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The Conservation Ideological State Apparatus

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Abstract

This article considers Louis Althusser's theory of the ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) for advancing political ecology scholarship on the functioning of the state in violent environments. I reflect on a series of events in which a state forest department in South India attempted to recast violent conflicts between themselves and local communities over access to natural resources and a protected area as a debate over human-wildlife conflicts. Through the example of conservation as ideology in Wayanad, Kerala, I show how the ISAs articulate the functioning of ideology within the state apparatuses in order for us to understand the larger mechanics of the state apparatus and the reproduction of the relations of production necessary for the reproduction of capitalism. Revisiting the ISAs as a theoretical framework for studies in political ecology and conservation is timely given the resurgence of militarised conservation tactics, the emancipatory aims of Althusser's theory, and political ecology's turn towards praxis.

Keywords: Louis Althusser, political ecology, wildlife conservation, hegemony, South India, human-wildlife conflict

"Man is by nature an ideological animal"
–Louis Althusser, 1970

INTRODUCTION

At 7:30 AM on a Saturday, hundreds of school children are gathering along a busy roadside in Wayanad District, in Kerala, India (Figure 1). They are participating in the first annual "Wildlife Walkathon," an event organised by the Kerala Forest Department (KFD) with assistance from local conservation organisations. Children crowd around a pickup truck where uniformed KFD staff hand out t-shirts emblazoned with the face of an orange cartoon tiger. The walk will take us northeast from the town of Sultan Bathery, where the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary headquarters are located, to the Sanctuary's Muthanga Range headquarters about 16 kilometres away (Figure 2). There are several breaks along the roadside, during which a dozen costumed children, at times wearing animal masks, are unloaded from a jeep to perform a short theatrical dance about living harmoniously with animals.

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During the walk I speak with students, local conservationists, and KFD and District Revenue Department staff about what the walk represents to them, why they are participating, and wildlife conservation issues more broadly.[1] At the end of the walk, the participants receive a lecture by KFD officers on the importance of conserving wildlife and receive a certificate of achievement. After lunch, I sit on the second-floor verandah of the range guest house with an officer of the Sanctuary and he tells me about the importance of educating children for protecting wildlife in India. He explains that he sees such activities as "the only way" to reduce human-wildlife conflicts (interview with KFD officer 2014).[2]

The following year I attended the 2nd Annual Wildlife Walkathon. The walk's programme was the same aside from the notable addition of a battalion of young *Kattunaika adivasi* (*adivasi*=indigenous peoples) children[3] enrolled in the National Cadet Corps (NCC), dressed in military uniforms, at the head of the march (Figure 3). The *adivasi*-cadets are enrolled in a government Scheduled Tribe school, and as part of their education are given the opportunity to participate

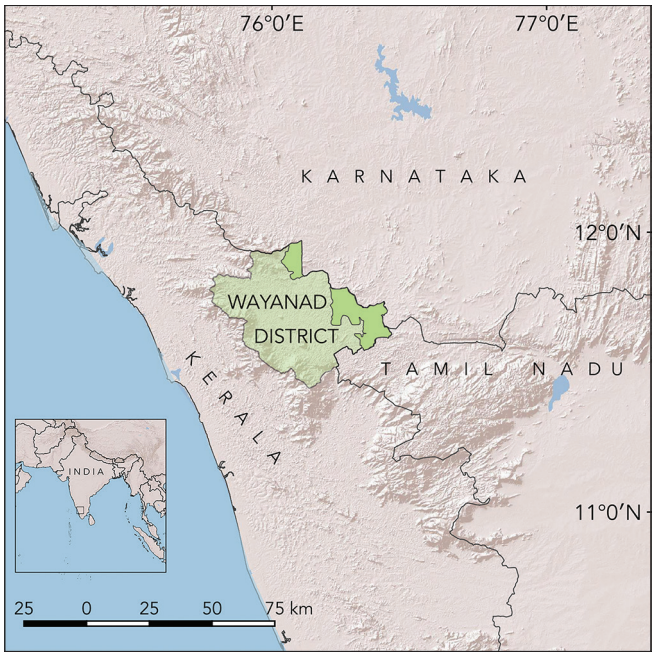

Figure 1
Wayanad District in northern Kerala (light green shading), and Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (darker green shading) at the borders of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu States. Map of India inset at left for broader geographic context

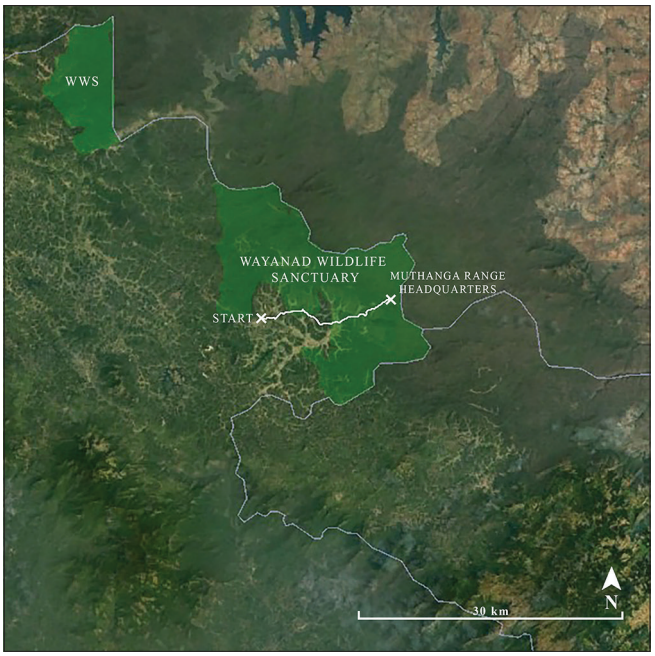

Figure 2
Location (shaded in green) of Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (344.44 km2) along with track of the "Widlife Walkathon" (white) beginning in Sultan Bathery, Wayanad, and ending at the Muthanga Range headquarters, Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary. GPS tracks recorded using a Garmin GPSmap 60CSx

in the NCC, where they are, among other things, taught to drill and march. The mission of the NCC is to engage "in grooming the youth of the country into disciplined and patriotic citizens" (Sharma 2008: 288). That this year the march was led by *adivasi* NCC cadets to the same location of a bloody struggle 12 years prior where over 1,000 *adivasi* families were violently expelled from the Sanctuary after occupying it in protest against the dispossession of their historical lands is notable (Bijoy and Raman 2003; Steur 2014). At least one activist and one policeman were killed during the violence, though by others accounts the death toll of activists was as high as fourteen individuals (Raman 2004).

Why did uniform-clad *adivasi* children lead a parade of nearly 900 primarily non-*adivasi* students wearing tiger t-shirts down a highway to the site of a previous state-sanctioned assault on some of Kerala's most impoverished citizens? I approach answering this question to explain why wildlife have become the primary subject of an ideological battle in Wayanad, framed through the construct of human-wildlife conflict. I will show how this framing enables the state to side-step direct conflicts with a diverse set of human communities over issues of economic marginalisation and accumulation by dispossession. In doing so, I explore how the annual event described above transforms from a "confusing, theatrical spectacle" as I first described it in my field notes to a coherent performance of interpellation of conservation subjects. Interpellation is the mechanism through which the state "hails" or calls upon individuals as state (conservation) subjects (Althusser [1970] 2014). The act of interpellation highlights the functioning of conservation as ideology, understood through the broader framework of Louis Althusser's theory of the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) ([1970] 2014). I argue that contestations between state actors and marginalised communities over conservation spaces are better understood through the emergence of what I call the 'conservation ideological state apparatus.'

Drawing on Althusser's theory of the ISAs helps to make sense of how wildlife become mobilised ideologically in ways that are supportive of the broader capitalist state project 'through' conservation. Understanding why wildlife have become central to political debates more foundationally about social and economic injustice in Wayanad reveals the value of conservation to the state in an era in which we are seeing increasingly militarised forms of conservation resurface. At the same time, these contestations show how the practice of politics in opposition to state conservation efforts demonstrate the shortcomings of a conservation agenda rooted in territorial and economic dispossession, practices which may ultimately harm efforts to conserve wildlife in the long-term (Duffy 2014, 2016; Büscher and Ramutsindela 2015).

My argument for employing the ISAs as a theoretical framework rests on the case that Althusser's theory of the ISAs shows us how hegemony is maintained through constant tensions between the state's repressive organs and the ideological forces embedded within increasingly diverse institutions typically understood as outside the state (Althusser [1978] 2006: 138). In recognising the contribution of the ISAs to further illuminate conservation as a state practice of ideological social domination, I draw on the complete edition

Figure 3
The 2015 "Wildlife Walkathon" underway in Wayanad District, Kerala. The adivasi National Cadet Corps are seen in uniform behind the banner (October 2, 2015). Photograph by the author

of *On the Reproduction of Capitalism,* recently made available in English, in order to formulate how Althusser's writings have much to offer political ecology in contemporary studies of the state despite an almost complete lack of engagement with Althusser to date (Althusser [1970] 2014). The newly available material reveals a more fully-fledged theory of the reproduction of the social relations of production and class exploitation in the capitalist state. I apply the framework of the conservation ISA to the case study of conservation conflicts in Wayanad, Kerala, to demonstrate the value of the theory of the ISAs in moving political ecology towards the development of praxis.

CONSERVATION AND THE STATE

There are of course a variety of theoretical frameworks and a large literature through which conservation has been examined in relation to state-making practices, namely, those of conservation as territorialisation (Peluso 1992, 1993; Neumann 1992; 1998; Brockington 2002), resistance studies (Holmes 2007, 2014), and works drawing on Foucault's theory of governmentality (Sivaramakrishnan 1999; Agrawal 2005; Foucault 1991, 2007; Fletcher 2010).[4] Understanding conservation as a state-making process through territorialisation practices is essential because the exclusion of people from conservation spaces remains one of the foundational conflicts in contestations over and through nature. This literature expands on essentially Weberian ideas of the processes through which state power is expressed and exerted through its geographic territory to how conservation as a set of ideals and practices become enmeshed in these processes (Weber [1904] 2011; Lefebvre 1992; Neumann 1992, 1998; Brockington 2002). However, this analytic is insufficient for theorising on the more complex assemblages of 'non-state actors' who co-produce and regulate conservation spaces and conservation subjects. Within conservation studies, scholars have also examined how people resist exclusionary conservation practices through timber felling, arson, occupation, and more symbolic practices of resistance against the state (Holmes 2007, 2014). While resistance studies are instructive precisely because they show us the various forms through which the exploited resist these efforts, they are less attuned to the ideological and functional means through which people are exploited in the first place by and through the state apparatuses (Sivaramakrishnan 2005; Norgrove and Hulme 2006).

It is arguably the work of Foucault that has most significantly impacted political ecology studies of conservation with regards to the role of state apparatuses in the making of conservation subjects, and the manner in which the state acquires their compliance (Sivaramakrishnan 1999). Governmentality-inspired studies have shown how the roll-out of neoliberal capitalism takes place through the proliferation of actors that seek to regulate environmental subjects through diverse sets of practices, discourses, and institutional apparatuses (Luke 1999; Agrawal 2005; Büscher and Dressler 2007; Igoe and Brockington 2007; Rutherford 2007; Fletcher 2010, 2012; Büscher et al. 2012). But scholars have also shown where purely Foucauldian analyses of conservation conflicts fall short of developing 'political' ecologies motivated by justice (Hart 2006; Li 2007; Gidwani 2008; Mann 2009). This is, in part, because the question of class struggle rests on the ideologies that exist in a social formation and their role in maintaining the dominance of one class over another. Here, we must make a departure from Foucault because in addition to his "eloquent silence on the subject of the State" (Hall 1985: 93), Foucault's thought is explicitly anti-ideological (Ryder 2013). Foucault is clear about his unwillingness to put much stake in ideology because it positions some subjects over others, and requires that through historical analysis, we can understand how certain ideologies are more 'right' than others. This position is at odds with the multiple truths that Foucault believes should be discursively analysed within a social formation (Ryder 2013).

Some researchers have combined Antonio Gramsci's writings on hegemony with a Foucauldian perspective of the micro-politics of power in an effort to reconcile governmentality's attention to capillary and nodal formations of power with Gramsci's emphasis on class relations and conflict (Li 2007; Gidwani 2008; Asher and Ojeda 2009; Birkenholtz 2009). Hegemony is a way to conceptualise not just the importance of the material nature of the ruling class's domination, and the evidence it does so, but the forms of class domination reproduced through 'civil society' in the form of norms, culture, thoughts, and ideas (e.g., the "ethical-political") (Gramsci 2000: 189-199). The merits of such theoretical hybridity are noteworthy and have helped articulate some of the ways environmental governance regimes seek to exact compliance and maintain hegemony within contested conservation geographies through increasingly diverse and unexpected actors (e.g., Li 2007).

So what precisely does Althusser's theory of the ISAs contribute to political ecology studies of conservation? The application of theory with sufficient explanatory power to understand why unequal social relations are reproduced, and to tackle theorising on the role of the state in reproducing

them, is essential in order to work towards upending them. And yet, as Kate Crehan (2002: 104) argues, hegemony seems to only "name the problem" of the reproduction of unequal power relations through coercion and consent. I argue that Althusser's expanded theory of the ISAs gives us a framework to understand in practice the role of ideology, 'materially' manifested in the ISAs, in reproducing the social relations necessary for capitalism. In locating where ideology finds purchase in the maintenance of unequal social relations, I believe the ISAs can also help move political ecology towards Gramsci's goal of praxis—the unifying of both theory and practice (Ekers et al. 2009; Loftus 2012). In the context of studies of political ecology, the aim of praxis is not only to analyse and understand why forms of unjust and unequal socio-environmental relations are re-produced, but to help envision and develop alternative futures that are not so unjust (Jarosz 2004; Robbins 2004; Watts and Peet 2004).

It must be noted that Althusser was, at times, very skeptical of the usefulness of hegemony as theory.[5] But following Gidwani (2008), I see room for an Althusserian reading of hegemony that attends to Gramsci's larger project of developing a philosophy of praxis *through* Althusser's conceptualization of the ideological state apparatuses (ISAs). As Gidwani writes:

> *If* hegemony…is understood as a ruling ideology that functions by effecting a suture between different classes and class fractions…there is a tenable way to read "hegemony"—Gramsci *through* Althusser, for instance—as a collection of *lived* practices; "ideas" as relations of force that operate in molecular and unconscious ways upon conduct, and which only achieve legibility in doings and not on a Cartesian slate of consciousness (2008: 131-132).

Framed in this way, we can read Althusser's theory of the ISAs as how hegemony operates within the state apparatuses through a formulation of how ideology precisely functions materially in the maintenance of state power. Or as Gidwani says, how the act of hegemonising works to continuously repair the "scars that can erupt once again into bleeding wounds" as a result of class conflicts (2008: 132). Before returning to the ISAs and my argument for the existence of a conservation ISA, I will first briefly contextualise the Walkathon within the case of conservation in Wayanad. I do this in order to situate the theory of the ISAs in the context of Wayanad's particular history of dispossession.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DISPOSSESSION IN WAYANAD

A full accounting of what led to the formation of an annual 'Wildlife Walkathon' requires engaging with Wayanad's long history of dispossession, as well as the appropriation and reconfiguring of forests as spaces under bureaucratic control for resource extraction in the British colonial era, and by the State Forest Department following independence (see Steur 2014; Münster 2015). In particular, Steur (2009, 2011, 2014) is instructive in demonstrating how disparate indigenous communities in Wayanad coalesced around the identity of *adivasi* in the 1990s and the early 2000s, not as a form of 'identity politics' in contrast to the twentieth century class politics of communist Kerala, but as a new articulation and tool for anti-capitalist resistance to accumulation by dispossession through activating, *via* indigeneity, their claim to a secure livelihood wedded to their historical lands. In invoking the notion of class in the context of India, and Wayanad in particular, I follow Steur (2014) in drawing on an expanded view of class in the Marxian Anthropological tradition of Eric Wolf, who understands class not as a signifier of difference in and of itself, but as a constellation of signifiers that point to the processes of primitive accumulation *within* the system of capitalism through which uneven development takes place in the first instance (Wolf 1982, Smith 1984 [2010]).

The original form of primitive accumulation by dispossession many of these diverse communities experienced was often tied to their historical position as bonded labourers within the region's *jenmi* system (a feudal land tenure system of Kerala's aristocracy) up through the mid-twentieth Century. With the abolition of this system in the mid-twentieth Century resulting from the rise of communist politics in Kerala, many *adivasi* communities transitioned into a new form of agricultural wage labour, often working for poor Christian settlers who came to Wayanad following the 1968 communist *Naxalbari* revolt in India, displacing and even violently evicting many of the region's historical landlords (Steur 2014). Crashes of several commodity crop markets in Wayanad beginning in the 1990s, including rubber, pepper, and tea, led to their increasing marginalisation and economic precarity as a result of a declining demand for agricultural wage-labour (Münster and Münster 2012; Steur 2009, 2014). In the wake of these crop market crashes, eco-tourism and wildlife tourism emerged in the early 2000s as a new post-agrarian speculative form of economic expansion in Wayanad (Münster and Münster 2012).

In highlighting, however briefly, the political and economic foundations of the move towards speculative investment in wildlife and 'eco-tourism' as a new economy in Wayanad, it is instructive to highlight that conservation, as a form of territorial management, has always been entangled in these processes and histories of accumulation by dispossession. This is seen in the colonial history in which Wayanad's forests were remade into timber plantations, and then later re-imagined into 'inviolate' spaces for wildlife, necessitating the relocation of *adivasis* outside of the forest. These earlier forms of dispossession in part beget another, the subjugation of *adivasi* communities as landless agrarian labourers. That ironically Wayanad's burgeoning tourism industry now capitalises on the racialised imaginaries of *adivasis* as 'primitive' forest dwellers, an economy they derive little to no benefit from (Steur 2014), only speaks to the rising tensions in Wayanad as a speculative post-agrarian landscape in economic crisis (Münster and Münster 2012; Steur 2014).

THE IDEOLOGICAL STATE APPARATUSES

In working towards an understanding of how conservation as ideology operates, it is useful to place Althusser's theory of the ISAs in the context of Marx's topographical metaphor of the reproduction of the relations of capitalism (Figure 4). The basic model is comprised of the base and the superstructure, wherein the base is the unity of the productive forces (raw materials, the instruments of production such as tools and machines) and the relations of production (labour, the bourgeoisie, capital, the agents of production). The superstructure, in contrast, is made up of two distinct components, the legal-political (law and state) and the ideological (religious, moral, etc.). Althusser develops the theory of the ISAs in parallel with the conceptualisation of the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA), the apparatus of the state that exerts itself primarily through violence and the threat of violence (the army and the police). In contrast, Althusser ([1970] 2014: 142) identifies 'many' ISAs, including schools, religious institutions, the media, the family unit, etc., and notes that this list is not finite. I propose to add to this list the assemblage of institutions working in the name of conservation.

It is in chapter five of *On the Reproduction of Capitalism* that we can begin to understand the genuinely novel contribution Althusser ([1970] 2014) is making through his theory of the ISAs and the role of law in suturing both the legal-political to the ideological within the superstructure, as well as the base to the superstructure. This is important because this chapter's text is entirely absent from the original essay published in *La Pensée*, and yet holds key insights into how Althusser ([1970] 2014: 55-56) is making a claim for the material existence of ideology through the ISAs. Althusser shows how the relational hyphen in the "legal-political" superstructure, the relation between law and the state, is essential in understanding the form of the state superstructure and its reliance on ideology. The law and the related concept Althusser refers to as "legal ideology" are essential in maintaining the necessary conditions for the reproduction of these social relations. Law, for Althusser ([1970] 2014: 65), is "necessarily repressive" in that behind law is the threat of repressive action by the RSA—the police, courts, penalties, and prisons. But law cannot only rely on the repressive apparatus for support. Law also requires the existence of a 'legal ideology' to ensure that subjects of the state behave as legal subjects without the need for the repressive apparatus. Thus, legal ideology "enables law to "'function' –enables, that is, legal practice to 'go all by itself', without the help of repression or threats" (Althusser [1970] 2014: 67). We can see these related but distinct forms of law operating (repressively, ideologically) in the Walkathon. Participants were reminded of both their 'moral duty' to share space with animals (ideological law), while later being lectured about the history, importance, and need for enforcement of the Wildlife Protection Act (1972) for saving endangered species (the threat of repressive law).

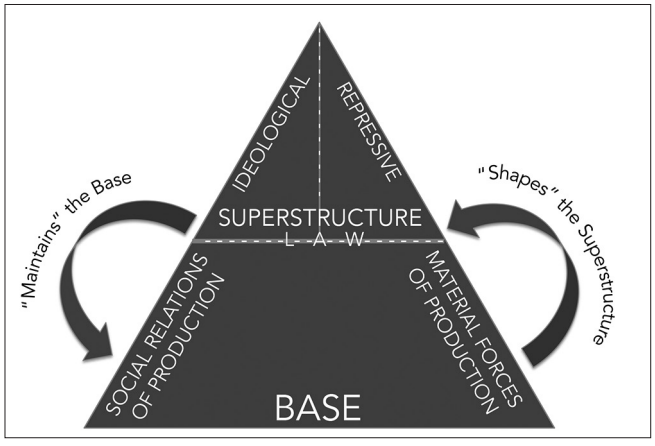

Figure 4
Visual model of Marx's topographical metaphor of the state as advanced by Louis Althusser's theory of the Ideological State Apparatuses

Althusser instructs that there is a relational nature between repression and ideology, and this is made clear in how conservation operates in both Wayanad and across India. In the case of the Walkathon, we see a unique example of the KFD (part of the RSA) functioning in an overtly ideological manner in conjunction with a variety of conservation non-profits and wildlife activist organisations. While both the RSA and the ISAs "function simultaneously on repression and ideology," the RSA functions overwhelmingly on repression, while the ISAs function overwhelmingly on ideology (Althusser [1970] 2014: 85-86). The Walkathon is therefore an especially illuminating case for examining the value of Althusser's theory to political ecology studies of conservation precisely because it is as exceptional outlier to the everyday norms of how the RSA (in this case, the KFD) typically *ought* to act. In developing a relationship between repression and ideology, Althusser is exploring how the state ensures compliance and the domination of the working class through the state's diverse apparatuses. This compliance is maintained through the tension between the threat of physical repression (state violence) and the more pliable evocation of compliance by means of the ideological apparatuses. What Althusser is seeking in the ISAs is a theory that explains the actual mechanics that enable the reproduction of relations necessary for the continuation of the capitalist state. I argue the ISAs articulate the material functioning of ideologies in order for us to understand the larger mechanics of the state apparatus and the constant reproduction of the relations of production necessary for the reproduction of capitalism.

Understanding these articulations helps us locate the "quilting point" where these various ideologies become fixed in relation to one another, and "become parts of the structured network of meaning" (Žižek 1989: 95-96). Locating these points can help us identify how diverse and often contradictory practices, ideas, and beliefs about conservation are 'stitched' together to form a conservation ideological state apparatus (Žižek 1989). Despite the conservation ISA's 'grating' against certain elements of the capitalist class (e.g., the 'anti-development' agenda of many conservation non-profit organisations), Althusser's theory helps us understand how

conservation as ideology continues to support the class war against Wayanad's diverse communities of original inhabitants (that together as *adivasis,* represent a largely dispossessed wage-labouring class, and see Steur 2009, 2014).

In the context of modern studies of governmentality, we can read Althusser's theory of the state understood through the RSA and the ISAs as one of an *expansive and expanding* capitalist class project, one in which the proliferating number of 'non-state actors' is reformulated as an expansion in both the number of kinds of ISAs as well as the number of actors proliferating 'within' each ISA in response to the mounting crises of late-era capitalism. The expansion of the kinds of ISAs enables new opportunities for the state to call upon state-subjects ideologically in order to reduce the friction and grating which may arise within other ISAs that become sites of class struggle. Through a reading of Althusser's formulation of the state emphasising the flexible, frictious, and expanding role of ISAs alongside increasing crises internal to the capitalist state, I believe we can see productive theoretical linkages emerge between how hegemony operates 'in practice', and the way power moves through nodal and diverse technologies of power. This is not to suggest the theoretical differences between Gramscian hegemony and Foucauldian governmentality are trivial (see Barnett 2005). Rather, I highlight these linkages to suggest that we might read Althusser's formulation of ideology, anchored "in material functions specific to each ISA" as a set of lived practices (Althusser [1970] 2014: 77). Through this reading of ideology it seems possible to overcome the critique that hegemony "lacks any clear sense of how consent is actually secured, or any convincing account of how hegemonic projects are anchored at the level of everyday life" (Barnett 2005: 9). At the same time, a move towards the ISAs as a way of framing how ideology operates in everyday life also brings to the fore the kinds of sites and institutions of power, and their networked relations, that are central to analyses grounded in a framework of governmentality. I now turn more directly to the conservation ideological state apparatus in order to help ground this argument in the practice of conservation and contestation to it in Wayanad.

THE CONSERVATION IDEOLOGICAL STATE APPARATUS

So how did the Forest Department in Wayanad, with support of the conservation ISA, call upon participants as conservation subjects during the Walkathon? An important parallel theory described in Althusser's ([1971] 2006) influential essay on the ISAs in *La Pensée* is the concept of interpellation. Explained by Althusser as "hailing," for instance when a police officer shouts, "Hey, you there!" and one turns, thereby, in effect, being hailed by the police as a state-subject, interpellation is the act of ideology identifying the subject (Althusser [1970] 2014: 190). Interpellation is "how the State Ideology, and the various ideological forms realised in these apparatuses and their practices…reach concrete individuals themselves at the level of their ideas and acts" (ibid: 177). Through the dispersal of shirts, caps, certificates, and a free meal, the KFD was hailing individuals as conservationists who could be called upon as such to walk for wildlife. In so doing, participants were also named as supporters of the protectors of wildlife—the repressive apparatus of the state (the KFD), and the conservation ISA. While interpellation allows us to understand how these subjects come to be hailed by the state as conservation subjects, I argue we should do so in order to understand how that hailing functions through the state's ideological apparatuses and for what purposes. This is only possible if we engage with Althusser's work as a holistic text in which interpellation is employed in the context of his theory on the structure and functioning of the capitalist state and how the state identifies and captures its subject.

Interpellation has found more engagement in political ecology texts than Althusser's broader theory of the state. Interpellation has been applied by Robbins and Sharp (2006) to understand the creation of the 'turfgrass subject' in their research on the political ecology of lawns in the United States, and by Macip and Zamora (2012) to explore conservation subject identities in Oaxaca, Mexico. But in both of these instances, the theory of interpellation is annexed from Althusser's formulation of the capitalist state—it is engaged with on its own terms as a mechanism for understanding subject-formation. While interpellation has arguably made a more lasting impact on philosophy than Althusser's broader writing on the ISAs (see Žižek 1989; Butler 2007; Bidet 2015), divorcing the former from the latter is to substantially weaken his formulation of the capitalist state writ large, for the concept of interpellation is the suture that binds the individual to the ideological apparatuses and the state. I would argue that this annexure of theories was facilitated by their original and incomplete presentation in the *La Pensée* essay, where the important linkage of the role of law in binding the state subject to state ideology through interpellation and the ISAs is entirely absent (Althusser [1971] 2006).[6]

We can understand the Walkathon then as the RSA's performance of interpellation hand-in-hand with the conservation ISA—an apparatus comprised of a diverse set of actors with their own particular motivations, from scientists to non-governmental organisations to policymakers. But how do we ultimately determine whether or not there really is a conservation ideological state apparatus? My argument is that it is most observable, and therefore exists, because of the resistance we can see emergent in reaction to it. During fieldwork, wildlife conservation and human-wildlife conflict were the primary stump speech topics of politicians seeking election in Wayanad and the neighbouring Nilgiris District of Tamil Nadu. In recent years, conservation has become 'the' site of an ideological battle in Wayanad. Debates over the beneficiaries of conservation are taking place in a geography with dense populations of some of the world's most endangered and also dangerous megafauna, amidst crashes in commodity agriculture markets (Münster and Münster 2012), and 'voluntary relocation' of *adivasi* and non-adivasi forest dwellers in order to create spaces for wildlife devoid of human

interference (Münster and Vishnudas 2012). In this geopolitical context, wildlife conservation has emerged as a contentious practice and ideological formation.

In particular, the lives of landless labourers and small-scale farmers are made increasingly precarious in Wayanad, both through forms of structural violence (Münster 2014), as well as through the particular geographies that expose labourers to the greatest risk of wild animal encounters that may endanger their safety. Public outcry in reaction to human death following encounters with tigers and elephants has become violent in recent years (The Hindu 2015a), with forest department officers and conservation NGO staff suffering physical assault by protesters (The Hindu 2015a; interview with KFD officer 2015; interview with local conservation NGO staff member 2015). Protests and strikes organised by various political parties have also increased in response to livestock depredation by carnivores (Phillip 2012; The Hindu 2015b), and rumours of Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary upgrading from a Wildlife Sanctuary into a Tiger Reserve (Sudhi 2012), the strictest form of protected area in India in terms of access and use of forests. These protests are organised by political parties to blame rival parties in power for their lack of efficacy in reducing human death and economic injury (personal observations 2016). In so doing, wildlife conflicts are transformed into performances of a broader political expression of discontent by politicians and parties on both the left and the right in an effort to garner votes in upcoming elections.

Despite this constant 'grating' I observed against conservation activities and actors and institutions associated with it, in this landscape conservation as ideology nevertheless serves the capitalist state well. Conservation as ideology has produced a discourse of a landscape 'in crisis' in Wayanad (Biermann and Mansfield 2014), in need of exclusionary management that benefits the state and bureaucrats through the right to natural resource extraction, while at the same time producing a new 'commodity' to sell to domestic and international wildlife tourists (Fletcher and Neves 2012; Roth and Dressler 2012; Barua 2016). As a local activist noted, "Despite this idea of protection, the Forest Department is still a revenue generating department for the state" (interview with local labour rights activist 2016). Producing an ideology attendant to these hybrid and contradictory landscape imaginaries that serves both the processes of capitalist accumulation as well as the image of a 'wild' conservation landscape in need of state protection is an acrobatic feat. Successfully doing so stands as testament to both the flexibility of conservation as an ideological scaffolding supportive of a variety of opportunities for capitalist expansion and territorialisation by the state, and yet also its strength—how despite its flexibility conservation as ideology is also hegemonic.

In Wayanad, while real estate speculators have profited from the turn towards wildlife tourism enterprises and building leisure-class holiday resorts, agricultural and forest department wage labourers (particularly *adivasis*), and small farmers have not benefited from tourism industry development (Münster and Münster 2012). As a result, wildlife tourism and the development of tourism infrastructure are viewed by many as another form of dispossession of Wayanad's original inhabitants. In May 2016, two activists were arrested by police in Wayanad in an area with a large *adivasi* population for hanging posters with anti-"eco-tourism development" messages (interview with KFD officer 2016). The arrest was made under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act of India, which allows people to be arrested for acts deemed to threaten the sovereignty of the State of India. In response to hanging these "Maoist" posters (as they were referred to by police), the police themselves began hanging "anti-Maoist" propaganda posters in *adivasi* settlements in Wayanad (Times of India 2016).[7] While Althusser tells us it is less common for the RSA to act so overtly ideologically, this kind of relation between ideology and repression made explicit by way of empirical example highlights the necessary engagement with ideology itself as a materially manifested apparatus within the state (Althusser [1970] 2014: 89).

Conservation practices also facilitate personal wealth accumulation by Forest Department staff through petty bribes, and 'skimming off the top' of budgeted projects such as wildlife barriers and other infrastructure projects, collecting informal toll fees, as well as wildlife conflict compensation funds (*sensu* Robbins 2000; Fleischman 2014; interview with former Forest Department staff member 2016; personal observation 2016). This is a common form of personal wealth accumulation among forestry officers and staff across India, who often must pay their way into Forest Department positions on the understanding that these positions have the potential for income generation far above their actual salary (interviews with two former Forest Department staff members 2016). Conservation as ideology functions in this case to support the state's claim to exclusive territorial management of these spaces under the auspices of saving wildlife. In doing so, conservation provides rhetorical ammunition for the KFD (and Forest Department staff across India) to maintain territorial hegemony over wildlife space whilst simultaneously supporting the desires of a department's staff to personally profit from this exclusionary spatial arrangement.

At the same time that conservation serves individuals and the broader apparatus of the RSA, this ideology serves the organisations that comprise the conservation ISA by enabling them to achieve their objectives of wildlife conservation protection and producing conservation data and knowledge. The production of endangered species data is necessary to supporting the ideology of a conservation landscape in-crisis, and is therefore paramount to the success of conservation as hegemonic (Biermann and Mansfield 2014). While the kind of territorial enforcement conservation as ideology demands is left in the hands of the state, through financial and physical support (including basic supplies for front-line staff such as jackets, caps, and boots), and perhaps most importantly, intellectual support, these organisations form an assemblage of institutions and actors that assist the RSA in exchange for having a seat at the table in influencing management decisions and gaining access to protected areas for research

and data collection (personal observations 2016). As one local conservationist explained:

> [The forest department] know we need to be able to collect wildlife data. When they call us to help look for a man-eater [tiger] or help with the wildlife census, we have to do it, because if we don't they can just chuck us out and work with another one [NGO] instead (interview with local conservation NGO staff member 2016).

In this passage we can see how tightly 'non-state' conservation organisations are wedded to the RSA, and yet at the same time how within the singular conservation ISA it is possible for competition amongst organisations to persist as they grapple for access and power in order to meet organisational objectives.

CONSERVATION, HEGEMONY, AND RESISTANCE

In Wayanad, Forest Department staff told me they are constantly vigilant to the possibility of revolt. As one leader of a national environmental NGO said:

> There are very strong feelings of injustice…People can just take over a protected area and burn it and take it over in no time…If the general citizens of this country decide to revolt nothing can stop them, because their numbers are just so huge. So I think we need to tread with caution (interview with an executive director of a national NGO 2015).

What is striking in Wayanad is how tightly coupled protestations against the government and protests against incidents of human-wildlife conflict have become—it is in reaction to wildlife conflicts that disapproval of the government in Wayanad is now largely expressed. The response of the KFD to these increasingly violent stand-offs between the local population and their staff and police also highlights the mechanisms through which they seek to alter the discourse of disenfranchisement and dispossession to one of tolerance, education, and civil order. *Adivasi* activists become labelled as threats to the sovereignty of the Indian state by reframing anti-'eco-development' campaigns as the beginnings of a Maoist insurgency. Similarly, exasperation by farmers in reaction to increasing crop and livestock damage is positioned by the KFD as the result of declining tolerance for wildlife, poor education, and political party agitations, rather than perhaps as symptomatic of the precarity of the neoliberal agrarian economy (Münster and Münster 2012).

The shift in discourse from one of direct conflicts between the state and the working class, to one of education and a 'bottom-up' approach, is facilitated through conservation as ideology. As one officer explained:

> The first step must be to educate the local man…it is a difficult task, it is an onerous task. [We] have to take the people into confidence, it has to come from the local level... It should come from the people, from the local man. So a lot of the effort is needed. It is a very difficult task, it is not at all an easy task (interview with KFD officer 2015).

That the will to conserve must "come from the local man" and yet it will be a "difficult…onerous task" for the Forest Department speaks to the quilting point of conservation as ideology and where it finds purchase with the RSA. The conservation ISA creates an ideological space, functioning through the various actors and organisations that comprise the apparatus, where exclusionary state enforcement practices are rendered legible on the moral-ethical terrain of conserving biodiversity and wildlife. While conservation as ideology therefore fills the needs of a diversity of actors and organisations for maintaining territorial hegemony, conservation also serves as an ideology that simultaneously enables the expansion of capitalism and capital accumulation into a landscape of speculative market opportunities, while reducing more direct conflicts between the working and landless poor and those in positions of power.

It is possible, however, to observe these interrelated activities and phenomena from the perspective of the state 'itself' attempting to curtail, manage, and slow the march of capitalism through Wayanad's forests through law. Certainly, this appears to be the aim of the Gadgil Committee Report 2011 commissioned by the Government of India, a high-profile national government report that advocated for strict regulations on natural resource extraction and development in identified eco-sensitive areas in order to conserve India's biodiversity in the Western Ghats (Gadgil Report 2011). But the Government of India's response to the strong backlash to the report created among industrial lobby groups was to call for an alternative, watered-down analysis, and the policy that reduced restrictions on extractive industries considered more amenable to the country's powerful mining lobby (Kasturirangan Report 2013; Kamat 2015). Nevertheless, backed by a variety of political parties, the order by the Government of India to individual states to implement this weaker report was still met with violent protest and widespread strikes in Wayanad (The Hindu 2013). But if we are to follow Althusser, to focus on the intent of the law and legislation attempting to reduce the harm of capitalist exploitation on the environment is to obfuscate the primary formation in which the law remains necessarily repressive and part of the bourgeois system. Where certain legislation or laws might emerge to slow the exploitation of Wayanad's natural resources, as Münster and Münster (2012) have shown, alternate opportunities for capital development of these resources emerge. We can see this in Wayanad in the rapid expansion and development of the 'eco-tourism' industry, where opportunities for more extractive industry have been curtailed by law and recent policies aimed at protecting the Western Ghats (see Gadgil Report 2011; Kasturirangan Report 2013).

Through my interviews across diverse groups of conservation stakeholders in the region, it is clear that any singular reading of these events would be to ignore the multi-dimensional and complex processes guiding the implementation and enforcement of wildlife conservation laws and policies in Wayanad, and

reactions to them. What becomes apparent instead is that 'all' of these activities revolve around the circulation of capital and the efforts of those in dominant class positions to increase individual opportunities for accumulating personal wealth and expanding opportunities for capital accumulation writ large. As ideology, whether it is through the opportunities afforded through the potential for increased 'eco-tourism' development, petty corruption and bribery, or illicit resource extraction, conservation has emerged as a malleable and effective ideology yoked to a set of practices through which certain actors seek to improve their positioning within the capitalist apparatus. It matters less then that conservation enforcement by the state *appears* at times to be the only agent acting in resistance to exploitation of forests, for these are precisely the activities that make conservation as ideology so effective. But what is often lost in these narratives is the one constant through all of these practices—the continuing marginalisation of Wayanad's original human inhabitants, who now largely work as daily wage-labourers for the Forest Department or as commodity crop plantation labourers (Münster 2014).

So why, ultimately, were school children marched in tiger t-shirts through the gates of a protected area? Like other scenarios in which conservation becomes the dominant ideology through which the state's presence is felt (e.g., West 2006), in Wayanad, the Forest Department has become the most visible symbol of the RSA. As one interviewee put it, "in this landscape, they 'are' the State" (*Adivasi* rights activist 2016). The interpellation of diverse and competing groups of people into conservation subjects represents an effort by the RSA to sidestep direct conflicts and contestations between themselves and settler agricultural communities, the displaced and marginalised original inhabitants of Wayanad, and the burgeoning wildlife tourism industry by re-framing issues of economic marginalisation and domination into an issue of educating the public about the value of endangered wildlife. Through a charting some of the competing politics of conservation in Wayanad, the performance of the Walkathon begins to take a particular shape as a broader class project aimed at quelling the possibility of full-scale revolt mediated through the lens of mitigating human-wildlife conflicts. What on the surface appear to be increasing incidents of political agitations and protest by civilians calling upon the Forest Department to mitigate incidents of human-wildlife conflicts become something else when viewed through the wider lens of the capitalist state project. That 'something else' is about the essential functioning of the ideological state apparatuses in reducing the 'grating of gears' inherent to competing ideologies and interests always present in the competitive and complex assemblage of actors and institutions present in the ISAs.

CONCLUSION

In this article I have sought to recuperate the well-known writing of Louis Althusser ([1970] 2014) and specifically his theory of the ISAs in its more expanded form to show the lasting value of the theory of the ISAs to contemporary studies of political ecology. I have done so explicitly within the context of political ecology of conservation scholarship to show how the development of a political ecology of praxis is strengthened by the theory of the ISAs and Althusser's related theory of interpellation as described in their more complete form (ibid). While the theory of the ISAs has had a profound impact on studies of the capitalist state, Althusser is rarely cited in political ecology texts and even less so in related literature on conservation. But just as Gramsci's writings still find relevance in today's political (and political ecological) landscape, so too might Althusser's given that his complete writings on the ISAs are only now available to an entire generation of Anglophone scholars. Drawing on my narrative experience of the interpellation of wildlife conservation subjects in Wayanad, I have demonstrated how the concept of the conservation ideological state apparatus can help make sense of seemingly contradictory and confusing practices in which diverse sets of actors are interpellated by the state through the performance of wildlife conservation as a coherent ideology in practice.

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NOTES

1. The arguments of this article are built upon long-term ethnographic research conducted in southwest India between 2014 and 2016. In particular, this article draws on in-depth interviews (N= ~50), document and textual analysis, and participant and non-participant observation conducted in Wayanad District, Kerala, India between 2015-2016. It is also informed by my broader ethnographic research in the region including parts of southern Karnataka and western Tamil Nadu states, as well as in-depth interviews with both governmental officials and NGO staff at both the individual state and national level in India (N= ~100). All interviews and research with KFD staff were conducted under conditions of anonymity in accordance with University of Maryland Baltimore County IRB approval (# Y15EE10197). Interviews in Wayanad were conducted in English or Malayam with the assistance of research assistant translators when required.

2. All interviews with KFD staff were recorded anonymously. For this reason I will choose to avoid designating the rank of the staff in question in order to further avoid their identification based on rank held at the time the research was conducted.
3. The term *adivasi* roughly translates as "first people" or "original inhabitant" in Hindi, and also refers to the "Scheduled Tribes" of India as designated in the government census and in official statistics. I prefer to use *Adivasi* when referring to this heterogeneous group, though the term "tribal" is more often used in common parlance, often by *adivasis* themselves. Because the term *adivasi* speaks to the *adivasi* struggle for self-determination and sovereignty that pre-dates the colonial era, I will refer to them as *adivasis*. The *Kattunaika* are also variously referred to in the literature as the *Kattunayakan, Nayaka* and *Jenu Kuruba* in different regions in this landscape. I would refer readers to the recent publication by Münster (2014) on the relations amongst *Kattunaika* Forest Department labourers and elephants in Wayanad, as well as the ethnographic work of Bird-David (1990; 1999) and Bird-David and Naveh (2008) on the *Kattunaika (Nayaka)* more broadly.
4. For a broad review of some of these theoretical orientations and their genealogies, see Brockington and Duffy (2010) and Vaccaro et al. (2013). On relations between nature and the state, see Roberston and Wainwright (2013) and Parenti (2015).
5. Especially in *For Marx,* Althusser reads hegemony as too immaterial to be analytically useful, arguing that Gramsci wrongly collapses ideology into the broader domain of 'culture' [1978] 2006: 136-137. See Thomas (2009) for an extended treatment on these debates and Althusser's shift in thinking over time.
6. Stuart Hall essentially made this point in 1985, in part placing the blame for the (unfortunate) dual trajectories of Althusserian studies on the two-part structure of Althusser's original essay on the ISAs—first on the role of ideology in the reproduction of the social relations for capitalism, and second on subject-formation: "The two sides of the difficult problem of ideology were fractured in that essay and, ever since, have been assigned to different poles. The question of reproduction has been assigned to the marxist, (male) pole, and the question of subjectivity has been assigned to the psychoanalytic, (feminist) pole. Since then, never have the twain met" (Hall 1985: 102). This again highlights the value and worth of the more synthesised contribution of *On the Reproduction of Capitalism* in comparison to the fractured, original essay on the ISAs.
7. In the context of southwest India, "Maoists" and "Naxalites" are general terms used to refer to members of one several militant communist groups of India associated with the Communist Party of India-Maoist. In interviews with KFD officers, the term "Naxalites" and "Maosits" were used interchangeably.

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