

# Dictating Participation

## *What choice do targets of empowerment have?*

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Munawwar Naqvi  
Email: [mnaqvi@unitec.ac.nz](mailto:mnaqvi@unitec.ac.nz)  
Address for correspondence:  
Munawwar Naqvi  
School of Communication  
Unitec New Zealand  
PO Box 92025, Auckland  
New Zealand.

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Under the participatory approach it is advocated that the role of state as initiators and managers of development projects should be minimal, this paper argues that where state intervention is declining for various political and economic reasons, this role is now increasingly being played by the larger Non-Governmental Development Organisations who provide and/or source funds for development projects and disburse them to ground NGOs. The data collected suggests that the ground NGOs seeking funds for 'customised' and locally designed projects, developed through the needs assessed by dedicated participatory approaches, often end up bidding for 'mass-produced' development projects available with the larger NGOs and development funding intermediaries. This occurs because of the ground NGOs' need to be institutionally functional and viable for the communities they serve or represent. This suggests that the modes of communication between ground NGOs their funding partners and their beneficiary communities reflect the nature of participation, indicating it is moving away from 'community agency' model (proposed by Lyons et al 2001, pp 273-288) and is shifting towards an apparently *new* 'involvement' model, in which the larger NGOs and development funding intermediaries are evolving as pseudo-state intervening entities, controlling development activity through various forms of financial decisions flowing into the funded projects. Because of this shift, certain modifications are suggested to Lyons' (2001) analysis of the relationship between the changing role of national government and the nature of participation in terms of two typical, ideal type models of participatory development at two ends of a continuum –the first is the 'community agency' model characterizing empowerment paradigm which involves grassroots structures, decentralizing control, and decision making to civil society and is believed to create self awareness and the transformation of society through empowerment. The other end of a continuum represents the 'involvement' model, under which development projects are initiated and managed by the state. Friedland's (2001) distinction between two types of societal integration (Social integration, operating through normative consensus grounded in communicative action and concerning the actors of the *lifeworld* [Habermas, 1981, 1987] and System integration effected by the instrumental steering of decisions by institutional sources of money and political power) is used to critique the extent of empowerment that 'participatory development' practice has delivered to the developing communities *being* integrated into the wider (perhaps global) economy.

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### **Ditando A Participação: Que escolha os alvos do "empowerment" têm?**

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Contato: [mnaqui@unitec.ac.nz](mailto:mnaqui@unitec.ac.nz). Os dados foram coletados com as entrevistas com 10 cabeças dos NGOs (organizações non-governmental) à terra em Índia central. Alguns dos descobertas são discutidos no papel.

Sob a aproximação que participação se advoga que o papel do estado como iniciadores e gerentes de projetos do desenvolvimento deve ser mínimo, este papel discute que onde a intervenção de estado está declinando para várias razões políticas e econômicas, este papel está sendo jogado agora cada vez mais pelas organizações non-Governmental maiores do desenvolvimento que fornecem e/ou a fonte financia para projetos do desenvolvimento e disburse os para moer NGOs. Os dados coletados sugerem que os NGOs à terra que procuram fundos para o 'customised' (personalizado) e projetaram localmente os projetos, desenvolvidos com as necessidades avaliadas por aproximações participatory dedicadas, terminam-nos frequentemente acima de oferecer para 'os projetos produzido em massa' do desenvolvimento disponíveis com os NGOs e os intermediaries maiores financiar de desenvolvimento. Isto ocorre por causa da necessidade dos NGOs' à terra ser institutionally funcional e viable para as comunidades que servem ou representam. Isto sugere que as modalidades de uma comunicação entre os NGOs à terra seus sócios financiando e suas comunidades do beneficiário refletem a natureza da participação, indicando que está movendo afastado da agência da comunidade do ' ' modelo (proposto por Lyons et al 2001, pp 273-288) e o está deslocando para o modelo de uma participação aparentemente nova do', em que os NGOs e os intermediaries maiores financiar de desenvolvimento estão evoluindo como entidades de intervenção do pseudo-estado, controlando a atividade do desenvolvimento através dos vários formulários das decisões financeiras que fluem nos projetos financiados. Por causa deste deslocamento, determinadas modificações são sugeridas a 2001 análises de Lyons' (do relacionamento entre o papel em mudança do governo nacional e a natureza da participação nos termos de dois típicos, tipo ideal modelos de desenvolvimento participatory em dois fins de um continuum - o primeiro é o paradigma caracterizando modelo do "empowerment" da agência da comunidade do ' ' que envolve estruturas dos grassroots, o controle descentralizando, e fazer de decisão à sociedade civil e é acreditado para criar a consciência do self e a transformação da sociedade com o "empowerment". O outro fim de um continuum representa o modelo da participação do ' ', sob que os projetos do desenvolvimento são iniciados e controlados pelo estado. Distinções de Friedland (2001) (entre dois tipos de integração societal (integração societal, se operando com o consenso normativo aterrado na ação communicative e concernindo os atores do *lifeworld* [ Habermas, 1981.1987 ] e a integração de sistema efetuada pelo direção instrumental das decisões por fontes institucional do dinheiro e do poder político) são usadas à crítica a extensão do " empowerment" que a prática do desenvolvimento participatory do ' ' entregou às comunidades se tornando que estão sendo integradas na economia (talvez global) mais larga.

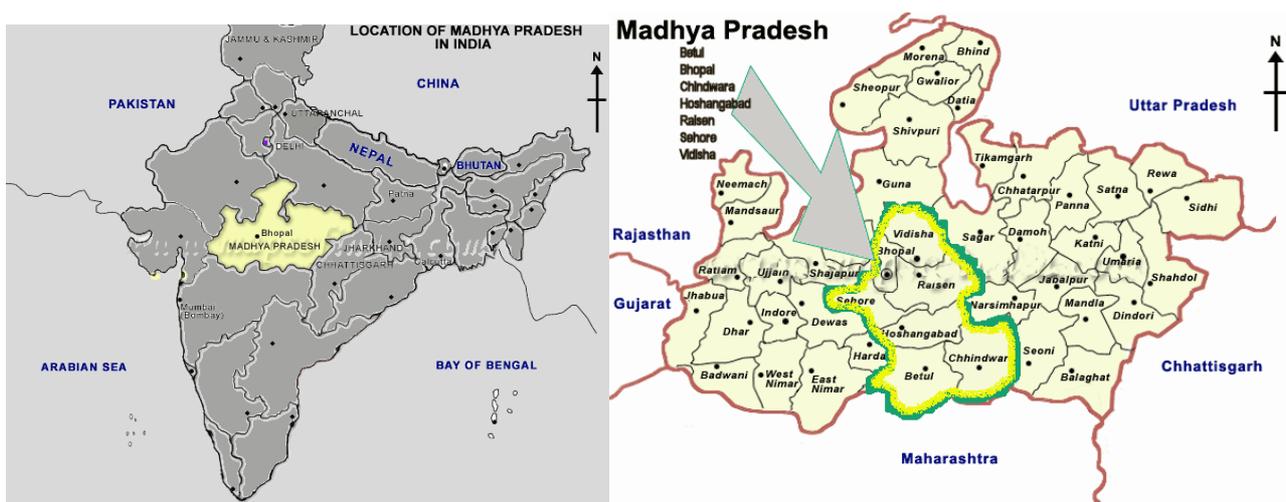
## ***Dictating Participation: What choice do targets of empowerment have?***

### **Background**

This paper is part of a research conducted in the field of Development Communication with the idea of exploring NGOs' perception of their own communication with their beneficiary communities, and with other actors on the development scene, including state, local administration and external funding sources. One of the objectives for the main research was to interpret the significance and role of various actors from field NGOs' perspective of their communication to get an insight into the *participatory approach* as in practice at the grassroots level. Certain basic questions, however, form the basis of this interpretation: Do the communities who are the ultimate beneficiaries of the development activities in the third world countries have a say in the way these activities are designed around them and the way communities are *initiated* into the process? Do they have alternatives between *status quo* (their current socio-cultural, socio-political and socio-economic bindings) and becoming a 'developed' society as visualised by the proponents of development interventions? If the ultimate goal of development activities is integration into the world economy, to what extent are these activities *agency* driven, and as such, what some of the implications could be for 'participatory approaches'?

### **Research area, data & respondents**

**Figure 1.0 Map of the Region**



Eight ground level, Non-governmental development organisations were contacted in seven adjacent districts of South-Central India, and data was collected through face-to-face, semi-structured interviews in the selected region (see map, figure 1.0) to gain an inner perspective on the

relationships they have basically with their funding agencies and the community(ies) they work with. The narrative interpretation also reveals the roles of various other actors at the community level and the complexity of constraints within which NGOs and/or community organisations work. An overview of data reflecting these roles from NGOs' perspective is given in Table 2.0.

## **Ethical issues in focus**

Theoretically, 'development', 'participation', and 'empowerment' have always been elusive of clear definitions, because of the extent of meanings these terms have generated since being adopted in the socio-economic and socio-political contexts. Gasper (1997) contextualises this as an ethical dilemma in development. Whereas he refers to W.I.D.E.R's (World Institute of Development Economics Research) research in the area of basic existential and ethical questions raised by development policies, one particular issue is of particular interest with respect to this discussion, namely, 'the legitimacy or illegitimacy of promoting views of well-being from one culture to another' (Gasper, 1997). For instance, the model with which the general perception of human rights is compared to is idealised in the western consumerist society and is derived from the lifestyle needs of the consumerist society. This –though apparently teleological –is actually how most of the respondent NGOs feel about working on rights issues. From Rostow's (1960) five stage model of modernity, the desired outcome –final stage –is indeed graduation to the consumerist society. The second issue which has a direct bearing on this paper is the definition of development as promoted by UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) through its Human Development Reports as 'enlargement of people's choices' (Gasper, 1997). The availability of options, the awareness of these, and the physical capabilities of the community to choose sustainable alternatives are in focus here.

With respect to theorising participation, the means/ends categorisation is more widely used than others (Oakley, *et al* 1991; Nelson & Wright, 1995). 'These distinguish between the efficiency arguments (participation as a tool for achieving better project outcomes) and equity and empowerment arguments (participation as a process which enhances the capacity of individuals to improve their own lives and facilitates social change to the advantage of disadvantaged or marginalised groups) (Clever, 1999). Clever views 'empowerment' as a rhetorical term and participation *itself* as empowering regardless of actual activity undertaken' (Clever, 1999). Although it is contestable whether *any* kind of participation would yield empowerment, the linkage is seen as a workable option. Thus participation, here, is taken to be 'the means of empowering communities and making physical improvements more sustainable in the long run' (Berry, 1993).

Schneider (1999) has described empowerment as ‘the gaining of strength in various ways necessary to be able to move out of poverty, rather than literally taking over power from somebody else at the purely political level’(Schneider, 1999). This is a more acceptable definition in the context of rural development in the Third World where poverty is recognised as the multidimensional concern on the forefront of international development agenda.

### **Communicatively integrated community**

Friedland (2001) proposes the concept of the communicatively integrated community for a post industrialised society that is rapidly advancing to a networked form of social integration. Two key elements are derived from his discussion and used as arguments to view some of the issues of participation and communities’ options emerging from research data: The first is the application of Habermas’s (1981; 1987, cited in Friedland, 2001) comparison of *lifeworld*, which is social integration via communicative action, manifest in personality culture and society; and *system*, which is integration via delinguistified steering media of economy and political system. The second element is his ‘strong version of democracy that is deliberative and participatory’ including certain ‘normative and practical criteria’ (Friedland, 2001). These criteria of genuinely ‘participative’ and hence ‘empowered’ communities can be characterised as in Table 1.0. Some of the research findings are discussed from this perspective.

**Table1.0** Characteristics of genuinely ‘participative’ & ‘empowered’ communities

1	<i>Realisation and basic organisation</i>	Thinking critically –redefining identity, capability and relationships; grouping; acknowledging and/or contesting the affecting issues.
2	<i>Broader Relevance</i>	Asserting collectively on issues; acknowledging other groups and institutions; networking.
3	<i>Political Recognition</i>	Expressing collectively; gaining the ability to affect political directions
4	<i>Actualisation and self help</i>	Decision-making, effecting change at local level; practicing responsibility; increasing options.
5	<i>Reorganisation</i>	accessing information; growing and changing as self assessed

### **Desire for change**

Most of the communities with whom NGOs are currently engaged accept *status quo*, and there is no apparent desire for change since they seem to be unaware of such possibilities applicable to

them, even though in the last two decades there has been a marked increase in some rural communities' exposure to mass media. The visuals of lifestyles and issues projected (primarily) through 'doordarshan' national television and 'bollywood' movies do not necessarily induce a reflection of their status to the extent that these communities would begin to seek changes for themselves. In fact, media descriptions of life are too far fetched for these communities and therefore pass as mere entertainment at their infrequent encounters with these images. Though national radio 'akashwani' does produce comparatively more programmes for the rural communities, much of these accommodate 'system' to 'macro' (Friedland, 2001) level interests. If there are local editions of newspapers, they would generally be at the district level if at all –again 'macro-meso' level (Friedland, 2001) –and the lack of literacy prevents print media operation at the purely local level. Most community interaction tends to be face-to-face. This is where NGOs become the medium questioning *status quo* and attempting to change communities' perceptions of itself. The rigorous nature of this effort is more susceptible to *supplying* development images usually by contrasting with developed societies, rather than educating the community to reflect on its own state and desire the change. Since the latter is evolutionary and hence time consuming, it does not usually fit the funders stress on quick results. This *supply* of the desire for change brings into focus the ethical dilemma –raised by Gasper (1997) –of the legitimacy of promoting the idea of well being from one culture to another, and questions the first criterion of empowered community derived from Friedland (2001) namely, *realisation and basic organisation*.

### **Project identification, design, and ownership**

Only one out of eight NGOs interviewed actually emerged from the community itself. In other cases, NGOs entered the domain as 'experts', having gained credibility working elsewhere. There is no denying that more often NGOs attempt to assess the need of the community through dedicated participatory approaches, like tools for participatory rural appraisal (PRA), and most respondents insist that they micro-plan their projects with utmost care, whether funding had already been negotiated or seen as the next step. Laverack (2001) contends that 'problem assessment is most empowering when the identification of problems, solutions to the problems and actions to resolve the problems are carried out by the community' (Laverack 2001). Whereas, there is acknowledgement of community's 'involvement' –which generally passes as participation (Lyons et al, 2001) –NGOs strongly voice that the community does not have any significant awareness of the process of need analysis. This again, raises the question whether being *present* would qualify as participating and whether any aspect of the process would be contested within such participation.

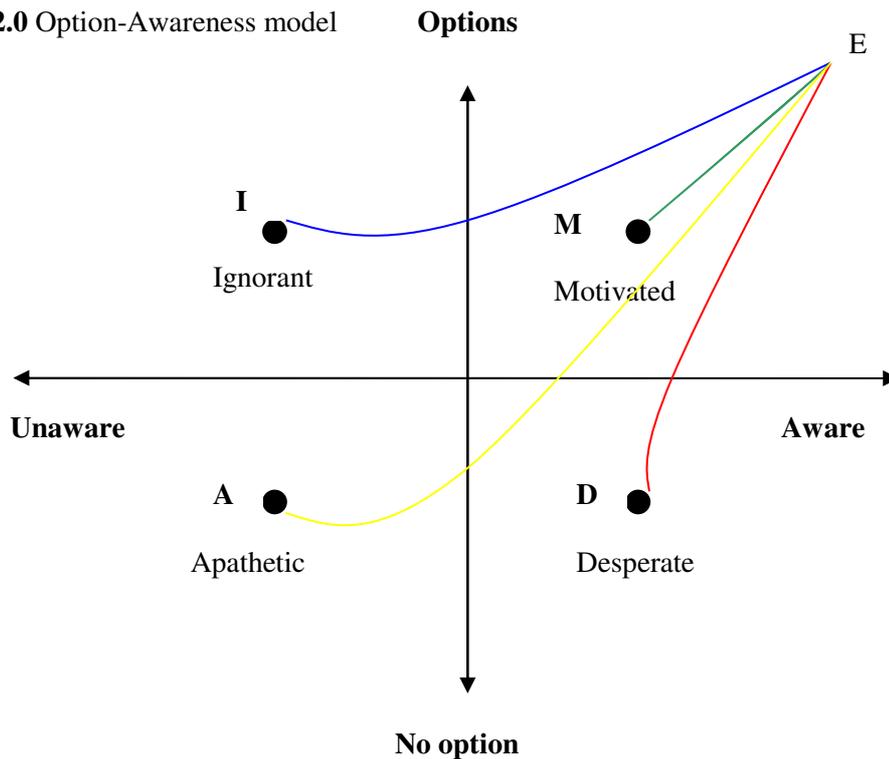
Respondents also acknowledge that even before they (NGDOs) enter the domain, preliminary negotiations are already in place with one or the other funding source. The external non-governmental funding sources usually do not have funds allocated to regions as such, but for certain categories of development projects depending on their agenda and as informed through macro-planning. Some inferences can be drawn from this data: One, that a field NGDO would be eventually implementing one of the 'mass-produced' projects available with the funding source into the community, *or* two, that a field NGDO would be working to strike a compromise between what they perceive as specific and prioritised needs of the community and what is available from funders, *or* three, the NGDO would be seeking another funding source for the specific and prioritised need. 'Custom-designed' project proposals are often seen to fail in the so called 'fund market' and NGDOs end up proposing within the frames of available generalised projects while seeking ways into it of accommodating issues *talked* about with target communities earlier in needs analysis. Most respondents maintain that at the time of making funding partnerships they (field NGDOs) know that the funding source has a certain agenda, but they keep reminding themselves that their (field NGDOs') main concern is a certain area of need of the community. Mostly NGDOs act as agents for the community to procure funds and/or other assistance for projects appraised by them. However, the urgency of meeting the assessed need of the community prompts to accept funding which would force them to modify their own programme interventions in the community. Community, on the other hand, is assumed to be 'involved' and 'supportive' in this exercise although most of the decisions for project design and implementation are made between NGDOs and funders.

The argument of the necessity of community having a sense of ownership of a programme being undertaken to address their concerns and issues, includes programme management that shows control of the primary stakeholders over decisions on planning, implementation, evaluation, finances, administration, reporting and conflict resolution (Rifkin,1990 cited in Laverack 2001). Data suggests that communities' sense of ownership of the projects (if any) is quite superficial, since most of the management activity is located with the NGDOs. Capacity building in this respect is a slow process therefore NGDOs' expertise is relied upon by the communities as well as funders. That, communities 'cooperate' in the smooth execution of project activities is the only perceptible ownership sense. From the criteria of empowered communities (Table 1.0), this brings into focus lack of *actualisation and self-help* characteristics of the community.

## **Awareness generation –“rights mode”**

In the context of donor's role in deciding and implementing a development intervention, many of the respondents see their organisations balancing on a tightrope. One says, 'It's a bit tricky ethic' because the funding agencies and larger NGOs have their own agenda. Some funding agencies are working exclusively for women empowerment, some for agriculture, or water or other agendas. Recently there has been a new set of agenda called the “rights mode”, meaning that some funding agencies have started stressing on making people aware of basic human rights with the intention that when they know their rights they will try to access these. This stress by many funding agencies to have the NGOs work on the “rights mode” is felt by the field NGOs as an attempt to subvert them to work as activist organizations. Probably this attitude of larger NGOs and funding sources, who can be seen in this context as emerging political actors, has been strengthened by the recent successes with WB & IMF policy changes in lieu of international NGO pressure (Nelson, (2001)). There were other concerns among NGOs on “rights mode” apart from the fear of being labelled as activists? One was that a full-scale impulse into awareness generation would require diverting NGOs scarce resources to this intervention. Many perceived that their interaction with communities already had awareness built into it. Another concern came very strongly and is also reflective of the mismatch of *micro* and *macro* planning, that increasing awareness without providing options would only aggravate the situation on the ground. The latter concern can be characterised in the form of an *Option-Awareness* model shown in figure 2.0: The horizontal axis represents the continuum of awareness and the vertical axis represents the continuum of options. Four scenarios can be visualised in the locus of points M, I, A, and D, representing *Motivated*, *Ignorant*, *Apathetic*, and *Desperate* communities, respectively. The movement from each of these loci is towards E (through ideal, near simultaneous increase in awareness and available options), but *an increase in awareness only* can produce negative consequences. This is especially of concerning where NGOs are working with communities who can be plotted in the third quadrant. A more detailed discussion of this model is included in the main research (thesis currently underway).

**Figure 2.0** Option-Awareness model



### Information demands & flow of structural constraints

Rick Davies (1997) contextualised funding organisation’s information demands and compared that with NGOs’ institutional development and conformity, while underlining the risk that ‘organizations which are meant to be intermediaries and means to an end will be treated as ends in themselves, and those whose welfare is supposed to be of final concern, the poorest, will be forgotten and recede into the background’ (Davies, 1997).

Davies (1997) presents the argument that institutionalisation of development could not have been possible unless there was something of value seen in it by donor’s or their principals. He identified that ‘type of information demand’ on NGOs would be a determinant of how important these organizations were. ‘A range of positions can be identified, from *laissez-faire* (NGO should be trusted to do what they will do and not be harassed by donors), to *hard-line* (funded NGOs have signed a contract and are therefore have an obligation to produce the goods i.e., information’ (Davies, 1997). However, the issues of information demands of funding sources are negotiated between NGOs and donors –the community does neither understand the intricacies nor gain an opportunity to *reorganise* itself by informed choice.

In a field report on the development process and community agency, It has been suggested that ‘as partnerships between active communities and other bodies become increasingly widespread, an increasing emphasis on management accountability to partners from outside the community will have to be guaranteed’ (Lyons & Smuts, 1998), and that ‘both spheres, and periods of accountability will need to be institutionalised. In addition, training processes will need to be established which relate to standardised best practices’ (Lyons & Smuts, 1998). This contention can be seen as advocating the *rationality* of corporate culture –which is quite reflective of US political culture –in terms of transparency and accountability norms. However, the issue that gains significance here is that the ‘compliance’ process creates an unequal relationship between the funding sources and the field NGDOs which is greatly tilted towards the funding sources. For various compliance pressures, which include the information demands of donors, majority of the funded Non-governmental development organisations have had to restructure themselves to the model of their donors, which is usually the corporate model, and effectively *instrumental* for economic efficiency.

### **Access to project information and control of community information**

Project information, for the practice of transparency, is meticulously recorded and updated by NGDOs. But it is generally there for the funders, local administration or if the elected *panchayat* wanted to have access to it. Members of the beneficiary community can ‘come and view this information at the project office’, as most of the respondents assert, ‘but they usually do not ask for it, because they don’t understand the content’. The communities have no understanding regarding what arrangements for reporting are in place between the NGDOs and funding sources. Another layer between *gram sabhas* (a village level committee usually put in place by NGDOs as a standard practice) and NGDOs is the difference in technology used at these levels while working with information –word-of-mouth or at best notes of the field workers at the input level *versus* information processing technologies which are now available to most NGDOs. Some authors have pointed to the link between technologies and cultural colonisation (Shiva, 1993) and that ‘technological advancement is often used to *disempower* and subjugate people, often in very covert ways’ (Babacan & Gopalkrishnan, (2001).

Some of the formats of data collection used by field NGDOs for progress monitoring, which I had the privilege of viewing during the process of interviews, were so detailed and specific that when processed with the new information processing tools would generate information of great value to market planners and eventually corporate businesses. Coupled with the frequency of collecting and

recording such information for consolidating reports for funding sources, by simple extrapolation various denominators could be established for determining socio-economic trends at macro-meso levels. Although, the intention is not to deny the value of this information for development planning, the ownership of community information becomes a central question. None of the respondent NGDOs were able to demonstrate an understanding of the issues surrounding production and subsequent dissemination of this information to entities other than those directly related to the development activity. The community –for its lower levels of literacy and hence lower scale of sensitivity in this regard –does not have the ability to control what finds its way into the public domain, and does not realise the possible consequences of this process.

However, very indirectly one of the respondents gave an example of “*neem*” versus Colgate’. Although, causality of development information and corporate penetration remains contestable, the given example does bring into focus the exploitative potential of the development information by corporates in a significant way: *Neem* twigs are used as the traditional, natural dental care in India. Many medicinal properties of *neem* are now accepted by modern alternative medicine. Use of toothpaste was practically unheard of till very recent times, when rural communities were exposed to advertisement in the media. The respondent’s grudge was that ‘Colgate had massive publicity machinery in place, but nobody advertised *neem* –at least not with the same rigour –with the result that a very healthy tradition is becoming obsolete. Further trapping into the consumer net of those who did not subscribe to toothpaste in the first place is by customising generic toothpaste with *neem*, and introducing as a product in the local market. Whereas, some may view this phenomenon as an example of compromise between traditional and modern ways, but the perceived economic reality is that the ultimate beneficiaries of this change in local tradition are the larger corporates. The example is open to criticism of free market economy and broader economic integration that market forces tilt the balance of political power to the disadvantage of the vulnerable groups in a society (Raiser, 1997).

The value of development information has also been taken into account from Bates’s (1988) economist’s perspective on information: *the intrinsic utility value*—derived by the consumer of the information good, and the *ancillary social value*—derived in the future use resulting from changes in the social and economic environment for the information good (Bates, 1988). On the surface it might appear that there is not much intrinsic utility value of the information generated under the ‘accountability’ umbrella of external funding for development interventions. That those involved in the development activity are expected to view the social value of this information as superseding

the former and that they would use it for grasping the problems of the Third World. The information, from their perspective, is a 'resource' and external to the economic domain. The question, however, remains who should decide for the community –in the absence of their ability to make an informed decision –as to what aspects of their information are passed on to individuals and/or institutions who are not directly associated with them. The community does not appear to have a choice in this regard. Unfortunately, privacy laws even in the 'modular' developed world are limited to individuals and at best family, and do not have much to offer on rights to information of communities/social groups.

### **Community organisation & dynamics**

The traditional *panchayat* (the traditional system of village elders chosen by consensus) is a cultural force binding the rural communities and in many cases dispenses justice according to traditional ways guided by 'old' knowledge. Although it is a significant entity in the socio-cultural arena, its authority is *extra*-constitutional. Most rural communities subscribe to the traditional panchayat for the simple reason that many minor local disputes can be quickly addressed without involving the local law enforcement agencies. However, in democratic India the traditional panchayat could not graduate to becoming the local political body for a variety of reasons, which are beyond the scope of this paper, but it *is* there. Instead, local political powers reside with another body, which is elected through the 'mainstream' democratic processes. To distinguish the two the latter is called elected *panchayat* in this paper.

The role of elected *panchayat*, can be compared with China's grass-roots level bureaucrats except that the elected *panchayat* is more a political entity having access to the local administrative machinery in a typical way. "With regards to the rights and obligations, the grass-roots level bureaucrats are relied on by the state to accomplish its policy since the centre has loosened its grip in society. Positioned between the state and society, as the state's representative they seize authority and are responsible for many policies, as spokespersons for the masses they negotiate with their superiors for resource re-allocation, and as 'local emperors' they have power over the distribution of public property and labour opportunities. This threefold role makes it convenient for them to select policies or formulate local policies to their organisational and personal advantage" (Huang, 1999). From their political masters, the elected *panchayat* has been extended the legitimacy of being the spokesperson for the community, operating a local budget, and employing people in local institutions, like primary education facilities etc. The resulting powers are used in a strikingly similar manner as by the grassroots bureaucrats in China, and very much to the same

unfortunate consequences. This also provides some insight into why NGOs in India prefer to work alongside traditional *panchayats* as against being urged to strengthen the local political body –the elected *panchayat*. The traditional *panchayats* are politically and administratively devoid of power but for the strong cultural influence they have, they are able to bring people together in a manner that suits reorganisation from the NGOs' orientation of less state interference. However, the role of community itself in this dynamics, is far removed from seeking *broader relevance and political recognition* through its own initiative.

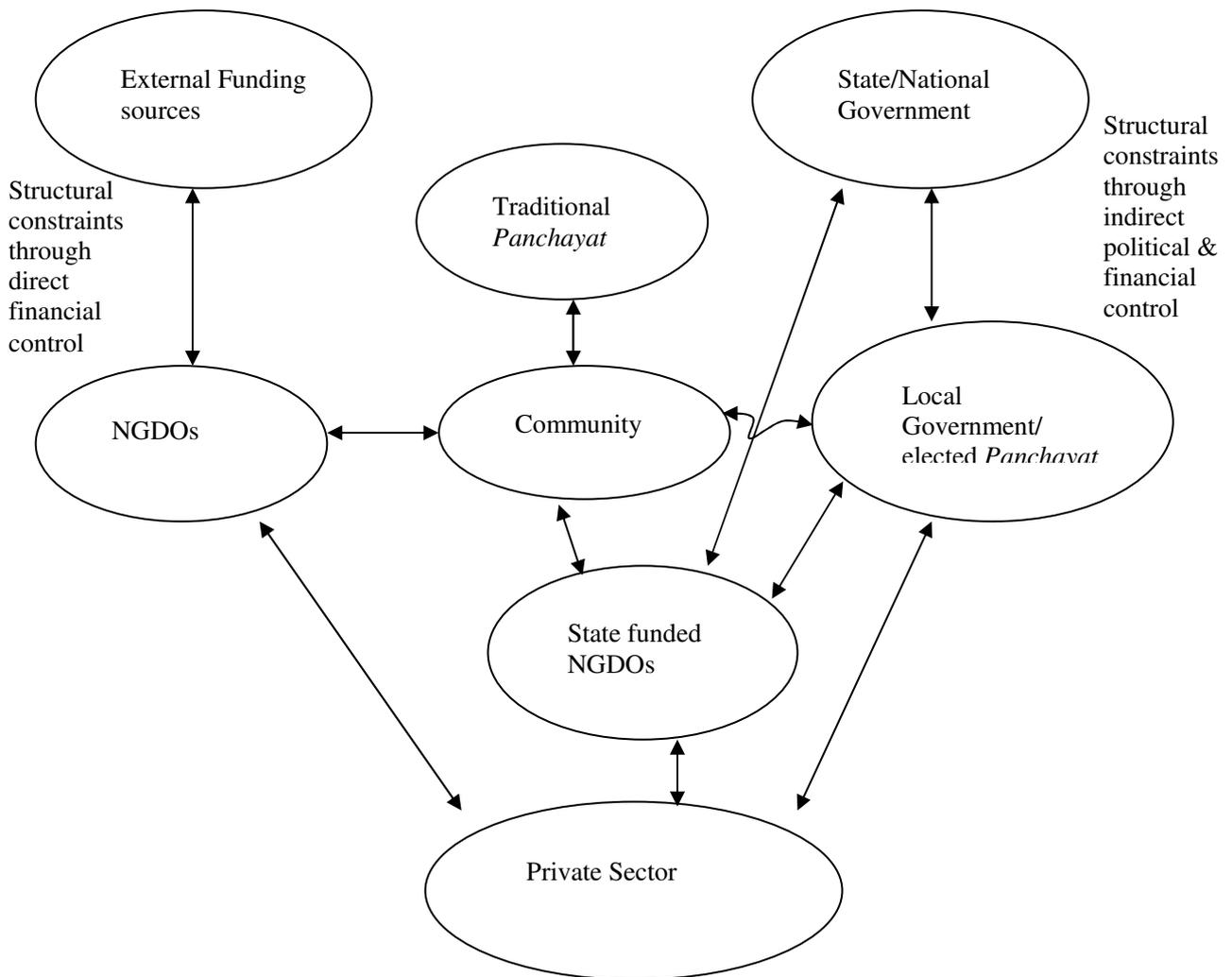
### **State intervention versus NGO intervention**

An administrative action against NGO might result from perceived lack of transparency of NGOs on the part of local administration, but can also be politically motivated in some instances like a major conflict between the interests of elected *panchayat* and NGO. The community itself is often torn between cooperating with NGOs and with local political body –the elected *panchayat*. This results in disenchantment of community members to a certain degree with the projects/programmes and relates back to the lack of responsibility and ownership of the programme (Laverack, 2001). 'The dilemmas for strategies of social change is whether to work within existing frameworks and structures to achieve incremental change or to work towards complete overhaul of systems' (Babacan, *et al* 2001) One thing that communities are well aware of is their lack of leverage against administrative and political action, and this is one of the possible reasons for continuing dependency on external managerial and financial input into the programmes, which in turn create further implications for sustainable development strategies.

On the other hand is the need for field NGOs to be institutionally functional and viable for the communities they serve or represent (Davies, 1997). The modes of communication between field NGOs their funding partners and their beneficiary communities reflect the nature of participation, indicating that it is moving away from 'community agency' model (Lyons, *et al* 2001) and is shifting towards an apparently *new* 'involvement' model, in which the larger NGOs and development funding intermediaries are evolving as *pseudo*-state intervening entities, controlling development activity through various forms of financial decisions flowing into the funded projects. Because of this shift, certain modifications are suggested to Lyons' *et al* (2001) characterisation of the relationship between the changing role of national government and the nature of participation in terms of two typical, arch-type models of participatory development at two ends of a continuum – the first is the 'community agency' (De Beer, 1996 cited in Lyons, *et al* 2001) model characterizing empowerment paradigm which involves grassroots structures, decentralizing control, and decision

making to civil society and is believed to create self awareness and the transformation of society through empowerment. The other end of a continuum represents the ‘involvement’ model, under which development projects are initiated and managed by the state (De Beer, 1996 cited in Lyons, *et al* 2001). The *new* ‘involvement’ model can be visualised as figure 3.0, major distinction being that community is not directly participating in the decision making process and is continuously adjusting to either political or financial constraints flowing down from state or external project funding sources respectively.

**Figure 3.0** ‘New’ Involvement Model



## Conclusion

The externality of the development initiative is apparent to variable degrees in all the instances discussed above and summarised in Table 2.0. From both, state or external channels, the funders have been entrusting funds to NGDOs as mediators for the community with the implicit assumption of certain qualities (participation, community orientation, democratic functioning, flexibility, innovativeness, cost-effectiveness, replicability, sustainability) of these ground organisations (Zaidi, 1999). 'Expertise' seems to be the main criteria for handling micro applications of macro-planned projects, which are highly generalised and do not accommodate for a particular community's history and culture.

The new involvement model (figure 3.0) suggested here characterises, among other aspects of development dynamics and existing strategy, a growing shift in the development functions of the State from its own wings to the non-governmental agencies, similar to Wood's discussion of 'Franchise State' (Wood, 1994), and the accompanied shift in the accountability of service providers to their funders. At the time of this research, the parallel (to the state) nature of the NGDOs is distinctly visible, and needs further consideration from the perspective of implications for more decentralisation of state power that is envisaged for international development strategy.

The choices of the targets of empowerment (rural communities) appear to be very few and far between, until these communities graduate to becoming 'motivated' communities as shown in Option-Awareness model in figure 2.0, where ironically there seems to be little or no need for intervention. The absence of choices in other three quadrants of the model produces questions in the ethical practice towards the limitations/extensions of the role of *agency* in development as it exists today. At this instance, the extent and modes of participation appear to be *extrinsically suggested*. For the goals of socio-economic progress and hence integration into the world economy, the integration efforts appear to be *systemic* and institutionally motivated in nature (Friedland, 2001) rather than evolutionary, *social* or genuinely deliberative, and do not match characteristics of empowered communities developed in Table 1.0. Education on options and choices stems from development interventions of NGDOs, who knowingly or inadvertently introduce the agenda –in full or part –of the funding sources, irrespective of whether they are nationally or externally funded.

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**Table 2.0: Overview of NGOs’ perception of roles of various stakeholders in the development activities in rural central India (Derived from NGOs’ responses on communication with various entities at different stages of development intervention)**

	<b>Community</b>	<b>Traditional Panchayat</b>	<b>Elected Panchayat</b>	<b>Field NGOs</b>	<b>Local Administration</b>	<b>National Funding Sources</b>	<b>International Funding Sources</b>
1. Desire for change	Unaware of their own living conditions, and Apathetic to alternatives	Visualise change in traditional ways	Desire regrouping in the political sense	Initiate comparing with other societies	Not Interested	Bring into context & act through Field NGOs	Bring into context & act through Field NGOs
2. Project Identification, need analysis, PRA	Present, but no capabilities	Involved when culturally sensitive issues emerge	Aware, but not directly involved	Conduct, record and mediate with funders	Not participating	Approached by NGOs after some initial work e.g. baseline survey	Approached by NGOs after some initial work e.g. baseline survey
3. Project Design	Present, but no capabilities	Involved when culturally sensitive issues emerge	Involved if local political ramifications emerge	Micro-plan but often modify to fit with funders’ demands	Involved if conflict with administrative interests emerge	Usually not flexible with Macro-planned and generalised projects they seek to fund through NGOs. Stress their own agenda	Comparatively flexible with micro-planned projects if coming from credible NGOs. Have their own agenda but ready for some compromises and adjustments
4. Project ownership	Least –namesake only, except where self-help groups e.g. ‘gram sabha’ are better educated	none	Take credit for projects in their area for PR purposes	Total management at field level. Procure funds	Interested in development statistics for government records	Financial control & expertise support.	Financial control & expertise support.
5. Awareness generation actions –“rights mode” – the newly envisaged mother-of-all development activity	Acting as educated and advised by NGOs	Supporting NGOs if convinced	Fear loss of control and unfavourable regrouping	undertaken, generally if not asked to work as activists by certain funders	Wary of communities being more aware	Want results in the “rights mode”	Want results in the “rights mode”
6. Information demands of Donors	Unaware of information issues, and insensitive to what exchanges occur between the NGO and Funders	Unaware of information issues, and insensitive to what exchanges occur between the NGO and Funders	Not concerned	Comply to funders demands for information. No alternatives to funder imposed accountability.	Only NGOs compliance with annual returns is sought. No Control over funder-NGDO relationship.	Seek transparency. Conflicting views on accountability. Get better information on funded project.	Seek transparency. Set norms for accountability. Get better information on funded project.

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	<b>Community</b>	<b>Traditional Panchayat</b>	<b>Elected Panchayat</b>	<b>Field NGOs</b>	<b>Local Administration</b>	<b>National Funding Sources</b>	<b>International Funding Sources</b>
7. Access to project information, control	In principle, yes. In practice limited by literacy & access to technology.	In principle, yes. In practice limited by literacy & access to technology.	In principle, yes. In practice limited by literacy & access to technology, political will	Actual information developers. Some access to technology	Access to what is provided by NGOs' annual reports, or through local media.	Owners of project information. Full control	Owners of project information. Full control
8. Structural constraints flowing down – linked to the kind of funding	Prompted by NGOs to (re)organise with almost every new partnership with funders	Not affected directly	Not affected directly	Directly affected, reflected in frequent changes in HR absorption, and day to day functioning	Not affected	Impose conditions vis-à-vis use of development funds	Frequently advise changes to NGO functioning vis-à-vis use of development funds
9. Existing community organisation & dynamics	Generally accept status quo	Impose status quo. Socio-cultural control	Seek re-organising of community to gain state compliance and political advantage. Socio-political control	Seek re-organising of community with the aim of project management. Socio-economic activity	Support elected panchayat's re-organisation activity. Extend legitimacy to elected panchayat	Advise NGOs to work with elected panchayat. Extend legitimacy to elected panchayat	Provide training to NGOs on group/community management. Supported organisation models are generally 'external' to community.
10. State intervention & obligation	Some awareness. No control	Some awareness. No control	More aware. Can ask state administration to interfere on various pretexts	Usually fully aware of state powers. Try to avoid conflict with administration in project implementation	Will not usually interfere if the project does not produce a major conflict of socio-cultural nature and/or if it helps in PR and presenting better development statistics	Advise NGOs to support local administration in their programmes	Concerned about results in development terms if NGOs get into trouble with local administration and a project has to close down. Leave to NGO to sort out