

Environmentalism of the malcontent:
Towards a new framework for analyzing development conflicts

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Existing analytical frameworks such as the distinction between 'old' vs. 'new' social movements or the 'environmentalism of the poor' vs. the 'environmentalism of the rich' fail to capture the specificity of a number of recent development conflicts such as those surrounding the Tipnis Road in Bolivia, Niyamgiri Mine in India and the Hasankeyf hydroelectric dam in Turkey.

To illustrate our argument, we focus on the ongoing resistance movement against the Gerze coal power plant in Turkey. The residents of this small town on the Black Sea coast have been fighting against a large company to prevent the construction of a coal power plant in Yaykıl, one of the villages under the township's jurisdiction, since late 2008. In addition to taking part in legal struggle, the locals have been standing guard against company intrusion into their territory, trying to raise public support both at the national and local levels, organizing demonstrations in main cities as well as in Gerze (the most noteworthy of which happened in November 2011 with the participation of more than 10,000 people) and engaging with various environmental and social justice movements. The main mobilizing force behind the resistance is YEGEP (*Yesil Gerze Platformu*-Green Gerze Platform), a local NGO formed in 2009. YEGEP is an umbrella organization bringing together actors from a variety of political stances and socio-economic backgrounds, and it has intentionally kept away from being identified with any party political group in order to be able to build a broad front.

Livelihood and health concerns, or place-based feelings of attachment and belonging cannot adequately describe the motivations of this core group of organizers in YEGEP. We argue that the type of environmental politics animated in the case of Gerze exemplifies what can be termed as "environmentalism of the malcontent": what mobilized this group of people to resist the particular development project envisioned for the area is long-lasting dissatisfaction with the broader processes marking the development trajectory of the country and resentment brought by their exclusion from shaping these processes.