'A WATERSHED IN WATERSHED GOVERNANCE'

DEMOCRACY AND (DE) POLITICIZATION OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

IN INDIA

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Ziel der vorliegenden Studie ist die Analyse der Verwaltungspolitik und der Institutionen in Entwicklungsprojekten am Beispiel von zwei Projekten zur Entwicklung von Wassereinzugsgebieten[1]: 1) dem Indo-German Watershed Development Programm in Maharashtra (Westindien) und 2) dem Integrated Watershed Development Projekt, Shiwalik Hills-II in Uttarakhand (Nordindien). Anliegen dieser Arbeit ist es, die Entwicklung des Verwaltungsdiskurses in zwei Fällen zu beobachten und sein Verhältnis zu Politik, Öffentlichkeit und Demokratie zu analysieren. Diese Untersuchung kommt zu dem Schluss, dass sich die Sphäre der Öffentlichkeit durch die Institutionen und den Diskurs in Entwicklungsprojekten verändert hat, was sich am deutlichsten im Phänomen der Entpolitisierung ausdrückt. Entpolitisierung ist eine Form der Staatskunst und eine Strategie des Regierens, die ihrerseits als Sammelbegriff für eine Vielzahl von Symptomen zu verstehen ist. In den Fallstudien wird veranschaulicht, wie das Treffen von politischen Entscheidungen im Sinne einer informierten, kritischen Diskussion der Bürgerinnen und Bürger über 'watershed policies', durch das Überreden zu bestimmten Interventionen und Schlussfolgerungen von ‚experten'[2] ersetzt wurde.

I. Prolog

Projekte zur Entwicklung von Wassereinzugsgebieten finden innerhalb der Grenzen von hydrologischen Einzugsgebieten statt und setzen sich zusammen aus physischen Interventionen wie Boden- und Wasserschutzmaßnahmen (z.B. Bau von Rückhaltedämmen und Sickergräben, Aufforstung) sowie institutionellen Interventionen (z.B. Organisation von Komitees[3] oder Selbsthilfegruppen für das Management von Wassereinzugsgebieten oder Etablierung von Kleinkreditgesellschaften und Waldschutzgruppen).

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[1] *Watershed Development Projects*: Feststehender englischer Begriff, der die Entwicklung von Wassereinzugsgebieten bezeichnet.
[2] Vgl. Evers (2005)
[3] Village Watershed Committee - VWC: (Dorf-) Wasserkomitee, welches eigens für die Umsetzung eines Watershed Programms ins Leben gerufen wird und für die Durchführung verantwortlich ist.

Die vorliegende Dissertation untersucht die Umsetzung von lokalen Governance-Praktiken, politischen Präferenzen und Institutionen in zwei von Geberorganisationen geförderten Projekten in Indien, und zwar IGWDP in Maharashtra und Shiwalik Hills-II in Uttarakhand.

Insbesondere seit dem Weltwasserforum in Den Haag im Jahr 2000 ist ‚Governance' ein zentraler Bestandteil internationaler Wasserdiskurse: nicht nur wegen der Einführung neuer Ideen wie Verantwortlichkeit und Transparenz in die internationale Diskussion, sondern auch weil nun der Mainstream-Entwicklungsdiskurs zum Thema Wasserressourcen – bis dato beherrscht von Ingenieuren und Hydrologen – erstmals mit politischen Prozessen und mit Politik in Verbindung gebracht wurde. Das Zitat "Die Weltwasserkrise ist eine Krise von Governance, nicht eine Krise von Knappheit" aus der *No Water No Future* Rede des niederländischen Kronprinzen wird seitdem oft wiedergegeben und ist zum Wahlspruch der globalen Wasserressourcenstudien geworden.[4]

In der Literatur zur Entwicklungszusammenarbeit werden dem Begriff ‚Governance' zwei Bedeutungen zugrunde gelegt: Erstens ein Verwaltungs- und Managementgedanke, der primär mit der offiziellen Position der Weltbank zusammenhängt. Dieser Gedanke betont unter dem Label 'good order', Verwaltungs- und Managementprobleme. Die zweite Perspektive geht einen Schritt weiter, indem die demokratische Gestaltung von politischen Prozessen für nachhaltige Entwicklung integriert wird. Im Feld hingegen existiert in der Form eines komplizierten Netzwerks aus Menschen und Institutionen eine dritte Art von Governance, die sich aus Management und aggregierter Entscheidungsfindung[5] zusammensetzt.

II. Hintergrund

Der folgende Abschnitt beschreibt das Konzept der ‚selbstverwalteten Wassereinzugsgebiete', die geographische Lage der beiden Projekte und die zunehmend wichtige Rolle der Geberorganisationen in der Entwicklung von Wassereinzugsgebieten nach der Liberalisierung der indischen Wirtschaft in den 1990er Jahren.

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[4] Vgl. Mollinga (2007)
[5] Vgl. Young (2000: 19)

Der englische Begriff ‚Watershed' entwickelte sich aus dem deutschen Wort Wasserscheide (vgl. Reimold, 1998:1) und bezeichnete ursprünglich die schmale, erhöhte Landfläche, die zwei Abflussbecken teilt; es ist die Grenzlinie eines Ablaufbeckens (vgl. Heathcote, 1998: 4). Der Begriff ‚Watershed' bezieht sich auf einen ‚Wendepunkt' oder eine ‚Änderung' im alltäglichen englischen Sprachgebrauch. Er dient als Trennlinie; z. B. wird auch ein Wendepunkt in der Geschichte als ‚watershed' bezeichnet.

Im Zusammenhang mit ‚Watershed Management' hat sich die Bedeutung des Begriffes verschoben und er bezeichnet hier das Abflussbecken selbst (vgl. Heathcote, 1998: 4). Dieses Becken ist das Einzugsgebiet eines Wasserlaufes oder Flusses, d.h. der Niederschlag, der in diesem Gebiet fällt, speist einen bestimmten Fluss (vgl. Farrington, 1999: 1). Ein Watershed ist also ein natürlich abgegrenztes Gebiet, und die hydrologischen Prozesse in diesem Gebiet sind voneinander abhängig, wie auch alle natürlichen Ressourcen in einem Watershed voneinander beeinflusst werden. Das Watershed beinhaltet sowohl die Böden, die Vegetation, das Oberflächen- und Grundwasser, als auch die dort lebenden Tiere und die Menschen, die Einfluss auf die Natur ausüben (vgl. Reimold, 1998: 1).

Die Teilnahme der internationalen Geberorganisationen an Wassereinzugs-gebietsentwicklungsprojekten in Indien hat seit 1992 – nach der Liberalisierung – stark zugenommen. Im Jahr 2005 umfassten von internationalen Gebern unterstützte Projekte eine Fläche von 2,72 Millionen Hektar mit Investitionen von 4968,93 INR crores[6]. Geberorganisationen arbeiten vor allem auf nationaler und bundesstaatlicher Ebene mit den Ministerien der indischen Regierung zusammen. Dabei beziehen sie internationale, nationale und lokale Nichtregierungsorganisationen (NROs) sowie die Menschen vor Ort ein. In diesem Zusammenhang wurden für die vorliegende Arbeit zwei gebergeförderte Watershed-Projekte, die darin vorhandenden Institutionen und ihre Governancepraktiken analysiert.

Fall-I: Indo-German Watershed Development Programm (IGWDP) Maharashtra

Das ‚Indo-German Watershed Development Programm' (IGWDP) ist ein laufendes Projekt, das vom Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und

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[6] GoI/ MoRD (2006). Crore ist eine indische Einheit; ein Crore entspricht 10 000 000 Rupien.

Entwicklung (BMZ) gefördert wird. Es wurde im Jahr 1992 eingeführt und läuft weiter bis 2009. Dabei hat ‚Watershed Organisation Trust' (WOTR), eine indische NRO, die Durchführung übernommen. Das Projekt befindet sich in Ahmednagar Bezirk im Bundesstaat Maharashtra im Westen Indiens (siehe Karte 1).

Ahmednagar wird von der indischen Regierung als ein dürreanfälliges Gebiet mit geringen und erratischen Niederschlägen bezeichnet. Acht von den 13 *talukas* (Teilbereiche eines Landkreises) in Ahmednagar sind ständig von Wasserknappheit aus Gründen unregelmäßiger und geringer Niederschläge betroffen.

Die Regierung von Maharashtra schreibt dem Programm von Boden- und Wasserschutz in ihrem Bundesstaat eine besondere Bedeutung zu. Dieses Programm wurde zum ersten Mal in 1958/59 eingeführt. Seit diesen ersten Bemühungen hat sich das Programm mehrfach weiterentwickelt. Derzeit führt das IGWDP allein 104 Entwicklungsprojekte in und um Ahmednagar durch und umfasst 204 Dörfer. Dabei sind u.a. mehr als 1200 Mikro-Kredit-Gesellschaften für Frauen eingerichtet worden. Das Projekt befasst sich weiter mit Themen zu Gesundheit und Emanzipation.

Fall-II: Shiwalik Hills-II Projekt, Uttarakhand

Das zweite Projekt, Shiwalik Hills-II, befindet sich im Yamkeshwar Block von Pauri Garhwal Bezirk im Bundesstaat Uttarakhand in Nordindien (siehe Karte 2). Das hügelige Gelände mit seinen bewaldeten Hängen erhält ausreichende Niederschläge von Mitte Juni bis Mitte September. Gelegentliche Niederschläge sind auch im Winter zu verzeichnen. Die Region erhält durchschnittlich 2180 mm Regen pro Jahr, ungefähr 90 Prozent davon ergeben sich aus dem Monsun.

Trotz reichlichem Regen leidet dieses Gebiet unter Wassermangel und Trinkwasserknappheit in den Sommermonaten. Dies begründet sich darin, dass das meiste Regenwasser wegen des hügeligen Geländes aus dem Gebiet abfließt. Die Beschaffenheit der steinigen Böden erhöht die Wassererosion. Dieses Wasser kann durch Waldentwicklung, Aufforstungsmaßnahmen, und den Bau von Staudämmen am Abfließen gehindert und in bestimmten Bereichen ‚geerntet' werden.

Watershedentwicklungsprojekte in dieser Region zielen daher auf diese Aufgabe ab. Die größte Herausforderung ist dabei das Speichern von Wasser über einen längeren Zeitraum bis zu neun Monaten. Das so genannte ‚Integrated Watershed Development Project

(Shiwalik) Hills-II' wurde in den Jahren 1999 mit diesem Ziel eingeführt. Es wurde von der Weltbank gefördert und dauerte bis September 2005.

Das Hills-II-Projekt und das IGWDP errichten lokale dörfliche Institutionen für die Durchführung der Projekte.

Die Beteiligung von Nichtregierungsorganisationen und die Bildung von Ausschüssen (ohne die gewählte lokale Regierung, *Gram Panchayat* in Indien[7]) scheint überraschend angesichts der Tatsache, dass die 73. Verfassungsänderung 1993 die lokale Regierung zur Aufnahme und Durchführung von Watershed-Entwicklungsprogrammen im Dorf ermächtigt[8]. Im breiteren Rahmen der Politik der "guten/verantwortungsbewussten Regierungsführung" scheinen die neuen Institutionen allerdings an der richtigen Stelle angesiedelt zu sein. Die Regierung zieht sich in den Hintergrund und die Projekte werden durch NROs oder ähnlich bevollmächtigte Gremien implementiert. Dabei wird Watershedentwicklung als ein technisches Thema behandelt, welches von der lokalen *Gram Panchayat* -Politik und den Änderungen in Ministerien wegen Wahlen und politischen Ereignissen abgegrenzt bleiben soll.

"Good Governance" oder verantwortungsbewusste Regierungsführung in der Planung und Umsetzung ist ein wichtiger, wenn auch nicht der einzige wichtige Aspekt der gebergestützten Watershedentwicklungsprojekte. Die Restrukturierung und Neugestaltung des Diskurses und der Institutionen für die Umsetzung von Watershedprogrammen findet auf verschiedenen Ebenen (Geberorganisationen, nationale NROs, quasi-staatliche Organisationen, Dorfgemeinschaft) statt und berührt dabei technische / physische, organisatorische, sozioökonomische und politische Dimensionen.

Diese Arbeit zielt darauf ab, diese verschiedenen Aspekte der Watershedentwicklung sowie die politischen Präferenzen und Einrichtungen zur Durchführung der beiden Fälle unter dem Konzept der Entpolitisierung zu integrieren. Auf diese Weise gewinnt die Öffentlichkeitsforschung einen empirischen Zugang zur Meinungs- und Willensbildung

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[7] Dorfkomitee; traditionell bestand das *Gram Panchayat* aus fünf (*panch*) Mitgliedern.
[8] Dadurch sollte Entscheidungsgewalt sowie soziale und ökonomische Gerechtigkeit in die Häuser der Menschen gebracht werden. Im Laufe der Zeit zeigte sich jedoch die Schwerigkeit bzw. die Unfähigkeit der Administration, die neue Getsezeslage indienweit umzusetzen.

der Akteure im Bereich des Watershed Developments, die sich mit den Begriffen deliberative Politik und Entpolitisierung verbinden lassen.

III. Problemstellung und die zentrale Forschungsfrage

Diese Studie befasst sich mit zwei grundlegenden Aufgaben. Die erste, praktische und zielgerichtete, Aufgabe ist die Betrachtung von politischen Dimensionen der Watershedentwicklungsprojekte, d.h. den Praktiken und Institutionen in den beiden ausgewählten Projekten. Die zweite, akademische und allgemeine, Aufgabe ist, einen Beitrag zur weiteren Entwicklung der politischen Analyse der Watershedverwaltung im konzeptionellen Rahmen der Entpolitisierung zu leisten. Das Ziel hier ist die Entwicklung eines analytischen Werkzeugs zur Untersuchung der Auswirkungen der verschiedenen Governance-Strategien in den Watershedentwicklungsprojekten, vor allem ihre diskursive Konstruktion und institutionelle Formen. Dieses Werkzeug wird dann bei der Analyse der zwei Fallstudien eingesetzt.

Der Zweck dieser Arbeit ist darüber hinaus, nach Lösungen auf dem Weg zu einer demokratischen Verwaltung der Watershedentwicklung in Indien zu suchen. Diese Studie liefert nicht nur die Belege für eine kritische Bewertung der derzeitigen politischen Präferenzen und Institutionen, sondern behandelt auch weitergehende Auswirkungen, welche eine Demokratisierung von Entwicklung schaffen. Die Studie belegt, dass trotz des jüngsten Einzugs der ‚Politik' in den internationalen Diskurs Wasser, die meisten Studien und Praktiken der Watershedentwicklung innerhalb ihrer technischen oder wirtschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen bleiben.

Bei der Literaturstudie finden sich zahlreiche Vorträge und Artikel über Projekte, die sich mit verschiedenen Themen befassen, z.B. dazu, welche Institutionen am besten zu guter Regierungsführung passen, zur Zusammenarbeit zwischen der Regierung und NROs, zur Beteiligung der einheimischen Bevölkerung u.ä.. Eine Menge von Literatur befasst sich auch mit Wassereinzugsgebieten und Nachhaltigkeit, mit dem Fehlen von "Good Governance", mit Macht und Korruption, damit, wie Projekte von der Elite dominiert werden und den Armen nicht nutzen und wie das Thema zusammen mit Frauenemanzipation ein bevorzugter Bereich von Entwicklungsinterventionen sein soll.

Jedoch gibt es wesentlich weniger Studien, welche die Verwaltung eines Watershedprojektes, seine Vorgehensweise und seine Durchführung sowie die breiteren Auswirkung des Projekts auf Demokratisierung studieren und damit die politischen Dimensionen der Watershedentwicklung als eine Darstellung einer umfassenden Regierungsstrategie analysieren. Die aktuelle Vorgehensweise der Watershedentwicklung in ihrem diskursiven Aufbau und ihrer Durchführung gibt sich als Teil des Problems zu erkennen, das die öffentliche Debatte über praktische Themen wie Wasser weithin beschränkt.

Um dieses Phänomen in den Diskursen und Institutionen von Watershedentwicklungsprojekten zu betrachten, wird im dritten Kapitel dieser Arbeit eine Vorgehensweise entwickelt und zur Analyse der Fallstudien angewendet. Der Fokus dieser Vorgehensweise ist die Entfernung der Watershedentwicklung aus der ‚deliberativen Öffentlichkeit.'

„Öffentlichkeit ist einerseits eine Soziale Sphäre, in der öffentliche Diskurse (aber auch all die anderen genannten Kommunikationsformen) zirkulieren, andererseits zugleich ein Kollektiv, das nicht nur die Zuhörer (Publika), sondern auch die Sprecher der Öffentlichkeit umfasst. Dieser Doppelcharakter von Öffentlichkeit wird am deutlichsten in den beiden Bedeutungsvarianten, die Öffentlichkeit im Englischen annehmen kann: ‚public sphere' als soziale Sphäre und ‚public' als Kollektiv von Sprechern und Zuhörern" (Peters, 2007: 21).

Die Darstellung der Watershed Entwicklung nur als technische Maßnahme zum Boden- und Wasserschutz wird in Frage gestellt. Stattdessen wird Watershed als einen Ort der politischen Anfechtungen und Verhandlungen gefordert.

Der Fokus dieser Vorgehensweise auf den konzeptionellen Rahmen der Entpolitisierung und das Arbeitsgebiet der zwei Fälle werden in der Hauptfrage dieser Studie folgendermaßen zusammengefasst:

Welche Diskurse, Strategien und Institutionen haben Weltbank und BMZ verwendet, um die Formulierung und Umsetzung von Watershedentwicklungsprojekten in Uttarakhand und Maharashtra zu beeinflussen? Haben diese Einflüsse zu der Entpolitisierung der Watershed-Governance in den zwei Fällen beigetragen?

In einer Zeit, in der das Publikum den Politikern und den politischen Institutionen seines Landes anscheinend wenig Vertrauen gegenüber bringt, wird die Übertragung von

Aufgaben entweder auf Organisationen, welche in bestimmtem Maße politischer Kontrolle entzogen sind, oder auf auf Regeln beruhenden Systemen außerhalb des staatlichen Gemeinwesens als positiv betrachtet werden. „Doch die demokratischen Auswirkungen dieses Prozesses sind selten geprüft ", meinen Flinders und Buller (2005). Diese Studie erstrebt einen Beitrag zur Überbrückung dieser Kluft, wobei sie sich auf Mechanismen konzentriert, durch welche die demokratischen Prozesse im Governance von Watershedprojekten und die Projektgebiete beeinträchtigt werden. Hier gelingt es, ausgehend von Einsichten der normativen politischen Theorie tragfähige Brücken zu den empirischen Forschungen in Politik und Wasserwissenschaft zu schlagen.

IV. Theoretischer Rahmen und Methode

Diese Studie beschäftigt sich mit dem Begriff und der empirischen Erforschung von öffentlichen Diskursen in Watershedentwicklungsprojekten unter der Anwendung des Konzepts der Entpolitisierung.

Entpolitisierung ist ein Prozess, in dem vormals politische Themen und Institutionen weniger politisch oder unpolitisch werden. In der jüngeren englischsprachigen Literatur wird Entpolitisierung oft als eine Form der „Staatskunst" und eine „Strategie des Regierens" (Burnham 2001; Buller/Flinders 2005) verstanden, die zugunsten eines verbesserten policy outputs darum bemüht ist, politische Entscheidungen in Arenen zu verlagern, die auf der Grundlage von nicht-politischen bzw. weniger offensichtlich politischen Prinzipien operieren.

Habermas (1990) beschreibt eine Verwandlung, in der die Rolle der '*citoyens*' (Bürger) zu der von Konsumenten wird und die Öffentlichkeit zu reinen Beobachtern wird. Dies impliziert die Verschiebung solcher Themen oder Institutionen aus dem Raum von demokratischen, politischen Verhandlungen und Entscheidungen in Räume, die von apolitischen Fachgremien beherrscht werden, sodass Regeln und Regulierungen von nicht-verhandelbaren wissenschaftlichen "Fakten" vorgeschrieben werden[9].

Das Konzept der Entpolitisierung stammt ursprünglich aus den Politikwissenschaften, die die Transformationen von demokratischer Governance in den "entwickelten" Ländern, speziell USA, Deutschland und Großbritannien, analysieren. Entpolitisierung und

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[9] Vgl. Hirsch (2007)

Delegierung sind konstitutive Kernelemente der 'postdemokratischen Revolution' (vgl. Blühdorn, 2007) seit den 1990er Jahren und sie sind elementare Strategien, um in spätmodernen Gesellschaften das effiziente Management einer nie dagewesenen Komplexität zu ermöglichen. Das Management natürlicher Ressourcen ist ein gutes Beispiel für diese Komplexität, und Entpolitisierung und Delegierung scheinen populäre Ansätze für ein effizientes Bearbeiten dieser Komplexität zu sein.

Harriss (2001) und Fergusson (1990) haben neben anderen das Konzept der Entpolitisierung in den Bereich der Entwicklungsstudien eingeführt, um darauf hinzuweisen, dass die Entwicklungszusammenarbeit von Weltbank und anderen internationalen Organisationen auf einem Diskurs basiert, der politische Themen wie Armut und Wasserknappheit als rein technische Probleme behandelt, um demokratischer und politischer Diskussion/Anfechtung aus dem Weg zu gehen. Sie argumentieren, dass Regierungen und andere Akteure ein Interesse daran haben, Debatten zur Entwicklung zu entpolitisieren, da dies die Legitimität des Staates und die Durchführung von Entwicklungsprojekten unterstützt.

Flinders und Buller (2005) versuchen, verschiedene Formen der Entpolitisierung (institutionelle, Regel- und Präferenzformende) zu analysieren und zu untersuchen, wie die verschiedenen Formen durch unterschiedliche Mechanismen und Prozesse operationalisiert werden.

In dieser Studie wird Entpolitisierung in zwei Kategorien disaggregiert:

I) Präferenzformende Entpolitisierung (preference-shaping depoliticization)

II) Entpolitisierung von Institutionen und sozialen Organisationen.

Diese Aspekte werden für die zwei Fallstudien detailliert betrachtet, um die Governance Strategien der Entwicklungsprojekte zu analysieren.

Präferenzformende Entpolitisierung hat seine konkreten und sichtbaren Auswirkungen in Form von Institutionen, die zur Umsetzung des Watershed-Programms gebildet werden.

Diese Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit den Präferenzen des Spenders und den Institutionen der Wasserbewirtschaftung in den ausgewählten Fällen, die im Rahmen der Analyse erwähnt wurden.

Der nächste Abschnitt beschreibt die Art und Weise der Durchführung dieser Studie.

Methode

Die Grundlage der Methode ist die Fallstudie von zwei Watershed Entwicklungsprojekten, IGWDP und Shiwalik Hills-II. Fallstudie ist eine ideale Methode, wenn eine ganzheitliche, eingehende Untersuchung notwendig ist (Feagin, Orum & Sjöberg, 1991; Yin, 1994).

Dies trifft ebenso zu in Konfliktfällen wie Wasser und in Fällen wie denen, wo ich argumentiere, dass das derzeitige Konzept der Regierungsführung in der Tat eher Teil des Problems als der Lösung ist.

Die Daten für diese Untersuchung wurden in formellen und informellen Interviews sowie durch Haushaltsumfragen gewonnen. Des Weiteren wurden Sekundärdaten in gedruckter und übers Internet veröffentlichter Form einbezogen. Die Fragen für die Interviews wurden ausgehend von den Forschungsfragen formuliert. Im Feld wurden sie dann nach zahlreichen Probeinterviews modifiziert und erweitert, um die Qualität der Fragen zu verbessern, bevor die eigentlichen Interviews geführt wurden.

V. Aufbau der Arbeit

Nach der Einführung in die Analyse beschreibt Kapitel 2 das empirische Milieu der Fallstudien und die in der Arbeit untersuchten Gebiete. Es beschreibt die Herangehensweise der aktuellen Studien zu Watershedmanagement und postuliert, dass ein bestimmtes Genre der Studien, welche ihre Legitimität von ökonomischen Theorien und technologischer Entwicklung ableiten, auch Watershedentwicklung als Forschungsbereich beherrscht.

Studien zur Verwaltung dieser Projekte sind auf den ‚vorgeschriebenen' Bereich beschränkt, indem sie bestimmen, was für ‚Good Governance' geleistet werden soll. Dieses Kapitel bildet die Basis für die Analyse, wie Watershedprojekte tatsächlich verwaltet werden und die damit verbundenen Auswirkungen. Bei dieser Analyse tritt der Prozess der Entpolitisierung als besonders bedeutsam hervor.

Kapitel 3 beginnt mit einer Diskussion über den konzeptionellen Rahmen, der in dieser Analyse verwendet wird. Es verfolgt die historischen und kontextabhängigen Wurzeln der Entpolitisierung, um ihre Angemessenheit zur Analyse von Aspekten der

Regierungsführung von Entwicklungsprojekten zu bestimmen. Der dritte Abschnitt dieses Kapitels taucht tiefer in die Verwendung des Konzepts in der empirischen Forschung ein.

Kapitel 4 beschreibt die Methode der Fallstudien sowie die Werkzeuge zur Datensammlung und Datenverarbeitung.

Kapitel 5 und 6 bilden zusammen den analytischen Teil dieser Arbeit. Kapitel 5 beschreibt die Präferenzen der Entscheidungsträger der Geber- und Empfängerländer. Dieses Kapitel kommt zu dem Schluss, dass die diskursive Darstellung der relevanten Themen in einer wirksamen Weise die Basis für institutionelle Interventionen bildet, welche dann als Mechanismen der Entpolitisierung der Entwicklung auftauchen.

Kapitel 6 isoliert die Institutionen der Watershedverwaltung zur Analyse und zeigt, dass diese Institutionen praktische, im Sinne von lebenswichtige, Themen aus der Öffentlichkeit entfernen und sie aus einer ‚gewählten' politischen Bühne in eine ‚nicht-gewählte' politische Bühne platzieren. Bei diesem Verfahren entstehen strategische Koalitionen/Bündnisse, welche sich die Ressourcen der Projekte in einer ungerechten Weise aneignen.

Die Arbeit schließt mit der Betrachtung von möglichen Auswirkungen der Mechanismen der Entpolitisierung der Entwicklung in Kapitel 7 und schlägt Themen vor, welche als Basis für zukünftige Studien in dieser Richtung dienen können.

VI. Forschungsergebnisse

Die beiden Fallstudien ‚weiten sich aus', indem sie politische Beziehungen auf der höchsten Ebene betonen, welche dann die Mechanismen zur Regierungsführung eines Watershedentwicklungprojekts bestimmen. Anhand des in Kapitel 3 entwickelten theoretischen Rahmens zeigen sich Beweise zur Bevorzugung apolitischen Handelns in der Watershedentwicklung in den beiden Fällen. Diese Überzeugung vom apolitischen Handeln wird sowohl von den Entscheidungsträgern als auch von den Geber- und Empfängerländern geteilt und hängt auch von den organisatorischen Neigungen der Entscheidungsträger ab. Kapitel 5 betont diese Präferenzen, um zu zeigen, dass Watershedentwicklungsprojekte als technische Interventionen zum Boden- und Wasserschutz entwickelt wurden, welche dann von den NROs und den Dorfausschüssen durchgeführt werden.

Der diskursive Aufbau von Entwicklung und Präferenzen äußert sich in der Entstehung von Institutionen, welche dann die Watershedentwicklungsprojekte durchführen. Quasistaatliche Agenturen und NROs werden bevorzugt und gegründet, um damit die politische Eigenschaft der Entwicklung abzugrenzen. Die dazu benannten Dorfausschüsse neue Aneignungschancen schaffen, die zur Bildung strategischer Gruppen führen[10] und liegen im Streit mit der gewählten Dorfverwaltung vor Ort.

In dieser Situation dient die Politik der Entpolitisierung den Interessen der durchführenden Agenturen, wobei die Dorfbewohner von der Projektarbeit verfremdet bleiben. Diese Strategien zur Regierungsführung verwandeln nicht nur die Natur der Entwicklungspolitik und die Legitimationsquelle einer Demokratie, sondern auch die der dörflichen Gemeinschaft insgesamt und damit sogar die Vorstellung von Watershedentwicklung.

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[10] Vgl. Evers (2005)

ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the governance aspects (institutions and discourses) of donor-aided development programs in two integrated watershed development projects: 1) the Indo-German Watershed Development Program in Maharashtra (west India), and 2) the Integrated Watershed Development Project, Shiwalik Hills-II in Uttarakhand (north India). A watershed development project entails physical interventions for soil and water conservation measures (like building check dams, water absorption trenches, forestation, among others) and institutional interventions (like formation of village watershed committees, micro-credit societies, and forest protection committees, among others) in a specified location demarcated by the catchment area of a river or stream.

Governance is an important component of the international water discourse, especially after the events following the World Water Forum in The Hague in 2000. It brought associated ideas like accountability and transparency into consideration along with politics into the mainstream water resources development discourse that so far was a field for engineers and hydrologists. Much quoted is the phrase 'The world water crisis is a crisis of governance- not one of scarcity' from the *No Water No Future* speech at the summit by the Prince of Orange of the Netherlands that has become a slogan in the global water resource studies since then (Mollinga, 2007).

There are two fundamental meanings associated with the notion of governance in development literature. First, an administrative or managerial notion associated primarily with the official position of the World Bank. It is concerned with promoting 'good order' by focusing mainly on technical, administrative, and managerial issues of governance. The other perspective on governance includes democratic politics as an integral component for sustainable development governance. In the villages studied, a complicated network of people and institutions practiced a third type of governance that derives both from managerial and aggregative-democratic decision-making.

This thesis presents economic and socio-political data from the above-mentioned case studies to illustrate that the present governance strategies of the watershed development projects can be usefully analyzed from a 'depoliticization' perspective.

Depoliticization can be described as a process in which previously political issues, people and institutions are becoming less political or nonpolitical. Habermas describes this process as the 'decline of the public realm as a political institution' that reduces the role of '*citoyens*' to consumers, the public realm gets confined to spectacles and acclamations (Outhwaite, 1996). This implies that such issues, people and institutions are relocated from the arenas of democratic contestation and decision into the arenas which are governed by apolitical expert bodies, rules and regulations prescribed by non-negotiable scientific 'facts'.

The discourse of depoliticization has been strategically employed by the implementing agencies and professionals to mystify the inequities in watershed development. The mystification of inequities through discourse, in particular the way in which 'political decisions have been transformed into technical ones' has been the focus of some studies (Ferguson, 1990; Barry et al., 1996; Jenkins, 1999). This concept originates in the political science literature that explores the transformations in democratic governance in the advanced industrial countries in the globalization era, especially USA, Germany and Britain. In development studies, the concept has been used among others by Harriss (2002) and Ferguson (1990) to suggest that the developmental enterprise in the third world is based on a discourse propounded by international development agencies like World Bank, that relocates political issues of poverty and water scarcity in the list of technical problems to bypass the issues of contestation in democratic politics. Political decision-making in the sense of citizens critically discussing watershed policies, has been replaced by dominant groups persuading the public towards certain interventions and conclusions as observed in the cases.

They argue that governments and other actors have an interest in 'depoliticizing' debates on development because exclusion of politics assists in reproducing state power and its legitimacy, as well as the reproduction of development projects.

In this study, depoliticization has been further disaggregated under two categories: (i) preference-shaping depoliticization, and (ii) depoliticization of institutions and social organizations. These aspects are explored in detail with the help of empirical data from each case to locate the governance tactics of watershed development projects. Issues and institutions in this sense became the focal locations where the processes of governance

were observed to be following certain techniques that could be problematized under the umbrella concept of depoliticization.

This thesis concludes that watershed governance in India is at the crossroads where it is undergoing a paradigm shift in the light of parallel transformations in the world democracy. This 'shift' has been characterized in the title of this thesis as 'a watershed' in Indian watershed governance.

Acknowledgements

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Maps

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Photographs

Glossary and Abbreviations

Adivasi	Original inhabitants of remote and forested areas
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (of Germany)/ *Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung*
BPL	Below Poverty Line
CBO	Community Based Organization
CBP	Capacity Building Phase
Crore	10,000,000
DDP	Desert Development Programme
DPAP	Drought-Prone Areas Programme
DWSS	Drinking Water Supply System
EDP	Exposure and Dialogue Program
EDP (e.V)	Exposure und Dialog Program (eingetragener Verein/ Registered Society)
FCRA	Foreign Contributions Regulation Act
FIP	Full Implementation Phase
GAREMA	*Gaon/* village Resource Management Committee
GoI	Government of India
GoM	Government of Maharashtra
GoUA	Government of Uttarakhand
Gram Panchayat	The elected council of the village
Gram Pradhan	The elected head of the village
Gram Sabha	The general body of a village
Gram Swaraj	Idea of village self-sufficiency and governance associated with the name of Mahatma Gandhi
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation/ *Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit*
IGWDP	Indo-German Watershed Development Program
IWDP	Integrated Watershed Development Project

KfW	German Bank for Reconstruction and Development/ *Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau*
Kharif	First season of the agricultural year that starts with the monsoon rains in May/ June
Lakh	100,000
MdB	Member of the German Parliament
MdEP	Member of the European Parliament
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly (elected for the State level government)
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoRD	Ministry of Rural development
NABARD	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PIA	Project Implementing Agency
Rabi	Second season of the agricultural year that begins with the end of monsoons in August/ September
Sarpanch	The elected head of the village
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation
SMS	*Sanyukta Mahila Samiti* / Joint Organization of Women
Taluka	Administrative subdivision of a district
VDC	Village Development Committee
VWC	Village Watershed Committee
WMD	Watershed Management Directorate, Dehradun
WOTR	Watershed Organization Trust
WSD	Watershed Development
Zilla Parishad	Elected district council

1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis studies the governance practices[11] and institutions of donor-aided development programs in two integrated watershed development projects: 1) the Indo-German Watershed Development Program (IGWDP) in Maharashtra (west India), and 2) the Integrated Watershed Development Project, Shiwalik Hills-II in Uttarakhand (north India). A watershed development project entails physical interventions for soil and water conservation (like building check dams, water absorption trenches, forestation, among others) and institutional interventions (like formation of village watershed committees, micro-credit societies, and forest protection committees, among others) in a specified location demarcated by the catchment area of a river or stream.

Governance became a core theme and category of the global water discourse after 2000. This was manifested in the three major events that took place[12] in that period at which the global water resources community debated the nature of the 'water crisis', namely the 2nd World Water Forum in the Hague in 2000, the Bonn Freshwater Conference in 2001 and the Johannesburg Summit of Sustainable Development in 2002 (Mollinga, 2008: 9). Inclusion of governance in the international discourse was a step forward from the understanding of water under the central concept of 'management' in its recognition of the embeddedness of water in broader sociopolitical structures. This brought politics into the mainstream water resources development discourse and challenged the dominant inclination of water professionals to treat water management as a technical issue and hence an exclusive domain of the civil engineers and hydrologists. Much quoted is the phrase 'The world water crisis is a crisis of governance- not one of scarcity' and that 'there is enough water to provide water security for all- but only if we change the way we

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[11] Practices being understood here as places where what is said and what is done, rules imposed and reasons given, the planned and the taken for granted meet and interconnect. See (Baynes et al. 1987: 103) for a detailed discussion on analysis of practices.

[12] See (Petrella, 2001: 24-25) for other main global conferences and international declarations concerning water after 1990, beginning with the 'Montreal Charter' on *Water and Sanitation* in June 1990 and First World Water Forum in Marrakesh in March, 1997.

manage and develop it' from the *No Water No Future* speech[13] at the summit by the Prince of Orange of the Netherlands that has become a slogan in the global water resource studies since then[14].

The concept of 'governance' has various meanings and manifestations in many contexts, reflecting a combination of descriptive and normative usages. Governance is generally understood as 'the prevailing patterns by which public power is exercised in a given social context' (Jenkins, 2002: 485)[15]. It is associated with ideas like accountability, transparency, and legitimacy; this implies that such processes and relations are not only technical or organizational but have political dimensions also, even if it is not directly acknowledged (Mollinga, 2007). In this sense, governance of the international development projects is a process contested and negotiated by the different 'strategic groups' including development 'experts' and local stakeholder coalitions (Evers and Gerke, 2009). However, the mainstream international development discourse, notably World Bank, treats 'governance' as a 'technical' issue (Jenkins, 2001; Randeria, 2003). It focuses on administrative, managerial, and objective oriented problem solving approach to achieve 'good governance'. Since there is no clear definition of 'good', different strategic groups[16] and development agencies draw 'promiscuously' on ideas that have sometimes emanated from the West's largest consultancy firms (Jenkins, 2002: 486). The prescribed goal of 'good governance' entails restructuring of the state[17] to ensure the 'reliability of its institutional framework' and the 'predictability of its rules and policies and the consistency with which they are applied' (World Bank, 1997: 4-5). The Bank's General Council in 1991 affirmed that 'technical considerations of economy and efficiency, rather than ideological and political preferences should guide the Bank's work at all time' (Abrahamsen, 2000: 12). The above statement by the General Council

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[13] This speech called '*No Water No Future: A Water focus for Johannesburg*' by HRH the Prince of Orange to the panel of the UN Secretary General in preparation for the Johannesburg Summit 2002 is available at the UN website at (http://www.un.org/jsummit/html/documents/nowater_nofuture_eng.pdf)

[14] See Mollinga (2007), Blumenthal (2006).

[15] See Kooiman (1993) for the concept of 'heterarchical governance' that involves various non-state actors, whose cooperation is instrumental in managing transnational problems, as opposed to the 'hierarchical governance' based on the nation-state and its subordinated institutions.

[16] On the definition and scope of 'strategic groups', see Evers and Gerke (2009: 2). The authors define 'strategic groups' as cutting across hierarchies and social classes but united in their common goal of securing present and future chances to gain access to resources provided by the international development projects.

[17] See Hirst (2000: 13).

presented the official position of the World Bank and a discursive construction of itself as an 'apolitical' actor in development, involved in the 'apolitical' act of poverty alleviation. The years before 2000 were a period of denial and exclusion of politics from the popular discourse on development that seems to be giving way to a new form of understanding that accepts the presence of politics as inevitable.[18] At the same time, different stakeholder coalitions seek to 'depoliticize' the governance practices for the sake of efficiency because the democratic decision-making is apparently a complex process that delays the project and is inefficient in its outcome. However, the two schools of thought, namely, governance as inclusive of politics, popular among the academic researchers, and governance as managerial problem solving, popular among the international development organizations and non-governmental agencies, coexist in the developmental literature and practice.

1.1 Subject of the Thesis

This dissertation studies the policy preferences of the donor agencies, institutions of implementation and local governance practices in two donor-aided watershed development projects in India, namely, IGWDP in Maharashtra and Shiwalik Hills-II in Uttarakhand, and analyzes them using the lens of depoliticization. This section describes the concept of watershed development followed by the location of two cases and the increasingly important role of the donor agencies in watershed development after the liberalization of Indian economy in the 1990s.

The word 'watershed' refers to 'a turning point' or to a 'change of course' in its everyday linguistic usage[19]. It is also understood as an important period or factor that serves as a dividing line: for e.g. a watershed in history. Technically, watershed development refers to a systemic conservation, regeneration and judicious utilization of the natural resources, especially land, water and vegetation within a particular geographical location that is demarcated by circumscribing the catchment area of a particular stream or river. A watershed then is a technical unit based on geographical requirements and thus can extend to more than one village community (Iyer, 2003: 72).

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s[18] See Foreword by Mario Soares on '*The Primacy of Politics*' in Petrella (2001: xiii).

[19] It is a translation of the German word '*Wasserscheide*' syntactically water+ divide. This meaning corresponds to the linguistic usage of the term while the technical usage of the concept of 'watershed' would be closer to the word '*Wassereinzugsgebiet*'.

Any watershed development project undertakes physical activities for soil and water conservation starting from the highest point in the drainage basin and follows the rainwater to the collection stream. This is referred to as the 'ridge to valley' approach. These activities include building of water absorption trenches, contour bunding, check dams, loose boulder dams, appropriate plantations, and ban on tree felling among others.

At the same time, the watershed project forms community-based, consensually nominated organizations in the village called Village Watershed Committees (VWC) for the implementation of these activities. It also forms micro-credit societies for women, forest protection committees and some times, youth credit groups in the project village. These non-elected local bodies work independently of the elected village parliaments (*Gram Panchayat*), with the elected village headman (*Sarpanch*) as the ex-officio patron of the program as recommended in the 'Common Guidelines for Watershed Development'[20] issued by the Ministry of Rural Development in 1994. Both watershed projects selected for the case study, one implemented by the government agency and the other by a donor supported national NGOs follow these guidelines.

After the liberalization of Indian economy in 1992, donor agencies began to participate in the watershed development projects in a big way. By 2005, the donor assisted projects covered an area of 2.72 million hectares and a huge investment of INR 4968.93 crores[21]. Donor agencies work primarily with the ministries of the Indian government at the Central and State[22] level, international, national and local NGOs, government bureaucracies and local people. This thesis studies two such donor funded watershed development projects, their institutions and practices of governance.

The first case is an ongoing project funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), called the Indo-German WatershedDevelopment Program (IGWDP). It was started in 1992 and would continue to run until 2009. A national NGO called Watershed Organization Trust (WOTR) is the implementing agency. This project is located in Ahmednagar District, Maharashtra State, in western India (see

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[20] MoRD / Government of India (1994)

[21] Parthasarathy Committeee Report on watershed development projects in India, published in (2006) comments that this amount was found to be 'little on the high side' for the technical committee but when it questioned the Ministry of Rural Development, it vouched for its accuracy (GoI/ MoRD, 2006: 39).

[22] The federal government in India is known as Central government, and the Nation as Union of India. Throughout this thesis, the terms Union and Centre mean the federal government and State means the federal states. State with a small's' refers to term as used in the political science.

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map 1). Ahmednagar is classified by the government of India as a drought prone area with low and erratic rainfall[23] that has suffered recurrent famines since 1396[24]. Out of the 13 *talukas* (sub-divisions of a district) in Ahmednangar, eight are constantly affected by water scarcity due to erratic and low rainfall.
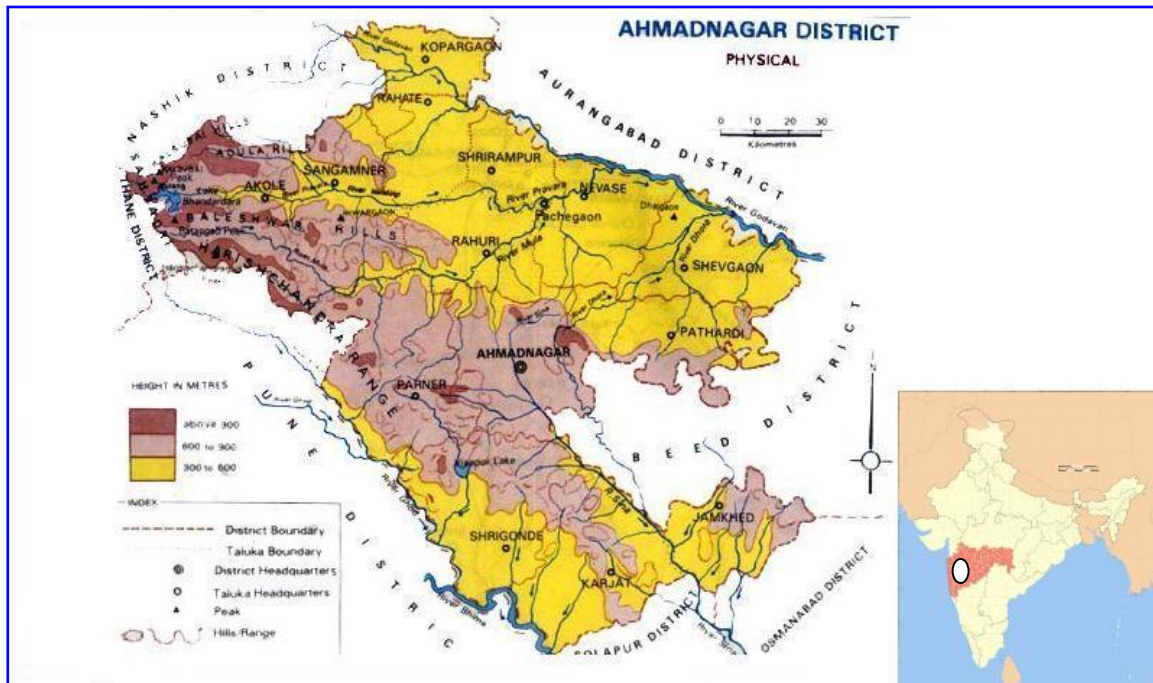
Map 1. Location of the IGWDP in Ahmednagar district, Maharashtra, India

The Government of Maharashtra, therefore, laid specific emphasis upon the scheme of soil and water conservation in the State. This scheme was undertaken in the district in 1958-59 for the first time. It undertook the physical activities of contour bunding and *nala* bunding throughout the district. Watershed development has come a long way from these modest efforts in the late 1960s. At present, IGWDP alone covers 104 watershed development projects in and around Ahmednagar spread over 204 villages. It has formed more than 1200 micro-credit societies for women in this area and continues to work on the issues of health and empowerment.

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[23] The recorded average rainfall was 303 mm in 2003 and 589.21 mm in 2004, Gazetteer of Ahmednagar.
[24]Gazetteer of Ahmednagar district, Government of Maharashtra (2003); Available at
<http://www.maharashtra.gov.in/english/gazetteer/Ahmadnagar/agri_famines.html >

The second project is located in the *Yamkeshwar* block of Pauri Garhwal district, Uttarakhand State in north India (see map 2).

Pauri region has a sub-temperate to temperate climate, which remains pleasant throughout the year. The hilly terrain with its forested slopes receives adequate rainfall from mid-June till mid-September. Occasional rainfall is also recorded in winters. Average annual rainfall in the district is 2180 mm, about 90 percent of which is generally concentrated over the monsoon. Regardless of the excess rain, this area suffers from irrigation and drinking water scarcity during the summer months. This is due to the hilly terrain due to which most of the rain water goes as waste in the form of run-off. The stony texture of soil further increases the rate of water erosion. The run-off rain water can be harvested by constructing water irrigation tanks, appropriate plantations, and constructing check dams in feasible areas. The watershed programs were started in this district to address this problem. The main challenge was to store the water for an extended period of 9 months.
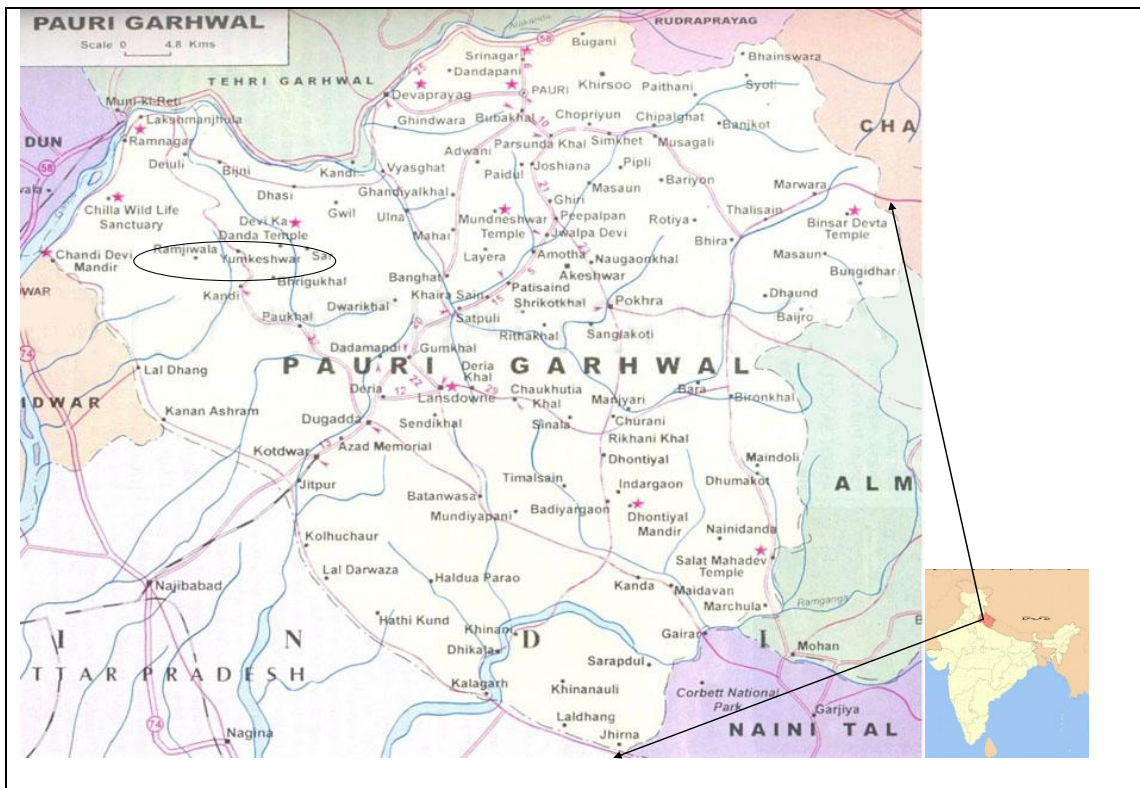
Map 2. Location Map of Hills II Project in Pauri, Uttarakhand, India

One such project, called the Integrated Watershed Development Project (Shiwalik) Hills-II was started in 1999 and 'covered' 493 villages spread over 24 micro-watersheds. It was funded by the World Bank and was operational until September 2005. My fieldwork was done in the ten villages of Aamkatal micro-watershed in the Yamkeshwar block developed under this project.

Hills-II project as well as IGWDP created village level institutions, consensually nominated by the *Gram Sabha* (village general body) to plan and implement the project. These institutions are created by the project implementing NGO in case of IGWDP and by the semi-governmental organization called Watershed Management Directorate (WMD) in the Hills-II project. The involvement of NGOs (and not the government) and formation of nominated committees (and not involving the elected local government called *Gram Panchayat* in India) appears surprising in the light of the fact that the 73rd Constitutional Amendment passed in 1993 empowers the local government to undertake watershed development programs in the village[25]. In addition, there exist fully functional governmental departments for watershed development both at the State and Central levels. However, seen in the broader framework of the politics of 'good governance' the new institutional setup does not seem to be out of place. The projects are routed through the non-governmental agencies or delegated bodies in sync with the 'rolling back of the state' and treatment of watershed development as a 'technical' issue that should not be mixed with local *Gram Panchayat* politics or be subject to the changing political ministries but with the help of a 'strong civil society independent of the state' (Hirst, 2000).

'Good Governance' in planning and implementation, is a, if not the, key aspect of watershed development projects supported by the donor agencies. The discursive construction of watershed development and the institutions formed to undertake the implementation of these projects within the framework of this concept forms the core of this thesis. The reconceptualization and reorganization of the institutional setup to implement watershed development program takes place at different levels (donor agencies, national NGOs, quasi-governmental organizations, village based community

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[25] The Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992-93. See 11th Schedule (Article 243G). Available at: <http://indiacode.nic.in/coiweb/amend/amend73.htm>

organizations)[26] and has technical/ biophysical, organizational, socio-economic and political dimensions. This thesis attempts to integrate and analyze these different aspects of watershed development governance by closely studying the policy preferences and implementing institutions of the two cases under the umbrella concept of depoliticization.

1.2 Main Concerns of the Study

This study has -thus- two fundamental concerns. The first, practical and specific concern is to explore the political dimensions of watershed governance practices and institutions in the two selected projects.

The second academic and general concern is to contribute to the further development of political analysis of watershed governance within the conceptual framework of depoliticization. The aim here is to provide an analytical tool to study the democratic implications of different governance strategies employed in watershed development projects, especially their discursive construction and institutional setup. This tool is then applied to the two case studies.

In the final analysis, the purpose of this thesis is to seek solutions and contribute towards a democratic governance of watershed development in India This study provides not only the 'grounded' evidence for a more critical appraisal of the present policy preferences and institutions but also the wider effects that they have on the democratization of development governance. It is the contention of this thesis that despite the recent recognition of the importance of politics in international water discourse, most studies and practices in watershed development remain confined within a technical or economic framework[27]. The participation of the local people and a decentralized form of natural resource governance as prerequisites of success for the project dominates the socio-political literature on watershed development.[28] Reviewing the available literature we find numerous papers and articles on how the watershed projects should be governed,

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[26] See Kooiman (ed.) (1983) for the conceptualization of governance as 'all those activities of social, political and administrative actors that can be seen as purposeful efforts to guide, steer, control or manage sectors (or facets of sectors). Governance takes place in interactions between actors on micro, meso and macro levels of social-political organization'.

[27] See Iyer (2003: 73) on the adherence to technological and engineering based approach to 'basin planning' in the water sector of India.

[28] See Section 2.8 and 2.9 for a comprehensive review of the existing literature on watershed development in India.

what are the institutions that we need for good governance, collaboration between the government and NGOs, participation of the locals and an equal amount of literature outlining the problems associated with watershed development like the issue of sustainability, lack of 'good governance', power dynamics and corruption, elite capture of the projects and empowerment of the women being the favorite spots for attack and prescriptive advice[29]. There has been an evident focus on counting the benefits or highlighting the shortcomings but very few studies on how the watershed projects are actually governed, understood and maintained in practice and what the wider effects of these practices are. There are limited attempts in this area of study to conceptually link the discursive, technical, economic and political dimensions of watershed development as manifestations of a broader governance strategy.

Within the conceptual framework of depoliticization, the present approach to watershed development in its discursive construction and practice is revealed as in fact part of the problem that limits public debate on practical issues like water. An approach to observe this phenomenon in discourses and institutions of watershed development projects is developed in the third chapter and applied to the case studies. The conceptual focus of this approach is 'the place of watershed development in the public sphere of deliberation and contestation'. Public sphere refers to the realm of deliberation and decision-making by discussion on the collective issues[30]. The presentation of watershed development as a technical intervention only to conserve soil and water is questioned and watershed as a site of political contestations and negotiations is advocated instead.

The focus of analysis within the conceptual framework of depoliticization and the given domain of the two cases is summarized in the main research question of the study as follows:

Through what kinds of discourses and institutions have the World Bank and BMZ been influencing the formulation and implementation of the watershed development projects in Uttarakhand and Maharashtra respectively? Do these influences contribute towards the depoliticisation of watershed governance in the two selected projects?

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[29] This can also be seen in the formation of working groups around these topics during the Exposure program organized for the donor's delegation in India in 2006. See section 2.3.2.

[30] See (Peters, 2007: 55)

'There is an implicit but rarely explicit normative assumption about depoliticization tactics in that that they are commonly presented and interpreted as a 'good' thing. The transfer of functions to either organisations that are insulated to some extent from political control or rule-based systems operating outside the national polity is commonly thought to be a positive development during a period when public trust in politicians and political institutions is perceived to be low. However, the democratic implications of this process are rarely examined', argue Flinders and Buller (2005). This study seeks to contribute towards bridging this gap by focusing on the mechanisms through which democratic decision making processes are circumvented (or not) in the governance of watershed development projects and its implications in the project areas.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

To study the political dimensions of watershed governance, this thesis is rooted in the 'rationality of theory'-'cognitive maps through which we apprehend the world' (Polanyi, 1958)[31]. It 'dwells in' the theory of depoliticization that provides a cognitive map to understand the changes in the governance strategies of watershed development projects. This section briefly describes the concept of depoliticization and its mechanisms as applied in this study.

Depoliticization is the process of relocating certain issues, people and institutions from the political arena of debate and deliberation into arenas that are governed by apolitical bodies. This concept originates in the political science literature that explores the transformations in democratic governance in the advanced industrial countries (especially Germany and Britain) after the 1990s[32].

In development studies, the concept has been used among others by Harriss (2002) and Ferguson (1990) to suggest that the developmental enterprise in the third world is based on a discourse propounded by international development agencies like World Bank, that relocates political issues of poverty and water scarcity in the list of technical problems to bypass the issues of contestation in democratic politics. They argue that governments and other actors have an interest in 'depoliticizing' debates on development because

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[31] See Kuhn, 1962; Popper, 1963; Lakatos, 1978.
[32] See Chapter-3 for a detailed discussion on the concept and operationalization of depoliticization.

exclusion of politics based on instrumental reasoning assists in reproducing state power and its legitimacy, as well as the reproduction of development projects.

Flinders and Buller (2005) argue that 'the wider literature on depoliticization has largely failed to distinguish between different types of depoliticization tactics. Nor has it sought to explore the inter-play between depoliticization and established frameworks of representative democracy. They attempt to specify different forms of depoliticization (institutional, rule-based and preference shaping) and analyse how different forms are operationalized through different mechanisms and processes.

Flinders' "preference-shaping" depoliticization involves the invocation of preferences through recourse to ideological or rhetorical claims in order to justify a political position that a certain issue or function does, or should, lie beyond the scope of politics or the capacity for state control. In essence a stance is adopted in which a preference-shaping position is employed to justify a refusal to intervene or regulate a certain issue, e.g. watershed development that should preferably be governed through 'self-help', NGOs or delegated agencies.

Preference-shaping has its concrete and visible effects in the form of institutions that are created to implement the watershed development program. These institutions rely on sources of legitimacy other than the democratic mandate and remain theoretically insulated from the 'politcs' of development and promise greater efficiency in project implementation:

"The depoliticization of institutions and social organizations implies that bodies ranging from environmental organizations and alternative self-help groups to building societies and retail cooperatives shed their ideological commitments and political agendas and focus on their *core business*. Deideologization, professionalization, pragmatism, managerial best practice, and the pursuit of efficiency gains are the principles that guide this transformation of social institutions" (Blühdorn, 2007).

This thesis subjects the preferences of the donor agencies and the institutions of watershed development in the selected cases for an indepth anaylsis within the theoretical framework briefly mentioned above. The next section describes the method of conducting this study.

1.4   Method of Study

The broad method chosen to address the concerns stated above is the case study of two watershed development projects, IGWDP and Shiwalik Hills-II. Case study is an ideal methodology when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed (Feagin, Orum & Sjoberg, 1991; Yin, 1994). Whether the study is experimental or quasi-experimental, the data collection and analysis methods are known to hide some details (Stake, 1995). Case studies, on the other hand, are designed to bring out the details from the viewpoint of the participants by using multiple sources of data.

Specifically, this research adopted the 'extended case study' method, 'which deploys participant observation to locate everyday life in its extralocal and historical context' (Burawoy, 1998). It is an ethnographic research strategy developed in the 1940s to 1960s by members of the so-called Manchester School of anthropology led by Gluckman (Mitchell, 1983). It is characterized by a painstaking ethnographic attention to socio-political processes as they unfold across varied contexts over time, with a focus on situations of conflict, or 'trouble cases' as Gluckman called them. The idea behind studying the strategies of watershed governance in their everyday working is to explore the methodology of research that in order to get a better understanding of what is good/bad governance begins by asking how these divisions (good/bad governance) are operated and the purpose that they serve in the two cases.

Extended case study is a research design that allows impartial and reflexive analysis. This is immensely important in conflict cases like water management and in cases such as these, where I argue that the present approach to governance is in fact part of the problem rather than the solution.

Another reason to select the extended case study method was its facilitation of multidimensional perspective to deal with complex issues. This means that the researcher considers not just the voice and perspective of the actors, but also of the relevant groups of actors and the interaction between them. The complexity of a watershed development program is inbuilt in its integrated approach towards soil and water conservation. Besides the complexity in performing a series of simultaneous physical activities, the 'community based' governance approach and formation of village level watershed development committees complicate the nature of contestation and negotiation that takes place at

12

different levels of the watershed project, from the field to the funding agencies, and has economic, managerial/ organizational as well as socio-political dimensions.

To maximize the number of possible actors, also beyond the national boundaries, and hence discursive regimes in a project, I selected two cases that were funded by donor agencies and were implemented both by state and by non-state organizations.

Both projects undertake watershed development within the participatory governance framework, form working committees for project management and address the women's development by micro-credit group formation. Both projects have donor funding. IGWDP is funded by BMZ via its developmental agencies (KfW and GTZ)[33] while the Hills II project is supported by the World Bank. IGWDP was implemented by the NGO called WOTR, and the Watershed Management Directorate (WMD) in Dehradun, a semi-state agency, undertook Hills II. This selection of cases further helped to maximize the number of actors and discursive practices for a comprehensive view of watershed governance in India.

Data collection began in the donor country with the interviewing of policy makers and functionaries of development organizations in Germany responsible for development cooperation in the IGWDP. This also included a ten-day exposure and dialogue program with the important decision-makers from Germany (including German parliamentarians, NGO representatives, officials from KfW and GTZ) and other countries who observed and presented their findings from the Indo-German development project villages in India. After gaining a basic insight into the donor's perspective of the project, the researcher moved to the field sites in Ahmednagar for the developee's perspective. I located the activities that were undertaken in the village, both physical and institutional. Staying in the village and interviews with the local people brought out the issues under discussion in the context of watershed development program. I followed the issues, activities and institutions of watershed development to the people who were beneficiaries, the women who became members of the self-help group, the office-bearers of village watershed committee (VWC), local NGO staff, field workers, local politicians and bureaucrats among many others for a holistic understanding of the project.

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[33] KfW- Kreditanstalt fuer Wiederaufbau (German Bank for Reconstruction and Development)
GTZ- Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for Technical Cooperation)

In Garhwal, the same procedure was repeated with a change in order of the informants. Here, I reached the village and began my data collection first with the village residents. Once the drinking water issue was identified for deeper study, I followed the actors, offices, contractors, villagers and women who had some role in the drinking water system of Hills-II. The idea was to map as comprehensively as possible the set of practices, issues, relations and institutions that play some role in the multi-level project governance. The first case in Ahmednagar observes these processes from the 'top' and the second case of Hills-II explores the governance strategies from 'below'.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

After this introduction to the study, chapter 2 opens with a discussion of the empirical setting of the cases and the areas that were studied for the thesis. It discusses the status of present studies in watershed management and argues that a particular genre of studies that derive their legitimacy in economic theories and technological advancement have come to dominate the research in watershed development. The studies on governance of these projects have been confined to 'prescriptive' domain, arguing what ought to be done for 'good governance'. This chapter concludes with building up a case for studying how actually the watershed projects are governed and their wider implications. This can be effectively done by using the concept of depoliticization.

Chapter 3 begins with a discussion of the conceptual framework that the study employs for its analysis. It traces the historical and contextual roots of depoliticization to establish its suitability for studying the governance aspects of development projects. The third section would delve deeper into the issues of operationalizing this concept for practical research.

Chapter 4 describes the case study method and tools employed for data collection and analysis.

Chapter 5 and 6 together present the analytical part of this thesis. Chapter 5 describes the preferences of the decision makers from the donor and the recipient countries. This chapter argues that the discursive presentation of relevant issues (people and institutions) in a suitable way forms the basis of institutional interventions that act as the mechanisms of depoliticizing development.

Chapter 6 isolates the institutions of watershed governance for analysis and contends that these institutions act as the instruments that remove issues of practical concern from the public sphere by shifting them from an *elected* political arena to a *non-elected* political arena. Strategic coalitions are formed in the process that appropriate the resources provided by the project in an inequitable manner.

The thesis concludes with a contemplation of the possible effects of the mechanisms of depoliticizing development in Chapter 7 and proposes themes that could form the basis of future research in this area.

1.6 Main Findings

The cases 'extend out' from their locations to highlight the broader political relations that determine the mechanisms of governing a watershed development project. Using the theoretical framework developed in Chapter-3, the two cases and their governance show evidences of a preference for an apolitical treatment of watershed development. These preferences are shared by the policy makers from both the donor and recipient countries based on the organizational affiliation of the decision-makers. Chapter 5 higlights these preferences to show that watershed development projects were presented as technical interventions for soil and water conservation, to be routed through the non-governmental agencies and nominated committees at the village level. It shows how the governance preferences are subject to politicization and depoliticization in different contexts and by different strategic groups. The discursive construction of policy and preferences has its most visible manifestation in the formation of institutions that are assigned the task of implementing the watershed development projects. Semi-governmental agencies and NGOs are preferred and formed to circumvent the political nature of development and the nominated village committees become a site of resource appropriation and come into conflict with the locally elected village government. This chapter shows that removal of political institutions from the scene proves beneficial for the strategic groups that are formed with the sanction of the development project and fade away with its completion.

In this situation, the politics of depoliticization serves the interests of the implementing agencies while the common villagers remain alienated from the project activities. These strategies of governance are transforming not only the nature of development politics and the sources of legitimacy in a democracy, but the rural society as a whole and indeed the

notion of watershed development itself. As the name of the thesis suggests, these transformations in the strategies of project governance represent 'a watershed' in Indian watershed governance.

2 SETTING OF THE STUDY

This chapter has two main objectives. The first is to explain the concept and definition of a watershed by briefly describing the activities that are undertaken within an integrated watershed development program (section 2.1). The second is to give an account of watershed programs in India from the 1960s till 2008 (section 2.2) followed by a background of the IGWDP in Maharashtra and Hills-II project in Uttarakhand to locate the dominant discourses and institutions of governance in the two watershed development projects (section 2.3.and 2.4).

This chapter also reviews the literatrure on watershed management in India to show that a particular genre of studies that derive their legitimacy in economic efficiency and reduction of complexity in evaluation and management have come to dominate the research in Indian watershed development (section 2.5). The literature review tells us not only what we already know about watersheds but also attracts our attention to those aspects that are passed over in silence or remain less researched for the want of appropriate conceptual tools and motives. It highlights the perceived gap in our understanding of the new forms of democratic transformations and their appropriation in development projects. This chapter concludes, in section 2.6, with a summary of the main points of the previous sections, and a discussion of some theoretical problems in the analysis of the policy and practices of watershed governance, building up a case for the employment of depoliticization as a suitable theoretical framework for research in this area.

2.1 Watershed: Concept and Definition

The word 'watershed' refers to 'a turning point' or to a 'change of course' in its everyday linguistic usage[34], understood as an important period or factor that serves as a dividing line: for e.g. 'a watershed in history'. Deriving from this sense, a watershed is the neatest division between two landscapes without any scope of overlap.

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[34] It is a translation of the German word '*Wasserscheide*': *Wasserscheide scheidet das abfließende Wasser zwischen zwei zusammenhängenden Einzugsgebieten. Das Wasser fließt in zwei unterschiedlichen Richtungen ab.* This definiton is provided by the *Lexicon Wasser*. Available at <http://lexikon.wasser.de/index.pl?begriff=Wasserscheide&job=te>

In technical usage, it can be understood as the drainage basin of a particular stream or river. Once raindrops hit the ground, they drift towards a stream or river or a lake depending on the topography of the landscape. Each stream has its 'catchment area' that collects and feeds the rainwater into it. This catchment area or the drainage basin is called the watershed (*Wassereinzugsgebiet*) of that particular river or stream. Watersheds contain a number of biophysical elements and resources: soil and water, along with vegetation in the form of trees, grasses and crops, and provide the sustenance for a number of further enterprises such as livestock production (Farrington et. al., 1999: 1).

This rainwater can be managed efficiently only if we take the watershed as one unit, unlike soil or forest management that can be addressed sectorally based on soil or vegetation types, forest sub-types, and grasslands and such classifications. Besides the management of rainwater, watershed also provides an ideal unit for soil and vegetation management. A small watershed of a few hectares (500-1000ha) that drains into a small stream forms part of a still larger watershed, until the combined watersheds may become a major river basin draining millions of square kilometers of land. A watershed is thus the smallest possible ecological unit of the world. The fundamental principle of watershed development is harvesting and efficient management of rainwater by slowing down its velocity and controlling the volume as it descends from the ridge to the valley.

Tideman (1996) compiled one of the most comprehensive accounts of watershed management suitable for Indian conditions. This book provides detailed information about the technical aspects of constructing physical structures for water harvesting in a watershed. It also refers to the idea of community management and popular participation as the prerequisites for a watershed program to be successful. Here, Tideman outlines the overall objectives of all watershed development projects (Tideman, 1996: 9) as follows:

- to increase infiltration into the soil;
- to control excess damaging run-off;
- to manage and utilize runoff for useful purposes;

He further adds:

'Watershed development essentially relates to soil and water conservation in a given area by proper land use, protecting land against all forms of deterioration, building and maintaining soil fertility, conserving water for farm use, proper management of local

water for drainage, flood protection and sediment reduction and increasing productivity from all land uses' (ibid.: 348).

Different structures, like check-dams, loose rock boulders, earthen plugs, grass beds, water absorption trenches among other constructions are made to achieve this goal. These structures help to conserve rainwater *in situ,* cause a rise in the water table and provide increased production capacity to the land, thereby enhancing the food security and soil conservation in rural areas. Watershed development aims to bring about an optimum balance between the demand and use of natural resources so that they remain sustainable over a longer period.

2.1.1   Physical Treatments in a Watershed Development Project

This section of the chapter describes the physical measures that are undertaken in a watershed development project. It shows how the interdependence of soil and water conservation on the socio-political factors requires consent from different stakeholders for undertaking these activities.

A typical watershed project undertakes physical activities for soil and land management, water harvesting, crop management, forestation, pasture/ fodder development, livestock management and other farm activities. These objectives are addressed by building appropriate structures using simple instruments, locally available material and labor. Depending upon the topography of the watershed area, the project undertakes all or a combination of treatments as outlined below:

- Continuous Contour Trenches (CCT): Continuous contour trenches are small pits with calculated vertical and horizontal intervals in the top portion of the catchment made to break the velocity of runoff water. The rainwater percolates through the soil slowly and travels down, benefiting the lower lands. Interrupted trenches are adopted in high rainfall areas.

- Water absorption trenches (WAT): This structure is preferred when the slope of land is more than 25%. These are rectangular pits and trenches dug with the purpose of arresting rainwater.

- Contour Bunding: 'Bunding' is an embankment of earth. It plays an important role in soil and water conservation in the field with medium slope.

- Gully plug: Gullies are formed due to erosion of top soil by the flow of rain water. In course of time, a gully assumes a big shape and erosion goes on increasing. To prevent erosion, barriers or plugs of different types of material are put across the gully, at certain intervals.

- Gabion structure: Beginning in the 16th century, engineers in Europe used wicker baskets filled with soil - dubbed by their Italian colleagues as *gabbioni*, or 'big cages'- to fortify military emplacements and reinforce river banks. The same technology is used in 'gabion' structures. It uses steel wire mesh and stones to slow down water velocity and soil erosion.

- Check-dams: These are concrete structures built at appropriate points in the village along the course of the river to store rainwater. It is possible to build them out of easily available materials at a very little cost. The most important decision to be taken when building such a dam is its location. This decision is crucial, as the effectiveness of the dam depends on this.

- Forestation: The village areas that have been deforested are selected for plantation and villagers are provided with saplings and fruit trees to plant in their farms that are otherwise barren.

The above mentioned structures at different places in the village makes the watershed program unique in its conceptualization of the interdependence of soil, water, crops, forests and cattle development that demands a holistic approach. It contradicts the dominant framework of sectoral treatment of water, forests, and agriculture that are undertaken by different line departments under different ministries in India. The physical interdependence of land, water and forests requires the different line departments, community-based organizations, facilitating NGO and local villagers to cooperate with each other as the land or forest area, or the drainage lines of the watershed that requires treatment may be owned either by the state or the villagers. This could prevent the NGO or the village *panchayat* from undertaking any watershed activity on government owned land without prior permission, or the government from working on privately owned land without the consent and cooperation of the village people.

2.1.2 Institutional 'Treatments' in a Watershed Development Project

Managing watersheds for rural development is a relatively new concept, much more complex than its original version. It is now concerned not merely with stabilizing soil, water and vegetation, but with enhancing the productivity of resources in ways that are ecologically and institutionally sustainable. This implies that the interaction between different resources and the impact of one over the other becomes the focal issue. Another implication of this integrated approach is the need for coordination between different owners of the land like the government departments of forest or revenue, private landowners and common pool resources with universal access of common villagers.

To achieve the above objectives in a watershed, a series of institutional activities are also undertaken with a fundamental commitment to the involvement of local community in the implementation and management of the project. On these lines, a watershed project undertakes socio-political activities like formation of consensually nominated and apolitical institutions separate from the *Gram Panchayat* such as Village Watershed Committee (VWC), Self-Help Groups (SHG), and formation of different forest protection committees to conduct the project work. This section focuses on these 'institutional treatments' undertaken in a watershed program and outlines the agencies that are entrusted with the responsibility of project implementation.

With a growth in the prominence of the 'good governance' agenda in the international water discourse, water scarcity was re-cognized as a 'crisis of management' threatened with bad institutions, bad governance, bad incentives, and bad allocations of resources[35]. Hence a focus on the institutional setup became an integral part of international and bilateral development projects that addressed the issues of water resource management in the developing world. Spearheaded by the international funding agencies like the World Bank and similar organizations, a reconfiguration of the institutions and mechanisms of governance was deemed necessary that formed the building blocks of 'good governance' agenda in the international development discourse. Jenkins (2001) argues that 'governance' as used in the mainstream discourse of the international funding agencies tends to become a 'technical' issue that overlooks the inherent political character of

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[35] Executive summary of the World Water Vision report of the 2nd World Water Forum in The Hague, 2000

natural resource management. This 'technical' approach is revealed to some extent in the prescriptive suggestions towards forming a set of 'apolitical' institutions that should now undertake the task of providing development. The next section explores the coming into being of such institutions in the field of watershed development.

With a continued focus on 'good governance' and 'rolling back of the state' in the development discourse, decentralized and participatory forms of governance have gained considerable support from all sectors. Good governance was initially used in the field of economic development where it referred to institutions' role in functional democracy, recognizing that establishing free markets and encouraging investments were not enough in promoting economic development. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has utilized good governance as a key concept in its development policies, defining good governance as comprising: accountability, transparency, participation, and the rule of law as mandatory administrative functions. These elements, together with consensus orientation, equity building, effectiveness and efficiency, are vital pre-requisites for sustainable change[36]. This has brought new actors to occupy the space vacated by the state in its rolling back, in the form of civil society organizations commonly understood under the label of NGO and community based organizations at the village level. Devolution of management responsibilities to the NGOs, governmental directorates, and community-based, consensually nominated bodies forms a major plank of the global (good) governance agenda.

A watershed project initiated by the government or a national NGO, funded by the international development banks or bilateral donors, works by forming a consensually nominated village watershed committee that acts as the nodal agency in the village through which the project is implemented. The project also forms micro-credit societies for the women and sometimes separate forest protection committees. In this setup, the elected village headman (*gram pradhan*) acts as the patron of the program but does not have any executive or administrative powers with respect to the watershed project.

The project also requires an agency that would act as a mediator between the donor agencies and the target villagers. A preference for routing of watershed development

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[36] Raffaele et al. (n.d.). *Cultural Dialogue through Governance: Diversity in the Political Arena.* Position Paper of Research Task 4.1; Sustainable Development in a Diverse World (SUS.DIV). Available at: <http://www.ebos.com.cy/susdiv/uploadfiles/RT4.1_PP_Raffaele.pdf>

projects through the NGOs and semi-governmental institutions is seen among the donor as well as state agencies. This derives largely from the negative contemporary connotations of 'politics' and 'political' associated with duplicity, corruption, lethargy and undue interference that rationalizes the need for 'apolitical' NGOs. The rise of public choice theory and its natural affinities with neoliberalism is one of the reasons that idealized depiction of politics as an arena of deliberation, public scrutiny, accountability and responsiveness in the academic discourse acquires an interventionist and inefficient image in the neoliberal discourse.

"Neoliberalism, informed by public choice theoretical assumptions, suggests the value of a tightly delimited political sphere which does not encroach upon the essentially private realms of economic and social exchange, encouraging a profoundly suspicious, skeptical, and anti-political culture" (Hay, 2007: 5).

The implementing agencies selected from among the 'technical' departments and 'apolitical' NGOs are the preferred mode of routing the watershed development projects by the donor agencies. The specific institutions formed in the selected case studies would be discussed in section 2.3 and section 2.4. An analytical discussion on their instrumentalization as tools of depoliticization will be discussed in Chapter 5 and 6. The next section discusses the development of watershed development programs in India at the national level before taking up the individual cases in Maharashtra and Uttarakhand.

2.2   Watershed Development in India: 1960-2008

This section outlines the growth of watershed development project as a solution for the development of rainfed areas from the early years of the first five year plan in India. It also outlines the management structure of the watershed development projects now falling under three different Indian ministries. It shows that watershed development has currently become the premier state and donor intervention for the development of rainfed rural areas. This section partially informs the literature review of watershed development projects that is undertaken later in the chapter.

Soil and water conservation to increase crop yields and arrest soil degradation was high on the Indian agenda since the first five-year plan in 1951(Tideman, 1996: 349).

Government established Central Soil and Water Conservation Research and Training Institute (CSWCRTI) in 1956 that started watershed activities in 42 locations, mainly on a small scale to understand the technical processes of soil degradation and the options for soil conservation (Samra, 1997). Watershed development started concretely in India in 1960s with modest efforts by the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) to conserve soil and water in rainfed areas[37]. After independence, India relied on multi-purpose reservoirs for providing irrigation and generating hydro-electricity. To stabilize the catchments of reservoirs and to control siltation, a centrally sponsored scheme of 'Soil Conservation Work in the Catchments of River Valley Projects' was launched in 1962-63. Another step in this direction was taken with the launching of Drought Prone Areas Program (DPAP) by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) in 1972-73. The objective of this program was to tackle the special problems of areas constantly affected by severe drought conditions. In 1977-78, the MoRD started a special program for hot desert areas of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Haryana and cold desert areas of Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh (which were earlier under DPAP) called Desert Development Program (DDP)[38]. Together these projects covered an area of 96.1 million hectares spread over 20 States (Government of India, 2001).

The Ministry of Agriculture started a scheme of Integrated Watershed Management in the Catchments of Flood Prone Rivers (FPR) in 1980-81. During the 1980s, several successful experiences of fully treated watersheds, such as Sukhomajri in Haryana and Ralegaon Siddhi in Western Maharashtra, came to be reported. The Ministry of Agriculture then launched a scheme for propagation of water harvesting/conservation technology in rainfed areas in 19 identified locations in 1982-83. In October 1984, the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) adopted this approach in 22 other locations in rainfed areas. With experience gained from all these, the concept of integrated watershed development was first institutionalized with the launching of the 'National Watershed Development Program of Rainfed Areas' (NWDPRA) in 1986-87, covering 99 districts in 16 states (Government of India/ MoRD, 2006).

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[37] Rainfed areas do not have a proper system of irrigation and depend on the monsoon rains for their agricultural demands of water.
[38] See Joshi et. al. (2004)

"The severe drought of 1987 forced the Government of India to give more thrust to rainfed areas. During the eighth five-year plan, an area of 4.23 million hectares was treated and developed with an expenditure of Rs. 9,679 million. In the 9th five year plan, an outlay was raised to Rs. 10,200 million to treat 2.25 million hectares, which was slightly more than half of the area treated in the 8th plan" (Joshi et al. 2004).

The watershed development programs that were implemented solely by the ministries also allowed for the participation of NGOs as implementing agencies with a new initiative launched by the MoRD called the Watershed Areas for Rainfed Agricultural Systems Approach (WARASA). On these lines, the Government of India issued 'Common Guidelines for Watershed Development Projects' in 1994. However, in 2003, these guidelines were revised and NGOs were excluded as implementing agencies that was now entrusted to the constitutionally mandated and elected local governance bodies called the *Gram Panchayat*. In 2006, the guidelines issued by the Government of India underwent revision and included NGOs and non-elected village committees for project implementation as a 'practical solution'[39] contrary to the Gandhian dream of *gram swaraj* (village self-rule) and empowerment of the elected village government.

At present, watershed development program covers all the 25 States and two union territories in India. It has so far treated 7.95 million hectares of land with an expense of Rs. 2398.76 crores. By the end of the March 2005, a total land area of 45.48 million hectares was covered under different watershed based development programs with a total investment of Rs. 17037.42 crores (Government of India/ MoRD, 2006: 38)[40].

Watershed projects in India are managed by three central ministries: the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) and the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) with the help of their respective line departments. The Planning Commission of India, which is in charge of the development of Five-year Plans for the country, co-ordinates long-term policy development in this area. The Commission is separated into divisions, which establish sector-wise working groups to make recommendations on policy matters for the formulation of the Five-Year Plans. The watershed development working group is in the agriculture division of the Planning

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[39] See Government of India/ MoRD (2006: 9)

[40] Ibid. The table on page-42 classifies these different programs under the three different ministries, area covered by each and the investments that were made upto March 2005. Available at the website of Department of Land Resources, MoRD: (http://dolr.nic.in/ParthaCommittee/Part1-TOCForeword.pdf)

Commission. There is also a water resources division and an environment and forestry division (Amezaga et al. 2003: 6). The Ministry of Science and Technology provides technical inputs for the other ministries involved in land and water management through its Natural Resource Data Management Systems (NRDMS) program.

2.2.1 Ministry of Agriculture

The MoA has worked in the field of watershed development since the 1960s and deals with issues like erosion prone agricultural lands, optimizing production in rainfed areas and reclaiming degraded lands. The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation (DAC) and the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE) of this ministry are involved in all aspects of watershed development. They are supported by two autonomous bodies: the Indian Council for Agricultural Research and National Institute for Agricultural Extension and Management. The MoA is currently implementing several schemes/programs including the National Watershed Development Project for Rainfed Areas (NWDPRA), Soil and Water Conservation in the Catchments of River Valley Projects (RVP) and Flood Prone Rivers (FRP), Reclamation of Alkali Soils, Watershed Development Project in Shifting Cultivation Areas (WDPSCA) and Externally Aided Projects (EAP) funded by the donor agencies[41].

2.2.2 Ministry of Rural Development

The MoRD has been implementing watershed projects only since the late 1980s. It deals with non-forest wastelands and poverty alleviation programs with important components of soil and water conservation. The key department in MoRD is the Department of Land Resources (DoLR) particularly the Wastelands Development Division. There are however two other departments, the Department of Drinking Water Supply and Department of Rural Development also involved in watershed development.

Two organizations support the MoRD, namely, the National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) and the Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART). The former provides advice on policy matters about watersheds, through the Centre for Natural Resources Management, whilst CAPART deals with the

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[41] Government of India/ MoRD, (2006: 37-38)

voluntary sector. CAPART also has a division which sanctions watershed projects to NGOs and voluntary organizations. Programs implemented by MoRD include the Drought Prone Areas Program (DPAP), Desert Development Program (DDP), and Integrated Wastelands Development Program. Its other projects include on-going watershed programs under the employment assurance scheme, support to NGOs, and some Externally Aided Projects (EAPs)[42].

2.2.3   Ministry of Environment and Forests

This ministry deals with forest and wasteland issues. Since 1989 the ministry implemented the Integrated Afforestation and Eco-development Projects Scheme (IAEPS) with the intention of promoting forestation and the development of degraded forests within an integrated watershed approach. The smallest player among the three ministries, MoEF and its area of work remains confined to the forested areas working under many guidelines as illustrated below. Two projects under this ministry are also shown in the figure.
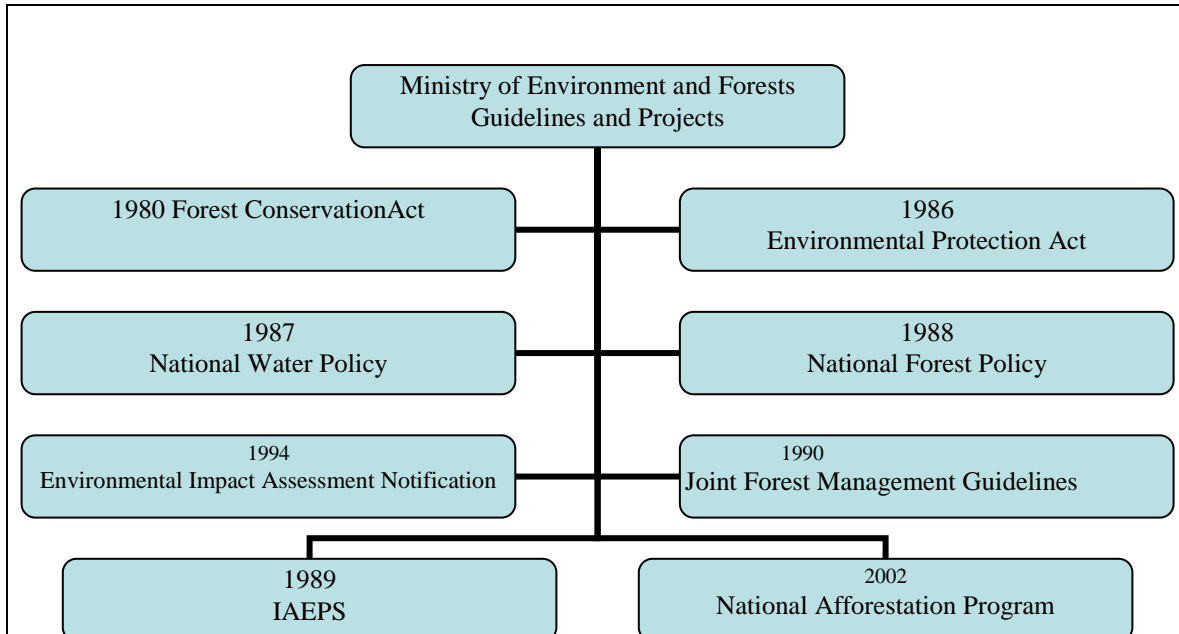
Figure 1.   Projects under Ministry of Environment and Forests

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[42] Amazega et al. (2003)

2.3   Indo-German Watershed Development Project: Maharashtra

This section of the chapter outlines the location, formation, and growth of the IGWDP in Maharashtra. It briefly describes the funding process of the project, involved agencies and different institutions that are formed in the process of watershed development program. This section also discusses the exposure and dialogue program of the donor community that has been taken up for identifying the 'preferences' of different actors in the watershed development program in the 5th Chapter.

Indo-German Watershed Development Project was initiated by Hermann Bacher, a Jesuit priest who began the first watershed work in Pimpalgaon Wagha (1988) in Ahmednagar district. Fr. Bacher came to Maharashtra in the 1960s, founded the NGO called ' Social Center' in 1968 and worked for tribal development in this area. This long association with the area and an austere lifestyle has helped Fr. Bacher in winning the trust of the local people.

In 1990, a project proposal was submitted to the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) (Bacher et. al. 1990) requesting a loan to start Watershed development in Maharashtra with the NGOs as governance agencies. This later became formalized as the IGWDP, a bilateral watershed development project. This is an ongoing project funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) started in 1992 and would continue to run until 2009. A national NGO called Watershed Organization Trust (WOTR) is the implementing agency. This project is located in Ahmednagar District, Maharashtra State, in western India (see map 1). Ahmednagar town lies in central Maharashtra, 285 kilometers and seven hours bus journey away from Mumbai. It has no airport facility but is well connected by trains and buses. It is the largest district of Maharashtra with an area of 17035 square kilometers and grows mostly sugarcane, *jowar* and *bajara.* It has the largest number of sugar factories in the State and is dominated by the National Congress Party of Sharad Pawar. The local Member of the Parliament Tukaram Gangadhar also hails from the same party. Ahmednagar is classified by the government of India as a drought prone area with low and erratic rainfall[43]. Out of the 13 *talukas* (sub-divisions of a district) in Ahmednangar,

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[43] The recorded average rainfall was 303 mm in 2003 and 589.21mm in 2004.

eight are constantly affected by water scarcity due to erratic and low rainfall. The Government of Maharashtra, therefore, laid specific emphasis upon the scheme of soil and water conservation in this area to address the issue of drought and recurrent water scarcity. This scheme was undertaken in the district in 1958-59 for the first time. It undertook the physical activities of contour bunding and *nala* bunding throughout the district.

It is also the largest district in Maharashtra occupying 5.66% of the land area. The official website of the district presents Ahmednagar as the 'most advanced district having maximum number of sugar factories in the State. The first cooperative sugar factory in Asia was established at Pravara Nagar in this district. Role Model of water conservation work can be seen at Ralegan-Siddhi and Hivare Bazar, which are also called ideal villages'[44]. This account presents three important aspects of the district in the form its sugarcane production and processing, a history of cooperative movements and a focus on rural development with the help of watershed programs.

Watershed development has certainly come a long way from the modest efforts by the government in the late 1960s. At present, IGWDP alone covers 104 watershed development projects in and around Ahmednagar spread over 204 villages. It has formed more than 1200 micro-credit societies for women in this area and continues to work on these issues.

The project site in Ahmednagar lies in the watershed of Mula River in the south and Pravara River on the north. This river system later meets Godavari River at a place called Pravara Sangam towards the northeastern part of the district, and forms the part of larger Godavari watershed. Some of the project area in the Ahmednagar block lies in the Sina River watershed also.

IGWDP was inspired by the successful examples of watershed development in this region of Maharashtra (notably Ralegan Siddhi village that lies in the same district) that have helped in rehabilitating the environment in the drought prone villages of Ahmednagar. The main objective of this project 'is to alleviate poverty through regenerating the environment with the active participation of the watershed community. This objective is

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[44]Gazetteer of Ahmednagar, Government of Maharashtra; Available at (http://ahmednagar.gov.in/)

achieved through different mechanical and vegetative measures, both on land and along the drainage lines' (WOTR, 2004).

IGWDP is a bilaterally funded program with two distinct phases both of which have separate funding sources and two separate organizations to route the funds to the implementing NGO called WOTR. The first phase is called the Capacity Building Phase (CBP), funded by the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ). In this phase, the 'mother NGO' equips the community-based organizations, villagers and their institutions to undertake the watershed project. The responsible organization for this phase is WOTR, a resource and support organization for local NGOs and village self-help groups that intend to undertake a watershed development project. In the CBP, an amount of 60,000 INR is allocated for the programs that deal specifically with the women's problems (WOTR, 2004).

The CBP is followed by a Full Implementation Phase (FIP) funded by the German Bank for Reconstruction and Development (KfW) with NABARD as their local partners. In this phase all major drainage line treatments are undertaken. FIP also has a component for women's promotion activities amounting to 5% of the total project cost or 250,000 INR, whichever is more.

The operational manual issued by WOTR (2004) identifies the important actors in IGWDP at three different levels of management. The highest strata at the program level consists of the implementing NGO called WOTR, NABARD, program coordination unit with two members each from WOTR and NABARD, project steering committee of the CBP and the project sanctioning and steering committee with the executive director of NABARD as the chairperson. Main actors at the village level are the local NGOs (other than WOTR) working at the grassroots and their employees, like the community organizer, lady social worker, and the technical officer. According to the manual, there are 6 main actors at the watershed level. This includes the watershed community or the general body of the project village, the village watershed committee (VWC) nominated by the general body, forest protection committee (FPC), women's self-help groups, *samyukt mahila samiti* (SMS) and watershed workers/supervisors selected from the literate villagers.

2.3.1 Exposure and Dialogue Program in Maharashtra

This section describes the donor's perspective on the Indo-German Watershed Development Project (IGWDP) based on an exposure program of the important decision makers from Germany among other international organizations, in which the participants visited the villages under this watershed project and discussed it with responsible Indian watershed development agencies.

Policy makers from the German government and other development agencies are regularly taken to such project villages in developing countries where Germany is the funding agency. This program is organized by a Bonn based NGO called 'Exposure-und Dialogprogramme e.V'. Initially these programmes were carried out by the 'German Commission for Justice and Peace' and later by the 'Association for the Promotion of North-South Dialogue', which was founded in 1992. Karl Osner worked as the founding managing director until the end of 2001. In 2003, the 'Association for the Promotion of North-South Dialogue' was transformed into the 'Exposure and Dialogue Programme Association'[45]. Since 1985, more than 60 such programs have been organized involving more than 900 participants.

This NGO coordinates with other NGOs in the recipient countries and arranges for the participants to stay in project villages, reflect on their findings and meet the decision makers from the recipient country.

IGWDP in Ahmednagar, India has been the host to three such exposure tours since 1991. Such exposure tours bring up issues that are considered important by the observers from the donor countries and they have an opportunity to directly ask the Indian policy makers about their stand and perspectives. This section is based on one such exposure tour conducted from October 27th- November 5th, 2006 called 'Poverty reduction and self-governing watersheds in Maharashtra', an exposure and dialogue program organized in cooperation with Watershed Organization Trust (WOTR), India.

This section first introduces the four-phase structure of the 'Exposure and Dialogue Program' (EDP) and then describes each phase of the EDP in detail.

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[45] Available at (http://www.exposure-dialog.de/english/ueber_uns/geschichte/geschichte.html)

<u>The Participants</u>

From 27th October to 5th November 2006, a team of 19 participants (including 5 members of the German Parliament, 1 member of the European Parliament, 3 officials of KfW and one member each from BMZ and GTZ among others[46]) was arranged to live with the villagers of the project areas in rural Maharashtra. This was the 4th EDP in the IGWDP villages in the last 17 years of association between the German government and the local NGO in India. Three before it were conducted in the years 1994, 1997, and 2000.

The idea behind this was to present an opportunity to the members of the donor community to make first-hand observations about the development projects that Germany was funding, and later prepare recommendations to be shared with the Indian counterparts as the concluding part of the program.

"The name 'Exposure and Dialogue Program' (EDP) derives from its methodical 'exposure' of the donors (*sich aussetzen*) to the project villages followed by a 'dialogue' and discussion phase with the policy makers of the recipient country. The core of an exposure and dialogue program is the face-to-face encounter with poor and socially marginalized people, who are striving to actively improve their living conditions. For about 3 days, the participants visit families in groups of two (usually one woman and one man). They live and sleep in the family home, sharing and experiencing their daily lives"[47].

A schematic diagram represents the exposure program as a four step process of exposure to the village life, reflection within the group, dialogue with the implementing agencies like the government and NGO staff, and making recommendations for the future improvement of the project based on the exposure, reflection and dialogue.

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[46] For a complete list of participants of the EDP in 2006, see appendix-B.
[47] For more details about the objectives and activities of each phase in the exposure program, see the website of the NGO called '*Exposure und Dialog Program*' e.V. Available at (http://www.exposure-dialog.de/english/methode/begegnen/begegnen.html)
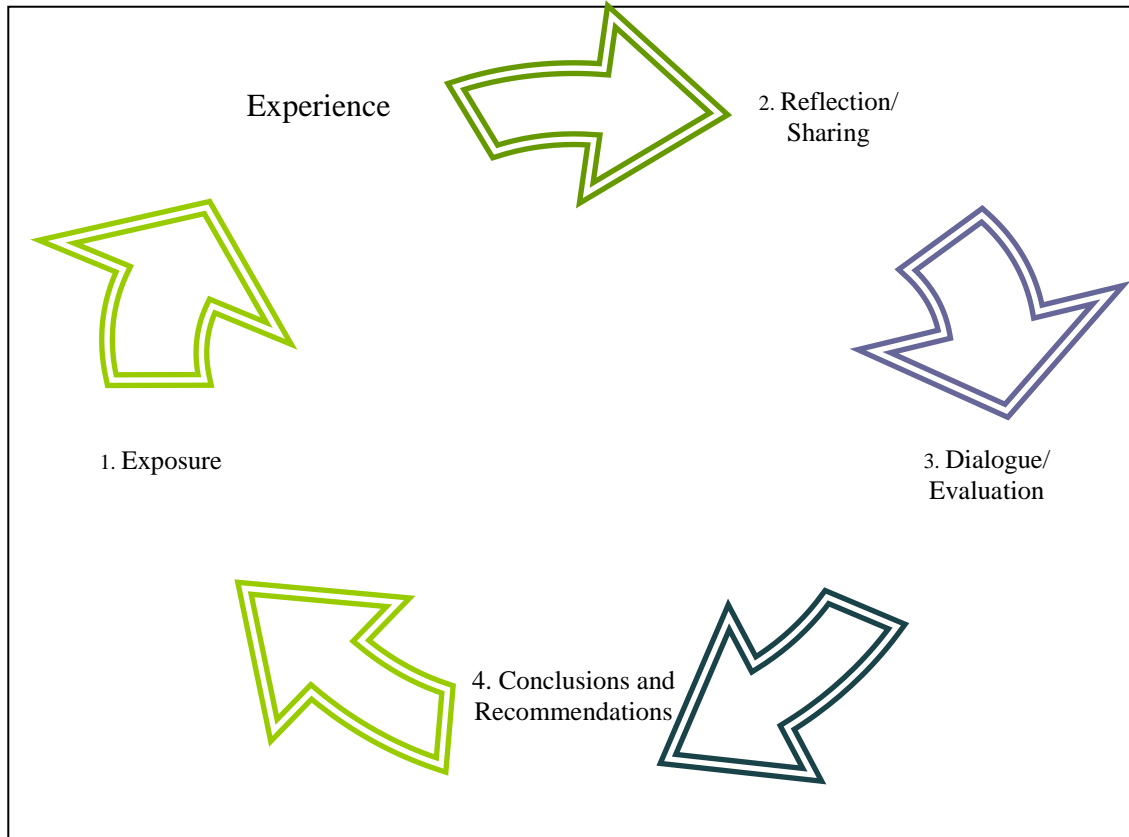
Figure 2.   Schematic Representation of the Exposure and Dialogue

Programme

<u>Before Exposure: First meeting of the Participants in Germany</u>

Two months before the actual visit to India, a pre-EDP meeting was organized in Berlin
to explain this program to the potential participants. In this meeting, the participants were
given a brief introduction to the project work in India.

The presentation made at the Berlin meeting[48], attended by the potential participants,
remarked that the starting conditions of economic cooperation between Germany and
India were changing in the light of the following facts:

- *Growing economic performance and influence in world politics*- the continuing
  rate of 8% annual economic growth showed that India was using the opportunity

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[48] Hahn, A., (2006): *Watershed Development im Kontext der bilateralen deutsch-indischen
Entwicklungszusammenarbeit*, Ref-203, BMZ; Presentation to the EDP delegation on 7th September 2006,
Berlin.

offered by globalization. At the same time, India's emergence as the local superpower in the region have been acknowledged by the nuclear agreement with USA and the meeting of the German Chancellor with the Indian prime minister in on her visit to India. The cooperation between the two countries is growing in many different fields. UN and WTO have also recognized the important role that India would play in the future world politics.

- *Widespread poverty and growing social disparity*: At the same time, 240-390 million Indians live in the conditions of extreme poverty, housing the largest number of poor in the world. India ranked 127th in the HDI out of 177 countries. (China was ranked 94th.)

- *Growing energy requirements, environmental problems and protection against climate change*: As a transition economy, India is in a growing need of raw materials and energy for its constantly growing economy. This makes India the 5th largest emitter of Carbon Dioxide in the environment. This has serious consequences for the environment and climate change.

- *An active civil society in the biggest democracy of the world*: Inspite of the infrastructural weaknesses, Indian democracy has proved its capacity to continue working. An active civil society shapes a lively social discourse and actively forms political and public opinion.

- *Interests in the deepening of development cooperation between the two countries*: This includes among other things, intensification of relations, in the areas of trade and scientific -technical cooperation.

'Within the environment sector, the objective would be the promotion of local resources for the gentle growth and sustainable management of natural resources'[49]. The areas of activity would be both within the government and industrial sector for environment protection and management of natural resources. The integral part of this work would be to provide environmental consultancy, Watershed Management, *Adivasi* development projects, PPP (Public Private Partnership) bio-diesel, '*zukünftig auch Maßnahmen zu städtischer Entwicklung, Anpassung an den Klimawandel*'[50].

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[49] '*Förderung von Ressourcen schonendem Wachstum und nachhaltiger Bewirtschaftung natürlicher Ressourcen*'.
[50] Hahn (2006).

The next part of the presentation argued in favor of a watershed development project by pointing to the fact that more than 50% of the area in India (175 million hectares) is affected by land-degradation. Around 70% of the Indian population derives its livelihood from subsistence farming and lives in extremely poor conditions. Watershed development that improves agricultural production in the rainfed areas has been a strategy of the government to fight poverty in these areas. The Indian government started with the watershed development projects in the early 80s but made little headway as the guidelines provided for the development of watersheds 'were purely technical in nature- to combat land degradation, without any acknowledgement, participation or role of the affected populations'[51].

"In this scenario, IGWDP was launched and with the main objective of bringing together the government and non-government organizations along with the self-help groups towards a self-governed and sustainable management of watershed areas. It was an integrated multidisciplinary approach to watershed development at different levels like concrete technical and socio-economic measures at the micro-level; local policy planning and governing, networking at the policy and decision making level and effective coordination between the involved State, central government, 'mother' NGO, local NGO and the community based organizations. IGWDP has impacted the life of poor *adivasis* in Maharashtra as well as the Indian policy makers. In 1999 when GoI set up the watershed development fund, the approach followed by IGWDP was taken up as the guiding principle for the development of other watersheds"[52].

This meeting also described the role of the NGO that has been active in implementing the capacity-building phase of the project:

"Watershed Organization Trust (WOTR) is an Ahmednagar based NGO that was formed in 1993 with the aim of alleviating poverty through 'self-help initiatives'. It was started by a Swiss Jesuit priest, Hermann Bacher and was coordinated by Fr. Crispino Lobo. Presently, Marcella D'Souza is the director of this program. WOTR plays the role of 'mother' NGO that supports the village level activities, both financially and technically. It provides training and consultation to the community based organizations and local NGOs in watershed work. It follows a participatory and self-help oriented approach in watershed development and undertakes following concrete measures: human resource development, land and water management, forestation, plantation activities, fodder plantation, rural energy needs and income generating measures".

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[51]*Bereits vor den 1980´er rein technische ausgerichtete Ansätze, ohne Managementrolle der betroffenen Bevölkerung zu berücksichtigen.*
[52] Ibid.

The German contribution to the project and to WOTR was also outlined briefly. The project is still under the support of BMZ and would run out in November 2008. The data given below gives us an overview of the FZ and TZ invested in this time period:

„1992 – 2008:
TZ: 7, 5 Mio €; FZ: 38,8 Mio €;
Letzte Förderphase für WOTR 12/2005 bis 11/2008 mit 1,8 Mio €, davon ein Finanzierungsbeitrag von 900 T€ „ (Hahn, 2006).

The future challenges for watershed development in India were outlined under two subtopics: decentralization and development of 'sustainable financial models' for watersheds with a goal of moving from pure subsidy to financial independence.

After the Berlin meeting, the participants gathered in India after 2 months for the actual program. This time we met in Darewadi village of Ahmednagar district.

Before the exposure: meeting in India

This section describes the first impressions of the EDP participants that were formed on the basis of their interaction with the NGO staff and their presentation of the watershed development work under IGWDP.

The participants were first welcomed by Father Bacher who spoke about the idea of watershed development and shared his experiences collected over the last fifty years in India, especially in the Ahmednagar District of Maharashtra. Due to its location in the rain-shadow area, it receives a rainfall between 508-635 mm and is thus a semi-arid region prone to recurrent droughts. It was in this semi-arid, drought-prone and industrially backward region that Fr. Hermann Bacher decided to establish the Social Centre in 1966 with the objective of alleviating poverty and hardships of the small and marginal farmers through development of water resources and increased agricultural productivity.

This was followed by a presentation by the director of WOTR, Marcella D'Souza. This presentation was on the sister concern of WOTR, a new NGO called 'Sampada Trust' which has started the work of establishing micro credit societies for women's empowerment in Maharashtra.

The presentation by the director was followed by a briefing by another staff of WOTR who explained in concrete terms, the questions and issues that the participants could ask once they reach the villages. These could be ascertaining the resource basket of the family, the cultural norms, and social relations of the family with the village folks and outside world. The participants could also look for the working of elected village governance bodies (*gram panchayat*), the number of self-help groups formed and their working, the actual sites with land treatments in the process of watershed development. After a brief break, the EDP delegation was taken for a survey of the Darewadi village to observe the change brought about by the watershed program.

Exposure and Living in the Project Villages

Nine out of the 204 project villages were selected to host the delegation on their three-day visit. On the morning of October, 29th the participants left for their respective villages, shortly stopping on their way to look at an untreated area which allowed for a comparison to the treated project villages yet to be seen. All nineteen participants were distributed into villages within a radius of around 30 km in the Sangamner taluka of Ahmednagar district where they would spend the next three nights (See Map 3). For the next 3 days, all delegation members were part of a village community, 'participating' in their daily activities, eating the way they eat and sleeping the same way.

Location Map of EDP Villages (approx distances and altitude)
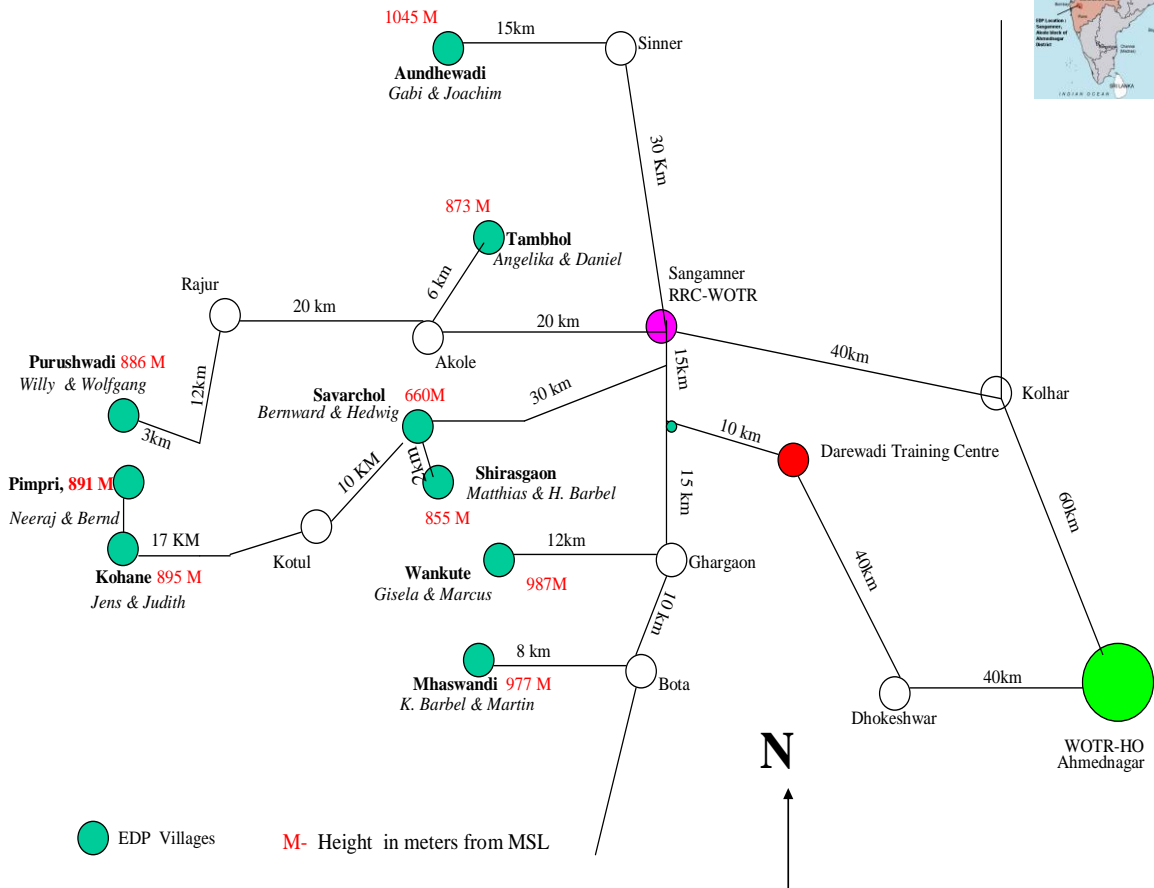
Map 3. Location of the Exposure Villages in Ahmednagar, Maharashtra

The participants would also meet the different functionaries in the watershed development project, the apex body of women's self-help groups, which is called *Sanyukta Mahila Samiti* (SMS) and other village level governance bodies. The participants were to remain in close communication with the WOTR facilitators working in the field, who were also available for conducting the village situation in its different cultural setting and language. The delegation represented the power base of fund suppliers, yet in a philosophical mood of cooperation and a stance of partnership.

The participants were received with great fanfare and celebration on their arrival in the village. All villagers assembled near the place of arrival to have a glimpse of the people from so far away. A 'white' man/ woman in the middle of an Indian village is not a

common sight and hence no villager would miss this opportunity to be a part of the welcome ceremony. Everyone, at least it seemed, was there. Adler from KfW and a participant of the EDP, records his arrival in the village in the following words:

'Bei unserer Ankunft schien das ganze Dorf auf den Beinen zu sein. Jedenfalls kam uns eine Traube von Kindern und Frauen entgegen, dahinter eine Gruppe junger Männer, die uns mit Pauken und Trommeln willkommen hießen. Es musste ein Großteil der knapp 500 Einwohner gewesen sein'[53].

I was located in the village called Pimpri in the Sahyadri ranges of western Maharashtra of Akole block. Dilapidated condition of the roads leading to the village makes it inaccessible and remote. The terrain is partially hilly and receives an annual average rainfall of 957 mm. Pimpri is a small village of around 390.37 hectares out of which 6.02 come under the forest department. 35.58 hectares is the revenue land, 317.81 hectares is cultivable and 31 hectares of wasteland. Agriculture is the primary occupation of the people, who often work as labourers in the nearby cities during non-cultivation periods. A total of 81 families with around 500 people inhabit the village. The whole community belongs to scheduled caste and scheduled tribes[54].

Once in the village, the 'ice breaking' was initiated by the village people in their warm and friendly welcome ceremony. In their traditional way of greeting with garlands and '*tilak*' on the forehead, the visitors were made a part of the village community.

„Frauen hielten einen Aluminiumteller in den Händen. Darauf stand ein kleines, brennendes Öllämpchen, daneben befand sich je ein kleines Häufchen Henna und Gelbwurzpulver sowie eine halbe, auffallend kleine Kokosnuss, an der ein Bändchen befestigt war. Wir bekamen von den Dorfbewohnern selbst kunstvoll zusammengebundene Blütenkränze um den Hals gehängt, und je einen Tupfen Henna und Gelbwurz in zwei übereinander liegenden Punkten auf die Stirn gedrückt. Damit waren wir Teil des Dorfes – eine schöne Geste der Gastfreundschaft".[55]

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[53] '*Lebensgeschichte*' submitted by Matthias Adler to the EDP e.V. (2006) Bonn, titled *'Von verlorenen Ziegen und drohenden Hochzeitsfeiern - drei Tage zu Gast in einer indischen Familie'*,

[54] Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) are Indian population groupings that are explicitly recognized by the Constitution of India, previously called the "depressed classes" by the British, and otherwise known as untouchables. SCs/STs together comprise over 24% of India's population, with SC at over 16% and ST over 8% as per the 2001 Census. Some Scheduled Castes in India are also known as Dalits Some Scheduled Tribe people are also referred to as *Adivasis*.

[55] '*Lebensgeschichte*' submitted by Matthias Adler to the EDP e.V. (2006) Bonn.

We were taken on a visit to the village where the watershed work was in progress. We came across the continuous contour trenches, plantations and water absorption trenches in the village.

WOTR provided each participant with a brief document that gave information about the project in the visited villages. The management of the project in Pimpri village was described in the following words:

"At the village level, the project is managed by Village Development Committee (VDC) called the Kaloba VDC with the help of WOTR's team working in Akole cluster. The members of the VDC were consensually nominated by the village *gram sabha*. The VDC has 9 members including 4 women. They regularly meet to plan, implement and monitor the project. *Besides, other* local level institutions *like* the women's self-help groups and *sanyukta mahila samiti* have also been set up at the village level and these too have undergone regular trainings in promotion and management of their groups, financial management etc. There are 10 members in the SMS".

Photograph 1. Continuous Contour trenches in Pimpri Village

The village social worker and the facilitators explained that this village was still on a pilot basis and the project was yet to move into the full implementation phase. The village would soon be taken up by NABARD for funding in this phase.

After a transactional walk of the village, we interviewed the women's micro-credit group and met with the interviewee family in the evening. This family consisted of a small land-owning couple with three children. The couple worked as farmers in their small piece of land and as daily wage laborers in the nearby town.Chandrabhaga Bai took us to her 2.5 hectares land plot that was slightly away from the village. The land was tilled but had no plantations at that time. She explained that there were no irrigation facilities and the only way to get water for her fields was the monsoon rains.

Reflection and Sharing of Village Experiences

After the village exposure, the EDP delegation reassembled to share their experiences made in the project villages over the last three days. They brought out a range of issues in the reflection phase that took place among the participants. They outlined the discrepancies in the project, status of women, education, role of the NGO, and political nature of the village society, among other things[56].

Dialogue with Indian Delegation

Dialogue phase in Poona gave the EDP participants an opportunity to meet with Indian governmental and non-governmental decision-makers in the field of watershed development. In this phase of the program, the donor representatives shared their preferences in watershed development based on their village exposure with the decision makers from India. The Indian delegation also used the opportunity to voice its preferences and position on watershed development programs. The Minister of Agriculture and Watershed Development of Maharashtra, B.S. Thorat also addressed the dialogue phase. The presentations on different aspects of the watershed development program by the joint delegation were followed by a discussion among the donor and recipient delegations. This phase concluded with a list of three final recommendations

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[56] See Chapter 5 for a detailed discussion on the reflection and dialogue phase.

made by the EDP delegation for the improvement of watershed development projects in India.

2.3.2 Final Recommendations by EDP

The participants were divided into three working groups to discuss the key issues that were identified during the exposure program.

<u>Working group I: Sustainability of the Watershed Development Projects</u>

The first working group took up the issue of ensuring sustainability of the watershed development projects. The group debated the need to ascertain measurable indicators that could be used to identify the successful activities and institutions created in the watershed program. It felt the need for a wider governmental support to the 'civil society' and such NGOs that have worked in this area. Donor policy and funding coordination and the need for India to join OECD donors in regional markets was also considered important aspects that determined the sustainable implementation of watershed projects.

The group worked with the help of a set of guiding questions provided by the NGO that was useful in providing the flow and direction to the discussion.

Guiding questions for the Working Group-I: Ensuring sustainability in watershed work.

- How can we establish best practice indicators, which can be adopted by other watershed development programs?
- How can access to energy in watershed areas be ensured in such a way that a deforestation of the rehabitated areas is avoided?
- What role can renewable energy play in this process? How can this be designed, organized and financed?
- What framework conditions are necessary to strengthen ownership at the political level in order to ensure sustainability of watershed development programs?
- How can this successful watershed development approach (approach of IGWDP/ WOTR) be used in national and international development programs? Who could be the responsible actors?

Table 1.   Guiding Questions for the Sustainability Working Group

With the above set of guiding questions, the EDP group made the following suggestions:

Indicators to measure successful performance of activities such as empowerment of the *gram panchayat*, SHGs and their resources, training, credit, etc. are needed by NGOs, governments, and villagers.

Indicators to monitor and assess outcomes such as: physical (water flows, water levels, water withdrawals), social (years of school, health status), economic (change in incomes and wages, number of jobs, land values) and environmental (vegetative cover, biodiversity) are needed by NGOs, governments, and villagers.

The formation of an NGO network should be supported by governments. Through the network 'centers of excellence' or lead NGOs can be identified for capacity building, operations, and the establishment of Mother NGOs. Establishment of a separate fund managed by a joint NGO and a government commission, which can fund NGOs and private sector firms to engage in social marketing. The goal is to initiate farmers clubs, identify village problems, begin to set priorities, and most importantly, create bottom up demand for watershed activities by villagers.

Renewable energy can be instrumental in watershed development through a number of approaches. Combine energy efficient techniques for cooking, sanitation, house heating and others.

Afforestation and reforestation should be linked with watershed management. A dialogue with governments is necessary to create a more reliable energy mix especially for the rural sector. In this context it was recommended to participate in the 'Germany-India Renewable Energy Conference' in December 2006.

To explore donor coordination and investment opportunities through the OECD[57] would be one approach to promote successful watershed development at national and international levels.

Initiate international market places (trade fairs, conferences, expos) where best practices are presented, displayed and promoted. Create opportunities for India and Africa to join with OECD donors in regional markets.

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[57] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

Working Group-II: Empowerment of villagers through watershed development programs

The second working group was assigned the topic of empowerment of the local community and various problems that needed to be addressed.

The guiding questions for this group:

- What skills do we need today to safeguard the future of the next generations with respect to 1) education; 2) social insurance; 3) social and cultural change process; 4) gender issues?

- How can watershed programs move beyond technical aspects to contribute to or initiate the process of empowerment?

Table 2.   Guiding Questions for the Empowerment Working Group

The working group on empowerment made following suggestions based on its group discussion and debate among the participants:

Empowerment should be politically enabling in the sense that village people must be able to organize the village life democratically. Democratic virtues should be developed in this given cultural background.

Creating awareness among the villagers through the WDPs was felt to be necessary. The watershed programs can link the villagers to banks and provide credit. Non-farm activities for increasing the income of the people (by providing them with vocational training- especially for the landless and the poorest of the poor) are to be recommended.

The so-called 'Watershed-plus Program' was suggested which would use the watershed activities as a platform to address the entire social fabric of the village and bring about positive change.

Policies should be readjusted to make sure that no one is excluded from the program, including the landless and the women. The decision-making body should be constituted in a way that all classes of the village population are included. Reservations must be made in these bodies in accordance with the percentage of population of each class.

Working Group-III: Enhancing 'good governance' in watershed development programs

The next working group was assigned the topic of 'good governance' and its role in the watershed development projects.

Working group-III was provided the following set of guiding questions:

- How can watershed programs contribute to the promotion of good governance through:
    1. Participation of all villagers including landless and women?
    2. Ensuring more transparency of public service delivery?
    3. Dealing with land rights and land tenure issues?
    4. Other issues of good governance?
- How can governmental programs and schemes reach the poor?

Table 3.   Guiding Questions for the Governance Working Group

Based on its set of guiding questions, the working group came to the following conclusions:

The main key to good governance is transparency. Resulting from that all records should be accessible to the public. In the villages visited, for example, all relevant numbers regarding the watershed development status were displayed publicly.

At the same time, the role of literacy needs to be emphasized, because transparency does not function in an illiterate environment. So education should be considered as crucial factor.

Transparency also requires clear purposes and clear plans. Therefore, operation and maintenance funds should not be used for other purposes. Specific guidelines have to be defined for the usage of these funds.

The decision-makers should have a clear idea about their duties, roles and responsibilities. This knowledge should enable them to take better decisions. Every villager should have the right to know about the decisions made and the roles played by each decision-maker. This is a vital instrument in fighting corruption.

Good Governance efforts should also include the NGO and the state level and not only the grass-root level.

2.4 Integrated Watershed Development Program, Shiwalik Hills-II: Uttarakhand

The project Hills-II was undertaken in the state of Uttarakhand, which came into existence in the year 2000, carved out of the hilly regions of Uttar Pradesh. It comprises of the eight hill districts[58] with its administrative headquarters at Dehradun, 235 km from New Delhi.

Travelling north from Delhi, crossing the plains, the transition (from plains to the hills) to the Himalayas is achieved via the Shiwaliks, a line of hills 15-50 km in breadth, with an average elevation of 1500- 2000 meters that run along the southern edge of the Himalaya. They are the first range of Hills encountered en-route from the plains and are geologically separate from the Himalayas. The Shiwaliks form the 'southern gateway' into the Himalayan range. In Uttarakhand, they extend from Dehradun to Almora before heading across the southern border of Nepal.

These Shiwalik hills are separated from the fertile Indo-Gangetic Plains by a band of swamp and forest called the *Terai*. Inhabited only by a few hunting and gathering communities, and highly malarial, the *Terai* formed an effective barrier to the penetration of large armies from the plains into these hills. [59]

A few kilometers north of the Shiwaliks, the proper Himalayan Ranges begin, ascending quickly to an average elevation of 7000 feet. It is the socio-ecological region between the Great Himalayan Range and the Indo-Gangetic Plains, which is the project site of IWDP, Hills-II and the focus area for my study.

Except for the remote valleys north of the Himalayan Range, the Uttarakhand region is subject to the annual monsoons and hence, rain-fed irrigation for agriculture. The pre-monsoon summer months begin in the late April and last till the month of June with the first showers of the monsoons coming in early-mid July. July, August and September

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[58]The 8 hill districts are: i) Pauri, ii) Tehri, iii) Uttarkashi, iv) Dehradun and v) Chamoli – which collectively constitute 'Garhwal; vi) Almora, vii) Pithoragarh and viii) Nainital- which collectively constitute 'Kumaon'.
[59]Guha (2001)

bring heavy rains to this region, average rainfall being anywhere from 1400-2000 mm. Winter begins to set in by late October, also marking the end of the pilgrimage season with most of the important religious shrines closing down for the cold winter. Heavy snowfalls on the Himalayan Range preclude any thoughts of motion in this area. However, the Shiwalik ranges receive milder snowfall and the trekking routes between the villages are passable even during winters.

Garhwal was an area constituted by many small principalities and chiefdoms when Ajaypal Panwar subjugated them in the early 16th Century. In 1517, it established its capital at Srinagar (in Pauri Garhwal) where it administered an impressive area including much of the terrain from the Yamuna River to Nanda Devi Peak in the east.

Bounded on the north by the Greater Himalaya and separated from the Indo-Gangetic Plains in the south by the Shiwalik hills, Garhwal remained pretty safe and isolated. Thus they neither came under the sway of the Mughals nor were they subject to the invasions from the north[60]. This has kept Garhwal in a relative isolation and retains a cultural heritage from the 'brahminical' social order of the past.

Integrated Watershed development work started in the Uttar Pradesh Hills under the Hill Development Department in 1983 by launching two simultaneous projects: 1) World Bank funded Nayar-Panar project till 1991 and 2) the EU funded South-Bhagirathi project till 1993. In the same year, EU funded another program called the Doon Valley Project (DVP) till 2001. Hills project funded by the Bank was started in 1999 then extended to Hills-II project and now continues in the form of UDWDP[61] until 2009.

GoI together with the states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh signed an agreement with IDA and IBRD in September, 1999 to grant a loan of 148 crore INR to improve the productive potential of Shiwalik ranges using evolving watershed treatment technologies and community participatory approaches.[62]

60Guha (2001)

[61] Uttaranchal Decentralized Watershed Development Program. For a complete list of programs implemented by WMD, see Appendix A.

[62]WMD (2001)

The studied project area is located in the Yamkeshwar block of Garhwal District, Uttarakhand State in north India (see map 2). This region has a sub-temperate to temperate climate, which remains pleasant throughout the year. The hilly terrain with its forested slopes receives adequate rainfall from mid-June till mid-September. Occasional rainfall is also recorded in winters. Average annual rainfall in the district is 2180 mm, about 90 percent of which is generally concentrated over the monsoon. Regardless of the excess rain, this area suffers from irrigation and drinking water scarcity during the summer months. This is due to the hilly terrain that most of rainwater goes as waste in the form of run-off. The stony texture of soil further increases the rate of water erosion. The run-off rainwater can be harvested by constructing water irrigation tanks, appropriate plantations, and constructing check dams in feasible areas. The watershed programs were started in this district to address this problem. The main challenge was to store the water for an extended period of 9 months. One such project, called the Integrated Watershed Development Project (Shiwalik) Hills-II was started in 1999 and 'covered' 493 villages spread over 24 micro-watersheds. It was funded by the World Bank and lasted till September 2005. My field work was done in the ten villages of Aamkatal micro-watershed in Pauri District developed under this project.

The World Bank appraisal document identifies the project as follows:

"Hills-II project is a poverty targeted intervention' in the rural development sector, within the responsibility of MoA. The implementing agencies would be the respective state governments and the Village Development Committees. The project would last for 5 years and was expected to close down in April 2005. The main objective of the project was 'to improve the productive potential of the project area in the five states (Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Uttar Pradesh), using evolving watershed treatment technologies and community participatory approaches. The project would contribute significantly to decreasing soil erosion, increasing water availability, and alleviating poverty in the contiguous areas of the Shiwalik hills in the five project states. Sustainability of project interventions would be ensured through the participatory involvement of project stakeholders/ beneficiaries." (World Bank, 1999)

2.4.1 Shiwalik Hills-II Project in Kimsar Village

This section introduces the institutions and activities of the Hills-II project in the Kimsar village of Aamkatal microwatershed. It first shows that the villagers of this block have

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presented the need for motorable roads but end up with watershed development projects that do not fulfill the developmental aspirations of the people.

Kimsar is a small village in the Rishikesh division, Yamkeshwar block of Pauri-Garhwal district in Uttarakhand, north India.
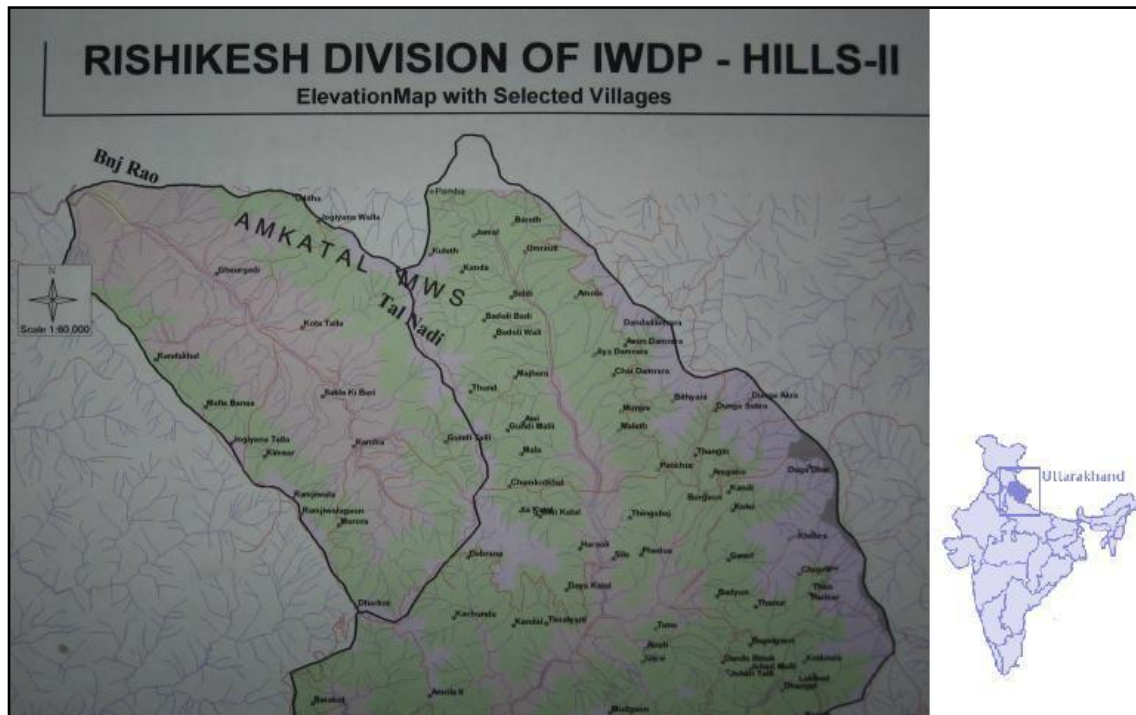
Map 4. Location of Kimsar Village in Hills-II Project, Pauri, Uttarakhand

Small but centrally located Kimsar is a useful destination for the villagers in the Taal Valley as this village has the only bank in this area. The location of the bank in this village makes it the most visited place in the block as almost every villager is required to go there at least once in a month or even more times depending on the need. The only mode of transportation is the jeep run by the private locals and no buses ply here as the roads are not suitable for a bus journey.

'On the road' of Kimsar

This village lies in the Gauhari Range of Shiwalik hills that became a part of the Rajaji National Park in 1983. There was little development in this area due to its forested surroundings and isolated location even before the national park was announced. But after 1983, all villages in the Kimsar *nayaya panchayat*[63] were subject to the jurisdiction of Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 and the Forest Act of 1980 (no construction other than those directly linked to the preservation of wildlife could be undertaken in the park area) that imposed further restrictions on any kind of construction in this area.

It was plainly unfortunate for the residents of this village that the entire Gauhari Range was declared to become a national park in the same year when the government of Uttar Pradesh sanctioned Rs. 38 lakhs for constructing the road between Kaudiya and Kimsar village in the financial year 1982-83[64]. However, this amount was not released for the road construction to Kimsar as noted in the letter to the chief conservator of forests, Uttarakhand from the Government of Uttar Pradesh:

"With reference to your letter number P-1682/ 8-1, dated 14-11-1990, I have been directed to convey to you that in the development block of Yamkeshwar in Pauri district, an amount of Rs. 38.80 lakhs was sanctioned in the financial year 1982-83 for the construction of Kaudiya-Kimsar motor road. But due to the 5th km milestone to the 22nd km milestone stretch lying in the Rajaji National Park (RNP), the road construction was withheld due to the provisions of Forest Conservation Act of 1980. Due to this issue, the honorable governor has consented to the construction of the above motorable road as 'forest motor road'/ jeepable tracks and is pleased to announce a sum of Rs. 22 lakhs for this purpose. As the above mentioned work has no provisions in the current financial year of 1991-92, and since the work to be done is very important and indispensible, the honorable governor has agreed to provide a sum of Rs. 22 lakhs from the State emergency fund in advance, till the work is approved by the legislative assembly, to be deposited under your authority. Kindly make this amount available to the concerned construction agencies."

This was in response to a letter sent by the chief conservator of forests, Uttarakhand in November 1990. The response that came from the government was in 1992 informing

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[63] *Nayaya Panchayat* refers to the cluster of villages or the elected body of village representatives at the block level constituted by the elected village *sarpanchs* of the given block.
[64] Letter to the Chief Conservator of Forests- Uttaranchal from MM Singh, Government of Uttar Pradesh on 30th March, 1992; Number: 1111/28-3-71591/ 88

about the money sanctioned for the village road in 1982-83. The amount sanctioned after 10 years in 1992 was reduced by almost half of the earlier amount as now the roads were to remain as 'forest tracks' between the 5th km to 22nd km milestone.

The sanction of this amount for the road did not translate into any concrete action as it could be seen in the 'Open Letter' sent by the elected local representatives of this area to the chief conservator of forests in March 2005 to 'exclude the Gauhari range from Rajaji National Park area'. It outlined the problems of individual villages in this range that had stopped the construction of roads due to the inclusion of this area into a national park:

"This is to bring to your notice that the existence of all the boundary villages of the Rajaji National Park (RNP), Gauhari Range forest area has come under sever crisis. All villages under the *Nyaya Panchayat* Kimsar (Ganga Bhogpur Talla, Ganga Bhogpur Malla, Talla Banaas, Kasan, Bhumiyakisar, Kandakhaal, Malla Banaas, Jogiyana, Taal Shahzada, Kimsaar, Khairana, Ramjiwala, Diwogi, Marora, Dharkot, Garhakot, Amola, Kachunda, Debrana etc) are affected by the Gauhari Range. The main road of access to these villages is the Kaudiya-Kimsaar motor road that passes through the RNP forested area and due to the enforcement of Forest Act of 1980, the roads have remained unmetalled.

Kaudiya- Bindwasani-Kandra motor road is also within the Gauhari Range due to which the villages under the Naugaon *Nayay Panchayat*- Like Bukundi, Taal ,Baunsali, Silsari, Gundi, Gundi Talli and Chamkotkhaal and many such villages are affected negatively by the Forest Act and remain in need for basic facilities for the lack of proper roads to approach these villages.

The developmental work is also facing great obstacles in the boundary villages of RNP in the Neelkanth *Nayay Panchayat*. The main villages affected in the Neelkanth panchayat are- Jaunk, Ghotiya, Patna, Haldogi, Phoolchatti, Rattapani, Ghattugad, Khairkhaal, Gudangaon, Pundrasu, Mauwan, Bhaun, Kothar, Khargosha, Dhamanda and Chamanpur. Due to the Forest Act of 1980, the trekking route from Swargashram (Rishikesh) to Neelkanth Mahadev pilgrimage has also come under serious trouble.

Other villages in the Gauhari range affected by the Forest act of 1980 are under the Gaindakhaal *nayaya panchayat* namely- Kota, Sirasu, Palelgaon, Bijni, Mohanchatti, and Nodkhaal.The roads between Lakshmanjhoola and Kandi have also been marked to be inside the Gauhari range resulting into frequent problems in road construction and transportation. Silogi-Gaindakhaal connecting road, development block Yamkeshwar and Dwarikhaal are also part of this range due to which the roads have not been metalled.

The age old funeral ground of the villagers has also been acquired by the park authorities and construction of the cremation house at the Phoolchatti funeral ground, which was already passed by the *zila panchayat* (elected district government), has now been stopped

by the park. The cremation houses in Neelkanth and Kimsar *nayaya panchayat* are also stalled due to the park and its provisions of The Wildlife Protection Act (of 1972)[65]. In the light of above presented facts, we request you to kindly take suitable action to exclude the Gauhari Range from the Park premises."[66]

In another letter from the MLA[67] of Yamkeshwar block to the chief minister of Uttarakhand, the roads issue was again brought up for consideration in October 2005:

"This letter comes to you as a request for the metalling of Kaudiya-Kimsar motor road on behalf of the people of Yamkeshwar legislative assembly, Pauri district. It has become impossible for the people of this area to travel on these jeepable tracks. The reason for its delay is always that the area lies within the RNP and thus no such activities could be undertaken here. I would like to bring your attention to the fact that there are other concrete roads within the RNP and some are being continuously metalled. May I ask you the reason for this differential treatment of this particular stretch? It is my sincere request to you to kindly initiate proper action for the improvement of the road on this 12 km stretch on the Kaudiya-Kimsaar road respecting the opinion of the people living in this area."[68]

Form the above letters, it can be seen that this area is in a desperate need of a concrete connecting roads but has met with little success. It is a well-known issue in this area, which has dominated the political sphere of discussions for a long time. Each election campaign promises the road but it somehow is shelved. The closest that this area came to a good road was in 1983 when the government of UP sanctioned 38 lakhs for this purpose but had to hold the work and release of funds because around the same time, the Rajaji National Park was announced and this area attracted the provisions of Forest Conservation Act (1980). This decision had proved historical for this village as it changed the socio-political life of this area forever, where the national park became an

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[65] *Grameenon ke varshon purane shamshaan ghat ko bhi park prashashan ne apne adheen kar liya hai aur phoolchatti shamshaanghat par zila panchayat se swikrit shawdaah griha ke nirmaan par rok laga di gayi hai. Nayaya panchayat Neelkanth aur Kimsaar ke shawdaahgriha ka bhi nirmaan Park Adhiniyam ke karan nahin ho paye hain.* The desperation of villagers for the exclusion from the park premises can be inferred from the letter that describes not only the difficulties faced by the villagers in their everyday life but also the ones faced in case of a death in the village.

[66] Open Letter to the Chief Consevator of Forests: (Dated: 11.03.2005). Village records of the Kimsar *gram panchayat*, Pauri.

[67] Member of the Legislative Assembly

[68] Letter from the MLA- Yamkeshwar to the Ministry of Forests requesting for the concrete roads from Kaudiya to Kimsaar: (Dated: 10.10.2005). It was made available by the village records of Kimsar *gram panchayat*, Pauri.

important point of reference and consideration. The roads cannot be built because it was partly in the park area, thus bulk goods cannot be transported because there are no roads. No roads mean an imposed isolation that result into lack of basic amenities like school, hospital, electricity and water supply. The villagers cannot travel out of the village after sunset nor can anyone come into the village after it is dark. This confinement is because there are no proper roads and the entrance of the access track is closed every evening by the forest department, as this is also one of the entrances to the Rajaji National Park.

It can be observed here that the people of Kimsar had used all democratic means to highlight the issue of connecting roads to the village. The village representatives of this area sent an 'open letter' to the forest conservator. A journalist from the local news channel and the local MLA had also brought this to the notice of the chief minister of Uttarakhand. In response to their demands, the Forest and Environment department of Uttarakhand government responded with the following letter:

"With reference to your letter addressed to the chief-minister on the above subject, dated 28-10-2005, I have been directed to notify that under the Project-*Wan margon ki sudrih-i-karan yojna* (improvement of the forest tracks) the mentioned stretch from Kaudiya to Kimsaar has been selected and the concerned offices have been directed to conduct the DPR (Detailed Project Report)/ survey for this region." [69]

The work on road construction was yet to commence when I left Kimsar village after my fieldwork in June, 2007. During my period of stay and usage of the same access road, I found out that the lack of proper access roads presented numerous difficulties for the local residents. Landslides frequently stopped all vehicles from plying on the narrow tracks and development activities suffered because the heavy motor vehicles could not transport bulk goods and resources. This problem was also highlighted in a letter sent to the chief engineer of the Public Works Department (PWD) from the *gram panchayat* of Kimsar requesting action for restoring the access road to the village that was closed since last 10 months following a landslide:

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[69] Letter to the *Sahara Samay* News channel from .P Gupta, Principal Secretary of Forests and Environment, Section-2, Uttarakhand government; dated: 6-12-2005, Number: 276/ X-2 2005-21(60) 2004 (820/ Gu. S/ 25-10-2005).

"It has to be brought to your kind notice that heavy rains on the 9th of July last year caused a landslide between the 17th and the 18th milestone, 300 meters from the Shobhasthali of Talla Banaas. This landslide brought a huge stone piece in the middle of the road which has not been removed yet, although the information was relayed to you on the phone from the advisory staff of the chief-minister on the 10th July. The stone piece on the road has totally curtailed the movement of heavier vehicles and the light ones are traveling in the face of great risk.

In between 18th and 19th milestone, about 200 meters from the Patwari's office, another landslide has blocked the road for heavy vehicles, which can be restored at very low cost by minor cutting on the upper part. At the same time, utility vehicles could be used for transporting the construction material like 20 feet pipes, iron, cement etc. These two restoration activities would cost not more than 8-10,000 INR. Due to the above mentioned reasons, heavy vehicles are not plying on this route since last 9 months. Frequent requests have been made to resolve the issue but no positive action has been taken so far. As a result, the goods are being transported by the smaller vehicles causing extra economic burden to the different communities of the village. The costs of the construction work undertaken by different panchayats is also rising due to the shrunken transportation facilities.

The construction of the health center in Kimsaar has also come to a stand-still due to this reason as the costs of construction have become unbearable for the contractors and the PWD Pauri, which finally would be a burden on the state treasury. The delay in the construction of the Health Center in Kimsaar has a direct negative outcome, that the people of this area are unable to access proper health facilities.

Thus, I request you to kindly look into the details of the above mentioned issues and take immediate action to resolve the problems and avoid the confrontation with angry residents of the area. It would also save the department officers from the charges of corruption in spending the budget meant for upkeep of the roads like it happened in the past when such charges of corruption were leveled against the PWD officers."[70]

It can be noted in the last paragraph of the letter that the village residents threaten an 'angry confrontation' like the 'political society' as outlined by Chatterjee. It consists mainly of the poorer members of social groups 'that transgress the strict lines of legality in struggling to live and work. They inhabit, that is to say, the rough and tumble worlds of political society, where governmental agencies are met by wit and stealth, and not uncommonly by violence' (Chatterjee, 2004). The letter was also sent to the local

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[70] Letter from the *Gram Panchayat* of Kimsar to Public Works Department of Duggada block, Uttarakhand and copies were sent to the Minsiter for Public Development (*Lok Nirman Mantri*) - Uttarakhand, Chief Medical Officer- Pauri and *Dainik Jagran* (a Hindi newspaper published from Rishikesh). Dated: 03-04-2006; accessed from the records of Kimsar *gram panchayat*, Pauri.

newspaper to politicize the problem and to pressurize the PWD by threatening to disclose the corrupt activities of the department in the public sphere.

In November 2006, the chief conservator of forests, Uttarakhand wrote to the secretary of forest and environment department acknowledging the completed detailed project report and specific changes in the road plan that was within the Rajaji National Park:

"With reference to the Engineering Projects (India) Limited, Lodhi Road, New Delhi and their letter number- NRO/ PMD/525/ Dehradun, this office presented the Kaudiya-Kimsaar *Van Motor-Marg sudrihikaran*[71]/ DP (detailed project) Report to the government for its approval. The letter from the government dated 15th September 2006 (No- 4270/10-02-2006-12(11)/ 2005 TC) sanctioned an amount of Rs. 489.60 lakhs for the construction of the mentioned road. The 12.2 km stretch of the road lies within RNP and hence partial changes have been brought into the construction plan, as a sensitive response to the park area."[72]

Six months later, when I finished my field work in June 2007, there was still no activity on the road front, and the issue remained a ubiquitous topic of discussion in the village public sphere. After the establishment of the national park, many other changes came in the livelihood pattern of the villagers who depended heavily on the forest for meeting their different needs, which was now a part of the park and hence unavailable for grazing cattle or fuel-wood collection. It was under these circumstances that the watershed development project called Hills-II was initiated in the village to be implemented with community participation. It can be seen here that decentralization of decision-making would imply that the needs of the people as identified by them, like the road here, would be a developmental priority. However, the village is treated and re-treated with watershed development projects that fails to convince the villagers to participate as it does not respond to the local requirements but must be implemented as the 'experts' have concluded that watershed development for the rainfed areas is the only option to alleviate poverty and provide food security to the country in the future[73].

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[71] Development of motorable roads in forested areas
[72] Letter from the Chief Conservator of Forests, Uttarakhand to the Secretary of Forests and Environment Department, Government of Uttarakhand, Dated 03-11-2006; No number.
[73] See the report issued by the Government of India (2006) in which Parthasarathy concludes that watershed development is the only answer to meet the 'nutritional emergency' that India would face in the coming years. The point is not to argue whether watershed development would rescue the country from this crisis

Watershed Development Project in Kimsar

This section seeks to present a sense of the 'texture of relations' between state officials and the local people. It describes the arrival and evolution of the watershed program in this village. It presents evidence to show that the national park around the village plays an important role in the local and regional politics of the area. The villagers have repeatedly emphasized the need for better roads as the primary developmental concern. The chapter has isolated one of the many activities undertaken in the watershed program, namely the drinking water supply scheme for a detailed analysis. It provides evidence to show that the management of water supply was delegated to the agencies at different levels and finally ended up as being disowned by all involved actors.

The village of Kimsar was not new to the idea of watershed when IWDP, Hills-II project came to the village. The earlier watershed development project by the government called the Drought Prone Area Program (DPAP) was also implemented in this village from the year 1994-1998. The president of the village watershed committee (VWC) now renamed as 'GAREMA[74]' in the Hills-II project, Bist was also the President of the DPAP project in the village. The village was not new to the idea of nomination of the office bearers and formation of VDC either.

Formation of the Village Development Committee

The first GBM in the village of Kimsar was held on the 17th December 2002 to inform the villagers about the project. The minutes of the meeting recorded by the village panchayat refer to an exposure tour and training session held in Rishikesh earlier where the project was introduced to the villagers but none in the village later recalled about such a tour except the office bearers of VDC. This meeting was called to elect the members who would form the GAREMA (Gaon/Village Resource Management Association), the

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but to say that 'expert' agreed measures for village development find priority and fundings while the measures emerging from the village public sphere are disregarded and allowed to languish without any funds or support. In this case, giving priority to watershed development as decided by the experts and not the road construction as demanded by the villagers (but disapproved by the experts because the road passes through a national park) is an example of how decentralization of power is effective only to fulfill the dominant agenda.

[74] Gaon/ Village Resource Management Association, henceforth referred to as VDC (Village Development Committee)

apex body that would coordinate the activities of the project and formulate the rules for money management.

The meeting was conducted in the presence of Keshar Singh Aire, the Unit Officer and the representative of the implementing agency called the Watershed Management Directorate (WMD) in this meeting. The village 'motivators' appointed on a salaried basis by the government, were also present.

"It was agreed in this meeting that the gram pradhan would be the honorary guardian of GAREMA and a resolution was passed.
GAREMA was proposed to be formed of the following office bearers and members:

Post	Name	Proposed By	Seconded By
President	Rajpal Singh Bist	Ummed Singh	Anusuya Prasad
Vice President	Khushhal Singh Azad	Viren Singh	Bhopal Singh
Secretary	Vinod Kandwal	MadanMohan	Darshanlal Kandwal
Treasurer	Smt.Chandrakala Devi	SS Negi	Bhubneshwar Kandwal
Member	Jaswant Singh	Prema Singh Negi	Om Prakash Kandwal
Member	Chait Singh Bist	Balam Singh	Ved Prakash Kandwal
Member	Bansi dhar Kandwal	Satya Prasad	Vishambhar Dutt
Member	Sachidanand Kandwal	Purushottam Kandwal	Rajendra Prasad Kandwal
Member	Smt.Guddi Devi	Narendra Singh	Smt.Urmila Devi
Member	Smt. Sangeeta Devi	Smt Pushpa Devi	Smt.Seema Devi
Member	Smt. Krishna Devi	Smt.Prema Devi	Smt. Vijaya Kandwal

Table 4.   Village Watershed Committee in Kimsar

A resolution was passed that the amount of money received for the project would be saved in a national or *grameen* bank, with the signatures of the President and the Secretary. The funds would be withdrawn and managed by the joint signatures of the President and the secretary."[75]

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[75] Minutes of the village meeting on 17-12-2002; Records of the Kimsar *gram panchayat*, Pauri.

Once the consensually nominated committee for project governance was formed in the village meeting, different activities to conserve soil, water, and forests were undertaken by it in Kimsar. The next meeting outlined some of these:

"Today on the 24th of December 2002 an unopposed decision was taken to select Salani Tok and Nighra Tok for forestation and plantations. GAREMA was asked to get the area surveyed and take necessary steps to start the work of forestation."[76]

Along with forestation, other activities like tin shed for animals, water tanks, fencing of the forested area, construction of fodder tanks among others were reported. In our interview with a retired person from the Railway Protection Force (RPF) in the village Talla Banas, the nature of working along with the nature of work was enumerated:

"There was a provision of tin sheds for the poor people. The other thing was the water tank. If this is our house and if the rain water falls from the roof, they made a small tank where the water falls. Now if it rains, the tank fills up and of course then it would certainly work for a few days, as long as the water lasts or as long as the rains last.
They also made fodder tanks for the animals. They are still there. When we go for the village visit, you could see them. What I mean to say is that it's not possible to simply gulp down cent percent budget. (So there are some structures on the ground.) If you don't show anything at all, in no time the authorities will take you to jail. What I mean is that 50% work they have done and 50% was eaten up and that is I think quite normal in today's world. I have told you the basic thing in very few words. If the top official is corrupt, the followers certainly cannot be checked. I know about the world outside. But when I see these projects and its management, it makes me really sad. I don't stop petty corruption or small time rent-seeking. But it should be limited to only as much as the salt in the pulses. If we put more salt in the pulse, it would become useless. This is what is happening here[77]."

The VDC meeting in February introduced for the first time, a proposal for a pumping scheme to supply drinking water in the village. The minute of the meeting reads as follows:

'Today on the 10th of February 2003, in the VDC meeting following resolutions were passed unopposed:

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[76] Minutes of the village meeting on 22-12-2002; Records of the Kimsar *gram panchayat*, Pauri.
[77] *Mae nahee rokta kisi ko khane se…theek hae khao..lekin utna hi jitna daal mae namak..(2) namak jayada gir jaayega to daal bekaar ho jaayegi..nahee kha paaoge...bus aajkal yehi ho raha hae yahan…* (Interview in Talla Banas on 25-01-2006; Field notes)

The drinking water problem of the village must be addressed by installing a pumping-scheme to bring the water from Jugyapani source to the village. In this regard, an unopposed resolution was passed to send this project to the IWDP for its consideration and seek their help in installing the pumping scheme.'

The meeting held on the last day of April 2003 passed 9 resolutions that included a demand for more openness in the working of GAREMA committee and other activities planned for the protection of forests and water conservation in the village:

"Today a meeting of the gram-*sabha* was called in which the newly elected gram pradhaan presided over the meeting. Following resolutions were made:

1. A decision was taken that the meeting of IWDP and GAREMA must be held at least once every month. (As the last meeting was in the end of February, no meetings in March, and the next one is being held on the last day of April. It was possible that all the actors in the IWDP are also active in the political field in the village. The meetings could not happen because the members and the office bearers were busy with the *gram pradhan* elections.)
2. The pumping machine should be installed in the village for bringing the water from Jugyapaani to the village.
3. It was agreed that both community forests and private gardens need to be protected from the animals by strong fencing of the forested area. It was decided that around 2 hectare land of the village would be used for community foresting and should be properly fenced.
4. In the village, there is a need for *CC Marg* and *Kharanja* at different places. About 3 km of the roads must be made into *CC Marg*.
5. The village *tok* should be repaired by laying around 300 meters of gul and 500 meters of pipelines, within the minor irrigation arrangement.
6. As soil conservation measure, small weirs and stone check dams would be made at the following locations- *dadran tok, rigwadi tok, dandi tok and viradi tok*.
7. It was proposed by the villagers that an animal shade must be made at the gudakhani *tok*.
8. The unit officer explained about the plans of constructing the water tanks and fodder tanks in the village and the rationale behind it. This year about 25 water tanks and 50 fodder tanks would be constructed in the village."

This meeting was attended by 19 people, no women members among them.

The next meeting in December on the 23rd 2003 put the drinking water agenda back in picture. The recordings of the meeting read as follows:

'For the drinking water, the pumping project to bring the water from Jugyapani was felt necessary. The house decided to remind the Deputy Project Director once more about the pumping project to be installed'.

It was in this meeting that the issue of corruption on the part of the implementing team was mentioned:

"The village motivator, Anuradha, has been accused of manipulating the number of plantations in the monsoons distributed to the villagers. Some members of the *gram sabha* expressed displeasure at the so called manipulation of the plantations and wanted an enquiry into the matter to resolve the issue."

The meeting on the 23rd of December was an important event as it was an overview of the things done in the last year in the village and the things that needed to be done in the coming year. A copy of the minutes of this meeting was also sent to the Deputy Project Director (DPD) of the Hills-II project for his information.

The next meeting held only 6 months later on the 2nd of June 2004, Attended by 27 people, 12 women among them, addressed the issue of drinking water once again. But this was not related to the pumping scheme and demanded the following measures for the other sources of water and irrigation in the village:

- The need for walking tracks till the *Jugyapani* water source, total length- 500 meters, was demanded and also the need for tracks from the village to the *Jamni-Pani* water source was stressed. The construction of these two must start immediately.
- In the judbhadar tok, there is a need for water tank and pipelines for the purpose of community gardening. To encourage the community gardening and irrigate the plantations, these things must be done immediately.
- With regards to the construction of 1100 meters gul in the tandi tok for irrigation, the house passed an unopposed resolution for the *gul* construction without any delay.

This meeting also identified the list of beneficiaries in the project for different facilities like fodder tanks, water harvesting tanks, chaff cutters, cattle sheds and for the formation of '*krishi*' terraces. The list reveals a localization of beneficiaries within a certain group and appropriation of benefits by the strategic groups:

Schemes	Fodder Tanks	RWH Tanks	Cattlesheds	Chaff-Cutterrs	Krishi Terraces/Nurseries
1.	Sulochna Devi	Vishwambhar Dutt	Mr. Lalit Mohan Kandwal	SS Negi	Madan Mohan Kandwal
2.	Ranjit Singh Rana	Balaam Singh Rawat	. SS Negi	Rajpal Singh	Satya Prasad

				Bist	
3.	Sateyndra singh Bist	Kamla Devi , wife Vishwambhar Dutt	Madan Mohan Kandwal	Vinod Kandwal	Vishwambhar Dutt
4.	Bhopal Singh	Mr. Ranjit Singh Negi	Baalam Singh Rawat		Sulochna Devi
5.	Dheeraj Singh	Mr. Lalit mohan kandwal	Sateyendra Singh		Sateshwari Devi
6.	Daulat Singh	Daulat Singh	Smt. Manju Devi		Ramlal
7.	Rajpal Singh	Bhopal Singh	Bhopal Singh		Ranjit Singh Rana
8.		Surendra Singh	.Daulat Singh		
9.		Uma Shankar Bhatt	Vishwambhar Dutt Kandwal		
10.		Prem singh Negi	Bansi dhar Kandwal		
11.		Virendra Singh Negi			

Table 5.   List of Beneficiaries in Hills-II Project, Kimsar

A close review of the above table indicates that in a village of 600 odd people, the resources from watershed program were distributed to 23 people in total. Among these 23 beneficiaries, eight people secured two and three people secured three benefits.

It must be noted that the beneficiaries chosen in the village meeting and mentioned under the particular scheme does not always exclude all others who are not mentioned. The influential people stay out of the village records when it comes to small benefits of the project. This serves two purposes. Firstly, it strengthens their claim for one big benefit and secondly, they appear to be democratic in not monopolizing the entire scheme.

If we look at the above table, it is evident that the three most important people in the village, namely the VDC president, secretary and the village *sarpanch* shared the three chaff cutters provided in the project. This was probably the most expensive among the provided benefits and was shared by the village elite. It must be added that even though the village meeting records did not register the name of *sarpanch* or the president for

rainwater harvesting tank, it was found to be present in both the houses. It shows that the records maintained by the VDC were only indicative and a half-hearted attempt towards presenting an illusion of accountability and transparency. In my 4-month stay in the village and repeated visits to all households, I never came across any chaff cutter, neither in the president's house, nor in that of the secretary or the *sarpanch.*

This table also reflects upon the distribution of drinking water in the village according to the power and political influence. This meant that the powerful group had secured the water-tank with cover, fodder tanks, tin shed, fencing wires and the water pipes were drawn till their kitchens while another group would be deprived of all of them or got a water tank made without cover in some houses including that of the village *pradhan* (which would anyway count as another tank on paper at the same time save the money from most expensive part of tank making), or fodder tanks or tin-shed for animals. This group could for e.g. never figure in the list of chaff-cutter beneficiaries or would never have the pipelines drawn even close to their locality. The people living in the removed hamlet called the *Nagri* area of the village belonged to this group. The marginalization of this group is so complete and part of the discourse that it shows up in almost everything, for e.g. in the distribution of project benefits, and at the same time its ubiquity makes it totally imperceptible to the village elite and planners alike.

This meeting also raises the issue of walking tracks from the village to the water sources. The other two small sources of water- are *jugbhadar tok* and *tandi tok*. The need for development of these two was also discussed. The traditional system of *gul* irrigation needed repairing too.

Selection of a Hills-II project activity- Drinking Water Supply System in Kimsar

As mentioned in the meeting records, the need for proper drinking water facility in the villages was felt and a proposal was passed for requesting the WMD officers to provide resources for installing a diesel run motor to pump water from the source in the valley to the village surface level and subsequently to the houses. This scheme involved comparatively larger sums of money and manpower. The pumping scheme for drinking water was to provide water to each house and would be run by the VDC. It would be responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the water supply system.

After the first meeting in February which introduced the drinking water supply scheme (DWSS), the next meeting held on the 30th of April noted that 'the pumping machine should be installed for bringing the water from Jugyapaani to the village.'

Jugyapani is the name of to the exact location of the water source in the village. Jugyapaani source was chosen to pump the water to the supply tank as it had a stronger water flow and later the diesel motor was also fixed here. Pipelines were drawn from here to the supply site and then from the supply tank water was pumped to a tank made on the highest point of the village, from there it was supplied to the distribution lines going to the households.

The minutes of the VDC meeting in January 2005 read as follows:

"A meeting of the gram sabha was organized today in the *Baraat Ghar* (village community hall) to discuss the issue of drinking water problem and the pumping scheme. The issue of laying the pipelines was also discussed in the meeting. Following important points were raised:
 It has been decided by the house that only those villagers who have paid the security money for water supply will be provided with a connection nearest possible to their house. However, the beneficiary has to make his/ her own arrangements to take it inside the house.
All interested villagers must deposit the security amount of 150INR with the president today so that their connections could be planned accordingly.
It has been decided by the house that Mr. SuryaMohan Singh, son of Pushkar Singh Negi would be appointed to operate the pump. He would be paid a sum of 500 INR per month for this job. No fiddling with the pipelines would be tolerated once the system has been laid out. Any kind of misuse of the pipelines would be seen as a punishable offence."

It appears that in the meantime, when no mention of the pipelines or pumping set finds entry in the meeting records, it was already installed and the issues relating to its management were now being discussed.

This was the last record that existed in the village on the DWSS or any other aspect of the Hills-II project. The president of VDC was of the opinion that since villagers did not take any active interest in the project work, he stopped calling any more meetings.

Lack of records or absence of minutes does not amount to saying that nothing concrete was happening on the project site. In the meantime, a pumpset was installed, one storage tank and one collection tank was made, pipelines were laid out in the village but the meetings of VDC (do not have any mention or recording of the discussions on these issues) did not bring up these matters for the public discussion. Later, security money was

collected, a pump-operator was employed and the stage seemed set for the water supply to begin. It never did.

To understand why it never did, would require that we further break up the DWSS into its component elements and observe them one by one to locate the interactions between technology, decentralized governance and inhehrent contestations in the project that manifested itself in the form an idle machine, a committee without legitimacy or funds to operate the water supply and the labrynthine arrangement of pipes across the village without any water to supply.

One of the most important components of this scheme was the diesel motor of 20 bhp, which would pump the water to the delivery tank. A storage tank was built and pipelines were laid out across the village streets. The diesel motor was ready and the pipes were connected to the respective tanks. A trial run was conducted and parts of the village received some water. After two days from the trial run, the motor failed to start and the villagers were back to their old ways of collecting drinking water, employing women and girl children to carry it on their heads from the valley to the houses.

It was worth considering why the motor failed to work beyond two days. Did the sellers not guarantee it? Why is it left without any maintenance and repair until this date?

Diesel Motor Pump in Kimsar

The water-pumping machine was bought in Dehradun on 26th April 2004. The receipt (Nr-57) made available from the president shows a payment of 90,000 INR made by '*Gram Sansadhan Prabandhan Samiti*, Kimsar' vide Draft Number 569421, dated 16-04-04 in favor of Pratap Machine Tools, on the Haridwar Road in Dehradun.

The village *pradhan* recalled the events of that day when the village committee and the government staff were going to Dehradun to buy the motor pump. They traveled to the shop that was suggested by the Junior Engineer (JE) in Dehradun. They wanted to buy a 20 bhp pump for lifting the water by around 300ft before it was supplied to the houses. The specifications and requirements were assessed by the JE and 'Pratap Machine Tools' was suggested to be the right shop.

Photograph 2. Diesel Motor Pump in Kimsar Village

To me the machine looked much older than the three years and I shared it with the *gram pradhan*. He confessed that he shared similar doubts on the very first day and recalled that when the machine was being bought, he noticed that the machine looked used and not brand new. There were patches of oil and seemed that he motor has been used before:

"I asked the manager of the shop that the motor looks like it has been used before and it is not new. The manager told me that I was both right and wrong. He said, just like your village, there was another village in the hills which wanted to install the pumping system and they ordered this pump and we made a trial run for them. In this sense you are right that the motor is old. But their scheme did not work out finally, so they never bought the motor and it remained in our shop. Hence it is new and you are wrong."[78]

There are 14 authorized dealers for USHA Inc. (pumpsets and engines) in Dehradun, the same brand of motor as that bought by the villagers, but the shop selected was not one of

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[78]Interview with SS Negi- *gram pradhan* of Kimsar village; Field Notes, Dated: 4th March 2007.

them.[79] An instructions manual came with this pump to the village and was given to the president. It was for a motor of similar make but from a different brand called Kirloskar[80]. The shop where the motor was bought has been listed on the Indiamart website with the following description: 'Pratap Machine Tools- Manufacturers of all kinds of stone crushers and Excavators. Address: 8, Haridwar Road, Dehradun, Uttaranchal - 248 001, India[81].

It remains an open question to understand why one would avoid all the 14 authorized dealers to buy the same pumpset from a company that makes stone-crushers, why a new machine should have oil patches and come with a manual that is from a different company. The reasons why the motor stopped working after two days could also be discovered if one explored the above outlined discrepencies in detail, which lies beyond the scope of this study. My interest is to explicate the interaction of technology with the human agency to show that the visible manifestations in the form of idle pumps or dry pipelines are only a symptom of a deeper interactive relationship between the two.

Finally, the same motor was bought and brought to the village. The next task was to carry it to the designated spot at Jugyapaani water source. The secretary of the village explained that the pump was unmanageably heavy and 15 people were needed to transport it to the right place. He recalled that the '*gurkha*'[82] laborers were the only ones who could have done it. He cynically remarked that the village people would never be able to bring that pump to the right place. It also implied the preference of Nepali migrant laborers over the locally available labor force. There exists a large Nepali community within the labour class and could be seen in all the 13 districts, mostly on the road construction sites which is a permanent activity in Uttrarnchal due to land slides and mountainous rough terrain.The pump was set up with the help of *gurkhas* and the pipelines were laid out in the village. Storage tank and taps were put. What happened now that blocked the water from flowing into the taps?

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[79]See a complete list of authorized dealers in Uttarakhand of the motor making company called 'Usha International: Available at:
(http://ushainternational.com/address/dealers.php?product=engines%20motors%20and%20pumps)
[80]Field Notes, 4th March 2007, Kimsar.
[81]Available at (http://dir.indiamart.com/impcat/stone-crusher.html)
[82]Migrant workers from Nepal are, in local discourse, considered strong and hard working. In comparison, hill people are considered lazy and laid back.

2.4.2 Contested Narratives of Hills-II Project in Kimsar

The issue of water supply and distribution was elaborated in an argument between the *gram pradhan* and the secretary of VDC. The pradhan was trying to put forth the popular perspective on the issue while the secretary was trying to explain his puppetry role in control of the government staff and that this was the best that could be done. The pradhan continued to highlight the shortcomings of the project, held the GAREMA committee responsible, and asserted that as the responsible agency for the project, it was their duty to demand the right papers and receipts for all the transactions. The following conversation between the *pradhan* and the VDC secretary captures the main arguments surrounding the issue in this debate. It started when the pradhan deduced that the DWSS was useless because finally it was not delivering anything to the village people.

Gram pradhan: When the resolution was passed in the gram sabha about the construction of these tanks, it was said that the water from the rooftop would be harvested and collected in the tank with the help of a channel. Provide me with the channel today and I would show you some water in this tank tomorrow. (Even the tanks were not built as directed for rain harvesting-no channels were provided). I am just saying that start the water supply and if it reaches my house, I would accept your argument.

VDC Secretary: But you cannot say that the scheme is a failure just because your house does not get water. I would say that my house is at the end of the hamlet but I still got water each time the supply lines were released. Therefore, I would say that it is a successful scheme.
GP: As you rightly said, your house is at the end and therefore at a much lower elevation than the others. So obviously, you would have water in your tap but mine on a higher elevation would get nothing.

VS: But that is a technical 'fault' and the engineer is responsible for it. We have no role to play in that.
GP: It is your responsibility to understand the technical aspects also and even get a better quality work done.
VS: The flow mechanics of water are best understood and handled by the engineers and we have no part to play here.
GP: But I still think that if there were certain technical aspects that affected the social distribution of water, you should have inquired about it.

From the brief conversation above, the 'texture of relationship' between the elected village government and the nominated VDC is observable.

IN brief, the two positions could be summarized as follows: the VDC claims the project to be successfully completed while the *gram pradhan* considers it to be a complete failure due to irresponsible management on the part of VDC. The reasons that each assigned to support their claim has been discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Present condition of the water pump

We paid another visit to the Jugyapaani source and looked around the motor and checked the pipes. The pipes connecting the storage tank to the motor looked worn out, the two-way valve connecting the motor delivery pipe to the supply pipe had slipped threads, and the engine oil was missing. We soon realized that just getting the diesel would not help. Rajpal, the president of VDC informed me that he had some burnt engine oil from the previous days and he could sieve it with a piece of cloth and try to run the motor. The jeep driver brought two 5-liter cans of diesel in the evening and we approached the motor with oil and caution.

Rajpal sieved the burnt engine oil with a piece of cloth, his plumber friend (*Chote* Plumber) checked the connecting pipe and tried to seal the cracks on this thick green plastic pipe by tying polythene bags around it. The two-way valve with slipped threads connecting the motor to the supply tank, could throw the pipe out once the water was pushed through it. Rajpal tried to put some cotton strings on the threads of the valve and re-wrenched it together with the motor.

Chote plumber began to rotate the handle on the pump slowly first, like a warm up for the engine before he pushed the handle with all his strength and the motor began to ignite reluctantly. It started full throttle on the second trial. We were surprised that it had worked with used engine oil. Just a minute later, the connecting valve gave up and threw the pipe, with all the strength of water on its way 300ft up, a few meters away with this break. The water continued to flow out of the motor but the connecting supply pipe was already on the ground. The noisy disbanding of the pipes took our attention away from the motor itself, which the plumber observed was abnormally thick in its exhaust. It was not going to move, I thought. However, the problems were becoming more apparent. I could understand the reluctance of the president to work with this motor. I was doubtful

68

that this was a new motor of two years. But the new problem (immediate) that the DWSS faced now was the requirement of a new brass two-way valve. We could not even try the motor before the valve was fixed. There is no possibility of going to the market and bringing a new valve immediately as the first hardware shops that sell these spares are in Rishikesh and it would be a daylong journey to go and get it. The president assured me that tomorrow we will get the valve and restart the motor.

The next morning we made our way back to the Jugyapaani source and observed the motor in sunlight. The president was also with us and he tried to restart the engine. The thick black exhaust of the motor with the start seemed like it would be totaled if allowed to run for two more minutes. He observed that maybe because of the burnt engine oil it is producing such smoke. Nevertheless, to me it looked like the symptom of a greater disease that we were unable to diagnose.

We went to the water source the next day, fixed the valve one more time and ignited the motor. The water began to flow to the supply tank. Three minutes later, the thick black smoke appeared again from the exhaust, thick green plastic pipe- 2 inches in diameter and a common sight in the Indian villages using tube well irrigation- connecting the storage tank to the motor started leaking from all sides like a sprinkler and seconds later blew off from the middle. The motor was quickly brought to a halt. A lot more needed to be done before the waters would reach the houses.

We came back to the village and shared our experience with the gram pradhan and other village elders. It was clear to us that the motor demanded a thorough examination and extra costs than anticipated. It needed technical instruments and supervision about the layout of the pipes as well as about the motor. More funds were needed to extend the pipelines into other hamlets and extra accessories like plugs and bends. The burying of pipes would need attention too. Briefly, no village level solutions would help here as both the funds and the technical expertise required did not exist there required funds and complete the Jugyapaani drinking water pumping scheme. The village *pradhan* agreed to send an official request to the WMD office informing them about the incomplete status of the drinking water scheme and demand funds for its completion. After a week, he sent this letter to the Director, WMD demanding 40,000 INR for this purpose:

Letter No: 3309/ Kimsaar/ DPAP/ Jalagam- 2003/ 042
Dated: 02 April, 2007
To,

The Director
Water Conservation Department
WMD,
Indira Nagar; Forest Colony
Dehradun- 248006

Subject: Requesting a grant of 40,000 INR to complete the Jugyapaani Pumping
              drinking water scheme started by WMD in Kimsar village

Sir,
In connection with the above mentioned subject, I would like to bring to your notice that in the year 2003-4, the drinking water pumping scheme was installed in Kimsaar through the GAREMA committee, which is till date incomplete and therefore the villagers are not benefiting from project. The project has not been handed over to the *gram panchayat* so far. When I asked the President and the Secretary of the GAREMA committee about the relevant papers of the project, they replied that they had no such papers and no documents to give and hence the gram panchayat could not take over the charge of the pumping set.

Added to this, the pipelines that have been laid in the village are not only inadequate but also a cause of minor problem on the streets as they have been left above the ground. At many points, the pipes have not been properly covered under the ground, as it should have been.

The following reasons account for the non-functional status of the pumping project :

In the village, the pipelines have not been laid till the household in many cases. The BPL groups are unable to buy these pipes and are deprived of any potential benefits that this project could bring. To address this problem, we need :

- 60 pipes (20 feet each) with 0.5 inches diameter for a complete layout.

- accessories for fixing and laying the pipes like reducers, elbows, sockets, fire-valves,

- Pipes which have already been laid-out need to be buried under the soil, which was to be done in the first place by the GAREMA but the pipes were left above the ground arguing that once all the villagers have taken the connection, we can think about burying the pipes. It remains in this state till date, half the pipes

70

- The pumping set for this scheme has not been working since the last two years and it would need a mechanic to start it after such a long period of inactivity.

Obviously, we need to address these four issues before the pumping project could be useful for the people. This would certainly cost money. Hence, as the representative of the village community, I request you to grant an amount of 40,000 INR to help us run this project for drinking water needs of the village.

At the same time, the handing over of and taking charge of the project between GAREMA and the gram panchayat would require other papers related to the IWDP project. I therefore, request you to kindly grant the 40,000 INR for the completion and successful running of the project and the relevant papers for the taking over of the charge of the pumping set by the *gram sabha* from GAREMA.

Thank you,

Mr.Sohan Singh Negi.
Gram Pradhan,
Kimsaar.

Table 6.   Letter to WMD Dehradun from the Gram Panchayat Kimsar

Meeting the Implementing agency

I was by now a familiar face in the WMD office, the implementing agency for Hills-II project, but that did not make the access to information any easier. At best, I began to be seen as an unwelcome outsider who cannot be legally stopped from asking for project related information. After the second visit, the officers would try to send me to the next person or avoid a meeting.

I presented my request and purpose of visit to Sharma's office and waited outside. The peon came out to say that I should visit Mr. Longwa, the administrative director for any kind of information. Mr. Longwa was a friendly man and tried to accommodate my questions largely. However, he had declined any data or reports from his office until the Secretariat consented to my request. About the Kimsar drinking water project, Mr. Longwa suggested that I contact the regional office of WMD in Rishikesh for information

on this area. In brief, there was not much information provided at the headquarters of the implementing agency in Dehradun.

In the absence of any concrete support from the directorate, I decided to approach the local MLA of the area in the hope of politicizing the issue and bring it to the notice of politicians who could indirectly pressurize the department to finish the drinking water project in Kimsar village.

<u>Meeting the elected block representative (MLA) of Yamkeshwar</u>

Ms. Badthwal is the elected MLA from the Yamkeshwar block and now lives in Dehradun. Ms Badthwal is a middle-aged woman and this is her first term in the Legislative Assembly. She won the state elections in February 2007 from the Yamkeshwar block. She had made a visit to Kimsar village during her election campaign recently and knew the gram pradhan of Kimsar and nearby villages very well. She was aware about the project but the details were not so well known to her. She heard the issue patiently and asked how she could be of any help.

I requested her to call Mr. Sharma at WMD and ask them to either release the funds as required by the *gram panchayat* or send the team from WMD to finish the incomplete work. Ms. Badthwal called the WMD office and had a brief conversation with Mr. Sharma.

Later, she told us that he has asked her to call the Rishikesh office of WMD and talk to Mr. Pandey. He was the DPD for this program. Ms. Badthwal called his office and talked to him about the project. She stressed the fact that Kimsar village has a serious water problem and he should do something from whatever funds are left. She wanted WMD to complete the project and then hand it over to the *gram sabha*. It seemed the project was over and the file was closed.

Ms. Badthwal did not feel very optimistic about WMD after her phone calls and felt that they are just shirking responsibility. As the VDC was the responsible implementing agency in theory, they were also responsible for anything that went wrong, which gave the WMD staff its most important source of security. This time she called the site office of WMD in Rishikesh and talked to another government officer, the deputy project director of Hills-II, Mr. Pandey:

"I wanted to attract your attention to a drinking water scheme in my block (Yamkeshwar). As you may remember, it was a part of the IWDP Hills-II but the pumping system is still not in a working condition. There is a severe problem of water in this village and if you could get it repaired and restore the water supply, I would be very obliged. It wouldn't cost much either, maybe around 40-50,000 INR because the infrastructure is already there. Then I request you to officially hand it over to the *gram sabha*… The project was never completed in the first place. Your department left without finishing it, now it's your responsibility to complete it and hand it over to the *gram sabha*. I know not much work has been done on the ground during this project. It has just been an exercise in making log-book entries".[83]

The other way to solve this drinking water problem was to transfer this scheme immediately under the jurisdiction of the *gram sabha* in its present state of incompletion. Then the *gram sabha* could use other development funds to restore the water supply. Ms. Badthwal knew the *gram pradhan* of Kimsar from her election campaigns when she went to the village with the now chief minister BC Khanduri. This visit was highly attended by the villagers from all the nearby areas. My landlady was also a part of this election meeting. She later remarked that most people went there to see the Helicopter (that brought BC Khanduri) rather than listen to the speeches. The *gram pradhan* and the MLA belong to the same political party, BJP[84].

The point is, Ms. Badthwal is quite familiar with the village and could empathize more than the WMD and could help in devising a local solution to the problem. For obvious reasons, politicians are closer to the people than the bureaucracy in India. The MLA called the *gram pradhan* on his phone and took a first-hand report directly from the village. The *pradhan* told her about the missing paperwork regarding the project that prevented him from taking charge of the water scheme. He repeated that there was no fund at present that he could use to revive the water supply.

In the above description of the two cases, it was my attempt to show that watershed development is a field occupied by different actors and discourses operating with each other in a complex developmental ensemble. The first case highlights the donor's

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[83]*Ground pe kuch kaam to hua nahin hai, sirf khanapoorti hui hai…* (Interview with the MLA of Yamkeshwar, Field Notes on 26-05-2007, Dehradun, Uttarakhand)

[84] Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) is an important right of the centre nationalist political party in India.

perspective and preferences for institutions and programs to alleviate poverty in the developing countries. This case also shows how a strategic group formation between the NGO, delegated government agencies, donors and politicians gives a chosen direction to the project and proposes its recommendations to undertake watershed development with a given set of institutional apparatus.

The second case in Uttarakhand reveals the presence of competeing discourses of development from the government and the local population. It shows that the Central government's priority of forming a national park in the inhabited areas prevails over the people's general will for the construction of access roads. Further, since these areas now form the periphery of the Rajaji National Park, watershed development project is the government's strategy to bring the nearby areas under forestation and subsequent protection. It shows that the project forms different institutions in the village that come in direct conflict with the local elected governments. In the case study, the consensually nominated VDC competed with the *gram panchayat* for undertaking village development activities. The VDC was also instrumentalized by the implementing agency to undertake the watershed work and its 'consensually nominated' status provided enough space for controlling its activites outside the public sphere. This resulted in a lack of critical public engagement with the work done by VDC that made it possible for the VDC to leave the drinking water scheme in Kimsar village incomplete without any accountability to anyone. This has led to the present dysfunctional status of the drinking water scheme that no agency wishes to claim as its own. VDC does not owe the responsibility because it was not registered nor had any other legal status, WMD does not take any responsibility because the project was implemented within a decentralized, participatory governance model where all funds are routed through the VDC. Moreover, after the project came to a close in 2005, all appointments and committees formed during the project period ceased to exist. The VDC was no more a valid institution, if it ever was one, and the units formed by WMD for this project were re-formed and sent to different projects. The *gram panchayat* of Kimsar could not take it under its jurisdiction because it was incomplete and there were no records of any sort about the water supply scheme. It did not come under the *gram panchayat* also because it was implemented by the VDC and funds were provided to them.

Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 discuss the preferences of the different agencies and the institutions formed in these cases in detail to explore the extra-local conncetions of the local governance strategies. The next section reviews the nature of studies that form the bulk of literature around watershed development projects in India.

2.5 Literature Review of Watershed Projects in India

This section explores the studies conducted on the different aspects of watershed development programs in India to show that three main groups of writings could be identified: civil engineering and GIS based technical studies for watershed development; economics based impact studies; and socio-political studies on community participation, decentralized governance, gender relations, and institutional framework. This literature would fit into, what Burawoy (1998) calls, the 'instrumental knowledge'. A limited amount of postdevelopment studies on democratization and governmentality have also focused on the watershed development projects as appropriate sites of investigation. A general conclusion that is drawn from this review is that there seem to be very few studies that address the everyday interactions between the technical, institutional and the political aspects of watershed development that works in synchronicity with each other.

Reviews by the Government of India

A periodic review by the government of its watershed programs brought out the gaps in policy making and institutional vacuum that was felt from the field experiences as the years of involvement in watershed development increased. Watershed projects were first reviewed in 1973 by a task force headed by Dr. B.S. Minhas, in 1982 by another task force headed by Dr. M.S. Swaminathan and by an inter-departmental group in 1984.
In 1993, a technical committee headed by Dr. C.H. Hanumantha Rao was formed by the MoRD to appraise the work done under DPAP/DDP to identify the weakness of the programme and to suggest changes. This committee submitted its recommendations towards improvement of the watershed programs in 1994. Based on these recommendations, a new set of guidelines were formulated by the MoRD, now called 'Common Guidelines for Watershed Development- 1994'. The Hanumantha Rao Committee felt that:

"The programs have been implemented in a fragmented manner by different departments through rigid guidelines 'without any well-designed plans prepared on watershed basis by involving the inhabitants'. Except in a few places, in most of the program areas the achievements had been dismal. Ecological degradation has been proceeding unabated in these areas with reduced forest cover, reducing water table and a shortage of drinking water, fuel and fodder."[85]

The guidelines recommended the formation of local institutions and involvement of NGOs to regenerate rural livelihoods through soil and water conservation using 'community based' participation.

Farrington et al (1999) argue that the 'Common Guidelines' mark the beginning of a new era in public sector rural development programs. 'The guidelines envisage a bottom-up planning approach, working where possible through NGOs and with community participation as a central principle' (Farrington et. al.: 8). In the eighth five year plan, the Indian government explicitly stated that attempts would be made to involve NGOs as collaboration partners in various development programs.

Watershed development projects implemented by MoRD from 1994-2001 followed these 'Common Guidelines of 1994'. In 2000, the Ministry of Agriculture revised its guidelines for National Watershed Development Project for Rainfed Areas (NWDPRA), making them "more participatory, sustainable and equitable". These were called *Warasa Jansahabhagita* Guidelines[86]. These guidelines were revised by MoRD in 2001, modified and reissued as 'Guidelines for *Hariyali*' in April 2003.

The next major milestone in India's watershed development program was the publication of the 'Report of the Technical Committee' in 2006, under the leadership of Parthasarathy. Following his suggestions, the Government of India (GoI) has issued the new 'common guidelines for watershed development' in February 2008. The report by the Parthasarathy Committee argues that India is on the verge of a 'nutritional emergency' that could be fought only by focusing on the rainfed areas that have immense potential to develop within a watershed framework. The discursive construction of watershed development as a solution to the looming food crisis is an effort to present the soil and water conservation requirements as an emergency so that the political will and motivation for the program could be generated (see section 5.4 also).

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[85] GoI, 1994. inthe Hanumantha Rao Committee Report on Watershed development , 1994, Preface.
[86] Government of India (2001)

As the 1994 guidelines introduced the concept of VDC as the chief implementing agency at the village level, the 2003 guidelines totally did away with the VDC and NGOs. It notes:

"The Ministry of Rural Development is committed to empower Panchyati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and has been impressing upon the State Governments to devolve necessary financial and administrative powers to the PRIs for self-governance particularly in planning, implementation and management of economic development activities in rural areas. Watershed Development has been included in the list of subjects to be devolved to the PRIs. *Gram Panchayat* and *Gram Sabha* are equipped with statutory rights and mandate for natural resource planning, potentially equipped with the powers to impose local taxes or user charges and are committed to 'reservations' for representation of women and weaker sections as per the Constitutional provision."[87]

It recommended the *gram panchayat,* which is constitutionally recognized and formed in a democratic election, to be the village implementing institution. The role of the NGOs was to given back to the government departments. The *gram pradhan* was made the co-signatory with the *gram sevak* (employee of the government, MoRD) to withdraw funds from the project account instead of the nominated committee. This institutional ensemble was opposed mostly by the NGO sector that saw it as a plot of the government to gain exclusive control and monopoly over the implementation of watershed development projects (Lobo, 2005).

Report published by the Government of India in 2006 has recommended the re-inclusion of NGOs and formation of consensually nominated VDCs alongside the *gram panchayat* to implement watershed development projects. It criticized the 2003 guidelines on the grounds of its 'impracticality':

"The experience of the working of watershed programme all over the country since the *Hariyali* Guidelines provides overwhelming evidence that the institutional arrangement as devised is not working well. The *Gram Panchayat* members are not able to discharge their responsibilities towards the watershed programme. We fully share and endorse the spirit and will expressed in the Hariyali Guidelines towards empowerment of PRIs. We believe this holds the key to the future of democratic governance in India and to realizing Gandhiji's dream of *Gram Swaraj*. But as the Mahatma would have advised in such a situation we must look for a practical solution."

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[87]*Hariyali* Guidelines, Government of India/ MoRD (2003)

A National Rainfed Area Authority (NRAA) was set up by the Government of India in 2006. Guidelines released in the February of 2008[88] delegate considerable powers to the NRAA and State governments to sanction and oversee the implementation of watershed programs. It further envisions the creation of multidisciplinary professional teams at national, state and district levels for managing the watershed programs. Providing it with 'professional' experts is a major thrust area of 2008 guidelines. NRAA emerges as the highest authority on watershed projects for overseeing and interpretation of any of the provisions of common guidelines.

These guidelines are important for defining the official position and discourse of the state with regards to watershed development. It also helps to identify the issues that have emerged from the past learning, the actors who are/should be involved and the institutions that the state finds suitable for implementing watershed programs. It presents the government's normative position on the program. It can be seen from the above section that watershed development program has undergone periodic depoliticization and re-politicization in the governmental discourse based on which the institutional apparatus for project implementation is determined, oscillating between the elected, governmental, and non-elected, non-governmental, 'civil-society' actors.

Watershed development program in academic studies

This section shows that the areas of enquiry in watershed development remains confined to the study of technical and economic progress documented from the successful projects. As an extension, such studies contemplate the possibility of large scale replication of successful projects and consider the possibility of sustainability. Other quantitative studies tend to be based on a small number of heavily supervised projects with no information about the long term effects. This section first outlines the technical and economic impact studies on watershed development followed by the studies done on institutional aspects. It then presents the limited number of critical studies on watershed development. This section concludes by pointing out the areas of research that the present studies do not discuss or discuss only rarely. It argues the case for a critical evaluation of the present approach as a part of the problem in its discursive construction of policy,

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[88] Government of India (2008)

practices and institutions that together remove the direct democratic control over watershed governance.

<u>Studies focused on biophysical and economic indicators</u>

Most studies in this area focus on the biophysical gains from watershed program or economic returns attributable to watershed development and with the methodology of assessing returns (Chopra, 1999; Landell-Mills, 1999).

A study of 6 watersheds (Sharda et. al. 2005)[89] showed that the watershed program reduced soil loses by 52% and surface runoff by 58%. The overall productivity of the watershed measured through a Crop Productivity Index rose by 12 to 45% in treated watersheds. A review of 120 selected households in four watershed projects in Gujarat (Shah, 2000) found that after 4 years of implementation, irrigated area almost doubled in all the projects, reaching about 18% of the land held by the beneficiary households. Cropping intensity also showed a rise. Around 87% of the households reported that their drinking water availability increased. About 71% of the landless reported better availability of employment opportunities in the post-project period. The value of the stream of benefits from the project over a 15-year period is estimated at Rs. 10.48 lakhs with an initial investment of Rs. 2.57 lakhs, with an overall benefit-cost ratio (BCR) of 4.07 (Government of India/ MoRD, 2006: 43). Other studies conducted to assess the impact of watershed programs provides mixed conclusions on the performance of watershed development projects in achieving their economic and environmental outcomes (see Chopra et al. 1990; Farrington and Lobo, 1997; Kerr and Chung 2001; Reddy et al. 2004; Rao, 2000; Farrington et al. 1999).

An impact study of five watersheds in Andhra Pradesh (Reddy and Ravindra, 2004) found that the overall BCR of watershed investment in 4 watersheds varied between 1.10 and 3.78. On this basis, they worked out that the investment payback period of a watershed project is 2 to 3 years. Another study by Chaturvedi (2005) notes that benefits occur because of an increase in cropped area, shifts in cropping pattern and improvements in crop productivity to due increased water availability. Lobo (1996) notes

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[89] Cited from Government of India/ MoRD, (2006: 43).

an average rise of nearly 300% in the irrigated area and 50% in cropped area from his study on three watershed villages in Ahmednagar under the IGWDP.

A comparative study of 16 villages in the drought-affected districts of Gujarat showed that the watershed villages were better placed compared to non-watershed villages in terms of water and biomass availability, employment opportunities and out-migration (Shah, 2000). MoRD conducted a comprehensive evaluation of watershed programs in 16 states covering 221 districts in 2001. A compilation of the results of this study (TERI, 2004) reports overall improvement in land use, increase in net sown and gross cropped area, expansion in irrigated area, greater fuel-wood and fodder availability, higher incomes and employment opportunities from the majority of states. Perhaps the most comprehensive summary of the benefits of watershed programs in India is provided by ICRISAT's (International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics) 'meta-analysis' of the impact of watershed programs (Joshi et al, 2005). It is based on an exhaustive review of 311 case studies.

The study found that in treated watersheds:

- soil loss (51 studies) reduced by 0.82 tonnes/ha/year;

- rate of runoff (36 studies) reduced by 13%;

- irrigated area (97 studies) increased by 34%;

- cropping intensity (115 studies) went up by 64%; and

- Additional employment (39 studies) of 182 person-days/ha/year has been created and in some cases, it went up to 900 person-days/ha/year.

The above-mentioned techno-economic approach is built on a fundamental belief referred to as the 'nirvana' approach (Molle, 2008). It presumes that 1) all water resources flow along the physical river basins/ watersheds and are therefore apt for management, 2) livelihoods of the poor people depend on natural resources and therefore by managing these resources poverty can be alleviated, and 3) by creating institutional structures we can sustainably manage natural resources and banish poverty (Saravanan, 2008). Each of the presumptions above is questionable and would require further substantiation based on field evidence. The problems of these linear approaches are not about the possibility of facilitating and guiding social change, but in over-simple prescriptions. A reductionist

approach to the problems of poverty and water scarcity is maintained in discourse that thrives on the denial of local level contestations inherent in water management for the sake of making sense of this complex situation even if only in the form of economic/numerical data, and achieving consensus for the efficient management of the project.

<u>Studies focused on institutions, community participation and governance</u>

Along with the studies on economic and biophysical gains resulting from a successful watershed program, a relatively smaller number of studies focus on the institutional apparatus that is trusted with the task of planning and implementation of these projects. Within this genre of studies, a critical eye is raised on the role of NGOs and community-based organizations, issues of inclusion and exclusion of the poor in the project activities, state presence within the participatory discourse and the role assigned to the women with special funds earmarked for them.

The role of national and international NGOs in watershed development is debated vehemently from two opposing perspectives. While the one sees it as the creation of a new public sphere that is not only apolitical but also supports the mainstream development apparatus 'from inside' and fulfills an important instrumental role in the global governance of development, the other perceives NGOs as representatives of the 'civil society' and in a position to provide faster and efficient development compared to the governmental bureaucracy. It provides for needs that are not being met by either the market-place or the public sector.

NGOs figure predominantly as one of the important partners in watershed projects in the common guidelines issued by the Indian government. Expanding the role of NGOs in socio-economic development requires that we rethink our notion of politics. The public sphere occupied by the NGOs is considered a realm of apolitical association, one that 'if politicized, could help reshape the national agenda in every country' (Rifkin, 1998)[90]. In her study of the NGOs, Fisher (1998) suggests that the 'civil society' in this form of organization should form the central tenet of political discussion in a tripartite model with market and the government as other two tenets. To what extent do the NGOs represent

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[90] In Foreword to Fisher (1998)

the civil society[91] is a matter of further research but in the Indian case, a distinction has been made within the non-governmental public sphere that recognizes the parallel existence of a 'political society' alongside the 'civil society'.[92] This consists mainly of the poorer members of social groups 'that transgress the strict lines of legality in struggling to live and work. They inhabit, that is to say, the rough and tumble worlds of political society, where governmental agencies are met by wit and stealth, and not uncommonly by violence' (Chatterjee, 2004)[93]. If we understand politics as not confined to the designated institutions but pervading every aspect of life (Foucault, 1991), NGOs as a civil-society organization also cannot remain immune from the political processes, especially in the light of the fact that they are involved in the issues of collective concern, *res publica* like land, water and forests.

The government in India has clearly shown its inclination towards employing NGOs to delegate a considerable amount of developmental work in watershed development following from the guidelines of 1994, 2005 and 2006. The National Advisory Council in its report (NAC, 2005) criticizes the watershed guidelines issued in 2003 that restricted the role of NGOs and proposes its reversal:

"The NGOs are, in general, better equipped to undertake the task of creation of awareness, social mobilization and capacity building. However, the revised Guidelines for Hariyali have severely restricted the role of NGOs as primary implementing agencies in Watershed Development, notwithstanding the mounting evidence that the performance of watersheds, in the implementation of which NGOs have been involved, has been distinctly better than those which have been executed by the Government Agencies alone. . . . This process may be reversed at the earliest and mechanisms evolved at the national and regional levels, to involve bonafide and competent NGOs and empower Watershed Associations in the task of social mobilization and implementation at the watershed level" (NAC, 2005).

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[91] The word 'civil society' was originally used in English to refer to the entire non-state sphere. The equivalent German term *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* comes to refer, with Hegel, to the domain of contractual (especially economic) relations and, with Marx, to bourgeois or capitalist society. With the revival of the term in 1980s to refer to the sphere of independent associations, in and against the state socialist dictatorships, German writers, including Habermas, have tended to use the English term or the German neologism *Zivilgesellschaft*. (Cohen and Arato, 1992)
[92] See Corbridge et al. (2005), Chatterjee, (2004: 3).
[93] For example, refer to the letter from the Kimsar *gram panchayat* to the PWD on demand for clearing of roads after a landslide. This letter clearly expresses the action that the villagers would take, like angry confrontation and levying of the charges of corruption on PWD officers in the open public sphere, if the roads are not cleared soon. Dated: 03-04-2006; accessed from the records of Kimsar *gram panchayat*, Pauri.

The report issued by the GoI (2006) takes note of the positive impact that some NGOs have created in rural Maharashtra and Karnataka. At the same time it casts a suspicious eye on their legitimacy and efficiency:

"Currently, the voluntary sector is seeing a proliferation of agencies, many of which are of a dubious nature. It is not clear that a commitment to serve the poorest has brought them to this field. It appears that the larger cloud of corruption enveloping society in India has made its entry into the voluntary sector as well. Many NGOs are simply fly-by-night operators who obtain government grants and disappear without a trace. There are others who play a contractor-type role, thriving on huge government grants and resultant commissions" (GoI, 2006: 89).

Hence, it would be too simplistic to presume that the development projects routed through the NGOs represent an involvement of the 'civil society' and thus are more accountable and transparent compared to the government. The issues of corruption and sloppy implementation that characterize the Indian bureaucracy are also to be observed in the voluntary sector. The final situation comprises of watershed development delegated to the NGO without any significant increase in efficiency, but removed from the governmental sphere to the non-governmental public sphere.

"While NGOs carry out their own monitoring and evaluation, rare is the effort from the government (or any independent authority) to open the 'black box' of NGO-led watershed projects. The black box contains information on how NGOs negotiated watershed and administrative boundaries. How they ensured participation? How they integrated diverse interest groups to promote environmental management and alleviate poverty? What happened after they withdrew formally? And more important how much money do they actually spend compared to funding received, for meeting the needs of the poor? While Vaidyanathan (2006) might argue that government bureaucrats are 'corrupt rut', corruption is part of everyday life around the world across multilateral agencies, governmental agencies, NGOs and village institutions too, though the intensity varies, some of which reduce the transaction cost to a great extent, while some increase the transaction cost and impact on the poor. Nevertheless, it is important that we take corruption seriously to facilitate those forms of corruption that are beneficial and constrain those that seriously hamper the development process" (Saravanan, 2008).

In 1993 the Indian parliament passed the 73rd constitutional amendment that granted constitutional status to three-tier locally elected bodies called the *panchayats*. The Common Guidelines of 1994 suggested the formation of nominated village watershed committees for implementing the projects. These 'community based watershed

committees', were separate from the *panchayat* though in theory it worked in cooperation with it.

As per the Common Guidelines of 1994, creation of non-elected and consensually nominated VDCs for watershed governance has come under attack from different perspectives. Chhotray (2007) investigates the rational of creating non-elected community based bodies for India's watershed program and argues that a discourse of depoliticization is in use to propogate the creation of 'apolitical' watershed committees in contrast to political *panchayats*, 'ostensibly unsuitable for participatory development for their embodiment of political contestation and vested interests'.

VDCs are seen to be free from the forms of political contestations that commonly characterize *panchayats* and are considered more appropriate for participatory development on this basis. This sort of rationalization represents a new form of depoliticization, the theorization of development as a wholly economic activity that has been highly conducive to the emergence of planning discourses and the attendant technocratic rationality of the state' (ibid.: 1038). This perspective on development governance has acquired significance after the pioneering work by Ferguson on Lesotho (1990) followed by other related studies (Harriss 2002, Kamat 2002, Tordella 2003, Chhotray 2007).

It can be observed from the above review that techno-economic indicators form the dominant framework in watershed studies. NGOs have come under critical appraisal with adherents both for and against their deployment. The issues of sustainability, good governance and empowerment of the poor through watershed projects are discussed under various subtopics. While the NGOs are seen to be in a position of providing development without the complexities of local politics, their politics of an apolitical participation in development projects and its long term impacts on democratization remains an issue for further research. It would however be difficult to comprehend that the governance of common goods like natural resource could be achieved apolitically.

2.6   Problematizing Discourses and Institutions of Watershed Governance

This section of the chapter elaborates the issues that remain under researched and neglected in the watershed development literature. This forms the basis of the present study that seeks to fulfill this gap and account for the missing link by employing a theoretical framework under the umbrella concept of 'depoliticization' as explained in the next chapter.

Watershed Policy making in India as well as internationally, has rhetorically moved towards finding new approaches and political legitimacy in the international goal of reducing global poverty and sustainable development, in the language of partnership and participation, citizen's rights and democracy. But the actual practice in the field is not informed/inspired by this 'new discourse'. The National Water Policy 2002 and the report of the technical committee on Watershed programs in India of 2006 emphasize the need of participation of the local NGOs, village community, especially women and the poor in watershed development planning and implementation.

National NGOs supported by the 'global civil society' and the community-based governance have largely spearheaded this movement to 'include' the local people and ascertain 'participation' in development projects. While NGOs carry out their own monitoring and evaluation, rare is the effort from the government (or any independent authority) to open the 'black box' of NGO-led watershed projects, as noted by Saravanan (2008) earlier.

The arguments for micro-watershed rehabilitation as a means of strengthening rural people's livelihoods through integrated, productive and sustainable use of natural resources are compelling. Equally compelling is the evidence from many small-scale projects, often run by NGOs that a rehabilitated watershed will quickly degrade again unless local institutions capable of managing the resource are strengthened.

Of particular importance is the evidence that the interests of the poorer sectors-often in common forest or grazing lands- will be overridden unless their voice in these institutions is strengthened (Farrington et. al. 1999: Preface). In general, watershed technologies are likely to fail if they divide benefits unevenly but require near universal cooperation to

make them work. In this case, equity becomes a prerequisite to efficiency (Kerr and Sanghi 1992).

Benefits after the first year or two were typically assumed[94], and, not surprisingly, cost-benefit findings were usually favorable. At the same time, the vast majority of projects were never evaluated, and there were good reasons to suspect that most of them had little impact (Kerr and Sanghi 1992). A study conducted by IFPRI notes that 'the improved condition of common lands on the projects appears to have been at the expense of access to products such as fuel and fodder from the commons. Respondents in the IGWDP villages indicated that they had suffered from reduced access to fuel and fodder from common lands more than respondents under other projects. At the same time, none of the projects seem to have done much to assist farmers without irrigation or to help landless people gain access to the additional water generated through project efforts.'[95]

Well-intentioned efforts to 'build local organization' – never mind anything as ambitious as 'civil society' - can so easily go wrong, as Corbridge et al. (2003) show, about the East Indian Rainfed Farming Project. Their independent evaluations of this project show that it had a fair degree of success as a farming systems program. But the logic of the project is that sustainable livelihoods are to be achieved through collective action in local organizations. Consequently, the project had devoted much effort to forming local development organizations. Considering the extent of inequality and social hierarchy in India, and the misleading stereotype of the 'egalitarian tribal society' in the rural areas, we can observe that development organizations are very substantially dominated by the more affluent and powerful members of the society, argues Corbridge. The NGO sector is no exception to this rule. This means, even the NGOs in most of the cases are dominated by people belonging to the higher castes/class and work in rural areas for tribal development. With this background, one has to check if at all and how much participation at the grassroots level is actually achieved and how far does 'documented' policy actually reflect the field reality.

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[94] Refer to the 'village report' provided by WOTR (2006) to the exposure participants before the village visit. It outlined the 'template' of benefits in the project village that was in its second year and yet to undertake the full implementation phase of the program.

[95] Available at IFPRI website (http://www.ifpri.org/divs/eptd/dp/papers/eptdp68.pdf (EPTD Discussion Paper No. 68)

Mosse (2005) presents an analysis of how the 'policy-practice dynamic' played out in the DFID-funded Indo-British Rainfed Farming Project (IBRFP) amongst the Bhil 'tribal' communities in rural western India. He describes how a development project finds ways of working itself out and how these ways are rarely based on policy in the way it is usually documented - but that they can nevertheless be turned into policy after the events. 'What if,' as Mosse formulates it, 'development practice is not driven by policy? What if the things that make for good policy are quite different from those that make it implementable? What if, instead of policy producing practice, practice produces policy, in the sense that actors in development devote their energies to maintaining coherent representations regardless of events?' (Mosse, 2005: 2). It becomes evident that the dynamic between policy and practice is deeply important in the project - but not for the reasons one would think. Evidences from the WB project showed that policy merely remained a convenient hanger for many agendas while the actual practices were distorted by class politics and power.

All important decision-making positions (President, Secretary) were held by the village elite in the consensually formed VDC. It was never registered under the Societies Act, as required by the participatory policy and decision making. In contrast to this, the implementing agency namely WMD presented the formation/ registration of the the village committee as the first step in implementing the project in the village[96]. This is just one example of development projects working to maintain themselves as coherent policy ideas (as systems of representations) as well as operational systems. Here policy primarily functions to mobilize and maintain the status quo of local political support i.e. to legitimize rather than to orientate practice. The discursive construction of the project by WMD presents it as a 'participatory development' project. This serves the political purpose of maintaining a policy coherency with the WB, at the same time legitimizing the continuation of such practices. The incoherency between policy discourse and field practices appears to be strange in the wake of popular slogans of participation and decentralization. Its focus, borrowing a phrase from Johan Pottier, is thus not on what the project achieved (or didn't) but *how* this achievement was represented.

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[96] Presentation to the ICR Mission on IWDP Shiwalik Hills-II by D.J.K Sharma- Deputy Project Director of Hills-II, WMD Dehradun; 3-6th June, 2005.

This thesis argues that a democracy of 'simulation' is at work here to claim that 'success' and 'failure' are policy-oriented judgments that obscure actual project effects and the political dynamics of its everyday working. Simulated democracy helps to conceal the flailing nature of the Indian state that maintains a coherent documentation of the development projects at the policy level to gain approval from the funding agencies, irrespective of the local mismanagement and partial action. This representation of the reality is biased in the favor of economic indicators, technical treatments and number of 'institutions' formed during the project. It does not communicate the actual qualitative status of the newly formed institutions and the political contestations that are inherent in the governance of water resource management to the effect of denying their presence.

This corresponds to an emerging strategy of governance that treats water issues as a 'technical' matter devoid of politics that can be efficiently provided by the apolitical NGOs and nominated expert committees. This apolitical treatment of water governance can be problematized as a brand of politics that takes up 'depoliticization' as its political ideology and employs discursive and institutional tools to pursue it. Rather than empowering the local communities or enhancing their capacities for self-development, these tools lead to the formation of strategic groups from among the international and national civil society, NGOs and delegated government departments, which is catalyzing, as this thesis argues, 'a watershed' in watershed governance.

3   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter explains the theoretical framework of this study by defining the concept of depoliticization and its operationalization for the case studies. It outlines this concept with reference to the concepts of politicization and politics and identifies its different tactics. In the next section it provides a review of the authors who have worked with this framework, specifically in the field of development studies and highlights the importance of this concept in facilitating our understanding of watershed governance, especially in the multilateral projects.

3.1   Politics, Politicization and Depoliticization

This section describes the concept of 'politics' and the different dimensions of its usage in the development literature. It contrasts the traditional meaning assigned to the term with its negative modern connotation. On this basis, it approaches the concept of depoliticization and outlines its relevance for this study.

<u>Meaning of 'Politics'</u>

Since the notion of politics plays such a central role in this thesis, it would be worthwhile to briefly describe what I mean by this term.

Stated most simply, politics responds to the need in complex and differentiated societies for collective and ultimately binding decision making. In the language of rational choice theory, contemporary socieities are characterized by proliferation of so called collective action problems (environmental degradation, global warming) to which politics is, in some sense, a response (Hay, 2007: 2). In a broad sense, politics is about the mediation of social power, and the strategic action related to that mediation, that is, the process through which the social relations of power are constituted, negotiated, reproduced, transformed or otherwise shaped (Mollinga and Bolding, 2004: 6). Leftwich describes human socieities to be characterized by a diversity of interests and preferences that need to be sorted out and resolved by a set of conscious processes that he calls 'politics', defined as "all the activities of conflict, cooperation and negotiation involved in the use,

89

production and distribution of resources, whether material or ideal, whether at local, national or international levels, or whether in private or public domains" (Leftwich, 1983). Such a basic conception facilitates ways of integrating both conventional ideas about po*litics* (power, authority and collective decision-making) and *economics* (allocation of scarce resources) into a broader understanding of the relations between them (Leftwich, 2007). In this sense politics acquires a broader context specific meaning. Kerkvliet defines politics as 'the debates, conflicts, decisions, and cooperation among individuals, groups and organizations regarding the control, allocation and use of resources and the values and ideas underlying these activities' (Kerkvliet, 1990: 11). Hay identifies twelve different senses of the term 'politics' (Hay, 2007: 61)[97] that shows us the different ways in which an action or issue could be defined as 'political' oscillating between the ideal form of critical public scrutiny and accountability of governmental policies, an arena of deliberation and realization of the collective good, to the association of politics with pursuit of material self interest of politicians, undue interference, corruption, inefficiency and lack of accountability.

From the definitions given above and the different connotations of the term as identified by Hay, it is clear why all development projects in the water sector are therefore inescapably political, not managerial or administrative in the current technicist sense. 'For at any point in any developmental sequence what is crucially at stake is how resources are to be used and distributed in new ways and the inevitable disputes arising from calculations by individuals and groups as to who will win and who will lose as a result' (Leftwich, 1996: 6). Evers and Gerke (2009) argue that strategic groups are formed when new resources become available as a result of social change or globalization, and that such groups try to acquire these resources in the long term. In this scenario, some groups stand to win at the cost of the others. Watershed development project brings a basket of resources to be used and allocated in the village public sphere that involves conflict, cooperation and negotiations among the different actors and leads to the formation of 'strategic groups':

"The theory of strategic groups assumes that resources, in this case development funds, will be appropriated by a group that then implements a strategy of securing resources in

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[97] He adds that this list is still not exhaustive as there are a variety of significant alternative definitions of politics and the political that it does not include (Hay, 2007: 62).

the long term and attempts to build social, political and economic environment towards this goal. Development experts can thus be considered as globally operating strategic groups. Within the context of development projects experts, as Bierschenk (1988: 158) has found out, are considered to in a 'process of continuous negotiations' with other strategic groups. Risse (1998: 1) has, in this connection drawn attention to the tendency for transnational networks and their actors to be decoupled from national and local issues" (Evers and Gerke, 2009: 6).

In the above paragraph, the authors highlight the strategies that groups, formed as a result of proliferation of development projects, employ towards securing the resources made available by the project. One of the popular strategies employed towards this end in watershed development projects, as this thesis would empirically show, is that of depoliticization.

 Politicization and Depoliticization

This section describes the concept of politicization and develops the concept of depoliticization in contrast to it. It describes the different models that are used to identify, map and explore the processes of politicization and depoliticization that forms the basis of operationalizing the concept in the next section for examining the case studies.

Simply stated, issues and institutions are politicized when they become the subject of public deliberation and decision-making where previously they were not. Hay (2007: 79) describes politics as the 'realm of contingency and deliberation' to distinguish it from the realm of necessity in which, 'in the absence of the capacity for human agency, it is fate and nature that fight it out for supremacy'. In this definition, political sphere includes both the governmental sphere and the public sphere. He further seeks to 'departmentalize' the political realm in order to discriminate between the different spheres of the political by differentiating between three arenas: 1) the governmental arena; 2) the public but non-governmental arena; and 3) the private sphere. Beyond this sphere, there exists a 'realm of necessity' where fate and nature/ necessity rule in the absence of any capacity of human control. Each of these spheres is seen to be politicized to a lesser extent than the preceding one. Consequently, issues and instiutions can be politicized in one of the three ways (Hay, 2007: 79):

Politicization 1: promotion from the realm of necessity to the private sphere.
Politicization 2: promotion from the private sphere to the public sphere.
Politicization 3: promotion from public sphere to the governmental sphere.

 In this model, the most basic form of politicization is (type 1) involves the extension of the realm of contingency and deliberation on the issues or institutions that were earlier assigned to the realm of fate and necessity. The examples of this type of politicization could be seen in the questioning of the religious prejudices and taboos or in the recognition of the capacity of human influence in the matters that were earlier the preserve of natural processes like global warming and climate change. Science and technology provides means to observe these natural processes in greater depth so that we no longer see such changes to be in the realm of fate but consider them as important issues for public deliberation and decision-making. In this sense, development of science had a politicizing effect.

An issue or institution is further politicized when they become subject to the deliberation by the masses (the public) when previously such deliberation was confined to the private sphere. In Hay's model, this is politicization of type-2. Growth of the feminist movement in India that challenged the traditional power relations in the domestic space and raised the issue for wider public debate is an example. It was clearly expressed in its slogan: 'personal is political'.

 A further process of politicization, according to Hay, might be seen to promote issues from the public (but non-governmental) sphere into the arena of direct governmental deliberation. The issue which already enjoys a certain degree of popularity in the non-governmental public discourse (like the roads issue as explained in the Hills-II case) is taken up and incorporated in the governmental policies and become part of the formal political agenda. This is type-3 politicization.

While Hay's model clearly shows the process of successive politicization of an issue, another study by Blühdorn (2007: 313) identifies three locations or sites of politicization as follows:

1. Politicization of issues: This implies that previously non-negotiable issues become negotiable and decidable. This means, these issues are dragged from nonpolitical spheres such as religion, tradition, nature, or intangible political authorities into the arena of public contestation and scrutiny, where value pluralism gives rise to

      alternative scenarios, where decisions have to be justified and democratically legitimated.

2. <u>Politicization of people</u>: This implies that citizens or groups of citizens who have previously been uninterested in politics and excluded from it become engaged in political debates and turn into political actors. The inclusion of women, lower castes and dalits into the mainstream Indian politics is an example of politicization of the people.

3. <u>Politicization of social organizations and institutions</u>: This is the process in which previously nonpolitical organizations such as nature conservation societies, religious associations, sports clubs, universities, or even courts of justice embrace and more or less openly promote specific political agendas.

In the most general sense, politicization is the realization that established social norms, social practices, and social relations are contingent rather than sacrosanct, that citizens, individually and collectively have political agency by means of which alternatives can be explored and implemented. This recognition of contingency in social practices and relations and the power of collective political agency have been the igniting spark of emancipatory-progressive movements (visible in the form of 'participatory discourse' in development) and politicization has been their key strategy (Blühdorn, 2007: 313).

<u>Depoliticization</u>

With this background, depoliticization can be described as a process in which previously political issues, people and institutions are becoming less political or nonpolitical. In the context of location, depoliticization of issues implies that they are relocated from the arenas of democratic contestation and decision into the arenas which are governed by- at least supposedly- unambiguous and nonnegotiable scientific 'facts' and codes rather than contestable social values. Scientific laboratories, economic markets, expert committees or international regimes are the prominent examples of such supposedly apolitical arenas. Interest rates, education standards, environmental quality, poverty or water scarcity are just a few examples of issues that have recently been relocated in this arena.

The depoliticization of people implies that citizens that had previously been interested and engaged in public affairs withdraw from political arenas and retreat into the nonpolitical pursuit of their personal affairs and wellbeing. Emergence of individualism, mistrust of political organizations and activities, consumerist social order and

disappearance of community life due to personalized sources of entertainment may be seen as evidence for the depoliticization of citizens.

In brief, the depoliticization of institutions and social organizations implies that bodies ranging from environmental organizations, micro-credit societies, water-user associations, retail cooperatives to youth volunteers shed their ideological commitments and political agendas and focus on their 'core business' or the 'task at hand'. As in the case of watershed development, professionalization, managerial best practice and the pursuit of economic efficiency were the principles that guided this transformation of social institutions.

Returning to Hay's model, depoliticization could be understood as operating in the reverse order to politicization as shown in the figure below.

Depoliticization 1: demotion from governmental to the public sphere.

Depoliticization 2: demotion from the public to the private sphere

Depoliticization 3: demotion from the private sphere to the realm of necessity.
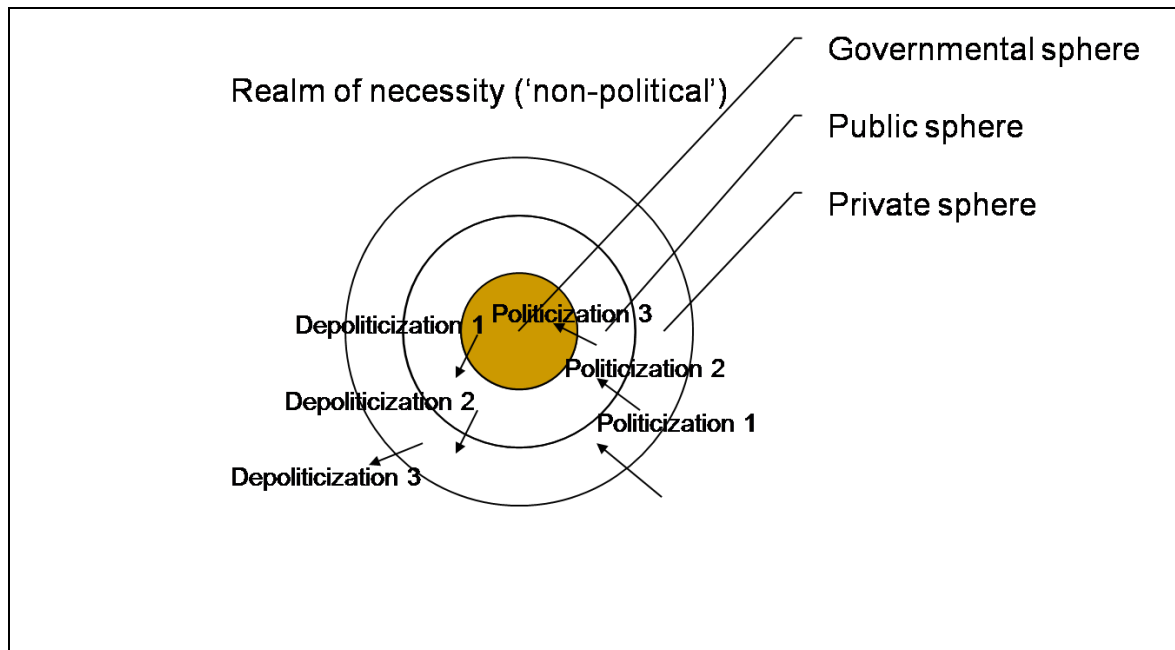
Source: (Hay, 2007: 80)

The first type of depoliticization (type-1), as shown in the diagram, is:

"the effective demotion of issues (institutions) previously subject to formal political scrutiny, deliberation and accountability to the public yet non-governmental sphere.This

94

may take one of two general forms: the displacement of responsibility from governmental to public or quasi-public authorities and the off-loading of areas of formal political responsibility to the market (through privatization). The potential advantages of this to government are considerable- in that responsibility for contentious issues can now effectively be passed to public or quasi-public bodies and to official who can present them as purely technical matters. Politicians are thus insulated from having to answer for the consequences of policies that may continue unchanged and for which they would previously have both claimed and borne responsibility" (Hay, 2007: 82).

This strategy results in an apparent loss of the policy-making capacity of the politicians due to which they demote the responsibility only to a quasi-public body such as a newly formed central bank and retain the power of appointment to such bodies. As outlined in the case of IGWDP where funds are routed through the bank called NABARD, the Ministry of Finance is not directly answerable or responsible for the project but retains the power to appoint (or remove) the managing director of the bank. At the same time, the delegated agency does not interfere in the autonomy of the government at all. Hay argues that type-1 depoliticization is also manifest in the attempt by the government to present environmental degradation as an issue of corporate or collective societal responsibility. In this way, the government moves to a 'facilitating' role and displaces the issue from the core political realm to the non-governmental public sphere.

Type-2 depoliticization occurs 'when issues previously politicized within the public sphere but not currently the subject of formal political deliberation are displaced to the private realm- becoming matters for domestic deliberation and consumer choice. For example, the representation of the issue of environmental degradation in such a way that responsibility is seen to lie neither with government, nor with business, but with consumers is, if successful, a form of depoliticization of type-2' (Hay, 2007: 85).

Depoliticization of type-3 involves the transfer of responsibility from the realm of deliberation (political realm) to that of necessity and fate. It involves a disavowal of the capacity for deliberation, decision making and human agency and entails a non-negotiable fatalism. The politicians often use globalization as a non-negotiable external economic constraint that limits the national governments to frame policies outside this structure.

The framework outlined above has clear resemblances to the Russian Doll Model of Flinders (2007: 108) where he characterizes the British state as a series of nested layers

with relatively small government departments at the core and a series of distinct layers working outwards. It resembles the solar system model where the public bodies are elliptically revolving around departments at various distances like planets around a sun. If departmental boundary lines provide theoretically significant categories for analysis, my contention is that the delegation of authority at each step involves a redistribution of power and sometimes involves the inclusion of new actors that are significant in locating the mechanisms of depoliticization.

From a public policy point of view, then, depoliticization means the reduction of direct influence of politicians, either through institutional delegation or the minimization of discretion, considering that politicians have the impression of being vote-maximisers tied to short-term electoral cycle.

Burnham defines depoliticization as a form of 'statecraft' and a 'governance strategy':

"Depoliticization as a governing strategy is 'the process of placing at one remove the political character of decision-making'. State managers retain arm's-length control over crucial economic and social processes whilst simultaneously benefiting from the distancing effects of depoliticization. As a form of politics it seeks to change market expectations regarding the effectiveness and credibility of policy-making in addition to shielding the government from the consequences of unpopular policies. Moreover, it is a process cloaked in the language of inclusiveness, democratization and empowerment" (Burnham, 2001: 128-129).

Flinders and Buller (2006) provide an extensive review of the literature on depoliticization to claim that this concept has found usage in a range of disciplines but 'in definitional terms the wider literature is largely barren'. Authors who have worked with this concept- like Boggs (2000), Douglas (1999), Petit (2004) clearly denote some kind of shared understanding of values and processes, yet never seek to explicate the core essence of the term.

The literature review allows us to harvest a number of shared values and processes, and through these processes produce a set of six common themes (Flinders, 2007: 238):

1. the role and power of a dominant rationality;
2. shifts in political reasoning and conceptions of legitimacy;
3. the process of placing at one-remove the political character of decision-making;

4. the reallocation of functions and responsibilities to independent bodies or panels of experts;

5. the exclusion of politics through the adoption of 'rational' practices; and

6. Political exhaustion, which feeds loss of confidence and a resignation to fate.

Synthesizing these core themes, leads us to define depoliticization as 'the range of tools, mechanisms and institutions through which politicians can attempt to move to an indirect governing relationship and/or seek to persuade the demos that they can no longer be reasonably held responsible for a certain issue, policy field, or specific decision' (Flinders and Buller, 2006: 3-4).

It is important to note that the concept of depoliticization is not intended to suggest that a given issue, people, institution or process is any less political but it is merely highlighting a change in relation to the 'arena' or processes through which decisions are either taken or avoided. Although the form of politics changes as the (water) issue is subject to an altered governance structure through the application of depoliticization tactics, the issue becomes no less political in its impact on the society. Processes and procedures that are commonly referred to under the rubric of depoliticization might therefore be more accurately described as 'arena shifting' (Flinders, 2007: 238). This means that the issues, people and decisions are not really devoid of politics as the syntactic meaning of the word 'de-politicization' seems to suggest, but are shifted to another arena- this one being a *non-elected* political arena.

3.2 Tactics of Depoliticization

This section describes the tactics of depoliticization (institutional and preference shaping) employed by the strategic groups and examines how these are instrumentalized in a mutually supportive manner to place at one remove the political character of decision making. Depoliticization has formed a, if not *the*, central element within the global politics in recent years to justify the formation of technical committees and delegation of responsibilities to a number of arm's-length bodies across a number of policy areas. Evidence of rising levels of public disenchantment and distrust in relation to politicians, political processes and political institutions has led to the promotion of depoliticization as a way of circumventing conventional politics.

Buller and Flinders (2005) point out that the wider literature on depoliticization has largely failed to pinpoint and distinguish between different types of depoliticization tactics. Nor has it sought to explore the inter-play between depoliticization and established frameworks of representative democracy. This study undertakes both these tasks within the given scope of case studies.When faced with the case studies, it becomes necessary to dissect and unravel the various components of depoliticization and their dynamic interaction with each other in order to understand the adoption of specific tactics and tools by the politicians, donor agencies and other strategic groups.

Flinders (2007) describe depoliticization as having three distinct elements-

"First, at the core of any depoliticization tactic is an acceptance that the *principle* (macro-political level) of depoliticization is an appropriate one for governments to pursue through the policy making process. Second, the principle of depoliticization should be distinguished from the *tactic* (meso-political level) used to realize this goal at any one moment…there are different tactics for implementing the objective of depoliticization and these can vary across time and space, even when the acceptance of the principle remains constant. The principle and tactics of depoliticization will be supported by a particular tool or *form* (micro-political level)".

Table 7.   Elements of Depoliticization at different political levels
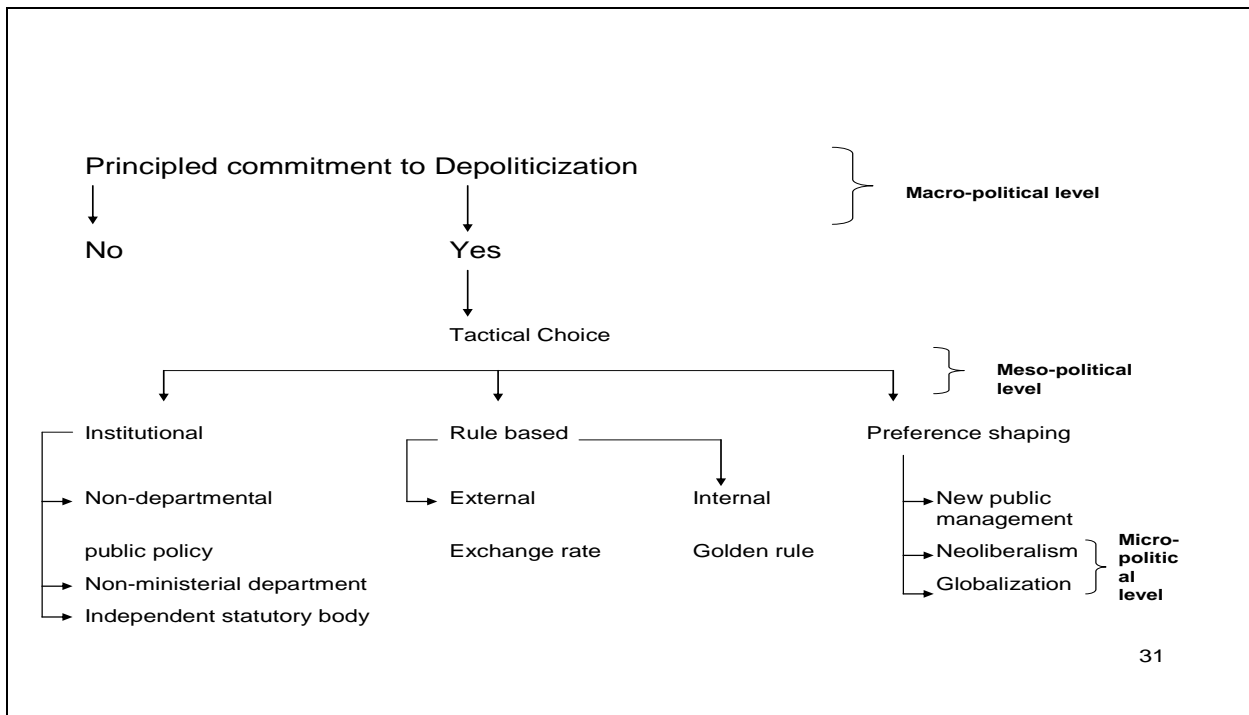
Source: Flinders (2007: 235).

98

In his view, the micro-level policy supports are the most transient part of a depoliticization tactic, 'pulled in' to operationalize a particular technique and then discontinued in the event of implementation failure.

The decision to make a commitment in principle to depoliticization might be taken on public policy or political grounds (or a mixture of the two). Once the principal of depoliticization has been adopted in a particular policy area, a choice has to be made concerning the most appropriate tactic, or mixture of tactics, to employ. The next section describes two among the many tactics employed in development governance, namely, preference-shaping depoliticization and institutional depoliticization.

3.2.1   *Preference-Shaping Depoliticization*

It involves the invocation of preference-shaping through recourse to ideological or rhetorical claims in order to justify a political position that a certain issue or function does, or should, lie beyond the scope of politics or the capacity for state control. In practice, preference-shaping depoliticization tactics involve the construction of a new 'reality' in which the role of national politicians is presented as having been, to some extent, eviscerated by external forces or broad societal factors. These forces limit the flexibility of national politicians and reduce their role in managing and enforcing rule-based tactics or policy stances which are designed to alleviate the negative consequences of trends for which national politicians cannot reasonably be held responsible (Flinders, 2007). However, a government may seek to avoid or deflect responsibility for an issue it is possible that the public may still blame the government for non-intervention or the adoption of an inappropriate tactic. The significant aspect of this tactic is that it relies on normative beliefs that may be extremely powerful even though the empirical evidence on which they are based is debated. Governments may seek to espouse or over-emphasise a distinct aspect or interpretation of an ideology in order to increase the potency of the line of reasoning being presented. The *preference-shaping* tactic is potentially far-reaching in that it attempts to refine and change public expectations about both the capacity of the state and the responsibilities of politicians (Buller and Flinders, 2006).

An example of this preference-shaping tactic is the development ensemble's recourse to arguments concerning globalisation in order to justify certain decisions or non-decisions.

In essence, the rhetoric of globalisation has been employed as a tactic or tool through which the potentially negative political consequences of policy choices can be neutralised through the creation of an ideological context in which issues are depicted as being beyond the political control framework of national politics. For example, a government can convince the public that it can no longer control the economy due to wider global trends despite the fact that in reality is still has a number of significant control mechanisms at its disposal. If one emphasises the importance of rhetorical or ideological strategies then this situation may well be defined as one of depoliticization due to the fact that the public believes that depoliticization has occurred because of globalization and other such constraints (Burnham, 2001).

3.2.2 Institutional Depoliticization

Institutions have always been at the heart of political science and political analysis. They consist of formal and informal rules, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, and systems of meaning that define the context within which individuals, corporations, labor unions, nation-states, and other organizations operate and interact with each other (Campbell, 2004: 1; see also Leftwich, 2007, Hodgson, 2001: 294).

Following North (1990), this thesis defines 'organizations' as "groups of individuals, bounded by a common purpose, involving a defined set of authority relations and dedicated to achieving objectives." Organizations differ from 'institutions', which are defined as rules of the game and include "codes of conduct, norms of behaviour and conventions" (North 1990; Uphoff 1986). Institutions are both embedded in and surround organizations (Alsop and Kurey, 2005). Then, as noted by Haggard, we have to dig beneath institutional arrangements to reveal the political relationships that create and support them (Haggard, 2004: 74). It is now acknowledged in the literature on water management that if institutions matter, then understanding the political processes that establish, maintain and change institutions matters even more. Political institutions determine the distribution of political power which includes the ability to shape economic institutions and the distribution of resources. As economists are conventionally concerned to explore the importance of structure of incentives which institutions establish, this study lays emphasis on the structures of power which not only underpin the formation of

100

institutions, but are also embedded within them. This section argues that it is important to recognize the preferred political goals that the institutions are designed to serve. The analysis should not stop at assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of an institution but should also extend to questioning for what is it effective? An institution that is effective for generating economic growth, for example, would have different indicators of 'effectiveness' than an institution which is effective for democratic participation.

Institutional depoliticization focuses on structures. Although the purest form of depoliticization is privatization, where the state absolves itself completely of responsibility for a specific policy field or sector, its most common variant involves the creation of a quasi-autonomous body to insulate decision-making from political influence (Flinders, 2007: 251). Depoliticization of social organizations and institutions is a mechanism by which the state comes into the public view or presents itself in a technical role, as a rational actor with a narrow focus on how to improve economic effectiveness and efficiency. Little attention is paid to the non-economic factors and the complex political, social and cultural landscape in which the state operates, is grossly oversimplified (Bryld, 2000: 703).

Institutional depoliticization is possibly the most frequently employed tactic. A formalised principal-agent relationship is established in which the former (minister) sets broad policy parameters while the latter (chief executive) enjoys day-to-day managerial and specialist freedom within the broad framework set by ministers. Institutional depoliticization is designed to release the agent (and its sphere of responsibility) to some extent from short-term political considerations - vote seeking, populist, short-term pressures to which elected politicians are subject (Buller and Flinders, 2005). Ministers do, however, enjoy substantial powers in relation to nationalised industries over such issues as appointments, policy frameworks and investment. Thus, a distinction needs to be made between an organisation's theoretical autonomy and the autonomy it enjoys in practice. Depoliticization should not therefore be seen as necessarily part of the 'hollowing out' or evisceration of the state but may be more accurately be interpreted as an aspect of the transformation of the state. Moreover, the degree of true 'depoliticization' is questionable when the independent body operates within a frequently narrow and prescriptive policy framework set by ministers.

The delegation of functions along a 'spectrum of autonomy' with ministerial departments at one end and purely private bodies at the other, and executive agencies, non-ministerial departments, non-departmental public bodies, strategic health authorities, a vast range of statutory, non-statutory and 'unrecognised' bodies, and increasingly complex forms of public-private partnerships in between these two poles - clearly raises a number of conceptual and empirical issues. At which point along the spectrum does an issue actually become depoliticised?

Clearly the explication of such tactics risks over-simplifying the complexity of modern governance. Within any sector at any time it may be possible to identify a mixture or amalgam of tactics. The examples outlined above may not be exhaustive as a list of depoliticization tactics. Nor should they be viewed as mutually exclusive. A government may pursue a number of different depoliticization tactics at any one time; with the *preference-shaping* tactic providing a macro-political context or rationale; the *rule-based* tactic operating at the meso-political level and within a certain policy area; and, the *institutional* tool operating at the meso as well as micro-political level and in response to specific incidents or demands.

In a nutshell, an extremely depoliticized outlook would hold that legal and political decisions are complicated matters which should be left to experts where as the extremely politicized outlook would argue that everyone affected by legal and political decisions should discuss them till there is a complete agreement about them. While the second outlook is unacceptable on practical grounds, the first is on principle unacceptable. The challenge is to find a synthetic amalgamation of the two views for a more desirable form of development.

3.3   Depoliticization in Development Studies

Probably the most influential book that deals directly with the depoliticization effects in bilateral development projects is *The Anti-Politics Machine* written by Ferguson in 1990. Using Foucault's notion of dispositif, or apparatus, Ferguson considers the development projects, particularly in Lesotho, as emerging from and operating as a complex heterogeneous ensemble of institutions, discourses, resource flows, programs and

practices. He regularly refers to it as a 'conceptual apparatus'. The heterogeneous nature of the apparatus, and the idea that effects are not necessarily predictable, means that a wide range of both positive and negative outcomes can be generated through development without attributing these to a metasubject or force, or requiring that we solely see imposition or interdiction at play (Brigg, 2002). At the same time, such ensembles operate to achieve overall effects, thereby serving a dominant strategic function (Gordon, 1980: 195).

The main thrust of his study is 'not to show that the development problematic is wrong but to show that the institutionalized production of certain ideas (about Lesotho) has important effects, and that the production of such ideas plays an important role in the production of certain sorts of structural change' that he explicates as a mechanism of depoliticization.

In recent years, Ferguson has been criticized for overstating the case for the 'anonymous automaticity of the anti-politics machine' (Chhotray, 2007). His approach diverts attention from the complexity of policy as institutional practice and the diversity of interests behind policy models and the perspectives of actors themselves (Mosse, 2004: 644). Corbridge and Kumar (2002: 95) criticize his argument that 'failed development projects are repeated because they produce the unintended effect of entrenching bureaucratic state power'. In their view, such hypothesis may not work in countries like India where the state has more direct ways of establishing its power than by designing new generations of 'failed projects'.

Harriss (2001) addresses the same problematic to suggest that the developmental enterprise in the third world is based on a discourse propounded by international development agencies like World Bank, that relocates political issues of poverty and water scarcity in the list of technical problems to bypass the issues of contestation in democratic politics. He argues that governments and other actors have an interest in 'depoliticizing' debates on development because exclusion of politics based on instrumental reasoning assists in reproducing state power and its legitimacy, as well as the reproduction of development projects. In his view, the idea of 'social capital' as propounded by the World Bank forms part of what became known as the 'anti-politics machine' to diffuse potential political conflicts in situations of underdevelopment. Harriss

103

adds participation, empowerment, civil society and decentralization to the list of concepts to depoliticize development because they are 'so deceptively attractive'.

The fuzzy concept of social capital has come under severe criticism fro its irrelevance in terms of practical development policy and the near impossibility to measure it because it seems to harbor many different things. In addition, Marxist political economists argued that understanding situations of underdevelopment was being replaced by a notion that was neither political nor economic, and which did not address situations of power asymmetries (Fine, 1999). Harriss agrees with Fine that social capital is anything but a Trojan horse within the neoliberal economic bulwark of the World Bank forming an important part of the neoliberal agenda to roll back the state and to legitimize large cuts in public expenditure by focusing on civil society.

Following Ferguson, Chhotray (2007) studied two villages in south India to explore the relevance of the concept of depoliticization within the governance strategies of watershed development projects. In her view, one needs to specify exactly what kind of politics (party politics, elite politics, low-caste politics, pro-poor progressive politics among others) is disregarded in a depoliticized from of development in the Indian context. She traces the approach followed by the Indian planners since independence for their apolitical content and the ways in which it has influenced development.

Although the planning exercise after independence was depoliticized in intent and sought to operate outside the domain of 'politics' the ruling Congress government engaged in a type of 'accommodative politics' that sided with the rich landlords to maintain its position of political power (Bardhan, 1984; Rudolph and Rudolph, 1987; Kaviraj, 1988; Kohli, 1988). In their efforts to win elections, Congress Party appeased the rich landlords and erstwhile kings by providing them with political power in lieu of electoral mobilization, which steadily eroded state resources and turned planning into a profligate process (Chhotray, 2007: 1039). Democratic system as it evolved in India had less to do with mobilization based on a critical reasoning of practical issues in the public sphere. Instead, political mobilizatsion was pursued along the lines of caste, religion and linguistic adherence in the years after independence (Varshney, 2007). Given the socio-cultural diversity of India and practices of caste based social organization, the political interest groups sought to mobilize people on similar lines that became, and remains, an

integral part of the Indian democratic system. The politicization of social relations was reflected in the developmental planning from the very beginning, producing elite driven and accommodative development strategies, argues Chhotray.

To the extent that we accept her definition of 'politicization' leading to elite driven accommodative politics, certainly Ferguson is of little direct relevance. However, if depoliticization is assigned a wider definition of a transformation of the public sphere from being a critical sphere of deliberation to a sphere where dominant groups push or persuade the public towards certain predetermined conclusions, as proposed by Habermas, then watershed development in India serves as a good example of depoliticization of development.

3.4 Operationalizing Depoliticization for the Case Studies

In the last section it was shown how different authors in the field of development have studied the processes and mechanisms of depoliticization. This section describes how this thesis would undertake the analysis of the two cases with the help of three different models of depoliticization by Blühdorn (2007), Hay (2007), and Flinders (2007) as outlined earlier in the chapter.

	Tactics of of Depoliticization	*Location of Depoliticization*	*Analytical framework to study depoliticization*
1.	Preference-shaping depoliticization	Depoliticization of issues, people and institutions	Discursive construction of debate, actors and institutions;
2.	Institutional depoliticization	Depoliticization of actors and institutions	Delegation and reorganization of developmental apparatus, shifting from political to apolitical arena;
Where: *Depoliticization 1*: demotion from governmental to the public sphere. *Depoliticization 2*: demotion from the public to the private sphere *Depoliticization 3*: demotion from the private sphere to the realm of necessity.			

Table 8.   Analytical Framework to study Depoliticization

Location of depoliticization in the above table is based on the work of Blühdorn while the tactics of depoliticization derive from the work of Flinders and Burnham (2006). Mechanisms of locating depoliticization derive largely from the work of Hay (2007) which forms the basis of the analytical part of this thesis.

Preference-shaping depoliticization in watershed development can be located by subjecting the issues, institutions and actors involved in the project to a three step analysis as described in the Hay's model. This amounts to analyzing if there exists a preference for specific issues and institutions in the discursive construction of the debates in watershed governance that correspond to their shifting from the elected political realm to the non-elected apolitical realm.

A discourse represents a configuration of ideas that provides the threads from which ideologies are woven. Numerous discourses can be identified, for example the 'scientific discourse', which sees development as a rational, technical and scientific process. The dominat discourse revealed in the analysis in these selected cases would be indicative of a (de)politicized form of development. Discourse analysis attempts to make explicit the implicit values and ideologies in discourses. 'Discourse' can also refer to dialogue, language, and conversation. If defined in this way, discourse analysis relates to the analysis of language used in policy-making and information sharing. This method can be usefully employed to study the preferences of policy makers and strategic groups that could then be evaluated to observe if they provide evidence for (de)politicization of type-1, 2, or 3 based on Hay's model.

Depoliticization of institutions looks at the delegation and reorganization of the governance apparatus in watershed development. Depoliticization of social organizations and institutions is a mechanism by which the state comes into the public view or presents itself in a technical role, as a rational actor with a narrow focus on how to improve economic effectiveness and efficiency. Institutional depoliticization focuses on structures. Although the purest form of institutional depoliticization is privatization, where the state absolves itself completely of responsibility for a specific policy field or sector, its most common variant involves the creation of a quasi-autonomous body to insulate decision-making from political influence (Flinders, 2007: 251). How far does a watershed project

subscribe to this tactic of governance? The institutional apparatus of the case studies are analyzed to observe if they could be seen as tools to delegate responsibility away from the political sphere of deliberation and contestation to a technical apolitical sphere. How far are the institutions in the apolitical sphere, created for implementing watershed development projects, 'inclusive' and how is this 'inclusion' mobilized?

In natural resource governance, inclusion and exclusion are not simply bipolar concepts. The concept of inclusion in the democratic process in itself presents problems of co-option and control and does not imply that people are not excluded. The act of inclusion begs the question of what the included have become included in, on whose terms, and what new exclusions the act of inclusion presents for them. How do projects ensure the participation of the community as valued, appreciated equals within the project, given the stratified nature of the society in India. Does the project have a *transformative* approach, by design or by default, as regards the social relations (of power), underlying the developmental issues/objectives, it seeks to address? If it does not, or only to some extent, what are the implications of this?

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has outlined the theoretical framework for this study that was used in the anaylsis of the data collected from two watershed development projects in India. It first outlines the concept of politics in its ideal usage as a sphere of public deliberation and collective decision making for common good contrasted with the narrow, negative connotation assigned to the term in current usage. This chapter argues that a discursive construction of 'politics' and 'political' as undesirable derives from the public choice theory and its formulation in terms of rational choice that understands the behaviour of politicians and government officials as self-interested agents who appropriate scare public resources for private motives. This leads to a search for alternative routes and strategies for governing development projects that could circumvent the governmental and political route. In this scenario, depoliticization emerges as a viable strategy.

In the next section, this chapter describes the models that have been employed to analyze this governance strategy. The first model by Hay (2007) describes the spectrum of

political and apolitical sphere and discriminates between the two based on a three-step model, where the type-1 depoliticization corresponds to the shifting of an issue or institution from the elected governmental sphere to the semi-governmental sphere of delegated agencies and type-3 depoliticization involves the shift from private sphere to the sphere of fate and necessity. This section also provides the important sites to locate the mechanisms of depoliticization in the form of issues, people and institutions, based on the work of Blühdorn (2007).

The next section outlines the tactics of depoliticization in terms of preference-shaping for depoliticization and institutional depoliticization deriving from the work of Flinders (2007). This is followed a brief review of the available literature that uses a similar theoretical framework to study the governance aspects in different contexts and situations.

The last section constructs an analytical model to study the watershed development projects and operationalizes depoliticization by synthesizing the available theories into a conceptual apparatus.

4 METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the scientific model selected for the study, the research method, and the techniques that were followed in the field for collection of data. The main goal of this chapter is to raise to the level of explicit consciousness all those means which have demonstrated their value in answering the main research question.

This research adopted the 'extended case study method' of Burawoy (1998) as used in social/ cultural anthropology, to study the political processes and governance strategies of IGWDP in Maharashtra and Hills-II watershed development project in Uttarakhand. By focusing on the issues and institutions of governance in watershed projects, I collected data with the help of interviews, participant observation, focus-group discussions and archival sources.

4.1   Selecting the Scientific Model

Methodology of a study informs us about the way we view and chose to investigate the social world we live in. It implicitly expresses our own position in the academic world and what we consider as 'valid' knowledge. In this view, our choice of methodology is also a political action that shapes the research process (including the questions asked and answers received), and privileges specific ways of knowing and discards others.

The fundamental idea behind any research is to represent the reality out there to its highest possible degree of accuracy, given the complexity and heterogeneous nature of any human activity, including water governance and watershed development. Before a study would begin to analyze the social situation, it is necessary to consider the fundamental basis on which such knowledge could be approximated with the reality and applied accordingly within the limitations of the selected case studies.

Positivism claims that experience is the foundation of knowledge. We record what we experience, and the quality of recording then becomes the key to knowledge. It would mean, as put by the Vienna Circle of logical positivists, 'if one could not verify something, one must question its existence'. The positivist approach to the study of social phenomena, exemplified by 'survey research' attempts to suspend our participation in the world we study. We insulate ourselves from the subjects of study by adhering to a set of

standardized data collecting procedures that assures our distance. We try to avoid affecting the situation we study, bracket external conditions, standardize data collection, and make sure our sample is representative. Positive science works on the principle of separation between the scientists and the subjects they examine. It proscribes reactivity, but upholds reliability, replicability, and representativeness in social research.

Structured interviews that form the basis of survey research have their importance in such studies that seek to estimate the watershed project impact in terms of economic indicators and numbers of people affected by the project. At the same time, its use is limited in such studies where the governance aspects or the quality of economic distribution is posed as a problem. It must be added that the studies on watershed development following positive methods are numerous and it is the dominant framework for most of the studies. It was noted that the results presented by the survey research conducted by various professional consultants hired by the implementing agenices hardly matched the reality as observed in the individual villages. The case of Uttarakhand can be enumerated here where the local villagers were aware of the limitations of the survey research conducted earlier and felt it did not provide the actual reality about the watershed projects. It was seen as an ambiguous method that helped to hide the actual processes and inequalities of distribution behind generalized reports seeking safety in numbers[98].

With humanism, man became the measure of all things and the relativity of truth gained ground. As Schiller argued, that since the method and contents of science are the products of human thought, reality and truth could not be 'out there' to be found, as positivists assume, but must be made up by human beings (Schiller 1969). The disagreement with positivism was also expressed by Dilthey (1833-1911) who argued that the methods of physical sciences, while undeniably effective for the study of inanimate objects were inappropriate for the study of human societies. There were, he insisted, two distinct kinds of sciences: the *Geisteswissenschaften* and the *Naturwissenschaften.* Human beings live in a web of meanings that they themselves spin. To understand humans, he argued, we need to understand those meanings.

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[98] Field Notes, 20 February 2007; Interview of the ex-*sarpanch* in the Talla Banas village of Garhwal. Available at (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wogn_DhbuAk)

My own allegiance in this study is based on the philosophy of human knowledge that emphasizes a reflexive participant observation of the socio-political phenomenon. Unlike the positivistic approach, the idea is to sense reality and to describe it in its meaningful context rather than only in numbers; words that reflect consciousness and perception compared to a juxtaposition and generalization of economic indicators as indicators of development. This humanistic tradition has been named phenomenology, where the acts (of consciousness) are the objects of systematic analysis to reveal the structures (of consciousness) and phenomenon that gives rise to these acts. The researcher tries to see reality through another person's acts (villagers, NGO/State, Donors) to understand the meanings that people give to the reality while at the same time reflecting on the meanings that he/ she would give to the same reality.

Rather than bracketing our participation in the world we study, a reflexive model of science takes these effects into consideration and uses theory to guide its way in the dialogue with participants. The central role of theory in this model is to provide the cognitive map through which the reality is apprehended. This 'dwelling in' theory is at the basis of reflexive model of science. This method embraces not detachment but engagement as the road to knowledge. Premised upon our own participation in the world we study, reflexive science deploys multiple dialogues to reach explanation of empirical phenomenon (Burawoy, 1998). The dialogues are embedded within a second dialogue between local processes and extra-local forces and between different theoretical positions that seek to explain these social processes. It is a generic strategy that focuses on differences between similar cases and the significance of a case relates to what it tells us about the world in which is embedded (Burawoy, 2005).

This research thus traverses the academic realm that begins towards the end of positivism and ends in the beginnings of post-modern thought. In this sense, it seeks to overcome the limits of positive science and embraces the importance of a critical view, but not by debunking this labyrinthine arrangement of development enterprise as a narrative only. In this sense the developmental apparatus does something concrete that cannot be located by positive methods alone. A theory centric method of enquiry was needed.

4.2   Critical 'Political Sociology' of Water Resource Management

To advance the social sciences we must not dissolve them, but create alliances both among them and the public, around shared projects- stitched together from below rather than imposed programmatically from above (Burawoy, 2007).

A critical 'politico-public' sociology of water resource management is an amalgamation of three related research fields: 1) critical sociology based on critical realism of Roy Bhaskar and critical theory of Frankfurt School, and their intersection with sociology; 2) political sociology refers to the contested nature of water resource management (Mollinga, 2008) and deriving from the works of Weber and Dahl; 3) public sociology based on the work of Burawoy (2005a) that he later rephrased as 'critical public sociology' (Burawoy, 2007).

Each of the three fields outlined above is a discipline in itself that prevents an elaborate review of their knowledge base. However, their main ideas that have relevance for the study of depoliticization in watershed governance have been outlined in the next section.

<u>Critical realism</u> is a methodological philosophy of the social sciences based on the ontological claim that social reality is constituted by real underlying social structures and causal mechanisms which we can identify and explain through scientific investigation (Bhaskar, 1998: 21). For critical realists, an observed event is presumed to have been produced/ generated by underlying social relations. The process of scientific discovery is therefore to identify, conceptualize, and improve upon existing conceptions of generative social relations, and the process through which these relations generate observed events (Archer, 2003). This is a post positivist philosophy which regards both causal explanation and interpretive understanding as necessary for social science. Unlike positivism, it is anti-reductionist, arguing that the world is stratified and characterized by emergence. Thus, the meaningful character of discourse or communicative interaction is emergent from rather than reducible to physical or economic behaviour, and hence must be understood in conjugation with *Verstehen*/ interpretative methods (Sayer, 2005).

The mainstream water management research based on instrumental knowledge and problem solving managerial approach exists with a fast emerging field of alternative approaches based on the contested nature of water resource, its context and its history (Mollinga, 2008; Franks and Cleaver, 2008; Molle, 2008). The authors build up a case for explicitly addressing the social relations of power that are part of water management structures and practices for a comprehensive analysis.

Burawoy provides a useful tool to deal with the diversity of research knowledge as practiced in the sociological research by posing the targeted readership and different target groups as the driving force behind the mainstream research. This can be usefully employed to map the governance of watershed development. He suggests that four types of knowledge define a scientific field that can be represented in the form of a matrix as given below:

	Academic audience	Extra-academic audience
Instrumental knowledge	Professional	Policy
Reflexive knowledge	Critical	Public

Table 9.   Knowledge types and knowledge audience

"Policy knowledge is knowledge in the service of problems defined by clients. This is first and foremost an instrumental relation in which expertise is rendered in exchange for material or symbolic rewards. It depends upon preexisting scientific knowledge. This professional knowledge involves the expansion of research programs that are based on certain assumptions, questions, methodologies and theories that advance through solving external anomalies or resolving internal contradictions. It is instrumental knowledge because puzzle solving takes for granted the defining parameters of the research program. Critical knowledge is precisely the examination of the assumptions, often the value assumptions, of research programs, opening them up for discussion and debate within the community of scholars. This is reflexive knowledge in that it involves dialogue about the value relevance of the scientific projects we pursue. Finally, public knowledge is also reflexive- dialogue between the scientist or scholar and publics beyond the academy, dialogues around questions of societal goals but also, as a subsidiary moment, the means of achieving those goals" (Burawoy, 2007: 139).

Mollinga (2008) asserts that water research and studies driven by practical concerns, which support the mainstream water resources discourse, mostly fall into Burawoy's

category of professional and policy sociology. The current dominant discourse follows the approach of 'instrumental knowledge' based on certain assumptions and methodologies that are shaped by power relations and normative values. Franks and Cleaver (2008) critique instrumental approaches to the generation of knowledge and policy based on the amalgamation of perceived 'success stories' and 'good practice' of governance. They favor instead approaches that attempt to understand water governance arrangements and outcomes for the poor within wider frameworks of negotiations over the allocation of societal resources. This implies the need to build reflexive knowledge generation into the research policy interface.

Need for reflexive knowledge in the field of water resource research has been felt by Mollinga (2008) who expands on Burawoy's critical public sociology to encumber water resources management. It would in a way 'level the discursive playing field in which the future of water resources management and the resolution of the impending global water crisis is analytically and ideologically negotiated', he argues. Reflexive knowledge must supplement the near monopoly of instrumental knowledge in the mainstream water resource management discourse.

Critical theory and Frankfurt School

The distinctive Frankfurt School perspective is essentially that of Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse developed in response to three major challenges: those of fascism, Stalinism and managerial capitalism (Outhwaite, 1996: 6). In their important work called the *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, authors argue that the Enlightenment critique of myth and domination and the pursuit of rational mastery over nature, themselves contribute to new forms of domination. Habermas shared their substantive preoccupation with the way in which enlightenment, in the form of instrumental means-end rationality, turns from a means of liberation into a new source of enslavement (ibid: 7). This instrumental rationality is the basis of the dominant discourse in watershed development studies that has been described here under the concept of depoliticization.

In works of Habermas there was a distinct concern with rational political discussion or practical reason (in modern technocratic democracy) which he believed was turning into

an object of technical manipulation. He explicates a tendency of the modern democracies to treat political decisions as a whole as a technical matter to be decided on expert advice, that he argued was a new source of enslavement.

Critical theory and questioning the presence of an 'objective' truth or the economic logic/indicators as the true representation of development finds its origin in Nietzsche's rejection of the Platonic idea of truth. Foucault takes it a step further, proposing what Deleuze (1984: 49) calls 'counter-philosophy', that ' traces the lowly origins of truth in struggle and conflict, in arbitrariness and contingency, in a will to truth that is essentially indicated with desire and power'.

Water resource management is deeply embedded in the human society and is an arena where structure and agency meet to reproduce and transform society (Mollinga, 2008). This implies that the social events that occur around this resource are of great importance. These events are generated by real underlying social structures and causal mechanisms which we can identify and explain through scientific investigation. Defining watershed projects here as events embedded in the social fabric, we seek to explore the mechanisms that contributed to this event and the mechanisms that helped to form the structures that facilitated the event. Is the 'good governance' rhetoric in watershed development subject to the same 'lowly origin in struggle and conflict, in a will to truth that is essentially indicated with desire and power'?

4.3   Extended Case Study Method

Burawoy (1998) proposes a parallel model to positive science in extended case method (ECM), based on reflexive science that overcomes the limitations faced by positive methods, specially the 'context effects' but has its own limitations in accounting for the 'power effects'. The origin of this method could be traced to social anthropology. Instead of collecting data from the informants about what the 'natives' ought to do, the Manchester School of social anthropologists began to record accounts of what 'natives' actually were doing, with accounts of real events, struggles, and dramas that took place over space and time. They brought out discrepancies between normative prescriptions and everyday practices (Burawoy, 1998: 5).

The extended case method emerges to overcome the limitations of other methods that also use participant observation. There exist two common criticisms of participant observation: 1) that it is incapable of generalization and therefore not a true science; 2) it is inherently 'micro' and ahistorical and therefore not true sociology (Burawoy, 1991). Based on the positions taken on the two criticisms, Burawoy presents four comparable methodologies from the four answers on the critique of participant observation as shown in the following table:

Level of Analysis	*Particular*	*General*
Micro	Ethnomethodology (micro only)	Grounded theory (micro to macro)
Macro	Extended case method (macro to micro)	Interpretative case method (macro only)

Table 10. Level of Analysis

Ethnomethodology works without generalizing and only on the microlevel, because each situation is perceived as context specific and unique. 'In the view of ethnomethodology the micro world is not a real world but a construction of participants enabling them to negotiate and uphold face-to-face interaction. The task of ethnomethodology is to elaborate the cognitive accomplishments that make social interaction possible (ibid: 272). Interpretative case method also problematizes the premises of the criticism. Here the 'micro is viewed as an expression of the macro, the particular an expression of the general. It is as if the whole lodges itself in each part in the form of a genetic code, which has to be uncovered through a process of hermeneutic interpretation' (Ibid: 273).

Both these positions are reproached by Burawoy as reductionist compared to the other two, 'both of which accept that micro and macro are discrete and causally related levels of reality and that generalizations can be derived from the comparison of particular social situations' (ibid: 273). Grounded theory has its scientific appeal as the theory here is induced from the data and its ardent pursuit of generalizations, induced from comparisons across social situations. But in making those comparisons grounded theory represses the specificity of each situation, leads to generic explanations, which take the form of invariant laws (Burawoy, 1991: 280).

The 'extended case method' applies reflexive science to ethnography and participant observation. It extends out from the 'micro' to the 'macro' or individual to the general, best exemplified by the 'extended' feminist slogan of 'personal is political'. Extended case study raises this implicit 'extending out' from the micro to the macro reality, to the level of explicit consciousness as a reflective method of studying social sciences (Burawoy, 1998: 6). It looks for specific macro determination in the micro world and seeks generalization through reconstructing existing generalizations, i.e. reconstruction of existing theory (Burawoy, 1991: 279).

It adopts a situational analysis but avoids the pitfalls of relativism and universalism by seeing the situation as shaped from above rather than constructed from below. In constituting a social situation as unique, the extended case method pays attention to its complexity, its depth, its thickness. Causality then becomes multiplex, involving an 'individual' (indivisible) connectedness of elements, tying the social situation to its context of determination (Burawoy, 1991: 280).

Both grounded theory and extended case method use participant observation and appear to have similar roots however differences do exist as outlined in the table below.

	Extended case method	*Grounded theory*
Mode of generalization	Reconstruction of existing theory	Discovering new theory
Explanation	Genetic (particular outcomes)	Generic (inductive strategy)
Comparison	Similar phenomena with a view to explaining differences	Unlike phenomena with a view to discovering similarities
The meaning of significance	Societal	Statistical
Object of analysis	Social situation	Variables across situations
Causality	Multiplex, indivisible connectedness of elements	Linear form: x causes y
Social situation	Thickness	Simplification
Micro-macro	Macro foundations of a microsociology	Micro foundations of macrosociology
Social change	Social movements	Social engineering

Table 11. Grounded Theory Vs. Extended Case Method

117

ECM deploys a reflexive understanding of participant observation to locate and study social phenomenon. A reflexive understanding takes into account the context effects and engages consciously with the object of study, recognizing the inter-subjectivity of the scientist and subject of study. It takes the social situation as the point of empirical examination and works with given general concepts and laws about states, economies, legal orders, and the like to understand how those micro situations are shaped by its wider structures. Once we highlight the systemic forces and the way they create and sustain patterns of domination in the micro situation, the application of social theory turns to building social movements (ibid: 282-3). According to Burawoy, extended case method is the most appropriate way of using participant observation to (re) construct theories of advanced capitalism.

In making problematic the exceptional or deviant cases, a space for further exploration is opened up that moves beyond the field situation to the broader socio-political forces impinging on the field. Seeing through the lens of governance and depoliticization, the cases become a completely different object, one treaded by patterns of power in which watershed management becomes a terrain of struggle and politics.

4.4   Discursive Analysis

Discourse analysis proceeds by ascertaining the source of data, identifying the speaker and the audience and the possible consequences of the text/ utterance. Discourse used in a semi-technical sense refers to the systematic examination of problematized validity-claims[99] which are raised or presupposed in speech. These can then be redeemed by a discursive anaylsis.

Many commentators, especially those who locate themselves within the field of critical discourse analysis (e.g. van Dijk, 1985, 1993), pay attention to the role played by discourse in sustaining systems of inequality or oppressive power. Schiffrin (1994) identifies six different approaches to discourse analysis that find relevance in different disciplines. In my study, following methods are being used for the analysis of the project documents to understand the preference shaping for a depoliticized form of governance in the linguistic construction of these documents:

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[99] See Outhwaite, 1996.

1. Speech-Act Theory: It was developed by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) to argue that language is used not just to describe the world but to perform a range of other actions that can be indicated in the performance of the utterance itself. For e.g. if we say grass is green, it also performs the function of assertion. Speech Act approach to discourse basically focuses on knowledge of underlying conditions for production and interpretation of acts through words. To mean, words may perform more than one action at a time and that contexts/ background knowledge of the situation may help to separate multiple functions of utterance from one another. It also provides a means by which to segment texts and thus a framework for defining units that could then be combined into larger structures for meaningful analysis.

2. Interactional Sociolinguistics: Some Interactional approaches focuses on how people from different classes/ castes/ cultures may share the grammatical knowledge of a language but differently contextualize what is said, such that very different messages are produced (Gumperz, 1982). Other Interactional sociolinguists (Goffman, 1981) focus on 'how language is situated in particular circumstances of social life and how it adds/ reflects different types of meaning (e.g. expressive, instrumental) and structure (e.g. interactional, institutional) to those circumstances'. Interpretation of the speaker's intent are related to different linguistic qualities of the utterance (phonetic, lexicon) as well as the way utterance is actually embedded. The same plantations when described by a government staff produces a very different data set compared to that described by a local farmer. In this method, the context of interchange (e.g. the physical setting, social roles, relationship of speech to other activities, physical stance of the interactants) is important and relies upon a precise transcription of linguistic, including prosodic detail of the utterances in social contexts. It also considers how interpretations of the speaker's intent are related to different linguistic qualities of the utterance (e.g. phonological and lexical variants) as well as the way the utterance is contextually embedded (e.g. activities it follows, to whom it is

directed). The focus of analysis is how interpretation and interaction are based upon the interrelationship of social and linguistic meanings (Schiffrin, 1994: 8).

Both cases consisted of data in the form of interviews, documents, field notes and transcription of group discussions that were analyzed using the above approaches to discourse analysis.

4.5   Research Technique

Limitations of the positive research and survey methods were overcome to some extent by following the ethnographic method of living with the community for a sufficient period of time and 'writing about the world from the standpoint of participant observation' (Burawoy, 1998: 6).

Participant observation and interviews were the main techniques that helped in collecting the major part of the data. Once in the field, I recorded all information that related to the watershed development project and its governance. In the case of IGWDP, I lived in the area very close to the office of the implementing NGO in Ahmednagar. From this place, I made daily visits to nearby project villages and finally settled down in a village called Kelwandi in the same district. Most of the staff from the NGO lived in the same locality and were a constant source of information and company. This was helpful in many ways as it allowed access to the NGO library and an observation of its day to day activities.

In participant observation the observer breaks out of the shelter and joins the participants in their everyday lives. This can lead to a different picture of social research. Problems that are otherwise repressed or bracketed now become central. The researcher always interacts and changes the researched by his presence in their time and space.

Slowly as I grew to be a part of the community, certain roles were implicitly expected from me. Once the villagers in Kimsar knew that I was a researcher studying the watershed project, I had the unsaid assignment of clarifying and sharing information from the government and their officials with the village people. At the same time, the local MLA expected me to give a true picture of the reality in the village and asked me to show her the photos and other documents related to the IWDP Hills-II, specifically those related to the drinking water supply scheme. I was intervening and participating in the village life, as far as water supply was concerned. I was in a way expected to bring to the

notice of 'honest officers' about the rampant practice of corruption in the project, as villagers kept repeating.

The point is, far from distantiating myself from the object of study, I was intervening in the watershed community and their lives when it came to the water issues. The field notes were thus not only an account of how the projects were managed and run in the villages but also about my reflective engagement with it.

The three considerations outlined above can be usefully summarized in the form as shown in the table:

Scientific Model	Research Method	Techniques of Empirical Investigation
Positive model	Survey research	Interviews, surveys
Reflexive model	Extended case method	Participant observation

Table 12. Models of Methodological Research

4.5.1 Selection of the Cases:

In this section, I present a brief argument to say that the selected cases would provide good opportunity /situation to investigate the mechanisms of depoliticization under the sub-categories as operationalized in the last chapter.

My study of governance strategy in watershed development projects is an approach to the subject of research in such a way that in order to get a better understanding of what is good/bad governance begins by asking how these divisions (good/bad governance) are operated in the two cases in an environment of simultaneous existence of multiple discourses.

To maximize the number of possible actors and hence discursive regimes in a project, I selected two cases that were funded by donor agencies and were implemented both by state and by non-state organizations. A selection of the second case was with a view to compare the practices in project management between the government and NGOs.

Both projects undertake watershed development within the community governance framework, form consensually nominated working committees for project management and address the women's development by forming micro-credit societies.

Both projects are funded by international donor agencies. As elaborated in the second chapter, IGWDP is funded by BMZ (via KfW and GTZ) while the Hills II project is supported by the World Bank. IGWDP was implemented by the NGO called WOTR and the Watershed Management Directorate, a nodal agency set up by the Government of India, funded by the European Economic Commission (EEC) in 1982, undertook Hills II. This selection of cases further helped to maximize the number of actors and discursive practices for a comprehensive view of Watershed governance in India.

4.5.2   Sampling

Extended case study does not take an entire community or culture as its object of study but relies on smaller social activities for analysis.

My study was conducted on the basis of one project and data from five villages in case of IGWDP in Ahmednagar and a detailed study of a single project village in Garhwal in the second case. Yet it was a constant concern for me to ensure a representative sample. This was attempted to be achieved by selecting and visitng many more villages in the same watershed (in both cases) that provided the complementing evidence and opportunities for cross checking the data from the thickly studied villages. The effort was more on maintaining a sociologically representative sample even if at times the statistical represetativeness suffered (Hamel, 1993).

Sociological representativeness relies more on seeing the sample village or community as a microcosm of the greater culture, the intent being to expand and generalize theories on the basis of the case study (ibid: 489). Thus sociological representativeness is determined more by the rigour of the study in question and in the quality of theory generated, than it is by the strict statistical representativeness of the sample. So whilst a small village sample may be of dubious statistical representativeness, if the ethnographer is sufficiently reflexive and uses theory to inform their work, it may well be capable of extension to the wider community (Wall, 2006).

4.5.2.1   IGWDP – Maharashtra

In 1990, a project proposal was submitted to the BMZ (Bacher, et. al. 1990) requesting a loan to start watershed development projects in Maharashtra with an explicit choice for NGOs as governance agencies. This later became formalized as the IGWDP in 1992 and

continued until December 2009. The project created its first institution in the form of an NGO called Watershed Organization Trust (WOTR) that was entrusted with the responsibility of 'capacity building' of the villagers to form local level ' civil society/ community based organizations' for project planning and implementation. Such capacity building NGOs are referred to as 'mother NGO' in the Indian watershed development jargon. 'Capacity Building' translates into the project areas in the form of new institutions created out of the village society as explained in the second chapter. To study the Watershed development project (implemented by the NGOs) and their discursive practices, WOTR provides a good case due to its long term involvement in the project area (around 20 years) and its well-documented project details. My preliminary acquaintance with this area and availability of data from the donor country (here Germany) were other reasons that helped and guided the selection of this project in Ahmednagar.

Once the project to be studied was selected, the specific villages to be chosen remained undecided until the field work actually began.

4.5.2.2   IWDP Hills-II, Uttarakhand

The Hills-II project is supported by the World Bank, one of the most important financial institutions for development in the southern countries. The policies and documents that the World Bank produces act as the largest source of development data referred to, anywhere in the world. It is not surprising therefore, that the projects of World Bank have been a source of constant observation and criticism.

Ferguson's analysis of World Bank-CIDA funded development project in Lesotho has immensely influenced the analysis of state power and development interventions, particularly from the perspective of depoliticization. Such financial institutions have been accused of an 'invention of the economy as a domain independent of politics, morality and culture' (Escobar 1999). Storey(2004) observes the way in which the World Bank discursively constructs debate, how it determines what policies are acceptable, how it seeks to present development as a neutral technical exercise, particularly in relation to economic development and by doing so it creates 'choice-less democracies'.

No study on depoliticization could claim completion unless the World Bank's perspective is taken into account, or so it appeared to me when I reviewed the literature available on depoliticization. This led me to tentatively select a World Bank funded watershed project, preferably in an area where the Bank has been involved for a considerable period of time to reveal the patterns (if there exist any) of governance from the perspective of depoliticization.

The project Hills II is located in the Garhwal district of Uttarakhand in north India. The World Bank has been engaged in this region since 1983, signifying an extended period of stay in the area, enough to give rise to the 'micro-politics' (Sardan, 2005) of development projects.

This project presents a different situation compared to the IGWDP, Maharashtra in the form of implementing agency also. A quasi-governmental nodal agency played the role of 'mother NGO' here. It was complementary to the first case in explicating the discursive practices in NGOs as different from those in the government organizations, the dominance of technocratic governance in the two situations, inclusively of the marginalized into the watershed governance in two cases, and the state society as well as the State- NGO-Society interactions.

4.6   Working in the Field- Trust Building and 'Extending out'

Case I:

In the first phase of my study of IGWDP Maharashtra, I interviewed the representatives of the donor agencies in the Germany. Later, I had the opportunity to accompany them on an exposure program to the field villages in India. After the exposure program when the participants from the donor country returned back, I stayed in those villages in an effort to triangulate my data from other sources of information. In the project villages, I met the important functionaries of the program and lived there in an effort to gain familiarity with the day-to-day living of the people when not observed by outside groups. The strategy of participant observation is to reduce the strangeness of one's presence in the space and time of the village

A reflexive participant observation requires that we build a relationship of trust with the community by empathizing with their cause and understanding their situation as they see

it. With an 'extended approach' of study, the reworking of theoretical explanations for the observed reality guided me in finding my way through the complex reality of watershed governance and politics that surrounds it. Besides empathy, the other technique for trust building that I follwed could be referred to as 'risky sharing'. This technique has its roots in clinical social work where the interviewer not only extracts information from the respondent but also shares his/her personal concerns. The researcher goes the furthest in 'nativity' when he/she is able to share his/ her own location in space and time and its relation to their space and time. The honesty of the relationship between these two spaces determines the trust that local people display in the research team. In my case study, I took the risk of telling the truth (and not what people would like to hear) as I stayed for longer periods of time and slowly drilled into the community that my interest was for the villagers though any direct action in terms of financial help for the pending work or new project was beyond my capacity. In personal interviews, 'risky sharing' helped to establish a rapport in the limited period of conversation.

I did not try to go 'native' in the sense that I perceived myself as a donor agent when participating in an exposure program organized especially for the donor groups, but remained in a cohesive relationship with both the donors and the Indian villagers. I was in a way representing both depending on the relative arrangement of the situation.

Case II:

Unlike the case study of IGWDP where I studied the 'top down' view on watershed development policy and practices, I applied the 'bottom up' view in the case of Garhwal. This means that I directly settled in the project village and began my data collection with the villagers' perspective on the watershed project. Following the ethnographic method and reflexive participant observation, I located the important activities, issues, people and institutions around the watershed development program.

As this area of Garhwal is surrounded by the Rajaji national park, the movement into and out of the village is not possible after sunset. This is because the roads are poor, unmetalled and wild elephants are a constant threat due to the surrounding park area. This provides the village with relative isolation in some respects.

Once we reached the village, there was an initial euphoria about the project when everyone wanted us to record their opinion. It slowly faded as we completely became a

125

part of the everyday vision of the village community. As the strangeness dissolved into mutual cognition, the important issues, people and institutions in the watershed program began to surface. I was in no hurry to extract the information from the villagers but focused on understanding the socio-political condition of the village and power dynamics around the watershed issues, till the villagers trusted me enough and were curios to share their opinion. From the many issues that came to light, the drinking water supply system and approach roads appeared to be a high priority and cause of much concern. In my position as an activist researcher, I explored the possibilities of bringing the water supply in a functional condition by extending out from the village into the governmental quarters of WMD and political institutions of the village *panchayat* and the local MLA. A certain degree of activism was necessary to build trust among the villagers as it showed them that my concern was not only to use this water system as a guinea pig for my research but a genuine concern about village water supply. A non-activist mode in this type of a setting is limiting by its own nature as it cannot experience the real problems that makes the water supply system dysfunctional.

A thick case study of the water supply scheme in Kimsar village served as the basis of analyzing the governance mechanisms that surround watershed development projects in Uttarakhand. I positioned myself on the side of the villagers in this case, and debated the revival of the pumping scheme from their perspective when faced with the government and implementing agencies, at the same time remained in a reflexive relationship with the opinion and perspectives from both parties as well as my own.

Participatory observation gave way at times to participant activism where I used the resources at my disposal towards a revival of the water system in the village.

4.7   Data collection and analysis

In the first stage of this study, a prelimnary review of the literature in this area was done to understand the existing theories in the light of the project processes. My aim was to develop an analytical framework whose categories could be used to explain the empirical data on issues, actors and institutions of watershed development projects in India.

Two main types of data were collected:

1) Policy papers and documents on the implementation of watershed projects from the implementing agenices;

2) Participant observations and field notes, interviews, ideas and local opinions;

Data Collection

I was mainly collecting qualitative data through semi-structured guided interviews as my main aim was to analyze the processes of governance and the actors' perspectives on them. Nevertheless, wherever possible quantitative data was also used to verify and enrich the qualitative data. In the case of quantitative data, the research depended partly on already existing data and partly collected in the field in interviews with households and families. Semi structured guided interviews with the expert groups, field staff and households were gathered over a period of one year divided between the two cases.

Expert interviews are based on the presumption that not the interviewed person is the object of analysis but his or her organizational context. The statements of the experts are considered in relation to their position in the interviewed organization. This helps in generating the research object specific assertions (Meuser and Nagel, 1991: 466). This type of interview is especially suited for collecting factual data and to gain information about the specific perceptions of different types of actors involved in watershed development. Expert interviews were conducted with the government officials, international experts, NGO representatives, individual experts and development agencies.

Household interviews:

To address the main research question, household interviews were found useful in getting the 'bottom up' perspective on watershed development programs. It was also useful in serving as a control sample to validate the data collected from the expert interviews and other documentary sources.

During the research period, it was my intention to talk to as many people as possible during my stay in the villages to get an impression of the living conditions and world view of the people. Though every such talk did not materialize into specific data, it certainly helped a great deal in enriching the study by providing a wider base to the socio-political observations in the specific watershed programs.

A normal interview proceeded in the follwong order of questions:

1) Introductory questions to start the conversation, uncontroversial and general issues;

2) Guiding questions that appear as substantial for the research question;

3) Additional questions that the specific position of the interviewed brings into discussion.

Data collected from the interviews and reflexive participant observation was organized and filtered for its relevant contents. Main issues and concerns of each interview were summarized to locate the important findings. The next step involved filtering the information gathered within the analytical categories of governance issues, people and institutions. Each analytical category was assigned further codes and memos based on the preexisitng theories. The process of coding and comparison of the two cases was facilitated by the research software called Atlas.ti-5.

5   PREFERENCE SHAPING FOR DEPOLITICIZED
WATERSHED GOVERNANCE

The objective of this chapter is to analyze the shaping process of donor's preferences in the governance of Indo-German Watershed Development Project (IGWDP) in India. Based on a discursive analysis of the 'Exposure and Dialogue Program' (EDP- as elaborated in the second Chapter) this chapter demonstrates the preference shaping of, and by, the EDP-delegation towards a depoliticization of watershed governance.

The chapter begins by analyzing the preference shaping of the EDP- delegation before the exposure program in Germany and then in India (section-7.1). The next section explores the 'display' of preferences by the EDP-delegation after their field visits in the project villages (section- 7.2) in a reflection session with other delegates and the implementing NGO. The next section analyzes how the donors in turn shape the preferences of the Indian policymakers in their dialogue session in Poona (section 7.3). The next section analyzes the preferences of the Indian delegation in their dialogue with the donors (section 7.4) followed by a brief summary of the main findings (section 7.5).

5.1   Preference-shaping of the donors

This section describes the process of preference shaping of the EDP-delegation, first in Germany and then in India, before their actual exposure to the project villages in Maharashtra. This will be achieved through a close textual analysis of the minutes of the EDP. Here I will examine in detail the peculiar emphases, interpretations and preferences of the delegation that combine to produce a unique perspective on watershed governance, a perspective that indicates a political position that watershed governance is a technical intervention to address the ecological problem of land degradation that should lie beyond the scope of politics.

5.1.1   Preference-shaping in the Pre-Exposure meeting, Berlin

This section discusses how the development agencies in the donor country, like the international NGOs and bilateral donor agencies like the BMZ shape the preferences for the choice of governance institutions and development interventions in the developing

countries. It explicates the choices that are dominant in the donor country and the discourses that find articulation in their policy documents and speeches to show a preference for treating watershed development as a technical intervention and placing it beyond the capacity for state control in the realm of apolitical implementing agencies like the expert NGOs and non-elected, nominated community based organizations.

The development policy of Germany is formulated by the BMZ and carried out with the help of its implementing agencies. The project under consideration (IGWDP) was sanctioned by the BMZ in 1992 and supported by the GTZ and KfW. The GTZ component is the initial 'capacity building phase' (CBP) of 12 -18 months. The funds are routed through the NGO called WOTR and then other phases follow with the help of grants from KfW.

Two months before the actual visit to India, a pre-EDP meeting was organized by the NGO called EDP e.V. in Berlin to explain this program to the potential participants. As its partner agency, BMZ was invited to introduce and provide details of the ongoing project, its origin, evolution and achievements in the last 17 years of association with the partner agencies in India.

The presentation made by the BMZ official in the orientation meeting at Berlin[100] reasoned that watershed management in India was a necessary development intervention because:

"*Über die Hälfte der Landfläche Indiens (175 Million. ha) ist von Landdegradierung betroffen…noch lebt die Mehrheit (c.a.70%) der indischen Bevölkerung auf dem Land von Subsistenzlandwirtschaft. Eine wichtige Strategie zur Armutsbekämpfung der Indischen Regierung ist die Entwicklung von Wassereinzugsgebieten…*"

The above statement not only describes the problem of land degradation as a cause of vulnerability of the 70% of the Indian population but also presents watershed development as the befitting solution to this problem. The Indian government also recognized the importance of watershed development as an appropriate response to poverty alleviation. The above statement also introduced the state as an important actor in

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[100] Hahn, A., (2006): *Watershed Development im Kontext der bilateralen deutsch-indischen Entwicklungszusammenarbeit*, Ref-203, BMZ; Presentation to the EDP delegation on 7th September 2006, Berlin. In the rest of this chapter, this presentation is referred to as (Hahn, 2006).

watershed development, and that watershed development has been an important strategy of the Indian government to fight poverty. However, the state agencies had failed to implement the projects successfully till the 1990s due to their "*rein technische ausgerichtete Ansätze, ohne Managementrolle der betroffenen Bevölkerung zu berücksichtigen"* (Hahn, 2006).

The performance of government implemented projects had not improved considerably even after the coming into being of a national guidelines for watershed development and formation of watershed development fund in 1999.

There are two points to be noted in the above statements. First, that watershed development was the unanimous choice of the BMZ and Indian government for addressing the problems of rural poverty, and secondly that the state was unable to implement the watershed programs effectively due to their 'purely technical approach' and lack of participation from the local population. The selection of a watershed by the BMZ and the Indian government as the smallest unit of development is a decision based on technical rationality. I argue here that the dominance of the technical discourse safeguards the selection of watershed as a rational unit of rural development and puts it beyond the realm of critical examination. Compared to the village, states, provinces, countries, the only 'natural' project area is a watershed and that is beyond reproach because it is technically the most appropriate unit for circumscribing a geographical area. It is 'natural' because it allows planners to focus on all the effects of a downhill run-off in a given area and to plan accordingly to control or contain it (Tideman, 1996: 7).

Using the speech-act theory, to separate the multiple functions of an utterance from one another, the above statement not only discredited the government for its 'purely technical' approach that did not take the affected people into account but also prepared the stage for the logical introduction of other non-governmental agencies that were comparatively more efficient. By outlining the weaknesses of the government, it indirectly introduced the strengths of the non-governmental agencies and the reasons why the donor agencies preferred to work with the NGOs and self-help organizations in the implementation of IGWDP:

"*Staatliche und nicht-staatliche Durchführungorganisationen sowie Selbsthilfegruppen setzen Kernelemente einer eigenverantwortlichen und nachhaltigen Bewirtschaftung von Wassereinzugsgebieten um"*(Hahn, 2006).

The sustainable management of watershed development projects required that non-governmental agencies and self-help groups must also participate in the implementation of the projects. Partnership with the NGOs, civil society and the private sector to carry out the development projects began in 1990s as an outcome of the 'good governance' discourse that became popular in the international water management, including German development cooperation, and promised '*sowohl soziale als auch ökologische Verbesserungen*[101].

This is not surprising in the light of the fact that the German development cooperation in the water sector has gradually shifted to partnerships with private agencies that are considered more efficient compared to the governmental agencies:

„Es zeigt sich, dass den Wasserverbrauchern, auch und gerade den Armen, (...) mit einem privaten Modell langfristig besser gedient ist als mit den überkommenen staatswirtschaftlichen Lösungen. Auch für die Umwelt ist ein professioneller privater Betreiber, der adäquat beaufsichtigt wird, günstiger als ein schlampiger Staatsbetrieb". (BMZ 1999, 118)

Hoering (2003: 4) argues that the preference for 'public-private partnerships' in the German development policy can be located in the middle part of 1990s when the goal of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of development aid acquired focus:

"*Das Konzept der Beteiligung privater Unternehmen an der deutschen Entwicklungszusammenarbeit (Private Sector Participation, PSP, oder auch „Öffentlich-Private-Partnerschaften", Public-Private-Partnerships, PPP) datiert auf die Mitte der neunziger Jahre. Zum einen hoffte die Entwicklungspolitik damit, die Stagnation bei der öffentlicher Entwicklungshilfe zu kompensieren...Zum anderen setzt sie darauf, dass privatwirtschaftliches Engagement und Gewinnstreben größere Effizienz und Nachhaltigkeit entwicklungspolitischer Projekte bringen werden. Nachdem die ursprünglich bilaterale Entwicklungszusammenarbeit zwischen Regierungen beziehungsweise staatlichen Institutionen bereits um eine verstärkte Kooperation mit Nichtregierungsorganisationen (NRO) erweitert worden war, wird nun versucht, durch einen weiteren Partner die Wirksamkeit der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit zu verbessern".*

Once the NGO was presented as an implementing agency that was more efficient than the government, the presentation by the BMZ official highlighted the important role played

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[101] See Hoering (2003) for a detailed discussion on the changing orientation of development policy of Germany in the water sector.

by the implementing partner for IGWDP, an NGO called WOTR with its headquarters in Ahmednagar, Maharashtra. It described WOTR as a multifaceted NGO that acted as the 'mother' NGO (an NGO that initiates the formation of community-based organizations in the project villages). WOTR also provided:

"Unterstützung der Aktivitäten auf Dorfebene , Training, Beratung, Capacity Building für lokale NRO und CBO, Dorfentwicklung, Land- und Bodenmanagement, Pflanzenbaumaßnahmen, Mikrofinanzierung, Weidewirtschaft, ländliche Energieversorgung, Einkommensschaffende Maßnahmen, Gender Mainstreaming, Aufforstung, Human Resource Development, EDP, Ünterstützung von Schulen, Dorferneuerung...aber WOTR ist mehr...." (Hahn, 2006)

The above sentence describes WOTR as an agency that has undertaken all possible activities within and without the scope of watershed development. A distinct preference shaping for the NGO could be observed in the above statement that presented WOTR as an organization that cannot be adequately described inspite of the long list of activities that it supposedly undertakes. In the model provided by Hay (2007), this preference for delegation of function from the state to the non-state public sphere is designated as type-1 depoliticization.

From the presentation at the orientation meeting, an attempt to shape the preference of the participants can be noted in the three main areas:

i)   That watershed development was the expert agreed rational solution to poverty alleviation in degraded areas of India, agreed by the experts in both BMZ and India.

ii) That government had failed to implement the projects properly due to their purely technical approach and lack of local participation.

iii) NGOs like WOTR are better suited to implement watershed development projects that also perform a range of other activities that are too many to list, hence should be supported by the donor agencies.

Once the experts have agreed that watershed development is in fact the right answer, now it is for the NGO to convince the village people of its usefulness and secure their participation. Similarly, the implementing agencies seek to convince the politicians in the donor countries about the undisputed acceptance of watershed development as the

solution to poverty-affected regions in the degraded ecosystems of India. This is an example of how dominant groups push or persuade policy makers of the merits of a more or less agreed (amongst the 'experts') position regarding certain interventions. From the perspective of depoliticization, I argue that watershed development and its universal acceptance as an answer to the problem of poverty alleviation simultaneously rules out any other approach or solution to the problem. The problems of connecting roads, education, structural imbalances of power or provision of markets and fair prices remain outside the sphere of discussion around watershed development. Depoliticization here works through the denial that there is even a political choice to be made, by insistence on the existence of one, single technically correct solution to the given problem of poverty in the form of watershed development.

In the same light, shaping a preference for the reduction of the role of the state and routing of development through the agency of NGOs that have no democratic mandate is a strategy of depoliticizing watershed development that shifts the implementation and decision-making for the project to non-elected and consensually nominated committees.

5.1.2   Preference-shaping in the pre-exposure meeting in Darewadi, India

This section describes how the participants from the donor countries were exposed to the competing discourses of watershed governance from the state and non-state agencies on their arrival in the IGWDP village of Darewadi and later in Poona. First part of this section presents the discursive construction of WOTR of itself and the achievements of the IGWDP. This is followed by an expression of the donor's preferences in their meeting, first with the implementing NGO and then with the Indian governmental delegation. The next part describes the governmental discourse on watershed development that the EDP delegation encounters. This section shows that while the discursive construction of WOTR of itself as a 'success story' is an important part of its presentation to the donors, the government agencies also express their preference to work with non-governmental agencies outside the state. It is also shown how the governmental agencies express their helplessness in the light of wider issues of international prices of agricultural products as having an impact on watershed development in Ahmednagar villages. This is an example of type-3 depoliticization in Hay's model, where the

watershed development is resigned to the realm of fate and dictates of international circumstances, taken away from the governmental and public sphere.

The presentation of WOTR as multifaceted and successful agency by the BMZ (*…aber WOTR ist mehr...*) in Berlin was reiterated in Darewadi by the officials from WOTR. Father Hermann Bacher who founded the IGWDP in 1988-89 welcomed the EDP delegation. He outlined the problem of water scarcity and soil erosion in Ahmednagar district since he came to this place in 1966. In his view, IGWDP was a success story because it addressed this problem of water scarcity and brought people together:

"We have a success story only when we have a problem. Unless there is a problem, there is no struggle and cooperation or any innovations. The IGWDP was an answer to the soil erosion and water scarcity in the drought prone areas of rural Ahmednagar, now extended to two other states for its exemplary execution through people's involvement and participation in all phases of project execution."[102]

He emphasized the point that watershed development was an effective solution to the problem of water scarcity and that IGWDP was a 'success story' because it addressed this problem with people's participation 'in all phases of project execution'. The point here is not to go into a debate about how this success is measured and by whom, or the meaning of 'people's participation' but to point out the discursive construction of WOTR as a successful agency in developing watersheds with people's involvement, and watershed development as the right solution for water scarcity and soil erosion in drought prone areas. Using the speech-act theory, to separate the multiple functions of an utterance from one another, the above statement foreclosed the debate on the other possible remedies to this situation in favor of watershed development implemented by the NGOs that could generate 'people's involvement'.

Father Bacher explained why he selected watershed development and the transformation that was made possible with the example of Darewadi village:

"When I was here before the year 1995, for half a year I was going all over the places with my jeep up there on the *pathar* (plateau) seeing where I find the worst watershed possible, absolute desert! But it should have at least 500 to 1000 hectares of land area. So after half a year traveling on the pathar of the whole of Maharashtra, I looked down upon this watershed- beautiful! Perfect desert!! No water, not a tree, not even a grass. I said-

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[102] Field Notes, 28-10-2006: Speech by Father Bacher from WOTR to the EDP delegation in Darewadi, Ahmednagar.

This is the place (Darewadi) where we can do something. Darewadi was an awful business; for 5 months of the year, the village did not have even drinking water. They had to leave the village and go for sugarcane cutting, go for brick-kiln work….anything!! But there was nobody here. And they were sheep-holders. For half a year they were not even here, with their sheep and goats and whatever they have, moving to the east coast of India and then came back again."[103]

Darewadi village agreed to join the watershed development project in 1996 and today this village has been able to restore its environment. This village also houses the residential training center of WOTR where courses in watershed management are conducted all the year round, attended by national and international participants. Darewadi village is a good example of a heavily supervised watershed that acts as the showcase village for IGWDP and shapes the preference of the visitors to consider all other villages under this project to have an equally transformative effect on the physical environment of the area. An example of the preference shaped based on Darewadi village was later expressed in the dialogue session with the Indian decision makers by the MdB, Bernward Müller (see section 5.4.1).

After the meeting with Father Bacher, the EDP delegation was given a tour to the Darewadi Training Center (DTC). The Center also had photographs of the Darewadi watershed before, during, and after the watershed program. The photos taken before the project showed a dry area, photos taken during the project period showed a perceptible green patch with plantations while the photo taken after the project shows a denser patch of trees with a pond developing in the valley of the watershed. This was followed by a tour to the actual watershed site in Darewadi village to observe it in its present condition. With this visit, WOTR was able to convince the donor agencies that it was successful in regenerating the physical environment in Darewadi, and hence of every village under IGWDP.

While NGOs like WOTR focus primarily on watershed development to address water scarcity and irrigation in the rainfed areas, the government departments remain convinced of their 'hydraulic mission' that construction of large, small and medium dams on the seven rivers (Pravara, Adhula, Mula, Dhora, Bhima, Sina, Mahalungi) of the district could be a possible solution. The retired secretary of the water resources department,

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[103] Interview with Fr. Bacher in a documentary film made by WOTR called '*The Silent Revolution*', WOTR (n.d.)Ahmednagar.

government of Maharashtra, Suresh Sirke noted in his speech in a public ceremony in Ahmednagar[104] that:

"It is baseless to blame the large dams like Koyna in Ahmednagar for the problem of silting or heavy investment. In fact, they are cheaper. Without large dams like Bhandardhara and Mula, with a storage capacity of 11 and 26 TMC respectively, the progress of Ahmednagar district cannot be imagined. Now the government must think of medium sized dams also that have a command area of 2000- 10,000 hectares. Nilwande dam with a height of 74 meters, which is still under construction in the district, would be able to store 8.5 TMC of water and irrigate 64500 hectares area in 5 blocks of the district".

The point here is not to delve into the question whether watershed development has transformed the local landscape or dam-based water provision is the solution for Ahmednagar district, but to show that there exist different discourses that approach the problem of water scarcity in the district in different ways. Interactional sociolinguistics argues that the social context of an utterance also determines to a large extent what is said. Both discourses become comprehensible and even necessary when we consider the context of interaction, target audience and the institutional conditions in which WOTR or the governmental department defines its preference. The difference between the two types of discourse is, as Ferguson notes, due to two different sets of rules of formation for discourse, or two different problematics, and not due to any necessary difference in intellectual quality or individual abilities of the speaker (Ferguson, 1990: 28). In this light, it is not surprising that the discourse on watershed development preferred by the NGO- WOTR maintains its own distinctive qualities (in being 'participatory' or having a 'capacity building phase'), its closure because it has its own institutional, financial and ideological constraints[105] that structure the formation of participatory watershed development as its main discourse. Burawoy (2005) argues that the production and

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[104] *Jal Pujan* (Water worshipping) of seven rivers in the district organized by The Institution of Engineers (India) Ahmednagar local centre in association with *Sinchayan Sahyog* (irrigation support department) and other government organizations to celebrate the World Water Day on 22nd March, 2009 at *Sahakar Sabhagruha*, Ahmednagar. Available at (http://www.worldwaterday.org/page/2495)

[105] The institutional constrains result from its lack of public mandate for the NGO that necessitate 'people's participation' as the only source of its legitimacy to work in the villages. Financial constraints derive from the fact that the donor policies are willing to support only such efforts that provide development through 'self-help' and popular participation, and ideological constraints prevent this NGO from responding only to the work of Jesuit missions but also involve common people in its developmental work. In this way, participatory discourse becomes comprehensible in the light of above mentioned constraints.

dissemination of knowledge also depends on the target audience. For WOTR the target audience is the EDP delegation/ donors while for the state agencies, it is the masses, who display more faith in dams and 'big schemes' than in watershed development[106].

The EDP delegation was informed about the 'success story' of WOTR in the brochures and CDs presented to each participant on his/her arrival. It also contained a concise report (henceforth village report) on the village to be visited during the exposure phase, the details of the work done, project governance institutions and 'tangible impacts of the initative'.

I was placed in the Pimpri village with an official from the BMZ. The village report given to us described the project in Pimpri as a 'WOTR-Wasundhara Watershed Development Project' started in 2005. It was an ongoing project that had completed its 'capacity building phase' (CBP) and was would soon be taken up for the 'full implementation phase' (FIP). The village report identified the project governance institution and its composition at the local level:

"At the village level, the project is managed by the Village Development Committee (VDC), called Kaloba VDC, with the help of WOTR's team working in Akole cluster. The members of the VDC are consensually nominated by the village *gramsabha*. The VDC has 9 members including 4 women. They regularly meet to plan, implement and monitor the project".

Kaloba VDC that managed the watershed project in Pimpri was 'consensually nominated' by the *gramsabha*. As noted earlier, the Common Guidelines issued by the government in 1994 recommends the formation of community based organizations for the governance of watershed projects. This body, called the village watershed committee (VWC) has no legal status in the *panchayati raj* institutions due to its 'consensually nominated' status. This amounts to saying that the VWC is not a registered body (in most cases) and thus cannot receive funds from a public sector institution like NABARD. Lobo (2003) from WOTR contends that:

"VWC could be seen as a 'formal body' according to the Bombay Village Panchayat Act of 1958. This Act holds that 'when the majority of adult voting members in a village held a *gram sabha* in accordance with the provisions of the Act and passed a resolution, that

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[106] For an example of the common people's preference for 'big schemes' compared to watershed development, see the interview of an 'educated' villager in Kimsar under Hills-II project, conducted on 24th February 2007 in Kimsar. Available at (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVeaS5fZS6U)

resolution was a formal act, having a legal basis, was binding and enforceable. Thus the VWC that is established in such a manner becomes a formal body, eligible to receive funds and be held accountable for them" (Lobo, 2003: 6).

This Act provided the legal basis for the banks to open accounts in the name of VWC and NABARD disbursed funds directly to these accounts.

The literature distributed to the delegation did not mention why the elected *gram panchayats* were not chosen as the implementing agency or the logic of creating an institution parallel to the democratically elected body for carrying out developmental work in the village that is constitutionally a responsibility of the *gram panchayat*[107]. Of course, one explanation for changes in institutions comes from considering the incentives of those in power (Olson, 2000). WOTR chose to work with 'consensually nominated committees' compared to the *gram panchayat* as noted in the village report.

The village report also presented the "8 most tangible impacts from the watershed development project in Pimpri" as follows:

1. "The agricultural wage rate has increased from Rs. 30 to Rs. 60.
2. The drinking water problem has been solved through the activities undertaken by the women's group. Now the village has enough drinking water.
3. Significant increase in the ground water table, seasonal irrigation and cropped area as well as cropping pattern developed.
4. Significant change in the socio-economic status and the standard of living.
5. Women's involvement in developmental activities and decision making.
6. Increased social unity and confidence in the people regarding implementation of various developmental activities in their village.
7. Increased agricultural production in the field since the farmers can cultivate vegetables like chilly, potato, beans and pulses.
8. Farmers take repeat crops soon after *Kharif* crops (June to September)."

After reading the village report and before our exposure to the Pimpri village, my opinion was formed that if a watershed project can achieve these '8 most tangible impacts' among other intangible impacts in one year of CBP, it is a 'success story'.

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[107] The Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992-93. See 11th Schedule (Article 243G). Available at: <http://indiacode.nic.in/coiweb/amend/amend73.htm>

<u>Women's empowerment through micro-credit groups</u>

As mentioned in the Berlin meeting, the NGO works not only in the field of watershed development but also for women's empowerment, among other things. This was further emphasized in the presentation made by Marcella D'Souza, the present head of WOTR, in the introductory meeting with the EDP delegation, on the micro-credit societies in the project villages through the 'sister concern' of WOTR called 'Sampada Trust'.

"Sampada Trust establishes micro-credit societies for women's empowerment and works as the 'company partner agency' to network with private banks and provides opportunities to the women to get loans. Sampada Trust has calculated the cost of watershed treatment, women's development and the cost of drinking water per hamlet. That comes to around 45€ / person / year…This new NGO is also looking for the scope of renewable energy in the project villages".[108]

In her presentation, D'Souza linked women's empowerment in the project villages with the establishment of SHGs implying that if a village woman was part of the micro-credit group formed during the project period, she could be considered as empowered.

It is important to note that the EDP delegation on a visit to watershed projects under IGWDP implemented by WOTR was presented with the information about a new NGO formed out of WOTR that works in the area of establishing micro-credit groups in the village.

It not only points to the project based lifeline of the NGOs in developing countries that are under a constant pressure to reinvent themselves as per the changing requirements and policy focus in the donor countries but also shows that the NGO was aware of its audience and accordingly presented its facts to inform the donors about its new ventures for possible funding in the future. WOTR that was formed out of the earlier NGO called 'Social Center' after BMZ sanctioned the IGWDP in 1992 was indicating its closure when the project was to expire in 2008 with the coming into being of a new NGO carved out of WOTR called 'Sampada Trust'. The demand for funding of this new NGO was partially revealed in its presentation of the cost of 'women's development, watershed treatment and drinking water' as 45 € while the rest of the presentation calculated other values in Indian Rupees. It would probably appear to be a small amount to pay for one year of water supply, watershed treatment, and 'women's development'. It would be

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[108] Presentation to the EDP delegation by D'Souza from WOTR on 28-10-2006, Darewadi, Ahmednagar

interesting to find out about the actual activities that the new NGO plans to undertake in its three-way developmental plan to be accomplished in 45€ per person and how these costs are calculated. From the micro-credit based approach of this NGO, it can be safely concluded that to 'develop a woman' would eventually boil down to inducting her in one of the village self-help groups as it is practiced in the IGWDP.

This partial approach to women's issues projects a woman's developmental need as confined to the possibility of her eligibility to secure a credit at lesser interest rate. From the perspective of depoliticization, reducing women's development issue to the formation of micro-credit societies in the village also denies them any other avenues of development except that they become micro-entrepreneurs with the help of a small loan, without addressing any other infrastructural or socio-cultural issues that directly have a bearing on the sustainability of a their enterprise.

The point is not to argue whether the formation of the SHG is an effective tool to address the development of women in a village but to show that by reducing their options of empowerment to the provision of a loan at a lower interest (that was anyway available at a higher interest rate from the moneylenders, with SHG formation the most fundamental change then, has been the lowering of the interest rate by 3-5% on small loans), the NGO simultaneously limits the critical discussion on the options to bring about empowerment of the women to a logistic problem of how to form more SHGs. It shapes the donor's preference that a woman in the SHG is empowered and hence developed. Little more needs to be done in a village for women's empowerment except forming a SHG.

The inherent contradiction and narrow definition of women's empowerment by self-help group formation was revealed clearly in the visited village. In the Pimpri village, Sunita has been a part of the SHG since the project started in 2005. Sunita has finished her high school and wanted to be a nurse but in the present discourse that clubs women's empowerment with the SHG formation, there is no space to address the idea that a village woman may have other needs and aspirations than becoming a village-level entrepreneur all the time. The job of the NGO however, is to convince the village women that SHG is their only recourse to development and to convince the donors of its developmental impact. Part of the strategy of depoliticization is to reduce the people to the status of consumers that need to be convinced about the usefulness of a particular intervention

141

rather than generate a critical public sphere to discuss the nature of intervention required. In this sense, convincing the donors of the usefulness of SHGs in women's empowerment also limits the donors from debating the nature of intervention that could be required to accommodate the concerns of women like Sunita in the face of available options.

The formation of this new NGO called 'Sampada Trust' that shifts from watershed development work into micro-finance (headed by the program coordinator of IGWDP, Crispin Lobo) shows how development projects are informed by a strong economic orientation centered on economic relations that are presented as true indicators of empowerment. This orientation derives from the understanding of economics as neutral, empirically verifiable, and technically correct discipline, a science of neutral and politically incontestable concepts. As Abrahamsen argues, this technical presentation of development is a part of generalized depoliticization of development, 'the myth of development as an apolitical, technical process':

"'To a significant extent, this claim to neutrality relies on the commonplace perception of economics as a value-free science. Economics is perceived as a "realist", empirical discipline that can provide a neutral and true representation of the world. In this way correct economic policy becomes a question of objective facts and data, devoid of political and cultural preferences" (Abrahamsen, 2000: 12).

This neutrality is then extended also to conceptualizations of the NGO as an agent of development that is apolitical, and acts ideally in the interest of all in order to provide the best economic support to the villagers with the help of micro-credit. With this presentation, the NGO shaped the preference of the donors to understand women's empowerment by counting the number of SHGs formed in the village. This later became an important, if not the only, scale for the donors to measure the success of the program.

In brief, this section has shown how the implementing agencies like BMZ and WOTR shaped donor's preferences before their actual exposure to the project villages:

- For treating watershed development as a rational, scientific intervention to fight land degradation vis-à-vis poverty.
- That the project villages were developed and poverty significantly reduced.
- That government was inefficient in implementing watershed projects compared to the NGO.

142

- That WOTR was a 'success story' in implementing watershed development projects.

- That inclusion of women in VDCs and self-help groups is a characteristic component of IGWDP that has empowered the village women.

- WOTR is an apolitical organization that works with nominated (hence apolitical) committees at the village level since watershed development does not involve making any political choices but is merely the implementation of technically correct policies.

- The local level politics and contestations in the project are passed over in silence although their existence was noted by the EDP delegation after their exposure to the project villages, as shown in the next section.

5.2   Donors expressing their preference

After a three-day exposure and living in the project villages, the EDP delegation had an informed opinion, if not a fully shaped preference about the different aspects of watershed development, and interventions for poverty alleviation through self-help.

This section describes the categories under which the EDP delegation organized their experiences in the exposure villages, the issues that came up for discussion, preferred mode of governing the watersheds and the shortcomings of the project. It shows that the donor's preferences for the watershed governance institutions and practices were subject to politicization and depoliticization depending upon the target audience, institutional affiliation and the social context of interaction.

In this section, I argue that the efforts made by the implementing agencies in convincing the EDP delegation that watershed development was the only rational solution to eradicate rural poverty, fell short of its goal as explicated in the observations made by the EDP members after their exposure to the project villages. The EDP delegation felt that it was necessary but not a sufficient solution towards alleviating rural poverty. The women's empowerment in the project village was limited.

Giesela Kallenbach, Member of the European Parliament (MdEP) observed in the reflection phase in Darewadi Training Center with the NGO staff and EDP delegation that:

"Watershed alone cannot be the answer to poverty alleviation. The issue of fair-trade and GMO are important matters that must be considered in relation to poverty alleviation besides the soil and water conservation issues raised by watershed development". [109]

In a similar observation Bärbel Höhn, MdB and a member of the EDP delegation added in this meeting that:

"Watershed development was just one component of the development process and other issues like livelihood opportunities for the landless, education, health, social security, women's development must also be addressed to fight poverty that looms large in the village-"

Matthias Adler from the KfW remarked that watershed development needs to be supplemented by addressing other issues also to bring about any effective change in the lives of the rural people:

"Besides water, there is an equally important issue of connecting roads. The village that I went to was Shirasgaon and the roads leading to it are in a very bad shape which makes it difficult to access the village. I would put roads on an equally high priority." [110]

Bernd Wirtzfeld from BMZ, placed with me in the Pimpri village observed that:

The management of water in a village cannot stop at just harvesting it but the waste water management is also a very important part of it. If the waste water is allowed to flow free into the ground, it will soon contaminate the water table and thus make it unfit for usage. The management of waste water also requires that there is a proper sanitation system in place but none of the villagers have it. The practice of open air defecation is rampant in the village and thus a serious cleanliness problem. We must also look into the issue of sanitation as a part of the project policy."

It is visible in the above statements that the efforts by the implementing agency, WOTR to present watershed development as a sufficient and most appropriate intervention for rural development was contested by the EDP delegation in the light of other important issues that the project did not address. These issues, as shown above, ranged from fair-trade, basic infrastructure, GMOs to sanitation that was observed to be relevant in connection with watershed development.

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[109] Field Notes, DTC, 29th October, 2006, Darewadi, Ahmednagar. All citations in English in this section are the recordings from this meeting in Darewadi after the village exposure and the citations in German are from the life-stories of the host families submitted by the participants to the organizing NGO called EDP e.V. after their visit. See EDP e.V. (2006).

[110] Ibid.

While WOTR seeks to depoliticize watershed development by presenting it as the only solution to rural poverty, the delegation politicized the issue by extending out to the structural causes of poverty and other equally basic problems. It extended the questioning space from 'what should be done to implement watershed projects successfully' to 'how far does watershed development address the problems of poverty and empowerment'.

The EDP delegation pointed out that "significant change in the socio-economic status and standard of living" as reported in the village report by the implementing NGO was not observed in the exposure villages. Adler from KfW recalled his experience in the project village of Shirasgaon with the Bhangare family, his host in the village during the exposure tour:

"Die Familie Bhangare gilt al eine ärmeren Familien im Dorf: sie besitzt kein Land und muß daher bei Landbesitzern als Tagelöhner arbeiten, was jedoch für den Lebensunterhalt nicht ausreicht. Das Familieneinkommen beträgt umgerechnet rd. 360 € im Jahr und somit gerade einmal einen € pro Tag."

Bärbel Höhn, MdB, placed in the same village with Adler seconded his observations in the following words:

"The villagers had no livelihood opportunities except working as daily wage laborers or depending on small assets like cattle. In my host family, a goat went missing on the day we were in the village and it was a great loss for the family. They had such fragile social security system that it could be disturbed by the loss of a goat."

She described her host family in an interview with *Die Zeit* (16th November, 2006) and their standard of living in the following words:

"*Meine hatte vier Kinder, sie lebt von Tagelöhnerjobs und zwei kleinen Stückchen Pachtland, und dabei muß Sie die Hälfte ihrer Reisernte auch noch dem Landbesitzer abgeben. Die Familie Bhangare schläft in zwei winzigen Zimmern zu fünft auf dem Boden*".

Kallenbach, MdEP noted the annual income of her host family Shelke:

"*Das Jahreseinkommen unserer Gastfamilie Shelke liegt bei etwa 200 €; davon sind neben den Eltern der ,Kronprinz Machindra (13) und die Mädels Savita (17), Sarika (15) zu versorgen.*"

Marcus Stewen from KfW, placed in the Wankute village with Kallenbach, observed the assets and the standard of living of his host family:

"Die vier Ziegen, der einzige größere Vermögensbesitz der Familie, findet nun Unterschlupf zwischen den noch stehen gebliebenen Mauern....Neben einigen Küchengeräten wie Pfannen und Töpfen dominieren die Dosen mit Gewürzen und Kräutern. Silberne Schalen auf denen das Essen serviert wird, gibt es nur fünf..."

Many such observations by the members of EDP delegation pointed to the fact that villages covered by IGWDP and the beneficiaries of the project were not enjoying a high standard of living nor was the poverty any lesser.

The participants of the delegation observed the efforts made towards the empowerment of women and the actual impact that the SHGs were making in the life of the village women.

Bärbel Kofler, MdB, was palced with Martin Rempis from the organization '*Brot für die Welt*' in the project village of Mhaswandi. Kofler observed the micro-credit societies and noted that:

"SHGs were a very lively group that provides some space to the women for discussion but it had no impact on changing the traditional role structure for women in the village nor was it sustainable."

Stewen from KfW, observed that in his village Wankute that "the watershed committee was male dominated with very few old women as members."

Höhn observed in the meeting that the "institution of SHG was providing some relief in the emergency situations but it is limited in its impact and sustainability."

Adler from KfW, located in the same village as Höhn, expressed his evaluation of the SHGs based on his interview of the host family:

"Die monatlichen Treffen und die Aussicht auf Mikrokredite verschaffen Linderung in der Not und beruhigen sehr im Alltag, aus der Armut führen diese Mikrokredite aber nicht", erklärt Thakabai.

Adler adds further that it made little sense to provide poor women with small loans and presume that they would become small entrepreneurs when all other socio-cultural and infrastructural problems are left unattended:

"Derartige Investitionen würden auch wenig Sinn machen: es existiert in Sirasgaon kein Markt auf dem selbst produzierte Waren verkauft werden könnten, und der Verkauf dieser Waren auf weiter entfernten Märkten unten im Tal wird erheblich erschwert durch die schlechte Straße zu diesem entlegenen Dorf, die nicht mehr als ein Eselpfad ist."

As already noted, Adler placed the connecting roads to the village on an equal priority with water.

In his visit report submitted to EDP e.V. it was noticed by Wodarg (MdB) that the project had, at its best brought the villagers only a step away from the traps of poverty:

"*In zahlreichen Gesprächen sowohl mit dem örtlichen VDC (Village Development Committee), dem „Gemeinderat", der Frauenversammlung und der Dorf versammlung wurde ausdrücklich die Bedeutung des Watershedprojekts für den Zussamenhalt des Dorfes betont und große Hoffnungen für die eigene Zukunft zum Ausdruck gebracht. Deutlich wurde aber auch, dass die meisten Menschen trotz der geschilderten positiven Entwicklung nur einen Schritt von einem erneuten Absturz in die Armutsverhältnisse vor Beginn des Projekts entfernt sind".[111]*

It can be observed from the above statements that the EDP delegation began to differ from the official discourse of IGWDP as a 'success story'. The delegation had argued that measures more than watershed projects were required, that poverty was stagnant and visible among the project beneficiaries also, and the limited support provided by the SHGs in times of emergency.

The point here is not so much to explicate the incompatibility between the discursive construction of IGWDP by WOTR and the observations made by the EDP delegation but to show the source of this incompatibility. In its discursive construction of the project, WOTR leaves out a very important aspect owing to its apolitical representation of itself, namely the political contestations and village level negotiations in forming the VDC and functioning of the project while the EDP delegation was exposed to the project work in all its reality of the everyday workings and automatically political negotiations emerged as an important variable in their observations. In their discussion with the NGO and other members of the delegation in Darewadi after the exposure to the project villages, the EDP delegation placed local politics and power relations in the project in its list of importance and began to differ discursively from the NGO.

This abstinence from addressing the political aspects of the project also performs the action of its denial in the project activities. Bärbel Höhn, Member of the German Parliament (MdB) asked:

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[111] EDP. e.V (2007) *Armutsbekämpfung und selbstverwaltete Wassereinzugsgebiete- Exposure- und Dialogprogramm in Kooperation mit dem Watershed Organization Trust (WOTR), Indien 2006* in *Lebensgeschichten und Erfahrungsberichte der EDP Teilnehmer/innen;* Bonn.

"Why were the projects not routed through the already existing elected village *panchayats*? Why were the people not given more power to manage their watersheds?"

This question was seeking a clarification for the observation made that people had limited power to take decisions about their watersheds. Lobo from WOTR admitted that in the larger political considerations, decentralization of power in actual practice was not in the interest of dominant group:

"Decision-making was still not decentralized in practice because of the political nature of the context, where it is in the interest of the government to keep people powerless and dependent on them, even underdeveloped. This gives them the space which they could promise to fulfill and continue to be in power based on those promises." [112]

From his statement, it is clear that the practice of decentralization was different from the claims made in policy documents because of political reasons. Lobo argues that the government derives its power by keeping the village people powerless; hence, deep down the hidden political consensus of the government is to keep people underdeveloped. Speech-act theory allows us to observe that Lobo also conveyed that WOTR being a non-governmental agency did not participate in this brand of politics, as it has no agenda of political power or reelection. To mean, WOTR was sincerely interested in empowering the villagers while the government was interested in keeping them 'dependent, or even underdeveloped'.

His statement also emphasizes the need for an apolitical approach to watershed development that could only be implemented efficiently by such organizations that have no political goals, namely the NGOs. Here 'political nature' refers to the electoral politics where reelection by the people is the only route to political power. In this sense, the NGO remains insulated from political considerations. This is an important argument from the NGO sector to claim its neutrality towards politics. It provides the NGO with the image of being a neutral, technical agency that is genuinely interested in the empowerment of village people (as their underdevelopment serves no purpose of the NGO, unlike the government where underdevelopment is preferred). However, it also raises the questions about their legitimacy to participate in a process as political as water distribution and management.

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[112] Discussion with the EDP delegation in the 'reflection phase' in Darewadi Training Center, Ahmednagar; (Field Notes on 1-11-2006)

The absence of political ambitions in an NGO by design is an important component of the discursive construction of itself as an 'apolitical' agency involved in an objective oriented technical intervention for soil and water conservation. But in practice, the NGO remains highly political in its negotiations with the village community, community based organizations, policy makers and donor agencies as observed by the EDP delegation. Local political configurations were visible in the unequal distribution of benefits, composition of the VDC, and inclusivity of women in the program.

Adler from KfW observed after his village exposure that:

"Recognition of the problems of different interest groups was important for an efficient planning of the watershed development projects…in my village landless and marginal landholders do not benefit much from the watershed development project and remain confined to wage labor."

Stewen from KfW also observed the skewed distribution of benefits:

"In Wankute village, there were rich farmers who certainly benefitted differently compared to the poor farmers. The village watershed committee was also male dominated with very few old women as members."

His observation highlights that landowning farmers (rich) benefit more and on a long-term basis (differently) while the marginal landholders and landless are confined to short term benefits (wage labor). As WOTR argues, '4 seats out of 9 are reserved for women in a VDC' conveys the message that women are included in the program and have a say in the decision making for watershed development. In his observation, Stewen highlights the male dominated composition of the VDC where women members have a weak presence. 'Old women (were nominated) as members' also points to the fact that the project does not address the basic structural problem that places restrictions on the village women in the first place and bypasses the fundamental issue in favor of getting the required percentage of women in the VDC by nominating old women, who are already 'empowered' (at least known and mostly respected due to their old age). It overcomes the problem of addressing the oppression faced by common village women that restricts their freedom of realizing their full potential by showing that women do have that freedom with the help of old women presented as members of the VDC.

Blühdorn (2007) refers to 'simulative democracy' as a characteristic of depoliticization. In theory, gender mainstreaming is achieved if there are '4 women out of 9 in a VDC'

while in practice the issue of representation is also vital. Do these 'very few old women' adequately represent the village women? Whom and what do they represent? Do they act only as a tool for the NGO to claim gender mainstreaming, or do they represent village women as empowered citizens? A simulation of women's empowerment[113] is achieved in discourse by the NGO that does not re-present the plight of common women in the villages but serves other political purposes of checking the right boxes in funding proposals.

Martin Rempis from the organization '*Brot für die Welt*' was placed with Bärbel Kofler (MdB) in the village called Mhaswandi under the IGWDP. This village also had a government supported watershed development project under the 'Employment Guarantee Scheme' of the government. He observed that:

"The government-run program that was meant to provide employment to the poor and landless villagers was hijacked by the rich farmers. The BPL population did not benefit as much as the rich farmers did. In IGWDP, the VDC operated within a democratic framework but the caste issue was also very much present. The low caste people were unable to resist and overcome domination by the higher castes…the capacity building phase should focus more on the poorer sections that have low self-help capacity."[114]

Rempis observed the inequality of resource distribution and that the projects were missing their target population due to the dominance of powerful interests. His last statement indicates that the capacity building of the poorer sections is more important than the present degree of focus on it. It is also implicit in his statement that the capacity building was an exercise with the richer sections (landowners) probably because the required physical constructions would take place on lands owned by them. Therefore, accommodating their interests was important for the project to procced in the village. Socio-cultural factors like the caste status were also playing a role in determining the governance of watershed development in the village.

In the exposure to the villages, the EDP delegation observed the presence of local contestations and politics shaping the watershed development programs. The nature of politics between the implementing NGO and the *gram panchayat* or the VDC, right from the selection process of the village to the completion of the project, was passed over in

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[113] Also see section 6.4 for a detailed discussion on ,simulative' democracy in the watershed development project management.
[114] Filed Notes, 1-11-06; Meeting of the EDP delegation and the NGO staff in the 'reflection phase', Darewadi Training Center, Ahmednagar.

silence. The acceptance of villages for the program by WOTR and the acceptance of WOTR by the villagers for the capacity building are also influenced by its Jesuit background as one of the EDP delegates, Vonalt from KfW, noticed:

"I was shocked and it saddens me to hear a rumor that WOTR may be discriminated because they have a Christian background and I hope this is not true."[115]

The point here is not to prove or disprove if WOTR is discriminated, but to argue that an absence of certain issues (like local politics, socio-political context) in the presentation of watershed development projects of WOTR helps it in its construction of itself as an apolitical, non-religious organization formed with the objective of providing technical guidance to the community based organizations in implementing watershed development projects.

An important tactic of depoliticization is to exclude certain issues of public importance from entering the critical public sphere and building consensus for the few selected issues that are allowed in the public sphere and 'publicized' by the interested agency[116]. Its absence in the discourse simulates the absence of such issues in reality also. In this sense, the EDP delegation repoliticized the issues of distribution and contestations in watershed development project by bringing them out in the public sphere for discussion. In this light the work of WOTR in poverty eradication or gender mainstreaming was observed to be of limited impact. The quality of impact, so far shadowed by the absolute number and quantity (of for e.g. villages covered or the total number of SHGs formed), showed conflicting evidence in support of the 'success story'. The point here is not to argue if the project was successful but to show that with the inclusion of different interest groups (locating and opening the 'black box') in their observation, the EDP delegation established that watershed development was in fact a politically contested site and as far as political empowerment of the people was concerned, the project had not made any significant change. This is precisely because the project addresses a different problem as shown in its choice of indicators to measure success that derive from a consumerist approach to development.

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[115] EDP e. V. (2006)

[116] See Habermas (1990: 55). '*Im Bereich der Massenmedien hat Publizität freilich ihre Bedeutung geändert. Von einer Funktion der öffentlichen Meinung wird sie auch zum Attribut dessen, der die öffentliche Meinung auf sich zieht: public relations, Anstrengungen, die neuerdings ‚Öffentlichkeitsarbeit' heißen, sind auf die Herstellung solcher publicity gerichtet.*

The only way for NGO to validate its 'success story' discourse now was to make the delegation believe that its choice of indicators were representative of success because the structural causes of underdevelopment of the people has political reasons that are outside the purview of WOTR's work as it is an apolitical organization. Thus it cannot be held accountable for the problem that it does not address in the first place.

5.3   Depoliticization by the NGO

This section explores how the preferences of the donors were 're-depoliticized' by the NGO before their dialogue with the Indian delegation.

If the villages were underdeveloped, as Lobo argued earlier, it is because the government and politicians want it to be so in the bigger political picture. This is one of the causes of discrepancy in what is said in policy and what actually happens in its implementation.

"There is a huge gap between policy and its implementation in India. The Indian officers are used to the charges of corruption, which has been a popular subject in the local press, but it puts the officers on defensive and thus no fruitful outcome of the dialogue is possible. We cannot afford to just locate the gaps between policy and implementation but should think in terms of solutions and suggestions for filling these gaps."[117]

After clarifying that the Indian delegation may get defensive if the gaps are located in the program, Lobo suggested that the delegation 'should think in terms of solutions and suggestions for filling these gaps' in their dialogue with the Indian policy makers. A more 'fruitful outcome of the dialogue' would be to tell the government that 'they are on the right track if they push watershed development in the way shown by WOTR':

"Indian politicians needed to know from a disinterested party about their watersheds. They need to know that they are on the right track if they push watershed development in the way shown by WOTR. The government projects do not focus on capacity building while WOTR spends one year, sometimes more in the capacity building. Human input in the government projects is low which gives rise to many problems including delayed money transfer, resulting in a delay of everything else."[118]

Lobo further clarified the weaknesses of the government projects, which do not focus on capacity building, have low human input and delayed money transfer. Using speech-act theory of discourse analysis, this statement also outlines the comparative strengths that WOTR has as an NGO. It also articulated the arguments that EDP delegation could use in

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[117] Discussion with the EDP delegation in the 'reflection phase' in Darewadi Training Center, Ahmednagar; (Field Notes on 1-11-2006)
[118] Ibid.

their dialogue with the Indian policy makers in support of a NGO driven watershed development program. This could be a substantial outcome of the dialogue session. In Burawoy's terminology (see Chapter-3), the critical reflexive knowledge of the EDP delegation, in the opinion of WOTR, should now acquire instrumental-policy characteristics in terms of solutions and suggestions. Since WOTR was a part of the solution, the EDP could be helpful in helping people if they spoke on behalf of the 'solution' in the way shown by WOTR.

Höhn (MdB) argued that the EDP delegation had:

"The possibility to tell the government whether a project was good or not…We can share our impression of the project with them, what was good about the work that WOTR has done in these villages and convince the politicians to back up such organizations".[119]

Other members of the EDP were not convinced that the dialogue session with the Indian delegation should focus largely on presenting 'what was good about the work that WOTR has done' but should also focus on actual experiences in the village and weaknesses of the program. Vonalt from KfW suggested:

"We could discuss tomorrow in the following manner: first, we can present what we have found out in the villages and then we can seek information about what is being done from the Indian side. We can then discuss the policy issues that could address this situation on behalf of the villagers. We should not only communicate that WOTR has done good work but also look for further opportunities for cooperation between the two countries, for e.g. in the field of bio-diesel and alternative energy options."[120]

Ackermann (MdB) agreed to the first part of Vonalt's proposition and added that:

"There is no possibility for the villagers to communicate with Indian decision makers. Thus we can use EDP as an opportunity to communicate the issues that we have experienced to the Indian politicians."[121]

We find here that some members agreed that the dialogue could be used to 'convince the politicians to back up such organizations' like WOTR, other participants argued that wider developmental cooperation between the two countries should also be discussed. The final preferences of the EDP delegation could only be revealed in their two day dialogue with the Indian delegation in Poona.

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[119] Field Notes: 1-11-2006, Ddarewadi Training Center, Ahmednagar.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.

5.4   Shaping the preference of the state

In this section, I will show that the presentations by the EDP delegation and their sharing of experiences in the dialogue with the Indian delegation in Poona underwent perceptible changes when compared to the sharing of experiences in the reflection phase with the NGO and other participants in Darewadi. Certainly the audience was thickened, joined now also by the state representatives including the Minister of Agriculture of Maharashtra among other participants. With a change in the listener group, the partially informal environment of the training center in Darewadi had also changed into a formal bilateral seminar on watershed development in Poona. But the most defining feature of the changed discourse of the EDP delegation came not from the changed 'to whom it was addressed' but from the changed 'on whose behalf was the address made'. In this section, I argue that the EDP delegation shifted from speaking 'on behalf of the village people' to speaking 'on behalf of the NGO'. The actors from the donor agencies in a strategic alliance with the NGO seek to shape the preference of the Indian delegation towards supporting an NGO-led watershed development program that works with consensually nominated community based organizations at the grassroots level. This indicates a preference shaping for a depoliticized governance of watershed development programs that bypasses the elected institutions of governance at the local and national levels.

5.4.1   Watershed dialogue in Poona, Day-1

Dialogue phase in Poona started with the sharing of village experiences by the German parliamentarians. Bernward Müller (MdB) shared his experiences in the village Sarvachol:

"I was in the village Savarchol in the Sangamner block and had a close interaction with the village families. Seeing the plantations in Darewadi, the economic benefits which the people reported and number of self-help groups in the village, I am convinced that the NGO has been successful in bringing many opportunities to the remotest of villages in Maharashtra. But there still remains the issue of sanitation which we should take up together. The women in the village are very interested and very active in this debate. It would also be an opportunity to look into the debate of waste water management. I would like to end by saying that 'people in the villages are very active in this project and WOTR has given many opportunities and possibilities to them in the form of a watershed project.

154

It is important to activate people for their own development by building their capacity for self-help."[122]

In his opinion, the NGO was 'successful in bringing many opportunities to the remotest of villages in Maharashtra'. He ascribed this success to the plantations and visible change in Darewadi (not so visible in Sarvachol), economic benefits which the people 'reported' (as it was not so visible to the participants in their exposure villages), and the 'number' of self-help groups formed in the village. The idea here is not to argue if these indicators represent the success of a project but to observe that the NGO was presented to be 'successful in bringing many opportunities'. He summed up his experience in the village by saying that 'people in the villages are very active in this project and WOTR has given many opportunities and possibilities to them in the form of a watershed project'. He expressed his preference for WOTR as the implementing agency for watershed development, and capacity building of the people. He was also convincing the state representatives to support WOTR because it had restored the ecosystem in villages like Darewadi, economic gains were reported by the people in project villages and formed many SHGs for women's empowerment. People 'are very active in this project' refers to the participatory nature of project implementation. WOTR should also be supported because it was successful in generating popular participation due to its unique focus on capacity building phase. The absence of capacity building phase in the government projects automatically rules them out in his preference for watershed implementing agencies.

His presentation was followed by a presentation by Bärbel Höhn (MdB) who shared her experience in the IGWDP village with the Indian delegation:

"The programme addressed not only the water related problems of the villagers but also brought about a significant change in the women's condition. The formation of SHG has made the women economically stable and they feel more empowered. WOTR started with watershed development but did a lot more. IGWDP benefits the people who have land. But the family that I was staying with was a landless family with five members. The wife had joined the SMS and was more confident. From many different points of

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[122] Dialogue of the EDP delegation with the Indian delegation in Pune, 2-11-2006. See: EDP. e.V. (2006). *Protokoll*: Armutsbekämpfung und selbstverwaltete Wassereinzugsgebiete- Exposure- und Dialogprogramm in Kooperation mit dem Watershed Organization Trust (WOTR), Indien, 2006. Bonn.

reference, this is found to be a successful programme. There are three main reasons why this programme is successful:

1) Empowering women is an important aspect of the programme. The women are now more active and confident, which is achieved by the SHG. The empowerment is also evident in that the women could get credit and help the family with money also, which was not the case earlier. This helps in times of illness or education or marriage in the family. SHG provides the platform for the women to talk about the different issues.

2) The programme is successful also because of its transparency policy. The project was carried out through the NGO, which gave the money to VWC and thus they have no hidden political agenda. This was actualized and reported in the *gram sabha* meetings. The distribution of finances is displayed in a public place of the village so that there is less corruption. It makes a good example in the light of realization that in India, as everywhere else in the world, corruption is a major obstacle to development. Also, there is a lack of structures to make the programme successful.

3) The project was not trusted to the *gram panchayat* as it may have political strings attached to the programme and it would not become a fully villager's program." [123]

Höhn outlined the reasons that made the IGWDP a successful program. She ascribed this success to the empowering effect achieved by the SHGs, transparency in village level financial transactions, and formation of a new apolitical institution, called the VDC that was more efficient and less corrupt.

Using the speech-act analysis, we observe that her statement also performs the function of outlining the strengths that WOTR had compared to the government institutions. It was an example of a transparent agency in the face of corrupt practices all around it, especially in the government supported projects. The point here is not to verify if the 'formation of SHG has made the women economically stable and they feel more empowered' or if the watershed development became 'a fully villager's program' because it was not entrusted to the political *gram panchayat* but was implemented by apolitical VDC, or if there is less corruption and more transparency in the workings of IGWDP. Our main concern is to note that her presentation expresses hers, and shapes the delegation's preference towards an apolitical treatment of watershed development. She argues that watershed development project could be successfully implemented only by those agencies that have 'no hidden political agenda', i.e. the NGOs. At the village level, the project works efficiently through a consensually nominated committee compared to the *gram panchayat* that has 'political strings attached to it'.

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[123] EDP e.V. (2006).

The choice of VDC over the democratically elected *gram panchayat* is a mechanism to shift watershed development from the arena of elected political sphere of the *panchayat* to the non-elected political sphere of the consensually nominated VDC. Choice of the NGO as an implementing agency compared to the government reflects the same phenomenon of providing an apolitical face to watershed development, to be carried out by the apolitical NGOs and VDCs. In Hay's model, this shifting of responsibility from the elected political sphere to non-elected public sphere is shown to be Type-1 depoliticization.

The village experiences were also shared by Bärbel Kofler (MdB) who observed that there was a "need to devise methods to capitalize on the social capital of the villagers" and Wolfgang Wodarg (MdB) who noted the "importance of leadership provided by Fr. Bacher in making this 'miracle' possible".

From this section, we can observe that the German parliamentarians praised and provided support to the work done by WOTR and expressed their preference for an NGO-driven governance of watershed projects. They also expressed their reservations in working with the elected *gram panchayat* that is presented as too political for watershed development and prone to corruption. The choice of non-elected and delegated implementing agencies is one of the many tactics of depoliticization. Here a preference is shaped for the choice of such agencies for watershed development.

It is surprising to note that the issues brought up during the reflection phase of the EDP, like the insufficiency of watershed programs, persistent poverty among all groups, unequal distribution of benefits from the watershed program or the limited impact of the SHGs found no mention in the dialogue with the Indian delegation. In contrast, the delegation focused on proving how the project was 'exemplary in its execution', how it made the women 'economically stable and more confident', and how the implementation of the program was transparent and how the NGO was more efficient as it was without any hidden political agenda. Distribution of benefits or the dominant role played by the rich farmers or the token presence of women in the SHGs as enunciated in the reflection in the Darewadi Training Center was also passed over in silence.

Interactional sociolinguistics provides a tool to partially account for this discrepancy in the two different representations of the same village experience. In this method, the

157

context of interchange (e.g. the physical setting, social roles, relationship of speech to other activities, and physical stance of the interactants) is important. It also considers how interpretations of the speaker's intent are related to the way the utterance is contextually embedded (e.g. activities it follows, to whom it is directed). From this perspective, I argue that the EDP delegation in the reflection phase at Darewadi was addressing a different audience than in the dialogue phase at Poona and this change of target audience changed the linguistic quality of their interaction. In Darewadi, discussions acquired a critical tone in which the participants narrated not only the good points about the work that WOTR had done but also reflected on the weaknesses of the project as enumerated in the earlier section.

Burawoy argues that one way to classify the sociological research knowledge is by posing the targeted readership as the driving force that shapes this knowledge (see section- 4.2). In this method, the nature of the audience determines the nature of the utterance. Or in other words, what is said is also determined by 'to whom' it is addressed. Discourse analysis recognizes the importance of other aspects of an utterance also, like 'on whose behalf' is the speaker talking, or 'who is the mouthpiece and for whom'.

In the reflection phase in Darewadi, the EDP delegation can be seen as speaking on 'behalf of the people' that brought out the difference in policy and its actual realization in the field. They 'politicized' the gaps that exist in the watershed development program by enumerating in the public sphere the insufficient nature of the intervention that had neither impacted poverty nor the women's empowerment in any significant way.

In the dialogue phase with the Indian policy makers, the EDP delegation was observed to be speaking 'on behalf of the NGO' that highlighted how the program was successful and sought to convince the state to support NGOs in watershed development projects. In this session, the EDP members depoliticized the watershed development program by suggesting that apolitical bodies likes NGOs should undertake watershed development. The experience sharing was reduced to an exercise that presented the strengths and advantages of working with non-governmental partners. None of the gaps in the program were mentioned by the partners, possibly to avoid making the Indian delegation defensive, but also to present an impeccable performance of the NGO in poverty alleviation and gender mainstreaming.

Deriving from the definition of depoliticization as removal of practical issues[124] from the critical public sphere and building consensus for a pre-determined, expert agreed, rational solution, we can observe that a selective presentation of the project's achievements not only removed the gaps from the discussion in an open public sphere but also sought to build consensus for an NGO driven watershed development without deliberating upon their accountability, or legitimacy, or the long term impact of forming nominated organizations parallel to the constitutionally elected governance bodies, on the democratic structure of the village.

5.4.2   Preferences of the Indian delegation: Poona Day- 2

This section presents data from the presentations made by the Indian policy makers in the field of watershed development to show that the government is gradually moving to 'facilitating' role in rural development projects while the NGOs and delegated agencies are acquiring prominence. This preference of the state and donor agencies that watershed development should lay beyond the direct responsibility of the state, into the realm of non-elected public sphere is a strategy of depoliticization (Type-1) in Hay's framework.

The theme of presentation for the Indian delegation (that included State government representatives, NGOs, quasi-state rural development banks, donor agencies, Minister of Agriculture among others) was announced as:

'Engaging Complementarities: Effective public sector, private sector and civil society engagement for large scale poverty reduction'

Within this broad theme, 5 case studies were presented by different actors:

1. *The experience of IGWDP and WOTR in Maharashtra* by the managing director of National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)

2. *The experience of WOTR as the 'mother NGO' in the government supported Drought Prone Areas Program (DPAP)* by the director of soil conservation department, Government of Maharashtra (GoM).

3. *Empowering and catalyzing community based organizations and local bodies for*

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[124] The term *Practical* is used in the sense of Kant's concept of practical reason, which refers to the moral-political domain.

poverty reduction, development and change by the director of the NGO called WOTR.

4. *The experience of Rajiv Gandhi Watershed Mission in Madhya Pradesh* by the joint development commissioner of Watershed Mission, Government of Madhya Pradesh.

5. *Institutional-partnership with WOTR* by the team leader of Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

Besides these 5 case studies, the joint delegation was also addressed by the Minister of Agriculture in Maharashtra, Balasaheb Thorat, narrating his experiences with watershed development in Ahmednagar in general, and specifically with respect to IGWDP.

The theme of the discussion points to the need for inclusion of private sector and NGOs also in the field of poverty reduction, here, by focusing on watershed development. This in itself is a good thing as much more can be achieved if the public sector is supported by other agencies also. However, the discussion that followed shows that rather than a partnership approach between the government and the NGO, the discussion sought to establish NGOs as more efficient and a possible alternative to the state in implementing watershed development projects. It also shows the shifting of debates in the public sphere towards reduction of the state's role in watershed development and how it could be achieved effectively.

An important aspect of discourse analysis is to observe 'who is allowed to speak' and 'who is the mouthpiece for whom'. Of the five cases 'allowed to speak' in the joint delegation meeting, four referred directly to the IGWDP and work done by WOTR. The case study of Rajiv Gandhi Watershed Mission highlighted how the government had successfully moved to a 'facilitating role' while the NGOs functioning as Project Implementing Agency (PIA) had carried out the State-wide watershed development program. Effectively, the presentations made by the Indian delegation expressed a visible preference for depoliticization of watershed governance by reducing the role of the state to 'facilitation' while the PIAs acquired prominence in project implementation.

This presentation showed a preference for involving non-governmental agencies in watershed development by citing the partnership between WOTR and NABARD as an example that has created many 'gardens of eden'.

NABARD is a partner agency in IGWDP. It is a semi-governmental rural development bank established by an Act of the Parliament called the 'NABARD Act of 1981'. This act was meant to:

"Establish a development bank to be known as National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development for providing and regulating credit and other facilities for the promotion and development of agriculture, small scale industries, cottage and village industries, handicrafts and other rural crafts and other allied economic activities in rural areas with a view to promoting integrated rural development" (NABARD Act of 1981, GoI).

As it is clear from the above citation that NABARD is a bank for 'providing and regulating credit and other facilities' that does not specifically deal with grants. However the mode of funding for IGWDP was in the form of grants and hence needed to be disbursed as grant. This was overcome by invoking the provisions of NABARD Act[125] that allows NABARD to accept and disburse grants for action research and innovative pilot projects.

NABARD supports the full implementation phase of the Indo-German watershed development project. Its main function here is to disburse the grants made available by KfW directly to the VDCs after the NGO certifies that the capacity building of the village is complete and a consensually nominated VDC has been formed in the village.

Director of NABARD agreed that watershed development was an appropriate intervention in the rainfed areas because:

"80% of the land holdings in the rainfed areas do not produce any market surplus. These areas are basically poor regions with a cycle of poverty leading to low income. Watershed development projects are the way out."

He also emphasized the 'success story' of their partnership with WOTR in the following words:

"The villages covered under IGWDP have changed from water scarce deserts to the 'gardens of Eden'. So far 86 gardens of Eden have been created and 54 more are nearing

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[125] Chapter VII (Other functions of the Bank)- Art. 38; pp.20

the completion phase. The program has helped to reduce migration, increase in the number of wells, better opportunities for village women to get together and shatter some of the boundaries that the traditional social system imposes."

The point here is not to verify if the NABARD-WOTR partnership created the 'gardens of Eden' but to note that he emphasized the advantages of 'engaging complementarities'. The technical partnership between the two agencies was successful, also because it remained insulated from the political influences of the government and village *panchayats*.

He shaped the preference for 'watersheds as the way out' of rural poverty, engagement of the NGOs as partners and that women of the village were empowered to 'shatter some of the boundaries that the traditional system imposes'. He advocated a strong preference and conviction that watershed development projects routed through the NGOs and delegated banks like NABARD have the capacity to bring about radical transformation.

From the perspective of depoliticization, a preference for non-elected and upwardly accountable organizations like the donor supported NGOs remove the practical issues around water, at least partially, from the critical public sphere and places it in the responsibility of non-elected public bodies like the NGO or the VDC. While NABARD is a product of the politics of delegation at the level of national politics, it further advocates depoliticization and delegation in the governance of watershed development projects at the local level.

Presentation by Soil Conservation department, Government of Maharashtra

The director of soil conservation and watershed development in Maharashtra presented the case of DPAP projects and the government's experience in implementing watershed development projects with the help of 'mother NGOs':

"It was useful for the government to involve NGOs in building the capacity of the people before the government could start its construction work in the village. The projects have never been a smooth sail and the government faced many challenges in the last 20 years of its involvement in watershed development. Some problems that still remain to be addressed are: 1) how to make watershed development bankable? 2) It has been found that many villagers are involved in the program with very short-term individual gain motives. They lack the commitment that could turn this program into a people's movement, so that the motives become long-term common expectations. In short, the

162

challenge is to make watershed 'everyone's business' (popular participation). 3) Also, irregular supply of funds is a major obstacle."

The director noted the important role that NGOs could play in preparing the ground before the government could begin 'its construction work'. Capacity building phase is seen here as an exclusive domain of the 'mother NGO' that trains the villagers in management of their watersheds, forms SHGs, and most importantly, creates VDCs during this phase. The VDC later receives funds directly from NABARD and implements the project. The logic of bypassing the *gram panchayat* is implicit in the formation of VDC. To mean, if the projects are routed through the *gram panchayat*, there would be no requirement of forming a separate VDC. This would reduce the capacity building phase drastically vis-à-vis the role of the NGO, if not remove it completely, by saving on the time and efforts made to create a new and parallel institution for watershed development in the village.

Mahalle acknowledged the presence of different interest groups that are 'involved in the program with very short-term individual gain motives' pointing to the contested nature of watershed projects and the political negotiations in their governance. His recognition of the motives that people have in participating in the project drew the EDP delegation's attention towards the political nature of watershed governance. For the government, it was a problem to generate popular participation. The 'challenge was to make watershed everyone's business' along with the irregular supply of funds.

His last statement informed the EDP delegation that if his department was falling short of its expected performance in watershed development, it was also because there were limited funds and a lack of commitment among the people. From the perspective of (de)politicization, it can be observed that he stressed the need for politicization of watershed development in the sense of it becoming 'everyone's business' was a serious challenge. The director's remarks are not precisely in support of depoliticization-institutional or otherwise, but he identifies a lack of genuine politicization of watershed development projects as one of the obstacles that prevents it from becoming everyone's business.

His statement on irregular supply of funds indicates a direct demand from the donor agencies to support the government agencies also along with supporting the NGOs. To

the extent that governmental implementation of watershed projects can be seen as an indication of politicization, the director shaped the donor preference towards support for the government in changing people's attitude from short term individual goals to long term common expectations. With a long term approach to watershed development, it would be useful to address the problem that so far it wasn't everyone's business and what should be done to achieve this. It also points to the dominant group capture of watershed development projects. In this sense, the project is political but not politicized. Here 'political' refers to its being subject to appropriation by different interest groups, while 'politicized' refers to its widespread dissemination and critical evaluation in the village public sphere comprised by all villagers so that it becomes 'everyone's business'. In the absence of a genuine politicization, the project remains unsustainable as people with similar interests come together with a motive of 'short term individual gain' during the project period and disperse once the project is over. Mahalle pointed out that lack of politicization was making the project unsustainable and subject to capture by dominant groups.

Presentation by the director of WOTR

In her presentation on empowering the community based organizations with the example of IGWDP, the director presented WOTR as an efficient implementing agency because it worked with the participation of local community (achieved by following a self-selection process and the so called 'empowerment pedagogy'), included women and the marginalized groups in decision making, empowered women by forming SHGs and was transparent.

"Engaging civil society would require a 'self-selection process' in which the people themselves would decide if they want the watershed program. It complies with the idea of a 'bottom to top' approach and the possibility of withdrawal of the NGO if the 'civil society actors' (here referred exclusively to the village community) do not recognize their responsibilities and duties. The other component to engage the 'civil society actors' is the so-called 'Empowerment Pedagogy', which serves the necessity of involvement of a target group in every stage of a watershed development. It means that the villagers participate at every step, regardless whether it is planning, implementing, maintenance or monitoring."

This statement shows that WOTR ensures that people participate by allowing the village community to decide if they want the watershed program. She calls it the 'bottom to top' approach because the demand for the project comes from below. The implementing NGO maintains a 'possibility of withdrawal' and is however not bound to support the program if the villagers fail to adhere to the conditions of the project or 'their responsibilities and duties'. WOTR follows the so called 'empowerment pedagogy' where people participate in every stage of watershed development. It presented WOTR as an agency that worked in 'self-selected' villages[126] by following a participatory approach at all stages of the program.

The director further added that WOTR was actively involved in the inclusion of the marginalized groups and women in the watershed development program:

"The second issue deals with the question of ensuring equity and mainstreaming of marginalized groups. The solution to this problem is twofold: 1) Deliberate institutional arrangements, which allow women or marginalized groups to be present on decision-making bodies; 2) Promotion of women's self-help groups and the apex body SMS, which enables women to strengthen their position within the village community and develop new sources of income through micro-credits."

The statement above shows that the project ensured gender mainstreaming by nominating women in the VDC. Their presence in the decision making bodies was the evidence of their empowerment. The NGO also promoted SHGs that provided village women with new sources of income vis-à-vis economic empowerment.

She noted the need for sustainability in watershed development projects and argued that transparency and accountability were important in this regard:

"The third issue deals with the importance of sustainability in watershed institutions and benefits. Transparency, ownership and accountability are amongst them as well as the installation of a maintenance fund.
But most important would be a solution to energy needs. Unless the problem of energy is solved, the risk of new deforestation and degradation still exists. Hence there was a need to look into the possibilities of renewable energy sources for the village people."

This statement also conveyed that WOTR was transparent and accountable and showed its future concerns to be in the field of renewable energy.

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[126] Refer to the case of Darewadi where the VDC president noted that Fr. Bacher campiagned actively in this village for one year to make the villagers realize the importance of adopting watershed development. This was elaborated in the speech given by the minister of agriculture in Maharashtra during the interaction session with the EDP delegates in Poona as described in the next section.

It is not my concern to show if the claimed procedure of 'empowerment pedagogy' or self-selection was actually observed by the EDP delegation in their exposure visit but to show that the director shaped the preference of the joint delegation for working with NGOs because they followed an 'empowerment pedagogy', included marginalized groups and women, and were transparent and accountable. From the perspective of depoliticization, a reduced role of the state in watershed development, replaced by an active role of the NGO that is more transparent and efficient, also shifts the main issue from the governmental realm to the non-governmental realm, an example of type-1 depoliticization.

Presentation by the representative of Rajiv Gandhi Watershed Mission

The case study of Rajiv Gandhi Mission emphasized the success achieved by the NGO driven watershed development in Madhya Pradesh. In his presentation, the joint commissioner of the watershed mission stated that:

"One of the main characteristics of this 'bottom to top' approach, lies within the facilitating role of the government, providing expertise and financial resources only to a limited extent, while the rural communities are responsible for the selection of activities, the creation and implementation of action plans, monitoring, the maintenance of assets and the budgeting related. The process can be accompanied by the program implementing agencies (PIA) from the phase of community mobilization and capacity building in the beginning until the end of a project. RGM cooperates with many NGOs that would function as PIAs to the villages. The program is currently one of the largest in India, covering more than 240 000 square kilometers, spanning 9540 villages in 6745 micro-watersheds. The program has led to a significant increase in irrigated area, in food and fodder production, to a significant decrease in ground water consumption and an improvement of ground water level in approximately 60% of the villages. The SHGs constituted and the efforts regarding microfinance and saving by rural communities also indicates a considerable improvement."

In this program, the government has reclined to a facilitative role 'providing expertise and financial resources only to a limited extent' replaced by 'many NGOs that function as PIAs' from the beginning to the end of the project. In Hay's framework, this reclining of the state to a facilitating role replaced by the NGO is an example of type-1 depoliticization. He observed that it was a successful experiment as evident from the 'significant increase in irrigated area, food and fodder production and an improvement

of ground water level'. This project had also brought about a considerable improvement in women's condition with the help of micro-finance. This presentation shaped the preference for an NGO-driven watershed development program with a decreased role of the government to be a successful strategy.

Presentation by the team leader of SDC

Since last five years WOTR has been working in partnership with SDC that started in 2001. The SDC representative expressed his dissatisfaction with the 'project based partnerships' as it ran the risk of instrumentalizing the partner for a brief period of time along with the 'problem of unnecessary administrative burdens' on the NGO. He favored the 'institutional partnership' instead and outlined the advantages of the same with an example of WOTR-SDC collaboration.

"The crux of institutional partnership lies in providing support to the NGO per se and not to a single project or activity. This provides the NGO with considerable amount of flexibility and timely funds that ensures the efficient implementation of watershed programs."[127]

In his presentation, the SDC official emphasized the need to support the idea of watershed development that WOTR was following even if sometimes specific projects may not be available. In an institutional partnership, the donors can support the NGO first before the projects.

The discussion above shows how a preference is shaped among, and by the government agencies, donors and NGOs for a transfer of power to national and local NGOs, nominated bodies and delegated agencies. In this discourse, the *gram panchayat* is presented as 'too political' and hence corrupt and inefficient compared to the apolitical NGOs and VDCs. Ribot (2005) analyzes how decentralization reforms in the developing countries, rather than empowering the representative elected local government have often transferred power to 'a wide array of other local institutions, including private bodies, customary authorities and non-governmental organizations'. The presentations discussed above show a distinct preference for transferring power to NGOs and bypassing the

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[127] Dialogue between the EDP delegation and the Indian government representatives from the watershed development departments in YASHADA, Poona; 2-11-2006

167

elected local governments. This is a governance strategy that is leading to the depoliticization of watershed development projects.

Address by the minister of agriculture

In his address to the EDP delegation in Poona, the minister recognized the local level contestations and negotiations involved in a watershed development program. He argued that normal 'everyday politics' based on narrow and divisive party affiliations keeps the village people divided among different political camps that makes it difficult to bring them together for a common cause like watershed development.

"It was a big challenge for us to organize the people as they came together for the program and as soon as the elections came around, they went back to their different political camps."[128]

He cited the example of Darewadi village to show how the negotiations among, and between the local influential leaders and the implementing NGO often caused unrest in the village power structure:

"It was a mega challenge to bring people together. For e.g. in Darewadi, there was a very influential person called Khande Rao who opposed it. After some time, Fr. Bacher was able to convince him and he became the President of the VWC but there were many people who opposed the election of Khande Rao for president. As watershed development program involves ban on free grazing and alcohol, people who opposed Khande Rao made his son drunk and paraded him in the village. Then the President Mr. Khande Rao thrashed his son in public for breaking one of the rules of watershed development and handed him over to the police. After this incident, the village got on track and started working for the program."[129]

It can be seen from his example that local politics played an important role in the process of forming VDCs, where the official posts were contested among the village elite. There is always a mistrust and opposition from the villagers towards such programs. Thus begins the phase of negotiating and convincing the village people to not only join the program but also provide voluntary labour during the project. This involves more than the involvement of local politicians and the project staff. In the case of Darewadi, as it was recalled by Khande Rao, the influential person who opposed it, the fears that villagers harbour and what does it take to convice them:

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[128] Address to the EDP delegation and the Indian delegation on 3-11-2006 at YASHADA, Poona.
[129] Ibid.

"In 1995, Father Bacher visited us constantly for around 12 months and discussed his idea of the watershed development with us. But we were not willing to join the program because we had many fears. The basic fear was that if we join the program they (IGWDP) may grab our land. Then we got an opportunity to attend a felicitation ceremony attended by about 5 lakh people in Ahmednagar, in which Father Bacher was honoured by our local leader Balasaheb Thorat. In his speech, Balasaheb Thorat shared his experience and tried to convince us that if the farmers wanted any kind of development for their villages, then there was no alternative to Watershed Development. We decided to join the project in the year 1996."[130]

It can be noticed in the above statement by Khande Rao that the village was not willing to join the project but after constant efforts by Father Bacher and intervention of the minister resulted in an agreement between the two parties, WOTR and Khande Rao, in which Khande Rao was made the president of VDC and IGWDP was started in Darewadi. The constant campaigning in the village for 12 months also indicates that the 'self-selection' process as outlined by the executive director of WOTR was not followed as a rule. If it were so, there would be no watershed development project in Darewadi. But in this village, the project had to be undertaken and negotiated with the villagers, even though they did not select themselves probably because WOTR had plans to construct its residential training centre in this village that came up in the years following the watershed development project and began working as a full fledged training centre in April, 2002. This points to the fact that political negotiations do exist within the project's everyday working though WOTR claims to be an apolitical organization without any 'hidden political agenda'.

The role of the minister in convicing the village to join the program is also important for other reasons, as explained by the minister in his speech:

"In order to spread Watershed development in my area through Indo-German Program, I have collaborated with both NGOs and state departments, as a representative of the people and directly appealed to the people for a separation of WDP from politics. I asked the people not to see me as a politician but as another farmer However, the same villages elected me with full votes in the next election. So, even if it was apolitical in the beginning, it became political in its outcome."

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[130] Interview with Khande Rao Avhad in the documentary film made by WOTR in 2003 called *A silent Revolution*, WOTR, Ahmednagar.

A politics of depoliticization can be observed in the minister's direct appeal to the people 'for a separation of watershed development from local politics'. However, here he is referring to 'politics' in the sense of divisive vote bank politics practiced in the elections, where political parties align themselves with different sections of population based on caste, religion, language or region, among other things. Politicization on the other hand, has been defined for the purpose of this thesis as recognition of contingency in social practices and relations and the power of collective political agency.

  In this sense, a 'separation of watershed development from politics' was needed to bring people together for a common cause with their power of collective political agency. So he advocated watershed development to adopt a different kind of politics that was welfare oriented and issue (watershed development) based. The rhetoric of depoliticization facilitated the implementation of the project as per the NGO's framework and added to the political support for the minister. The shaping of regional politics by watershed development was exemplified in the reelection of the minister. So, even if it was apolitical in its appeal, it became political in its outcome, only exemplifies how depoliticization is used as a governance strategy for political outcomes.

The minister expressed his preference for watershed development as a good program and sought support from the donor agencies in making it into a people's movement.

In his address, the minister observed that women have an important role in watershed development:

"It was very clear that women have to play an important part in this as women are not only interested in the development of the family but are also less political."

5.5 Interrogating the state

The woman member of the European Parliament, Giesela Kallenbach, objected to the last statement by the minister on ascribing a 'less political' status to women. She responded that:

"It would be inappropriate to say that women are not interested in politics as they are also equal voters and citizens and what they do in the SHGs is also quite political."

There are two messages conveyed by her statement. First, that the EDP delegation does recognize the presence of politics in the SHGs, and second was a demand to treat women as equals in the discursive construction of women by the state.

The minister explained that here mentioning them as 'less political' was more of a statement about politics than about women. Politics has a negative connotation in the Indian public sphere, associated with duplicity and corruption, whereas women are seen as more interested in their family than in political power. The government does recognize them as equals and made policies to bring them into mainstream politics:

"After Rajiv Gandhi, there has been a reservation made for the women in the government and *panchayat*. Even in the parliament and the state Assembly, 33% seats are reserved for the women. We are trying to increase it to 50%. You must have seen women working very hard to secure water for the family. To solve this problem is their main attention and not the 'politics'. If she gets an opportunity to solve this problem, this would be her first preference rather than politics. In this case 'politics' comes with a negative connotation."

In this perspective, if watershed development is treated in the normal political way, many benefits are siphoned off by politicians or go to dominant elite groups in the village. His statement on 'separation of watershed development from politics' in a way assures the villagers that the benefits would not be siphoned off by the dominant groups and addresses the possible cynicism that villagers would have as regards such schemes.

"Along with WOTR, there are other good NGOs that are also supported in this program but unless it becomes a movement of the people, it cannot be successful. It cannot be done on large scale either and it is our attempt and struggle to make this a people's movement. In any other way, it would take at-least 50 years to do any effective work or bring about visible change."

The minister left the joint delegation with the current challenge that WOTR and other government departments were facing in implementing watershed development projects. It was not acquiring the shape of a 'people's movement' that hindered its successful implementation. From the perspective of depoliticization, 'people's movement' refers to the highest degree of politicization possible in a society. Though it is realized by the Indian policy makers that unless a genuine politicization is achieved, where all citizens deliberate upon and concern themselves with watershed development as a long term practice rather than its current management through short term coalitions, the mechanisms employed to govern this program (through the agency of NGOs, bypassing

171

the elected local government) depoliticize watershed development in its planning and implementation.

Obstacles in making this program into a people's movement was ascribed to the absence of capacity building phase in the government projects by Lobo from WOTR. In the projects undertaken by WOTR, there was a distinct phase of capacity building of 6-12 months but this was insufficient as noted by the Indian delegation. The chairman of the technical committee, constituted by the Department of Land Resources under the ministry of rural development in February 2005 to reassess the watershed development programs in India that submitted its report to the government in 2006, was also present in the dialogue session. He argued that the report of the technical committee (*From Hariyali to Neeranchal*) does take the problem of capacity building into account and the lack of focus on this aspect. He clarified that this deletion of capacity building from watershed development projects implemented by the government served the political compulsion of limiting the development projects to the time of an election term:

"In our report[131] we have put the time for CBP as 2 years, because it is not only difficult to achieve but also depends upon the preparedness of the community, the receptivity of the villagers, their skepticism about the new program and planned intervention after 40 years of non-planning in the Indian villages. People debate a lot of issues and we also add in the report that even if the community is not ready to undertake the program, there must be a way to write it off as a part of an evaluation mechanism. I advised the government to undertake this program, which would now last 7-8 years for completion. But the governments are typically in a hurry and do not want to invest in the programs that last more than 5 years, the time of an election term."

It is clear from his statement that the electoral priorities of the politicians have a negative impact on the planning and policy making of watershed development. For one, it forces the planners to limit their projects in time and design it as a tool to achieve political mileage. Considering the actual status of poverty 'after 40 years of non-planning' in Indian villages, a planned intervention like watershed development requires a preparedness on the part of the villagers, which does not exist at present. Addressing this problem is difficult because of the 'skepticism of the villagers about the new program and

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[131] Parthasarathy refers to a report named "From Hariyali to Neeranchal- a report of the Technical Committee on Watershed Programmes in India." This report was released in January of 2006 by the Ministry of Rural Development, GoI

planned intervention'. He argues that one way to address this problem was to focus on the capacity building of the people for an extended period of two years time, more than the government or the NGOs were spending on this phase at present. But the political interference in the policy making confines it to confirm to the political requirements of the leaders. Watershed development is useful for the politicians if it could be accomplished within the time of an election term, but technically it needed 7-8 years, he argued. This proves to be a fatal compromise as the program begins with the final implementation phase without creating a mass base for the project. In the limited amount of capacity building, the implementing agency has the compulsion of forming new institutions that would be instrumental in carrying out the future work. As a deliberative democratic process for forming the institutions is longer and complicated, the implementing agency forms 'nominated committees' in strategic alliance with the dominant groups. It was thus not surprising that it did not become a 'people's movement' and could not be sustained beyond the project period.

It is under such circumstances that depoliticization fares better than this quality of politicization (here politicization is understood in a narrow sense of being subject to the politicians' motives and personal goals). If the programs work independent of the electoral politics, with the help of apolitical agencies that are flexible and free of electoral demands, the programs could be implemented in the right way with a capacity building phase of two years:

"NGOs have an advantage here as they do not have to work in this time limit nor worry about getting elected. I stood firm on the point that the CBP must be spread over a period of two years and not 6 months as at present. One has to be really flexible in carrying out such programs because the communities react differently to such programs and it may not help if we are not flexible."

From the perspective of depoliticization, it is clear that the chairman of the technical committee has a preference for the NGOs because they 'do not have to work in this time limit nor worry about getting elected'. An apolitical treatment of watershed development was felt necessary that could make it more flexible and free from being used as a political instrument. In this sense, 'politicization' understood as an involvement of the politicians in watershed development was not desirable. However, 'politicization' in terms of creating an informed community that critically debated the watershed development

project in its village public sphere was felt necessary as visible in the extended period of the capacity building phase. A flexibility in method and time was required to make watershed development everyone's business.

Before any concrete capacity building of the people could begin, it was necessary that the politicians agreed to the plan proposed by the committee to extend the period of the project to 8 years. This required that the committee should make the watershed development program lucrative to the politicians without compromising on the capacity building phase. In this sense, the technical committee also has a political agenda to motivate the politicians and form a political will for the program. He argued that this is often achieved by employing 'technical' and alarmist arguments in favor of the project. Such arguments are based on scientific facts and an apolitical understanding of the project but are used to achieve political ends, here a favorable action based on the findings of the technical committee:

"In the report it has been said, we need 15 years to cover all the villages under the watershed program with some investment. Otherwise, in a normal process, it would take 70 years to do it. But the governments do not wake up to the arguments like that. They only respond to looming crisis and we did state this problem as a looming crisis. When 40% of the additional food production in the next 15 years is going to come from the rain-fed areas, there is a big food problem waiting for us if we do not respond to the situation in the rainfed areas."

The above statement shows us that a subtle politicization of watershed development project, in its presentation as an answer to a 'looming crisis' was necessary to motivate the politicians. However, the basis of achieving this political end was in the technical fact that '40% of the additional food production in the next 15 years is going to come from the rainfed areas' and watershed development in these areas was the answer to curb this looming food crisis. Here depoliticization acts as an instrument in the hands of the 'experts' and technical committees to motivate the politicians, and in this sense to 'politicize' the issue. A political will was equally important (and difficult to achieve) in making watershed development a successful program when the funds were available.

"Funds are not a problem right now, what we need here is a political will to undertake these programs. It is more important and more difficult to motivate the politicians than the village people."

With this statement, the chairman attracted the attention of the joint delegation towards the need to create a political will along with motivating the village people. After his comments, the 'appeal to separate watershed development from politics' by the minister of agriculture seemed to be unrealistic in the light of the above statements.

Politics at local and national levels were equally important as evident in the statements by the chairman of the technical committee and the minister. Now the watershed development project had an added dimension of the role and participation of the politicians along with the role and participation of the people.

A delegate from the Indian bench, chief general manager of NABARD- Pune, N. Srinivasan added another dimension of the role of international politics as critical in watershed development. He highlighted the issue of international trade agreements and prices of agricultural products in the international market, which had a direct bearing on the development of farmers in the project villages:

"You have seen from the field that people are quite backward, for the kind of interventions that are being made possible by the joint cooperation of India and Germany, especially in this case of IGWDP and similar watershed interventions in other parts of India. While it has been quite helpful in increasing productivity and also improving quality of access, physical access now available to the people, one of the major issues they face is of the markets, its accessibility and the prices they get.
Quite a few of you are in a position to influence the policies in your country. Can we have systems where people out here could get realistic prices through fairer trade mechanisms and more appropriate rates? Can you in some way convince your government to design your polices in favor of the poor, can we stop subsidizing sugar and cotton, can we stop subsidizing oilseeds, can we stop intervening in the domestic markets in the dairy sector? If we do, what we do by this intervention will be 100% more effective in combating poverty than many watershed programs.
Through a more appropriate wage policy we can alleviate poverty more effectively than many other watershed programs. A small market surplus becomes a life-sustaining fund if the prices are standard, the farmers can sustain themselves without any other help. I would leave this part to you all; can you in some way influence the policies of your government a little bit more in favor of the poor?"

Srinivasan pointed out that people in the project villages were quite backward inspite of the watershed development program because they lacked access to the markets and the low prices that they got for their labor and products. He observed that not only village people or national politicians but the international politicians also had an important role in influencing the policies in their home countries in favor of the poor. He emphasized

the limitation of the watershed development program in the absence of appropriate wage policy, and continued subsidy for the farmers in developed countries on cotton, sugar and oilseeds, which are also the main crops grown in Maharashtra. Srinivasan's statement combined three important issues in the global politics that was left untouched by the NGO or the EDP delegation: accessibility to the market, agricultural subsidies to farmers in developed countries, and an inappropriate international wage policy.

If depoliticization is understood as disappearance of practical issues from the critical deliberation in the public sphere, it is clear that the issue of fairer prices or agricultural subsidy was not taken up for discussion as it was presumed to be unrelated to the discussion on watershed development. This isolated treatment and focus on watershed development was a mechanism of depoliticization that pushed other related and relevant issues beyond the scope of discussion and critical reflection. Srinivasan re-politicized the watershed development program by explicating its linkages in international politics and prices.

The linkage of watershed development in Indian villages to the international agricultural policies was cited with the example of cotton prices in the in the international markets by the minister of agriculture in response to a question from Martin Rempis of the organization *Brot für die Welt*. Rempis referred to an article on farmer's suicides in Maharashtra published by the national magazine in India called 'Frontline' (Volume-21, Issue-16, 2004, among others). In his response, the minister highlighted the plight of farmers in the cotton producing belts of Maharashtra:

"The issue of suicide was highlighting only one aspect of the problem, one study says, it is due to globalization of cotton prices, WTO and subsidized market economy. 50% of the cultivable land in this area (Vidarbha) is under only one crop, which is cotton, and it has become a crisis crop for the last 10 years. WTO gave a verdict but nothing happened. The cotton price in 1994 was 81 US-cents per pound and now its 57 US-cents per pound in 2005. It appears that the increase in prices of the equipment to the seeds to fertilizers has had no effect or rather such an effect that the prices for the farmers are really suicidal. The farmers get less in their hands due to heavy subsidy offered by the developed countries to their farmers, so till situation improves in cotton market internationally, the prices cannot improve. And unless the price issue is addressed many developmental efforts would end up increasing the crop productivity but no markets to sell them. Thus the fair trade issues are also relevant in this case."

The statements by Srinivasan and the minister traced the intricate political connections that affect the watershed development program and create obstacles in its success. This shaped the joint delegation's preference for a politicized treatment of watershed development rather than a 'separation of watershed development from politics' as presented by the NGO. It also highlighted the need to politicize the practical issues around watershed development that were left unaddressed by treating watershed development as an isolated technical intervention for alleviating poverty by soil and water conservation. Bringing up these issues on the table for discussion was the first step in politicizing these excluded facets of watershed development.

5.6   Summary of the Chapter

This chapter analyzes the shaping process of donor's preferences in the governance of Indo-German Watershed Development Project (IGWDP) in India based on an exposure and dialogue program of donor agencies in the project villages of Maharashtra. It shows the process of preference shaping of the donors by the implementing agencies for depoliticization of watershed governance by presenting watershed development as the expert agreed, only rational solution to rural poverty (and no other intervention), advocating the involvement of non-elected village committees and NGOs (and not the government or the village *panchayat*), and an absence of local politics in watershed development from the project discourse.

After the village exposure, the EDP delegation re-politicized watershed development projects and their governance in the villages by pointing out its insufficiency in rural development and gender mainstreaming, role of the elected village *panchayat* and local level contestations for the resources among the project beneficiaries.

The NGO re-depoliticized the project by presenting its advantages in economic terms and presenting the implementing agency of the NGO as less corrupt and more efficient than the government. At the village level, nominated committees performed better compared to the *gram panchayat* that was too political and inefficient.

The EDP delegation presented its preference for the depoliticization of watershed development in its dialogue with the Indian delegation. It approved the agency of NGOs and nominated committees for the project implementation, and supported the bypassing of elected local government. The delegation supported the watershed development

program as bringing about the development of both men and women in the villages and the issues of local contestations and negotiations, which were discussed in the reflection phase, were passed over in silence (a denial of their presence).

The final discussion re-politicized the watershed development program by pointing out its local, national and international political linkages. The issues left out of the discussion like the political motivation for watershed development or the international agricultural policies were also established as important issues in this regard.

6 INSTITUTIONAL DEPOLITICIZATION IN WATERSHED GOVERNANCE

The objective of this chapter is to show that the implementation of watershed development projects through the NGOs and delegated governmental directorates is a strategy of governance that circumvents the elected local governments and transfers power of implementation and decision making to a wide range of nominated committees. This chapter uses the case study of Indo-German Watershed Development Project (IGWDP) and Hills-II project and their institutions of implementation to explicate that the routing of watershed development projects through the NGOs like WOTR or delegated agencies like Watershed Management Directorate (WMD) at the project level, and through VWC and GAREMA (*Gram*/Village Resource Management Association) at the village level removes the political character of decision making by reallocation of functions and responsibilities to independent bodies or panel of 'experts'. This choice of institutional ensemble for watershed development is underpinned by a discourse of depoliticization.

This chapter concludes that the 'apolitical' implementing agencies and nominated development committees created to circumvent the 'political' *panchayats* remain highly political in operating as a subsystem of a larger political rationality. It shows how the attempt to create apolitical implementing agencies like the NGOs or delegated directorates removes the political character of decision making and at the same time reflects the accommodation and power of a dominant political rationality.

 This chapter first explores the formation of WOTR and WMD to show that such delegated organizations act as tools of institutional depoliticization created by the alliance of the donor interests and 'strategic groups' in the recipient country to insulate decision making from political influence (section 6.1). The next section explores the village level institutions for watershed development formed by the two projects (VDC, GAREMA) to contend that these nominated committees for watershed development become the instruments of bypassing the elected local government at the grassroots level (section 6.2) followed by an analysis of the proliferating local organizations and their relationship with one another in the governance of watersheds (section 6.3). The next section shows how a

simulation of transparency and empowerment is practiced by the implementing agencies in their efforts to fulfil the conditions of the funding agencies. This also frees the implementing agencies from their accountability to the local people, resulting in an alienation of the local people from the project activities (section 6.4). This is followed by a summary of the chapter and its main findings (section 6.5).

6.1   Implementing Institutions as Tools of Depoliticization

The development ensemble in watershed projects does not make its presence felt only through preferences in documents and reports as outlined in the last chapter, but also through concrete policies, programs and institutions that are entrusted with the task of implementing watershed development projects.

This section of the chapter traces the coming into being of Watershed Organization Trust (WOTR) as an implementing agency and 'mother NGO' for the IGWDP, and Watershed Management Directorate (WMD) as the implementing agency for the Hills-II project to argue that both agencies owe their origin to a politics of delegation that portrays them as apolitical, technocratic implementers of policy, with the local contestations and negotiations in the development of watersheds downplayed or ignored. Formation of such 'mother NGOs' and directorates allows the government and the funding agencies to move to an indirect governing relationship where they can no longer be reasonably held responsible for the (mis) management of watershed development projects. This in turn insulates the decision making of the NGOs from (undue) political interference, provides the NGO with a direct access to funds and an increased independence from accountability to the local people as long as they remain upwardly accountable. Olson (2000: viii) observes that conditions necessary for (economic) success occur most reliably, and thus with greatest economic effect, in rights-respecting democracies where institutions are structured in ways that give authoritative decision making to encompassing rather than narrow, interests. Without the constraints provided by the political institutions of democracy (as is the case with depoliticization) it is more difficult to develop credible systems of property or contract enforcement.

6.1.1 Formation of WOTR and Depoliticization in Watershed Development

This section of the chapter is concerned with the case of IGWDP and its primary implementing agency, an NGO called WOTR that was established in 1993 with the exclusive purpose of implementing the IGWDP. This section first provides a brief account of how the NGO was conceived, funded and organized, and what it was expected to do. It further explicates the institutional instruments activated and put to use by this NGO in the implementation process to show that these institutional choices are underpinned by a strategy of depoliticization.

In this sense, this section also establishes a connection between the preference-shaping for depoliticization, as discussed in the last chapter and the institutions that are formed to implement watershed development projects. From a pragmatic point of view, it is understandable that the official discourse in which IGWDP/WOTR and Hills-II/WMD are meticulously presented as successful organizations working with people's participation and including women in the decision-making process, might operate only as a necessary tool used to obtain funds from the donor agencies or justify watershed development as the succinct answer to 'fighting poverty with self-help' in the donor and governmental circles, but playing no significant role in the more concrete level of actual institutions, programs and day to day management of the projects. This section shows that this is not the case and that the preference-shaping for some institutions and not others does indeed define the institutional choices made to implement watershed development projects. These choices are only intelligible within a frame of reference which treats watershed development projects as apolitical, technical interventions to be carried out by apolitical, technical agencies. In this light, the implementing institutions appear not so far removed from the discursive preferences (as elaborated in the preceding chapter) but as sites where the preferences of the policy makers is first put into play, and has its most concrete and visible depoliticizing effects.

This section describes how the IGWDP was inspired by the policies of the German government and shaped around it to explicate the accommodation of donor's priorities in the developmental interventions, best carried out by the non-governmental agencies.

181

WOTR came into being in December 1993, four years after the IGWDP was approved by the German government in 1989:

"In June 1988, the Parliamentary Commission for Economic Cooperation (of Germany) following a public hearing, passed a resolution titled 'fighting poverty through self-help' calling upon the German government to reorient its official development aid towards poverty alleviation in a way that placed poor at the centre of development intervention. Subsequently, the German parliament passed a resolution supported by all parties mandating the government to increase and reorient official development assistance (ODA) for poverty reduction through self-help efforts which if, henceforth, would be grant financed" (Lobo, 2003).

It can noticed that the German policy orientation towards 'fighting poverty through self-help' had a role to play and shaped the conceptualization of the watershed development program that came to be known as IGWDP. Lobo from 'Social Centre' notes the conditions under which Fr. Bacher proposed the project to the BMZ for funding:

"Fr. Bacher, who has been involved in the development sector for over 50 years and who was involved in the entire Indo-German watershed development pilot project study, saw the opportunity that arose from the confluence of these various events and processes and conceived of a large-scale community driven program for poverty reduction centred on regenerating the environmental space of villagers along watershed lines. The people themselves would be responsible for the projects, with NGOs facilitating them and all other actors playing the role of enablers. Given Fr. Bacher's credibility and experience, he was successful in convincing both the Indian and German governments to accept, approve and fund the project. The first official agreement was signed in 1989. If success were to spread, 'facilitating involvement' (as opposed to control) by framework actors, namely government and political institutions would have to be ensured at all stages of intervention" (ibid.).

As it can be seen from the above statement, the project was to be a 'large scale community driven program for poverty reduction'. This convinced the donors that the project did fall within their policy focus and could be supported. Further, Fr. Bacher's experience in this area for more than 50 years and his credibility as a Jesuit priest from Switzerland was convincing to the donor agencies as well as the local population[132]. As it

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[132] See the public address by Crispin Lobo in the 'watershed fair' organized in Ahmednagar that brought all the VDC and some self-help group members to Ahmednagar. In this address, Lobo spoke about the conditions under which Father Bacher brought the funds for the project directly to the villagers and placed tremendous trust in the villagers and if they failed him now, he would be willing to go back to his home country: (Documentary made by WOTR on the VDC- WOTR, 2004).
"My birth place is in Switzerland, but my work place is this land-India. I have been working with the farmers here since the last 35 years and I never had any bad experience, which would make me lose faith in

is clear from the above statement, the main objective of IGWDP was 'regenerating the environment' to be carried out by the people with NGOs as facilitators while the government and political institutions were to have a lesser degree of control in the project. The reduction in the role of 'political institutions' also creates the space which could then be occupied by the 'apolitical institutions' like the NGO. The demand for the rolling back of the state also results from the fact that the government is seen as corrupt and inefficient, besides the neoliberal motives attached to it:

"In Germany, during the 1990s, German development cooperation policy came under review as it was realized that with very few exceptions, official aid (channelled through the government) reached the poor largely by way of exception. It was decided to launch a worldwide study to assess and determine the conditions under which official aid could directly reach the poor in a manner that empowered them to free themselves from poverty (ibid.)."

The donors search for an agency other than the government, which could bring the official aid to the poor 'directly' crystallized around the non-governmental sector, technical agencies and delegated institutions like the national banks. The donor's choice of non-governmental institutions and their policy priorities were incorporated in a watershed development program and presented for funding as IGWDP:

"The project proposed by Fr. Bacher (namely, the IGWDP) fitted in nicely with the new institutional and developmental thrust in Germany and offered an opportunity to realize these new orientations and perspectives on a large scale" (Lobo, 2003).

While the 'Social Centre' as an NGO met the criteria of institutional thrust on non-governmental channels, the proposed project promised to fight poverty through self-help. Having incorporated the donor's agenda the project was approved for funding and began to work with 'Social Centre' as the implementing agency in India. However, the local socio-political context and a disregard of the villagers' agendas soon became apparent after the first four years of the program that only funds were not enough to implement the program and something was missing from it, when the project was considered to be 'floundering and not making much headway':

"When the IGWDP began, there were only 7 NGOs involved, of whom only two had some experience in integrated watershed development. If the programs was to become a

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them. So if you (the government) are willing to accept the fact that the money should be given directly to the villagers, I am ready to bring in the IGWDP."

movement as envisaged, and go to scale rapidly, a lot many more NGOs would have to be involved, common standards and protocols developed and best practices put in place. This called for substantial expansion in existing capacities, identification of new NGO partners and the development of a pedagogy that systematically built up institutional, organizational and operational capacities of the NGOs as well as the VWCs and other community based organizations. Existing resource agencies were unable to meet this requirement and by 1993 the IGWDP was floundering and not making much headway" (ibid.).

Lobo from 'Social Centre' argued that this NGO was unable to meet the requirements of the project due to its lack of 'common standards and protocols' that led to the poor performance of the project. There was a need to 'put best practices in place' and expand the existing capacities of 'Social Centre' to build the capacity of local NGOs and community based organizations. This gap was to be filled up by the formation of a new NGO, carved out of the 'Social Centre'.

"It was decided by a *group of prominent NGO leaders* to set up a new organization to cater to the capacity building needs of the IGWDP as well as to provide an institutional base for the Program Coordinator. Thus WOTR was established in December 1993 as an NGO under the Bombay Public Trust Act 1950" (ibid).

It can be observed in the above statements that WOTR was established to systematically build up the institutional capacities of the local organizations and provide an institutional base to the project coordinator. It would develop common standards and protocols and pedagogy of systematic capacity building. A more formal and rule-based managerial approach was needed for the program to make some headway.

In this section I argue that WOTR came into existence as an organization that would not only fulfil the technical requirement of 'capacity building' but perform a range of other functions that would provide it with an autonomy and independent access to funds by circumventing all political controls on its budget and decision-making.

With the formation of WOTR, the IGWDP went into the exclusive custody of this NGO. It became the official partner of the project and defined for itself the task of training the villagers to undertake the watershed development program in the so called 'capacity building phase'. In the years from 1989-1993, when the IGWDP was implemented by the 'Social Centre' it had no such 'technical' capacity building phase and the grants for the

project was by the way of 'financial cooperation' (for investment purposes only) routed through KfW. When IGWDP began its work in Ahmednagar, there was no distinct 'Capacity Building Phase' and the funds were released by the way of Financial Cooperation of KfW. In these initial years, Social Centre acted as the facilitating NGO. Later, when capacity building was established as a distinct activity and part of watershed program, part of the funds for the program was routed by the way of Technical Cooperation (*TZ: Technische Zusammenarbeit*) through the GTZ directly to WOTR, the implementing NGO that came into being later. In the first 3-4 years, this project worked in coordination with Social Center and some other local NGOs without much experience in the field of watershed.

Formation of WOTR as an NGO separate from Social Center was a further delegation of responsibility, this time for the sake of this new project called IGWDP. Here the issue of governance remains within the same sphere of non-governmental public sphere, i.e. neither promoted or demoted (refer Hay's model, 2007: 87) but this coming into existence of a new NGO totally dedicated to achieving the objectives of IGWDP serves a different purpose.

The new NGO developed a 'capacity building phase' (CBP) of 12-18 months as a precondition to undertaking the full implementation of a watershed development project. The newly added CBP was considered as a 'technical cooperation' that came under the purview of GTZ and funds were routed directly to WOTR via GTZ. The Indian government on its part exempted this official development assistance from the realm of Foreign Contributions Regulation (FCR) Act:

"WOTR gained the status of an official partner and the funds were available for direct disbursement to NGOs (even those without FCR Act clearance) and village committees. A flexible financial instrument called the 'disposition fund' was instituted and the office of the Program Coordinator was established" (ibid: 4).

The newly formed WOTR now provided a direct access to the funds, was better positioned to work with added flexibility and assurance of timely money. It helped this NGO to focus only on IGWDP (unlike the Social Center that worked on other issues also), develop its own strategies of governance (like 'participatory operational pedagogy', 'net planning methodology', 'participatory impact monitoring' among others) and much

needed autonomy. Last but not the least, it provided WOTR an identity of a 'professional' organization independent of the Social Center and its missionary work.

By establishing a requirement for the technical cooperation in watershed development, the NGO was able to justify its formation as a 'technical agency' that could receive funds directly from the donors without going through the bilateral governmental route. Although this direct cooperation with an NGO in a developing country is not the common route by which German ODA is transferred, an exception was made in the case of WOTR:

"*Das Program läuft als eines der ersten Modellvorhaben dieser Art im Rahmen der so genannten Direktkooperation mit Süd-NRO. Während die Deutsche staatliche Entwicklungshilfe, soweit sie nicht mit deutschen NRO zusammenarbeitet, es in der Regel mit ebenfalls staatliche Partnern im Gastland zu tun hat, wurde hier ein anderer Weg der Kooperation beschritten. Zwar ist der indische Staat weiter offizieller Zuwendungsempfänger des deutschen Beitrags, und eine nationale Entwicklungsbank verwaltet das Geld, jedoch erfolgt die unmittelbare Durchführung allerMaßnahmen durch einheimische NRO*" (Bliss, 2001).*

This 'direct cooperation' with a southern NGO was an exception also in the light of the fact that the project was not making much progress so far when implemented through the NGOs. In this situation, the 'direct cooperation' in a way centralized the managerial powers in one NGO and removed the political control of the government in its direct funding of WOTR as a way of decentralizing decision-making. In effect, WOTR became a 'technical agency' for the implementation of IGWDP directly funded by GTZ under its 'technical cooperation' after 1993. This centralization of managerial powers and the decision of direct cooperation would appear unbalanced in the light of its basis of formation 'by a group of prominent NGO leaders'.

As we see in the above discussion that IGWDP began in 1989 to regenerate the environment along watershed lines, implemented by 'Social Centre' and was funded exclusively by KfW until 1992. In 1993, a new NGO was formed and a CBP funded directly by GTZ was added. It was necessary to recognize the NGO as a 'technical agency' working for watershed development, not only to qualify for the funding under 'technical cooperation' of GTZ but also to present its task as an apolitical intervention by the 'civil society' actors towards environmental regeneration.

However, to work in the villages on the people's land and water, the NGO needed acceptance from the villagers and some form of legitimacy. This was to be achieved by building the capacity of the people to participate in the program and by building local organizations from among the villagers. The government also needed to be convinced to allow the NGO 'a level playing field' to work in the villages and abstain from undue political interference.

"In IGWDP since participatory development was its central tenet, it was necessary to bring about a level playing field (as all the major actors were governmental agencies), and ensure that concerns and perspectives of the field actors (villagers and NGO) were brought on board. This was achieved by three innovative institutional mechanisms: 1) the inclusion of an NGO, namely WOTR as an equal and 'official partner' in the governance and management structure of the program; 2) the creation of a flexible financial instrument called the 'disposition fund'; 3) the establishment of the office of program coordinator (PCO)".[133]

It can be observed above that the 'level playing field' was achieved with the status of an 'equal and official partner' for the NGO so that it can work with the donor agencies independent of the governmental control and was actually a demand of delegation of watershed development to the NGO, and to remove political interference from its decision-making processes. Once the status of 'official partner' was acquired, the NGO needed resources to carry out its work that was provided by the 'disposition fund'. It can be observed that the donor support was empowering institutions other than the elected local government to do the same work as the local government does. A level playing field was translated in the formation of WOTR as an organization equal to the governmental department that carried out watershed development, in possession of technical and financial resources but without a mandate from the people that it sought to develop. It is debatable if the NGO was able to acquire a level playing field and equal status in the eyes of the government from the above three measures, but the 'official partner' status provided considerable freedom to the NGO from political influences in their decision making, especially during the CBP when it acquired funds directly from the donors and was accountable to them directly. The above measures certainly allowed the NGO to circumvent local politics and maintain its depiction as an apolitical actor while performing the political task of intervening in the issues of collective concern. It must be

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[133] Lobo (2003).

noted that the concerns of the villagers finds no such institutional mechanism to bring it on the table for discussion. While the NGO presents its own concerns regarding lack of power in working parallel to the government and institutes new NGO and designations, no such measures are found necessary in the case of the villagers' concerns. In this sense, the demand for a level playing field is in fact a demand for empowerment and recognition of the NGO sector rather than the empowerment of common villagers. This demand to empower non-elected agencies as development agents of and for the people weakens the elected governments by the people, affecting the democratization process negatively.

Program Coordinator

This section shows that the 'institution of the program coordinator' was a site of centralization of managerial powers in one office. It was presumed to represent the interests of the 'civil society' while all mechanisms of control by the 'civil society' were weakly formulated, if not non-existent. This office was to be acquired by nomination from the 'Social Centre', the NGO that was the initial implementing agency. The program coordinator was now to be the chief functionary and authority for IGWDP. 'Social Centre' nominated Fr. Crispino Lobo for this post. Lobo had worked with Fr. Bacher since the beginning of the project in 1989 and now was appointed as the project coordinator for IGWDP. He was also the founding member and the managing trustee of WOTR along with Fr. Bacher. Lobo describes the role and decision-making process of the program coordinator as follows:

"Since the *institution* of the program coordinator was approved of in bilateral agreements, it had official sanction and therefore could represent the program at all levels. *Since the program coordinator was historically from, and nominated by the NGO sector, he represented the interests of civil society*. It was an officially sanctioned post and so the program coordinator had official access to the government. Since WOTR provided the institutional and organizational base for the program coordinator, the latter had at his disposal the resources and goodwill of the organization and its network. This unique combination enabled real time flow of information as well as provided the flexibility and resources to undertake creative and innovative experiments at the project as well as institutional levels" (ibid: 5).

The program coordinator presents it as implicit that this office represents the interests of the 'civil society' because of his being historically from (Social Centre), and nominated by the NGO sector (Social Centre). It also presumes that the NGO sector represents the interests of the 'civil society'. The point is not to argue if the NGO does or does not represent the 'civil society' but to show that the politics behind appointment to this powerful post is legitimized by claiming a membership to the NGO sector and nomination by it. In its portrayal of the NGO as representing the interests of the 'civil society' as a whole, the analysis of the NGO as representing certain sectional interests is downplayed or ignored.In the absence of any other direct local democratic control on this office, the program coordinator represented the interests of the donor community as much as it represented the 'civil society' because the only accountability that existed was to the funding agencies. In this scenario, the decentralized planning and emergence of the local perspectives at the project and institutional levels was confined to the managerial intervention by this office to 'undertake creative and innovative experiments at the project as well as institutional levels' and the decentralization of decision-making stopped at the empowerment of the program coordinator with flexibility and funds.

"Unencumbered by bureaucracy or protocol, the program coordinator was able to easily move across all levels of influence, from the village to the decision-makers, across the boundaries of the civil and public sectors as well as between the official and the non-official worlds. In fact, the directives of the Government of Maharashtra granting permission to treat forest lands as well as extension of facilities and benefits of the 'capacity building phase' to the 'full implementation phase' were in response to the initiatives and consistent follow up done by the program coordinator. Furthermore, in being able to approach the political and administrative establishments on both the Indian and German side at various levels, the program coordinator was able to facilitate continued support and an enabling policy environment for the IGWDP" (ibid: 6).

The above statement shows that the program coordinator worked independent of any undue interference from the governmental bureaucracy and created enabling circumstances for the project in the form of securing permission from the government to work on the land owned by the forest department and securing continued funding from the donor agencies. The lack of bureaucratic protocol for the program coordinator also signifies an absence of accountability to the institutions of governance in the recipient country, replaced by an accountability mechanism to the donor agency. A concentration of managerial powers in the office of the program coordinator is useful in continuation of

the project. In this capacity, the program coordinator utilized his flexibility and resources provided by the NGO for efficiency gains and political support for the program. The continuation of the project became an end in itself that replaced its role as a means towards alleviating poverty. This changed managerial approach also signified a replacement of NGOs as public bodies that could have been the seedbed of radical alternatives and structural change to expert bodies that could be utilized for efficiency gains in implementing watershed development projects.

The absolute power of the program coordinator over the project could not be achieved without the continuous supply of the 'disposition fund' from the donor agencies. This was achieved by the inclusion of another delegated agency in the form of a national bank called the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).

6.1.2   NABARD as an Instrument of Depoliticization

This section of the chapter argues that NABARD as a national bank uses its quasi-state organizational status with the donors to act as the credible recipient of funds for IGWDP and with the government to secure administrative and political approval for the project. A strategic group formation between the NGO and the Bank helped in routing the grants from Germany not through the State or Central government treasuries but through a semi-governmental organization, an example of Type-1 depoliticization in Hay's model. This also exempted the donor funds from attracting the provisions of Foreign Contributions Regulation (FCR) Act, the only other legal mechanism of state control on donor contributions. This section shows how depoliticization by delegation of responsibility to the banks became instrumental in removing the political character of bilateral funds, reduced to a technical accountability exercise to be dealt interdepartmentally between the National Bank and the Ministry of Finance. Routing of funds through NABARD provides the NGO greater flexibility by removing the grants provided by the donors from the governmental treasuries as well as from the FCR Act.

NABARD's Role in Securing Governmental Approval for IGWDP

This section shows how NABARD's status as a quasi-state organization becomes useful in securing the governmental approval for the project while the NGO remains in the background and its role in the project is downplayed.

The deputy manager of NABARD, Bombay made the first application to the GoM for the 'political and administrative approval' of the IGWDP[134] on 19th December, 1991. This was followed up by him in another letter addressed to the government on 31st July, 1992[135]. The Government of Maharashtra responded to his request on 27th of August, 1992 with a 'government resolution' approving the demand for the project:

"Having regard to the NGO activity in the field of watershed development in Maharashtra, negotiations on bilateral assistance between the Government of Germany and the Government of India (GoI) were under process in the past. Now the German government has agreed to provide through KfW financial assistance of DM 12 million (i.e. Rs. 174.09 million; E.R: DM 1= Rs. 14.5) for the development of watershed projects by the NGOs in Maharashtra. NABARD in consultation with GoI has agreed to help in the preparation of project proposals and implementation of the projects. German assistance may be in the form of grant for the program. The fund will flow from the KfW directly to the National Bank i.e. NABARD, as per arrangements laid down by the Ministry of Finance, GoI. The National Bank shall institute similar measures for financing individual projects. On the basis of projects sanctioned, the phasing indicated in the project document and satisfactory work completion, NABARD will release the funds for direct project implementation (labor and material costs) through the local bank to a joint account of the VWC and the NGO concerned. Overhead costs of the NGO will be paid directly to the NGO." [136]

The 'preamble' of this governmental resolution as cited above, shows the important role ascribed to NABARD in the funding process as a direct recipient of the grant from KfW. A preliminary reading of the 'preamble' of this resolution gives the impression of a contract between KfW and NABARD concerning a grant of DM 12 million for the purpose of implementing watershed development projects through NGOs in Maharashtra. In this sense, NABARD acted also on the NGO's behalf by offering its services and seeking approval from the government.

In the normal course of action, ODA is routed through the ministries, but in this case it was delegated to a national bank. With this move, the Ministry of Finance moved into an indirect control of the grant. This responsibility was delegated to NABARD, an example

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[134] Letter No. NB.OPD. FS/2949/RF.KFW/1991-92; Government of Maharashtra
[135] Letter No. NB.DPD. FS/1403/RF.KFW/1992-93; Government of Maharashtra
[136] Resolution No. IGP-1091/43015/CR-36/ JAL-7; Government of Maharashtra

of Type-1 depoliticization in Hay's model where the accountability of the funds is removed from the central ministry to the arena of a 'professional bank'. NABARD also agreed to help in the preparation of project proposals and project implementation. It was responsible for meeting the labor and material costs to be transferred directly to the joint account of the NGO and the VWC. The NGO was authorized to receive only the overhead costs directly from the donor agencies.

The governmental resolution further elaborates that:

"National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development has sought government's approval for implementation of this program and necessary support and guidance from the concerned department of the Government. Since the entire funding in the program is being provided for under German assistance, no financial support is required from the Government. However, for successful implementation of this project, Government's approval and support are essential. In view of this, Government is now pleased to accord approval for implementation of IGWDP through NGOs in Maharashtra with active involvement of NABARD."

The GoM granted its approval because NABARD had an active role in the project and would act as the governmental arm to ascertain accountability in the project. The point here is to note that NABARD shielded the NGO from coming in direct contact with the state and used its quasi-governmental status to convince the state and the donors of its authenticity and reliability. At the same time, NABARD removed the IGWDP from the public sphere and direct political concern into the realm of a technical transaction between two national banks, KfW and NABARD.

Notably, the government resolution makes no mention of the technical cooperation that was routed through the agency of GTZ that became an integral component of the program. One reason for this could be that the CBP was added to the program after the formation of the new NGO called WOTR in 1993 while the governmental approval was grant a year before in 1992. After the government approved the project, it underwent an institutional transformation with the formation of WOTR and the addition of a new CBP. This also included the displacement of NABARD as the funding agency for this phase of 12-18 months where the grants were given by GTZ directly to the NGO. In Hay's model, this further delegation of responsibility to the non-governmental sector, removed first from the ministerial sphere, then from the semi-state sphere of the National Bank to the private sphere of the NGO, is an example of Type-2 depoliticization. With this addition

to the program, the grants were also removed from the local public sphere and scrutiny to a confinement into an organizational issue between the GTZ and WOTR.

NABARD's Role in Securing funds from KfW

As noted earlier, that bilateral funds from the German government are routed only through the state agencies in the recipient country, however an exception was made in the case in which the funds were provided directly to the NGO with a national bank as the mediating agency (Bliss, 2001). The program coordinator of IGWDP, Lobo explains why this was a good choice from the NGO's point of view:

"These being bilateral funds, they normally have to be routed through either the Central or State government treasuries. However, the procedural complexities involved in accessing budgetary resources and the need to have funds allocated in a flexible manner and available on a timely basis, made the NGOs (as well as the villagers) uncomfortable with this route" (Lobo,2003).

Lobo from WOTR rejects the budgetary option because it involved 'procedural complexities'. The lack of flexibility and delay in fund transfer also made the government route 'uncomfortable'. NGOs can also be supported by the donor agencies in India without going through the budgetary route, within the framework of FCR Act. Lobo argues that this option was also not available for the IGWDP:

"If the funds were routed outside the budgetary channel, they would attract the provisions of FCR Act. Since the goal of IGWDP was to create a large scale movement involving 'civil society', most of the NGOs (especially the small ones) and all the community based organizations would have been excluded from directly receiving these funds. Moreover, whatever channel was used, since these funds were ODA and fairly substantial, both the German and the Indian governments would have to be assured of its deployment and proper utilization. Since Fr. Bacher personally knew its top management, he decided to explore NABARD as the routing agency for the German funds from KfW" (ibid: 4).

As shown before, NABARD sought the permission and political approval from the Government of Maharashtra for the project and volunteered to act as the recipient agency on behalf of the ministry of finance and 'Social Centre'.

"NABARD, being a Govt. institution, would meet the requirement of governmental oversight, (both from the German and Indian sides), could accept the funds directly (do away with the budgetary route) and would not attract the provisions of the FCRA. Being

a public sector financial institution dealing with large amounts of money and having experience in dealing with bilateral and multi-lateral funding institutions, it would also provide a credible counterpart to the official German Funding Agencies" (ibid: 5).

It can be observed in the above statement of the program coordinator how the involvement of NABARD did away with the budgetary route and shielded the grants from attracting the provisions of FCR Act. Delegation was used as a strategy of depoliticization that not only removed the direct political control on the fund but also shifted them out of the public sphere by circumventing the legal machinery present to oversee such transactions. The status of NABARD as a quasi-governmental bank was beneficial for the NGO in availing the funds without delay and outside the purview of FCR Act. At the same time, its status as a bank presented problems in dealing with 'grants' as it was a credit-disbursing bank. Lobo from WOTR noted this problem and how it was resolved in favor of the NGO:

"However, NABARD, being a credit disbursing agency, faced an initial difficulty in administrating these funds since they were grants and had to be disbursed as grants. However, there is a provision in the NABARD Act, which allowed for NABARD to accept and disburse grants for action research purposes and innovative pilot projects especially those which would test out approaches and mechanisms that enhance credit absorption and utilization. Since NABARD largely re-finances agricultural operations, a good amount of which is rain dependent, promoting watershed development as a means of stabilizing and productivising rural agricultural credit was viewed as innovative, in line with its mandate, and therefore qualified to be taken up on a pilot basis" (ibid: 5).

Brought into being by an Act of the Parliament in 1981, NABARD is a credit disbursing agency that does not deal with grants. However the mode of funding for IGWDP was in the form of grants and hence needed to be disbursed as grant. This was overcome by invoking the provisions of NABARD Act[137] that allows NABARD to accept and disburse grants for action research and innovative pilot projects. Article 38, section (iii) notes that NABARD:

"…may provide facilities for training, for dissemination of information and the promotion of research including the undertaking of studies, researches, techno-economic and other surveys in the field of rural banking, agriculture and rural development and it may for the said purposes make loans (or advances or grants[138]) including grants by way of provision for fellowships and chairs to any institution."

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[137] Chapter VII (Other functions of the Bank)- Art. 38; pp.20
[138] Subs. for the words "make grants" by Act No.55 of 2000.

This article solved the issue in favor of the implementing NGO. As NABARD was a governmental institution that could accept the funds directly from KfW, could now also disburse it as grant. It resolved two problems for the implementing NGO: 1) it circumvented the lengthy budgetary route and 2) it saved the community based organizations from the provisions of FCR Act.

A favorable interpretation of its provisions allowed NABARD to fit this project in its mandate as an action research that would enhance credit absorption and utilization. In this effort, it can be seen that watershed development undergoes contextual presentation and interpretation based on the target audience. For the BMZ, it was presented as a project to 'alleviate poverty through self-help' to fit their policy focus, for the government as an 'integrated and comprehensive soil and water conservation treatment program within the micro-watershed'[139], and for NABARD as an 'innovative way of stabilizing and productivising rural agricultural credit'. Watershed development was seen as an innovative approach towards stabilizing agriculture in rainfed areas, hence 'qualified to be taken up on a pilot basis' with grant disbursement. It can be seen that the strategic group formed by the apolitical, technical agencies suitably interpreted the provisions of the NABARD Act to make the project 'qualify' and fit the Bank's purview of operation.

Under the authorization from NABARD the funds from KfW were received in trusted hands in India. Now the problem that remained was in bringing the funds directly to the village people. Who in the village would receive the funds? Who would be held accountable in case of mismanagement?

The program coordinator of IGWDP noted this problem and its resolution in the following words:

"A difficulty arose in routing these funds to the villagers directly. Since, at the village level, the legal project holder was the Village Watershed Committee (VWC) consensually nominated by the *Gram Sabha* and since this was not a registered body, the question of whether they could receive funds from a public sector institution and be held accountable for the same arose. Local Banks refused to open accounts in the name of the VWC. The Bombay Village *Panchayat* Act of 1958 provided a legal solution. It held that when the majority of adult voting members in a village held a *Gram Sabha* in accordance with the provisions of the Act and passed a Resolution, that Resolution was a formal act,

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[139] The GR of 27th August, 1992: Government of Maharashtra.

having a legal basis, was binding and enforceable. Thus the VWC that is established in such a manner becomes a formal body, a person in law and therefore, eligible to receive funds and be held accountable for them. When this was brought to their attention, local banks began to open accounts in the name of the VWCs and funds were disbursed directly to these accounts" (ibid: 6).

Refusal of the local banks to open accounts in the name of VWC also points to the weak recognition that the committee had in the village public sphere. This body, called the village watershed committee (VWC) has no legal status in the *panchayati raj* institutions and was 'consensually nominated' by the *gram sabha*. This amounts to saying that the VWC is not a registered body (in most cases) and thus cannot receive funds from a public sector institution like NABARD. It has no verifiable identity proof (other than the minutes of the village meeting on the day that *gram sabha* consensually nominated the VWC) required to open bank accounts in the name of the VWC.

This was overcome by providing a weak legal basis to this committee in the Bombay Village *Panchayat* Act of 1958. It is interesting to note that this Act was brought into effect to strengthen the village democracy and *Panchayati Raj* Institutions (PRI) was used to form and legitimize a parallel non-elected committee. From the perspective of depoliticization, it can be observed how sometimes the democratic instruments in the public sphere could also be used to depoliticize local institutions.

The example of routing funds and the complexities involved in the process could be inferred from the above description. It was quite rational for the implementing NGO to explore alternate routes of channeling funds for the project as bilateral governmental routes are tedious and unpredictable, it would make the efficient implementation of the program difficult in the absence of timely availability of funds. Similarly, FCR Act would prevent the community based organizations to secure funds from Germany. Both parties resolved the issue by delegating the responsibility of grant disbursement to autonomous Banks, working largely independent of the government at the Center or State. In Hay's model, this could be described as demotion of the responsibility from the government sphere to the non-governmental public sphere, with an arm's-length control over the delegated body, an example of *Type 1 Depoliticization*. The implementing agency was able to reduce direct governmental influence from the day-to-day activities of the project by delegating the responsibilities to non-political authorities, expert groups, technical

agencies and 'professionals'. The implementing NGO represents itself as a 'technical organization' that specializes in watershed development. It conducts training sessions throughout the year in its residential training center at Darewadi village in Ahmednagar. The training sessions are attended by the government staff of different watershed departments, NGOs working in different parts of India, researchers and international delegates. This helps in constructing an 'apolitical' image of the NGO, perceived as a 'goal oriented and objective based organization'. This does not imply that the work of the NGO does not involve political negotiations and contestations, especially when the NGO begins with the formation of institutions like the VWC and micro-credit societies. Also, the delegated agencies engage in extra-parliamentary politics to either avoid a legal act or interpret it favorably as per the context. Delegation further centralizes managerial powers in the hands of apolitical agencies that promise efficiency by circumventing politics and following a formal rule-based managerial approach to watershed development. It focuses on output legitimacy and economic efficiency by reducing the complexities involved in deliberative democracy and governmental procedures.

As discussed in this section, the way it was imperative for the NGO to avoid bilateral channel in the favor of efficiency and reduction of complexity, it was also imperative to avoid the *panchayati raj* institutions at the village level for similar reasons. It was too politicized to be efficient.

6.1.3   *Watershed Management Directorate as a Tool of Depoliticization*

This section explores the institutional mechanisms of depoliticization in the case of Hills-II project. It traces the coming into being of watershed projects in Uttarakhand and the nature of institutions that have been formed to govern these. On the basis of this case study, I argue that the institutions governing the watershed project are increasingly placed outside the direct purview of political influence by delegating the governance to specialized agencies formed for this purpose. In Hills-II project, Watershed Management Directorate (WMD) was the implementing agency working under the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA). I argue that WMD is a product of the 'politics of delegation' that refers to the analysis of the secondary consequences of locating responsibilities and powers beyond the direct control of elected politicians. Hay's model that maps the

197

gradations of autonomy also allows us to accommodate the existence of different control and accountability frameworks. Russian Doll Model of Flinders (2007: 109) maps seven stages of delegation of authority in the governance strategies excluding the core executive and ministerial departments, as explained in the third chapter.

Following Hay and Flinders, I argue that WMD is an example of delegating watershed program from the political realm to an apolitical body, delegation to the *Layer 2*, i.e. an 'executive agency'.

Executive agencies remain a part of their parent departments, like WMD is a part of the MoA, but enjoy a significant degree of operational autonomy. The ministers do not concern themselves with the day-to-day running of the agency. The agency is funded by the parent department but may also generate their own revenue streams. Appointments are made by the Principal secretary of the State government in consultation with the Secretary Agriculture and Secretary of the Ministry of Finance.

Agency chief executives are responsible to the ministers and have no direct line of accountability to parliament. Ministers remain accountable to parliament for their department's agencies.

In this section we would examine the coming into being of one such agency called Watershed Management Directorate (WMD) that acts as the implementing agency for watershed projects in Uttarakhand and explicate its principal-agent role in relation to the MoA as emerging from the logic of delegation and a tactic of institutional depoliticization.

Monsoon rains of 1978 flooded the entire northern India and left at least two million people homeless. The destruction of crops and property was immense in what was described by BBC as 'the worst floods in the living memory of northern India'[140]. Two most important rivers of north India, Ganga and Yamuna, both originating in Uttrakhand had risen way beyond the official safety level ruining crops and life. The Indian government responded by setting up a high-level working group for flood control in Ganga-Yamuna basin to study its causes and suggest remedial measures for its control. The Working Group suggested a treatment of the area on watershed lines.

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[140] http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/september/4/newsid_2496000/2496097.stm (accessed: 31-01-09).

"Accordingly in November 1981, the forest department of the erstwhile Uttar Pradesh formulated an overall development plan for treating the said region. In March 1982, keeping in view the "Overall Development Plan" of forest department of Uttar Pradesh, Watershed Management Directorate (WMD) was established by the Government of Uttar Pradesh to carry out the work performed by various departments on the basis of watershed region in an integrated manner by means of a 'Multi- disciplinary force' under an administrative authority to check the obscure problems like those of soil erosion in the hilly areas and environmental degradation".[141]

This directorate had a well defined role and function. Its presentation of itself was defined by the functions that it promised to perform:

"Through this Directorate, it was proposed to, gradually, treat the entire mountain region on the basis of mini watershed regions under which state, district and regional offices/ units were approved to manage the work related to environmental preservation and activities pertaining to curbing soil erosion, afforestation, social forestry, setting up of parts, grazing land development, increase in the high breeds of animals for high productivity of milk distribution of fertilizer and high yielding seed for agricultural land, minor irrigation schemes, minor Engineering etc. in a successful, effective and integrated manner" (WMD 2006).

After its formation in 1982, WMD acted as the administrative authority that worked to address the problems of soil erosion and environmental degradation in the hilly areas. It was a purely technical endeavor that had nothing to do with the community that inhabited these ecosystems till 1993 when the EEC came to Uttarakhand with the 'Doon Valley Watershed Management Project' when community based institutions were to be formed for its management. From 1982 to 2005, WMD worked as a statutory body implementing projects with the help of line departments. It was granted a permanent status in 2005 as a nodal agency for all watershed projects in the State. The executing agency from 1982 to 1993 was mainly the line departments or the project administration 'under the unified command'. Doon Valley Project (DVP) financed by EEC for the first time brought self-help groups into the management matrix though it received secondary importance in this project. The execution here was still 'by the project administration under the unified command' but community based organizations did make an appearance in the management discourse. The 1999 project of Hills-II totally did away with the line departments and strengthened the discourse on community participation. This did not

[141] http://www.gramya.in/about_us.html (accessed: 11-01-09)

imply that the line departments had a diminished role but the technical requirements of Common Guidelines issued by the Ministry of Rural Development in 1994 and 73rd Constitutional amendment necessitated this reluctant inclusion of the community in the affairs of WMD.

The main point that I wish to highlight here is that WMD began as a delegated agency to undertake the watershed work on technical lines and continues to work on the same paradigm till 1999 when the global focus on community based organizations and 'people's participation in their own development' acquired popular legitimacy. It would be naive to presume that WMD would make a paradigm shift overnight to community-based governance. As the evidence from the case study shows, WMD still operates with the high-handedness that is characteristic of the public-sector agencies in India. Further, it simulates the presence of a local participation by citing in its official records the presence of new village-level institutions (called *Gram*/ Village Resource Management Association- GAREMA) and self-help groups for women.

In the next section, I would explore these local governance institutions to show that the so called GAREMA and self-help groups are a way of further delegating the responsibility of watershed work to such institutions that have no power or presence in the local project implementation. It certainly facilitates the shifting of responsibility of work done/not done from WMD to amorphous local bodies, that are made 'amorphous' by selective inclusion of the local people in project governance among other strategies, by the very agency that has the task of forming such village-based institutions. I would look closely at the case of Kimsar village in Uttarakhand and the GAREMA formed there to govern the Hills-II project. It also looks at other villages in the same micro-watershed to show that local participation in the project management is deliberately kept to a select group of villagers from the elite groups and big landholders.

6.2   Village Watershed Committee as a Tool of Institutional Depoliticization

This section introduces the village level institutions that were formed and put to use by the Hills-II project in Uttarakhand. By exploring how these village level institutions were conceived, funded and organized, what they were expected to do and what they ended up doing, this section argues that the village level institutions became the sites where the depoliticized strategies of governance are first put into play and have their most concrete

and visible effects of institutional depoliticization. At this level, depoliticization occurs by transfer of power to a wide range of non-elected, 'consensually nominated' local committees that encloses and diminishes the watershed project from the public sphere to a select group of interest-based coalitions while the elected local governments languish on the sidelines.

6.2.1   Formation, Functions and Fading-Away of VDC in Hills-II Project

In this section, I show how the formation of the watershed development committee in Kimsar village, Uttarakhand under the Hills-II project reallocated the responsibility of village development under the project to a 'consensually nominated' body formed by an alliance between the government staff from the implementing agency of WMD and the village contractors/ politically influential people. The main idea behind empowering committees other than the elected local government was to circumvent any political interference in the program. Political interference in this sense associated with duplicity, corruption and undue delay in the decision-making processes, that was meant to be avoided by the formation of new committees, not only eroded the public scrutiny of the project implementation but also became as corrupt and duplicate as the political *panchayats* they sought to bypass.

Formation of GAREMA

Watershed development was not a new idea for the residents of Kimsar village in Uttarakhand when the Shiwalik Hills-II project came to this village in 2002. It was already a part of watershed development under the state-sponsored Drought Prone Areas Program (DPAP) from 1994-1998. This project was implemented by forming nominated watershed committees, a separate body from the elected local government. Needless to say that the project did not bring about any significant change in the environment or the life of the people during DPAP and hence was selected one more time to be covered under Hills-II project.

Kimsar village was first visited by the WMD officials in December 2002. The first meeting of the village *gram sabha* records the events of the day of watershed committee

201

formation on 17th December 2002. A consensually nominated committee of 11 people was formed to govern the Hills-II project. It included a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and 7 members. In practice, only two people from the committee, namely the president and the secretary were trusted with some functional powers like withdrawal of funds from the local bank. This committee was called *Gaon* /Village Resource Management Committee (GAREMA)[142]. This has been referred to as the VDC in the following pages.

This meeting was conducted in the presence of Kesar Singh Aire (Unit Officer for Hills-II project, Kimsar village) from WMD and three women 'motivators' who would help to form the self-help groups for women. In theory, the functional powers were devolved to the 'community based' institutions.

"Today on 17th December, 2002, a general body meeting of the Kimsar *panchayat* was held to inform the villagers about the Hills-II project. As some villagers know from their 'exposure tour' and the training session in Rishikesh about the program, same rules and regulations of the project were repeated for others. After this, the apex body for the implementation of this project, to be called GAREMA, was proposed to be formed. It was agreed that the *gram pradhan* would be the ex-officio patron of the project."

This meeting also defined the power distribution between the newly formed committee and the elected local government. The executive power in the project was to be retained by the VDC while the elected local government was reduced to the role of a consenting bystander. By assigning no active role to the *gram panchayat*, the VDC also removed the scrutiny and control of its activities from the village public sphere. The VDC was to address the collective problem of water but the decision-making was to not to be collective but confined to the nominated committee that did not derive its power from the collective mandate nor could be removed from office by democratic means. Following resolutions were passed in this first meeting:

"Resolution-1: GAREMA was <u>proposed to be formed</u> of the following office bearers and members:

Post	Name	Proposed By	Seconded By
President	Rajpal Singh Bist	Ummed Singh	Anusuya Prasad

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[142] Minutes of the village meeting on 17-12-2002. Village *Panchayat* records of Kimsar. Translated by the author from Hindi.

Vice President	Khushhal Singh Azad	Viren Singh	Bhopal Singh
Secretary	Vinod Kandwal	MadanMohan	Darshanlal Kandwal
Treasurer	Smt.Chandrakala Devi	SS Negi	Bhubneshwar Kandwal
Member	Jaswant Singh	Prema Singh Negi	Om Prakash Kandwal
Member	Chait Singh Bist	Balam Singh	Ved Prakash Kandwal
Member	Bansi dhar Kandwal	Satya Prasad	Vishambhar Dutt
Member	Sachidanand Kandwal	Purushottam Kandwal	Rajendra Prasad Kandwal
Member	Smt.Guddi Devi	Narendra Singh	Smt.Urmila Devi
Member	Smt. Sangeeta Devi	Smt Pushpa Devi	Smt.Seema Devi
Member	Smt. Krishna Devi	Smt.Prema Devi	Smt. Vijaya Kandwal

Table 13. Village Watershed Committee in Kimsar

Resolution- 2:

A resolution was passed that the amount of money received for the project would be saved in a national or *grameen* bank, with the signatures of the President and the Secretary. The funds would be withdrawn and managed by the joint signatures of the President and the secretary."

A closer look at the above table reveals that the formation of VDC in the village also represented the power distribution among the strategic groups in the village. The nominated president for the VDC, Bist, was also the president for government sponsored project of DPAP and the secretary nominated was the son of the earlier secretary. All other office bearers had no active role in the project as specified in the second resolution, but served the purpose of a simulated democratic decision-making and inclusivity in the project. This point would become more obvious when we observe the inclusion of women into the committee. The above table indicates that after the powerful posts were distributed among the village contractors[143], a woman candidate was nominated for the post of treasurer. The inclusion of women members in the committee and their order of appearance in the table indicate the importance assigned to them. Selecting three women

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[143] The nominated president also has the contract for the construction work of the Hospital in the village while the secretary supplies vessels and equipments during the marriages in the nearby villages.

members in a row towards the end of the meeting also indicates the priority given to them and served the purpose of fulfilling the requirements of gender balance as required by the World Bank.

Blühdorn (2007) argues that the simulation of democratic representation (inclusion of women in the decision-making body) is a strategy of depoliticization that shapes the public opinion about the democratic nature of an organization when in reality the democratization of decision-making has not been achieved. It also limits the public deliberation and solutions for the issues that are simulated to be resolved, like inclusivity, while they still exist. The implementing agencies emphasize persuasion to convince the donor agencies towards believing that women have been empowered by inclusion into the decision-making committee, whereas in reality the inclusion is highly selective and into non-power positions.

The second resolution as cited above, further concentrates the power of watershed project management into the hands of president and the secretary. If they are authorized to withdraw and spend the funds, they are responsible for the project also. The second resolution also excluded the *gram panchayat* from any control or monitoring of the funds. In this arrangement, removal of the *gram panchayat* also circumvented any (undue) political interference and public scrutiny, where the funds would be released by the WMD in the account of the VDC that would then undertake watershed development activities in the village and be accountable to the WMD.

It must however be noted that no mention was made of registering this committee under the Societies Registration Act of 1860 as outlined by the World Bank. It is evident that there was no intention of 'devolution of power' to the VDC as it was left almost as an informal body in the absence of any legal status. This was a common pattern of work in the Hills-II project as identified by the World Bank *Aide-Memoire,* mid-term review. The WMD responded by 'promising to register all VDCs under the Societies Act by September 30, 2002'[144]. As the project in Kimsar began in 2002 and ended without a registration of the VDC in 2005, certainly the WMD did not fulfill its promise of registering all VDCs by September 2002 nor did it follow this guideline in the villages that were taken up after this date, for e.g. Kimsar.

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[144] *Aide-Memoire* – Mid-term Review by the World Bank, Published by WMD, Dehradun, 2002.

<u>Functions of VDC:</u>

This section shows that the VDC was authorized to undertake village development work and issues of collective concern that is constitutionally the responsibility of the elected local government. If so, what was its source of legitimacy and authorization to do undertake such work? Here I argue that the creation of apolitical bodies parallel to the elected village government that is authorized to perform the same task is a strategy of depoliticization that seeks to provide village development without the involvement of local democratic politics.

After the formation of the VDC in the first meeting of the Hills-II project, the next meeting held a week later on 24th December, 2002 outlined the activities to be undertaken by the VDC:

"An unopposed resolution was passed to select two areas- *Salami Tok* and *Nighra Tok* within the Kimsar *gram sabha* for forestation (*vanikaran*). The VDC was given the authorization to conduct the survey and begin work in these areas. Since these areas are privately owned, the landowners are allowed to use their choice of private plants along with those given by the implementing agencies"

It can be observed from the above resolution that forestation of the private land was the priority for the implementing agencies. For this action, cooperation from the villagers was required (as the land was privately owned). As the VDC was formed from among the villagers, it would be easier for the government to work through this committee rather than directly employ its line departments. This was also a reason that VDCs were formed but only to be instrumentalized by the WMD to facilitate rent-seeking and to act as its local agent. The nominated status of the VDC made it easier to manipulate than the *gram panchayat* that has the popular mandate and could be scrutinized by the public and removed from office if found to be involved in unfair practices. The process of VDC formation made it immune from such scrutiny and control.

The VDC gradually added more issues of collective concern in its list of activities in the next meeting held in February 2003:

"An unopposed resolution was passed that a pumping system should be installed in the village water source of Jugyapani to supply drinking water to the households. A request for this project should be sent to the WMD, Dehradun."

The next meeting held in June 2003 reconfirmed the above resolution and outlined other areas in which VDC would be authorized to work:

"The pumping scheme to bring water from the Jugyapani source to the village households was passed unopposed. It was decided that collective forestation (*samuhik udyanikaran*) and private forestation (*nizi udyanikaran*) can only be successful if there was wire-fencing (*taar baad*) to protect them. In the village, around 2 hectares of land would be undertaken for collective forestation and wire-fencing. VDC would also construct cemented walking tracks of about 3 km in the village. As a part of minor-irrigation support, 366 meters of *Gul* and 500 meters of pipeline would be laid in the Juwahad *Tok*. Stone check-dams would be made in the Dehran *Tok*, Dadi *Tok* and Viradi *Tok*. The unit officer from WMD also explained about the construction of water tanks and fodder tanks in the village. 25 water tanks and 50 fodder tanks would be made in the village."

It can be observed from the above meeting record that the VDC would not only undertake forestation and water supply in the village, but also be responsible for wire-fencing, street construction, minor-irrigation, construction of check dams and water tanks among other things. These developmental issues that would normally come under the jurisdiction of the elected *gram panchayat* were shifted to non-elected, nominated committee. This committee was recognized and funded by the WMD. Meanwhile, the elected local government received neither support from the government to undertake similar activities, nor any power to influence the decision-making of the VDC. It left the elected local government powerless and weak while the nominated committee formed by the alliance of strategic groups was recognized and empowered by the WMD.

This meeting also discussed the formation of a 'revolving fund' for the maintenance and upkeep of the project activities:

"An unopposed resolution was passed that each villager would contribute a sum of Rs. 10 as directed by WMD. This amount would form the basis of establishing a revolving fund for the project."

Along with the funds issued by WMD, the revolving fund was also to be deposited in the village bank account, jointly operated by the president and the secretary of the VDC. Under the directions from WMD, the VDC would not only undertake activities as enumerated above but would also be the custodian of public funds. However, the agency authorized to undertake these activities in the village had no legal status or democratic

mandate from the people. The question of its legitimacy in the village public sphere was also raised in this village meeting.

Legitimacy of VDC and the Issue of its Registration

This section shows that the VDC continued to work in the village without any formal status. The only evidence that such a committee existed was in the minutes of the village meeting, which cannot be considered a legally binding evidence as it was an informal document maintained by the president of the VDC. In the absence of any other constitutional provision for the formation of such a committee, the villagers demanded in this meeting that the VDC must be registered as a non-profit organization under the Societies Registration Act of 1860:

"An unopposed resolution was passed to register the VDC as a non-profit organization and the president of the VDC was authorized to undertake the formalities of registration."[145]

This resolution by the *gram sabha* clearly indicates an interest of the village community in the registration of VDC. The president of VDC certainly did not 'look into the matter' or was prevented by the WMD staff to push for registration is not clear. For the next one year, this issue remained unattended. It reappeared as a point of debate in the meeting of 4th November 2004. The resolution passed earlier was repeated again in the following words:

"The registration of GAREMA was felt necessary by the house and the President was given the responsibility of getting the formalities completed. It was agreed by all that the amount of 3000 INR required for the registration of GAREMA could be withdrawn from the 'Revolving Fund' account number 207[146].

Two months later, the project came to an end in Kimsar without any registration of the VDC. The last meeting of the committee was held on 27th January, 2005 after which no records exist about the project work. In fact, no records other than the minutes of village meeting exist for this project at the village level. In my search for the records, WMD office in Dehradun directed me to the village committee and the village committee

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[145] Minutes of the village meeting on 23-06-2003, Kimsar, Pauri.
[146] Minutes of the Village meeting on 4-11-2004, Kimsar, Pauri.

directed me the president of the VDC. The president in turn confessed that he did not receive any documents, plans, expenditure details or log-books from the WMD office. WMD certainly had mid-term reviews, status reports and a combined data on the entire State but individual details of the work done at the village level were unavailable or not made available. Since VDC had no legitimate status, there was no legal mechanism available to them to 'demand' the relevant information from WMD nor could the research team ask VDC for any information due to the same reason. In practice, the VDC was reduced to a one-man committee, run by the president.

To explore why the VDC was not given a formal status, it is important to explore who it would benefit and how. In theory, the governmental agency 'empowers' the villagers to form such institutions that would govern their watershed projects, in practice, the governmental agency retains an arm's-length control over the community-based organizations. In this case, the VDC in Kimsar is nominated to perform the act of decentralization but actual power of funds and planning is retained by the WMD. No public dissemination of information is practiced that could facilitate a democratic decision-making in the village but information is shared on a 'need to know' basis and never in writing between the WMD and VWC. The VDC works independently of the *panchayati raj* institutions, sometimes in competition with it as was the case in Kimsar. The VDC president could be the next *sarpanch* if he worked well in watershed project. This separation from the *panchayat* keeps the VDC out of the political sphere in the village as they are not elected democratically (but nominated) and hence not subject to the removal from office by popular mandate. In the absence of any formal registration, the VDC automatically dispersed once the project team left the village. The 'multidisciplinary teams' formed by WMD shifted to new areas once the project was over in Kimsar. These teams were reformed and deputed to new areas now under the new project sanctioned by the World Bank called 'Uttaranchal Decentralized Watershed Development Project' (UDWDP- *Gramya*). The delegation of responsibility to technical committees formed and reformed makes it difficult to establish the accountability in the project both at the village and implementing agency level. The non-formal status of the VDC further facilitates inappropriate rent seeking outside the public sphere, both by the

government and village committee members. Hence, it makes sense to implement the project through the VDC and not through the village *panchayat.*

The village *sarpanch* Negi argues that VDC was not a part of the *gram sabha* and although he was the patron of the project in theory, no decisions were made with his consultation. To 'politicize' this issue, so that *gram sabha* would become the responsible body for the project management, the *sarpanch* demanded an official 'hand-over' from the VDC with all the right papers. As shown above, no such documents were ever shared with the VDC by the implementing agency of WMD.

The 'Status Report IWDP (Hills-II)' published by the WMD in March 2005 provided the status of action taken on the observations made in the Aide Memoire of the World Bank supervision mission in 2002. On the issue of registration of institutions formed, the status report presents the data on the total number of VDCs formed in each division and those that were registered under the Society Act 1860. In the Rishikesh division, 121 VDCs were formed out of which 83 were registered[147]. This report cites the reason given by WMD for non-registration as follows: 'many VDCs are unwilling to do registration under Societies Act inspite of persuasion of project staff'[148]. However, the minutes of village meetings in Kimsar do not record any mention of registration from the project staff, certainly no persuasion. In fact, the villagers pressed for registration and sanctioned funds for it as noted above, but to no avail. But the absence of registration or a legal basis did not prevent the VDC from working on the watershed development project, an important component of which was the pumping system to supply drinking water to the households.

Drinking Water Scheme in Kimsar

This section explores the pumping scheme and its management by the VDC in Kimsar village to argue that the scheme ran into trouble and still lies dysfunctional precisely due to the strategies of depoliticization followed during the planning and implementation phase, which not only removed it from the village public sphere but also kept the elected local government from taking any responsibility for its repair and revival.

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[147] Status Report upto March 2005, IWDP Hills-II, Uttaranchal. Published by WMD, Dehradun, May 2005.
[148] Ibid.: 2.

The demand for a pumping system to supply drinking water was raised in the village meeting in February, 2003:

"An unopposed resolution was passed that a pumping system should be installed in the village water source at Jugyapani to supply drinking water to the village residents."
As mentioned in the meeting records, the need for proper drinking water facility in the villages was felt and a proposal was passed for requesting the Hills-II project officers to provide resources for installing a diesel run motor to pump water from the source in the valley to the village surface level and subsequently to the houses and would be run by the VDC. This body would be responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the water supply system.

After the meeting in April 2003, which again emphasized the need for the pumping scheme, it did not find any mention in the two meeting that were held in the next 18 months. The issue made its reappearance in the records of the last meeting held on 27th January 2005. The minutes of this meeting in January 2005 read as follows:

"A meeting of the gram sabha was organized today in the *Baraat Ghar* to discuss the issue of drinking water problem and the pumping scheme. The issue of laying the pipelines was also discussed in the meeting. Following important points were raised: It has been decided by the house that only those villagers who have paid the security money for water supply will be provided with a connection nearest possible to their house. However, the beneficiary has to make his/ her own arrangements to take it inside his house.
All interested villagers must deposit the security amount of 150INR with the president today so that their connections could be planned accordingly.
It has been decided by the house that Mr. SuryaMohan Singh, son of Pushkar Singh Negi has been appointed to operate the pump. He would be paid a sum of 500 INR per month for this job.
No fiddling with the pipelines would be tolerated once the system has been laid out. Any kind of misuse of the pipelines would be seen as a punishable offence."

It appears that in the meantime, when no mention of the pumps, pipes or the layout plan finds entry in the meeting records, it can be inferred from the above resolutions of this meeting, that a pump was installed, storage and supply tanks were constructed, but the meetings of VDC do not have any mention or recording of the discussions on these issues. It did not bring up these matters for the public discussion and now the issues related to its management were being discussed. The minutes cited above clearly shows that this village meeting was not a forum to discuss the water supply system where the

villagers could voice their opinions and ideas about the project but the villagers were approached as 'consumers' to be informed about a new scheme that they could avail if a monthly bill of Rs. 150 was paid to the VDC. Using water without paying for it would be considered a punishable offence.

It can be noted here that the substantial discussion about the cost or quality of the pump, layout of the pipes, number of required connections among other things were not brought out in the village public sphere. The villagers were approached only after the committee had decided the 'practical issues of concern' away from the public sphere and needed to convince the potential users to pay the security deposit and inform about the rules to be observed and not to deliberate upon, for example, what rules should be put in place. Irrespective of any possibility for a greater democratic influence on the rules, pump specifications or the other decision-making of the VDC, the villagers needed to know what the VDC was doing or failing to do and to influence it as far as they could, to accommodate the collective problems. The issue of the pumping system in Kimsar shows how the scheme was shifted from 'publicity' in the sense of openness in the public sphere to the modern usage of the term in journalism or politics whereby the interest groups seek to convince the mass of consumers whose receptiveness is public but uncritical. It appears that the information was kept from to the people to avoid the critical public scrutiny from the villagers.

The consensually nominated VDC became the main agency through which water supply was to be provided in the village. The role of the *gram panchayat* was already minimized in the formation of the VDC and now the *gram pradhan* was just another customer in the village who did not receive any water in his house but could take no action as VDC was neither elected nor registered. Complaints, if any, could only be made against the individuals who were the office bearers and that is not preferred in a close knit village society, also because it was common knowledge in the village public sphere that WMD had reduced the committee to a puppetry role.

This was the last record that existed in the village on the pumping scheme or any other aspect of the project. The president of GAREMA was of the opinion that since villagers did not take any active interest in the project work, he stopped calling any more meetings.

After the last meeting in January 2005, security money was collected, a pump-operator was employed and the stage seemed set for the water supply to begin. It never did.

The next section explores the reasons why the pumping system failed to provide any water in the village taps after all the arrangements were made for it. It argues that the marginalization of the local state and empowerment of a nominated VDC for the short period of project duration created conditions in which the VDC felt responsible for the pumping scheme only during the project duration and the local state did not feel responsible for the pumping scheme after the project duration as it was still not completed by the VDC when the project left the village. In the end, the pumping project remained abandoned and dysfunctional by all the involved actors including the VDC, WMD and the *gram panchayat*.

6.2.2   Seeing like the local state: village headman's view on pumping system

This section presents the views of the elected *gram pradhan* to show that the temporary status of the VWC tied to the project duration and its lack of formal status in the village allowed it to disperse after this duration although the activities started during the project were still incomplete. Circumventing the local *panchayat* that allowed WMD to manoeuvre the VDC, also absolved the VDC from any accountability to the local people and it faded away from the village public sphere after securing the 'revolving fund' and without fulfilling the requirements of drinking water supply. The *gram panchayat* took no responsibility for its revival because the project was not yet complete and none of the documents related to the project could be provided by the VDC. The present status of VDC in the village was now a matter of personal opinion. The *gram pradhan* was equally at a loss whether to place the VDC in relation with the project duration or with the activities that it undertook during the project period:

"VDC has left the drinking water project incomplete and now there is no one to take responsibility for it. They say that the water supply scheme in the village is complete because they showed once in the trial run that water could be supplied to the houses but in my opinion, the project is still incomplete. One thinks that I say this because of political reasons and differences that one may perceive between us due to our different political affiliations, but the things that are incomplete with respect to the project are right there in front of our eyes. The first thing is that the pipelines running across the village

212

have not yet been buried under the ground. Not only is this a technical requirement but also because someone might trip and fall while walking in the village. I would have ignored the technical aspect that the pipes have not been buried as per technical requirements as long as it was not creating problems for the villagers. There have been cases when some people tripped due to the pipes on the way, fell and hurt themselves badly"[149]

In this statement, the *gram pradhan* noted that the most visible sign of the incomplete work was the pipes running across the village above the ground. It did not help the villagers in any way as the water supply did not begin but created additional trouble in everyday life. On enquiring about the present status of VDC in the village, the *gram pradhan* observed that:

"Since the Hills-II project is now over and WMD has left the village, but the water supply work is still incomplete, I would presume that the committee that was formed during the project is still valid and it is their responsibility to finish the remaining work. Or, if we presume that VDC has also become invalid after the project was over, and it was in office only for the project duration, then it should hand-over the charge to *gram panchayat*. In this case, the VDC should handover the revolving fund that was collected from the people. This fund can be utilized by the *gram panchayat* to finish the remaining work".[150]

In his statement above, the *gram pradhan* clarified that the elected village government had no role to play in the water supply scheme till VDC finished the work for which it has already received funds from the government and then hand it over to the *gram panchayat*. The *gram pradhan* also demanded the 'revolving fund' that was collected by the VDC during the project. In fact, revolving fund was not the only thing that kept the *gram panchayat* from taking charge of the water supply system. He also complained that there were no records of the money spent, plan of the pipe layout, specifications of the pump among other things that he required for a systematic handover:

"If the government says that the VDC ended when the project was over and the new caretaker of the scheme would now be the village *panchayat*. I have no problems with that. But before I undertake to maintain the scheme, I am supposed to know what is it that I have to maintain. What is the scheme? If I am a responsible village head, I should know about all the programs in my village. I want to give you an example. Suppose we have a visit from the District Collector (DC) office and the Collector asks me to explain about the projects in my village. I see it as my responsibility as the village head to know about the projects in my village. There may be technical nuisances that I may not be aware

[149] Field Notes: Interview with the *gram pradhan* of Kimsar, S.S. Negi on 24th February, 2007; Kimsar, Pauri
[150] Ibid.

about but I should certainly know about the non-technical aspects of the project. If the DC asks me 'Tell me about the amount spent on this particular scheme', I should know that. And how can I know that without the right papers? I am arguing that if there is a problem with the pipelines somewhere and it begins to leak in the future, how will I locate the problem if I have no sketch or any diagram of the line distribution? I should know how the pipelines run, where the joints are before one can repair it." [151]

In his statement, the *gram pradhan* confessed that so far he had no concrete information about the project as the communication between the VDC and WMD was always verbally transmitted and never in written or made public. If the elected village head as a patron of the project had no concrete information, it was obvious that the common villagers knew even lesser about the activities of the project. It points to the fact that VDC worked in isolation from the villagers as well as the patron of the program. The villagers or the *gram panchayat* had no formal mechanism to demand information from the VDC and VDC in turn was not responsible to the villagers in any direct way. This made it even more difficult to persuade or even force the VDC to finish the water supply scheme or provide the documents related to its planning and construction.

It was VDC's responsibility to demand the documents related to the project from the WMD staff and they were at fault for not doing this. They did not demand the documents because that would put the WMD staff on defensive and they would withdraw the project from the village. As VDC did not want to lose the benefits that the project could bring, it acted as directed by the WMD and hence did not represent the village public opinion in the governmental sphere or it would have demanded the documents related to the village development program as the *gram pradhan* demanded. The VDC was only simulating to represent the villagers, deriving its weak legitimacy from the 'consensual nomination' by the village *gram sabha*. In practice, it was a body of politically influential village contractors that was brought together in a committee, effectively reduced to one contractor, the president, who acted not as a representative of the village but a stooge of the WMD staff. A strategy of depoliticization was to put such a committee in the first place that would not demand transparency from the WMD and act according to its

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[151] Excerpt of the interview: *(Agar Sarkar yeh kehti hai ki GAREMA ab nahin rahi, Samiti ab nahin rahi, isko ab gram sabha ko dekhna hai…to bilkul theek hai… hum maante hain…jaroor dekhenge, humari jimebaari bhi hai…lekin hum dekhenge kya cheez?Hume us cheez ka Kuch maloom to ho ki yeh cheez hai kya...dekhiye neeraj ji main is gram sabha ka pradhan hoon aur agar main apni jimmedari ko samajh raha hoon to mujhe apne gaon ke sabhi yojnaon ke bare mein gyan hona chahiye)*

interests. Depoliticization replaced the villager's interests with the interests of the implementing agency called WMD by nominating a VDC that would not, and could not demand documental evidence of its practices as no one would, or could demand any documents from the VDC as it was not accountable to the people or to be elected by them. This was the situation that prevented the *gram pradhan* from asking for project related documents and VDC's evasion to comply with this request. VDC argued that it did not receive any documents from WMD and this demand should therefore be placed before them and not to the VDC. As WMD worked with officials from different line departments, it was not possible to find the team that was responsible for the project in Kimsar as they are now deputed to new projects in different configurations:

"The Kimsar unit of WMD that formed the VDC has also disappeared. Once the project was over in this village, their deputation was also over and now new teams have been formed for the new World Bank project. The Hills-II project had its unit office in Muni-ki-Reti, Rishikesh that has now been shifted to Uttarkashi for this new project".[152]

It can be observed that circumventing the elected and political *panchayat* the WMD was able to shift the blame on a committee in the village that existed only for the project duration and even the highest authority in the village government, namely, the *gram pradhan* had no possibility of securing any details about the water supply scheme that lies dysfunctional in the village.

6.2.3   Seeing like the VDC- President's view of the Water Supply Scheme

This section enumerates the official position of the VDC to show that the above shown observations of the *gram pradhan* were contested by the VDC and contrary to his view the VDC held that the project was complete and water was supplied to the village. It was stopped only because the villagers did not pay the monthly charges due to which the diesel for the pump could not be procured and the water supply stopped. It can be observed in this section that the *gram pradhan* blamed the VDC while the VDC blamed the 'people' for the failure of the scheme. The president of VDC explained that he was not provided with any documents about the project from WMD and hence he could give

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[152] Field Notes: Interview with the *gram pradhan* of Kimsar, S.S. Negi on 24th February, 2007; Kimsar, Pauri

the *gram pradhan* the papers he wanted for the handover of the water supply scheme to the *gram panchayat*. It can be observed in this section that depoliticization of VDC was used to facilitate corruption and rent-seeking that was observed in the governance practices.

The VDC president agreed that the watershed development project in the village did not achieve its goal of drinking water supply or forestation in the depleted areas because the 'people' were engaged in the project with very short-term motives:

"The people did not deposit the 'revolving fund' in time and were confined just to the labour work on daily wages. The participation of the villagers could not be achieved as it should have been. And the different works done under the IWDP were not guarded or taken good care of by the people.
For example, the plantations which were done could not flourish as the watchmen did not pay any attention to it and it was destroyed. Still some plantations which were given to the private lands are secure as they were protected from the animals and care was taken. There were professional motivators for each village but they did not do their job at all as they were salaried employees. (So, even if they don't do the job, they were assured of their income on a monthly basis.) I don't know if they motivated the people or they didn't, but we could not manage the participation of the people".[153]

The president argued that the water supply scheme was complete and could start working if the cost of the diesel could be met:

"We have a water problem in this village as the water source is far below the village plain level. So, we demanded a <u>pumping set</u> for the village and finally we were able to get it and have installed the pump. While we were putting the pumping project, the villagers were very excited that they would be able to get the water in their houses. But this pump is a diesel run machine and now people do not pay the money for it. There are two problems, one is that we need someone to operate the machine everyday and second is the cost of the diesel. Then this operator could start the machine and pump the water to the tanks and then it could be supplied to the houses. But the villagers are unable to bear the costs. So, inspite of everything being in place, the project has remained dysfunctional"[154]

I reminded the president about the 'revolving fund' that was collected by the VDC for this purpose and that the *gram pradhan* referred to in his list of requirements for accepting the water pump under the *gram sabha*:

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[153] Field Notes: Interview with the president of the VDC in Kimsar village, Pauri on 27th February, 2007
[154] Ibid.

216

"Initially it was decided that the revolving fund would only be kept as a security, to be used if something went wrong with the pumping system or some repairs were needed. So we did not touch that fund then. Later after 3 months when I tried to start the pump one day, it did not work. I tried to call the mechanic here but the dealer told us to bring the pump to Dehradun. We carried the pump again all the way to Dehradun and got it repaired and brought it back to Jugyapaani. Again the *gurkha* laborers did this for us. Since that day, the motor lies idle for the want of diesel."

It remains open to discussion as to what could have been the problem in the pump that a mechanic cannot fix it there but requires the tedious process of carrying this 200kg pump on jeep tracks to Dehradun. The point is, this repair tour to the city and back was an expensive business as the president told me, they had to use the 'revolving fund' and now there was no money for diesel or staff to run the motor. Besides the repairing cost for the motor, the president argued that he supplied water to the village for one month that used up the remaining money from the revolving fund:

"Initially, we took 150 INR advance from the villagers, saying that only those who pay this amount would be provided with the pipelines till their house. Accordingly we laid out the pipelines and then people demanded that we should run the motor with this money that they paid. So we ran the machine for about one month and then the money was over"[155]

This claim by the president of the VDC was contested by the villagers, including the *gram pradhan* who was also a 'customer' of the water supply scheme:

"This statement is totally incorrect. It never worked for more than 2 days. I am also a consumer and I am just talking about myself here. I did not get any water at all and I cannot agree that it was run for 4 weeks. I did not get a drop of water in my tap. If you have any doubts, you can ask the president to open the supply channels and see in my house if there is any water reaching. I am the pradhan and even I don't get water in my house. I could agree that the water is reaching the supply tank but it is not getting distributed in the households and that is a bigger problem. The layout of the pipes is just random. It has been turned and twisted at wrong places just to provide some small benefit to even smaller number of people. Obviously, the water does not reach all the households".[156]

It can be observed in the above statement that the claims made by the VDC were contested by the *gram pradhan* and vice-versa. This made it difficult to ascertain the number of days for which the water supply system worked and the nature of repairs that

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[155] Ibid.
[156] Field Notes: Interview with the *gram pradhan* of Kimsar on 12th March, 2007; Kimsar, Pauri.

217

the pump underwent to understand if that could have used up the entire 'revolving fund'. But in its present state the water supply scheme was dysfunctional which also pointed to the fact that the sustainability of the scheme was not a priority for the VDC or the WMD. The goal was, as the *gram pradhan* noticed, to show once in the trial run that water could be supplied to the households. It did not reach his house even during the trial run due to inappropriate bending of pipes to provide the involved groups with water inside their house. The president of the VDC argued that this was not the case. It there were any shortcomings in the project, it was due to the reduced amount of funds that was made available to them from the WMD. They had to work in lesser than the required amount due to the rent-seeking practices by the implementing agencies. A non-compliance with their request would result in the withdrawal of the project from the village as explained in this interview:

"Q: How long did the project last in this village?
A: For about two years, from the day of the first meeting of the IWDP in our village.

Q: Was there any problems that you faced dealing with the government staff?
A: We had to pay a commission of 30% to the project staff from the funds meant for the project. It was done through cheques. If they sent one lakh rupees, it was deposited in our account and when we withdrew the money, out of the total amount we were forced to pay 30% to them on the spot.

Q: Once you withdrew the money, you would carry 30,000 to their office?
A: They would follow us to the bank and wouldn't leave us till we paid the money. They would be hanging around the bank till we paid.

Q: They already knew when the money was deposited in your account?
A: Of course they knew about it. They knew about every penny that came to our account. It was them who sent the money to the bank, so there was no question of them not knowing. Measurements were taken by them and then the money was sent accordingly. They would say that if you don't pay us the said amount, we will reduce your measurement (of the work done), we will send a 'recovery' team to your village, and your project would be failed, you won't get any further budget. We were willing to pay as the villagers then wanted to get as much work as possible for the village. They threatened that they would stop the work if we don't pay the appropriate commission.
It has happened in many villages in this area. Wherever the villagers refused to pay their commission, the work was stopped and at the same time where the payments were made well, as in one village, the work amount has crossed even one crore rupees"[157]

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[157] Field Notes: Interview with the VDC president of Kimsar, Rajpal Bist and VDC president of Jogyana, Birendra Bandhu on 24th Februar y 2007. Also available at:
(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T_bz1RNaO3w)

The point here is not to show that rent-seeking was a popular practice in the watershed development project but to argue that no agency in the village was willing to take responsibility for the revival of the drinking water supply scheme. The *gram pradhan* held VDC responsible; VDC held the 'people' and WMD responsible while WMD in turn held the VDC responsible as the entire funds for the project were directly disbursed into their account. The depoliticized status of the VDC allowed it to be used as a tool for the implementing agencies. In theory, the project was an example of decentralized watershed governance where 'people' were responsible for managing their own watersheds with the funds supplied directly to their accounts, while in reality it was a toothless tiger, an informal, non-registered, nominated committee controlled by the implementing agency called WMD that retained the control of VDC from an arm's length. In this way, the responsibility of any mismanagement could easily be shifted to the 'people' as the project was 'self-governed' and WMD could stay clear from any responsibility or legal action. The statement cited above explains the power relation between the WMD and VDC also. WMD exercised its discretion of village selection for the projects to manufacture consent from the VDC to comply with its 'fixed rate of 30%' commission from the total amount. The apolitical and nominated status of the VDC was an essential component of creating such a body in the first place that would work hands-in-glove with WMD because it would not be dependent on the villager's opinion for its reelection and would only be answerable to the WMD. In other words, if the villagers would not agree to the 'fixed rate of 30%' there would be no VDC formed at all, simply because the village would then be deselected for the project implementation. A VDC emerging from such subordinated status was in no position to refuse their demands and was easily manipulated.

The president explained in the interview that the funds reduced by 30% after paying the commission left him in a difficult situation where he had to compromise on the quality of the work and often report false expenses to compensate for it:

"Q: How you manage to do the work in an amount reduced by 30%?
A: We have to adjust the working days of the laborers. We show the same number of laborers who work. For example, if 10 people work for 4 days, we show 10 people working for 8 days on the bill. This is how we cover that 30% paid in the commission. Otherwise we would be in trouble and so would they be. This is the actual practice.
There are certain rates which are fixed. The rates of the labor or of the stones or the

219

transportation charges in these areas are fixed. There may be cases where we may not pay the transportation but we have to show it to cover the commission.

Q: Can you give me an example from the project where you managed the funds in this way?

A: Say for example, they give us the rate of 50 INR per meter. We go to the labor and get him to agree that he would do the job at 25-30 INR per meter. If he is ready the work gets done.
A2: We actually sub-contract the work. We make contractors and give them the work. For example, we tell the contractors, that you have to make this wall that costs 100 INR; will you do it in 40 INR? He would say, yes I will make it. Even when we pay him 40 INR he would make good daily wage at the end of the day.

A1: Suppose we have made the boundary walls for the forestation. Let's say that the wall costs us 30 Rs per meter. We sub-contract it to the labor at 20 Rs per meter. At the rate of 20 Rs/ meter also, he is making 150-200 Rs every day. And if we keep him on the daily wage, he would charge 80 Rs and do the work only worth 50 Rs. But if we give the work to him on contract basis, instead of 80 Rs, he would try to make 150 Rs for himself in the day. He would then work more and do more than on a daily wage basis.

For example, in the forestation there is a need for digging pits to plant trees. If we get 2 Rs per pit from the WMD, we tell the laborers that they have to dig the pits at Rs 1 per pit. Then the laborer tries to dig 100s of pits. And if we put him on the fixed wage of 80 Rs./ day, he wouldn't dig more than 50 pits.
This is the fact, somewhere something is wrong. The system is wrong somewhere or the other.

Q: And the other thing that you do is maintain the register for 8 days when the work is done for 4?

A: We are forced to do it otherwise how can we cover up for the commission paid which has no record. Where shall we show it? We have to do it. Whatever amount we have paid in 'black' that we have to make into 'white'/ legal
And if we don't pay; the village doesn't get any work at all. Then the villagers shout at us that the neighboring village has got so much work through projects and why is our village not getting any. There are many types of problems that we face.
And the other thing that was the main money spinning enterprise was the 'Exposure tours'. The department made enormous amounts of money through these tours. Someday they are going to Pantnagar, next day to somewhere else, third day to Jaipur and so on. This was the most corrupt practice in this entire project. No doubt some people went to these places but it was totally illogical and out of place"[158]

This excerpt from the interview shows us that corruption in the project activities is not an

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[158] Ibid.

exceptional phenomenon but an accepted form of behavioral practice. If WMD seeks rent, the VDC compensates for it in the records and incomplete work. The point here is not to show that there is corruption at the local level but to show how and why it exists and sustains itself as a common practice. It can also be observed that the institutions formed for carrying out the watershed development, at the project level as well as the village level, play an important role in continuing this practice. This could also be attributed to their lack of direct accountability to the local people and also to their upwardly accountable structure. The apolitical process of their formation either by 'consensual nomination' or 'decided by a group of prominent NGO leaders' remains only a simulation of their democratic nature while in actual practice the consensus is in most cases manufactured. An apolitical institution makes it possible to manufacture consent easily compared to the deliberative democratic processes of the political institutions. In this sense, depoliticization emerges as a favorable governance strategy that reduces complexity and promises to increase efficiency. The outcome is a proliferation of puppetry institutions working according to the needs of funding agencies in the name of decentralized institutions that are empowered for the development of self-governed watersheds.

The direct involvement of VDC in the governance of natural resources of the village brings it in direct competition with the elected village government that is authorized to work on the same issues. As observed in the village, the relations between the *gram pradhan* and the VDC were not always cordial. The *gram pradhan* described the VDC as inefficient and corrupt while the VDC blames him for not motivating the villagers to participate in the project. This led to a situation of conflict between the two in which the issue of water supply suffered and remained abandoned. The next section describes the (non) acceptance of VDC in the village public sphere as a legitimate authority to undertake watershed development work.

6.2.4   *Elected State and the 'nominated' VDC in the village public sphere*

This section shows that the relationship between the *gram panchayat* and the VDC remained uneasy due to their contestation of the power over natural resource management in the village. While the WMD empowered the VDC to implement the Hills-II project

that undertook natural resource management in the village, the elected status of the *gram panchayat* provided it with the people's mandate for village development activities. The *gram panchayat* demanded documentary evidences of the water supply scheme and forestation work done in the village, which was indirectly a demand from the VDC to prove its legitimacy to the *gram sabha* and make its dealings with the WMD transparent in the village public sphere. This section concludes that the empowerment of the local bodies other than elected village *panchayats* is a strategy of depoliticization that results in a proliferation of agencies at the local level with poorly defined job-profiles and jurisdiction. It effectively strengthens the village elite as parallel force to bypass and compete with the *panchayati raj* institutions and makes the project susceptible to capture by the strategic groups instead of a decentralization of political power to the grassroots.

In his interview, the *gram pradhan* asserted that *gram panchayat* was the only legitimate agency in the village and no other agency could take its place. It demanded that the watershed development project should be officially handed over the *gram sabha* as VDC cannot be considered as a permanent agency responsible for it:

"If they are incapable of finishing the water supply scheme, the *gram panchayat*, which is a legitimate body in itself and the works with various government departments to undertake developmental activities in the village, should be given the charge/ handed over to complete the project. This is also a rule that irrespective of the developmental agency (*Zila Panchayat, Kshetra Panchayat*) involved in the work duration of the project, finally the responsibility is transferred to the village *panchayat* for its further maintenance and upkeep as it is the only permanent elected body in the village and no organization can afford to stay in the village forever. So, in any case the project should be handed over to the *gram panchayat*."

His above statement points to the fact that the VDC is not recognized in the village public sphere because it was a temporary body only valid for the duration of the project. The choice of VDC as the implementing institution over the *gram panchayat* is a form of recognition provided by the WMD through the transfer of resources, partnering in the project and engagement through contract with the VDC[159]. Recognition strengthens the chosen institution for the project duration and lays the foundation of its automatic disappearance by curtailing the resource flow and contractual engagement with the VDC

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[159] See also: Ribot (2007)

once the project ends. The *gram pradhan* observed, as shown above, that the *gram panchayat* was the only legitimate body as it was constitutionally recognized and hence, like all the development projects of the village, water supply scheme should be 'handed over' to it.

On enquiring about the handover process by which the *gram panchayat* could take the responsibility of the project, the *gram pradhan* outlined the following requirements:

"I would need the signatures of the President and the Secretary of VDC saying that the project has been transferred to the *gram sabha* for further upkeep and maintenance along with the relevant important papers. I certainly need the right papers for the 'handover'. Then I can try to finish the project and make sure the supply of water is regular. I know everyone may not be satisfied, as was the case with the work done by GAREMA. But as a man on a responsible position, I am aware 'how much should one eat and how much should be left for developmental work'. But the papers are needed anyway, you see. I am the gram *pradhan* and I know that if I undertake a developmental project in the village worth 50,000 INR, I would also like to keep whatever is left over from the project. Even I will not provide my time and labor without a price[160]. They must have charged for their time too. But we cannot move away from the technical requirements of the project (to save money) and leave it incomplete.

It was implicit in his statement that the lack of right papers with the village committee was a clear indication of a high level of corruption and that the ones who did the water supply work do not know 'how much one should eat' and they have 'overeaten' in this case due to which the drinking water scheme remains dysfunctional. The demand for 'right papers' could not be fulfilled by the VDC. It remained firm on the point that WMD did not share any papers with them that they could handover. In the absence of these, the *gram pradhan* was unwilling to recognize any work done by them in the village.

VDC and its lack of recognition in the formal governance structure of the village was also responsible for the corruption in the project and it had provided the president avenues to monopolize the benefits to the extent that even the secretary of the VDC was unaware of the actual expenses and profits that the president was making:

"In this village, the president and secretary were responsible for doing the project work. But the secretary could not get his hands on any cash or maybe he was never consulted or asked about the length of the pipes, motor system or layout of the supply lines is a matter of his personal relationship with the president. But if it comes to legal situations, he

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[160] *(Muft me to main bhi samay nahin doonga...apni jeb se)*

223

cannot plead innocent on the account of lack of awareness about the project details simply because he is the secretary and he has to know it. Since it is a village based society and everyone knows everyone else, we rather maintain good social relations and avoid situations of argumentation or confrontation, regardless of the information that we have about the corrupt practices and misconduct. After all, we have to live here together."[161]

It was implied here that the secretary is comparatively innocent compared to the president who had made lots of money from the project. The secretary got more than the other villagers but not as much as the president, argued the *pradhan.* If there is a legal situation or official inquiry, he cannot say that he was unaware of the facts or has no papers to prove his honest conduct. The secretary must own responsibility for the failed water supply due to his official position in the project, even if the personal relations deterred him from acting effectively or demanding transparency from the president.

From the perspective of depoliticization, it can be observed that the status of VDC in the eyes of the local governmental discourse is that of a one-man enterprise simulating a decentralization of political power in watershed governance. Besides the institutional competition between the *gram panchayat* and the VDC, the heads of these institutions also compete with each other on the political front. The president of the VDC has worked as a contractor in the village before and presently has the contract for the ongoing work on village hospital. He is an influential man in the village who acquires the role of the president in all watershed development projects. He was also the president for DPAP project and now re-nominated for the Hills-II watershed project. As already noted, the *gram pradhan* is a BJP sympathizer while the VDC president is affiliated to the Congress, both powerful political parties in India. His nomination for the president one more time also reflects the influence of State politics in Kimsar. At that time, Uttarakhand was ruled by the Congress government while the Yamkeshwar block had elected a BJP candidate. Hence the projects coming from the State agencies in Dehradun could have been influenced by the Congress government that led to the nomination of the present president. Incidentally, the nominated president is known to share a good relationship and his surname with the local Congress leader, Ms. Renu Bist. The village

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[161] Field Notes: Interview with the *gram pradhan* in Kimsar village on 12th March, 2007. Pauri.

headman elaborated his experiences in the earlier work that he did together with Rajpal, the president, and his role in the water supply scheme:

"If I didn't intervene in this project, there would be no construction of the storage tank or anything at all. I told them very clearly that we don't want any compromise on the drinking water scheme. You have to do good work at least in this regard and after that if there is any work which is not done or is incomplete, even if there is an enquiry there would be no one to report. Even if someone does report, I would use my official position to save you all, as far as I can. But I am not going to go easy on two issues- drinking water and the revolving fund. I told them beforehand. But Rajpal didn't understand the responsibility of his post although he worked also as the president in DPAP. He disregarded the importance of the issue of drinking water. That was his biggest mistake. If only he had realized the importance of drinking water for the people, this problem wouldn't have come at all".[162]

The *gram pradhan* was willing to use his official position to save the VDC from any enquiry if they could only install the drinking water supply scheme even if the villagers made a complain about it to the higher authorities. But the president of the VDC had disregarded its importance and was flaunting his personal benefits in the open village public sphere that had caused resentment among the villagers:

"I would give you the same example of the boundary wall for the village school or issue of pipe distribution in Hills-II. The people, who couldn't afford to buy pipes for taking the water close to their houses from the main line, gave me in written that they needed pipes. Now that I got a written request, I had to do justice as the village head no matter who is on the line of fire, be it Rajpal or my own brother. When I get the role of a judge, I always do my best to be true to god and myself and avoid all conscious partiality. There can be no '*bhaibandi'* in that. Of course, if unknowingly I make a wrong decision that is a different issue, but consciously I can never do partiality in decision-making.
I told Rajpal, if you take 7 pipes, how will the poor get anything, even if they may need just 2 pipes? So I said, those who are poor and need pipes, it should be given to them first. Now Rajpal has fenced his balcony with these pipes, put his TV antenna on supply pipe while others didn't have enough to take the connection from the main pipe anywhere close to their house. Problem of the diesel engine is quite different. Whether it is new or old, is a different issue and that will go on for a long time. Even if it is discovered after 10 years that the supplier has given a wrong/ old machine, they have to pay for it. Otherwise, the other day it was decided that the fire-valves to control the water flow have been brought and everything is now there then why are they not trying to run the engine?"

The *gram pradhan* observed that even the engine bought for the pump was a cause of concern and he did express his opinion when the pump was being bought in Dehradun.

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[162] Ibid.

He recalled that when the machine was being bought, he noticed that the machine looked used and not brand new. There were patches of oil and seemed that he motor has been used before.

"I asked the manager of the shop that the motor looks like it has been used before and it is not new. The manager told me that I was both right and wrong. He said, just like your village, there was another village in the hills which wanted to install the pumping system and they ordered this pump and we made a trial run for them. In this sense you are right that the motor is old. But their scheme did not work out finally, so they never bought the motor and it remained in our shop. Hence it is new and you are wrong". [163]

There were other discrepancies in the project besides the dysfunctional status of drinking water supply scheme and that the pipelines were not buried inside the ground:

"That is one of the observable problems but not the only one. The problem is more serious than that. The problem here is of the measurements and payments made for those measurements. As the payments for burying the pipes has already been made, there must be some records of the date and amount and of the measurement. Someone must have done these measurements either the JE or the AE or the EE[164] because that's the only way money could have been released. Payments have been made, IWDP has already finished its tenure in this village and everything in that respect is now closed. I want to ask the person who made its (MB, how did he do it when the project is not finished on the ground and extract the money for something that was never done.

The labor charges for burying the pipes have already been made. And if it is so, why are the pipes still lying on the surface. If the money was never paid to VDC for this purpose, I would have requested the people to provide voluntary labor to do this. But it makes no sense to ask people to do something for free when the government has already paid for the work and in official documents it is a completed project.

See, one thing leads to the other. When I press for an enquiry of the water supply system, I would also ask for the details of <u>forestation</u>. It was reported by VDC that it <u>caught fire</u>. I agree there are forest fires sometimes; there could be some situation in which the plantations caught fire. I want to ask the VDC who they reported to about this fire. There should be a report if the plantations caught fire. There may have been an enquiry about the causes that led to this fire or if someone deliberately burnt them down. There can't be a fire out of nowhere. Something must be behind it."[165]

From the above discussion it is clear that the relationship between the VDC and *gram panchayat* was competitive and unpleasant. WMD's choice of working with a nominated

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[163] Interview with SS Negi, Field Notes, Dated: 4th March 2007.

[164] JE- Junior Engineer, AE- Assistant Engineer, EE- Executive Engineer

[165] *Hamare gaon me bhi Jalgam ke samay forestation ka kaam hua tha. Bus forestation ho gaya who aaj humko nazar hi nahin aata hai kahin. Bola ke usme aag lag gayi. Arre aag lag gayi so to theek lekin kaise aag lag gayi, uski bhi to report hoti hai.*

committee left the *gram panchayat* deprived of the resources that were being diverted to the village. VDC's control of decisions on the public issues and service delivery was the only form of legitimacy that it had. Its formation had sought to shift the conception of legitimacy to other than democratically elected bodies that were authorized to work on collective issues[166], without a collective mandate. The reallocation of water supply to an independent body removed the political character of decision-making by circumventing the local elected government that led to the non-cooperative relationship between the two. Partially transferring the executive powers to the VDC without any formal registration allowed the implementing agencies to retain control over them. Conyers (2002) argues that when transfers of power are conditional or insecure (in this case, the condition of 30% commission from the funds or the insecurity of village selection for the project), recipients are forced to respond to the needs of those institutions making the transfer so as to retain their privileges. Transfers made as privileges can be taken back, thus the threat of withholding power makes the local institutions upwardly accountable. However, it cannot be withheld if the transfers of power are made as secure rights where it can be exercised with discretion in response to local needs. Hence the institution to which the power is transferred is also indicative of the preference of the governing strategy. Transfer of power to hurriedly nominated, apolitical VDC is a strategy of depoliticization that takes away decision-making powers of the democratic local governments.

To 'politicize' this issue, so that *gram sabha* would become the responsible body for the project management, the *sarpanch* demanded an official 'hand-over' from the VDC with all the right papers. In their absence, the project remains incomplete, outside the 'critical public sphere' without any agency or institution that could take up and complete the drinking water supply system in Kimsar.

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[166] By invoking the provisons of Bombay Village Panchayat Act of 1958 as seen in the case of IGWDP or the provisions of Common Guidelines for Watershed Development issued by the GoI in 1994, followed in the IGWDP, Hills-II project.

6.3 Simulation as a Technique of Depoliticization

This section of the chapter attracts our attention to a practice of simulation in the watershed development projects that continue to maintain a coherent representation of the project in the policy documents independent of the actual realities on the ground.

In the twin villages of Bhoyare Khurd and Pathar in Ahmednagar, a big signboard about the watershed work greeted us at the village main road.

Photograph 3. Signboard about the Indo-German Program, Bhoyre Pathar village, Ahmednagar, Maharashtra State

Overlooking the dilapidated condition of the sign that occupies a prominent place in the village 'public space', the contents on it are more relevant for the discussion here. This signboard is placed on the main (and only) village road that connects Pimpalgaon Wagha to the twin villages of Bhoyre Khurd and Pathar. It reads that an 'Indo-German

Watershed Development Program' funded by the 'Federal Republic of Germany' is under progress 'in the Bhoyre Khurd village'. It is a 'cooperative effort of the people of Bhoyre Khurd and Pathar' under the umbrella organization of '*Vithal Gram Vikas and Panlot Kshetra Vikas Sanstha* of Pimpalgaon Wagha'. NABARD, KfW, WOTR and GTZ are other actors in the program. 'GoM and GoI are also in the picture.

This signboard has two sides, just like the watershed program. As we see on this side, the project has been announced in English that is of no use to the common villagers who speak and read only Marathi, the local language. But this does not mean it has no use at all. It shows the presence of the project to an international audience and the elite national audience in India that prefers information in English compared to regional languages. It certainly does not address the local population although it is located in the public sphere of the village. The other side of the signboard repeats the same information in *Devnagari* script (see Photograph 4) but retains the formulation, semantically and syntactically, as in the English language, hence of no use to the village people one more time. One can conclude that the writings in English have a stronger scientific appeal and technical legitimacy in the eye of the villagers as it is the language of the educated class in India.

Points of contact between the villagers and NGOs such as these remain biased in favor of the NGO. Here the implementing NGO had the opportunity and authority to 'set the discourse' as it were, and it chose to practice linguistic exclusion of the villagers in both roman and *devanagari* scripts. The main point to be extracted from this argument is that the democratic ideal of bringing awareness to the local people exists but not accomplished on the field. The village public space is usefully employed by the NGO to show to the outside world, mainly the funding agencies, that the program has reached the remote areas such as these. In practice, this board serves the NGO even from the village public sphere. This process of creating an illusionary democracy has been seen as a strategy of depoliticization, especially by Blühdorn (2007), who calls it 'simulative democracy'- a distinctive feature of the late-modern democracy. In his words:

"The distinctive feature of late-modern democracy is, strictly speaking, not really the simultaneity of the participatory revolution and the post-democratic revolution, i.e., the simultaneity of politicization and depoliticization, but the *performance* or the *simulation* of this simultaneity. ..Historical evolution of democracy can now be conceptualized as the transformation from *direct democracy* via *representative democracy* to *simulative democracy*" (Blühdorn, 2007: 321).

In theory, this signboard would signify a local dissemination of information about the project but in practice, it delivers no concrete information to the villager. A simulation of transparency is at work here.

Photograph 4: Signboard announcing the Indo-German Project in Devnagari script; Ahmednagar, Maharashtra

Photograph 4. Signboard about the Indo-German Program, Bhoyre Pathar village, Ahmednagar, Maharashtra State in *Devanagari* script

The village of Bhoyre Pathar was an exemplary evidence of the success of watershed development program as documented by the implementing NGO. A short documentary film made by WOTR and funded by GTZ called 'Enkindled hope, resurgent spirits' (WOTR, 2006) describes the process of watershed development in the Bhoyre Pathar

230

village. This film begins with an interview of a village woman called Shobha Suryavanshi who talked about the "proud moment when the challenging task of developing a watershed of 250 hectares in this village was given exclusively to women" (WOTR, 2006). The film further shows village women participating in the activities of watershed development like taking measurements, digging and moving soil. The main message of this documentary was that the IGWDP has been able to empower women to undertake the development of their watersheds and it was great leap forward in a society, which is otherwise patriarchal.

The research team visited this village and met Shobha Suryavanshi to understand her views on the watershed development program that was undertaken 'exclusively' by the village women. Ms. Suryavanshi is the *Aanganwadi* worker[167] and lives with her old father and a physically challenged husband. On asking about the watershed development program of this village, she explained that WOTR had made such a proposal and a women's committee was also formed for this purpose but the work cannot be completed due to 'political interferences'[168]. On enquiring about the exact nature of these interferences, she explained that:

"Some of the interested parties in the village tried to pay 50,000 INR to the president and secretary of the women's watershed development committee asking them to refuse to work on the project. The village level politicians had also made a document of refusal and wanted these members to sign on it, and the money was offered for this signature. The village *sarpanch* and his son the *up-sarpanch* offered us the money to refuse to work on the project. When we continued to work on the watershed development, they used force to stop us from working. I was prepared to complain to the police but thinking about my children and family, I avoided involving the police into the matter. Today also, when I was coming here to meet you people, he called me from the Aanganwadi window and asked me to tell you that all the six SHGs are functional and regular. However, the only reason why the SHGs stopped working was political interference. I worked hard for the project but only faced resentment from the people. "[169]

From her statement, it was clear that the documentary made by WOTR is only a simulation of the women's empowerment and self-reliance while the actual events from

[167] It is a government sponsored child-care center in every village of India managed by a village resident called the *Aanganwadi* worker. This program caters to children in the age group of 0-6 years. It was started by the government in 1975 as a part of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) to combat hunger and malnutrition among children.

[168] *Rajkaran jhala.*

[169] Interview with Sobha Suryavanshi, Field notes: 26-11-2006. Bhoyre Pathar village, Ahmednagar. (*Me kaam karlo aani gunahagar tharlo, raajkaaran jhala*)

the village show us that the women of the village had very little control on the activities of the project that was subject to negotiation by the different political groups in the village. Simulation in this sense serves the purpose of presenting an empowered women's community to the funding agencies that does not exist in the actual village society but maintains a discursive unity between the proclaimed policies of the NGO and village-level practices.

We had already met the *Sarpanch* of the village asking about his opinion about the WDP. After the interview, his son, the *Up-sarpanch,* accompanied us to the different project sites and showed the work done in the watershed programs. During this visit to the fields, the *up-sarpanch* approached a farmer working in the field and asked him to pose as the president of the VWC (which was revealed when we questioned this farmer about the details of the VWC- to which he did not respond at all and looked blankly at the *Up-sarpanch* asking him to answer the questions). When we expressed our desire to meet the Aanganwadi worker, he quickly left the scene on a motorbike and disappeared. It was later revealed by Suryavanshi that he came to tell her that she should say to us that all of the six SHGs are working and in good condition.

One can look deeper into the issue of corruption in this project, if the time given is more and an elaborate study is undertaken. However, a simulation of gender-sensitive and participatory watershed development could not escape the eye.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has shown us how the implementation of watershed development projects through the NGOs and delegated governmental directorates is a strategy of governance that circumvents the elected local governments and transfers power of implementation and decision making to a wide range of nominated committees.

It uses the example of WOTR, NABARD and WMD to show that such institutions play an important role in depoliticization of watershed governance at the project level. The next section uses the example of the village level institutions to show how the governance strategy that empowers institutions other than the elected local government depoliticizes watershed development and facilitates rent seeking. It also leads to a proliferation of local institutions that compete with each other for control of the watershed development project, ultimately neglecting the developmental goals. A simulation of decentralized

development is then presented in the official discourse that serves the pragmatic purpose of securing funds from the donor agencies. Depoliticization also means that the local issues and problems are displaced from the public sphere, substituted by the concerns of policy makers and the donor agencies. The implementing institutions convince people that it is also the cause of their underdevelopment and peddle the project for securing participation of the people that remains its only source of legitimacy owing to its apolitical character and method of formation.

The final politics in the watershed governance thus oscillates between *de*politicization and *re*politicizaiton (not confinable to a binary relation between the two) and emerges as an outcome of the dynamic interaction between the two. A discourse of democratic participation interacts with the power sharing issues of everyday politics and both determine and reconstitute each other in the actual governance practices in the two cases.

7   FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This thesis on 'democratization and depoliticization of watershed governance' has explored the political dimensions of watershed development to make politics a legitimate area of enquiry in watershed development and governance discourse. It addresses an important aspect of development aid that is routed through the non-governmental agencies and delegated institutions, and has so far remained under-researched. To study the political dimensions of watershed development, I have synthesized the existing theories in political science and development studies with the aim of developing a conceptual framework under the umbrella concept of depoliticization within which such studies could be undertaken. This conceptual framework was then operationalized as an analytical tool that was applied in the two selected cases of IGWDP, Maharashtra and Hills-II project, Uttarakhand to understand the changing governance strategies in watershed development.

Depoliticization provides us with a working hypothesis that the under-researched aspects and a lack of critical reflection on some areas in watershed development politics could be a part of the governing strategy that depoliticizes development by keeping certain issues out of the public sphere of deliberation. It is not so much by chance as by a deliberate effort on the part of interested parties to obscure the political negotiations that are taking place on a daily basis in the context of development projects. It was my attempt to explore these negotiations and identify entry points for making research possible in these areas.

The focus of this concluding chapter is – therefore- on the theoretical and analytical strengths of depoliticization in terms of the researchable space that it secures and carves out for itself (from the competing hegemonic discourses) in analyzing the politics of watershed management.

In section 7.1, I describe the conceptual apparatus that was developed under the umbrella concept of depoliticization and how it can be usefully applied in practical research situations by studying the preference-shaping and institutional aspects of depoliticization.

In section 7.2, I revisit the two case studies and briefly describe the political dimensions and governance strategies that are revealed by using the lens of depoliticization. I

conclude this section by returning to the main concerns as outlined in the first chapter and explain how this thesis helps us to answer these questions in the light of the research findings. These two sections together provide a summary answer to the central research question of this thesis.

In section 7.3, I discuss two specific research themes that emerge out of this study that could form the basis of future research in this area.

In the last section, 7.4, my attempt is to link these strategies of governance in watershed development projects to the wider phenomenon of a perceived change in the understanding and practices of democracy in the modern world.

7.1 Depoliticization in Practical Research

This study subdivides depoliticization into two components for it to be usefully employed for studying practical situations in watershed governance. Preference-shaping depoliticization investigates the broader discursive frameworks that construct watershed development as a 'technical' intervention and on this basis justify the involvement of technical and 'apolitical' institutions like the NGOs as implementing agencies. This section shows how the political dimensions of watershed development can be usefully problematized by invoking the concept of preference shaping for a particular type of conceptual apparatus.

7.1.1 Preference Shaping for Depoliticization

This thesis has shown how prefernces of the implementing agencies and strategic groups formed during the project could be an important site of investigation for studying depoliticization. It has shown that the discursive construction of the debates has concrete and visible effects in the different phases of the watershed development project in terms of the goals and objectives that the different participating agencies set for themselves and the institutional appratus that result from it.

The preference shaping for depoliticization is also a process of rhetorically building up an argument that conceals actual practices on the field. This helps in persuading the local

people about the usefulness of a particular program and convinces them to participate in it. Participation of the local people in their own development does not mean that the local people have decided their programs of development, but that they are gradually convinced to adopt a particular program that comes in the village with the help of some external agency, either the NGO or the govenement.

Once the preference is shaped for a particular program, here watershed development, the mobilization of the village is undertaken in the form of a capacity-building program. As already mentioned the capacity building then remains an exercise to form a strategic group in the village that could convince the implementers of its capacity to perform the required tasks, both physical and institutional, that together make up the watershed program. Depoliticization of people is carried out largely by the juxtaposition of interest groups both from above (in the implementation circle as in IGWDP) and from below (in the village circle as shown in the Hills-II project).

In the depoliticization from above situation, experts in the form of NGOs are activated to perfom the developmental tasks. In the IGWDP case, the NGO formed its strategic partnership with 'capacity building' as its domain of expertise, the knowledge that was, and still is, absent from the government implemented programs.

In the depoliticization from below, the local village group that is comprised of contractors and local influential people stands to gain from every project. This strategic group of 'professional beneficiaries' was found to be securing the key positions and benefits from the project in all rural development programs.

7.1.2   Institutions of Depoliticization

This study has shown how the institutions formed for implementing the watershed development projects have a depoliticizing intent and effect on the project governance. The rationale behind forming 'village watershed development committees', when the 73rd Constitutional Amendment in 1993 already empowers the village *panchayat* to undertake village development work (on 29 subjects listed in the XIth Schedule including watershed development) has been frequently questioned.

This 'administrative devolution' of power to the VDC is underpinned by a depoliticization discourse in development that see it primarily as an economic activity of self-employment and development of cottage industries.

On the other hand, 'politicization' of *panchayats*, and the fact that *panchayats* do not constitute 'ecological units' (with the result that boundaries of a watershed unit may not correspond to the village boundary included in a particular *panchayat*) but political units in a small 'city- state', render them unfit for undertaking a watershed project that has a pronounced technical content.

The relationship between VWCs and *panchayats* varies from one case to the other. In IGWDP, village *panchayats* were consulted but had little role to play in the workings of watershed program. It was mainly undertaken by the village NGO under the guidance of WOTR, the mother NGO. Watershed project was announced (by the NGO) in the village as a technical, apolitical activity and hence actively pursued a disassociation from the village politics or any political ideology. In case of *Hiwre Bazar*, and *Ralegan Siddhi* the project was undertaken by the village *panchayat* in a 'politicized' manner. The development here could be inferred as more sustainable than in many IGWDP villages because of the constitutional recognition of institutions. The approach followed by IGWDP also has its successful examples in Darewadi, Mendhwan and many others but the sustainability of the institutions and maintenance of plantations, physical structures and sustainability of the self-help groups has been a constant problem in most of the visited villages in Ahmednagar.

In Hills-II, WMD plays the role of facilitator and is a technical agency for implementing watershed projects in Uttarakhand. However, in its nomination of the VDC the project went through a pattern of formation of similar 'strategic groups' in all villages that comprised of the village shopkeeper, contractors and the junior engineers. A type of politics that revolves around appropriation of public funds and presents it like genuine disbursement among the needy by keeping the paperwork right is the main problem of this project. The role played by *Panchayat* in Kimsar was almost negligible. Although the minutes of the meeting record that the *gram pradhan* would be the ex-officio patron of the program, the actual relationship between the VDC and *gram pradhan* was of mutual mistrust. The *pradhan* felt that watershed work has been left incomplete due to corruption

by the VDC members and the President of VDC argued that if there was any corruption he is not the one responsible because the demands for 30% fixed bribe came from the WMD staff and they had to work in limited budget of 70%. He cited the lack of funds due to corruption as the cause of failure of the drinking water scheme. He blamed the people for not paying the monthly bill for diesel and plumber while the *gram pradhan* contested that he was also a customer of the water supply scheme and paid the initial amount but there was no water for a single day that he should have paid for in the next month. The relations between the VDC and *panchayat* could be observed as being that of competitors in the process of nominating a VDC exclusively for watershed development.

7.2   Main Concerns in Retrospect

The first, theoretical, and specific concern of this thesis was to study the political dimensions of watershed development using the concept of depoliticization. The second concern was to operationalize this concept for undertaking research on governance practices and apply them in the selected case studies.

On applying the theoretical framework to the cases, we can observe that watershed development projects are the sites of contestation and negotiation for the resource distribution. This area has not been researched extensively for the lack of a solid conceptual apparatus as well as the complexity involved in undertaking such research.

The case of IGWDP in Maharashtra shows how the delegation of project funds to a national bank was effective in circumventing the elected ministries. The national bank was also able to accept the ODA funds as 'grants' and disburse them as such so that the legal control of the FCR Act was bypassed.

The formation of a new NGO as the implementing agency for IGWDP and providing it with the status of an 'official partner also gave it the complete control over public funds and resources without any accountability to the local people or the national government.

At the village level, the formation of a consensually nominated committee for implementing watershed development projects circumvented the elected local government and and provided the VDC with powers to undertake the functions that the elected local government is mandated to perform.

238

This thesis shows how the partnership between the donor agencies and the implementing NGO results in the formation of a strategic group for securing the funds for an extended period. BMZ has been funding this project since last 20 years. This becomes possible because of a discursive and institutional apparatus formed in the process that presents the project as a 'successful intervention' based on the indicators of development selected by the NGO. These indicators remain biased in favor of the NGO and present one-sided view of the project based on economic and biophysical measures. In this sense, it is important to ascertain 'who counts development' and what qualifies to be counted as an indicator of development as most of the impact studies on the project was conducted by WOTR, the implementing NGO itself.

Due to the dominance of economic model of development, efficiency and transparency in the working of IGWDP are seen as evidences of 'good governance' and a measure of success. This project does address the economic aspects of the village life but steers clear of the societal power relations that cocoon the causes of poverty, of which economic poverty is just one among the many. It achieves economic gains for a short period of time in the village. As the project comes to an end, gradually the village seeps back into its traditional roles and social position as defined by the local community. The groups formed during the project disappear into oblivion as the time passes. In this way, the work done by IGWDP is partial in its approach as the societal component of the program needs a wider acknowledgement, understanding and recognition of the political nature of the project governance, especially at the capillary level of implementation.

The discourse maintains the project as a 'success story' of a participatory watershed development program and shapes the preferences of the donors and national governments towards a long term support of the project that is presented as an apolitical technical intervention to be carried out by apolitical NGOs that have no hidden political agenda (see Chapter 5). This discursive construction of watershed development projects is manifested in the institutional apparatus that is entrusted with the task of carrying out the development project. At the level of the project, NGOs substitute the state agencies and political ministries and at the village level, nominated committees substitute the elected local government. Both institutions effectively circumvent the political governments that are perceived to be 'too political' and hence unworthy of trust. A comprehensive view of

the 'hidden politcs' of this conceptual and institutional apparatus promoted by the strategic groups reveals that the watershed development project comes to be controlled by a small group of national and local elites for an extended period of time who appropriate the available resources for their individual gains in the absence of any control or accountability to the 'demos'. Depoliticization in this way claims democracy as its first and the final victim.

The case of Hills-II project presents a similar strategy where the role of the 'mother NGO' is delegated to a semi-governmental department called the Watershed Management Directorate (WMD). As shown in the preceeding chapters, this agency came into being in 1982 with funds from EEC. So far this Directorate has 'completed' seven watershed development projects with funds either from the World Bank or the EEC (see table in Appendix-A). The establishment of WMD as a nodal agency for project implementation removes the watershed development programs from the direct political control of the government and ministries (vis-à-vis the demos) into the hands of a technical agency that is outside the purview of electoral control.

Following the guidelines issued by the World Bank, WMD formed consensually nominated VDCs in the village for implementing the Hills-II project. This committee came into being as an institution that could effectively circumvent the elected local government that is already established, well structured and constitutionally recognized. As shown in chapter 6, the elected local government is rendered powerless and reduced to the role of a bystander without any involvement in the village watershed development that becomes an exclusive domain of the VDC formed by a small group of influential villagers. Similar to the IGWDP, the VDC in Hills-II project works without the popular mandate or direct accountability to the 'demos'. In this sense, depoliticization is simultaneously a strategy that claims democratization of development as its victim.

7.3   Future Research

Two possible research questions follow from the above study. In the case of donor-recipient interaction in Maharashtra, the donors focused on those aspects in a watershed program that could enhance its present state, replicate the successful cases in other areas

by improving the project governance and using watershed projects as a platform to empower the local people. The Indian state represented by the Ministry of Agriculture saw watershed development as a small intervention with limited scope because of the structural problems of the world economic system. They cited the example of cotton farmers committing suicide in Maharashtra as a global issue that also derives from the international cotton prices as much as from the lack of water in the area.

In my view, there is a need to create an ideal-speech situation between the two parties and explore the prerequisites of that. The politics of language in development governance is another area of study that remains under-researched. Habermas and his theory of communicative action and universal pragmatics could provide the theoretical framework for the study and data could be collected on the basis of international development projects that interact with at least two socio-political discourses, cultural values and ethics among others, and hence the need for an 'ideal speech' situation that could enhance the project planning process.

The other case of water supply system in Kimsar requires further research that explores the governance strategies for the revival of the water supply, if at all it could be revived. In my view, a fully politicized approach to the formation of a new committee and distribution of responsibilities in a democratic fashion could lead to the efficient working of the water system. This forms the basis of the second research project. It would be worthwhile to study the governance of a water system when the planning and implementation is fully and consciously politicized, the watershed committee is elected by a popular mandate using secret ballot, where the villagers conduct their own elections. At this stage, the pumping system could be handed over to the new committee from the old one. The present state of the pump and many of its pipelines would require repairs in a big way. Given the time of 1 year and a planned budget, a type of experimental action research could be designed that works towards the completion of the water supply in this village, observes the democratic processes that could be most sustainable and concludes with the establishment of a profit-making water supply system generating more money from revenue than its cost of operation, more water for the crops, faster construction of the hospital building, relief to women and children from the arduous task of water procurement along with a clean and sanitized Kimsar, if the experiment is successful. In

case of its failure, we would be in a position to understand and document the processes of politicized development and the obstacles that hinder its path that could be addressed in future development projects. The problems of water scarcity can be then resolved by identifying, isolating and then relocating the centrality of politics in watershed development.

The mistake that present frameworks make both in a politicized and a depoliticized governance strategy is that they start with the community and seek to address the problems faced by poor and marginalized individuals. It follows from the idea of a 'trickle down' effect where an empowered community will have empowered individuals by default. These result in real problems because not only the concept of a community remains contested but also because the group of village population presented as the 'community' is often a juxtaposition of powerful interest groups. This prevents the project from trickling any further to the poor groups, minorities and women. In this sense, the projects never make to the target population subsumed by the vaguely understood and formed community-based organizations.

In my opinion, this approach needs to be turned upside down in its method by starting with the individual villagers and seek to address the problems of the community. This does not imply an adherence to the philosophy of 'individualism' but a focus on individual citizens is the stepping-stone towards building an empowered community. By identifying the problems faced by individual farmers, we already identify the issues that the community as a whole is subjected to. A 'door to door' campaign would yield much better results than a loosely announced public meeting that is sparsely attended or attended only by the informed potential beneficiaries. Such 'capacity building' method, if followed consistently for two years as claimed by the implementing agencies may be in a position to form an empowered community. At the same time, it would produce important demographic data identifying each household's water needs, its members, age, income, and education among others that could be useful for future developmental interventions.

7.4 Final Remarks: Democracy and the 'Brave New World'

I finally contend that the concept of depoliticization could be consolidated with the help of other disciplines as an important tool for analyzing development projects, in particular with moral and ethical philosophy. Depoliticization in this view could also be usefully problematized as a crisis of morality in development studies.

In this strategy of governance, development remains invisible behind a series of expert bodies and scientific 'facts' that guide the developmental enterprise and the actions taken by it are sanctioned by techno-economic laws devoid of all subjectivity or politics. Development thus comes forth not as a shared global moral engagement but as an essential and indispensable cog in the wheel of globalizing neo-liberal market economy.

This thesis has argued that the developmental enterprise in the third world countries are depoliticizing development by their different governance mechanisms, as shown in the two selected cases. This depoliticization of development is independent of the implementing agency, be it the NGO or the GO. The study has focused on the processes that lead to the marginalization of individuals and groups from the issues and policies that affect them. This has been done by analyzing the narrative and rhetoric of the projects, focusing on the processes of debate and decision making which often marzinalize individuals and groups because the norms of political discussion are biased against some form of expression as explicated in the two cases. The need for democratic communication, a positive engagement of the civil society and revitalization of the public sphere as a space to entertain such plural forms of communication cannot be overemphasized. This thesis demonstrates that both watershed management and rural development are interrelated and inherently political.

Development must remain politicized because without the intervention of the state machinery substituted by the NGO, and open public reasoning there can be no improvement in the living conditions of the poor people at the scale required in India. And without the people and their deliberative approach to social problems all solutions would only be a stop-gap arrangement. Only limited success could be achieved in the long term without a proper role of the elected government, and there could be no democratically elected government without the people and their active participation in the

243

political process of development. Democracy is based on the proposition that power is dangerous and it is extremely important not to let any one small group have too much power for too long a time. The constitution is a device to limit power but it could be rendered useless by employing such strategies that take the developmental process beyond the constitutional provisions. This translates in the field by disregarding the amendment that recognizes the local elected government and empowering parallel institutions instead, or bypassing the provisions of legal acts that are designed to hold the development agencies accountable to the state. With depoliticization as a governance strategy, circumvention of democratic processes and constitutional provisions is an inevitable outcome.

This study does not argue that there is something principally wrong with depoliticization but a general acceptance of the logic of delegation to reduce complexity and increase economic efficiency without any detailed or principled consideration of the administrative or future democratic consequences of this process is a step in the dark.

Year	Evolution of watershed work in Uttarakhand
1978	• After the dreadful floods in August 1978, the concept of watershed development surfaces; • Constitution of a high-level working group set up by the Governemnt of India for flood control in Ganga-Yamuna basin.
1979	• Submission of the recommendation report by the Central Working Group
1981	• Presentation of 'Overall Development Plan' by the forest department of erstwhile Uttar Pradesh; • Decision of the forest department of the Uttar Pradesh government to work on the basis of watershed units through a 'multi-disciplinary force' under an administrative authority in an integrated manner in the mountain areas based on an overall plan; • Establishment of 'Watershed Management Directorate' (WMD) as a state-level administrative agency; • Decision to treat the entire mountain region on a micro-watershed basis.
1982	• South Bhagirathi Phase-I Project:

Duration	1982-1988
Area	172 square kilometers
District	Tehri Garhwal
Expenditure	6.46 Crorres INR
Execution	Through Line departments
Funded by	European Economic Commission (EEC)

1983	• Himalayan Integrated Watershed Management Project:
	Duration	1983-1992
	Area	2867 square kilometers
	District	Pauri Garhwal and Almora
	Expenditure	80.49 Crores INR
	Execution	Through Line departments upto 1988; then by project administration under the 'Unified Command'
	Funded by	World Bank
1988	• Mid-term review of the Himalayan Integrated Watershed Project; • Shift of project executive agency from the line department to the project administration under the 'Unified Command'; • South Bhagirathi Phase-II Project:
	Duration	1988-1996
	Area	356 square kilometers
	District	Tehri Garhwal
	Expenditure	19.56 Crores INR
	Execution	By the project administration under the Unified Command
	Funded by	EEC
1991	• Bhimtal Project:
	Duration	1991-1998
	Area	216 square kilometers
	District	Nainital
	Expenditure	12.68 Crores INR
	Execution	By the project administration

		under the Unified Command
	Funded by	EEC
1993	• Doon Valley Watershed Management Project:	
	Duration	1993-2001
	Area	2408 square kilometers
	District	Dehradun, Tehri and Nainital
	Expenditure	102.12 Crores INR
	Execution	By the project administration under the Unified Command
	Funded by	EEC

- It involved construction, implementation and evaluation of rural schemes at village level;
- Implemetation of the project on the basis of community participation;
- Constitution of 'Gram/Village Resource Management Association' (GAREMA) for implementing watershed projects;
- Formation of self-help groups;
- Village resource management plan for the maintainence and sustainability of created resources and assets.

1999	• Intergrated Watershed Development Program (Hills-II) Shiwalik Project:	
	Duration	1999-2005
	Area	1573 square kilometers
	District	Pauri, Udhamsingh Nagar, Nainital
	Expenditure	189 Crores INR

	Execution	'Based on community participation'
	Funded by	World Bank
	Number of micro-watersheds	24

- Planning, implementation and evaluation of the projects at the village level;
- Implementation of the project on the basis of community participation;
- Formation of 'Gram/Village Resource Management Association' (GAREMA) for implementing watershed projects;

2004

- Uttarakhand Decentralized Watershed Development Project (UDWDP): funded by the World Bank.

APPENDIX-B: List of Participants in the Exposure and Dialogue

Programme

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5.	Gaikwad, Dr. Ratnakar	Member Board of Governors & Director General YASHADA	Yashwantrao Chavan Academy of Development Administration (YASHADA) Rajbhavan Complex Baner Road Pune – 411 007/ India
6.	Glück, Michael	Programme Co-ordinatior Natural Resource Management Programme /German Development Cooperation (GTZ)	German Development Cooperation (GTZ) Natural Resource Management Programme; D-108., Anand Niketan, New Delhi 110 021
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			Tansania
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23.	Saharia, Dr. Jageshwar	Principal Secretary Agricultur & Horticulture	Agricultur & Horticulture Mantralaya, Mumbai
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