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Doctoral Program in Criminology

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A Criminological Approach to the Social Control of Environmental Harm

Summary of Doctoral Thesis

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Budapest, 2025

I. Problem Statement

Environmental harm is a broader category than environmental crimes. In criminology, environmental harm may appear in research examining white-collar crime, economic crimes, state crimes, corporate crimes, and state–corporate crimes. In the early 1990s, the umbrella term *green criminology* (Lynch, 1990) emerged, which to some extent encompassed the results of these studies related to environmental harm, and supported the development of a common conceptual framework, while the differentiation and diversity arising from different approaches remained. One of the basic tenets of the green criminological thinking is that most environmental harm lies in the grey zone located along the continuum of legality and illegality (Ruggiero and South, 2010). There are severe forms of environmental harm to which criminal law already responds. In many cases however these are phenomena that cannot be interpreted within criminal law concepts but may violate such fundamental human rights as the right to health, food, and water (Zaitch, Boekhout van Solinge and Müller, 2014).

Building on the theoretical foundations of green criminology, the dissertation examines on the one hand how the global market economy — together with the industrial consumer society — contributes to environmental harm. And on the other hand, what happens to the people and communities worldwide who struggle against investments and industries that cause environmental harm. International and civil society organizations point out that environmental defenders who work on the front line of conflicts over natural resources are exposed to various, often repressive reactions because they endanger business and national economic interests (ARTICLE 19, 2016; Global Witness, 2019, 2023, 2024). These practices may appear in criminalization, various soft control tools, the labelling of environmental defenders, atrocities and threats against them, and even in crimes against them, including those against life. Victims may be activists from the community affected by environmental harm, members of social movements and civil organizations, human rights defenders, or journalists. According to Global Witness data, in 2023 alone, 196 and since 2012 a total of 2,106 environmental defenders were killed who defended their land against the expansion of various industries — such as mining, logging, industrial agriculture, or hydroelectricity (Global Witness, 2024). The killing of environmental defenders known to Global Witness (2024) occur almost exclusively in countries of the Global South — in 2023, 85 percent of them in Latin America — most often endangering indigenous communities. These crimes are characterized by impunity and high hidden figure (Lynch, Stretesky, and Long 2018). However, we can also encounter criminalization, labelling, threats and atrocities against activists in Europe or the United States. Worldwide this practice affects even more environmental defenders. We have no knowledge of exact data; according to reports from civil society organizations, the hidden figure of these cases is also very high (ARTICLE 19, 2014).

If we look at these repressive practices applied by state and private actors as a kind of control mechanism, then it is also worth looking at what broader process these stories fit into. I begin the examination of the processes leading to environmental harm and their social control. In this regard I examine market practices and interests that lie behind environmental harm as well as the possible social control of environmental harm. The institutionalized forms of the control of environmental harm include, among others: national and international laws, international organizations' conventions, as well as human rights documents. The question arises of how effectively these operate. Rojas-Páez (2014) draws attention to the fact that the capitalist market economy and its logic are reflected in international laws and conventions affecting the regulation of environmentally harmful activities. Since they do not break with the origin of environmental harm (Lynch et al., 2013), they do not provide adequate protection against the environmental destruction of the global economy. These market mechanisms can cause severe environmental harm and social conflicts at the local level, furthermore, the underlying economic and political interests can contribute to the control (repression) of the resistance against environmentally harmful investments.

Starting from the often-experienced inadequacy of institutionalized control, in my argument resistance at the level of the affected community is the informal social control of environmental harm. I interpret the toolkit for hindering and making resistance impossible, or suppress it, as the control of resistance. The examination of the interactions between informal and formal social control is not new to criminology (Cohen, 1985; Garland, 2001; Ferrell, Hayward and Young, 2008; Borbíró, 2011). In my research however I do not examine crime and crime control, but use these concepts to examine environmental harm and its control.

II. Research Objectives and Methodology

One aim of the research is to explore the dynamics of power and resistance through the examination of control mechanisms generated by conflicts of interest related to environmental harm. Although the green criminological approach has already appeared in Hungarian criminological thought in the last ten years (see e.g. Irk, 2016; Zachar, 2020; Molnár, 2021; Szalai, 2023), it is still not sufficiently dominant. Thus, among the criminological theoretical objectives of this research is to strengthen green criminological thinking within Hungarian criminology. Secondly – as the research is strongly theory-oriented – one of the aims of the dissertation is also to enrich the green criminological framework with the social control approach for the examination of environmental harm and resistance.

The specific conceptual framework of the dissertation is provided by a social control perspective integrated into the theoretical framework of green-cultural criminology, which also forms the analytical framework of the Hungarian case study in chapter 5. In this dynamic

model, I focus on examining the interactions between various forms of social control arising around environmental harm. Within this, I distinguish between the social control of environmental harm and the control (suppression or repression) of resistance that has arisen in opposition to environmental harm. In connection with social control the literature (Cohen, 1985; Garland, 2001) distinguishes between formal (institutionalized) and informal control.

1. The formal aspect of the social control of environmental harm consists of normative systems and laws aimed at controlling environmentally harmful activities. I interpret the resistance of the affected communities, and more broadly social movements related to environmental protection as the informal social control of environmental harm. In this context, the informal control of environmental harm reacts to the shortcomings or inadequate functioning of institutionalized control. In many cases, the enforcement of legal control mechanisms is a significant tool of the resistance.
2. We can also speak about the means of formal and informal control with regard to the reactions – or pre-emptive measures – that resistance can trigger among those who support the economic interests behind environmental harm. The formal control of resistance and social movements may appear in the criminalization of activists or even in the restriction of the possibility of demonstrations, which at various points may be connected to criminal policy. As the informal repression of resistance, we can interpret, among other things, violent and life-threatening crimes committed against environmental defenders and threats against them. The phenomena belonging to the informal control of resistance do not end with repressive control tools. We can also encounter so-called soft control practices that seek to weaken the resistance, such as the corporate social responsibility programme of the company causing the given environmental harm.

Based on these assumptions, at the start of my research I formulated the following working hypothesis: The weak institutionalized control of environmental harm and the institutionalized promotion of market activities causing environmental harm can trigger informal control mechanisms from society, which appear in various forms of resistance. Practices aimed at controlling and suppressing that resistance amplify the reproduction processes of environmental harm.

Based on this hypothesis I formulated the following research questions:

1. What characteristics and connections can we identify in the institutionalized and informal social control of environmental harm?
2. How is the control (suppression or repression) of resistance implemented?

3. How are the instances of control of environmental harm and control (suppression or repression) of resistance connected to the reproduction of environmental harm?

I conducted a theory-oriented study, which combines elements of basic research and explanatory research (Semanns, 2011). Based on the nature of basic research the focus is on exploring the characteristics of the research problem and creating a conceptual and theoretical framework to facilitate understanding. However, the conclusions drawn from examining the dynamics between various forms of social control around environmental harm contribute to understanding the reproduction processes of environmental harm, so in this respect the research also has an explanatory character.

In the research problem social phenomena observable at both the macro and micro levels are crucial. Given the joint examination of social phenomena at the macro level and at the level of interactions, the methodological considerations of the research are based on critical and phenomenological epistemologies (Scotland, 2012). In the research process, the macro level involves uncovering the power relations and institutional practices leading to environmental harm, in which the capitalist mode of production appears prominently. The study is connected to micro-level social phenomena through the examination of the resistance of the affected communities and the control-type reactions to it. In this way, the phenomenological approach also allows us to examine the perceptions of environmental harm and its different interpretations, which may play a role in the formation of resistance and its repression.

In the first half of my research, the emphasis was on document and content analysis, in which, by analysing reports from civil and international organizations, academic literature, video interviews, investigating journalism reports, documentary films (Nádasi, 2004) and various cases of environmental conflict, I concluded that social control is a possible interpretative framework for examining environmental harm and the related social conflicts. Document analysis accompanied the entire research, as in the selected Göd case a great deal of secondary data sources are available.

To demonstrate the applicability of the conceptual framework of social control to the study of environmental harm, I chose the case study methodology (Hancock and Algozzine, 2006; Mills, Durepos and Wiebe, 2010). For the case study, I relied on secondary data sources and my own empirical research. Within this, I applied the qualitative data collection approach and the methods associated with it – semi-structured interviews, observation, qualitative content analysis, document analysis (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). In the case study-based research method, the selected cases are the units of analysis, which can be interpreted in their specific context using various data sources (Yin, 2003). Within one case, we can explore the

phenomenon under study and its different perceptions, so this method fits well with the phenomenological and constructivist approach (Baxter, Susan Jack and Jack, 2008).

The fieldwork regarding the environmental and social harms caused by Samsung SDI battery factory was carried out in Göd between March 2024 and July 2024. I conducted thirteen interviews, two of them with experts – the chemical industry expert of Greenpeace and the expert of the waterworks – and the others with activists from the Göd-ÉRT Environmental and City Protection Association, and with residents of Göd. One of the most difficult tasks of criminological research into the “crimes of the powerful” is to gain access to corporate and state actors who are involved in or have information about the given case (Beizsley, 2019). Nevertheless, I sought to conduct semi-structured interviews with business and state actors behind the environmental harm, in order to present the underlying conflicts of interest in a more nuanced way, but they did not respond to my inquiries.

III. Structure of the Dissertation

In Chapter 3 of the dissertation I present the global processes leading to environmental harm and the theoretical framework for the criminological examination of environmental harm. During the research, I worked from the theoretical and methodological basis of critical criminologies (see e.g. DeKeseredy 2011; Borbíró 2018). In the first part of the theoretical chapter, I briefly present the starting points of the critical paradigm, then I address the implications of the economic dimension of globalization that are relevant to my research, as well as the conflict between global law and local order as depicted by Bauman (1998). Closely linked to the conflict between the local and the global is the asymmetric distribution of freedom (Ruggiero, 2015), which connects the theory to the criminality of those in power. Thus, the theoretical framework also draws on criminological studies of the crimes of the powerful, in which the economic dimension of globalization appears prominently (see e.g. Rothe and Friedrichs, 2014; Barak, 2015; Ruggiero, 2015b; Bittle et al., 2018). In the subsequent part of the theoretical chapter, I present in more detail the theoretical foundations of green criminology examining environmental harm and crimes (see e.g. South, 2009; White, 2009; Lynch et al., 2013; Potter, 2014; Hall, 2015; Walters, 2018; Brisman and South, 2019), then I join the arguments of those authors who advocate for a stronger connection between green criminology and cultural criminology (see e.g. Ferrell, 2013; Brisman and South, 2014).

In Chapter 4 of the dissertation, for the examination of conflicts around environmental harm, I introduce a dynamic model of social control, which facilitates the understanding of the interactions that arise between the different forms of social control of environmental harm. To this end, I review the main milestones in the scientific study of social control, and then the

micro- and macro-level power theoretical approaches that can shape social control. In the second part of the chapter in order to obtain a comprehensive picture of the social control of environmental harm I briefly present the international frameworks of the formal control of environmental harm. Next in the same chapter I present resistance as a form of informal social control in environmental conflicts, and in the last part of the chapter I turn to the formal and informal means of controlling and repressing resistance.

In Chapter 5, in the case study I examine the environmental harm caused by the Samsung SDI battery factory in Göd, the formal regulations, the resistance and the control of resistance, as well as the factors that hinder it. The production of batteries needed for electromobility raises numerous environmental dilemmas, including the environmental harm caused by lithium mining, battery production, and the storage and planned recycling of scrap and waste (see e.g. Abelvik-Lawson 2019; Éltető 2024c; Győrffy 2023a). In a strictly observed regulatory environment environmental harm is less likely to occur or become severe. This regulatory environment is still in the process of being developed at the EU level, but the environmental impacts of plants associated with battery production and waste management are already felt in several Hungarian settlements (Éltető, 2023, 2024).

IV. Main Findings of the Research

The case study of Göd presented in the dissertation contributes to the examination of paradoxical environmental harms resulting from climate change mitigation practices (White, 2012). According to South (2009), environmental harm cannot be separated from the practices of the global economy, which encourage the excessive exploitation and waste of natural resources. In the Hungarian case it becomes very clear that behaviours causing environmental harm are often not considered crimes, thus the subject of green criminology falls into a grey zone. In the case of the Samsung factory in Göd these manifests on the one hand in the enormous demand for water and energy, and on the other hand in environmental harms caused by irregular and underregulated operation, such as noise, air and groundwater pollution. The Hungarian case also strongly supports the fact that in this grey zone activities by corporations and the state that are not considered crimes – as well as omissions by authorities – can cause very serious environmental harm (Hall, 2015).

The Göd case study is an illustrative example of how the logic of capitalism which seeks continuous growth, creates unequal geographical spaces (Aas, 2012) in which certain communities are forced to live with the environmental harm caused by capitalist accumulation, while market actors enjoy a kind of “extraterritoriality” (Bauman, 1998). Moreover, following the logic of the free market, profit-making assigns to the given state the role of ensuring the continuously expanding conditions necessary for the functioning of the

global economy. As a result, residents of Göd are forced to live with the noise, groundwater and air pollution caused by Samsung SDI, without being able to count on the help of decision-makers and authorities. Even those who move away are not necessarily able to escape. This is well illustrated by the case of a resident of Göd who moved away because of the Samsung factory, but at their new place of residence another battery industry investment was announced. Samsung SDI's "extraterritoriality" is ensured on the one hand by the Hungarian government through subsidies to the company and a permissive legal environment which fits into a governmental strategy for the battery value chain in which both foreign and domestic capital are supported at the expense of the state budget and the environment (Gagyí, 2024). On the other hand, its untouchability is ensured by the "state within a state" corporate operation, as a result of which it is almost impossible to gain insight into the actual operation of Samsung SDI.

Environmental harm as a social construct

According to Mol (2017), the dilemmas related to defining environmental harm should be resolved through the examination of the power relations, techniques and dynamics involved in the perception of environmental harm, since these influence whether a particular environmental harm becomes legal harm, tolerated illegal harm, or non-tolerated illegal harm. In my research, through the analysis of the social control of environmental harm I sought to present those dynamics and discourses that, in a given case can shape the perception of environmental harm in which power relations play an important role and which also influence the various forms of control of environmental harm.

The case study shows the perceptions local residents have regarding environmental harm, as well as the discourses, power relations and techniques influencing how locals perceive the environmental pollution occurring around them. In this regard the question of trust is very important. In what measurements and data do local residents trust or can they trust? Many would not trust measurements by the municipality and the authorities without civil oversight. Since the authority does not check whether the data reported by the factory are accurate, it cannot be stated beyond doubt that even more serious pollution is not taking place than what locals are aware of. According to the narrative of decision-makers and authorities their work is made more difficult by the fact that this is a relatively new industry, and the actual long-term effects of the hazardous chemicals used and their breakdown products on the environment and human health are not yet fully known; only the risks can be clearly seen. There are indeed chemicals for which no limits have yet been set for release into the environment – for example, NMP, which has a limit value in air but not in soil.

The case study highlights that discourses surrounding environmental harm play a crucial role in shaping perceptions of harm. An important result of local resistance is that they revealed the environmental harms caused by Samsung SDI and communicated it to local residents. In contrast stands the governments' narrative, which communicates that battery industry investments must meet very strict environmental requirements and that everything is being done to ensure locals feel safe. However, as authorities do not take measures to make information accessible many of the facts around the actual environmental harm remain concealed from the public.

The social control of environmental harm

In the dissertation I introduce a dynamic model of social control for the examination of environmental harm and the complex control mechanisms arising around social mobilization in which critical and interactionist criminological approaches are mixed, helping to develop a nuanced understanding of the interconnections between global and local processes. Since social control appears in some form in every environmental conflict focusing on the examination of control mechanisms can also contribute to placing personal and community problems related to environmental harm experienced in various parts of the world into global economic, political, and social processes. In my research, both forms of social control – formal control emphasizing the role of the state, and informal social control – play an essential role.

The application of the conceptual framework of social control also has theoretical implications for criminology. According to this, if we extend the scope of criminology to the examination of harms mediated by social relations (institutions and practices) that are underpinned by economic and political interests and the acts of those in power, then it is worth getting to know and analysing the control of social and environmental harms, as well as the interests and conflicts of interest that shape them.

1. What characteristics and interconnections can we identify in the institutionalized and informal social control of environmental harm?

The formal control of environmental harm is permeated by the dilemma between economy and nature, in which economic interests still prevail. Polanyi (1944) pointed out the problematic relationship between capitalism and nature — namely, that the ever-expanding logic of the market economy results in the exploitation of nature. Moreover, beginning in the 1980s the implementation of neoliberalism's market model, grounded in neoclassical economic principles, brought about unprecedented destruction of nature and became the main driving force of the ecological crisis. In Fraser's interpretation, capitalism colonizes nature like a cannibal: it extracts the resources necessary for production, and then uses it as

a sink for the waste generated in production and consumption (Fraser, 2024). Examining the international frameworks of the formal control of environmental harm, the conclusion was, that the time-consuming nature, the entanglement with conflicts of interest, and the embeddedness in capitalism of the creation, application, and enforcement of legal control mechanisms are insufficient as formal controls to meaningfully reverse or prevent the worsening of the ecological crisis.

Our relationship with nature, as well as our perceptions of it, are shaped by our culture; therefore, in the study of environmental harm we encounter a strong cultural embeddedness. This makes discourses shaping Western societies' relationship with nature essential to understanding the functioning of formal control. In this regard, Luke's (1995) argument highlighted that the transformation of Nature into "environment" in scientific and policy discourses contributed to legitimizing the exploitation of nature. According to Luke (1995), if the dominant discourse defines nature as a resource and as a kind of lifeless environment, then almost anything concerning the exploitation of nature can be legitimized. This discursive subordination also shapes the formal instruments of controlling environmental harm. Since in this perspective nature appears merely as a resource, legal instruments intended to protect the environment cannot move beyond the sustainability narrative which is in support of economic growth.

Green economy has emerged as an internationally accepted response to the ecological crisis. However, it does not resolve the contradictions inherent in the relationship between nature and capitalism, since it is built upon superficial ecology. It claims that the very technology contributing to the destruction of nature can also save it. This affects the formal control of harm and the way we think about particular environmental harms. The case study of Göd confirmed that the green economy alone is not necessarily an adequate response to the climate crisis. Attempts to address the climate crisis that do not break with the logic of capitalism — despite being labelled as sustainable or green — can themselves be sources of further environmental harm. The narrative of the green economy often provides legitimacy for the continuation of activities that cause environmental harm. In the case of Göd and Hungary this occurs in a regulatory environment that does not prevent the battery industry's investments from causing severe environmental harm. The Göd case illustrates well how, in order to attract market actors and capital, the state controls local social and economic activities in ways advantageous to global economy — whether in terms of environmental, industrial safety, or labour regulations and their enforcement.

In the Göd case I examined, the transition to a green economy and green energy was itself a source of further environmental harm and social conflict, thus reinforcing White's (2012) argument on the need to examine paradoxical harms, as well as Ruggiero's (2013) stance that green criminology should commit itself more strongly to deep ecology. The

dissertation confirmed that while the transition to electromobility may reduce certain environmental harms – such as CO₂ emissions in large cities – battery industry investments, where state and market interests are strongly intertwined cause further environmental harm.

I examined the social control of environmental harm in a postsocialist context, in which Győrffy (2023a) highlights the parallel between the country's forced industrialization connected to the battery industry and the industrial policy of socialism. The case study showed that the state support of Samsung SDI's investment in Göd – both in terms of financial backing and permissive regulatory and supervisory frameworks – enjoys overwhelming advantage over ensuring the safety and healthy living conditions of local residents, as well as the protection of the environment and the natural assets of the Carpathian Basin. Yet these are without exception rights and obligations enshrined in Hungary's Fundamental Law. In the case of Göd, therefore, we can speak more of the institutionalized facilitation of harm through permissive legal and administrative environments including the acceleration of investments and the obstruction of social consultation.

Furthermore, the EU supports Hungary's battery strategy (Polyák, 2024) in defence of the automotive industry, despite the fact that its cornerstone is the battery value chain built by East Asian companies (Czirfusz, 2022). As a result, bolstered by EU climate neutrality measures and industrial policy, Hungary's authoritarian regime plans to secure the supply of German-owned automotive plants in the country through battery industry investments relying on East Asian investors (Gagyi et al., 2024). Polyák (2024) argues that the government's battery strategy is more political than economic in nature, as serving the German automotive industry has shielded the government from serious EU criticism and sanctions over the past decade. This has enabled German capital to flow into the country unhindered (Polyák, 2024), while the ruling Fidesz party has steadily dismantled the rule of law (Bárd et al., 2022) and established an autocracy (Fleck, 2025). Battery industry investments reinforce this process, as their irregular operations and environmental pollution do not give the EU reason to withdraw its support for Fidesz's battery strategy. Moreover, EU support may become a source of conflict, as affected communities are left entirely on their own when battery factories and related facilities along the value chain are established.

Within the conceptual framework of the social control of environmental harm, I interpreted resistance as the informal control of environmental harm, partly in response to the inadequacy of formal control instruments. The resistance of local residents can be described as the communities' self-defence mechanism against the economy (Polanyi, 1944), with the potential to bring about change in a given environmental conflict. In examining the conditions under which this can occur, it is crucial to consider the social and political environment in which resistance emerges and the fundamental obstacles activists must face as a result. This

environment also has important consequences for the effectiveness of the tools of resistance – whether they enforce institutionalized control or contribute to its development. The research focused on the resistance of local communities in environmental conflicts triggered by investments or development projects. To provide a global perspective on such resistance, the dissertation drew on cases from the Environmental Justice Atlas database and studies analysing them (Temper, Bene, and Martinez-Alier, 2015b; Martinez-Alier et al., 2016; Scheidel et al., 2020). From these sources it has become clear that important elements of resistance in environmental conflicts include litigation and the strengthening of community participation. The importance of enforcing rights within formal frameworks underscores the crucial role of law in resistance against environmental harm, where the positive, resource-like face of law comes to the fore.

Since one of the most important tools of resistance is law and legal enforcement, legal norms and institutions provide space for resistant social action and, within it, for tactical manoeuvring (Fleck, 2014), which can contribute to the transformative power of collective action, achieving partial or even complete success in a given case, not only in the legal sense. Law, as one of the key instruments of social mobilization, also appeared in the Göd case study. However, in this case, the authoritarian political environment rather obstructs the emergence of this positive manifestation of law. One example of this is that authorities ignored the court's order for immediate legal protection, which should have halted Samsung SDI's activities subject to a unified environmental permit. Nevertheless, civil activists achieved a great deal. Their work contributed, among other things, to the initiation of an environmental review process of Samsung SDI, the establishment of an emission limit value for NMP in the air, the development of a monitoring system, and the acquisition – sometimes through litigation – of information about the factory that the authorities had no intention of making public.

2. How is the control (suppression) of resistance implemented?

From the point of view of the negative outcomes of environmental conflicts in the EJ atlas, the criminalization of activists, as well as the prevalence of serious crimes committed against them – most typically in the countries of the Global South – are defined as serious problems. Regarding the control of resistance, the dissertation presents those techniques of exercising power that contribute to making resistance more difficult, as well as those that aim at repressing the resistance. Here, law appears as an instrument of repression, which is supported by the governmental power tools revealed in the case study that, on the one hand, serve to implement the will of the political elite without public consultation, and on the other, to disable resistance and, more broadly, civil society in Hungary.

The goals and forms of realization of control – whether their aim is to make the emergence of resistance more difficult or to suppress the activities of resistance – always develop in accordance with local specificities, so in Chapter 4 of the dissertation I only sought to categorize the various forms of control. Based on cases from secondary data using the EJ Atlas, as well as literature dealing with the issue of the control of resistance (see e.g. Fernandez, 2008; Balsiger, 2015; Peterson and Wahlström, 2015; Scheidel et al., 2020; Vegh Weis, 2022), I divided the tools of control into three categories, which I refined based on the experience of the fieldwork and the characteristics of the Hungarian case:

1. Formal control of resistance, the extreme case of which is criminalization, is encountered in many cases. Its manifestations differ in the countries of the Global South – where it is not uncommon for key actors of the resistance to receive prison sentences of several years – and in the countries of the Global North – the United States and Europe – where it manifests, among other things, in police actions and administrative offence proceedings against activists, in which environmental activists are portrayed as “eco-terrorists” or extremist groups.
2. Another form of suppression is the atrocities committed against environmental activists, as well as the life-threatening crimes against them. The latter is mostly characteristic of countries in the Global South, while threats and atrocities against activists can be encountered anywhere, even in Hungary.
3. Soft control tools include practices in which either the investor company or state actors try to persuade the actors of resistance and/or the affected community not to engage in resistance. This may be, for example, a programme or development carried out in the name of corporate social responsibility, or, in certain cases, granting various advantages to locals or buying them out. Also included here are those rhetorical elements and political or corporate discourses that seek to normalize and gain acceptance for the given investment among the broader public, thereby shaping resistance or questioning its legitimacy and credibility, such as narratives around green economy and sustainable development.

The case study revealed that the control of resistance is closely intertwined with the facilitation of the given economic activity. Most control instruments are primarily aimed at supporting the state-backed economic activity, namely the operation and continuous expansion of the Samsung factory. However, at several points they intersect with the control of resistance or, conversely, with its neglect, which indicates the complex entanglement of market interests with the exercise of power. Since resistance appears as a kind of inconvenience or threat to governmental intent, it is not possible to fully separate the instruments that support the smooth functioning of the Samsung SDI – thus narrowing the

possibilities of resistance, such as declaring a project a priority governmental investment – from those that directly serve to hinder or discredit the work of civil activists – for instance, the investigation by the Sovereignty Protection Office against the association.

Based on the fieldwork and document analysis, in the Göd case I identified three categories into which the instruments of suppressing the resistance fit:

1. *Keeping the extent of resistance within bounds.* In this category, typically soft control tools are discussed, which are based on various state, local government, and corporate narratives, and which increase uncertainty, distrust, and division, while concealing the real problem and its severity. These tools aim to weaken resistance or prevent its spread and popularity. Here I include the appropriation of professional questions of battery production by the hegemonic (party) political discourse, which contributes to the alienation of local residents from public affairs and to the difficulty of cooperation between local civil organizations. A part of the government's toolkit of repression is the politicization of public affairs, whereby professional and policy issues that they do not wish to subject to public consultation are framed as party politics. As a result, those concerned in the given matter – in our case, local residents exposed to the environmental and industrial safety risks of the Samsung SDI factory – often keep away from public affairs. This significantly hampers mobilization. Also included is the political rhetoric that shapes the broader public's perception of resistance, or of civil society in general, in a negative direction. Furthermore, the inaccessibility of information – often its concealment or misrepresentation – in addition to making resistance more difficult, increases distrust within the local community and heightens uncertainty regarding the perception of the environmental and health impacts of battery factories. I also classified among soft control tools those community 'festival' programmes organized by the municipality that can be interpreted as a kind of substitute activity, and which try to improve the well-being of local residents while ignoring one of the main causes of their anxiety. From this point of view, I also interpret Samsung's corporate social responsibility programs as soft control, which, by painting the company green (greenwashing) and responsible mask the serious industrial safety risks and environmental harm that, due to contradictory information or often lack of information, are almost invisible to local residents.
2. *Legal instrumentalism and law enforcement practices.* Legal instrumentalism – which in this case also includes serious abuses by the state in relation to legislation and law enforcement – appears very strongly in order to make resistance more difficult, sometimes impossible, and to support the operation of Samsung SDI. The legal and administrative environment supporting the smooth execution of battery industry investments, as well as its unpredictability, clearly illustrate that for the legislator

economic interests override the interests of the community and environmental values, and thus the conditions necessary for a healthy life – despite the fact that the latter are protected by Hungary’s Fundamental Law. From the point of view of making resistance more difficult, in the category of legal instrumentalism and law enforcement practices I distinguished between the legal and administrative environment serving to accelerate and facilitate battery industry investments, the toolkit of exceptional governance, legislation serving the protection of political power – for example, the Sovereignty Protection Office – as well as stalling as a routinely applied law enforcement practice.

3. *Restrictions and atrocities affecting individuals and civil organizations.* Among these tools and community reactions we can find the discrediting of activists, defamation, and the restriction of access to local online community platforms.

Overall, in the course of the formal control and criminalization of resistance, state power punishes those who stand up against environmental harms and the ecological crisis, instead of taking action against actual harm by strictly regulating and enforcing the regulation of the polluting operations of large corporations. In the countries of the Global South, moreover, the environmental harm suffered by marginalized social groups becomes the focal point of conflicts in which social inequalities are increasingly entrenched, and through the criminalization of resistance the state contributes to the further marginalization of already vulnerable groups. Environmental activists and their communities must contend not only with formal instruments of repression but also with rhetoric directed against them, threats, atrocities, and even life-threatening crimes committed against them.

In the Hungarian case, the authoritarian political environment, the facilitation of the uninterrupted functioning of Samsung SDI and control-type reactions to resistance together contribute to the obstruction and suppression of resistance. This, on the one hand, becomes an additional source of anxiety and conflict within the local community, and on the other hand, by suppressing resistance, contributes to the persistence and intensification of environmental harm, thereby even enabling its expanded reproduction.

3. How are the control of environmental harm and the control of resistance connected to the reproduction of environmental harm?

The examples presented in the dissertation illustrate that the instruments of suppressing resistance also contribute to the expanded reproduction of environmental harm. These control instruments hinder and suppress those informal social control mechanisms that could promote or even compel the lawful operation of environmentally harmful investments or the suspension of such projects. In these cases we can identify the connection between the

preservation of privileges and the extension of control instruments. Thus, by weakening social mobilization, the shrinking space of civil society, criminalization, intimidation, and the impunity of crimes committed against activists, the political and economic elites give further space to the environmentally destructive activities of various industries and major investments.

The Hungarian case can also be linked to global trends that take shape around the market processes leading to environmental harm and the social control of harm. On the one hand, this includes the increasing environmental harm caused by the green economy, particularly the transition to electromobility, which – from lithium mining to the problem of battery waste – has triggered resistance from affected communities worldwide. On the other hand, the suppression of resistance against environmental harm is a global problem, in which state and corporate actors employ a variety of means to discredit, obstruct, and disable resistance. In this regard, the case study revealed that mobilization against environmentally harmful battery industry investments in Hungary face difficulties from two directions. First, from the government's facilitation of the unlawful operation of battery industry investments and the suppression of resistance. Second, from EU industrial policy, which, in the interest of maintaining capital accumulation through green economy supports the Hungarian government's battery strategy. As long as EU regulation does not move beyond the logic of capital accumulation in order to protect nature and prevent the worsening of the ecological crisis, local activists may run into walls without being able to count on meaningful support from the Union.

In addition to the suppression of informal control mechanisms, the maintenance of the reproduction of environmental harm is ensured by the embeddedness of the formal control of environmental harm – that is, the national and international regulatory frameworks – within capitalism. In this regard, there is another implication of the social control of environmental harm for the reproduction of harm. From the control dialectic outlined in the dissertation, a dichotomy also follows: although we recognize that formal control mechanisms cannot move beyond the logic of economic growth and capitalist capital accumulation, the development and enforcement of existing regulatory frameworks could still contribute, to some degree, to successful interventions in reproductive processes of environmental harm. Furthermore, in order to transcend these regulatory systems and enable measures that emphasize the intrinsic value of nature and the unity of nature and humanity, it is necessary to develop alternatives to the industrial consumer society and capitalist economy whose survival does not depend on continuous growth. In this transition, ideally, bottom-up community initiatives would encounter a legal environment – both internationally and nationally – more sensitively attuned to environmental issues, one that acknowledges the real

source of the problems – capital accumulation – and thus moves beyond the primacy of economic growth.

This utopian vision, however, may be hindered by the institutions and entrenched everyday practices of the economic and political elites, as well as of industrial consumer societies, which together cause the alienation of modern societies from nature. In this regard, it is worth considering Hartmut Rosa's (2019) concept of resonance, which may help in seeking ways out of the crises of late-modern capitalist societies. The concept describes a way of relating – as the opposite of alienation experienced in accelerated modern societies – in which we connect naturally and securely to time and thereby to the world around us. These connections and experiences touch us and, at the same time, transform us. This approach can provide a solution to overcoming alienation from nature, as it indicates that the need for connection with nature persists even in modern societies. With the rediscovery of this connection, and by learning from the traditions and experiences of cultures that still live, or once lived in harmony with nature, a new kind of relationship with nature could emerge – one based on reciprocity and mutuality – that would leave no room for the environmentally destructive practices of capitalism and industrial consumer societies.

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