1.2 Formal channel environmental discourses and identity:**

As seen in chapter two and table 5.A, borough officials responsible for Pal Bazaar had similar identity profiles as the surrounding community in terms of class, caste and to an extent, regional origin. This may have contributed to discourse coalitions and solidarity grouping formations between these two groups, elaborated in section 5.2.5. Officials from the borough and headquarter levels framed the Pal Bazaar case as one of pollution requiring technical interventions, derived from their own post-material environmentalism. Extracts below further illustrate that officials did not recognise non-technical issues as 'real' problems, framing the issue as concerning poor water quality. That the engineering departments of the borough and headquarters handled the pond improvement, calling the grassroots group 'encroachers' reflects the technical, legalistic, problem-solving cognitive commitment of the municipality.

*The water was awful. It was very bad with no dissolved oxygen and we tested it to check sources of nutrients. Unless wastes were stopped that area couldn't be helped. ... There were no other problems except technical problems (in the Pal Bazaar case).* (DC, ex BX engineering department, 15.03.03)

*Building the retaining wall, appointing the contractor for de-siltation and excavation, planning for the work was all done by the Borough X engineering department. The Corporation removed encroachers from there and resettled all the people. (GM, ex BX engineering department, 25.2.03)*

Even political representatives like the Borough XII chairperson approached the engineering department for the pond work, thus removing the issue of environmental justice from the initial official framing of the problem. Subsequently, this issue became extremely contentious, leading to the environmental conflict between the grassroots group and surrounding community. Most officials portrayed environmental issues in binaries like polluted/non-polluted, clean/dirty. Actions overcoming obstacles to achieving the desired pole of a binary were justified, with concessions for achieving the positive pole considered ‘necessary evils’ for completing the job. As expanded in section 5.2.5, the issue of grassroots evictee relocation was seen as a ‘necessary evil’ without which achieving the desired pole of pollution free environment for the ‘greater good’ of the area was seen as impossible.

### **5.1.3 Attitudes towards environment by non-formal channels:**

As seen in table 5.A, political parties and party mass organisation members had high discursive parity with formal channels regarding the environment. This derived from the identity profile of the non-formal channel constituents and the party discourses towards the environment. Described in chapters three and four, these discourses and identity similarity between formal and non-formal channels in Pal Bazaar demonstrated the high possibility of formation of discourse coalitions, expanded further in 5.2.1. The non-formal channels were important in convincing the surrounding community of the need for the grassroots evictions and the appropriateness of the JSC leading the pond improvement work.

## **5.2 Political Field: the politics of environmental claim making:**

Expanded in chapter one, the political field comprises of actors such as the state, political parties, citizens and social movement organisations tied together by a particular political culture. The concept of political field brings the dimensions of power and culture to the analysis of the political opportunity structure. This section examines the political field in the Pal Bazaar case through the actors involved in claim making. The relative power of the actors and the impact of the political field- of the everyday politics and High Politics- on their environmental claim making ability to the municipality are analysed here. The actors are compared to each other for their resources, constraints and strategies in claim making, with the resultant response of the formal channels and the outcome of the claim making effort. The role of discourse in shaping the politics of environmental claim making is also addressed here.

The different sub-sections deal with the issues being discussed with respect to the surrounding community as well as the grassroots group.

### **5.2.1 Resources available for claim-makers from the political field: High Politics and everyday politics:**

While the surrounding community in Pal Bazaar was politically very well connected with the Left parties, politicians from Left as well as non-Left parties united to support this group's pond improvement effort. This overcoming of mutual differences by various political parties in favour of the pond rejuvenation effort, as seen below, was a significant resource for the surrounding community. Due to this they were able to garner the support of the formal channel as well as the non-formal channels for their claims.

*This area is Left dominated. Left leaders are liberal, democratic and accommodative, therefore non-Left party people didn't object in joining in. Therefore a mass movement could be created. This was a major reason in dissolving political difference. (AB, LF member and JSC member, 24.11.02)*

This political support for the surrounding community emerged from its unity and value as a vote bank; and from social links that several key politicians like KG, BCC and KGo had with the area, described in chapter two. Both wards 92 and 104 had Left councillors and the KMC was also Left ruled at the time of the improvement work. Since the TC's victory in the 2001 KMC elections, the KMC's cooperation with the JSC diminished due to the JSC's perceived identification with the Left. The importance of political allies and support of socially imbedded political leaders, and the drawbacks for the grassroots group on these counts are seen in the following extracts.

*In West Bengal everything has to be done by political patronage.... The Corporation co-operated with us largely because KG was with us. However, KG did this also to increase his popularity, though not only for this end. ... without KG, it might not have succeeded to such an extent. (MR, JSC member, 3.3.03)*

*The basti always voted for the Congress. Therefore as a political move they were removed from here and relocated to where Left votes were less (DNP, Newland resident, 29.11.02).*

Politically divided, the grassroots group's allegiance was divided between the CPI-ML, CPI (M), INC and the TC. Their smaller numbers as compared to the surrounding community, and their low value as a vote bank prevented formation of grassroots coalitions with formal channel members to advance their claims, as seen below.

*The police came and told us that, "you wont be able to fight KG and other important people, co-operate with them, because everyone is against you." CPI (M), TC, Congress, all people were together, therefore basti people got scared...and left out of fear. (LD, grassroots group man, now settled in Garfa, 5.1.03)*

Hence, formal channel constituents- political representatives, borough and KMC officials and the police united for the eviction of the grassroots group. The members of the formal channels argued that their discourse regarding pollution prevention and aesthetic improvement of the area could only be fulfilled by removing the grassroots group and other polluters from the area, for the 'greater good' of the environment and the larger community.

*The biggest problem was that if the thirteen (grassroots) families were not removed and resettled, then this beautiful pond couldn't be sustained. (DB, TD; members of JSC and NC , 22.11.02)*

During the evictions and the inauguration of the improved pond, the TC had tried to support the grassroots group, but was overwhelmed by the support for the pond rejuvenation among the Pal Bazaar surrounding community. The grassroots group tried to sue the JSC for evicting them but was forced to withdraw, realising the precariousness of their position due to threats of violence made by the surrounding community and on advice of politicians pointing to the futility of such actions.

*Legally we have a case but because we are politically weak and few in numbers, our strength is not enough to overcome all the vested interests (HF, grassroots person resettled near Jadavpur station, 22.10.02)*

After the evictions the grassroots actors were not given deeds for the land they had been relocated to<sup>1</sup>, for which they started making claims to the KMC. DDT, a local TC councillor represented their claims in the KMC House, as a strategy for the TC to strengthen its grassroots base. TC's opposition to grassroots evictions and their continued support were perhaps based on such political calculations.

*Trinamool instigated the basti to not go from the basti site because they (TC) had votes there. The TC did not want to lose the votes from the basti and wanted to get new voters by supporting the basti (DD, tea shop owner by pond side, 21.11.02)*

These illustrations of political compunctions shaping the behaviour of actors are discussed further in chapter seven.

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<sup>1</sup> Till fieldwork was conducted- until September 2004

The section now discusses the social resources that were available to the different claim-makers from the realm of everyday politics. Further from chapter one, social resources can be understood as relationships of solidarity, co-operation and help, which groups can count on in times of need. These relationships are based on perceived solidarity due to shared history, identity, networks, shared values or fuelled by understandings of mutual benefit. Studying social resources that different claim making groups were able to tap on reflects the everyday politics within these groups and with the formal and non-formal channels. Identifying the possible allies that the claim-makers could approach and the factors affecting the final choice of allies with whom solidarity was expressed reflects this everyday politics. The choice of solidarity partners sheds light on the power equations between the different groups, thus indicating the ability of different claim making groups to access the formal channels

The biggest social resource that the surrounding community had was their unity. Viveknagar and surrounding areas had started as refugee colonies, characterised by high social cohesion and strong involvement in community work through clubs, colony committees etc. The unity within this group was attractive for politicians wanting to cultivate them as a vote bank.

*Viveknagar was a colony area therefore had unity because of the similar background of the people who came forward for the work of the JSC. (PS, ex male councillor ward 104, 6.4.03)*

The West Bengal non-refugee origins of the grassroots group united the surrounding community against them. Though not overtly stated as the reason for eviction of the grassroots group, the East Bengal-West Bengal schism was quite important as seen from statements of the grassroots group and the surrounding community. Regional origin is an element of identity around which coalitions are created in Kolkata. This schism, simmering below the surface in everyday life, becomes apparent during conflicts when divisions between people get deeper, as seen below.

*Next to the pond, there are two storey houses also built on the (filled up) pond and should have been broken. We saw that instead they were left and a road built in front of them to separate them from the pond. This was because they (belonged to) rich East Bengal people. At that time the division between East Bengal and West Bengal people became very prominent. (LD, evicted grassroots man, 5.1.03)*

The combination of this regional identity with class-caste antipathy towards the grassroots group helped forge solidarity within the surrounding community. Identity based solidarity groupings with important politicians like KG, KGo and BCC and with significant bureaucrats like MM- an area resident, made it easier for the surrounding community to access the KMC.



*KG is a man from this locality. He has seen the jhil and the people of this area from very close quarters. (DD, owner of tea shop by pond side, 21.11.02)*

*We had to get MM involved in the swimming pool and JSC work...since he was a powerful bureaucrat. (MR, JSC member, 3.3.03)*

The grassroots group were aware that their West Bengal peasant identity was a catalyst in forming the surrounding community's coalition with the formal channel. The combination of this identity profile with the political affiliations of the surrounding community created a potent combination against the grassroots group, reflecting the everyday politics influencing the claim making process.

*Viveknagar people were all from East Bengal and there was a lot of cohesion between them, therefore they united against us as a group overcoming political differences. Further, the Left government had power and the councillor was also from East Bengal and from the Left. Plus, all their voters were originally East Bengalis therefore also everyone got united. (LD, grassroots evicted man, 5.1.03)*

However, this refugee experience of the surrounding community also served as a resource for the grassroots group. Relocation was not legally required by the KMC since many of the grassroots group were legally squatters. Yet, as seen below, spurred by their own memories of the pain of eviction in their migration to West Bengal, the surrounding community ensured that land was made available for the relocation of the evicted families (refer figure 2.4 for locations).

*I said that, "who are we to raise the issue of legality? After all we refugees were illegal too." We felt and understood the traumas of uprooted-ness and therefore our approach to relocation was much more humane. Therefore we gave relocation to the completely illegal ten tenant families also. (MR, JSC member, 12.4.03)*

Thus the discussion above shows the influence of past history and shared struggles on shaping present values and actions. While these elements forged solidarity among the surrounding community for a common purpose they also prompted reflexivity among them, giving rise to the support for relocation of the evicted grassroots group. This projection of past struggles on present actions is elaborated in chapter seven.

### **5.2.2 Constraints in claim making: from High Politics and everyday politics:**

Among constraints from High Politics, one significant for the surrounding community was the TC's opposition to the grassroots evictions and the JSC's use of the pond, which was legally

private property. The TC also alleged that the silt excavated from the pond had been sold for the private profit of the JSC members. The TC demonstrated during the rejuvenated pond's inauguration but found little support from the surrounding community as its actions were perceived as arising from its own political agenda of winning grassroots affiliation and against work meant for the 'greater good' of the public.

*There was false propaganda against the JSC, myself etc. that these people earned lakhs<sup>2</sup> of rupees by selling the excavated soil. Who did this false propaganda? It was the TC, BJP etc motivated by jealousy and by political reasons (BCC, ex councillor ward 94, JSC member, 12.11.02)*

As seen in 5.2.1, the grassroots group attracted little support from the sphere of High Politics. The powerful mid-level CPI (M) leader and MMIC in the KMC, KG was supporting the surrounding community. He influenced the formal channel into supporting the pond rejuvenation effort and involved the CPI (M)'s mass organisations in this work. His power resulted in the failure of grassroots claims in accessing the formal channels.

*KG is a big man here, without his agreement, nothing can happen. (GR, grassroots man evicted to Ganganagar, 24.12.02)*

Coming to constraints from everyday politics, we saw in chapter one that the identity of claimants affects their claim-making role, reinforcing identity power equations. The everyday politics of gender hierarchies in the community influenced the way claims were articulated and presented in public by the surrounding community. The JSC, with a largely male, upper caste, middle class composition articulated claims on behalf of the surrounding community. The involvement of women from the surrounding community was limited to secondary roles as participants in demonstrations organised by the JSC and as the backup support to the area's men who were involved in supervising the pond rejuvenation work late into the nights. As a consequence, the surrounding community put forward a uniform nature of claims. Though it is impossible to speculate on the difference of women's claims from the JSC's unified claims for the surrounding community, yet suffice to say that there was little public discursive or political space for the women to articulate claims that were their own. This gendered nature of public claim making was also observed in the grassroots group, as expanded later.

Other than this gendered hegemony in claim making, another constraint faced by the surrounding community was opposition from the owners of the pond. These owners- three sisters and their relatives- were opposed to the JSC's work on their private property.

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<sup>2</sup> 1 lakh= 100,000 rupees= approximately 1212 pounds sterling (rate 8.4.05)

*It was a forced thing. Even the police had no powers in the face of the situation. No one was against this capture of private property (GP, one of the owners, 6.4.03)*

The owners negotiated with the KMC but were unable to reach an agreement about compensation. Consequently they approached newspapers claiming that the livelihood of three elderly women was being snatched. However, the JSC was able to go ahead with the improvement work, by using its political and public support and using discursive strategies portraying the owners as greedy and unscrupulous.

*The Corporation and the government tried to settle (the compensation) matters with the owners. They wanted more money than twelve lakhs. Their intention was to sell the pond to developers. (Since there was no settlement with the owners), they go around saying that we have grabbed their land. (SC, JCS member 22.11.02)*

Another aspect highlighting internal schisms within the surrounding community were some of its members, especially from Newland, who opposed the pond rejuvenation effort. These oppositions reflected the internal schisms within the seemingly united surrounding community, and affected the everyday politics of the situation. Since most Newland residents were financially better off than Viveknagar residents, their lower level of participation in the JSC's efforts proved detrimental to the JSC's work. Critics of the JSC included people with material interests in the pond or land abutting it, and those specifically opposing the eviction of the grassroots settlement. Combined with the classist attitude of a number of Newland residents towards Viveknagar Colony, this contributed to Newland's disinterest.

*A large number of Newland people had forcefully occupied the west edge of the jhil, ... we had to reclaim it from them... also their sewerage emptied into this jhil. ...therefore maybe they have a negative view of the jhil work and us. (AB, JSC member and local politician, 24.11.02)*

As seen in the following extract, differences between history and profile of residents of Viveknagar and Newland resulted in the difference in their unity and interest in community work. Thus despite their surface solidarity, schisms within the surrounding community existed, not always a product of tangible differences in access to resources etc., but also due to 'intangibles' like memory and past history.

*Newland has the psychology that they are plot holders and Viveknagar is a colony. Therefore Newland doesn't co-operate with Viveknagar much. Viveknagar people remain united and organised because they came as a group from East Bengal; therefore Viveknagar people had lot of craze for their colony. Newland is much more*

*individualistic and the people there have no link with each other like Viveknagar people do* (PSe, Newland resident- formerly Viveknagar resident, 9.12.02)

An aspect of the conflict's everyday politics that negatively affected the grassroots group was lack of choice in location for relocation. As seen earlier, the sidelining of the grassroots group's claims for relocation nearby increased travel costs and travel times to their workplaces- affecting household incomes. It also affected the social networks that existed within the group. Though new social networks might build up over time, but in the short to medium term it created problems for people, something that was overlooked by the surrounding community's construct of the outcome from evictions.

*There we used to stay together. Now contact between different basti dwellers much less. They broke our unity. Now everyone is alone.* (LD, grassroots man living in Garfa, 5.1.03)

As seen below, the grassroots group alleged that relocation to far off areas without attempts to keep them together allowed the surrounding community to break grassroots unity and simplify evictions. This was denied by the surrounding community, citing unavailability of sufficient land in one place as the only reason the grassroots families were scattered. This demonstrated the conflicting interpretations of guilt, culpability and rationalisation of cause and effect inherent in such conflicts. As seen in the second extract, prompted by a resulting sense of helplessness, the grassroots group wanted the weight of elites and powerful people behind them. They tried to approach non-formal channels as they were convinced the formal channels were already in favour of the surrounding community.

*People were sent to Bhagat Singh Colony and Ganganagar. No one was given any choice of where they could stay. There was place in Ganganagar for all of us, but they didn't want all of us to stay together.* (AD, basti woman evicted to near Jadavpur station 22.11.02)

*All councillors were with them (the pond rejuvenation group). BCC made the main arrangements for moving us there. (Since) our own councillor was involved in our eviction, so it was no help talking to him* (MO, 22.11.02)

Further constraints for the grassroots group arose from the everyday politics of their interaction with the formal channels. The grassroots group's little knowledge about bureaucratic procedures and the high time investment required to follow up their claims for land-deeds made claim making through formal channels difficult for them. For example, the grassroots group members did not keep photocopies of their original petitions against

evictions and for land-deeds to be able to effectively follow up their claims. They had been given no formal documents by the borough administration or the JSC.

*We keep going to the municipality and to a TC councillor or municipal officials to get compensation or (deed) papers but keep getting sidelined and (always) told to return after fifteen days. We can't spend lot of time in running around to make complains to the municipality since our families survive on the daily wages we earn (HF, relocated near Jadavpur railway station, 22.10.02)*

An important aspect of everyday politics was the impact of the actors' identities on their claim making ability. As described in chapter two, apart from political disunity within the grassroots group, a schism existed between land-deed owning informal settlement dwellers and their tenants. This everyday politics within the grassroots group resulted in the tenants being more easily persuaded to leave their pondside homes, lured by promised ownership of 1.5 *kathas*<sup>3</sup> of land per family in alternate locations. The land-deed holders refused relocation far away, so were promised only 1 *katha* per family near Jadavpur station. The JSC's threats of violence at the time of evictions combined with promises of landownership easily broke the fragile unity within the grassroots group.

*There was no unity in our own group especially between the tenants and us because they were greedy to go because they were getting land. (TM, land-deed holder evicted to Jadavpur rail station area, 22.11.02)*

*If the basti people had stayed united, they could have got a better deal. (PSe, Newland resident, 9.12.02)*

The grassroots settlement functioned largely as a collection of separate families rather than a united community. LD, mentioned earlier, had tried to forge a united opposition by the grassroots group to the eviction efforts. However, out of fear and uncertainty the grassroots group members had gradually dismantled their bamboo and thatch homes, accepting the JSC's relocation package. This illustrates the importance of reliable social and political resources, such as group cohesion and powerful allies, in creating the ability for resistance. Having some of these resources, LD was able to resist eviction longer than the other grassroots group members, though was unable to create sustained group resistance due to the everyday politics of internal group schisms and lack of allies.

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<sup>3</sup> 1 *katha*=720 sq.ft

That the surrounding community identified the grassroots group as *chhotoloks* in opposition to themselves- the *bhadraloks*- played a role in the grassroots group considered as deserving eviction from ‘civilized’ Pal Bazaar. This everyday politics of differentiation between the ‘civilized’ self- the *bhadralok*- and the other- the *chhotolok*- becomes apparent through the surrounding community people’s condescending statement that despite being *chhotoloks*, the informal settlement dwellers did not ‘behave’ in *chhotolok* fashion when they lived by the pondside, though the surrounding community did not prominently articulated this binary. This antagonism and its role in spearheading action for creating a ‘civilized’ city in Kolkata is further expanded in chapter seven

*In this basti there was a bhadra way of life. There was no uncouth behaviour after consuming alcohol, no abusive language. Staying here with bhadraloks, they had learnt bhadra culture.* (ADg, male JSC member, Viveknagar, 21.11.02)

The impact of gender on grassroots claim making was seen in 5.1.1. Due to masculinisation of politics, grassroots women repeatedly stressed their non-involvement in claim making, with male family members engaged in public claim making. The presence of a woman councillor in ward 104 did not encourage grassroots women’s participation in claim making. The gender solidarity hypothesised by women’s reservations in 74<sup>th</sup> CAA did not surface. Seen in chapter three, gender remained subsidiary to other concerns in forging solidarities.

*No woman-woman solidarity is there with the current woman councillor, HC. If any thing, she will always thinks of her party first, not gender. In any case, our family men always went to talk to councillors, never women* (AD, woman evicted to near Jadavpur railway station, 22.11.02)

Tying grassroots claim-makers to the non-formal channels was the absence of citizens’ structures like Ward Committees for bypassing political representatives. Since the High Politics and everyday politics of the area had not allowed the WCs to emerge, there were no formal channels other than the councillor or borough officials for making claims. Thus the only alternative to the formal channels, unsympathetic to the grassroots group, were the non-formal channels- i.e. party leaders, mass organisations etc. The failure of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA’s inclusion agenda proved detrimental to the claim making effort of the grassroots group.

### **5.2.3 Strategies of claim-makers related to the discursive field:**

In discursive affinity with the formal channels, the surrounding community justified its claims by evoking the ‘greater good’ that would be obtained by fulfilling the surrounding community’s agenda. The argument of ‘removal of a few for the good of many’ was used to justify the evictions- also reflecting the environmental and public good scripts.

*For the good of the majority of people if encroachment has to be removed, then whether five or fifty families are staying there, they should be removed. If it is possible to relocate them, it should be done otherwise not. Can you stop progress because of such issues? (OM, surrounding community man, Newland, 19.11.02)*

Use of the environmental discourse as a script to hide other agendas was among the surrounding community's main discursive strategies. As seen in 5.2.2, their antagonism towards *chhotoloks* contributed to their desire to rid urban space of illegal, uncivilized presence. Hence, the environmental script of pollution abatement and beautification was used to justify removal of the grassroots group from the Pal Bazaar pondside. The shallowness of this environmental reasoning was evident from the minimal action taken against surrounding community members encroaching on the pond. This was justified as pragmatic, based on the ability of these persons to oppose the JSC, as seen below. The way pragmatism got defined illustrates the inequalities inherent in social and 'practical' choices made not based on ethical or legal judgements, but on ease of achieving an end without running up against powerful opposition. The surrounding community also used the settlement's illegality to justify its eviction, while as refugees they had themselves been 'illegal' squatters with the area being regularised only in the 1980s.

*When the PCB people came, they said reconvert the pond to its original size. (Where the) garden is located now and we have some houses, for example the (surrounding community) yellow house now- they were all were part of the pond. (It is) difficult to reconvert them now and it would have delayed the work even more. Therefore we did however much we could do. (AD, JSC member, 23.11.02)*

The JSC's practice of calling the informal settlement a *basti* was similarly a discursive ploy to legitimise its removal. The word *basti* implied the settlement was illegal, unplanned and dirty- consequently lacking the entitlement to exist in 'clean' Kolkata. This was perceived and resented by the grassroots group, with the deed holders claiming legal right to living there.

Another discursive strategy used by the surrounding community was portraying their work as a harmless social cause. This sanitised the pond rejuvenation effort, making it appear an uncontested good for all. This is similar to the strategy of some formal channel members, seen in 5.2.5, in portraying the pond rejuvenation as social work of selfless people.

*We are trying to do a humane and environmental work. We have wanted to save nature without hurting people. This attitude is the same towards the relocations and the Pals (the owners)... An apolitical initiative is very potent because it doesn't have*

*ulterior motives. Therefore ordinary people were involved and participated. It was a mass movement in the real sense. (RM, male JSC member, 23.11.02)*

With little formal support and in a very unequal power relationship with the surrounding community, the grassroots group expressed their resentment of this domination and their eviction through subversive actions- the 'weapons of the weak'. These did not openly challenge the surrounding community, thus avoiding direct confrontation with a more powerful group. These actions included discontinuing their relations of help with the surrounding community, small acts of 'disobedience' like not answering when called, gossiping about the Viveknagar residents to outsiders etc. To increase support for themselves, they used a discourse exaggerating the entire eviction episode, using a storyline of torture or cheating by the JSC and the extreme pain of departure from the area. The extract below highlights this discursive strategy exaggerating the pain of separation from the area.

*The bodies of people who have died amongst us since (the evictions) have been taken around the pond. We feel very sad when we go there now. We don't show any concern for any people of that community now. If they ask us to provide maid or servant to work at their home- we don't give any help anymore. Why should we? They removed us from there... why carry it on it now? Whenever my husband or sons do anything for the community people there, I scold them and ask why and what for? (DBa, grassroots woman now living in Sapui Para, 15.11.02)*

#### **5.2.4 Strategies of claim-makers: from High Politics and everyday politics:**

The JSC tapped the surrounding community's overt unity by carrying out community mobilisation and fund collection drives. A mass movement was generated with active participation from women, men and children. The very public nature of the mass movement and the excitement generated by the JSC sustained the community's interest in it.

*Some hundred young men and women worked through nights for pond rejuvenation. A mass movement was generated, which became the entire area's local movement. (AB, JSC and CPIM member, 24.11.02)*

*To attract the municipality's interest and obtain finances, we collected funds, did lots of rallies etc...A few teachers from the Hindi High School were involved and got children to participate. There was a local women's rally. (MR, 12.11.02)*

In a hurry to complete the pond work, the surrounding community utilised everyday politics by tapping their social and political networks to manoeuvre formal channels to speed up *basti* evictions, as seen below. Using the networks of the environmental NGO associated with the



JSC, they involved the state Pollution Control Board (PCB) in the conflict, whereas in chapter four we saw that the PCB did not usually intervene in matters of non-industrial pollution.

*The people who lived in the basti did not go easily. To be very frank, we played tactically with them, as otherwise it would have been impossible to remove them from here. We called the Pollution Control Board, who issued a notification and got the police and Corporation involved. (RM, JSC member, 22.11.02)*

*We didn't do many things as per legal procedures. We had to do the eviction, relocation and jhil work outside of legal procedures because it takes ten-twenty years for work like this to happen by legal ways. (SC, JCS member 22.11. 02)*

The JSC and surrounding community used threats of violence and of destroying grassroots livelihoods to reduce grassroots resistance to the evictions. This demonstrated strategies using everyday politics playing upon power differences between the claim making groups. The JSC also tried to dilute grassroots resistance by trying to convince them of the rashness of listening to LD, the CPI-ML leader in the informal settlement.

*I told the basti people to clean up and leave as I said; "otherwise I will spoil your fish rearing business by poisoning the fish". (ADg, JSC member, 21.11.02)*

*The JSC got bulldozers at 2 a.m. They said that take back the (court) case, else we will break your houses. (GN, evicted to Ganganagar, 24.12.02)*

*We were evicted by force throughout. ... They scared us, threatened us with beatings and bloodshed. They tricked us into signing the papers. (HF, evicted to near Jadavpur station, 22.10.02)*

The ownership of the land on which the *basti* residents were relocated was unclear from interviews with the KMC departments such as Estate Management and Revenue Department (maintaining all land records within the city limits), the Chief Municipal Town Planner and Architects Department and KMDA officials (maintaining records of government owned or vested land). Using the excuse that land ownership was a sensitive matter which they did not want to reveal to outsiders, the KMC departments and KMDA remained reluctant to reveal the details of the ownership of these land parcels despite repeat visits and requests made to them. This ambiguity of land ownership records is not a unique occurrence and other researchers (Bhattacharyya, 1998), (Roy, 2003) have also reported the difficulty of locating land record information in Kolkata without having access to powerful party officials, who for reasons of party secrecy do not share such information easily.

As recounted by the those JSC members who had made arrangements for the land for families relocated to Ganganagar and Bhagat Singh Colony in ward 109, it appears that this land was obtained from non-formal channels such as LF party mass organisations- *Krishak Samitis* (farmer's organisations)- through the agency of KG, the powerful LF politician and councillor of ward 109. These accounts show confusion over the actual ownership of the relocation land near Jadavpur station- variously ascribing it to a local landowner Bihari Mondol, the KMC and a local charitable trust, as seen in 5.2.6. The strategy for obtaining relocation land relied on local politicians and their party mass organisations to deliver the land. The secrecy around the transactions and lack of land deeds to the relocated persons point to the use of informal settlements with their uncertain ownership rights for creating a 'geography of patronage', useful for politicians to increase their hold over residents of these settlements. This point is further developed in section 7.2.3.

*In Ganganagar, KG was involved with the Krishak Samiti. KG found out that land was available there. Through him we identified land (suitable for relocation) and asked the Krishak Samiti for 9 plots (AD, JSC member, 21.11.02)*

Another surrounding community strategy was using surprise in the evictions. On facing the grassroots resistance and refusal to leave, the surrounding community resorted to a sudden eviction attempt giving the grassroots group little time to oppose this.

*We went once to Mamata (Banerjee- TC leader). She and her party opposed the demolition of our homes. We didn't go to Mamata the second time because there was no time - they (the JSC and local people) came with trucks (to demolish our homes) without giving us any time to go away to her (UF, evicted to Sapui Para, 15.11.02)*

Thus the surrounding community used different strategies- some involving direct action like the mass movement and threats, others involving subversive actions like dividing the opposition, creating uncertainty and misinformation about the eviction schedule etc. A combination of these direct and subversive strategies created a situation where grassroots actors were forced to confirm to the surrounding community's agenda for the area.

To overcome the low success of their claim making efforts, the grassroots group had attempted a legal case against the JSC to prevent their eviction. They were forced to abandon this case due to surrounding community pressure. With the changed political field due to the TC's emergence in the KMC, opportunity opened up for the land-deed holding grassroots families to access the KMC through the TC. They tried to use the new political opportunity structure to get the support of the TC by exploiting the political compulsions of the party. In the new areas to which they had been relocated, the evicted grassroots actors tried to maintain

good relations with non-formal channels like party mass organisations, so that they could approach them in case of future need. This illustrated the grassroots attempts to manoeuvre High Politics and exploit openings in the POS for their own benefit. This further demonstrates that there are no completely powerless groups in any conflict. The forms of power and the strategies emerging from it differ based on context and may change with altering situations.

#### **5.2.5 Formal channel responses related to the discursive field:**

A discursive strategy of the formal channel was highlighting the 'obviousness' of the surrounding community's claims. The formal channel's discourse of administrative rationalism had discursive affinity with the surrounding community. Formal channel members did not consider grassroots material and non-material discourses as valid *environmental* discourses. For the formal channels, the use of a natural resource like a waterbody for purposes other than aesthetic enjoyment and maintaining the ecological balance were not appropriate urban environmental uses. As seen earlier, they characterised the grassroots use of the pond as dirty and destructive for the urban environment. Hence their discursive strategy was characterising grassroots discourse as irrational and un-environmental.

In continuation with this strategy, the formal channels portrayed the pond rejuvenation effort as a noble community movement. The formal channel members, especially from the LF, portrayed the JSC and the surrounding community as selfless people who had made a noble effort to achieve a larger social and environmental good. This framing tried to negate the injustice experienced by the grassroots group, also tying up with the effort of the surrounding community to portray the outcome of the evictions as salutary for everyone. This discursive parity between the formal channel members and the surrounding community illustrated their discourse coalition.

*People who are enlightened- only they can do such great work. Those who have shallow ideas - (who think) "what is there for us in this" can't do this type of work. Only those who have a feeling for the larger good - only they are successful in such work...Missionary zeal is needed (for doing such work). (KGo, ex PWD minister, JSC associate, 15.12.02)*

Similar to the surrounding community, a strategy of some of the formal channels members was downplaying the extent of grassroots opposition to eviction. This discursive strategy tried to make the eviction seem peaceful, largely unopposed and not involving the use of force. The formal channel also tried to discredit the legality of the grassroots actors' claims, in keeping with their technocentric cognitive commitments.

*These land deeds were not very correct. All other families were squatters. All came from the rural areas of the S.24 Parganas (District). They were mostly Left front supporters therefore didn't oppose the jhil work much. (PS, 6.4.03)*

To strengthen this framing of the outcomes, a discursive strategy of the surrounding community and officials was equating justice with the material prosperity of the relocated grassroots persons. They argued that the resultant ownership of land compensated for the suffering that the grassroots had to go through before, during and after the eviction.

*Here they were all squatters, but now they own land (and hence are better off). (ADg, JSC member, 23.11.02)*

However, the grassroots group's descriptions of humiliation and being cut off from the pond negated this discursive construct of the surrounding community. The losses of the evictees were not limited to the loss of land, which was compensated by their relocation. These included the loss of their birthplace, social networks, and their bitterness at having been dealt with unjustly without a fair hearing. The evictions resulted in an increased precariousness of grassroots actors' lives. These were not costs that could be simply calculated. The grassroots group had also not got land-deeds to make them legal landowners till the time of the fieldwork, hence any material benefits from landownership were also suspect.

The formal channels and non-formal channels reflected the impact of structural factors like identity similarity, shared pasts and common networks in shaping their responses to claims from the claim-makers. Discourse coalitions and solidarity groupings emerged out of discursive parity and structural similarities between the claim-makers and claim accepting channels.

As seen in previous sections of this chapter, their common discourses towards the urban environment, pollution, legality and technical intervention resulted in discourse coalitions between formal channel members and surrounding community members. This made access of their claims to the formal channels easier than that of grassroots groups. As seen below, the discourse coalitions manifested themselves in high levels of cooperation by various departments of the KMC with the JSC, and involvement of the state government's Public Works Department in fulfilling the surrounding community's agenda.

*Through Borough X there was the involvement of KG, SS (MMIC Roads and Engineering), CG, mayor PC and the MLA KGo. Everyone joined in because they realised this is a good work. (PS, then LF councillor, ward 104, 6.4.03)*

*The PWD, KMC and all political parties were involved. (KG, then MMIC in KMC, 30.11.02)*

The sidelining of the grassroots claims is apparent from the nature of formal channel responses. Punitive steps like evictions only targeted those unable to oppose the formal channel- surrounding community coalition. The limited ability of the grassroots to do so arose from their discursive and political marginality, and identity based schisms with the majority of formal channel members. Alterations were made in the houses of surrounding community encroachers without evicting them. The idea of building alternate pondside accommodation like flats for the grassroots group was never considered, though suggested by DD in whose tea-stall discussions about the work used to take place. DD pointed to the surrounding community's disinterest in considering a solution that could have fulfilled their stated pollution prevention agenda while maintaining the grassroots group's link with the pond and area. Though almost ten million rupees<sup>4</sup> were spent, yet formal channels did not consider any scheme that could have avoided the grassroots evictions. This indicates the surrounding community's desire to rid the area of the grassroots *basti* while cleaning the pond- thus illustrating the impact of identity on environmental politics and showing the use of the environment as a script for other agendas.

Other than structural factors, the formal channels' support of the surrounding community was also based on their agency, motivated by self-interest. Dominating the formal channels at the time of the pond rejuvenation, the LF wanted to maintain its hold over its strong surrounding community vote bank. Relocating the grassroots actors to various areas in KG's ward (number 109) also satisfied his electoral calculations as it created a captive vote bank since these relocated persons were completely dependant on KG and his party for survival in the new area. Thus an element of self-interested agency shaped the formal channels' response to the claims of various claim-makers and the choice of strategies like relocation instead of in-situ upgradation of the grassroots settlement.

*KG did this gigantic thing here for winning elections. (OM, Newland resident, 19.11.02)*

We summarise here the involvement of the formal and non-formal channels and their legal and extra-legal methods for bypassing the rules and procedures of the municipality in the Pal Bazaar case. As seen, real world politics in Pal Bazaar bypassed institutional rules of the KMC and the state government. Some such acts were- capture of private property like the Jhil

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<sup>4</sup> 10,000,000 rupees is about 121,225 pounds sterling (rate, 8.4.05).

without paying proper compensation to the owners, obtaining land for relocation through non-formal channels like party mass organisations, maintaining ambiguity regarding land ownership, not providing land-deeds to relocated persons, not following due municipal process to consider action involving expenditure to the tune of 1,000,000 Indian rupees, involving the Pollution Control Board in a clear case of domestic pollution usually not in their jurisdiction, use of threats in *basti* eviction and use of KMC equipment like bulldozers to intimidate *basti* residents etc.

In all such bypassing of laws and rules, the involvement of politicians was crucial - both from non-formal channels as well as those holding posts in the municipal government. They paved the way for certain groups to easily bypass formal procedures with the complicity and co-operation of municipal officials, and also participated in acts that would not hold up to legal scrutiny. Furthermore, non-formal channels such as community groups like the JSC, local clubs and party mass organisations also acted as claim makers and conduits for claims to the politicians to ensure that the Pal Bazaar pond rejuvenation happened without much delay or obstructions. KMC bureaucrats- from the borough as well as from the headquarters- were also involved in the playing out of real world politics through their support to politician's agendas and by following their own predispositions not in line with municipal procedures. The absence of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's channels of public participation- the WCs- ensured that no channel other than those already in the control of political parties and bureaucrats could oversee the Pal Bazaar process or take a principled stand against the aspects of the case not confirming to municipal laws and procedures.

#### **5.2.6 Outcome of claim making: reflecting the discursive field:**

An outcome of the evictions was the fear articulated by the relocated grassroots persons that they would be evicted again, as they had not received formal land-deeds from the KMC despite having made innumerable claims through the local councillor and through non-formal party channels. The tenant families constructed their plight as that of 'pioneers' used by political parties to settle uninhabited land to make it habitable, after which they would be evicted from there and the land sold by property developers to affluent people. The original deed holding families articulated their unease about their future due to lack of knowledge about the ownership of their land.

*Even in the new place, no documents have been given as yet. Even now, richer people are coming in and poorer people being evicted. When an area is difficult to live in, the Left government brings in poor people there. They make the area worth living by their efforts. Then richer people start buying land, land prices go up and poor people are forced to move out. (LD, former basti resident now living in Garfa, 5.1.03)*

*We don't know whose land this is. Some say it belongs to the (Pal Bazaar) market, or is land belonging to Bihari Mondol (a landowner), it can be anyone's land. It can be Corporation's also, but no one knows clearly. (TM, land-deed holding family, evicted to near Jadavpur station area, 22.11.02)*

It is relevant to summarise here the norms and values that helped to determine 'appropriate' action and 'fair' compensation in the Pal Bazaar eviction, relocation and pond rejuvenation process. The definition of appropriate action was shaped by numerous value and normative judgements. As seen in the previous sections, the values of middle class environmentalism that considered aesthetic improvement and pollution control to be more relevant than environmental justice claims shaped the way the conflict was understood by the municipality and surrounding community. The issue of legality of land ownership was also crucial to the case, with de-jure rights, such as Viveknagar had acquired in time, considered more important than de-facto rights that the basti had. Social norms like *bhadraness* affected the conflict outcome by shaping solidarity groupings. Thus these shaped the remit of what was considered appropriate action in this case - the *basti* eviction due to its illegality, the pollution it created and its undesirability due to its social character. The norms of social interactions influenced the outcome of the Pal Bazaar pond- with the surrounding community controlling the pond space and monitoring its 'proper' use by the grassroots bathers.

The issue of just compensation for the *basti* evictees was shaped by the norms of social compassion- especially relevant for the 'moral' majority- the surrounding community, who insisted on providing relocation despite there being no legal obligation. The paternalistic value of deciding that *chhotoloks* were deserving of no more than material compensations- a limited conception of justice- also shaped the surrounding community's definition of just compensation. Since the moral majority considered justice to have been done to the *basti* by providing for its material needs like land, this implied that the surrounding community considered any non-material needs of the *basti* dwellers to be irrelevant. The formal channel also concurred on these values in deciding just compensation for the basti. Just compensation to the Pal sisters, the legal owners of the pond, was pushed aside by drawing upon the construct of the surrounding community's 'selfless social work' versus the owners' 'greed for compensation'. Valuation of the surrounding community's actions as egalitarian and hence superior, led to the lack of compensation to the Pal sisters being considered just. Thus considerations of appropriate action and just compensation were shaped by values and norms of the actors involved.

### 5.2.7 Outcome of claim making: from High Politics and everyday politics:

In contrast to the LF's domination of the municipality during the pond rejuvenation, the TC was ruling the KMC in the post rejuvenation period. Due to the JSC's affiliation with the LF, the change in political field affected the KMC's help for the JSC and the surrounding community had to rely on community fund-raising for constructing a swimming pool next to the improved pond. Their ability to get equipment and labour help from the KMC diminished with the changed political domination of the KMC, as seen below. This illustrates the impact of political identity on formal channel responses to claim-makers.

*Both the West Bengal Government and Corporation can't be approached now...there is no co-operation by the administration (DB and TD, JSC and NC members, 6.1.03)*

*The swimming pool was a part of the original plan. Then the Corporation was dominated by the CPI (M) and therefore it was easier to get funds. However, because of the TNC now it is difficult to get funds (MR, JSC member, 3.3.03)*

The everyday politics within the claim making groups affected the outcome of their claim making. In turn, everyday politics was itself altered by the new situations and further affected the outcomes from earlier equations among people. As the post-rejuvenation emphasis was on day-to-day management of the pond, community interest in the pond work reduced without the excitement of an 'environmental crusade' to sustain them. Schisms within the surrounding community emerged with some people alleging corruption in the JSC's work, showing that successful community action does not guarantee the desired outcome being sustained. These developments illustrate how everyday politics and power equations between people do not remain constant and alter with changing circumstances, further expanded in chapter seven.

*At time of the pond rejuvenation the enthusiasm (of the community) was much more but to maintain this jhil takes sustained effort. People's enthusiasm is now less in working for the pond. (DB and TD, JSC and NC members, 6.1.03)*

*We do have detractors, even if (they are only) 3-5% (of people here). These people don't give constructive criticism. It is very saddening that outsiders of the Jhil Committee are running down the dignity of a voluntary, social, environmental work. (RM, JSC member, 23.11.02)*

Another outcome for the surrounding community was due to the political schisms and non-cooperation between sections of the JSC. Apart from the lack of interest of some of the JSC members in the pond work, their varied political identities were creating trouble in the JSC's post rejuvenation work.



*We can't do 40% of the JSC's work because of politically motivated thinking in the JSC. Dormant political affiliations (of the members) come to the fore, affecting the whole effort. The common perception is that it is a Left Front effort. But this is not true. (RM, JSC member, 23.11.02)*

Another illustration of the changed post-rejuvenation everyday politics among the surrounding community was people questioning the JSC's integrity in managing the pond, due to its lack of legal standing. This is seen below in the worries of a JSC member. The KMC had not given de-jure management rights to the JSC, which was continuing the pond management with a de-facto status. As recounted in chapter four, a question regarding this was raised in the KMC House meeting by DDT- the Borough XII TC councillor.

*Presently the way we (JSC) are working, legally we have no standing. But we are striving to do the best basically through voluntary labour. Officially, the Corporation has taken over the management of the pond, after the PCB issued the gazette and notification of the pond. (RM, JSC member, 23.11.02)*

A significant illustration of everyday politics between surrounding community and grassroots bathers at the rejuvenated pond was the covert and occasionally overt friction between these groups- an expression of social antagonisms and competing desire for control over urban space. Upto 800 grassroots bathers used the post-rejuvenation pond for bathing, swimming and occasional religious rituals (refer figure 5.3). The JSC had de-facto ownership of the pond, and allowed the bathers controlled access to it (refer figure 5.4). The JSC had formulated and prominently displayed rules for the *ghat*'s use on the pondside. In defiance of these rules, some bathers washed slippers and brushed teeth on the *ghat*, which was also a community meeting place. Many bathers were not residents of the area but visited the area for work. Child labourers, construction workers, rickshaw pullers and workers from Pal Bazaar bathed there. Some surrounding community residents also came for a bath or quick swim. Recreational angling was observed on Sundays (refer figure 5.2).

The number of bathers had almost doubled since the pre-rejuvenation days. On a typical winter weekday a total of 484 men, 34 women, 63 boys and 22 girls were counted using the pond between 9 am and 6 pm (refer Appendix F for more data). Despite this positive result, the rejuvenation can be criticised for the injustice of the evictions and the controlled access granted to the bathers. Though approving the increased cleanliness and improved bathing *ghat*, the bathers resented the JSC's rules and control of the bathing area. They were not involved by the JSC in the pond upkeep or in any of the JSC's pondside activities. The

Viveknagar community's attitude towards the bathers was of antipathy, resigned acceptance and vigilance.

*None of the people who bathe here are 'bhadraloks'. They are all chauffeurs, rickshaw drivers etc, therefore we have lots of trouble and problems because they don't behave well and bathe all day long. (DNP, Newland resident living opposite the ghat, 29.11.02)*

JSC members supervised *ghat* activity from time to time and had employed a caretaker to enforce the rules. The grassroots bathers' resentment towards this control and supervision by the JSC was seen at the pondside. The following sequence observed there, highlights the disgust with which the surrounding community viewed the bathers and their treatment of the latter as impostors requiring to be controlled. It also shows the friction between the bathers and the JSC and the formers' use of 'weapons of the weak' like sarcasm, provocation etc.

(On a typical weekday afternoon around 1 pm, there were about 70 bathers- women, men and children).

JSC man to a bather -*Hey! Why are you washing your shoes here?*

A bather- *Why are you stopping them? You can stop only those in front of your eyes. Those who are not in front of your eyes, how will you prevent them?*

Two surrounding community men- *Call the caretaker S, call him. We will stop the washing clothes here. He will take away everyone's clothes away.*

JSC man (to some bathers he thinks are staring at a woman bather)- *Do you come here to have cheap fun? All you animals, you bloody indecent guys ..... (and many abuses)*

(JSC secretary got people to remove shoes, clean *ghat* steps etc.)

(After the shouting was over, all the people at *ghat* started sarcastically mimicking JSC people)-*Don't wash shoes, don't clean cycle!*

From a pond being used for multiple uses by different people, it became a controlled space where other groups had restricted and supervised access. There was no attempt by the surrounding community to combine their environmental pollution concerns with equitable access to the pond. The ability of the surrounding community to access the formal channels resulted in their environmental values emerging "victorious" and which controlled the area. Illustrating the almost total non-involvement of the grassroots bathers in controlling the pond, in a snapshot interview of fifty randomly selected bathers<sup>5</sup>, of whom about 80% were pond regulars, 79% didn't know who had spearheaded the rejuvenation effort, with only 11%

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<sup>5</sup> Of which 81 % were men and the rest women and children.

naming the JSC, 5% the CPI (M) and the remaining naming the club. None of these bathers-who were all poor and largely SC-STs -had ever been approached by the JSC or anyone else for their opinions about the pond's management. As one of them said,

*Nobody talks to the poor or asks them anything (man at ghat, 17.2.03)*

The loss of grassroots control over urban space was apparent in the surrounding community's values defining the pond and *ghat* space. The JSC conducted annual wetland day events on the banks of the pond involving the surrounding community, with minimal involvement of any other group. The events such as environmental quizzes, poetry recitation and dramatics by school children were tailored to the surrounding community's sensibilities.

*Since there is a strong Bengali middle class cultural milieu here, therefore we mix things like dramatics, poetry recitation etc. with the ponside (event) since it helps to keep the people's involvement. (MR, JSC and environmental NGO member, 12.3.03)*

These practices reinforced the surrounding community's ownership of the pond space. At the annual function, the JSC regularly exhibited a slide show recounting how the pond was saved through the eviction of the informal settlement and through inputs from surrounding community, the KMC and important politicians. This re-telling distanced pond ownership from the grassroots.

*The slide show is shown periodically in the locality to revive the public's memory about the entire movement because people tend to forget the effort that had gone into this pond (MR, JSC and environmental NGO member, 12.11.02)*

Another illustration of everyday politics and the use of the environment as a script to extend domination over urban space was seen in the swimming pool proposed by the surrounding community. Under the JSC's leadership, the surrounding community wanted to convert a part of the pond to a restricted access swimming pool for fee-paying members to keep out "undesirable people". No one from the grassroots group- either the bathers or the evicted group- was part of the community meeting organised by the JSC in January 2003 regarding this. It seemed that once the swimming pool came into existence, the *ghat* and the bathers from poorer groups would be further restricted, since it required high walls for security and privacy, especially of female swimmers. Consequently, the pond could pass further into the surrounding community's control, slipping further away from the grassroots group. The head of the environmental NGO associated with the JSC echoed such misgivings- unlike what was seen from the JSC members' attitudes towards the grassroots bathers in the previous extract.

*We must be extra concerned that creation of the swimming pool doesn't sideline rest of the jhil. Because swimming pool is a more upper class activity, therefore it will get*

*more focus unless we are very careful.* (MR, JSC member and head of environmental NGO, 12.3.03)

The outcome for the relocated grassroots group was dependency on local clubs and parties in the areas where they were relocated. As seen in 5.2.5, informal channels bolstered politicians from these areas of Kolkata, infiltrated the formal channels and made the grassroots people living there highly dependent on party mass organisations. Their dependency on the non-formal channels extracted high costs in terms of time, money and effort from the grassroots groups. In return for party patronage, they had to attend party meetings, join mass organisations, attend party sponsored political events and donate to local clubs- often at the expense of their livelihood. Lacking land-deeds, the grassroots persons could not sell their land and go elsewhere. Withholding of land-deeds was seen by some grassroots actors as deliberate influence of the non-formal channels on formal channels to continue grassroots dependency on them.

*Land deeds have not been given to us yet because if they gave us the papers then we won't go to party meetings any more and won't do party work.* (DM, grassroots woman evicted to Sapui Para, 15.11.02)

This 'carrot and stick' strategy of the non-formal channels reinforces the argument made in chapters one and three about the institutionalisation of dependency by the non-formal channels, which further removes the formal channels as viable claim making options for the grassroots groups. Though the JSC assured the grassroots group that they would help them get the land-deeds, they had not pursued this in a concentrated way till the end of the fieldwork, especially since the TC's rise to power in the KMC.

### **5.3 Conclusion:**

Comparing the claim making of the groups involved in Pal Bazaar's environmental conflict, we see that the grassroots group tried to access the formal channels and failed. Strategies used by all actors involved manipulation of the discursive and political fields, but the outcomes were tilted towards the surrounding community. The latter were able to garner both the formal and non-formal channels' support. The inability of the grassroots group was due to their structural position as well as the agency of the formal and non-formal channels. The discursive coalitions and solidarity groupings between formal channels, non-formal channels and the surrounding community, limited the spaces for grassroots claim making through the formal channels.

The failure of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's inclusionary provisions like WCs and gender solidarity by women councillors reduced the ability of the grassroots group to access the formal channel, creating a particular gendered nature of environmental claim making. The control over the formal channels' working by their political culture and bureaucratic culture weakened grassroots groups' access to the municipal claim making systems while making it seem 'natural' that surrounding community claims were addressed by it. The everyday politics of the area, influenced by past history and changing subject positions of people shaped the claim making terrain in the conflict. An overlap of individual rationality with social embeddedness shaped the behaviour of formal and non-formal channels.

The grassroots group tried to oppose the evictions, but in the absence of any support were evicted by force to various localities in the political constituency of KG. They were thus scattered, their social links broken and their link with the pond and livelihoods in the Pal Bazaar area became more tenuous. Their dependency on the non-formal channels in the new localities increased and the lack of any ownership papers for any of the evicted people made their situation precarious due to possible re-eviction from the new areas. However, despite this, they illustrated the diffused nature of power by manipulating to their advantage any openings in the POS and the post eviction cleavages in the surrounding community's unity. The Jodhpur Park case is expanded in the next chapter. Comparisons between the two cases in chapter seven raises interesting points about the relative importance of the political and discursive fields on claim making ability.

## **Chapter six: The politics of environmental claim making: Jodhpur Park**

*The disinterest of the officials, the false and repeated promises of the politicians and the growing basti- facing hostile reactions of the Jodhpur Park people- all make the situation complicated (BP, JPI member, 28.10.02)*

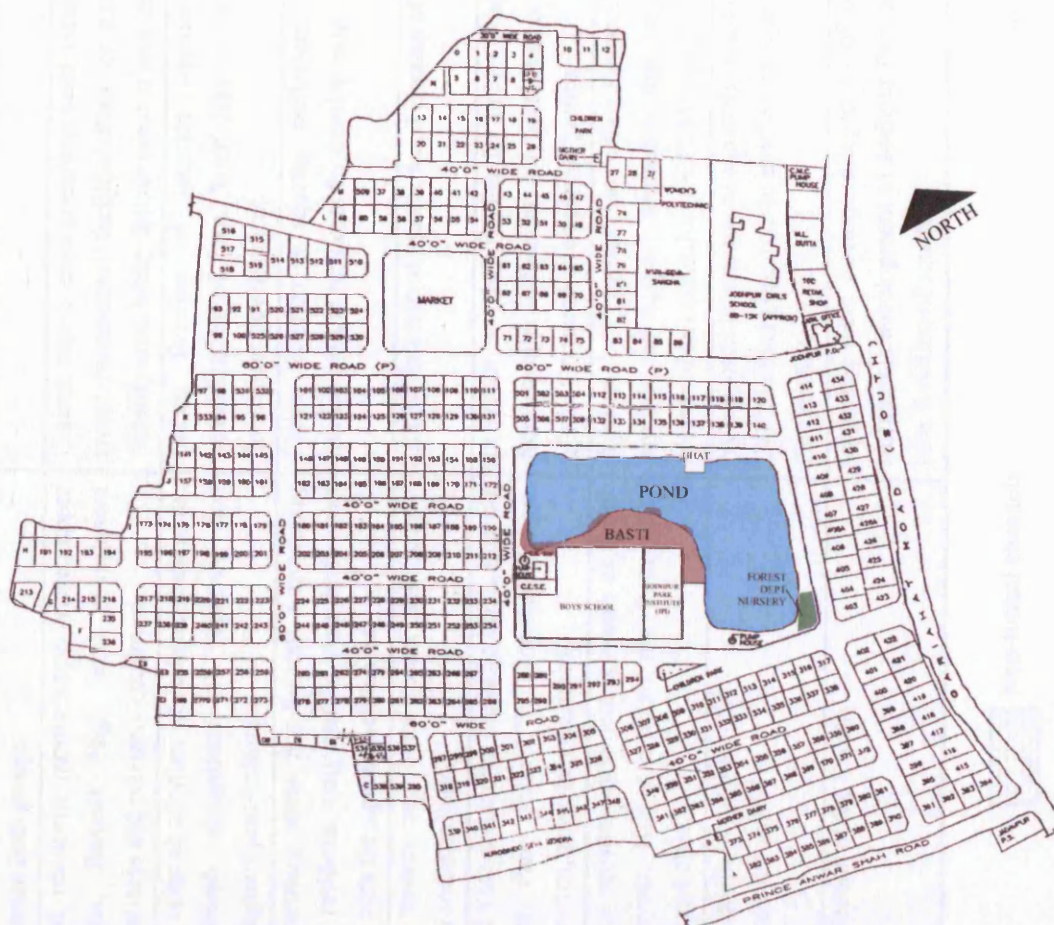
This chapter outlines the case of Jodhpur Park lake, in a degraded condition and part of an environmental conflict involving the surrounding community in Jodhpur Park and the grassroots squatter settlement on the banks of the lake. As seen in figure 6.1, the lake abuts a park located centrally in Jodhpur Park with surrounding community houses overlooking it. The main actors in the case are summarised in table 6.A

### **6.1 Discursive field:**

The surrounding community claims in Jodhpur Park derived from a post-material environmentalism focussing on pollution prevention, nature for recreation, and illegality of the lakeside grassroots squatter settlement. The claims of the grassroots group reflected their lived experiences, injustice of eviction attempts and a material valuation of the natural resource. These issues have been discussed in chapter four while illustrating the storylines of the various claim-making groups. This section qualifies those claims to understand their links with the identities of various claim-makers. The possibility of discourse coalitions being formed with formal channels and non-formal channels is also discussed.

#### **6.1.1 Environmental discourses and identity of claim-makers:**

As elaborated in chapter four the similarity between the Jodhpur Park surrounding community's environmental claims and the formal channel's environmental discourse points to the possibility of discourse coalitions forming between them. Both groups stressed technical solutions to pollution problems of the lake and beautifying it for leisure activities. They also stressed the destruction of the lake environment by the lifestyle of the grassroots group. As seen previously, such discourse coalitions have an exclusionary impact for the claims of those groups not part of the coalition. The Jodhpur Park Society (Society), the Jodhpur Park Institute (JPI) and the Residents' Association (RA) were the main surrounding community organisations who articulated claims on its behalf. Since the sizeable surrounding community was largely disinterested in the lake, the agendas of these community organisations shaped the community's publicly articulated claims. The technocentric, legalistic discourse of these organisations was apparent in these claims, as were their differing visions for the lake, highlighting schisms between them. Identity-based antagonisms towards the 'other'- the largely Bihari, SC, squatter grassroots *basti* dwellers were also apparent in their claims, as can be seen in the following extracts.



**Figure 6.1: Map of Jodhpur Park and views of lake** Source: Jodhpur Park Society, 2003  
Not to scale



**Figure 6.2: Bathing at *ghat* opposite to *basti***  
Source: Author



**Figure 6.3: Garbage dumping at the lake**  
Source: Author



**Figure 6.4: Surrounding houses overlooking park and lake**  
Source: Author



Actors	Political affiliation	Profile of Actor	Position About Lake
<b>Informal settlement dwellers</b>	Cultivated as Left vote bank. CITU stronghold among KMC employees.	100 families, mostly SC, Bihari migrants. 65% KMC employees, rest petty traders, unemployed etc. Schism between both groups.	Claim: right to land and living close to work, use of pond for lifestyle. Rehabilitation for all close by in event of eviction
<b>Surrounding community residents</b>	No fixed political leaning	About 2000 residents, mostly upper caste, upper middle class, Bengali. High level government officials, business and privately employed	Claims: varied- evict grassroots <i>basti</i> , clean up lake and park, create recreational facilities there or residents only park, beautify area. Many disinterested in area issues.
<b>Jodhpur Park Society</b>	No fixed political leaning	Represents original allottees of Jodhpur Park plots, now moribund- allegations of nepotism and corruption against post-holders	Claim: Eviction of lakeside squatter settlement and beautification of lake. Want lake to be handed back to Society for development.
<b>Jodhpur Park Institute</b>	Changing political leaning	Club representing some non-Society surrounding community residents, only middle class body with any contact with the squatter settlement	Claim: Eviction of squatter settlement. Want lake to be handed back to residents for development
<b>Residents' Association</b>	No fixed political leaning	Represents tenants and other recent non-Society residents of Jodhpur Park.	Claim: Eviction of squatters and cleanup of lake.
<b>Councillor</b>	Present councillor from Trinamool Congress in power for last 10 years.	Previous CPI(M) councillor - middle class, English educated JP Park doctor. TC councillor from Gobindapur slum, poor, less educated.	In favour of rehabilitation for only Corporation employees from squatter settlement. Advocates use of force for eviction of non Corporation employee groups
<b>Borough X administration</b>	Borough X office and the Borough Committee: TC dominated	Large nos. of squatter settlement residents as lower level employees. Higher officials not from area- higher caste and class.	Against Left parties' so called 'support and sympathy' towards the squatter settlement that they deduce by past actions of ex councillor- a CPI(M) man.
<b>Party organisations</b>	CPI(M) only. TC party mass organisations not effective.	CPI(M)'s Nagarik Committee- NC CPI(M)'s trade union CITU	NC opposed to eviction of squatters. Want clean lake. CITU actively opposed to eviction of squatters employed in Corporation.
<b>Significant individuals or organisations</b>	No fixed political leaning	Breakaway faction of the Society.	Opposing main Society -allegations of corruption. Claim: sustainable development of Jodhpur Park and cleaning up of lake. Eviction of squatters.

Table 6.A: Actors and their claims: Jodhpur Park case study



Claim-makers



Formal channels



Non-formal channels

Source :Author



*The Corporation is responsible for cleaning the lake, but how can the park and lake be cleaned if the dirty basti is there? (KB, breakaway faction of Society, 10.1.03)*

*They (basti residents) are largely Biharis. No one from the basti works in Jodhpur Park people's houses. No one is getting any sort of benefit from the basti being there. They just dirty the area. (DG, TG, Society members, 15.12.02)*

The community organisations tried to articulate neat claims on behalf of the entire surrounding community. The membership of these organisations was largely male, upper class, and upper-caste; and the gendered nature of the publicly articulated claims became apparent on interviewing women residents of the area. As seen in 4.2.2 in chapter four, the surrounding community women publicly made claims similar to those of men. However, those surrounding community women who lived near the lake perceived the grassroots settlement with a specific gendered view of *bhadra*-ness illustrating their discomfort with the proximity of the *basti* to their homes. These claims used the storyline of threat to the modesty of these *bhadra* women from the behaviour of the grassroots settlement and their disgust with the lifestyle of the grassroots group. The surrounding community women used environmental claims to camouflage these antipathies towards the grassroots *basti*.

*These basti people create a nuisance. Their tubewell is opposite my house- they brush their teeth, bathe right here. I can't sit on the balcony because all this is very dirty and objectionable. (RMu, woman living opposite basti, Jodhpur Park, 18.12.02)*

*The activities in this lake offend my daughters and other women. (DM, woman living opposite basti, Jodhpur Park 15.12.02)*

As mentioned in chapter two, within the grassroots group the divisions between the Corporation employee group and the remaining *basti* residents also affected their claim making. As seen below, these groups had different claim making resources and hence differently articulated claims. This illustrates the impact of identity and resultant resources on claim making.

*The real problem is regarding them (non-Corporation workers)...because the Corporation will surely not bother about them, as they are squatters. Corporation employees have no fear, as we know that we will get relocated. We haven't been given any notice...we got to know of Corporation's intentions from office gossip. (BM, basti leader employed in Corporation, 8.1.03)*

*We earn on an everyday basis. We work around this locality. We would prefer to stay here because our work is here, and we don't want to go to any other place, but if we have no option, we will go wherever they shift us. (JP, basti non-Corporation worker, 2.3.03)*

As seen in the previous chapter, grassroots non-material claims were articulated subsidiary to their material claims. The *basti* residents showed a resigned willingness to relocate provided their material needs were met, as seen below. In chapter seven, this is explained as the strategic use of a discourse by the grassroots group, based on what is *expected* of them by formal channels; as well as utilisation of their position of power in the conflict to extract the best possible material outcomes for themselves.

*We will go from here only if alternate accommodation is provided on Corporation land. (BM, Corporation employee, Jodhpur Park basti, 8.1.03)*

*Basti* claims also protested the unjust blame on the grassroots residents for polluting the lake and park, as the surrounding community members also dirtied the area. These claims also showed the *basti* residents' awareness of the identity-based resentment that the surrounding community had towards them; while also illustrating differing uses of storylines to attribute blame by the two conflicting groups.

*Rich people get their maids to throw garbage in this area. They are the ones dirtying the lake. And then they blame us. We use this water daily, so why would we dirty it? The people from the market dirty the place and use it as a toilet. People walk their dogs here. ...People throw dead cats and dogs in this lake. We fish them out and bury them. (GN, Corporation employee, basti, 15.12.02)*

Claims articulated by grassroots women did not find specific reference as women's claims but were subsumed within general *basti* claims. More than men, grassroots women used emotional language while framing their claims- analysed further in chapter seven. However these claims were not part of the *basti*'s public claims, but only articulated privately. Further, as the extract shows, grassroots women also stated environmental claims specific to their practical gender needs and showing an emotional lived experience of the environment.

*We want to stay here. We have got used to staying here and have been here for so many years. It is our own land. We want to stay in the light and stay alive with the fresh lakeside air. It would be good if there could be a separate bathroom for women rather than common with men, as that is our main problem. (Woman at basti, 8.1.03)*

### 6.1.2 Discourses and identities of other actors from the area:

The formal channel members, comprising of the councillor and the local borough municipal officials had discursive affinity with the surrounding community as far as their discourse towards the environment was concerned. This is apparent from their plans for the lake stressing pollution prevention and leisure activities.

*I want to spend 1.5 crores<sup>1</sup> for speed boating, a floating fountain, light and sound show, concretising the lake banks and evicting the squatters. I believe that while the basti is there, there is no point in beautifying the lake. My personal opinion is that without some rehabilitation, evictions cannot be done (RD, Jodhpur Park councillor, 27.10.02 and 28.2.03)*

*For Jodhpur Park it is required that the water body be sealed so that the overflow from waste disposal doesn't come into the lake. When it rains too much, the overflow happens as there is a link with drains. Basti has to go also (because it pollutes due to) washing of clothes, vessels, night soil pollution etc. (DC, ex BX engineering department, 15.3.03)*

As seen from table 6.A and from chapter two, the identity profile of the formal channel members had greater similarity with the surrounding community than the grassroots group. The discursive affinity and similarity in identity profile should have allowed the surrounding community to access the formal channels more easily than the grassroots group. However, as seen in chapter two, the surrounding community was unable to do so as successfully as the grassroots group. This can be understood while looking at the political field discussed in section 6.2 and in comparisons with the Pal Bazaar case in chapter seven.

Non-formal party channels were dominated by the discourse of the political party towards the environment and its 'proper' use in the urban scenario. The following extracts illustrate the non-formal channels' overt ascription to their party's discourses towards the environment and its destruction by grassroots groups. The party's discourses towards grassroots actors, sometimes different from their practice, had a strong link with their political and self-interest agendas, as expanded in section 6.2. Seen in these extracts, the ideological schism within the TC towards the evictions became apparent on comparing the statement of TC politician ABis to that of RD used previously in this section. Each had a different stand towards the *basti*.

*The CPI (M) wants that the environment be improved while keeping the (basti) people there and that the KMC should complete its responsibilities like street cleaning etc.*

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<sup>1</sup> 1 crore= 10,000,000 rupees= 121,200 pounds sterling (rate 8.4.05)

*Since their (basti peoples') daily work is there, we will have to find new land for them. (ARC, CPI (M) leader, 22.11.02)*

*Restaurant, boating etc are planned for the Jodhpur Park lake. We'll remove these squatters. The Corporation will not give separate accommodation to these KMC employees settled there illegally. If they are living illegally, it is not the Corporation's responsibility to give them alternative accommodation. Non-corporation employees will not be given any rehabilitation; they will be evicted like the (Tolly Nullah) canal side dwellers were. (ABis, TC leader, Borough X, 21.3.03)*

## **6.2 Political Field: the politics of environmental claim making:**

The impact of everyday politics and High Politics on the environmental claim making ability of various actors to the municipality in the Jodhpur Park case is analysed here. The claim making resources, constraints and strategies of the various claim-makers are compared to show their impact on the resultant response of the formal channels and the outcome of the claim making effort.

### **6.2.1 Resources available for claim-makers from the political field: High Politics and everyday politics:**

Politically divided, the surrounding community did not vote as consistently, as united, or as numerously in local elections as the grassroots group did, as seen in extract one. Consequently, they were not an attractive vote bank for the local non-formal channels and their concerns did not feature high on the agenda of local politicians, as seen in extracts two and three. It is not that such political connections were impossible for the surrounding community, but that till the fieldwork's end, they had not considered such local political connections important.

*People in Jodhpur Park are fed up with politicians therefore don't like to vote. (DG, TG, Society post holders, 15.12.02)*

*Political parties have a vote bank focus. Basti people can be coerced and coaxed, because they need parties for survival. Political parties can't force upper class people. (JG, surrounding community man, 16.12.02)*

*When we complained that the pump near the lake is not being operated and there is less water in houses, (the concerned minister) said " you don't vote for us (CPI -M) therefore we can't do anything for you." (RMu, surrounding community woman, 18.12.02)*

However, surrounding community members had good networks with higher-level politicians and senior officials in the municipality and state government- which Benjamin (2000) has called the 'global networks' favoured by affluent groups. For example, the surrounding community used the 'old boys network' of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) to approach the Forestry Department, as seen in extract one. Some Jodhpur Park residents, such as ANB<sup>2</sup>, were senior government officials, or like SB were political party leaders closely involved in surrounding community organisations, as seen in extract two.

*Through the IAS old boy network someone (from Jodhpur Park) told the Forest Department to maintain the park. (DG, TG, Society post holders and ex government officials, 15.12.02)*

*I am the Vice President of Jodhpur Park Institute. I am secretary of the Mohalla Committee (a sub-group of CPI-M's Nagarik Committee). I am also the Vice President of the NC. (SB, Jodhpur Park resident, 21.3.03)*

Among the community organisations, the JPI had good relations with the councillor, borough officials, officials from the municipal headquarters like the chief engineer and officials of the state forestry department. JPI was also in touch with senior politicians like the MMIC (Parks and Gardens), MMIC (Conservancy) and the mayor. The Society had pursued a case against the KMC regarding the lake's upkeep. These facts illustrate the ability of the surrounding community to form links and use networks to access formal channels, though they had not used the local formal channels effectively. This reinforces the argument that the surrounding community was not unable to form coalitions but disregarded the importance of the local level. This undervaluing of the local formal channels was further illustrated by the surrounding community's dislike of the then councillor, as he had a working class background and was uncomfortable with English. This demonstrated the surrounding community's identity-based antagonisms and reluctance to engage with persons they considered socially inferior. The surrounding community understood the non-formal channels' political compunctions in supporting the grassroots group, yet they did not engage politically with the non-formal channels and used their personal networks and global contacts from outside the area.

*He can't even write in English. People working for him do that. He has to be bribed to get work done, more so of upper-class people. He is more sympathetic to poor people because they are large in numbers. They form a vote bank and also go to party*

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<sup>2</sup> ANB was a member of the State Planning Board

*meetings and demonstrations. Therefore he has to keep the poor happier than upper-class people. (AK, Society breakaway faction, 17.12.02)*

Unlike the surrounding community, the *basti* dwellers had strong links with the Left parties, especially through the CITU-the CPI (M)'s trade union, of which all the *basti* Corporation employees were members. The *basti* had been protected by PSS- the previous CPI (M) councillor. The party's local mass organisations like the NC still looked after the *basti*. However, since the KMC got transferred to the Trinamool Congress, the *basti* people, especially those not employed with the Corporation had also started supporting the TC. Success at claim making for the grassroots group implied canny utilisation of the party in power, in exchange for costs extracted by the parties.

*The basti people largely support the CPI (M) party, mostly through their office contacts. However, some also support the TC, especially the non-Corporation workers because now the TC is in power. (BM, basti leader, 8.1.03)*

As seen below, the *basti*'s political unity affected the TC as well. The TC councillor accepted that KMC employees in the *basti* were politically too strong to be trifled with, due to their membership of the CITU and value as a united group of voters. The position of the unorganised, un-unionised non-Corporation workers was strengthened by their proximity with Corporation employees and their own value as a vote bank. However, the supremacy of the Corporation group in the *basti* was apparent from the selection of BM- with strong Corporation credentials and CITU contacts- as the *basti* leader.

*I contacted the local councillor RD about the park. He said, "it is a KMC sweeper's basti, we can't remove them. How can we do anything"? (SJB, Forest Department, West Bengal state government, 3.3.03)*

Coming to resources (or their lack) from everyday politics; as mentioned earlier, the surrounding community had strong networks with politicians and officials beyond the local borough level. Many residents were current or former government employees or well placed in the state judiciary, the PCB or media; and tapped their professional networks to get things done. Despite these strong networks with the formal and non-formal channels, the lack of united effort by the surrounding community residents weakened their ability to make effective claims to the formal channels. They approached their networks for fulfilling their individual and family needs, rarely for common issues of Jodhpur Park. The disunity was also reflected in the schism between the three important community organisations of the area- the JPI, the Society and the RA, as expanded in the next section.

As far as the grassroots group's resources from everyday politics, other than good political contacts with the CITU, the Corporation employees from the *basti* also had good contacts with KMC officials. Since most of the Corporation employees worked in the Borough X office in the Conservancy department, they were in daily contact with the District Conservancy Officer (DCO), RDa. The *basti* residents were able to approach other important borough level officials in case of need. Politicians and officials cultivated the *basti* residents for their own ends. However, the Corporation employees got more patronage than others, firmly establishing their primacy in the *basti*.

*People from the basti who work in the Corporation know a lot of people there and can get work done. (GJ, basti non-Corporation worker, 30.12.02)*

### **6.2.2 Constraints in claim making: from High Politics and everyday politics**

As seen from table 6.A and chapter two, majority of the Jodhpur Park surrounding community members were upper middle class, upper caste Bengalis. Living in large single-family homes and with ample personal resources, they were less involved with the area issues than the surrounding community in Pal Bazaar had been. Many of the Jodhpur Park residents were disinterested in the waterbody issue.

*I live very far away from the lake, so have not much interest in the lake and don't know much about it. (BT, Jodhpur Park resident, 12.3.03)*

Of those surrounding community members who did mention an interest in the lake issue, a majority did not devote time or effort to claim making. As seen below, this was related to the lack of community cohesion, to its increasingly aging profile, changing social and regional origin profile of the residents and increasing numbers of tenants- who had little incentive to participate in the community's affairs.

*Jodhpur Park has rich and upper middle class people but they have no unity. They are ready for the basti's removal but don't want to take any initiative. This has become more so after the rental flats were built... the social cohesion and social commitment has decreased. (KB, Society member, 10.1.03)*

*Older Jodhpur Park residents were Bengalis, though now the majority are non-Bengali. They have no time as most have businesses. The situation is (almost like an) older original groups vs. younger newer group...there are no discussions and consultations (about local issues). (PG, surrounding community youth, 7.1.03)*

Other than the surrounding community's disunity and disinterest, the antagonism between its community organisations was also a significant constraint to claim making. The Society, JPI

and RA were involved in disputes. The JPI alleged the Society was a comatose organisation with its post holders involved in exploiting the Society for personal profit. The Society's deals with the KMC over the Jodhpur Park market and Health Centre in the area were mentioned in this regard. The JPI was portrayed by the Society as an unscrupulous group, involved in underhand deals and coalitions. They were alleged to have inside links with the *basti*, trying to take over the lake to create a commercial swimming pool. The importance of identity-based schisms between the various community organisations is seen in the following extracts.

*There is a communication gap and cultural gap between the JPI and Society. Most Society members were or are high-level government officials or from the private sector and are old and hence rigid (in their thinking). JPI has different kind of people- not very successful academically or career wise. Therefore there is an impasse between them. (JG, Jodhpur Park resident, 16.12.02)*

*The JPI has taken the main initiative regarding the lake. The Society doesn't do anything though it had done the land transfer. (BP, JPI member, 28.10.02)*

As seen in the extracts below, the main surrounding community organisations had differing plans for the lake, further hampering their united claim making to formal channels. Due to the KMC's failure to fulfil the condition of beautifying the lake, the Society wanted that the lake be returned to it after the KMC evicted the squatters. The JPI wanted the KMC's permission to make a commercial swimming pool after the evictions. The Society breakaway faction alleged that the KMC wanted to build an amusement park after removing the squatters.

*It is the Corporation's contractual responsibilities to remove the squatters. They should then return the lake to us; we will develop it. (TG, Society post holder, 20.2.03)*

*The Corporation and councillor want to make Acquatica (a water theme park) here... For us, that will be a bigger headache. (KB, breakaway faction of Society, 10.1.03)*

Till a united agenda for the lake and park could be agreed upon, the surrounding community faced sustained opposition by the grassroots group, who were supported by the non-formal channels and parts of the formal channels since doing so fulfilled their self-interest agendas of the moment. This is expanded in 6.2.3. In the event of future eviction the *basti* people, especially Corporation employees, insisted on rehabilitation close to the present location. Several politicians and bureaucrats supported them, weakening the surrounding community's claims.



Other than grassroots opposition, a constraint for the surrounding community was the overlapping jurisdictions of multiple government agencies in the area. The lake was owned by the KMC, with the borough Engineering Department responsible for its drainage and related issues and the Conservancy Department for its cleaning. As seen in chapter four, there was confusion at the KMC headquarter level about the department responsible for urban ponds. According to the Society and the JPI, the KMC's Parks and Gardens Department was responsible for the lake, denied by that department's MMIC. The KMC's Chief Municipal Town Planner and Architect's department and the Survey Department were also named as responsible departments. The state government's Forestry Department was involved in looking after the park abutting the lake. It ran a nursery in the park and was responsible for the park's maintenance. In 2002, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) floated the Kolkata Environmental Improvement Programme (KEIP). The Jodhpur Park Lake was taken up for cleaning as part of the KEIP, with a special cell set up in the KMC for this project. The overlap of so many different departments and government levels complicated the case. The numerous jurisdictional issues confused the claim-makers.

Among the grassroots group, the schism between the Corporation employees and others was a constraint for their claim making. The power inequality and disunity in claim making between the two groups became evident in a focus group where everyone from the *basti* was present- followed by a meeting with the Corporation employees alone. As seen below, the *basti* and Corporation employee leader- BM, the other Corporation employees, as well as GJ- representing the non-Corporation worker group- insisted that the Corporation employees would not accept any rehabilitation if it did not include the non-Corporation workers.

*First Corporation employees should get alternate rehabilitation. Others should also get some rehab. If they do not get rehab we will also protest. (BM, leader of the Corporation group, 2.3.03)*

*The non-Corporation employees will have to stand together with the Corporation employees to get rehabilitation. (GJ, representative of non-Corporation worker group, 2.3.03)*

However, when the Corporation employee group was approached separately, NM- a CITU leader present there, flatly denied that CITU would support the non-Corporation workers' rehabilitation claims. Corporation employees present there did not protest this, supporting NM instead. Thus, the *basti*'s united opposition to evictions revealed its precariousness- where under pressure the Corporation employee group could abandon their demand of rehabilitation for everyone.

*We can't talk about those who are not employed with the Corporation. Why should we? We are only concerned about our own members.* (NM, CITU leader outside the *basti*, 2.3.03)

The councillor and bureaucrats' insistence that in the event of evictions rehabilitation would be provided only for KMC employees was a further constraint for the grassroots group. The varied reactions of KMC officials from Borough X and the headquarters to the grassroots claims ranged from accepting rehabilitation claims of only Corporation employees to denying rehabilitation to any *basti* residents. None of the KMC officials accepted the grassroots claims about their links to the lake and land, or their claims for the *basti*'s improvement. The usual bureaucratic response to these claims stressed that the *basti* residents were illegal squatters polluting the area's environment. To complicate issues further, the MMIC (Conservancy)- MRa, denied that the KMC had permitted some of the Corporation employees to build living quarters in the area, despite claims to the contrary by *basti* KMC employees.

*Basti dwellers are all illegal squatters- there are no Conservancy (department) quarters there. They are lying. The basti is unauthorised. So many people live in Kolkata in so many places. How can we keep track of where our employees live?* (MRa, MMIC Conservancy Department, KMC, 26.12.02)

The area councillor- RD, repeated the response of his party colleague MRa (MMIC-Conservancy) - that the *basti* was illegal and could expect no support. However, he differed by saying that KMC employees should get rehabilitation upon eviction. According to the grassroots group, RD's attitude reflected his party TC's desire for the *basti*'s support while keeping the surrounding community happy.

*(I want to) shift the squatters. There are some 'proper' and some 'improper' people occupying land next to the lake...one thing is clear- unless the scavengers' colony (basti) is removed, there is no point in beautifying this place.* (RD, councillor ward 93, 27.10.02)

The strong global networks of the surrounding community balanced the local networks of the grassroots group. While the grassroots group depended on local politicians and parties, the surrounding community utilised their contacts in the courts, state level departments like the PCB and Forest Department to oppose the *basti*. However, as seen previously, the immediate local impact of these global networks was limited. The surrounding community were also media savvy and involved a local Bengali television channel, which made a short programme about the condition of the Jodhpur Park lake and its pollution by the *basti*. This programme used a post-material environmentalism to frame its claims.

*The basti is responsible for the dirty lake... I see garbage like plastic bags, puja idol frameworks, puja flowers belonging to the local people here... Why can't Jodhpur Park residents- rich and powerful do something about it? Otherwise they'll have to run away from the dirty conditions here soon. (Khoj Khabar programme, Akash Bangla channel, 25.12.03)*

Despite the strong local networks of the *basti* residents, they needed to keep changing political affiliations with changing political situations. Compelled to keep switching loyalties for their survival, this illustrated the actual powerlessness of the grassroots and their dependence on politicians and parties. Their changing relationships with municipal representatives, non-formal channels and bureaucrats were all based on the changing political field. That bargaining with the local councillor in return for votes occurred became apparent when IV, a grassroots woman assuming the researcher to be a politician pledged her vote if she was provided a ration card to access the subsidised public distribution shops. Though such political bargaining was also true for other people, yet since they lacked resources like economic power, global networks or identity coalitions with formal channels, the grassroots group's dependency on 'political bosses' was much higher than that of other groups.

The absence of citizens' formal structures like WCs further institutionalised the dependence of grassroots and other claim-makers on their informal networks with the formal and non-formal channels. Similar to Pal Bazaar, the grassroots group in Jodhpur Park had no option to bypass politicians and parties. The WCs would have provided this alternate channel but their absence resulted in the continuing dependence of the grassroots group on other exploitative channels. Similarly, the surrounding community was also dependent on their global networks and identity coalitions in the absence of a citizen's channel like the WCs.

Gender was totally marginalised in public claim making, as seen in section 6.1. This was another parallel with the Pal Bazaar case. The local male councillor RD had no conception that women's claims could be separate from those of men. His interactions were always with male *basti* leaders. Further, grassroots women- especially those of Bihari origin had very little voice in community matters. The overlap between gender and regional identity became even more important here as the Bihari women were completely marginalised in public claim making. During the field visits to the *basti* and in the combined *basti* focus group these women tended to remain silent. Whenever they tried to articulate their claims, *basti* leaders would hush them. The only time the women spoke about their claims was in one-to-one dialogues with the interviewer.

### 6.2.3 Strategies of claim-makers related to the discursive field:

The surrounding community used discursive ploys to justify their attempt for the eviction of the grassroots group. They tried to portray the *basti* people as shrewd and powerful due to their networks. They expressed their aversion using the *bhadralok- chhotolok* dichotomy and tried to portray the *basti* residents as criminals who were causing crime in the area. The many levels at which their claims against the *basti* residents were also claims against the presence of an 'other' become clear from the following extracts.

*Basti people are very clever and can run with the hare and hunt with the hound (can change their behaviour to suit their companions of the moment). (DG, TG, Society post holders, 15.12.02)*

*(There is) suffering for everyone because the squatters commit chain snatching, drug trafficking and other heinous things. (DG, TG, Society post holders, 15.12.02)*

*We said if you want to live here, you basti people must learn to behave like bhadra people since now you live in a bhadra area. (RMu, Jodhpur Park resident, 18.12.02)*

Another strategy of the surrounding community was reinforcing their discourse towards the *basti* and lake by organising events drawing upon post-material environmentalism and providing these events visibility by involving senior bureaucrats and technical experts. AK, a member of the breakaway faction of the Society organised a seminar in the area in which he invited members of the PCB, the KMC, the state Forestry department and academics from Kolkata University. In this seminar he used the environmental pollution argument to justify eviction of the grassroots *basti*. Another surrounding community man made a list of the flora and fauna in the lake, justifying the eviction of the *basti* from the lake's banks on grounds of saving this flora and fauna. A survey about the lake was conducted by an environmental NGO from Jodhpur Park. 92% of the 102 surrounding community families surveyed voted for cleaning the lake and park for leisure activities like walking, community gatherings, children's play area etc.

The environment was being used as a script by the surrounding community to hide their multiple agendas related to the eviction of the grassroots group. This argument links this section with the next one on strategies from the political field, as the discursive field and political field overlapped in this scenario. The agendas for which the surrounding community used environmental claims as a script ranged from antipathy to the *basti*'s presence in their '*bhadralok*' area to making private profit by selling the *basti* land to promoters. For fulfilling these agendas, the JPI and the Society were rumoured to have mended their differences in

private while maintaining an outward appearance of antipathy. Thus, in the entire scenario of environmental claims, counter-claims and allegation- as seen below- environmental issues were being used as a “script” to hide varied agendas of different actors.

*The contract for the market is becoming conditional to the sweepers rehabilitation and eviction of others from the basti. The JPI is the promoter group that probably wants the market petty contracts. Hence they are not disturbed by proposals for eviction of the basti, despite having close links with it. (MC, Jodhpur Park resident, 27.1.03)*

*The Society probably has an underhand link with the JPI in wanting a share of the market project. If they get this, the squatters will be removed and the JPI can then also develop the park from corporate sponsorships, which they might funnel to their own pockets. Therefore the Society did not co-operate with the Corporation’s MM in finding alternate land in Jodhpur Park that the basti settlers could be rehabilitated on. (MC, Jodhpur Park resident, 27.1.03)*

Despite the overt schism between the Society and JPI, some Jodhpur Park residents believed this to be an eyewash for hiding covert deals between the JPI and Society over the lake and market issues, part of an urban land deal in conjunction with the formal channels and political parties. Since the Jodhpur Park lake area was important in the lucrative local urban land market, this made the frictions between the various community organisations more severe. The practice of real estate developers shaping Kolkata’s urbanscape using political patronage and urban informality as tools; and its link with the way formal channels treated claims about urban space could be seen in this conflict. For example, a market owned by the Society in Jodhpur Park had entered the bargaining between the Society and the KMC. The KMC wanted to develop the market for profit and the Society was insistent that in lieu of these profits, the private contractor developing the market for the KMC should evict the *basti* and hand the lake to the Society. The breakaway faction of the Society and the JPI alleged that the developer would convert the area into an amusement park after evicting the squatters. In the midst of all these allegations and bargaining, formal channel constituents were also taking sides. The councillor favoured eviction by the KMC with beautification by the KMC’s Parks and Gardens Department. Various Borough X bureaucrats supported the councillor. However, the KMC’s Planning and Development Department’s engineer in charge of the market project denied any final decision about linking the development of the market with the lake.

When all this is seen in the context of the formal channel's support for the *basti*, this support seems very fragile, appearing that it would last only as long as the agenda for the area could not be agreed upon by various conflicting factions, after which the grassroots *basti* would be evicted to make way for the final outcome. This use of urban informality by political parties for fulfilling agendas ranging from electoral victory to real estate development was outlined in chapter one. This argument is expanded further in chapter seven. This also ties up with the argument made in the previous section about the grassroots group's dependency on patrons from the formal and non-formal channels. It is argued that not only was the formal channels' support contingent on it fulfilling their informal self-interest agendas, but even non-formal channels such as the CITU would support the grassroots *basti* only till it was fruitful for them to do so. The use of the environment as a script and the self-interested agency of the formal and non-formal channels can be seen here.

A discursive ploy used by the *basti* residents was to exaggerate their plight and claims to elicit sympathy from listeners. As seen below, they also strategically highlighted their own helplessness and the power of the surrounding community- utilising this for applying for help to middle class outsiders. This strategy deliberately played upon listeners' feelings of class superiority -prevalent in the hierarchic social structure in Kolkata.

*There are no leaders or party to help us. We don't know anything about the Nagarik Committee. We all stay here. We don't have any work and we have nothing.* (Non-KMC employee, *basti*, 2.3.03)

#### **6.2.4 Strategies of claim-makers: from High Politics and everyday politics:**

To overcome the grassroots group, the Society had gone to court against the KMC to bring about eviction of the squatter settlement. The West Bengal High Court had ruled in favour of the Society, making the KMC responsible for evicting the *basti*. The *basti* opposed this eviction through their links with the CITU. A mid-level CITU leader of the area, BC, prevented the KMC from approaching the *basti* for eviction. The eviction attempt was so low-key that many of the *basti* residents were not aware of it.

*When the High Court sent the eviction notice, we couldn't remove the basti because of BC (a CITU politician), the local kingmaker.* (R, TG, Society members, 20.2.03)

The court case by the Society for the removal of the squatter settlement was an example of the surrounding community's multi-pronged strategy for the *basti* eviction. In parallel they used their global networks, discursive ploys like the seminar and approaching the media and the courts for this effort.

The surrounding community also used the low interaction between them and the grassroots group strategically to keep the grassroots group unaware of their lake related plans. This kept the *basti* residents in an uncomfortable suspense and in the grip of the non-formal channels out of insecurity.

*We don't know what is happening behind the scenes. There has been no direct talk with us regarding this. No one (from Jodhpur Park) has talked to us about this. (GJ, basti non-Corporation worker representative, 2.3.03)*

The KMC officials cooperated with the grassroots KMC workers from the *basti* not only because of sympathy with the workers but also out of fear of CITU retaliation. As seen in chapter three, Kolkata still had a Left dominated political culture despite the emergence of the TC, hence ignoring the CITU –the CPI (M)'s trade union- was risky for municipal officials. Therefore the KMC workers from the *basti* were able to regularly access the Borough X officials with their claims related to eviction, rehabilitation etc. This link with officials was limited to the local government level and the officials at this level were familiar with workers as demonstrated in the interaction between the Borough X DCO and the KMC workers in the focus group in which they were present together. The DCO knew their names, had visited the *basti* and was familiar with all who were KMC workers.

*Since many of us get involved with party (politics) largely through office contacts like the CITU etc, therefore we know lots of important people in the government also. In case there is any trouble they will help us. We have gone to the executive engineer etc. also. (BM, Jodhpur Park basti leader, 8.1.03)*

The grassroots group also utilised their non-formal channel contacts opportunistically. The pattern of being approached only when someone needed something from them- whether politicians asking for votes or the KMC chief engineer asking for support for the implementation of his scheme- propagated opportunism among the grassroots group. They used their votes as currency for accessing the formal and non-formal channels with their claims. As seen in chapter three, they turned to whichever party was in power, whichever politician could offer them the best patronage, remaining alert about political power equations and repercussions on the official channels. In return they had to work for the parties and participate in their meetings and marches. As mentioned earlier, this strategy demonstrated their underlying dependence and lack of choice since the grassroots could not afford to ignore the political realities on the ground.

The *basti* residents also displayed their anger at the perceived maltreatment by Jodhpur Park surrounding community in very direct ways as well. RMu, a middle class woman whose house faced the entrance to the *basti*, gave an example of this. The *basti* residents expressed their anger at her efforts to get them evicted by throwing faeces onto her balcony everyday early in the morning without anyone being able to spot the perpetrators. They also smoked and gambled at the entrance to her house, knowing that she disliked this intensely. *Basti* residents who worked for the KMC, emptied their garbage carts in front of her house creating piles of noxious rubbish. All these strategies were guerrilla warfare- the weapons of the weak- and no individual perpetrator could be easily identified.

The grassroots group also had a stake in remaining in the *basti* till their presence got so critical to the market and lake development scheme that they would be able to dictate terms about their rehabilitation. This illustrates the diffusion of power and the use of urban informality as a bargaining device by all actors for fulfilling their self-interest agendas; similar to the surrounding community and the formal and non-formal channels' use of the *basti* to create bargaining leverage for themselves in the development scheme for the lake.

#### **6.2.5 Formal channel responses related to the political field:**

The KMC had been compiling lists of *basti* Corporation employees as a strategy to limit the number of claim-makers it would consider legitimate. In 1995-96 the Borough X DCO RDa prepared a list of all the KMC employees living in the *basti*. In case of eviction only those included in the list would be considered for rehabilitation. When he stated this in the focus group in which *basti* Corporation employee representatives were also present, they expressed misgivings for those KMC employees who had started living in the *basti* after the list was made. Thus the list acted as an exclusionary device- not only limiting the number of claim-makers- but also acting as an instrument around which negotiations could happen- leading to patron-client relationships between the formal channels and the grassroots group. This is expanded further in chapter seven.

*Those who are my Corporation employees, who are staying there, their names are there in the list. The Corporation has a responsibility for them; they will be looked after. This number is fixed, anyone who has come after this list was made will get into lot of trouble. (RDa, Borough X DCO, 28.2.03)*

Despite the similarity in structural position and regional origin between the surrounding community and KMC bureaucrats, the impact of the formal channel's agency overshadowed the impact of structural similarity. Despite the high possibility of formation of discourse coalitions and solidarity groupings between the surrounding community claim-makers and the



formal channels, grassroots claim-makers were able to access the formal channels more easily than the surrounding community. The impact of agency of the formal channel members, the influence of the non-formal channels on the formal channels and the impact of political culture on bureaucratic culture are important to understand this.

The impact of identity occasionally did surface in the functioning of the non-formal channel reflecting the confusion that occurs when there is a divergence between the political expediency of an act- governed by an actor's agency, and the ideological or identity-based predisposition of the actor. This was reflected in the case of the NC vice-chairperson, SB, a upper-middle class Bengali resident from Jodhpur Park, who despite being a part of the pro-*basti* CPI (M) wanted its eviction without providing rehabilitation; as she found the *basti* incompatible with the upper middle class, Bengali character of Jodhpur Park.

*Eviction attempts have been made several times over the last five-six years. The basti people are lying to you that no eviction attempt was made. We petitioned the previous mayor (from the CPI-M) for basti eviction and lake clearing many times. We went several times to the (current) TC mayor also. Nothing happened... There is lots of dirty work happening in the basti. The people of Jodhpur Park are bhadralok and they don't want to get involved in the work of basti removal... PC (previous KMC mayor from CPI-M) had told us to find space for the (Corporation) sweepers' flats in Jodhpur Park. We refused. (SB, vice-chairperson of NC and Mahila Committee leader from CPI (M), 21.3.03)*

Despite having identity similarities with the surrounding community in Jodhpur Park, most of the non-formal channels did support the grassroots group mostly due to their value as a vote bank. However, in an attempt to cultivate the Jodhpur Park surrounding community as a vote bank as well, the area's non-formal channels, i.e. politicians, party mass organisations and party structures, maintained a dual position- proposing eviction of the *basti* to appease the surrounding community, while proposing rehabilitation nearby for the Corporation employees. *Basti* rehabilitation within the current ward boundaries would have ensured that political benefits from the grassroots vote bank remained in the area, while fulfilling the claims of the surrounding community. In the extract below, the area's CPI (M) NC leader demonstrated his party's attempt to please both vote groups.

*We have decided to lead a movement to clean the environment. The basti is using the lake in a bad way. We want to make good quarters behind the school for the basti dwellers and make a boundary wall there. (ARC, CPI (M) NC leader, 22.11.02)*

*Politicians tell Jodhpur Park people that we will remove these basti people within six months, and then tell them (the basti) that we will never remove you. This double talk of politicians is there to both groups of people. (DG, TG, Society post holders, 15.12.02)*

The influence of the non-formal channels on the formal municipal channels in Jodhpur Park was also visible through the hold of the party on the councillor and the borough chairman, and the influence of the KMC's political culture on its bureaucratic culture as seen in chapter three. The councillor and the borough chairman were influenced by the policies of their party towards the issue of grassroots evictions based on environmental grounds.

#### **6.2.6 Outcome of claim making: reflecting the discursive field:**

The KMC employees from the *basti* were sure that they would be rehabilitated in the event of eviction. The non-KMC workers were unsure that the KMC employees would look after their interests. As was seen earlier, though majority of the Corporation employees overtly said that they would help the non-Corporation employees, the *basti* leader BM did not protest when the CITU leader refused to help the non-Corporation people. Nor did the Corporation employees protest when the various officials and councillors in the combined focus group reiterated that only the Corporation employees would be rehabilitated.

Further, the non-material aspect of the grassroots claims got submerged under the material aspect of their claims. The grassroots group was ready to leave their lakeside location provided they were rehabilitated nearby. The strategic use of the material aspects of grassroots claims, since they are the *expected* format of claims from them, was explained in the previous chapter and is further expanded in chapter seven. Due to this bias towards grassroots environmentalism, the eviction was perceived by the *basti* as an opportunity to negotiate better living arrangements- using the lakeside location and votes for bargaining.

#### **6.2.7 Outcome of claim making: reflecting High Politics and everyday politics:**

By 2004, the councillor had started working on lake upgrading using the ADB funds. The KMC had strengthened the lake banks to prevent erosion and done some landscaping in the park abutting the lake. The *basti* had not been evicted, as the *basti* residents had been able to resist such plans using their united efforts, the backing of non-formal channels and support from formal channels. The surrounding community was unsure of the *basti* evictions as seen from a survey of 102 surrounding community households by a local environmental NGO.

*The place is looking beautiful... The banks of the lake have been done up nicely but I think as long as the sweeper colony (basti) is not removed from there, there is no*

*respite and however much renovation is carried out, we will return to square one. The households I surveyed agree with me. The water is filled with plankton already with a return of garbage bags floating in the lake. (SBa, environmental NGO, Jodhpur Park, 4.9.04)*

As far as the lake use was concerned, in a count conducted during the fieldwork, the lake continued being used by the grassroots group. The results are detailed in Appendix F. On an average weekday a total of about 300 women, 250 men, 75 boys and 80 girls bathed in the lake. Of these about 205 women, 160 men, 61 boys and 72 girls were from the *basti*. The remaining bathers from Gobindapur, Jodhpur Park market, Selimpur and other low-income nearby areas bathed on the *ghat* across the lake from the *basti*. The maximum use of the lake was from eleven am to three pm, when the Corporation employees returned after their early morning shift and the bathers used the *ghat* opposite the *basti*. The lake was used for ablutions, bathing, water for cooking, washing clothes and utensils, and for swimming. The bathers on the *ghat* across from the *basti* complained that drug peddling, alcohol consumption and prostitution happened in the park after dark. They tried to make claims to the formal channels, including the police about this, but with no results. They feared that these problems would overshadow any improvements made to the park and lake.

*We see bad things happening in front of our eyes, but we go away because who wants to get involved in problems? The police don't do anything- they arrest some of the miscreants and then leave them...We are very discouraged by everything that happens here. (Woman at park side ghat, 15.12.02)*

During the daytime, the park abutting the lake continued being used by surrounding community members for walking their pet dogs and was soiled with dog droppings. Though a garbage truck collected trash in the morning in Jodhpur Park, those residents who missed the truck threw garbage in plastic bags in a corner of the park where it collected in noxious piles. Thus the surrounding community also continued to dirty the park and lake. Most surrounding community members accepted their responsibility in polluting the lake and park though they insisted that the *basti* was the main culprit.

The *basti* residents remained confident in being rehabilitated in case of evictions. This was a product of their local networks with non-formal and formal channels. However their dependence on the non-formal channels ensured that the *basti* residents were in the control of the parties active in the area. Consequently they had to continue to support the CITU, the TC and the CPI (M)- staying aware of the political power equations so that they could use these strategically. Further, they remained in the control of the JPI and other local power brokers

who kept threatening them with eviction. The dependence on political parties forced the grassroots group to go to party meetings and demonstrations, pay bribes to the councillor, bargain for things like ration cards using their votes as currency etc.

*Whenever there is a demonstration or meeting of any party, we all go to it. Everyone goes because if they don't go there is pressure from others who are going. (GJ, Jodhpur Park basti, 30.12.02)*

### **6.3 Conclusion:**

In the Jodhpur Park case we saw the importance of agency in formulating the formal and non-formal channels' responses towards claim-makers. Not only did agency and self-interest of the channels, but also the profile of the claim-makers shaped this response. The Corporation employee claim-makers from the *basti* had a much higher ability to negotiate with the formal and non-formal channels because of their being able to currently fulfil the self-interest agenda of these channels. The power of the surrounding community with their global networks was sufficient to attract the non-formal channels towards themselves as well. Hence the surrounding community also influenced the response of the formal channels towards the claim-makers. In their attempts to cultivate these voters, the non-formal channels did not commit fully towards action for one or the other claim-making group. The politics of environmental claim making occurred with the backdrop of use of urban informality for profit by the various claim making groups and the various channels. The claim making also happened using the environment as a script. The surrounding community claim-makers used the pollution prevention discourse to hide their ulterior motives of self-centred profit seeking, as in the case of the JPI. The grassroots manipulated their environmental discourse to hide their agenda of maximising benefits such as obtaining rehabilitation before leaving the *basti*.

The next chapter deals with a comparison of the two case studies to highlight the conclusions about the process of environmental claim making in Kolkata.

## **Chapter Seven: Micro and Macro-level analyses: the cases and the context**

Sections 7.1 and 7.2 discuss the politics of environmental claim making using a micro-level comparative analysis of the case studies. They compare the discursive and political fields in the two cases to understand to what extent these factors affect the response of formal channels to the environmental claims of claim-makers. Section 7.3 contains the macro-level analysis of the level of success that the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA had in increasing access for environmental claims to the Kolkata Municipal Corporation. Section 7.4 concludes the chapter by re-visiting the research hypothesis in the light of the preceding analyses as well as reflecting on the macro-level analysis of chapters three and four and the micro-level analysis of chapters five and six.

### **7.1 Discursive field of the Micro-level analysis:**

This section discusses the discursive field's influence on the formal channels' treatment of environmental claims in the two case areas. Environmental politics brings together a variety of actors with their particular concerns and own modes of talking (Hajer, 1997). Due to varieties of cognitive commitments, varieties of environmentalisms exist (Guha, 1997), articulated through varying discourses coexisting in the discursive field. The degree of overlap and resonance between strands of these varied discourses determines the degree of discursive parity between them. This in turn determines discourse closure and formation of discourse coalitions between discoursing actors. Environmental claim making operationalises an actor's cognitive commitment to an environmentalism. However, the constraining effect of discourses can result in exclusion of claims not having parity with the dominant discourse in the discursive field or which are derived from an environmentalism at odds with that of the dominant discourse. Though this may seem a structural argument limiting the scope for agency, however as discussed further, the discursive field is not shaped by structural factors alone, but also by actors' agency.

At first glance in Jodhpur Park and Pal Bazaar the discursive field seems composed of the surrounding community's post-material discourse on the one hand, and the largely materialistic grassroots discourse on the other. The grassroots discourses seem to draw upon a moral social justice argument while the surrounding community discourses seem to draw upon rational science. However, it would be simplistic to understand this as just a dichotomy between post-material/materialist discourses tied to specific actors and drawing upon different epistemologies for justification. Essentialist identification of particular discourses with particular actors is misleading, as their ascription to discourses may not be constant. Among other factors, an actor's changing social relations, social practices, environmental values emerging from particular constructions of time and space, their identity etc. can shape ascription to discourses. The difference in various actors' environmental discourses is only

partially based on epistemic differences but is also moulded by the politics of accessing formal channels with environmental claims.

First we inspect the argument attributing differences in actors' abilities to access the formal channels due to differences in the epistemic bases of their discourses. In each case study the surrounding community's environmentalism bolstered storylines of technical management of the environment, pollution prevention and leisure-based use of the environment. The environmentalism of grassroots actors had low resonance with that of the surrounding communities. Since the latter shared cognitive commitments with the formal channels, it was difficult for grassroots environmental claims to be raised within the institutional sphere. In both case studies, the institutional discursive field remained opposed to accepting any notion of grassroots environmentalism on epistemic grounds. Discourses emerging from grassroots environmentalism were not considered valid *environmental* discourses within the institutional discursive field. This demonstrated that environmental conflicts are conflicts of interpretation- in which actors participate in a debate in which the terms of the *environmental* discourse is set (Hajer, 1997).

The discursive parity between formal channels and the surrounding communities in both cases studies suggests that surrounding community claims could have been able to access the formal channels more easily than grassroots claims could. However, this was not so and despite the inability of grassroots discourses to be considered valid *environmental* discourses in both case studies, the Jodhpur Park grassroots group was able to access the formal channels mainly due to political compunctions and their strategic manipulation of the discursive field, discussed in 7.2. Hence despite being important, the role of discourse cannot be concluded to be overarching and the epistemic difference argument can be seen as only partially useful in explaining the different access of claim-makers to formal channels.

As seen in the case studies, discourses ascribed to by actors may change with time, changing situational context and exposure to different discourse types by the discoursing subject. To understand this, storylines- important in articulating discourses- should not be seen as glued to actors, but inherent in social practices through which specific social relations are defined (Hajer 1997). This also challenges essentialist identification of discourses with actors. Changing social relations can lead to changing social practices and hence changing storylines used by actors. This emphasis on social relations does not imply a solely structuralist explanation, since actors themselves actively take part in reproducing and transforming practices. Hence actors' agency is important in explaining changing storylines with changing social relations and the strategic use of storylines by actors to achieve claim-making goals.

This understanding of storylines tied to practices rather than actors explains the change in the materialist discourse of the surrounding community in Pal Bazaar from their refugee days to the post-materialism of the present and their antipathy towards the materialistic environmentalism of the grassroots group. The change in their subject positions- from poor refugees struggling for survival, to an established middle class community- affected their practices towards the environment. Whereas in their refugee days they had undertaken extensive filling up of ponds and water bodies, in their middle class situation the Pal Bazaar surrounding community members condemned the *basti* residents' use of the pond. The surrounding community actors' storylines changed with changing practice and lay the foundations for the environmental conflict with the grassroots actors.

The case of the surrounding community in Jodhpur Park was different. Since the inception of Jodhpur Park, its residents had been middle class persons with professional white-collar occupations. The identity profile of the group remained constant over time and they stressed rational use and stewardship of the environment, using unchanging storylines of pollution prevention and aesthetic enjoyment of urban nature. Though social relations in the area remained constant for many years, changes were appearing slowly, with increasing numbers of tenants replacing plotted housing owners. As seen in chapter six, the scale of change in social relations within the surrounding community in Jodhpur Park was much less than in Pal Bazaar. Despite ascribing to a storyline of pollution prevention and environmental protection similar to the surrounding community in Pal Bazaar, inhabitants of Jodhpur Park showed low group interest in operationalising this discourse into claim making and community action. The reasons for this are expanded in section 7.2.

As seen in chapters five and six, in both case areas the grassroots non-material storyline remained subsidiary to their materialist storyline and they drew upon the materialist storyline while mentioning their non-material attachment to the location and land. A sidelining of grassroots non-material relationships with urban nature was observed in both cases. For example, in Jodhpur Park the grassroots actors were willing to relocate from the lakeside provided their material needs were met. Similarly, in Pal Bazaar the grassroots actors had been filling up the water body to increase their living area and also allegedly for the benefit of some real estate developers. The largely materialistic public claims of the grassroots group and their occasional destructive practices towards the urban environment are discussed here.

In a significant body of literature rural grassroots actors' non-material discourses towards the environment were understood to be derived from their material lived experience of the environment- derived from their livelihood-lifestyle link and close symbiotic relation with it

(Bryant and Bailey, 1997), (Ghai and Vivian, 1995), (Guha and Alier, 1997), (Hofrichter, 1993), (Keil, 1998). From these arguments it could be proposed that changes in the livelihood-lifestyle link of grassroots actors with the environment would alter their lived experience and material relations with the environment, changing their environmental discourses and practices. This could be used as an explanation for understanding the overwhelming materialist nature of grassroots claims in urban areas in both case studies and their occasional destructive practices towards the environment, such as the pond filling by the Pal Bazaar grassroots *basti*. However, such an explanation as it would be formulated is detailed below, would be simplistic in linking grassroots environmental behaviour and discourses to structural factors such as their supposedly 'shallow' livelihood links to the urban environment as opposed to 'deep' links in rural contexts. Their agency also needs to be considered in the explanation and the public articulation by grassroots actors of only their materialist storylines in both case studies may be linked to practices emerging from circumstance and strategy.

The argument mentioned above proposes that in rural areas grassroots actors have to act as guardians of the environment for their survival, whereas in urban areas, this material survival is no longer linked to the environment. De-linked from the material use of the environment closely intertwined with daily living and social life in rural areas, grassroots actors in urban areas exploit the environment for meeting their most pressing material needs in the precarious urban scenario. Hence in their struggle to fulfil basic needs, urban grassroots actors give up their stewardship role and maintain a 'shallow' materialistic link with the natural environment- as opposed to the 'deep' materialistic link of rural grassroots actors. This link is snapped when they shift to non-primary occupations or easier and 'modern' urban alternatives- such as water standpoints- become available for fulfilling grassroots lifestyle needs. This further decreases the intensity of grassroots actors' material link with the environment in urban areas. Hence grassroots actors are less likely than other groups to use a non-material storyline in urban areas and the materialist storylines articulated by them do not illustrate any deep material attachment to the urban natural environment. Despite this argument illustrating the link of storylines with practices rather than actors, it has several weaknesses, which need to be addressed to better explain the primarily materialistic storylines of urban grassroots actors and their occasional destructive practices towards the environment.

A few arguments are made here to overcome the deficiencies of the preceding explanation. One is the lack of alternate choices for urban grassroots actors due to power disparities between them and other urban actors, forcing them into certain practices towards the urban environment and into stressing materialistic storylines. Similar lack of choice due to power



differentials may also be experienced in rural areas, resulting in similarly destructive practices towards the environment. Hence, idealistic conceptualisations of rural grassroots actors as environmental stewards are problematic, as is linking rural or urban locations with an actor's environmental discourse and practices. This is explained using the ideas of rurality and urbanity, not necessarily connected to actors' physical contexts but to practices reflecting rural-type or urban-type values emerging from positions of power or other social relations. Precariousness due to power disparities in any context can force actors to adopt a short-term survival focus rather than a long-term consolidating focus. In addition, strategic use of storylines by actors for achieving claim-making goals also needs to be understood. All these arguments are unpacked subsequently in this section.

The unequal power distributions in both case study areas are a possible explanation for the grassroots emphasis on materialist rather than non-material storylines in the environmental conflicts. An example of these unequal power relations was seen in the powerful coalition of the united surrounding community with municipal officials in the Pal Bazaar case. This coalition used varied strategies against the grassroots actors' claims for remaining in their pondside *basti*. Citing immediate survival as the more pressing issue in the face of this powerful combine, in public the grassroots group emphasised their material discourse towards the environment rather than their non-material storylines relating to their attachment to their pondside location, their social capital networks in the area and with the larger community. Due to their limited resources, lack of choice and focus on short-term survival the grassroots group also engaged in destructive practices towards the environmental resource they depended on- such as filling up the pond. Similarly, unlike the KMC employees, those grassroots actors from the Jodhpur Park *basti* not employed with the KMC had few powerful patrons. Therefore with a desire to minimise their losses in the conflict and focussing on short-term survival, these *basti* residents made largely materialist claims indicating their acceptance of relocation in the event of eviction, without stressing their non-material attachment with the area or their non-material losses in eviction from that location.

Further, the formal channels discounted the non-materialist storylines of grassroots actors as these were derived from an epistemology at odds with that of the formal channel stressing on rational science and management. 'Emotional' storylines of the grassroots actors linking non-material values like feelings of attachment to the areas due to their long-term embedded links to the location were not considered rational or for the greater good by the formal channels. The 'greater good' storyline was used by the formal channel and the surrounding community members in the cases. Grassroots presence next to the waterbodies was not considered in the 'greater good' of the area; hence their claims faced difficulty in accessing the formal channels

on the basis of the merit of their claims. This sidelining of non-material claims by the grassroots claim-makers may also have misrepresented their importance for the grassroots group to the Pal Bazaar surrounding community. The latter justified the eviction of the grassroots *basti* citing the improved material conditions of the grassroots group due to land ownership as a result of the eviction.

Further, the formal channels expected the grassroots actors to articulate only material claims, considering non-material claims derived from a rational scientific epistemology beyond the claim-making ability of the grassroots group. Science was the epistemic basis for the non-material claims of the surrounding communities and which resonated with formal channel discourses. Various authors have showed that science cannot be considered value free and objective (Bryant and Bailey, 1997), (Hajer, 1997), (Humphrey, 2002), (Marston, 2004). Using science as the sole credible epistemology for validation of discourses is problematic since it can become a highly ritualistic affair reproducing existing power equations (Hajer, 1997). Marston (2004) demonstrated the effects of discourse on the production of knowledge in policy processes, thus bolstering the argument that state discourses using science as the epistemological justification are not value neutral and reflect the effect of power disparities and power equations on the policy process. This was seen in the overwhelming sway that the discourse of administrative rationalism held over the formal channels and the space it created in these channels for post-materialist environmentalism. This reproduced existing power relations between grassroots and other claim-makers into the discursive field of the formal channel. Formation of discourse coalitions between groups with discursive affinity was an illustration of the role of discourses in not only reproducing power relations, but also actively shaping and institutionalising them.

Discriminated by this insistence on science for justification of claims, grassroots groups were expected by formal channels to articulate only materialistic claims- as these could fit within a scientific and managerial format. Since they were *expected* to do so, the grassroots groups strategically chose to articulate only materialistic claims as their public claims to the formal channels, considering these to have a higher chance of accessing the formal channels. Hajer (1997) explained such occurrences due to actors having an implicit understanding of structured ways of arguing in corridors of power, which prompt them to operate within formats acceptable to formal institutions, since the costs of going against routinized institutional practices can be too high for actors to bear. Further, as seen in chapters four, five and six, actors strategically used various discursive practices of metaphor, analogy, historical reference, cliché, and appeals to collective fear or guilt to strengthen their claims and increase their access to claim accepting channels. These practices were observed among all claim

making groups- demonstrating the fact the strategic aspect of claim making was appreciated by all actors and they tried to overcome power inequalities of the social field by utilising such discursive practices to achieve their claim making goals of accessing the formal channels.

The primacy of materialist claims in grassroots claim making may also be attributed to the concerns of grassroots non-material claims being considered 'feminine' by formal channels and grassroots claim-makers. Consequently, in the case studies mostly grassroots women articulated these non-material claims such as attachment to the land and feelings of connectedness to the area. Grassroots men articulated non-material claims in the passing- only after promptings, subsidiary to materialist claims and as unimportant in 'proper' claim making. The grassroots group as well as the formal channels considered grassroots non-material claims as 'soft' claims not worthy of being raised in a public forum. In this light the overwhelmingly masculine claim-making arena and male control over public formulation of grassroots claims also explain the marginalisation of grassroots non-material claims, which were relegated to the sphere of private claims, best 'left to the women'. This has been explained by Roy (2003) as the masculinisation of politics- which is not just exclusion of women from a political activity like making claims to formal channels, but also an overwhelming masculinist idiom of political mobilisation. This masculinisation of politics also explains women's peripheral involvement in claim making. This was bolstered by Kolkata's political and bureaucratic culture, discussed in chapter three and further expanded in section 7.2, which denied the relevance of gender as a category of concern, assessing claims using a class-based or occasionally caste-based lens.

Masculinisation of politics was also observed among the surrounding communities in the cases. However unlike the grassroots group, surrounding community claim-makers publicly raised their non-material claims to the formal channels. This difference in claim-making practice of the two groups is based on the epistemological differences in their respective claims. The grassroots non-material claims used a moral justification and drew upon emotional storylines and hence were considered 'soft' and 'feminine' by the grassroots and formal channels. On the other hand non-material claims of the surrounding communities dealt with pollution prevention and related claims emerging from scientific epistemology. These were considered 'masculine', rational, manageable claims- worthy of being raised in the institutional sphere. Hence it was not the materiality of the claims that made them worthy of being raised to an institutional audience, but their epistemic validations. Patriarchal attitudes assigning claims related to science to the 'masculine' sphere of public claim making and other claims to the private 'feminine' sphere were important in deciding the kind of claims validly raised in the institutional sphere by the different groups of claim-makers.

Popular conceptions abound considering rural grassroots actors as stewards of the natural environment and urban grassroots actors as its polluters. However, this rural-urban distinction is an artificial construct overlooking the possibility of properties of each context existing in the other (Allen, 2003). Instead, values of rurality or urbanity need to be considered, having little to do with an actor's locational context and instead concerned with the actor's frames of reference, values embedded in and emerging from these and use of space-time compressions (Harvey, 1997) to transfer values from a different contextual situation to present practice. For example, despite having lived in the urban context for three generations since migrating from rural East Bengal, the Pal Bazaar surrounding community still articulated values towards waterbodies derived from their rural context. Their transference of these values to present space-time illustrates the surrounding community's rurality with respect to the waterbody in their present urban context. Hence, arguments using a rural-urban dichotomy for explaining primarily materialistic claims of urban grassroots can be considered overly simplistic. An actor's rurality or urbanity has structural as well as agency implications, as this outlook can inform the actor's values while also being used strategically in claim making.

Demonstrating the role of agency in shaping the discursive field, in both case studies environmental claims were used as a script to carry forward non-environmental agendas of actors. In Jodhpur Park, the JPI in collaboration with a promoter was allegedly trying to replace the *basti* with an amusement park for private profit. With the agenda of removing 'unwanted outsiders'-the *basti*- from Jodhpur Park, the Society and RA were proposing restricting access to the park and pond, purportedly for limiting pollution. These groups used the pollution prevention storyline to justify claims for the squatter settlement's removal, keeping their area beautification agenda subsidiary and private profit motives hidden in their public claims. Similarly in Pal Bazaar, environmental claims were used to rid the area of the 'dirty' grassroots *basti* and create a 'civilised' *bhadrak* area. Similarly, grassroots groups in both areas strategically used materialistic environmental justice storylines to increase their access to formal channels with claims for better rehabilitation in the event of evictions in Jodhpur Park and for land deeds in Pal Bazaar. Since they used environmental storylines to increase their chances of accessing formal channels with claims related to agendas other than their attachment and lived experiences with the environment in their local areas, therefore their use of these storylines can be considered as a script. Linkages between actors' identities and environmental claims are discussed further in section 7.2.

From the preceding discussions we see that ascription to discourses is more complicated than as sketched in the initial arguments about material and non-material discourses. Discourses do not just stand alone, but are in a dialectic relationship with other 'moments of social

processes'. Hence, ascription to discourses is affected by all the moments of social processes through a dialectic relationship between discourses, beliefs, social relations, institutional structures, material practices and power relations. Discourses internalise effects from all of domains while reciprocally entering in, though never as a pure mirror image, to all of the other moments of social processes (ibid). As seen in the cases, the discursive constructs of various claim-making groups and claim-accepting bodies emerged from a dialectic relationship between discourses and the other moments of social process. The effect of social relations and identity, of history and shared pasts, of material practices, and power relations between groups and within groups were observed shaping the discursive field in the politics of environmental claim making. This politics was created and negotiated by different claim-makers using different resources, strategies and overcoming different obstacles.

## **7.2 Micro-level analysis of the political field for environmental claim making:**

This section compares structural factors and actors' agency shaping the political field in both case studies, to understand its impact on the difference in the formal channels' treatment of claim-makers in both areas. While structural factors shape and constrain agency providing a horizon of historical possibilities, they are themselves open to changes brought about by individual agency and can be overruled by agents acting in their own self-interest or in response to ideological commitments (Kaviraj, 1997). Non-formal channels and their interactions with formal channels are also compared in the two case studies to understand the relative influence of actors from these channels in shaping the political field and its impact on the formal channels' responses to claim-makers in the two conflicts.

### **7.2.1 Structural factors: Identity and impact on accessing formal channels:**

The identity of actors as determined by their class, caste, gender, regional origin and shared history is compared across the two cases to understand their impact on the claim making process. As actors have multiple identities, which are fluid and place individuals within different social networks affecting their agency differently, it is relevant to compare the cases to see how formal channel members chose their social networks in each case. Therefore, identities of formal channel members are compared with those of claim-makers to understand formation of solidarity groupings, which affected claim-closure at the municipal level.

As seen in chapters two, five and six, and in tables 7.A and 7.B, in both case studies the formal channel members had identity profiles closely matching those of the surrounding communities. Formal channel members were largely middle class, male and upper caste. In terms of gender solidarity, Pal Bazaar's Bengali woman councillor of refugee origin did not exhibit gender solidarity with her ward's women and did not consider gender to be important in accessing claims from her ward residents. The Jodhpur Park councillor, a Bengali man

from a lower middle class background also discounted gender as a category of difference in claim making. Bureaucrats from Borough X who were involved in both cases were also from middle class, upper caste backgrounds. Pal Bazaar had the added advantage of being the residence of the chief engineer of the KMC, also of refugee origin.

	Pal Bazaar		Jodhpur Park	
	Councillor ward 104	Municipal Officials (BX, BXII)	Councillor ward 93	Municipal Officials (BX)
<b>Caste</b>	Upper caste	Upper caste	Upper caste	Upper caste
<b>Regional ID</b>	East Bengal refugee	Mixed- involved East Bengal origin officials	West Bengal	Mixed
<b>Political Affiliation</b>	LF	Borough LF dominated	TC	Borough TC dominated (previously LF)
<b>Sex</b>	Female	All male	Male	All male

**Table 7.A: Identity of formal channels members**

Source: Author

	Pal Bazaar		Jodhpur Park	
	Grassroots actors	Surrounding community	Grassroots actors	Surrounding community
<b>Occupation</b>	Housemaids, Cycle cart drivers	Small business, Salaried jobs in govt, private	Municipal workers; In private companies	High rank govt. officials, Business
<b>Caste</b>	SC (lowest Hindu castes-untouchables)	High Caste	SC and ST (tribals)	High Caste
<b>Regional ID</b>	West Bengal peasant origin	Refugees from East Bengal	Hindi speaking Bihari Migrants; few Bengalis	West Bengal, East Bengal
<b>Numbers</b>	13 families=80 persons	100 families=500 people	100 families=600 people	2000 + people
<b>Political Affiliation</b>	Mixed	Strongly LF	KMC workers: LF, others: varying	Mixed

**Table 7.B: Identity of claim-makers**

Source: Author

One of the crucial reasons for the difference in the ability of the surrounding communities in Jodhpur Park and Pal Bazaar in accessing the formal channels was the difference in identities profile of these communities and resulting difference in resources, constraints faced and different strategies adopted by these groups. The Jodhpur Park surrounding community had a primarily upper middle class profile, with better financial and social status than the surrounding community in Pal Bazaar. The former group's identity profile had changed little over time and they followed the pattern commonly observed among upper class groups of maintaining global networks rather than mutual or local networks. The Pal Bazaar surrounding community had started as poor refugees, having to rely on mutual social capital networks and networks with local politicians and administration to fulfil their basic needs. This has been characterised by Benjamin (2000) as typical of corporate-centered versus local economies. These differences in local networks resulted in local level formal channel support for the Pal Bazaar surrounding community and not for the Jodhpur Park surrounding community. Further, a shared history of struggle united the Pal Bazaar surrounding community, as discussed later.

As explained by Benjamin (2000), local level administration and governance shape settings for local economies, in which the municipal corporation forms the main institutional arena with councillors and lower level bureaucrats playing key roles. Extensive ethnic and social connections exist between the lower level bureaucracy and local interests. In the event of any intervention in the area by higher-level political agents, their actions take place in the context of interventions by local bodies- involving the local councillor as the mediating agent. This was observed in Pal Bazaar, where many members of the local bureaucracy and municipal administration were local residents and had close links with the surrounding community.

On the other hand, corporate level economies have links with the state political level, sometimes reaching up to the national level. Usually upper middle class and wealthy groups use these higher-level networks as they have a wider net of contacts than lower middle class groups. There is the added dimension of caste, considered in Kolkata through the concept of *bhadra* identity. Thus largely upper caste, upper class people have the ability to acquire global links. Their links with local level municipal and political structures are weak and they suffer in comparison to those who possess local level linkages in situations where they need the intervention of this level. Even if higher-level politicians intercede on their behalf at the local level, it may not guarantee problem solving in favour of these groups, as local level political realities may inhibit the effectiveness of higher-level political interventions. This was the case with Jodhpur Park surrounding community residents. This argument overlooks the gendered nature of such links- whether global or local, which tend to be overwhelmingly masculine, reinforcing the masculine nature of Kolkata's political field (Roy 2003).

Other than the difference in access to identity-based networks, the surrounding communities in the two areas also differed in their unity and level of community involvement. These factors were shaped by their histories. The Pal Bazaar surrounding community was composed of former refugees. The characteristics of refugee colonies contributing to their unity and community involvement have been explained by various authors (Bhowmick, 2000), (Bose, 2000), (Chakrabarti, 1990), (Das, 2000), (Gangopadhyaya, 2000), (Ray, 2000), (Sen, 2000), (Sinha, 2000). The urge to negotiate individual and collective survival in a new place in the face of official indifference had made first generation refugees realise that self-rehabilitation was their best option (Bose, 2000). The refugee groups struggled together utilising mutual help and cooperation to occupy land and set up 'refugee colonies' on the suburbs of Kolkata (then Calcutta). Institutional structures like colony committees and clubs were established to promote refugee interests, prevent interference of outsiders or deviation from community rules (Ray, 2000), (Sinha, 2000). Colony committees and clubs also had political links with the growing Left influence in the refugee areas under the aegis of the United Central Refugee Council (UCRC), an important organisational arm of the Communist Party of India (CPI). Thus, the refugee groups depended not only on mutual social networks to survive and prosper, but also on close association with the Left for making their claims regarding rehabilitation to the then Congress state government (Bhowmick, 2000).

This Left affiliation continued, giving rise to the saying that 'even a lamp post nominated by the Left would win from Jadavpur' (Sinha, 2000: 159), the area in which both the case study sites were located. However, this was changing slowly, as discussed later in this chapter. Among other issues, this change reflects the slow shift in party affiliations from the older population of first generation refugees to the younger generation, who identify less with their refugee past and political affiliation with the LF. The descendants of refugees have not experienced hardship and consequent need for community unity to the extent experienced by the first generation refugees. Hence, the unity of the refugee areas was also observed to be slowly undergoing change.

The refugee colonies emphasised their residents' shared East Bengal identity through recreation of cultural festivals and symbols of their past. They tried to maintain the East Bengal character of their settlements by discouraging people of non-East Bengal origin from settling in the colonies. This schism between the *Bangaals* (of East Bengali origin) and *Ghotis* (Bengalis of West Bengal origin) was prominent among the first and second generation residents of the refugee colonies, but reduced in overt form by the third generation, even exhibiting formation of kinship networks between the two groups through marriage (Sinha, 2000). Though the everyday expression of this schism reduced, it emerged at times of



conflicts, as was seen in Pal Bazaar. Another defining characteristic of refugee settlements, important in shaping the behaviour of the Pal Bazaar surrounding community, was refugee groups identifying their collective worth through voluntary community projects. These become repositories of cultural traditions of the homeland and a place where complex set of meanings and symbols operate at various levels (Bose, 2000), (Sinha, 2000). This was seen in Pal Bazaar, where the surrounding community recalled their East Bengal homeland's geography for justifying their love for waterbodies and consequent community effort for pond rejuvenation.

That their shared history as refugees had a profound impact on the attitudes and community spirit of the Pal Bazaar surrounding community is apparent from the difference between the residents from the settlements of Newland and Viveknagar in the area. Despite living in proximity, the two groups had very different levels of involvement with community projects like the pond rejuvenation. Not only were Newland residents, largely non-refugee, less involved with the pond, they also displayed a bias against Viveknagar residents, as the latter had not bought plots but had squatted on land regularised later. This schism highlighted the earlier argument about the fluidity of identity, apparent in Newland residents considering themselves *bhadraloks* while placing Viveknagar residents on the margins of *bhadra*-ness, who did the same with the grassroots group. The different conceptualisations of identity and its twisting to suit a political end become apparent from this.

The impact of 'refuginess' on shaping community consciousness clarifies the reason for the unity and collective action of the Pal Bazaar surrounding community compared to their lack among the Jodhpur Park surrounding community. Community organisations in Jodhpur Park like the Society, RA and JPI were not formed out of the compelling reason of survival but from the compulsion of area maintenance and functions as cultural clubs. The area residents had no prior links of kinship or a shared history of community struggle to forge a strong solidarity. The impact of refugee identity on affecting behaviour towards non-refugees in refugee areas is important to understand the treatment of the non-refugee grassroots group in Pal Bazaar, discussed later.

Another reason for the difference in commitment to area issues among the surrounding communities in the two cases was linked to their differing identities as politically active persons, experiences in political mobilisation and community action. The JSC in Pal Bazaar, which had spearheaded the pond rejuvenation effort, was almost entirely composed of persons with known political affiliations, and records of past and current political activism on behalf of the community. Unlike this, the Jodhpur Park surrounding community's involvement with

High Politics as participants and party members was minimal. Thus the Pal Bazaar surrounding community area had as a resource a core of politically active residents with experience in community organisation and concern for community level issues. Coupled with differences in occupational backgrounds, recounted earlier, political identity, involvement and activism acted as a community resource, shaping community mobilisation and involvement in both areas. These factors made the Jodhpur Park surrounding community group less likely to unite for community causes. This also had the repercussion of making them less attractive as voters to political parties, discussed later, which was important in their inability to access formal channels or form coalitions with them.

The coalitions between formal channel members and the Pal Bazaar surrounding community group was bolstered by the fact that the *basti* residents with their squalid living conditions and West Bengal peasant origins formed an easily identifiable 'other' against which the Pal Bazaar surrounding community with an East Bengal origin could unify. Rutherford (1998) describes how the centre (self) expels its anxieties onto the margin (the other), in the process manifesting the violence, aversion and antagonism at the core of this centre-margin relationship. Deep structures of prejudice, contempt and aversion are the response of the centre to the margin (ibid). The surrounding community defined itself as the centre, expelling its anxieties and antagonisms onto the margins- the *basti*. The centre here identified itself as the *bhadralok*- the refined classes- wishing to create a polite, clean and refined city (Roy, 2003) after sanitising the city of any *chhotolok* presence- the margin- against which the *bhadralok* displays anxiety.

This self-identification as the *bhadralok* despite the class difference between the Jodhpur Park and Pal Bazaar surrounding communities<sup>1</sup> was possible because of what Ganguly-Scrase (2003) explains as the process of downward mobility of the *bhadralok* in terms of the inclusion of the lower middle classes as among their ranks. However as seen earlier, the Jodhpur Park surrounding community group was unable to unify as the cultured *bhadralok* against the grassroots *basti* despite displaying a centre-margin relationship with the *basti*, illustrating a *bhadralok-chhotolok* anxiety towards the *basti* residents.

This centre-margin relationship was also apparent between the surrounding community in Pal Bazaar and the grassroots actors using the rejuvenated pond for bathing. The JSC used the rules for bathing and supervision by the caretaker to control the physical space of the pond area. The aesthetic improvement of the pond area resulting from its 'middle classisation',

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<sup>1</sup> Based on relative economic and social status, Pal Bazaar residents were considered from the lower middle class while Jodhpur Park residents were considered upper middle class.

allowed grudging and controlled access to the grassroots group to this space, illustrating the uneasy power equations between the two groups. As recounted by an interviewee VR, the moments of skirmish between the members of the surrounding community group and the grassroots bathers in Pal Bazaar illustrated the use of psycho-social strategies of causing and containing offence which are part of the strategies of engaging in the class-caste war between the *bhadralok* and the other that these skirmishes symptomise. Such skirmishes did not occur in Jodhpur Park with the same intensity as in Pal Bazaar, as the surrounding community in the former area tended to not engage with the *basti* at all, intimidated by the *possibility* of the insult dormant in any situation of skirmish with the *basti*.

The chapter now moves to the structural implications of identities for the grassroots groups. The identity profile of the grassroots groups in the two areas also determined their level of success in accessing the formal channels. The Pal Bazaar grassroots group were less numerous as compared to the Jodhpur Park *basti*. This was significant in deciding their attractiveness to political parties as vote-banks, expanded later. Further, the grassroots group in Pal Bazaar differed from the Jodhpur Park *basti* in being less united. Jodhpur Park *basti* residents displayed high levels of unity derived from their shared regional identity as Biharis. Seen in chapter six, there were few Bengali families in the *basti* and the Bihari majority were related to each other through kinship. This unity was strengthened by the prejudices displayed by Kolkata's Bengali community towards migrants from Bihar (de Haan, 2003). Examining gender within the grassroots communities, women from the Bihari community suffered the double disadvantage of a gender identity that limited their presence from the public domain of claim making as well as a regional identity that placed them in a marginal position. Further, Bihari grassroots women, controlled by a patriarchal outlook more conservative in the Bihari grassroots community than in Bengali grassroots communities, were less involved in the public domain than Bengali grassroots women.

This overt and active prejudice towards *Hindustanis*, as Biharis were referred to, expressed through discourse and use of stereotypes (ibid) united the grassroots group from Bihar, cementing their ranks and dissolving interpersonal problems while dealing with this prejudice. In comparison, the Pal Bazaar grassroots did not exhibit such unity, despite their West Bengal origin in a primarily East Bengal area. This is because as seen earlier, the schism between the East Bengal origin residents –the *Bangaals*- with the West Bengalis – the *Ghotis*- reduced over time, overtaken in importance by differences in political identity, *bhadralok* identity etc. In contemporary Kolkata this difference remains muted surfacing in cases of extreme community conflict and does not have the overt character of the prejudice against Biharis.

Further, the identity of majority of the Jodhpur Park *basti* residents as having good networks in the KMC and support from the bureaucracy due to their CITU backing also placed them in a stronger position with respect to the formal channels than the residents of the Pal Bazaar *basti*. The latter had much weaker subject positions- being largely menial workers engaged in rickshaw pulling, housework and petty trade. They did not have any networks in the municipal administration at the borough level comparable with those of Jodhpur Park *basti*. The presence of the KMC employees provided reflected strength to the Jodhpur Park *basti* residents not employed with the KMC. Though there did exist one resident of the Pal Bazaar *basti* with strong networks in the government and political parties, LD, yet he had low influence on the remaining residents of the *basti*. This was because he had not been unanimously chosen as their leader and because of the strength of the surrounding community group in its oppositional tactics against the *basti*.

An element that contributed to relocation of the evicted Pal Bazaar grassroots group was also linked to the identity of the surrounding community. Of refugee origins, the surrounding community was more sympathetic to providing relocation despite the KMC's policy being against it, due to their memories of partition and displacement. Having suffered the trauma of being uprooted from their homes, they repeatedly stressed not wanting to impose the same trauma on others. This 'passing' of past history in shaping present action (Rutherford, 1998) led to the insistence by the Pal Bazaar surrounding community on grassroots relocation. Not having had such experiences in their past history, there was little consciousness among the Jodhpur Park surrounding community group for relocation for the grassroots group there.

So far the chapter examined the impact of claim-makers' identities on their claim making ability. It now examines the impact of structural factors- such as claim-makers' subject positions on shaping formal channel responses towards claim-makers. For this, the relative importance of structural factors and agency of formal channel members are examined in forming coalitions between them and the claim-makers.

The solidarity grouping between the Pal Bazaar formal channels and the surrounding community claim-makers was described in chapter five. This grouping occurred, as there was a high degree of overlap between formal channel members' self-interest (determining their agency) and their structural predisposition towards coalition formation with social elites from Pal Bazaar area. Being numerous and having united political affiliations, the surrounding community was an attractive vote-bank for the elected formal channel members- the councillors, fulfilling their self-interest. As seen in tables 7.A and 7.B, this attraction overlapped with the structural affinity between the formal channel members and the

surrounding community claim-makers arising from a shared history as refugees and through common social networks. Pal Bazaar grassroots actors' identity profile was very different from that of the formal channel members, and since their claims did not fulfil the formal channel members' self-interest, the latter had no incentive to overcome this structural dissonance.

Tables 7.A and 7.B show that in Jodhpur Park, the surrounding community group had a similar identity profile as the formal channel members. However as it did not fulfil the formal channel members' self-interest agenda as well as the grassroots group did, the surrounding community was unable to form solidarity groupings with the formal channels. The grassroots group was large and united in its political affiliation, had the support of political bodies like the CITU and easy access to borough level bureaucrats through the *basti* residents employed in the KMC. This attractiveness of the grassroots group as a vote-bank and their support from the CITU prompted the agency of the formal channels in overcoming their structural affiliation with the surrounding community, allowing easier access to grassroots claims.

Thus coalition formation is observed to be dependent on the overlap of structural identities with the self-interest agendas of the formal channel members. In the event of a schism between these, formal channels may activate their agency providing easier access to groups fulfilling their self-interest agendas, rather than those having structural affinity with them. However, this is valid only till formal channel members act in defence of their self-interest. If they have ideological commitments towards a particular outcome, they might activate their agency in forming coalitions with groups that fulfil this ideological agenda.

### **7.2.2 Agency of members of formal channels reflecting High Politics:**

Having examined structural factors affecting the behaviour and attitudes of formal channel members and claim-makers, the chapter analyses the impact of agency. As seen in 7.2.1, actors' agency emerges when following structural predispositions would go against their self-interest or ideological agendas. Section 7.2.2 examines how agency of elected councillors uses or is affected by High Politics in dealing with actors' environmental claims. Everyday politics shaping the behaviour of formal channel members- bureaucrats and councillors is discussed in 7.2.3. The practices of elected councillors that reflect everyday politics are closely linked to those of party non-formal channels, also discussed in section 7.2.3. Of the formal channel members, councillors have dual and sometimes conflicting responsibilities- towards their political parties and to the constituency they represent in the municipality. Hence, analysing their behaviour with respect to High Politics and everyday politics is very useful in understanding the political field.

The fieldwork revealed that the primary focus of councillors was garnering support for their party, rather than their mandate as elected people's representatives. Described in chapter three, the CPI (M) has a highly centralised party structure and line of control, emulated by other LF constituents. This shapes the ideological framework within which the party members operate and also affects their actions through party directives, not always consistent with party ideology or manifesto. As Glyn Williams (2001) demonstrated, the CPI (M) has a 'higher discourse' of class struggle and transformation, alongside more 'vernacular' and local discourses, which are manipulative of local contexts and aimed at maintaining the party's power at the local level. Thus party ideologies and 'higher discourses' towards the environment and environmental claims, squatter groups and their eviction- form the ideological backdrop against which party councillors work. This *seemingly* coherent ideological background is offset by councillors' practices of power accumulation and corruption. For justifying these practices councillors use a more contextualised discourse and reasoning than the totalising 'higher level' discourse of the party.

The quest for maintaining political power requires continued support from voting groups and a daily legitimisation of power through negotiated patronage mechanisms, which ensure support. Converting an unreliable and scattered citizenry into an accessible, united 'public' requires that councillors, in conjunction with party mass organisations, employ mechanisms of patronage and enter into relationships of clientelism with the people (Fox, 1994), (Roy, 2003). In West Bengal the LF's monolithic public presentation obscures the fact that it's remaining in power requires daily renewal of its legitimacy at multiple fronts (Roy, 2003) using efforts of multiple representatives and mass organisations of the party. In all this, LF councillors' agency remains important in maintaining and/or capturing power for their party and themselves. The impact of party ideology remains on the overt level of public presentation- shaping the 'official' discourse and councillors' pronouncements in situations of High Politics. LF councillors in the case study areas demonstrated opportunistic support for claim-makers in their attempts to expand their political base.

Similar behaviour was also observed among TC councillors. The TC was distinguished primarily by its apparently vastly non-reflexive anti-Left stand (Bhattacharyya, 2004) and lack of consistent commitment to any political ideology. Detailed in chapter three, anti-Leftism seemed to be the TC's driving force and reflected in the behaviour of the councillors at local level. The TC's ideological confusion, the factionalism that pulled its councillors into opposing directions, and their own agendas of power accumulation shaped the agency of TC councillors. Similar to LF councillors, TC councillors in the case study areas demonstrated opportunistic behaviour- siding with whichever group it made electoral sense to support. This

section further examines High Politics with respect to councillors, in their overt and covert uses of party ideology and their strategies to fulfil their own agendas.

In both case study areas the influence of party ideology was seen shaping the overt discourse of the formal channel constituents- the councillors and borough committee members. The environmental discourse of the CPI (M) and LF were derived from a productive Marxist ideology- looking towards the environment for development and human benefit by utilising natural resources. TC councillors, in the absence of ideological directions from their party also ascribed to this discourse. Environmental discourses of the LF and the TC stressed technical solutions by the KMC's engineering and planning departments for tackling pollution. The strength of this discourse was so overpowering that in both case study areas the attitudes of the bureaucracy and strategies of the claim-makers were derived from it, as demonstrated through extracts in chapters four, five and six.

However, a definite difference was seen in the ideologies of the two parties towards squatter settlements and rehabilitation. In both case studies environmental pollution was used to justify eviction of the squatter settlements. Interviews with KMC bureaucrats showed that there was no concrete policy regarding eviction of squatter settlements. This allowed the party in power at the KMC to decide on the suitability of evictions, measured against their political and other costs. In the case of the Left Front and CPI (M), when there was a change of power at the state level to the Left, the then existing rule of eviction was changed to one of in-situ development of slums, with no attention to squatter settlements. The KMC abided by this norm with a degree of discretionary flexibility in carrying on its work.

However with the TC in power in the KMC, changes to this norm emerged based on the schism between the factions in the TC. As described in previous chapters, one faction led by Mamata Banerjee, was against the eviction of squatter settlements, especially using the pollution reduction justification. The other faction, lead by the KMC mayor supported such evictions, having conducted them in Tolly Nullah. This ideological confusion in the party over evictions and their environmental justification was also seen in both the case areas.

In Pal Bazaar, the TC councillor from ward 106, DDT, emerged in support of the evicted grassroots group, forwarding their claims to the KMC House for consideration. In Jodhpur Park, the local TC councillor, RD, was opposed to rehabilitation of the grassroots group, convinced that pond beautification could not be carried out without the *basti's* eviction. However, this remained in the realm of discourse while in practice he maintained a deliberate inaction towards evictions, as he was unsure of the position that would be approved by his

party and wanted to maintain good relations with both claim-making groups in Jodhpur Park. The difference in behaviour of two councillors from the same party in adjacent wards shows that this was shaped not by the impact of ideology but the agency of the councillors, determined by their own agendas of political success and electoral victory.

The same pattern is observed on comparing this to LF's councillors' behaviours. While PSS, the CPI (M) councillor from Jodhpur Park had maintained close relations with the *basti* and even helped consolidate it, the LF councillors from Pal Bazaar had very different attitudes towards the *basti* there. They consistently opposed the Pal Bazaar *basti* on environmental grounds and were at the forefront for its eviction. This illustrates the primacy of agency (based on electoral considerations) over party ideology, as well as demonstrating the effect of the councillors' own middle class, upper caste subject positions and resultant post-material environmentalism overcoming the LF's norms towards slums. In the Pal Bazaar case, the *basti* was an informal settlement or slum and not a squatter settlement, as a number of *basti* residents were landowners with the others their tenants. Thus, by lobbying for eviction rather than in-situ upgradation of the slum, the LF councillors were betraying their party's norms for their own electoral benefits and conforming to their own environmentalism.

The link of self-interest agendas of formal channel members with their actions becomes clearer when considering the history of Pal Bazaar refugees. The refugees in Pal Bazaar area were legally squatters till they were regularised by the LF government in the 1980s. The LF government had not evicted them from their colonies till then due to sympathy with their situation, demonstrating an inconsistent attitude towards squatters with refugee backgrounds and other squatters. Though this can be explained in terms of the human crisis perceived by the LF constituents when the refugees first arrived, it also related to the early links that the CPI and other Left parties formed with the refugees through the UCRC and other Leftist refugee aid organisations. The Leftists were out of power at that time, and refugee support was important for their ultimate election victory in West Bengal. Further, over time the refugees had improved their social standing and entered the ranks of the middle classes. Evicting well-entrenched and militantly united refugee middle class settlements would have been impossible and politically suicidal for the LF. However, other Kolkata squatters, being poor and often disunited served the purposes of the LF through their very vulnerability. That squatters could be evicted without compunction provided the LF with a mechanism for regime renewal. As expanded in 7.2.3, this mechanism of eviction and relocation of squatters in colonies has multiple benefits for the LF. Thus the norm of squatter eviction played out differently for different squatters based on the political calculations of the LF.



However, the changing fortunes of the LF even in refugee areas illustrates that the impact of the LF's support of the refugee group could not be taken for granted. The LF suffered a staggering defeat when in 2000 the TC's SM defeated the LF candidate- KG- from a municipal seat considered among the safest for the LF; which included the present case study areas and was in a primarily refugee dominated area. However, the TC has been unable to maintain its hold on the polity in West Bengal, polling low votes in subsequent assembly and bye-elections since 2000 when it wrested the prestigious KMC from the LF. The TC was torn with internal fighting and external lack of trust about the party's intent, to the advantage of the LF (Bhattacharyya, 2004). The TC's support base as apparent from 2001 state assembly election results- recounted in Appendix E, showed that it had an edge over the LF only among the upper economic group, with the poorer groups favouring the LF. In urban areas the LF enjoyed marginally better support than the TC, though West Bengal's urban areas are considered anti-Left. The difference between the TC-INC combine and the LF was most pronounced in the support of the SCs and Muslims, who tended to support the LF.

Another feature of High Politics in the political field was the competition between parties at the municipal level and its impact on formal channel responses towards claim-makers. Shaped by the agency of their members, the interactions of opposing political parties in the municipality was characterised by frictions. The TC, in power at the KMC level tried to suppress claims forwarded by LF councillors in the House. Simultaneously at the borough level, TC councillors tried to overpower LF councillors in Borough Committee discussions on budget allocations and prioritising borough issues. Such frictions were observed in Boroughs X and XII, which administered the case study areas. The TC dominated Borough X and claims made by LF supporters faced hurdles in the borough, as seen in chapter three. The members of the LF from Borough X reported difficulties they faced in accessing the TC ruled KMC with their claims, due to their political identity. Similarly, the LF was dominant in Borough XII, creating problems for DDT- a TC councillor of that borough- in the Borough Committee meetings. However, he was easily able to access the TC ruled KMC municipal House to forward claims for the evicted landowner grassroots group from Pal Bazaar area. Apart from illustrating the importance of political identity in ability to access municipal formal channels, this also illustrates the impact of the formal channel members' agency in ignoring the municipal rules of engagement and unbiased attention to claims of claim-makers.

### **7.2.3 Agency of formal and non-formal channels reflecting everyday politics:**

Having examined the agency of elected members of the formal municipal channels, this section deals with three distinct groups of actors in sequence- bureaucrats, councillors and non-formal channels- to understand their everyday politics. Emphasising the possibility of

formation of elite coalitions, Roy's (2003) characterisation of the formal channels in Kolkata, especially the KMC, as arenas of *bhadralok* regime consolidation was validated in this research by evidence of the upper caste- upper class identity profile of *bhadraness* having a demonstrated upper hand in garnering support and claim acceptance at the municipal level- both in Pal Bazaar and Jodhpur Park. In Pal Bazaar, *bhadralok* regime consolidation was evident in the *bhadralok* municipal officials' strategies of collaborating with the *bhadralok* project of aesthetic improvement and pollution control of the Pal Bazaar pond by removal of the *chhotolok* basti. In Jodhpur Park *bhadralok* regime consolidation in the KMC borough administration happened through *bhadralok* officials' use of the *basti* as a bargaining chip with the middle class Jodhpur Park residents for the *bhadralok* project of *basti* removal for beatification and market construction.

The *bhadralok* concept, expanded in chapter three, merges class and caste identities, though as seen in the field and discussed in 7.2.1, *bhadra* identity is fluid and relative in modern Kolkata. Depending upon the class-caste identities of others present and its external manifestations through markers of *bhadraness* like dress, deportment and language use an individual may be considered *bhadralok* in certain social situation and not others. As caste gets bracketed with class in the everyday interactions among people in Kolkata, its everyday aspect can be understood largely through *bhadralok* identity. In Kolkata caste alone is a significant entity largely at socio-religious occasions like marriages and religious ceremonies.

Roy (ibid) showed how the KMC's knotting of power has a distinct socio-cultural idiom, with historical roots in the region. The KMC's social basis of regime consolidation is the Bengali *bhadralok*, making solidarity coalitions with other *bhadraloks* very likely. As seen in both the case study areas this was especially relevant in pursuit of 'polite and clean' urban spaces cleansed of *chhotolok bastis*-. Yet only in Pal Bazaar did this 'natural' coalition between the *bhadralok* surrounding community and the KMC officials take place. In Jodhpur Park, despite the *bhadralok* idiom being present in the administrative structures, the coalition had not materialised between the surrounding community *bhadralok* claim-makers and the formal channels. It is not argued that this coalition would never occur, it is just that till the end of the fieldwork, the *basti* and the formal channel's alliance was stronger than the possibility of a coalition between the surrounding community and formal channel. However, the strength of the *bhadralok* idiom in structuring the formal channel's attitudes was observed even in Jodhpur Park. Though they largely supported the *basti* residents' claims for rehabilitation in the event of eviction, yet the formal channel members fit this within the paternalistic and patronising attitude of the *bhadralok* master towards the *chhotolok* dependant.

As seen in chapter one, bureaucrats are affected by the political culture of the organisation they work in. The impact of the centralised, anti-decentralisation political culture of the LF on the bureaucratic culture of the KMC was illustrated in chapter three. The tendency of bureaucrats to form coalitions with people with a similar identity profile as themselves has been discussed by various authors at the general theoretical level (Fox, 1994), (Gledhill, 2000), (Ham and Hill, 1984); in the Indian case (Benjamin, 2000), (Jeffrey and Lerche, 2000), (Vanaik, 2000), (Vyasulu, 2004); as well in the case of West Bengal (Bhattacharyya, 1998), (Vernon et. al, 2003). This tendency was illustrated in the Pal Bazaar case.

However, while bureaucrats have a structural pre-disposition to form coalitions with social elites, their agency cannot be overlooked in overcoming such predispositions based on their self-interest or ideological commitments to certain social or political agendas. This was illustrated in the Jodhpur Park case, where Borough X bureaucrats overcame their structural predisposition to form coalitions with the Jodhpur Park surrounding community, due to the self-interest of the bureaucrats being fulfilled by supporting the grassroots group from the *basti*, who were KMC employees with strong political backing of the CITU and value as vote-banks for other political parties in the area.

However, in Vanaik's (2000) examination of the political and bureaucratic elite in the Indian state, he cautions against reading too much into the downward linkages that bureaucratic elites, i.e, upper level bureaucrats, have with lower level state employees. He stresses that the horizontal linkages of the state elite- both bureaucratic and political elite- to the dominant classes outside the state apparatus, but within the ruling coalition, are incomparably more important than any downward linkages with lower level state employees. Vanaik describes this ruling coalition as comprising of the proprietary classes- the industrial and agrarian bourgeoisies- and professionals comprising of public bureaucracy and public sector white-collar workers.

This description of the professionals part of the ruling coalition matches the profile of the surrounding community in Jodhpur Park. Hence, though the Jodhpur Park case illustrates the agency of the municipal level bureaucratic elites in overcoming their horizontal linkages with the Jodhpur Park surrounding community, it does not demonstrate a victory for the lower level municipal employees from the *basti* in the area. The bureaucrats' agency in overcoming their coalition with the Jodhpur Park surrounding community was prompted by the other political elite- the political party mass organisations' support for the grassroots group. Bureaucratic support for the *basti* was ultimately due to a coalition between the bureaucrats and these political parties and their political bosses rather than derived from sympathy

towards the grassroots claims. Despite this argument portraying an all-pervasive power of political and other elites in dictating the actions of bureaucrats, free agency of bureaucrats-derived completely from their ideological positions were also observed among some members of the KMC. Such free agency, uncontrolled by the norms or compunctions of the ruling coalition or discourse coalition between the bureaucrats and surrounding communities, was perhaps the result of a deeper reflexivity on the part of the individual bureaucrat, not governed by any structural forces.

The diffused political power in Kolkata due to the borough system ensures that no single party possesses disproportionate levels of power in municipal governance. Different political parties dominate the different boroughs, thus ensuring a system of checks and balances between the boroughs. This lack of concentration of power with one party has ensured bureaucratic caution in overly penalising party supporters from any party at the KMC headquarter level. Since the TC was in power at the KMC, this implied easier municipal access for supporters of the TC. However, since the TC was viewed as an unstable party and the LF had been in power at the KMC for a substantial length before the TC, bureaucrats also demonstrated a tendency to 'play it safe' and not overly penalise LF supporters.

However, since particular parties dominated individual boroughs, the political schisms between the dominant and subsidiary parties did affect bureaucratic behaviour towards claim-makers. They used bureaucratic discretion to favour supporters of the party in power at the borough, while opposing others, also discussed by Vernon et. al (2003) in their study of rural West Bengal. This was demonstrated in both Pal Bazaar and Jodhpur Park cases where the former dealt with two Boroughs- X and XII while the latter dealt with only X. The different political parties in power at Borough X and XII, as well as the change in Borough X's dominance from LF to TC made a comparison between the boroughs very interesting, illustrating the impact of political equations on bureaucratic agency.

While discussing bureaucratic culture and everyday politics in Kolkata, the antipathy of bureaucrats to decentralisation and the inclusion agenda of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA need to be mentioned. Though addressed in detail in 7.3, it is relevant here to reinforce that KMC bureaucrats demonstrated a resistance to the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's citizens' structures- the Ward Committees. Bureaucrats were upset by the possibility of WCs challenging their non-transparent functioning as sub-principles (Vyasulu, 2004) and by functional considerations of increased workload and 'interference' of citizens in official matters. To counter this slippage of control and to maintain their power as a technical elite, KMC bureaucrats tried to dilute the impact of the WCs, as discussed in chapter three.

Having examined the bureaucratic culture, we move to the everyday politics of the behaviour of elected formal channel members- the councillors. For this, tendencies of corruption and fulfilling self-interest agendas by party cadres are examined as factors significant in shaping the agency of councillors when confronted by party discipline. Bhattacharyya (1998), Chatterjee (1997), Roy (2003), and Williams (2001) have pointed out the tendency of CPI (M) cadres towards corruption and inappropriate behaviour derived from self-interest. There is a commercialisation of the CPI (M) party apparatus and while on one hand the party cracks it Leninist whip of Democratic Centralism to check the growing wealth of party cadres, on the other hand, the growing bourgeoisification of the party is well under way (Roy, 2003). Reflecting this observation, people of the two case study areas interpreted actions of councillors from the CPI (M) and LF through this idiom of corrupt self-fulfilment. Recounted in chapter three, the political culture of the TC was similar to the LF in matters of corruption, and people had similar perceptions of TC councillors.

In Jodhpur Park, the TC councillor was alleged to have underhand links with the promoter appointed by the KMC to develop the Jodhpur Park market. During the 2004 beautification of the park abutting the lake, he was alleged to have taken bribes from the contractors and on insisting that the renovation design be such that allowed him to extract maximum financial benefits from the construction. Similarly, in Pal Bazaar, the LF councillor who was part of the JSC at the time of the pond rejuvenation was alleged to have obtained personal financial benefit from the sale of the silt excavated from the pond. As part of the JSC, he was also alleged to have obtained financial benefits from the JSC's fish rearing activity and its collection of idol immersion fee during *Durga Puja* celebrations. Though it was not possible to verify these allegations, yet they did not seem improbable in the light of media reportage about the self-serving behaviour of CPI (M) and TC party cadres.

Other than direct personal benefits that the councillors allegedly tried to gain, they also showed agency in increasing the support base for their parties, in the process sometimes ignoring their party's ideologies and discipline, as well as their own structural pre-dispositions. They used strategies of populism that the 'New Communism' of the LF deploys to capture votes, as well as clientalistic and semi-clientalistic relationships parties cultivate with voters from different strata of society. This involved the interference of the non-formal channels, especially party mass organisations, in the working of municipal channels. Non-formal channels are discussed later in this section. Here we concentrate on the strategies of councillors to increase the support base of their parties.

While cultivating votes, councillors of both case study areas demonstrated preference for groups that were numerically larger, had united political affiliations, were politically engaged and mouldable through clientelistic relations or populist mechanisms. Fox (1994) cautions against encompassing every instance of political bargaining as clientelism, defining it as between actors with significantly unequal constraints on the autonomy of interactions between them. The political bargaining between actors of similar degrees of power is based on populist mobilisation, fulfilling the needs and agendas of the voting group. The ease of forming coalitions with persons with similar structural positions (Benjamin, 2000) made the Pal Bazaar councillor engage readily with the area's surrounding community group through a populist mode of mobilisation. However, more important than the ease of forming identity-based coalitions were the characteristics of the surrounding community in Pal Bazaar, preferred by politicians while cultivating vote-banks. In Jodhpur Park, the politically engaged and unified grassroots group was attractive and formidable enough as a vote-bank to prevent the councillor from forming coalitions with the area's surrounding community.

Continuing efforts to fulfil their party agenda and personal agenda for increased political power, strategies employed in the two areas also demonstrated politicians' desire to increase captive voters in their area. These captive vote-banks were created by strategies for regime consolidation that resulted in what Roy (2003) calls a 'geography of patronage'. This geography of patronage was observed in the fieldwork, with it resulting in the formation of 'colonies' where relocation of evicted grassroots actors took place. Interviews with relocated settlers in these colonies about their political and social resources and constraints validated Roy's (2003) assertions about re-territorialisation of political mobilisation and control through movement of squatters and other grassroots actors from scattered urban location to a single, isolated and circumscribed space (ibid). As seen in the Pal Bazaar case extracts from interviews with the evicted grassroots group, reproduced in sections 5.2.2, 5.2.6 and 5.2.7, show that these colonies provided institutional space for the LF to engage in patronage politics, as all colony settlers become completely dependent on the political party and its structures for survival.

The LF's strategy of creating a 'geography of patronage' by voter relocation to areas of LF power and to constituencies of mid-level LF politicians was seen in the case studies. As recounted by grassroots and surrounding community respondents in the fieldwork in sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.2.4 the Pal Bazaar councillor helped relocate the grassroots *basti* into KG's ward, the powerful KMC MMIC, thus ensuring a large, captive and dependant vote-bank in KG's ward. Similarly, in Jodhpur Park, ARC -the LF's NC member, in section 6.1.2 also stressed on relocating the grassroots actors (in the event of the *basti*'s eviction) within the

same ward, to ensure a captive vote-bank. Interviews of settlers in these colonies provided evidence of LF regime consolidation in the colonies through The LF's status as the sole source of goods and services necessary for survival in these areas. The colony settlers mentioned their total dependency on the LF and the LF's total power in such colonies. Furthermore the fieldwork demonstrated that the survival of the grassroots groups was completely dependent on remaining compliant with the dominant party's wishes and commands and remaining sensitive to the shifts of political power.

These relocation colonies were also observed to be arenas of semi-clientalistic relations between politicians and their voting group. However, it is simplistic to envision relations between unequally positioned actors such as grassroots groups and politicians as of one-way clientelism and dependence. Grassroots groups often utilise their political resources cannily, taking a pro-active stand to define their external relationships with political actors (Benjamin, 2000). This was observed in the Jodhpur Park *basti*, as evident from extract in sections 6.1 and 6.3, where grassroots actors utilised their political resources like links with politically powerful municipal insiders and support of politically strong entities like the municipal workers union to emerge as significant bargaining actors in the political field while in semi-clientalistic relationships with parties on which they depended for survival.

The influence of non-formal channels on formal channels, and their functioning as structures of governance parallel to formal structures became apparent through the fieldwork. The chapter now examines non-formal channels, also called the paralegal structures of political society (Chatterjee, 2004), like political party mass organisations and other groups functioning as claim making channels. The impact of non-formal channels on grassroots environmental claim making can be seen as an embodiment of everyday politics. This analysis should be read in the light of the discussion about everyday politics of councillors to understand the overlap between the formal channels and non-formal channels in practices of power accumulation in the political field.

The influence of non-formal channels on formal channels in Kolkata is explained by Roy (2003) as a LF populist strategy for maintaining the legitimacy of the regime. As seen in chapter three, she defined regime as a specific structure of power predicated on simultaneous deployment of legal and extralegal mechanisms of control and discipline. The fieldwork corroborated this strategy's importance for LF regime consolidation. In the field the legal mechanisms of control and discipline involved the municipal channels acting in their legitimate formal roles, while extralegal mechanisms involved non-formal channels- party mass organisation like the NCs, the unions and the Mahila Samitis and other actors such as

politically active members of local community based organisations (like the JPI in Jodhpur Park and the JSC in Pal Bazaar) affecting the political field of these interactions. The strategies of control and discipline observed in the field involved local party mass organisations in relationships of clientelism and patronage with grassroots and other actors. As was seen in both Pal Bazaar and Jodhpur Park cases, non-formal channels like the NCs and party workers maintained a close relationship with grassroots actors, remaining abreast of the day-to-day problems in the latter's lives. This not only helped non-formal channels gain inroads into the grassroots settlement but also made them the most accessible channel of claim making for the grassroots group. Thus party mass organisations had significant control over the grassroots settlements in both case areas, as is seen in chapters five and six. In the field, this 'geography of patronage' discussed previously in reference to councillors, also revealed party offices and local clubs in the case study locations and the resettlement colonies in Mukundapur, Ganganagar and Shaheed Bhagat Singh Colony through which populist mobilisation of the urban poor took place. Chatterjee (2004) describes this as a shift from formally organised structures such as political parties to loose and often transient mobilisations, building on communication structures that would not ordinarily be described as political- such as the clubs. As reiterated through the fieldwork it was seen that grassroots actors are unable to survive in the urban milieu unless part of such patronage networks, and are hence under the control of political parties and members of non-formal channels, as observed in both case studies.

In Jodhpur Park, the degree of power of non-formal channels like the JPI, Society etc. were based on their networks and links with the formal channels. Detailed in chapter six, the JPI was able to function effectively as a non-formal channel due to its networks with local party mass organisations and politicians from the CITU, CPI (M) and TC. Consequently, it was able to maintain a dominant position of power with respect to the grassroots *basti*. Similarly in Pal Bazaar, party mass organisations like the NC were closely involved with the JSC. This contributed to garnering support from various political parties for the JSC's pond rejuvenation efforts. Eviction and relocation of the grassroots group from the Pal Bazaar area also reflected strategies of control and discipline used by the LF to maintain its power bases in Kolkata.

As mentioned with reference to councillors' strategies for maintaining power, eviction and relocation of squatter settlements in Kolkata are part of the LF's regime renewal strategies. The eviction of squatter settlements from urban areas to colonies such as Ganganagar,



Mukundapur, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Colony<sup>2</sup> in outlying fringes of Kolkata is part of this strategy. The fieldwork supported Roy's (2003) contention that these evictions and relocation are done in those areas of Kolkata in which mid-level leaders of the CPI (M) want to increase their power base. The patronage politics of mid-level CPI (M) politicians like KG is omnipresent in the southeastern fringes of Kolkata. Hence, KG, involved in the eviction of grassroots group from the Pal Bazaar area, was able to manipulate the evictions and resettlements to suit his political ends. The research findings supported Roy's contention that these relocation colonies are a site of informality where ownership and user rights are established, maintained and overturned through extralegal systems- the implementation of techniques of discipline and power by party mass organisations.

In fieldwork interviews in sections 3.2.3, 5.2.6 and 5.2.7 colony settlers in Ganganagar and Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar stressed the LF mass organisations' power to distribute plots in the colonies, 'discipline' and punish settlers refusing to follow party commands, and to interfere in the innermost functioning of settlers' lives to ensure complete control over them. It emerged that it is characteristic of these colonies that the relationship of patronage is reproduced on a daily basis through the operation of party mass organisations that oversee every detail of daily life in these colonies from problems with municipal services to fights among neighbours. This increases the dependency of relocation colony dwellers on the parties, keeping them in relationships of subordination to the party. As seen before, these dependent groups are cultivated as vote-banks by party functionaries- councillors and party mass organisations- which involves providing patronage and favours in return for votes and participation in party political events. The fieldwork interviews indicated that party mass organisations operate by using the identity of colony residents as nodes around which political, social and cultural negotiations occur. These negotiations lead to the formation of identity-based groupings based on regional origin, religion and caste dividing grassroots groups. Thus dependence on non-formal channels deepens social divides among grassroots groups, increasing their vulnerability to political manipulation for fulfilling the self-interest agendas of the political parties.

As emerged from the fieldwork in the Pal Bazaar area and from Roy's (2003) work, evictions and relocations are also a mechanism by which land is reclaimed from the city's fringes, made habitable and ready for sale to developers. The grassroots groups in Pal Bazaar stressed their conviction that they were being evicted to fringe areas of southeastern Kolkata to act as 'pioneers', as seen in section 5.2.6 where Ganganagar families recounted their fate of

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<sup>2</sup> Under KG's leadership the Pal Bazaar grassroots group was relocated to these colonies in Kolkata's undeveloped fringe 5-10 kms from Pal Bazaar with virtually no transport links to them.

evictions and re-evictions as a common occurrence in Kolkata's political field. They claimed this to be a common LF strategy for making an uninhabited area habitable so that this land that could be sold to developers after colony residents were evicted to even further off locations.

A key issue reinforcing this LF strategy that emerged from fieldwork interviews was that even in relocation colonies, grassroots groups are not provided secure tenure or land deeds. They remain squatters, staying until party patronage continues. This was seen in the case of the evicted Pal Bazaar grassroots actors, as evident through their quotes in section 5.2.6 and DM's comments in section 5.2.7. They were relocated, but not provided ownership papers, increasing their insecurity and the certainty of future re-eviction. These cycles of eviction and relocation are part of the LF's strategies of regime renewal and fulfil the agendas of mid-level leaders in expanding their vote base, and of the LF by forming coalitions with property developers as part of its emphasis on urban development. The poor are used as pioneers to make land for urban development habitable while providing an easily controlled captive vote-bank. As observed in the field, the construction of middle class housing was one of the most profitable businesses in contemporary Kolkata and thus the LF's focus on urban developmentalism used such strategies to its commercial advantage.

Further, an important factor observed in the fieldwork as determining the ability of relocated grassroots actors to survive in these colonies was their attention to the balance of power between the locality's political forces. Any shift in the strategic balance of political forces could have dramatic effects on the lives of these grassroots actors living on the fringes of urban life in Kolkata (Chatterjee 2004). Political compunctions could compel sudden withdrawal of political patronage from a colony, increasing its vulnerability to further evictions (Roy, 2003). This has unfortunate consequences for grassroots actors' lives in these colonies as was recounted in sections 5.2.6 and 5.2.7 by grassroots actors from Ganganagar and Shaheed Bhagat Singh Colony where they described the pressure to participate in the activities of the local party in power in the area. Hence, for self-protection against uncertainty colony residents claimed it remained crucial for them to maintain careful and opportunistic support of various political forces, thus increasing precariousness of life in these colonies.

At this point, it is relevant to revisit different sites of subsidiarity relevant for this research. Seen so far, caste and class were important in shaping formal channel responses towards claim-makers, primarily through their combination into *bhadra* identity. Caste largely did not demonstrate any separate significance, except in municipal reservations for SC-STs, in which case SC-ST municipal representatives were able to partially raise some issues of their concern

at the KMC level. Regional identity emerged as important in shaping affiliations among formal channel members and claim-makers - whether due to East Bengal origin in Pal Bazaar or due to the Bihari vote-bank in Jodhpur Park. The claim making process also revealed its gendered nature through the masculinisation of public claim making, the de-gendered nature of municipal representation and overlooking of women's claims in formal channels. Clubs and colony committees, the prime vehicles of control in relocation colonies, were also largely masculine domains, limiting the involvement and hence importance of women and their discourses from the agenda of political parties and their functionaries in the colonies. Women from relocation colonies remained foot soldiers in the entire enterprise- bolstering the political parties by increasing body counts at their political events and as voters in elections, without influencing the agendas at the municipal level or in the everyday politics of the colonies.

Analysing the TC's reaction to LF strategies of regime renewal is pertinent here. As repeated earlier, the TC faction led by Mamata Banerjee opposed squatter settlement evictions, while the KMC mayor led TC faction supported these. This can be explained as the party's attempt to capture a broad cross-section of the Kolkata public as supporters. Grassroots actors' loyalty could be secured through Mamata Banerjee's support for them, and the middle class's support by the mayor's emphasis on a '*bhadralok*' city- clean, pleasant and refined, requiring eviction of the undesirable 'others'- the squatter settlements. Even if this was not a planned strategy of the party, its existence can be linked to the political pasts and personal presentation of the leaders of the TC factions. The TC mayor was famed for his masculine, tough talking image. Mamata Banerjee, on the other hand, established her party in West Bengal through her personal portrayal as a leader of the poor, downtrodden masses- tapping on the popular Bengali image of a saviour goddess (Bhattacharyya, 2004).

The analysis now examines the influence of LF party channels on the municipality. The crux of the CPI (M)'s party design was externally operated party control of municipal affairs (Bhattacharyya, 1998), which was reiterated in the field. In Pal Bazaar, NC members were prominent in the JSC's work and also handled claim making to the municipality. Their nomination by the local councillor to the WC had extended party control over this channel introduced by the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA. In Jodhpur Park, the then TC councillor relied upon party supporters to keep track of the ward's problems. The previous councillor, PSS from the LF, had utilised CPI (M) branch office and NC inputs for his work in the area. The CPI (M) party branch office remained in close contact with *basti* residents maintaining a hold over them. In both case study areas, claim making to formal channel members- the councillor and officials- occurred largely through the mediation of either TC members or LF party mass organisations

or party structures. This was encouraged by the councillors and by municipal officials, as these party mass organisations could be moulded and controlled by the councillors.

Party mass organisations employed myriad mechanisms to penetrate the local polity, like deep involvement in their daily lives, knowledge of their domestic issues etc. A CPI (M) women's organisation member, SB from Jodhpur Park, illustrated this when she explained how women of the mass organisation got involved in the daily lives of local women, going house-to-house to solicit support for the party by intervening in problems like domestic violence and other issues affecting area women. Though this presented a scenario of party cadres knowledgeable about the local community's problems and issues, yet it did not translate into action for addressing these issues. The basic mandate of party mass organisations was increasing the party's popularity among the local populace. Further, they were controlled by the party's dictates. Hence, they did not undertake activities against these interests, like helping supporters of opposing parties, making claims on behalf of people that would harm their party etc. Ultimately, party mass organisations were shaped by their mandate to provide a platform for the party to penetrate the local populace and increase its support base.

Having examined formal and non-formal channel members and their interactions with claim-makers, it is possible to establish the relative importance of the factors influencing access of grassroots claims to the municipality. The discursive field did not have a very high impact in determining this access. Surrounding community environmental discourses had higher parity with municipal environmental discourse, aiding formation of discourse coalitions between the surrounding community and formal channels in Pal Bazaar. Due to the impact of the political field through concerns of High Politics and everyday politics, Jodhpur Park demonstrated a situation where this discursive parity was insufficient to prevent grassroots claims from accessing formal channels. Grassroots access occurred by activating the agency of municipal officials influenced by the powerful political actors supporting the Jodhpur Park *basti* due to its value as a vote-bank. The Pal Bazaar surrounding community had the characteristics of a good vote-bank, in addition to having social networks and shared history with many KMC formal channel members. Thus the coalition between the surrounding community and formal channels worked well on counts of both the discursive field and political field in Pal Bazaar.

The identities of surrounding community members- their legality, their networks, their particular class-ethnicity combinations that matched those of formal channel constituents increased the possibility of formation of solidarity groupings between them. These solidarity groupings, similar to discourse coalitions emerging out of discursive affinity based on similar environmentalisms, kept the formal channels potentially more receptive to the surrounding

community claims. However, the diffused nature of power ensured that this was not an unequal situation for grassroots groups, who used their everyday politics interactions with non-formal channels to keep their interests alive in claim making. The interactions of the moment of social relations with that of discourse, power and material practices become apparent from this.

### **7.3 The macro-level- 74<sup>th</sup> CAA in West Bengal:**

This section assesses the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's degree of success in increasing inclusion of grassroots environmental claims in municipal formal channels based on the discussion of environmental claim making from the previous sections. The 74<sup>th</sup> CAA is examined here for the interface between its environmental agenda and its inclusion agenda. These agendas if successful, would have increased the access of grassroots environmental claims to formal channels. These agendas of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA were unsuccessful to varying degrees because in practice they faced impediments arising from the discursive field and political field. The following sections examine these factors to understand the reasons for low success of the inclusion agenda and failure of the environmental agenda

#### **7.3.1 Failure of the municipal environmental agenda:**

As seen in 2.1 and 4.3.3, through the Twelfth Schedule of the constitution the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA had the ability to broaden the scope of environmental issues considered municipal subjects. The environmental agenda of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA, would have moved the prevailing municipal focus beyond that of services delivery to include a more participative, just and complex definition of the urban environment. The new environmental agenda would require a more nuanced understanding of the urban environment than an agenda with only a line services focus. The environmental agenda and inclusion agenda would complement each other to produce an inclusive, participative setting of environmental agendas for individual municipal wards. As seen in 4.3.3, this would mean widening municipal environmental issues beyond the few traditional line services, alongwith assessing municipal environmental agendas for their justice towards claims of different groups of citizens. However, in the field, the environmental agenda of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA seemed to have failed.

A reason for the failure based in discourse can be attributed to rigid conceptualisation by the municipal level of environmental issues considered valid within its remit. The positivist values informing the municipal level (Marston, 2004) prevented enlarging its institutional cognitive commitment beyond straightforward supply of services. The line-services focus of municipalities continued even after the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA gave them the obligatory responsibility of environmental protection and promotion of ecological aspects in West Bengal. The failure of

the environmental agenda from the discursive level arose from the inability and lack of desire of the municipal level to look beyond its technical orientation and positivist rationality to examine multiple environmental discourses existing in society.

The taken-for-granted nature of municipal understandings of the environment, blind to other readings of it, may be argued as necessary for an actor whose primary purpose is ultimately functional and managerial. However, even before the actions or orientations of municipalities could change, a space had to exist for alternate discourses to be elucidated and acknowledged. The significance of taken-for-granted knowledge is that some subjects are never discussed and certain questions never raised (Gledhill, 2000). The absence of discursive space for any other reading except a positivist reading of the environment removed the possibility of voices of different actors shaping municipal environmental agenda and practices. Including more than just the service delivery agenda in the municipal understanding of the environment could have had less inequitable outcomes for grassroots claim makers whose claims did not relate to delivery of line services. In such a case, environmental justice concerns would have had a better chance of inclusion in municipal environmental discourses. This would have created municipal discursive space for grassroots environmentalism, rather than just a middle class environmentalism with its focus on environmental pollution prevention, cleanliness and aesthetic improvement. Allowing more than service delivery to define urban environmental agendas could have prevented middle class environmentalism from having a position of primacy in municipal environmental discourse.

Though one might argue that the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA never intended that an alternate 'variety of environmentalism' influence municipal conceptualisations of the environment, yet the twelfth schedule also mandated that municipalities should safeguard the interests of weaker sections of society. This provided a creative opportunity to municipalities to combine the environmental agenda and the social justice agenda to create space for a different conceptualisation the environment than as traditionally understood by middle class environmentalism. This would, at the least, have created space for alternate environmental discourses being admitted into the municipality. Municipal channels remained unwilling and unable to make the creative leap to combine the inclusion agenda with the environmental agenda to provide environmental justice to claim makers whose claims required a focus on environmental issues beyond traditional line service delivery.

However, this issue of allowing entry to other voices in the municipal discourse is perhaps at odds with the nature of the municipal organisation. The postmodern desire to include varied voices and discourses is at odds with the municipality's modernist, positivist ethos believing

in the totality of grand urban areas planned by technically competent urban planners and shaped within the reality of political influence and limited financial means. Perhaps the discursive failure to include multiple understandings of the environment was after all a failure of faulty expectations from the municipal level. Perhaps the passing on of a responsibility like protection of environmental and ecological aspects by the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA to the municipal level was doomed to fail due to its inelegant fit with the very nature of a municipality.

Other than failure at the discursive level was the more mundane failure of functional implementation. Pollution prevention, upkeep of urban waterbodies and similar issues important in this discussion continued to be considered the responsibility of the PCB or various state departments despite allocation of environmental protection to the municipal level. KCS and NS, senior central government bureaucrats instrumental in the formulation and enactment of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA blamed this on the lack of accompanying funds and capacity in the municipality to handle pollution prevention, environmental protection and promotion of ecological aspects. The environmental issue was one of the several 'attractive' issues added to the twelfth schedule without a clear idea of how these responsibilities would be operationalised and obligations met by the municipal level.

The multiple jurisdictions, under which environmental issues fell, further complicated implementation. This is illustrated by taking the example of urban ponds. At the KMC level several departments had conflicting and limited responsibilities with regards to the ponds. These included the Parks and Gardens department, the Chief Municipal Planner and Architects Department, the Estate Management and Revenue Department. The Conservancy Department declined responsibility of maintaining ponds, as did other possible KMC departments. At the state government level, waterbodies above five cottahs in size could be taken over by Fisheries Department in the event of pond filling. Simultaneously, the Land and Land Reform Department and the Block Land and Land Revenue Officer looked at all rights-related issues for ponds. The Refugee and Rehabilitation Department looked at cases related to ponds in the state's refugee areas. The Pollution Control Board looked after industrial pollution of ponds, overlooking their domestic pollution. The Forestry Department accepted responsibility for the Jodhpur Park lake's upkeep, but did little in absence of the KMC's failure to evict the *basti*. Thus, urban ponds in Kolkata were under multiple departments at the local and state levels, illustrating the jurisdictional complexity around elements of the urban environment. This was an important reason why the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's environmental agenda could not be implemented in letter or spirit.

Finally, political equations between the state and local levels also hampered the success of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's environmental agenda. This failure stemmed from jurisdictional confusions surrounding the urban environment, as well as from the political equations between the state and local level governments. Politicians from different government levels opposed sharing environmental responsibilities, especially in the case of urban areas where political parties other than the LF were in power at the local level. The departments of the LF state government which had jurisdictional overlaps with municipal departments over environmental issues, engaged in messy battles stemming from their differing political cultures and clashes between political parties in power at the different government levels. Thus political disputes also caused the failure of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's environmental agenda.

### **7.3.2 Low success of the inclusion agenda:**

As outlined earlier, the inclusion agenda of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA involved introduction of WCs and reservations for women and SC and STs to increase the access of a variety of people into the municipal level. As seen in chapter three, the inclusion agenda succeeded only partially. Women's reservations fulfilled their mandate partially by increasing the participation of women to 33% of the all councillors in the municipality, however without these elected women demonstrating any of the envisaged gender-based solidarity with women from their constituencies or raising gender or women's issues at the municipal level. New formal channels like WCs created for the inclusion of voices of a wider variety of people in urban governance and increasing the claim making points for the public, failed due to opposition by councillors and bureaucrats. SC-ST members were included in municipal governance in a limited way. This section analyses the reasons for these failures and partial successes.

The nature of the political field determined the success of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's inclusion agenda at the KMC level. In positivist policy making the success of any procedure is based on assumptions of objective and rule bound formal channel members working impartially towards its implementation. However, formal channel members were actually not independent, objective or rule bound. Their biases and structural predispositions coloured their reactions to procedural innovations like the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA, which attempt to change the political and social status quo. The self-interest agendas of formal channel members also shaped their reaction to the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's inclusion agenda. The inclusion of a greater variety of voices and increase in peoples' access to the municipality through the WCs bypassing existing formal channels threatened to diffuse political power among a larger number of agents. This idea of diffusion of power proved too uncomfortable for formal channel members. Hence, bureaucrats and municipal representatives found ways to bypass the WCs or render them ineffective, as detailed in chapter three.



Reservations for women and for SC-STs achieved limited political success as they allowed introduction of these groups into the municipality without challenging the municipal discourse towards gender, women's issues or caste. This allowed usual practice of politics and conduct of municipal matters without placing the burden of adjustment on municipal officials or representatives. Instead women representatives and SC-ST representatives had to adjust to and fit within the masculine, upper caste *bhadralok* municipal organisational culture. Further, there was no support from political parties to opening up municipal discourse to issues related to gender based needs and interests. Raising such issues would have had a deleterious impact on the political standing of women politicians, making them appear weak and with limited concerns. Hence though women took advantage of reservations to enter active politics, raising the profile of women in politics, their failure to radically engage with the ideas of gender needs and gender based solidarity, on which the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's gender inclusion agenda had been predicated, points to its limited success.

The political field in Kolkata was characterised as hegemonic (Ray, 1999), implying it has a homogenous political culture and a concentrated distribution of power. This hegemonic political field ensured that the concentration of power was not diffused through the WCs. It also ensured that the homogenous political culture, characterised by masculine, *bhadralok* organisational culture in the KMC, was left undisturbed by the introduction of concepts like gender interests and needs or SC-ST interests which would have challenged this homogeneity. The hegemonic political field in Kolkata effectively killed off the potential of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's inclusion agenda to include more and different voices in urban governance.

Dilution of the WCs bolstered the importance of party mass organisations as claim making channels. These party mass organisations- such as NCs and women's organisations of the LF acted as claim making channels for the local populace in preference to municipal channels since councillors utilised party mass organisations to obtain information on their wards and involved them in decision-making about the ward's priorities. The ease with which LF party mass organisations penetrated the local population was another factor causing their primacy. Whereas formal channel members dealt only with municipal claims, party mass organisations cultivated a deep relationship with locality people, intervening in their private conflicts and public issues. Acting as claim making channels parallel to formal channels, party mass organisations approached municipal officials with claims of the local populace. The sidelining of WCs by formal channels, did not affect the ability of party mass organisation in approaching municipal officials, as they approach them as private citizens and with the councillor's support. This dual strategy of deep penetration of the local populace and involvement in municipal work through the local councillor made party mass organisations

the claim-making channel of choice for people. The Left's political culture made this reliance on party mass organisations almost mandatory for councillors from all parties. In this the LF had an advantage over other parties, as it had well articulated and differentiated hierarchical structures, unlike cruder organisational structures of other parties in the state.

The 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's inclusion agenda was also hampered by functional problems. WCs were difficult to implement, as they required induction of citizens acceptable to the councillors and the municipality. Finding candidates who would be able to act independently and yet be acceptable to all parties proved to be troublesome. GM, a senior bureaucrat explained these problems as arising from the possibility of the takeover of WCs by a councillor's supporters, making them unacceptable to other parties. The antipathy to 'too much participation' in governance and the possibility of using WCs to spy on activities of councillors further increased their unpopularity and prevented WC formation. Similarly, rotations of constituencies reserved for women made the implementation of women's reservation problematic. Further, finding suitable women candidates for contesting elections was also problematic for political parties. Hence, other than the political field, functional barriers to smooth implementation also prevented the success of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's inclusion agenda.

#### **7.4 Revisiting the Hypothesis:**

Having examined the reasons for the outcome of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's environmental agenda and inclusion agenda, the chapter revisits the research hypothesis.

"The Indian Democratic Procedural Innovation was unable to create the political opportunity for formal environmental claim making by grassroots women and men as the innovation lacked understanding of environmental claim-making of grassroots actors and was hampered by the nature of the political field with its inherent exclusions."

This hypothesis did identify some of the issues important for explaining the failure of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA in creating increased access for grassroots women and men's environmental claims to formal channels. Firstly, it identified the procedure's lack of understanding of the complexity of environmental claim making activity, demonstrated to be true. The complexity of this activity, seen in its discursive dimension, issues related to High politics and everyday politics, impacts of various actors' identities on claim making, and the structure and agency of the formal channel members- point to a process following fuzzy logic rather than the positivist logic of a procedure aiming to provide defined measured inputs, expecting certain defined and measurable outputs. However, this was not surprising, as all positivist procedures are based on a simplified model of actual complexity. Procedures, by their very nature cannot

encompass all the diversity and messiness that occurs in reality, and focus instead on imposing a single recipe to cure varied maladies.

The hypothesis's emphasis on the nature of grassroots environmental claim making pointed to its pre-empting that this would be different from environmental claim making as understood by other actors. Through fieldwork this part of the hypothesis was proved to be correct, as the nature of grassroots environmental claim making was found to be very different in its discursive and practical dimensions than surrounding community claim making. The hypothesis also assumed the nature of the political field to be responsible for the failure of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA in increasing grassroots access to formal channels for environmental claim making. This too was borne out, with the research examining the nature of High Politics and everyday politics and the exclusions they shape and encourage. However, the hypothesis failed to overtly state the contribution of the discursive field in the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's failure. Though indicating the discursive dimension while mentioning the nature of grassroots environmental claim making, it did not overtly express this aspect, which emerged as significant in shaping the access of grassroots environmental claims to formal municipal channels.

Another omission was more significant- the hypothesis did not examine whether the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's agendas were appropriate for the local level. The thesis maintains that since the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA had an environmental agenda *in combination with* an inclusion agenda, it was appropriate for the local level. The principle of subsidiarity states that action should occur at the lowest level appropriate for it. The local level was most appropriate for fulfilling the social goals of the inclusion agenda. However, the environmental agenda would be constrained at this level due to discursive and capacity constraints, therefore the local level may not have been the most appropriate for it. There was a participatory deficit and lack of effectiveness in the ways in which the municipality operated. The nature and capacity of local authorities and formal claim making channels needed to be altered for the success of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's agendas.

## **Chapter Eight: Conclusions**

This chapter moves beyond the case studies and the Indian context to the larger level conclusions regarding the main components of the research. The question attempted is: What broader issues, that are not context specific, emerge from the entire exercise? The chapter draws on arguments made in chapter one and discusses the lessons learned about the discursive field and the political field through the study.

### **8.1 Discussions about the discursive field:**

The social constructionist approach followed in this study was expanded in chapter one. This understands nature and environment as socially constructed categories, in direct contrast to the functionalist approach where existence of social problems, and in this case environmental problems, are considered a direct result of identifiable, distinctive and visible objective conditions (Hannigan, 1995). The social constructionist approach contends that social problems are not simply reflections of objective conditions in society but rather come to be identified as such only as a result of an interpretative process engaged in by competing claim-makers. The 'new environmental conflict' as Hajer (1997) defined it, is not conceptualised as a conflict over a predefined unequivocal problem with competing actors pro and con, but is seen as a complex and continuous struggle over the definition and meaning of the environmental problem itself. Such an understanding of environmental conflicts was useful for this study's research focus and the kind of analysis conducted.

Constructivism understands discursive constructs of environmental problems- such that there can be different 'realities' of the environmental problematic for different people. The value of the constructivist approach to understanding environmental conflicts is in that this view not only accepts varied meanings of the environment for different groups, but also takes into consideration the impacts of the political and social context on definitions of environmental issues and the questions of power inherent in the processes of legitimation of particular views of environmental problems.

As seen in part A of chapter one, ideal-typical environmental policy models used in positivist policy studies try to neatly fit the interpretation and response of a state apparatus towards environmental issues into pre-defined categories shaped by values of objectivity, scientific proof and expert management of environmental problems. This decides the discursive frame from within which a particular environmental conflict or situation is judged by the state. This 'standard view' of environmental management (Harvey, 1996), is a dominant paradigm of most state actors. Its dominance results in it permeating into popular discourse about environmental problems. Thus, even those actors whose own cognitive commitments give rise

to an alternate definition of an environmental issue are forced to mould their claim-making efforts to the dominant and popular standard view of environmental management. Positivist policy making by formal state channels ascribes to the discourse of administrative rationalism looking towards the 'big talk' of science for discourse validation (Stott and Sullivan, 2000). This disadvantages groups who do not speak this language of science or whose claims are derived from a moral reasoning, not evidence based rationality. The limitation of positivist approaches to environmental policy making is that they overlook or under-emphasise the political field, the actors and their interests in the policy making process.

The deep divide between the social constructivist approach and functionalist tendencies entrenched in popular discourses on environmental problems was very apparent in this study. Though adopting a constructivist approach allowed this research to conceptualise the different varieties of environmentalism that could exist- it was a problematic position to take in the fieldwork. Frequent misconceptions about the nature of the study and open hostility to the idea that there could be alternates to positivist answers to environmental problems were encountered in the fieldwork. The respondents in the field, especially those from educated, middle class-upper caste backgrounds, irrespective of gender, showed a high tendency to deny any definition of the urban environment other than what fitted with the 'standard view' of environmental management as adopted by the state. The dominant class-caste subject position and consequent lived experiences of the claim-makers, resulting in a particular post-materialist outlook resulted in this understanding of the environment.

As a consequence of these cognitive commitments to a particular environmental discourse, there was a denial of alternate discourses as valid *environmental* discourses. Foucault explained these dominant forms of social knowledge as able to underpin 'technologies of domination' - techniques that allowed one to determine the behaviour of other individuals, to impose certain wills on them, and to submit them to certain ends or objectives (Foucault, 1980), and which could define a field of knowledge accepted as truth. Here he explained truth not as a universal object to be discovered and accepted but rather as 'the ensemble of rules according to which the true and false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true' (ibid: 132). Foucault showed truth to be linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it; with the effects of power induced by truth which in turn it extends. Thus the relationship of truth with power and vice-versa creates regimes of truth - the positive dimension of power- invalidating certain discourses and forms of knowledge (ibid). Thus production of these 'regimes of truth' had to be understood before trying to formulate ways to subvert them through social practice (Gledhill, 2000). It was seen in the field that the possibility of letting other discourses enter into the discursive field of the formal

channels was very remote. The discourse coalitions observed in the study reinforced a dominant discourse bolstering the regime of truth accepted by the formal channels. Opposing environmental discourses were unable to break into these discourse coalitions due to their inability to challenge the 'rules of the game' that propagated the regimes of truth accepted by the positivist formal channel.

Hence, as seen in the study, the oppositional discourses tried to stick to the known methods of claim making, without putting up a substantial discursive challenge to the institutionally acceptable discourse or to subvert the regimes of truth that formal channels accepted. Actors from the grassroots groups faced a discursive dilemma that they constantly had to choose whether to challenge or to operate within the space created for them by the prevailing discourse structures and the discursive affinity that formal channels *perceived* claim-makers of their subject position to have. The grassroots groups chose to not challenge the 'rules of the discursive game' and worked within their implicit understanding of structured ways of arguing in the discursive spaces provided by the state formal channels. Working strategically, they chose to downplay those aspects of their environmentalism at odds with the environmentalism *expected* of them by the claim accepting channels. Hence, grassroots actors publicly articulated largely materialist claims and stressed upon material compensations.

Experiences of subalternity can force actors to be strategic about their choices of claim making, if they want to conform to the discursive spaces and do not want to throw a discursive challenge at more powerful institutional actors who dominate and control discursive space. This is not just a structural explanation emanating from the subaltern identities of the actors, but includes their own agency in choosing to articulate their claims in a certain way, as the social and intellectual costs of challenge can be high (Hajer, 1997). Hence, though the constructivist nature of this research made it easy for the researcher to accept the existence of varieties of environmentalism, actually seeing such varieties being articulated as *public* claims of groups in practice in the discursive field was difficult.

Having discussed different understandings of the environmental subject, the chapter moves to varieties of environmentalism. Varieties of environmentalism that can exist range from the so-called First World Environmentalism with its perceived green agenda, and Third World Environmentalism with its perceived brown agenda (Guha and Alier, 1997). Typically, green agenda proponents are thought to focus on ecosystem protection and immediate and deferred impact of human activity on regional and global scales. The brown agenda is seen as focussing on human well-being and social justice and the immediate problems of the local level, especially as suffered by low-income groups (Allen and You, 2002). Dobson (1998)

characterised the difference between green politics and a brown agenda politics of social justice based on the former's focus on aggregate production of environmental goods versus the latter's focus on disaggregate distribution of social and environmental goods and bads. However, an identification of First World environmentalism with the green agenda and Third World environmentalism with the brown agenda is misleading, as green and brown agenda concerns exist in both Third World and First World contexts and there are a multitude of discursive positions in between the extremes of deep green or deep brown agendas<sup>1</sup> (Humphrey, 2002), (Pulido, 1996). Frequent and contentious tussles on issues of preservation versus differently construed human interests demonstrate an active engagement between varieties of environmental positions in any context (Humphrey, 2002).

Unlike Guha and Alier's (1997) identification of varieties of environmentalism as Southern and Northern, corresponding to an essentialist identification of the brown agenda with the former and green agenda with the latter, this thesis showed that the particular agenda that an actor has can have differing levels of green or brown concerns to it. Hence for example, while there may be a green agenda concern to a claim for pollution prevention, the same claim may be accompanied by a brown agenda desire to accommodate the livelihood concerns of people affected by the actions necessitated by the pollution prevention concern. The position at which one places oneself in this continuum between the green to brown agenda, is determined largely by the discourse one ascribes to. The discourse frames the elements of a claim considered valid- those aspects of the claim that are considered acceptable and admissible.

It is important to take into account these different discourses in an enquiry examining social justice concerns in the context of different understandings and valuation of environmental preservation by conflicting actors- such as the preservation of urban ponds in the face of grassroots rights to access and control over them. As seen in chapter one, the problems of preservation per se can be far less congenial to clear human interest and present some of the most intractable challenges to environmental policy (Humphrey, 2002). When assessing an environmental conflict, the idea that human interests will often conflict with an interest in nature preservation is embedded in environmentalist discourse (ibid), especially with reference to subaltern environmentalism (Pulido, 1996), or Third World environmentalism (Bryant and Bailey, 1997).

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<sup>1</sup> For example, while the brown agenda Environmental Justice Movement exists in a First World context, Third World contexts have green agenda environmentalists campaigning for bio reserves and wildlife sanctuaries drawing on deep ecology arguments of preservation due to intrinsic value in nature and authentic wilderness.

This takes us to the environmentalism of claim-makers shaping the range of claims they consider valid. Examining the actions and claims of various claim-makers within the parameters of their environmentalisms brings up the realisation that it is very difficult to judge the validity of a claim if seen from within a particular environmentalism. For example, 'middle class' post-materialist environmentalism's cognitive commitment to pollution prevention makes claims asking for evictions of a groups polluting urban ponds by their lifestyle seem justifiable from within the boundaries of that discourse. Similarly, from within the boundaries of grassroots environmentalism, grassroots claims for continued right to live next to and use urban pond water seems justifiable. Actions of people of these groups may be defensible within the parameters of their own environmental discourse and value maps. The question then arises of how to come to grips with such situations of environmental conflict where the claim-makers possess such differing cognitive commitments arising from ascription to discourses with different axiological bases. It refers to a basic conundrum- a schism between the green agenda and the brown agenda and the problem of relativism leading to inaction and confusion.

In his work on comparing ecocentric and humanist environmental theories Humphrey (2002) points out the possibility of mediating such apparently conflicting discourses by understand the *actual* differences between them through morphological analysis. There are often deep misunderstandings between proponents of opposing theories about axiological and ontological facets of their discourses. What value judgements are made and what entities are considered worthy of being put in positions of primacy determines how different theoretical schools interact with each other. However, as Humphrey pointed out that there is a possibility of mediating the schism between humanist and ecocentric environmental schools through concepts such as contingency and strong irreplaceability. He points to the value of understanding the differences between these schools of thought as not a sterile one between humanism and anti-humanism but as arising from multiple humanisms – the myriad forms that humanism can take, and the many ways in which these ideas can be articulated alongside ecological concerns. Such an understanding can help us in adopting a position with respect to the kinds of environmental conflicts discussed above.

When faced by seemingly opposing environmentalisms such as middle class post-material environmentalism and grassroots environmentalism, it is better to see what lies at the intersection of these two environmentalisms. The different humanisms that inform these environmentalisms can be discerned here. On one hand, post-material environmentalism deals with a humanism that looks to nature preservation as it fulfils human needs of being in touch with nature. On the other hand, grassroots environmentalism looks to nature and hence



*implicitly to its preservation* not so much for intrinsic value that nature may have but in terms of its fulfilling certain materialist and non-material needs. The observations that actions of grassroots actors may be in contrast to any implicit arguments for nature preservation in their environmentalism, is not a function of the discursive domain but can be understood by analysing the political field. As Pulido (1996) explains, subalterns encounter environmental problems through an unequal position of power. Resolution of these problems for subalterns requires intervening in the political field, which may overcome their ideological commitments. Hence grassroots environmentalism, as well as middle class environmentalism *in practice* have to be understood through the superimposition of the discursive field and political fields- through an understanding of local power relations, cultural practices, systems of meaning and economic structures. This is not to deny the very political significance of discourses and their impact on shaping political action (Hajer, 1997), (Humphrey, 2002) but to point out that the way these different ascriptions to discourses play out in relation to issues such as actors' balance of ideological commitments and self-interest agendas, can be fully understood through analysing the discourses with respect to the political field.

For assessing the claims of the conflicting actors part of this study, it was important to adopt a particular lens- to take a political stand- with which to look at the multiple humanisms of the discursive field in their interaction with the political field. By doing so, the possibility of falling into the trap of relativism due to having adopted a constructivist approach could be set aside. A third party, in this case the researcher, looking at the issues of the conflicts cannot do this 'objectively' as there is no objectivity that can transcend taking up either discursive position or at least a median of them. Hence the answer pointed to deciding the framework within which the issues of the environmental conflict would be examined. In this thesis, the framework that assessed the 'shape' of the conflict was decided by the choice of assessing the inclusion agenda and environmental agendas of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA with respect to the claims of grassroots claim-makers. This choice of the lens with which to look at the claims of the claim-makers from differing environmentalisms, established the priorities that the investigation wished to impose on the conflict.

Hence, within the current framework adopted, the environmentalism of the surrounding community seems to overwhelm the municipality's cognitive commitment, denying the possibility of grassroots environmentalism accessing the municipality and in the process imposing sanctions on the grassroots group through eviction. Though the eviction in one case was accompanied by relocation, but the use of force and the grassroots group's inability to enter into a dialogue through the formal channels- point to the negatives of the 'middle class' environmentalism, as seen through the adopted lens. So the position taken here was that the

grassroots claims could not be resolved just by providing them with alternate living arrangements. The issues were not just better access to services but democratically being able to balance alternate and perhaps improved living conditions and the concerns of equal representation and inclusion. The questions of environmental justice, understood as access to and control over urban spaces; and awareness of material as well as non-material consequences of environmental activism for the actors involved in environmental claims were equally important.

Hence, it is of little surprise that different persons with different cognitive commitments and not adopting the same lens used by this topic, found different balance of merits in the claims of the two groups. This was observed in the case of the head of the NGO from Pal Bazaar area who found the analysis of the issue carried out within the remit of the present topic to undervalue the JSC's work in saving the environment from destruction. Similar reactions expressed in a seminar by academics from different department in Kolkata University can also be explained thus. Ultimately, the central point is that the cognitive frame that is adopted to examine a question shapes the way its universe is defined, determining the nature of the conclusions that can be drawn about the case. In the remit of the present enquiry, the impact of 'middle class' environmentalism denied grassroots actors the access to the formal channels that this topic was enquiring into.

Employment of any discourse as a sole credible discourse is a highly ritualistic affair that serves to reproduce existing power relations (Hajer, 1997). This was seen in the overwhelming sway that the discourse of administrative rationalism held over the formal channels and the space it created for post-materialist environmentalism in the formal channels. This reproduced the power relations existing between claim-makers from the grassroots and other groups into the discursive field of the formal channel. The formation of discourse coalitions between groups with discursive affinity is an illustration of the role of discourses in not only reproducing power relations, but also actively shaping and institutionalising certain power relations.

Discourses do not just stand alone, but are in a dialectic relationship with other 'moments of social processes'. Hence, what an actor articulates as his or her discourse is a product of a dialectic relationship between discourses, beliefs, social relations, institutional structures, material practices and power relations. Discourses internalise effects from all of these domains while reciprocally entering in, though never as a pure mirror image, to all of the other moments of social processes (Harvey, 1996). This was seen in the study as well, where the discursive constructs of the various claim making and accepting groups were seen to have

emerged from a dialectic relationship between their discourses and the other moments of social process. Hence, one saw the effect of social relations and identity, of history and shared pasts, of material practices, and power relations between different groups and within groups on shaping the discursive field of the politics of environmental claim making.

This takes the chapter towards the observations about the political field that emerged from the study. However, a brief look at structure and agency is relevant before that since as seen in the case studies, the structural aspects of discourse and of social relations that shape identity have an important role to play in the politics of environmental claim making. Similarly, the agency of actors (whether individuals or groups) in overcoming the constraining effects of structure creates new possibilities of action and new linkages between them. It is perhaps better to understand structure and agency together in a view where it is not just the agency of actors that overcomes structural factors (or vice-versa in which structure constraints agency), but all transactions occur in a field imbued with power. This field is composed of social relations- which are the structuring factors; and material practices and transactions- which represent the agency of actors coloured by their political and self interest calculations; with both structural and agency aspects embedded in power and activated by it.

The next section examines the conclusions drawn from the study about the structural aspects of High Politics and social relations; and the agency aspects reflecting everyday politics, which shaped the environmental claim making of the various actors.

## **8.2 Discussions about the political field:**

Before moving on, it is important to briefly revisit the debate on procedural and substantive justice started in 1.1. In this thesis, it is not that substantive outcomes or distributive justice is considered unimportant compared to participative justice. Since the thesis focuses on a procedural innovation- an instrument for greater participation for leading to greater justice, therefore the thesis focused on participation. The substantively just outcome for this study would be greater unmediated, viable and unforced participation of all affected groups in formal environmental decision-making. This focus on participation was even more pertinent since the political context of West Bengal in which the research was conducted was very attuned to participation in governance mediated by non-formal channels. Hence here participation was the first and crucial step to ultimately achieving other substantive outcomes- i.e. addressing people's claims. Therefore this thesis focused on participation as *in itself* a substantively just outcome for the political, social and cultural context of the research.

The discussion now turns towards the impact of some of the moments of social processes on the politics of environmental claim making. As observed in the case studies, the identity and subject positions of actors, their political affiliations, their social relations, their shared histories and present struggles interacted dialectically with their discourses to shape the politics of environmental claim-making. This politics was created by and negotiated using different resources, strategies and overcoming different obstacles by different claim-making groups, the choice of which partly depended on their identification as part of civil society formed of 'citizens' or part of political society formed of 'populations' (Chatterjee, 2001).

This distinction between citizens and populations was important in influencing how the formal channels interacted with the claim-makers and what level of influence non-formal channels had on the claim-makers. Chatterjee (2001) described 'populations' as groups of urban residents like squatters, whose livelihood or habitations involve violations of the law. State channels cannot and do not treat them on the same footing as civic associations of urban residents who live in a way confirming with state legal regimes and laws. Chatterjee called the latter 'citizens', a definition emerging from their legitimacy in the eyes of the state as candidates having rights. For the state, populations could at most have entitlements to welfare. Citizens were part of the civil society, while populations like that of grassroots groups, had to rely on political society to access their entitlements or get their claims heard. Roy also pointed out this distinction between 'citizens' and illegal squatters by saying "When one is homeless, one cannot be a citizen" (Roy, 2003:211). As seen in the case studies, groups in political society have to negotiate claim-making, made uncertain due to the formal channel's ambivalent attitude towards them, by making a numerous connections outside their group; with other groups in similar situations, with more privileged and influential groups, with formal channel officials, with political parties and leaders.

These connections between groups and others draw on the realms of High Politics and everyday politics. The former, as seen in previous chapters, involve political parties engaged in a political game for electoral success. High Politics involves competing political parties using their political ideologies, their manifestos, members, and formal channel members from the party in strengthening their hold over political power. Everyday politics is called into play for bolstering this effort. Everyday politics involves political mass organisations, parallel or as Chatterjee calls them, 'paralegal' structures that are part of the political society which enter into variety of relationships with grassroots actors and other populations in return for their political support through votes.

As seen in chapter one and through the cases, these clientalistic relationships of the parallel channels with populations fulfil mutual needs. The grassroots groups and other populations depend on the non-formal party structures to make claims upon the state, to fulfil their material and other needs and to provide them with support in continuing with their livelihoods or lifestyle activities which fall outside the remit of state sanctioned legality. The non-formal channels in turn extract political support from these groups by way of votes and participation in political activities. It would be wrong to characterise this relationship as one of one-way exploitation of the grassroots groups by the non-formal channels, as the former have a canny understanding of the High Politics and everyday politics and use their votes as a bargaining chip for their survival. This was reiterated in Vernon et. al's 2003 study of rural West Bengal, which showed that the workings of political society, often dominated by sectional interests or 'groups', conditioned claim-makers to access the state in particular ways. This conclusion supports this study's observation of grassroots groups' utilisation of parallel or non-formal structures for claim making as the easiest way for them to access the state.

However, it would be fallacious to think that these populations are able to be free of their dependency on the non-formal channels and political parties in any significant way (Williams, 2001). The formal channels' discourses and practice towards grassroots groups push these actors into relationships of dependency with non-formal channels, who use this dependency for regime renewal and perpetuation. The support from High Politics and everyday politics for grassroots groups is conditional on the non-formal channels' balance of benefits. Based on this balance of benefits, non-formal channels can withdraw support from 'populations' as and when convenient for them. Despite the fact that there may be numerous competing political parties in the political field, since each party may have similar relationships with grassroots groups, the choice for such subaltern groups is largely limited to turning from one party to another based on convenience, without hopes of support by that party in face of it becoming politically inexpedient for them to do so. As explained by Roy (2003) this is a daily renewal of legitimacy that requires unceasing negotiations between the political parties and subaltern groups and this reliance on the non-formal channels and the view of the state as the 'mother-father state' makes it difficult to enfranchise men and women as 'the people' (Vernon et. al, 2003), who can act as 'citizens' and participate in governance through formal channels of claim making using new procedural mechanism like the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA.

The fact that 'citizens' from civil society have state sanctioned rights and can approach formal state channels as part of these rights makes it more difficult for grassroots groups and other such 'populations' to approach the formal channels. The impact of discourse and social relations on the relationship between the formal channels and the claim-makers can be seen

here. The identities of the 'citizens' derived from their legality, their particular class- ethnicity combinations that overlap with that of the constituents of the formal channels prompt formation of solidarity groupings between the formal channels and the citizens. These solidarity groupings, similar to the discourse coalitions emerging out of discursive affinity based on similar environmentalisms discussed in section 8.1, keep the formal channels more attuned and receptive to the 'citizens'- from backgrounds with more power in comparison to the grassroots groups. However, the diffused nature of power ensures that this is not entirely an unequal situation for grassroots groups, who use their everyday politics interactions with non-formal channels to keep their interests alive in the overall scheme of things. The interactions of the moment of social relations with that of discourse, power and material practices become apparent from this.

Apart from political resources from High Politics, everyday politics of environmental claim making as seen in the case studies demonstrated the use of practices of power and resistance by claim-making groups also discussed in chapter one. Among such practices that grassroots actors used, the 'weapons of the weak' (Scott, 1985) are significant. Stopping short of open challenge, these practices express discontent and opposition without arousing retaliatory reaction having high costs. Practices of power are also visible in the strategic manipulation of discourses by grassroots as well as opposing groups. In the case studies, elite groups used environmental discourses as a script to camouflage their identity-based antipathy towards the grassroots groups. These antipathies illustrate instances of the centre expelling its anxieties towards the margins, defined relationally as the 'other' due to having subject positions perceived as abhorrent. Similarly, grassroots groups used environmental discourses as a script to obtain better material compensations from the formal channels in turn for being evicted.

Another interaction between social relations, material practices and power was seen in the study through the strategic use of articulated identities. Seen in chapter one, identities come into play as structural factors shaping the interactions between various claim-making groups. Similarity in identity through class, caste, regional origin, shared histories of struggle and common political affiliations are used strategically to shape community action against subaltern groups configured as the 'other' due to their different identity profiles. The use of articulated identities to forge community action against a deviant 'other' is a practice of power used in environmental conflicts. The functioning of identities and subject positions as nodes of negotiation and exclusion is apparent not only through the strategic use of identities by claim-makers, but also by the negotiations around identity-based groups by the non-formal channels to bring about the daily renewal of regime legitimacy. These 'unceasing

negotiations' (Roy, 2003) using elements of identity and difference sharpen community divisions and identity-based schisms while allocating goods on the basis of these differences.

The glaring lack of gender awareness in the political field in the study resulted in the exclusion of women as claim-makers to the formal channels. Considering women and men's claims to be the same, and a product of their class position; political parties, formal channel members as well as non-formal channels members did not attempt to elicit women's environmental claim instead focussing on subaltern groups as 'aggregates of people' (Levy, 1992) with singular unified claims. These situations of gender blindness also illuminate the power relations and social practices that marginalize gender as a category worthy of investigation. These practices render gender equivalent of biological sex, making it appear an independent variable like age. A critical analysis of gender in institutional contexts involves looking at specificity and complexity with respect to gender and other elements of identity (Sunderland and Litoselliti, 2002). Specificity implies looking at particular women and men in particular settings and complexity refers to the ways in which gender interacts with other aspects of identity- such as ethnicity, class, occupation, and with power relations. In this study's micro-level analysis of the political and discursive fields, the equating of gender with biological sex and its separation in the discursive realm from other elements of social identity was observed, with the very political use of sex in a strategic overlap with other subject positions seen in the political practice of claim making.

The prominence given to class at the expense of other elements of identity, as discussed in chapter one, replaces the possibility of there being publicly articulated subaltern women's environmental claims as separate from subaltern men's claims. The marginalisation of gender, in its relationship with class is apparent in the lack of women's claims being publicly articulated even among elite groups. Roy (2003) expressed this as a gendering that results in the masculinisation of politics such that women become marginal in public fora, due to a masculinist idiom of political mobilisation and participation. Due to lack of any public presence of women's claims related to access to and control over environmental resources, the impacts of environmental actions on women's gender needs and roles get overlooked. The consequence is increased disparities between women and men in their power relations within the family, community and society arising out of changed access to and control over the environment.

The gendered nature of environmental claim-making, which prohibited the articulation of women's claims at the formal level or in the public arena in the study also reflected in the representation of women's voices in the formal channel. This links to the concerns of this

topic with procedures emanating from the inclusion agendas of 'good governance' paradigms. Discussed in chapter one, strategies that try to increase the funnel of representation for inclusion of marginalised groups in governance fail since they do not problematise the relationship between categories of marginalisation and political representation and power. The criteria fuelling the actions of political parties, people's representatives and formal channel members are often based on their own calculations of benefit and loss, which may or may not include providing the space for voices of 'the marginalised' in institutional spheres. De-linking the inclusion agenda from a social context and political discourse which privileges class above all other social relations results in a skewed understanding of the procedures needed to operationalise the inclusion of groups other than those marginalised due to class. As a result there is failure of inclusion beyond the token presence of representatives from the marginalised categories.

Further from this discussion, it is relevant to briefly re-visit the structure and agency debate. Though structuring effects of subject positions shape relations of power, the agency of actors has a role in deciding the fate of procedures for advancing the inclusion agenda. The agency of actors is shaped not just by their own calculations of benefit and loss, but also through their ideological commitments, which may propel them to overcome their structural predispositions and carve out a different trajectory. One of the key expressions of agency is development and attachments to various social identities (Marston, 2004), though this does not imply that at all points actors are conscious of choosing their identity or that this choice is a fixed entity. The duality of structure and agency as explained by Giddens is useful to understand these possibilities. Giddens' conception of structure has no reality except so far as it is 'internal' to agents in the form of memory traces; it is agents who bring 'structure' into being, and it is 'structure' which produces the possibility of agency. Since agents draw on rules in the enactment of social practices, the capacity to modify the rule that is drawn on in any action is an ever-present possibility. At each point of structural reproduction there is also a potential for change (Giddens and Cassell, 1993). Marston (2004) applies this to discourse analysis for social policy analysis, stating that at one level, policy-making is about the ongoing tension between agency and structure within a range of institutional relationships. This was seen in the study, where the shaping and constraining effects of structure and agency were observed in the politics of environmental claim making using formal channels. They affected policy formulation as well as its implementation- the latter an essential components of social policy analysis on which this research focussed.

It is now pertinent to review the various dimensions of the political field and the discursive field related to the process of environmental claim making. For this purpose, I have attempted



to construct a model of the environmental claim making process as it occurs 'on the ground'. Fully aware of its inherent reductionism, this still appears a useful exercise as it enables a comparison with the 'good governance' efforts of inclusive environmental claim making as attempted through the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA in India.

### **8.3 Sketch model of 'real world' environmental claim making and procedural understandings of inclusive environmental claim making- a comparison:**

A sketch model of the process of environmental claim making as observed in the field and looking through the cognitive lens of the research can be outlined. As observed, environmental claim making was conducted within a discursive field that shaped the cognitive position of the claim-maker. This claim making utilised varied resources and strategies to access the claim accepting channels, whether formal or non-formal, with the claim. These resources included the claim-makers' articulated and flexible identities, which shaped the structural factors governing the claim acceptance process; as well as their networks- whether local or global with members of formal and non-formal channels. However, agency mediated by the self-interest and ideology of the claim-maker or claim-accepting channel also shaped the final outcome of the claim making process. The claim making process was affected by the natures of the political and discursive fields; and the opportunities created for claim acceptance through procedural innovations. Despite demonstrating resistive practices and canny utilisation of the political and discursive fields for attaining claim making goals, claim making actors displayed an ultimate vulnerability since their actions were moulded by the changing political equations and need to stay 'on top' of the political game. Governance processes determined the political space created in the claim accepting channels through their creation of an opportunity structure. However, until the political opportunity structure was not bolstered by a freedom of admission of discourses other than the regular environmental discourse of the claim accepting channels, the claims of only those claim-makers were able to access the claim accepting channels that had a cognitive resonance with the discourse of these channels. Hence it was concluded that the political field could not overrule the importance of the discursive field while keeping in mind the structure and agency of the actors involved.

Comparing this model of environmental claim making processes to state attempts for inclusive environmental claim making through formal channels, we see that procedures for operationalising 'good governance' tried to understand administrative-managerial structures as embedded within larger political processes. Yet despite this focus on the political dimension, in practice there was a certain de-politicisation. The state was seen as a neutral mediator, not as comprising of actors with their own subject positions and ideologies, who respond to the discursive field and political field. In the governance framework, the state has

ended up a 'solved political problem' (Roy, 2003) free of power contestations. This has resulted in a goal like inclusive environmental claim making getting operationalised through initiatives like Wards Committees and women's reservations— which despite having tremendous potential for bringing about change- have become ineffective due to the highly political handling of essentially depoliticised procedures.

Overlooking the discursive field and the non-admissibility of alternate environmental discourses is also crucial in continuing the domination of formal channels by the discourse of administrative rationalism. Taking account of the discursive field is important due to the institutional basis for reifications of the understanding of the environment, which prohibit the entry of alternate discourses into the formal channels. Practical responses of formal state channels get coloured by institutional bias and reproduction of well-entrenched institutional discourses towards the environment. The state's lack of understanding of the process of environmental claim making as imbedded in the moments of social processes also results in the low success of governance attempts for inclusive environmental claim making through formal state channels.

Ultimately through the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA, processes for claim making through formal channels were created without the parallel creation of *substantive* opportunities for people to achieve this freedom. "Unfreedoms" are created when either inadequate processes or inadequate opportunities exist for people to achieve desired goals (Sen, 1999). The substantive-ness of processes and opportunities is important, since mere procedural inputs rarely result in substantive outcomes. As discussed in chapter one, the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA broadened people's entitlements to accessing municipal governance through legal procedures. However, entitlements are embedded within social relations, and practices governing possession, distribution and use in a society (Kabeer in Roy, 2003). Hence, people's actual capabilities to achieve the entitlement to participation in municipal governance were distorted by the operations of the political and discursive field, which moulded the distribution of this entitlement through the politics of claim making.

#### **8.4 Contributions, limitations and further research:**

This research attempted to look closely at the complexity of environmental claim making in an urban context. The study tried to move beyond the more usual focus on environmental conflicts in rural context. The thesis linked together grassroots environmental claim making in the urban context of Kolkata, examining its functioning within the framework of a procedural innovation, the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA, through a focus on the political field and the discursive field. The study tried to be innovative in its formulation of the problem by combining these variables,

not usually put together in the same enquiry. There have been very limited number of studies about the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA, and none to the researcher's knowledge have looked at its environmental agenda and inclusion agenda, different from the more frequent studies on fiscal or representational issues related to the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA. The choice of Kolkata for studying environmental claim making, using ponds in the heart of the city as the case, is also a way in which the study differed from others. Most work on environmental issues in West Bengal has been around the issues of land and forests in rural areas. Environmental issues in Kolkata have been studied largely related to the East Calcutta Wetlands, with little emphasis on urban ponds, which are an important part of the city fabric.

However, the study was limited to the wards in the added areas of Kolkata, which comprise of Boroughs X-XV and show a specific socio-political character, as these have a large refugee population. A comparison with the wards in inner Kolkata where different social situations exist could have probably yielded a different understanding of the relationship between environmental claim making and political and social fields.

Being a single person research, there were limitations due to time, resources and ability to access all the data envisioned. More time and resources could have allowed a comparison of the cases from the added areas of Kolkata with environmental conflicts in the inner wards of Kolkata. A study over time of the changing political and discursive fields in the KMC regarding environmental claims and conflicts, focussed around the cases of environmental conflicts studied would also have been an interesting possibility in the absence of time and resource constraints. A further possibility could have been studying the state level environmental departments. Such a study would have focussed on their understanding of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's ability to bring about inclusive environmental claim making at the local level. This would have been interesting as the state level was the level of government with the actual resource ability to handle environmental conflicts and also had the responsibility for enforcing the inclusion agenda of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA at the municipal level.

From the experiences of the analysis and the fieldwork, certain ideas for further research emerged. These ideas take off from the points where this research leaves off. Some of these ideas are:

- A comparison of rural and urban decentralisation laws in India- a comparison of the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> CAAs with respect to certain common agendas of these laws, such as their inclusion agendas- with a specific focus on gender and subordinate group inclusion in governance; or with respect to the environmental agenda in the context of the Decentralised Natural Resource

Management (DNRM) framework established for rural contexts and its extension to urban contexts.

- An investigation into the success of other functional agendas of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA listed in the twelfth schedule, such as its agenda for urban infrastructure and services improvement, social justice etc.
- Comparison between different Indian states to understand the impact of different political, social and environmental contexts with respect to the environmental and social justice agendas. Few interesting comparisons could be between states with long-term communist governments in power such as West Bengal and Kerala; between states with very different political cultures- such as Madhya Pradesh (INC dominated), Kerala (communist dominated), Gujarat (BJP dominated); comparison of states with very different social profiles- such as Rajasthan (with low gender justice indices and high rates of atrocities against subordinate groups) versus West Bengal (with better indices of gender justice and subordinate group justice) with respect to the inclusion and environmental agendas of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA.
- Research on issues related to municipal governance and inclusion of various identity groups- such as women, people of different regional origins, from different castes etc. in municipal governance and access to claim making structures within different levels of municipal bodies in a state or across states.
- A study of environmental conflicts involving more than one level of government- such as study of municipal and state level governments with respect to a specific environmental issue such as access to land- to allow comparison between the varied levels of government and their handling of environmental claims.
- A comparative study between different national contexts to study different approaches to urban decentralisation and environmental claim making.

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## Appendix A

### Field Methodology

The topic attempted to answer the following research questions, which were formulated before leaving for the fieldwork:

#### a. Research Questions:

1. What are the assumptions inherent in the 74<sup>th</sup> amendment- with respect to the municipal representation of environmental claims, especially those of grassroots women and men through the agency of their councillors?

- 1.1 What are the assumptions behind gender solidarity and need for gendered representation inherent in legislation?
- 1.2 How does the legislation envision the role of women and men representatives as channels for representing the voice of grassroots women and men?
- 1.3 How does the state conformity legislation translate the mandate for handling of environmental issues to the Urban Local Body (ULB) level?

2. What are the attitudes and behaviour of the members of the formal channels of claim making- the Ward Committee, the ward councillor, and the municipal department- towards grassroots women and men's environmental claim making through formal channels?

- 2.1 What are the attributes of environmental claim making that make claims acceptable to institutional audiences like municipalities, ward committees? What are the values and procedures on which this process is based and what skills does it require claim makers to have?
- 2.2 What has been the track record of the **Ward Committee** in representing environmental claims of grassroots women and men to the municipality?
- 2.3 To what extent do women and men **councillors** represent environmental claims of grassroots women and men to the municipality?
  - a. What is the nature of interaction and attitude of the councillors with the needs, rights and interests of the grassroots women and men of the ward in general? Regarding the environmental claims of grassroots women and men?
  - b. If they choose to take the claims forward, how do the councillors frame<sup>1</sup> these claims for the municipal council or the municipal department? What factors govern this framing?

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<sup>1</sup> by framing I mean the way the claim is formatted and shaped by the councillor verbally and in writing for presentation to the municipal department or council. The concept of discourse becomes relevant

- c. Does solidarity exist between women representatives and women of the ward? Do the grassroots women and men and/ or the councillor perceive such solidarity or work with it in mind? If such solidarity does exist, what are the grounds for its existence- gender/ caste/ class/ political affiliations/ other factors, which are part of their experience of their structural position and role in society? Does such a solidarity exist apart from gender -i.e. are male representatives soidaire with women constituents?
- d. What is the quality of the relationship<sup>2</sup> between the councillors and the municipal department officials? To what extent do councillors influence the municipal officials and how far do they respond to the concerns of the councillors regarding environmental and other matters?
- e. How does the political identity and ideology of the councillor impact their attitude towards environmental claims of grassroots women and men?
- 2.4 How does the **municipal department** react to the environmental claims of grassroots women and men?
  - a. What is the attitude and behaviour of the municipal department towards the environmental claims of grassroots women and men? What factors (social/ political etc.) affect this?
  - b. Is there any evidence of a solidarity grouping between community elites/ other elites and the officials of the municipal department regarding the environmental claim in question?
  - c. What is the impact of the political culture of the state on the municipal department's interaction with the grassroots environmental claims?
  - d. What is the process by which the municipal department accepts environmental claims in general? What is the characterisation of environmental claims that is followed by the municipality?

### 3. How do grassroots women and men make their environmental claims?

- 3.1 How do grassroots women and men formulate, represent and pursue their environmental claims? To what extent are women involved in this process and what reasons govern the degree of involvement?

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here as the way an issue is framed implies choice of discursive strategies, use of metaphors, rhetorical devices etc.

<sup>2</sup> explained in opertionalisation of theoretical concepts section



- 3.2 How do they decide on the appropriate strategy and channel of environmental claim making? What factors govern this decision? What resources- social, political, and other- do they utilise in making these claims? What are the costs they incur in the process?
- 3.3 To what extent do various social attributes like class, gender, caste, religion, regional identity etc. affect grassroots women and men's conceptualisations of matters of environmental importance, their ability to make the claim and the receptivity to these claims by formal channels?

**b. Operationalisation of some concepts for the field:**

These concepts have been expanded in chapter one. Here the effort is to find practical indicators and other ways to operationalise these concepts for the actual fieldwork.

- Environmental claims: Further from the conceptualisation of environmental claims in the theoretical chapter, these were understood in the field as claims about nature and access to and control over the environment as related to the livelihood and/or lifestyle of people. In this case, ponds were selected as the natural resource. Therefore claims regarding access to the ponds, their pollution and water quality, using of the water and other benefits from the pond which are linked to lifestyles of the community (grassroots women and men and others) and the livelihoods of these groups were considered as environmental claims.
- Factors inhibiting use of formal claim making channels by grassroots women and men:
  - Institutionally acceptable format of environmental claims: this was deduced by reviewing the procedures to be followed for making claims regarding environmental problems to the appropriate municipal authority. Interviews with claim makers about the complications of the process and the extra-institutional obstructions to the claim making process also helped point to the values imbedded in the institutionally acceptable format of environmental claims and the skills needed by the claim makers to actually be able to utilise the formal channels for claim making.
  - Local socio-political dynamics: were understood as the various groupings in the local socio-political terrain of the cases and the municipal administration and the way these groupings interact with each other in relationships of support, apathy or obstruction. For unveiling these dynamics at the field level certain questions were kept in the background of every interaction in the field. These were questions about inclusion and exclusion (who is included/excluded from a certain discourse/ group/ formation), of benefit (who benefits from a certain situation - overtly and covertly -to whatever extent is deducible with a degree of certainty-

maybe through triangulation across respondents), of dominance by persons (who dominates -by speech/ action/ behaviour a certain space/ structure), of dominance by ideas (whose ideas/ discourse dominates a certain situation/ space/ structure) etc.

- Political Culture: As seen in chapter one, political culture has both overt and covert dimensions. The overt dimensions are observable through the attitudes, beliefs and rules that guide a political system, determined by the history of a system and the experiences and ideologies of its members. Hence the overt dimension of the political culture was gleaned by interviewing members of the formal channels to elicit their ideologies, experiences, attitudes and beliefs. The covert dimension was understood in the field by observing the presence of hegemonic coalitions between bureaucratic, political and community elites; and their behaviour towards grassroots actors. The former was deduced by observing the nature of claims raised by grassroots and other groups and the nature of claims raised in the formal channels; the latter by observations of interactions between formal channel members and claim makers.
- Social capital networks: are crucial for community action and claim making, especially for groups for whom these are primary resource in facing problematic situations. These were assessed by interviewing the grassroots groups about the identity of the people or groups they turned to for help in times of trouble. Further, questioning them about norms such as gift giving, community celebrations, labour exchange, aid in any other form that exist for strengthening these social capital networks was also important. Elite groups also have their own social capital networks, which may be different than that of grassroots groups. Hence, the nature of these was also understood while interviewing the elite groups.
- Exclusion of grassroots women's and men's environmental claims: this was deduced through records of interactions between grassroots claim makers and claim making channels to understand the attitude of the latter towards the former. It was not possible to directly observe claim making by the case study grassroots actors, except in a few occasions. Hence, the fieldwork relied upon people's accounts of the claim making efforts, official records about this and municipal officials' statements about these efforts. Observing the level of deliberation or action on a claim that was able to access the formal channels also helped understand the issue of sidelining.
- Quality of the relationship between formal channel members and claim makers was assessed by observing the level of interaction, ease of accessibility, perception of the

others' motives and actions, sympathy towards the other's claims and constraints, attitude and behaviour, desire and willingness to act positively regarding the others' concerns.

- Framing of claims by councillors: means the way the claim is formatted and shaped by the councillor verbally and in writing for presentation to the municipal department or council. The way an issue is framed implies choice of discursive strategies, use of metaphors, rhetorical devices etc. all reflecting upon the actor's own subject position.
- Gender Solidarity between the councillor and constituents was assessed by interviewing the councillor to understand whether she/ he felt any special inclination towards representing the problems and issues of constituents of the same gender. If the councillor took special steps to allow the practical and strategic gender needs of the claimants to be met with respect to the claim making process, that would point to the presence of gender solidarity between the councillor and constituents. If the constituents also felt able to raise gender specific issues without hesitation to the councillor- that reinforced this gender solidarity between the constituents and councillor. Since the amendment put in place gendered representation predicated on a notion of gender solidarity between councillors and their constituents, it is only the councillor- constituent relationship that was assessed for gender solidarity.

### **c. Fieldwork Design:**

The fieldwork was based in two stages- the preliminary and final fieldwork stage.

#### **1. Preliminary Fieldwork:**

The preliminary stage was conducted in the months of October 2001 and Dec-2001- January 2002 in Kolkata. Qualitative research methods were used as the nature of the topic involved eliciting people's opinions and perceptions, for which qualitative enquiry is best suited.

The **Objectives** of the preliminary fieldwork were:

- To find a case study
- To test preliminary hypothesis and different assumptions within it
- To understand context and locate snags in methodology
- To locate and establish initial contact with municipal representatives and other actors
- To find out about history and aims of the democratic procedural innovations in question and their implicit attitude towards gender and the environment - from documentary sources and some interviews with experts and state actors.

The **Hypothesis** being tested through this stage of the research stated that:

Democratic procedural innovations aiming at increasing women's participation in urban municipal governance fail to empower peri-urban grassroots women in stating their claims in environmental conflicts and women municipal representatives in representing these.

The innovations rooted in patriarchal values, overlook Strategic Gender Needs and the structural positions of both these groups of women. They also overlook the specific disabling attributes of environmental claim making, reducing the efficacy of grassroots women and their municipal women representatives from claim making and representing to an institutional audience.

As is apparent from above, the emphasis at this stage of the research was on grassroots women's environmental claims, the factors that prevent them from using the formal channels for claim making and women representatives from representing their claims. This clear focus on women was tested through the preliminary fieldwork. The research for this phase of the fieldwork dealt with the issues around the amendment itself, the claim making attributes recognised institutionally, grassroots women and men's environmental claim making and the context of the research- the PUI.

#### **Methods and field experiences- preliminary fieldwork:**

In the field, the methods used included semi-structured interviews and observation and study of secondary sources. The various populations who were interviewed were the members of the formal structures - the councillors and municipal officials; the civil society organisations like NGOs, CBOs involved in work with gender, governance or environment; experts on gender, on devolution and on environment and grassroots women and men. Using research questions as a guide, a list of questions were developed for interviews with the various subject groups.

The basic concerns of the questions were regarding the following issues:

- The attitudes of the respondent about women representatives and their roles, their subjects of representational interest and the attitude of women councillors towards grassroots women and their claims.
- The attitude of the respondent regarding the difference between women and men's perception of any issue and need to take into account the dis-aggregated groups of women's and men's voices in any claim.

- The respondent's conceptualisation of urban environmental issues and views of environmental conflicts involving grassroots women
- The impact of the amendments on achieving representation for grassroots women's environmental claims

**Table A.1** compares the stages of the preliminary fieldwork as proposed with the experience on the field and the way this influenced the preliminary fieldwork and design of the final fieldwork. The purpose of giving the proposed methodology as it was designed initially is to allow a comparison between the methodology as proposed and as followed. This highlights those points that emerged during the preliminary fieldwork causing changes in the way the fieldwork was carried out and also affected the framing of the research problem itself. These issues that arose from the fieldwork have influenced the final fieldwork methodology, the choice of the final case study and the practical problems and issues that have to be kept in mind for the final fieldwork.

- In step one of the preliminary fieldwork, documentary study of municipal records of three- four cities in West Bengal was proposed. This had the aim of understanding the attitude of councillors in these municipalities regarding environmental issues, deducible from the municipal records of the issues they raise in the council. It was hoped that this study of municipal records would help locate case studies of environmental conflict. However, in the preliminary fieldwork, accessing municipal records was almost impossible due to bureaucratic red tape. Hence instead of finding the environmental conflict through environmentally active councillors, the focus shifted to locating cases of environmental conflict from secondary sources like newspapers and from talking to members of civil society. Since secondary data about environmental issues was available most easily for Kolkata, it was decided to focus on this city for the final case.

**Table A.1: Comparison of proposed fieldwork methodology with field experiences- preliminary fieldwork**

<b>Steps Proposed for Preliminary Fieldwork</b>	<b>Relation to field work objective</b>	<b>Experience in field</b>	<b>Theoretical outcome final fieldwork-</b>	<b>Practical outcome final fieldwork</b>
· Documentary study of municipal records of 3-4 cities in West Bengal	· Find case study · Attitudes of formal actors to environment	· Impossible to access records from municipality-  · Environmental information available only about Kolkata	· Focus on interesting case not environmentally active councillor	· Find back up to municipal records  · Case study in Kolkata
· Semi-structured interviews: men and women councillors (identified from step 1)	· Locate councillors · Their attitude about research issues	· Non-recognition of gender by most · Insistence on class · Environmental issues only service delivery related	· New focus: gender in combination with other social factors	· Observe councillor's interaction with grassroots women and men - attitudes and behaviour · Use public surgeries
		· Difficult to access municipal representatives (except surgeries)		· Try different strategies of interviewing
· Interviewing members of civil society	· Find case study · Observe all actors' attitudes towards research issues · Establish contacts with varied NGOs	· Found NGOs: community managed CPRs, health · Little environment-women link in urban NGO's work · No work on devolution	· Working with 74 <sup>th</sup> amendment	

Steps Proposed for Preliminary Fieldwork	Relation to field work objective	Experience in field	Theoretical outcome final fieldwork-	Practical outcome final fieldwork
· Interviewing experts	· Attitudes of all actors towards gender	· Class, not gender understood	· Gender to be studied along with other social relations	
	· Attitudes of all actors towards gendered representation	· Class and political position largely defined as representation criteria		
	· Attitudes towards environment and grassroots claims	· Restricted to urban service delivery · Grassroots priorities not seen as valid municipal environmental subjects	· Differing discourses about urban environment important	· Include questions about their perception of valid urban environmental subjects
· Interviewing bureaucrats - deptt of environment, planning	· Attitudes towards research issues	· Majority: environmental issues restricted to urban service delivery	· Dependant on ideology and experience of official	
	· Establish contacts with bureaucrats	· Women's issues - reproductive role, no other gender solidarity	· Gender solidarity idea challenged	
		· Largely unhelpful bureaucracy with some helpful high profile officials	· Political culture and ideology important	· Identified some helpful and dynamic officials

– The next step proposed consisted of semi-structured interviews of environmentally aware and active men and women councillors identified from the previous step. The aim of these interviews was to ascertain these councillors' view, perceptions and attitudes towards the issues of the research. The field experience demonstrated the difficulty in this step, as it was very difficult to access the municipal councillors except in their public surgeries, where due to lack of privacy and constant influx of people, it was impossible to interview them. Hence a practical outcome of trying to attempt this step was to change the way the councillors were approached. It was decided to use public surgeries to observe the interaction between the councillors and the claim makers of all types. Further, for the final interviewing, different interview techniques such as telephone interviews, submitting a list of questions beforehand to the councillor etc. were used to facilitate interviewing. Ex-councillors were also interviewed, as in the preliminary fieldwork they were found to be more approachable than the sitting councillors. These ex-councillors still maintained links with the political set-up and were active in wards. Hence, their views helped reflect some of the attitudes of sitting councillors, the problems faced by them and the issues related to social activities in the ward. Apart from the practical issues related to access, a clear indication that sex based difference in matters of claim making was not recognised by municipal councillors also emerged and affected the way the topic of the research was conceptualised. As a result of non-recognition of any specific difference between grassroots women and men and of sex based difference, the topic was reconfigured to investigate gender rather than sex based difference in relation to other social relations and structural elements.

– The third step of the preliminary fieldwork involved interviewing the members of civil society. The aim of this step was to establish contacts with a wide variety of NGOs and establish the importance that the issue of grassroots women's interaction with the natural environment had for the NGOs, deducible through their agendas and field of work. From the field experience it emerged that there were no NGOs who worked with the grassroots women-environment link in urban areas and there were no NGOs involved in the field of devolution of power to municipal governments. Further the NGOs working with community managed Common Property Resources and environmental health reported facing a largely unhelpful bureaucracy with a few high profile and helpful officials. These facts pointed to the importance of political ideology and bureaucratic culture in providing scope for the work of the civil society members. Hence the topic was re-conceptualised to include these issues as part of the elements being studied. Further, for the practical conduct of the final fieldwork, a number of dynamic and helpful officials were



identified from the interviews with the civil society members. During the final fieldwork these officials were tapped for data and interviews.

– The next step of the preliminary fieldwork involved interviewing experts on various issues such as gender, governance and environment. The aim of this step was to find out about the attitudes of the varying groups to be interviewed in the research about sex based difference and representation, urban environmental issues and grassroots claims regarding the urban environment. From the interviews with the experts, it emerged that the dominant difference understood by all categories of people was class, not sex or any other factor. Class and political position, not sex, were defined as criteria for getting representation from the councillors. As deduced from these interviews, urban environmental issues were perceived by large numbers of the bureaucracy, councillors and even experts as limited to line services, hence the environmental priorities of grassroots actors were not recognised by claim accepting channels. It made clear the importance of the different discourses about the environment in urban areas as crucial in determining people's attitudes and behaviour towards these issues.

– The final step of the preliminary fieldwork was interviewing bureaucrats and officials of the departments of planning and of environment. The aim of this step was again to enquire about the attitudes of the claim acceptors towards environmental claims and urban environmental issues. It emerged from the preliminary fieldwork that the majority of the environmental issues conceptualised by these actors were restricted to urban service delivery. Further, women's issues were limited to being conceptualised as reproductive issues such as related to women and children's health etc. No gender solidarity was perceived by the claim accepting channel between grassroots women and the women councillors. As a result of the experiences of these interviews, it emerged that the ideology that the claim acceptors subscribed to was very important. The few officials who did think in ways different from the conventional way about the environmental issues in urban areas, did so because of the different political or personal ideology they subscribed to. The experiences in this step also challenged the idea of gender solidarity that was assumed before starting the preliminary fieldwork.

Thus the preceding explanation about the contents of table A.1, clarifies how the preliminary fieldwork helped influence both the theoretical issues regarding the topic as well as the practical issues concerning the final fieldwork. Four case studies were located in the preliminary fieldwork, from which finally one case study was selected for the final fieldwork.

**Characteristics of case study:**

Through the preliminary fieldwork it was possible to identify four alternate case studies. These were selected based on the topic's theoretical requirements and the practical cases observed in the field. The desirable characteristics of the case study to be chosen had the following features:

- Location: it should be in an urban municipality, which has adopted the provisions of the amendments in their functioning
- Conflict type: As detailed in the chapter one, the following characterisation of environmental conflicts has been adopted -
  - conflicts over livelihood issues (of two types- conflicts of grassroots actors against state or other actors' green agenda concerns impinging on their livelihood concerns and conflicts of grassroots actors against other non green concerns impinging on their livelihoods)
  - conflicts over pollution distribution- (who bears the burden of pollution and its negative health impacts)
  - conflicts over different developmental priorities for natural resources arising out of different conceptions of and values towards nature and the environment

So the environmental conflict in question could have any or more than one of the above characteristics.

- Actors: It should involve a wide range of actors, including civil society actors, from different socio economic backgrounds and structural positions in society.
- Gender dimension: there should be a woman councillor in at least one ward, which is part of the environmental conflict. The documented participation of women of the area in the claim making activity is not an essential condition as non-participation itself is an important fact requiring investigation.
- Conflict history: it should have some history of attempted participatory conflict resolution.
- Jurisdiction: it should be under jurisdictions of more than one government department-making it ideal for a study of intra-departmental co-ordination in terms of addressing the environmental conflict and the perceptions of the different departments of the claims of different claim makers.
- Accessibility and safety: it should be easy to access data and people about it and it should be safe.

### **Comparison of four alternate cases:**

Based on these considerations and the insights from the preliminary fieldwork, four case studies were selected, researched and compared. The cases are compared based on the research aims and characteristics of the case study in Table A.2. Based on the comparison of the four preliminary case studies, the ponds case in Kolkata was selected as the final case study. This was since this case allowed studying environmental claim making to municipal governments in the heart of the city. Further, there was a clear environmental conflict involving distinct actors, which had not been affected by too much media intervention or involvement of outside actors. Finally, the fact that the two pond cases that were finally selected were in adjacent wards and had overlapping Borough administrations, made comparisons between them easier. Lastly, accessing the case study areas and accessing data from both the case studies was also easier in comparison to other case studies investigated in the preliminary fieldwork.

## **2. Final Fieldwork:**

### **Study Design:**

The research design consisted of a comparison of two ponds. One pond, in the Pal Bazaar area, had a high level of surrounding community mobilisation around the pond with a very active and effective community structure and a history of failed efforts of grassroots women's and men's claim making against it. The other pond, in Jodhpur Park, demonstrated a lower level of community awareness and mobilisation among the surrounding community while an active and strong opposition by the grassroots group and their demonstrated ability in accessing the formal channels. Such comparison allowed understanding the reasons behind grassroots success in formal environmental claim making in one area when compared to the other. The strategies and resources used by the various claim making groups pointed to the efficacy of the formal channels in claim making and thus pointed to the problems and issues related to grassroots environmental claim making through formal channels.

The final fieldwork was conducted in two phases. In the first phase from October 2002 to April 2003, the researcher was present in the field and had the assistance of two research assistants. In this phase the majority of the interviewing and data collection took place. In the second phase, from August 2004 to November 2004, a research assistant working on behalf of the researcher in Kolkata helped fill gaps in the data collected in the first phase. Cases were revisited to establish the degree of change since the initial fieldwork.

**Table A.2: Comparison of four case studies selected from Preliminary Fieldwork**

	<b>Rajarhaat township</b>	<b>Garbage cultivation</b>	<b>Ponds</b>	<b>Slums- health</b>
<b>Sector</b>	Land and wetlands	Land and garbage	Water	Human health
<b>Issues of conflict</b>	-Destruction of wetlands -Livelihoods loss both due to acquisition for the township	-Land conversion -Reduced access to garbage crucial for farming	Loss of drainage, destruction of common property resource due to municipal apathy	Negative impact on indoor health and due to unsanitary conditions outdoors
<b>Actors</b>	-Farmers, HIDCO, speculators, ministries, NGOs, politicians municipalities, panchayats.	-Garbage cultivators, NGOs municipality departments, leaseholders, politicians.	- Community dependant on ponds, politicians, NGOs, municipality	- Municipal departments, NGOs councillors, slum dwellers, politicians, foreign donors
<b>Jurisdiction</b>	Later to have own municipality	Urban	Urban	Urban
<b>Claim- people motivated or NGO initiated</b>	Primarily NGO motivated	Some claims people initiated but squashed by political bigwigs	People, NGO, party motivated	NGO and people motivated
<b>Women municipal representatives involved</b>	Follow party dictates- are pro township- no women councillors	One of the wards has a woman councillor	In one pond strong involvement. Others may be women	Some- women members of MIC, municipality councillors

	<b>Rajarhaat township</b>	<b>Garbage cultivation</b>	<b>Ponds</b>	<b>Slums- health</b>
<b>Presence of explicit Gender dimension</b>	None seen in fieldwork interviews	Yes- women involved majorly in cultivation and selling of garbage cultivated produce	Yes- women claim makers and women councillor active	Yes- women's health
<b>Media coverage</b>	High, sustained	Very negligible, sporadic	Low, short term focus	Medium, long term
<b>Grassroots people locatable and accessible</b>	Possibly accessible and locatable	Locatable but difficult to access due to volatility of area	Yes	Yes
<b>Public Interest Litigation</b>	One- unsuccessful against township	None	None	
<b>Recognition as municipal subject</b>	Not recognised as such	Falls within urban ward though urban agriculture not recognised	Not explicitly recognised- conflict in recognition	Yes
<b>Existence of field organisations</b>	Yes-	None	Vasundhara- environmental NGO	FOCUS- slum development NGO, DFID and World Bank
<b>Contact officials: documents and govt. data</b>	HIDCO- partly helpful- one strong contact	Hostile in CMDA so far, IWMED helpful	Difficult because of conflict between municipal departments	Slightly easy- some CMDA officials and MIC members

**Methods used in the final fieldwork:**

The final fieldwork had a pre-interview stage and an interview stage. In the pre-interview stage, the physical and social context of the two case study areas was understood through physical observations. In the interview stage, the actual interviews and observations of formal channel interactions were conducted.

- Semi-structured interviews were used for all the populations. Some of the groups such as the grassroots women and men, the NGO members and the persons belonging to the formal channels such as the Ward Committee members, councillors and municipal official related to the actual claim making activity required more than one visit.
- Focus Groups were conducted in the Jodhpur Park area, consisting of the grassroots group, the councillors, formal channel members and members of middle class groups. This was not possible in the Pal Bazaar area due to the scattered grassroots actors and resistant surrounding community. The focus groups were invaluable in understanding the multiple points of view regarding the issues and also in observing the power relations between the various participants.
- Councillor's surgeries where grassroots women and men go for making their claims and interactions of the grassroots women and men with the various municipal departments and officials were observed. Wherever direct observation was not possible, accounts by various actors of previous such attempts were relied upon to understand the nature of such interactions. Such observations helped to ascertain some of the ways in which power is operationalised in these settings and the relationships it builds between the various groups regarding the environmental claims.
- Though the research interviewed those grassroots women and men who were active in claim making, it did not overlook the fact that there were those grassroots women and men in the community who chose not to be part of this process. These persons were those who had a claim but found themselves unable to make a claim around this complaint due to personal reasons or due to being excluded actively or covertly from the claim making process by others. Interviewing them revealed what factors affect grassroots women and men's perception, ability and desire for claim making about the environmental claim in question.
- Pond side counts and observations of pond usage were carried out in both ponds. This helped understand the nature of pond usage by different groups in both areas and the centrality of the ponds in the lives of the surrounding communities. Questioning the actual users of the ponds also helped understand their perceptions of the pond, the community conflict and their involvement in the pond upkeep and other issues.

- Ward Committees had not been formed in the wards in Kolkata where these case studies were located and were dysfunctional in the other wards in Kolkata. Hence, to understand the attitude of councillors towards the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's inclusion agenda using Ward Committees, a suburban municipality next to Kolkata, Madhyamgram, was chosen to study these issues. Madhyamgram was chosen as it was contiguous with Kolkata, had many residents working in Kolkata and hence affected by a similar social and cultural milieu as Kolkata residents, and had functional municipal ward committees in all its wards. The fact that the Trinamool Congress was in power in both Kolkata Municipal Corporation and Madhyamgram Municipality made it an interesting comparison to understand why the same political party at the helm of the two municipalities still resulted in such different outcomes in the two contiguous municipalities.
- Secondary sources: such as newspaper reports, television reports, party literature and radio programmes were analysed to understand the general discourse in Kolkata about the issues related to the environment, gender and governance.
- Records were also kept of conversations with different people in Kolkata, unrelated to the case studies. These conversations were in the form of casual social chats on bus stops, in shops and other public places. These reflected the attitudes of Kolkata residents about the issues of the research.

#### **Pre interview stage:**

The pre interview stage was conducted to help locate the relevant people to be interviewed in the interview stage and gain an understanding of the area and the significant people and groups in the area. This stage consisted of studying the areas in detail so that information gathered in this stage could be used to understand the communities and understand the dynamics of the area and also identify the persons to be interviewed. The steps of the pre interview stage were as follows:

- **Area study-** geographical and urban landscape study covering the following points:
  - Surrounding uses around the pond
  - Range of influence of the pond
  - maps and documents of the ward that contains the pond
- **User profile-** profile of regular, periodic and occasional pond users. Here regular users are defined as persons who use the pond on a daily or alternate day basis, periodic as those whose use varies from weekly to monthly and occasional as those who use the pond only a few times a year on special religious or cultural occasions. The user profile consisted of administering questionnaires to users of the pond at the site of the pond. These questionnaires

were administered to persons at the pond over a twelve-hour cycle from early morning to late evening - once on a weekday and then on a weekend, so that the full range of daily users was tapped. The questionnaire to all users covered the following

- The use they put the pond to
- Specific needs they have from the pond based on religious, regional or class identity
- Range of influence of the pond: the distance from which they come
- Their identity profile consisting of: age range (from visual evidence), Caste and religion deduced from surnames. In case of ambiguous names- by actually asking persons about their religion. Regional identity- by asking about place of origin and whether they have connections still existing with place of origin. “Quick indicators” of class by asking about occupation, place where they stay, whether they own or rent a house or live in the open and whether any house they live in is a *pucca* (permanent) house or a *kutchra* dwelling (made of non-permanent materials).
- **Community profile:** This consisted of the profile of the community surrounding the pond and in the range of influence of the pond. The community profile also covered age, class, caste, religion, regional, gender identity of various sections of the community. However, the sections or divisions that divided the community were deciphered as well. This was done by interviewing persons from the community to understand the ‘shape’ of the actual community divisions as known on the ground.
- **Institutional profile:** This consisted of profiling the main cultural, religious, economic, community service and recreational institutions that existed in the areas, which may have a role to play in the pond or in influencing the politics of the area.
  - Cultural and recreational institutions like sports clubs, libraries etc.
  - Educational like schools, colleges and libraries.
  - Economic like local markets and shopping centres, informal shops and hawkers.
  - Community service institutions -youth clubs, residents committees, NGOs, CBOs, etc
  - Religious institutions like ‘*puja* committees’, places of worship
  - Political institutions like Ward Committees, local party wing offices.

The purpose of profiling all these categories of institutions was that each of them might act as a site of local political power for any particular group or groups and may emerge as the non- formal site of local decision making and politics. The institutional profile consisted of the following: membership information, activity information, involvement with the ponds, experience with formal channels, presence of significant individuals or groups connected with the institution who



have a say in the area and whom the members of the institution turn to for work of the institution or for personal help.

It was kept in mind that the researcher was not an objective and neutral observer. My subject position as the researcher with situated and multiple identities influenced my interactions with people in the field while conducting the interviewing, taking notes and later analysing the data gathered. Keeping a record of my own observations, attitudes and reactions to persons and events in the field helped remove the “neutral researcher” from the entire exercise. Hence, a journal of fieldwork experiences was kept on a regular basis. Further, practical issues such as negotiating access to the participants and re- negotiating access each time, reassuring the participant, deciding on the level of disclosure about the researcher’s private life to the participants and the explicit explanation of the researcher’s goals in interviewing the participant were also considered. The snowballing sampling technique was used in locating the grassroots actors and therefore issue concerning this technique, especially the choice of the ‘gatekeeper’ to different participating actors (Miller: 65) was carefully considered.

#### **Sources of Information:**

##### **Primary sources:**

- Grassroots women and men- active and non-active as claim makers
- Local Councillors
- Ward Committee members
- Larger community members
- Municipal departments dealing with water- state and local level
- Municipal departments dealing with environmental issues
- NGOs working with the grassroots groups and with environmental issues
- Experts on gender, environment and governance respectively
- Councillors’ surgeries
- Municipal Council meetings
- Officials from the Borough and headquarter level of the KMC
- Councillors from Madhyamgram municipality

##### **Secondary Sources:**

- Laws and Acts of West Bengal Government

- Published academic papers on subjects of research interest
- Media- TV, newspapers (vernacular press and national press, English and Bengali press, mainline newspapers and party mouthpieces), magazines, radio
- Political party literature.
- Municipal records

**d. Language, research assistants and guide:**

The actual questions that were asked at the interviews were derived from the Research Questions outlined earlier. These interview questions were phrased in simple and easily understood language. Bengali, Hindi or English were used depending on the language preferred by the person being interviewed.

Research assistants were engaged to help take notes during the interview. . The research assistants did not conduct many interviews independently but accompanied the researcher on the interview sessions. This was important; as it had emerged from the preliminary fieldwork that tape recording of interviews was problematic as people became hostile to the interviewer. Hence, to ensure that nothing was missed from any interview session, the research assistant took notes to supplement the notes taken by the researcher. Apart from the research assistants, the NGO Vasundhara from Pal Bazaar and CED from Jodhpur Park were requested to identify one person from each pond area who could act as an introducer and guide in the community.

**e. Computer based data analysis:**

Data obtained through interviews, observations and from secondary sources was converted into formats compatible with qualitative analysis software, NVivo 2.0 used for data analysis. The first step of analysis was coding the data using a system of nodes. This system of nodes emerged from theoretical concepts used for the topic and the conceptual outline of the analytical chapters. The node structure was a tree level structure with the core concepts occurring at the base with progressively finer levels of concepts occurring as the children of the core node and their children. The next steps included data manipulation using NVivo sets and various kinds of searches to yield information about the data allowing patterns to emerge. Writing analytical memos about various concepts, emerging patterns and themes helped capture analytical insights, hunches and fieldwork reminiscences, which were later compared and collated to allow explanation of phenomena observed on the field.

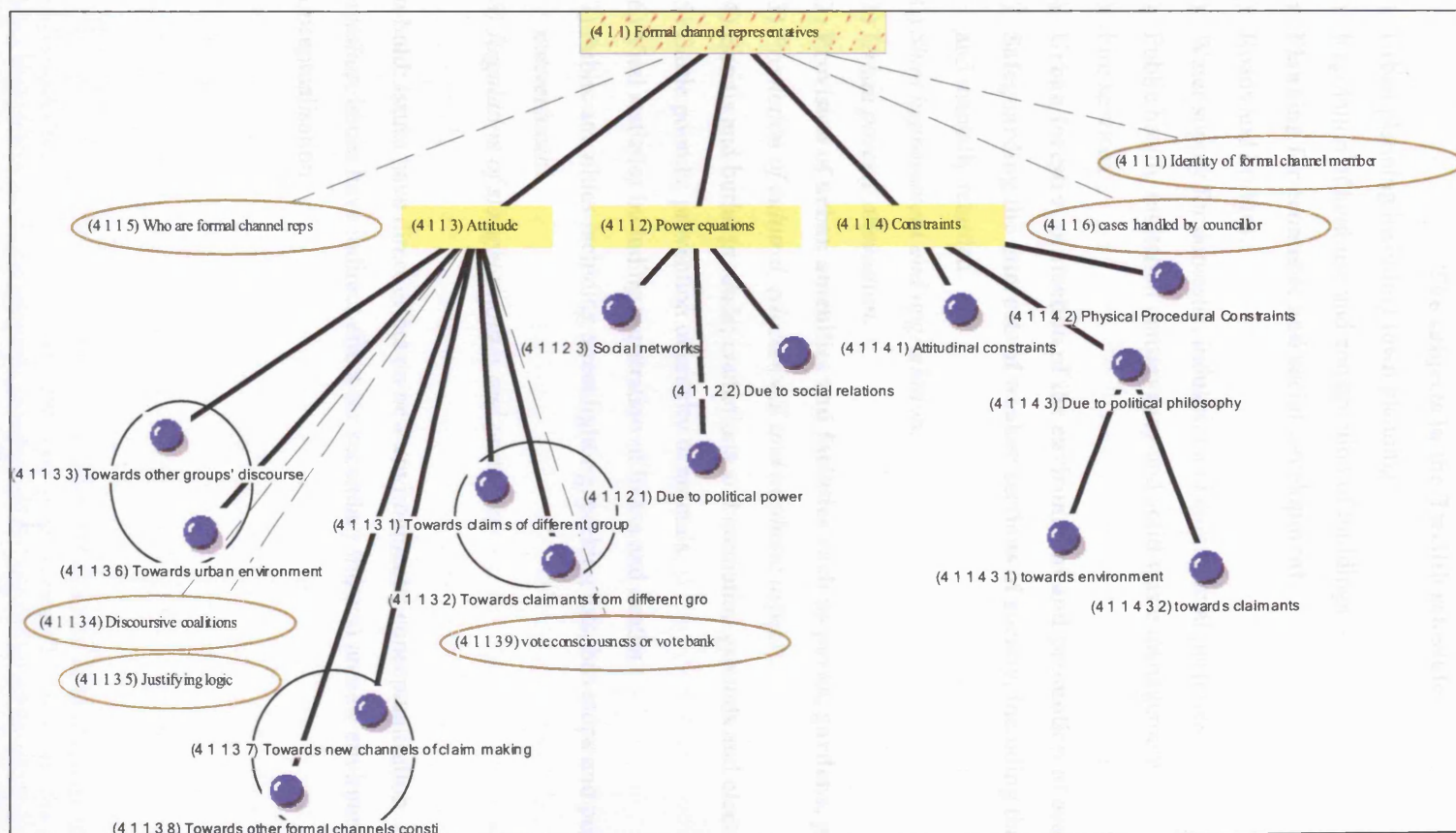
Figure A.1 represents how the nodes were used in the writing of the cases. The numbers in brackets before the node name signify the level at which the node comes. Hence, (411) means a node, which is the first of third level nodes under node 4. Here we take the example of a node “Formal channels representatives” (411), which is a sub-node of claim recognition, and representing sources node. The sub-nodes of this (411) node were

- Identity of formal channel members
- Power equations
- Attitude
- Constraints
- Who are the formal channel representatives
- Cases handled by the councillor

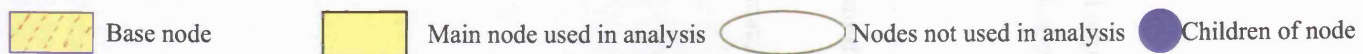
In the actual coding, all these sub-nodes were used to code data. However, only some of these were used for analysis, others were merely collection of data. The nodes that were used for analysis were ones that were linked to the core concepts and research interests of the topic. In the diagram, these nodes have been called ‘main nodes used in analysis’. These nodes had further children nodes, which finely categorised the information into separate analytical categories. These have been called ‘children of node’ in the diagram. The nodes, which were only holders of information and not conceptual nodes or were repetitive, have been called ‘nodes not used in analysis’. An example of a holder of information node is “who are the formal channel reps”. A node that held repetitive information and hence not used in final analysis is, for example, the “Discursive coalition” node. This node had very similar information as the “Attitude”- “towards other groups discourse” node structure.

In writing the analysis chapters, when we talked about formal channel representatives, we divided the chapter according to their attitudes, the power equations they were a part of and the constraints faced by them- all sub-nodes of the node “formal channel representatives”. Thus the sub-nodes provided the conceptual divisions of the topic on formal channel representatives. The children of each of these sub-nodes provided the finer subtopics and details. For example, while writing about the attitudes of formal channel representatives, we used the nodes “towards other groups discourses” and “towards urban environment” to write about the attitudes towards discourses and formation of discursive coalitions. Some of these sub-nodes supplemented each other in providing information about a part of the topic that was being written. These have been grouped in the diagram by placing an ellipse around the nodes. In principle as we went down the

node hierarchy, we added more and more specific information. The higher-level nodes were the broader categories and the lower nodes were progressively more detailed about a certain aspect about the broader in category.



**Figure A.1:** Schematic illustration of NVivo node use in analysis



## Appendix B

### The subjects in the Twelfth schedule:

- 1) Urban planning including town planning.
- 2) Regulation of land-use and construction of buildings.
- 3) **Planning for economic and social development.**
- 4) Roads and bridges.
- 5) Water supply for domestic, industrial and commercial purposes.
- 6) Public health, sanitation conservancy and solid waste management.
- 7) Fire services.
- 8) **Urban forestry, protection of the environment and promotion of ecological aspects.**
- 9) **Safeguarding the interests of weaker sections of society**, including the handicapped and mentally retarded.
- 10) *Slum improvement and upgradation.*
- 11) *Urban poverty alleviation.*
- 12) **Provision of urban amenities and facilities such as parks, gardens, playgrounds.**
- 13) *Promotion of cultural, educational and aesthetic aspects.*
- 14) Burials and burial grounds; cremations and cremation grounds and electric crematoriums.
- 15) Cattle pounds; prevention of cruelty to animals.
- 16) Vital statistics including registration of births and deaths.
- 17) Public amenities including street lighting, parking lots, bus stops and public conveniences.
- 18) *Regulation of slaughterhouses and tanneries.*

**In bold:** issues have direct effect on new environmental conceptualisation

*In italics:* issues have indirect effect (or secondary impact) on new environmental conceptualisation

## **Appendix C: 74<sup>th</sup> CAA**

### **History of municipal government in India- the need for the amendment:**

India is composed of different states with a constitutional demarcation of the subjects under the jurisdiction of the central and the state governments. These have been explicitly stated in the Seventh Schedule of the constitution in the Union List, the State List and the Concurrent List.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the chain of command and clear demarcation of duties is established up to the state government level. However, there was no explicit definition of the powers and duties of the next tier of government- the rural and urban local government level. Though Nehru and the leaders of independent India stressed on three tiers of government and Gandhian thought was emphatic about the need for re-establishing a strong rural local government structure, the emphasis did not translate into firm legislation or constitutional provisions until the passing of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act (dealing with rural self government) and the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act (dealing with urban local government) in 1993. There were some attempts at defining the functions and scopes of work for urban and rural local bodies earlier but without much practical success.

Looking back at the history of municipal governments in Indian cities, we come across Madras, which received its municipal charter as early as 1687. After 1857 and the ‘mutiny’<sup>2</sup> the British administration started serious municipalisation of the country’s cities and towns resulting in 200 municipalities throughout British India by 1870. However, the problems of the lack of independence of urban municipalities started from the very inception of the municipalities. Indian nationalists did not favour municipalisation believing that local self-government was meaningless without political participation at higher levels of government. The British district level administration was also reluctant to grant independent functioning to the local bodies. The Montague-Chelmsford Report of 1919 released the municipal authorities finally from district administration control and the Indian political leadership showed a keen interest in municipal affairs. This interest waned in favour of participation in the provincial legislatures with the advent of 1935 and the granting of provisional autonomy under the Government of India Act. This trend was continued in the post-independence scene. Politically, municipal institutions were important

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<sup>1</sup> The union list deals with subjects under the central governments purview with the state list dealing with matters under the jurisdiction of individual state governments. The concurrent list contains matters that are under the jurisdiction of both the state governments and the central government. In case of disputes related to any entry in this list, the view of the central government is given higher priority.

<sup>2</sup> The ‘mutiny’ was the first organised pan-India rebellion of the Indian soldiers against British rule in 1857. This was later renamed ‘the first war for independence’.

only for a brief period from 1919 to 1935 (Datta, 1999). This marginalisation of the urban local bodies was severe for four decades of the post-independence era with many cases of superseded and annulled municipalities. In many cities, municipal elections did not take place for decades with a moribund local government system.

#### **The 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act- background and passage:**

The colonial authoritarian structure of urban governance inherently antithetical to sharing political power with decentralised urban institutions, continued in the post-independence era. The existence of numerous para-statal and development authorities and boards effectively resulted in the substance of urban municipal governance lying with the state rather than with the local government body. This also affected the credibility and relevance of the municipal bodies for citizens. Two fundamental issues that were at the core of the disempowered municipal governance were depoliticisation of urban development and the extension of State functional domain. The attempt at keeping the municipal level apolitical was defended by arguing for the necessity of maintaining their impartial character. The division of municipal functions into obligatory and optional ones and the narrow revenue base of municipalities further contributed to their weakening (ibid). A very significant outcome of this was the veritable lack of citizens' say in the running of their city or town. Ineffective and occasionally absent representative systems resulted in undemocratic governance of cities. Elite domination of issues and an unreal idea of the needs of the poor was a result of this. Women and other disadvantaged groups had a negligible say in the development plans that were prepared for urban areas.

The initial attempts at decentralising municipal governance occurred in 1952 with the establishment of Community Development Blocks. The Balwant Rai Mehta Study Team was appointed in 1957 to consider the institutional set up and suggest measures for mobilising local initiatives. However, these were all measures connected with rural local government. By the mid 1970s even this had been almost reversed with a trend towards centralisation of power and decision-making. The successive committees and commissions<sup>3</sup> established to advise the government increased decentralisation efforts directed towards rural and district level (Sivaramakrishnan, 2000).

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<sup>3</sup> These included the Asoka Mehta Committee in 1977, the Singhvi Committee in 1986 and the Sarkaria Commission in 1988. The former championed the cause of increased definition for the powers and functions of the rural panchayati raj institutions (PRIs) with the Singhvi Committee additionally recommending constitutional amendments. The Sarkaria Commission's view was that the subject lay completely within the competence of the states.



The National Commission on Urbanisation, or the Correa Commission of 1988, tackled urban local governance and recommended a two-tier set up for larger cities and regular elections for all city and municipal councils (ibid). Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi seriously took this up for reform in 1989 when he first introduced the Panchayati Raj Bill (the 64<sup>th</sup> Amendment) and the Nagarpalika Bill (65<sup>th</sup> Amendment) in the Parliament. Prior to this, meeting and seminars were held with active participation from District Magistrates (DMs) and Collectors from all over the country with the Department of Personnel. The bills had been passed by the Lok Sabha- the lower house of parliament, but the motion was defeated in the upper house, the Rajya Sabha. The two bills were re-tabled in both houses of the parliament in 1992 and were adopted as the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Acts (CAAs) in 1993 (ibid).

The rejection of the decentralisation bills in 1989 stemmed from opposition by state governments fearing a reduction in their authority. The Chief Ministers of some states were concerned about a perceived ‘redundancy’ of power of the state level with direct connection of the local to central level. The political situation of the country with a shaky central government with an eroded support base in the states also added to the reasons for the Bill’s failure. By contrast, in the second tabling of the Bills in 1992, the central government was relatively more stable and succeeded in wielding enough influence in getting the Bills tabled and passed successfully.

**Status of conformity legislations by the Indian states:**

All the fifteen major states and some of the smaller states like Goa, Manipur, Tripura and Pondicherry as well as the union territories of Delhi and Andaman and Nicobar enacted the conformity laws (Sivaramakrishnan, 2000). The conformity legislations enacted by different states range from mere repetition of the constitutional amendment to fairly elaborate amendments to existing State laws. There are many differences between the conformity legislations. However, on an overall analysis, a few states such as West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh etc. have shown more efficiency than others regarding the enactment of various provisions of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA.

## Appendix D

### **West Bengal information:**

West Bengal is located in the eastern part of India. It is bounded on the north by Bhutan and the state of Sikkim, on the northeast by the state of Assam, on the northwest by Nepal, on the east by Bangladesh, on the south by the Bay of Bengal, on the southwest by the state of Orissa, and on the west by the states of Bihar and Jharkhand. The alluvial plain in the south is watered by the River Hooghly and its tributaries. The Himalayan north, comprises of the districts of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Bihar. Variations in altitude result in great variety in the nature and climate of West Bengal. ([www.westbengalgovet.org](http://www.westbengalgovet.org)) Although in area West Bengal ranks as one of the smaller states of India, it is one of the largest in population. The capital is Kolkata, India's second largest city; other important cities and towns are Howrah, Asansol, Durgapur, Siliguri, Darjeeling, Kharagpur and Haldia. (Ibid).

**Social Profile of the state:** is expanded with reference to some sites of difference and subsidiarity

#### – Religious profile:

Of the different religions, Hinduism, with its substrata of castes and aboriginal tribes, claims the adherence of 74.72% of the population, with 23.61% of the population being Muslim (GOWB, 2001). In spite of the large number of Muslims, the Hindu-Muslim strife characteristic of most other Indian states with large Muslim populations, has been less in West Bengal. This may have to do with the secular policies followed by the Left Front government of West Bengal. However, with the rise of right wing forces in Indian politics and the propagation of the 'Islamic terrorist' stereotype popularised by right wing parties in India, this Hindu-Muslim strife may be increasing. These trends are noticeable through events over the past few years such as the interventions by the state governments in framing rules for the conduct of Muslim religious schools in West Bengal and the increasing antagonism between the members of the two religious groups, reviving the animosity towards Muslims felt by large sections of Bengali Hindus who had come to West Bengal as refugees in the 1950s after the partition of Bengal. These religious tensions are observable on a micro scale as well and form an important part of the social identity of a person in West Bengal.

#### – Scheduled caste and scheduled tribes:

The state list of scheduled castes lists fifty-nine castes. From the table D.1 it is apparent that in comparison to the rest of India, West Bengal has a larger than average percentage of its population belonging to the scheduled castes. West Bengal contains thirty eight recognised communities of tribes--the better known among them being the Santals, Oraons, Munas,

Lepchas, and Bhutias--that make up less than one-tenth of the total population. Similar to the population profile concerning scheduled castes, the percentage of scheduled tribe members is also higher than the national average. These facts become relevant for the topic as it points to the 'categories of marginalisation' that the state employs and the large numbers of such persons in West Bengal. The large percentage of the population made up of the scheduled castes and tribes may lead to the scheduled caste and tribe members being less socially marginalised than in other Indian states and in their being politically strong as a large 'vote bank' in the state. This is a conjecture that is borne out by anecdotal impressions of people in West Bengal as well as opinions elicited during interviews in the field. The impression may also be fuelled by the overt rhetoric of equality subscribed to by the Left dominated government in the state.

<b>Table D.1: Percentage of Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe Population to Total Population, 1991</b>					
	<i>State</i>	<i>SC Population (000's)</i>	<i>ST Population (000's)</i>	<i>Percentage of SCs to total Population</i>	<i>Percentage of STs to total Population</i>
	<i>INDIA</i>	138,223	67,758	16.48	8.08
1	<i>Uttar Pradesh(highest)</i>	29,227	288	21.05	0.21
2	<i>West Bengal</i>	16,081	3,809	23.62	5.59
3	<i>Mizoram (lowest)</i>	1	654	0.10	94.75
Source: Institute of Applied Manpower Research (IAMR), <i>Manpower profile of India, Yearbook 1999</i> , IAMR, New Delhi, 1999					

– Women's status in West Bengal:

As the study focuses on gender in relation to other elements of social identity, the following section looks at the status of women in West Bengal as far as can be derived from such large-scale indicators as statistical tables. Status here is meant to indicate the structural position of women which has been thought of as being composed of women's level of education, their participation in the formal or informal waged economy, their levels of personal savings, their responsibility as heads of households.

Table D.2: Literacy Rates – States				
	State	1997		
		Person	Male	Female
	INDIA	62	73	50
1	Mizoram (highest)	95	96	95
2	West Bengal	72	81	63
3	Bihar (lowest)	49	62	34
Source: Institute of Applied Manpower Research (IAMR), <i>Manpower profile of India, Yearbook 1999</i> , IAMR, New Delhi, 1999				

From table D.2, it is apparent that at least basic literacy – both for males and females West Bengal is higher than the average for the country as a whole. The literacy ratio in West Bengal is 69.22% compared with 65.38% in India overall (GoWB, 2001). However, West Bengal performs fairly badly in comparison to the state with the highest literacy among females- Mizoram. There is a

significant gap between the literacy levels of men and women in the state as well.

Table D.3: Women Employment in Organised Public and Private Sectors by State – 1998 (Thousands)			
	State	Public Sector	Private Sector
	INDIA	2,764.4	2,050.9
1	Tamil Nadu (highest)	408.5	324.5
2	West Bengal	115.4	102.1
3	Mizoram (lowest)	10.0	0.6
Source: Institute of Applied Manpower Research (IAMR), <i>Manpower profile of India, Yearbook 1999</i> , IAMR, New Delhi, 1999			

Another indicator of women's structural position in West Bengal, their employment in the organised sector shows that West Bengal again features fairly averagely with comparison to other states, as seen in D.3. As women comprise 48.28% of the state's overall population, it is apparent that a very low percentage of women in West Bengal get employed in the organised private or public sectors. This is also reflected in the rural areas observing the female work participation rate in rural areas in the state which is only 13.54% compared to the highest of 39.07% in Madhya Pradesh and a low of 7.02% in Punjab (Mohanty, 1999). Though this does not account for all the work that is done by women in their different gender roles, yet it is a significant indication of the position of women's labour in the state.

Table D.4: Unemployment Rates by States, 1993-94					
	State	Rural		Urban	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
	INDIA	2.0	1.4	4.5	8.2
1	Assam (highest)	6.2	14.3	6.2	28.9
2	West Bengal	2.8	4.6	7.7	19.6
3	Himachal (lowest)	2.3	0.6	4.1	0.4
Figures relate to usual status of individuals. The figures represent size of unemployment as per cent of labour force.					
Source: Institute of Applied Manpower Research (IAMR), <i>Manpower profile of India, Yearbook 1999</i> , IAMR, New Delhi, 1999					

From the table D.4, it is apparent that female unemployment in urban areas in West Bengal is much higher than the national average and closer to Assam having the highest urban female unemployment than to Himachal Pradesh with the most urban employed females. This may be a result of the categories included in enumerating women's employment, yet the trend is visible from this table. Furthermore, the percentage of rural women in West Bengal who are classified unemployed is much lower than urban women in West Bengal. This may indicate that perhaps women's structural position in urban West Bengal is lower than that in rural West Bengal.

From table D.5, the fact that is most interesting is that girls' enrolment in institutions of formal education in West Bengal is quite close to that of boys up to middle level, after which the proportion of women going for higher studies starts dipping significantly in comparison to men. This confirms with the overall pattern seen in India, with even the state with the highest number of women going to higher studies, Maharashtra, showing the same trend. This points to the supposition that women's education is not given a priority by society in West Bengal beyond imparting them basic literacy. This may hamper their abilities to find waged employment in the formal or informal sectors, which could have consequences on their structural position in society. This may thus point to a reason for disempowerdness among certain sections of women in West Bengal.

Table D.5: Enrolment of Boys and Girls in General Education by Level and State (Thousands)									
State		Maharashtra (highest)		West Bengal		Sikkim (lowest)		INDIA	
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
	Pre-primary	384	327	60	46	12	11	1,558	276
	Primary	6,244	5,636	4,863	4,045	43	42	61,329	47,453
	Middle	2,840	2,277	1,517	1,034	13	11	23,646	15,841
	Secondary	1,336	945	660	283	34	3.3	11,230	6,717
	Senior Secondary*	727	434	456	158	19	1.4	5,907	3,387
	Graduate and Above	448	306	227	164	1	0.6	3,524	2,129
	Total	11,979	9,925	7,783	5,730	74	69	107,194	76,803
*Covers Intermediate / Junior Colleges teaching classes XI-XII under +2 stage									
Source: Institute of Applied Manpower Research (IAMR), <i>Manpower profile of India, Yearbook 1999</i> , IAMR, New Delhi, 1999									

Another important indicator of women's structural position is their participation in local government bodies. From data on rural government participation in table D.6 it is apparent that women in West Bengal, though fulfilling the 33% reservation mandate in the state's rural local government bodies, only marginally increase their standing at this level above the reservation quota. When compared to Karnataka, this increase over the quota seems not much, indicating that the reservations may be used for limiting women to *only* and not *at least* to the reserved seats.

Table D.6: Female Participation Rate in Rural Local Government		
	State	%
1	Karnataka (highest)	43.38
2	West Bengal	35.18
3	Punjab (lowest)	29.68
Source: Mohanty, 1999		

Table D.7: No. of Female Headed Households per 1000 Households and Average Household Size by Sex and States, 1993-94									
	State	Rural				Urban			
		Total No. of Hhs 1991 (000's)	No. of fh.Hhs. per 1000hs	Average hh. Size		Total No. of Hhs 1991 (000's)	No. of fh. Hhs. Per 1000hs	Average hh. Size	
				Fh. Hhs	All hhs			Fh. Hhs	All hhs
	INDIA	111,539	97	3.2	4.9	39,493	106	3.2	4.4
1	Uttar Pradesh (highest)	18,092	82	3.6	5.4	4,317	76	3.7	5.1
2	West Bengal	8,895	76	3.2	5.0	3,609	105	3.1	4.0
3	Sikkim (lowest)	70	57	3.2	4.1	8	100	1.4	3.6
Source: Institute of Applied Manpower Research (IAMR), <i>Manpower profile of India, Yearbook 1999</i> , IAMR, New Delhi, 1999									

From table D.7, it is apparent that there is a very high proportion of female headed households in urban West Bengal. This may point to the greater burden on the state's urban women to support their families. This might also indicate that the structural position of urban women in West Bengal is stronger than that of rural women. Further, West Bengal has the lowest urban birth rate in the country at 14.3 (2001 census) and a sex ratio steadily increasing from 865 in 1951 to 934 in 2001. This also supports the picture of women's structural position having improved over time. The low urban birth rate may indicate on the one hand, urban women's high control over reproduction, while on the other hand, indicating lower number of women living in urban areas.

As seen from the preceding analysis, it is not possible to draw conclusions about the structural position of women from only statistics. Statistics can at best serve as a base, which needs to be built on. The indices of women's structural position were used as the background against which field interviews were analysed to elicit a general notion of women's feeling of their own level of agency, crucial for their ability to make claims about their environmental rights. Further, the influence of other elements of identity like caste, class, education etc. on women's political participation as representatives as well as on peoples' perception of women in general, was also observed in the fieldwork.

## **Appendix E: West Bengal Statistical Abstract 2001-02**

Sources: 1. Bureau of Applied Economics & Statistics, GOWB,  
2. Bhattacharya, D., 2004

### **A. India**

- Sex Ratio: 933
- Density: 324 ppl/sq.km
- Literacy: 65.38%

### **B. West Bengal**

- Area: 88,752sqkm
- Population: 8,02,21,171 (4,14,87,694 males, 3,87,33,477 females)
- Sex Ratio: 934
- Population Density: 904
- Literacy: 69.22%

### **C. Kolkata**

- Area (2001): (all urban) 185sqkm
- Population
  - 1981 33,05,006
  - 1991 43,99,819
  - 2001 45,80,544 (W: 20,74,515, M: 25,06,029)
- Sex Ratio Kolkata (2001): 828 females/1000 males
- Population density Kolkata
  - 1981 22,260 ppl/ sq.km
  - 1991 23,783
  - 2001 24,760
- % literate in Kolkata (2001)
  - total: 81.31%
  - males: 84.07%
  - females: 77.95%

Madhayamgram (N. 24 Parganas)

79,716 males, 75,787 females = 1,55,503

### **D. Sites of Subsidiarity Statistics in West Bengal and Kolkata:**

- **WB SC/ST population by sex + district, 1992**

SCs

83,26,832 male, 77,53,779 female. Total= 1,60,80,611

24,75,206 urban



STs

19,38,955 male, 18,69,805 female. Total = 38,08,760

1,96,312 urban

Kolkata

SCs 1,59,731 male, 1,23,871 female. Total = 2,83,602

STs 5,083 male, 3,510 female. Total = 8,593

– **Population by Religious Community, 1991**

WB: 6,80,77,965 (total population - all religions)

5,08,66,624 Hindus (74.72%)

1,60,80,611 SCs (23.62%)

3,47,86,013 Hindus other than SC (51.10%)

1,60,75,836 Muslims (23.61%)

11,35,505 others (1.67%)

Kolkata: 43,99,819 (total population)

35,46,431 Hindus (80.6%)

2,83,602 SCs (6.45%)

32,62,829 Hindus other than SC (74.15%)

7,79,433 Muslims (17.71%)

73,955 others (1.69%)

– **Distribution of population by major scheduled languages, 1991**

	Bengali	Hindi	Urdu	Nepali	Oriya	Punjabi
WB	5,85,41,519	44,79,170	14,55,649	8,60,403	1,70,001	71,376
Kolkata	27,98,358	9,30,172	5,20,166	14,699	33,637	24,565

– **General & Slum population with literacy rates in Kolkata 2001**

General population: 25,06,029 males, 20,74,515 females. Total = 45,80,544

Slum population: 8,25,334 males, 6,65,477 females. Total = 14,90,811

Literacy general: 84.07% males, 77.95% females, 81.31% total

Literacy slum: 78.30% males, 68.55% females, 73.99% total

– **Incidence rate of total cognisable crimes & crimes committed against women SCs & STs in 1997**

WB (total): 86

Against W: 9.2 [highest: Rajasthan = 22, lowest: Punjab = 4.2]

Against SC: 0.0 [highest: Rajasthan = 11.02, lowest: Assam, WB = 0.0, Punjab = 0.05]

Against ST: 0.0 [highest: MP = 1.84, lowest: Assam, WB & Punjab = 0.0]

– **Incidence rate of total cognisable crimes & crimes committed against women, SC & STs in 1999**

Against W: 8.8 [highest: Rajasthan = 24.5, lowest: Punjab = 6.6]

Against SC: 0.0 [highest: Rajasthan = 10.6, lowest: WB = 0.0, Punjab = 0.2]

Against ST: 0.0 [highest: Rajasthan = 2.3, lowest: Karnataka = 0.1]

Data not there for many states in SC/ST category

**E. Political Profile of West Bengal:**

– **2001 Assembly elections**

Indian National Congress	8.05%
<u>CPI(M)</u>	<u>36.98%</u>
Revolutionary Socialist Party	3.47%
CPI	1.81%
All India Forward Block	5.71%
Socialist Unity Centre of India	0.83%
<u>All India Trinamul Congress</u>	<u>30.99%</u>
GNLF	0.52%
WB Socialist Party	0.68%
BJP	5.25%
Independents & Others	5.71%

**- Results from Assembly elections and Panchayat elections- 1977 to 2001 (tables 1 and 2)**  
(Source: Bhattacharya, 2004)

**Table 1: Percentage of Votes Polled and Seats Won in Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha Elections in West Bengal: 1977-2001**

		1977	1977	1980	1982	1984	1987	1989	1991	1991	1996	1996	1998	1999	2001
		VS	LS	LS	VS	LS	VS	LS	LS	VS	LS	VS	LS	LS	VS
CPI (M)	Vote Share	35.5	26.1	39.9	38.5	35.9	39.3	38.4	35.2	36.7	36.7	37.9	35.4	35.6	36.6
	Seat Share	61	40	67	59	43	64	64	64	64	55	53	57	50	49
Left Front	Vote Share	45.8	34.3	54	52.8	48.5	52.9	52.3	47.1	48.9	48.7	49.4	46.8	46.8	49.1
	Seat Share	78	55	90	81	62	85	90	88	83	79	69	80	69	68
Opposition/ Non-LF	Vote Share	54.2	65.7	46	47.2	51.5	47.1	47.7	52.9	51.1	51.3	50.6	53.2	53.2	50.9
	Seat Share	22	45	10	19	38	15	10	12	17	21	31	20	31	32

Note: Percentage rounded off.

VS- West Bengal state assembly elections

LS- Indian central parliamentary elections from the state

**Table 2A: Percentage of Seats Won by Left and Anti-Left Parties in Three Tiers of Panchayat: 1977-2003**

Party	1978	1983	1988	1993	1998	2003
Gram panchayat						
Left Front	69	60	73	64	56	66
Opposition	31	40	27	36	44	34
Total seats	46845	46153	52520	61010	49199	49140
Panchayat samity						
Left Front	76	66	79	73	67	74
Opposition	23	34	22	27	33	26
Total seats	8467	8664	9128	9453	8515	8500
Zilla parishad						
Left Front	92	74	91	89	87	87
Opposition	8	26	9	11	13	13
Total seats	648	678	658	656	716	713

Note: All percentage rounded off.

**Table 2B: Seats Won by Left, Congress and TMC in Three Tiers of Panchayat, 1998 and 2003**

	Gram Panchayat			Panchayat Samity			Zilla Parishad		
	LF	Congress	TMC	LF	Congress	TMC	LF	Congress	TMC
1998	27587	5962	9773	5712	831	1439	632	32	38
2003	32269	6699	6530	6309	1044	817	617	68	16

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal.

## - Results from post 2001 assembly elections survey by CSDS to 1793 state wide respondents

**Table 3: Whom Did You Vote for in Assembly 2001 – Age Group (Per cent)**

	Left	TMC+Congress	BJP	Others	Total
Up to 25 years	44.9	32.4	1.2	21.5	100
26-35 years	45.0	28.1	3.4	23.5	100
36-45 years	52.4	23.9	3.8	19.9	100
46-55 years	48.4	29.1	2.5	20.1	100
Above 55 years	46.9	30.2	0.7	22.1	100
Total	47.6	28.2	2.6	21.6	100

Total Respondents 1793.

**Table 4: Whom Did You Vote for in Assembly 2001 – Locality (Per cent)**

	Left	TMC+Congress	BJP	Others	Total
Rural	51.5	24.5	2.6	21.4	100
Urban	39.9	35.3	2.6	22.2	100
Total	47.6	28.2	2.6	21.6	100

**Table 5: Whom Did You Vote for in Assembly 2001 – Economic Class (Per cent)**

	Left	TMC+Congress	BJP	Others	Total
Poor	55.8	20.6	2.4	21.1	100
Lower	48.2	27.7	2.8	21.3	100
Middle	39.9	32.0	3.1	24.9	100
Rich	33.5	45.7	1.8	18.9	100
NA	28.6	64.3	0	7.1	100
Total	47.6	28.2	2.6	21.6	100

**Table 6: Whom Did You Vote for in Assembly 2001 – Caste/Community (Per cent)**

	Left	TMC+Congress	BJP	Others	Total
Hindu upper	38.2	37.7	2.4	21.8	100
Hindu OBC	48.3	26.6	1.9	23.2	100
Dalit	49.4	28.9	4.3	17.3	100
ST	87.4	10.9	4.3	17.4	100
Muslims	57.8	16.5	1.6	24.2	100
Others	47.3	24.4	2.3	26.0	100
Total	47.6	28.2	2.6	21.6	100

Source: CSDS National Election Survey Archives.

(Source: Bhattacharya, 2004)

**– General Summary of Election in Assembly Constituencies by Distt**

Kolkata

No. of seats: 24

No. of candidates: 259

No. of voters: 33,41,201

No. of women voters: 13,88,653

No. of voters who voted: 23,36,702

No. of women voters who voted: 1,00,233

Appendix F - Results of questionnaires administered at pond sites		
Pal Bazaar		
Interviewees	Men interviewed	153
	Women interviewed	46
	<b>Total</b>	<b>199</b>
Present Activity	Bathing	117
	Others (including puja, morning walk, studying and standing)	23
	Did not respond	59
Distance of travel to pond	Nearby	109
	Far-away (in KMA)	32
	Did not respond	58
Age Range	> 60	10
	55 - 60	9
	50 - 55	0
	45 - 50	37
	35 - 45	30
	25 - 35	33
	< 25	18
	Did not respond	62
Caste	Scheduled Caste	48
	Upper Caste	30
	Hindus	78
	Muslim	7
	Did not respond	114
Region	Uttar Pradesh	5
	Bihar	32
	West Bengal	95
	Orrisa	15
	East Bengal	5
	Did not respond	47
House ownership	House Own	52
	House Rent	69
	Did not respond	78
Occupation	Daily wager	40
	Small Business	44
	Housemaid	10
	Service (salaried job)	29
	Other	25
	Did not respond	51

Jodhpur Park			
		Ghat 1,2 & 3	Other Ghat
Interviewees	Men interviewed		43
	Women interviewed		15
	<b>Total</b>		<b>58</b>
		Ghat 1,2 & 3	Other Ghat
Present Activity	Utensil washing	5	1
	Bathing	14	22
	Playing	2	0
	Clothes washing	9	4
	Fishing	1	0
	Others (including puja, morning walk, studying)	14	5
Distance of travel to pond	Jhil Road / Pal Bajar		2
	Nearby (incl. Jadhavpur, Garia, Dhakuria)		22
	Not-nearby		3
	Did not respond		33
Age Range	> 60		2
	55 - 60		11
	50 - 55		0
	45 - 50		3
	35 - 45		8
	25 - 35		3
	< 25		5
	Did not respond		26
Caste	Scheduled Caste		17
	Upper Caste		41
	Hindus		58
	Muslim		0
	Did not respond		0
Region	Uttar Pradesh		0
	Bihar		2
	West Bengal		55
	Orrisa		1
	East Bengal		0
	Did not respond		0
Occupation	Daily wager		12
	Small Business		22
	Housemaid		1
	Service (salaried job)		0
	Other		2
	Did not respond		21
Resources for problem solving	Internal		27
	External		14
	Did not respond		17

Note: Ghat 1, 2 and 3 were in the *basti* and the questionnaire was not administered to the *basti* dwellers. Their activities were observed and in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted in the *basti*. The "Other Ghat" stands for the bathing ghat across the lake from the *basti* and the questionnaire was administered to the bathers there.

### Appendix G

#### **Pal Bazaar, Jhil Road Interview list:**

<b>Initials</b>	<b>Interviewee description / location</b>	<b>Date of interview</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
AB	surrounding community	24.11.2002	Local CP (M) leader and headmaster of local school
AB	surrounding community	15.06.2004	"
AD	basti	21.11.2002	
AD	basti	22.11.2002	
AD	basti	23.11.2002	
ADg	surrounding community	21.11.2002	JSC member
ADg	surrounding community	23.11.2002	JSC member
BM	basti	26.10.2002	
Bh, M	basti	26.10.2002	
CM	surrounding community	22.11.2003	
CR	surrounding community	19.11.2002	
DB	surrounding community	22.11.2002	NC member, ward 104, JSC member
DB	surrounding community	6.1.2003	"
DBa	basti	15.11.2002	Living in Sapui Para now
DD	surrounding community	21.11.2002	Tea shop owner
DNP	surrounding community	29.11.2002	
DP	surrounding community	31.08.2004	One of original owners
DU	basti	17.12.2002	Living in Sapui Para now
GN	basti	24.12.2002	Group of Ganganagar residents
GP	surrounding community	6.4.2003	One of original pond owners
GR	basti	24.12.2002	
HF	basti	22.10.2002	Five Halдар families
JS	surrounding community	12.11.2002	
LD	basti	05.01.2003	Basti de-facto leader
MD	surrounding community	10.11.2002	
MMi	basti	22.11.2002	
MO	basti	22.11.2002	
MP	surrounding community	24.11.2002	
MR	surrounding community	27.09.2002	Head of environmental NGO, member of JSC
MR	surrounding community	29.09.2002	"
MR	surrounding community	18.10.2002	"
MR	surrounding community	28.10.2002	"
MR	surrounding community	08.11.2002	"
MR	surrounding community	16.12.2002	"
MR	surrounding community	03.03.2003	"
MR	surrounding community	12.03.2003	"
MR	surrounding community	12.04.2003	"
OM	surrounding community	19.11.2002	
PaB	surrounding community	25.10.2002	
PSe	surrounding community	09.12.2002	
RM	surrounding community	23.11.2002	JSC member
RMa	basti	21.11.2002	
RS	surrounding community	09.12.2003	JSC member
SC	surrounding community	22.11.2002	
SCh	surrounding community	19.11.2002	JSC member
SD	basti	21.11.2002	
Sh*			Pond caretaker
TD	surrounding community	22.11.2002	NC member, ward 104
TD	surrounding community	6.1.2003	"

TM	basti	22.11.2002	
TS	basti	22.11.2002	
UF	basti	15.11.2002	
VS	surrounding community	21.11.02	member of local club

\*Sh was a daily contact, hence dates aren't given for when he was interviewed



<b>Jodhpur Park Interview list:</b>		
<b>Initials</b>	<b>Interviewee description / location</b>	<b>Date of interview</b>
ABo	surrounding community	19.02.2003
ABo	surrounding community	19.02.2003
AD	basti	20.12.2002
ADa	surrounding community	22.12.2002
AG	surrounding community	19.10.2002
AG	surrounding community	25.10.2002
AG	surrounding community	28.10.2002
AG	surrounding community	21.11.2002
AG	surrounding community	15.06.2004
AG	surrounding community	10.05.2004
AG	surrounding community	15.6.2004
AK	surrounding community	17.12.2002
AK	surrounding community	07.01.2003
AM	basti	20.12.2002
ANB	surrounding community	21.03.2003
ANB	surrounding community	23.03.2003
BM	basti	15.12.2002
BM	basti	08.01.2003
BM	basti	02.03.2003
BMu	basti	15.12.2002
BP	basti	02.03.2003
BP	basti	21.11.2002
BPa	surrounding community	19.02.2003
BPa	surrounding community	28.10.2002
BT	surrounding community	12.2.2003
CP	surrounding community	19.02.2003
DCh	basti	15.12.2002
DG	surrounding community	15.12.2002
DM	surrounding community	15.12.2002
G	basti	20.12.2002
GJ	basti	08.01.2003
GJ	basti	02.03.2003
GN	basti	15.12.2002
IV	basti	20.12.2002
JD	basti	20.12.2002
JG	surrounding community	16.12.2002
JKR	surrounding community	03.04.2003
JP	basti	2.3.2003
JR	surrounding community	3.4.2003
JSu	surrounding community	14.3.2003
KB	surrounding community	10.01.2003
KD	basti	20.12.2002
KKN	basti	15.12.2002
KM	basti	20.12.2002
LM	basti	20.12.2002
MC	surrounding community	27.1.2003
MD	basti	20.12.2002
MM	basti	20.12.2002
MR	surrounding community	20.02.2003
MS	surrounding community	24.02.2003
NH	surrounding community	15.2.2003
NM	basti	15.12.2002
PBh	surrounding community	20.2.2003

PD	surrounding community	10.01.2003
PGh	surrounding community	07.01.2003
R	surrounding community	20.2.2003
RK	surrounding community	07.01.2003
RMu	surrounding community	18.12.2002
SB	surrounding community	21.03.2003
SB	surrounding community	24.03.2003
Sba	surrounding community	4.9.2004
SD	basti	20.12.2002
SG	surrounding community	07.01.2003
SM	basti	02.03.2003
ST	surrounding community	12.2.2003
TG	surrounding community	15.12.2002
TG	surrounding community	20.02.2003
TR	surrounding community	14.12.2002
TR	surrounding community	16.12.2002
TR	surrounding community	20.12.2002
Unnamed men (seven men)	basti	20.12.2002
Unnamed woman	basti	15.12.2002
Unnamed women (two women)	basti	20.12.2002
Unnamed woman and man	basti	2.3.2003
VM	basti	20.12.2002

**Municipal and State officials, Political Body Members and Others Interview list:**

<b>Initials</b>	<b>Interviewee description</b>	<b>Date of interview</b>
ABis	Chairman Borough X, TMC Councillor	21.3.2003
ABis	"	10.04.2003
ABis	"	28.06.2004
ABo	Councillor of Madhyagram municipality	22.03.2003
ABos	Vice President Ward Committee, Ward 93 and President, Mahalla Committee	15.06.2004
ACSSC	CSSC faculty	10.3.2003
AGu	PCB	17.4.2003
AM	Information and Public Relations Department official	19.3.2003
ARC	CPIM post holder in Anwar Shah Road- Padma Pukur Area	22.11.2002
ARC	"	30.12.2002
BC	CITU leader	13.3.2003
BCC	ex-councillor from ward 104	12.11.2002
BCC	"	12.04.2003
BCC	"	29.05.2004
B&E	Basti and Environment department MIC	19.3.2003
DB	NC member ward 104	22.11.2002
DB	"	06.01.2003
DC	ex-executive engineer, Borough X	15.03.2003
DrC	Junior engineer WBPCB	12.12.2002
DDT	councillor from ward 106, TNC	09.12.2002
GM	Deputy Chief Engineer, P&D, KMC	25.02.2003
HC	current Councillor from ward 104, LF	12.11.2002
HC	"	13.12.2002
HC	"	02.04.2003
HC	"	07.04.2003
HC	"	29.05.2004
HG	Chief, West Bengal Pollution Control Board	05.12.2002
HGu	P & G (Mayor in Council)	10.12.2002
Gardners	Jodhpur Park Forest Department. Nursery	07.01.2003
GG	ex chairman Borough XII	18.3.2003
KCS	ex- secy, Ministry of Urban Affairs	28.3.2003
KF	A&TP deptt KMC	02.07.2004
KF	"	28.10.2002
KG	councillor ward 109	30.11.2002
KGo	ex-State Minister PWD, CPM	15.11.2002
KM	Member of the Ward Committee of HC's ward committee, INC	14.2.2003
MK	Asst. chief municipal architect, KMC	28.10.2002
MMu	Deputy Director, State Fisheries Department	11.10.2002
MMu	"	03.04.2003
MM	Ex Chief Engineer, KMC	23.02.2003
MM	"	04.03.2003
MMah	Councillor of the ward 92, KMC	06.12.2002
MRo	Councillor of Madhyagram municipality	22.03.2003
MRa	Mayor in Council Conservancy	12.10.2002
MRa	"	26.12.2002
NPS	ex-Secretary, Ministry of Urban Affairs	5.4.2003
PB	Official, P&D department. Member Ward Committee in Dum Dum Municipality, working on Jodhpur Park Market	25.02.2003

PBh	Member and secretary, 93 ward Nagarik Committee	20.02.2003
PC	ex- mayor, Kolkata (CPI-M)	4.12.2003
PG	Section officer, Meetings department, KMC	09.01.2003
PG	"	14.04.2003
PS	ex-councillor ward 92, CPI	06.04.2003
PSS	ex CPIM councillor Jodhpur Park	22.11.2002
RB	Assistant executive engineer, Borough X	13.03.2003
RDa	DCO, Borough X	13.03.2003
RD	Councillor Jodhpur Park	27.10.2002
RG	Chairman of Madhyamgram Corporation. Chairman of Ward Committee, TC	06.03.2003
SBh	Municipal Secretary, KMC	14.2.2003
SBh	"	29.05.2004
SBha	Executive Engineer, KMC	21.3.2003
SC	Borough XII Chairman, CPM Councillor	21.03.2003
SC	"	30.06.2004
SEE	seb executive engineer, BX	13.3.2003
SJB	State Forest Department official	03.03.2003
TD	NC member ward 104	22.11.2002
TD	"	06.01.2003
TKM	DG, Slum Improvement Department	02.07.2004
UCS	Chief, Project Management Unit, KEIP	12.04.2003

<b><i>Pond observations, Meeting , Focus Groups:</i></b>	
Jhil Committee meeting	04.01.2203
Jhil Road Pond	05.10.2002
Jhil Road Pond weekday pond visit	07.10.2002
Jhil Road Pond weekend pond visit	24.11.2002
Jhil Road Pond – Mahalaya Festival day	06.10.2002
Jhil Road Pond survey - weekday winter afternoon	19.11.2002
Jodhpur Park focus group - AG's NGO Office	28.02.2003
Jodhpur Park ghat - weekday morning	03.12.2002
Jodhpur Park ghat - weekend morning	15.12.2002
Jodhpur Park pond survey	19.12.2002
JP Society's meeting of members	
Slide show - MR	12.11.2002
Council Full House Meeting	20.11.2002
Notice Board at Jhil Road Ghaat	
Commemorative stone with names of people involved in the jhil work	

**Appendix H**  
**Kolkata Municipal Corporation Ward Committee (Composition and Function) Rule, 2002**

AGENDA ITEMS OF THE KOLKATA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION  
DATE OF MEETING - 16<sup>TH</sup> JAN 2002  
CENTRAL MUNICIPAL OFFICE BUILDINGS,  
S.S.N. BANERJEE ROAD  
KOLKATA - 13

Item (9) To consider the recommendation of the Mayor-in-Council dated 04-12-2001 for framing of the Kolkata Municipal Ward Committee (Composition and Functions) Rules, 2002.

In view of the amendment of the provision of the Sub section (2) of the Section 11 A of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation Act, 1980 there shall be a ward Committee in each ward of the Corporation to form an function through a set of rules. As such the Mayor-in-Council in its meeting held on 14.12.2001 had suggested the framing of the following rules for sanction of the Corporation for onward transmission to the State Govt. for approval and notification in the official Gazette.

THE KOLKATA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION WARD COMMITTEE  
(COMPOSITION AND FUNCTION) RULE, 2002.

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CHAPTER - I.  
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1. Short Title - (i) These Rules may be called the Kolkata Municipal Corporation Ward Committee (Composition and Functions) Rules, 2002.

(ii) These shall come into force on the date of their publication in the Officers Gazette.

2. Definitions - (i) In these rules, unless the context otherwise requires --

(a) 'the Act' means the Kolkata Municipal Corporation Act, 1980 as amended from time to time.

(b) 'member' means a member of the Ward Committee.

(c) 'chairperson' means the Ward Councillor of the concerned Ward.

(d) 'Section' means the section of the Act.

(2) Words and expressions used in these rules but not otherwise defined shall have the same meaning as is the Act.

## CHAPTER II

### (3) Composition of the Ward Committee.

(3.1) The Ward Committee shall be constituted by the Councillor elected from the Ward immediately after the first meeting of the Corporation after a general election and shall consist of the Councillor elected from that ward and such number of other members as follows :-

In a ward where the population is not more than fifteen thousand (15,000), the number of other members shall be four and, thereafter, there shall be one additional member for every three thousand (3,000) population or part thereof, subject to a maximum number of nine.

Explanation - In reckoning the number of additional members of the Committee exceeding four, any part of less than two thousand (2,000) population may be ignored.

(3.2) The nomination of other members of the Committee shall be made in the following manner :-

Total number of other members of the Ward Committee.	To be nominated by the Councillors elected from the Ward	To be nominated by the Corporation.
4	3	1
5	3	2
6	4	2
7	5	2
8	5	3
9	6	3

The Councillor of the Corporation, as the case may be, shall have the right to remove any member, if considered necessary.

(3.3) While nominating the other members of the Committee, the aspect of proper representation of engineers, physicians, educationists, social worker, cultural activities, sportspersons, women, persons from economically backward section of society or any other

person from among the residents of the ward, shall be made in such manner as may cover all sections of people of the ward as aforesaid.

(3.4) The elected Councillor of the ward shall be the Chairperson of the Committee. He shall preside over the meeting of the Committee. In his absence, the members present in the meeting shall elect a President from amongst themselves to preside over the meeting.

(3.5) The tenure of the Committee shall be coterminous with the tenure of the office of the Councillors constituting the Corporation.

(3.6) Any casual vacancy in the membership of the Committee caused by --

- (a) death,
- (b) resignation, duly accepted by the Councillor elected from the ward or by the Corporation, as the case may be.
- (c) withdrawal of nomination by the Councillor elected from the ward or by the Corporation, as the case may be, or
- (d) shift of residence from the ward to any other ward, shall be filled up by the Councillor elected from the ward or by the Corporation, as the case may be, by fresh nomination.

#### CHAPTER - III

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##### (4) Functions of the Ward Committee

4.1 The first meeting of the Committee shall be convened by the Chairperson of the Committee within fifteen days from the date of constitution of the Committee. Apart from normal business, the Committee shall at its first meeting, select a Member-Secy. for the Committee from amongst the members of the Committee who shall convene the subsequent meeting of the Committee with consultation with the chairperson and shall perform the secretarial functions of the Committee.

4.2 The Committee shall meet at least once in every month. The meeting of the committee shall be convened by a clear seven days' notice.



4.3 The committee shall function under the general supervision and control of the Borough Committee.

4.4 The Committee shall help the Borough Committee/Corporation in the matter of -

- (a) identification of problems of the ward;
- (b) fixation of priority of the problems so identified;
- (c) overseeing the proper execution of various works in the ward relating to different municipal services, development and maintenance by way of enlisting people's participation and obtaining necessary feedback from the ward;
- (d) motivating the people of the ward in the matter of payment of tax and non-tax revenue ;
- (e) planning and execution of various obligatory and discretionary functions and functions transferred by the State Government as laid down in the Calcutta Municipal Corporation Act, 1980 (West Ben. Act LIX of 1980) (hereinafter referred to as the said Act);
- (f) detection of violation of various provisions of the Act such as unlawful construction, encroachments on municipal and public properties, public nuisance, evasion of taxes, unlicensed activities, and the like ;
- (g) arresting wasteful uses of various municipal services like tap-water, street hydrant, street light, parks and playgrounds, community centres and libraries, and the like ;
- (h) organization of greater civic participation by holding periodical meeting ;
- (i) listening to the grievances of the residents of the ward and making arrangement for their redressal ; and
- (j) maintenance of environment of the ward including protection of trees and plantation;
- (k) any other functions entrusted to the Committee by the Borough Committee/Mayor-in-Council/Corporation from time to time.

4.5 The Committee shall convene an annual general meeting of the residents of the ward to be held within the 30th June every year to apprise them the activities of the Corporation in general, and the ward in particular, during the preceding year and to assess the popular needs of the ward for the current year. The copy of the Annual Administration Report alongwith the copy of the Annual Financial Statement of the Corporation for the preceding year may be placed at the meeting for public information and deliberation thereon.

4.6 All the meetings of the Committee including the general meeting shall be arranged preferably in a public place within the ward.

#### **CHAPTER - IV.**

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##### **(5) General Provisions.**

5.1 Any inter-Ward dispute/problem shall be settled through sitting between the concerned Councillor at the first level. The Chairperson of the Borough in case the Wards under dispute fall within the same Borough shall meet with the concerned Councillors at the second level and in case the disputing wards fall under different Boroughs the Chairpersons of the concerned Boroughs shall meet with the concerned Councillors at the second level. If the dispute/problem remains unsolved the matter shall be referred to the Mayor-in-Council either jointly or severally and in that case the decision of the MIC shall be final.

5.2 No Ward Committee shall act in such a manner as may disrupt the services and in any way cause inconvenience to the proper discharge of functions by the neighbouring Ward.

5.3 The Mayor-in-Council may review the functioning of any Ward Committee, if it deems fit and proper.

5.4 The Ward Committee members shall interact only in Ward Committee meetings.

5.5 The other Ward Committee members shall not use any letterhead pad, Corporation logo and seal and stamp.

5.6 The other Ward Committee members shall not interact directly with any Corporation official.

5.7 The other Ward Committee members shall interact only through the concerned Ward Councillor.

5.8 All communication for and on behalf of the ward committee shall be signed and endorsed by the chair person.

5.9 No matter shall intervene in routine administrative works relating to the ward.

5.10 The Ward Committee shall not incur any expenditure unless otherwise provided for.

5.11 Proceedings of the meetings shall not be held valid unless signed by the Chairperson.

5.12 The Chairperson shall send a copy of the proceedings of each meeting to the Borough Executive Engineer.

As such the matter is placed before the Corporation for consideration.

THE KOLKATA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION,  
CENTRAL MUNICIPAL OFFICE BUILDINGS,  
5, S. N. BANERJEE ROAD,  
KOLKATA - 700013

Circular No. 07 of 2002-2003 of the Mpl. Commissioner dated 30-05-2002

In pursuance of sanction of the Corporation at its meeting held on 16-1-02 the modalities of formation and functioning of the Ward Committees thereof shall be guided as per the following :

(A)

FORMATION OF WARD COMMITTEE:

The ward Committee in each ward shall consist of the following members :

- |  |       |              |
|--|-------|--------------|
| (1) The Councillor of the ward                 | _____ | Chairperson. |
| (2) Members to be nominated by the Councillor. | _____ | Members.     |
| (3) Members to be nominated by the Corporation | _____ | Members.     |

Mode of selection of Members as at Sl.No.2X3 and number of Members thereof shall be as follows:-

(i) The selection of other Members shall be from Educationists, Engineers, Physicians, Social Worker, Sports Person, Women, Persons from economically backward sections of the society or any other person from among the residents of the ward.

(ii) Fixation of number of other Members wardwise (in reference to 1991 Census):-

No. of the ward	No. to be nominated by the ward Councillor	No. to be nominated by the Corpn.	Total
(1) 7, 45.	6	2	8
(2) 22, 24, 46, 49, 51 87, 99, 105, 106, 110, 119, 136, 137	7	2	9
(3) 8, 9, 13, 16, 20, 27, 47, 50, 52, 75, 84, 90, 94, 102, 103, 106, 111, 112, 113, 119 120, 123, 126, 130, 133, 140	8	2	10
(4) 18, 19, 21, 23, 37, 39, 43, 48, 63, 73, 86, 104, 109, 114, 116, 117, 124, 128, 131, 132, 138, 141	9	2	11

:: 2 ::

No. of the Ward.	No. to be nomi- nated by the Ward Councillor	No. to be nomi- nated by the Corporation	Total
(5) 5,10,11,12,17,36,40,41,42, 53,72,76,89,89,95,96,98,100, 107,115,121,122,127,135	9	3	12
(6) 1,2,3,4,6,14,15,25,26,28,29, 30,31,32,33,34,35,38,44,54, 55,56,57,58,59,60,61,62,63, 64,65,66,67,69,70,71,74,77,78, 79,80,81,82,83,85,91,92,93,97, 101,125,129,134,137	10	3	13

(iii) The tenure of the Committee shall be co-terminus with the tenure of the terms of the Councillor.

(iv) In case of any casual vacancy caused due to death, resignation, shift of residence from the ward and withdrawal of nomination by the Councillor or by the Corporation may be filled up as per the mode of selection.

**(B) FUNCTIONS OF THE WARD COMMITTEE:-**

(i) The Ward Committee at its first meeting shall select a Member-Secretary from amongst the members of the Committee to convene subsequent meetings and perform secretarial functions of the Committee.

(ii) The Committee shall meet atleast once in every month on clear seven days Notice.

(iii) The Committee shall help the Br. Committee/Corporation in the following matter :-

(a) Identification of problems of the ward.

(b) Fixation of priority of the problems so identified.

(c) Overseeing the proper execution of various works in the ward relating to different municipal services, development and maintenance by way of enlisting people's participation and obtaining necessary feedback from the ward.

(d) Motivating the people of the ward in the matter of payment of tax and non-tax revenue.

(e) Detection of violation of various provisions of the Act such as unlawful construction, encroachments on municipal and public properties, public nuisance, evasion of taxes, unlicensed activities, and the like;

(f) Monitoring the execution of various municipal services like water supply, street lighting, street light, parks and playgrounds, and the like;

(g) Organization of greater civic participation by holding public meetings;

(h) Listening to the grievances of the residents of the ward and taking arrangement for their redressal; and

:: 3 ::

(i) Maintenance of environment of the ward including protection of trees and plantation;

(ii) Any other functions entrusted to the Committee by the Borough Committee/Mayor-in-Council/Corporation from time to time.

(iv) The Committee shall convene Annual General Meeting of the residents of the ward preferably in a public place in the ward to be held within 30th June every year to apprise them the activities of the ward during the preceding year and to assess the popular needs of the ward for the current year.

(C) GENERAL PROVISIONS:-

(i) No Ward Committee shall act in such a manner as may disrupt the services and in any way cause inconvenience to the proper discharge of functions by the neighbouring Ward.

(ii) The Ward Committee members shall interact only in Ward Committee meetings.

(iii) The other Ward Committee members shall not use any letterhead pad, Corporation logo and seal and stamp.

(iv) The other Ward Committee members shall not interact directly with any Corporation official.

(v) The other Ward Committee members shall interact only through the concerned Ward Councillor.

(vi) No other ward Committee member shall intervene in routine administrative works relating to the Ward.

(vii) The Ward Committee shall not incur any expenditure unless otherwise provided for.

MUNICIPAL COMMISSIONER

Distribution :

- 1) All Councillors \*
- 2) All Controlling Officers
- 3) All Borough Ex. Engineers