University of Southampton

Faculty of Social Sciences

Economic, Social and Political Sciences

Adivasi Field of Contention, Movement Habitus, and Political subjectivity: Land Struggles and Political Practices of _Adivasis_ in Kerala, India

by

Aneesh Joseph

Thesis for the degree of PhD in Sociology and Social Policy

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Abstract

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The *Adivasis*, indigenous people in India, have historically constituted their subjectivity in and through insurgencies, armed resistances and protracted mobilisations against disenfranchising, dispossessing and displacing colonial and postcolonial regimes. The academic representations of their political subjectivity have often been caught up in a double bind between the cultural and the political primarily on account of disciplinary boundaries. Hence there is a need for unpacking *Adivasi* subjectivity for what it is. In Kerala, a southern state of India, the protracted socio-political mobilisation of *Adivasis* for land and resources have brought them into the epicentre of the political field. These mobilisations have been rendered by scholars as indigenist assertions of *Adivasis* that destabilise the edifice of Kerala Model of development and hollows out the class politics. Addressing the need to problematize the *Adivasi* subjectivity that is constituted in and through these land struggles, this research engages in an ethnographic investigation to unearth the dynamics that structures and reconstitutes it. Building a theoretical frame that interlocks the conceptual categories from Bourdieusian theoretical oeuvre, theories of social movement, subjectivity and reflexivity, this research unpacks the processes of structuring *Adivasi* field of contention, restructuring of the movement habitus, consolidation of relevant forms of capital and the reflexive reconstitution of the *Adivasi* subjectivity through the movement practices of the land struggle. This restructuring of the *Adivasi* habitus and reconstitution of their subjectivity, the data suggests, is enabling them to be strategic actors, albeit with ambivalences that mark their subjectivity, within the political field as they assert their political subjectivity and belonging.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name:	Aneesh Joseph
Title of thesis:	*Adivasi* Field of Contention, Movement Habitus and Political Subjectivity: Land Struggles and Political Practices of *Adivasis* in Kerala, India

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
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6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission

Signature: Date: 18 July 2021

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Definitions and Abbreviations

ADSS	*Adivasi Dalit* Samara Samiti (*Adivasi Dalit* Action Council)
AGMS	*Adivasi* Gothra Maha Sabha (The Grand Assembly of *Adivasis*)
BJP	Bharatheeya Janatha Party (People's Party of India). It is a Hindu nationalist party in India, currently in power
CPI (M)	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CPI (ML)	Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist). They are known as Maoists / Naxalites in India
CPI	Communist Party of India
FRA	Forest Rights Act 2006
KST act	Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction on Transfer of Lands and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Act 1975
NDA	National Democratic Alliance. Lead by BJP
PESA	Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas 1996
SAF	South Zone Adivasi Forum (South Indian *Adivasi* Sangamam)
SEZ	Special Economic Zones
SC	Scheduled Caste (in general the ex-untouchables known as *Dalits*)
ST	Scheduled Tribe (*Adivasis*)
TRDM	Tribal Resettlement and Development Mission (This mission was set up at the behest of AGMS to oversee the distribution of land and resources for the *Adivasis*. It monitors the resettlement related works of *Adivasis* in Kerala)

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In what has been hailed as a 'landmark development' by State and media, India has become the 6th largest economy in the world displacing France, according to the IMF, with its economy worth $2.6 trillion and predicted growth rate of 7.3 per cent in 2018[1] (Raj, 2018; Today, 2018; Today, 2019). Since 2000 there have been concerted efforts to rebrand the country as making headway in growth through campaigns such as 'India shining', India emerging as a new 'super power', and the shift in political discourse to 'development talks'. However, despite this glittery showcasing of the economic boom, the margins of modern India, after 72 years of its independent journey, remain exceptionally contested spaces. Some of those contestations are deeply entrenched in the very fabric of what constitutes this nation, determining its socio-political hues and historical trajectories. Minorities (ethnic, linguistic, sexual, and religious), *Dalits* (former untouchable communities), *Adivasis* ('tribal'/indigenous communities), other 'backward' communities, and women struggle in the margins of this 'incredible' neoliberal 'democracy' to accrue a reasonably dignified and rightful existence. Of these the *Adivasis* are, arguably, one of the most vulnerable communities, profoundly entrenched in a protracted struggle in the margins.

1.2 The *Adivasis* and their Socio-political Movements in Postcolonial India

The *Adivasis*,[2] – 'a term, nestled between colonial and postcolonial pitfalls and between the global and the local' (Chandra, 2015) – known in Indian administrative language as the Scheduled Tribes (STs), belong to 461 communities comprising over 104.3 million people, 8.6 per cent of the Indian population (Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, 2004; India, 2013; Oommen, 2014) and it is the highest population of indigenous people in the world occupying 22 percent of the Indian geographical area. Dispersed in various parts of the country, the *Adivasis*' diversity is immense

[1] With the latest figures, India has slipped to 7th place as per the World Bank data. However, the differences between UK, France and India are turning out to be quite narrow and fuzzy as figures and positions are increasingly becoming variable (Today, 2019).

[2] In the government parlance they are known as Scheduled Tribes (STs), and The Supreme Court has accorded them the right to use Indigenous People of India against the government's denial of that status. *Adivasis*, (Original/First dwellers) is the political category that these people have resorted to identify themselves with. A detailed discussion of these debates is presented in the literature review. In this study, I will be using the category *Adivasi* to stay close to their political self-identification and to represent the complexities of this identity in the empirical context in India.

and some scholars make a distinction between the frontier tribes, forming 11 per cent of the total tribal population, who are located in the north-east states of India and are self-governing[3]; and (2) encysted tribes (groups enveloped by the dominating presence of other communities), who constitute 89 per cent of the *Adivasis* and are dispersed over the rest of the country[4], with a higher concentration in central India (Shah, 2004; Oommen, 2005; Ambagudia, 2011; Oommen, 2014; Xaxa, 2016).

The postcolonial State of India, as part of its 'Affirmative Action' project, has granted reservation[5] (Prakash, 2003)for the *Adivasis*, a total of 7.5 per cent, (1) in political representation, (2) higher education and (3) employment in the public sector. The 'development apparatus' – State and bureaucracy – has constructed an image of the *Adivasi* as poor, illiterate and unemployed and launched technocratic projects for poverty alleviation, promotion of education and the generation of employment, but has failed to address the political and economic processes that have produced and sustained poverty (Kjosavik, 2010). The appalling statistics show unambiguously that the *Adivasis* have not benefited much from these 'affirmative initiatives' even after 7 decades. The literacy of the Scheduled Tribes is 58.96 per cent (2011 census) as against the national rate of 72.99; only 40.6 per cent live in what are termed 'good' housing conditions, but those with proper latrines on the premises form only 20.6 per cent. 44.73 per cent of the *Adivasis*, almost half of them (World Bank, 2011), are living below the poverty line (India, 2013). Only 4.3 per cent of students in higher education are from the Scheduled Tribes (Gautam, 2013). It is of grave concern to note that, of the 21 million people displaced in India (especially by way of 'developmentally' induced displacement) between 1951 and 1990, up to 55 per cent have been *Adivasis* (Biswaranjan, 2005) and a recent supreme court ruling has created fear of potential eviction of 8 million *Adivasis* from their ancestral land[6] (Mari, 2019). According to the admission of the State authorities 75 per cent of these disenfranchised still await rehabilitation (Baviskar, 2008). As of January 1999, 465,000 cases of alienation of 'tribal' land have been filed (Oommen,

[3] The indigenous people of North-East India, prefer to self-identify themselves as 'Tribes' and use the word '*Adivasis*' to refer to the communities that were brought into North-East as indentured labourers by the British (Xaxa, 2016,p.43)

[4] Except Haryana, Punjab, Delhi, Pondicherry, and Chandigarh, all states and union territories have tribal populations in varying numbers (Ambagudia, 2011).

[5] These affirmative actions from the federal (central) government came to be known as reservation policies for the Scheduled Tribes (*Adivasis*) and there are similar constitution-endowed reservation policies for Scheduled castes (*Dalits*) as well. These reservation policies, especially the reservation of places in employment and education, have been constantly subjected to debates in India and Prakash (2003) gives a cursory review of the major debates surrounding the reservation policies.

[6] This is a ruling by the Supreme Court of India on a petition by the conservationist groups despite the protective government act that accords the rights for *Adivasis* to have recourse to forest land, produces and conservation in the Forest Rights Act 2006. The appalling ruling becomes more opaque by the fact that the Indian government did not even bother to send a lawyer to defend the right of *Adivasis* raising suspicion of collusion (Mari 2019).

2014), and under the Neoliberal policies that have been in place since 1991 the acceleration of dispossession and displacement of *Adivasis* has become overwhelming, although the data is still to be aggregated in this regard.

These material contexts of marginality have triggered various collective movements across the country in both the colonial and postcolonial periods. The *Adivasis* have battled determinedly for their habitats, livelihoods, resources, access to forest produce, protection of their culture and community, indeed for their very survival against the onslaught of colonial, postcolonial and neoliberal State and encroaching capitalism. While resistance to eviction and dispossession from hydroelectric projects such as Narmada epitomize democratic protests, what is becoming pronounced now is the changing nature of *Adivasi* movements in the context of neoliberal land grab (Shah, 2004; Steur, 2009, 2011a) and the ways in which they have become emblematic of resistance to the ruthless onslaught of neoliberal corporatism and State-brokered developmentalism, be it in Kashipur[7] and Kalinganagar[8] in Orissa, Nandigram,[9] Singur[10] and Lalgarh[11] in West Bengal, or Chattisgarh[12], North Andhra or Jharkhand, some of which have been inextricably entangled with Maoist struggles (Shah, 2006, 2007b, 2012, 2013c, 2013b; Chandra, 2014; Rycroft, 2015).

1.3 Positioning *Adivasis* in Kerala

Kerala, the southernmost state[13] of India, has witnessed an unprecedented state-wide *Adivasi* movement since 2000 (confer Appendix B1). Kerala occupies 1 per cent of the total land area of India and has a population of 33.3 million, which is 3 per cent of the Indian population (Nithya, 2013). The *Adivasis,* belonging to 36 different tribes, constitute 1.4 per cent of Kerala's

[7] *Adivasi* resistance against Aluminium Corporations.
[8] 12 *Adivasis* were killed in police firing in 2006. The *Adivasis* were protesting against TATA, the giant Indian corporation, taking over their land for mining purposes without offering adequate compensation and with no proper rehabilitation plans.
[9] 14 acricultural workers died in police firing in Nandigram as they were resisting the communist government in their bid to take over their land for the Salim Group of Indonesia to set up a chemical hub.
[10] Police violence was unleashed on peasants who were protesting against the acquisition of 1000 acres of agricultural land by the communist government in West Bengal for the car manufacturing factory of TATA in 2007. Both Nandigram and Singur suffered a high death toll over 37 years of leftist rule in West Bengal.
[11] *Adivasis* uprising against the police atrocities and allegedly Maoist-backed attempts at agrarian revolution in Lalgarh, West Bengal in 2009.
[12] The 'red corridor', where the Naxalite-Maoists (CPI-ML) have established a strong presence in collusion with the *Adivasis* which spreads from Andhra Pradesh, through Jharkhand and Chattisgarh and extends up to the Nepalese border. There have been many insurgencies of *Adivasis,* facilitated by Maoists, against rapacious global capital and Neoliberal states, which sought to displace them from their land and habitat.
[13] In the federal constitutional republic of India, the polity has 29 states and 7 union territories. Kerala is one of those states. I have used the term 'state' to represent the political structure and also to denote the state of Kerala.

population, 484,839 (2011 census). They are scattered into various enclaves across the state; the highest concentration of *Adivasis* is in the Wayanad district, which is home to 37 per cent of the total *Adivasi* population, followed by Idukki, with 14 per cent (2011 census). However at the national level, historically, in official lists of states with a major *Adivasi* presence, Kerala hardly finds a place because the criteria considered relevant by the State are 'numerical strength, primitiveness and isolation' of the *Adivasis* (Shah, 2004). The *Adivasis* of Kerala, therefore, have continued to be marginal outliers in academic, political and public discourses on account of their comparative numerical minority, their 'pockets' of habitation not being recognized as "scheduled areas", a dearth of data on tribal communities in Kerala, and the resultant exclusion from 'tribal studies' at the national level and their consequent lack of political mobilization (Chandran, 2012). This neglect has been extended to the literature on *Adivasi* movements as well, as is perceptively critiqued by Shah (2004). Assessing the massive three-volume work edited by K. S. Singh, *Tribal Movements in India* (1982, 1983a, 1998), where there is only one paper on the tribal movements of South India, Shah cautions scholars and urges them to study those tribes before drawing conclusions regarding the capabilities of small tribes for movement and revolt. And these small tribes, have now revolted, disregarding their 'numerical limitations, primitiveness and isolation'; as a result, their struggles and resistance have succeeded in changing the terms of the discourse on *Adivasi* movements (Steur, 2011b) in Kerala and beyond.

In postcolonial Kerala, mirroring the national scene, the *Adivasis* have been characterized by poverty, malnutrition, land alienation, illiteracy, socio-economic and sexual exploitation by settlers and the depletion of their traditional resources (Nithya, 2013). Even after a decade of epochal struggles, more than 55 per cent of *Adivasis* in Kerala live in dilapidated houses, half of the population have no access to drinking water, 77,680 *Adivasis* between the ages of 15–59 are unemployed (including 2,012 graduates, 200 postgraduates and 2,066 professionally qualified individuals). 1,255 *Adivasi* hamlets are not electrified and more than 1,300 *Adivasi* settlements face threats from wild animals (Hindu, 2011). The current occupational pattern of *Adivasis* in Kerala shows that 18 per cent are engaged in farming, 15 per cent (mostly women) are in household employment, 12 per cent work as agricultural labourers, and only 1 per cent are in the government service[14] (Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, 2004). Landlessness, malnutrition, starvation, crisis in the agricultural sector stemming from neoliberal policies, and poverty have all added to the misery of the *Adivasis* in Kerala. But their worst affliction has been the invisibility

[14] Additionally, 3 per cent in forest plantations, 9 per cent are miscellaneous wage workers, 8 per cent are self-employed, 4 per cent are engaged in collection of minor forest-produce occupations, 1 per cent perform tree-cutting and loading work, 1 per cent are in government service, 16 per cent are students and 13 per cent are unemployed (Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, 2004).

into which they have been shunted for decades. For instance, analyzing the discourse of 'farmers' suicide' which has become emblematic of the neoliberal debacle in Kerala, Badami highlights how '*Paniya* (tribal community) distress and suicide' (six times the national rate), is rendered invisible (Badami, 2014).

To put this deprivation in context, the *Adivasis* have to be positioned in the general milieu of the socio-political and economic structures of Kerala. Kerala has a *High Human Development Index* (0.790) as against a *Medium Human Development Index* for India as a whole (0.649) and has attracted UN appreciation for its performance in human development (Dhar, 2013). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Working Paper states: 'The state of Kerala in India provides to show how it is possible to both achieve growth and improve income distribution through human development' (Suryanarayana and Agrawal, 2013). Kerala is one of the leading states in India according to UN human development indicators (Parwez, 2016), and prides itself on these achievements as is demonstrated by the discourse on the Kerala Model of Development, wherein it could, it is claimed, achieve social development comparable to that of other leading countries – without the corollary of economic development (Parayil and Sreekumar, 2003; Sen, 2006; Sreekumar and Parayil, 2006; Tharakan, 2006; Tharamangalam, 2006a; Sreekumar and Parayil, 2010; Tharamangalam, 2010). Progressive princely states, reform movements among the lower castes, the strong political wings of dominant communities clamouring for a share in State resources, the interventions of communist governments, a culture of public action, and the interventions of a missionary presence were key elements in the forging of this explosion of development, as is outlined by Jeffrey (2003). Without pre-empting the literature review, what I would like to foreground here is that the situation of the *Adivasis* has to be seen against this socio-political backdrop if we are to comprehend the grotesque and deplorable marginality into which the *Adivasis* have been denigrated. The statistics appended to bolster Kerala's impressive claim to hold a leading position among Indian states profess to have achieved the following: literacy at 93.91 per cent, life expectancy at 74 years, the highest female/male gender ratio (1,084 females per 1,000 males), a low infant mortality rate (IMR) of 12 per 1,000, and a poverty rate of 7.05 per cent (2011 census). It is against these figures that the stark situation of the *Adivasis* has to be contrasted and assessed. There is still a 26.36 per cent illiteracy rate among the *Adivasis* in Kerala and only 4.09 per cent go into graduate education and above (HDR 2005). Deaths by starvation are still reported in malnourished *Adivasi* hamlets (Shaji, 2015; Shaji, 2016; Ameerudheen, 2017; Abhilash, 2020), the infant mortality rate, 66.7 per cent, outruns the national average of 40 per cent, as was reported in an *Adivasi* enclave of the state, and life expectancy was only 59 years (Sreedevi, 2017).

The Neoliberal policies that have been in force in the state since 1991 have aggravated the already existing socio-economic cleavages in Kerala and further marginalized the *Adivasis*. The exponential expansion of private education and healthcare, discrediting the public education and healthcare services as inefficient and outmoded, has systematically marginalized the *Adivasis*, who are still in the very early stages of benefiting from the reservation policies enshrined in the country's Constitution. The dominant communities in Kerala, such as the upper castes, Nairs, Syrian Christians, *Ezhavas*, and some sections of the Muslim communities[15], (Thomas, 2020) have exploited the opportunities offered by neoliberalism and an expanding IT industry and made phenomenal headway in amassing wealth through migration, remittance and the concomitant real-estate boom. The *Adivasis*' resources – economic, social and cultural capitals - fall short of those required for emigration and the benefits of remittance that have fuelled the development of Kerala. Poverty has prevented their finding a space in the real-estate boom in Kerala. Their plight has become even more shocking as the agrarian sector, which initially absorbed the *Adivasi* labour force, has suffered disastrous collapse. At the same time the public distribution system that made provisions available to the *Adivasis* – albeit rationed – have dwindled appallingly as the neoliberal state has progressively withdrawn its welfare functions. The studies attest to a widening of inequality as the 'redistribution' mechanisms (Sreeraj and Vakulabharanam, 2015) of a constricted, 'rolled back' neoliberal state (Brenner *et al.*, 2010) fail miserably. Therefore any narrative of *Adivasi* reaffirmation in Kerala, have to be analysed in relation to this crisis and strain that propels the eruption of the movement.

1.4 *Adivasi* Land Struggles: Questions of dispositions, Practices, and Subjectivity

It is against this background of extreme deprivation, marginality, neglect and invisibility that the *Adivasis*, who form 36 splintered groups, have resorted to reunite and reassert their identity as a socio-political force, articulating their demands and confronting the state with a series of unprecedented movements. These spates of *Adivasi* movement under the leadership of *The Grand Assembly of the Adivasis* (AGMS) have problematized the plight of the *Adivasis* in relation to the question of land. Land has become a fundamental resource around which *Adivasi* demands for justice, equality and a dignified life have been constructed and unflinchingly claimed. Land has assumed a symbolic value in *Adivasi* politics in Kerala as a result of these protracted struggles.

[15] These communities wield both economic, and political power in Kerala. They also eek out the large share of the pie when political decisions are made regarding education, health and employment. For a current and detailed discussion see Thomas (2020).

These *Adivasi* protests, though articulated through the idiom of land struggles, have been seminal in changing the academic and political discourses in and about Kerala itself. Though there are studies, which have looked into these mobilizations from diverse perspectives and disciplines, there is a significant lack of in-depth analysis from the perspective of social movements and political subjectivity. While studies have focused on the implications of the movement for accruing their demands (Kjosavik, 2010) and for the discourses on Kerala Model of development (Sreekumar and Parayil, 2006; Raman, 2010b) or for the class politics (Steur, 2009, 2010, 2015a, 2017), my interest is to unpack the consequences for the *Adivasis* themselves. Have these movements changed their dispositions and competencies? Have they acquired new sets of capitals, other than economic, as a result of these mobilisations? How have these changes, if there are, affected their subjectivity and political belonging? Looking at these aspects of qualitative changes among the *Adivasis,* I argue, will allow for sociological insights into the dynamics and possibilities of their collective articulation beyond the mobilisation. Therefore, this line of investigation can uncover the terrain and texture of *Adivasi* subjectivity which can provide impetus for social policy and planning which is inclusive and collaborative. Sociologically, it is important to understand the mobilisation and the agency of *Adivasis* as it could have implications for socio-political movements of marginalized communities across the globe. My research seeks to make such a contribution.

While sharing the wider context of the struggles of indigenous peoples around the world (and of course with the *Adivasis* in the rest of India), there are specificities that underpin the *Adivasi* mobilization in Kerala. These agitations[16] were different from the wider upheavals in the *Adivasi* heartlands of India, which are primarily against neoliberal accumulation by dispossession (Steur, 2014b), the ripples of 'global land grab' resulting from a convergence of 'global crises (financial, environmental, energy, food)' (Borras Jr and Franco, 2012). In this sense there are continuities and discontinuities with the *Adivasi* resistance in other parts of India and the subjectivity being constituted in and through those movements. My research acknowledges and, where necessary, problematizes the continuities, intersections and ruptures in *Adivasi* subjectivity and political agency in Kerala.

The *Adivasis* in Kerala demanded distribution of surplus land by the State and restoration of the unjustly alienated land assigned to migrant settlers over many decades. The 'land struggles' of the

[16] I use agitation to refer to a protest activity in this thesis. The subtle difference between the terms such as agitation, protest and mobilisation are not subscribed to in the thesis. Agitation here stands for any protest mobilisation in the wide spectrum of *Adivasi* socio-political mobilisation in Kerala. Some social movement scholars have done that in their writing (for example Tilly, (2008, p.79 & p.97) uses agitation to refer to protest activities such as 'meetings, resolutions, statements to the press' and 'petitions').

Adivasis in Kerala, I argue (and seek to substantiate through this research), showcase the story of an indigenous community emerging as a reflexive political bloc that is capable of engaging with a repressive neoliberal state and re-appropriating their rights. These movements, I argue, have changed the political subjectivity of the *Adivasis* in multifarious ways, as the movement became the medium through which they inculcated the practices of exercising their agency and engaging with both state and public in Kerala. I would like to investigate the socio-political processes that the *Adivasis* have been through, and the consequent changes in their embedded dispositions and political subjectivity. How has the movement, its inception, unfolding and embedding shaped the field of contention, subjectivity and practices? How has the practices of the movement changed dispositions, know-how, perceptions and political belonging of *Adivasis* in Kerala? These are the central questions of my research. I examine these questions also in the context of a landed life on the Aralam Farm resettlement, where the *Adivasis* have started reorganising their life.

1.5 Framing theories

As this research interrogates the changes in the dispositions, competencies and resources that the *Adivasis* have gained through their socio-political mobilisation, I resort to Bourdieusian concepts of habitus, capital, field and practices to understand and explain them. These concepts, in the way Crossley (1999b, 2002a, 2002c, 2002b, 2005) interprets Bourdieu, are brought in to dialogue with social movement theories such as framing, opportunity structures, and pre-figurative politics to facilitate a productive permutation of theoretical concepts that can account for the dynamics of mobilisation as structuring as well as structured socio-political processes and practices. The research in this sense seeks to understand how the *Adivasis* restructure their habitus as embedded movement habitus within the field of contention and how they reconstitute their subjectivity on that restructured habitus and capitals. Interrogating the complex processes and multi-layered valences of the movement, my research tries to unpack the ways in which they have shaped the *Adivasi* habitus into reflexive political subjectivity capable of critical thinking, resistance and engagement in collective, oppositional projects in their everyday lives. Grounding the Giddens-Beck (Giddens, 1990; Beck *et al.*, 1994) conception of reflexivity on the theories of practice, Farrugia (2013b, 2015) articulates an embedded notion of reflexive subjectivity as practical intelligibility. From this Farrugian notion of reflexive subjectivity this research looks into the acquired capabilities of *Adivasis* to engage with the wider socio-political field as embedded actors with reflexive dispositions. In this sense the research seeks to show that the socio-political movement has been, as Foucault illustrated in his microphysics and analytics of power, productive and constitutive and enabling the formation and sustenance of subjectivity (Foucault, 1977; Widder, 2004; Green, 2010) that is political, reflexive and embedded.

My research will raise questions on movement habitus and reflexive subjectivity and ask whether a social movement and its practices could become the crucible in which its participants restructure their habitus and forge their subjectivity anew and reconfigure their political belonging. The *Adivasi* mobilization in Kerala, the literature seems to suggest, has been a complex process of articulation of an indigenous identity, of reforming and re-organizing the communities in and through the socio-political movement, of entanglement in marginality and resistance, of remaking communities and reconstituting State-*Adivasi* relations. I investigate whether and how these processes have enabled and produced the *Adivasi* as political subjects, who have constituted their subjectivity reflexively? How has the restructuring of their habitus into movement habitus facilitated this reconstitution of their subjectivity? How has the social movement enunciated a field of contention and thereby enabled and constrained the shaping of reflexive consciousness and political belonging among the *Adivasis*? How has this reconstituted subjectivity politicized their everyday life (Calhoun, 1993b) and how do they live their subjectivity through the practices of 'everyday-forms-of-resistance' (Das, 2009) and collective oppositional projects (Nilsen, 2016), especially on the Aralam Farm *Adivasi* resettlement? The theoretical framework that is delineated in Chapter 3 will be extensively employed to analyse and interpret the data gathered through an ethnographic field research.

1.6 Designing the Research

This is a qualitative research on the socio-political mobilization of *Adivasis* for land and resources in Kerala and it interrogates how the mobilisation has facilitated a restructuring of their habitus, within the field of contention, which in turn becomes the locus of their reconstitution of subjectivity. I have designed this research as an ethnographic study of *Adivasi* subjectivity and political belonging, and I have moved with and travelled along the activists for meetings, demonstrations, protests and commemoration and stayed with them as part of my field research. The data required for the research have been collected through observations, interviews with *Adivasis* and social activists, and focus-group discussions. Using the qualitative data analysis program Nvivo, I have organized and coded the data and identified key themes. The analysis and interpretation of the data with the proposed theoretical framework is presented in three chapters.

1.7 Timeline of Research

The scoping of the field, which helped me to visit the field and initiate contacts and build networks, was crucial to this research. I undertook a month long visit to the field in April, 2016 as

part of this process. It helped me not only to assess the feasibility of this research but also facilitated the designing of the research. I went back to the field in beginning of December 2016 and started moving with the movement and extending my networks and identifying potential individuals for interviews and focus group discussions. I started collecting my data through observations, interviews and focus group discussions from January, 2017 to the end of March, 2017.

1.8 Outline of the Chapters

Understanding *Adivasi* subjectivity in Kerala and its reconstitution as a reflexive political agency in and through socio-political movements requires that we unearth the construction of '*Adivasi* subjectivity' by the colonial and postcolonial states, review the process of *Adivasi* consolidation and assertion in various socio-political struggles and explore the multifarious dimensions of the *Adivasi* subjectivity that has been shaped, rearticulated and unravelled in the course of these struggles. These processes, I argue, inform and frame the contemporary imaginations of 'being and becoming' *Adivasi* and their political belonging in neoliberal Kerala. The chapters are outlined as follows:

Chapter 2: This chapter provides a thematic review of the relevant literature. Through an examination of contestations between colonial, postcolonial and neoliberal states and *Adivasis*, the processes of constructing the 'tribal' and '*Adivasi*' subjectivities are unearthed at the national level. The land struggles in Kerala have been interpreted as unravelling the Kerala Model of development and dislodging the class politics. It foregrounds the need to address the gap of investigating disposition and lived subjectivity. The chapter concludes with the research question that seeks to investigate the way these movements and their practices have restructured the habitus, field of contention and subjectivity of *Adivasis*.

Chapter 3: The changes in the dispositions, competencies, knowhow and propensities of *Adivasis* in the light of their mobilisations are sought to understand through Bourdieusian concepts of habitus, capital, field and practices. These are brought into creative permutation with concepts of social movements such as framing, opportunity structures, pre-figurative politics and repertoires of contention. The engagement with theories of reflexivity provides a fertile understanding of reflexive subjectivity that is produced through these struggles.

Chapter 4: The chapter delineates the designing of the study and the detailed narration of the way that design was employed concretely in the field for research. The qualitative study used ethnographic methods and gathered data through observation, interviews, and Focus Group Discussions.

Chapter 5: Analysing the data, this chapter portrays how the *Adivasi* field of contention got structured and restructured through intense and engaged social processes of mobilisation. The genealogy and trajectories of the movement is theoretically rendered as a dynamic process of enunciating the *Adivasi* field of contention.

Chapter 6: This chapter looks at how the habitus of the *Adivasis* became restructured through multiple processes of framing, initiating the repertoire of land occupy, and the practices of the major struggles such as *Kudil Ketti Samaram*, *Muthanga* Land Occupy Struggle and *Nilpu Samaram*.

Chapter 7: Having restructured their movement habitus, the *Adivasis* are reconstituting their subjectivity reflexively through assertions of their right to voice and representation. Their re-engagement with the political field with the reconstituted subjectivity is enabling the *Adivasis* to reposition them as strategic actors and redefine their political belonging. Delineating the microcosm of resettled *Adivasi* life on Aralam Farm, I interface, in this chapter, the *Adivasi* political subjectivity with internal diversity.

Chapter 8: The conclusion provides a summary of the substantiated arguments and findings about the *Adivasi* political subjectivity in Kerala. It also draws implications for social policies and suggest directions for future research.

1.9 Conclusion

Having introduced the context and rationale for this research and proposed the theoretical frame and methodological design of this research, I will delve in to these in detail in the coming chapters. The *Adivasi* mobilisations for land and the political practices that inform those movements are going to be investigated to unpick the dynamics of restructuring *Adivasi* habitus and reconstituting their subjectivity reflexively.

Chapter 2 Contextualizing Questions of *Adivasi* Subjectivity and Socio-Political Movements

2.1 Introduction

Central to this research is the critical interrogation of the construction and consolidation of the *Adivasi* subjectivity in Kerala through socio-political mobilization for land. This enquiry builds on literature gathered from four different areas: writings on the constitution and reconstitution of *Adivasi* subjectivity in India, and the scholarship on *Adivasi* mobilization in Kerala. This chapter comprises a literature review. First I will lay out a thematic overview of the literature on *Adivasi* subjectivity in India, outlining the wider context of this problematic, then present a review of key research specific to *Adivasi* mobilization in Kerala. I conclude with the consolidation of seminal questions raised in the course of this chapter, and this will form the springboard for the theoretical framework for the research and also for its design and methodology.

2.2 Constituting 'Tribal' subjectivity

Adivasi subjectivity is constructed in and through complex historical processes and understanding this seamless tapestry involves fastidious disentangling of the layers, which constitute it. Following Rycroft and Dasgupta's (2011) suggestion that the histories and patterning of *Adivasi* subjectivity may be studied through engaging with a number of issues including the formation of community consciousness in anti-colonial movements, the memory of counter-insurgencies, the internalization and deployment of administrative categories, the negotiation of anthropological and developmental practices, the contestation of nationalist histories of de-colonisation and the intercultural construction of indigeneity, I review those dimensions of *Adivasi* literature. As the *Adivasis* have been historically constituted at the national level, it is imperative to review that wider picture before narrowing down to the *Adivasi* mobilization in Kerala. In that section, having reviewed the existing literature thematically, I will try to unfurl some of the major elements, which have shaped the contemporary subjectivity of *Adivasis* in India in general.

The colonial modernity and regime have been the principal agents driving the process of constituting 'tribal' subjectivity, which has in turn been followed through by the postcolonial state that reconstituted it, in addition, through the discourses of planned development. This section aims to interrogate, as succinctly as possible, these three facets of the history of constituting 'tribal' subjectivity in India.

2.2.1 The Colonial Construction of 'Tribe'

The colonial encounter was central to the construction of the 'tribe' in India (Singh, 1993; Bates, 1995; Béteille, 1995, 1998; Xaxa, 1999b, 1999a; Rycroft and Dasgupta, 2011) at two levels or rather in two sets of domineering colonial discourses; the anthropological and the administrative. Colonial anthropology[17] constructed the tribe as the 'other', in keeping with the evolutionary theory of civilization that informed and legitimized the bulwark of colonial modernity. The colonial anthropologists were intrigued by those groups of people in India who were found outside the caste hierarchy[18], who they thought were their 'primitive', 'savage' or 'backward'[19] counterparts (Rycroft and Dasgupta, 2011; Chandra, 2015). 'Tribe', in India, a beleaguered concept for Radhakrishna (2016a) thus became a 'dustbin' category in which to throw all that was considered unorthodox and non-Hindu, for Crispin (Bates, 1995). For Devalle a 'groundless colonial category' (Rycroft and Dasgupta, 2011), for Skaria, the 'fixated childhood' of the modern Western man (Shah, 2007a) and for Zou 'an ehtnographic and bureaucratic construct of colonial state' (Zou, 2016). In the aftermath of the 1857 rebellion, as one of the counter-insurgency measures (Gupta, 2012; Gupta and Basu, 2012), the mapping of the people of India became an obsession of the British Raj and 'interestingly, a number of volumes featuring references to the 'castes and tribes' of various regions began to appear[20] (Radhakrishna, 2016a). The colonial governmentality used census as the pre-eminent discourse through which the category of 'tribe', appropriated from the anthropological discourses, became enshrined in its administrative annals. The categories and criteria used in connection with 'tribes' in various census reports illustrate the ambiguity, fluidity and plasticity of the category of tribe: 'forest tribe' in the 1881 census, 'animists' in 1901 and 1911, 'tribal religion' in 1921 (Xaxa, 1999b; Heredia, 2016). Ajay Skaria (1999) argues that this process of categorisation was arbitrary and became a process of

[17] The studies of Bronislaw Malinowski of Trobriand Island, A.R.Radcliffe-Brown of Anadaman Island and E. E. Evans-Pritchard on Nuer and Dinka of Southern Sudan coalesced in constructing the subject 'tribe'

[18] Xaxa argues that the term 'tribe' in India emerged in opposition to the Indian caste structure in India (2016: 35) and Skaria argues that the distinction between 'tribe' and 'caste' evolved in India as 'a product of colonial theories and practices' rather than continuation of 'Indan practices' (1999:730). Whereas Das Gupta (2012) argues that it is more of a Brahminical construct as it is the notions of the dominant castes, which informed the framing of the people by the colonial state.

[19] In colonial South Asia, the term 'tribe', came to refer to groups who were *uncivilized* (hence wild, primitive and savage) and *unmodern* (hence backward and ruled by custom). Second, those South Asians who came to be defined as 'tribal' were seen as members of a universal category, as in the nineteenth century Europeans were discovering 'tribes' all over the world. In South Asia, therefore, 'tribe' was diametrically opposed to 'caste': the former pointed to global comparisons the latter to the essence of South Asia (Schendel, 2011: 20).

[20] Examples include: *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* by Edgar Thurston; *The Tribes and Castes of Central Provinces of India* by R. V. Russell; *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal* by H. H. Risley; *Mysore: Tribes and Castes* by L.K.A. Iyer; and *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province* by H. A. Rose

'primitivisation or invention of primitive societies' (Schendel, 2011). But the colonial regime that exerted – discursive and dominating (Hearn, 2012) – power that constituted 'tribals' as subjects did not go unchallenged. Colonial pillaging of the natural resources surrounding 'tribal' habitats (Mazumdar, 2016) had set the colonial regime at loggerheads with the 'tribal' communities, who lost their customary rights to those extracting dispossession (Münster, 2015). The latter rose in rebellion against this oppressive exploitation. The discursive power of the colonial modernity that ventured to define these social formations as 'tribes' by means of their administrative apparatus with its institutional power – witness the law-making that produced the Penal Code, the Forest Act and the Land Acquisition Act (Sundar, 2011). Their endeavour to entrench this construction could not, I argue on the basis of existing literature, succeed in a unilateral process of neatly imposing 'tribal subjectivity' on these groups. Rather, the oppressed 'tribes' reworked this subjectivity through their determinedly protracted resistance and negotiation. How do resistance and struggles rework the habitus of the *Adivasis* and in turn reconstitute their subjectivity? How does this process re-establish their political agency and belonging?

2.2.2 The Post-independent construction of 'tribe'

The colonial epistemological tradition has been handed down to the postcolonial Indian academicians and the state, and the tension between defining 'tribe' as a 'politico-administrative' category (scheduled), or a 'culturo-political' entity, is evident (Akhup, 2013). It was Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the framer of the constitution of India and the luminary of *Dalit* liberation, who insisted on the category of 'Scheduled Tribe' being assigned to '*Adivasis*'. Scheduled Tribes thus became the administrative category for endorsing certain constitutional privileges, protection and benefits[21] for a specific section of the people (Rafaqi, 2014). Naming the *Adivasis* as 'Scheduled Tribes' was an attempt on the part of the state to constitute them as an administrative category. This added an important layer to their subjectivity and which, in turn, became the staple category for postcolonial anthropological studies in India (Radhakrishna, 2016a). It is deeply disturbing to note that the characteristics used to identify the 'Scheduled Tribes' continues to be, as they have long been: (i) 'primitive' traits; (ii) distinctive culture; geographical isolation; (iv) wariness of any

[21] These include, provision for their statutory recognition (Article 342) as well as proportionate representation in the Parliament and state legislation (Article 330 and 332). There is also restriction on the right of the ordinary citizen to move and settle in tribal areas or acquire property there [Article 19 (5)]. Provision for the protection of their language, dialects, and culture too exists (Articles 29). The Constitution also has a clause that enables the state to make provision for reservation in general [Article 14(4)], and in jobs and appointments in favour of tribal communities in particular [Article 16 (4)]. There is also the Directive Principle of the Constitution that requires that the educational and economic interest of the weaker section of the society, including tribes, be especially promoted (Article 46). Besides these, there are provisions in the Constitution that empower the state to bring the area inhabited dominantly by tribes under special treatment for administrative purpose.

contact with the community at large; and (v) 'backwardness' (Radhakrishna, 2012). This privileging of the concept 'tribal' in almost normative sense as encapsulated in the terms such as 'Scheduled Tribe', 'Scheduled Area' in administrative and popular spheres, effectively marginalizes indigeneity (Rycroft and Dasgupta, 2011). Anthropologists in India, Beteille (1998) argues, have been 'more concerned with the practical problem of designation than with the theoretical one of definition', and have thus became complicit in embedding the 'tribal' categories, discourses and studies. I content that the researches have not adequately problematized the ways in which the 'tribal' has become the discourse through which the *Adivasis* have had to define their engagements and negotiations with the state or thought through the implications for the *Adivasis* reworking their own subjectivity.

The postcolonial state, especially during the Nehruvian era (De, 2014), followed a policy that oscillated between isolation/ protectionism and assimilation of the Scheduled Tribes (Bates, 1995; Shah, 2007a) in its developmental enterprises[22]. Chandra's (2013) assessment is that Nehruvian policy sought to find a delicate balance between the demands of economic modernization and those of cultural conservation[23]. However, as De (2014) argues the postcolonial state became ruthlessly expedient as it brushed aside its own policy of protectionism and displaced the *Adivasi* communities wholesale as it conflated development with colossal industries and dams – for mineral resources and hydropower benefitting the people of other communities (Nathan, 2012) – and De, singularly, credits Nehru with the responsibility of being the architect of *Adivasi* misery. Paradigmatic examples are the forest and conservation policies of the state, which ignored the *Adivasis*' traditional conservation practices along with their long-term economic dependence on the forest (Kothari and Broome, 2016). Mineral-rich *Adivasi* habitats have been surrendered to global capital in the name of development to ravage and exploit[24] (Radhakrishna, 2016b). *Adivasis*

[22] Writing in the forward to Verrier Elwin's *Philosophy for NEFA* in 1959 set out the basis of the national policy of 'tribal' development and has come to be known as the '*panchasheel*' and remains as the magna carta to this day: a) people should be allowed to develop on the lines of their own genius and nothing should be imposed upon them, b) tribal rights on land and forests should be respected, c) induction of too many outsiders into tribal areas should be avoided d) there should be no over administration of tribal areas as far as possible, and e) the results should not be judged by the amount of money spent but by the quality of the human character that is involved (Heredia, 2016: 137).

[23] The contrasting views of G. S. Ghurye, the sociologist who advocated the view that 'tribes' are 'backward' Hindus called for assimilation into the mainstream as the way forward and of Verrier Elwin who asserted that the deplorable and impoverished situation of *Adivasis* are because of the interaction with the mainstream and that *Adivasis* have to be isolated and protected from the exploitative interventions of the outsiders, shaped the binaries within which state interventions were debated and involvements designed as that of integration (Gupta and Basu, 2012: 4; Xaxa, 2012: 23).

[24] *Adivasis* constitute 8.2 per cent of the total population, but they form 40 per cent of the total displaced people in India, and the researchers investigating dispossession and displacement in Andhra Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha attest to this and these are states rich in natural resources and home to considerable *Adivasi* population.

rose in agitation against the displacement and dispossession they faced in the postcolonial period, voicing impassioned and protracted demands for separate statehood. These movements were the furnaces, I argue, in which '*Adivasi'* identity was shaped, sharpened and articulated in order to reconstitute the *Adivasi* subjectivity in contestation with the isolation/ assimilation policies of the state. Therefore, it is important to look at how contemporary mobilisations facilitate reworking of subjectivity and questions about these social processes and dynamics. This research intents to do that.

2.2.3 The Developmentalist Construction of 'Tribe'

The postcolonial state delineated constitutional provisions and welfare measures for combating the deprivations and marginality, and these were instrumental in constructing a specific subjectivity for the *Adivasis*. In the initial phase of the postcolonial period, the law served as an important tool of the state in recognizing *Adivasi* rights and thereby embedding the Nehruvian principles that provided a vision of respecting the uniqueness of *Adivasi* communities and their customary claims on land (Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, 2004; Menon, 2007). In the Nehruvian approach to planned development, Five-Year Plans were the predominant means of leveraging social change (Sujatha, 2002; Mehta and Shah, 2003; Mohanty, 2006). Arguably, there were only two epochal initiatives that represented any significant response to the specificities of the *Adivasis'* persistent demand: a) the *Panchayat* Extension to the Scheduled Areas Act (PESA)[25], 1996[26] b) the Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA)[27] (Stuligross, 1999; Mahi, 2000; Menon, 2007; Oommen, 2014; Sarin, 2016; Savyasaachi, 2016; Vasan, 2016).

There is a plethora of wide-ranging literature (Xaxa, 2012; Padel, 2016) on the developmental issues relating to Scheduled Tribes. While acknowledging that body of work, I would focus on how

[25] As part of the counter insurgency measures, at the behest of Queen Victoria in 1858, the colonial regime espoused two types of approach to the 'tribal' areas. The non-regulated areas where unreconciled 'tribals' lived was maintained under the military and the regulated areas were governed with the help of civilians, but recognizing the ancient rights of the inhabitants through the Scheduled District Acts of 1874 and the Agency Tracts, Interest, and Land Transfer Act of 1917. Under the Government of India Act of 1935, the 'unrestricted' and 'restricted' became 'excluded and partially excluded' areas. In 1950, the Constitution of the independent India designated these areas as the fifth and sixth scheduled areas, respectively. (Savyasaachi, 2016: 55-56)

[26] The PESA empowers village councils in the schedule V areas to make decisions regarding the management of resources in accordance with customary practices.

[27] FRA recognizes the rights of the *Adivasis* and traditional forest dwellers over the forest and its produces, (it recognizes settlement rights up to 2005 and grants 13 types of rights over land and produce – especially land rights, use rights, and the right to conserve and protect the forest), thus righting the historical wrong wrought by the forest policy of the postcolonial state in India, which turned them into encroachers overnight (Radhakrishna 2012: 148; Sarin, 2016: 278; Vasan, 2016: 254).

these constitutional provisions, developmental plans and trajectories have struggled to reconstitute the *Adivasi* subjectivity along the lines of governmentality. Social exclusion and adverse inclusion have been central themes in these developmental sagas (Nathan and Xaxa, 2012). *Adivasis* constantly resist and re-negotiate the developmentalist state's attempts to configure their subjectivity within a language and narrative of development and their everyday resistance forms part of their struggle to re-articulate their subjectivity with agency.

2.3 Reconstituting Adivasi Subjectivity

The *Adivasi* subjectivity was constituted by their being labelled as 'primitive tribes' by the colonial regime, as 'Scheduled Tribes' by the postcolonial state and as 'objects of developmental projects' by the welfare state. However, challenging the subjectifying forces of colonial and postcolonial regimes of power and of representations, I argue, *Adivasis* reconstituted their subjectivity as 'politically subversive'. The self-defining category, '*Adivasi*', the indigenous politics associated with it, the global discourses of indigenous people's rights, identification with environmentalism, as the sole global political alterity and the neoliberal struggles have coalesced to form significant layers of the subjectivity of *Adivasi* in India today. This would seek to move beyond 'the matrices of power operating in 'tribal' studies' and to position itself in exploring 'a new geography of resistance and *Adivasi* belonging' (Rycroft and Dasgupta, 2011).

2.3.1 Resistance and Self-defining

'The great tribal rebellions', as Felix Padel (2014) calls it, were the collective struggles of the *Adivasis* against Imperialist exploitation through taxation, take overs of land and forest, and the colonial control of production (Das, 2015) and the squeeze on the *Adivasi* from the Zamindar, the *saukar,* and the *sarkar* (landlord, moneylender, and government) (Heredia, 2016). The unrest in Tamar in 1816, the Munda rebellion in 1832, the mutiny of 1857, the Bisra Munda uprising in the 1890s and the Tana Bhagath movement of the early twentieth century were all moments at which every district of Chotanagpur, the *Adivasi* heartland of central India, throbbed with rebellion at one point of time or another (Damodaran, 2006b). K. S. Singh divides these *Adivasi* movements in colonial India into three distinct phases from 1795 to 1947 (Shah, 2004). From the nineteenth century onwards through this series of political acts – which were categorized as insurgency, revolt, rebellion and movement – the *Adivasis* forced their way into historical visibility (Banerjee, 2006). It was into that radically ploughed fertile soil of struggles and resistance that the category of '*Adivasi*' erupted. David Hardiman speculates that the category '*Adivasi'* originated in Chotanagpur in the 1930s at the behest of Christian missionaries, who have been central to the 'reformist ethnicist' project since 1845 and have cooperated with the newly emerged *Adivasi*

elites - educated, urban based and Christian (Xaxa, 1999b; Damodaran, 2006b; Shah, 2007a; Xaxa, 2016). The origin of '*Adibasi Mahasabha*' demanding for regional autonomy of Jharkhand consolidates this identity in their mobilization[28] (Prasad, 2016). The category *'Adivasi'* brings together two different political genealogies; one that traces its trajectory from the anti-colonial rebellions as mentioned above and the other of positioning them within the discourse of indigenous peoples in the arena of global politics (Rycroft and Dasgupta, 2011). The organized claim that these 'tribes' are '*Adivasis*' (the first people), the indigenous[29] communities of India, is a political claim grounded on their distinct cultural characteristics (Schleiter and de Maaker, 2010; Radhakrishna, 2016a), and Xaxa (2016) claims that such deeply held beliefs have become part of the consciousness of *Adivasis* in India now. The UN Human Rights Council adopted the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on 29 June, 2006, and recommended that the General assembly adopt it, which it did in 2007 (Shah, 2007a; Cole, 2012; Nathan *et al.*, 2012; Fernandes, 2013; Das, 2015). The declaration outlined a wide spectrum of individual and collective rights, legal and political, pertaining to culture, identity, education, health, employment, and language (Das, 2015). Despite the fact that many countries refused to acknowledge the native 'tribals' and 'aboriginals' as being on a par with 'indigenous people' along the lines of the UN charter – as had been the case with India and South Asia for politico-cultural reasons (Schendel, 2011) –the 'tribals' have adopted 'indigeneity' as a political category with which to link their unparalleled cultural, political and economic exploitation and its accompanying historical injustices. The politics of indigenism has thus become an important weapon in the arsenal of counter-hegemonic resistance across the world (Das, 2015). The Supreme Court of India (5 January 2011), in pronouncing its judgment in the case of a woman of the Bhil Tribe, unequivocally ordered that the 'Scheduled Tribes' (STs) be recognised as indigenous communities in India (Das, 2015), overruling the reluctance of the state to grant that status to *Adivasis*[30]. The *Adivasi* struggles, in the context of indigenous politics, thus become manifestations and articulations of 'oppositional agency – that is, challenges to the extant structuring of power relations and the multiple forms of marginalization that are produced by this structuring' (Nilsen and Roy, 2015, p.1). At the same time, the *Adivasi* identity is not monolithic[31], homogenous and/or unitary, rather it is

[28] Jaipal Singh, the Oxford educated *Adivasi* leader of the movement, reminisced in 1948 that the primary task of their movement until then had been to make the *Adivasis* conscious of their political rights, and that they knew by then that their salvation was in their own hands (Prasad, 2016: 310).

[29] Interestingly, *Dalits* of India (250 million) had their representatives attending the UNWGIP's annual sessions at least four times to claim that they should be regarded as the indigenous people of India (Radhakrishna, 2016: 15)

[30] Though the Indian state has refused to accept the *Adivasis* as indigenous people at the international fora, it has, however, signed the UN charter of the *Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People*

[31] Inheriting the notion from colonial anthropology, Indian anthropologists used to depict 'tribes' as small, self-contained, self-sufficient, and autonomous communities with a subsistence economies, having virtually

constitutively diverse and some of the struggles have been championed by the educated elites among them, and this concept has often obfuscated the trials, tribulations and burdens of *Adivasi* women (Prasad, 2016). Rycroft and Dasgupta (2011) interestingly argues that, given the diversity of *Adivasi* experiences of imperialism and modernity, one could speak of multiple *Adivasi* subjectivities (Rycroft and Dasgupta, 2011). The scholarship that has studied these movements extensively has not adequately uncovered the layering of the reflexive constitution of *Adivasi* subjectivity. As the political, cultural and intellectual terrains of *Adivasi* subjectivity are in continuous flux (Rycroft and Dasgupta, 2011), these studies would require multiple iterations from diverse perspectives. While attempting to put various literature together to fathom the *Adivasi* subjectivity, I do it with the intention of understanding the discourses to which the Kerala *Adivasi* subjectivity lays claim, i.e. those of continuity and affiliation. My research interrogates the *Adivasi* subjectivity that gets constituted and articulated in Kerala drawing impetus and discursive momentum from its unique historical experiences. It will also endeavour to unravel the discontinuities and specificities of *Adivasi* subjectivity in Kerala.

2.3.2 Indigeneity and Adivasi Subjectivity

There has been contentious anthropological debate over the appropriation of the category and politics of 'indigenous people' by the *Adivasis* in India and aboriginals elsewhere. Xaxa (1999b, 2016) argues forcefully that the communities deemed to be the Scheduled Tribes in India are indeed the indigenous people of the land. On the other hand Andre Beteille questioned the validity of such a claim (Béteille, 1998). Scholars such as Li (2000), while not overlooking the intrinsic essentialism incumbent on indigeneity, have emphasized the way agency is exercised in the articulation of indigeneity, which gives these disadvantaged communities space for political manoeuvring (Das, 2015). The essentialized notion of indigeneity and indigenous culture is considered to be problematic, Shah argues, highlighting its dark side, because it relies on, and in turn reproduces, the obsolete anthropology and romanticized ethnography of the Victorians (Shah, 2007a), inverting the discourse of the 'primitive' versus modernity to the celebration of 'alter-modernity' versus 'hegemonic modernity' (Schendel, 2011). The Indian context shows up the complexity of the concept of indigeneity in the 'tribal-*Adivasi*' ethnic tensions in Assam, where the *Bodos* are the indigenous community of the region and the *Oraons*, *Mundas* and *Santhals* who were brought to Assam by the British to work in the tea gardens (Bhowmik, 2016; Zou, 2016), are

no internal differentiation, conflict or exploitation. This homogenized and static notion has been found to be empirically unsustainable and hence they talk about the 'castisation' or 'peasantisation' of 'tribes' (Gupta, 2012: 75-76)

denied the claim to be, and the rights as indigenous people of Assam[32](Sharma, 2009, 2011). Xaxa (2016) argues that they need to be regarded as indigenous people in the context of the country as a whole. Schendel (2011), however, warns of the danger of an 'essentialised indigneity discourse' in which progressive ideas get conflated with xenophobic ideologies of belonging, which may then purport to have exclusive rights and strategies of purification, with their inevitable tendency to degenerate into ethnic cleansing. He argues that the political claim to indigeneity gets articulated vociferously and invoked vehemently in situations where non-*Adivasi* communities want to be included in the Scheduled Tribe list, which the *Adivasis* resist for fear of having to share the welfare benefits.

This politics of indigeneity ties up the *Adivasi* political agency in a double bind, as Banerjee (2006) argues; the *Adivasis* have been an incessantly active as political agents from colonial times, with a manifestly rebellious determination that has been rightly acknowledged. However, what has often happened is that their political agency has been assigned to the realm of 'indigenous culture' causing it to be perceived as purely 'ethnic' and bereft of political significance. The disciplinary divisions between anthropology and history have rendered this unproblematic, and the political agency of the *Adivasi* thereby invisible. Therefore, I seek to adopt a theoretical model that can re-problematize this anthropological blind spot and foreground the reflexive political agency of the *Adivasis* in Kerala front and centre. The central problematic of this research addresses this gap by resorting to understand the reworking of the agency within the field of contention through socio political struggles. Bhangya Bhukya (2008), in similar vein, challenges the nationalist and Marxist historiography for the way in which they have invisibilized *Adivasi* struggles by arrogating *Adivasi* reality and rebellion and reconstructing them within their own theoretical frameworks. An insurgent identity, which is often portrayed as non-political, is attributed to the *Adivasis,* whose leaders are not acknowledged as national leaders (Bhukya, 2008). There is no Pan-Indian *Adivasi* platform which brings together diverse communities of *Adivasis* under one umbrella, and neither have they been successful in forging a political party that represents all the *Adivasis* of India across its manifold enclaves. As a result, the indigenous engagements in India remain fragmented, parochial and polyvalent (Das, 2015). The political agency of *Adivasis*, mired in disciplinary compartmentalization, as these scholars suggest, stands in need of problematization and interrogation. This necessitates and warrants the construction of a framework that brings together concepts of social movement and social theories, to account for

[32] It was estimated that there were 1,200,000 time-expired coolies in Assam by the 1920s (Sharma 2009, 2011: 13, 18). Because the plains ryots were seen as 'lazy natives' and the hill groups as 'wild tribes', indentured labour from outside served as the foot soldiers for improving the empire's garden estates (Sharma 2011: 87).

and to analyse the multifarious dimensions and layers of *Adivasi* political subjectivity within the context of *Adivasi* mobilization in Kerala.

This line of critical interrogation becomes necessary as *Adivasis* become touted as the vanguards of all kinds of struggles against all forms of hegemony and oppression that people want to attach to them purely to bolster their own arguments. The political positions of diverse sets of people have often been confounded with the *Adivasi* struggles and as a result they have come to symbolize the ultimate political alterity or the 'global subaltern' (Chandra, 2015) as they are depicted as having to wage all the wars against the local, national, global and even the cosmic dehumanizing structures of power. As Banerjee (2006) argues, the anti-colonial and postcolonial politics have always depended on the image of a final, uncompromisable political agent – the *Adivasi*. According to this school of thought *Adivasis* have maintained their autonomous struggles against the colonialists, have fronted secessionist movements against the centralizing Indian state, have participated in militant left mobilizations and have stood in the frontlines of environmental struggles against industrial modernity and global capital (Banerjee, 2006). Prasad (2016) would argue that many of these struggles get premised on the 'moral superiority' of *Adivasis,* a notion based on a perception of their egalitarian, environmentalist and democratic values and cultural practices, vital tenors of *Adivasi* subjectivity. The multi-layered and multi-dimensional nature of their exertions (or rather multiple readings of those exertions) have positioned *Adivasis* as the ultimate radical political agent. Precisely because of these reasons, it is vital to unpick the *Adivasi* subjectivity and unearth the layers of it through a complex and dexterous theoretical analysis. Therefore, my research seeks to construct a theoretical framework that can uncover questions on *Adivasi* agency and political subjectivity. I intent to do this by addressing questions about the movement field, habitus, frames, and subjectivity and I elaborate a framework in Chapter 3 for this purpose.

2.3.3 Adivasi subjectivity and politics in Neoliberal India

Following the colonial and postcolonial periods, during which the *Adivasis* were, respectively, 'tribalized' then 'developmentalized', the neoliberal moment (Guthman and DuPuis, 2006; Brandtstadter, 2007; Fletcher, 2010; Ganti, 2014) has reconstructed the *Adivasi* as the 'resisting subaltern'. As Harvey suggests, although the neoliberal state withdraws (its Keynesian internventionism) in certain arenas, it escalates it in arenas in which it sees an opportunity to augment the construction of social and political environment that facilitate market rationality (Protevi, 2009; Gershon, 2011), especially when it can operate as an epiphenomenon of

accumulation (Das, 2009). One major neoliberal intervention is in the area of land reform[33] (Wolford, 2007). Contemporary forms of land[34] control are facilitated by neoliberal regimes, which now revolves around economic growth and market efficiencies, sustaining a 'colonial mode of development' (Pal, 2015), rather than upholding land-rights claims, of traditional property holders (Fraser, 2008; Peluso and Lund, 2011; Kapoor, 2013). The state governments within the federal system of India, under neoliberal conditions, have assumed the role of a "land broker" generating competition between states to acquire land in order to attract giant industrial conglomerates (Bedi and Tillin, 2015). By November 2007 the Board of Approvals of the Ministry of Commerce cleared 366 SEZ (Special Economic Zones) proposals (Walker, 2008). From the early 1990s when state land seizures accelerated the neoliberalizing of nature (Castree, 2006), the mineral-rich but poverty-stricken areas of eastern and central India's 'tribal belt' – especially the states of Orissa, Chhattisgarh, and Jharkhand – became the principal targets (Walker, 2008). Nandini (2012) argues that the state and political parties have developed a discourse that presents displacement as a solution to underdevelopment, ignoring the resulting largescale dispossession. In the whirlpool of 'neoliberal imaginaries' (Cross, 2010) to position oneself as a rights-bearing citizen rather than a benefit-negotiating victim of dispossession (Steur, 2015b) has become near-impossible. It is within this harrowing context that *Adivasis* have surfaced as the 'embodiment of neoliberal resistance', a role they fulfil in diverse forms in different sites of conflict across India. One form of resistance with which the *Adivasi* politics have become entangled is the protracted Maoist "peoples' war" an anti-imperialist, anti-developmentalist, anti-corporatist[35] centred around the 'red corridor' (Shah, 2009a, 2009b, 2011; Sundar, 2011; Shah, 2013c; Navlakha, 2015; Radhakrishna, 2016b). There are other forms of resistance against the neoliberal regime that threatens *Adivasis* to be subjected to 'cultural genocide' by the development-garbed global capital (Padel and Das, 2010; Sareen, 2012; Steur, 2015b). The slogan '*Jan Denge Par Jamin Nahi Denge*' (We will lay down our lives, but will not give up our land) encapsulates the intensity of *Adivasi* resistance to these neoliberal dispossession and disenfranchisement (Radhakrishna, 2016b).

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[33] An example is the enactment of Forest Conservation Act, 1980 which accentuated the problems of dispossession for *Adivasis* as this act placed forest directly under the central government and susceptible to the diversion of forest land for non-forestry purposes. The rate of diversion per year between 1950 to 1980 was 10,000 hectares per year, primarily for agriculture, however, between 1980-9 the rate went up by 60 per cent to 170, 000 hectares per annum, for developmental and industrial projects (Prasad 2016: 318).

[34] According to an Oxfam study, speaking globally, 227 million hectares – an area the size of Western Europe – has been leased or sold to international investors (Kapoor 2013)

[35] Some scholars argue that the Marxist and Maoist movements tended to ignore the existence of a community consciousness and seemed convinced that the class consciousness, as dispossessed peasants, would obliterate all other forms of pre-modern community-based politics, even while employing an *Adivasi* consciousness in their political practice (Prasad 2016: 317).

Within this socio-political dynamics of *Adivasi* resistance that marks the national scene, the *Adivasis* in Kerala are engaged in a democratic struggle for claiming land for the landless *Adivasis* from the neoliberalised state. How have these socio-political struggles for land charting the trajectories of 'being and becoming' *Adivasi* in Kerala today? How do they structure the field of contention through their mobilisations? How do these mobilisations and their practices restructure their habitus and subjectivity?

2.4 The *Adivasis* in Kerala: The story of the extreme outliers

The *Adivasis* in Kerala, while sharing the broader context of the processes of consolidating and articulating '*Adivasi* subjectivity' in India, have their distinct layers and trajectories. The literature on the narratives of the *Adivasi* campaign to consolidate and articulate their politics can be categorized broadly into three themes: (a) elucidating the history of *Adivasi* struggles for land in the postcolonial Kerala (b) positioning and assessing the plight of *Adivasis* against the backdrop of the Kerala Model of Development discourses and (c) engaging and critiquing the adivasi movement in Kerala in the light of the 'politics of indigenism'. Though the works of some of the scholars I review here cut across these three themes, and some overlaps are unavoidable, I will try to be consistent in reviewing the oeuvres of individual scholars to position their contributions in the body of knowledge built around the *Adivasi* mobilisation in Kerala. I will critically review these, and argue that despite these renderings of *Adivasi* mobilisation, an inquiry into the multifarious dynamics involved in constructing the *Adivasi* subjectivity and belonging, through an analysis of the processes of constructing field of contention, movement frames, practices and habitus, is long due. Seeking to build upon and expand on the existing body of literature, this research is intended to contribute to social movement studies and to theories of habitus, subjectivity and political belonging.

2.4.1 Stripped of their 'ancestral' Land: the ignoble tale of Betrayal by the non-*Adivasis* and the state

Though there have been a number of anthropological descriptive studies on the 'tribes' in Kerala (Aiyappan, 1936; Aiyappan, 1937; Gnanambal, 1952, 1954; Aiyappan, 1992), critical studies on the political engagement of *Adivasis* have been few. Land has been a key socio-political and economic matter of contention, which later become central to *Adivasi* political agenda, promoting many research initiatives to grapple with it. C R Bijoy has meticulously documented the critical history of the land rights and struggles of the *Adivasis* in Kerala (Bijoy, 1993, 1999; Bijoy and Raman, 2003), as well as his reports on the status of *Adivasis* in India as a whole (Bhengra *et al.*, 1999). His rights-centred approach is augmented by his legal astuteness and skill as a historian. Notwithstanding

the invaluable contribution he makes to the socio-political history of *Adivasis'* long conflict, I respectfully argue that there is a gap in theoretical rendering and empirical substantiation, which may be indicative of a certain limitation to the approach he adopts. Ravi Raman's efforts seem to point more in the right direction, as he interprets the socio-political movement in the light of subaltern modernity and other contemporary social theories (Raman, 2002; Bijoy and Raman, 2003; Raman, 2004, 2010a, 2017). While being theoretically articulate, Raman also positions the *Adivasis* struggles in the wider context of the global south and enriches them with much descriptive history. However, his attempts often falls short of the depth of qualitative empirical data and this affects the potential nuancing and sophistication of the theoretical rendering, be they theories of modernity or of post-structuralism. Kjosavik does bring in the empirical depth in her works on *Adivasi* identity, development and mobilisation in Kerala, and positions herself theoretically in the liberal Marxist tradition (Kjosavik, 2004; Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, 2004; Kjosavik, 2006; Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, 2006; Kjosavik, 2010; Veettil *et al.*, 2013; Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, 2015). The tendency to unduly privilege the leftist version of the political processes among *Adivasis* in Kerala and to draw her analysis and interpretations therefrom, skews some of the data and analysis un-reflexively at times. Notwithstanding that limitation, Kjosavik infuses a set of discussions on *Adivasi* identity, development and exclusion in the context of the land struggles in Kerala spearheaded by the *Adivasis*. In the following part of this section, drawing substantially on the works of these authors, I present a critical summary of *Adivasi* land alienation, dispossession in Kerala.

Colonial privatization of land and its distribution to the plantation companies, together with state appropriation of forests for exploitation and conservation by the colonial administration had alienated large tracts of land from the *Adivasis* in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Kjosavik, 2010). The internal migration to northern part of Kerala, first prompted by the Post World War II deprivations and postcolonial expansion, especially during the 1960s, saw migrant settlers taking control of traditionally 'tribal' land and marginalizing the *Adivasis* within their own territories (Bijoy, 1999). This echoed the displacement and dispossession of *Adivasis* from their homeland in Chotanagpur (North Indian Adivasi belt), where the landlessness among *Adivasis* increased from 20 percent to 33 per cent in the ten years between 1961 and 1971 (Bates, 1995). Acclaimed as the incomparable instrument of socio-economic redistribution, the Kerala Land Reform Act 1963, in effect, deprived the *Adivasis* of what meagre land resource remained to them as they fell prey to acquisitive incoming settlers who, shrewdly, acted as tenants and thus obtained rights over the *Adivasis'* land (Bijoy, 1999; Raman, 2002, 2004; Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, 2015). The protective measures introduced to rescue the *Adivasis* from dispossession culminated in the Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction on Transfer of Lands and

Restoration of Alienated Lands) Act 1975, which was given assent in the ninth Schedule of the constitution with a view to ensure that it would not be challenged in any court of law. However, it was not taken up for implementation until 1986 when it was notified in *The Gazette*. The government received, in the region, 8,500 applications for the restoration of land, but no action was taken. The successive governments of both political hues managed to keep the KST Act 1975 from being implemented by inventing new ordinances to sabotage the original Act despite an incessant flow of intervening orders from the courts. The civil society activists and *Adivasis* waged legal battle in the High Court and in the Supreme Court, but the land question remained a moot point and the governments in power went un-reprimanded, abrogating their responsibility apparently without opposition (Bijoy and Raman, 2003; Raman, 2004; Sreerekha, 2010). The socio-political activism for *Adivasi* land in the democratic Kerala during these years, remained largely juridical except for the Naxalite forays in late 60s and 70s.

Meanwhile neoliberalism aggravated the plight of the already ailing *Adivasis*[36], who were groping in obscurity for survival, by further impoverishing them, aggravating their plight, accentuating their marginality by multiple exclusions (Oommen, 2010; Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, 2015). These policies resulted in dismantling public distribution system, education and health services.[37] A crisis arose in the agricultural sector stemming from the withdrawal of subsidies and the unrestrained import of agricultural commodities. All of this was devastating to the *Adivasis* who, bereft of alternatives, were forced to succumb to their own vulnerability. The move towards destatization and depoliticization, in which the state shifts from government to governance – which is merely administration and management (Mannathukkaren, 2010b) – together with the shift to market-driven development resulted in a 'double squeeze' on the *Adivasi* (Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, 2006; Steur, 2014a; Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, 2015). Migration, privatization of education[38], IT development and an allied real-estate boom all benefited Kerala, and have sustained the Kerala Model (Raman, 2010b), but not the 'outliers', i.e. the *Adivasis*

[36] The *Adivasi* households, which depended on agricultural labour abysmally declined in MPCE in nominal terms at 13 per cent and their real value as deflated according to the agricultural labour consumer price index, by 23.86 per cent (Oommen, 2010).

[37] To corroborate the state withdrawal the following statistics may be helpful: There was a sharp decline in state expenditure on education and health expenditure during the reform period (1990–91 to 2006–07) declined sharply at the rate of -2.04 and -2.46 respectively per annum whereas during the pre-reform period (1980-81 through 1989-90) there were decreases respectively at the rate of -0.97 and -1.59 per cent. The same trend is visible in government expenditure on other social services, which was as high as 39.7 per cent during the 1970s, declining to 25.17 in 1990-91 and to 17.97 per cent in 2005-06. The NSDP norm of 6 per cent of NSDP, which Kerala generally enjoyed during the 1960s and 70s, declined to a little over 4 per cent during the 1980s and was below that for 12 out of the 17 years of the post-reform period (1990-2007)(Oommen, 2010).

[38] 82 per cent of the engineering seats and 45 per cent of the medical seats are in the self-financing sector, which has resulted in gross corruption, communal appeasement, and a prodigious lack of affordability and accessibility for the poor and the marginalized (Oommen, 2010).

(Yadu, 2016). At 3.5 per cent of the population of India, Kerala consumes 13 to 15 per cent of the consumer goods produced in the country, demonstrating how the culture of consumerism has become embedded (Mannathukkaren, 2010a), but the *Adivasis* do not have a share in this highly acclaimed and conspicuous increase in consumption; their fight for survival continues unchanged. Ravi Raman has noted that even the much-vaunted 'decentralized planning' (Isaac and Tharakan, 1995) marketed by mainstream parties has been shown up by the plight of *Adivasis,* and has been recognized as merely draining 'Tribal Sub Plan' funds for neoliberal projects, that do nothing to advance *Adivasi* interests (Raman, 2004). Steur (2010, 2015a, 2017)would argue that the neoliberalization of Kerala is more latent and could be discernible only in the processes of increased commodification and market exposure, but, as studies have shown, it is actually more pronounced than that (Oommen, 2010; Sreeraj and Vakulabharanam, 2015). For instance in Wayanadu, the new opportunities that got opened up by neoliberalism were all connected with the booming tourist sector, in which *Adivasis* have few jobs and are only spectacles – indeed this lead to their forced migration to Kodagu, in Karnataka, as agricultural labourers (Jose and Padmanabhan, 2016). This bears out Walker's argument that neoliberal predatory growth transforms the rural poor into a 'reserve army of labour' (Walker, 2008). This eventually results in their literal and metaphorical exclusion from full *Malayali* citizenship (Steur, 2014a). It is in this context that the *Adivasis* have resorted to fighting for their land (Veettil *et al.*, 2013). But the questions that prop up in the light of this literature are central to my investigation: How has this complex social context facilitated a process of structuring an '*Adivasi* field of contention'? How has framing the land question affected the restructuring of field, capital and habitus of *Adivasis*? How these struggles reconstitute the subjectivity and political belonging of *Adivasis*?

The literature on this historical narrative seems to show general convergence in the major theme, although there are some differences in the details or the emphasis. Bijoy (1999) has documented the history of land struggles with legal astuteness and historical acuity. Kjosavik takes it further and provides a Marxist analysis of the *Adivasi* question and Steur gives a critical anthropological analysis focusing on the politics of indigeneity. What stands out in these historical narratives is not just the appalling denigration of the *Adivasis* and their rights by the state or the connivance of the settlers to keep the *Adivasis* dispossessed and alienated but the dismaying general consensus, fabricated in the political and civil echelons of Kerala that the *Adivasis* and their rights can be dispensed with. It is against this apathy, this manufactured conspiracy of blindness to *Adivasi* sociality, I argue, that the latter now have to battle. My research seeks to establish that, in confronting the consensus through protracted opposition, the *Adivasis* have restructured their habitus and reconstituted a reflexive subjectivity and political belonging. They emerge from the shackles of oblivion to the centre stage of politics and public life, confident and bold, ready to

engage an indifferent, if not hostile, political and civil opponent as embodied by the society of Kerala. My research seeks to capture this shift in dispositions, skills, competencies and propensities that are embedded through movement practices and which shape their political subjectivity.

2.4.2 The story of Resistance and Relentless Struggle

Writing in the context of the displacement of *Adivasis* in Jharkhand, Ekka (2012) enumerates the symbiotic relationships that *Adivasis* have with land[39] as an embedded meaning system that structure their relation to everything. Bhukya (2012), in his study of *Adivasis* land assertion in Andhra Pradesh, argues along similar lines that the *Adivasi* relation to land is organic, territorial, symbolic and even spiritual[40]. Whether one resorts to these romantic, indigenist notions of *Adivasis* – a symbolic relationship with the land – or take the non-essentialist view – all agricultural communities tend to be land-centred – it was desire for land that brought the *Adivasis* in Kerala together, and it was around the issue of land that they have defined their political agenda. Therefore, understanding the framing process of land struggles and how they structure the field of contention and restructure habitus and practices become indispensable in interrogating and unpicking the subjectivity of *Adivasis* in Kerala.

There have been three stages in the building up of the *Adivasi* 'organic movement' (Nalunnakkal, 2004) for land in Kerala[41]. The state-wide land struggle began with the tragic deaths by starvation of *Paniya Adivasis* in 2001, at which time the *Adivasis* started a march from *Wayanadu*, the northern district, to the secretariat at *Thiruvananthapuram*, the southern region. Started under the banner of the *'Adivasi-Dalit Action council'* (ADSS) staging *kudilketti samaram* (hut-built agitation), the struggle garnered support from civil society movements and other peoples' movements, metamorphosed into the new pan Kerala tribal political forum 'the Grand Assembly of *Adivasis*' (*Adivasi Gothra[42] Maha Sabha,* AGMS)' and ended by securing an agreement with the

[39] He elucidates this relationship in detail: a) The meaning of land for *Adivasis* is derived from their myths and legends which detail the genesis of the Creation, of humans, and of human relationship with God, and cosmos; b) land is inextricably linked to the socio-cultural and religious identity of *Adivasis*; c) land is the basis of their religious life as they encounter 'God' in the creation, such as in groves and their guardian spirits are all over the land – the hills, rocks, forests, rivers and lakes, fields, and village boundaries, to mention but a few; d) land is the basis for the socio-economic and political systems of *Adivasis* and their community living is constructed around the land they inhabit (Ekka 2012: 53-55).

[40] Bhangya Bhukya (2012:65) argues that the land, for *Adivasis,* is not a commodity to be exchanged, and rights over land are symbolic, intrinsically linked to the *Adivasis* sense of territoriality, their organic relationship with their habitat; they maintain a spiritual relationship with the land, which resonates throughout their cultural ceremonies

[41] Confer appendix B3 for the details of the movements

[42] Gothra refers to a clan which traces its origin to a common ancestor and shapes the practice of exogamy within a clan. They are exogamous kinship groups. The study of gotras within the Hindu tradition has been

Chief Minister for the distribution of government land to the *Adivasi* families (Raman, 2002, 2004). The AGMS held a consultation with the *Adivasis* from all over Kerala and decided to stipulate a period within which the government, which it had mandated itself as part of the agreement, must honour its commitment to land distribution. However, there was little progress during this waiting period and the *Adivasis* decided to occupy *Muthanga*, a wildlife sanctuary, as the next phase of their protest and 1,100 families moved into the area on 3 January, 2003. They were forcibly evicted from the 'movement scene' and in the ensuing encounter with the police, both an *Adivasi* and a policeman died. This lent momentum to a renewal of protests, struggles and resistance.

Criminalizing the protest has been strategically employed to curb the resistance and to facilitate the *Adivasis'* physical dispossession (Steur, 2015b). The government's attempt to project the police's defensive reaction as a response to Maoist forces gained hardly any support and the conflict consolidated *Adivasi* politics in the socio-cultural and political milieu of the state of Kerala (Bijoy and Raman, 2003; Raman, 2004). Kjosavik argues that the *Muthanga* struggle redefined the image of *Adivasis* from being that of a helpless, illiterate and uncivilized rabble into that of a people capable of engaging in militant struggle for their rights (Kjosavik, 2006). *Muthanga* also became an opportunity to reinvent and experiment with the life of an '*Adivasi* republic' (Nalunnakkal, 2004), which was shaped by the perspectives, structures and practices derived from the *Adivasi* 'tradition'. Kjosavik describes the experiment at *Muthanga* as "pre-living imagined futures" wherein they tried to organize their lives within the contours of modernity, not as a reliving of the frozen past, but of a dynamic future (Kjosavik, 2006, 2010; Veettil *et al.*, 2013).

The third wave of the *Adivasi* protest started on July 9, 2014. It was begun in order to revisit the agreement that the state had reached with them in 2001, which still remain an unfulfilled task (Khan, 2014). The struggle formally ended with the state entering a renewed agreement with the AGMS leaders at the end of 162 days, it would honour its commitment and take the necessary measures to incorporate the *Adivasis'* enclaves to the Fifth Schedule[43]. The AGMS leaders kept

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an important concern for early Indian sociologists such as G.S. Ghurye (*Two Brahminical Institutions: Gotra and Charana,* 1972) within the framework of caste system. However, among the *Adivasis* in Kerala gothra refers to specific community such as *Paniya, Adiya, Kurichya,* etc with their own customs, practices, language, rituals and traditions. There interrelationships and intrarelationships are governed by historically derived practices and customs. The AGMS is a consortium of all such *Adivasi* communities in Kerala.

[43] The major demands of *Adivasis* presented in the movement flyer were: a) Grant the status of Scheduled area to Kerala 'tribal' area; b) restore the alienated 'tribal' lands that had been encroached upon; implement Forest Rights Act-2006; c) stop the privatization of *Aaralam* farmland and its redistribution among landless 'tribals'; d) grant justice and rehabilitation of *Muthanga* victims and families; e) allocate special packages for the weakest among the *Adivasis*; f) grant ST status to the tribes who are not already recognized as STs; and g) put an end to the 'police raj', and torture in the name of Maoist threats and connections (AGMS, 2014).

open the possibility of reopening their campaign if the state and Kerala bureaucracy continue to fail to honour its commitments or did not deliver the promised justice.

Outside these waves of state (province) wide mobilisations, there have been emblematic land occupy struggles such as the one for Aralam Farm in 2006. It was due to the pressure from *Adivasi* movement as a post-Muthanga agreement that the state government bought the Farm from the central government in 2004 for distributing it for *Adivasis.* However, as the government failed to take any significant proactive measures to hand over the land to landless *Adivasis*, the movement decided to forcibly occupy the land for their habitation. They had to confront both unionised workforce of the farm as well as the police in their march towards occupying the Farm and succeeded despite the unrelenting oppositions (Sreerekha, 2010). This has now resulted in distributing one acre of land each to more than 3000 *Adivasi* families (confer appendix B4) making it the largest *Adivasi* resettlements in India (Kumar, 2019).[44]

There are two salient ways in which scholarship has analysed the *Adivasi* movements of the 2000s: the first body of research argues that the movements 'unravelled the edifice' of the Kerala Model of Development (Steur, 2009, 2010; Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, 2015) and the second strand of literature has attempted to uncover the complexities of indigenous politics as against class politics (Steur, 2011a; Steur, 2015a). While conceding the merits of both these branches of scholarship, I argue that they have not paid the requisite attention to the dynamics of *Adivasi* subjectivity in Kerala, or to the processes of embedding dispositions and movement practices and of reconstituting the subjectivity reflexively. It is in this area that I would like to take existing knowledge forward by providing a micro ethnographic and analytical account of the dynamics and processes of constructing *Adivasi* subjectivity in and through the discourses of these socio-political movements. My research generates data, not only from the *Adivasis* who have been in the forefront of the fight to regain land, but also from the key social activists whose contributions were pivotal in connecting the *Adivasis* and the public of Kerala. The intensive field research on Aralam Farm can reveal how the political subjectivity and movement habitus gets embedded in their everyday life. By means of these data I hope to reveal the complex and intricate story of *Adivasi* emergence and peel back the layers of their reflexively constructed subjectivity. This also

[44] From 1970 to 2004 the ownership of the Farm was with the federal (central) government of India and during this period there were nearly 600 *Adivasi* families working on the Farm. The major produces were cashew, cocoa, rubber and coconut. As of now 3375 *Adivasi* families from ten different *Adivasi* communities have received land on the Farm and are supported through the Tribal Department of Kerala. The Kerala government established Tribal Resettlement and Development Mission (TRDM) in 2001 as a result of the *Kudil Ketti Samaram.* TRDM, now oversees the distribution of land and other developmental activities on the Farm (Kumar, 2019).

will address the gap in studying the life of *Adivasis* in the post-land struggle resettlement with a social movement and social theory perspective.

2.4.3 The *Adivasis* as Outlier to the Kerala Model of Development

The consolidation of *Adivasi* politics, premised on their historical experience of marginality, has been presented by scholars as an unravelling of the claims of what came to be known as the Kerala Model of Development. 'Development' in Kerala attracted scholarly attention with the publication of UN Study on Poverty (CDS/UN 1975), (Parayil and Sreekumar, 2003; Sreekumar and Parayil, 2006; Tharamangalam, 2010). This provided a foundation upon which to construct a model abstracted from Kerala's development experience that claim to have charted a unique trajectory of development by achieving outstanding heights in areas of health, education and demographic transition despite low economic development and low per capita income in comparison to other states in India and the developed world. Further it suggested that in Kerala basic facilities and welfare measures were fairly evenly distributed across the gender and rural-urban divides and among *Dalits* and *Adivasis* (Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, 2004; Tharakan, 2006). This progress is attributed to a number of factors including: the activities of social reform movements, workers' and peasants' movements and left wing political orchestrations, politicization of various specific groups and the evolution of a strong civil society, maritime and commercial connections, presence of a plural society, Christian missionaries, social reform groups and their leaders (Jeffrey, 2003; Parayil and Sreekumar, 2003; Tharakan, 2006; Nithya, 2013). 'Public action / public politics'[45] became the defining slogan of the Kerala Model of Development for scholars (Jeffrey, 2003; Raman, 2010a; Rammohan, 2010), and the discourse of the Model became hegemonic in any related discussions in Kerala (Raman, 2010a); leftwing intellectuals appropriated this and became its vanguards, oblivious to the multifarious factors and multi-layered processes, running beneath the surface. However, research on Kerala has now acknowledged that the *Adivasis* have been excluded, resulting in a "paradox within a paradox" (Chandran, 2012). The plight of the marginalized communities, *Adivasis*, *Dalits* and fishing community (Human Development Report 2005, 2006) is, it is argued, a 'blot' on the Kerala model; they are dismissed as 'outliers' to the central tendency of the model (Parayil and Sreekumar, 2003; Tharakan, 2006; Chandran, 2012; Nithya, 2013). Steur describes it as a "failed model of development" (Steur, 2014a) and others as the model 'in crisis'(Chandrika and Nandakumar, 2014).

[45] Rammohan (2010) warns that 'Public' understood in an essentialised, homogenised, way is masking the caste-class powers and that there is disproportionate outcome for the different groups for their public action.

The sustainability of the model has been questioned from environmental perspectives, referencing the lack of growth in commodity production, high 'value-adding' or export-oriented services, low employment generation, growing gender disparity and the middle class opting out of the public system (Tharakan, 2006). However, for *Adivasis* this model has never delivered, and this is evident from the fallout of the land reforms that were deemed to be the pillars of the model (Rammohan, 2008). Moreover, the *Adivasis* have been invisible in any discussions of the model itself, although they have now been 'included' as 'victims', and 'outliers'. Contemporary research reveals that the caste-land nexus continues to operate, as can be seen from the landholding patterns in Kerala to the present day, and there is a significant increase among *Adivasis* in the proportion of households that do not own and/or cultivate land (Yadu, 2016). Even the 'one-lakh' colonies[46], the settlement enclaves allotted to the *Dalit* and *Adivasis* have become the pockets of poverty in Kerala, and many of the *Adivasis* have been found excluded (Nalapat, 1976; Damodaran, 2006a; Sreerekha, 2010). Additionally, neoliberal changes in Kerala have accentuated the discrepancies and widened the inequalities furthering the unravelling of the Kerala model. This is evident from the analysis of growth regimes for Kerala since its formation, where the growth of economy is straddled with a corollary escalation in inequality[47] since 1987-88 to 2010 (Sreeraj and Vakulabharanam, 2015).

These sets of literature (the above mentioned) locate the outbreak of the *Adivasi* movement within the wider discourse on the development experience of Kerala and interrogate its developmental trajectory and the inequalities in which it is implicated. While it is important to place *Adivasi* movements within the greater narrative of Kerala, it is equally important, I suggest, that these movements be understood within the larger history of Kerala, especially that of the reform movements of the lower castes. Consolidation of community identity is not new to Kerala,

[46] The *Adivasis* living together in a geographical and social space today gets referred to as *Adivasi* colony. The Kerala government's project of 'one-lakh' (one hundred thousand) houses for providing housing to the poor who did not have a house or land after being evicted as a result of land reforms (Nalapat, 1976) formed the basis of colonies in Kerala. These houses were constructed in all 960 panchayats (village) of the state using public fund and public land. They came to be known as colonies. Damodaran (2006a) has argued in the context of Wayanadu district that the intensive develop programmes that government orchestrated among the *Adivasis* after 1950s was an attempt at colonisation whereby the *Adivasis* were located adjacent to non-*Adivasi* settlers with the view that the interaction would benefit for *Adivasi* development. The government provided common land for cultivation for the *Adivasis* with a one size fit for all approach. In sum, *Adivasis* living in clusters with minimal land and other facilities today are called *Adivasi* colonies and they have become the emblems of deprivation and poverty among the *Adivasis*.

[47] The growth regimes are divided into three: a moderate growth regime from 1960-61 to 1970-71; a period of stagnation from 1971-72 to 1987-88; and a high growth regime after 1987-88. From 1987-88 onwards Kerala's economy started to grow rapidly and this has continued in recent years, making it one of the fastest growing states in India. In terms of the story of changing inequality in Kerala from 1983 to 2010, an absolute decrease in inequality between 1983 and 1993-94 can be contrasted with a substantial increase in inequality from a Gini Coefficient of .316 in 1993-94 to .473 in 2009-10 (Sreeraj and Vakulabharanam, 2015).

rather it is through such large identity movements that modern Kerala came into being. Therefore sociologically and politically it is vital to understand the transformation in their skill sets, competencies, embedded dispositions and propensities that will enable them to be solid political actors in Kerala. How do these movements endow them with capitals and entrench them with movement practices to bolster their political belonging? How do these mobilisational experiences reconstitute their subjectivity? Answering these questions that relate to changes in their habitus, forms of capital, practices and subjectivity will be crucial in understanding their possibilities as actors within a politicised socio-economic culture (Jeffrey, 2003; Devika, 2017) in Kerala. It is here that a theoretical fusion between concepts from Bourdieu, social movement theories, and reflexivity becomes pertinent.

Secondly, over the years discourse on the Kerala Model has become trite, and I argue that it is important to look beyond it. My argument is that the neoliberal transitions had already led the 'Model' in to a crisis, so the *Adivasis'* resistance had not just deconstructed the 'Model' but was indeed a product of that crisis. Privatization and corporatization of education and healthcare, emigration and remittance from affluent communities had thrown the 'Model' into an irredeemable disarray. It is only by our keeping the neoliberalization of Kerala front and centre, the *Adivasis* land struggle and political subjectivity can be sensibly unpacked, and that is the direction of my research. From an extended class analysis, the anthropologist Steur makes such an attempt, as she assesses the shift from the politics of class to that of indigenous identity.

2.4.4 From Class politics to Indigenous Identity: proletarians turning *Adivasis*

During the pre-1990 tribal movements in India the political entities such as the Communist Party of India (CPI), the Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist) (CPI[ML]) – in the case of the Naxalbari movement – and the Socialist Party played vital role in setting the objectives and agenda of the tribal movements in India (Shah 2004). The history of *Adivasi* mobilization in Kerala is deeply enmeshed with their involvement in the Communist Party, in whose cadres they have served faithfully, reproducing the party correlation of patronage and masses. The '*Adiya'* community, for example, has a history of being animated by the radical left movement (CPI (ML)/ Naxalite / Maoist) in Kerala to demand their rightful share of wage and food in the 1970s. Today, however, they have become disillusioned with the party and the party in turn has blatantly rejected identitarian politics (Steur, 2011a). Their treating *Adivasis* as the 'frozen working class' and subsuming indigeneity once again into the class debate (Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, 2004) was pivotal in containing the *Adivasi* voice. Additionally, new research into Kerala's communist party has revealed that the party has recently been heavily implicated in corporate corruption scandals and shown itself to be susceptible to the lure of neoliberalism (Steur and Das,

2009). The hollowing out of the class politics represented by the communist party, and forging a new politics around indigenous identity, represents a major discursive shift on the part of the *Adivasi* away from the Marxist politics because of its failure to embody their concerns. An autonomous *Adivasi* movement has emerged in Kerala in the 1990s (Chandrika and Nandakumar, 2014). In a strategic 'reverse discourse' (Green, 2010) the *Adivasis* have appropriated the very same derogatory category, as had been applied to them and have inverted its signification, inflecting it with radical overtones and entrenching it as a politically resilient representational identity along the lines of indigenism. Thus, they have marked a shift from 'class' to 'identity' a political process with a small 'p' (Steur, 2009, 2014a).

Steur (2011a, 2011b) research has explored how the international discourse on indigenous politics has informed the local articulation of the *Adivasi* struggle in Kerala. Leaders have emerged such as C. K. Janu, who took the opportunity of representing herself prominently as '*Adivasi*' in international conference, which has helped foreground her politics. Kjosavik (2010) argues that UN Decade, together with international indigenous movements, have lent discursive momentum to the articulation of the *Adivasi* movement in Kerala. The South Indian Forums were particularly notable in promoting the leadership of C. K. Janu and others as she was the President of South Zone Adivasi Forum (SZAF) (Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, 2004). There is a contradiction in indigenism in that the term invokes a certain historicity and permanence, whereas the political climate in which it became embedded is the product of the latter half of the twentieth century (Steur, 2005). Steur argues that it is historically a challengeable proposition to prove that the '*Adiya*' or the '*Paniya*' were the first dwellers on and owners of the land because their very names suggest that they were 'slaves' and 'workers' for other communities – they were slaves 'without the memory of a golden age'. However, now that they have taken up and revolutionized the category '*Adivasi*' and claimed it as their political identity, they are able to restore to claiming authenticity to their claims of being aboriginal and the land being their ancestral property. This is a politics that seeks land not through the idea of 'land to the tiller' but through the concept of *Adivasi* belonging. Adivasis have begun to see both their past and their future in terms of Adivasi autonomy rather than workers' emancipation (Steur, 2011a; Steur, 2015a). Steur further argues that the politics of indigenism does conceal power relations within the indigenous communities wherein the dominant actors manage to impose their interests and thereby marginalize others (Steur, 2005). Analysing the ways in which indigenist politics has been articulated across the

globe, Steur (2011b) expands and contextualizes Anna Tsing's distinction of travelling models of indigenous voices[48] to fit the *Adivasi* mobilization in Kerala into these discourses on indigenism.

Steur's research succeeds in unpacking the *Adivasi* movement in Kerala in its indigenous positioning within the global discourse of indigenous movements. It has revealed the ways in which the *Adivasi* subjectivity has been reconstituted in the moulds of indigeneity, shaped by both the limits and possibilities of such an articulation. Employing an extended class perspective, Steur substantiates her arguments with ethnographic data. My problem with this line of analysis is that despite stating that *Adivasis* are a heterogeneous community it tends to construct them as a homogenous group involved in class politics. Such a singular narrative is empirically unsustainable as the *Adivasis en bloc* have never been interested in class politics. Have the *Adivasis*, or at least a significant majority of them, resorted to class politics in Kerala? Have they all been proletarians? There have been heterogeneity and diversity within the *Adivasi* communities as in their political affiliations. The field research on Aralam Farm may testify to this internal heterogeneity among the *Adivasis* in terms of their political propensities and allegiances. Even as the narrative refers to the dominant frames of politics, it still begs qualification of such blanket claims. Secondly, the phenomenon of communitarian identity becoming the epicentre of political mobilisation is not unfamiliar to Kerala, rather a politics based on community identity has been central to mobilisations during both the colonial and postcolonial periods. Though the communist party in Kerala prides itself in representing the marginalised groups, it has never been in power for two consecutive terms neither can substantiate the neat simplification of marginalised = working class = left supporting. Such simplistic, reductionist interpretations may well play into the hegemonic discourses constructed by the leftist and liberal intellectuals, along with the Kerala Model of Development. Therefore, claims such as communist indigenism may be unsustainable.

My research seeks to build on Steur's work through an investigation of *Adivasi* mobilization from a social movement perspective, and by an empirical inquiry into the post-conflict life of the *Adivasis*. I seek to build a theoretical frame that incorporates Boudieusian concepts, social movement theories and theories of reflexivity with a view to understanding how the land struggles have facilitated the reconstitution of a reflexive *Adivasi* subjectivity, and how the practices of the movement seeks to construct a movement habitus.

[48] Steur (2011b) elaborates and extends Anna Tsing's various models: (a) Organic indigenism, (b) autonomous indigenism (c) Democratic indigenism (d) Communist indigenism.

2.5 Research Questions

The central problematic of this research is to understand how the socio-political mobilisation for land and resources have enabled the *Adivasis* to rework their habitus and reconstitute their subjectivity. Inquiries into movement practices, relevant forms of capital, repertoires of contention, framing process and the enunciation of the field of contention will provide the analytical pathways in unearthing the *Adivasi* political subjectivity and belonging. This line of enquiry, I argue, will provide significant insights into the dynamics which shape the processes of being and becoming an *Adivasi* in Kerala. It will also give indications on how the reconstituted subjectivity may continue to facilitate the processes of morphogenesis and help to navigate the challenges in both their everyday lives as well as in the political field.

2.5.1 Questions:

- What are the multiple valences and trajectories that have structured and restructured the *Adivasi* field of contention in Kerala?
- How has this protracted socio-political movement facilitated the restructuring and embedding of a movement habitus among the *Adivasis*?
- How has the socio-political mobilization enabled the *Adivasis* to reconstitute their embedded subjectivity reflexively in the light of their 'movement habitus'?

2.6 Conclusion

I have presented a thematic literature review on the question of *Adivasi* subjectivity that cuts across defining moments in colonial and postcolonial times and in spaces both at the national and regional level. *Adivasis* have historically asserted their agency and subjectivity through their resistances and struggles and in Kerala they have done it through a protracted mobilisation for land and resources. These struggles, while marking the agency of the *Adivasis*, have also structured their subjectivity. Unearthing the dynamic processes involved in the constitution of *Adivasi* subjectivity in and through the socio-political struggles can provide insights into the possibilities this embedded subjectivity opens up for the *Adivasis* as actors in everyday life and in the political field. Therefore this research investigates the enunciation of *Adivasi* field of contention within which the *Adivasis* have restructured their habitus into a movement habitus in reciprocal structuring relation to relevant forms of capital and movement practices. It seeks to uncover the intricate dynamics of *Adivasi* political subjectivity and the internal heterogeneity as embedded and enacted in their everyday life on Aralam Farm, an *Adivasi* resettlement in northern

Kerala deemed as the largest in modern India. The next chapter will map a theoretical frame for the analysis of the data garnered for addressing the concerns raised in this research.

Chapter 3 Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

Investigating the question of reconstituting *Adivasi* subjectivity and political belonging in the wake of protracted socio-political mobilisation requires pooling of a set of theoretical concepts to weave a framework that is feasible for such an analysis. The central questions of this thesis are a) how have the socio-political movements of the *Adivasis* facilitated a restructuring of their habitus into 'movement habitus'; and b) does a 'movement habitus' give rise to practices that leads to a reconstitution of their subjectivity reflexively in relation to their political practices and belonging in the context of Kerala? Death (2010) argues perceptively that protests and struggle are the sites where, in the Foucauldian frame, the self is constructed and modified by the actors. The theoretical framework is welding subjectivity (reflexive constitution of self) to movement habitus to derive embedded subjectivity by looking at the way it gets structured and changed in relation to the discursive field of contention and to look at how habitus and theories of practices can mutate with reflexivity to produce its semantics as practical intelligibility that facilitates belonging.

This theoretical framework is primarily premised on the argument that the participation and involvement in the socio-political movement has had prolonged and enduring social and ideological effects on the lives of the actors, at least for 20 years as studies have shown (Giugni, 2004). I look at how the land struggles have changed the habitus, subjectivity and political belonging of the *Adivasis* in Kerala. McAdam's study of "freedom summer" graphically illustrates that the social movement actors developed sustained changes and political engagements as a result of their experiences in the mobilisation and these changes were not constricted to their political behaviour but panned to other domains of their lives; personal and work lives (McAdam, 1988, 1989). Exploring the movement experiences of thirty Colorado peace activists, Downton and Wehr (1998, 2019) has shown how peace action have evolved into ethical career that is inseparable from personal identity and day-to-day life. It is argued on significant researches that involvement in social mobilisation even at low level of commitment can have far reaching consequences (Giugni, 2004) for individuals and for the movements such as creation of a cohort of activists (Whittier, 2004), or 'social movement spill over'(Meyer and Whittier, 1994) as in influencing or giving rise to other movements, or sharing of movement tactics (Soule, 1997). Resonating with and departing from these studies, the question that this research investigates is how do the intensive involvements in the socio-political struggles for land significantly alter the political subjectivity and belonging of the *Adivasis* in Kerala and shaped their movement habitus and political practices? Answer to this question hinges on the conceptual universe of social

movement, habitus, practice, subjectivity, reflexivity and belonging. This section intends to map how these theoretical strands can be interlocked to ground a solid framework for the analysis of the data generated in this research.

3.2 Subjectivity and Practice

Ortner (2005) defines subjectivity as the ensemble of modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, fear and so forth that animate acting subjects and the specific cultural, social and political formations that shape, organise and provoke those modes. Holland and Leander (2004) think of subjectivity as actor's thoughts, sentiments, and embodied sensibilities, and especially, their sense of self and self-world relations[49]. For Ortner subjectivity is the basis of agency, a necessary part of understanding how people try to act upon the world even as they are acted upon. Agency for Ortner takes shape as specific desires and intentions within a matrix of subjectivity – feeling, thoughts and meanings. As the basis of agency, Ortner argues, subjectivity is also the basis of resistance, and of relationship between human action and 'the system'. She assesses that the Foucauldian inspired works explored the way discourses construct political subjectivity – or subject positions – but it falls short of examining subjectivity, the complex of emotional and reflexive orientations to the world that are generated through people's engagement with such discourses (Ortner, 2005; Mitchell, 2007). The attempt in this research is to examine that subjectivity and for that I try to anchor it on the habitus and the theory of practice which focuses on the orientation to the world and on the practical engagement wherein subjectivity gets constituted. I begin this by looking at Bourdieu' theory of practice and then connect that to Foucault's notion of constituting subjectivity and finally arrive at Farrugia's proposition of reflexivity as practical intelligibility.

3.3 Habitus and movement practices

In the Bourdieusian framework the practices are structuring as well as structured. Bourdieu's frame of practice includes habitus, capitals and field and he presents it as an equation; [(habitus) (capitals)] +field = practice. This underscores the reciprocal relationship that they share; in the sense that practices are structured by the interactions between habitus, capitals, and field and the practices in turn structure these as well. What Bourdieu is trying to argue is that practices are the result of "obscure double relation" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992,p.126) or an "unconscious

[49] They look at how the processes of positioning shape the subjectivities and in turn contribute to the production of cultural forms that mediate subsequent experiences.

relationship"(Bourdieu, 1993, p.73) between field and habitus. Therefore to understand practices we need to understand the evolving field within which the actors are positioned and the evolving habitus which they bring to the social field of practice (Bourdieu, 1990b, 1991). His formulaic presentation shows that the practices result from the interaction between one's dispositions (habitus) and one's position in the field, within the current situation of that arena (field), demonstrating the interlocking nature of these "thinking tools"(Wacquant, 1989, p.50). Habitus is the generative principle. Maton (2014) argues that the habitus is a relational concept in that it encourages us to think relationally as Bourdieu emphasises relations between them rather than either/or where each dimension being related is itself defined relationally. Bourdieu argues for a methodology that examines the interlocked and interdependent habitus, capital and field without assigning primacy, dominance or causality to any one of them. When interrogating the social world each of them is deemed integral to it and their mutual entanglement have to be deconstructed for each of the cases under investigation (Thomson, 2014). I try to bring this general theory of practice in conversation with the social movement theories for a productive process of building a theoretical framework of movement habitus, discursive fields of contention, and reflexive subjectivity.

3.4 Conceptualizing Movement Habitus

Skeggs (2004) states that there are many who work against and through Bourdieu to put his theories to different uses, combining them productively with other theories and often reformulating them eclectically, which Bourdieu himself has been supportive of when he argued for flexibility of his theories and even for the necessity of inconsistency. The attempt here is to use his general theory and thinking tools to understand and explain socio-political mobilisation and its impact on subjectivity. In Crossley's (2003) words it is extending the theorist of reproduction to examine the processes of transformation, as there have been critique that his theory is at best a theory of reproduction and is at its weakest a theory of transformation (Calhoun, 1993a). Bourdieu has not theorised on social movement in any detail and therefore the attempt here is to move beyond orthodox interpretations of Bourdieusian concepts to engage with social movement theories so that a set of toolkits can be churned out that could be useful to understand the social movement (Crossley, 2005) and the production of subjectivity. In order to do that I examine the key concepts of Bourdieu to draw their import for understanding the formation of subjectivity and excavating the dynamics of a movement habitus. Scholars have

creatively employed Bourdieusian categories to understand the dynamics of social movements[50] (Horton, 2003; Emirbayer and Goldberg, 2005; Nepstad and Bob, 2006, 2007; Haluza-DeLay, 2008; Fligstein and McAdam, 2011, 2012; Husu, 2013; Mayrl, 2013; Landy, 2015). However, as this study is looking at the formation of a movement habitus and subjectivity, I will be predominantly incorporating Crossley's interpretation of Bourdieu in relation to social movements (Crossley, 1999a, 1999b, 2002a, 2002c, 2002b, 2003, 2004, 2005).

Bourdieu has been credited with accolades for centrally contributing to the attempt to overcome such ubiquitous theoretical oppositions as subjective/objective, culture/society, and structure/action (Calhoun *et al.*, 1993). Envisaging to transcend these sets of longstanding binaries in the social theory, Bourdieu's habitus ingeniously traverses between them. This is clear from the fundamental question that he raises: "how can behaviour be regulated without being the product of obedience to rules?" (Bourdieu, 1990a, p.65). It is the question of how the binary notions of individual agency and social structure be reconciled and habitus is proposed as a link not only between structure and agency, but also between the individual and the social, the subjective and the objective. Bourdieu conceives social life as "mutually constituting interaction of structures, dispositions, and actions whereby social structures are embodied (therefore situated) knowledge of those structures produce enduring orientation to action which in turn, are constitutive of social structures"(Calhoun *et al.*, 1993, p.4). Bourdieu conceptualises habitus as the property of actors (individuals, groups or institutions) encompassing "structured and structuring structure"(Bourdieu, 1990a, p.170). It is structured in the sense of past and present experiences such as upbringing, social location, educational experiences and so on. In terms of shaping one's present and future practices, the habitus is "structuring". It is a "structure" in the sense of systematically ordered and this "structure" encompasses a system of dispositions that engenders perceptions, assessments and practices (Bourdieu, 1990b). Habitus is the capacity for structured improvisation; it is once intersubjective and the site of constitution of the person-in-action; system of dispositions which are both subjective and objective (Calhoun *et al.*, 1993). In common parlance habitus focuses on the way of our acting, thinking, feeling and being; how we carry our own history within us and how we bring that to bear upon our present and how that

[50] Horton (2003) examines construction of a green capital in British environmental activism, Haluza-DeLay (2008) investigates the construction of an ecological habitus in the environmental movement, Nepstad and Bob (2006,2007) analyses social movements to see the decisive role of leadership capital, and Husu (2013) in studying identity movement argues for congruence between the concepts of habitus, field, and capital, and political process, opportunities, resource mobilisation, and framing. Scholars employ the Bourdieusian concept of field extensively such as Fligstein and McAdam (2011, 2012) have proposed a general theory of strategic action fields (STFs), Mayrl (2013) seeks to improve field analysis of social movements in the context of 'social justice fields' and prison abolition movements, and Landy (2015) looks at how movement actors become translators across different fields of practice.

determines the choices we make. Bourdieu would say that habitus is "socialized subjectivity" and "the social embodied" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.127-8) meaning the internalised structure and the objective made subjective that brings together the objective social structure and the subjective personal experiences. "Disposition" is the key word in defining habitus and for Bourdieu it is:

> It expresses first the *result of an organizing action,* with a meaning close to words such as structure; it also designates *a way of being, a habitual state* (especially of the body) and, in particular, *a predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination.*
>
> (Bourdieu, 1977, p.214)

Two features of these dispositions are that they are '*durable'* and '*transposable'*; they persist over time and are amenable to be active in a wide variety of social settings (Bourdieu, 1993, p.87). They are not fixed or in constant flux but they evolve. The movement habitus in the scheme of Bourdieusian understanding is a structured and structuring structure that evolves through the personal history of activism of the person. These creates dispositions amenable to the dynamics of socio-political mobilisation and consolidates sets of skills, competences, perceptions, thinking and responses that equip the person to engage in the field of contention (Crossley, 1999a). But how do we unearth this habitus? Bourdieu's answer is that we have a route through practices. Habitus is formed through inculcation of specific schemas of perception, discourse and action and which generates practice. If there is a stylistic homology between practices across different fields, which betray a set of underlying perceptions, discourse and action, then we can deduce the existence of a shared habitus (Crossley, 1999a).

As practices are generated by the habitus in relation to capital and field, those practices can be excavated to unearth the underlying structure of the habitus. The practices, properly examined, can reveal the generative principle and structure underlying them, and for Bourdieu, that is the task of a researcher. So the embedded and embodied movement practices will provide inference cues to the habitus of the movement actors, here the *Adivasis*. The research will investigate this intricate link between movement practice and habitus of the *Adivasis*.

Bourdieu explains the relation between field and habitus as the meeting of two evolving logics or histories (Bourdieu, 1993, 2000). For Bourdieu this relation is marked with "ontological complicity" wherein the field structures the habitus and the habitus provide the basis for actor's understanding of life, sociality and the field itself:

> On the one side it is a relation of *conditioning*: the field structures the habitus… On the other side, it is a relation of knowledge or *cognitive construction*. Habitus contributes to constituting field as a meaningful world.
>
> (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.127)

McNay (1999) asserts that habitus here is not the principle of determination but generative structure which has a 'double and obscure' relationship of '*conditioning'* and '*cognitive construction'* between habitus and field. Habitus, in this sense, as a historical structure that is or can be realised only in reference to specific contexts, does not foreclose the possibilities of creativity and innovation and remains open to be restructured in the light of fresh experiences. This underlines that the field of contention, the socio-political movement field, conditions and structures the movement habitus but also in turn gets shaped by that habitus. But how does this movement habitus gets constituted and structured with the experiences in socio-political mobilisation?

3.4.1 Restructuring Habitus through pedagogic work

While envisioning the change to habitus, Bourdieu suggests that pedagogic action and pedagogic work can bring in transformations in the habitus:

> (Pedagogic action (PA)) entails *Pedagogic Works* (PW), a process of inculcation which must last long enough to produce durable training, i.e. a habitus, the product of the internalisation of the principles of a cultural arbitrary capable of perpetuating itself after the PA has ceased and thereby perpetuating in practices the principles of the internalised arbitrary.
>
> (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p.31)

Moore argues that the formation of the habitus, occurs through the "pedagogic work" and the inculcation of "strict rules" to the point that they acquire an embodied form (Moore, 2014). Therefore transformation of the habitus could entail the same process of 'inculcation' and 'training' along with the implicit experience in the internalisation of habitus (Jenkins, 2014). What is particularly significant for the productivity of pedagogic work is the degree of transposability of the habitus that gets generated through it; that is "capable of generating practices conforming with the principles of inculcated arbitrary in a greater number of different fields" (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p.33). Crossley argues here that social movement has various forms of pedagogic action that feed into the inculcation and development of the movement habitus and this has to be investigated (Crossley, 1999a). For him one of the ways that movement ensures the reproduction

of the movement habitus is through the leaflets or reading lists that a movement produces. My research investigates how does the *Adivasis* movement facilitate this processes? What are the mechanisms they employ to ensure that the seasoned campaigners pass on the skills and dispositions they acquired to the new members, thus sharing their habitus with the prospective recruits? Habitus can also be changed through a self-aware and consciously regulated process and it will transform to fit the need of the field:

> Not only can habitus be practically transformed (always within definite boundaries) by the effect of social trajectory leading to conditions of living different from the initial ones, it can also be controlled through awakening consciousness and socio-analysis.
>
> (Bourdieu, 1990a, p.116)

This allows for the restructuring of the habitus into a movement habitus through processes that awaken consciousness and through critical analysis and interrogation that often forms part of the movement itself. If this is how movement habitus gets structured, the next pertinent question would be: how does the dynamics of movement habitus operate? Asking the question how does movements 'move', Crossley tries to gauge the changes that takes place within a movement that seeks to change the society and depict the dynamics of habitus (Crossley, 2005). Social movement involves a variety of forms of know-how, dispositions, (perceptual, conceptual, action and identity related) schemas, which together make up the habitus. This movement habitus, moves through the social body of the community, crossing generations through the force of the practices they generate within and through the movement and the learning situation they effect through participation of the actors. The political activity generates new habitus and that being generative, in turn gives rise to further political activities, socializing the new entrants to the same habitus, thus ensuring its reproduction through them. But this habitus keeps evolving, adapting to new contexts and responding to fresh challenges of the movement, requiring creativity, innovation and change; the new recruits bring in their past experiences and habitus which mutate with this movement habitus ushering in change (Crossley, 2005). Farrugia and Woodman (2015) argue that by conceptualising practice as regulated improvisation Bourdieu has brought the possibilities of creativity and innovation into his scheme of habitus. His rendering of habitus to the pre-reflexive and spontaneous realm without the burden of cognitive rationality or deliberation, enables Bourdieu to argue that actors can be creative and innovative without having to be exclusively focused on conscious deliberative rationality. This way of conceptualizing movement habitus can facilitate examining of the evolution and dynamics of *Adivasi* movement habitus. This also allows me to analyse how certain creative practices and innovative experiments spawn within *Adivasi* movement.

3.4.2 Crisis, Reflexivity, Doxa and Hysteresis

The habitus change as we have seen so far "constantly in response to new experiences" and to new opportunities. But it also changes in response to what Bourdieu calls crisis where changes are abrupt and disrupting of the field and the individual's position within becomes unclear. As a result of the disruption between the alignment of habitus and field, the doxic beliefs (Bourdieu, 2011) that provide stability to the field (Deer, 2014) is dislodged and it is a moment of change as well as of reflexivity, for Bourdieu. It is at the times of crisis, of drastic socio-structural disruptions and modifications, that doxa[51] may get interrogated, even overhauled by the emerging critical consciousness, which may give rise to new doxa[52] (Bourdieu, 1998b, p.129). In such indeterminate moments of disruption between habitus and field, Bourdieu uses Hysteresis as a conceptual category to capture the complexities involved. It refers to the disruption in the relationship between habitus and field structures, mismatch between cognitive structures and objective structures to which they no longer correspond (Bourdieu, 1977, p.78). What makes hysteresis significant as a thinking tool within Bourdieusian conceptual world, is that it provides explicit link between the objective nature of systemic change (field transformation) and the subjective character of the individual response to that change (altered habitus)[53] (Hardy, 2014). Bourdieu (1990a, p.4) argues in *In Other Words* "habitus as a product of social conditioning and thus of history (unlike character), is endlessly transformed".

Against the criticism of the determinism of habitus levelled against Bourdieu (Jenkins, 2014), the attempt here is to expand the window of change that Bourdieu has opened up for theorizing change and transformation. I argue that it is where the pre-reflexive orientation of the habitus is reconstituted reflexively as subjectivity, in the Foucauldian sense, that the concept of movement habitus gains further dynamism and openness. Secondly, the rupture between habitus and field as a result of a crisis provides a theoretical window to account for the emergence of a reflexive subjectivity that Farrugia conceptualizes. Conceptually, therefore, I will be utilizing both doors that Bourdieu has left open to both understand the *Adivasi* subjectivity and to incorporate the

[51] Doxa for Bourdieu (2011), is the pre-reflexive, taken for granted, shared and intuitive knowledge, perceptions and beliefs shaped by experience and has a mutually reinforcing dynamic within the habitus and field relation.

[52] For Bourdieu one such crisis was May 1968 that rattled the French academia and society where the movement triggered radical interrogation of the prevailing academic and social order and the underpinning doxa in practice, action and discourse. From there Bourdieu goes on to develop his notions of reflexivity which interrogates the doxa of the researcher that structure and shape the research.

[53] Field structures result from the actors' strategic efforts to position them to the best of their benefits – desirable positions - deploying their accumulated capital and historical experiences (habitus). When a crisis or say state interventions change what is legitimate the relative value of symbolic capital are altered and the interactions between habitus and field are dislocated, resulting in hysteresis

dynamics of change (morphogenesis) among the *Adivasis* through their socio-political mobilisation and they are pedagogic action and crisis triggered reflexivity.

3.5 Prefigurative Politics, Repertoires of Contention and Pedagogic Action

Proceeding from the Bourdieusian conceptual frame that allows pedagogic actions to restructure the habitus, I argue that two key pedagogic works within social movement are pre-figurative experiments and the action repertoires. These become intense restructuring forces as they embed movement specific practices and galvanize movement related capitals within the field of contention. This section delineates how pre-figurative experiments and action repertoires become pedagogic work that restructures the habitus and in turn intensify the generative and restructuring relations between habitus, capital, field and practices.

Formally defined first by (Boggs, 1977, p.100) as 'the embodiment within the ongoing political practice of a movement, of those forms of social relations, decision-making, culture, and human experience that are the ultimate goal'. From its origins in the new left politics and popular with anarchist strategies, the insistence is that prefigurative politics should reflect the end in the means rather than end justifying the means. It involves in experimenting with the means that are available at present, in such a way that they mirror or embody the political ideals that inform the movement(Baker, 2016). To prefigure is to anticipate or enact, at least partially, some of the features of the 'alternate world' in the present as though it has already been achieved (Yates, 2015) or 'embodying in the present the vision of the future' (Jeffrey and Dyson, 2016). In movements prefigurative politics encourage consensus or other participatory or 'direct democracy' mechanisms to promote egalitarian decision-making mechanisms and collective action, 'implementing radically democratic in pursuit of social justice' (Cornish *et al.*, 2016). There is a parallel meaning for prefigurative politics where building alternative structures to transform the way power operates (Maeckelbergh, 2011). As Graeber says, from his own experience with an occupy movement, that prefigurative politics is the idea that the organizational form the activist group takes should prefigure and reflect the society that it wishes to create (Murray, 2014). In this line there are two question that are pertinent for the analysis of this research: firstly, what are the ways in which the *Adivasi* organizational form, AGMS, prefigures the political ideal that it seeks to create and thereby makes itself a pedagogic work? Secondly, how the occupy struggles of the *Adivasis* provide a pedagogic space for their prefigurative experiments to initiate actions geared to the restructuring of the habitus? These questions, I argue, substantiates the significance of

incorporating the concept of prefigurative politics into the theoretical scheme of movement habitus and subjectivity.

Another key element of the movement practice that is structured by the habitus and that in turn structures the habitus is repertoires of contention that the movement adopts, modifies, innovates and enacts. Crossley argues that Charles Tilly's (1978, 1993, 2008) concept of repertoires of contention needs to be developed further to enhance its applicability for further study and analysis of social movements, and he seeks to do it by incorporating Bourdieu's theory of practice (Crossley, 2002c). The term repertoires of contention is used by scholars to denote the distinctive constellation of strategies and tactics developed over time and used by movements for collective action and for laying claim to their demands (Taylor and Van Dyke, 2004). The word repertoire enables describing what happens at the mobilisation with a limited set of routines that are learned, shared and enacted through process of choice. The repertoires emerge from struggle and do not descend from abstract political philosophy or propaganda and the activists draw upon this 'know how' to upfront their claims (Mische, 2008). The concept attempts to capture the historical peculiarities of the methods of protest the agents employ, the way an agent protests reveal their historical and national-geographic location.

> The word *repertoire* identifies a limited set of routines that are learned, shared and acted out through a relatively deliberate process of choice. Repertoires are learned cultural creations, but they do not descend from abstract philosophy or take shape as a result of political propaganda; they emerge from struggle. People learn to break windows in protest, attack pilloried prisoners, tear down dishonoured houses, stage public marches, petition, hold formal meetings, organize special-interest associations. At any particular point in history, however, they learn only a rather small number of alternative ways to act collectively. (Tilly, 1993, p.264)

Tilly argues in the definition that the agents are constrained by the repertoires available to them historically and they need to learn them. There are recent studies that use the concept of repertoires of protest to explicate the dynamics of contentious political practice of our times[54] (Casquete, 2006; St John, 2008; Chaudhuri and Fitzgerald, 2015; McCurdy *et al.*, 2016).

[54] McCurdy *et al.* (2016) have shown how protest camps have become key sites in which a variety of repertoires of contention are developed, tried and tested, diffused and sometimes dismissed. Casquete (2006) talks about protest rituals such as demonstrations that are symbolic performances staged by the social movement with a manifest objective to influence the authorities, public opinion, and the participants.

But why are repertoires significant for the movement habitus and subjectivity? They are analytically significant for its learned nature and its generativity. There is also a tacit acknowledgement that the protest requires the agents to be competent in the know-how, the required skills of staging and managing specific forms of protests. There is an emphasis on the practical constitution of repertoires as they emerge from the struggles of everyday life, in a way generative from the habitus. For Tilly the new forms of protests emerge in the repertoire because activists are constantly innovating, usually at the 'perimeter' of existing repertoires. If the new forms become successful, then other agents appropriate these and they enter the repertoires. But what are the social dynamics of the processes by which the agents select a particular form contention from the repertoires of protest? Why some groups invent and reuse their own forms of protests? What makes them reject other available forms of the repertoire? Crossley (2002b) suggests that the Bourdieusian concepts of field, forms of capital, and habitus – the theory of practice - help us answer these questions, which I will investigate in the context of *Adivasi* land struggles.

3.6 Discursive Field of Contention

Where does the pedagogical action take place? Where does the movement habitus get structured and the subjectivity get constituted? It is within the field. This section looks at the relationship between habitus and field in generating practices. Within the context of socio-political movement the field is understood as discursive field of contention (by incorporating the insights of contentious politics and political opportunity structures) and elaborates a microprocess within the movement – framing. I argue here that envisaging the socio-political field, where the mobilisation unfolds and iterates, as discursive fields of contention with its discursive opportunity structures allows us to understand the dynamics of movement habitus and the constitution of subjectivity.

Social world for Bourdieu is a relational space and he conceives field as an analytical space to understand it (Bourdieu, 1996). Bourdieu's concept of field is envisaged to provide the frame for "relational analysis" that accounts for multidimensional space of positions and position taking by the actors. Each field has, for Bourdieu, its own logic of practice and the actors positioned in respective field understands how to interact and engage in the field, in a "natural" feel. An actor's position in the field is shaped by the interplay between the habitus of the person and the position that person commands on the basis of the possession of appropriate forms of capital. People occupy different fields at the same time such as economic field, educational field, religious field, field of arts, bureaucratic or political field. Each field is "semi-autonomous characterised by its own determinate agents (students, novelists, scientists) its own accumulation of history, its own logic of action, and its own forms of capital" (Calhoun *et al.,* 1993, p.5). Field is defined by the

interdependence of entities that structure the positions within it and which share power relations across positions. By using the analogy of game and the notion of strategy the social field of practice is conceived as a competitive game or "field of struggle" wherein the actors strategically intervene and improvise to maximise benefits to their positions. The field is the field of power and of struggle simultaneously where actors compete for legitimacy, position and even dominance, an internal struggle for power balance is endemic to the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu, 1998a; Thomson, 2014). The relative position of the actors within the field depend on the volume and structure of their capital and they – often unconsciously – engage in endeavours that preserve or transform their relative position[55] in the field (Bourdieu, 1983). The actors, whose relative position within the field depends on the volume and structure of their capital, develop and engage in strategies – sometimes unconsciously - oriented towards transforming or conserving their clout and in turn their positions within it (Hilgers and Mangez, 2014). He proposes the notion of "Habitus as feel for the game is the social game embodied and turned into a second nature" (Bourdieu, 1990a, p.63) to indicate how habitus works within the field. It is the pre-reflexive level of practical mastery, and may engender or is constitutive of reasonable practical behaviour and not rational behaviour(McNay, 1999).

Crossley (2003) engages this notion of "fields are sites of struggle" and therefore are structured through the unequal distribution of capitals, which are pertinent to them across the participants. He phrases it as 'field of contention' (Crossley, 2005) to refer to a relational conception of social movements and contentious politics, understood as emergent realities of interactions, interdependencies and relationships of a diverse range of elements such as individual agents, networks, SMOs, or other organizations representing different viewpoints and occupying a range of diverse positions. Thus defined, field is a heterogeneous ensemble and is always in process as they are constituted in interactions. Fields are thus 'dynamic structures' and sites of practice. Fields are varied and the actors may have to operate in different fields, which have their own rules of the game, such as legal, media, political (Crossley, 2003). Fields both shape the formation of the habitus and constrain the actions stemming from them (Crossley, 1999a). Bourdieu suggests that as the actors participate more engagingly in the field, their habitus undergoes continuous and often unnoticed changes to be more compatible with the demands of that respective field (Bourdieu, 2000). This is pertinent for the shaping and structuring of movement habitus and subjectivity. The field within is also characterized internally by a great deal of

[55] Bourdieu explained this in terms of cultural field wherein those endowed with high volume of economic capital are the dominant actors whereas those endowed with high volume of cultural capital but low volume of economic capital are the dominated actors within it.

competition, conflict, and inequality; competition to define the field, the statuses accorded within the field, the resources required for participation.

Going beyond Crossley's productive interpretation of Bourdieusian field as field of contention to engage the dynamics of socio-political movement, I would extend that to a discursive field of contention to bring in the imports of the political opportunity structure and the dynamics of discourses. The political opportunity structures (McAdam, 1985; Kriesi, 1995; McAdam, 1996; Koopmans, 1999, 2004; Azani, 2009; Tarrow, 2011; Della Porta and Diani, 2015) recast into the concept of field of Bourdieu can be very fertile way of understanding social movement. Scholars from POS perspective have argued that the reduction in power disparities between the authority and the challengers is significant in the way the mobilisation emerges and pan out. The weakening or division within power-holders provide opportunities for the challengers to shift the balance of power in claim-making to their favour. When the discourses about the possible political opportunity is widely spread among the prospective participants of the mobilisation, it creates a discursive opportunity for them to initiate the movement. This is in tune with the key notion that the opportunity has the potential to facilitate a movement only in so far as the actor perceives the opportunity and there is an alignment between the actors' desire and their belief in the opportunities. Snow (2004) argues that since late 1990s social movement scholars from cultural and political/structural perspectives have started arguing, almost simultaneously, that it is impossible to have a sensible understanding of movement processes and dynamics such as framing apart from the broader enveloping contexts in which these are embedded. Culturalists called these contexts 'discursive fields' (Steinberg, 1998) and the structuralists termed it 'discursive opportunity structures' (Koopmans and Statham, 1999, p.228). The discursive field is understood as the discursive terrain in which meaning contests occur and which can help to shed light on movement-related discourses and framing and therefore, in the Bourdieusian sense is a field of power and struggle. Drawing on semiotics and culturalists, Steinberg (1998) argues that such fields emerge in the context of discussions or debates over contested issues, events or perspectives and encompass both cultural materials of potential relevance but also various actors who are differentially aligned in relation to the contested issues. Precisely because of these framing assumes importance in the context of discursive fields. This is particularly pertinent in understanding the *Adivasi* mobilisation and the contestations within the discursive fields and the related framing processes. It facilitates the analysis of position taking, dynamics of contestation, the volume and structure of capitals, and document the shifts in positions within the field of contention. Within this discursive field of power and of struggle, I suggest in the Bourdieusian vein, the movement frames are developed, circulated, enmeshed and embedded from the generative structure of the habitus.

The discursive opportunity structures as a concept suggest that the discursive framing processes and the fields in which they are embedded are not just the function of the events, cultural resources, interactants, framing debates but are also influenced by the enveloping political contexts (Snow, 2004). In relation to frame theory, discursive opportunity structures act as incentives to or restrictions on choosing frames[56] (Baumgarten and Ullrich, 2016). Gamson and Meyer (1996) has argued persuasively that it is on how the movement actors frame the political opportunity structures that its capacity to constrain or enable the mobilisation depends. Extending this argument, my contention here is that the discursive opportunity becomes pliable and facilitative in so far as the way it is framed. It helps to investigate how the framing process has had the effect of redefining and reconfiguring the discursive field and opportunities? Locating framing process[57] (Snow *et al.*, 1986; Snow and Benford, 1988, 1992; Benford, 1993; Gamson and Meyer, 1996; Benford, 1997; Benford and Snow, 2000; Carragee and Roefs, 2004; Snow, 2004; Williams, 2004; Snow, 2012; Gahan and Pekarek, 2013; Gamson, 2013; Lubitow, 2013) within the discursive field of contention, I argue, allows for understanding the micro processes of meaning making and mobilisation within the macro context of discursive opportunity structures.

Husu (2013) argues that framing has conceptual affinity and similarities with Bourdieu's theory of habitus. As interpretative schemata that 'function to organize experience and guide action', framing resonates with the concept of habitus which is both a perceptual and classifying structure and generative structure of practical action. As has been argued so far the discursive field of contention, which effectively is a field of power and of struggle, is where the actors have to wage the 'game' of mobilisation and resistance and develop a 'feel for the game' to be effective in articulating and realizing their demands. This process restructure the habitus of the actors as they inculcate and sediment the know-how, dispositions, perceptions and a practical relation to the field. It is within the dynamics of habitus and field that movement frames are constructed and embedded which catalyse and structure the mobilisation.

[56] Ullrich has shown how the differences in discursive opportunity structures in Britain and Germany lead to adopting different frames on Israel – Palestinian conflict (Baumgarten and Ullrich, 2016).

[57] Framing theories, with their origins in symbolic interactionism, focuses on the way actors make sense and the meaning work involved in the processes of articulating the grievances, generating consensus on the form of collective action to be pursued, and present rationale for their proposed solutions and demands to the participants, bystanders, and the public. The frames help to ensure that a certain story is told, certain messages are conveyed and to transform the routine grievances or injustices into injustices or mobilising grievances (Snow, 2004, 2012).

3.7 Volume and Structure of Capital

With his notion of capitals Bourdieu foregrounds the assertion that power and dominance are accrued not only from having material resources but also from social and cultural resources. In the Bourdieusian frame every individual has a portfolio of capital, a particular amount or volume of capital with its own specific composition. Bourdieu effectively argues that other forms of capital such as cultural or social are transubstantiated version of the economic capital (Bourdieu, 2011). Forms of capital such as cultural capital can be understood as qualitative differences in forms of consciousness within different social groups; that is habitus as a specialization (cultivation) of consciousness and a recognized master of some techniques, etc. This suggests that social membership in itself will not endow someone with the habitus and the associated symbolic capital that particular social group commands to everyone uniformly (Moore, 2014). The economic capital may be gained instantaneously as Bourdieu suggests by the spin of the roulette wheel (Bourdieu, 2011), but embodied cultural capital presuppose duration. Moore argues that capital is objectified as habitus, and is embodied and realised in practice (Moore, 2014). Society is structured by differential distribution of capitals and individuals strive to maximise their capital relative to their position within the field. The capital they are able to accumulate define their social trajectory and reproduce class distinctions (Calhoun *et al.*, 1993). The point of convergence with social movement theory is in seeing capital in terms of resources and they become vital in shaping the movement and the position of the actors within the socio-political field. Samuel (2013) argues that like all forms of capital, political capital is also unevenly distributed and those who are low in political capital may have to depend on others to represent them and speak for them. Accumulating political capital, in the Bourdieusian line of thinking for him, is associated with access to material and cultural resources. This framework will facilitate in investigating the dynamics of diverse forms of capital in relation to the land struggles. How has these forms of capital evolved over the course of the struggle restructured the terrain of the field of contention? How have they relied on these forms of capital to navigate the discursive field of contention and to claim economic capital – land and resources - through their socio-political mobilisation?

3.8 Movement Habitus and Subjectivity

As the discussion so far has shown, the Bourdieusian conceptual tools are brought in dialogue with the concepts of social movements to work out a theoretical frame for movement habitus in relation to various forms of capital, movement practices and the field of contention. This has been an attempt to rework the theories of reproduction into a framework that accounts for transformation. The movement habitus expresses itself as a form of subjectivity which gets

constituted through this dynamic restructuring process. Foucault, from a very different theoretical genealogy, explicates this dimension of and offers pertinent insights into constituting subjectivity. Hoy (2002) argues that both Foucault and Bourdieu see subjectivity as extensively constructed by the social and historical factors. For me what can theoretically justify this interfacing and mutation of Bourdieu and Foucault is the relational epistemology that underpins their understanding of power and its dynamics. What constructs, structures and facilitates the constituting of subjectivity is practices (Foucault, 1998). For him these practices are predominantly those related to the self as his emblematic example of it, confession, demonstrates. However, recognising that self is produced in and through social engagements and interactions with the structures, I look at practices from a Bourdieusian perspective to underscore the embedding and embodiment of subjectivity. I draw on Farrugia's (2013b) proposition that Bourdieu's notions of habitus is generative of the subjectivity itself to argue that the generative nature of habitus is key to the understanding of the production of subjectivity.

Foucault has a complicated relation to theorizing subjectivity. Kelly suggests that Foucault always talked about subject and towards the end of his life he acknowledged that his work was always related to the question of subject (Kelly, 2010, 2013). For Strozier, the later phase of second and third volume of history of sexuality marks a reorientation in Foucault's thinking: the recognition that we are historically constituted as self-reflexive and self-constituting subjects leads him to a genealogy of human self-constitution (Strozier, 2002). Foucault begins to reframe his overall project as an "analysis of ourselves" premised on a "critical ontology of ourselves" (Foucault, 1997). He speaks of this reframing clearly:

> My objective has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects (Foucault and Faubion, 2000, p.326)

McNay (1999) argues that the later shifts in Foucault shows that subjectivity is not imposed from above but rather actively constituted by the individuals through practices of 'self' and when this self-stylization becomes conscious the possibility of reflexive self-fashioning emerges. Foucault's idea of subjectivity involves 5 things for Kelly (2013): subjectivity is historically constituted (2) the subject constitutes itself (3) subjectivity is a reality ontologically different from the body (4) this is a form rather than a substance, and (5) the subject is constituted through practices. Two processes that are important for Foucault are subjection and subjectivization and subjectivity[58]

[58] Subjection is the process wherein people are induced to relate to themselves in certain ways, to subjectivise themselves in certain ways. Subjectivation/subjectivization is the process whereby one attains the constitution of a subject or to be more precise, of subjectivity, which indeed is one of the given possibilities for organizing self-consciousness (Kelly, 2010). Subjectivity is not a passive product of the impersonal historical structures or processes, as the concept 'subjection' (meaning subjugation or

encapsulates both within its conceptual ambit. *Adivasi* subjectivity in this sense will be how the *Adivasis* organise their self-consciousness at a historical moment, in this research, in the context of their socio-political struggles. While Foucault, I argue, allows for the reflexive self-constitution of the subjectivity, analytically there are issues with the way it is being considered. The subjectivity here appears to be a disembodied and disembedded concept. Secondly, the reflexive process of constitution sounds a cognitive and conscious process. Subjectivity as a socially constructed phenomena cannot be reduced to both. But Foucault shows an important pathway to break this conundrum, that of social practices. The act of constituting itself takes place through social practices, where it is not thought determining our being rather a self-understanding that connects to our more concrete practices[59]. Therefore, I argue that a process of embedding the subjectivity involves examining its relation to practices. The notion of self-constitution implies that there is plenty of work involved and the concepts of techniques and practices of self, reiterate that one needs to learn certain ways in which the subject can constitute itself. We acquire our practices, and so they are habitual and those habitual practices ensures continuity in subjectivity (Kelly, 2013) and also a possibility for acquiring new practices and of reconstituting the subjectivity. This conception of subjectivity in relation to practices is closer to the Bourdieusian understanding of habitus and practices which encompasses learned aspects of the disposition and competencies. Foucault seeks to understand the contemporary subjectivity as his interest is in the "history of the present" (Foucault, 1977). He looks at *how* we have been made to constitute ourselves as subjects rather than *when* this process first began by examining the ensemble of the processes through which the subject constitutes itself (Kelly, 2010). For Foucault subjectivity means the historical relation of the self to itself and he analyses it in terms of the technologies and practices of the self. This is pertinent because this research is looking at how the *Adivasis,* who have been used to relating to themselves on their sub community related subjectivities, relate to their self as *Adivasis* in the context of the experiences of their socio-political mobilisation. Foucault says:

> The political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state, and from the state's institutions, but to liberate us both from state and from the type of individualization linked to the state. We have to

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subjecting to a power) may seem to suggest, but rather a process of 'subjectivation' where the subject constitutes itself through the techniques available to it under the multifarious historical factors beyond its control.

[59] You do not have the same type of relationship to yourself when you constitute yourself as a political subject who goes to vote or speaks at a meeting and when you are seeking to fulfil your desires in a sexual relationship. Undoubtedly there are relationships and interferences between these different forms of the subject; but we are not dealing with the same type of subject. In each case, one plays, one establishes a different type of relationship to oneself. (Foucault, 1997, p. 290)

> promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality that has been imposed on us for several centuries. (Foucault and Faubion, 2000, p.336)

Promoting new forms of subjectivity becomes a way of resistance and therefore a political strategy. The forms of subjectivity itself becomes the site of resistance. I interrogate how the *Adivasi* subjectivity as a form of subjectivity is constituted in resistance and to an extent has become a site of resistance. Weberman (2000) says that "there are no paths to selfhood or subjectivity that lie outside power. Subjectivity is an unavoidably *political* affair". Baumgarten and Ullrich (2016) argues that the concept of subjectivity provides on the one hand the micro-macro links between social structure and/or change and on the other hand motivation to protest, struggle and resist. It is in this context that scholars such as Beckett *et al.* (2017) and Luchies (2015) argue that the claims such as Foucault denies capacity to resist or under-theorize resistance[60] are untenable. Scholars have explored the interstices of Foucauldian framework to iterate a narrative and politics of resistance (Pickett, 1996; Kulynych, 1997; Death, 2010). The whole discussion of resistance and forms of subjectivity should be informed by Foucauldian understanding of power (Fraser, 1981; Foucault and Faubion, 2000; Allen, 2002)

What is pertinent from the Foucauldian notion of subjectivity for the current frame work under discussion are the key notions that he proposes such as: subjectivity is reflexively constituted by the actor[61]; the constituting of the subjectivity is through the relation to the self in power through practices and techniques; forms of subjectivity can be sites of resistance and struggle. However, it is vital from a sociological perspective, I argue, to move away from a disembodied and disembedded notion of subjectivity and for that grounding it on the Bourdieusian concepts of habitus become indispensable. Habitus, in this sense, I argue is the embedded subjectivity as the Foucauldian notion of subjectivity enables us to keep the reflexive relation to the self alive. Bourdieu's theory of habitus entails a more nuanced development of the embodied and embedded notions of subjectivity than Foucault whose reluctance to think of the materiality of the body constricts this line of theoretical development (McNay, 1999).

3.9 Reflexivity as Practical Intelligibility (reflexive subjectivity)

The reflexive reconstitution of subjectivity, which, as I have argued in the above section, rests on the embedded habitus, can facilitate the analysis of the complexities and multiple layers of

[60] Becket *et al.* (2017) explores the concept of heterotopias – 'counter sites' of resistance where the order of things are challenged – in the writings of Foucault and proposes it as sites for the analysis of social movement practices.

[61] Foucault doesn't use that term as it gives an indication of an autonomous agent

Adivasi subjectivity. There has been significant works on reflexivity[62] as proposed by theorists, Giddens, Beck and Lash (Giddens, 1990, 1991, 1992; Beck *et al.*, 1994). These conceptions of reflexivity often become reductionist when it is understood as a cognitive rationality (Lash and Urry, 1993) of the individuals. Binkley (2009) argues that the cognitive bias of the reflexivity thesis need to be grounded on the pre-reflexive, unthought and embodied dispositions. Farrugia (Farrugia, 2011, 2013a, 2013b, 2015; Farrugia and Woodman, 2015; Farrugia, 2016), tries to combine the theory of reflexivity and Bourdieu's theories of habitus and practices to talk about reflexive subjectivity and practices. I follow Farrugia in arguing that reflexivity is practical intelligibility, which allows the subject to develop embodied dispositions through practical engagements with the social structures that shape their lives. Both these are important notions in understanding *Adivasi* movement wherein the reflexive practices they have acquired through the mobilisation helps as practical intelligibility for them. In that sense I keep arguing that the socio-political movements have given the *Adivasis* the possibilities of reconstituting their subjectivity reflexively. But how do we get there? Theories of reflexivity are not addressing social movements, per se, and how does it fit into the scheme that I have been developing? The entry point is the 'crisis triggered reflexivity' that Bourdieu has provided in his account of transformations in habitus.

A number of authors have tried to bring together theories of reflexivity and Bourdieusian concepts of habitus to circumvent the limitation of reflexivity to account for the relationship between subjectivity and structural power relations[63] (McNay, 1999; Sweetman, 2003; Elder-Vass,

[62] For Giddens (1990, p.38) "the reflexivity of modern social life consists in the fact that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character". It also involves "reflection upon the nature of reflection itself". For Beck (1994) reflexivity is not mere *reflection* but it is *self-confrontation*. Reflexivity is individual's capacity to reflect on the self and the social and continuously reinvent and re-configure onself, one's positions and be critical about the same process. Giddens states 'the self today is for everyone a reflexive project – a more or less continuous interrogation of past, present and future' (Giddens, 1992, p.30). There is an echo of Foucault, as it was mentioned in an earlier section, who has stated the constitution of subjectivity is a reflexive process fashioning the self. Giddens' defines reflexivity saying that the concept does not simply mean mere reflection, but 'a reflexive self-monitoring of action' and a biographic identity work 'self-identity is constituted by the reflexive ordering of self-narratives' (Giddens, 1991, p.244).

[63] Sayer (2009) argues that a language of disposition is vital to account for deeply embodied social experiences, especially those connected to social exclusion. For Sayer individuals can be competent social actors only if part of their actions are based on Bourdieu's practical sense. Decoteau (2015) argues that internal contradictions creates crisis and thus social change, even while individuals are carrying on with routinized actions. Elder-Vass (2007) reworks the theories of habitus and reflexivity to suggest that human action is the outcome of a continuous interaction between disposition and reflexivity. Sweetman (2003) proposes that there are increasing number of contemporary individuals for whom reflexivity is becoming more habitual, acquiring a reflexive habitus wherein the processes of self-fashioning becomes almost 'second nature', paradoxically reflexivity becomes an unreflexive element in individual's disposition. Examining the climbing practices, Bunn (2017) argues that reflexivity and habitus need to be better catalysed to explain such socialities. Farrugia (2011) interpreting Beck's thesis of reflexive modernisation, argues that his central contribution is the argument that reflexive subjectivities are constructed in response

2007; Sayer, 2009; Farrugia, 2011; Decoteau, 2015; Bunn, 2017). What stands out in these arguments, for me, is the way in which the disjuncture between the field and habitus creating room for actors to develop reflexive capacities and practices to navigate the challenges beset by such ruptures. This is where one finds a major wriggling room for accommodating change within the Bourdieusian theoretical universe of practice. They find this crisis emanating from detraditionalisation (McNay, 1999), individuation (Nico and Caetano, 2017), or insecurities (Farrugia, 2011). In the analysis of the data generated from the research, I will examine both the macro changes of the neoliberal restructuring and the micro-meso processes of their involvement in socio-political mobilisation as critical factors in the creation of de-alignment between *Adivasi* habitus and field. I will seek to unpack how this disjuncture engenders the possibilities for a reflexive reconstitution of their subjectivity anchored on movement habitus. It is in the light of these discussions I find Farrugia's conceptualisation of reflexivity as practical intelligibility as pivotal to the analysis of *Adivasi* subjectivity.

Farrugia argues, following some of the above discussions, that reflexivity is continuous with the dispositions of the habitus and a grammar of disposition is indispensable to the language of reflexivity to be meaningful. He emphasizes on the know-how of the practical engagement based on a practical relationship with the world for human action and survival. Actions that are based on reflexivity too follows the same principle of socially embedded dispositions that the actor has to rely on their practical sense of what is possible for them and who they are in relations to the world when they think about themselves and the world to manage their lives in tune with it. Drawing on practice theories, Farrugia (2013, 2015) suggests that practical intelligibility connotes the way world is made intelligible through practical engagement where an actor makes sense of the world as embedded within it and on the practical knowledge about the social contexts it is negotiating. Therefore, actions operating on practical intelligibility are founded on embodied dispositions. Farrugia thus argues that the notion of reflexivity as practical intelligibility addresses the limitations of a disembedded cognitive reflexivity by articulating reflexivity as continuous with embodied know-how and embedded dispositions. The actors develop embodied dispositions, which operate on their assumptions about what is possible and meaningful, through their practical engagements with the social structures that shape their lives. The reflexive identity works operates within the dynamic matrix of socially embedded dispositions that generates creative practices through active engagement and negotiation with diverse structural

to insecurity; insecure and unstable material circumstances of life make reflexive monitoring of self and relationship with others a necessity to survive. Analysing the question of feminine identity McNay (1999) argues that with Bourdieu's notion of crisis she is able to account for the shifts in field positions of women due to detraditionalisation and this rupture creates disjuncture between field and feminine habitus facilitating critical reflexivity and self-fashioning of identity.

environments. Thus reflexive practices and embodied dispositions are continuous with one another embedded within the dynamics of fields.

This view of reflexivity as practical intelligibility allows to investigate the embedded subjectivity of *Adivasis* which get reflexively reconstituted through their practical engagement with socio-political mobilisation. In analysing the data, I will examine how has the movement habitus that the *Adivasis* have developed from their protracted involvements and practical engagements within the political field enabled them to generate an embedded subjectivity. How do they rework their political belonging (Crowley, 1999; Yuval-Davis, 1999, 2006, 2007, 2009; Krause and Schramm, 2011; Yuval-Davis, 2016) as s they constitute this politicised form of subjectivity – the political subjectivity – reflexively through their identity work? As *Adivasis* acquire the movement habitus which involves their perceptions, dispositions, competencies, know-how, pre-reflexive sense of the world and their practical relationship to it, how do they reorganise their symbolic capital within the discursive political field and stamp their belonging? These questions will be brought to bear on the data and interrogate it from the perspective of this framework to unearth the dynamics and multi-layered complexities of *Adivasi* subjectivity.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has sketched a theoretical framework for analysing the *Adivasi* subjectivity constituted through their socio-political mobilisation. Through a productive permutation of Bourdieusian concepts and movement theories, a conceptual toolkit is derived such as movement habitus, movement/political practices, forms of capital, field of contention, framing, pre-figurative experiment and action repertoire. These are further supported by theories of subjectivity and reflexivity to bring up concepts such as embedded subjectivity and reflexivity as practical intelligibility. This frame will be extensively employed to analyse the data garnered through qualitative field research.

Chapter 4 Research Methodology

4.1 Research Question and Objectives

This research is an attempt to understand the socio-political movement of *Adivasis* for land in Kerala, and how that has shaped the movement habitus and political subjectivity of the *Adivasis* who have been engaged in the mobilisation for the past two decades. Unpacking the trajectories and practices of these protracted struggles for land can enable the researcher to unearth the dynamics and interplay that structure the habitus and constitute the *Adivasi* subjectivity. How does this process unfold? What are the elements and layers of the *Adivasi* subjectivity in Kerala that has been articulated through their land campaigns? How has their experience of socio-political mobilization opened up the possibilities of restructuring their habitus into movement habitus, which is in reciprocal structuring relation to capitals and field of contention? How has it reconfigured their political belonging in Kerala and reworked their subjectivity reflexively? Interrogating the movement dynamics and practices of *Adivasi* land struggles, my research seeks to examine the restructuring of movement habitus, capitals and field of contention and to unpick the layers of *Adivasi* subjectivity and political belonging. This study will also contribute to the process of documenting empirical data on the *Adivasi* movement, which has recently passed through certain critical historical junctures of rupture, division and re-alignment. In order to understand the embedding of political consciousness in the dispositions of the *Adivasis*, the research also engages with the everyday life of *Adivasis* on one area of land that has been granted to them by the state, namely Aralam Farm. Known as the largest resettlement project in India, Aralam Farm provides a cross section of *Adivasi* life in the process of reorganizing in a distributed/occupied land. Aralam Farm, as a site of conflict, as a locale of resettlement and a state-orchestrated welfare space, assumes a pre-eminence to a researcher seeking to understand the restructured habitus of *Adivasis*, which entrenches and embeds the reflexive political subjectivity. The aim of this research, therefore, is:

- to investigate how the socio-political movement has enabled the enunciation of an *Adivasi* field of contention and to unpack its genealogy and trajectory
- to uncover the ways in which the *Adivasi*s restructure their habitus into a movement habitus through their protracted involvement with the mobilisation and its practices
- to examine how the *Adivasis* reconstitute their embedded subjectivity reflexively on the restructured habitus and accrued capitals. How has this reconstituted subjectivity become politically reflexive through their practical engagement with the political field?

4.2 The Scoping of the Field

The preliminary scoping of the field was undertaken to gauge the feasibility of this research, to assess the ease (or otherwise) of access and to ensure the viability of being able to garner enough data, of sufficient quality, to facilitate the proposed study. This initial month-long visit to the field, in April 2017, provided an opportunity to establish contacts with potential key informants and 'gatekeepers', and to undertake a brief exploration of the field's potential as a source of data. The scoping exercise helped me to hone my research question, refocus on the review of literature, design the study, delineate the methodology, work out the strategies of data collection and identify potential pockets for data mining. It additionally provided me with an invaluable opportunity to gain access the heart of the Movement, the *Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha* (AGMS). Attending a student camp organized for *Adivasi* children during this period gave me an extremely important platform for establishing connections and assessing the feasibility of generating data for the study. A short visit to Aralam Farm helped me to gain insight into organizing my research there by working out access, consent and also the logistics of stay and building networks and contact with the *Adivasis* on the Farm.

4.3 Research Design

Answering the question about the political subjectivity and belonging of the *Adivasis* in Kerala, which are centred on the restructuring of the *Adivasi* habitus within the field of contention and in relation to relevant capitals acquired through the land struggles, required a qualitative approach. As the objective was not to assess or measure the level of political consciousness but rather to explore and lay bare the multifarious dimensions and specificities of *Adivasi* field of contention, movement habitus and political subjectivity in Kerala*,* the qualitative research design was deemed appropriate. This investigation took place in tandem with the practices of social science research, where it is the research question that determines the methodology (Bryman, 2007; Maxwell, 2012; Bryman, 2015; Creswell and Poth, 2017). The study required qualitatively intense data on the experiences of the *Adivasis* engaged in socio-political mobilization, of the social activists who were pivotal to the initiation and continuation of the campaign and of those *Adivasis* who benefited from the land eventually won, especially on the Aralam Farm.

4.3.1 The Basic Assumptions Informing the Design

The nature of *Adivasi* reality in Kerala, as the literature testifies, is socially constructed. Their political subjectivity has been constructed in and through their experiences of the process of socio-political mobilization for land. However, though I tend to talk of *Adivasi* political subjectivity in a general way, it has been empirically enlightening to learn that habitus and subjectivity are not

monolithic, homogenous phenomena that encompass every *Adivasi* or every sub-community in the same way but are, on the contrary, intense, diverse and heterogeneous. Ontologically they are not one seamless reality but multiple realities which are fractured, fragmented and internally diverse. These differences and diversities do create ambivalences for the subjectivity of *Adivasis* and this research has tried to capture those contestations and contentions.

The data was generated through a close interaction between me, activists and the *Adivasis*, and the interactions were not linear or straightforward but were, rather, complex, interrelated and multi-dimensional. Problematizing such interactions and the multiple layers of underlying communication can reveal hidden depths in the social world of a community and the field of contention, and thus enable the researcher to gain insight into their subjectivity and belonging.

Axiologically, the value systems and perceptions of the *Adivasis* have been discussed at both surface and deep levels of conversation as this study is particularly concerned about their habitus and practices. They have been viewed by themselves and by the public, with varying degrees of emphasis and significance, as instrumental to the way in which the *Adivasis* organize their subjectivity, pre-dispose their orientation and embed their practices. Understanding such beliefs or documenting references to such perceptions can also be instructive and illuminating because they often feed into the ways in which '*Adivasiness'* is constructed, negated and then transcended, which has become decisive in articulating a subjectivity that is politically both subversive and reflexive.

4.3.2 Data Collection Plan

Three major methods of data collection were employed: (a) in-depth interviews, which provided a wealth of data on the topic under exploration, (b) focus-group discussions, that generated interactive data (Wilkinson, 1998; Överlien *et al.*, 2005; Hennink, 2013; Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, 2013; Krueger and Casey, 2014; Stewart and Shamdasani, 2014), and (c) the ethnographic observations (Bryman, 2015; Creswell and Poth, 2017) which I undertook formed the corpus of data garnered from the study along with gathering and documenting the leaflets, reports and flyers produced by the Movement.

a) Field observation:

- to move around with the activists and observe how their activities are organized by the AGMS on the ground;
- to stay on Aralam Farm, the largest *Adivasi* resettlement in Kerala, where 3,000 *Adivasi* families have begun organizing their lives in the land given by the state;

- to observe the *Adivasis'* everyday routines, inter-community interactions and social gatherings, and attend AGMS meetings;
- to participate in demonstrations or protest mobilisation of *Adivasis* on the field of contention.

b) Interviews:

- to interview the *Adivasi* leaders (10, who were also the leaders of the AGMS);
- to interview the *Adivasis* (30, from cross-sections of the community – men, women of different age groups and belonging to different sub-communities and classes (excluding children under the age of 18));
- to interview non-*Adivasi* activists (10)

c) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):

Focus group discussion is a research method that seeks to generate data from a focussed discussion among participants who 'are known to have been involved in a particular situation'(Bryman, 2015), and to observe the process of collective sense-making in action (Wilkinson, 1998). The FGD data has helped me to enhance the opportunity to examine the intersection between group dynamics and articulation and the process of weaving an interactive collective narrative. Though the participating *Adivasis* are selected on the basis of their involvement in the socio-political mobilisation and continued involvement in the *Adivasi* movement, it platforms the unfolding of entrenched power relations and social dynamics within the group.

- to conduct discussions with groups of Adivasis
- to generate interactive data from *Adivasi* groups that could be helpful in triangulating the data from interviews and observations
- to capture the complementary and argumentative elements of the focused discussion within a group of *Adivasis* who have shared a common experience
- to understand how the group is collectively making sense of their involvement in the mobilisation and constructing meaning around their life in a resettlement (Aralam)

d) Document gathering, including:

- leaflets/flyers produced by the Movement;
- reports about *Adivasi* activism in local magazines and journals.

I developed tools, data collection checklists, which would be of help while engaging the *Adivasis* in interviews, FGDs or observations (confer appendix A.1, A.2, A.3, A.4, A.5, A.6, A.7) and got approved from the ethics committee of the University of Southampton (confer Appendix A.8). They consisted of expanded research questions intended to facilitate the operationalization of

concepts that emerged in the course of the investigation, and I utilized them, with necessary improvisations, for my data-gathering process.

4.4 Population, Participants and Sampling

As the study investigates the effects of engaging in social movement on the habitus and political subjectivity of the *Adivasis* in Kerala, I selected *Adivasis* as the population under study. The *Adivasis* in Kerala belong to 36 different communities and form one per cent of the total population of Kerala, which would be around 400,000 people living in various enclaves across Kerala. The broader sets of participants were from the *Adivasis* and the non-*Adivasi* social activists involved with the socio-political movement, which has bearing on the political subjectivity of the *Adivasis*. However, the *Adivasi* group had to be further disentangled into smaller categories.

The research participants included:

- *Adivasi* leaders of the movement (AGMS).
- *Adivasis* who are currently engaged in struggle but are not part of AGMS.
- *Adivasi*s living on the Aralam Farm Block 13
- Non-*Adivasi* social activists associated with these movements in Kerala.

These four sets of participants in this research could provide qualitatively rich empirical data regarding the evolution of the movement habitus and the resultant reconstitution of *Adivasi* subjectivity. The research, being qualitative in nature, could incorporate the challenges thrown open in the course of the investigation, which is discussed in detail in section 4.5.3. This openness is particularly important when researching social movements and indigenous peoples (Nicholls, 2009) as expounded by the Kapaupa Maori research project (Walker *et al.*, 2006).

4.4.1 Sampling

Since I was looking for sample subjects who would fit into specific categories I engaged in purposive sampling. The methodological practices of qualitative research warrant the use of purposive sampling as they ensure that the right sample is approached in order to elicit the data that fits in to tell the story that was intended. Two types of purposive sampling (Edwards, 2014) were employed, namely, purposive generic sampling (Bryman, 2015) that would allow me to select the candidates I felt were most suitable from my own acquaintance with the field and my judgement as to who most closely embodied the qualities outlined above. Secondly, 'snowballing' (Noy, 2008), during which I connected from person to person when I turned to interviewees whom the people I interviewed suggested as "must see" participants. This illustrates the collaborative nature of the research project, wherein the participants felt free as well as being

deeply involved in the whole project (Fawcett and Hearn, 2004; Nicholls, 2009) They have been included in the sample because the value they contributed to this research was recognized and ratified by the people whom I had interviewed already. These two sampling methods together provided the optimal sample available for me at that point in time in the field. They were also representative of the categories pertaining to my research and they brought out both variations and similarities within those categories in the most illuminating ways.

The total number of interviews conducted was 41 and they divided, approximately equally, into 4 sets. Being qualitative, around 10 interviews seemed to exhaust the data that was available there at that point. Since they seemed exhaustive and theoretically saturated the matter under study, these numbers seemed appropriate. These individual interviews were supplemented by FGDs, numbering 5, 3 from Aralam farm and 2 from other sites of ongoing struggle. The selection of participants for the focus groups was made according to suitability, proximity, willingness, and the identity of the participants. The findings of these FGDs would supplement the data generated through the interviews with individuals.

4.5 Procedure

The data collection entailed the lengthy process of gaining access to the field, of building 'authentic rapport' (Fawcett and Hearn, 2004) with the key actors, and with the people living on the Farm and other sites of ongoing struggle. With the access that I gained I was able to organize my data-collection processes (i.e. interviews, FGDs and other observations). I was back into the field in the beginning of December, 2017 with my research plan and started renewing my connections and extending my networks by participating in the activities on the field. I began collecting data through interviews and focus group discussions from January 2017 and I left the field on 1 April 2017. The following details elucidated in this section stem from my time on the field from the beginning of December 2016 to end of March 2017.

4.5.1 Gaining access

Since the study involved multiple sets of participants I needed to work on my access (Crowhurst, 2013; Bryman, 2015) to these groups systematically. Scoping the field had given me some contact points, which proved to be useful. Negotiating entry to these groups required me to begin somewhere, and the opportunity arose when I heard about a meeting that had been organized to discuss a new campaign.

4.5.1.1 *Chalo Thiruvananthapuram* as an 'entry point'

The first step in the process that I undertook was to associate with a new movement that was taking shape at the time that I went into the field in December 2017. The movement, known as *Chalo Thiruvananthapuram*, was being launched by a leadership inextricably linked to the *Adivasi* socio-political movement. I started by attending the State Committee of the new movement in Kochi, Kerala, which was convened to discuss the manifesto that had been prepared as the movement's fundamental document, which was to become a platform for dialogue and alliance building. This movement was envisaged as a democratic platform comprising *Adivasis*, *Dalits*, members of the fishing community, transgenders, plantation workers and other marginalized people of Kerala. The caste associations and small splintered groups, as this movement envisioned, had to come together to form a broader alliance in order to ensure that this historic mobilization could gain momentum and deliver its objectives centred around offering a new political vision and a new democratic agenda for Kerala. The resurgence, unification and politicization of the most vulnerable in Kerala, the proponents imagined, would fuel a push to gain power over resources and to eradicate all caste colonies in Kerala, to which most of the 'lower-caste' people had historically been relegated. Since this included the *Adivasi* contingent, I could work in cooperation with this movement to gain access to the group upon which I wanted to focus my study. I gathered the names of several individuals who were introduced as members or leaders of the AGMS; slowly, I would build a close relation with these participants (as will be explained later) and that would factor into my sample when I started my data collection. The State Committee then proposed follow-up meetings, concentrating especially on different locations for its regional camps.

4.5.1.2 'Hanging around' and connecting as access strategy

As far as my research was concerned, being there in the field threw open the world of my investigation. I knew that I would be 'hanging around' (Bryman, 2015) with this group for a few months. The only person I knew among all who gathered there was Geethanandan, the leader of the group, who eventually came to be my sponsor for this research (Bryman, 2015). I had established rapport with him from my scoping the field, then from there I could get acquainted with other individuals and collect the phone numbers of a few, which helped me to gain access to their manifesto and effect my entry into the next meeting. After the second meeting of the State Committee, one that broadened my familiarity, I received information about a protest that was being planned in Idukki against the atrocities perpetrated on the *Adivasi* families there. There I was, with the link that I derived from my entry into the movement and the 'hanging out' around those meetings. I travelled all the way there, took part in the agitation and covered the event. Although I positioned myself as a researcher there, I was accepted as someone sympathetic to

their cause. I joined the march and walked along with them. By the end of the day I was admitted to their group, as was evident from the fact that I was given a lift in their car to a further location where they had another meeting to plan further actions. As I was walking to join them, a man came to my side on his motorbike and started talking to me. He had asked for my whereabouts earlier, while I was taking photographs and talking to the team members there. He asked me whether I was a journalist and I said that I was a researcher. This time he asked for my phone number, I gave it and he gave me a ring immediately. Then Santhosh, a member of the State Committee team, came to us and told him that we needed to get into the vehicle there and then, and not to interfere with us. He told me that these policemen have their ways of doing surveillance. I looked at him, and then he revealed that he was doing freelance videography for the police. But the lift and the protective act were instrumental in and reflective of cementing my 'insider status' in the movement. The Padikkapu *Adivasi* colony would be one of the sites I returned to for further investigation and interviews.

I met Dr. Mohan, an ex-Naxalite and currently a naturopathy doctor, in the course of my attendance at these meetings and protests. He told me about an *Adivasi* agitation and land struggle that was going on at Kadappara, in Thrissur, and he asked me whether I was interested in visiting the site of the struggle. That was another breakthrough for me. I readily agreed and we planned our visit, met up on the way to the site, and visited Kadappara. Interaction with the people there gave me an insight into how the movement was being organized and how people were engaging with the struggle, which was ongoing. We then reported this back to Geethanandan and team effectively strengthened my position as an insider of the movement. Hanging around and connecting was really an excellent way forward for me.

4.5.1.3 Accessing through a 'Gate Keeper'

Meanwhile I also went to Aralam Farm and revived my connections there, especially with one Ramu Mooppan, which I had established during the exercise of scoping the field in April 2016. Ramu Mooppan was the leader of the AGMS in Block 13 of Aralam Farm and was actively involved in the land struggle there. We planned our fieldwork there in February and March and he thought that it was a feasible plan. This visit helped me to navigate my access through the bureaucratic procedures of the Police and District Administration.

Around the time of my field work two Maoists, Kuppu Devaraj and Ajitha, were killed in a police encounter in Kerala near an *Adivasi* settlement (24 November, 2016 in Nilambur, Kerala). The incident created wide-ranging reactions in the state, ranging from allegations of fake encounters to vying for millions of rupees from the Central Fund in the name of countering Maoism. But this created a precarious situation for the *Adivasi*s. On the pretext of the Maoist visits to *Adivasi*

settlements, the police started regulating the public's access to *Adivasi*s. This had implications for my research:

a) When I went to Ramu Mooppan, I was told that I should meet the police before entering the Farm and when I went there they took my details and asked me to get permission from the TRDM (Tribal Resettlement and Development Mission) officer.
b) When I approached the TRDM officer he asked me to get permission from the District Collector (civil servant) and to give him a copy of the same.
c) Finally I had to spend two days for a meeting with the District Collector in order to obtain his approval for conducting my study on the Aralam Farm. The information sheets (appendix A.1, and A2) and consent forms (appendix A3 and A4) came handy for the permission.
d) This became a bureaucratic nightmare, in addition to my having to work my way through the 'gatekeepers' of the *Adivasi* community on the Farm to gain access, and setting up my stay for ethnographic observation and interviews.

When Geethanandan, the leader of the *Adivasi* movement, heard about the difficulties being put in my way he was infuriated and said that police had no right to decide who should or should not come and meet the *Adivasi*s in their own homes. He expressed his concern at the way in which the 'Maoist threat' was being tailored by the state and the police to regulate the *Adivasis*' life and curb their democratic rights.

Ramu Mooppan was a key figure in my entry to and field work in Aralam Farm, someone who was a gatekeeper (Marvasti, 2003; Maxwell, 2012; Bryman, 2015; Silverman, 2016) for my study, and he also remained a key informant. Gaining access to the field was indeed a dynamic process of encounter between gatekeeper, researcher and the participants in the research (Crowhurst, 2013; Crowhurst and Kennedy-macfoy, 2013). I had to rely on the gatekeeper for gaining entry to the field, organizing the information event I had to hold in order to gain the community's consent, for identifying key respondents and setting up venues for FGDs, and so on. My positionality as a researcher from outside but connected to the leader of the movement informed our interactions, but gradually we developed a working friendship in which power relations changed. There had been moments when the schedules of my meetings had been dictated by his convenience, which was a way he could exercise power over me as a researcher, dependent upon him to get the work done. I had to establish independent relations of trust with the participants in order to build a research relationship that was untainted by his influence. I consciously took measures during my stay on the Farm, later, to offset the possibility of being restricted to the information and perspective he offered, by interacting with and interviewing *Adivasis* of different camps who were

not his friends. Some of them were critical of his position of distancing himself from the C.K. Janu group. The field was embedded in its own power relations both within and beyond the Farm, and it was extremely important for me to position myself as a researcher sensitive to these intricate dynamics.

4.5.1.4 Three levels of access

So my work progressed at three levels. My associations with the social activists were strengthened and cemented as I attended meetings, visited camps and took part in the activities of the *Chalo Thiruvananthapuram*; my exploration of the tribal world widened as I got to other sites of struggle (*Padikkappu, Kadappara, Athirappilly and Kallichithra*) and established newer contacts with the *Adivasis*. My ties with Aralam Farm were kept alive by follow-up contacts with a view to beginning my fieldwork there. These layers of engagement in the field helped me to identify my samples, frame my interactions and work on my interview schedules.

4.5.1.5 Exposure to the mobilization and activities in the field

The process of the build-up to the inauguration of *Chalo Thiruvananthapuram*, on 29 January 2017, which was attended by 5,000 people – a significant turnout for a movement from the margins of Kerala – from different parts of Kerala, gave me the opportunity to understand the way the social movement was being orchestrated. The commemoration of Jogi, who was murdered by police during the Muthanga struggle, provided me with a direct experience of how the movement was first organized among the *Adivasis*. Jogi was an important symbol of *Adivasi* struggles in Kerala, and there was a commemorative monument built in his name near the historic site of the struggle. The *Adivasis* had been celebrating the day of his martyrdom for the past 14 years. Also, whilst I was there, a ritual, *Gaddika,* was conducted on the land that had been allotted to his family, whereby his soul was invoked and installed in their land. The two protest rallies in which I participated at two different locales illustrated for me how the democratic protest had been organized by the *Adivasis*.

The programmes I attended, participated in or covered during my time in the field from early December 2016 to end of March 2017, were as follows:

1) 4 State Committee meetings, 3 Regional camps, preparation and inauguration of *Chalo Thiruvananthapuram*;
2) A one-day protest in front of the District Collectorate in Painavu, Idukki;
3) A one-day *Nilpu Samaram*, (standing agitation) in front of the District Collectorate in Kalpetta, Wayanadu;

4) The commemoration of Jogi, the *Adivasi* who was killed in police firing in Muthanga in 2003; and *Gaddika, Adivasi* ritual for invoking and installing the soul of the dead, here that of Jogi, in the land that had been allocated to their family by the state;
5) The visit of Geethanandan to the *Padikkappu Adivasi* colony for planning the agitation to be launched in front of the Collectorate;
6) The visit of Geethanandan to Aralam Farm for planning the future activities of AGMS on the Farm.
7) One day at the district court in Wayanadu to meet the *Adivasis* who were to appear for the two ongoing cases related to Muthanga Occupy struggle

4.5.2 Interviews, FGDs and Field Observations

The major sections of my data collection involved 3.5 weeks of field work on the Aralam Farm between February and March, 2017, interviewing 40 participants and conducting 5 FGDs. The fieldwork at Aralam Farm involved going around from place to place, creating contacts with the *Adivasis* there and inviting them to come to the interviews and FGDs. I interviewed 10 *Adivasis* from Aralam Farm and conducted 3 FGDs there (Appendix A7). The number of participants was 4, 5 and 10 respectively. As Wilkinson suggests, it is important to look into the interactive data that emerge from focus groups in addition to individual interviews (Wilkinson, 1998) and Smithson argues that sites of disagreement, confusion and contradiction can be usefully studied by careful attention to FGDs (Smithson, 2000). I had an interview guide for my semi-structured interviews (appendix A5, A.6), and I audio-recorded all the interviews. However, I had to be fairly flexible with the questions, so a number of the interviews transgressed the scope of the guide but yielded rich interactions (Procter and Padfield, 1998; Hampshire *et al.*, 2014). I also collected some of the documents produced by the movements; these would also form part of the overall data and would be incorporated depending on their relevance.

The social activists were personally contacted for interview and the interviews were conducted at places convenient to them. The *Adivasis* attached to AGMS were also identified through my involvement in the protests and the commemoration, and the interviews were organized at places of their own choosing. The non-AGMS *Adivasis* were mostly from movements being organized outside the ambit of the AGMS but who share the general premise of the research question and were able to provide triangulating and comparative data in addressing the research question regarding *Adivasi* subjectivity. These interviewees were gathered from the sites of ongoing struggle to which I made frequent visits and built up contacts.

4.5.3 The challenges in the field

There were challenges that came my way quite unexpectedly: the killing of two Maoists in Kerala from the *Adivasi* area created an unprecedented sense of suspicion of anyone interacting with *Adivasis*. This incident had created its own difficulties, and these impeded my entry into and movement within the Aralam Farm. There was one day when I had set up my FGD and was ready with everything needed for the discussion, but that morning a death, unexpected but natural, took place in a family around which my FGD was planned. I had to postpone it by a week because a death entailed its own period of mourning and grieving which made it impossible for them to participate in my FGD at the scheduled time. When there was another death in a nearby *Adivasi* colony from which many people had come to Aralam Farm, I went there and spent the entire day attending their funeral rites. Besides all these, a woman was brutally murdered by an elephant that entered from the forest. This had created considerable distress and upheaval; but I could not be there because I was away from the Farm on the day it happened. It was in and amongst all these events that I carried out my field study at Aralam Farm.

Interviewing other *Adivasis* and social activists required travelling considerable distances – ranging from 100 to 150 miles each way – to meet up with them and be there at times that suited their schedules. Most of the travels were undertaken either on public transport or on my motorbike and the whole exercise took about a month. Those travels unfortunately took a toll on my health which I had to deal with between fieldwork operations.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

This research adhered to the ethical guidelines of social science research as specified by the University of Southampton. These ethical requirements were meant to protect and safeguard the interests of all participants in the research programme.

4.6.1 Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation

Information about the research was provided through a Personal Information Sheet and consent was obtained through a consent form. Most of the participants gave their consent orally (I audio-recorded them) as I had to read out and explain the consent form to them, which was their preferred approach. The participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and they were free to withdraw from the study at any point in time until the writing up. I did not find it difficult to get informed consent or voluntary participation in the field as the participants in general were considerate and generous in their involvement in the study. Some of them had questions about me, on where and how I came to this topic of study, and others had general questions about what sort of issue I would be looking at and asking them for information about.

These questions were of a friendly nature, however, just requests for clarification and expressions of their interest in my work.

4.6.2 Anonymity and Confidentiality

Maintaining anynomity and confidentiality have become central to social science research ethics (Wiles *et al.*, 2008). The participants were assured that personally identifying references would be consciously avoided to maintain anonymity. Confidentiality would also be protected as the data analysed and used for writing up would not be in a format that would allow anyone to identify the individuals who had supplied them. Assurance was given that the anonymity of the *Adivasi* leaders and non-*Adivasi* activists would be maintained as per request. The activists, both *Adivasi* and non-*Adivasi*, who are well-known public figures will be named in the writing up of the study unless they request for anonymity.

4.6.3 Independence and Impartiality

I promised them that I would adhere to independence and impartiality by representing their voices as truthfully as I could. The memos, field notes and journalling were helpful in keeping me reflexive during the fieldwork and data-collection processes. All the interviews and FGDs were to be audio-recorded and would be stored in the repository, so that the original data would be available as a countervailing influence to ensure that I maintained impartiality in my interpretation of the data.

4.6.4 The internal divisions of the *Adivasi* Community

The divisions within the community in terms of sub-identities could in some cases impede my friendly access to one or another group, and the only way to manage this, as a researcher, was to assure all the groups of my impartiality. There was also an imperative need to protect my data source, because of the political divide that has come about within the movement. As I was moving across these polarized groups I had to tread a careful path between triangulating some of the information whilst taking care not to divulge the source of that information to people at the opposing pole. There were moments at which I found myself affected by emotional tension, for example when I was interviewing C. K. Janu I had to ask questions that were vital to the research, but take great care to avoid giving any impression that I was representing the other camp. As the interview progressed I had to make quick decisions on how to phrase certain questions or indeed whether to ask those questions at all. At the end it was a great relief, and confidence-affirming for me personally, that I seemed to have managed to put those questions without causing her any offence. I had a similar experience when interviewing Geethanandan, as I had to ascertain his

position on some of the moot points that had come up while I was interviewing other social activists. These were questions that tended to critique some of the pivotal decisions that he had made, decisions that determined the way in which the whole movement unfolded. As far as possible I consciously avoided accidental or unintended disclosures (Wiles *et al.*, 2008) in order to protect confidentiality and harmony.

4.6.5 Appropriate storage and handling of data

The data will be stored in digital format, securely, in the repository as per the Data Management Policy of the University of Southampton.

4.7 Researcher's background, beliefs, and biases

My interest in *Adivasi* politics in Kerala was ignited through my involvement in teaching the module on 'Marginalized Communities' in a college in Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala. As part of the course we had invited the leader of the movement, namely C. K. Janu, to a seminar in the department. This seminar coincided with the third wave of the statewide *Adivasi* struggle in 2014, the *Nilpu Samaram* (standing agitation). We joined the *Adivasis* who were standing at the Secretariat and we sang and danced with them. The students also mobilized resources for feeding those who were at the protest, which lasted for 162 days. This engagement with the movement, minimal though it was, left an indelible impression on me. Though I had had opportunities to be with the *Adivasis*, and had spent some summers with them, those experiences had not gripped me as this had done. Once I made my decision to work on their social movement for my PhD dissertation I found all those experiences falling into place and making sense. However, even with all this zeal and passion for their cause and support for their struggles, I am still an outsider as far as the *Adivasis* are concerned.

4.7.1 Insider-Outsider positionality

Insider/outsider positionality is a continuum wherein specific configurations and intersections of identity occur in complex and shifting ways (Hampshire *et al.*, 2014), being constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed. As someone who shares a common language, geographical origin and nationality I am an insider. But there are significant attributes of my identity, although it was reconstituted in the course of building up the research relationship (Thapar-Björkert and Henry, 2004), that makes me an outsider to the people whom I study and whom my research seeks to represent. Firstly, the fact that I am a member of a dominant Christian community, a community whose migrants were largely responsible for usurping their land and exploiting them (Devika and Varghese, 2011), positions me within the power-holding community. When I was

moving around with one of the social activists, for quite a number of days, he asked me directly which community I hailed from. I said that I was a Syrian Christian and he fell silent for a while. He had explained to me, many times and at great length, how the Syrian Christian settlers had wreaked havoc on *Adivasis* and *Dalits*, sharing the same casteist mind as the Brahmins and alienating them from their own land and labour. However, that discussion did not affect our interactions – at least, not at the surface level. Secondly, there was my association with an elite educational institution. In most of my interactions I introduced myself as someone working in a college in our state capital and is currently researching *Adivasi* social movements. This accentuated my outsider status, as I was interacting with a community that was slowly moving into higher levels of education. On the other hand, being an educated person concerned with understanding their cause won me considerable acceptance among the *Adivasis*. As one *Adivasi* woman put it, 'it's after being part of these movements people like you come to us and we can interact with you'. But my identities and background nonetheless generated an unarticulated leverage of power among the participants in my research. Besides this, my education and 'baggage' might have affected my capacity to empathize with them and ability to immerse myself in their social world and see from their perspective, despite my sincere efforts to do so.

Thirdly, my positionality as a researcher from a Western university adds a further layer of complexity. It places me as a connecting link between the *Adivasis* and Western academia, and this required me to organize the sociality of their life into idioms intelligible to research practices within that academia. It also vested me with a significant power of representation, as their reality would be filtered through mine as it reached the West. That power also came with a gaze provided by the academy, focused to note aspects of their reality which would advance my research, but perhaps overlook details not supportive of my theories. I am also aware of the privileged power of deciding which ideas are to be included and which excluded, depending on my research skills or strengths (Nicholls, 2009).

I realized that I was biased towards their cause and the struggles in which they had to engage in order to be able to live a dignified life. Their troubles, suffering and deprivation have affected me and my perception and I knew that I would have to hold my impulses in check and disengage with them as I quit the field for the time being.

4.7.2 Power relations and reflexivity

The relationship that I built with my respondents was founded on my positionality (Thapar-Björkert and Henry, 2004), though the rapport went beyond the confines of my identification with the indicators of outsider status just reviewed. Since I liaised closely with the State Committee of the new movement and built up my relations from there, I now realize that I carried the aura of

being part of/associated with the leadership with whom I was interacting. This worked to my advantage as it facilitated my easy access to the field and to respondents who identified me with their leaders. On the other hand it was not very helpful in enabling me to pass for someone who would not be on the other side of the *Adivasi* camp.

As I became a familiar face in the meetings and as people started recognizing me in cordial ways, I began to deliberately refrain from expressing my opinions in the meetings. I became aware that there were positions in the discussions to which my perceptions had become aligned, and reminded myself that I was an observer as well as a participant. Being critical of my own leanings and perceptions was important in engaging with the movement as a reflexive researcher. I tried to rephrase my comments as critical questions when I sat for interviews with the social activists.

Field notes helped me a great deal in keeping my engagements reflexive (Watt, 2007) as well as the supervision (Elliott *et al.*, 2012) I received during the fieldwork. It was always a way to reflect on my experiences and to constantly question my own positionality in relation to the people with whom I had been interacting in the field.

4.8 Data Processing Plan

The data analysis requires that I organize all that I have seen, heard, and read, to make sense of it all, (Watt, 2007). The 41 interviews and 5 FGDs were transcribed after the field research. Interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 3 hours as did FGDs. The transcribed data was coded (Bazeley, 2013; Flick, 2013) with the help of NVivo software (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013; Saldaña, 2015) and themes were identified as they emerged from the data (Miles *et al.*, 2013). These smaller themes were then categorized to develop generic themes that captured the subthemes under its umbrella. They were then subjected to a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Some of the documents that I have collected may also be incorporated for analysis. The four sets of data provided a comprehensive picture of the movement at this point in history and threw light upon its further trajectory.

4.9 Quality Assurance

The following measures are cited as significant efforts to ensure the validity of this qualitative study.

4.9.1 Credibility, Transferability and dependability

I have met all the major actors who were part of this movement and who are currently leading it. I have tried to enrich the data by bringing in respondents from 4 different categories of people.

This has also helped in triangulating the data. As the schism between the two main leaders in the movement has become the principal factor that frames the narratives and discourses on the ground I have tried to meet people from across the divides and pool their perspectives. That has also helped me to be reflexive of my own leanings towards the group with which I have been more closely associated. The data, in its extensive detail on the qualitative dimension of the research, seeks to accurately reflect the experiences of the participants. My own involvement in the various activities of the movement helps with the nuancing and texturing of the data. This is intended to have a qualitative effect on the findings.

What has brought about the particular social formation, and the realignment of that formation in response to the emerging challenges, has to be understood as contextual to Kerala and its unique political setting. However, the democratic value of this experience is far-reaching and has a transferable value into other contexts. It can be looked at on two levels: at one level it has the possibility of extending its own breadth of politics to encompass a wider range of *Adivasi* groups and communities within Kerala. At another level it offers significant lessons about democratic struggles in states beleaguered by Maoist and other militant versions of the *Adivasi* struggles. The assumption of this study is that the whole experience of a socio-political struggle for land has enabled the *Adivasis* in Kerala to enunciate a field of contention and restructure their habitus into movement habitus upon which they articulate a new political subjectivity. This subjectivity manifests itself in the ways in which the *Adivasis* involve in activism, their practical engagements with the political field, reflect on their experiences and chart ways to structure their lives self-consciously. It asks the question, to what extent can political subjectivity be considered reflexive? A similar set of contextualized assumptions and questions can be raised in relation to *Adivasi* movements in other parts of India, or to indigenous movements in other countries, a factor that makes the framing of this research not just an interesting attempt to study the movement in question, but one which in turn is transferrable to understanding a wide range of movements having a content of political transformation.

The research, while looking into the shaping of *Adivasi* political subjectivity, has tried to weave together a set of qualitative methods for collecting data specifically to answer the research question. The ethnographic observations, in-depth (semi-structured) interviews and FGDs were employed to gather sufficient data across different categories of people central to the research. The data collected by these methods have been transcribed and translated, and subjected to analysis. The study was based upon a social-movement paradigm with a theoretical emphasis on questions of habitus, practices, subjectivity and reflexivity. It is an attempt to bring together a divergent array of theoretical strands to explain *Adivasi* socio-political mobilization and its role in restructuring their habitus and constructing a political subjectivity on it. I have foregrounded my

role as a participant/observer and data gatherer with an identity as a student from Western academia, with a base in a local educational institution, and belonging to a dominant community. This tapestry of my identity has facilitated a complex engagement with the participants in my study. All along I have tried my best to be reflexive and transparent about the research process and engagement and this will, I hope, ensure that the dependability of the study is robust.

Chapter 5 Genealogy and Trajectories of *Adivasi* Field of Contention

5.1 Introduction

As this research interrogates the dynamics of the political subjectivity of *Adivasis* in Kerala that emerged in the context of their socio-political mobilisation, in this chapter it is vital to examine the genealogy and trajectories of the *Adivasi* field of contention within which *Adivasi* subjectivity is constituted. The prime interest of this delineation is to engage in a sociological analysis of the historical and political dynamics that have shaped and reworked the tendencies and valences of the movement that structures the field of contention, which in turn fashions the subjectivity. The focus of this chapter is predominantly on the way the *Adivasi* field of contention gets constituted and defined through animated debates, discourses, collective struggles and the varied forms and composition of capital and dispositions that shape their positioning and strategic action within the wider socio-political field of contention (confer Appendix B2 for a graphic representation). In the process of mapping the trajectories and genealogies of *Adivasi* field of contention the following sections analyse firstly, the varied forms of capital that activists from different protest fields bring in to the *Adivasi* field of contention, secondly, the dynamics, debates and power struggles embroiled in the constitution of *Adivasi* field of contention, thirdly, how *Adivasi* Gothra Maha Sabha (AGMS, The Grand Assembly of *Adivasis*) symbolically embodies the processes and struggles of the field, and fourthly, how as a new campaign, *Chalo,* shapes up in collaboration and alliance with other marginalized sections in Kerala, the *Adivasis* are positioning themselves within the field as strategic actors.

5.2 Activist biography and forms of capital: Intertwining legacies of the Field

Unpacking the *Adivasi* agency requires an analytical dissection of the divergent strands that intertwined into the constitution of *Adivasi* field of contention and mobilisation. The literature on the *Adivasi* mobilisation in Kerala has framed the movement as a political articulation of the *Adivasis* around their indigenous identity, to a large extent with the connivance of those involved in it (Bijoy and Raman, 2003; Steur, 2009; Steur, 2011a). Those renderings of the mobilisation portray an autonomous political articulation of *Adivasis* centred around key activists such as CK Janu, the *Adiya Adivasi* leader, and the co-ordinator of *Adivasi* Gothra Maha Sabha (AGMS), and

M. Geethanandan, a *Dalit* activist with a Naxalite past. However, those iterations have not interrogated the activist legacies of the constitution of the movement, the *Adivasi* field of contention, and their implications for the shaping of the content of the movement, its articulation and practices. As my fieldwork took place at a reflective moment for the *Adivasi* movement in Kerala in the wake of a split between its leaders, the data has absorbed those ruminations, introspections and flashbacks quite densely and vividly. Therefore it compels the scholar to delve into the complexities of these genealogies to understand the key strands in the constitution of the field of contention and the contours of the political subjectivity it has given rise to. This section interrogates the diverse genealogies of the activists who moved in to this matrix of *Adivasi* mobilisation and examine the capitals, dispositions and practices they brought into the movement from their respective former fields of intervention that were decisive in shaping this field of contention, the form, content and practices of the struggles and the formation of the *Adivasi* subjectivity.

The activists, who have coalesced to construct an *Adivasi* field of contention through their mobilisation, have their entrenched personal history of being shaped by their prior engagements in other protest fields of contention (Confer appendix B2). As the literature on social movements have shown (McAdam, 1989, 1999; Giugni, 2004) these biographical oeuvre of the activists have definitive implications for the building up, shaping and unfolding of the movement they are currently involved in. What they tend to bring with them, as can be inferred from the movement literature, is a set of social, cultural and symbolic capital that are relevant to the field of contention and which can conjoin to shape the field, and in turn the content, practices and panning out of the movement. As Crossley (2002c) argues from the Bourdieusian perspective, the competencies, capital and dispositions developed by individual actors in one field are transposable and convertible to other relevant fields. There were three dominant strands of legacies that coalesced resulting in the eruption and unfolding of this movement, first the disillusioned radical left from the Maoist field, second, the praxis-longing *Dalit* intellectuality from the *Dalit* field of contention and third, the *Adivasi* land occupy activism from the nascent *Adivasi* field of contention. My argument here is that each of these strands of activists, with their experiences from respective fields of contention, enters into the movement with their own set of skills, experiences, competencies, dispositions, capitals, repertoires, 'feel for the game' and practices, (Crossley, 1999a, 2003) which feed into the co-constitution of the *Adivasi* field of contention. How have these strands intertwined in creating the *Adivasi* field of contention Kerala? What specific capital, dispositions and practices these streams bring into the field? And, what has been the struggles and negotiations in combining these disparate prior fields of contention? The following is an analysis of the genealogies of these strands and their complex trajectories.

5.2.1 The disillusioned radical left

Modern Kerala marked its tryst with left politics from the time of its first democratically elected communist government in 1957. Commentators on Kerala have explored how this has been central to generating and sustaining a leftist political consciousness in Kerala (Franke and Chasin, 1992; Jeffrey, 2003). So, it was not surprising that the radical left movement, CPIML – Naxalism/Maoism – found its resonance among the youth in Kerala. As the *Adivasi* domain was entrenched in exploitations such as dispossession of land by migrant settlers, abysmally low wages for their labour, and the vicious cycle of debt and compulsory labour, it became one of their fields of activism. In the late 1980s and early 1990s there were irreconcilable ideological differences among the radical left group in Kerala and many walked out of the movement including M. Geethanandan, and others. Examining their narratives of political activism and eventual estrangement highlights the gamut of know-how, capital and dispositions they bring to the new arena they get involved in as has happened with the new left, anti-war, civil rights, and student movement activists who when those movements declined, became involved in community activism and environmental movement (Whittier, 2004). Here the attempt is to understand the set of capitals and dispositions these activists carried forward as they left their field of radical left politics. Geethanandan narrates the journey of his involvement in ML movement:

> By the time I moved to Thiruvananthapuram[64], I had already entered into left politics. … Thiruvananthapuram was the centre of manifold currents at the time of emergency period[65] (1975-77), artists and literary figures, theatre artists, writers, and parallel journal. It is into this world that I reached. Many activists were imprisoned and released at the time of emergency, for the first time the Dalit question was getting raised and discussed. … We used to get plenty of literature produced by the radical groups in the North, in many ways through their networks, some of them as translations. That provided a significant understanding of the diverse currents of Marxism at the international level and also on Dalit trends; lots of publications reached us. …

Geethanandan's experience manifest the ways in which his own activism became embedded within a cultural milieu of left radicalism, bolstered by the connections to national and international networks of literature sharing. His words cartographically illustrates the socio-political and cultural milieu that he was enmeshed in. They reveal the social capital of networks

[64] Capital of Kerala, a South Indian state
[65] Indira Gandhi, as Prime Minister, declared emergency in India between 1975-77.

that he builds, the cultural capital of the discourses of Marxism, Ambedkarite literature and that of radical art and theatre. These are not merely a context that shape him but something that he assimilates into his being, to the very kernel of his activism. Pitching Ambedkar[66] along with Marx, was a pivotal moment for the *Dalit* movements in their shift in to cultural politics in India. He spearheaded the faction that raised the *Dalit* question along with gender and ecological questions within the radical left movement in Kerala. Recognising that the communitarian, caste and cultural questions cannot get its desired space within the class analysis and political articulation of the radical left orthodoxy he quit the movement. There were also others who had similar journey of disillusionment. Dr. Mohan, another activist of a similar lineage, puts it quite bluntly:

> I was associated with the ML (Naxalite/Maoist) movements during 1986--89. By 1990 the association ended with the split in the ML movements. … We took the contemporary questions and issues to an open debate but purely from a Marxist ideology and communist perspective. But later I realized that these ideologies and perspectives themselves have certain issues and they weren't flawless as I initially perceived. This realization resulted in parting ways with the communist ideology and organizations and eventually finding myself associated with *Dalit* movements and then with Janu's movements. … I came out of ML mainly because I was convinced communist parties can't take a definite stand regarding caste and caste inflicted issues because they view everything from the perspective of class. … We formulated and brought out a 'Dalit manifesto'…

The ideological tensions within the ML group of Kerala regarding the analytical inadequacy of the Marxist and Maoist frameworks in conceptualizing and addressing questions of caste coincided with crisis in Marxist regimes and the changes in the geo-political world order (Gamble, 1999), and in India *Bahujan* politics[67] gaining momentum (Chandra, 2000). Drawing upon the *Ambedkarite* vision and the global impetus for identitarian articulation of socio-political mobilisation, they set out for trailblazing new praxis. That political position and departure from ML movement forms the substratum of what Geethanandan brings to the *Adivasi* movement. It is very pertinent to acknowledge this upfront because of the way it feeds into the consistent rejection of class politics, which later became emblematic of the *Adivasi* movement. Scholars, such as Steur (2009; Steur, 2011a) have interpreted the *Adivasi* mobilisation as unravelling of the class politics and a rejection of the Marxist ideology. Along with the problematization of the class

[66] The protagonist and icon of *Dalit* politics in India, who has written profusely on caste oppression. He is also revered as the man behind Indian constitution.
[67] Decline of the hegemony of Congress Party and the surge of lower caste politics

analysis and praxis, the radical left political activism have enabled the activists like Geethanandan to locate the *Adivasi* mobilisation within the broader panoramic spectrum of cultural politics. Moreover, he also brought in his rich experience of organising non-formal education in the *Dalit* colonies and years of working with trade unions:

> In Thiruvananthapuram I got involved with the literacy movement activities in the colonies and slums, and with helping the studies of the students of those settlements and slums. After I moved from Secretariat to AG's office, I was engaged in this work; going to colonies and slums in the morning and evening to teach the kids. We were a group of 5-8 activists… With the support of our group there were many study centres operative in those colonies. … By 87-88 I moved to Kochi to be active in the labour union platform of the Marxist-Leninist group, initiating 'Maydina Thozhilali Kendram' (Centre of May Day Labourers) platform.

The social and cultural capital accrued from this experience of working with colonies and slums and of organising the labour struggles become decisive in shaping the *Adivasi* struggles in Kerala. More than that, the social capital of the networks of colonies and activists proved to be invaluable for the *Adivasis* when they came for prolonged struggles such as *Kudilketti Samaram* or *Nilpu Samaram* at the Secretariat in Thiruvananthapuram. Geethanandan, as coordinator of AGMS, orchestrated the logistics of many *Adivasi* agitations relying on the social capital acquired from his radical left activist days, without which organization of these agitations would have been impossible. Along with the social and cultural capital garnered from entrenched involvement in radical activism, what mattered most was the sensibilities of engaging with the ordinary *Adivasis* that made the mobilisation possible – the modes of practices. But as significant as this historical trajectory of espousal and rejection of Marxism and pivotal turn to cultural politics, are the whole set of perspectives, competencies, know-how, dispositions, practices, social and cultural capital that these activists 'transpose' to the *Adivasi* mobilisation. These are, I argue, decisive in defining the *Adivasi* field of contention that in turn inform and structure the political subjectivity of the *Adivasis* through these mobilisations within the larger socio-political field of Kerala which I address in chapter 7.

5.2.2 The praxis-longing *Dalit* intellectuality

Another significant contingent in the formation of the state-wide *Adivasi* mobilisation and the articulation of the *Adivasi* field of contention were the *Dalit* activists. These activists hailed from the *Dalit* community in Kerala, which has a genealogy of community centred social reformation

and subsequent gains in education through affirmative action[68] (reservation policies). The educated *Dalit* youth activism slowly developed a strong intellectual flavour and their activism had an explicit anti-caste content. The earlier articulation of *Dalit* organisations was reliant on Marxism in its analysis and praxis. But with the advent of *Ambedkarite* literature into easy accessibility through translations in regional languages as part of the Indian state's initiative to celebrate the centenary of *Ambedkar*, the firmament of *Dalit* activism and thinking reached new heights while simultaneously causing crises and stagnation to existing *Dalit* organisations as their ideological structure that shaped the organisations and their practices became archaic and redundant. This historical conjuncture created a state of vibrant youth longing for an arena for praxis, and *Adivasi* mobilisation, I would argue, provided that platform. Some of the *Dalit* activists, who were central to the initiation of Kerala-wide *Adivasi* mobilisation, had a history of working with KSSA (Kerala Stipendary Student's Association) and SEEDIAN (Socially Economically Educationally Depressed Indian Natives), two important *Dalit* organisations[69]. As M D Thomas, reminisced:

> I was also active in the association at the school level, and later at the time of my undergraduate studies, I was its state secretary. When we evaluate KSSA today, since its foundation in 1965, it managed to connect many of our *Dalit* students. … My involvements in KSSA have influenced all my social activist endeavours later. Later KSSA got absorbed into SEEDIAN, and most of the leadership in SEEDIAN had come through KSSA.

The churning of social reforms at the level of the community have become embedded into the lives of *Dalit* youth such as MD Thomas, who traces the history of his own activism to his school years. The social capital gained through activist history is entrenched in persons such as Thomas, whose trajectory of acquiring cultural capital (schooling and graduation) is punctuated with that of activism. These experiences endow them with the skill sets of socio-political activism,

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[68] The Dalits, particularly the Pulaya community, had gone through a social reformation under the leadership of Ayyankali and Poykayil Appachan. While struggling against the caste-legitimised atrocities against the *Dalit* communities, they demanded the rights to education and thus instilled enthusiasm and aspiration among the community to utilise the opportunities that the policy of reservation provided in the postcolonial years in Kerala.

[69] As an association of all Stipend receiving students, KSSA accommodated and represented all *Dalit* students. Through their dynamic interventions in the issues of the *Dalit* students, be it on college admission, better hostel facilities for *Dalit* students, or demanding a raise in the stipend from the state, or other relevant *Dalit* concerns, KSSA became a platform for the young *Dalits* to organise, discuss, and build their leadership skills. They, eventually fed into SEEDIAN, an organisation that pioneered in bringing Marxism and Ambedkarite insights together to understand caste and to devise strategies for resisting it. SEEDIAN initiated a rupture with Marxist-Leninist movements, which had attracted a numerous *Dalit* youth, and later broke with Marxism itself. The 'Seedian' journal and 'November Books' publication were significant move on disseminating the *Dalit* perspective and its advances in theoretical inquiries .

organising protests, handling leadership roles in activist organisations, and cognitive competence to analyse and respond to the challenges arising from such activist engagement and organising. All these are brought into the *Adivasi* mobilisation. For the *Dalit* youth who have been moulded in the furnace of activism from their school years, there was a serious lack of protest avenues as the *Dalit* organisations reached a stalemate. MD Thomas caricatures such a moment in that journey where he remembers a meeting of *Dalit* activists and intellectuals:

> We had most of the so-called radicals in the meeting, and such an attempt to synthesize these two philosophies (Marxist and *Ambedkarite*) was a pioneering attempt in Kerala. SEEDIAN has always kept that line of thinking over the course of its history. But then those theoretical advances were not accompanied by any significant interventions. So the group got dispersed and was moving around on their own. It was at that time that *Kurichi* Struggle[70] happened and it was pivotal.

The two pertinent insights emanating from an analysis of that narrative segment are: (a) the centrality of such meetings that discuss and debate theoretical positions of activism and (b) a perceived lack of interventions that are concomitant to the investments in thinking and deliberations. The first one is a practice that the *Dalit* activists, having acquired through their experiences of organized activism, embeds in the *Adivasi* mobilisations as well, and I could see this happening in the field where camps and meetings were convened for debating, clarifying the theoretical foundations of the *Chalo* campaign (see 5.5). Secondly, he pinpoints the dilemma among the young *Dalit* intellectuals who were seeking to find a fertile soil to engage in praxis. Sunny Kappikkadu would articulate it differently, but would highlight the same predicament and historical readiness.

> Around late 80s the *Ambedkar* writings became available in print in English at the initiative of the Maharashtra Government. When these came out, *Ambedkar* was widely read and became a major reason for the crisis of the Dalit movements and organizations in Kerala. The theoretical constructions before that were built on a distant and nascent understanding of *Ambedkarism*. Secondly, these constructs were entangled with Marxism and provided a base for the activism until then. By 90s the activities of these Dalit organizations became low key and by the second half of the 90s most of these organizations became inactive as the crisis created by the familiarity of *Ambedkarite* writings escalated. In this phase, it was some agitation fronts, who were standing up

[70] This struggle was in a *Dalit* village in Kottayam district where an 11KV electric line went through it, and a *Dalit* activist, Sukumaran committed suicide while demanding for it to be removed. That escalated into a wider struggle and the *Dalit* activists cut the electric line and brought the struggle into fruition.

> against the atrocities against these marginal communities. Many organizations came together, those who did not have organizations also allied together and such agitation fronts (arenas of protests and struggle) were active from the early 90s in Kerala. Thus the established organizations were disappearing and the agitation fronts were gaining ground around that time. I was part of that.

The crises in *Dalit* organisations and the consequent freeing up of activists from the constraints of the organisational commitments had created an atmosphere for a new wave of activism. When that historical moment presented itself to them in struggles such as *Kurichi* and *Kundalla*[71], it unleashed unparalleled energy and momentum. Even when the organizations declined and established patterns of activism diminished giving way to the opening of new frontiers of struggle such as *Adivasi* mobilisation, what linked these two social processes was the seasoned activists with the know-how, dispositions, 'feel for the game' and equipped with sets of practices fitting to the field of contention. This process has parallels with what happened with the activists of the new left, anti-war, civil rights and student movements and as scholars argued in their case (Soule, 1997; Giugni, 2004), the Dalit activists brought the frameworks, practices, tactics, repertoires to the *Adivasi* movement. Thankachan, a *Dalit* activist, explains the socio-political scenario of *Dalit* activism from his experience of moving into a *Dalit* village as a teenager:

> When I came to live in this village, *Chamakkala* was a naxalite village. There were many *Dalit* activists in this area and many were involved in extreme left movements. … When I observed the dynamics here I became convinced that as a community we were capable of determining the political trajectories of this society. That's how I understood that social activism was indispensable and I came to it. … We attempted to strengthen the *Ayyankali* activism and tried to move beyond caste, religious and sub-caste divides. We were more problem focused than organization oriented; if there was a murder, that was our concern or if there was an encroachment of land that became the concern not the organization.

It is interesting to note here how Thankachan positions his activist endeavours by distancing and negating the radical left politics that was rampant in his vicinity. This has implications for the way the *Adivasi* field of contention gets articulated with a clinical distance from both the radical left politics and the democratic leftist parties. Coming from an activist oriented *Dalit* movement Thankachan and others faced the same dilemmas of the excesses and crises of organisations and

[71] Kundalla struggle was against the decision of the government to allow an engineering college to be built on *Adivasi* land. The struggle succeeded in demolishing the college and reclaiming the land for the *Adivasis*.

had decided to move towards a problem-focused interventional approach. They were strategically focused on direct action and were responding to issues as they arose. That experience provided them with the skill sets and predispositions and sets of practices required for rapid responses to the challenges arising in a dynamic field of contention. They brought that to the *Adivasi* field of contention and contributed immensely in shaping its contours and practices. Their approach and commitment became invaluable in organising and staging the *Adivasi* struggle at the secretariat. The distance they built with ML politics and the grammar of *Dalit* activism they championed provided the much-needed activist texture for the *Adivasis* on an unprecedented scale. I argue that this was an indispensable strand that shaped and continue to shape the *Adivasi* political subjectivity in many ways as I discuss in chapter 7.

5.2.3 The *Adivasi* land occupy activism

But the third and most crucial element that fed into what came to be known as *Adivasi* mobilisation, and in shaping the *Adivasi* field of contention, came from the land occupy struggles under the leadership of CK Janu in Wayanadu (confer appendix B3 for list of movements). Land was the central concern for *Adivasis* in modern Kerala and their activism largely centred around juridico-legal struggles for the alienated *Adivasi* land, represented by activists from other communities such as Nalla Thampy[72] (Bijoy, 1999). But in the 1990s there was a shift in framing and responding to the land issues of the *Adivasis*, which came through CK Janu and her conferrers. Analytically dissecting this strand is instructive for unearthing the content and form of the *Adivasi* mobilisation and the distinctive way in which the *Adivasi* field of contention became enunciated and structured.

Inheriting the lineage of communist party membership through her grandfather P. Kalan, CK Janu began her activist career in Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)).

> I was a member of the CPIM party, District Committee member of the *Karshaka Thozhilali Union* (Agricultural labourer's Union), got nominated to the Local Committee, then got nominated to the State Committee of *the Karshaka Thozhilali Union*. It was then that I said 'please don't nominate me', and that I was not intending to stay in the party and I would be leaving this party. I told them in that function and I resigned from the party and came out.

[72] He was fighting for the implementation of the Kerala Scheduled Tribe (Restriction on Transfer of Lands and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Act, 1975 (Act No. 31 of 1975), that was given constitutional ascendancy to ensure that *Adivasis* could reclaim their dispossessed land.

Her formative years as an activist was as a cadre of left political party where she got familiarised with the ways of democratic practices of protest, demonstrations and struggle. By the time she left the party folds, she was already into leadership positions which could be understood as attesting to her successful incorporation of party ideals and manifestation of her competencies in orchestrating the local units. This social and symbolic capital benefited her as she parted her ways to tread her own path of socio-political activism. The abdication of the party membership and leadership position was a decisive break for Janu and *Adivasis* in the context of enunciating a mobilisation premised on *Adivasi* identity than under the tutelage of the political party. This rejection of institutionalised left politics can be seen as cutting a common ground with the ex-radical left activists and *Dalit* activists who share a similar ideological departure. Though Janu learned her baby-steps of activism in the kindergarten of CPI(M), she was further supported and trained by the Christian NGO[73], Solidarity, which was active among *Adivasis* in Wayanadu. She quit the communist party and became active in their literacy movement among the *Adivasis* and it was through the interactions facilitated by her literacy campaigns that she decided to embark upon a land occupy movement:

> When I went to *Kolikkampadi* colony[74], there were 25 families living in just small 3 huts. We stayed that night there. But there was no place to sleep… We asked them whether they know of any place where there was land available. They said that they didn't know of any land available… So I gathered two families with me and went to the village officer and asked him whether he knew of any land, which was available around. Then he told us that there was one acre land at the top of hill, but that land was under litigation as 5--6 people had claimed right of ownership on that land and the case was in the court. When we came back and told people to occupy that land and build huts, they did it despite heavy shower. By the end of six months, every family was given 10 cents each and they got that land for 10 families, who shared it with other families. Before that, realizing that landlessness is the fundamental problem of the *Adivasis*, we have given petitions, met ministers, filed cases, staged agitations in front of collectorate, and so on. But the state did not care about that. Then we had no other way but this. That's how we went into 'land occupying' and 'hut building', because all other ways were exhausted and did not bear fruit.

[73] Some of these NGOs, such as Solidarity, were animated by the ideological underpinnings of Liberation Theology (interpreting Bible in the light of Marxian ideals) that was often out of step with the institutionalised Church in Kerala at the time.
[74] In 1990 (confer appendix B3)

As CK Janu claims, it was the abysmal deprivation of the people living in Adivasi 'colonies' that prompted her to dare the movement such as forceful occupation of land and building huts there. She framed the commencing of the land occupy struggle as the last resort for the *Adivasis*. This was a key repertoire of action in the *Adivasi* field of contention. Her initial success was followed up by further struggles through which she galvanised the support of the *Adivasis* and slowly emerged as a fearless *Adivasi* woman leader in Wayanadu, the district with the highest population of *Adivasis* in Kerala. In the process she was creating a collective social, cultural and symbolic capital for the *Adivasis* to carry forward in delineating a field of contention, with action repertoires and practices of mobilisation.

> We have done many struggles here in Wayanadu-- *Kolikampadi* (1990)*, Ampukuthi* (1994)*, Cheenkeri* (1995)*, Panavalli* (1995) and so on[75]. There were such struggles going on for the land. It is after that we engaged in struggles at a wider scale, with an all Kerala impact.

These struggles also provided the *Adivasis* with a set of know-how, dispositions and experiences that came along with the processes and dynamics of land occupy struggles. These struggles were not cake-walks, rather each of them were filled with resistance and repression from the police, and experiences of imprisonment, torture and clampdown as Kesavan gives a glimpse of it when he talks about Cheengeri land occupy attempt:

> CK Janu and us, we sat together in 1995 and thought this through. That was how we decided to begin the struggle, and we went to occupy Cheengeri Forest. There were 220 acres, of the original 540 acres set apart for *Adivasis* in 1958, left as Coffee Plantation. We wanted Adivasis to get that, and we occupied it. We were there on that land for 14 days, and then police arrested us and jailed 400 of us in sub-jail and tortured. We also faced threats from the party people. But upon release from jail we went back to occupy it again, to be arrested and removed again.

Each of those occupy struggles were textured with police action, opposition from local political parties and indifference from officers from revenue department. Groups of *Adivasis,* who were involved in each of these local struggles went through all these and built up the symbolic capital of facing all these hardships. They bounced back with resilience and generated congenial constituents of supporters among the *Adivasis*, many of them women, in the process engendering a tectonic shift in approach to activism and repression as illustrated in the case of Cheengeri struggle. An array of localised land struggles established Janu as a leader among the *Adivasis* in

[75] Confer appendix B3

Wayanadu, creating a stir of socio-political activism, shimmering of agency, and a set of competencies and social and symbolic capital.

The pertinence of the local *Adivasi* land occupy struggles for the social processes of *Adivasi* mobilisation, I argue, was the way such practices and organisational activism becomes embedded among the *Adivasis* shaping their agency as well as accruing the set of know-how, dispositions and practices for socio-political mobilisation on a wider scale. Along with the land occupy struggles there was another level of involvements that shaped the *Adivasi* activism among Janu and her conferrers, that of the exposure and training provided by platforms such as *Adivasi* Sangamam[76] (1992). The *Adivasi* Sangamam established Janu as a leader on the South Indian scale, as Kesavan, her ally for some of the land occupy struggles in Wayanadu put it:

> The *South Indian Adivasi Sangamam* (assembly), initiated by NGOs working among *Adivasis*, was seeking to bring together various Adivasi groups, and it was there that I met CK Janu for the first time. We got acquainted and did some works together, and the *Sangamam* was successful. The NGO called Solidarity brought CK Janu into it and I went there representing the *Kuruma Adivasi Sangham*. There we learned about the *Adivasi* problems at a global scale, and then it became all the more difficult for us to restrain from actively engaging with the issues here… The story was same at the national and global level. We were gathering more knowledge about all these. Then there were similar *Sangamams* in Karnataka and Tamilnadu, and as we participated in them we became more thorough with these problems.

The Sangamam opened their canvas to the wider world, at the South Indian level initially and to the national and international stages; CK Janu and a team went to visit *Adivasi* organizations in Jharkhand and attended national *Adivasi* Coference in Pune (1992), then to Geneva to represent the *Adivasi* issues in 1994 and to Europe for a series of protest demonstrations (Cologne, Germany and Davos, Switzerland) against globalization in 1999. These coincided with the UN initiatives in foregrounding the concerns of the indigenous peoples at the global level and seeking to define their rights (Shah, 2007a; Cole, 2012; Nathan *et al.*, 2012; Steur, 2017). CK Janu and her movement capitalised on the energy generated by such changes at the global, national and local levels through these interfaces and exposures. These exchanges, I argue, helped CK Janu and her *Adivasi* team to locate their struggles within the array of struggles at the global levels for establishing the rights of indigenous peoples. This would also have had a reinforcing effect of their

[76] It was an assembly of *Adivasi* organisations in South India on 12 October 1992, where the representatives and leaders of various *Adivasi* organisations gathered together to discuss their issues and concerns

sense of indigeneity and encouraged them to assimilate those notions into the frames of *Adivasiness.* Positioning their self-understanding and mobilisations within the discursive fields of indigenous rights and mobilisation at the global level and the *Adivasi* struggles at the national levels further helped them to peg their identity on the *Adivasiness* and to fathom the political potential of that identity and to negotiate and expand the space within that identity through their struggles. These exposures and training endowed them with the cultural capital where they learned about the challenges confronting indigenous people world over. At the same time their land occupy struggles in Wayanadu also familiarised them with the repressive apparatus of the state, and acquired symbolic capital in dealing with them. CK Janu would later claim in our interview that jail, torture and imprisonment could no longer threaten her people because they had been through all those, shaping their dispositions and competencies. The embodied cultural capital requires duration to acquire, as Bourdieu proposes (Bourdieu, 2011). There was adequate duration of local land struggles which various groups of *Adivasis* involved in to have acquired cultural capital for the field of contention. But where would they carry this momentum from here? Though the land occupy struggle became successful and gathered momentum in Wayanadu, it took a different current of coalescing various activist forces to spread it across the state and make it truly a state-wide *Adivasi* struggle. When that opportunity arrived CK Janu and others around her had already acquired the required social, cultural and symbolic capital and a set of skills, predispositions, and 'a feel for the game' that would set them on fire on the larger stage. How did these coalesce with other forces to create a state-wide *Adivasi* movement? How did the local struggle of two or three *Adivasi* sub-communities grow into an all-encompassing *Adivasis* struggle? How did these different strands of activists coalesce to define the *Adivasi* field of contention in Kerala? It is through collaborative and collective struggles and contentions and negotiations around them, that the *Adivasi* field of contention is constituted.

Bourdieusian conception of field is that of interdependent entities that structure the positions within it and share power relations across positions (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). The *Adivasi* field of contention gets constituted when these strands of activists position themselves within it with the capital and dispositions they bring from their respective fields of contention where they had prior experiences with mobilisation. In analysing the constitution of global anti-corporatist protest fields, Crossley has shown how the field gets co-constituted by the actors, whose participation as 'players' in a historically and culturally specific social 'game' and their subjective definitions of the 'game' shape the dynamics of the field (Crossley, 2002a). The *Adivasi* field of contention is constituted as the activists from these different streams conjoin together as 'players' within the game of 'struggles'. This analysis of the constitutive elements of the *Adivasi*

agency often touted as 'autonomous movement'(Bijoy and Raman, 2003; Raman, 2004) is crucial in understanding the subjectivity of *Adivasis*.

5.3 Constituting the discursive *Adivasi* field of contention: ADSS to AGMS

As the activists coalesced on the ground of *Adivasi* mobilisation with the capital they shored up from their involvements in previous fields of contention, the attempt was to define and articulate a new field of contention. This required positioning the *Adivasis* within the wider field of politics and engaging in contentious contestations to establish their credentials and to accrue benefits as Bourdieu suggests. As Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu, 1998a) rightly iterates, the field is the field of power and of struggle and an internal struggle for power balance is endemic to the field. I argue that it is through the internal struggles, contention and contestations that the *Adivasi* field of contention gets articulated and embedded. A protest field is a heterogeneous ensemble with dynamic structures and is always in process (Crossley, 2003). The dynamic process of constituting the *Adivasi* field of contention, from an analytical point of view, takes place through two intertwined processes. While there was intense external action and discourse that established the field of *Adivasi* movement, there was also equally intense internal discourse that defined and redefined the contours of this field of contention. Here, I examine and analyse the discursive constitution of the *Adivasi* field of contention entangled in both the external struggles and internal discourses (confer appendix B2).

It was the Kurichi struggle (March, 2000), which became an awakening call for the *Dalit* intellectuals and activists. It not only brought these two factions of the *Dalit* community together but also Geethanandan, the disillusioned radical left activist. Sunny Kappikkadu, *Dalit* activist and intellectual, argues that Kurichi struggle ended the decade long stagnation of *Dalit* activism and catalysed the *Dalit* group and instilled an unprecedented confidence among the *Dalit* community in Kerala. While discussing the formation of the British Networks for Alternatives to Psychiatry (BNAP), Crossley (1999a) underlines the importance of the meeting of activists from different strands where they could learn, borrow from each other, enhance their tactical and discursive repertoires and give rise to new sets of practices. In view of the *Adivasi* field of contention, *Kurichi* struggle was a pivotal moment for the history of this movement, as it brought together the three sets of activists, with their specific set of capitals and dispositions into one group with a strong support base. *Kurichi* struggle thus has a landmark status in this narrative, as Sunny states:

> *Kurichi*, 11KV struggle was not organized by any particular movement; there were many organizations who came out to support it. But those without any affiliation to any

> particular organizations created a Committee for it: I was its chairman and MD Thomas was its General Convenor. It was this agitation front in which Geethanandan and we all came to work together for the first time. That movement became a successful mass movement and breaks the decade--long stagnation of Dalit activism in central Tranvancore. Not only that, as 11 KV line was cut, it created an awakening among these people by instilling a sense of confidence.

As sunny explicates, the *Kurichi* struggle brought the radical left activists such as Geethanandan and the Dalit intellectuals and activists to a common platform. They mustered all their capital, their know-how and competencies to take the struggle into fruition. The success of the struggle was also the onset of a new collectivity that reworked the alchemy of socio-political mobilisation. CJ Thankachan, representing the activist stream of the *Dalit* community, expounds his experience of gelling with other 'intellectualist stream' (for want of a better word) of the *Dalit* activists at the Kurichi struggle:

> Those days, I did not have much of a relation with Sunny Kappikkadu and MD Thomas. They were regarding us as lesser mortals because we were working with Dravida Party of India (DPI) as DPI was against the concept of Dalit activism as it argued that we were not Dalits. That was the problem. But it was later that we understood the Dalit politics, that what these people were saying was right and even when we say we were Dravidas we still lived in Dalit conditions. It was *Kurichi* that brought us together.

Thankachan's account highlights the power relations that were operative around different factions of *Dalit* activists, and Kurichi struggle brought them together constructing a shared intersubjective *Dalit* perspective. This discursive formation of the collective *Dalit* activism was through creative debates and dialogues across these groups within the furnace of the struggle. This process of constructing a new intersubjective *Dalit* perspective that combined three layers: the intellectualist, the activist and the disillusioned radical leftist each bringing diverse sets of capital and competencies. This intersubjective Dalit perspective, became pivotal in structuring the *Adivasi* field of contention. They were also in the process of generating a fresh 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu, 1990a) of new genre of mobilisations.

Drawing on established links with CK Janu, Geethanandan bridged the vibrant *Dalit* activists fresh from the Kurichi struggle with the *Adivasi* land-occupy activists in Wayanadu. That was a defining moment in constituting the *Adivasi* field of contention as the *Dalit* activists, who successfully enunciated a *Dalit* field of contention with Kurichi struggle, met the *Adivasi* activists marking a collaboration that would eventually iterate the *Adivasi* field of contention. Sunny Kappikkadu states that the move to Kundalla (March, 2001) was the result of a decision to forge a joint

movement, which formed the substratum for the *Adivasi-Dalit Samara Samiti* (ADSS), an alliance between *Dalit* and *Adivasi* activists. This was an expansion of the Dalit platform that was initiated at *Kurichi* struggle and an incorporation of the *Adivasi* platform that was developed through land occupy struggles in Wayanadu. Sunny's words:

> The members of the *Kurichi Samara Samiti* reached Wayanadu to participate in the collectorate march led by CK Janu and in the planning meeting with CK Janu after the march it was decided that we could make a joint movement at *Kundalla*. The people who got involved with *Kundalla* were predominantly those who were part of the *Kurichi* struggle.

That decision for a joint movement reconstituted the field of contention with the emergence of a *Adivasi-Dalit Samara Samiti* (ADSS) creating a single platform for *Adivasis* and *Dalits* and provided with an organisational structure. Geethanandan summarises this succinctly:

> Bringing Janu, Koyyon from Kannur, and others, we presented the concept of the platform of *Adivasi-Dalit* unity. We had created a *Dalit* platform before that and had done some interventions. But it is with this that we come to a much more organised platform, *Adivasi-Dalit Samara Samiti* (ADSS). In a camp at *Kallara,* the Samiti was formally initiated with C K Janu as the Chairperson and me as its Convenor and under its banner we organized the *Kudil Ketti Samaram* (Hut-built agitation).

From Geethanandan's words corroborate the trajectory of enunciating a *Dalit-Adivasi* field of contention through the constitution of a joint platform of *Dalits* and *Adivasis*. This *Adivasi-Dalit* field of contention absorbed the three different strands of activists into a collaborative mode within this field of contention. Under this new platform there was pooling of the social, cultural and symbolic capital that each of the strands brought and they experimented them in *Kundalla* struggle, leading to a sharpening of skills, competencies and practices for the wider state-wide *Adivasi* mobilisation – *Kudil Ketti Samaram* in 2001[77]*.* The *Kudil Ketti* struggle at the secretariat, in the capital city of Thiruvananthapuram, was successfully organised by the ADSS; for the first time in the history of modern Kerala, the democratic state entered into a formal agreement with the *Adivasis* on land distribution and resettlement mission (TRDM).

Through this mobilisation, the field of contention was subjected to repositioning and restructuring (Bourdieu, 1998a). With the success of the movement, questions emerged among the key activists

[77] Kudil Ketti Samaram was from 29 August 2001 to 16 October 2001 for 48 days at the secretariat (confer appendix B3)

on how to consolidate the resurgence of *Adivasis* through the struggle and how to take their mobilisation forward. Those questions found an answer in the formation of AGMS (*Adivasi Gotra Maha Sabha*), but that formation was premised on a certain exclusivist, essentialist understanding of the *Adivasis*, which practically delinked the *Dalit* activists from this formation. Those debates and discourses were central to the reconstitution of the *Adivasi* field of contention in Kerala.

Geethanandan argues that it was the natural response to the *Adivasi* emergence that happened at the end of *Kudilketti Samaram*:

> As the *Kudilketti Samaram* erupted from the *Adivasi* community, our demands and contracts were limited to the *Adivasis*. The struggle was on *Adivasi* land question alone and had not raised the land issues of *Dalits*. It was not easy then to transform that into a *Dalit* question. Doing so would have been unethical. Since that was an *Adivasi* emergence, it was made theirs entirely. We constituted their body, and that is how *Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha* (AGMS) got formed. Naturally, they (*Dalits*) withdrew a bit. There was a feeling that *Adivasi* specific line was not the right direction. Nobody discussed it openly. But it must have been there. But we moved from a *Dalit-Adivasi Samara Samiti* formation to a consolidation of *Adivasi* social and cultural self-rule. That was inevitable, and there was no other way. I was the one who presented its concept. Gothramaha Sabha should have a separate entity; it should have a unique platform.

Geethanandan argues that as the *Kudilketti Samaram* foregrounded the land issues of the *Adivasis* and resulted in the emergence of that community, it was ethical and logical to have consolidated that as AGMS. A unique platform for the convergence of diverse *Adivasi* communities became an imperative and he presented that concept of AGMS as a consortium of all *Adivasi* Gothras (communities). MD Thomas argues that it was the proposition that *Adivasis* were *adima jana* (Indigenous/first people) that created the split. Such an essentialist ethnic notion of *Adivasiness* excluded the *Dalit* activists from further collaboration:

> At the formation of AGMS, there was a proposition that Adivasis were *Adimajana* (First/original people), and we could not accept that. That became a cause of division among us. Kottayam is an area where you have large numbers of *Dalits* and *Adivasis*, and they have been incredibly active too. Not only Anil and Biju who died during the struggle, but you had many others including Thankachan on the field. But except Thankachan, who somehow managed to fit in, all others from the Dalit belt went out of this movement. … Geethanandan was the coordinator of AGMS, and CK and the *Adivasis* had accepted him as such. **(MD Thomas, *Dalit* activist)**

The foregrounding of the claims of indigeneity as the focal point of *Adivasi* unity in a way deconstructed the *Dalit-Adivasi* field of contention that was constituted through the *Kudil Ketti Samaram.* The political consciousness that emerged from the *Dalit-Adivasi* field of contention was not sustained because of the formation of AGMS, which became detrimental to the very structure of that field itself. The *Dalit-Adivasi* field of contention, in the wake of the *Adivasi* emergence at the end of the *Kudilketti Samaram*, underwent a transmutation and got restructured as the *Adivasi* field of contention with AGMS as its symbolic embodiment.

Sunny Kappikkadu expounded the way in which established and upper caste/class sections of the *Adivasi* communities infiltrated into the movement at the success of the *Kudil Ketti Samaram* and took control over the imagination and dynamics of the movement, almost displacing the most marginal communities of *Adivasis* that initiated and fought through the struggle.

> As I see it, there were two factors leading to the formation of AGMS. First and foremost, the fantasy generated by that huge success, a success that *Adivasis* never had in the history. Secondly, the notion that *Adivasis* were a different ethnic community, and this notion was not produced by the *Samara Samiti*. There were *Adivasi* groups who came into it, after the success of the struggle, who were enthralled by the feeling that they were going to get land, they were going to have self-rule and therefore they wouldn't need an alliance. Such an ideology was articulated in a big way, especially when the Malayaraya section came in, they were consciously building up such a discourse. They were developed communities, right? Actually the primary actors in the ADSS was the downtrodden section among the *Adivasis* such as *Paniya*, *Adiya* and so on and they continued to be friendly and cordial as ever.

The entire dynamics can be understood as the power struggle within the field that results in the restructuring of the field itself. As Bourdieu states, the actors within the field engage in strategic processes and action that can transform their position within the field (Bourdieu, 1983). The *Adivasis,* with larger volume of economic and cultural capitals (such as Malayaraya as Sunny suggests) positioned themselves with stronger clout in the field and engaged in the strategic action of reconstituting the field on their terms which could maximise benefits for them. As this strategic reconstitution was premised on the ethnic identity of *Adivasis*, the *Dalit* activists were sidelined in the process and the *Adivasi* field of contention was enunciated, obliterating the *Dalit-Adivasi* field of contention. The field is internally characterized by competition over the status it affords, conflict over the right to define it, and inequality in capital required to participate in the field (Crossley, 2002a). As the definition of the field was shifted from *Dalit-Adivasi* unity to the

indigeneity of the *Adivasis*, it reconfigured the status and the capital within the field to the advantage of one group and debilitating the other section from operating within that field.

This section has looked at the debates at the heart of the founding moments of AGMS, and has analysed the way the dynamic *Adivasi* field of contention became constituted through the struggles and the debates. Studies that fail to engage with the intricate dynamics that structure the *Adivasi* field of contention often get caught up in the rhetoric such as 'unravelling the Kerala model of development' (Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, 2004; Sreerekha, 2010) while missing out on the socio-political processes structuring the mobilisation and its agents. The social dynamics that played out in reconstituting the *Adivasi-Dalit* field of contention as an ethnic identity based *Adivasi* field of contention, I argue, shapes the AGMS in times that followed.

5.4 AGMS: A Symbolic Embodiment of the field of contention

Having problematized the formation of AGMS and the constitution of the *Adivasi* field of contention and its articulation through the medium of AGMS, this section attempts to understand AGMS itself, its vision, its politics, inherent tensions, hierarchies, fissures and the future by looking at AGMS as a symbolic embodiment of the field of contention (confer appendix B2). In the context of the crisis within the field spawned by the division among the leaders of the AGMS, an analysis on the differences in the vision and the understanding of politics within *Adivasi* field of contention that is symbolically represented by AGMS is warranted. For Bourdieu, the field is both an analytical space and a relational social space (Bourdieu, 1996). The AGMS symbolically embodies the dynamics of the *Adivasi* field of contention in the ways it represents its vision and politics and also engages as an actor within the wider field of politics. As a political actor and a representational body of the *Adivasi* field of contention, an analytical understanding of the AGMS can provide insights into the dynamics and logics of operation within the field. AGMS, as an embodiment of the *Adivasi* field of contention is a dynamic space where actors constantly engage in repositioning and strategic action to preserve or transform their position within the field. These dynamics reflect back upon the way the *Adivasi* mobilisation gets articulated within the field of contention and the discourses that it produced, circulated and embedded within the larger field of politics. To understand these interrelationships, it is important to approach AGMS as a field of contention. These narratives and excerpts have to be located within the context of a split within the AGMS as CK Janu and section of the *Adivasis* formed her own party and joined the NDA alliance (lead by the Hindu right wing *Bharateeya Janata Party* of Narendra Modi) to contest in the state election as a candidate and Geethanandan and another section of *Adivasis* denouncing such a move. This crisis has become a reflexive moment to rearticulate what AGMS is and the data presented here reflect these soul-searching musings.

Jayesh, an *Adivasi* leader, states that though the rudimentary discussions of the AGMS started during the *Kudil Ketti Samaram* its formal structuring and inauguration came after the struggle, but still on the waves of the ecstasy of its success. The logic of internal competition, conflict and struggle that marks the field can be seen in this symbolic embodiment too. Even though it was envisaged as the platform for all *Adivasi* Gothras, Geethanandan now states that the AGMS is the platform of the most marginalised among the *Adivasis.* That position comes from the understanding that those very communities are the consistent contingent for AGMS, and others may come and go according to the fortunes of the struggles. This qualification of the platform of AGMS can be seen as another attempt to strategically reposition sub-communities within the *Adivasi* field of contention. It is also an acknowledgement of the internal hierarchies operative within the *Adivasi* field of contention wherein the most marginalised communities are getting relegated to the peripheries within the field by other established sub-communities. The field therefore, remains dynamic and contentious and the struggle for positioning and repositioning are ever present. This tension can be read between the lines of Geethanandan's words:

> In fact, Gothra Maha Sabha embraced those who were scattered, literally the indigenous communities among Adivasis. Ethnically, we can look at it so. They can be called the 'true Adivasis', I think. It's not that others are not there on the schedule [list of the state that enumerate the sub-communities], they are there. But these were the communities, who understood Janu as their ethnic symbol. So then and now, those communities continue to predominate *Gothra Maha Sabha* and its activities. When it is inflamed in the limelight as a movement, many would be attracted to it and come along, but when a crisis comes, they will back out. That's how it was going on.

AGMS as a socio-political platform of *Adivasis* has been predominantly consisting of the poorest and weakest sections of the *Adivasi* subcommunities. Using the Bourdieusian conception of field as positioned by diverse range of actors with varying degrees of capital (Bourdieu, 1983), the AGMS encompasses *Adivasis* of different hues, especially with class and status differentiation. The variation in economic and cultural capital enables the *Adivasis* to position themselves within the field of AGMS differently, and gives them choice to get involved or retreat as per their wish. Geethanandan cognizes the AGMS as a social formation with the challenge to integrate the communities of *Adivasis*. This vision of consolidating the *Adivasis* as a social formation goes to the heart of AGMS, and it is precisely there that AGMS finds its greatest challenge. Geethanandan explains this:

> The idea of *Gothra Maha Sabha* organizationally was to unify the *Adivasis* across caste, sub-community, gothra divides, a desire for which became visible at the end of *Kudil*

> *Ketti Samaram*. The challenge is to integrate (synthesize) the community. It is not an organization as such; it is a social formation, … but it cannot do without an organizational shape. It's not something like an extremely centralized party. The people who were sidelined, in such a broad social and economic discourses, seek to come back and to build up a new social form from their indigenous life and to establish their space in the broader system. Both these are different, right? That's the possibility of Adivasi self-rule. In that sense, *Gothra Maha Sabha* is an idea for a social formation of this community.

This very notion of AGMS as a social formation brings it conceptually close to the notion of the field, which is imagined as a 'relational' 'social space' (Bourdieu, 1996). AGMS here is envisaged as the social formation of the marginalised community to claim a space within the broader field of Kerala society. But it is acknowledged that integrating the diverse, economically and socially varying *Adivasi* sub-communities into the fold of that social formation is the fundamental and overriding challenge. But there is explicitly differing understanding of the politics of the field, the AGMS, Geethanandan's understanding of the politics of AGMS is geared to facilitating the social formation among the *Adivasis*, whereas CK Janu seem to be perceiving it as a political organisation for *Adivasis*. This could be attributed to the dispositions that Janu acquired through her initial years of struggle under the nomenclature of varied organizations, which were disposed along the way and her training from NGOs. Geethanandan's dispositions acquired through his involvements in radical left movements with deliberative predilections propels him to envision AGMS as a social formation rather than an organization. These differences which are constituent of envisioning of the AGMS has been decisive not only in the way both of them have gone separate ways but also in the new strategic struggle to constitute the field on their terms. For the *Adivasi* activists Jayan and Jithin, AGMS is a platform that brought together the various communities of *Adivasis* and has always tried to articulate an *Adivasi* vision, on behalf of them:

> For *Adivasis* it is not easy to come together as one. But if they have done that, it is with AGMS. A *vedan, arayan, oorali* and all will go together. There is a new perspective among the *Adivasis* now and the AGMS understands it and tries to put forward that politics.

Rajesh, an *Adivasi* youngster, credits AGMS for foregrounding the *Adivasi* identity in Kerala and in that sense in enunciating an *Adivasi* field of contention. This falls in line with the original vision of consolidating the *Adivasi* emergence and social formation:

> This notion is something for which AGMS deserves credit. The state had attributed the category 'Scheduled Tribe', and the *Adivasi* elders were not happy with 'Scheduled'

> asking why should we be called so? With the work of AGMS and their attempts to represent the issues of *Adivasis* at the centre of its politics, we have moved into the collective identity of *Adivasis*.

This move towards the collective *Adivasi* identity is also intermingled with the process of constituting the *Adivasi* field of contention discursively within the larger society of Kerala. It is precisely by engaging in public discourses from the *Adivasi* field of contention that AGMS could articulate its positions within the larger field of socio-political life in Kerala. These discourses have created further opportunities in the socio-political field and in turn rearticulates the *Adivasi* field of contention as a discursive field (Steinberg, 1998) of contention as well. Detailing the politics of AGMS, Geethanandan explains the way AGMS visualizes and intervenes in the politics. For him AGMS, as a representative body of the *Adivasi* Gothras, is committed to argue the case for *Adivasis* with clarity and definitive position. They are particular in raising the *Adivasi* questions as common questions, such as not for a particular piece of land, but for the right to land. :

> In all these (atrocities on *Dalits*, the budget earmarking in Kerala, forest rights related issues), we have been able to take a position with clarity in such way that other groups, organizations could find them as guidelines. I think that's the role of Gothra Maha Sabha. … Land struggles are going on in many parts of Kerala. We try to raise this as a common question. Rather than being engaged only with a local struggle of a group or a caste, we do support them, but many of those struggles are ultimately for itself. Gothra Maha Sabha would never speak of a problem only of one particular group or place as such. In the land question, we intervene by generalizing it and demanding land for all the landless.

The discursive interventions of the AGMS on broader political questions have enabled it to position itself within the wider socio-political field as a credible actor with a distinct voice. Their credibility and distinction of their voice have come from their protracted struggles. CK's vision of AGMS is making *Adivasis* into self-reliant, independent, thinking individuals:

> We would not ask any of the 35,000 *Adivasis* to stand with us in the *Gothra Sabha* because when they get the land, they become its owners. They have the right to work in that land and take the produces from it and that person should decide in which market those produces must be sold. That person should decide what should be done with those produces. In that way, our effort is to make that person self-reliant and independent. *Gothra Maha Sabha* always try to make people independent and self--reliant. In other systems they are made dependents and slaves.

CK Janu envisages that the *Adivasis* with land and resources should remain independent and make considered decisions even about remaining active with the AGMS. For her the *Adivasi* field of contention should enable the *Adivasis* to be self-reliant through the dynamics, processes, struggles and mobilisations that they have engaged in. The question of land and resources are seen as a medium in that process, as a game within this field with a broader end. While this is a significant articulation of envisaging the politics within *Adivasi* field of contention, it needs to be seen in the context of the split and resultant difficulties in Janu's attempts to reclaim support and loyalty from a major wing of AGMS.

The most significant contribution of AGMS and its struggles is in placing land as a political question before Kerala and in problematizing the resource power, according to Geethanandan. The *Adivasi* field of contention embodied by the AGMS championed the land struggles in Kerala as its political act and that has been brought into the awareness of the state and public of Kerala and has caught the imagination of many other fringe groups who have moved along similar line of activism (detailed discussion in chapter 6). AGMS, can claim the pioneering place in encouraging the land struggles in Kerala:

> All the changes that have happened in land relations since 2000 in Kerala, the right assertion of the marginalized communities, is through Gothra Maha Sabha. It doesn't stop there. The state may be creating many schemes, may be to overcome this, but definitely is a result of this. Land as a resource power in its concreteness, has been established in the political-administrative realm in this century, in Kerala. That has become a commendable dynamic force, and that has not been extinguished even now, it's still on.

It is by keeping the land question front and centre that AGMS orchestrated the *Adivasi* field of contention as a dynamic field of struggle and mobilisation. But through a politics of land, discourses on land and resources, the AGMS has gone into the questions of *Adivasis* rights and protective provisions to conscientize both the public as well as the *Adivasis*. These have been gradually becoming part of their know-how, perceptions, and sedimented knowledge, the field is indeed shaping the *Adivasis* as well as the public.

The problem of AGMS remaining a platform without strong organisational structures has been critiqued as its current weakness, challenging it to restructure itself as an organisation. The critique comes from multiple levels and stakeholders such as activists, leaders and ordinary *Adivasis*. But how does that impact the *Adivasi* field of contention that AGMS has upheld in enunciating? Has the ambivalence within AGMS to have an organisation with proper structures become an imperative in the new context?

> Now we have a platform. We have the understanding that we need to keep those children who were in Muthanga, as they get educated. AGMS even then have not gone into a cadre system or into a structured organization. That's the backlash we are getting now. If we had such a structure, even CK Janu may not have gone like this. There is such an evaluation among us.

The words of JN, an *Adivasi* activist, highlights the ambivalence the AGMS has been navigating over the years on the question of whether to remain as a platform or to consolidate as a proper organisation. As a platform, as a field of contention, AGMS, as it had been initially envisioned, has the potential to harness various sub-communities as well as community organisations among the *Adivasis*. A fully structured organisation may lack the elasticity and pliability to do such a mammoth task. The challenge is whether to remain as a movement or to be a movement organisation? Implicated in this ambivalence and dilemma sAGMS is positioning itself within a new campaign that is reconstituting the field of contention for a wider alliance of marginalized communities.

5.5 Reconstituting the Field of Contention: *Adivasis* positioning within a new campaign

With the split in the leadership of AGMS, and the changes in the political climate of Kerala and India, the field is witnessing a resurgence of the *Dalit-Adivasi* unity that got dismantled at the formation of AGMS. The macro political processes at the national level, namely the resurgence of *Dalit* resistance against the repressive regime of Hindutva, and the political churning in Kerala as a result of the murder of a *Dalit* student in her hut built on the wasteland, and the micro processes of division within the AGMS have provided a discursive opportunity for a new campaign, *Chalo Thiruvananthapuram*. This new campaign is transcending the boundaries of AGMS, and even the initial *Adivasi-Dalit* unity of the liquefied ADSS to the alliance of all marginalised communities in Kerala including fisherfolk, women, transgenders, and plantation workers (confer appendix B2). The field of contention is getting reconstituted in the process. It has two implications as far as *Adivasis* are concerned: on the one hand they will become one of the marginalised communities operating on this wider field of contention, on the other hand *Adivasis* are now going to position themselves within that field as actors who can represent the concerns of other marginalised communities as well. So that is moving beyond the identitarian politics, to a politics of alliance and collaboration. How is this envisaged? How will the campaign *Chalo* operate as it reconstitutes the field of contention? How will the *Adivasi* politics play out in all these?

Chalo is in continuity with the *Dalit-Adivasi* political experiment in 2001 according to Sunny Kappikkadu and reworking the concept of democracy and engaging with the public are central to it. It envisions that the marginalised groups have a collective and collaborative platform where they can raise their specific issues and they will be raised together from that platform. The solution to such problems can be arrived at only through engaging with the public, reworking themselves and the democracy itself. This is made viable by entering into a dialogue across marginalised communities:

> But the imagination of this new struggle is in continuity with the 2001 struggle, its seeds were from the *Dalit-Adivasi* struggles. So involving in that struggle and in many other *Dalit* struggles in Kerala over the years that I came to the notion that only by reworking and expanding the concept of democracy that *Dalit-Adivasis* could claim a dignified life here. … How democratic are we? How broad is the citizenship, which is provided by our democratic state? Which all sections does it include? Only by engaging with such fundamental questions, with the ideas put forward by the modernity, can the *Dalit-Adivasis* open a new frontier for their movement and struggle. *Adivasis*, *Adivasi* organizations, be it that of various sub-communities, they all will have to operate as one *Adivasi* collective in this platform. That's how it functions. They wouldn't have a separate, individual platform as such. (Sunny Kappikkadu)

By directly linking it to the *Dalit-Adivasi* field of contention that was enunciated in the first state-wide *Adivasi* struggle, Sunny is incorporating the social, cultural and symbolic capital of those movements to this new formation and field of contention. His reference to the experiences of his own involvement in the *Dalit* struggles after the *Kudilketti Samaram* again reflects the accumulated social, symbolic and cultural capital that he himself is bringing into this field as he positions himself within it as a key initiator and actor. As he envisages the space for the *Adivasi* field within this wider field of contention, he assigns a collaborative space for them, and indicates that *Adivasis,* as a collective, need to position themselves within this new field of contention. Resonating with this perception, Geethanandan sees *Chalo* as a historical maturing of the *Dalit-Adivasi* mobilization and for him the material conditions have been ripe to make the long cherished dream of an alliance of marginalized sections into a reality:

> Now what is reaching at *Chalo Thiruvananthapuram*, had been a deep-seated desire in all of us. That there should be a broader front that can coalesce the *Adivasis*, *Dalits* and the marginalised people, was something which was there from the beginning. But there were no material conditions ripe enough for that, whether people were organizationally equipped enough was a problem, which we faced. Now there is an interest and attempt

> to embrace it by the *Dalit-Ambedkarite* and marginalised groups and the new generation among the left, creating a conducive atmosphere. So our principal responsibility is to unite *Adivasis*, *Dalits*, and other marginalised communities, and demand resources including land.

Geethanandan is locating the new campaign and the reconstitution of the field of contention within the long term dreams of the activists and that is another way of linking up various mobilisations with *Chalo* and constructing a linked-narrative of various socio-political mobilisations. As he strategically enmeshes the current campaign within trope of the interventions that they have already done, he is able to streamline and position the acquired capital and dispositions within this unfolding field of contention. The words like 'maturity', 'ripe' are evocatively used to signify the link as well as continuity. There is clarity on the *Adivasi* side that they are part of it as *AGMS;* in *Chalo* each organization are part of it as themselves as JY & JN, *Adivasi* activists, suggests:

> In *Chalo* all are members as our own organizations. They are taking up our issues including PESA [Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas 1996] itself. In our Idukki district we prepared the major issues to be represented for the 'huge petition' and we came up with the plantation labourers' problem and the implementation of FRA [Forest Rights Act 2006] and PESA.

The setting of agenda in *Chalo,* in this sense, is deemed to be quite democratic, as each of the segments can set their agenda and be represented through this campaign. The movement seeks to engage with a public which is willing to enter into dialogue with this campaign and its demands without being patronizing. The leadership seeks to consolidate the social, cultural and symbolic capital that they have built through years of *Adivasi* mobilisation and harness the same from other movements of various marginalised communities, who are forming part of the *Chalo*. An *Adivasi* youngster, Rajesh, found it an exciting project and his experiences testifies to the possibilities of this new politics of alliance:

> What I saw in *Chengara* at the time of *Chalo's* inauguration was that *Dalits*, *Adivasis*, fisherfolk, plantation workers, and *Dalit* Christians, and all such excluded and marginalized communities and those who experience caste oppression were all there as siblings born of the same mother, recognizing that these are our collective problems. That feeling of commonality is something exceptional, and remarkable. That is what I liked about *Chalo* and though they are proposing many things in the charter of demands, for me what stands out as the fundamental message of the movement is this unity across divides. (Rajesh, young *Adivasi*)

As the ball started rolling for this new campaign with an exciting inauguration at the site of a *Dalit* land struggle, there is an untrammelled conviction that this is the way forward. I would argue that this in effect is restructuring the field of contention with new actors, diverse set of capitals and dispositions, seeking to establish its own set of practices. It is amalgamating various fields with their own 'cultural arbitrary', architecture, with their own forms of power and domination (Crossley, 2003). With the history of land struggle and the concomitant acquisition of social, symbolic and cultural capitals related to mobilisation, *Adivasis* can position themselves quite powerfully within this newly articulated field of contention. When Crossley analyses the field of contention of global anti-capitalist movement, he argues that even while the actors differ in their ideologies, or perceptions, they co-constitute a social space of contention through their structured relation to one another and mutually interpenetrating actions. As they act, respond, interact with each other with a strong sense of 'this is where the action is', they attract further actors into the field of contention (Crossley, 2002a). *Chalo*, in the same way, is facilitating the co-constitution of the field of contention as the actors, organizations, and groups enter into a structured relation to one another and their interaction and interdependence as 'players' in the game of socio-political mobilisation is orchestrated within that social space.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to delineate the genealogy and trajectory of the *Adivasi* field of contention which is a heterogeneous ensemble, always in process, with its dynamic structures. From the conjoining of activists who have lineages traceable to diverse fields of contention such as radical left, *Dalit* activism and *Adivasi* land occupy struggles, to their consolidation in the *Dalit-Adivasi* field of contention, the constriction of the field premised on the claims to indigeneity into *Adivasi* field of contention with AGMS as its symbolic embodiment, and to positioning AGMS within the new campaign that seeks to constitute a broader field of contention of various marginalised sections, the field is in dynamic process. It is within this dynamically evolving and strategically reconstituting field that the *Adivasi* mobilisation unfolds and it is in relation to this field that their subjectivity gets produced and constituted (confer appendix B2). Within this field of contention, as I would argue in the following chapters, the *Adivasis* restructure their habitus as they engage in protracted struggles and rework their subjectivity and political belonging reflexively.

Chapter 6 Structuring *Adivasi* Movement Habitus and Practices through Land Struggles

6.1 Introduction

In search of understanding the *Adivasi* subjectivity that springs from over a decade long land struggles, in the previous chapter I have delineated the critical conjunctures in the constitution of the *Adivasi* field of contention wherein these series of protests unfolded. This chapter examines the processes involved in the structuring of a movement habitus among the *Adivasis* and consolidation of capitals in relation to the land struggles within this field of contention. Social movements, Crossley (1999b) states, are a vital source of critique and innovation in modern societies as they generate new plans and ideals for living, questioning that which we take for granted and challenging central norms and values. While both these dimensions – critique and innovation – are central to the *Adivasi* land struggle in Kerala, there is a whole gamut of changes that take place to the agents of the movement, *Adivasis* themselves, as a result of their participation in the mobilization. It is equally vital to examine and understand those changes for the participants of the movement too. Scholars have investigated and interpreted the *Adivasi* movement as a critique of Kerala Model of Development (Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, 2004, 2006; Sreekumar and Parayil, 2006; Tharakan, 2006; Steur, 2009, 2010) and as a critique of left politics, of hollowing out of class politics (Steur, 2011a; Steur, 2015a). Here, my interest is to look at the innovation aspect, to the dynamics of contention and the processes of the *Adivasi* mobilisation, to theoretically render these to explain the structuring and embedding of movement habitus, the substratum of their subjectivity. Therefore I begin with an analysis of the framing of *Adivasi* grievances as a question of landlessness highlighting the symbiotic relation between habitus and frame, move on to examine the practice of land occupy as a key repertoire of *Adivasi* mobilisation emphasising the generative relation of habitus and movement practices, and then interrogate the three major mobilisations from the perspective of the movement habitus.

6.2 Framing *Adivasi* grievances: Opportunities and Resources

The grievances of *Adivasis* have existed for many years in the pre and postcolonial eras in Kerala. Their land have been alienated by the migrant settlers, the vested land have not been distributed to them, the constitutional provisions have not been accorded to them with diligence, care and efficiency, and their children have died of malnutrition and hunger for decades. What has then triggered the *Adivasi* land occupy struggles in Kerala? Is it the aggravation of neoliberal changes in

Kerala in the twenty-first century? Is it the constellation of activists that came together, who spearheaded the movement, as elaborated in the previous chapter? Is it the political opportunity opened up by identity politics and political power grab by the *Bahujan* communities in India ushering in a climate conducive for cultural politics? Is it the possibility opened up by the UN declaration of the decade of indigenous people, and then the declaration of their rights, spiralling a politics of indigeneity in Kerala? All these have indeed contributed to the creation of a discursive opportunity structure for framing the *Adivasi* discontent as landlessness. The discursive opportunity structure allows the grievances to be framed in specific ways (Koopmans and Statham, 1999) so as to capitalize on those opportunities and advance the contention with diligence. In the Bourdieusian theoretical universe, framing is organically linked to the generative principle, the habitus (Husu, 2013), and I argue that these frames in turn, within the context of the social movement act as catalysts in restructuring the *Adivasi* habitus.

Crossley (2002a) suggests very small strains may be sufficient to initiate movements if they depart from the expectations and assumptions of the participants about their everyday life. When strains precipitate tensions in the affective level (anger or outrage) and at the cognitive level by shocking them out of their taken for granted attitudes and carrying on 'as usual' becomes difficult, the habitual sediments of agency and social world are disturbed. For Bourdieu such destabilising strain can be a moment of crisis where the field and habitus get ruptured and a de-alignment between the two generates actions oriented to restructuring of the relationship between the two. It is here that the social movements can be anchored to the Bourdieusian notion of crisis and can be reimagined as the mechanism that can restructure the de-aligned relationship between habitus and field incorporating the changes facilitated through the mobilisation. The strain created by neoliberal changes in Kerala, from the destruction of agrarian sector, to the state withdrawal from welfare measures, (Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, 2015) and hunger deaths of *Adivasi* children surpassed the threshold level to erupt as an insurgent movement (Raman, 2002). However, the situational definitions, subjective perceptions, and an intersubjective understanding of the grievances indeed matter in this process of orchestrating the discontent as a full-fledged socio-political mobilisation. Here is where land is identified as the prime reason for the pathetic and exacerbating existence of *Adivasis* and for their layered and multipronged crisis.

6.2.1 Landlessness as the master frame

Framing land as the raison d'etre for all the issues among the *Adivasis*, Janu expounds:

> The landlessness was causing conflicts and quarrels among them. It may not be for big issues; when it rained one of the kids went to the other house and it became dirty. They would then quarrel on that.

Housing was another issue stemming from landlessness, as Janu narrates:

> In one house, not a properly built one, there were 6, 7, or even 12 families. There was no privacy for people. Any husband and wife could settle their conflicts if they could sit together and talk that through. When there were no possibilities for that, it could get worse by the psychological stress it generated. Then that would lead to further conflicts and when they got aggravated, people committed suicide.

Adivasis had no place to stay or to bury the dead, Janu concludes:

> The largest number of suicides, alcoholism and everything in fact emanates from this landlessness. … There was a colony in Batheri, called *Manikuzhy*, adjacent to the town. There even in the toilets people live; inside it. When people die, they don't have a place to bury them. They have to bury them inside their own house.

The myriad problems that arose among the *Adivasis*, which they normally assume as issues of their own making, have been presented with an underlying reason by the *Adivasi* activists: Landlessness. When landlessness was presented as a master frame (Snow and Benford, 1992), it re-construed everything that *Adivasis* have been experiencing in their everyday life. One of the reasons for this frame to reverberate in the deepest recesses of *Adivasis*' hearts, I argue, is the ingenious way it fitted in with the narratives of their daily exacerbations. In other words what happens here is frame alignment (Snow *et al.*, 1986); the frame aligned with the habitus of the *Adivasis*. That is in line with the argument of Husu (2013) that there is conceptual affinity between framing and habitus. The craft of framing is discernible in the way that C K Janu weaves diverse issues of *Adivasis* life from interpersonal struggles, neighbourhood problems, housing, alcoholism, suicide and even the issue of burial ground for the dead. Framing in this sense does a crucial subversive act for the actors of social mobilisation, it externalises the causes of their internal struggles. Furthermore, it provides a space for building up an intersubjectively acceptable narrative for resisting those external causes and for wilfully demanding of those in power to change them. As Snow *et al.* (1986, p.464) explains frames 'function to organize experience and guide action'. Here, I propose that the frame has a double bind; on the one hand it has clear affinities with the habitus as it resonates intimately with that generative principle and on the other hand it also works towards restructuring the layers of that habitus as it becomes embedded in the dynamics of the mobilisation within the field of contention.

The framing process within the discursive *Adivasi* field of contention is not a single, linear, unilateral process but rather is layered and multipronged. Different processes of framing and frame alignment such as extension, amplification, bridging and transformation (Snow *et al.*, 1986; Benford and Snow, 2000; Snow, 2012) are done with dexterity, precision and appeal. In the following section, I look at these different layers of the *Adivasi* crisis and the multipronged processes of framing among ordinary *Adivasis* who have been involved with the mobilisation.

6.2.2 Framing multi-layered crisis

Jayesh while reminiscing about the way he got involved in the movement, in embracing the frame the movement presented, also illustrated how aggravated was the crisis of *Adivasi* lives in Kerala. The crisis had grown to the level of waking them out of their slumber and accentuating their affective and cognitive shock:

> When I was thinking about our plights as *Adivasis*, suddenly a thought captured my mind that the time may not be long when our community may become extinct and our portraits may be exhibited in the museums for the future generations here to see and wonder. The time was 12.30 pm. It was at that very moment that C. K. Janu gave an address on the All India Radio uttering a statement during her speech: 'if the *Adivasis* continue to die of starvation and malnutrition it won't be long when they become museum pieces in this very land which was their own before anyone else's.' For me that was a critical moment. (Jayesh, *Adivasi*)

He is alluding to the crisis that the *Adivasis* have been under, indeed an existential crisis that threatens the survival of *Adivasis* and the dire need to act unprecedentedly. He resonates with the frame proposed by Janu and her team of *Adivasis* and joins the movement ever since. The metaphor of 'museum piece' captures the crisis, angst, lament and propels him into action, which is out of tune with his structured habitus often marked by submissive, diffident, withdrawn, inhibited traits. He thus extends the frame of land to incorporate this concern of existential crisis (Snow *et al.*, 1986). The existential crisis of *Adivasis* is matched by a material crisis that is precipitated by unemployment and hunger that plague *Adivasi* families lurching from the agrarian crisis and a diminished public distribution system. Due to unemployment and hunger, the *Adivasi* homes bereft of food illustrates the extent of the crisis, as Naresh says:

> As the paddy fields are becoming mechanised, the Adivasis are losing out on their jobs, and they don't have work here. If the free ration were not there, most of the Adivasi families would be in appalling levels of hunger and poverty. The Adivasis prefer to eat rice, but the state is distributing wheat through the public distribution system. If there is

> work, we could think of buying rice from the open market, but when we don't have a job we rely on the 'ration shop' for survival, and we eat wheat as well. But we don't say these things out. We keep it to ourselves and try to lead a quiet life as much as possible.
>
> (Naresh, *Adivasi*)

What is quite intriguing about this narrative is the final statement that *Adivasis,* in general, do not speak out in public about their sufferings of deprivation, hunger and poverty. That has been part of their habitus of being withdrawn, diffident and reticent in relation to the public. However, framing these issues around landlessness has given them a frontier to address their plight and thus bridge these issues. The crisis is also enmeshed in a kind of cultural 'impoverishment', loss of everything they had, as Kesavan laments. What is pertinent here is again the way it gets framed in the narrative, inextricably linked to the issue of land:

> What is left for the Adivasis now? All their traditions, rituals and culture, which were closely linked to land, have gone, and their situation is indeed deplorable. There is nothing left for them; they lost their land, their 'Chudala' (burial place), they don't have a place to bury their dead, they don't have a house to live in, their cultural uniqueness also got lost as a result of their interaction with the outside world. There is nothing left of it; all went away, far far away. (Kesavan, elderly *Adivasi*)

That lament about the cultural crisis goes to the heart of the mobilisation organised around the ethnic identity of *Adivasis* and something around which myriad dynamics revolves, as elaborated in chapter 5, within the *Adivasi* field of contention. It also challenges the argument that the agricultural labourers are merely using the indigenous identity as '*Adivasi* workers' (Steur, 2010) to claim their rights as this interpretation can miss out on this critical element or negate it as mere construction or invention. It is the ingenious linking of this cultural crisis to the fulcrum of landlessness that accelerates the embedding of this frame into the *Adivasi* consciousness. Hence the argument that amplify the frame can be summarised like this; landlessness has affected their rituals and practices of rituals, what they posit as making them *Adivasis*, their cultural existence is in jeopardy.

The landlessness frame also captures the erstwhile leftist frame into its canvas and accentuates its gravity, the process known as frame transformation (Snow *et al.*, 1986; Benford and Snow, 2000). The questions that were predominant in the articulation of class politics are not bulldozed over by the new frame but rather gets a renewed thrust when placed in it, a transformation of the frame. Naresh's words explodes with the pain of the inability to use their historically acquired know-how for themselves and their progenies, of being forced to sell their labour to the benefit of others

while remaining at the margins of their 'sweat turning gold for others to reap'. This was the narrative central to the class politics that communist movement foregrounded and on which it built its parliamentary party base in the history of Kerala, and which in turn became disenfranchising for the marginalized communities like *Adivasis* to exercise their agency (Devika, 2010). What we see here is the recasting of the same narrative onto a different frame for people to struggle for those sets of resources along with all that the master frame encompasses. Naresh articulates class politics and landlessness in the following manner:

> For the *Paniya* or *Kattunaikka* communities, it's not that they do not know how to cultivate because in most of the fields the workers are Adivasis. Adivasis are the ones who till the land, wrestle with it and produce food. We are the ones who educate others about agriculture, and our memories are replete with the knowledge of how we could cultivate sensibly and organically. But with all these knowledge, we don't have our property to do agriculture; we have to work for someone else all through our lives. Though we say that we live in this area, we have to live as landless people, without ever owning the property we cultivate.

Here Naresh is trying to graft his notions that echo class politics to the master frame of landlessness. But this does not mean that this was agrarian workers merely using an *Adivasi* identity to claim land as Steur (2015a) has portrayed; the complexity of the groups that make *Adivasi* community is not collapsible to agrarian labourers. Secondly, the benefits that are accrued through the struggles are not limited to the agrarian labourers among the *Adivasis* but goes to the wider *Adivasi* community. The concerns that are framed in the question of landlessness is not reducible to class politics of agrarian workers union; but also include question of their culture, rituals, tradition and their survival as a community demonstrated in the quotes above.

6.2.3 Invoking the injustice frame

This contemporary crisis is ingeniously linked to the *Adivasis'* long history of struggle with land and thereby providing the master frame with a historical justification and endurance. The collusion of modernity, state and migrant settlers rendered the *Adivasis* landless and the memories of this historical injustice of dispossession is inflamed with this frame. The injustice frame that Gamson (2013) proposes not only uncovers the injustice but also attributes that injustice to a targetable causal agent. The post-war internal migration in Kerala has been detrimental to communities such as *Adivasis,* who have their stories of land alienation linked to upsurge of migrants to their habitat. The never-implemented, constitution-ascended Restoration of Alienated *Adivasi* Land Act 1975 (Bijoy, 1999) is illustrative of the way *Adivasis* have lost their

land in the hands of migrant settlers. This is a historical concern that indigenous people around the world echoes in their own stories of dispossession and expulsion from their habitats (Patrick, 2004; Curran, 2007; Alden and Anseeuw, 2009; Vermeylen, 2009; Rius, 2012; Kidman, 2016). However, the framing of landlessness, while predicating on the historical injustice in the processes of land alienation and dispossession, evokes the memories of antagonism with the migrant settlers but does not take that animosity forward. Rather it carefully targets the state which stood behind these injustices. It was there the potential of *Adivasi* land struggle emerged and expanded. As Balachandran explains, *Adivasis* lost their land in the process of state initiated land reform and at the hands of the migrant settlers as they did not have documents to prove their ownership and colonies developed as a consequence of land reform

> Through land reforms, it was *Adivasis* who lost most of their land. What happened with such a colonial like change here was that *Adivasis* and *Dalits* were relegated to half cent, one cent, two cents and five cents of land in the colonies. Why should we only have to live in colonies? But for others, for an individual family, had the right to keep up to 15 acres of land. For *Adivasis* and *Dalits* it was reduced to tenant rights.
>
> (Balachandran, *Adivasi* activist)

Here it comes to the crux of the crisis the *Adivasis* are experiencing. Their current life in the colonies is brimming with the problems that are outlined earlier and the reason for the deplorable state of their lives in the colonies are now linked to historical dispossession and alienation of land and the responsibility is attributed to the state. The injustice frame is invoked here with a clear target that has the wherewithal to redress their grievances and reinstate justice for them. The framing thus whips up the feelings of anger and frustration about their current degraded life in colonies with the extremities of living in toilets and burying the dead within the house (see 6.2.1) and legitimises them on the grounds of historical injustice and posits the state as the natural target for directing their feelings. These discussions indicate how multiple frames can operate to reinforce each other, especially when it is profoundly enmeshed in the habitus and field of contention.

6.2.4 Extending the frame: Landlessness as a political question

The multi-layered crisis for *Adivasis*, framed as their landlessness, could create a break with their habitus, and afire them to mobilization. While the *Adivasi* contingent, along with their habitus interlocked to issues of land, provided the master frame of landlessness for the *Adivasi* mobilisation within the field of contention, the activists with a left-oriented habitus could extend this frame as a wider political question. This strategic extension (Benford and Snow, 2000) and

redeployment of the frame developed within the *Adivasi* field of contention to the wider socio-political field rehashed this as a crisis of Kerala itself and it became part of the discourse of Kerala Model of Development among the Kerala Scholars (Parayil and Sreekumar, 2003; Sreekumar and Parayil, 2006; Tharakan, 2006; Tharamangalam, 2006b, 2010). This provided further discursive opportunity and legitimacy for the *Adivasi* frame as well as the *Adivasi* field of contention, reinforcing their capital and acknowledging their movement habitus. Geethanandan argues that the land question of *Adivasis* needed a reframing as a political question:

> The land litigations had reached a stalemate, and the state limited them to a legal issue. The *Adivasi* organisations got entrapped in the lawsuits of land issues. They were raising the concern only of the alienated *Adivasi* land demanding its return to the *Adivasis* through legislation and legal interventions. That was its weakness. But I had been, at the time of the *Adivasi Dalit Samara Samiti* (ADSS) itself, discussing that it should be raised as a broader land question, a political question, and should be developed as a critique of Kerala Model of development.

The frame extension could thus bridge the *Adivasi* grievances with entrenched academic and political discourses on Kerala Model of development, facilitating unprecedented visibility and recognition for them and for their cause.

What I have tried to argue in this section is that it was not just the strain or crisis that provoked the *Adivasi* land struggle but framing of that multi-layered crisis as the question of landlessness. This master frame, a relatable concept for *Adivasis* because of its organic affinity with their habitus, could be and has been ingeniously extended to encompass all layers of crises that *Adivasis* experience – existential, material, and cultural - in their lives within its spectrum through processes of extension, amplification, bridging and transformation of frames. Besides that, the movement also sought to anchor an injustice frame of historical experience of land alienation and dispossession as an effective foothold to bolster the master frame. In that strategic framing process, the *Adivasis* positioned themselves against the state as the source of the injustices and therefore the target of their mobilisation, brushing aside migrant settlers from their field of contention. With that the movement also tried to raise the *Adivasi* land struggle as a political question challenging the entrenched disposition of the state and the public in relation to the *Adivasis*. Thus I argue that a crisis or strain crosses the threshold level of discontent into a mobilization predominantly with the footboard of the framing process. Strains stemming from multi-layered crisis have to be weaved together through a dexterous framing to weigh up to surpass the threshold to forge agents into unprecedented action and mobilization. Multiple frames can operate in a mutually reinforcing way if they are strategically interlocked to the

master frame. While the movement frame stems from the habitus of the actors, the mobilisation premised on that frame leads to a restructuring of that habitus into a movement habitus.

6.3 Land Occupy: key repertoire and movement practice

Having developed land question as the master frame that encompassed multi-layered crisis and multipronged strains of *Adivasi* grievances, the collective action around the frame gained momentum. As the *Adivasi* field of contention became enunciated through these struggles, their key repertoire that of 'land occupy' also evolved and became central to the field as well as the movement. Given the way Tilly developed the concept of repertoire, its utility in uncovering the relationship between the repertoire and the habitus and the mutually structuring relation of the two within the field of contention cannot be understated. Land occupy and its variants as a repertoire of struggle, has been developed, adopted and popularized by the *Adivasis* in Kerala and in many cases it has been proved effective, and even emulated by other struggles. But this analysis is not merely to expose the dynamics of land occupy as a repertoire of protest but to foreground in the line of Crossley (2002c) how it has contributed to the movement habitus that *Adivasis* developed as a result of their involvement in the land struggles.

6.3.1 Shift in repertoire

Up until the land occupy struggles came in, the predominant mode of *Adivasi* activism was in the legal field, and the agency of those efforts remained with non-*Adivasi* philanthropists, as is evident from Kesavan's narration:

> Dr Nalla Thampy was fighting the case of the Alienated *Adivasi* Land in the high court. During the trial, there was a reference in the court that there were representations for *Adivasis* but not *Adivasis* themselves coming forward with it. There were a group of lawyers in Ernakulam, who were keenly following the *Adivasis* issues in the court. So they contacted me and told that one of our organisations should join as petitioner in the case as the court is raising questions regarding that. As the working president of *Adivasi* Federation, I entered that Case as a petitioner.

The issue here is not merely of the agency of these legal struggles, which Kesavan seeks to partially ameliorate by being a co-petitioner at the behest of the court, but the entire mode of activism were implicated in endless judicial procedures and the bulwark of political indifference of the state (Bijoy, 1999). Recognizing the futility of these legal battles, as Sunny depicts below (see also 6.2.4), which have gone on unfertile for years, the *Adivasis* changed their arena of struggle and invented a new repertoire for their struggles.

> Those days the issue of alienated *Adivasi* land was quite live, in a sense, those were the dominant discussions. It was live from 1975. But its potential was minimal; to reclaim those land was not easy. That is where we bring a shift by arguing that the state should provide Land for the landless Adivasis. That is how we go into *Kudil Ketti Samaram*.
>
> (Sunny Kappikkadu)

The constitution of the *Adivasi* field of contention, as detailed in chapter 5, hinged upon the emergence of the repertoire of land occupy as the field itself was shaped in and through the ensuing struggles. Land occupy as the distinct constellation of strategies and tactics, as a movement practice, can be seen as emanating from the master frame of landlessness and therefore, in intimate affinity with the habitus of *Adivasis*. I argue here that it was a shift in the frame - from legal frame of alienated land to movement frame of land for all landless *Adivasis*- and repertoire – from judicial procedures to land occupy activism - that facilitated the land occupy struggle and the larger state-wide struggles.

6.3.2 The emergence of a new repertoire

C K Janu, who became the emblematic figure of *Adivasi* land occupy struggles in Kerala, states that it was their collective discussions on *Adivasi* issues that resulted in these two pivotal developments: these discussions converged in predicating landlessness as the prime reason behind all the ills that *Adivasis* experienced (framing see 6.2) and that can be overcome by occupying the land for them to live (invention of repertoire). This explicates the organic link between framing, repertoire and habitus as both frame and repertoire are intricately linked to embedded habitus. Moreover, repertoire as a movement practice is structured by the habitus and augmented by the forms of relevant capital of the actors and in turn restructures the habitus within the field of contention. This dynamic relations can be inferred from the *Adivasi* field of contention. Their first experiment was occupying land for the residents of Kolikkampadi colony (see 5.2.3. From C K Janu's delineation, the repertoire, the land occupy form of struggle emerged from their own discussions and deliberations on how to overcome the 'crisis' or 'strain' they found themselves in.):

> It was those discussions in the colonies that finally took us to land struggle. So we said, we did not need their free ration, instead these *Adivasis* should be given land for cultivation, with which they would live. If land were to be given, it would solve hunger deaths, would end interpersonal conflicts among them, they could sleep keeping their legs and body outstretched, they could keep their privacy and they could eventually live a decent and dignified life. When that would be done, there would be changes among

> them and problems such as anarchy would disappear from them automatically, rate of suicides will decline. It was answer to many such problems.

Once they found success with *Kolikkampadi* struggle (confer 5.2.3 and appendix B3) of occupying land for the residents of the 'colony', they develop it as a repertoire of struggle of the *Adivasis,* it thus gets embedded as their movement practice within the *Adivasi* field of contention. For Janu, the repertoire is premised on the *Adivasi* conception of land, which belongs to everyone and none has absolute right of ownership or possession over it. This culturalist notion of land could have made land occupy as natural and appealing for the *Adivasis* making it easy to persuade *Adivasis* to join the land occupy struggle. As Tilly (1978) suggested, it emerged from the *Adivasi* struggle, from their cultural conception of land and thus it became a preeminent weapon of struggle in their hands. In other words, it emerged from the habitus of the *Adivasis* in relation to their cultural and symbolic capital and within their field of contention as their movement practice and Janu here tries to drive that message home:

> For *Adivasis*, land was their mother and nature was their father, that was their faith. So, this land and nature were not owned by anyone. For all humans who are born on this earth have the right to take resources required for their sustenance. Nobody has the right or power to take the land as their own. That is true. Nobody takes this land with them when they die. They just use the resources of the land, as long as they live and then they die. At the end they return to this very land. Since they have this kind of organic relation with land, they don't desire for title deed of their land. … Will anyone agree to divide ones own father? Will anyone agree to share their mother? No, we will not. Father and mother belong to all of us and no one should divide them.

If not the culturalist notion, a culturalist discourse around land that embeds such a notion has been crucial to the repertoire. Given these reasons, land occupy caught the imagination of *Adivasis* as a way of expressing their political contention and of accruing cherished resources for a dignified life. This is not a proposition of the leadership, but *Adivasis* such as Jayan, echoes the same sentiments as Janu, and states that for *Adivasis*, land belongs to everyone:

> I have some land under Forest Rights Act and I work sincerely in that but I don't believe that its my personal property. According to the tribal concept, the land is of everybody's together.

As a repertoire of struggle, land occupy was an extension of *Adivasi* belief system, dispositions, and pre-reflexive propensities and this explains the reason why it got embedded and entrenched in the historic struggles of *Adivasis* as a set of movement practices. As it resonated with the

Adivasi habitus and accentuated the credibility of their framing, it could positively alter the sense of agency of the *Adivasis*.

6.3.3 The repertoire as movement practice

The sharpening of the repertoire, for Tilly, happens through a process of intersubjective sharing, collective action and relatively deliberate choice of this emergent cultural creation. Through these very processes, the repertoire become movement practice, as in the case of land occupy for *Adivasis*. C K Janu lists the struggles that were crucial in embedding this practice:

> We have done many struggles here in Wayanadu-- Kolikampadi, Ampukuthi, Cheengeri, Panavalli and so on[78]. … We had made many organizations before the Gothra Sabha. Adivasi Vikasana Pravarthaka Samiti, after that one Adivasi Ekopana Samiti, then we formed South Zone Adivasi Forum (SZAF) by incorporating adivasis from other states of South India. We have made many such structures.

These localised land occupy struggles (details in appendix) and organizational activism established the repertoire of land occupy as a movement practice. These practices in turn reconstituted the *Adivasi* field of contention and initiated the restructuring of the *Adivasi* habitus into a movement habitus, endowed with required capital and generating equivalent practices. Kesavan explains the Cheengeri and Panavally land occupy struggles and it is possible to deduce the way certain practices are getting embedded through this repertoire:

> CK Janu and we sat together in 1995 and thought this through. That was how we decided to begin the struggle, and we gathered the *Adivasis*, collected necessary materials and went to occupy Cheengeri Forest. We were there on that land for 14 days, and then police arrested us and jailed 400 of us. When we came out, we decided to occupy another land, the vested forest in Panavally near Therunelli Panchayat in March 1995 and cleared the land, built sheds to stay, and started organising our life there. At the same time, there was a relay fasting agitation going on at Cheengeri by some of our people who came out of jail with us. From Panavally we got arrested again, and this time some of us stayed out from getting arrested. We learned our lessons from Cheengeri experience because we were all in prison and there was no one there to bail us out. From the next day, we started protest march, rallies, and agitations against their arrest. When the police presented them to the court on the 14th day, we bailed them out. Two

[78] Confer appendix B3 for details

> days after their return, we entered the same land to occupy it. That stayed on, CK Janu got one acre there, I had half an acre which I gave to two Adivasi families freely and came away.

This detailed quote illustrates how the *Adivasis* plan, organize and occupy the land, build their sheds there and begin their life as a repertoire of their struggle. But the movement practices extend to acquiring the cultural and social capital to deal with police, judicial processes and to simultaneously assert their claim to the land through demonstrations, protest marches and fasting agitations as constellation of strategies and tactics. These are the ways in which they embed their know-how and predispositions which enable them to return to the sites of struggle despite oppositions and hurdles (further analysis in 6.5).

6.3.4 Repertoire as a transposable practice

As a learned and shared cultural creation, repertoire moves to other movements (Crossley, 2005) as an adaptable practice. This became visible as Land Occupy became a repertoire that got adopted and adapted by diverse groups in Kerala and there are stylistic homology in that movement practice. There were other attempts at the same time as Muthanga as the idea caught the imagination of *Adivasis* all over the state, as Raman states their story of land occupy struggle that began in 2003 and continues to this day in the Orange Farm of Nelliyampathi[79], Palakkadu:

> We occupied the land in 2003 when my uncle was still alive. We built huts (Kudilketti) and started living there. In fact, ours should have been another Muthanga story. But we had ample support from the Trade unions here, and they continue that support to this day.

Then *Dalit* groups took it up such as Chengara[80] (in 2007) and other land occupy struggles in Kerala got their inspiration from Muthanga. Santhosh, a *Dalit* activist, emphatically states:

> Chengara land occupy struggle was inspired by Muthanga. Though the left had championed land reforms, when they themselves had forgotten about it, AGMS came and had these historic movements.

These and other such land occupy struggles in Kerala shows that the repertoire has travelled across movements and have enabled them to adopt it as their practice of contention.

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[79] 158 *Adivasi* families who were plantation workers moved into an Orange farm, state owned land, in 2003 and the struggle is still going on as the *Adivasis* continue to live in the site of struggle.
[80] A *Dalit* land occupy movement that began in 2007 and continues as a struggle even now

This section (6.3) has discussed the shift, emergence, metamorphosis and 'transposability' of the repertoire of land occupy, which becomes central to the *Adivasi* mobilisation in Kerala. This analysis shows how land occupy as a repertoire emerged from the furnace of *Adivasi* struggle to grapple with land question. The *Adivasi* habitus tacitly supported or lent itself to the emergence of this repertoire of contention. Rather than weighing the merits and demerits of the available stock of repertoires, as rationalist choice theory would have had it, the *Adivasis* invented their own repertoire of contention, which is expressive of their habitus and linked to their movement frame. I argue, therefore, that this organic repertoire was pivotal in radicalizing the *Adivasi* habitus into a movement habitus. The emergence of repertoire or its selection is dependent not only on the habitus but also on the capitals – social, economic, cultural and symbolic – as they have to be sustainable with the capitals available for the movement by providing confidence and efficacy for the actors (Crossley, 2002c). This is particularly important because *Adivasis,* especially the poorer sub-communities of *Adivasis* who were central to the movement, lacked the economic and social capitals that were required for other forms of repertoires. This repertoire have then got metamorphosed and embedded as movement practices for the *Adivasi* mobilisation and as repertoires it has travelled to other movements because of the transposable nature of the repertoire. However, as I argued earlier, their cultural and symbolic capital pre-disposed and augmented the land occupy as a fitting repertoire for their mobilization. To conclude this section, I reiterate that the land occupy repertoire with its variants generates embedded movement practices that structures the *Adivasi* land struggles and in turn the movement habitus, within the field of contention.

6.4 Movement Habitus in Process: *Kudilkeltti Samaram*

The *Kudilketti Samaram* (hut-built agitation) (30 August to 17 October 2001) at the Secretariat in Thiruvananthapuram, became the first Kerala-wide *Adivasi* struggle with representatives from 31 sub-communities forming a grand council of elders and leaders (Raman, 2002) charting and giving ascent to the demands the movement put forward to the state. While the 48 days long struggle can be read as marking the emergence of *Adivasis* as a political community in Kerala, our analysis here seeks to show that it was a monumental milestone in the restructuring and embedding of the *Adivasi* movement habitus and political practices. While most of the land occupy struggles, until then, were within the vicinities of their own habitat, the *Kudilketti Samaram* brought *Adivasis* out of their enclaves to the epicentre of political activism in Kerala. I argue that drawing energy from the experiences of localised struggles of land occupy and trusting on the social and cultural capital they garnered from the same, the *Adivasis* stage-managed a huge protest at the Secretariat. It was an extension, a variant, of the repertoire they developed – land occupy – and

Kudilketti Samaram became occupy the Secretariat. The *Adivasis* occupied the streets of the Secretariat in the capital by building traditional huts as they used to do after occupying land. The repertoire of contention, again emerged spontaneously, and is illustrative of the way *Adivasi* habitus, which is in the process of restructuring, expressed itself. This is evident from what Sunny Kappikkadu remembers how the repertoire of *Kudilketti Samaram* emerged from the life of *Adivasis* themselves, as he narrates:

> There was a discussion with the government, after some days into the struggle, and that failed forcing us to expand the struggle. For that, we decided to build an awning in front of the secretariat and intensify the participation of the *Adivasis* and thus develop the struggle further. When people went around to gather materials for building the awning, they returned with coconut leaves and other materials suitable for building huts. It was not a premeditated decision and the hut was not built in accordance with the decision of the committee. The people who went around, they were *Adivasis* and *Dalits* who went in search of collecting the materials, the sheets and poles. They came back with coconut leaves and grass, the materials proper for building huts. When they started building huts with them, the entire dimension of the struggle changed. It was like that the whole struggle became a new genre known as *Kudilketti Samaram* -'hut--built agitation', - this happened one week after the commencement of the struggle.

Sunny talks here about the spontaneous selection of materials fitting for building huts, but what is pertinent here is that this unpremeditated decision was an expression of the restructuring movement habitus itself. *Adivasis* who have adopted the land occupy struggle as their repertoire spontaneously seek to build huts where they occupy, as a practice of their occupy struggles. So even when the location of their occupy movement changed, from a piece of land in the vicinity to the street of the secretariat, their practice found a continuity, their pre-reflexive predilection transposed that practice to a different avenue. The two assertions in the narrative are instructive in this regard; firstly hut-building was not 'in accordance with the decision of the committee' and secondly, the hut-building 'happened one week after the commencement of the struggle'. While the unpremeditated, pre-reflexive and spontaneous choice indicate the movement habitus in action, the gap in time testifies to the reproduction of land occupy practice. However, transposing a practice to another venue indicates agency of the *Adivasis* gaining their ground on the capital they galvanised on their march to this historic struggle. The reproduction of movement practices such as occupy and hut-building creates comfortable niche within an unfamiliar city for the *Adivasis* enabling them to creatively use their capitals to navigate the challenges:

> I was there for *Kudil ketti Samaram*. We sat there in the hut that we built. It felt like being in an occupied land, so I was comfortable there. They would sit in the *Kudil*, and I was wearing a skirt and a blouse, and I enjoyed wandering around in the town with the basket they gave me, requesting contributions from people and shops. They used to say that they were disgusted with us Adivasis hanging around. I would reply that they should tell the state to give us our land and we would go. When the police asked us something we answered in our language and they used to say that they did not understand our 'barbarous' language. Then we used to take sickle and chase them shouting in our language when they threatened to confiscate our rice and provisions, and they used to say these 'forest-dwellers' were dangerous unlike Janu's *Adivasis*.
>
> (Radhika, an elderly *Adivasi* woman)

The words of this old *Adivasi* woman exemplify how she negotiated the challenges of participating in a struggle in an unknown city and navigated a hostile environment with the strategic deployment of her resources such as her language and appearance. She felt like being in an occupied land and that is indicative of the movement habitus in process, which in way gave her an embedded disposition to strategically position herself within the field of struggle and face the public and confront the police. The master frame provided her with a clarity of purpose which animated her involvement in the struggle and surmount the disgust and hatred meted out to her. It is in and through these experiences that the *Adivasis*

6.5 *Muthanga* Struggle: Pedagogic action and Prefiguration

It was with all the capitals garnered and the practices embedded from the *Kudilketti Samaram* that the *Adivasis* went into the historic *Muthanga* Occupy Struggle (4 January to 19 February 2003)[81]. Though the movement sloughed off *Adivasi Dalit* Samara Samiti (ADSS) and turned into an all *Adivasi* outfit *Adivasi* Gothra Maha Sabha (AGMS) reconstituting the field of contention, as discussed in Chapter five, the capitals that it marshalled – social networks, media leverage, public support, the knowhow of political mobilisation, and symbolic capital such as the competencies for working together across sub-communities of *Adivasis* – stood in good stead for the movement as it ventured into the most daring occupy struggle in the history of *Adivasis* mobilisation in Kerala. However, the state was not benign this time; it mustered all its power to suppress and crush down the *Adivasi* articulation of freedom, autonomy and agency. The history of police brutality was marked with the death of an *Adivasi* in police firing and of a police man in alleged counter-

[81] Confer appendix B3 for details

attack from the *Adivasis*. But inhuman police repression provided hitherto unheard of visibility to the *Adivasi* mobilisation and socio-political articulation in Kerala. In this section I look at how the practices within an occupy struggle can be pre figurative and how that becomes a pedagogic action for inculcating the movement habitus, which is 'the internalisation of the principles of a cultural arbitrary capable of perpetuating itself after PA has ceased' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p.33).

Jayesh says that Muthanga Occupy struggle had longstanding influence on the participants:

> *Muthanga* struggle was a watershed in the *Adivasi* movement in Kerala. Those who were part of the *Muthanga* struggle have always been with AGMS ever since.

This claim of *Muthanga* struggle as having a longstanding and discernible impact on the participants is similar to McAdam's (1988) Freedom Summer Project study, which has shown that the participants of the project had an enduring influence in the latter part of their lives. Their biographies were coloured by their involvement in the Summer project. Jayesh's claim of enduring biographical impact of *Muthanga* struggle on its participants is indicative of the pedagogic work in the movement which has been instrumental in restructuring the *Adivasi* habitus. The pedagogic work operated through the way life in *Muthanga* became a profound pre-figurative moment in the *Adivasi* land struggle, an attempt to create a microcosm of the world they envision (Boggs, 1977; Yates, 2015; Baker, 2016). Practices such as communal living, creating alternative economic institutions, and exercising participatory democracy are known to be experiments in pre-figurative politics and *Adivasis* were doing precisely that in *Muthanga*. It was broadly a pre-figurative experiment on *Adivasi* self-rule, which in fact had been granted by the constitutions in PESA, in 1996. The origins of pre-figurative politics among the new left may explain how that formed part of the habitus of activists like Geethanandan, who has a radical left past that spilled into the land occupy movement of *Adivasis*. In Jayesh's exposition of the *Adivasis* life in *Muthanga* the elements of pre-figurative praxis is discernible. It is equally important to note that they were reinventing the cultural traits of *Adivasis* such as respecting other creatures. It was indeed the embodiment of the imaginary of the AGMS, anticipatory enactment of the envisioned future:

> I was working there as an administrative officer and I was entrusted with the responsibility of distributing rice and provisions for the families. I had to keep proper lists and records and I still have those with me at home. We implemented many programmes of reforming the community. For instance, there was local brewing of alcohol and sales, which used to corrupt the *Adivasis*. We selected 52 *gothra* police and they were entrusted with the task of destroying these local centres of alcohol. Day schools were set up for

> children when their parents went to work on the land. Another decision was to respect the animals, birds and other creatures in the forest and consider them as important part of our lives and not to harm them. Many *Adivasis*, during our *Oorusabha*[82] meetings, shared that they slept peacefully for the first time. They, the forest officials and other interested parties, wanted to create an atmosphere of terror by sending in elephants in order to threaten the *Adivasis* to vacate from the land. That day we decided that we shall not allow free entry for people from outside; even the police, journalists, and finally the forest officials. We deployed people on the entrance and I, myself, have denied entry to many, even to a forest official quite strongly. (Jayesh, *Adivasi*)

This narrative gives a glimpse of the ways in which the community life got organized within the *Muthanga* Occupy site of struggle. They developed systems of organizing the structures of distribution, systematized their approach to the nature and beings, engaged in reforming the debilitating habits such as alcoholism, facilitated learning centres for children, organized *Oorusabha* as a representative body, and orchestrated mechanisms for safeguarding their site of struggle by inventing community policing and restricting entries. In all these we could see an untrammelled attempt to prefigure a life they thought would be true to, meaningful for the *Adivasis* and would act as a symbolic space that prefigures and embodies their political vision. These provided an unparalleled platform of pedagogic work (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) for the *Adivasis* wherein they could restructure their dispositions, perceptions, and internalise the know-how, competencies and skill sets required for organizing their life as a mobilisational practice. Therefore, the restructuring of the habitus through this pedagogic action of prefiguring self-rule was on two inextricably interconnected fronts; one on the front of the movement and the other on the life of *Adivasis* as a community.

Owning the land in which they cultivate and enjoying the fruits of their own labour is central to the vision of *Adivasi* land struggles and *Muthanga* gave the *Adivasis* a foretaste of what it would be like. This pre-figurative experience in this sense accelerated the yearning of the people for their own land, resources and autonomous life. Moreover, it provided them with competencies and capital required for living together as a larger community of *Adivasis* that cuts across the isolationism of sub-communities. Devika worded the life in *Muthanga* as ‘we tried building up our

[82] There is a clear difference between *Oorusabha* and *Oorukoottam*. While *Oorusabha* is a representative council, *Oorukoottam* is the whole body of *Adivasis* living in an Ooru (village). The *Adivasi* life in Muthanga were organized with these *Adivasi* systems of administration. The whole groups were divided into 24 *Oorukoottangal* (village collectives) and from them a group of selected representative formed *Oorusabha* (village assembly) (Kjosavik, 2006).

kind of life there' and her phrase explicates concisely how they elaborately worked out their communitarian existence within the site of struggle. Having their rituals, cultivating at their will and enjoying the communal lives with evenings of drums, singing and dancing were elements of 'our kind of life' in *Muthanga*:

> Life there was good. We entered *Muthanga* and lived there more than a month. We cleared the land and put up our huts and lived there. We found traces of sacred groves there, indication of erstwhile *Adivasi* settlements, and we did our rituals there. We tried building up our kind of life there. We tried to cultivate things and in the evenings we would come together and used to have drums, dancing and singing as per each sub--communities. It was good and it was a good place. (Devika, *Adivasi* woman)

Locating their cultural practices within the pre-figurative experiment of communal living that cut across sub-communities provided them the experience and learning of a landed life organized around principles of *Adivasi* self-rule. This was indeed a pedagogic work that was intended to inculcate new elements into their habitus that was undergoing a process of restructuring. It was initiating them into a 'new game' within the *Adivasi* field of contention and instilling in them the rules, skills and practices of the game. By embodying in the present the vision of the future (Jeffrey and Dyson, 2016), the *Adivasis* were prefiguring an answer to their multi-layered crisis. This was interlaced, reinforced and augmented by the joy of owning the fruits of their labour, as Naresh says:

> In *Muthanga* there was a whole tract of land at our disposal for cultivation and we farmed there labouring collectively, even the sprouting of a small plant made us leap with joy because we were going to consume that fruit of our labour for the first time. I cannot explain the depth and nuance of that delight. We were landless people, and the opportunity to be owners of our property was an unprecedented emotional experience for most of us. Even though they say that our forefathers had the ownership, we did not have the experience of owning land. When we labour hard and produce the food and have that for ourselves, it's an unmatched bliss. (Naresh, *Adivasi*)

Besides the 'feel good' effect of the pre-figurative life in *Muthanga*, what matters here is the way it becomes site of pedagogic action in the Bourdieusian sense. The pre-figurative experiment in self-rule has provided the *Adivasis* with an opportunity for re-structuring their habitus through pedagogic action. The words such as 'reform', 'discipline', 'our kind of life' are connotative of the processes of change in the habitus. *Muthanga* occasioned the *Adivasis* to have a glimpse of what they are struggling for, and enabled *Adivasis* to prefigure the praxis of their landed communal life

and they became a pedagogic platform (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) for restructuring their habitus, generating new sets of practices and inculcating a fresh 'feel for the game'.

The police repression and terrorizing by the state as they brutally evicted the *Adivasis* from *Muthanga* (February 19, 2003) made it a symbolic force that embedded the movement habitus even among *Adivasis* who were not part of the occupy struggle. In other words, *Muthanga* became an enormous symbolic capital for the *Adivasis* within their field of contention as well as within the larger political field, with support from activists at the state and national level pouring in and leaving the state in a defensive position (Bijoy and Raman, 2003; Raman, 2004, 2017). In Kanakamma's narration of her entry into the fray she details how *Muthanga* transformed her disposition facilitating her to confront the police and raise daring questions:

> After the police firing in *Muthanga*, there were live telecasting and discussions on the TV and reports in the newspapers. I got deeply moved by what happened in *Muthanga*, and I made a decision that day, that I would be with them. They tried to suppress Geethanandan and CK Janu in Wayanadu because they tried to mobilise *Adivasis* and endured those sufferings for them. I too am an *Adivasi* and what they suffered was for me as well. So when we came to know about the police firing, we organised a march to Kuttanpuzha police station. We went and told the police in the Station that if you come out of this, we would stone your head and break it. Your officers had fired at our *Adivasis* in Wayanadu and had murdered an *Adivasi*. But they argued that they had to do it because the *Adivasis* killed one policeman. I told them that we were demanding only for a piece of land for us to live and there were available properties in the hands of the State for distribution. So why the state could not give us the property and solve our problem, rather than suppressing our struggle and killing our people? I asked this question to them on that day. But since then it stayed with me.
>
> (Kanakamma, *Adivasi* woman)

As Kanakamma suggested in the narrative, though she lived in a far distant place from *Muthanga* and belonged to a completely different sub-community, it propelled her to empathise with the movement and to march to the police station nearby to challenge them and then be part of the struggle since then. *Muthanga* thus became the symbolic site for the *Adivasis* all over Kerala to be drawn to the cause of the mobilisation and to draw on the symbolic capital that it created. *Muthanga* came to represent all the aspirations of the *Adivasi* mobilisation and the unyielding power and agency of the *Adivasis* against the brutality of state repression. The symbolic value of *Muthanga* and its representational power is anchored on the discourses that it generated and the symbolic capital that it has assumed since then. The AGMS strategically embeds it by

commemorating February 19 as *Muthanga* day, remembering the martyrdom of Mr. Jogi at the memorial erected in his honour at the site of struggle.

I have argued in this section that the pre-figurative experiments in *Muthanga* occupy struggle became a pedagogic action for inculcating a movement habitus among the *Adivasis*. The attempts to prefigure *Adivasi* self-rule within the site of land occupy struggle provided an opportunity to enact an envisioned future in the here and now for the participants. As Bourdieu argues habitus can be practically transformed by changing the initial conditions of living and also by awakening consciousness (Bourdieu, 1990a) and *Muthanga* did both. The symbolic economy of *Muthanga* as a pedagogic agent transcended the actual site of struggle as a result of the widely televised and mediatized brutish eviction and police torture.

6.6 Consolidating Capitals: *Nilpu Samaram*

Adivasis returned to the state-wide struggle front at the secretariat after a decade in 2014 (from 9 July to 18 December) with a new repertoire *Nilpu Samaram* (standing agitation) which lasted for 162 days[83]. The gap between these episodes was not one of inactivity. There have been efforts on different levels to take the *Adivasi* struggle forward. There was an attempt to forge a political front with the collaboration of the *Dalit* organisations and other *Adivasi* caste organisations namely Rashtreeya Maha Sabha (RMS – Grand political alliance) and C K Janu contested a parliamentary election as its candidate. There were land occupy struggles such as Aralam Farm struggle where the *Adivasis* finally received 3200 acres of land from the state and which has now become the biggest resettlement of *Adivasis*. There were initiatives such as *Kaveri Patashala* for providing informal educational support to *Adivasi* children. Then there was the huge responsibility of carrying on with the court cases of *Muthanga*, which over the years got reduced from 14 to 2. Meanwhile the central government passed the Forest Rights Act 2006, which guaranteed the *Adivasis* with access and resource rights over forest. These were also years when Maoist insurgency among *Adivasis* became strong in the Red Corridor that stretches from Andhra Pradesh to Nepal (Shah, 2006; Chakraborty, 2009; Shah, 2011, 2013a; Navlakha, 2015).

In this context the *Adivasis* returned to the frontier of politics in Kerala with an expressed desire to dialogue with the public and to negotiate with the state. The demands of the movement was clearly articulated in their flyer and the *Adivasis* started standing in front of the secretariat to raise

[83] Confer appendix B3 for details

their claims to the state and also to engage in conversation with the public. Engaging and educating the public was an articulated goal of the movement and the organisers believed that once the public is convinced, they will join the *Adivasis* to get their rights established by the state. In other words, the strategy was to shore up and consolidate their social, cultural and symbolic capitals so that they can convert them into mounting political pressure on the state to address their claim-making. Having gone through the process of restructuring the *Adivasi* habitus through the socio-political struggles, it was now vital to consolidate their social, cultural and symbolic capitals in relation to the public. The social capital such as networks, public support, media leverage, cultural capital such as the knowledge of the movement/political processes, awareness about their rights, skills in political engagement and symbolic capital such as confidence, courage and esteem especially with regard to themselves and their identity have been crucial in this journey for the *Adivasis*. This struggle they saw as an opportunity for consolidating that and in the process in embedding their movement habitus further. This becomes another key movement practice which restructures the dispositions (habitus) and the actor's position in the field (Bourdieu, 1990b, 1991) of contention.

The preparation of the mobilisation commenced with a '*Vasthutha Mission Yaathra*' (Fact finding Journey) by a *Janakeeya Samithi* (the people's committee) that visited randomly selected hamlets in various enclaves of *Adivasi* habitats all over Kerala and assessed the situation. Manoj states:

> I had an opportunity to go to the majority of *Adivasi* settlements as a part of *Janakeeya Samithi* led by BRP Bhaskar. That is where I witnessed the glimpse of reality first hand. … I was convinced that their politics should be addressed.
>
> (Manoj, social activist)

The experience of Manoj, is illustrative of the kind of awareness that they wanted the public to grow into through their campaign and struggle and thus shore up their social capital. So the movement practice of generating, circulating and embedding a discourse on *Adivasi* sociality and their rights, with a view to influence the public, remained at the forefront of this *Adivasi* standing agitation. The *Adivasis* felt they had greater involvement in the organisation of the struggle, attesting to their movement habitus in action. *Adivasis* themselves assess that they have grown and have learned to undertake some of the mobilising responsibilities on their own and this is illustrative of the restructured habitus of *Adivasis* working in tandem with the related symbolic and cultural capital and movement practices within the field of contention. Rajeev states:

> By the time of *Nilpu Samaram* we had made considerable progress. I had become a full time worker of the movement by then. For *Nilpu Samaram* we looked after everything. We used to take people from here.
>
> (Rajeev, *Adivasi* activist)

Over the years the *Adivasis* have built themselves up on the movement habitus they acquired through their struggles endowing them with the know-how, competencies, dispositions and 'feel for the game' of mobilisation. Spawning from their restructured movement habitus, many were involved in local resistance, struggles and protests. In the focus group discussion the participants remembered their own experience of participation with great pride and enthusiasm. The account also shows that the length and intensity of participation from the *Adivasis* varied in those 162 days of struggle:

> Balan: I remember the one week we were there at the Secretariat in Thiruvananthapuram for the *Nilpu Samaram*.
> Anita: It was a great experience. I was there for three months. I had to come back because the children had to go to school.
> Surendran: I was there from the beginning to the end. We had 46 days of agitation in Kannur prior to that and then proceeded to Thiruvananthapuram.

Though the level of participation varied from individual to individual, their collective sense of political articulation remained vibrant in their sharing of memories of their experience as was evident in the animated discussions in the FGD. Moreover, as elucidations in the previous sections attest, the *Adivasis* went for *Nilpu Samaram* not as amateurs to their first performance but as experienced participants with their skill-sets, know-how, competencies, and propensities crystallized in their movement habitus that aligns capitals to its advantage and generates practices that furthers their position within the field of contention.

A glimpse into the experience of the organisers would reveal how galvanising and leveraging social and symbolic capitals became central to this struggle as they tried to strategically reposition the *Adivasis* within the field of contention. Abraham's words also reveal that the *Adivasis* have learned from their failures of the past and tried to circumvent some of those challenges, indicating the reflexive quality of their movement habitus:

> We organised a Support Group for the Agitation (*Samara Sahaya Samiti*) at Thiruvananthapuram. Being the place where the secretariat is located, there were many leaders of various agitations, and we called for a meeting of all of them. We also made sure that we had the support of all the religious leaders in the capital by meeting all of

> them individually. Moreover, we were vigilant to check the propensities of the state to portray and frame it as supported by extremist forces as they usually do, and we could see that people from all walks of life were joining hands with it as days went. Initially, it took some time to draw public attention and support, but once the celebrities from film industry chipped in, it was a turning point. From then on, we had youngsters pouring in from all over. (Abraham, social activist)

The strategic intervention of the movement to shore up the social and symbolic capital of the *Adivasi* field of contention within this wider socio-political field by negotiating with key actors and representatives of dominant sections and communities was crucial not only for the success of the movement but also for embedding the restructure habitus. This movement practice had its restructuring effect on habitus and capitals. Focusing on the consolidation and bolstering of the social and symbolic capital through an engagement with the public was going to be time-taking. However, the *Adivasis* were convinced that they could convert the social and symbolic capital into political pressure on the state and thus attain their mobilisational goals. Their efforts paid off as their movement galvanized a support base not only at the state and national level but also at the international level. It was in *Nilpu Samaram* that the movement went global as the support for the movement poured from the diaspora of all corners of the earth. Social Media[84] (Geethanandan, 2015) started having its impact on the movement and Manoj has this to say:

> For the first time, the mainstream acknowledged such a movement. The persons who generally have no empathy towards another individual too came in to express their support to the movement. That was a big victory. First time after years, the mainstream of Kerala discussed and debated on a land struggle. Who are the owners of these resources, the land? The support flowed on such massive scales from all corners. Indian Campuses took that up - TISS, JNU, Hyderabad Central University and others. Students organised *Nilpu Samaram* on those campuses. Then supporters from Middle East countries, Europe, Africa and America also had their show of solidarity. They sent in pictures of their local *Nilpu Samaram* around the world and that generated enormous momentum. (Manoj, Social Activist)

The social capital of the *Adivasi* land struggle increased by commanding support at wider levels such as in academia, film industry, and diaspora. This expansion of the support network beyond the confines of *Dalit* or other marginalised communities have been a reinforcing dynamic for the

[84] In a later interview given to Keraleeyam (2015, p.42-46) Geethanandan explains how social media became a platform that consolidated the social capital for *Adivasis* when mainstream media almost ignored the struggle.

restructured habitus and further embedded that movement practice. The discussions and dialogue on *Adivasi* rights profoundly entrenched their own cultural capital as well. There have been criticisms of the movement in comparison to the first *Kudil Ketti Samaram* at the secretariat. Some of the critique was geared to the decline in participation from *Adivasis,* and others pointed to the social composition of the support base of the movement. As Sunny Kappikkadu details it in his words:

> *Adivasis* were there protesting at the secretariat and their participation was not wide and there was a middle class who supported the movement, such as students. But marginal sections such as Dalits, or fisher folks had not gone there but on the other hand it was the middle class that took up that cause and celebrated it. That had to be examined.

While it is sociologically important to examine the social composition of the support that the *Adivasi Nilpu Samaram* garnered, the critique itself vindicates the key theme and practice of the mobilisation. When the critique claims that the middle class supported and celebrated the agitation, it nonetheless substantiates that the social and symbolic capital of the *Adivasi* mobilisation were gaining ground through the movement practice of engaging the public. In Jithin's words

> The public of Kerala, those who were wrecking Western Ghats, the religious minorities, the citizenship right activists, they understood the politics. They also realized that they need to be part of this political process now and that was visible in *Nilpu Samaram*. Though the struggle was waged by *Adivasis* but this recognition of the public is the reason for the wider acceptance it received. (Jithin, *Adivasi*)

A restructured *Adivasi* habitus required a concomitant shifts in its capitals so as to fortify its position within the field of contention (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu, 1998a; Thomson, 2014) so that they can ensure the establishing of their rights within the wider socio-political field. Abraham, one of key organizing support of *Nilpu Samaram* shares the exigencies of the dynamics of the movement while underscoring the process of consolidating capitals through its key movement practice of engaging with the public:

> We need to see two things of *Nilpu Samaram*. Its primary motto was to have a dialogue with the public, while raising demands to the state because we had to educate the people on the rights and plights of the *Adivasis* in Kerala. As we had prioritised the dialogue with the public over the direct coercing of the state, we had our anxiety escalating as the agitation hit 60 days, 70, 80, 90, and then 100 days. However the

> *Adivasi* leadership was calm. Educating the Public, conscientising them about PESA or FRA would be a lengthy time-taking process. But it was important for us to get the public to understand the need to get the *Adivasi* rights established so that the public could ensure it. (Abraham, Social activist)

As the *Nilpu Samaram* ended with another signing of contract with the state, *Adivasis* firmed up their political clout not only with the state but also with the public by consolidating their capital and embedding the movement habitus. This galvanising of the social and symbolic capitals through an engaged public demanding that the state honours the rights of *Adivasis* enshrined in the constitutions and central government acts became a decisive turning point in taking the struggle to fruition. This movement practice had a reinforcing effect on the habitus in the field of contention. It should be emphasized that social media became an important mechanism of consolidating social capital through the movement practice of networking with publics globally in *Nilpu Samaram*.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has analytically examined the processes undergirding the restructuring of the *Adivasi* habitus into a movement habitus and spawning movement practices. As a 'structured and structuring structure' the habitus of the *Adivasis* acts as a generative principle for the movement frame – landlessness – and the repertoire – land occupy – and they both in turn, in a reciprocal relation within the spectrum of land struggles, structure that habitus into movement habitus. The dynamic framing process that interfaces and encapsulates multi-layered crisis and strains of *Adivasis,* shape the emergence and panning out of the land struggles in a structuring and generative relation to the habitus. Prefigurative experiments such as in *Muthanga* facilitates pedagogic work that inculcates and embeds the movement habitus and the emanating movement practices. I have argued that in *Nilpu Samaram*, the *Adivasis* strategically consolidated their social, cultural and symbolic capitals to convert them into political pressure upon the state to accrue their demands. This has reinforced the embedding of the habitus and its realigned relation to the *Adivasi* field of contention. These dynamic social processes, I would argue in the next chapter, has constructed the substratum on which the *Adivasis* reconstitute their subjectivity and political belonging reflexively.

Chapter 7 Political Subjectivity, Reflexivity and Belonging

7.1 Introduction

The *Adivasi* land struggles have facilitated the *Adivasis* to develop a movement habitus within *Adivasi* field of contention, which structures their practices and in turn becomes restructured by these practices. The changes that have been incorporated into their habitus, I argue, have effected significant changes to their subjectivity. The experiences that the *Adivasis* have garnered through their intensive involvements in the protracted mobilization for land have politicized their subjectivity and have radically altered their political belonging. As Farrugia (2013b) puts it "every subject is habitus", suggesting that the actor constitutes subjectivity on the habitus which is inextricably interlinked to the forms of capital and the field. Bourdieu cements this relation when he says that habitus is "socialized subjectivity" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.127). It is on this embedded movement habitus that the *Adivasis* reconstitute their subjectivity reflexively within the historical context of their socio-political struggles for land. This chapter analyses the multifarious layers of this subjectivity and how this reconstituted subjectivity is manifesting itself in variegated ways in the everyday lives of *Adivasis*.

In the theoretical permutation of theories of reflexivity (Giddens, 1991, 1992; Beck *et al.*, 1994) and the Bourdieusian notions of habitus (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu, 2011), scholars (Sweetman, 2003; Farrugia, 2013b; Decoteau, 2015; Bunn, 2017) have argued in diverse ways that it is possible for reflexive dispositions to become embedded. As Ibrahim (2016) has argued the conscious engagement of the activists with the social and political endow them with the capacity for reflexivity. Crossley (2002a, 2002b) argues that unlike the Bourdieusian notions, reflexive schemas of self-inspection and reflection forms part of the habitus of the movement actors. Besides that, acquiring a reflexive disposition is pertinent in being a social agent and the politicized reflexivity is an extension of this in a social movement. Within the Bourdieusian scheme the theoretical possibility for such an embedding of reflexivity emerges from the 'crisis' that de-aligns and disrupts the interlinkages between habitus and field. The crisis that spawned the framing of land struggles (chapter 6), and the array of socio-political mobilisations for land and resources have been restructuring the habitus of *Adivasis* and the field of their contention. When *Adivasis* reconstitute their subjectivity reflexively on this movement habitus there are multifarious transitions that are at work. This chapter examines how the *Adivasis* have reconstituted their political subjectivity reflexively and how they are re-

engaging the political in the wake of the shifts in movement habitus and thereby assert their political belonging.

7.2 Movement habitus embedding struggle as central to Adivasi subjectivity

Socio-political struggles of the *Adivasis*, as I have argued, have restructured and re-embedded the *Adivasi* habitus into a movement habitus, which has a predisposition and propensity for mobilisation and creates an orientation for action. As the movement habitus 'embodies the social' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) as sedimented personal history of the protracted agitations, what marks this habitus is the centrality of the proposition that protest and struggles are the only path for *Adivasis* to tread out of their misery. In the attempt to analyse and interrogate the anchoring link between the socio-political struggles and the lived subjectivity of *Adivasis,* or the movement habitus, what stands out is this embedded assertion that the socio-political struggles are the only way forward for the *Adivasis*. This section interrogates how the embedded notion that accords centrality to political struggle becomes the organizing principle that structures the movement habitus and reconstitutes their subjectivity.

7.2.1 Embedding struggle as a political practice

The *Adivasi* land struggles have become a beacon of hope for them by shifting the terrain of political practice and discourse as these struggles have proved that political patronage is redundant and collective action can bring in desired changes, albeit with constraints. Geethanandan eloquently articulates this dimension of hope constructed through the arduous and assiduous materialisation of the alternative political imaginary – the path of collective action as a democratic practice for the marginalised sections:

> In this century, in Kerala, *Adivasi* land struggles have given high hopes for many struggle-oriented people. The hope that humans can survive here, and these struggles are and can be an alternative means of expressing their aspirations and engaging in dialogue with the state. The commonly held perception that problems can be solved only through political patronage, through an MLA[85] who has recourse to the legislative assembly, was broken and in turn established that struggle is a democratic way of getting your rights established, of holding the state accountable. This became a vital political eye-opener

[85] Democratically elected representative at the devolved state (province) legislative assembly (Member of Legislative Assembly)

> for them. These struggles have proved that the aspirations of the people from varied domains of civil society can be efficaciously expressed through struggles, a consensus can be arrived at, and, to a large extent better than the political parties, the governing policy-making can be influenced and desired results can be derived. It is AGMS that has enforced the largest distribution of land to the landless in Kerala.

What is being underscored in Geethanandan's remark, though couched within an assertion of AGMS' achievement, is the hope that these mobilisations have instilled among various quarters of the marginalized groups and activists. The hope is constructed around the democratic processes of claim-making through intensive collective action, which has become the anchorage of *Adivasi* subjectivity. This realisation that the *Adivasis* can establish their political rights and hold the state accountable through the democratic means of socio-political struggles have been decisive in the shaping of their movement habitus as it has become an embedded pre-reflexive and orienting notion generating the practices of mobilisation. These political practices of collective action have, in turn, restructured the habitus within the *Adivasi* field of contention embedding the primacy of mobilisation as a political practice of democratic claim making, allowing it to be an organizing principle of the lived *Adivasi* subjectivity. C K Janu echoes the same perception and states that no torture can deter *Adivasis* from mobilising:

> They had tortured us severely, tortured as though we would never come back. But people cannot but come back. There should be liberation from this state of affairs. For that there is no other way than to struggle, to agitate.

This dire willingness to engage in the political practice of collective struggles despite the brutal torture unleashed on the *Adivasis* by the state marks their movement habitus and disposes them to the democratic resistance and mobilisation. This awareness and acceptance of the narrative that pitches the centrality of the socio-political struggles as a key practice by being part of the struggles and accruing the relevant capitals underwrites the restructuring of the movement habitus and its relation to the field of contention which collectively form the substratum of their subjectivity. Sreejith, an activist publisher, reflects the change that has happened among the *Adivasis* over the years of struggle which he has picked up from his interactions and involvements with them:

> The difference that can be sensed from the time of *Kudilketti Samaram* to *Nilpu Samaram* is the pervasive awareness that decisions only can be enforced through movements.

Within the embedded movement habitus this goes deeper than an awareness to a propensity, a disposition, and a pre-reflexive notion for the *Adivasis* that orients them and propels them to think, feel and act in ways that are in tandem with it, marking the reconstituted *Adivasi* subjectivity. Therefore, it is not just the claims of the leadership or of the observers, but the ordinary *Adivasis* mirror them in their own reflective articulations as manifest expressions of their subjectivity. Ramesh, an *Adivasi* who has been part of these struggles, says that the *Adivasis* have gone into the struggle despite their fears and on the realisation that they have no other way than to struggle for their rights:

> Adivasis used to be afraid of going to agitations. We had a great fear of the police, forest officers or bureaucrats, and whenever we saw them, we used to withdraw and retreat. But with our participation in these struggles and with AGMS, we have learned a lot about the political processes, and we got rid of our internal fear. Adivasis have understood that we, ourselves, should struggle and agitate for our rights in the years ahead and that is the only way forward for us.

Ramesh's experience and his reflection on that experience is emblematic of the consciousness that have emerged through their land struggles and it informs and structures their habitus and subjectivity that in turn generates practices and sustains that consciousness. When he says that they have learned about the political processes and overcome their fear and inhibitions through their involvements in those struggles, he is explicating their accrued social, cultural and symbolic capital – networking processes, know-how of mobilisation, and the inner resources required for overcoming fear or inhibitions - and embedded movement habitus - the dispositions, competencies, and associated cognitive processes which have become a propensity in shaping the decisions and actions of the subject. He emphasises his interiorised realization that has become a marker of their embedded subjectivity, which is that the *Adivasis* themselves should struggle and agitate for their rights in the years ahead and that he sees as the seminal political practice. What marks this view of the struggle is that it has been structured in the habitus and embedded in their subjectivity and that could be the reason that they are predisposed to align with the struggle and express their willingness to join the protest movements as their principal political practice.

7.2.2 Dispositions to re-wage the struggles

This embedded notion of mobilisation as their salvaging political practice does not preclude the disappointments of its futility in terms of some desired results. However, many of the *Adivasis* are willing to re-wage those struggles without being completely disillusioned, disenfranchised and disheartened in the field of contention. This willingness and disposition are indicative of the

embedded movement habitus and subjectivity. What they deem as pivotal is that the public and the state acknowledge that the *Adivasi* claims are warranted, as Jayan, *Adivasi* says:

> Kerala Society had made that agreement and three governments have come and gone and nothing happened. We had many more struggles and interventions, we went to Delhi three times, and did other tactics too. But nothing worked out. There was no other way other than struggle. We wanted to establish it once more before the public that the *Adivasi* rights claim is justified and non-contestable. But still we may have to wait again for some time. The fact that the state government sent a recommendation to the central government on scheduling our area[86], is not a simple achievement.

Jayan is highlighting the need for a concomitant transformation in the approach of the public and the state in relation to the *Adivasis* and their rights which he seem to believe can be a solid social and symbolic capital in the socio-political field. While acknowledging the limitations, they emphatically foreground the achievements, as Jayan does about the recommendation, which act as reinforcement to their habitus and subjectivity that prompt them to re-wage the struggles. *Adivasis'* acquired expertise on the craft of socio-political mobilisation and 'feel for the game' accelerates a determined engagement in the struggles to ensure that their rightful demands are accrued even if they have to wage the same war again and again. These disposition and determination are entrenched within their subjectivity through their protracted political practice of resistance and struggle.

The *Adivasi* experience of the socio-political struggle is complicated as the case of Rajeev here. The land he lives in is the success story of the struggle but the struggles to end pineapple cultivation that entice elephants to frequent the farm threatening his life in the land have been futile. So is the struggle to oust an illegal shop located within the *Adivasi* land. So the picture is quite complex and layered, however, they know that their only resource is to struggle, protest, mobilise and resist. The ordinary *Adivasis* experience the lack of change despite their struggles, as Rajeev from Aralam Farm shares his experience:

> As long as there are pineapples the elephants won't go away from here. We had agitations in the district level at Kannur Collectorate, at state level at the secretariat in Thiruvananthapuram. They are not keeping their words. When we had the agitation, they said that they would stop this cultivation within one year as the contract with the

[86] Including the *Adivasi* resettlement areas under 5th schedule of the constitution provides special administrative powers to the Governor, rather than the state government. It makes land transfers from *Adivasis* legally impossible and provides opportunities for the *Adivasis* to constitute a Tribal Advisory Council (TAC) to monitor the functioning of these areas.

> private parties would end then. Now it is the 3rd year and the pineapples are still there and the works are going on… Then there was a struggle for closing down the shop, which was running on the farm without proper permission. That went on for one month almost and ended with an agreement where they requested time for closing down the shop and taking it out of the farm. But even after the time mentioned in the agreement, they have not closed it nor have they vacated the farm.

What is pertinent to this analysis is the way in which Rajeev and his collective of *Adivasis* problematize and politicise issues such as pineapple cultivation, or illegal shop and are willing to challenge them through mobilisation at various fronts and levels. That exemplifies the movement habitus in operation through movement practices, which in turn restructure their habitus and their subjectivity. This lack of visible results and material changes can be deterrent to many *Adivasis* but the movement habitus that has evolved through their socio-political struggles dispose and sustain their subjectivity in the path of resistance and mobilisation and instil hopes against hope. As Prasad, an *Adivasi* on Aralam Farm, would put it:

> We do struggles and get into an agreement with the state but beyond that, AGMS has its own limits in transcending those systemic problems of the state. We do the struggles, the state agrees to our demands and nothing more comes out of it and that's our dilemma now. Despite that, mobilisation is the only way for us.

There is perceivable desperation prevalent in the field but it is also tinged with their belief in the collective power of mobilisation. The stylistic homology across groups is manifestly visible on this, and this evidences the embedded notion in the movement habitus.

7.2.3 Strength of protest in place of external saviours

The sense of their agency in the process of constructing the topography and charting the cartography of their collective existence and destiny has become the epicentre of their subjectivity. Kanakam, an *Adivasi* woman, reminisces how she had to wait for a Panchayat Member who said that he would be there at the police station to help her when she had to be at the station for registering a complaint against the goons who beat up her brother and the member never showed up:

> The police officer asked where the Panchayat member was and we said that he had told us that he would come sometime later. So he asked us whether we understood how the politicians behave and after all the support we give them, they turn their back to us

> when such an atrocity took place in his ward. For me, that was another experience that underlined the fact that there would be no politicians to help us *Adivasis* when we had a problem. *Adivasis* have to stand up for ourselves, and we need to look after ourselves because we will not have any saviours from outside. We can rely only on our resistance, on the strength of our protest.

There may have been no dearth of experiences such as Kanakam's for the *Adivasis,* but what makes it different is the way the *Adivasis* now grapple with those experience and respond to them, which is a graphic illustration of their movement habitus and subjectivity. This disillusion, discontent and distrust of the established practices of political actors have given the *Adivasis* ample reason to believe that their history is in their own hands and no one else will surrogate their war for them. These experiences embed the realisation that they have to, and can represent themselves, voice their concerns on their own and be there for themselves relying on the cultural and symbolic capital they have acquired through their mobilisation. These realizations engender, shape and structure the subjectivity of the *Adivasis.* The need for resistance and the strength of protest becomes deeply ingrained in the *Adivasi* habitus and shapes their subjectivity; this movement habitus symbolically replace the hope for any saviours. As the product and producer of the social structure and as its embodied-performative aspect, the habitus for Bourdieu (1977) is the reservoir of perceptions, dispositions, pre-reflexive orientations of the subject. The movement habitus in this sense embeds these ways of perceiving and disposing the *Adivasis* to problematize and politicize their everyday experiences to the tune of 'resistance and strength of protest'. I argue from the above analysis that these dynamic processes of embedding the notion of the indispensability and imperative of struggle, dispositions to re-wage many of those excruciating agitations and the reinforcing reliance on the strength of protest, shape the *Adivasi* subjectivity.

7.3 Reflexive reconstitution of *Adivasi* subjectivity

The restructuring of *Adivasi* habitus into a movement habitus through their protracted involvements in the socio-political struggles for land has its impact on their subject positions. I argue in this section that the *Adivasis* have been reconstituting and reconstructing a subjectivity in tandem with the habitus and capitals within the field of contention. Foucault (1982) maintains that subject positions or lived subjectivities are constituted by the terms made available by the discursive regimes. Within the discursive terrain, here the *Adivasi* field of contention, they restructure their habitus, acquire and shore up capitals, generate practices (see Chapter 6) and reconstitute their subject position and in turn alter the discursive field itself as elucidated in Chapter 5. The multi-layered crisis that engendered the land struggles de-aligning the field and the habitus have created that room for reconstituting a reflexive subjectivity among the *Adivasis*.

The pedagogic atmosphere within the socio-political mobilisation catalysed the inculcation and embedding of that reflexivity within the pre-reflexive schemata of the movement habitus upon which the *Adivasis* have reconstituted their subjectivity. The layers of this subjectivity requires unpacking for a sociological insight into the dynamic processes which have facilitated the restructuring of their habitus, capital and field and reconstituting of their subjectivity. This section analyses the multifarious dimensions of this process of reconstituting *Adivasi* subjectivity and explores its various layers in various practices and sites of transitions.

7.3.1 Identity as the site of reflexive reconstitution

Foucault argues that subjectivity is constituted reflexively within the practices of the self in history, which can be deemed as engaging with a process of identity work. The constitution of subjectivity, for him, involves reconfiguring of one's relation to the self through practices. As the *Adivasis* have been reconstituting their subjectivity within the historical context of their mobilisation for land, they reconfigure their habitus to movement habitus and that then lead to a reworking of their relation to the self. This in a way becomes part of the project of identity work on self. C K Janu argues that the fundamental, tectonic transition has happened at the level of appreciating and accepting the identity of *Adivasi* and that forms the bedrock of the process of reconstituting subjectivity.

> Those who had enough to eat four meals a day were finding it a shame to be known as *Adivasis*. Now everyone accepts that s/he is an *Adivasi*. That I should say is the result of our struggles, our organization, our fighting. That has helped to say with dignity that I am an *Adivasi*, to feel that it is not in any way bad to be an *Adivasi*.

The subjectivity of shame, embarrassment and inhibition that many have felt within a stigmatizing culture of Kerala, is in transition as *Adivasis* reconfigure their relation to self in the context of land struggles and movement practices. As C K Janu narrates, the communities or individuals who benefited from the reservation policies of the state because they had the resources to capitalise those opportunities, constituted an upper class among the *Adivasis* and were mostly self-contained. In many cases they preferred to park their identity aside while interacting with the public for fear of the deriding stigma that *Adivasi* identity bestowed on them in the socio-cultural milieu of Kerala. But C K Janu argues that such a deriding, stigmatizing category, *Adivasi*, has become a source of pride and esteem and I argue that this is facilitating a fresh relation to the self that allows reconstitution of the subjectivity of *Adivasis*. This reversal could only come through the socio-political struggles which established an unapologetic ethnic identity of *Adivasis.* The cultural and symbolic capital that the mobilisations accrued have infused the subjectivity of

Adivasis with a moral worth and symbolic economy (Farrugia, 2015). Jayan, an *Adivasi,* testifies to this from his own experience of negotiating his identity and reconstituting subjectivity reflexively:

> When there was an attempt to cover up hunger deaths saying that it was an unknown disease, CK Janu went there wearing her *Adivasi* dress and we read about it in the newspaper. That was the first time when I had identity crisis coming. Earlier I used to get stipend from the institution, study something and return home. Since I was comparatively farer in complexion, it was a cover, and people would hardly recognize me as an *Adivasi*. I used to walk around with general students and I was staying in the college hostel and that was also fine. There was no such problem from the place of my origin as I have never heard my relatives talking about themselves as *Adivasis*. So in that sense to be an *Adivasi* was a shame and it was when I studied here in the St. Joseph's college for pre-degree that the question why I am not able to live in my true identity came to my mind, it was not about 'talking caste', but of living as an *Adivasi* in my own country.

Jayan's narrative expounds and testifies what Janu tried to articulate in the previous quote. As someone hailing from a sub-community of *Adivasis* who were better off than others on many fronts such as economic, social and cultural capitals, Jayan could manage to navigate a stigmatizing identity with ease and had taken that way of relating to his self to be 'normal'. However, the mobilisation and the visibility that mobilisation brought for *Adivasis* had its ripples across different sub-communities of *Adivasis* by shoring up symbolic capital around the construct of *Adivasis*. It provoked questions in the minds of many *Adivasis,* challenged many of them to confront their own sense of self and enabled them to align with the dynamic process of reconstituting their subjectivity in and through the socio-political mobilisation. The ruptures that this process created within their own sense of self and identity, as Jayan explicated, has allowed a reflexive reconstitution of their subjectivity. These kinds of shifts in subject positions and the lived subjectivity can be gauged on many spheres of *Adivasi* lives. From a 'victimhood' subjectivity there is a shift to being 'proud contributors' to the social, and economic domains of the society they live in and this shift is informed by and embedded in the reflexive reconfiguring of their relation to self. Positioning *Adivasis* as the wealth creators of the society and predicating the achievements of other communities in education and employment, which privilege them with economic and cultural capital, to the hard work of *Adivasis*, Naresh reflexively reverses the discourse of seeing *Adivasis* as the vestiges of the social order. Naresh says:

> Now when I say that I am an Adivasi, I feel proud of it. I understand that it is the *Adivasis* who sustain the people here. If our community is not there, no wealthy people would be

> able to live here. If only we work in their fields and properties and produce the crops, they will have some money in their pockets. It was *Adivasis* who made the doctors here, made engineers here, created contractors here. For the new models of buildings they live in, the wealth was created by the *Adivasis*, all these are the hard labour of the *Adivasis*.

This reverse discourse is also reflecting the shifting of the *Adivasi* subject position and thus reflexively reconstituting *Adivasi* subjectivity in tune with the restructured habitus. Naresh's comments show that these reflexive perceptions are embedded notions within the reconstituted subjectivity of the *Adivasis*. What is significant here is that the pride that Naresh feels is predominantly about their role as valiant contributors to the society in which they live in and that is a different way of relating to the self. It is not an apologetic whisper of a subjectivity of shame, embarrassment or inhibition but an emboldened, deliberated assertion of *Adivasi* subjectivity, which in effect is reconfiguring of the discourse about *Adivasis* in tune with the reflexively reconstituted subjectivity. What underwrites the reflexive subjectivity is the symbolic capital of enormous 'confidence' that the *Adivasis* have gained. Suman explicates this when he says about his own experience of being a *Paniya Adivasi*:

> Earlier it was quite painful to be known as a *Paniya* among others. While I was at school, I had to grow up with those who were much ahead of us regarding wealth, prestige and community, and when I got referred to as lower caste, it created a self-deprecating ill--feeling about myself. But with all these struggles that sense of inferiority has changed, and now I can happily and confidently say that I am a *Paniya,* without any reluctance. As the elephant is oblivious of its strength, we too, do not know our power, and we tend to live in denigrated and inferior consciousness.

The metaphor that Suman uses is that of an elephant recognizing its own strength: a tamed elephant gets controlled by a stick and chain. But in moments of madness when the elephant overcomes the repressive and constraining socialisation, it overthrows the chain and stands up against anything on its way. For Suman, unshackling the chains of repressive regimes and warding off the constraining stick of the discourses that inhibited, embarrassed, shamed, and stigmatized them, have facilitated an emboldened subjectivity reflexively reconstituted through fresh set of practices of the self. It is interesting to see how his reference is to his sub-community name rather than *Adivasi*, while the references of the struggles is that of '*Adivasi*' land struggles. For him, as for many *Adivasis*, oscillating between *Adivasi* and *Paniya*, the sub-community, is fluid, frictionless and unencumbered by much baggage. At the same time this explicit use of *Paniya* can also be read as signifying the differentiation that he wants to make within the internal hierarchies of the

sub-communities of *Adivasis* where *Paniya* ranks on the lower rungs and then accentuate the gravity of transformation embedded in the reconstituted subjectivity. For *Adivasis*, like Suman, self has become a reflexive project where they reconstitute their subjectivity reflexively within the context of new experiences and practices (Giddens, 1992).

7.3.2 Rights-asserting Voices of Reflexive Subjectivity

The *Adivasi* subjectivity that has been reconstituted reflexively in and through the socio-political land struggles enable *Adivasis* to assert their rights to the bureaucrats, the state, and to the non-*Adivasis*. In fact, here I argue that it is in and through those assertions that the *Adivasis* are constantly reconstituting their subjectivity. Jithin, an *Adivasi* who is active in the *Adivasi* land struggles, explain how this change reflects in the way *Adivasis* now relate to the state and bureaucracy:

> Now there is such a mental power among us, thanks to the interventions of AGMS. Even in this area, our grandparents were all afraid of the forest officials. They used to run seeing their red turban. They addressed them as '*thampra'*, (Lord). When the forest officers came for the land survey in accordance with the Forest Rights Act, those who were not of this belt used to bent down before them and would say, as you would please. With us that won't work, it is our right. Shifting into that mode is such a remarkable change because that was breaking centuries old practices… The officers who came here were good people. They said it was state's land and we said no. We asked them to read the preamble of the Act and understand. It was a reparation for the historical injustice done to us and this land belong to us.

Jithin candidly asserts that he understands land and resources that the state provides for them is their right and they do not need to venerate or revere the officers, who do that bureaucratic work for them. Breaking the centuries old practices of subordination, inhibition, fear, and submission is illustrative of the reflexive subjectivity of *Adivasis,* who are recalibrating these practices, in such instances of assertion, with new sets of practices. The assertiveness that marks the reworked subjectivity of *Adivasis* like Jithin, qualifies them to challenge the officers who are uninformed about the rights of *Adivasis* enshrined in the FRA and in that practice they reconstitute their subjectivity. The knowledge they have gained – cultural capital – through their constant involvement with AGMS that discusses the rights of *Adivasis* and the Acts and provisions for them, have helped them to assert those rights in times such as the above. They show the audacity to ask the officers to read the preamble of the FRA and understand. That is not mere confidence to talk to 'outsiders' but an agential power anchored on their reworked subjectivity to demand what is

rightfully theirs even when it requires correcting or convincing the officers, the so-called repository of bureaucratic state power/knowledge. The reconstituting of the *Adivasi* subjectivity is premised on the symbolic economy and moral worth generated by the socio-political struggles and it allows them to reconstitute it in assertive interventions.

It is this reworked *Adivasi* subjectivity that enables Omana, an elderly *Adivasi* woman, to confront the people who came to buy *Adivasi* land for cheap price with the same cultural capital that she derived from her involvements:

> He was buying my father-in-law's land. I told him that he could not buy property here because it was Adivasi hamlet and it was illegal. They asked me who I was to say not to buy land there and what authority did I have to warn them so. I replied that it was my hamlet and I had the power to speak up for my village. If my people did not show sense, I have some understanding, and I would ask you questions. I explained that the Indian government had given this land to us *Adivasis* and that you could not buy our property. Then he got infuriated and said to me that I did not have the right to ask them. I reiterated that if you were to buy our land, you would have to leave this place empty-handed because legally this transaction would not hold.

An elderly woman such as Omana has become emboldened with the cultural capital, sharing the reflexive *Adivasi* subjectivity, to confront the 'outsiders' when they try to infiltrate their hamlet to acquire land through deceitful transactions. Not only does she have the cultural capital to be aware of the consequences of such land transactions to warn the buyers but she also holds the symbolic capital to assert her right and challenge them citing the impending risks. It is this right-asserting subjectivity that has become the site of reflexive reconstitution in the wake of their involvement in the mobilisation that restructured their habitus and practices.

What marks the reconstitution of *Adivasi* subjectivity is that it has given them a voice both in simple social interactions and in serious public forums. The restructured habitus has endowed them with competencies and skill sets to engage in social interactions and the disposition and pre-reflexive orientation to be agile social actors. In entrenching the practice of exercising their voice in diverse arenas of interaction, the *Adivasis* reconstitute their subjectivity reflexively. This excerpt from an FGD on the Aralam Farm highlights how they acknowledge and appreciate that change:

> Uma: We have learned to talk, interact and mingle with people. These visible changes came because of our involvement in the AGMS.

> Ambika: Yes, otherwise, we never used to come out or face people or talk to them. We would prefer to remain inside. But that has changed considerably.
>
> Binil: We did not know to go to Collectorate or to talk to the officials. These changes came after I started going to AGMS. We had been reluctant to be with the public and do anything. Adivasis have started to come into public spaces. Earlier we used to go for the party programmes as they say, but we could not say anything and we were not expected to. It is after coming into this movement that we have started speaking like this.

The words such as 'never used to' 'learned to' explicate that there has been a shift in the ways they were 'used to' (habitus), and have acquired new practices ('learned') from their restructured habitus. In and through these expressions and exteriorisations of the transformations that have restructured their 'habitus' *Adivasis* reconstitute their subjectivity reflexively in these everyday practices of interactions. The *Adivasis* describe this reconstituted subjectivity through their own experiences of claiming agency such as articulating their voice in public forums. For Binil the agency that he experiences or he sees other *Adivasis* exercise is something that came through their involvement in the struggles. He could see that in his own symbolic capital to engage the bureaucracy (civil servant/Collector), or voicing his ideas or perceptions in the public forums and fundamentally in the consciousness that they have the agency to make changes. This testifies how the shift in their habitus, competencies and skill sets, on social interaction occurred as they interiorized the complexities, nuances and intricacies that underpins the social interactions with those who were in positions of power. These shifts in their habitus generates new practices as they assert their voices and engenders new dimensions to their subjectivity.

7.3.3 Unleashing the creative urge of intervention

This reconstituted subjectivity is enabling the younger members to be imaginative and to intervene creatively such as the initiative of Balachandran, who grew up witnessing *Adivasi* mobilisation and became part of C K Janu's political party as its secretary for a period of one year before he broke away from it. He expounds his creative initiative at the socio-cultural milieu of *Adivasis*:

> I call it Gothra (Tribe) and have subtitled it as Social and Cultural Movement for Tribal Youth. In schools, they promote Adivasi students in athletics because if you draw a line and ask him to run he would run. But when it comes to arts, it is expensive, and it requires figure and looks, and our children are dark and may not meet those standards of beauty, but they may be talented. My objective is to source government fund to assist the Adivasi students who are talented in arts. Then I would like to build an

> organisation that can coordinate the Adivasi artists and bring them along with *Gothra*. What I envisage is, if this goes well for the next two years, then we should bring Tribal Academy[87] to Wayanadu. Then I also want to intervene in education by finding those dropped out students and assist them to resume their studies by sourcing them the government programmes.

The initiative is inflamed with confidence, shaped by their analysis of *Adivasi* youth and inspired by their desire to intervene at the level of academy. These are glimmers of the reconstituted subjectivity of *Adivasis* and illustrates how reflexive it is when they employ categories and logic to understand their own condition critically and then think of ways to offset those constraints and to forge ahead as a community. While NGOs have initiated such interventions to support, sustain and promote the *Adivasi* cultural traditions, this initiative comes from the *Adivasis* themselves. It can be attributed to the congenial environment (restructured field enabling opportunity structures) that has come about as the overall result of a changed subjectivity marked by social, cultural and symbolic capitals acquired over the course of the years of land struggles. His reflexive subjectivity enables him to see not only his personal life as a project and wants to constructively work on his self and biography, he wants that work to be intertwined with the project of his interventions in his community. He situates his life project within the larger project of his creative involvements in the community along with his cohort of interested youth and works out ways to materialise both and in the process reconstitutes his subjectivity.

In this section I have analysed and argued that the *Adivasis* are reconstituting their subjectivity in and through various practices and in multiple sites of transition. These allow the *Adivasis* to reconfigure a renewed relation to their self within the historical contexts of their mobilisation for land.

7.4 Ambivalences of *Adivasi* Subjectivity on Aralam Farm

The complex expression of *Adivasi* subjectivity with its multiple layers can be examined from the data from Aralam Farm, where the *Adivasis* have begun their life in the biggest resettlement that they accrued as a result of the land struggle. The *Adivasi* subjectivity reconstituted and reworked on the movement habitus, capitals and field of contention is not only rosy, positive and

[87] The tribal academy is envisioned as a unique space of education and research that focuses on studying *Adivasi* communities, their history, economy, folklore, culture, medicine, music, arts and theatre. The interdisciplinary approach could help in advancing the field of *Adivasi* studies in Kerala and could integrate interventional activism that seeks to ensure equity and justice for the *Adivasi* cause. This vision for an *Adivasi* academy can only be fulfilled if the state government takes initiative and for that there should be concerted efforts from the *Adivasi* movement.

straightforward but has its fissures, complexities and layers. I call them ambivalences of the *Adivasi* subjectivity and look at some of those layers in this section.

7.4.1 From denigration to dignity

Adivasis who have received land on Aralam Farm have the experience of reconstituting a subjectivity of dignity that is markedly different from that of denigration. For some of the *Adivasis* like Sankaran, the changes within the subjectivity is accentuated through the procurement of land through their struggles. As an *Adivasi* from Aralam Farm who has received land, Shankaran enumerates the changes that have come about in his and others lives:

> I really had my anxieties about my future before getting this land, our minds were terribly tensed because of the landlessness we were in. But now that we got this land our lives have changed a lot. For example, in the case of the education of our children, there has been tremendous change. You just saw my son going out of our house, he is doing his graduation in a college in central Kerala. There are children from here, who are studying in metro cities like Bangalore now. I strongly believe that such changes are a result of their involvement and engagement with the Gothra Maha Sabha. If we had not got this land and were stranded in our colonies, we would have remained as worms doing coolie work as if slave labour. When we got property here, we have coconut trees in that, and even if it is just one cashew tree, we could take the cashews and sell it happily because it belongs to us and we are not answerable to anyone else.

The sense of dignity that underpins the reconstituted *Adivasi* subjectivity is expressed eloquently when Shankaran says that if not for the struggles and the land, they would have remained as worms with the denigrating experience, slave labour. Reclaiming the dignity and self-worth have been key to the process of being landed and that the ownership of land has reconstituted their subject position – these material changes along with the movement habitus, capitals and practices have facilitated the reconstitution of a different subjectivity and bid adieu to a slave-like subjectivity. One of the aspects of the dignified life marked by his reconstituted subjectivity is that he is able to educate his son in a distant city and in fact his son's admission to that college actually worked through his contacts developed through the movement. For him, therefore, the land and the struggle have given the economic, cultural, symbolic and social capital to move towards an imagined future that he dreamed for his family and children and he sees that in other *Adivasi* families too. Some of them think that their involvements in the movement have enhanced their ability to be reflexive and to reform their personal life, by engaging in a 'reflexive self-monitoring of action' (Giddens, 1991). Suresh, an *Adivasi* on Aralam Farm shares his experience:

> I used to drink. It is one year since I stopped drinking. I thought life was slipping away and I needed to recoil it. If there are no experiences, then there is no life. I thought about it. The children could not study, they did not want to stay at home, and I thought hard and decided to give up drinking. I realised that if I continue drinking, my children will struggle when others would live decent lives. When such a thought came to my mind, I determined that I wouldn't drink again.

His newfound experience of control over his own life and his increased capacity to enforce reform to his behaviour through reflexive self-monitoring exemplifies the reflexive subjectivity that he has now. He is able to assess, evaluate and reorder his life in accordance with the priorities that he sets and engage in biographic identity work through a 'reflexive re-ordering of narratives'(Giddens, 1991). His work on his self and his biography, on the project of his life, is in view of the larger good of his family and the wellbeing of his children and he engineers these changes relying on the cultural and symbolic capital anchored onto this reconstituted subjectivity.

7.4.2 The ambivalence between collectivity and individuation

The reconstituted *Adivasi* subjectivity and habitus have their ambivalences as the *Adivasis* reorganise their lives in their owned land with the sedimented set of competencies, dispositions, attitudes and perceptions. There are those, who feel that the changes that have come about, including the ownership of land has been leading to individualisation among *Adivasis,* impeding the collective urge and even participation in common causes and mobilisation. Rajeev, an active *Adivasi* in Aralam Farm, shares his feeling candidly:

> We had a strong group (names of people) who set out for this struggle and were working together, collectively. As *Adivasis* got the land they were struggling for, that collective activism, working together has come dwindled. Now it is one's family, land, concerns and no one is now interested in these kinds of common concerns.

Rajeev believes that *Adivasi* subjectivity is also becoming articulated into that of modern individualistic propertied class subjectivity as they accrue land and resources. Even though the *Adivasis* have not turned into atomised individuals of modernity, there is a discernible trend of individuation at least among the land accrued *Adivasis*. The reflexive reconstituting of *Adivasi* subjectivity has accelerated the pace of detraditionalisation that is emblematic of modernity, among *Adivasis*. Mallika, a young *Adivasi* woman, shares her experience of the processes of individuation in the landed life of *Adivasis*, and this can be seen as an ambivalence of the reconstituted subjectivity:

> In the colony, yes we had lots of struggles, but then we could see each other all the time. Whatever problems or conflicts they had in the colony, whatever it be, they would speak to each other the next day. But here that is not there, there is no meeting or speaking to each other. They all used to go to each other's houses and no one would ever go hungry in the colony, they would share across families. When the works come they would go to work. After getting land on this Aralam Farm, people have changed completely. Whatever happens in the next house, they wouldn't come at all. Our people won't unite for anything. Earlier, when it was the time of our elderly people, they used to visit everyone across colonies and they knew who is related to whom. But now it is not so, we hardly know such things. Earlier if somebody died everyone would gather and would remain for 10-15 days together with the bereaved family doing the rituals. Now it is just a 3days rituals and people are not interested in going for such things.

While the socio-political struggles and land have brought in many welcome changes for *Adivasi* like Rajeev and Mallika, they also feel that the life as they knew it in the colony has changed unprecedentedly. The breaking of traditional bonds, structures of support network and the erosion of the economies of affect and care have become intractable in the torrent of changes they experience. The dispositions, orientations and consequent practices have changed as they become reconstituted in the *Adivasi* subjectivity. Echoing a similar sentiment Vanaja, another young *Adivasi* woman, gives glimpses of the emergence of class variations among the *Adivasis* who have received land together:

> Now they are also getting good money and then the question is how to spend that for others. There are people who save their money by depositing it in the bank or investing in gold. Since many have cows and cattle they are able to save up from their income and deposit in the bank, as almost everybody has a bank account. Then they are buying things to their homes like blender and TV and so on. For some people there is real progress.

It is interesting that Vanaja assesses progress as consumption; buying new electronic goods or investing in gold because in terms of ownership of property they all have one acre of land. These are new practices for many of the *Adivasis* as they reconstitute their subjectivity within a larger socio-cultural milieu of Kerala, which has been metamorphosing into a consumer society under the neoliberal regime (Zachariah *et al.*, 2001; Lukose, 2005). However, this comment also portrays how concepts such as savings in a bank and working hard to create money for the future are getting embedded into the lives of the *Adivasis* as they are becoming landed. Such practices

emerging with the advent of economic capital (land) and as part of the reconstituted subjectivity also accelerate individuation and subtle differentiation of class practices.

7.4.3 Ambivalence of diversity and fragmentation

Though *Adivasi* is a blanket category, it encompasses a wide range of diversity in terms of sub-communities (36), political affiliations, culture, language, ritual traditions and educational, employment advances. These diversities at times can turn to be conflicting and fragmentary, revealing the fissures, tensions and contradictions of the *Adivasi* subjectivity. This is partly due to the tension between the collective *Adivasi* identity, a political construct and the deeply embedded sub-community identity. This is blatantly conspicuous on the Farm as *Adivasis* from different sub-communities live amongst each other. As Suresh puts this:

> *Adivasis* on the farm belong to different sub-communities. Bringing unity among us *Adivasis* is the greatest of all challenges. Uniting *Karimpalans*, *Mavilas*, *Paniyas* and *Kurichyas* is going to be a hard work. Then and now it's the same case with the sub-communities. That's how it is; their own party, their own communities. It has not changed much because we are living together.

This tension informs the way *Adivasi* subjectivity gets structured and reconstituted. So they have learned to traverse between the *Adivasi* identity and that of the sub-community as and when required. Politically they resort to the *Adivasi* identity and internally they relate to each other with their sub-community identity. *Adivasis* are learning to manage their multiple identities and their subjectivity is informed by these fluidity of identities.

But this diversity and differences can become smothering and intimidating when internal hierarchies become instruments of control and domination. Soman feels that there is deliberate efforts from the members of other *Adivasi* sub-communities with the support of the political parties to control and silence them:

> I was among those who came onto this farm first as part of the occupy movement. But there are also people who came here when they got title-deeds, many of them as wards of political parties. They don't know the pain of the struggle behind the fortune they enjoy now. They try to threaten us, control us and silence us. We wouldn't allow that.

The complexity of inter-community hierarchies and tensions, accentuated by political parties create the internal world among *Adivasis* quite conflictual. The feeling that they fought for the fortune that others are freely enjoying now and they also try to dislodge and intimidate them complicates this situation. But this internal hostility is cognized and resisted wherever possible as

evident from these verbalization. These show how the unity that the movement achieved is quite tenuous and the fragmentations run deep. However, the reconstituted subjectivity is enabling the *Adivasis* to be simultaneously critical and resistive about the internal power structures while struggling against the state to get their rights established as *Adivasi* citizens.

This section has analysed the ambivalences in reconstituted *Adivasi* subjectivity in and through the land struggles and the ownership of land. These illustrations foreground that the reconstituted subjectivity is contested from within, is marked with fragmentations and fissures, and is ambivalent about the dynamics of individuation and detraditionalisation. Given these explorations, I would like to now turn to an important dimension of the *Adivasi* subjectivity that found untrammelled expression in the field, namely their political subjectivity.

7.5 Aralam Farm resettlement as a microcosm of landed *Adivasi* life: Interfacing Political subjectivity and Internal Heterogeneity

This section delineates the ethnographic data by delving into my observational and participant experience during the field research on Aralam Farm with a view to foreground the embedded movement habitus in everyday practices. Focusing on the exchanges, meetings, and in-situ practices, I seek to unpack the complex interface and interrelationship between their political subjectivity, which has a collective dimension as it is based on the movement habitus they share, and the internal heterogeneity, which often disarticulates such neat collectivisation. The *Adivasis* on Aralam Farm, I argue, navigate these complex terrains of competing, conflicting and shifting polarities by attempting to construct an *Adivasi* belonging that cuts across seemingly irreconcilable divides.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, (2.4.2) the Farm was the property of the central government, from which the state government purchased it using the *Adivasi* fund for distributing it to the *Adivasis* as part of the post-Muthanga agreement. Out of the 7000 acres of the farm over 3000 has been distributed to the *Adivasis* irrespective of their involvement in the occupy struggle (Sreerekha, 2010; Kumar, 2019). The rest of the land is still run as farm. This has allowed the political parties to bring in truckload of *Adivasis* who are their loyal wards on to the farm creating pockets of political support within the largest *Adivasi* resettlement in India.

My field research focused on the 13th block of Aralam Farm which has an entrance from the Keezhpally town with a thriving market. Most of those buildings appeared new and constructions were ongoing for spaces for yet new shops. The assertion that the *Adivasis* on the Farm have changed the face of the town was not an exaggeration by leaders or hyperbole in their rhetoric;

the new buildings, beaming *Adivasi* presence, long queues of auto-rickshaws (three wheeler taxis) conspicuously testify to substantiate that assertion. Suresh is a 35 year old *Adivasi*, who was part of the land occupy struggle on the Farm in 2006, lives with his wife and two young children on the 13th block. He is a daily wage labourer, who is also now an owner of one acre of land and a small house, thanks to the land occupy struggle. He says that this transformation of the local town has had a positive effect on the public's approach to the *Adivasis*. They, the neighbouring public, had joined the workers on the Farm to oppose the land occupy struggle and tried to get rid of the *Adivasis*, but now they have come to realize that the *Adivasis* contribute to the betterment of their own lives by changing the local economy. The cashews, cocoa, coconuts and rubber, the farm crops, used to be harvested centrally and sold in distant markets while the Farm was run by the government. But, the *Adivasis* sell them locally infusing the local economy with an unprecedented supply of farm produces with a snowballing effect on the local markets. They also shop and consume locally, ensuring that the money earned through the sales of produce in the local markets went back to the same local markets for consumer goods, setting in motion another spiral of local businesses. The wealth creation in the local market have been visible on the palatial houses and vehicles in the homes around the town. Even the Church has built some rooms to be rented for retail shops and thus indirectly benefiting from this local economic boom[88]. Moreover, what captured my attention was the tenor and texture of interactions between *Adivasis* and the local public; they were cordial and confident. Certainly, the ownership of land has changed *Adivasis*; but, that has changed their subject position too in relation to the general public. I could see that the local business owners were trying to be respectful and friendly to ensure that their regular customers, *Adivasis,* were rightly humoured and wooed.

Suresh insists that this rosy portrayal does not nullify the cheating of *Adivasis* by these same business people as they try to make a profit on the *Adivasis* nor does it obliterate the fact that their cordiality and respect can be an external façade. He mentioned these as we had a meal at the local eat out and travelled on the three wheeler taxi back to his home. He says that he has learned to differentiate between the outward expression and the hidden feelings of the public and this learning he predicates to his experiences with the movement. He says that his travels for protests and agitations, his interactions with people in different places where he has been to, his learning from the leaders of the movement have all facilitated him to interiorise and such discretionary knowledge and discerning practices. I could see how animated he was while describing these. His conversations with the taxi driver and the hotel owner exemplified what he tried to verbalize. His wife came out and asked me questions about me and the purpose of my

[88] My informal conversations with the parish priest and the trustees of the church revealed this.

stay on the Farm. She went on to say that if it was not for her own exposure to the movements, she would not have come out of her room to talk to me. Though I had met Suresh for past four days and had developed a connection with him, it was the first time that I went to his house. His house was well-maintained but had works yet to finish. He said that he had decided to do the construction by himself and refused to get it built by the contractors[89], which was the usual way. He says that the TRDM and contractors have an agreement and the contractors bribe the officers for the contracts they accrue and swindle money from these projects. When I looked around I could see that his house was different from the similar pattern with which most other houses in the 13th block.

For Suresh undertaking the construction of his house had its own challenges; though he knew the work, he had to muster the support of a group of people, mainly his friends and relatives, and he also had to raise the money to do the work before getting the payment from the project. The project paid him money as and when he completed certain levels of the building and he said that the inspection and sanctioning of the money were laborious process and he had to go after them many times. He felt that it was the officers' intention to showcase him as a bad example by prolonging his payments and thus delaying the completion of his work whereas those houses that the contractors took up got completed much early without any hassles for the beneficiary. It was again on their ploy that he could not get the money for plastering the walls and completing the works of his house. He said that he didn't regret that he decided to go it by himself despite the unwarranted struggles and unending delay in completion. The whole process gave him and his family a sense of accomplishment and belongingness to the house they are living now. He and some others assert that process helped them to spread their roots of belonging in this occupied land of their resettlement. Many of the empty houses, built by contractors, on the Farm seemed to suggest that he had a point.

Suresh had agreed to take me to the place where they had experimented with group farming voluntarily. As we came out of his house, in the midst of a coconut grove, I could see a local shop on the road side. The shop owner came out and stared at me as I walked past it. Suresh said that shop is symbolic of the ambivalences of *Adivasi* struggles. I heard this later from many *Adivasis* on the Farm. The Jaleel's shop was a small enterprise, but they remained there despite all the attempts from the *Adivasis* with the AGMS to oust them from the Farm which was given to the *Adivasis*. The *Adivasis* forcefully destroyed the shop once. But, it was back the next day. They have the support from political parties outside the Farm. They say the main purpose is surveillance, but also to ensure that they have a hold on the farm. He showed me vestiges of small huts behind the

[89] Those who take the contract of building houses for the *Adivasis* on the Farm.

shop. He said that the AGMS organized an open parliament[90] in that space in 2014 and the very next day, that space was occupied by *Adivasis* from another community, the *karimpalas.* They were brought in by the party from distant places to sabotage the unity that was built in the 13th block, that could challenge not only Jaleel's store but also could thwart the attempts of political parties gaining ground. For me, that was a pivotal moment where the internal heterogeneity of the *Adivasis* clashed directly with and discredited their political subjectivity that was getting embedded in their lives concretely. *Karimpalas* were *Adivasis* and they came as occupiers in the same way as they occupied the land on the Farm. So they could not be chased away or even coerced to move away. Interestingly, Suresh and others call them encroachers[91] whereas they think of themselves as occupiers and now with the title deeds, legitimate owners of their land. "We don't talk to them", Suresh said. Though the *Karimpala Adivasis* slowly moved away from the area they occupied, the instigators succeeded in fizzling out the synergy that was brewing there. "They made it harder for us to assemble, to organize and to plan our activities" said Rajeev, another *Adivasi* youngster. I sensed that frustration from many others as well. So this heterogeneity was an efficacious tool in the hands of politicians and other detractors to flare up and pit one group against another to disrupt and dislodge the enmeshing of the *Adivasi* political subjectivity on the Farm. They acknowledged this as a herculean challenge in personal interviews, in focus group discussions and even in their meetings as well.

As we walked through the coconut farm, I could see houses that had not completed building and sheds that were left empty. They were not like the pattern visible outside the Farm where the public have their land and houses. These were remnants of a still-to-be settled people and their still-to-be lived land. Some of the houses were incomplete because of insufficient funding and others were empty because those who have got their land continue to live in their colonies and hold the land on the Farm. They come at the time of collecting cashews and other produces, resulting in confrontations between *Adivasis* who live on the farm throughout the year and *Adivasis* who hold land on the Farm but live in their old houses and places because they have the facilities there. I met an old man who was beaten up by a group of *Adivasis* who threatened him from collecting cashews from their property, where they do not live the whole year. The internal

[90] It was a community parliament, where the members of the *Adivasi* community acted as the elected representatives and discussed their pressing problems and debated their key concerns. Organized under the aegis of AGMS, there were other dignitaries along with the AGMS leadership, to attend the event. Many *Adivasis* mentioned that as an exhilarating and inspiring experience. The leaders told me that they were impressed by the depth of the discussions and intensity of the debates (field notes).

[91] The general public, police and Farm workers had initially considered Suresh and their ilk as encroachers when they first came to occupy the Farm as part of their struggle. Now that they have become the settled owners, they call the new entrants as encroachers!

heterogeneity of class, community and political backing destabilises the movement habitus forged through collective struggles and articulated through collaborative living.

The land, where Suresh and his friends took me, was segmented into small plots of paddy fields where they cultivated rice and they organised a harvest festival to celebrate their produce. Two youngsters, who had joined us on the way, showed me pictures of the festival on their mobile phones. There were singing, dancing, drumming and eating together. It was the success of their initiative and their hard work. They owned the fruit of their labour and they celebrated it. While explaining the processes of their work, how they brought community into the idea of creating a paddy field for cultivating rice for their own consumption and detailing the excitement of their celebration, I could feel how the habitus has taken roots in everyday forms of activities, shaping their predilections and entrenching their know-how. They have learned to organize across communities, there were *paniya, adiya* and *kurichya Adivasis* in this collective project. Though it shines as an example of a way forward, it has not been taken up by the rest of those on the Farm and that would require further work, local leadership and aggressive campaign. Nonetheless, it has emerged as a fresh imaginary in the direction of *Adivasi* initiated resettlement.

This concern came up in the meeting with Geethanandan[92]. There were twenty people; 12 men and 8 women. They gathered in front of the house of an AGMS activist. While Geethanandan facilitated the discussion, the *Adivasis* were actively bringing in their concerns for discussion. Both Geethanandan and the members converged on the need for strengthening local leadership. He was candid in saying that he wouldn't be able to micromanage the work of the organization on the Farm as he is involved in many other political projects. The participants themselves reiterated that they need strong leadership from their own communities there. The interactions were intensive, engaging and insightful. They acknowledged the differences within *Adivasi* communities on the Farm and incisively reflected on the divides.

But, what could bring the *Adivasis* with different political affiliations (because many were brought onto the Farm by the political parties), with diverse communities (some of them with a history of purity-pollution relation between communities), with emerging class distinctions (some have started saving and accumulating wealth in small ways), and the split within the AGMS itself? The answer that seethed through in all three focus group discussions on the Farm was the existential threat that they faced: the wild animals such as elephants, that have frequented their intrusion into their fragile life. The unity of voices, complementing of arguments and the collective

[92] Geethananda visited the Farm during my stay on the field. It gave me an opportunity to witness the dynamics of the meeting.

emotional tone of the interactions that emerged across discussion groups underlined the centrality of the issue. Suresh was vocal in the FGD and also respectful of the opinions of others even while disagreeing; but he had his perspective and his own lens to view the collective experience that he shared with others in the group. So was Vanaja, a 22 year old *Adivasi* woman, who lives with her mother in one of farthest end of the 13th block, adjacent to the boundary with the Forest. She told me that she was doing her graduation through a distance education programme. Vanaja has been active in the movement for some years now. She was there for the *Nilpu Samaram,* in the state (province) capital, and she reminisced some of the cherished moments, one of which was being interviewed by a TV channel about her experience in the struggle. She also was an independent candidate for the local election and was eloquent about her experience on the campaign trail, where she had to walk from house to house to canvas *Adivasis* on their doorsteps for voting her. She said it was difficult to change some of the deep-seated political allegiances. But, I saw her to be unrelenting, unflinching on the day when the dead body of a woman who was killed by the elephant was brought to the Farm. That was the fourth *Adivasi* life that the elephant had taken from the Farm. She, with other women gathered there, said 'not any more'. Their political subjectivity was in action.

The atmosphere was tensed, people gathered were grieving, and the police were cautious as they brought the battered pieces of the body of the unfortunate victim of the elephant. The police did not want to take the body out of the ambulance because they were insisting that it had to be taken to her original hometown for burial at the earliest. The women were enraged. C K Janu's presence added fuel to the fire. They demanded that the body be taken and kept in the forest officers' building. There were outsiders hovering around, talking with the police, and calling on their phones. The women demanded that the district collector had to come to the Farm and listen to their grievance before the body can be taken for burial. C K Janu was adamant too. However, it was other women who were talking, crying, yelling and demanding that the police listen to their demands. The body was moved to the forest officers' building and the police started negotiating with the women. One of the policeman asked Vanaja, if it were her mother's body, would she had done like this and she retorted that it was with the same commitment as that of her mother's body that she was demanding the presence of the district collector to listen to their grievances. The outsiders, the white clad party workers, were trying to convince the women that the body needed to go for burial and their protest could be at another appropriate occasion. Vanaja insisted to the police that the collector should come and listen to their grievances and promise to take urgent action to safeguard *Adivasi* lives and ensure that the children of the women would be supported with protective measures. She went on to say that last week another man from a dominant community had an encounter with elephant and lost life because of his own fault, but

there were ministers, politicians, and others to pay homage to that man. No one bothers about *Adivasi* life. The impasse continued for two more hours, with women leading the resistance and police attempting to pacify them. Finally, the local politicians managed to convince the children of the deceased lady and they demanded that their mother's body be released for burial before the sunset, as was customary. Meanwhile the district collector came to the guest house, he refused come to the Farm though, and promised to take swift action to ensure safety for *Adivasis* from the attacks of wild animals.

The tyranny of elephants and wild boars were the topical issues on the days that I spent on the Farm. Suresh and Rajeev said that the state government is investing enormous *Adivasi* fund for combating the wild animal's problems. But, they hardly involve *Adivasis* who live on the Farm or on the border of the forests. The focus group discussions across groups insisted that fencing was indispensable to their safety and that of their cultivation. The rampage of the wild animals was one of the stated reasons for the large sections of *Adivasis* who have acquired land on the farm to continue to live in the abysmal conditions of their old habitat. For *Adivasis* to move on to a life of self-reliance and autonomy with the one acre of land they have received, it was pre-requisite to have the basic safety be ensured.

It came up in one of the Focus Group discussions that the government endorsed fencing was being built on the land that was distributed to the *Adivasis*. 20-25 cents of their land was getting lost for their deplorable fencing work. When the *Adivasis* approached the workers who were laying the fence, they said that they were following orders from their engineers. They had manoeuvred the *Adivasis* to sign an agreement to have the fence run through their land. So the *Adivasis* went on to agitate, they went on to protest in front of the collectorate and took the issue to the *Nilpu Samaram* itself. It was then that they came after the *Adivasis* to withdraw the case and stopped digging in the *Adivasi* property. Suresh said that they had to resort to mobilisation, agitation and protest to communicate these things and find a solution. Their movement habitus gets into action on these everyday issues of life. Another issue that came up in the group was regarding the recruitment of *Adivasis* for jobs on the Farm. Vanaja and her friends went for interviews, but when results interview results were published, it was *Adivasis* who were from outside, who found place in the list. They sprang into agitation and protest. The list was withdrawn and the recruitment was stalled. The oppositional agency that the *Adivasis* have constructed through their intensive involvement with the mobilisation aid and abet them in confronting the challenges that they encounter in their everyday life. They refuse to yield and they decline to stomach things when they get rubbished, side-lined or even invisibilised.

However, the challenge of internal differences was on display on that day too. Some *Adivasi* men came and shouted at C K Janu, threatening her and demanding her to leave the place. Some *Adivasis* also tried to dissuade the women who were arguing with the police and demanding Collector's presence. The members of the political parties joined together to entice the children to demand for the release of their mother's body, which sabotaged the whole resistance to naught. The police influenced the deceased woman's husband and made him demand the body to be released. There were large sections of *Adivasis* on the Farm, for whom none of these things really mattered. The whole network of forces, which utilise the support of *Adivasis* from diverse and differing factions, keep smothering the collective voices of the *Adivasis*.

The political subjectivity of the *Adivasis*, garnered through the protracted socio-political mobilisation and resultant movement habitus, was on full display as they sprang into resistance instantaneously. The women did not need to be told, they acted as if it was well-orchestrated, pre-meditated intervention. It was neither a spontaneous uprising from an emotional upheaval. The women had their arguments, they articulated it audaciously, they were willing to go all the way to get their demands met and they gave up only because they lost their ground when the children intervened. Vanaja told me that she got emboldened and she became convinced of their rights as humans and as *Adivasis* through the mobilisation. She also mentioned to me that in such moments they are able to circumvent the detrimental effects of internal heterogeneity and to come together as a collective. That was their strength in the movements, so far. Building on that strength on Aralam Farm is the challenge for *Adivasis* on the Farm and for that the political subjectivity has to be grounded on the crucible of belonging.

7.6 Political Subjectivity and Belonging

While the analysis so far has focused on unearthing and understanding the multifarious dimensions and multi-layered structure of the *Adivasi* subjectivity, this section examines how this subjectivity gets constituted within a particular field; the political. While I was conducting research I attended one of the meetings for a new campaign *Chalo.* At the meeting, there was a discussion on whether to bring in some of the NGOs on to its platform and Geethanandan emphatically asserted: 'this is politics and not some NGO charity game'. His vigorous assertion, almost reproving the discussion, accompanied by his sharp body language and voice underlined how the entire engagement was avowedly and unambiguously political. The vision of land struggles is not constricted to acquiring land for the *Adivasis* but they are geared towards political belonging and equal citizenship. This requires that the *Adivasis* break the established boundaries of belonging (Crowley, 1999) and rework their belonging as strategic actors in the field and

entrench fresh practices. The predominant layer of the reconstituted *Adivasi* subjectivity is political and I interrogate the political subjectivity of *Adivasis* in this section.

7.6.1 Being actors in the political field

C K Janu, as an initiator and leader of the land struggles, articulates in detail this broader vision that animates their socio-political mobilisations:

> When we get the land, their problem of landlessness will be solved. But life is a continuous flow and there will be other problems they would encounter from then on. They also need to be solved. In order to do that, we have to come to the realm of politics because it is there where things get decided and problems are ultimately resolved. We need to be part of that. We are all citizens of democratic India and that means we are all citizens with equal rights and dignity.

For C K Janu, it is the assertion of the political subjectivity of the *Adivasis* that forms the crux of the mobilisation of land and resources. Besides accruing the demanded land and resources, she thinks that the *Adivasis* should ensure their political belonging and equal citizenship. As politically engaged citizens, the *Adivasis* have to resolve their issues of resources, culture, existence, growth and flourishing through intense political action wherein they have to draw on their subjectivity. The vision that is uncovered in the analysis is that the *Adivasis* need to be actors with agency in the political field, their subjectivity needs to become reconstituted politically. Santhosh, a young *Dalit* activist with *Adivasi* land struggle, echoes this when he says:

> The whole thing is not just a land issue or an issue of authority over resources. How these people ended up in this situation is the central question, which will take us to the denial of socio-political rights. A bigger journey in ensuring those socio-political rights is what we envisage. No existing relations in the political or social fronts can ensure marginalized communities their rights. So we need to seek new alternatives.

Land or resource rights are not the final frontier of this mobilisation but it is of ensuring the socio-political rights of the *Adivasis* in Kerala and their political belonging. Mobilisation is equally intended to facilitate a political subjectivity of *Adivasis* where they galvanise the capital and embed practices which would allow them to reclaim and accrue the socio-political rights.

7.6.2 The political eye-opener and shifting political practices

The *Adivasis* are reconstituting their relation to the political, especially with that of the political processes, parties and the state. This possibility for reworking their relationship with the political

came from their own experience of being engaged politically in the land struggles. Soman, an *Adivasi* activist and Mooppan, links these political realizations and awareness for the need to rework their political engagements in land struggles.

> Politically, who is our friend and who is our enemy… such realizations come through these struggles. *Muthanga* had been the most successful struggle in that. Those who came for *Muthanga* struggle, were in BJP, Congress, Communist parties, in the NGOs here, whatever small factions were there *Adivasis* were there too. The *Adivasis* were taught by those groups that they would sort out any problem for the *Adivasis*. Adivasis had believed that blindly. Whatever problems we had our party would intervene and solve it, our organization would intervene and save us. But when they went for the occupy struggle in *Muthanga*, the party, the NGOs and everyone got the *Adivasis* into jail by showing them to the police and got false cases charged on them. That was the moment of realization for *Adivasis*, that these were all our enemies who were cheating us. Within one day, people had that political realization, which would never be there for them even if you educate them for one hundred years.

Soman emphasizes that the experiences the people gained over the years of struggle is incomparable to whatever they may learn from classes or conferences. The key learning is the realisation that the *Adivasis* need to see through the games of the political parties and the leaders, that their interactions are not always straightforward and have layers to it. This realisation, the political reflexivity, as Soman and others testify that has become characteristic of their restructured subjectivity have altered their political belonging and practices. This reflexive reworking of practices and subjectivity have been predicated to the hard-earned experiences of mobilisation. Embedding of new practices such as asserting political rights, questioning political decisions, have politicised the reconstituted subjectivity of *Adivasis* (see 7.3). These practices are central to the construction of political belonging which is deemed as a mutually influencing process (Krause and Schramm, 2011) of assertion, engagement and belonging. Questioning the politicians with renewed awareness of their rights and privileges is one of the ways in which the political subjectivity of *Adivasis* gets articulated reflexively in political practices within their practical engagement with the field. The politicians in turn use their means to undermine the credibility of these *Adivasis* among the community – contestations for legitimacy within the field of power (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu, 1998a), Jayan says:

> There are three Mooppans (the leader of *Adivasi* hamlet), who would question them and challenge them, so the politicians wait for an opportunity to get at these guys. When did you grow up to talk like this? Such is the attitude that they have.

More than the attitude of the politicians what matters here is the fact that the *Adivasis* have indeed 'grown up to talk like this', to struggle and engage in strategic action within the political field of power (Bourdieu, 1983). This 'growing up' is a phrasing to connote the embedded political subjectivity, a reflexive disposition, that the *Adivasis* exercise in their everyday lives in the local contexts of political field.

7.7 Reflexive re-engaging of the political

The reflexive political subjectivity of *Adivasis* is endowing them with the practical intelligibility to re-engage in the political field as actors with agency. This re-engagement repudiates the tokenist representation of *Adivasis* within the electoral politics and dislodges the practices of blind loyalty to political patronage. As embedded actors with reflexive dispositions the *Adivasis* are repositioning themselves within the political field, redrawing the contours of belonging and asserting their right to representation. Farrugia (2013b) defines reflexivity as practical intelligibility, where the field is made intelligible through practical engagement with it as embedded actors. *Adivasis* make the political field intelligible for them through their practical and conscious engagement with it as embedded actors, especially through practices of resistance, struggle and interrogation. The movement habitus that the *Adivasis* have acquired through their involvement in the struggles have enabled the *Adivasis* to be embedded actors who can adapt and adopt the practices of the political field. That is where Farrugia's (Farrugia, 2015; Farrugia and Woodman, 2015) assertion holds ground that reflexivity is continuous with the dispositions of the. Embedding reflexive political practices through such experiences can make it integral to the dispositions that structure the subjectivity of the *Adivasis*.

7.7.1 Positioning within the electoral politics

Adivasis began their reflexive re-engagement with positioning themselves within the electoral politics, which is the seminal space of the political field. Their experiment of *Rashtreeya Mahasabha*, the political wing of AGMS did not succeed electorally when C K Janu contested in Idukki for the Parliament in the aftermath of *Muthanga* Land Occupy struggle. Jithin says that they did not have the machineries and mechanisms to compete with the established political parties. But as an experiment in re-engaging the political field with a different set of capitals, habitus, practices and subjectivity that they galvanised through the land struggles, this experience can be read as a process of embedding reflexive disposition as the field became more practically intelligible for the *Adivasis*. Jithin reflects on this experience:

> For the politicians, AGMS was not an organization that could have been easily handled as their vote-bank and then they began their work locally to sabotage it. We did not have enough skills to combat that. We did not have a cadre system in our organization. These parties had ruled for so many years and had their systems established and we were not in any way like them. We knew that winning against these established forces without sufficient resources or machineries was impossible but it was an experiment that was worth the effort.

Jithin is reflecting on the experience of campaigning for the election that C K Janu contested[93], and tries to unpack the dynamics involved in the political process of consolidating *Adivasi* votes. The machinery, resources and established practices (derived from economic, social and symbolic capitals) of political parties are formidable for the nascent *Adivasi* movement experimenting with political contests. The established parties also have their time-tested strategies that they have developed over decades of competition with other parties in the political fray. When the *Adivasi* enter the wider field of politics, they find their command over the capitals quite wanting to challenge the dominant actors. However, the *Adivasi* effort can be seen as politicizing their reconstituted subjectivity and embedding reflexive dispositions with a practical orientation to engage the political as actors with agency. They assert their desire to represent themselves and to make their mark within the political field and imprint their belonging. This re-engaging of the political and embedding of their reflexive political subjectivity is taken forward in diverse domains of the political field. When the *Adivasi* women decided to stand for elections to local governing bodies they had to confront the predatory power of these machineries, resources and strategies. The primary challenge was to convince *Adivasis* from different sub-communities with indelible party loyalties. Mallika explains her own experience with the *Adivasis* on the Aralam Farm:

> We went to each and every house here. We went around walking, taking the pain in approaching everyone personally to ask for their votes and support for the local election. They all said that they would give but at the time of the vote, the parties played their cards, pumped in money and grabbed the votes. When we went to the houses of *Adivasis* they treated us like party campaigners and asked whether we had brought anything for them? We told them that we were *Adivasis* like you and we decided to contest the elections because it would help our cause. If you could cooperate with us, we could do many things for our people. Somehow they did not understand this. When the party candidates or campaigners used to go to these houses, they would

[93] C K Janu contested in the 2004 Indian Parliament election as a candidate from Idukki constituency which has 11.51% of total *Adivasi* population in Kerala.

> carry food and provisions for these people. The *Adivasis* were used to that style of campaign and that was the reason why they asked us the same thing. They also got the old *Adivasi* women to the polling station, calling them our mother and took them to the station in front of us. Then we confronted them asking when did you get a mother, who was not there until now, just today?

The political parties use their machinery, and economic and social capital to get the *Adivasis* to the poll station and caste votes for them. They also use soft strategies, which they accrued as career politicians, such as calling them (the elderly among them, of course) 'mother' or 'father' to accord great respect. Mallika and other *Adivasi* candidates witnessed first-hand how all this has played out. But they didn't shy away anymore; rather they confronted the person with the question 'when did you get a mother, just today?'. Though it may not mean much in the course of the larger political processes, it demonstrates that young *Adivasi* women like Mallika have the symbolic capital to raise that question and confront established politician. It is indicative of the reconstituted political subjectivity that is reflexive enough to question and confront forces of power and in a way disrupt the reproduction of domination and subordination. This experience has given young *Adivasi* women like Mallika a first-hand knowledge of how the parties operate at the level of their own communities and has enabled them to embed their practical engagement with the political field. It also manifests the fragmentations within the political subjectivity of *Adivasis.* Kesavan, an older *Adivasi* activist, conceives this mode of intervention (contesting local elections) as a strategic action within the political field where he seeks to build bargaining power (symbolic capital) within the field for *Adivasis*:

> I contested the local election here as an independent candidate and came third, and the Congress and CPIM candidates lost to another independent candidate. I taught them a lesson. Can you make the Congress or CPIM or BJP politician do what is best for you? If you have that power, then there will be significant changes. If when Adivasi contests in an election, the 'possible winner' loses, and the 'possible loser' wins it, then there will be political clout for the Adivasi. When the 'possible winner' loses the election because of our candidates, then we have a clout to make a political bargain with these parties and get our demands executed.

This practical engagement with the political field is facilitating embedded disposition of *Adivasis* to be strategic actors who can reflexively reposition themselves in such a way as to accrue the desired benefits. In the political game of numbers, minority communities like *Adivasis* do not have the wherewithal to pressurize the mainstream parties as other communities do, but there are other ways out of this maze. Kesavan has thought about it and experimented with it. These kinds

of reflexive interventions, strategic manoeuvres, and practical negotiations have sprung up from the engaged *Adivasis* and these interventions do help them to navigate the asymmetrical relations of power that *Adivasis* have within the political field.

7.7.2 Representation as central to political belonging

The political subjectivity of *Adivasis*, as it has been shaped and constituted through the socio-political struggles, seem to have an embedded notion that their right to represent themselves within the political field as pivotal to their political belonging. While they understand that it is an arduous process, they also cognise that this embedded subjectivity needs to be articulated into institutional belonging within the political field. Vanaja, another woman candidate who contested a local election, believes that it is imperative to have *Adivasis* on local governing bodies to ensure that *Adivasi* interests are represented and they have a recourse to the world of schemes, funds and projects designated for *Adivasis*:

> Actually we felt that next time too we should contest in the elections. One of us should be there in the local governing body. Only then we would be able to do something. Now we do not know what is there for us at the local governing council (*panchayat*). We do not have any idea about our own funds. So there should be someone from us there.

Vanaja articulates the necessity of the politics of representation within the political field and positions her political subjectivity reflexively within the need to belong to the domains of decision-making where policies and projects are charted and funds allocated. Anju, a young housewife, understands and raises the question of voice quite seriously; she challenges the current practices of political representation and public service.

> If *Adivasis* come forward to work for us in politics, it would be easier for them to understand our problems than the outsiders who seek to represent us. That was our line of argument that we would better understand, voice and serve *Adivasi* concerns than any other candidates of the established political parties. I am convinced that it is because the *Adivasis* prioritise political parties that we do not have the development that we could otherwise have had. My considered opinion is that *Adivasis* themselves should champion *Adivasis* politics and should refrain from the debilitating process of consigning that to external agencies such as political parties of different hues.

These young *Adivasi* women represent the symbolic and moral economy that reconstituted political subjectivity of the *Adivasis.* As actors with agency, they are willing to re-engage the political which has treated them as objects of vote-bank politics rather than subjects of their

political choices and engagements. Their political subjectivity shaped by the movement habitus enable them to critically engage with the political practices, challenge them where necessary and to reflect on their implications for the lives of *Adivasis*. The reflexive political subjectivity of the *Adivasis* are enabling many *Adivasis* to see through the ways in which political patronage and *Adivasi* dependency operate.

7.7.3 Reflexive interrogation of political patronage

While on the one level it is important to exercise political belonging through practices of re-engaging the political process as actors in electoral contests, at another level it is essential to build a reflexive relation to the political field. The reflexive political subjectivity is enabling the ordinary *Adivasis* to engage in an interrogation of the dynamics of political patronage. Meena, an *Adivasi* woman, tries to explain how the system of dependency and patronage work among the *Adivasis* in the context of a conflict between *Adivasis* over collecting cashews from a piece of land on Aralam Farm.

> What we, *Adivasis*, do not realise is that when there is a problem such as this both the parties involved in the conflict will call the same politicians to resolve the issue. What will they do? They will try to compromise it because they do not want to lose their wards. They will not say that the Vietnam colony Adivasis should not collect the cashew nuts nor will they say that these people should not gather the cashew nuts. So at the end of the day, we become even more entrenched in their system of patronage by creating situations where we have to depend on them.

What matters here, is that *Adivasis* themselves are able to see through these strategies and tactics that politicians employ on an everyday routine to ensure the structures of political patronage ensues unhindered. Meena, an ordinary *Adivasi* house wife, not only has the insight into the ploy of political manoeuvring and contortions around them, but takes time to think through analytically how these social processes operate and how political actors enmesh the *Adivasis* within an inescapable web of patronage. Though all the *Adivasis* may not share the same level of insight, the fact that some of them do and they talk about it, create a discourse around it, would definitely keep the ball rolling as I could witness and listen to when we gathered for the FGD.

From their experiences with these established parties, *Adivasis* are able to reflect, analyse, draw their own conclusions about the whole mechanism of political patronage, vote-bank and manoeuvring. Their reflexive political subjectivity is enabling them to objectivize these interactions and unearth their implications for them, to understand how they are being constantly

objectivised in this political power game. Steeped in these experiences, the *Adivasis* are able to exercise their discretion, a vital cultural capital garnered from the mobilisation, when they assess the political games and gimmicks around them. The parties want *Adivasis* to add to the length of their marches[94], the *Adivasis* say to each other. From another FGD (2) on the Farm:

> Sunita: Whatever it be, we will not go if the party people come and call us. We have that realisation now. So whatever gimmicks they show, we will not fall for it anymore.
>
> Uma: We will not go. We have our organisation, and we have learned to see through and understand how all these parties manipulate us. So now we know, and we won't get carried away.
>
> Karthika: They want us to add to the length of their march. There are *Adivasis* who go for it, but we will not go.
>
> Sreejith: When we were in the colonies, we were also going after these parties. We know all these dynamics very clearly. They think that we are too ignorant. But we have been through all these.

The confident assertion that 'we know all these dynamics very clearly' comes from their intense scrutiny and interrogation of how they have been used by the politicians and parties and from their own analysis about their interactions with the political structures. They not only problematize this relation but also reveal that the perception of the politicians that *Adivasis* are ignorant is unwarranted. That assertion comes quite emphatically from what they have gone through, what they have gained and how their own subjectivity was transformed in the process.

7.8 Conclusion

The political subjectivity of *Adivasis* that is referred here is not all encompassing, that is all of the *Adivasis* in Kerala haven't been articulated into it. However, a considerable group of *Adivasis* have been through this journey and they are able to differentiate the grammar of party politics and *Adivasi* mobilisation. *Adivasis* have created their niche in the political realm for representing their concerns through hard fought socio-political mobilisation. While they have accrued land and other benefits as a result of these struggles, they have also reconstituted their political subjectivity. This subjectivity was articulated, at least initially, in contrast to the political parties who have been treating them as cadres in their structures of patronage. Their efforts to re-engage

[94] Political marches are often exercises of public demonstration of the strength of their following. The parties want to get as many supporters marching for them as possible to elongate the rally.

the political have established them as strategic actors within the political field and have enabled them to rework a reflexive relation to this 'field of power and struggle'. The embedded dispositions of reflexive subjectivity is enabling them to navigate the power-ridden maze of everyday life. These may, with their feel for the game, also stir up fresh practices that can restructure the field in a more democratizing ways.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

8.1 Context and Questions

Against the colonial anthropological and state attempts to construct the vast groups of people who were found outside the Hindu caste hierarchy as 'tribes' and constitute a 'tribal subjectivity', the *Adivasis* sought to reconstitute their subjectivity through their insurgencies and mobilisations. The glimmers of *Adivasi* political agency continued to spark and inflame movements in the postcolonial era where the state attempted to structure and contain them as objects of its developmental interventions. Unlike colonial plundering, the postcolonial incursions into *Adivasi* habitats were justified as legitimate cost for the developmentalist nation building and the *Adivasis* were dispensed to pay the price through massive evictions, dispossession and displacement. *Adivasis* have resisted such cataclysmic dispossession through protracted struggles as exemplified in the historic mobilisation against massive displacement and evictions triggered by Narmada Dam. While the *Adivasis* continued to reconstitute their subjectivity in and through these resistances, the scholarly rendering of this agency has been caught up in a double bind, Banerjee (Banerjee, 2006) would argue. On the one hand it is skewed in the disciplinary boundaries and gate keeping such as history, anthropology or sociology and on the other hand, as a result of this, it is represented as cultural and often devoid of its political moorings. Additionally, As Chandra (2015) argues they are treated as global subalterns engaged in endless struggle against anything and everything be it anti-globalisation or environmental struggles or class wars or cultural politics. Therefore it is vital to unpick the *Adivasi* agency and subjectivity. This is an important point of departure that my research on *Adivasi* subjectivity sought to engage with by investigating the processes and dynamics that structured *Adivasi* movement habitus and reconstituted their subjectivity.

Though most of these *Adivasi* mobilisations in India were locally articulated and embedded on issues of specific sub-communities, be it in the case of the anti-colonial great rebellions or the movements in postcolonial years, they were rendered and documented as shaping the *Adivasi* politics at the national level. These become glaring in the movements against the neoliberal state and corporate vandalism and pillaging unleashed on the *Adivasis* living in mineral rich topography of the country such as Jharkhand, Odisha and so on. *Adivasi* resistance against the multi-national takeover of their land for mining and other exploitative business purposes also became entangled in the Maoist movement in the so called red corridor that spans from Andhra through central India to Nepal, enabling the state to wreak havoc in those areas on the pretext of counter-insurgency security measures which in effect cleared land for the corporates, as the state

arrogated the mantle of a land broker. *Adivasi* subjectivity, enmeshed in armed resistance against the state invited scholarly attention that sought to unearth the intricate dynamics of neoliberal boom and militant repression of struggles such as that of *Adivasis*. These were also taking place in the context of the democratic victories of *Adivasis* in acts such as PESA 1996 and FRA 2006 and constructive engagement with the UN indigenous work group and declaration of indigenous rights. These complexities at the national level, defined the *Adivasi* subjectivity and political agency in India. But in Kerala, the articulations in the post-globalisation period was through protracted democratic mobilisations for land and resources. While these struggles were drawing impetus from the democratic struggles at the national level and the political opportunities that the international attention on indigenous plights brought, the socio-political mobilisations were enunciated with specificities entrenched in the spatial and temporal context of Kerala. The scholarly documentation and rendering of these struggles centred on identity politics of indigeneity that unravelled the edifice of Kerala Model of Development and the hollowing out of class politics (Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, 2004; Kjosavik, 2006; Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, 2006; Steur, 2009; Kjosavik, 2010; Steur, 2010; Steur, 2011a; Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, 2015; Steur, 2015a, 2017). However, studies that investigated the processes of social formation of *Adivasis* in and through these struggles and the conspicuous changes in their disposition, knowhow, perceptions, propensities for action were lacking. This lacuna also resulted in undertheorizing the reconstitution of *Adivasi* subjectivity and its implications for political belonging and engagement. My research sought to address this gap by keeping the question of *Adivasi* subjectivity front and centre. Therefore the central problematic of this research was to understand the *Adivasi* habitus and subjectivity evolved through the socio-political mobilisation for land.

8.2 Theory and Methodology

Sociologically understanding these changes in the embedded dispositions and sedimented competencies of *Adivasis* through land struggles necessitated weaving together a conceptual framework that encompassed Bourdieusian theories of practice, movement theories and theories of reflexive subjectivity. The productive permutation of movement theories provided concepts such as field of contention in which the struggle unfolds, movement habitus which embeds the dispositions and competencies inculcated from the practices of mobilisation, reflexive subjectivity that is reconstituted upon the movement habitus and that repositions the *Adivasis* in the political field as reflexive actors. This framework was delineated by utilizing the interpretative directions provided by Crossley (1999a, 1999b, 2002a, 2002c, 2002b, 2003, 2004, 2005) and Farrugia (2011, 2013a, 2013b, 2015, 2016).

As these were questions of the qualitative changes in the subjectivity of *Adivasis*, the data had to be generated through qualitative research design. The five months in the field provided opportunity to move with the major actors of the movement and to be with the *Adivasis* in the resettlement land on Aralam Farm. Within the context of a new campaign that was reshaping and realigning the activists and communities, I could witness how it was unfolding in the field. The split within the movement (AGMS) had created an atmosphere of introspection and reflection among the *Adivasis* and activists and I found the field both active (in terms of the new campaign) and reflective (in the context of the split) at the same time. As I employed purposive and snowball sampling for this research to identify the best suited persons for eliciting the required data, I could also experience the collaborative interventions from the *Adivasis*, who had become positively interested in this research as a result of our interactions in the marches, demonstrations, commemoration, and planning meetings. I collected data from interviewing 40 participants and from 5 focus groups involving 27 participants in total, besides my ethnographic observations. These recorded conversations were translated from vernacular and coded into Nvivo for identifying key themes emerging from the data.

8.3 Structuring of *Adivasi* field of contention

As I looked at the restructuring of *Adivasi* habitus and the reconstituting of *Adivasi* subjectivity the first question was to look at the structuring of an *Adivasi* field of contention within which these processes of restructuring and reconstitution take place. For Bourdieu habitus is in a reciprocal conditioning and structuring relation to the field and therefore, to understand the field of struggle is pertinent in fathoming the restructuring of the movement habitus. This field of struggle for *Adivasi* mobilisation is conceived as field of contention which is structured and restructured in power struggles and strategic action of the actors within the field who seek to shore up their position to accrue maximum benefits in relation to that field. The genealogy of *Adivasi* field of contention was traced to the actors who were part of diverse movements and who possessed the capitals and habitus that their involvements in those movements endowed them with. This salient feature of the restructuring of habitus was corroborated by social movement scholars such as McAdam and Whittier who have established that the biographical impact of involvements in social movements continue to exert influence on the actors even 20 years down the line, hinting at enduring changes – restructuring. The activists who coalesced into the *Adivasi* mobilisation came from radical left movement (CPI(ML) Maoist), *Dalit* movements and *Adivasi* land occupy activism. The disillusioned radical left activists and the praxis longing *Dalit* intellectuals and activists came together to articulate a *Dalit* field of contention in Kurichi struggle. The activists found their acquired capitals and habitus pivotal in taking the struggle to fruition and in

structuring a *Dalit* field of contention. Their embedded dispositions for mobilisation and activism, their acquired capitals such social capital of orchestrating networks, media attention, support cultural capital of managing large crowd in action, and knowhow of organising struggles, the symbolic capital of confidence in engaging the police, bureaucracy and state, all these were enormous assets that they brought together within the field of contention. Enthused by the synergy and the potential of the collaboration, the group joined the *Adivasi* land struggle activists to reclaim an *Adivasi* land illegally acquired for building a private engineering college at Kundalla. With that the field became restructured as *Adivasi Dalit* field of contention where the *Adivasis* brought in their capitals of land occupy activism and practices into the field where the radical left and *Dalit* activists had already pooled their capitals and practices. A common thread that underpinned all these sets of activists was a rejection of orthodox Marxism and class politics and that could explain why the *Adivasi* field of contention was enunciated in contradistinction to the left politics. The churning together of these capitals and practices provided the resources for orchestrating the state-wide mobilisation of the *Adivasis* under the banner of ADSS. Orchestrated from an *Adivasi Dalit* field of contention but focused primarily on *Adivasi* land issues, the field was on the verge of another restructuring. As Bourdieu mentioned, the field is the field of power and of struggle where actors compete for status and resources by positioning themselves strategically. As the field restructures it realigns the ruptured relations between habitus, capitals and field. The struggle and strategic action restructured the field into an exclusive *Adivasi* field of contention premised on the ethnic identity of *Adivasis*. The restructuring process was entangled in debates over the *Adivasi* identity which as a cultural capital became key. AGMS became the symbolic embodiment of this restructured *Adivasi* field of contention. The struggles that AGMS spearheaded consolidated the capitals among the *Adivasis* and geared the restructuring of their movement habitus. As they enter the new campaign in a wider field of contention that coalesces marginalised sections and minority communities, the *Adivasis* position themselves as strategic actors with required capitals and a movement habitus that has spawned decisive political practices.

Four key conclusions can be drawn from the restructuring of the *Adivasi* field of contention:

1. The *Adivasi* field of contention stands in structural relation to its actors and their subjective sense of engagement with the game of socio-political mobilisation in the field. The structuring and restructuring of *Adivasi* field of contention was a dynamic process of strategic action and power struggles.
2. The analysis of the genealogy of the *Adivasi* field of contention provided insights into the forms of capital and embedded dispositions they brought into this new field, which were pivotal in its enunciation and claim-making.

3. A rejection of orthodox Marxism and class politics was part of the habitus that each strand of activists who pooled into the structuring of *Adivasi* field of contention. This resulted in shaping and positioning the *Adivasi* field of contention in contradistinction to left politics and in articulating its content as a rejection of class politics.
4. This analysis of the structuring, contested restructuring and dynamic realigning of the field of contention is pivotal in understanding the unfolding of the mobilisation and the corollary restructuring of the *Adivasi* habitus and practices.

8.4 Restructuring the Movement Habitus and consolidating the forms of Capital

Analysing the process of restructuring the movement habitus and practices through the socio-political movements, the primary and fundamental process was that of framing. Through a dexterous process of framing the multi-layered crisis of *Adivasis* around the master frame of landlessness and incorporating existing injustice frames within its ambit, the mobilisation erupted. The multiple frames reinforced and embedded the master frame within the collective structure and consciousness of the movement. There is a reciprocal binding between frame and habitus: the movement frame landlessness can be seen as emerging from the habitus which is the generative principle; when this frame becomes embedded in the mobilisation, it can be seen as exerting a restructuring relationship with the habitus. This dynamic can be linked to the organic affinity that frames and habitus have as Husu (2013) has argued. What took the frame forward into an articulation through the mobilisation was the repertoire that emerged from the movement. As a constellation of strategies and tactics, and as a shared cultural creation, the repertoire can be seen as intricately connected to the habitus and the frame. The *Adivasis* developed land occupy as a repertoire of contention and as constellation of movement practices. They experimented and embedded this practice within the localised struggles and it became emblematic of the movement itself. The restructuring of the movement habitus of the *Adivasis* in and through these movement practices became evident in the way the state-wide *Adivasi* struggle unfolded. The genre of kudil ketti samaram (Hut building) was spontaneous extension of their land occupy struggles and that became deeply entrenched as a political practice for the *Adivasis*. This also allowed *Adivasis* to shore up their social, cultural and symbolic capitals relevant to the field of contention, be it the social networks among the activists, literati, media, other marginalised sections in struggle or the skill sets and knowledge in organising the movements and articulating their demands and engaging with the bureaucracy and state or the confidence, competence and emboldened approach of asserting their rights. What accentuated the restructuring of the movement habitus and its inculcation, the data shows, was the pedagogic

action that happened in the prefigurative experiments they had in the Muthanga land occupy struggle. It provided an opportunity to experiment with the imaginaries of *Adivasi* self-rule where they lived 'their kind of life' as Devika put it. They built huts, started cultivating in the land, set up day school for their children, organized Oorusabha meetings regularly, disciplined and reformed their behaviours such as drinking habits or organizing their relation to nature and its beings such as respecting the animals, birds and nature, policed their boundaries, administered the distribution of food and provisions, organized their rituals and played their drums in the evenings and sang and danced together. 45 days in Muthanga gave *Adivasis* a glimpse of what could be a possible future and this in turn became a pedagogic moment for the *Adivasis* to weld these into their movement habitus. Despite the tragic end of the movement in police firing, brutal torture and repression, the *Adivasis* had been transformed in terms of their movement habitus, capitals and entrenched political practices. The failure of the movement disillusioned and the police action terrorised the *Adivasis*, however, their return to the mobilisations show that their movement habitus , capitals and practices helped them navigate such traumas and negotiate the setbacks. These propel them to engage in struggles such as for Aralam Farm which they successfully negotiated to be one of the largest resettlement projects for *Adivasis* in Kerala. When they came up for 162 days long *Nilpu Samaram* in front of the secretariat in Thiruvananthapuram, they employed a completely different strategy within the field of contention. Their focus was to shore up their social and symbolic capital by engaging and dialoguing with the public. When their social capital of public support and the symbolic capital of self-assured and emboldened engagement and articulation of their rights, slowly became consolidated through this prolonged state-wide mobilisation, it built tremendous political pressure on the state to address the struggle. While these reinforced the restructuring of the movement habitus and political practices of the *Adivasis*, this also helped them to build up strong capitals within the larger political fields as they convinced the public to join them to get their rights established politically, socially and culturally.

The key conclusions that can be drawn include:

1. The framing of the multi-pronged and layered *Adivasi* crisis around landlessness was central to the initiation and entrenching of the mobilisation around land.
2. The movement frame is organically linked to the habitus, which is the generative principle that spawns the frame. The embedding of the frame produces a restructuring relation of the frame to the habitus which undergoes the process of reworking within the dynamics of the movement.
3. Land occupy as a repertoire of contention emerged from the lives of the *Adivasis* and in relation to the movement frame. As a constellation of movement practices the repertoire has a restructuring relation to the movement habitus. This repertoire gets reworked in

the context of the struggle at the Kerala Secretariat as Kudil Ketti Samaram, evidencing the embedded political practices.

4. The prefigurative experiments of *Adivasi* self-rule in Muthanga land occupy struggle becomes a pedagogic action that inculcated the movement habitus among the *Adivasis* with enduring effects.
5. Analysing the movement with theoretical concepts such as field of contention and forms of capital help us to fathom and interpret the strategic intervention of the *Nilpu Samaram* as an attempt at consolidating social and symbolic capital which in turn was used to mount pressure on the state to agree to their demands.

8.5 Reconstituting *Adivasi* subjectivity and political belonging

All these have now enabled the *Adivasis* to reconstitute their subjectivity reflexively in radically different ways as far as many *Adivasis* are concerned. They see shifts in themselves in the ways they conduct themselves, the way they organize their lives, interact with others and claim their rights. The emboldened, informed and assertive *Adivasis* are willing to re-engage the political field in which they had been positioned at the receiving end of political patronage as malleable objects for electoral gain. In shedding their 'primeval innocence' through the harsh experiences of land struggles where they acquired the cultural capital of political realization that enable them to see through the ploys and manoeuvres of the political parties and established politicians, the *Adivasis* have become reflexive actors in the field. Their rejection of the denigrating systems of political patronage and their embrace of autonomous political engagements in staking their claims to represent their interests in local governing bodies can be seen as evidences for the reconstituted subjectivity in the grassroots. Besides acquiring the capabilities, the capitals that enable them to navigate the everyday challenges and the political field as strategic actors, the reconstituted subjectivity is manifesting itself in multiple ways and arenas. In creative initiatives, in questioning the so-called depositories of bureaucratic power/knowledge, in challenging the local politicians, in reforming the personal lives, in reimagining the educated future of their children, *Adivasi* political subjectivity is opening new trajectories of life. But this reconstituted subjectivity is not in any way all-encompassing or homogeneously articulated or euphorically embraced. There are ambivalences within the subjectivity, insecurities and uncertainties that are part of any social change are integral to it. Moreover, this reconstituted subjectivity is in contestation with other subjectivities of *Adivasis* who have not been part of this journey or who have preferred to remain within the perimeters of loyalties and established ways. This struggle is quite pronounced on Aralam Farm, the *Adivasi* resettlement project, where they are organizing a landed life. The inter sub-community tensions, fragmentations, diverging political affiliations, ambivalences of

individuation and detraditionalisation are all indications that there are fissures and contentions within the *Adivasi* subjectivity. However, as this study has sought to uncover the processes of restructuring that has been occurring in and through the land struggles, the *Adivasis* can stake claim to the movement habitus, capitals and political practices that these have ushered in and the reconstituted subjectivity and political belonging. I argue that these embedded subjectivity and reflexive disposition will allow *Adivasis* to explore and experiment innovative interventions within the political field as creative actors as well as in their everyday life as practical and strategic actors.

Key conclusions:

1. The restructured movement habitus and consolidated forms of capital within the *Adivasi* field of contention has enabled them to reconstitute their subjectivity.
2. This reconstituted subjectivity is facilitating the assertion of their rights, giving them a voice in everyday interactions as well as in formal communications such as in public forums, with bureaucrats and politicians and a desire for a politics of self-representation.
3. The reflexive content of the reconstituted *Adivasi* subjectivity is at work in their attempts at biographical rework, personal reforms and in enunciating a renewed relation to the self.
4. The reconstituted subjectivity is willing to re-engage the political field as strategic actors and their attempts to contest in local elections as independent *Adivasi* candidates are unravelling the politics of patronage and brinkmanship. They are able to see through the manoeuvres and call out the bluster as a result of these.
5. There are ambivalences to this subjectivity as it is constant contestation with *Adivasis* who have not been part of this formative process of socio-political mobilisation. The sub-community fragmentations and divides are indicative of the fissures of the subjectivity.
6. This experience of reworking their habitus and reconstituting their subjectivity may enable them to be strategic actors in the political field where they have stamped their belonging and in the everyday life with umpteen challenges to navigate.

8.6 Policy Implications of this research

This research on *Adivasi* subjectivity positions *Adivasis* as strategic actors within the political field and in everyday life. This has several policy implications:

The first and foremost is implementing the PESA by making the *Adivasi* resettlement areas under the fifth schedule with the Governor having a greater say in the *Adivasi* matters and the Tribal Advisory Council assuming greater voice of representation for the *Adivasis*. This research

substantiates that the gains made through their socio-political mobilisation can be efficaciously harnessed in bringing in this structural change to their political administration.

Secondly, this research recommends reworking the practices of planning and executing the welfare projects among the *Adivasis*, wherein with their reconstituted subjectivity and belonging, they can be involved in all stages as actors with agency. Therefore, inclusive and decentralized planning and execution processes have to be integral to the political processes and bureaucratic system which are seemingly impervious to such radical shifts in practices despite continued lip service to the same.

The strengthening of *Oorukoottam,* the village collective, and *Oorusabha*, the village council of *Adivasis*, is pivotal in consolidating these gains in *Adivasis* subjectivity to ensure that their voices are represented in the local governing bodies and in relevant avenues of power. This needs to go beyond the partisan politics to ensure that they become the building blocks of *Adivasi* autonomous rule under fifth schedule.

Community organization schemes should be initiated and where necessary rehashed to creatively involve the activists and leaders within these movements to be part of rebuilding the communities.

Policies of land distribution should be accompanied by provisions for other resources such as agricultural support, employment opportunities, transportation and schooling facilities and so on that can make their resettlement in the given land practically viable and sustainable.

8.7 Future Directions of Research

The future directions of inquiry, that this research give rise to, are on the following areas:

a) Documenting the multiple local resistances that different sub-communities of *Adivasis* are engaged in at various geographical locations. Some of them are land struggles, some are resistance movements against hydroelectric projects and some are mobilisations against atrocities and everyday discriminations. These can shed light on how the movement habitus and subjectivity are operative in diverse locations and with varied actors.
b) With *Nilpu Samaram* already foraying into the possibilities of galvanising the social media to its advantage, documenting and interrogating the online discourses that construct and represent the *Adivasi* subjectivity, activism and resistance can be explored.
c) The *Adivasis* and the conservationist environmental activists were at loggerheads in Muthanga struggle. Now, the land struggle activists have been arguing that their occupy struggles and movement practices are deeply conservatory. With climate change and

annual floods re-igniting the environmental discourses in Kerala, it is worth investigating the evolving relations between the land struggle activists (both *Adivasis* and non-*Adivasis*) and the environmental activists in Kerala.

8.8 Conclusion

This research has looked at the processes of transformations that the *Adivasis* have experienced in their lives and sought to understand them as restructuring the habitus, consolidating capitals and reconstituting their subjectivity and political belonging. With the reconstituted *Adivasi* subjectivity, in and through a protracted land struggles in Kerala, they are able to negotiate the challenges they face in everyday lives and navigate the political field. This reworking of their habitus and subjectivity may further the processes of their consolidation as a political community that can engage in constructive demands for power and resource sharing and ensure that their rights enshrined in the constitutions are honoured.

Appendix A ERGO Approved Research Tools and Material

A.1 Participant Information Sheet

(for adivasis)

Study Title: Power, Identity and Reflexivity: Interrogating their dynamics and interplay in the margins of India

Researcher: Aneesh Joseph Ethics number: 24391

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study about the adivasi movement in Kerala. It is an attempt to understand the dynamics and processes of the socio-political mobilization of adivasis and your life in Aralam Farm. This leaflet explains what is involved. Kindly read it through before you decide whether or not you would like to participate.

What is the research about?

As you know, since 2000 the adivasis (indigenous people) in Kerala have resorted to socio-political mobilization for addressing your longstanding grievances. These long struggles for land and allied rights have enabled you to create a political space and agency around your identity as adivasis. Having achieved your stated objective of land for a significant section of the adivasis in Kerala, you have started organizing your lives in the land given by the state, such as Aralam Farm and Sugandhagiri Estate. This research tries to study your movement and the life in the newly acquired land. The aim of this research is:

To understand the dynamics of your socio-political movement

To study the ways in which you are organizing your lives in the land distributed by the state

To explore the dynamics of the adivasi – non-adivasi activist relations in the movement and after.

The research includes field observations on Aralam Farm (the land distributed to you by the state), interviews and focus group discussions with you and interviews with other social activists associated with these movements.

Why have I been chosen?

Appendix A

You have been part of this movement and a beneficiary of the land distributed by the state. Your experiences in the movement and in organizing adivasi life on Aralam Farm are invaluable for this study.

What will happen to me if I take part?

The research consists of field observations, interviews and focus group discussions.

The field observations:

Try to understand your daily routines and interactions

Attempt to map your everyday struggles in organizing your life in this land

Interviews and Focus Group Discussions will:

Focus on your experiences in the movement, what you have learnt, and the personal changes that you have undergone.

Take place when and where is most convenient for you, and take approximately 90 minutes

With your permission I will audio-record the interview.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

The study will contribute to the knowledge on adivasi movement, life and politics. It will also help in reaching your concerns and experiences to a larger audience who may benefit from them.

Are there any risks involved?

There are no risks involved in participating in the study

Will my participation be confidential?

Your participation in the study will be confidential. Your anonymity will be protected by using pseudonyms and by avoiding personally identifying references. The information gathered from you will be stored in password protected section on computer.

The findings from the research will be:

Written up in dissertation for Ph D

Written up in academic publications and conference presentations

What happens if I change my mind?

I will ask you to sign a consent-to-use form at the interview, but you can withdraw from the research at any stage, up to the point of writing the thesis (approximately 12 months after your interview).

What happens if something goes wrong?

In the unlikely case that you may have any concern or complaint about this study, please contact the Head of Research Governance (02380 595058, rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk).

Where can I get more information?

If you have any questions about the research and your participation please contact me using the email or phone number given below. I am happy to answer your questions over phone, or in person.

Aneesh Joseph, PGR Student, University of Southampton, UK: aj11g15@soton.ac.uk; +919539079335

A.2 Participant Information Sheet

(for social activists)

Study Title: Power, Identity and Reflexivity: Interrogating their dynamics and interplay in the margins of India

Researcher: Aneesh Joseph Ethics number: 24391

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study about the adivasi movement in Kerala. It is an attempt to understand the dynamics and processes of the socio-political mobilization of adivasis and their life on Aralam Farm. This leaflet explains what is involved. Kindly read it through before you decide whether or not you would like to participate.

What is the research about?

Since 2000 the adivasis (indigenous people) in Kerala have resorted to socio-political mobilization to address their longstanding grievances. These long struggles for land and allied rights have enabled them to create a political space and agency around their identity as adivasis. Having achieved their stated objective of land for a significant section of the adivasis in Kerala, they have started organizing their lives in the land given by the state at Aralam Farm. The challenge before the movement now is to maintain the acquired adivasi identity amidst divisive sub-identities (of class, ethnicity and religion) and to negotiate their political space in the neoliberal Kerala. The aim of this research is:

To understand the dynamics of the socio-political movement of adivasis

To study the everyday lives of adivasis in the land distributed by the state

To explore the dynamics of the adivasi – non-adivasi activist relations

The research includes field observations in Aralam Farm, interviews and focus group discussions with adivasis and interviews with non-adivasi social activists associated with these movements in Kerala.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been part of this movement as a non-adivasi social activist and your experiences in associating with the movement and the adivasi life after these movements are invaluable for this study.

What will happen to me if I take part?

An important part of the research is the interviews with non-adivasi social activists. Interview will:

Focus on your experiences in scio-political activism and your personal association with the adivasi movement in Kerala

take place when and where it is most convenient for you, and take approximately 90 minutes.

With your permission I will audio-record the interview.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

The study will contribute to the knowledge on adivasi movement, life and politics. Your experiences, achievements and setbacks in movement organization will be an important source for those, like me, who are interested in the cause.

Are there any risks involved?

There are no risks involved in participating in the study as this study is not exploring sensitive topics.

Will my participation be confidential?

As representatives of the activists associated with the adivasi movement, interviews will be 'on the record'. During the interview you can, at any stage, indicate that a remark should be treated as 'off the record' and we will honour that. Other than using attributed quotes, the interview recording will only be available to me as the researcher. If, in case, you would like anonymity to be maintained, I shall keep the interview confidential and avoid personally identifying references in the analysis and writing up of the research.

The findings from the research will be:

Written up in dissertation for Ph D

Written up in academic publications and conference presentations

What happens if I change my mind?

I will ask you to sign a consent-to-use form at the interview, but you can withdraw from the research at any stage, up to the point of writing the thesis (approximately 12 months after your interview).

What happens if something goes wrong?

In the unlikely case that you may have any concern or complaint about this study, please contact the Head of Research Governance (02380 595058, rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk).

Where can I get more information?

If you have any questions about the research and your participation please contact me using the email or phone number below. I am happy to answer your questions over phone, or in person.

Aneesh Joseph, PGR Student, University of Southampton, UK: aj11g15@soton.ac.uk;
+919539079335

A.3 Consent Form

Study title: Power, Identity and Reflexivity: Interrogating their dynamics and interplay in the margins of India

Researcher name: Aneesh Joseph

Ethics reference: 24391

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (version 2/03.01.2017) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study. ☐

I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be recorded and used ☐

I give permission to have the interview audio-recorded and understand that it will be 'on-the-record' unless I state otherwise ☐

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time prior to the ☐

Data Protection

I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study.

Name of participant (print name)……

Signature of participant……..

Date……

A.4 Consent Form

Study title: Power, Identity and Reflexivity: Interrogating their dynamics and interplay in the margins of India

Researcher name: Aneesh Joseph

Ethics reference: 24391

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (version 2/03.01.2017) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study. ☐

I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be recorded and used ☐

I give permission to have the Focus Group Discussion audio-recorded and understand that it will be 'on-the-record' unless I state otherwise and will be entitled to linked anonymity of the FGD group ☐

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time prior to the ☐

Data Protection

I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study.

Name of participant (print name)……

Signature of participant……..

Date……

A.5 Interview guides: a) for Adivasi leaders b) for adivasi activists

I. Interviews with Adivasi leaders

Topics	**Questions**	**Time**
Introduction	Welcome • Introducing the research: It is about the adivasi movement in Kerala, your experiences of struggle and resistance in and through the movement, your everyday life and continued struggles after the movement • Sign the participant information sheet and the consent form Explaining the Process • It is an attempt to learn from you • Free flowing sharing on topics/questions suggested • There is no right or wrong answer, feel free to say as you would like to Logistics • It will last for 60-90 minutes • Feel free to take a break or stop in between • Inform and turn on the audio recorder {*Facilitator:* • *materials to be ready – PIS, consent forms and pens, audio recorder and field note }*	10 minutes
Themes	**Questions**	80 minutes
Personal story	1. Position in AGMS (Grand Assembly of Adivasis) and length of association 2. How did you come to this movement? Were you active in any other political / civil society movements before?	

	3. What was your involvement in the three waves of the state-wide agitation of adivasis (2000, 2003 and 2014)?	
Social Movement Organization	4. What was the context of consolidating adivasi politics and forging a movement? 5. How did you organize the resources required for such long periods of agitation – money, people, food, media support? 6. How did you (micromobilize) attract and recruit the adivasis into activists? What were your strategies for conscientizing, mobilizing and sustaining the adivasis in the movement?	
Political consciousness	7. As the leaders of your movement stated in the media there was a stereotypical image of adivasi as 'silent, invisible and submissive'. Do you think that has changed due to these movements? What changes do you see in yourself? At what point did you have the confidence to challenge the status quo or power structures? How did this shift come about?	
Indigenous Identity	8. What do you normally use to refer to yourself? Adivasis or the community (sub-identity) or scheduled tribe? Which of these identities are important for you and in what ways? 9. How do you negotiate the (fragmentations and polarizations) divisions among the adivasis in terms of various sub-identities?	
Disciplining	10. How did your movement try to change the habits and ways of life among the adivasis? Such as controlling their drinking habits, encouraging their studies, building the notion of 'savings', etc.? What were their responses to such attempts?	

Adivasi-non-adivasi activist relations	11. How helpful have the non-adivasi activists contributions been? How do you assess their involvement and association with the movement?	
Everyday life in the land distributed by government	12. How are you continuing the struggle in the landed life of adivasis? What is the role of the movement in the everyday life of adivasis? How are you associated with them in their post-land-struggle life? 13. How has the movement changed the everyday lives of adivasis qualitatively? What evidence can we garner from Aralam Farm?	

II. Interview with the adivasis in Aralam

Topics	**Questions**	**Time**
Introduction	Welcome • Introducing the research: It is about the adivasi movement in Kerala, your experiences of struggle and resistance in and through the movement, your everyday life and continued struggles after the movement • Sign the participant information sheet and the consent form Explaining the Process • It is an attempt to learn from you • Free flowing sharing on topics/questions suggested • There is no right or wrong answer, feel free to say as you would like to Logistics • It will last for 60-90 minutes • Feel free to take a break or stop in between • Inform and turn on the audio recorder {*Facilitator:*	10 minutes

	• *materials to be ready – PIS, consent forms and pens, audio recorder and field note }*	
Themes	**Questions**	80 minutes
Personal story	1. How did you come to know about AGMS (Grand Assembly of Adivasis) and length of your association 2. Were you active in any other political / civil society movements before? 3. What was the context of your decision to join the movement? 4. Were you involved in all the three waves of the state-wide agitation; (the hut-built agitation in 2000, Muthanga occupy struggle in 2003 and Standing agitation in 2014)? 5. What are the other local adivasi movements in which you have participated?	
Social Movement Organization	6. Did you contribute to the resources required for such long periods of agitation – money, people, food, media support? 7. How did you get convinced that agitation is the way out of the miseries that you had been experiencing for many years? 8. Were there moments when you wanted to quit? What keeps you going with the movement?	
Political consciousness	9. When did you decide to go against the stereotyped notion of adivasis as 'submissive, silent and peace-loving'? How did you develop a questioning mind and a resisting mindset?	
Indigenous Identity	10. What has been your experience of being known by your community (sub) identity and as adivasis? Do you talk about yourself as 'Scheduled Tribes'?	

	11. How did you manage to accommodate others belonging to different communities (sub-identities) as your own people, as adivasis?	
Disciplining	12. What changes have you brought about in your life as a result of your association with the movement? Such as controlling your drinking habits, encouraging studies of your children, building the notion of 'savings', etc.? Did you find them too demanding and constraining your freedom?	
Adivasi-non-adivasi activist relations	13. How helpful have the non-adivasi activists contributions been?	
Everyday life in the land distributed by government	14. Are you happy with the land you have received? What more, do you think, should the movement/state do for adivasis now? What is the role of the movement in your everyday life? 15. Has the movement changed your everyday lives of adivasis qualitatively in this new site, *Aralam/Sugandhagiri*? Have you acclimatized to the change of place? 16. Are you politically active in this new place when there are issues in your vicinity?	

A.6 Interview with Key Social activists and associates:

Topics	**Questions**	**Time**
Introduction	Welcome • Introducing the research: It is about the adivasi movement in Kerala, their engagement with the state and the public in and through the movement and the changes that they have undergone.	10 minutes

	• Sign the participant information sheet and the consent form Explaining the Process • It is an attempt to learn from you • Free flowing sharing on topics/questions suggested • There is no right or wrong answer, feel free to say as you would like to Logistics • It will last for 60-90 minutes • Feel free to take a break or stop in between • Inform and turn on the audio recorder {*Facilitator:* • *materials to be ready – PIS, consent forms and pens, audio recorder and field note }*	
Themes	**Questions**	80 minutes
Intersection of personal trajectory of politics and adivasi movement	14. Personal story of social activism 15. How vital do you see 'adivasi politics' to your larger politics? 16. How did you come to associate with this movement? How do you see your role in the movement?	
Social Movement Organization: context and process	17. What were the multiple factors (historical, structural and external) that enabled the emergence of autonomous adivasi movement in Kerala? 18. To what extent did you play a role in the organizing, mobilizing and facilitating the resources required for the movement? 19. Were you involved in (micromobilizing) organizing the adivasis? If yes, could you elaborate?	
Political consciousness	20. Do you think there has been a change in the political consciousness of adivasis now? How did you contribute in bringing about a change in the consciousness of the adivasis? In terms of their	

	identity, their need for agitation, their right to assert their voice and demand what was rightfully theirs, to develop a questioning mind? 21. Do you think that they have attained a political agency that can autonomously launch and sustain movements for themselves? Organize their lives self-consciously?	
Indigenous Identity: fragmentations and polarizations	22. How did you engage and negotiate the internal divisions among the adivasis (in terms of their sub-identities) in the process of organizing the struggles and later?	
Disciplining	23. How did your movement try to reform/change the adivasi life? Such as controlling their drinking habits, encouraging their studies, building the notion of 'savings', etc.? What was their response to such attempts? Were there moments of frictions, disagreements, denouncing of your suggestions?	
Adivasi-non-adivasi activist relations	24. What were your moments of frustration and struggle in being part of this movement? Have you felt that they have not been living up to your expectations as activists or their involvement is insufficient and limited? 25. How do you think the adivasis should take this struggle forward? Do you envisage your continued association with it? 26. What do you consider as your personal learning from your association with the movement?	
Everyday life in the land distributed by government	27. How has the movement changed the everyday lives of adivasis qualitatively? What evidence can we garner from Aralam Farm? 28. Do you hear of instances where they have resorted to resistance when faced with everyday issues such as unwarranted police aggression, failure of welfare provisions, or violence/exploitation from non-adivasi social groups?	

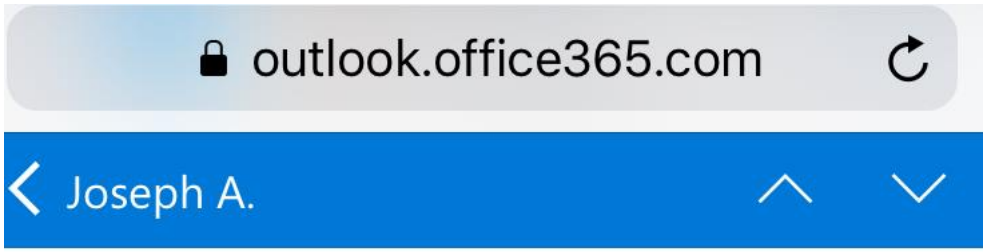
A.7 Focus Group Discussion with Adivasis

FGD Guide

Process / Area of discussion	**Activities / Questions for FGD**	**Time**
Introduction	Welcome • Introducing the researcher and welcoming the participants • Introducing the research: It is about the adivasi movement in Kerala, your experiences of struggle and resistance in and through the movement, your everyday life and continued struggles after the movement • Sign the participant information sheet and the consent form Explaining the Process • It is an attempt to learn from you • Free flowing discussions on suggested topics • There is no right or wrong views, every voice is valuable, not trying to reach consensus • The researcher will act as facilitator • We shall adhere to confidentiality of this group Logistics • It will last for 90-120 minutes • Feel free to move around • Ensure that you have Signed in the participant information sheet and consent form • Help yourself to refreshments • Inform and turn on the audio recorder Ground Rules • Everyone participates in the discussion • Maintain confidentiality • Respect for differences in opinions, views and experiences • Kindly let the other speak and avoid side conversations {*Facilitator:* • *materials to be ready – PIS, consent forms and pens, audio recorder and field note* • *if possible write down the ground rules*}	10 minutes
Discussion	**Discussion Begins**	

Sharing of experiences	Could you share • how you came in to the movement • your personal experiences in the movement	10 minutes
Perceptions of changes	• The changes your community has undergone	10 minutes
Political consciousness	• Has the movement affected the way you understand and relate to politics/ political parties and the state and its machineries?	10 minutes
Non-adivasi activists and support networks	• How have the non-adivasi activists helped in shaping the movement?	10 minutes
Everyday Issues and stories	• Your everyday struggles in the new place • How has the movement enabled / constrained you to face these struggles?	10 minutes
Navigating polarization and fissures within	• How easy and compelling is it for you to identify yourself as an 'adivasi' along with people belonging to other subgroups? religious or political affiliations?	10 minutes
Way forward	• What are the challenges and struggles that you see ahead?	10 minutes
Conclusion	Thanking the participants • Thanking for their candid sharing • If anyone feels that anything important has been missed out, kindly feel free to discuss with the facilitator later	5 minutes

A.8 Ethics Committee Approval



ERGO <ergo@soton.ac.uk>
Sun 15/01/2017 21:07
Inbox

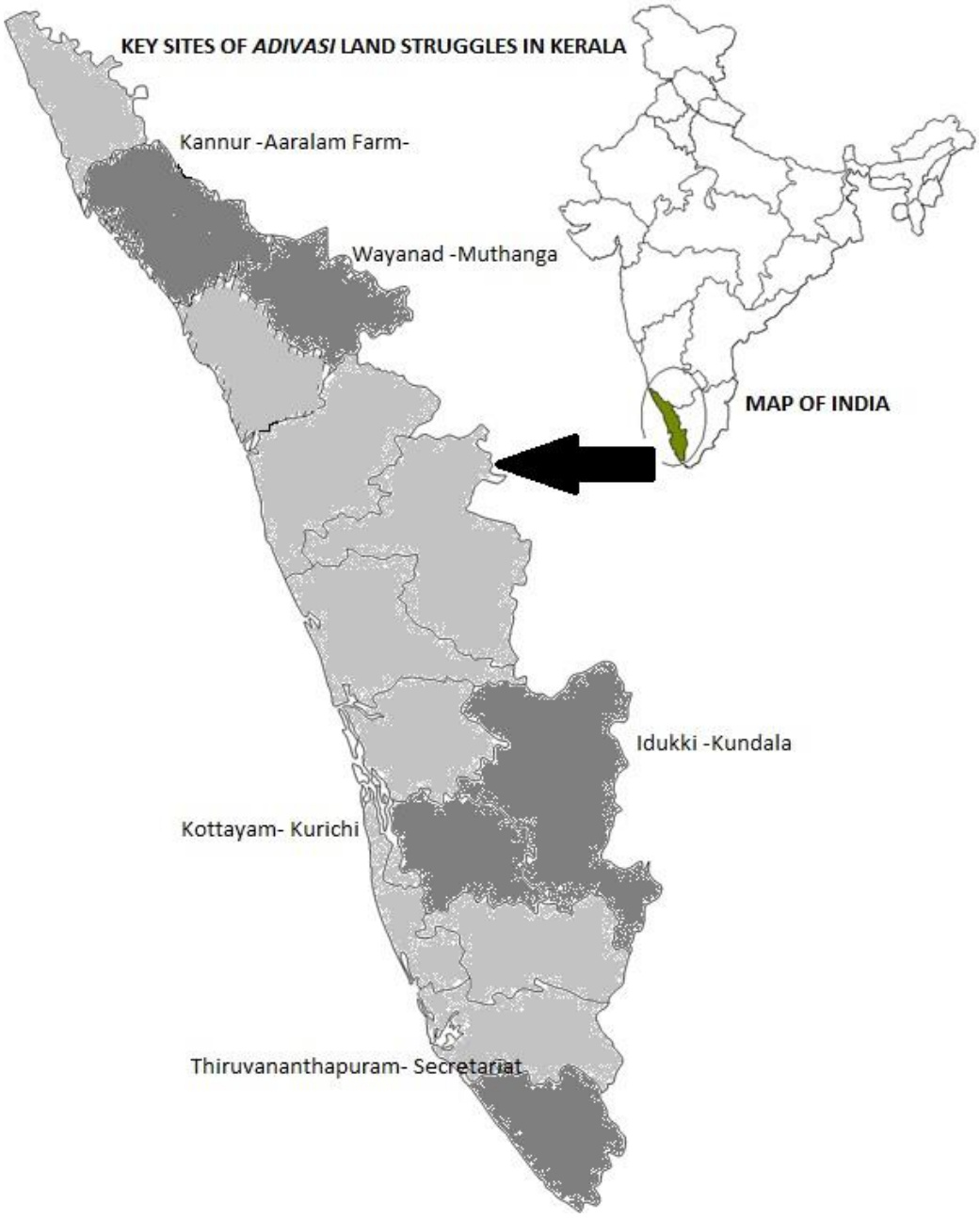
To: Joseph A.;

Submission Number: 24391
Submission Name: Power, identity and Reflexivity: interrogating their interplay and dynamics in the margins of India
This is email is to let you know your submission has been reviewed and approved by your supervisor.
It has now been sent to the Ethics committee for review.

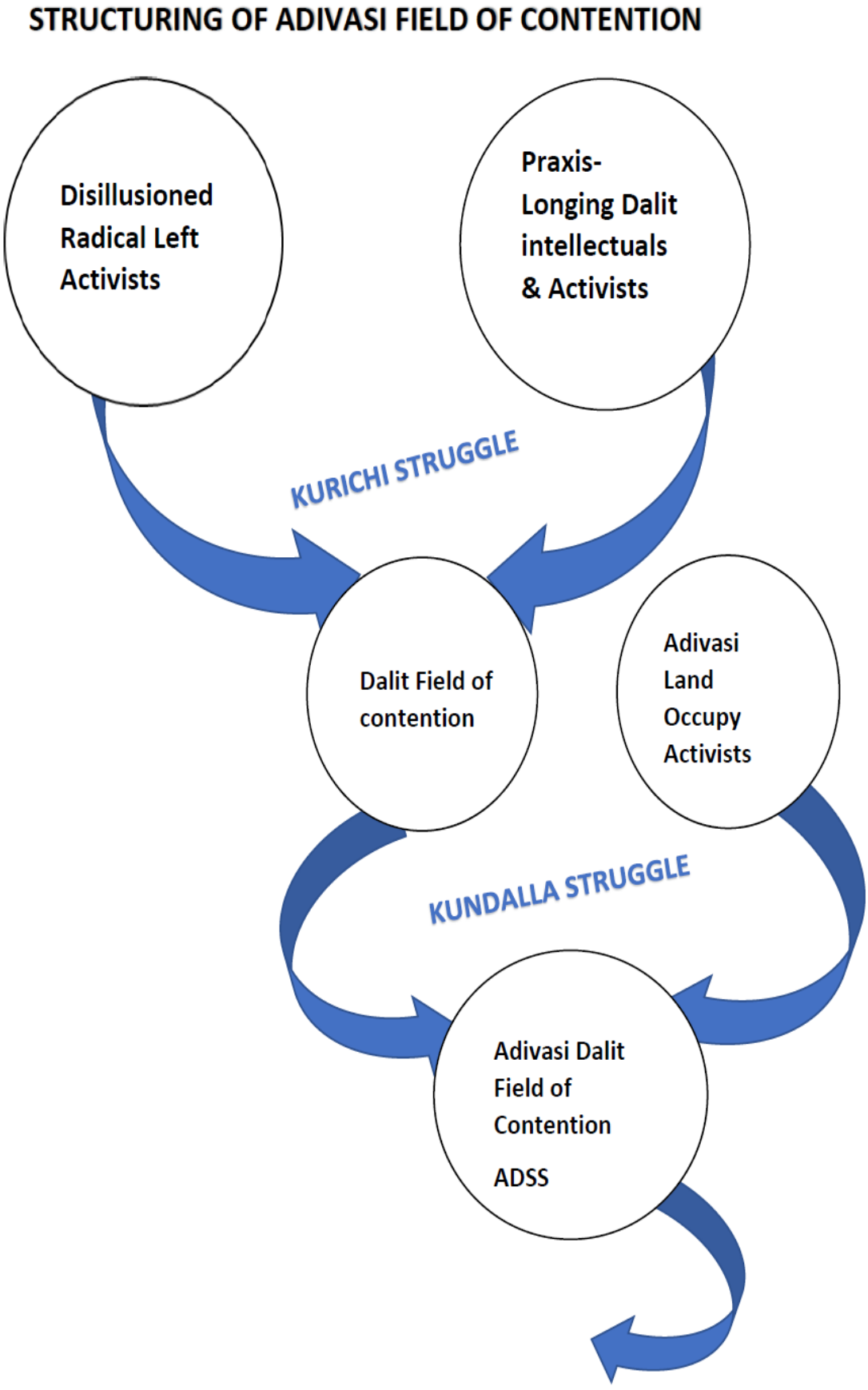
Comments
None
Click here to view your submission
Coordinator: Aneesh Joseph

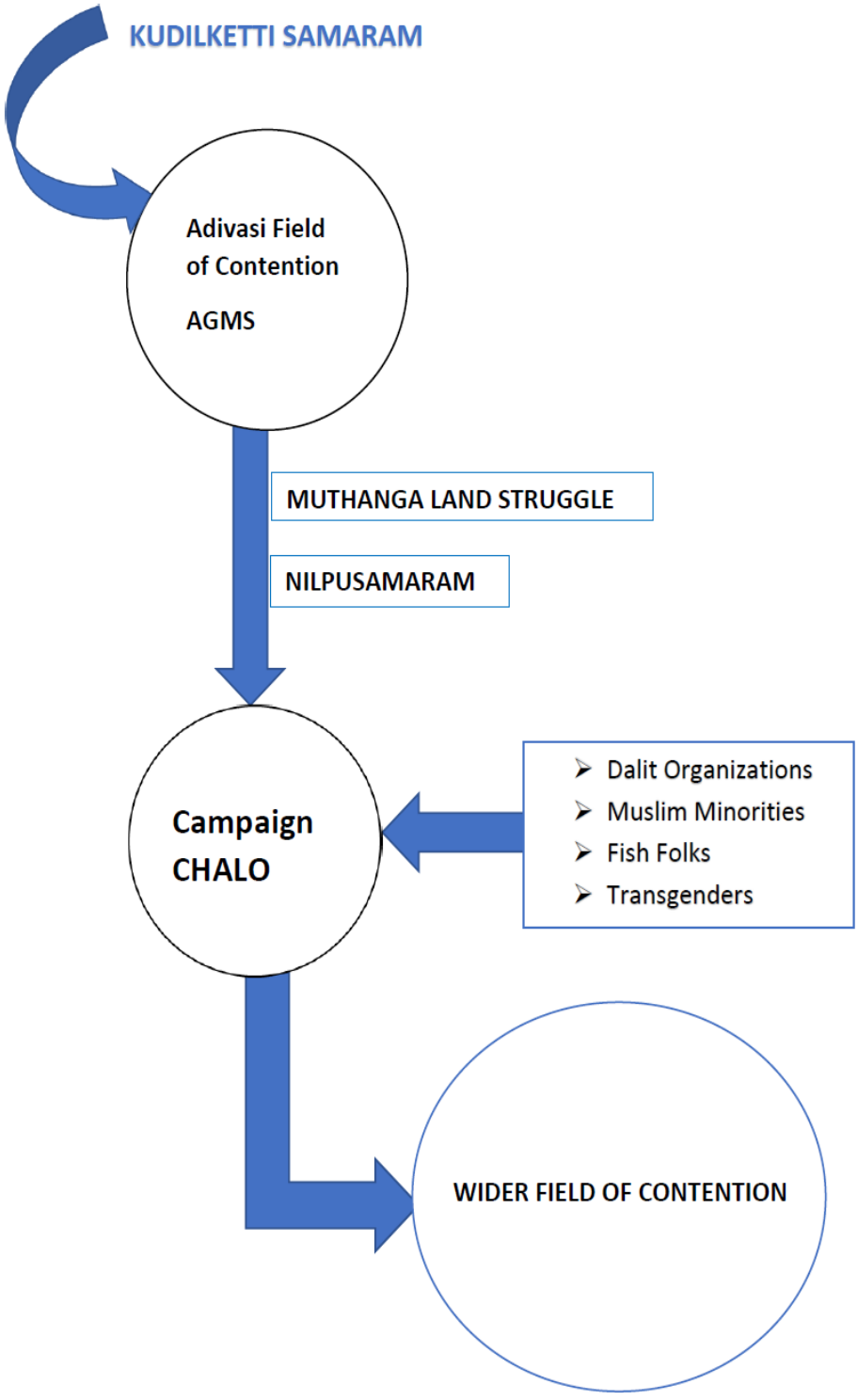
Appendix B *Adivasi* mobilisation: Supporting Details

B.1 Map of Kerala and Key sites related to Land struggle



B.2 The Structuring and Restructuring of *Adivasi* Field of Contention




KUDILKETTI SAMARAM
Adivasi Field of Contention
AGMS
MUTHANGA LAND STRUGGLE
NILPUSAMARAM
Campaign CHALO
Dalit Organizations
Muslim Minorities
Fish Folks
Transgenders
WIDER FIELD OF CONTENTION

B.3 The movements that are key to this research

No:	Name of Struggles	Date	Participants		Modes of Action	Result
			No. of families	No: of Persons		
1	Kolikkampady	1990	20	82 *Adivasis*	Occupying the land Building huts	By the end of 6 months every family were given 10 cents
2	Ambukuthi	April 1994	200	480 Adivasis	Occupying the land Building Huts C K Janu fasting unto death and collector intervened	The title deeds were given for the occupants
3	Cheengeri	25 Jan 1995	249	500 *Adivasis*	Occupying the land Building Huts Protest fasting Marches	Police Arrest Evacuation No land was given here
4	Panavally	March 1995	75	240 *Adivasis*	Marching Land occupying Traditional Hut built agitation -1 month Fast unto Death Satyagraha 13 days	*Adivasis* received one acre of land each C K Janu is living here on the land that she occupied during the struggle
5	Kurichi	March 2000		300-400 Dalits	Suicide of 'Sukumaran', a *Dalit* as a protest against drawing electric line over his hut without his consent, had created a struggle which was ongoing for a year. The radical left activists and praxis longing *Dalit* intellectuals & activists took up the struggle. 10 days intense Strike Cutting the '11 KV' line	The electric line was removed from the *Dalit* colony as a result of the struggle
6	Kundalla	24 March 2001		150 local Muduvan *Adivasis* and 35	Protest by local *Adivasis* was going on for over a year without results Cultural Night celebration	Govt. appointed a commission to look into issue, the construction was halted and the Muduvan *Adivasi* land

				Dalit activists	Demolishing the building of the engineering college Hartal Marches Weeklong fasting of C K Janu	remained with them without being taken over by the Government
7	Kudilketti Samaram	29August 2001 to 16 October 2001 – 48days		1000s of *Adivasis* and Dalits	Started with a state-wide march for 'establishing *Adivasi* rights' and culminated at the secretariat where they began hut built agitation. They simultaneously had groups protesting at the Chief Minister's residence. During the Onam festival, where the state showcases flamboyant cultural fiesta for the tourists, the *Adivasis* interrupted the procession.	The state entered into contract with the *Adivasis* and initiated the Tribal Resettlement & Development Mission (TRDM) to initiate land distribution. Madhava Menon Commission was assigned to study the *Adivasi* issues and suggest remedies.
8	Muthanga	3 January 2003 to 19 February 2003	1100 families	4000 *Adivasis*	Occupying the land Hut Building Constructed check posts Organized *Adivasi* self-rule	Police brutally evacuated the *Adivasis* with one police man and one *Adivasi* dying in the police action.
9	Aralam Farm	2002 first attempt 2006 decisive land occupy struggle	1000 Families	3500 Adivasis	Occupying the land and building huts. Gothrapooja in the land.	The left government was forced to abandon its plan to divert the land meant for *Adivasis* for an eco-tourism project was forced to distribute the land.
10	Nilpu Samaram	9 July 2014 to 18 December 2014 – 162 days		1000s of *Adivasis* and supporters from the public	Standing in front of the Secretariat in Thiruvananthapuram for 162 days. *Adivasis* took it as an opportunity to engage the public and educate	Agreed to all demands raised by the AGMS including land rights, Muthanga package, scheduling the

					them about *Adivasi* rights.	*Adivasi* areas under 5th Schedule

B.4 Land distributed to the *Adivasis* as a result of the Struggle

Data of land given to *Landless Adivasis* after the establishment of Tribal Resettlement and Development Mission (TRDM) as a result of *Kudilketti Samaram* (2001)

NO:	DISTRICT	AREA	FAMILIES	AMOUNT OF LAND (IN ACRES)
1	Kasaragod	Kinanoor, Kunchathoor	110	123.43
2	Kannur	Pazhassi, Kolayadu, Koodali, Aralam, Cheruvanchery, Alakodu	3102	3006.37
3	Wayanad	Sugandhagiri, Pookkedu, Karappuzha, Kunnathidavaka, Cheengeri	997	2526.601
4	Malappuram	Michabhoomi (Surplus Land)	61	46.8
5	Kozhikode	Muthukadu, Vattachira, Perambra	420	600
6	Palakkad	Malampuzha -2 Village	10	4.44
7	Thrissur	Thalapilli	20	5.68
8	Ernakulam	Neriyamangalam, Kuttambuzha	296	418.9
9	Idukki	Marayoor, Kundala,Alakkodu, Chinnakanal, Poopara	949	1460
10	Alappuzha	Cherthala, Kallada Irrigation	35	7.67
11	Kottayam	Madukka	19	19
12	Pathanamthitta	Olikallu	28	12.19
13	Kollam	Kuriyottumala, Kottarakkara	128	114.68

Source: Published by Keraleeyam, (Pratheesh, 2014) . A total of 6777 families were given land from 2001-2012 as per the report of Comptroller and Auditor General, India.

Glossary of Terms

Kudil Ketti Samaram: A repertoire of struggle that *Adivasis* in Kerala employed by **building huts** in front of the state secretariat as they usually do when they occupy a land.

Muthanga: The land that *Adivasis* ventured into for a massive occupy struggle. The state claimed that the land was part of the wildlife sanctuary and hence reserved forest. However, *Adivasis* claimed that there were *Adivasi* settlements before and hence the occupy was not illegal. The court has accepted the argument of *Adivasis* as the case against them was dropped after years of tedious battle in the court.

Nilpu Samaram: It is another repertoire of *Adivasi* land struggle that evolved organically from them. It is **standing fast**, where the *Adivasis* stand the whole day as a form of protest and struggle and continues for as many days as they can until the state engages with them for negotiation. Their 2014 struggle lasted for 162 days.

Naxalite / Maoist: The radical left groups who believe in people's armed war, the Mao ideology of villages taking over the towns and cities. Their intervention in the Naxalbari village in West Bengal 1967 resulted in the name Naxalite/Naxalism. There has been a long history of *Adivasi* entanglement with the Maoist resistance.

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