FROM THE DIALECTIC TO THE DIALOGIC: GENERATIVE ORGANIZING
FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION –
A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY IN INDIA

by

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Preface: A Map of the Dissertation

To provide clarity to the reader, I first present a brief map of the dissertation: its organization and a brief overview of the chapters. I have organized this dissertation into four parts. Part 1 presents the introductory materials in two chapters. In Chapter 1, I introduce the research concern, suggest reasons for why this study might be important and offer a brief overview of the theoretical framework that I have developed. In Chapter 2, I present the research method used to conduct this study: methodological choices and the issues thereof and the rationale for my choices. While comparative case study was my methodological strategy, I used principles of constant comparative method and theoretical sampling from grounded theory and first person research principles from action research tradition. I explore the contradictions between these two approaches and then offer a framework of holistic ontology which resolves this problematic. This framework is grounded in Hindu philosophy. I also present my data analysis strategy based on Schatzki (2005)’s site ontology and illustrate my analytic strategy with examples. My level of analysis is the practice-arrangement bundle. The practice component consists of actions, rules, teleoaffective structure, and understandings, and the arrangements component consists of both structural and material arrangements. I invite the reader to use the chapter on methodology as analytical evidentiary pathway to my theoretical offerings.

Part 2 consists of the three case narratives organized thematically. I developed these themes from within each case, independent of the others. My intent in this part of the dissertation is to provide rich, thick descriptions of the case narratives, provide the reader with a window to these worlds, and share their stories. I also hope that these
chapters will provide the reader with hints of what is to come in the final part of the
dissertation in the form of theoretical abstractions, as well provide an evidentiary
pathway to my theoretical framework. Chapter 3 presents the narrative of the first case -
TBS, “Transforming Realities: Making the Improbable Possible.” Chapter 4 presents the
narrative of the second case - Kuthambakkam, “Network Economy: Sustainable
Alternative for Rural India: Vision of a Leader.” Chapter 5 presents the third case -
LABS, Livelihood Advancement Business School – “A Business-Society Initiative
providing access to the New Economy.”

Part 3 of the dissertation presents the analysis using the practice-arrangement
bundle framework. It consists of three chapters (Chapters 6 through 8). In Chapter 6,
Using the approach of critical genealogy, I present the impact of colonization on Indian
social life and ecology and use Gadgil & Guha’s (2000) socio-ecological framework to
locate the three cases. To do this, I use the role of ‘water’ as a key resource in the three
sites and examine their interrelatedness. In Chapter 7, I describe the structural
arrangements of these cases, both internal as well as in relationship with key external
entities. Chapter 8 describes the practice of change in these sites. In this chapter, I
describe the teleoafffective structure, rules and understandings, and actions in these sites
with examples from data. In this chapter, I present the theoretical categories of Rules and
Teleoafffective structure: Vision, Values; Motivations and Approach to Change; Actions:
Visioning, Triggers for Change and Understandings: Simplicity, Spontaneity and
Flexibility. I also ground these concepts in extant theory.

Part 4 presents the in-process theoretical framework of change that I have
developed and the implications of this dissertation. Chapter 9 introduces the theoretical
framework and describes the source of generative capacities as the interplay between four sets of polarized entities in organizational life and describes a framework of Generative Organizing as interplay between intentional and emergent organizing for transformation. Finally, in Chapter 10, I present the implications of this study: paradigmatic, epistemological, theoretical, practical and pedagogic. I conclude by addressing the limitations of the study.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No dissertation can result from sole individual effort. Certainly, mine did not. While my bibliography acknowledges those whose ideas that I have borrowed and built upon, here it is my privilege to thank the people who have contributed to this dissertation in obvious and less obvious ways. These words are simply shorthand for my feelings of gratitude. First and foremost, I want to thank the numerous people from my case sites, who did not merely participate in my study; they welcomed Viyan and me and extended hospitality, warmth and affection to us. It was a privilege to learn with them while building mutually nourishing relationships. I dedicate my dissertation to these extraordinary people who I admire most deeply, for whom life is an everyday struggle, one in which they continue courageously and tirelessly. My special thanks go to Rajendra Bhai, Kanniah Bhai, Gopal Singh of TBS, Elango, Hema, Ramadoss from Kuthambakkam and Suku, Kannan, Deen, Ajit, Aravind, Bala and Bhaskar from LABS. They put up with my endless questions and let me follow them around for days.

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presence of God is perhaps a rare occurrence, but I suspect that when it happens, one would almost always leave with a renewed sense of faith about one’s calling. Almost after every one of my meetings with David, I left with a sense of rejuvenation. Dave, thank you for being on my committee and supporting my dissertation in the best way that you could! Sandy Piderit is not only a committee member and a research collaborator but a very dear friend. Sandy, you have been there for me, every step of the way. Thank for you believing in my work, supporting me, teaching me while all the while loving me and Vi. You are one of the most caring souls that I have had the privilege to know. You are my role model and I look forward to our continuing engagement. And very special thanks go to Peter Whitehouse, the external examiner on my committee. Peter, thank you for your incisive and thoughtful questions and generous support of my work!

I want to extend a general thank you to my department, Department of Organizational Behavior at Case Western Reserve University. Nowhere else could I have dissented so strongly and still be accepted so lovingly. The spirit of our department is very rare and special and I do hope we always cherish and nourish our ability to provide space for intellectual discovery and growth. I am especially grateful for the Don Wolfe Dissertation Scholarship that provided me with the material resources for subsistence during very crucial stages of data analysis and conceptualization of this dissertation. I also want to extend my appreciation for the faculty members who have provided me with material and other kinds of support. I want to thank Richard Boyatzis and Poppy McLeod for providing me the material support necessary for this dissertation and my field work by offering me continued opportunity to work in LEAD. It is my pleasure to acknowledge Hilary Bradbury’s support. Thank you, Hilary, for your positive ‘bias’ towards my work,
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ask for the student's thumb as payment for his teaching (thumb is the key in a bow and arrow battle) whereas I am rather certain that you are not going to ask me to have a lobotomy in your honor! I also take this opportunity to thank members of the Critical Management Studies Interest Group of the Academy of Management, my intellectual home in the academy. I feel fortunate to have found this community of scholars whose bold, cutting edge and rigorous work energizes me.

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This is perhaps the conventional space for thanking one’s partner for keeping one fed, clothed, wined and warm and generally taken care of. Well, I guess I need to thank my rather well functioning multiple personality disorder that helped me let my multiple worlds co-exist in chaos, yet present an apparently coherent personality at any point; so I could write a dissertation, keep a house cleaned, dinner cooked, muffins baked, garden weeded and bills paid, which was all done mostly because I could not escape them (partly done to escape my dissertation, of course!) because of the presence of my wonderful son, Viyan Poonamallee, who I want to thank next. Even while I was burrowed in the angst that appears to characterize most dissertations, he bound me to the mundane world by silver threads. Becoming a parent has added unimagined richness to my life. It has made me a better person; it has been made me responsible towards creating a better and more humane world for our future generations. He has given me new eyes to look at the world with. Viyan not only teaches me that most good things in life take time, like good ideas take time for maturation, and that to be present and alive in the moment is key but also that I have to stand up for what I believe in. Vi, you are my home in the universe and you inspire me to the best I can be, every day!
From the Dialectic to the Dialogic: Generative Organizing for Social Transformation – a comparative case study in India

Abstract

by

LATHA POONAMALLEE

The dissertation examines generative capacities and generative organizing for social transformation from a global-critical-organizational perspective. It is a comparative case study of three social experiments in India, all of which are focused on creating sustainable alternatives for local livelihood. The first case features a successful social transformation through reclamation of traditional environment management methods and creation of parallel governing structures for the ‘commons’. The second case is an attempt by an elected village leader to create a sustainable and locally networked economic model that he hopes can become a viable model for rural India. The third case, a corporate consortium in India has formed a livelihood advancement school for urban, underprivileged youth and places them in jobs thus opening doors to the new economy. However, they vary in terms of structural characteristics occupying unique spaces in a shared post colonial context. This study makes a number of contributions to our field: 1) substantive - it brings marginal perspectives to mainstream conversation and moves toward mitigating the ethnocentric imbalance of our field; 2) paradigmatic – based on Hindu philosophy it offers a framework for holistic ontology that transcends the dualistic ontological conceptions of subjectivity-objectivity; 3) epistemological-theoretical, it presents a dialogic framework for studying change, bringing together the much polarized discourses of change-continuity, structure-agency, cooperation-conflict, internal-external sources of change, long term-short term, and output-process and proposes that generative
capacities of organizations rest on the interplay between these polarized entities that are conceived of as foundational elements of change phenomena; 4) theoretical-practical - it presents an exposition of Generative Organizing as the interplay between intentional and emergent organizing for change; 5) methodological – it locates itself in an innovative social ontology called Site Ontology (Schatzki, 2002), uses the practice-arrangements bundle as the level of analysis and offers a conceptual framework for conducting multi-level research to examine complex social phenomena; and 6) pedagogic – this dissertation challenges conventional, polarized and simplistic theorizing of organizational life and argues that if education should simultaneously fulfill the functions of preparing individuals for meaningful employment as well as progressive and cosmopolitan citizenship, it is important to bring critical thinking back into our curricula.
PART ONE - CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this introduction is to present an overview of the substantive and epistemological questions and premises that fueled this dissertation. I introduce the research concern, suggest why this study might be important, and briefly preview my theoretical framework.

Research Concern

The research concern central to this dissertation is the domain of generative capacities and mechanisms for social transformation, one that holds great promise for the collective wellbeing of our world. Gergen (1982) defines generative capacity as, “the capacity to challenge the guiding assumptions of culture, to raise fundamental questions regarding contemporary social life, to foster reconsideration of that which is ‘taken for granted’ and thereby furnish new alternatives for social action.” This dissertation is the outcome of a comparative case study of three social experiments in India. My preoccupation with this particular research concern and the context is quite personal. As a socially conscious scholar-activist, I am concerned, with many others, about the increasing economic, social, political and ecological inequities and these sites are working to address these issues through processes of transformation. As Feldman (2004) points out, it is the underlying dynamics of organizing that produce change and therefore to learn about transformation, it is important to try to understand these dynamics. In this study, I have addressed both the elements of change and the process of organizing for change.
Why is this study important?

Despite millions of dollars of financial aid and the efforts of thousands of people involved in the business of developing the non-industrial world, the divide between developed and developing countries has been growing more than ever in the past few decades. There is a growing movement of rebellion against the hegemony of the one world view of capitalism across the world, erupting in events like the Seattle March, leading to further polarization on the one hand and calls for inclusion of multiple voices on the other. The Human Development Report 1998 (UNDP) gives the following facts: in 1960, the richest 20% of the world had 30 times the income of the poorest 20%, but this gap had increased to 82 times in 1995. In 1995, 1.3 billion people lived on an income of less than 1 dollar a day, 841 million were malnourished and 880 million had no access to healthcare, 885 million adults were illiterate and thus, despite the ‘progress’ made, a large proportion of the world population has been left behind. For example, the State of the World Report for the year 2006 offers comparative data for per person ecological foot prints (in global hectares) by China, India, Europe, Japan, and the United States: they 1.6, 0.8, 4.7, 4.8, and 9.7 respectively. The ecological footprint as a share of global bio-capacity varies from India at the lowest of 7% of the global bio-capacity to the US at the highest rate of 25%.

Increasing inequity is not merely a global phenomenon; it is locally manifested, even in advanced countries like the US. For instance, the US national survey for literacy 1993 showed that 21 to 23% of adults in the nation are at the lowest level of literacy – this is 40 to 44 million adults who cannot locate an intersection on a street.
Modernity, be it in the erstwhile colonization or present day forms of capitalization through globalization, has touched almost every part of the world and a vast majority of them negatively. Communities are being stripped of their livelihood everyday through this process. This awareness has also led not only to the anti-globalization social movement across the world whose members number in hundreds of thousands, but also to a multitude of social experiments, in communities across the world, both in first and third world countries, which are designed to wrest back some kind of control and self determination.

India offers an especially fascinating context, not only because the country is predicted to emerge as one of the key economic powers in the immediate future. Flavin & Gardner (2006) liken the emergence of India and China to civilization changing events such as the rise of the Roman Empire or the discovery of the New World. They write that even those are pale historical comparisons since they only touched a fraction of the human populations of their day. In the same chapter, they write that Deutsche Bank in Germany projects that economic reforms and a growing work force will lead India to overtake China as the world’s fastest growing major economy over the next fifteen years. This growth is going to have an enormous impact on the global biosphere, especially because this growth, unlike in the west, does not have the material resources to make investments critical to equity and sustainability. 

Sunita Narain (2006) summarizes this imperative and argues that India needs to
reinvent the development trajectory. Because, the environmental movement in the west emerged after the period of wealth creation and during the period of waste generation, they argued for containment of the waste but did not have the ability or the need to argue for the reinvention of the paradigm of waste generation, whereas a fast growing economy like India needs a breakthrough in terms of new and inventive thinking.

Such progress amidst social and environmental inequities has led to the situation, in which India co-holds multiple countries within herself, each one being a crucible of major transformation. At one end of the spectrum is the software writing, international banking, hip, urban India greatly influenced by and materially benefiting from the process of globalization. At the other extreme is Bharat, consisting of her villages that are protesting against globalization and its impact on their livelihood. There are also groups in between committed to finding sustainable economic and social alternatives. This study juxtaposes examples from three different contexts along this continuum and presents a contemporary picture of the transformation from multiple perspectives. Therefore, this study can offer anyone who is keenly interested in these issues, a window to these worlds. Moreover, scholars continue to point to the ethnocentric imbalance of our field (Orlando, & More-Osejo, 2003; Whiteman, 2000) and the choice of context in this study moves toward mitigating this imbalance.

As a scholar, I share the concern with many others (Daft & Lewin, 1993; Gergen, 2003; Hugh & Willmott, 2000; Starbuck, 2003) that our field needs to study and evolve new paradigms in organizing. To build truly groundbreaking theories on ways to look at organizations, I believe that we need to look beyond the type of organizations that our
field conventionally studies. I take my cue from scholars (Appadurai, 2000; Esteva & Prakash, 2000; Sachs, 1997) who celebrate the radical, exciting, and innovative forms of organizing along the margins and argue that collective action and contention underlie the construction of new organizational forms (Rao, Morrill & Zald, 2000).

Although as a topic of study, organizational change has remained in vogue for decades, Van de Ven & Poole (1988) point out that a formal theory that adequately addresses the question of how and why change occurs has not yet been devised. They suggest that a theory of change in social structure should meet four paradoxical and interdependent requirements: (1) action-structure, (2) internal and external sources of change, (3) stability and change, and (4) time as the key historical accounting system. They allege that most social theorists have failed in synthesizing all these four requirements. This dissertation study is an attempt to fill this gap however partially, by offering a new process-based framework to examine change from a holistic and dialogic approach, transcending the dualistic conceptions that polarize scholarship in our field. Using the examples drawn from the comparative analysis of two cases that have emerged as exemplars of more effective change and a contrasting less effective case, I illustrate the interplay between the polarized entities.

Development of such theory is also a generative process. This study makes a paradigmatic contribution to our field by offering a framework of holistic ontology that allows the researcher to transcend the conventional subjective-objective dualism thus facilitating the generation of theory through interplay of ontological subjectivity and epistemological objectivity. It has epistemological implications for our field, especially for qualitative work grounded in subjective ontology, because it allows such work to go
beyond the descriptive mode and provides the space for building knowledge with conceptual-theoretical integrity.

This study also contributes to methodology. The overall methodological strategy of this study was that of comparative case study. However, I adopted a multi-step and multi-level approach to the treatment of my data. To do this, I introduced two key methodological innovations. To anchor my level of analysis, I have used an innovative type of social ontology, called site ontology (Schatzki, 2005). This approach allowed me to look at practice-arrangements bundles. In that sense, this study is different from a typical social constructionist approach that usually offers no scope to incorporate the material/structural arrangements of a phenomenon, because the social constructionist approach does not usually consider the extra-discursive materially real elements in their analysis. By using the practice-arrangements bundle approach, I was able to examine key organizing practices along with the contextual, historical and structural analyses. Another methodological innovation that I introduced was the rigorous application of first person research principles grounded in the holistic ontology. In this way, I could plumb the ‘bias’ to build a framework with conceptual-theoretical integrity. In the next chapter on methodology, I have described these innovations in further detail.

**A brief overview of the emerging theoretical framework**

In this dissertation, I suggest that the dialogical approach (Bhaktin, 1986) might be a more appropriate one to deal with paradoxes of organizational life. While the dialectic approach to paradoxes polarizes, dialogic approach permits simultaneity and interplay of polarized entities. I use this approach to develop propositions about generative capacities of organizations. I argue that generative capacities of organizations
rest in the interplay between the dualistic conceptions of Change-Continuity, Agency-Structure, Cooperation-Conflict, and Internal-External sources of change. Thus, not only do I offer a new theory of change, I also offer a new framework to understand change. I also describe the process of Generative Organizing which is the interplay between Intentional and Emergent Organizing for Change.
CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

This dissertation falls under the qualitative research tradition and draws from more than one established methodological approach while introducing novel innovations in their application. Moreover, my method is grounded in and offers a framework for a holistic approach to ontology which allowed me to combine ontological subjectivity with epistemological objectivity. More specifically, it combined principles of constant comparison from grounded theory method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and that of first person research (Bradbury & Reason, 2001; Marshall, 2001) from the action research tradition.

Case Study Strategy

Because I wanted to study and theorize about organizational level change processes and enhance the probability of transferability of my findings without losing the richness of organizational context, I used the comparative case study approach. Yin (1981) writes that the distinguishing characteristic of case study research strategy is that it attempts to study a contemporary phenomenon in its real life context, and especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident. Naturalistic inquiry based on field study of real world phenomena precludes the possibility of using survey or similar methods because it is not possible to separate the variables for manipulations or explanations. Moreover, this case study strategy allowed me to draw from other research methods, thus allowing me to capture and describe the richness of the phenomenon and the context as well develop a formal theory about generative capacities and mechanisms for change.
Yin (1984) advocates selecting each additional case in a research program to address some very specific aspect of theory inadequately addressed in the previous cases. I felt that this approach would only have been appropriate if my theory was more fully developed at the outset than it was and therefore, I selected case situations so as to deliberately vary the context across different structural dimensions. Yin (1984) also says that “literal replication” in multiple sites requires that the phenomenon being studied be defined by some characteristics common to all the research situations and hence, I chose sites that are all situated in a post colonial context. Moreover, all of them are at attempts at collective action to create social change. Rao, Morrill & Zald (2000) write that collective action refers to a broad range of purposive of collective behavior, the most organized of which are social movements that occur over longer time stretches, are driven by long-term goals, and develop formal organizations. The three cases of this study hold unique spaces along the continuum of “development” scenarios but all of them have occurred over time, are driven by long term goals and have developed formal organizations. The comparative case study method also offered me the scope to move back and forth between the sites and data sets, formulating theory in one setting and then immediately placing the embryonic ideas in other contexts for potential confirmation, disconfirmation or vivification. Next, I introduce the cases.

The Cases

As I mentioned in the introductory chapter, India offers an especially fascinating context for this study. India co-holds multiple countries within herself, each one being a crucible of major transformation. One end of the spectrum is the software writing, international banking, and hip India greatly influenced by and benefiting from the process
of globalization. At the other end is Bharat; its villages protesting against globalization and committed to finding appropriate and sustainable economic and social alternatives. There is an obvious pressure from the former on the latter to conform, sometimes in the garb of enticing rewards. Sometimes, in a very small way, the fruits of the former are offered – or harnessed – to support the latter. For example, there are two associations of Non Resident Indians (NRIs) in the USA: Asha and the Association for India Development (AID). While Asha raises funds for promoting and supporting primary education initiatives, AID raises funds and consciousness in support of development issues in India. My sample includes three different social change organizing efforts that serve as useful contrasts on multiple structural and theoretical dimensions. The three sites are:

1. Tarun Bharat Sangh, a voluntary agency that has been working for twenty years with a thousand villages in the Alwar district of Rajasthan, on regeneration of their environment and society through a revival of their traditional water harvesting structures. These villages have formed Village Committees to take ownership and responsibility of their commons including water and forests. They also have formed local non-governmental River Parliaments to protect and safeguard the five rivers that have come alive in this process. This site provided the longitudinal data for my study as the data from this site has been collected in two phases over three years.

2. The second site is the village of Kuthambakkam, in Tamil Nadu, India. It has a population of around 5000 in 1040 households spread over seventy hamlets. It is a long-lived habitat with ancient temples, in fairly close proximity to
Madras, the state capital. The primary occupation is agriculture through lake-fed and rain-fed irrigation. As President of Kuthambakkam panchayat, Rangasamy Elango has imagined, pursued, and achieved much in strengthening of basic infrastructure in this village. He was one of the select 28 local government leaders from around the world to tour the United States at the invitation of the State Department; he is an Ashoka Fellow as well. Through his Trust for Village Self-Governance, he is attempting to create what he calls a “network economy” in this village. This non-governmental organization has already founded a Panchayat Academy, a training center for Panchayat (village governance) leaders from across the country.

3. LABS, my third site, is a corporate consortium creating a livelihood advancement program (LABS) for the at-risk youth, promoted by a few corporate houses in Madras, India and spearheaded by Murugappa Group. They run a vocational school and have so far trained around a hundred and twenty young people in different skills ranging from driving to computers to hospitality and the same companies that are part of the consortium also hire them on completion of the training module. The success of this program has captured the imagination of many other corporate houses and state governments in different cities that are trying to create similar initiatives in their local settings.

Table 1 presents the structural conditions of these three sites.
Table 1 – Comparative Characteristics of the three sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site/Characteristic</th>
<th>Rajasthan (Site 1)</th>
<th>Kuthambakkam</th>
<th>LABS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>Self Reliant, Farming</td>
<td>Networked, Farming and Dairy</td>
<td>Business supported, feeds into mainstream economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structures</td>
<td>Egalitarian</td>
<td>Quasi-Democratic /Hierarchical/Network</td>
<td>Intergenerational/Formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available Capital</td>
<td>Land, Labor, Social and Cultural Capital</td>
<td>Land to some extent, labor, social, cultural and political capital</td>
<td>Labor and perhaps informal social capital to some degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trigger to Change</td>
<td>External Leader</td>
<td>Internal-External Leader</td>
<td>External</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Self Organizing community with a strong visionary leader and multiple, indigenous and situational leaders</td>
<td>A Strong Leader with a vision to organize the community into an economic network</td>
<td>Externally organized, with participation of recent graduates as mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with Government</td>
<td>Indifferent/Opposed, with a few instances of cooperation</td>
<td>Co-optation and claim of ownership</td>
<td>Not Clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td>Landed, Rural</td>
<td>Rural and Semi-urban, landed and landless farming</td>
<td>Urban Poor, with no property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Homogenous</td>
<td>Mix of Hindus, Muslims and Christians, though the majority population is Hindu</td>
<td>A proportional representation of the larger demographics, but religion not a salient identity in this context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing Purpose</td>
<td>Water/Livelihood</td>
<td>Local Economy/Livelihood</td>
<td>Livelihood Mainstreaming</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection Methods:

As Pettigrew (1990) describes, to build a rich case study on organizational change, it is imperative to collect data that is processual (an emphasis on action as well as structure over time), comparative (range of studies), pluralist (describe and analyze the often competing versions of reality seen by actors in change processes), historical (take into account the historical evolution of ideas and actions for change as well as the
constraints within which decision makers operate); and contextual (examine the reciprocal relations between process and contexts at different levels of analysis) for understanding complex change processes. McNulty & Ferlie (2004) also write that in process analysis, it is important to balance what people say they do against what they actually do. Therefore, I collected various types of data including interviews with individuals, visual data from focus groups followed by debriefing sessions, observational and archival data, the details of which I provide below. I also kept an extensive personal journal. Data types included:

1. Audio recordings of informal, in-depth interviews with individuals who may include, (1) formal and informal leaders of the system, (2) those affected by the changes as well as the initiators of the change; (3) different interest groups internal and external to the focal organization under study. Through these interviews I collected their stories, key defining moments and incidents, their assumptions about being human, their definitions of wealth and their vision for the future. See Appendix for the interview protocol.

2. Observational material including field notes on attendance at formal meetings, as well as informal meetings and conversations.

3. Visual Data: I invited the research participants to represent their stories and vision for the future in visual forms and debriefed in focus groups.

4. I collected archival data, both public and private, to triangulate data points as well as provide the background information to capture and describe the context. These include the minutes of the meeting, press reportage, policy and strategy documents, memos and correspondence.
Fieldwork and Engagement with the sites

I spent around eighteen months between the sites over the last four years. In this section, I describe my research engagement with each of the sites and how I collected various types of data.

Case One: TBS

My first visit to Rajasthan was in Summer 2001 and lasted six weeks. Later, I followed it with two more visits of six and eight weeks each in 2004 and 2005. I made these trips to keep the data current as well as because it offered me an opportunity to collect data at three different points of time over the years. During my first visit, I also attended a River Parliament session. During the same trip, I also happened to be present on another important day, the day on which Rajendra Singh, the leader of TBS, was supposed to have been arrested by the State Government for tampering with the local irrigation system, On that day I had the opportunity to be part of the Satyagraha (active fight for truth) with people from around 100 villages in the region, and participated in the process of donation of voluntary labor at the site that was deemed illegal. I also participated in a two day training program on water harvesting organized for around twenty five people from various NGOs in different states of the country. My data, therefore, includes interviews with people, field notes from the River Parliament, my observation and audio recordings of the Satyagraha, and audio recordings of the training program. All these interviews were conducted in Hindi by me, and in some of the villages, a native tribal dialect which is a mix between Hindi and Rajasthani was used. I transcribed these into Hindi and then translated them into English. I have tried not to lose the flavor of the original language in the process of translation by retaining the sentence
structures and conventions of speech that are unique to Hindi and not tried to fit them into “proper English”.

In TBS/Rajasthan, my key informants were Rajendra Singh, the founder-secretary of TBS, Kannaiah Lal Gujjar, the Chief Coordinator of Village Activities, and Gopal Singh, the Chief Architect of the water harvesting structures. Kannaiah Lal and Gopal Singh do not call themselves by these titles, they simply call themselves Volunteers, but I use these titles in to provide some understanding about their roles to the readers. Not only did I interview them in a very detailed fashion, but I also spent enormous amounts of time with them during my visits, traveling with them to many villages during my visits.

**Case Two: Kuthambakkam**

I made my initial contact with Elango of Kuthambakkam in May 2003 and followed it with an intensive data collection visit for three months in 2004 and then with another brief visit in Jan 2005. During the visits, I was not able to formally attend one of the Panchayat (Village Government) meetings but I was able to spend substantial time visiting with people and informally talking to them. Here, the interviews were conducted in Tamil, my native language. I listened to the interviews at the end of every day and then transcribed and translated them at frequent intervals.

In Kuthambakkam, my key informants were Elango, the Panchayat President and the Founder-Secretary of ‘Trust for Village Self-Governance,’ Hema, the intern from ‘Madras School of Social Work,’ and Ramdoss, a local villager who has worked with Elango over a few years now. Elango was an obvious choice because he is not only the central and key leader in this community, but he is also figural because of his connections with external entities. Hema was a happenstance, she happened to be around the same
time, helping Elango with the village housing project. She graciously shared her house
with me and Viyan during our stay and so I got to spend substantial amount of time with
her. Ramadoss was an interesting find because he was one of the very few who worked
with Elango, but with a strong sense of self and was not afraid to disagree with Elango,
so he was a perfect foil to triangulate my data. I met him during my first visit in Summer
2003. In 2004, during my second visit, which was the longest time I spent there,
Ramadoss had quit working with Elango because he was frustrated and needed to work
elsewhere, but he still made the time to talk to me. During my third visit in 2005, he had
come back to work for the Trust because his commitment to his community was high and
he wanted to work on changing it from the inside. I had another opportunity to talk with
him.

**Case Three: LABS**

My professional relationship and personal friendship with Mr. Sukumaran, a key
mentor of LABS-Chennai, goes back close to a decade. Most of my data was collected
over a three month period in 2004 and I went back for a brief visit in 2005, which was
more a social visit rather than a serious data collection effort. While this was not an
explicitly intended Action Research Project, my mode of engagement with these
communities has been one of a friend, supporter and a researcher. During these later trips,
I was able to share some of my analyses with my key informants.

In LABS, my key contacts were the corporate mentors as I knew every one of
them personally and professionally much before the beginning of this study. The
corporations that they represented were sponsors/stakeholders of LABS-Chennai. My key
informant was Arvind from Dr.Reddy’s Foundation (DRF), Hyderabad, which is
somewhat like a parent organization for LABS all over the world. He was in between roles during my visit, since he was moving from his role as the Center Head, LABS-Chennai, to the HR Manager for DRF. He not only spent time with me, but also helped me organize my visits to offices of DRF and their centers in Hyderabad.

Participants in Data Collection

In Rajasthan where TBS works, I spoke informally with over 60 villagers and conducted detailed interviews with 20 of them. They consisted of 14 men and 6 women. In Kuthambakkam, I talked with around 50 people informally and conducted detailed interviews with 15 of them. I also interviewed two women’s self help groups and one mud-block workers’ group. They also participated in the visual data collection exercise and the following focus group discussions. In LABS, Chennai I was able to get a 100% sampling of students, faculty members, and key sponsors/mentors at the time I was present there. It included five faculty members, 5 student groups of 15 each, 6 individual students, 2 key alumni members, and five corporate sponsors/mentors. In Dr. Reddy’s Foundation, Hyderabad, I interviewed three professional managers, and in one of the LABS Hyderabad centers, I interviewed one alumni member, and four faculty members. So in all, I have 61 detailed individual interviews and 8 group interviews/discussions. Overall, I had transcripts of around a hundred and sixty hours of audio-recordings, over two thousand pages of archival data, and eighteen months of observational data. In Table 2, I present a summary of the data that I collected. Tables 3 through 7 present the participation numbers for each site.
Table 2 - Types & Quantity of Data

| Fieldwork | 18 months |
| Audio-recordings | 160 hours |
| Archival Data | 2000 pages |
| Personal Journal Entries | 100 pages |

Table 3 – Overall Data Distribution among the three sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site/Type</th>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TBS</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuthambakkam</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LABS</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5 (all the students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 - Participation from TBS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Leaders</td>
<td>Villagers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 – Participation from Kuthambakkam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individuals</th>
<th>Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 – Overall Participation from LABS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LABS Chennai</th>
<th>LABS Hyderabad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>5 of 15 each</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7 – LABS Participation by Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>LABS - Chennai</th>
<th>LABS - Hyderabad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>6 + 5 groups of 15 each</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Mentors</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Managers</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Evaluation and Classification of the three cases**

Originally, I selected the three sites as exemplars of transformation. However, during my stay in Kuthambakkam, and based on my preliminary data analysis, I saw that Kuthambakkam was not an exemplar at all and it was indeed emerging as an unintended contrast. Therefore, I looked for a theoretical framework that could anchor and evaluate the three sites in terms of their effectiveness and chose Ferlie et. al.’s (1996) model of assessing organizational transformation to evaluate and classify the three cases in my study. Ferlie et al.’s (1996) model for assessing organizational transformation is focused on actions and related consequences as well as change in underlying meanings. The model consists of six indicators of transformation: multiple and interrelated changes across the system as a whole; the creation of new organizational forms at a collective level; the development of multilayered changes which impact the whole system, at unit and individual level; the creation of changes in the services provided and in the mode of delivery; the reconfiguration of power relations (especially in the formation of new leadership groups); the development of a new culture, ideology and organizational meaning. They claim that only when all six criteria have been fulfilled is it possible to talk of a completed organizational transformation. While this model was originally developed and applied at the healthcare sector, I found it to be a useful model for
assessing my cases because it emerges from the less studied public sector with its complexities and so it offers a set of reasonably comprehensive criteria that I could apply to evaluate my sample, given the nature of their complexities. Next, I present my analysis of the three sites using this model.

1. Multiple and interrelated changes across the system as a whole

As evident from my case narratives, TBS and LABS meet this criterion of transformation. In the case of TBS, it has not only transformed the region’s physical environment but also has had positive reverberations in the social arena including improvement of lives of women and children. Similarly, LABS in general, and LABS Chennai in particular, has brought together multiple governmental, non-governmental and business organizations. Kuthambakkam also meets this criterion quite reasonably by modeling a new way of working for Panchayat (Village) level government and changing the physical quality of life for the villagers through the housing project.

2. Creation of new organizational forms at a collective level

Once again, TBS and LABS have done well on this front. In the region, where TBS has been working, there are more than a thousand well functioning Gram Sabhas (Village Committees), a well functioning Arvari River Parliament, thousands of Women’s Groups, hundreds of Tarun Shalas (Elementary Schools). TBS has also created an informal learning network among many Non-Governmental and Government organizations who visit the region on Paani Yatra (Water Pilgrimage) to learn from their success and now this is being formalized through the construction of a new Water University. Similarly, LABS has exploded in many states in the country with multiple centers in different cities drawing partners from multiple stakeholder groups. LABS
national and local alumni groups are also new organizational forms that have taken shape in the last few years. In Kuthambakkam, Elango has revitalized the formal local governing machinery of the Panchayat but has also founded a Trust for Village Self Governance which runs the Panchayat Academy where many Panchayat leaders learn together to work differently. There is also one functioning Women’s Self Help Group and a few more yet to find their niche for operations. Elango has also brought in various development agencies like ‘Swiss Development Agency’ and ‘Association for India Development’ to fund his programs for housing and other new, planned initiatives.

3. **Development of multilayered changes which impact below the whole system, at unit and individual level**

TBS and LABS meet this criterion squarely and the changes of these initiatives impact all the levels. TBS has developed local leadership in all the villages and its emphasis on women’s development has brought forth uneducated women who never stepped out of their homes to the public arena, with their participation evident at all levels. TBS’s initiative has regenerated their physical, social, and cultural environments. Families have been brought back together, age-old water harvesting and farming practices are back, and children are getting educated. The impact of LABS at an individual level is awe-inspiring. It has not only changed the lives of around 18,000 at-risk youth, but also the lives of its facilitators, managers and mentors from corporations by providing them appropriate avenues for career growth if necessary while also offering opportunities to contribute to the larger space. While some of the efforts of Elango like better primary infrastructure like roads, street lights, reliable water supply, and improvement of sanitation facilities and the housing project definitely have had a positive
impact on the lives of the villagers, other efforts like the Network Economy and Women’s Self Help Groups are yet to function in a sustainable fashion. So, I would categorize Kuthambakkam as below par on this criterion.

4. Creation of changes in the services provided and in the mode of delivery

I would categorize all three cases in this study as effective examples under this criterion because all of them have endeavored to create new services where none existed before. While TBS and LABS have been extraordinarily successful on this criterion, Kuthambakkam is not far behind in its achievement as a Panchayat in providing basic infrastructure and the manner in which the Panchayat functions in comparison with the rest of the country. It is free of corruption, its President is accessible to the villagers when in town, and he is able to bring in private and public resources for village development and is personally dedicated and caring. In a political and governing system ridden with corruption and apathy, this is a great accomplishment indeed.

5. Reconfiguration of power relations (especially in the formation of new leadership groups)

TBS has been extremely successful in this particular criterion because the entire region of over a thousand villages have reclaimed their power over the commons and are even more influential than the elected, formal governments, be it local or state. Unlike most ‘development’ initiatives, the relationship of the villagers and villages is also free of power issues; the power squarely rests with the villages and they are keenly aware of it. Its impact on women’s participation is also particularly noteworthy. It is generally quite a male chauvinistic society and therefore, its women attending women’s group meetings,
annual conventions and having access to financial resources through group savings are all
great indicators of TBS’s success in this criterion.

LABS’ values of affirmative assumptions, student-centered approach, grounding
in the community, and absolute refusal to compromise on quality of pedagogy have
paved the way for providing center stage to the students and their families who are the
most disenfranchised group among its stakeholder groups. Similarly, their decentralized
organizational structure also allows a tremendous amount of operational freedom to its
managers and facilitators. Their ongoing attempt to involve the alumni at different levels
not only accords them respect but also gives them power. Finally, by the very nature of
the objective of the organization as well as their approach, they are providing an
opportunity for the economically and socially marginalized to enter and partake of in the
mainstream economy and society.

Kuthambakkam is a more complex case to analyze because at one level, Elango’s
stint as the President of the Panchayat (Village Government) has brought in a greater
sense of autonomy to the Panchayat government, freeing it from the clutches of corrupt
bureaucrats and politicians at the state and district levels. Nevertheless, my data suggests
that it is not a widespread or shared reality among the people, but rather rests on Elango
himself. My data does not suggest that it is a deep-rooted change at the village level
which will continue even if he steps down and someone else gets elected to the position.
And internally, within the village, there is no real change in power; it still rests with the
authority, and it is the good fortune of the village that the authority is held by a man of
integrity and veracity. Therefore, while at a superficial level, it might appear that
Kuthambakkam meets this criterion, a more careful analysis of data suggests otherwise.
6. **Development of a new culture, ideology and organizational meaning.**

LABS fits this criterion excellently because it has not only created a new organization and new livelihood for its students and alumni but also has developed a new culture and work ethic for its students, alumni and their communities, because its students and alumni are the new role models for the youth of their respective communities. Similarly, among comparable vocational schools, both for-profit and not-for-profit, LABS stands unique because of its corporate networks and ability to profit from these networks not only in creation of new livelihood, but also by drawing the talent from these corporations to support its growth and development and providing opportunities to professionals in these businesses to mentor the youth. TBS also would score highly on this criterion, because it triggered and facilitated a process of reclamation of the dignity and pride of the villagers and in turn their sense of self efficacy.

Using this model, I categorized LABS and TBS as exemplars for accomplishment of radical transformation while Kuthambakkam emerged as a contrast. I use the terms ‘more effective’ and ‘less effective’ rather than the normative and pejorative terminology of ‘success’ and ‘failure’ because these are living experiments and communities and arriving at such conclusions may be premature, especially in the case of Kuthambakkam. McNulty and Ferlie (2004) explain the limits to intended organizational transformation in terms of a contradiction between the new envisioned organizational ideals and pre-existing organizational arrangements and relationships already developed. This might help in explaining the lack of sustained progress in Kuthambakkam on the change initiative planned by their leader. Elango’s history and the caste system in the
village, and the role it plays in acceptance or otherwise of the change, is addressed in the later chapters of this dissertation.

**Approach to Data Analysis and Theory Building**

I anchor this discussion in Van de Ven and Poole’s (1988) essay on the paradoxical requirements for a theory of organizational change. They suggest that a theory of change in social structure should meet four paradoxical and interdependent requirements: (1) action-structure paradox (2) internal and external sources of change, (3) stability and change, and (4) time as the key historical accounting system. They allege that most social theorists have failed in synthesizing all these four requirements and suggest methods through which these requirements may be fulfilled by a theory.

I also add another paradoxical requirement, that of (5) accounting for both outcome and process. Many organizations that embark on a change mission succeed and/or fail to varying degrees and there are multiple reasons behind the success as well as failure. Most organizational change literature in the search for parsimonious theories has focused on outcomes because they are more amenable to analysis and not on the dynamic, processual elements. This raises the question: Is organizational change a process or an outcome? I argue is that it is at once a state of being (i.e. an outcome) and a state of becoming. I believe that it is another paradox inherent in our field. As organizational scholars it is incumbent upon us to study both outcomes and process, so we can learn to keep both alive, and avoid the dangers, either of reification of “static” truths or of faulty memory where certain inconvenient “static” truths are forgotten over the duration of the change process. My dissertation attempts to partially remedy this
failure to address the paradoxical nature of change by adopting a multi-level, multi-vocal and multi-step analysis and in this section, I walk the reader through this process.

Van de Ven & Poole (1988) define paradox as the simultaneous presence of two mutually exclusive assumptions; taken singly, each is incontestably true, but taken together they appear inconsistent. They also offer four strategies to deal with paradoxes. One is to accept the paradox and live with it because this strategy would enable us to study the dialectic between opposing levels and forces. The second strategy is to clarify levels of analysis and connections between them. A third way to address paradoxes is to take the role of time into account. The fourth strategy is to introduce new terms or new logic.

Therefore, underlying the existence of the paradox are the ontological belief system and the attendant complex epistemological and analytical choices. In the following section, I describe mine. First, I discuss the various ontological assumptions that guide our field and then present a framework of holistic ontology that this study is grounded in and its epistemological implications. Grounded in the Hindu philosophy, this framework transcends the conventional subjective-objective divide.

**Ontology: Subjective or Objective?**

Beliefs about nature of knowledge are shaped by beliefs about the nature of reality. Even though Deetz (1996) terms the discourse on subjective-objective boring and misleading, in the same paper he writes that no other paradigmatic grid has gained the almost hegemonic capacity to define the alternatives in organizational analysis as that of Burrell & Morgan (1979). One of the axes in this grid is ontology, i.e. nature of reality. This pertains to the question of whether the ‘reality’ to be investigated is external to the
individual or the product of individual consciousness. They term it the subjective-objective divide. One’s view of the nature of reality informs one’s view of the nature of knowledge. Epistemologically, the question is then whether the nature of knowledge is hard, real and capable of being transmitted in a tangible form, or whether ‘knowledge’ is of a softer, more subjective, spiritual, or even transcendental kind, based on experience and insight of unique and essentially personal nature.

A small but growing discourse of organization researchers denies the subject-object split (Alvesson & Skodberg, 2001; Bhaskar, 1970, Willmott, 1990). An alternative that differentiates itself from both subjective-social constructionist ontology and empirical realist ontology is the critical or scientific realism as proposed by Bhaskar (1970). Critical realists claim that an entity can (which does not mean it does) exist independent of our knowledge of it, but unlike the naïve realists, they concede that our access to the world is conceptually mediated. According to critical realists, an entity is said to be real if it makes a difference or causes an effect. They distinguish between four kinds of reality: material, ideal, artefactual, and social. Materially real entities are those in the realm of pure physical reality. Ideally real are those entities in the realm of discourse and other discursive practices. Socially real entities are social practices that are extra-discursive, meaning that they exist even if they are not articulated or codified as theories or ideas. Artefactually real entities are the combination of material, social and ideally real entities. Fleetwood (2005) offers computers and cosmetics as examples of artefactually real entities. While this is a very useful framework to differentiate between modes of reality, it relegates subjectivity to merely a role of mediation. While it brings a great advancement to scientific thinking grounded in positivistic assumptions of objectivity, it
does not really advance new grounds for those bound by subjectivist assumptions. I join this discourse and offer an alternative paradigm which views life as holistic, i.e. comprised of both subjective and objective views of reality and focus on the interplay between both. While I share the point of departure with the aforementioned scholars, the alternative I offer is grounded in the view of life and reality as described in the philosophical texts of Hinduism. To do this, I have drawn on the foundational work done by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the renowned Indian philosopher, and Swami Vivekananda, a well-known nineteenth-century Indian spiritual leader.

**Holistic Ontology: A Hindu view of the world**

Most of the discussion about ontology in social sciences is derived from Western philosophical traditions based on dichotomy and binary opposition. Embedded in this fundamental style of thinking, however, are not only oppositions, but also a hierarchy, in that one or the other polarity is more or less privileged (Carr & Zanetti, 1999). In contrast, Hindu philosophy in general and the Advaita philosophy in particular rest on assumptions of non-dualism. The entire philosophy can be summed up in a single dictum ‘Tatsvam Asi’, meaning ‘You are that’, *that* meaning the other. Social scientists rooted in the Western tradition might accuse me of ontological dualism (Knights, 2001) or ontological oscillation (Weick, 1995), but I frame it as ontological holism. For the Hindu thinkers, the objective world exists. It is not an illusion. In this framework, objective and existential realities are not to be set against each other. In fact, in his exposition on the theory of *maya* (illusion), Sankara, one of the key exponents of the non-dualistic *advaita* philosophy categorically lays out that empirical being (*vyavaharika satta*) is quite different from illusory experience (*pratibhasika satta*). A fundamental tenet of this
philosophy is ‘Aham Brahman’, I am Brahman and therefore, it is not separate from me, and as Radhakrishnan puts it, in all objective consciousness, we are in a sense aware of the real. Radhakrishnan writes that a spiritual view is sustained not only by insight but by a rational philosophy and sound social institutions. One is not separate from the other.

Contemplative traditions like Hinduism and Buddhism are rational philosophies and are not solely based on faith about the existence of God. Ecstasy or emotional excitement is not the goal of Hinduism. The goal of Hinduism is *vidya* – knowledge, only through which one can be liberated. Knowledge in this framework is not just limited to codified texts but it integrates multiple ways of knowing, action, experience, contemplation and sense making, all through the witnessing of self because self is a microcosm of the universe. The aspiration of most Eastern contemplative traditions is to witness oneself and thus be free of both purely empirical realities and purely subjective experiences through knowing both.

Hindu epistemology is based on the belief that subject can view itself as an object and still continue to be an actor and subject. Recent cognition and consciousness researchers advance the same argument based on rigorous experimentation and neurological studies. For example, Grush (2000) writes that a first person perspective allows a system to conceive of itself as part of an independent, objective order, while at the same time being anchored in it and act as a subject. I argue that this is a key principle which makes interplay between ontological subjectivity and epistemological objectivity possible. The conventional subjective-objective ontology denies a subject the capacity for objective reflection. From the point of view of conventional bifurcated ontology, most qualitative and especially naturalistic inquiry appears to be subject to subjectivity simply
owing to its stance on a researcher’s phenomenological presence. But, operating from a holistic ontological perspective, it is possible for a researcher to transcend the subjective-objective divide and be epistemologically objective in interpreting data without denying the researcher’s subjective experience of being an actor in a system.

Next, I describe the nature of social ontology, i.e. beliefs about where the social reality resides and how I used the notion of site ontology to guide my level of analysis.

**Social Ontology and Level of Analysis**

Social ontology examines the nature and basic structure of social life and social phenomena. It has been divided into two camps: individualists and holists. Ontological individualism maintains that social scientific discourse refers only to individuals, their actions and relations among individuals. In contrast to ontological individualism, ontological holism holds that social groups are best understood as composite entities. Like the subjective-objective divide, this forces the researcher to pick either camp and stick to it for ostensible purposes of parsimony and integrity. Rejecting both these purist approaches, I have used the concept of site ontology (Schatzki, 2005), that steers a path between individualism and societism. Site ontology maintains that social life is inherently tied to a kind of context in which it transpires. In this model, practices are the site. This approach construes an organization as a practice-arrangement bundle, i.e. 1) an organization is a product of actions, 2) it is a mesh that embraces existing practices and a mix of new and old material arrangements and 3) it continues in existence via a perpetuation of its practices and a maintenance of its arrangements that accommodates evolution and focused changes in the mesh. This social ontology holds implications for studying organizations. One central task is identifying the actions that compose it, the
second is to identify the practice-arrangement bundle(s) of which these actions are part, and the third is to identify other nets of practice-arrangement bundles to which the net composing the organization is closely tied.

Grounded in this approach, my level of analysis was the practice-arrangement bundle. This approach allowed me to examine the dynamic interrelationships of practice, history, contexts and outcomes. More importantly, unlike most constructionist approaches focusing on dynamic interrelationships (Weick, 1995), this approach also allowed me to examine and incorporate the embodied material entities involved in these sites. Therefore, I was able to examine, describe and explain the practice of organizing through its actions, rules, teleaffective structure and the material arrangements including local histories, relationships with relevant entities like governments, and the structural arrangements for local governance.

**Analytic Strategy**

I combined principles of constant comparison of grounded theory (GT) method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) with principles of first person research (Bradbury & Reason, 2001; Marshall, 2001) from action research for analyzing the data and developing the theoretical categories and framework. Although GT evolved as a reaction against traditional sociological research, it is still aimed at objectivity and considers ‘bias’ as something to be avoided. While both Glaser (1990) and Strauss (1988) do agree that it is the researcher’s creativity that leads to good theory, their objectivist paradigm behooves them to consider ‘bias’ as negative and something to be avoided rather than looking at it as a possible source of creativity. Given the relative length of time that I had spent with these communities, my escalating emotional involvement with
these initiatives, and my objective of developing a formal theory, I was afraid that unexamined and unimaginative application of constant comparative method would pose a conflict with the fundamental assumptions of GT and be problematic. Therefore, while this was not explicitly an action research study, I decided to use the rigorous first-person research principles from the action research tradition to not simply unearth my assumptions and biases but also to plumb them for generative theory building. As Reason & Bradbury (2001) point out, attempts at third-person research which are not based in rigorous first-person inquiry into one’s purposes and practices are open to distortion through unregulated bias.

Next, I briefly introduce the GT method and describe the controversy surrounding its use.

**Grounded Theory**

Kendall (1999) offers a succinct description of the GT process. “The purpose of grounded theory methodology is to generate theory through the process of constant comparison. Data are analyzed as they are collected, through the process of coding. Theoretical memos are written to further conceptualize properties of the theoretical ideas and constructs. As similarities and differences in the codes are conceptualized, a coding scheme reflecting theoretical constructs is refined by clustering codes together to make categories. Conceptual satisfaction is reached when no new categories are generated from the open codes, and the remaining gaps in the emerging conceptual scheme are filled. The categories are then examined for their relationships to each other. The integration and interrelationships of the categories, especially the core categories, form the basis of the grounded theory. Once the theory is developed, it is compared to previous work as well
as other literature and perspectives to validate or point out differences of gaps in current understandings of the phenomena.”

**GT History**

Grounded Theory was formulated and introduced as a formal methodology for theory generation by Glaser & Strauss in 1967. Its theoretical roots lay in the Chicago School of Sociology, where scholars developed symbolic interactionist theory to challenge the privileged status of functionalist theory. In contrast to the functionalist theory which stated that the social world exists as a whole unit or system consisting of interrelated, functioning parts in which the parts of a system can have meaning only in relation to the whole, symbolic interactionist theory offered an alternate account of society as a fluid, dynamic process of ongoing activity and varied and reciprocating interactions. Another key imperative that this method put forth was that social theorists needed to generate more new theory rather than simply testing already existing great men’s theories, which was then the most favored approach for many scholars of sociology. GT was a pioneer in offering a systematic approach to generating new theory from empirical data focused on social problems.

**The Grounded Theory Controversy**

‘The Discovery of Grounded Theory’, the first book on GT, was published in 1967 by Glaser & Strauss together, but later over the next two decades they developed independent and divergent approaches to its conduct. Even though both agreed that research bias is something that needed to be addressed in building grounded theory, their fundamental difference stemmed from how to deal with this bias in their approaches to theory building and analysis.
Next, I describe how I navigated the thorny issues that arise out of combining methods.

**Induction, Deduction or Abduction?**

Glaser (1992) advises that the purely inductive approach of letting the theory emerge on its own by sticking to the data is necessary to combat bias. His approach aims at combating impressionistic influence by tying the theory tightly to the data over and over again. Strauss & Corbin (1990) advocate a combination of induction at the early stages of the analysis and deduction during the later stage of theory development. They believe that analysts are potentially fallible in their interpretations and therefore any relationships inferred from data should be checked out against subsequent data. While Glaser’s approach to grounded theory is pure induction and Strauss & Corbin’s a combination of induction and deduction, both attempt to keep the interpretation as free of bias as possible.

The premise of naturalistic inquiry that positions the researcher as a subjective actor impacts the approach to theory building. Moreover, not only was I not completely free of assumptions or expectations, but as an advocate of social change, I entered the field with an active agenda, even if it was shaped through the research process. Therefore, tabula rasa induction was not only inappropriate for my study but almost impossible. Given the emergent nature of qualitative research agenda, pure deduction was also equally inappropriate. I therefore, relied on the abductive approach to theory building. Magnani (2002) defines theoretical abduction as the process of inferring certain facts and/or laws and hypotheses that render some sentences plausible; that explain or discover some (eventually new) phenomenon or observation. There are two main
epistemological meanings of the word abduction: 1. abduction that only generates plausible hypotheses (selective or creative) and 2) abduction considered as inference to the best explanation, the second interpretation being more applicable to the realm of pure sciences than to our field. I would describe my process of theory building as abduction that generated plausible theoretical relationships. While I have been selective in identifying the core category and building the different categories around it, I have been creative in bringing together the concrete with the abstract. Haig (1995) also characterizes the creative inference involved in the generation of grounded theory as abductive in nature.

**Coding Controversy**

The fundamental difference between Glaser and Strauss in their approaches to handling bias is also reflected in the process that they prescribe for analysis. Between the open/substantive coding and the analytical/theoretical coding of Glaser & Strauss (1967), Strauss & Corbin (1988) introduced another stage called the axial coding. At this stage they introduce a conditional matrix as an analytical device to describe the causal conditions, context, intervening conditions, action/interactional strategies and consequences of a phenomenon. They claim that the purpose of this matrix is to sensitize researchers to the possible range of conditions that can be found in data and that pertain to the phenomena under investigation are to be brought into the analysis. Glaser (1990) is vehemently opposed to this stage of analysis because he believes that the conditional matrix interferes with the purely emergent nature of grounded theory building. This intervention by Strauss & Corbin (1988) has also been criticized by scholars like Robretch (1995) who alleges that this method of GT is focused more on operational steps.
than on theory development and encourages the production of poorly integrated theoretical explanations. Nevertheless, I chose to use the conditional matrix in my analysis because I was studying situations in which the macro conditions are not simply background but play a crucial role in the shaping of the events.

**Use of first person research in theory building**

Both the variants of the GT method acknowledge the need for theory to be grounded in reality as well as change the reality through generating applicable solutions to social problems and these concerns made GT a good methodological fit for this study. However, beyond field notes, neither of them offers a systematic process to help explore one’s biases and/or use the researcher’s insights to develop theory. Adler (2004, in personal communication) says that good scholarship happens in a reflexive distance, when the scholar reflects on action from a distance but not from outside of it. Marshall’s (2001) comment, “How to work with it generatively, rather than being self absorbed or self indulgent, is a key challenge of self reflective practice” is a very valid one, given the danger of self-referential spin that self reflexivity could take. MacKinnon writes (1988):

“Adhering to science as a standard for theory, they have suggested that the theorist must be stripped of commitments, community, experience, and feelings to know the truth about society. If knowledge is located in a critical embrace of those same commitments, recognition of community context, a grasp of the roots and consequences of experience as well as its limitations, and an attempt at awareness of the social determination of emotions, these factors are made accessible to theory. Such a theory does not deny that the theorist is determined by the very factors the theory documents for everyone else.” (emphasis is mine).
MacKinnon’s approach is predicated on the belief that not only is social theorist located inside the world that she is describing, but she can also be critical and skeptical about her own commitments, experience and feelings. Marshall (2001) also offers a useful model for exploring the self reflexive process: ‘inquiring through inner and outer arcs of attention’. By inner arcs, she says she pays attention to her own internal processes, assumptions, repetitions, patterns, themes and dilemmas. She not only works with a multi-dimensional frame of knowing but she also scans for breadth and tracks for sustained curiosity. She writes, “Pursuing outer arcs of attention involves reaching outside myself in some way. This might mean actively questioning, raising issues with others, or seeking ways to test out my developing ideas.” Drawing from MacKinnon’s model of social theorist as a critical insider, Marshall’s practice of self reflexivity and my experience of combining my roles as a subjective actor in a research context with the epistemological objectivity necessary to advance valid theory, I found that there are two dimensions that characterize this type of self-reflexive practice. They are researcher-location and researcher’s sense-making process. Figure 1 depicts this interplay between subjective ontology and objective epistemology.
Researcher- Location: Insider- Outsider

By researcher- location, I mean the location and identity that a researcher holds in relation to the site. I argue that an insider-outsider location is the most appropriate location for an action researcher who wants to produce valid theory. The concept of ‘insider-outsider’ action research has been excellently developed by Bartunek & Louis (1996) based on their research in educational settings as consultant-researchers. It is an approach in which a team of insiders and outsiders work together, tempering each other’s reality and perceptions and constructing a mutually advantageous action and theory agenda; in a way, this ‘triangulation’, in constructivist fashion. Similarly, Gergen (1994)
advocates a relational view of research through co-constructing shared meaning. Whereas, I argue that, when grounded in holistic ontology, a researcher can simultaneously be an insider and an outsider. As an insider-outsider, not only can a researcher participate actively in their respective communities, one can also objectively view the community and their own role and relationship with it, construct, deconstruct and comprehend the world both as an insider and as an outsider.

To me, as a researcher, it means that I am in it and yet not of it, a unique place to be in. As an insider, I want to change the world, and as an outsider, I access the reflexive distance to learn from my experience as an insider. I am passionate about the topic as well as the communities that I studied. My familiarity allowed me access to build personal relationships with the people in these communities. Since, I do not come from the same socio-economic class as most of them, the only exceptions being the professionals, some of the faculty and the corporate sponsors/mentors in LABS, my third site; this class difference had differential impact depending on the site. Similarly, this location of insider-outsider varied with the site based on shared language and familiarity. As shown in Figure 2, LABS occupies the innermost ring, Kuthambakkam the middle ring, and Rajasthan the outermost ring.
LABS occupies the innermost ring because I knew all of the corporate sponsors/mentors personally from my previous work experience; they speak the corporate language which I have in common with them, and they are all people with a heart, because like me, they want to bring in at least a little bit of humanity to their workplaces. I studied LABS, Chennai; the city I grew up in, both as a child and as a professional in the corporate world. I understand their challenges, their motivations, and their drive even if I don’t share them because I don’t belong to the same world at the present moment. My personal relationships with the key mentors certainly facilitated my access to the site and the ease with which I was able to collect data and participate in the recruitment drives that they hold regularly. It also allowed me an easy access to Dr. Reddy’s Foundation at Hyderabad, where the original model of LABS evolved; and they still hold the accountability for process integrity. This relationship along with my persistence is what allowed me to build up a sample of 100% as far as Chennai LABS goes. I talked to every student, faculty, and mentor/sponsor of LABS, Chennai. It was also a tad ironical because I went in expecting them to be more hierarchical than Kuthambakkam, but it turned out
that LABS is a greatly decentralized organization with a loosely organized federal structure between its various centers. The only dimension that they are really rigid about is the integrity around process and target groups, more of which I talk about both in their case narrative and analysis. In the course of my data collection with LABS, I was also fortunate to connect to parts of the mentors that I had known for a long time, but in other professional contexts that did not give us an opportunity to connect at these depths or levels. For instance, I have known one of the key mentors of LABS, Chennai, Mr. Kannan, VP-HR of PepsiCo, India for around ten years now, having met him both in professional and personal contexts but never really got to see his commitment to the underprivileged. I knew that he was a person with a large heart but never knew how out of the way he would go to bring his heart to a company like PepsiCo.

Kuthambakkam occupies the middle or second circle in my figure because we come from the same part of the country, share the same native language, and have a shared regional affiliation and cultural history. My engagement with Kuthambakkam community was complicated because the community is predominantly caste-driven and they knew the significance of my status of being born into a Brahmin family. Moreover, their relationship with their leader Elango was hierarchical, about which I talk more in my comparative analysis and as someone who was seen as Elango’s friend, his status reflected on me. For example, a number of villagers asked me to recommend their case to Elango, to get his approval for housing or any other funding. They might have tried to give me what they thought I wanted, but unfortunately they did not have access to the rich language of metaphors that the villagers of Rajasthan had. My big challenge was the positioning of the narrative because I had developed a good, friendly supportive
relationship with Elango, the leader and as a researcher I could see his leadership style in contrast with that of Rajendra Singh and the resulting impact on the outcomes of this change process.

Completely unintended, Kuthambakkam and Elango emerged as a contrast to Rajasthan and Rajendra Singh. My challenge was that while I wanted to capture the story as I heard it and interpreted it, I also did not want to undermine Elango’s personal sacrifices and dedication to the cause. I wanted also to make the story a hopeful one rather than a condemning one. After much careful thought, I positioned the narrative as that of Elango’s vision. In this way, I could still capture the best of this experiment - the well thought out vision for an alternate economic model - and honor Elango’s personal commitment to the cause.

The outermost circle in my figure represents Rajasthan. With the people of Rajasthan, I do share a strong national identity and to some extent, a shared religious identity of being a Hindu, but our socio-economic identities are very different. I am very urban, whereas they are almost as removed from the urban civilization as one could be. Similarly, I do not come from that part of the country and therefore, while I am fluent in Hindi, their language, I cannot claim mastery over it, and in some cases when they had Hindi mixed with local tribal dialects, I found it hard to understand and asked them to translate into Hindi. But none of this was a deterrent to bonding and building a relationship because they do not see themselves as inferior to me in any way, different maybe, but not deficient. They were always warm, hospitable, respectful and considerate of me and my urban needs. Metaphorically and literally, I broke bread in almost every
I was an insider as well as an outsider to this group, because they knew I was from India, but from the United States, too. A number of them were proud that I had come so far in the quest of knowledge but were not averse to pointing out that India was my home, and I had better return after I complete my education. They were also very curious about how things worked in my part of the country as well as in the United States. They did not hesitate to ask me about my marital status and what my parents thought about it, or if my jewelry was twenty-four carat gold. Some of their practices and beliefs regarding the role and place of women frustrated and angered me, but they were always willing to talk about it. They taught me that their practices are an outcome of their context, and that I, as a researcher can only make sense of it in context. This means that as an inquirer, I need to learn to explore and unearth the guiding assumptions behind every practice and contextually situate it. For example, most women in this community wear a veil covering the face, a practice that I found oppressive. When I talked to one of my male informers about it, he explained the origin and the history of this practice, which was originally intended to protect the Rajput women from Muslim invaders, but over generations it had become a custom and norm that could not be very easily violated. I realized how some practices may very well have drifted from the original purpose to become a ritual or even an oppressive procedural formality. He also explained that girls growing up in this decade who go to school and college choosing not to wear a veil has become commonplace. Similarly, I questioned the need for a number of children, but in a
non-industrialized, agricultural community, children mean extra hands, and children are as much their asset as their lands or livestock are.

Researcher’s Sense-making: Exploring Affirmations and Ambivalences

The insider-outsider location of the researcher has an enormous impact on the researcher’s sensemaking. Schultze (2000) describes how ethnographers need to juxtapose their assumptions and practices with those of the ‘foreign’ culture. Similarly, being an insider-outsider simultaneously allowed me to co-hold the subjective and the objective and affected the way in which I made sense of the data. In my relationship with the data and my experience with these sites, I found that sometimes my assumptions got reaffirmed, while there were times when my ambivalences were aroused. While an insider may become blind to the ambivalences, an outsider may not be able to perceive the affirmations, but an insider-outsider location permits the researcher to reflect on both and the interplay between these two reactions helped me in analyzing the data and developing my theoretical ideas. To illustrate this interplay, I provide an example of one of the theoretical categories that I developed when I analyzed the data from my first case (Poonamallee, 2004). It is a category I called, “Shared Social Construct of Wealth as Community Wellbeing.” Please see Figure 3 for a representation of this element.
My background and training in a department that is steeped in the traditions of (AI) Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) made me sensitive to the fundamental dimension of affirmative assumptions, which has emerged as a foundational block in my sense-making of this phenomenon. For example, I coded the following excerpt of the interview for ‘affirmative assumptions’.

“When I heard that there was a time when the neighboring village, Brahmanvas, had a market for grains, it occurred to us that if this district was poor for centuries, there wouldn’t have been a market for grains. So, this place must have been prosperous at some point of time and that is why there was a market for grains here. Another thing is that as you may have noticed there are a couple of old, large houses here and there, so they have built a few buildings in this region, and they did not loot somewhere and build them here, they were built from resources in this region. So we started thinking about that world, what times were they, what kind of world was that, what can we learn from those times?”
When I began to expand this code in its various dimensions, I discovered that this affirmative assumption is not restricted to people. This community extends similar assumptions to all sentient beings, cherishing and worshipping trees, animals, birds and all the elemental forces. In these villages, I saw peacocks walking right beside people, with utter confidence that they will not be harmed. Over and over, I heard this note of acceptance, love and respect for all sentient beings.

Further data showed that when such affirmative assumptions comprise the foundation of a community, there is willingness to accept and nourish the other with love; this combined with a concern for mutual welfare allows community members to work on a cost-benefit defying rationality. Springing forth from this core assumption is the shared social construct of community wellbeing as wealth. Acceptance of the other forms the basic block of this shared social construct of wealth, not only allowing them to nourish the other with love, but also nurturing a concern for mutual welfare, which leads to their investing their emotions, energies and resources for the welfare of their community, defying cost-benefit rationality. In my personal journal, I wrote,

“I keep seeing the spiritual dimension of these people, the use of we, common for vision for the group, no special requirement for self, love, sustenance economy, but no need to grow and expand one’s wealth and riches beyond water, happiness for all. no quest for individual, concern for environment, animals around. “

Not only was I paying attention to data that affirmed my worldview but I was also paying attention to my ambivalences too, which arose partly because of my own insider-outsider status. While I do share cultural and spiritual roots with this community and in fact, being raised in a water-starved city, I share their concern for water, but I am also an urban professional who is used to taking basic infrastructural utilities for granted and
used to defining a more modern life as a more advanced one. I also wondered if it would at all be possible for me to choose their lifestyle as a permanent option. I continued to reflect on and explore this ambivalence which led to my examining this community’s definitions of progress and wealth. I share an excerpt from my personal journal that illustrates this ambivalence.

“Life seems to be difficult to people there, no way of income except through livestock, and gathering forest produce but they don’t have the right to sell the dung. And also the question of standard of life. But Suresh Bhai says these people don’t think their lives are bad, it is me with my urban values, the values of an omnivore imposing my values on their lives and finding their “below” standards. So what are the standards? And whose standards?”

Constant comparative analysis between the data that I collected and my personal reflection helped me in conceptualize their understanding of wealth. For them wealth is the wellbeing of the community which everyone I spoke to enunciated over and over again. Arjun Bhai, one of the locals told me,

“The world thinks that those who consume a lot, those who spend a lot, those who enjoy a lot, they are the developed ones. You may know that those who share a relationship of love with nature, those who have love in them, those who can nourish the others with love nurture the environment and community around them. For us, that is wealth”.

It is even reflected in the way they use language, they almost never used the pronoun of ‘I’, it was almost always ‘we’.

I argue that if one operates on the principles of holistic ontology and is rigorous in their first person research, the tension between data and experience becomes generative interplay. Strauss & Corbin (1990) acknowledge the role of this creative interplay in the process of theory building. They say that even if the researcher simply follows the grounded theory procedures/canons without imagination or insight into what the data are
reflecting because he or she fails to see what they really indicate except in terms of trivial or well known phenomena – then the published findings fail on this criterion. Because there is interplay between researchers and data, no method, certainly not grounded theory, can ensure that the interplay will be creative.

Thus, I have addressed three of the four paradoxical requirements suggested by Van de Van & Poole (1988). To remind the reader, these requirements are (1) action-structure paradox (2) internal and external sources of change, (3) stability and change, and (4) time as the key historical accounting system. I introduced the fifth paradoxical element of process-outcome. I have addressed the first three and the fifth element of process-outcome through the use of site ontology, the level of analysis being practice-arrangements bundle. While the practice part allowed me to get at the process in the form of actions-interactions, the material arrangements component helped me tease out the structural, contextual and historical issues as well as material outcomes. For example, in my first site, I not only examined their basic values like affirmative assumptions and actions, I also studied their structural innovations like the Village Committees and Arvari River Parliament. Similarly, by studying the intentional element of immutable core values of these sites dynamically with the dynamic visioning process and the emergent organizing characteristics, I was able to hold the tension between stability and change. My use of an evaluative framework to categorize the sites as less or more effective cases was outcome oriented, which I then combined with an analysis of the practices in an attempt to hold the paradoxical elements of process and outcomes. Regarding the fourth element, i.e. the use of time as the key historical accounting system, I was not only able to use this factor in each case individually by organizing a chronological narrative, in my
analysis of practice-arrangements bundle, I have also adopted a critical genealogical approach to contextualize and connect the micro histories of each case with the macro history of the country. However, considering the complexity of the cases, the paucity of time, resources, and the lack of a conceptual framework to compare the three cases, their divergent histories, starting points, and current stages in process, this analysis needs to be further developed. To weave in all these analyses together, I adopted a multi-step approach to the analytic process.

Multi-step process

The first step was to write up rich, thick case studies for each site individually and honor the individual cases which are offered as detailed, thick case descriptions in Part 2. At this stage, the analysis was thematic, with the objective being discovering key themes within each case and presented them chronologically. During the next step I cross-analyzed the practices, including actions, rules, teleoaffective structure, understandings and material and structural arrangements to develop different theoretical categories and relationships. Next, I used the emerging theoretical linkages to guide me to appropriate organizational theories that I use as frames to analyze my data again. Later, I articulated my understandings about how these findings can add to the existing knowledge about organizing. Locke & Golden-Biddle (1997) show how organization studies theorists textually construct opportunities for making contributions to the field and they also say that this was primarily achieved through the way the theorists categorized and used existing literature to support their claims of uniqueness. I too used this strategy of using literature to ground and frame my theory of organizational change. The context of this study is postcolonial and therefore I have used the colonial and postcolonial histories of
these organizations, especially in decoding and explaining the contextual features. Overall, this has been a hermeneutic, reiterative process, from data to theory, back and forth. I have organized theory through narratives; because narrative reveals what theory occludes and theory articulates what narrative struggles to see (Hayles 1996). In the next part of my dissertation, I present the rich, thick case narratives before I move on to present the analysis in the form of practice-arrangement bundles. Mindful of the ethical implications of this perspective which, as Hawes (1999) points out, depends heavily on which stories we tell and which ones we believe to be true, I have tried to present the voices of many along with my own interpretation. In this way, while I claim ownership of my interpretation, I have also strived to provide sufficient data for the reader to ensure the ecological validity of my interpretation.
PART TWO

CASE NARRATIVES

Overview

Part 2 presents thick descriptions of the three cases that were examined in this study. This part aims to fulfill four objectives: one, to honor the stories of these peoples and their communities, 2) provide the reader with a window to these people’s worlds and their lives and accomplishments and 3) to provide the reader with hints of what is to come in the final part of the dissertation in the form of theoretical abstractions and 4) to add another step to the analytical evidentiary pathway of my theory development process.

To do this, I have used two organizing principles for these descriptions and they are themes and chronology. Themes contain the germs of ideas that I later present and discuss in detail in the third part. I incorporated chronology to provide the reader with a flowing narrative as well highlight the kind of time involved in such social change initiatives.

Chapter 3 is the description of the first case – TBS, “Transforming Realities: Making the Improbable Possible.” Chapter 4 describes the second case - Kuthambakkam, “Network Economy: Sustainable Alternative for Rural India: Vision of a Leader.” Chapter 5 presents the third case - LABS, “Livelihood Advancement Business School” a Business-Society Initiative providing access to the New Economy.
CHAPTER THREE
TRANSFORMING REALITIES – MAKING THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE - A NARRATIVE

“I don’t believe that everything happens from knowledge, but I believe that emotion, love, affection, energy of faith is the real core thing. People came for emotion, started liking it, and the work got its own momentum. That is it.” – Rajendra Singh, Founder, Tarun Bharat Sangh

.... Some people will ask for themselves, some may ask for their children, for me if there is such a good dream in which I can see God, I will only ask for a good life in which I can do good things. I will ask for the welfare of everyone, that all of us should be well through our good deeds, that we should continue to do this good work in water, that save the forests. If my community is doing well and is happy, I will be fine and happy too. The greatest of all things in this world is love. If we love everyone around us and do good work, then we will be together and our strength will grow. I will only ask that our community should be loving and together – Arjun Bhai, one of the villagers from Bhaonta.

I keep seeing the spiritual dimension of these people, the use of “we”, common vision for the group, no special requirements for self, love, sustenance economy, no compelling need to expand one’s personal wealth, happiness for all, harmony with the environment. These are people who are not embarrassed to say “Mother Earth” – From my field notes.
Overview

This is the story of around 1000 villages in the Alwar district of Rajasthan, the desert state of India, with a population of more than a million. This region is nestled among the Arvari hill ranges and also includes the Sariska Forest, one of the last few homes of the Great Indian Tiger. This is a harsh and semi-arid land with temperatures fluctuating from 0 degrees Celsius in winters to 49 degrees Celsius in summers. The average rainfall when the monsoon is kind is around 620 mm. Topographically, the tract may be divided into two zones: the hilly area, and the plains (which include very small and low hill-like terraces). Forests here are deciduous in nature, typical of desert vegetation. The bio-diversity of this district is one of the most significant in the country and about 12000 wild species of flora and over 5000 wild species are found in this area. This does not include the biologically rich areas like the Sariska Forest. Most of the ethnic groups and subgroups of the Indo-gangetic plains are found this district. People in this region are traditionally vegetarian and animal lovers.

This case study attempts to capture the story of these villages and its peoples and how they got together twenty years ago, catalyzed by a young, committed social change leader, and transformed their lives and worlds around them. This is a story of how a community ravaged by nature and man, achieved the improbable through co-operation. In the 1980s these villages in Rajasthan were experiencing a severe drought, like 60,000 other villages in the country. Water was scarce, distress migration was rampant and poverty was stark. But these people did not give up. They responded by reviving old water harvesting structures. Using local materials, their traditional knowledge and help from the voluntary agency, Tarun Bharat Sangh, they rebuilt a network of structures. The
underground aquifers got recharged and such large-scale water conservation has made a seasonal nullah (canal) into a perennial river, the Arvari. To ensure that the river and the surrounding ecology remain prosperous, the villages in Arvari watershed have formed the Arvari River Parliament. This ecological emancipation, brought in through community involvement, ushered in changes because availability of water freed women’s time and they began to get involved in income generation activities and this led to schools being formed and the children of the area going to school. There was a future when once there was none.

I try to capture the multiple voices of people from this community, old and young, men and women, catalysts and those catalyzed. Through this story, I hope to honor the spirit of these people who battled against all odds to create alternate realities. I hope that this story will give courage to other communities on the threshold of such change. I also hope that I can learn from this community about a different way of life that allows regeneration of people’s spaces and harmony with nature.

Local Wisdom – the wellspring of knowledge and action

“Latha, you may know this, it has been written and said in our Indian scriptures that when any nation or society is in distress, it is not moving well, its graphs is going downwards, efforts to bring itself up is failing, then we need to go to people occupying its lowest rungs, because that section of the society usually has some original, fundamental principles, they have saved it, in their attitudes, thoughts and concerns. With this in mind, I thought that I should talk to the oldest people in the community and truly, only from them the path was discovered. In Gopalpura village, there is an old man called Mangu Patel, he told me, “Bhai, if you want to do something for my village, stop talking and if you want to change the way things are here, the only route is through building ponds and tanks for water. All these difficulties are due to the water shortage”. This is how our work started, I learnt everything from the community, I did not have any knowledge. I just had concern for the community and the commitment that I had to do something for the community. I can say that whatever little work you see has happened here, the complete work has been done by the community’s wisdom, its
own methodology and its own labour. All we did was to spread the methodology.”

Rajendra Singh, Magsaysay Award Winner for Community Leadership in the Year 2001, the founder of Tarun Bharat Sangh, the NGO which catalyzed the change in this community has this to say about his early days in this work. Rajendra Singh was a young man of 23 when he gave up a promising career as a civil servant to stay and work with this community. He had traveled through the State as a civil servant and found that this was one of the most affected communities with a completely denuded environment. He says that he decided that he had to do something with and for this community. He came to Tana Gazi (the nearest town) with four friends and reached Bheekampura-Gopalpura with almost nothing with him except a fiery heart and a committed soul. As Badriji, a villager from Bheekampura reports,

“My relationship with TBS started when Rajendraji first landed here. When he came here first, I was the one who brought him to Bheekampura from Tanakazi by jeep. I was running a jeep then. I just took five rupees to bring him here. And do you know what he had? He had a big bag, four or five sticks of wood to light a fire, and four people with him.”

This is the beginning of the saga that has continued to spread to over 1000 villages in the last two decades.

**Barefoot Ecologist – A trigger to change**

Mangu Patel is one of those ageless old and wise men who remembers his village and the surrounding region from its prosperous past with flowing waters and wooded forests and majestic tigers roaming around. He is not an academically trained ecologist who had studied about food chains, but he knew that if tigers were safe and in abundance, their environment was safe. If their environment was safe, they were safe too. He also remembered his father telling him that it was so because the local wisdom then believed
in rainwater harvesting structures that fed the Mother Earth back to replenish what we draw from her to run our lives and worlds.

This was before the land was plundered for its trees which led to the slow and steady degradation of the region. Loss of trees led to erosion of topsoil. Topsoil loss led to inability to catch rainwater combined with the loss of forest cover leading to less rain. With monsoons failing, these structures were neglected and people lost faith in their land. So, slowly, one by one, the younger people left the villages in search of work to the nearby cities like Jaipur, Delhi and the villages became ghosts of their previous selves with just old people, women who were away six hours a day to fetch the water supply for the day and the children who were tending to the cattle if there is any.

The proud landowning farmer became the shameful, migrant labor of the urban slums. Those who owned acres of land in their villages were forced to live in cramped hovels or on pavements on the cities, away from their loved ones in loneliness. For these people who are so communal in their orientation, this move meant much more than losing the presence of their immediate family members, it is a loss of a lifestyle, of their roots, their connectedness to the land they grew up in, their legends, history, mythology and the wisdom. This situation only worsened over the decades and over time, their stories of prosperity became distant memories and inaccessible to their everyday reality. Thus, life continued for a couple of generations. This was how Rajendra Singh found this community.

He spent the first few months of his stay talking to people, telling them that he wanted to work for the community. Then, Mangu Patel told him, “If you want to work, work, don’t keep talking about it, go build a johad (tank)”. He also told him that there
are old johads which have not been maintained in the last few decades and that he could go and clean one up. Can you imagine the debris and bushes that must have grown over a tank that was neglected over decades?

**The Path with a heart**

So, Rajendra Bhai went to work on the tank and cleaned it up, deepened it and this took about seven months. In the meanwhile, his companions had left for various reasons. Rajendra Bhai describes his initial days as a movement from loneliness and mistrust to trust, acceptance and affection.

“I took a shovel and started working on the first johad (pond). It took close to seven months to build the first johad, during those seven months I had given up thinking rationally, gave up making decisions, I did not even stop to think if there was any benefit to what I was doing or even about what difficulties could lie ahead. Enough to say that some emotion took over and it told me to do that, just emotional, emotional energy, commitment. I cannot give any ideological, rational explanations, it was simply an emotional decision to stay and do the work. This emotion brought in affection between the community and me, they realized that this boy has been working for over seven months and he needs some love (laughs) and people started giving me love. With that love they started talking to me, from that affection and love came faith.”

The journey from rejection to reception was not an easy one. He had to unlearn a lot from his previous self and learn to live with the community as one of them. Rajendra Bhai describes this process.

“I was educated, I had learnt a lot in college and university. I had to unlearn all that first, forgot all that, once I did that I started enjoying myself here. Then I was also one of this community, you got to be one of them, I learnt to be joyful with the community, learnt to live happily with the community, then one begins to grasp things from the community. Society does not tell us, it does not teach us by saying things because it doesn’t have the words. We can say our message in words but the society shows through its behavior, transactions and conduct. When you are part of the conduct, then you can understand what it says. Many times we are not part of it, we cannot understand its behavior. So it is important to free yourself from those things that keep you away from being part of the community. So I slowly learnt to free myself and learn to live as part of the
community, to live like the community, to eat, drink and do everything like one of them. This took about four to five years.”

Fortunately, that year, monsoon happened and hence the tank was full. The tank was full allowing the water to seep in the underground aquifers and led to the wells in the region being recharged. When the villagers saw water in the wells, a few of them tried to cultivate their lands and succeeded. As Badri Bhai, Mangu Patel’s son describes,

“Then the monsoon came and the johad was full of water, our wells were full of water and our houses were full of happiness. We were able to cultivate our lands, we got together, worked hard. This is the story, Beti.”

A people moved through stories

Looking at Gopalpura, the village of Govindpura followed suit and they came up to Rajendra Bhai and asked him to help them. This movement started spreading slowly and steadily all over the area, village by village. The movement spread in a variety of ways. As Arjun Bhai from Bhanota-Koylala, the village that won the award instituted by the President of India, for being the most ecologically conscious community in the country, shares how the story reached his village.

“It has been twelve or thirteen years now. In the beginning, Rajendra Bhai had started work in Gopalpura, he had started to build johads and anicuts with the people here. One of my relatives is from that village, and we got to talking. Hearing him talk and getting all information about how beneficial it has been for them, how they built all this without help from the government and how they got together and did all this work. I went and shared this with my villagers and we were thinking about this when Rajendra Bhai came on padyatra (a pilgrimage on foot) to our village. He was walking from village to village talking to people about water and jungle, and he reached our village. He spoke to us too, he told us that these were our traditional methods, our age old ways of working, and he told us that we are the ones who should protect our traditional wisdom. We told him that government does nothing for us and he told us, “if government doesn’t do anything, why don’t you do it?” build johads, build anicuts, build bunds. All these
"words sat in our minds, and we built our first johad, we put in 70% of the cost and TBS put in 30% of the cost. All of us worked on it too."

Involvement of indigenous and local leadership led to the movement spreading like a wildfire. As Govardhan Bhai, one of the master builders of these water structures shares the story of his involvement,

“Oh, I went to school till I was about 14 years old and then after that I was taking care of our goats. I used to take them grazing everyday and bring them back, take care of them, milk them. This went on for years till about 15 years back when I met Rajendra Bhai. I was with my goats out in the forest when I ran into him. We got to talking and then he told me about the work that has happened in our other villages. I got very interested and wanted to know more details about what happened, how, who did it, what are our benefits. Rajendra Bhai then asked me if I would like to organize something like that in my village and I said, Sure. That is how my journey started.”

**Capacity Building – through local leadership**

Rajendra Bhai says that when this work started he had no clue about the technicalities of this kind of work. He also did not have an office full of staff working with him on these issues. But slowly, capacity building of a different kind happened, through the involvement of locals in their areas of interest. One of the young men from the villages, Kanhaiya Gujjar, a farmer, believed in this revolution and wanted to offer his services to the larger community beyond his village. So he became a Co-ordinator with TBS and began taking care of spreading the message to more villages and he became the point man for the village committees in all the villages. And there were people like Govind Sigh and Govaradhan Bhai who were interested in the technical aspects and became the Master Architects and Executors of these structures. The reticent Gopal Singh, a high school graduate today trains engineers from all the States of the
country as well as from other third world countries on the art of building water harvesting structures using local technology. As Govardhan Bhai reports,

“No one asked me to. But after we did the work in my village, I had fallen in love with this work and wanted to work in other places too. So I came to TBS and told them and that I would like to get involved in more work. Rajendra Bhai was very happy about it and then I slowly started helping other villages in their work. First I started working with them, offering my labor. Slowly, by and by, I learnt more about the terrain, the soil, the kind of structures that would stand in one place versus another and such things. Because I started working in many sites. This is how I got involved.”

Now that water was plenty in the villages, the young men who had left started returning to agriculture. This brought not just prosperity but also life back. The fields were no longer barren, it had men, women, children and animals working on it and the green of crops became a balm for the eyes. Given the fact that the entire community is animal loving and hence the peacocks that are in abundance in the region are not afraid to come near humans, fields are a sight to behold, women in their colorful clothes and the peacocks vying for attention. The villages were alive now.

These initiatives did not only stop at the physical environment; there were also reverberations in the social environment. While the larger villages and local administration centers do have primary and high schools, most of the villages in the interior didn’t have schools and while some parents sent their children to a nearby school, some didn’t. Children of this community like in any agricultural or poor community are a source of income. Most parents would rather send them to graze their cattle than send them to schools. Moreover, most people do need help on the fields and use their children. For them, this is the way their children learn to do agriculture that is their traditional profession. To address the needs of these children, TBS suggested the idea of evening
schools for these children. The most highly educated villagers offered to volunteer as teachers along with their usual work of agriculture. Now, these schools are authorized to conduct classes and exams till fifth grade and this assures that all these children have access to basic education. After this, they could choose to go for further education to nearby government schools. Hari, one of the teachers, reports,

“I have been teaching in the evening school for over three years now. I teach the children in my village and surrounding villages. With the intent that our children should study and it will be good if they can learn something. There is one of my students who now goes to Government School for a higher grade, because in my school they can only study till Class 5. I had taught him in the evening for three years and now his parents are convinced to send him to government school. He tells everyone that Hari master taught him. He is such a good student that looking at him, his family started telling me to teach their daughters too. And I have also learnt so much through this teaching experience, my knowledge has increased.”

Anita was the first girl who offered to teach the children in her village and around. While child marriage is quite common across the Gujjar and Meena castes, girls from the Brahmin families are allowed to finish high school before they are married off. Anita (being a Brahmin girl) had the privilege of formal education along with her regular duties on the farm and in the kitchen. When I met her, she was eighteen years old and was about to graduate from high school.

“I was in junior (class 11) and I started feeling sad that none of the girls from our village were studying and I knew it was a bad thing. I was thinking that it was such bad thing that none of the villagers send their girls to school and I was wondering if I could do something about it, I thought that it would be good if I could work on this. That is how I started teaching young girls. Now it is two years since I started this work... One of the boys from our village, his name is Bhodh, I was telling him about this. He was already working with TBS. he told me that perhaps I could work with TBS on this. And then he spoke to TBS about it and then I visited TBS with my father. My father told me that I could do this if it won’t affect my studies. I told him that I would try it and if it suits me I will do it. once I visited this place, don’t even ask me how I felt, I felt so connected to this place that I told my father I will manage my studies but I will work here. I was so
attracted to this place, the people here and the kind of work they were doing. Then I started with my village, in that village there are many girls, but none goes to school. They take care of the cattle, work on the fields, collect firewood and do all sorts of chores around home. I first had to go house to house to talk to the parents asking their permission to let them come to my classes in the evening. I had to explain to them that this won't interrupt their work schedule, this is what we plan to teach them and so on. I told them that there are no strict timings, if they want their girls can stay for ten minutes or three hours. But today all these girls attend the entire class in the evenings. They have learnt so much and improved so much. They can all read, write and do math now. It's become easy for them now. Not only that, now when they go to the market, they buy other books to read.”

Integration of Differences through Submission to a larger cause

Like every part of rural India, the people in this region also follow strict caste rules. They marry within their own castes and their social status is reflective of their caste. I was curious to discover how they managed to build their relationships around and over this seemingly insurmountable stratification to come together and build this movement.

“No, no, all are equal. All of us sit together, and work together. Forest is common to us, water is common to all of us, what is the caste in these? Similarly, in a johad, people from all the castes go to take water, a Brahmin also goes, gujar too, meena too, rajputs all go to take water. Similarly, there is no caste system inside the school system too.”

“Everyone has the right to talk in the Gram Sabha (Village Committee). Everyone has the right to sit in the meetings. Whatever caste he is, whether it is a man or woman, all have equal rights in the GS. All of us sit together, talk and make decisions. There is no discrimination in that only some can talk. If they are saying good things, everyone can say it. If they are saying fair and just things, good things, everyone can talk. If they are talking bad things, whatever caste he is he doesn’t have the right to say those. No one is allowed to abuse another. That is bad, not right.”

They still practice their caste rules in social relations; they don’t claim an unrealistic sense of harmony but have managed to find it around issues that matter to all
of them. Submitting themselves to a larger cause of their village and its welfare as a whole, they have been able to work with each other without giving up their caste identities, they learnt to acknowledge their differences and yet work together around them. They also seem to have brought in a different stratification in running these initiatives; people are good or bad depending on their words and actions.

**Ownership: who owns it?**

Most of the externally funded development initiatives depend on external agents, and support structures to sustain their energy, but this group of people owns the initiative, both literally and metaphorically; they invest time, labor and resources to build and maintain these structures. They feel proud of their achievements and feel responsible to maintain the momentum. The condition for TBS helping them was that the village should have arrived at a consensus decision to build a structure, fund a major portion of it and then work on it themselves. TBS would provide the equipment and cement while everything else had to be done by the villagers. Since they were very poor, it took even close to three of four years in some cases to raise the necessary money but it was theirs. They were all used to a tremendous amount of physical labor and so this was not hard for them. In a society which was under colonial rule for four centuries, this reclamation of ownership of the “commons” by people is simply more than a legality, it reflects a tremendous change in their mindset and worldview.

As Rajendra Bhai says,

> “Latha, it is a question of ownership. Sustainability comes with ownership. Whatever the nature of work is, here, the community owns it. No community will let their property go waste. They won’t let them rot. You may have noticed the pride of the villagers whether it comes to the water structures, reclaimed forests, TBS owns nothing here, it is all the property of the community. They are the owners. TBS just prepares the community to take responsibility of
any property but they own it and they maintain it. They are the owners and they are the users. Whether it is water or forests or lands, if the community does not own it, work won’t go anywhere. This is the base of the system. If they are the owners, then they do their own work, and there is no problem of sustainability. Things happen on their own. These structures here, no engineers or scientists did them, these villages did all this themselves. It is their responsibility. All they need is an opportunity. Once they get it, they will most certainly take the responsibility and do the work. I think all that TBS did was to create this opportunity and space for people. We did not make them into owners, they owned it anyway, they had the characteristics of the owners.”

This sense of ownership led to formation of Gram Sabhas in every village to protect and regenerate their environment. This village committee meets once a month on the New Moon Days to manage their water and maintain their structures. They address the issues of water, forest and animals in these meetings and enforce strict rules. Members of different village committees say,

“We in our village discuss many things in the gramsabha (village committee). We discuss about future work, we punish people who break rules in the forest like taking a metal axe, cutting a tree. We have large families in our village, so we choose one person for every ten persons, and form committees. People bring in their thoughts and each member shares his or her concerns and thoughts. All our planning for work happens in these meetings when people sit together, share their ideas and decide about the work. They also monitor the progress of work, like how much is left, is there need for more resources. So we discuss all these things in the meeting.”

Responsibility in its true sense – Being Responsive

“This is how it happened, we were working on our johads and tanks and anicuts and then water started flowing. Then we built an anicut on the river too. Because of the way our small johads and bunds helped in catching water and recharging the groundwater, the river started flowing. We didn’t expect it, we didn’t even hope for it, or desire it. By god’s grace the river came alive and then people started talking about how to regulate the use of river water. And Anil Bhai from Delhi (Late Chairperson of Center for Science and Environment) also told us, “Bhai, this is your water, and you have brought this water through your hard work, and you have to care of it. Make some rules about the use of it”. Then we came upon the idea of forming the Arvari Sansad (Arvari River Parliament) and we made rules like minimizing the use of river water, and we also decided to
prohibit tubewells or borewells on the river banks as they would drain the ground water again. We also decided that we would monitor people from other places taking water, we agreed that we wouldn’t allow anyone to waste the water we had brought with such hardwork. We also decided that we would minimize sugarcane cultivation as that consumes a lot of water but we would grow more of Bajra (a staple grain) because it consumes less water and provides us food. There are about 150 people from seventy villages around the river in Arvari Parliament and all of us agreed on these rules together. During the last meeting we also decided that we would study the entire region for understanding water usage and scarcity and that our members will visit different villages to do this and help spread the message of water conservation.”

Arjun Bhai, a villager from Bhaonta describes the formation of Arvari Sansad (Arvari River Parliament). With years of concerted effort and care, this effort led to the rejuvenation of five rivers in the region that had dried up completely. This rejuvenation was a gift to the people there and they didn’t want to squander it away. So the villages around the Arvari River got together and formed the Arvari Sansad – Arvari River Parliament, perhaps one of the first of its kind in the world through which the villagers manage their common wealth of water. This parliament consists of representation from all the villages on the banks of the river and meets twice a year, once before the monsoon and once after to talk and decide about issues pertinent to them. They decide how to use the water and even control the granting of industrial licenses so undue water may not be drawn on the banks of the river through tube wells.

**Participative and Consensual Decision-making**

These committees plan their future actions through a participative process of all the villagers gathering together, drawing a map using sticks, leaves and rocks on the ground and with the village elders knowing where one’s property began and ended and another’s began, this process was very easy for them. Then using the map, they decide all the places where they could build new structures, considering factors like water
availability for fields currently, access to canals, number of wells, whether the structure should be a tank or a small earthen dam (anicut) over the canal. Then depending on whose families benefit the most, who is giving up a portion of their land, they work out the cost details and share the cost among all the villagers.

Another key to the process is consensus. Until the entire village comes to a consensus around building a structure, they are willing to wait. There have been cases of villages taking over three to five years to come to a consensus but they respect the right of people to dissent and have agreed that they will not begin a project till everyone is committed to it. As one of the Hamirpur residents along the Arvari River says,

“This work we did it a few years ago. But before that, we had done small work here and there, johads and ponds, but not a dam. Then we thought that if we build a small dam across the river, this will benefit all of us immensely. It will give more water to our wells, it will also impact the water collection in the main river. This was a powerful and strong piece of work and so we named it ‘Jabardast Sagar’ meaning the Powerful Dam. In the beginning many of us were ready to undertake this work, but some were not ready. We are about fifty families here and a few of them, may be three or four did not want to do this, they weren’t ready. It took time and effort to convince them that we could do this and get them together. But finally all of us got ready and worked together. When all of us set to work together, work happened really fast.”

**Sense of togetherness**

These villagers share a sense of togetherness that allows them to participate in a relational understanding of long term benefits for all, without questioning about short term individual share of the benefits. For instance, even if a particular water structure is going to benefit just a few families, all the families of the village offer voluntary labor to construct the structures. As Badri Bhai talks about a particular structure,

“All the villagers worked hard on it. Though the whole village benefited from it, direct benefit went to only 5 or 6 families, because the bund was on their fields, but the whole village benefited from it. The water level in all our villages increased, and all of us got a lot of benefit. All of us gave our labor.”
Their sense of togetherness and community is so woven into their consciousness that they rarely use the singular pronoun of “I”. Even when I specifically ask them to narrate their part in the story, almost everyone responded with,

*Latha: What did you do?*

Puran Singh: I? all of us worked on it together. All of us offered our labor to build all the structures. Then we formed the Gram Sabha, Vana Samiti. I am a member in Vana Samiti (Forest Committee)

This sense of togetherness is also reflected into their responses to my question of what would they ask for if God appeared in their dream that night and granted a boon. Almost all of them echo Pandi Devi, an old lady in one of the villages,

“(laughs) what will you ask? I will ask only for my community’s welfare. If I have to be fine, my community has to be happy. What can I ask? That our community has to be together, happy, even if it is your enemy keep him happy. I pray everyday only for this. That everyone in my village should remain happy, smiling, then I will be happy too.”

**Involvement of Women**

While women had always participated in the building of these structures through voluntary labor, prosperity freed their time so they could get more actively involved in these initiatives. Lakshmi Devi, one of the local women leaders says,

“All of us were involved, all of us donated our labor, even in the past we had always offered labor in our village works, but of late, after the formation of women’s group, the women have built some johads and anicuts by ourselves, putting our money and our effort. Everyone contributes or works according to how much they can. Some people did work worth 100 rupees, some did work worth 200 rupees, we were open about that. But all of us did work. There are twenty of us women in the group and we did it. We finished the anicut in less than a month. It was very useful to our village, water level in our village have gone up a lot. In our lives, we are dependent on our land, and our land is dependent on the water. When our wells become dry, our land suffers and we suffer. Now because there is water in our wells, our lands are happy and we are happy too. That is why we keep doing more and more. And our income has gone up. We are able to grow more cows and goats too. And we felt very good doing this work. Now that
we feel confident that we can do it, we will do more work. The men also now believe that we can do things independently.”

Apart from their independent work, more and more women are getting active in the village committees. Women in these villages follow a strict rule of purdha (veil) and the paternalistic system does not allow the younger women to talk in front of the older men. Those villages who have women on their committees have found an innovative approach to work around this constraint.

“There are about four women in our gram sabha (village committee). Even our women do great work. They work alongside us when we build these structures as well as in our GS meetings. Though the women wear purdha, it is not an obstacle. Because, there are a number of women who can talk in public, like the older sisters in law or mothers or aunts. They use the purdhas only for their elder brothers in law and father in law. In a family, they have to maintain it only for about 10% of the people, and so there are women who can participate in the gram sabha (village committee) meetings along with the men. We don’t take younger women, we don’t take daughters in law, we don’t even take daughters.”

This gave rise to the new trend in other villages too. Women who had never stepped outside their villages, women who had never traveled even by buses, women who couldn’t write, women who got married when they were eight or nine began to play reasonably active roles in their larger communities.

**Relationship with Government**

The first tank they ever built did not only bring water and prosperity but also brought government action. The State Government irrigation laws were an archaic inheritance from the imperial government and hence denied the villagers any right of ownership over their common lands and resources. So, the government issued an arrest warrant to Rajendra Sigh for tampering with government property. This infuriated the villagers who refused to let him be arrested. They contended that he could be arrested if
all of them could be arrested. Because all of them built it together. This was an important point of acceptance of Rajendra Bhai by the people as well as recognizing their own power as a collectivity. The Government retreated.

Arvari Sansad, the River Parliament almost immediately on formation had a struggle with the government authorities. When the river came alive and started swelling, with it came the fish. Government, without consulting with the villages, granted a fishing license to a fishing unit. These villagers believe in the principle of Jeevan Daya – Compassion for Life and that includes the fish in their waters. The villagers through the parliament fought this decision through peaceful means (Satya graha) and retained their right and power over the river.

“Here after we built this and water started becoming plenty, fishes started breeding here. Once, government wanted to auction the fish here, but we villages fought against it. We fought against the government, the entire administration, police were here, but we people got together and protested. We felt that the government did nothing for this, and they had no right over our water and fish.”

When I was with them, they were into another controversy with the government about one of the largest structures that they have ever built across a tributary of the river Ruparel at a village called Lava-Ka-Bas. The state government had issued an arrest warrant to Rajendra Bhai for tampering with the irrigation system. On the day he was supposed to be arrested, hundreds of villagers voluntarily came to the construction site offering voluntary labor and Rajendra Bhai was also waiting to be arrested in the true Gandhian Spirit. The struggle continues and people seem to emerge out of it victoriously and harmoniously as one of the village elders commented to me,

“We are angry with the government, they are trying to take away what we built with our bloods, sweat and tears, but we will fight them with love”.

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There is a general sense of distrust about the local elected government as well as the bureaucracy but combined with a sense of independence from it. There is a sense of trust in their own capacity to deal with their issues and needs on their own.

“But see, not much work happens inside the government, and our role is to reach places where the government doesn’t reach. When they don’t run schools, we run them. And the kind of work we do, government can never do it. Like inside the Sariska forest, even above the kraska village, there are villages where government goes every five years to campaign for votes, but we work even there. We have built johads and bunds, run schools, women’s groups are into savings schemes there.”

“Look, what is the relationship with panchayat (legislated local government)? Nothing, they do nothing. Panchayat is funded by government and the money goes into the pockets of the Sarpanch (head of Panchayat) and others, so people who are corrupt and want to usurp the government money take positions in Panchayat but be it Gram Sabha or Arvari Sansad, noone can take the money her. It is our money and it is used for our initiatives. In government system, each level takes some money and finally there is nothing to do any work”.

But this feeling of mistrust is not so pronounced in some villages, which I think may be due to the effective and successful functioning of Panchayati Raj (decentralized village government). Some members who are part of the Gram Sabha also hold office in the local government. In these villages, they seem to work together with mutual respect.

“We work together pretty well, if the gram sabha asks for something or writes a note, they accept it.”

**Relationship with TBS, the NGO**

Everyone is very fond of Rajendra Bhai and feels a sense of connectedness to him and the NGO. With almost all the coordinators of the NGO drawn from the village this relationship is not surprising. At the same time, they also have a sense of faith that they can continue on this journey even without TBS and I think that this is the greatest
achievement of TBS. They explicitly plan their resources independently of TBS so they can do this.

“When our earnings started improving, we started saving some money, depending on whoever can spare, and then deposited it in the bank and used the money to build more johads and ponds. So we could continue to build even if TBS does not give, or the government does not give. Then we continued to build one after another, we made a rule to invest a part of our earnings in these efforts. So our lot improved, and even the President of India came to our village to give us an award. This award also gave us one lakh rupees ($2200) which we have reinvested in our work and the welfare of our village.”

Protection of the “commons”

In contrast to the modern legal system and in consonance with most of the indigenous systems, the rules formulated by the village committee are all around protection of the “commons” like water, forest, animals and land and not focused on protection of “individual” rights. In Bhaonta, there was an old man who had the habit of walking up the hills carrying water for birds and animals. He did it every day and on days he was too ill, his wife did it. This man (who is no more, the story was narrated to me by his nephew Pooran Singh) brought up the issue of regeneration of forests and protection of animals in their committee. With water aplenty, animals including tigers were coming to the water head near the village; this became an important issue. So they came up with two resolutions: the first, to create a small sanctuary for animals near their village, and the other, self-enforced rules about gathering forest produce. For regulating the use of forest products, they brought an innovative rule that no villager should carry anything with metal in the forest, and this includes the axe. So this allowed them to pick dry twigs and fallen leaves for their fuel and fodder for their cattle but did not allow them to cut trees.
“One of our decisions was about our jungle. We all sat together and decided that no one will cut trees, even if they want firewood, they can only pick up dried sticks. When someone cuts from a big tree, he is fined 11 rupees, all of us sat together and decided this, and all of us sit together to implement it. And everyone has to accept our decision. You can look at our register, when someone from Kishori cut some wood, we ostracized him, we won’t even drink water at his house, nor will we give him even water. We make him isolated from the community.”

This was the beginning of the “Save the Jungle – Jungle Bachao” and “Save the Animals – Janwar Bachao” campaigns. So now, the villagers had sworn to save Jal (Water), Jungle and Jaanwar (Animals) in their neighbourhood. While this rule was enforced in their village, they couldn’t prevent people from neighboring villages violating the rules. When this became the issue, members of the village committee from Bhaonta met the committee members from the offender’s village, a dialogue ensued and the offending village adopted the norm for their inhabitants too. With Kanhaiya bhai, a volunteer TBS coordinator from Bhaonta village, now available to spread the news from one village to another, this practice slowly was adopted by all the villages and now all the 950 villages follow this norm religiously leading to a tremendous improvement in the forest regeneration efforts of the region.

Reclamation of the Sacred

This community has managed to reclaim the Sacredness of their relationship with one another and with Mother Earth. Most of their rules and practices come from their spiritual practices in which trees and animals were worshipped. Considering that the whole community was vegetarian, animal protection came naturally. They told me,

“Who has seen God? To me Nature is the only God. That which gives us to eat, drink, wear, that is the only God. If we eat out of our hard work and efforts, and take care of Nature, then we can be at peace forever.”
“God has given plenty of water, He has no need to use water, and it is our responsibility to protect it.”
And we believe that fish need to be protected too, none of us eat fish, and we believe killing it is bad. We never kill any animals or birds. Now there is so much fish here.”

With the reclamation of the Sacred in their lives, faith returned. Rajendra Bhai talks of the role of faith in community building,

“They wanted to work together, and when that started happening, there was an association among all of them. When the community feels like getting together and doing some work together, then their faith is brilliant, their faith shines and work happens in that faith.”

Spontaneity and Simplicity

This entire people’s movement, which Rajendra Bhai calls, “Lok Ganga”, meaning the River Ganges of people which reflects both the abundance and sacred nature of the movement is an emergent organization (the River Ganges is the holy river of the Hindus). It has emerged through its simplicity and spontaneity. All its structures have emerged out of the need of the moment and people have spontaneously joined it. Rajendra Bhai describes it thus:

“This is how an emergent organization works. In its spontaneity. On its own pace, it has its own inner power, strength and energy. When things emerge on their own, they keep going. It has its own pace, and it move on its own. You saw the satyagraha yesterday, so many satyagrahis, they didn’t think about how difficult it is going to be for them. They were chatting and laughing, when it was too hot, they sat down and sang, when it was less hot, they got to work. When the government officials came, they spoke to them. This is what happens in an organization when it emerges on its own, it builds on its own strength and grows. When there are too many interventions, then the organization doesn’t make itself, doesn’t move by itself, it gets made, it gets moved. This one makes itself. In this, there is nobody from outside who calls for meetings. Even yesterday, whoever was on the front spoke to the government authorities, you can’t find leaders. There are no leaders. They are all doing this spontaneously. Spontaneity is the route to sustainability. It corrects itself spontaneously, it organizes itself. When any organization has this spontaneity and simplicity, it has its own way of going
forward and growing. But when you try to give hormonal injections for its growth; it is not permanent. At one stage or the other it will reach its end.”

Reverberations

These villagers worked together and now this region earlier classified as a dark zone has been reclassified by government as white-zone. Food grain production has increased fivefold and milk production has tripled. The forest cover has grown from 5% to 50%. Wells are recharged and there is no water scarcity at all. Today, even after two failed monsoons, water is not scarce and they are able to cultivate their lands and feed their cattle and themselves. Villagers who did not get a square meal a day are feeding a thousand people during their meetings and conferences. There is a new rhythm to their lives and play. Generations of Rajasthanis did not know to swim as there was not a single water body large enough to swim in, but today’s children have learnt to swim and it is simply a joy to see them enjoying themselves in the water.

With the villagers tasting the power of ownership and control over their lands, awareness came, awareness that the marble mines in the region are inflicting havoc on the environment they have worked so hard to preserve and improve and they have to take initiative and responsibility to stop this damage. So these villagers went to all the levels of the government to get around 1000 mines closed. Mining in the area is a wealthy business and the owners who run it are almost like a mafia, nevertheless the villagers succeeded in protecting their environment.

Their highest point of recognition came when one of their villages, Bhaonta-Koylala, received the President’s Award for the most environmentally conscious community and the President of India went to the village to honor them with the award,
deviating from the common practice of the awardees visiting him in the capital. Their work is also causing ripples across other ravaged states in the country and other third world countries. I hope that this case study will also inspire and generate more of such responses across the world.
CHAPTER 4
NETWORK ECONOMY: SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVE FOR RURAL INDIA
VISION OF A LEADER

Introduction

This case study presents an account of a bold social experiment being performed in Kuthambakkam village near the city of Chennai, in the state of Tamil Nadu, using the vehicle of Panchayat (Village Government). It describes the village, the accomplishments of its unique Panchayat Leader, Elango, and his vision for the future of the village and a sustainable model for Rural Economy. Elango is trying to build what he calls a Network Economy among a few villages in the region, using which the local economy builds, sustains and nurtures itself, without dependence on the mainstream, global economy, while not completely divorcing itself from it either. His ambition is to demonstrate this idea through a working model which other local economies can follow. He has also founded a “Trust for Village Self Governance” through which he imparts these ideas to village leaders from other parts of the state and country. This village is on its way to becoming the first hut-less village in the country, the new dwellings built using indigenous materials, technology and labor, with the government resources being augmented by the villagers themselves and funds raised personally by Elango through his connection agencies and well wishers.

Village Overview and its Livelihood

Kuthambakkam is a group of hamlets or colonies covering an area of about 36 sq. km with a population of around 5000. It is a long lived habitat for over a thousand years, a delightful village with numerous ancient temples. A vast lake irrigates around 1400
acres while another 700 acres are rainfed. Though 75% of the inhabitants are dalits (the lower caste), they own only around 2% of the land and hence work as laborers in the landlords’ farms. The inhabitants of this village district come in multiple colors and hues and are not necessarily a completely homogenous population. There are many caste divisions, though the major division is between those of the upper castes and Scheduled Tribes, who form the lower caste Hindus. The literacy rate for this village is around 85% but the difference in levels of education among different castes is quite high. The upper caste Hindus own almost 85% of the cultivable land in the village, while most of the lower castes Hindus have traditionally worked as laborers on these farm lands. But there are also class divisions that make the society even more complex. But almost all the villagers share the reliance on water for livelihood, even though a few of the landowners are educated and have other sources of revenue.

Usually, even in the midst of rampant caste politics, antisocial activities like brewing of illicit liquor and lack of amenities and hygiene, this village has been prosperous due to their longstanding and highly effective rain water harvesting practices. Like many parts of the country, the state of Tamil Nadu has practiced the traditional rain water harvesting methods and Tamil Nadu is especially well known for its historic Tank Irrigation system. Rain water harvesting has been an extremely important practice in the history of irrigation in India, because most of the country is dependent on monsoon for its water and it is important not only to save water when they can, but also to ensure continuous renewal of the underground water aquifers as they in turn ensure water supply for the rest of the year and the future. These traditional rainwater harvesting structures like ponds, tanks, lakes, and small earthen check dams not only serve as catchment areas
for rainwater during the monsoon season but also continually renew the underground water resources. They are also eco and human friendly because they do not cause the kind of damage like flooding and displacement of villages that are attendant effects of bigger dams; whereas these structures are built around the needs of each village and are their commons. These practices in Kuthambakkam allowed the village farmers to grow three crops a year, which meant that most of the population had steady income and therefore did not go hungry even in the midst of severe drought. But more recently this has been changing with the depletion of water resources by multiple parties.

A different kind of Panchayat Leader

Elango, the second-term President of the Panchayat (Village Government), a dynamic forty-five-year-old man, was one of the fortunate few of this village who had access to an engineering education that took him away from the village for around fifteen years, after which he decided to come back and work for his homeland’s welfare. He is from a dalit (lowest caste) family, though economically their family was not in the lowest stratum of that community. Born and brought up in Kuthambakkam, Elango obtained a degree in Chemical Engineering and was a scientist with Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in India for eight years. Whenever he visited his village, he found that the social ills like poverty, caste riots, illicit liquor, and environmental degradation continued to plague his community. In 1994, he quit his job as a scientist to return to the village fulltime to work on his community’s welfare. While many such men usually work through NGOs (Non Governmental Organizations), Elango chose a completely different route. While most of the educated, middle class of the country choose to stay away from politics, he jumped into the fray, contested independently in the
elections in 1996 and became the President of the Village government. He describes his vision for the Panchayat rule:

“Panchayat is a system for the village. It is available in all the villages of the country. According to 73rd amendment of the constitution, so it is a constitutional body, it has to function as a self governing body for the village, to solve the problems, to attain the social and economic development. So in this, everything fits. But if this functions effectively, as envisioned by the constitution or as it originally did in the pre colonial india, if this takes off, it starts to deliver results to people, the entire problem of the villages can be solved within a decade or something...”

Restoring Panchayat to the community is what Elango attempts to do. He believes that Panchayat is a community vehicle and people should feel that it is theirs and they own it. That they have the right to demand from it.

“In the past, people use to complain about the panchayat malfunctioning to outsiders like District collector or BDOs because they didn’t feel that the panchayat was theirs. But now, they are giving the petition to us, if there is a problem with water or street lights they inform us addressed to me. Now panchayat is a community organization. They will go outside, the outsider will call me. So when that used to happen, I always used to tell the DC to tell the plaintiff to come and talk to me. Tell him to come and find me at my office, my home. Don’t entertain him. Don’t talk about rules. Water is my business, village business, make him part of the system. If he comes here, I tell him solutions to fix his problems himself. A single bolt that needed to be fixed, fix it and come to me and get it reimbursed. Don’t waste four days of your life chasing the bureaucracy.”

**Basic Infrastructure Development**

The one compelling reason Elango came back to Kuthambakkam was the fact that women were beaten up, humiliated and exploited by their alcoholic husbands every night. He was committed to change this situation by addressing the illicit alcohol brewing business. After years of persistence and persuasion, the men have agreed to quit dealing in alcohol provided they were given alternative means of employment. Elango saw an
opportunity for employment for these families in putting up infrastructure (houses, drains, and roads) for the entire village.

**Samathavapuram (Town of Equality)**

The Panchayat started its work with the establishment of “Samthavapuram” of 50 twin-houses (now one of the 6 hamlets of Kuthambakkam) in October 2000. Samathavapuram is a housing project of the Tamil Nadu state government, which is envisioned as a symbol of peaceful co-existence of traditionally antagonistic communities. In this housing project scheme, a dalit family and a non-dalit family share a twin house. While this is an ongoing scheme of the state government, Kuthambakkam Panchayat redefined the process of this housing project. It was the first time in the history of Samathavapurams (of which there are 154 in the state), that a panchayat demanded a say in its planning. Elango describes the change that his panchayat brought to this process.

“when there is a government house being built in a village, the rule is that the government engineer has to do the plan, grade the plan, approve the groundbreaking, and everything happens under his supervision. But building houses in villages is not a new thing, for thousands of years, villagers have built houses. Even houses with more than one story has been built. But what does the government say? It says that our government engineer has to come and take a look, he has to mark, and stuff like that. What do we say? That government does not have to interfere. Government gives 40 K. let them send someone to see if what we build is worth the money, that should be the thing. Here in kuthambakkam we are building houses worth 40000 rupees. But what the government rule says is, our person should come, because we are dependent on them, our work gets delayed. For example, we might begin work everyday at 8 am with our local mason, whereas we have to wait for the mason, who will come at 10.30, we have to wait till he comes. If we can use and organize the local people to do the work, we will do the work between 6 and 10.30 before the sun really starts scorching but we were able to convince the government. Because panchayat itself is a people’s body, if it is a big superstructure with fourteen stories, then engineering is important, there you
need to intervene. But this is after all a small structure. We were able to convince. Now it is only certification after the house is constructed, to see if it is worth the money that the government is investing in. This is worth more than 40000. Before it was not like this, every time, every stage there is a bill and a lot of bureaucracy. So for many things panchayat has authority. For rules and regulations we need to change the rules when it does not benefit people. Now people have the clarity. To the extent possible, they should be allowed to do whatever they can. Why should we interfere? We have lobbied for such changes. Especially the housing."

Unlike typical concrete box-houses with asbestos roofing, which are harmful, eco-unfriendly and expensive, Elango chose to employ the stabilized mud-block technology with the help of HUDCO. This technology is simple, inexpensive, uses local red soil for blocks and mortar, and is aesthetically appealing. More importantly, it does not require baking and hence is eco-friendly. The traditional Madras terrace controls the temperature inside. While a typical Samathavapuram house was only 210 sq.ft in area and had no windows but only small ventilators, Kuthambakkam house was expanded to 286 sq.ft and included wide windows for the same cost. Out of the total investment of about Rs. 88 lakh rupees (around $20000), Rs. 28 lakhs (around $6200) was paid for labor, and benefited 220 families rehabilitated from the illicit-arrack trading. While the people were meaningfully employed, they also learnt the technology and construction skills. There are 216 more huts in the village. These will soon be converted into mud-block houses this year, under the central government’s innovative housing scheme. The villagers will be responsible for laying the foundation and building the walls at their own cost. The government will help with the roof tiles, doors and windows. Elango has been involved in raising funds to cover the shortfall through his personal network as well as Swiss Development Agency which has a rotational funding scheme for habitat development. In another year, Kuthambakkam is expected to become a hut-free village.
Roads, Drains, Water and Street Lights

Unlike in the cities, village roads are used not merely for transportation. They are social spaces for adults in the evenings, playgrounds for the children, and a functional space for drying grains during the harvest season. Similar to the housing scheme, the rehabilitated families laid good interior concrete roads in every part of the village at a low cost. With government support, all highway and union roads were also repaired, and relaid, where necessary. They also built drains using locally available materials. An overhead water tank has been constructed, and a water pump installed in every hamlet. These are connected to every house cluster. Elango also came up with a new energy saving lighting scheme for the streets of Kuthambakkam and these lights were assembled by a woman’s self help group in the village. Elango has set up nearly 200 low cost toilets in this village.

Network Economy: A Social Experiment in making

Traditionally village communities in India have maintained a sustainable economy which safeguarded their security of their basic needs. This has been made possible through practices of sustainable agriculture, low cost labor and simple and yet elegant life style. Such sustainability of the day to day life in the village has been the basis of the sustainable economy. Elango realized that it was not enough to provide the basic infrastructure but the need of the hour was to create a sustainable source of livelihood at the village level. This model couldn’t be informed by the mainstream economic model which was based on mass production, whereas in the village economy, it had to be production by the masses. For instance, when Elango came up with the energy
saving lights production scheme, a women’s self help group from the village produced for itself. But as he explains further,

“Contentment versus development. Humility vs Greed. If you are vested in development philosophy or thought, scale of thinking is very different. Energy efficient light project, there is a huge demand, there is potential to grow more, even 25 lakhs of turnover per day is possible. Philips company has offered two crores to set up an unit here. I am thinking about it carefully because that way, we will be plugged back into the mainstream economy and why don’t we show that the villagers can do it on their own? Since I know both the models I am confused about the merits of one versus other. If I didn’t know about the macro economy I might have said, it is okay, even if we become financially non viable, we will stay with the village economy. But I think, that if thirty people work here on this project, spread the opportunity around. For instance, if a panchayat from Namakkal wants these lights, Kuthambakkam shouldn’t make money out of it but rather teach the other panchayat’s villagers this technology so they can manufacture their own lights. That village’s money should stay in their community.”

Therefore, he learnt about various rural development models already operating in India including Anna Hazare's watershed management in Maharashtra, Dr. Parameswara Rao's wasteland development in Andhra Pradesh, Dr. Karunakaran's Gram Swaraj movement in Madhya Pradesh, Dr. M. P. Parameswaran's Swadeshi movement in Kerala and from several universities working on relevant/appropriate rural technologies like the Central Food Technology and Research Institute (CFTRI), Mysore and Central Mechanical Engineering Research Institute (CMERI). Elango's network of rural development workers, academicians and government officials and ministers has helped him refine his model constantly. Based on lessons learnt from various sources, Elango drew up a detailed five-year plan for the integrated development of Kuthambakkam in 2003. This model is also grounded on the data collected from the villagers themselves. Elango and his team conducted a survey among the villagers of Kuthambakkam with a focus on understanding the consumption and supply patterns of the village. The study included the consumption of food items and other goods and materials, which are
necessary and form part of the routine life of the village communities. The survey also included the sources of origin and venues of value addition for such goods. The other elements of the survey included the mapping of the local resources, which include agricultural produce, natural raw materials, skills and the present level of value addition or processing that is happening at the village level. He found out that almost all the commodities being used by this community are coming from the urban market. A more important part of the discovery was that the most of the local produce was sold to the market as raw material and the value addition to that local produce takes place in the urban industries and through a multi-tier distribution system; these finished goods are being sold back to them at much higher prices. Therefore Elango decided to focus on developing a system which enables the villagers to use their local resources by converting them into consumable, finished goods through value addition by themselves for their own use.

“I am not saying that lets close industry, but we can combine both. We need refineries but we can replace sugar with jaggery production. Let the urban population earn money, I don’t want them to be my enemies, I would rather create a model of affection and holistic economy that will attract population here. We will need to create this model. Globalization cannot be stopped but don’t marginalize the villagers but find a niche for the village economy in that big cycle. The australian milk has a longer shelf life. Their entire process is different, because they start from zero bacteria. What will happen to the dairy farmers here? Lets give them a break even. They cannot sell half liter for five or six rupees. Can we offer a local alternative for the same or better price. Shirt example. The price can never be compared. Because their costs are different. Production by the masses instead of mass production. It will work in the local economy. Each community should start its own community. Kuthambakkam people will think about and care about kuthambakkam dairy farmers. They will not work for farmers in Pune but between these villages, there can be an integration at all levels; emotional, economic and social integration.”
Key elements of the Network Growth Economy Model

The three key elements of the envisioned network growth economy model are: Panchayat’s role as a facilitator, promotion of village industries, and external networks.

Now I present the elements as described by Elango.

**Panchayat’s Role as facilitator**

Panchayats are envisioned by Elango as pivotal to the effectiveness and success of Network Economy model and have to play a major role as a facilitator, enabler and at times implementer for all the interventions, which are required towards operationalization of this model. Since this model envisages a number of villages working together in a collaborative manner, a network among Panchayat leaders will need to be established with fair amount of mutual understanding. The group of villages in a cluster has to live like a big family and the Panchayat leaders would be responsible to establish adequate degree of harmony and solidarity among the villagers. This mandate will require high degree of leadership, maturity and team building qualities in the Panchayat leaders so that they can handle the group dynamics while dealing with the village communities of different castes and religions. Further the Panchayat leaders have to make efforts to deal with the various state and central government departments for mobilizing necessary support and assistance for their villages under different schemes in force. In order to ensure holistic development of their villages, their Panchayat leaders will have to give due emphasis on all the important matters pertaining to community needs like education, health, employment, infrastructure and utilities. The Panchayat Academy founded by Elango will support these panchayats in making these possible.
**Promotion of Village Industries (VIs)**

Self Help Group members and other villagers have to be motivated and trained to put up value addition units for converting locally produced items and raw/waste materials into finished goods. There are various Central and State Government schemes that are available for this purpose and need to be dovetailed for financial and technical assistance. The entire process needs to be carried out through the Panchayat. Elango is setting up a demonstration and training center in his Trust to show how these units will work. The infrastructure development is already in process and some of the equipments, tool, and machineries have been installed. In addition to demonstration and training, these units will also be used to produce some items through Self Help Groups of Kuthambakkam village. The Trust plans to organize training programs for SHG leaders and members in collaboration with the Panchayats. The Panchayats will be responsible for organizing the villagers into these activities and may charge a fee or tax for this support so they can generate revenue for investment in village developmental activities. Some of the potential areas of business that Elango has envisioned for these village industries in Kuthambakkam are:

*Thoor dhal (Lentils) processing*

Raw Thoor dhal will be processed and sold in Kuthambakkam and neighbouring villages. This project will provide Thoor dhal at cheaper prices and provide employment to rural women.
**Dairy project**

Excess milk available in Kuthambakkam and nearby villages will be processed into marketable milk products.

**Soap making unit**

Using an age old bullock cart wheel fitted with bearings and pulleys, Elango has constructed a machine to mix soap ingredients and make soap. These soaps when consumed locally can bring the money that is spent on soaps manufactured by multinational and national companies in the urban economy back to the community.

**Bakery project**

This project will prepare bakery products like bread, buns, and biscuits for consumption by the village population.

**Peanut oil production**

In this business, locally grown peanuts will be shelled, and the oil extracted for local sale and consumption. They will also make other peanut based products like candy. During my last visit to the village, the oil production and sales had begun in the village.

**External Networks**

To make these infrastructural investments possible, Elango has not only built relationships with the district level and state level bureaucracies but also with a number of external organizations including Association of India Development (AID, USA), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Ashoka Foundation, Indians for Collective Action (USA), British High Commission, and Sankalp Foundation (USA). As
Elango himself describes, he has also been picky about who he chooses to build his networks with:

“I network with likeminded people. I refused aid from USAID. The consulate general visited here, they have been talking with me. I told him that we don’t need much money infusion, all I need I can raise through individual contributions. When I demonstrate, it becomes a people’s economy. They will have the money. But you help me with travel, if I go to the US, give me tickets, organize my stay there, do those kinds of things. Whereas Swiss government wanted people movements focusing on habitat development. Mostly it happens through agencies and they wanted to experiment with panchayat. I have a meeting with British high commission this afternoon. British attitude is different. They want to pay back. They say that they feel guilty and they want to pay back. There is affection. America, there is no emotional binding. We have a history with UK. Europe is very leftist in orientation.”

Elango’s Maternal Model of Leadership

He calls his model of leadership as the “Maternal Model”. He says,

“A few people may be negative, some people may be too positive in their evaluation for me. But we have to look at the facts for both. For example, we are building a drain. Drain issues. People might say, “What is this? He is building drains all over”... Whatever you do, you might do it against his aspirations, but ultimately you are doing it for his welfare. A mother has the right to do it, I have the same right. Ultimately you need it, that is the point.”

“I feel that this whole community is mine. But when I think like that, sometimes I expect the community to react in a particular way. That is not a dictatorship. It is one of affection. When we admonish a child not to do something unsafe, it is done out of love. But there should be transparency, democracy to the possible extent which will not disintegrate the strength of the community.”

My observation of his daily activities also supports this model. For instance, every single day, I saw him giving money to someone or other - an old lady who had scheduled a hospital visit, a child who didn’t have notebooks or clothes, a young man who had to pay his college fees - Elango was always ready to help them. He would also go with the young people of the village for college enrollment, pay for their computer education.
While it can be termed as paternalistic approach to leadership, Elango calls it the maternal approach: with caring and compassion, but setting boundaries with a belief that “mother knows best.”

This model of leadership also informs his vision for an effective social change process.

**Relationships Vs Revolution: Traditional Versus Modern**

Even though he was a Dalit (Untouchable) activist in his youth, he believes that the Dalit Movement was informed by the Western models of revolution whereas his vision for the community change process lies in nurturing and building of relationships. He also believes that such revitalization of relationships can only happen at a local level, where there is a history between the people involved. As he says,

“In the western style, it is done through revolution, protest, fight and liberation whereas in a community set up it can happen through a revitalization of relationships. So, I cannot do it on a district level. Because I am not connected to them, so my words will not penetrate their hearts but I am making that leader do the same. He spreads the word to other villages The community is organizing, the panchayat is a community movement. It may be a parliamentary democracy, and they feel that they are partners and participate in the process of selection through voting. They feel that they have a right. When we do good work, they enjoy and feel reaffirmed. There the democracy should stop. What do we do? If some researcher says, 50 people are vehement, what am I supposed to do? management researchers might come up with some hundred problems but what I do is, go to the person who is angry and ask her, “Sister, why did you say that?” and she says, “That you scolded me” and I say sorry. Everything gets crumbled. That is the community solution. There is a compromise and negotiation. There is a relationship. But you will give a grievance procedure and teach them how to protest against me. So the mega-thoughts will not suit us but micro levels or network level approach will work for us. We resolve through conversation and negotiation. We are not related by blood. But people come up and talk with me, a man says that your grandfather and I were friends. Not everything works with law. But with community and relationships, things work.”
Social Change, Emotions, Economic Alternatives

He also believes that social change has to be accompanied by viable, economic alternatives and that access to resources and creation of opportunity structures are key ingredients of successful social change programs. I quote him once again:

“For example one man is taking absurdly but democratically, if he gets liberated, yes you are liberating him, but to what. Even take the case of caste politics. When they were liberated by the forward thinkers, there was no economic alternative for them. I am not a negative person but an alternative person. All the dalit activists are emotionally driven. I don’t have meaning in the feelings. If instead they had spoken to the upper classes to improve their standard of life, things would have been better for the lower castes. Because there was some safety net for them. But now it has been destroyed with no support structures in place. I might be portrayed as a reactionary but I am a pragmatic person. What I feel is that emotional issues alone will not work for dalit liberation because they are poor, there should be an economic package that goes with it. There is no point in liberating them emotionally and sending them off to the dark economically. I put him in the slum, it is the same communism that taught me the culture. The pig culture. They live in a community, enjoy their lives. We put them in slums, they live like pigs. When we liberate dalits, we need to take an economic package, there is no point in addressing only emotional issues. Or help them come up with a partnership with the upper caste. Someone who has fifty acres, ask him to let a dalit family use two acres for themselves. The Anna Hazare model. Offer alternative lives. What if you bring a prostitute and do not offer an alternative, she will brew illicit liquor. You are liberating that person in a competitive world, no one has compassion. So many people are suffering in my homeland and no one cares. I am a dalit development worker looking for an alternate route.”

Action Vs Theory

Elango derides the ivory tower theorists who do not have a relationship with the community nor the willingness to do work on the ground.

“Symbiosis Institute of Management visited us. Last year, the world class examples in India, I was one of the four chosen people and I went and spoke to a large audience. What can you do as MBAs? You can do only theory. You can keep on working on more and more theories, and more graphical representations, more and more presentations, but only when you come in you can look at it. Your argument can be only on the graph, there is no sustainability. Management argument is hypothetical, it is only theory. It is all based on assumptions, but here it is based on reality, love, community. There is no need for hypothetical talk about village economy or its success. Success is Anna Hazare.”
While at first glance, this statement might appear contradictory to his approach where he has begun the social process of social change with a well defined vision and an economic model for rural economy, what we must keep in mind is that his model was grounded in information from many other practitioners as well as data from his own village. He has also been on the ground working on infrastructural issues that he had the power to intervene in his capacity as the Panchayat leader.

Current Status

In spite of a functional infrastructure and the apparent willingness of the villagers to cooperate with the Panchayat to make their village a model village, hunger still remains a persistent problem. The families rehabilitated from the illicit arrack brewing trade were temporarily employed in reconstructing the village. Now, they go hungry and are waiting for alternatives. The Panchayat is now working towards making Kuthambakkam a hunger-free village in one year. The plan is to revive traditional (organic) farming on under-utilized and abandoned lands, and establish several small-scale rural industries, which will employ the villagers, who will be trained in production as well as maintenance. Several auxiliary units can operate around these. The rural industries will, to the extent possible, be land-based; use locally available raw-materials and indigenous knowledge; cater to the local market; meet the basic needs of villagers - food, clothing and shelter - to attain self-sufficiency; be diverse; work on a cooperative model through men and women’s SHGs without the interference of the state or the central government; be heavily dependent on human power; and be environment-
friendly. That Elango has been re-elected in the 2001 elections with zero campaign cost speaks for the faith the villagers have placed on him. He is also concerned about creating local, sustainable livelihood to avoid potential migration of educated youth out of the village, and thus can be depended to take up roles of leadership and responsibility to implement and spread the message of “Network Economy”. He also plans to move out of Panchayat on completion of his term in 2006 so the work that he started can be carried by the next generation, and he can begin to focus on spreading the message to many other parts of the country through the Trust for Village Self-Governance he founded and runs.
CHAPTER FIVE

LIVELIHOOD ADVANCEMENT BUSINESS SCHOOL (LABS) – A BUSINESS-SOCIETY INITIATIVE

“It is not just providing them jobs, but it is preparing them to face life in a more meaningful way.”

“What the teachers teach me, after we came here, we changed so much, that is not forgettable.”

Introduction

This is a case study of LABS-Chennai, promoted by five corporate houses in Chennai, India, that creates and delivers a livelihood advancement program (LABS) for the underprivileged, at-risk youth, equipping them with training in skills including auto mechanic, computer maintenance, homecare nursing, hospitality, IT enabled services, and retail services, At the end of three months they are placed in jobs. This program was inspired by the success of its original model which was started and run by Dr.Reddy’s Laboratories in Hyderabad. The success of this social experiment has captured the imagination of many other corporate houses and state governments that are trying to create similar initiatives in their local settings.

My reason to pick this particular center was my longstanding personal and professional relationship with Mr. P.P. Sukumaran, one of the key founders of LABS-Chennai, the then President- Group Personnel with Murugappa Group, a billion dollar corporate conglomerate. Sukumaran is my ex-boss, professional mentor and a very close friend. As a matter of fact, when he first toyed with the idea of starting this center, he had emailed me about what a perfect fit I would have been for leading this initiative, had I still been in India. Nevertheless, when we met again in Summer 2003, during my trip to India, our laid-back catch-up session led to a discussion of my research interests and the
energy of our conversation changed; it became charged with excitement from both of our sides. His excitement over the model that is a huge success in Hyderabad was contagious. He was talking about scaling it up all over the state and the country. And to me it seemed to be a perfect addition to my research sample, providing a site that is completely entrenched in the world of mainstream business. Therefore, I joined the team as a researcher. In the next section, I introduce the LABS model and its two elements, LABS process and LABS People.

The LABS Model

Many old-time Indian corporations have believed in being accountable to their role in the society as responsible citizens and they have in the past usually have taken the route of philanthropy, through a range of initiatives like schools for their employees’ children, hospitals for the welfare of their employees and their families, scholarships to deserving, needy youth, and support of culture and art through sponsorships. In fact, most of these corporations have always had Welfare Managers on their rolls. But as the title suggests, while these reflected the good intentions of these organization, the model was mostly philanthropically inclined. But LABS is a different model in which corporations and other partners (including various government departments and police departments) have come together in an effort to create an infrastructure that will support the entry of the disenfranchised into the mainstream economy. In turn, it is also a good business model, because in a short time, most LABS centers are on the road to financial self-sustenance. As Deen, one of the mentors in LABS Chennai puts it,

“It is because LABS is not a philanthropic model, neither is it a purely a business model, it is a combination. None of the corporates is involved for one or the other reason, yes, it is a good business model, it is going to give them affordable labor, it is going to
Another key difference between the old fashioned corporate initiatives is that they were usually limited to the communities in which these corporations were located while LABS has developed a replicable model and process which has become a prototype for scaling these operations across the country. In fact, LABS has been invited by and has worked with governments in Vietnam and the United Kingdom to train them in and transfer the LABS model. Therefore, it is important to understand the key elements of this model: LABS process and LABS organization.

LABS Process

Affirmative Assumptions

One key dimension that defines LABS and is instrumental to its success is that the whole program has been founded in affirmative assumptions about everyone involved in the initiative. As Bala sums it up,

“The very success of LABS hinges on that belief, that everyone has empathy, the other side, the inner side that wants to give back something, but normally, we don’t call it.”

Every mentor, facilitator and professional manager that I spoke with mentioned it. In fact, their involvement seems to be based on these assumptions and hence they are willing to invest the necessary resources for LABS. For example, Arvind talks about his experience of engagement with the students:

“I could see the same amount of intellectual thirst in them. Despite all of them being dropouts, they have the same amount of thirst which I had or my friends had in a marketing session in BIM.”
Every one of the mentors spoke about their positive assumptions about the student population.

“We all know the word street smartness, but only six years ago I learnt the meaning of the word. Street smartness is a child who is in the slum or some place like that, who has gone through all the difficulties of life and is able to deal with them really well. I know every LABS child is street smart, tomorrow they are thrown out of a job, they can handle it. They have gone through all the vagaries of life. If there is anything I have learnt, it is about their street smartness.” – Deen

Or Karthik’s description of LABS Chennai echoes similar sentiments.

This place oozes positive energy. I also had an intuitive feel good factor about the place, their respect, dignity for the population they serve and above all, their belief and faith.

This approach has a positive impact on the LABS process because this grounding in affirmative assumptions sets a self fulfilling prophecy that supports the students in reclaiming their self esteem, dignity, and conscience that in turn help them in accomplishing their goals. As the following excerpt indicates, LABS is grounded in the empowering mode.

“Naturally I come to helping people, working with people. And that too, when it comes to helping, I tend to be, not in a philanthropic mode but in an empowering mode as a methodology. I look at empowering people through education, knowledge, generating their own values, their own resources, to help them help themselves.”

Or as Kannan says,

“These boys are very true to themselves, they have no ulterior motives, right? They only want to have a good living, a very sincere living, they want someone to advise them. Where things go wrong is, when there is nobody to advise them, mentor them, things go wrong, you know. Therefore, when you really talk to them, you know that they are not intentionally not. If you were to find out some of the boys have become pick pockets, or gotten into drugs or in any such negative spirals, I don’t think it is because of their interest, or because they want to be that way. It is largely their circumstances and lack of mentoring and guiding them. There are many such in the society. Somewhere I think, we have a role to play. If we can play whatever small role to help them, it makes a lot of difference.”
Whole Person Process

“There is an emotional cycle in the whole process that one needs to be aware of. It is a journey of self exploration for the students and the faculty. It is a self respect boosting journey for them. An experience focusing on the student, which is very unusual for them.”

This quote from Arvind, one of the professional managers of Dr. Reddy’s Foundation, sums up the spirit of the LABS process.

While the crux of LABS is offering livelihood skills to underprivileged youth of vulnerable age with the objective of ‘mainstreaming’ them so they could have access to and enjoy the benefits of the new economy, it is much more than simple transfer of skills. LABS is grounded in a deep belief in human potential and that it is important to engage the whole person for the potential to flower and flourish. To date, they have trained and placed over 18,000 young people in various jobs, operating in six states with over 50 centers and have an international reputation and presence.

Bala, a professional manager with Dr. Reddy’s Foundation, describes the core process:

“I would say, when I joined here, they were talking about this program, telling that they will take these underprivileged youth, give them training, and orient them to the new economy and the emerging trends, and give them placement in three months.”

LABS does not simply impart vocational training, although imparting such skills is a critical component of LABS process. As they say, they impart livelihood skills along with job related skills. As Kartik, one of the mentors puts it,

“Because these kids are not only learning some vocational skills but really a lot more than that, social and emotional skills too.”
Each center may identify different skills based on their location and the local needs of the economy, but regardless of which skill they have chosen to get trained in, all the students undergo an intensive one week phase of induction during which they are guided through a process of reflection about where they come from, who they are, and where they want to go. They are also experientially trained in the mainstream work and professional ethic, including basics like time management, attire, etiquette and conversational English. One of the students in the Customer Service Skills Academy describes her learning process,

“We are asked to come on time. If we come late even by five minutes, we are asked to go back home. We were very upset with this practice and asked our teacher to change it. We told him that no one comes late on purpose. But he explained to us how important it punctuality is to working in organizations. He is always extremely punctual; he always comes in earlier than any of us. He explained how our employers would expect to be punctual and honor our commitments.”

Kulo, the Center Head emphatically states,

“We also teach them life skills and goal setting which is something no one else does. Everything here is systematic, in the beginning, they come in, we induct them properly and after that we give them the academic training module, work experience module and after that we place them. Everything is systematic.”

Rajesh, one of the LABS-Chennai facilitators, echoes Kulo,

“It is not the technical LABS, it is the other side of it. Technical they don’t have to learn here. It is not required for me to teach them technical skills, they will go and learn it anywhere, if they have the interest to learn, they will definitely learn by themselves. But this life skills part, I am also not a great teacher of lifeskills, probably what I have learnt from others, I may try to share my ideas with them and let them explore themselves and find it out, how to do, and they can do it on their own.”

As the LABS students themselves put it,

“Our conscience is what really motivates us. I think we have to thank LABS for that.”
“We have enjoyed these three months so much. We have never had such a good time like this ever.”

While the primary focus of LABS is creating new livelihood opportunities and training the students for these jobs, they also believe in lifelong learning and believe that their job is to create a thirst for knowledge and self exploration. As Kulo, the Center Head of LABS – Chennai, says,

“We do not only guide them in helping them identify the course that they can take in the next three months, but we help them in career planning for their whole lives. What can you study? For example, if he has accounts knowledge, we recommend them to study B.Com. We guide them throughout their careers, through their life choices.”

In fact, on completion of the program, a fair proportion of the students do not take up the jobs that are offered to them. Instead, they either opt for starting their own business ventures or for higher education. A number of them go on to get undergraduate degrees. As SS, yet another faculty member succinctly sums up,

“What they will do is operate from their own perspective on how to mingle with the society.”

Whole Person Grounded in Community

In a way, it is a positive socializing process and a weaning away from negative life style choices and work practices, but simultaneously retaining their grounding in the communities that they were raised in and belong to. There is extensive research and documentation about how mainstreaming or formal education alienates the youth from their history and roots, especially in contexts with histories of oppression through colonialism and/or racism. Therefore, this focus becomes a key attribute of the LABS model and it is integrated throughout the process. For instance, LABS process begins
with recruitment which is done through road shows, presentations in various communities and references from the local police force as well as references by the alumni of the program. Every effort is made to ensure that families are involved and parents are trained and communities are included in this process. As Sukumaran puts it,

“"Yes, very much, in fact our road shows are held in the communities, the parents come for counseling, they are educated about what we offer, they are invited to come and visit the facilities.”

One of the alumni talks about his personal vision and ambition and his self confidence is palpable.

“I will be very famous, by 2006 or 7, I want to become the top photographer in Hyderabad city. Now it is my boss and he is entering into films, now he is working with Teja, a Telugu director, my boss is the Assistant Director to the Jai movie that is coming out now, next, they have signed the Tamil rights to Revathy, I think she is a Tamil heroine. Next month we are taking the entire production over, and so I want to take over from my boss as well as learn film camera from him. One day, I want to get the Best Cinematographer Award from Filmfare. If my boss’s blessings are with me, I can do it.”

What makes LABS not just an educational program, but also a social change program is that a LABS student/alumnus sets a higher standard for his or her community and its youth. LABS students become role models and mentors for other kids in the community. LABS also provides opportunities for alumni to get involved in the initiative in various roles including mentoring, financial contribution, and referring new students. An alumnus that I spoke to in Hyderabad talks about his involvement with the alumni organization,

“Last year, we organized alumni clubs, area wise, we have done it. we started in Rama Nagar, so many areas we have done. Many alumni are involved like I am.”
Dr. Reddy’s Foundation also holds an annual Alumni Meet at Hyderabad during which thousands of alumni from all over the country have an opportunity to congregate, share each other’s success stories and support each other in creating different futures. For example, Kannan talks about his experience in one of the Alumni meetings,

“One of the finest moments for me was when they had invited me to their Annual Event at Hyderabad. They said that you have to come and address a group of boys and girls who are the alumni of LABS. They said that they will have an hour time with me when they will ask me questions and interact with me. These are boys and girls who had passed out of LABS having jobs, in different parts of the country, they have all assembled together, they have lots of questions, they have all taken jobs, they are all in different career stages now. I said, sure. This was a big group in a hall and I said, I can’t speak Telugu, I can’t speak Kannada or any other language, I can speak, to some extent, Hindi, and English. So what should I speak? They said, speak in English. These are all Karra (rustic, unpolished) guys, people below the poverty line, who cannot speak in any other language but their vernacular and they said, Speak in English and I was very surprised, Wow, Thank you guys. It went on and on and on, it didn’t stop for a long time. One of the boys said, sir, “I studied B.Com after I passed out of LABS, now I work in a small company as an Accounts Clerk in Delhi. Now I want to do my CA, I don’t have any money, I don’t know what to do, how should I be going about?” I said, “Very good, very ambitious, you must do it. I am sure if you are working in a company, they have an Accounts Manager, and he may have friends, you may come across many suppliers, I am sure you come across many people and companies who may have accountants. Ask them, ask more and more people, what should I do? how do I do that? I am sure they will tell you, if you want to do CA, you have to do Articleships (apprenticeships), you have to do this, this, this, and there is a CA Institute here and you can get more information there.” He said, “Fine, Okay, but how do I buy books?” “Good Question, you don’t have money. And when you get to know more people, you can ask them to lend you some books, I am sure many of them can spare some books, some library, some source for books.” As it was happening, one girl sitting next to him, she said, “Excuse me, I don’t know him, I work in Hyderabad and I met him only here. But I can help him, I am working for an audit firm. Now I can send email and I will send where he can get all the information and books.” See the connect that is happening, that really touched me.

Sukumaran talks about his vision for alumni involvement in LABS Chennai.

“What we planning is to get the alumni involved, if the alumni came come in slowly as faculty, alumni can evolve programs, alumni can do the market research, that we are trying to do slowly. What we are, the challenge we are facing now is to get the alumni together and form a network and that we are doing now.”
Window to the World

LABS takes its role as a path-breaker very seriously. The process ensures that the students get a taste of what the middle and upper class students in colleges get as a regular fare through industry visits, guest lectures, campus placements, and mentoring by corporate managers helping the students see what is on the other side. LABS students who have usually never been successful in formal schooling system are currently working in multinational organizations like Citibank, Pepsico, Standard Chartered Bank, and Greenpeace. The following quotes illustrate the various ways they get a glimpse into the ‘other’ world.

“Within three months, we invite guest lecturers from various fields. Even though they don’t have the opportunity to go to regular college, they get a similar exposure here.”

“The spoken English, may not very good, but we have to appreciate the fact that he is coming from a corporation school, his parents are probably living in a slum, with that kind of background, the children that they are coming out, I appreciate the kind of confidence which is instilled in the students. and that too, in three months, I know fully well that three months is not sufficient but these people are evolving out of the model that yes, three months is sufficient, put them on vocation, hands on experience is going to be there, they have had some success in the form of say, Standard Chartered Bank who are hiring these kids for sales jobs, home nursing, we are associated with some very well established names.”

“Even though they don’t have the opportunity to go to regular college, they get a similar exposure here. If you look at the first batch, at the IT enable services, you would have heard about campus interviews in colleges, during the first batch, we organized campus interviews for our students. We asked the companies to come here, to conduct the tests and interview here and select them from here.”

“We are getting jobs at Greenpeace. We are going to be involved in concept selling.”

LABS Organization

What makes LABS vibrant and thriving and why? The people of LABS make it vibrant and through its organizing processes, LABS engages two kinds of accountability
from the people that are involved, be it students, mentors, facilitators, professionals or alumni. As Sukumaran says,

“See, there are a couple of things, there are two kinds of accountability. One is the typical, financial accountability for which we have a clear head. We have the concept of the Regional Head, we now have Heads for each Region. And there is something called the emotional accountability, someone who is attached to it.”

Deen says that this approach leads to “a structure which a far more sustainable structure, it is a loosely organized structure, it is far less power centered.”

This section presents two dimensions of LABS organization: 1. Leadership as Mentorship and 2. Learning centered organization. This section also describes the different groups of people that make up the organization.

**Leadership as Mentorship**

Mentoring is a key element of LABS and is important at all levels. For instance, Kannan, VP-HR of Pepsico India, talks about his experience with LABS,

“it is this share of mind concept for me. I didn’t say, give me so many boys, I want to hire so many people. That is very, very business like. Always my approach was not that. frankly speaking, I have not given any money to LABS, I have not hired their boys as much other companies have, but if you ask me, my linkage, my engagement, my desire to be continuously engaged is much deep rooted, I am not looking at generating business for LABS. I think LABS needs people who can take the time off to mentor, people who can create the organization, help them create the organization, be there for the boys when they want. Things like that.”

While mentoring is an obvious component of the facilitators’ roles, mentoring by the alumni is also encouraged. Similarly, the employees, both the professionals and the facilitators also act as mentors to newcomers. Arvind emphasizes that I need to talk with his mentor,
“Baskar, you should speak to him. he is no longer with DRL, he is with Airtel, but he was my mentor, he guided me”

The role of corporate managers and executives in mentoring the students is a critical component of LABS process. Senior executive also play the part of mentors in taking on strategic responsibility in mentoring LABS professionals. Kannan and Kartik talk about their mentoring role in their relationship with LABS,

“Suku, Deen and I work very closely with LABS, in mentoring the teachers, mentoring the boys, talking to corporates and getting them business. Whenever I go to Bangalore, I visit the LABS, talk to the students, talk to the faculty, purely mentoring role and adding value.”

“My role is to get involved both in strategy and visioning as well as operational, grassroots level connection and mentoring of students, which keeps me energized.”

Learning centered organization

Students are not only the ones who learn at LABS. LABS is organized around supporting everyone for learning. Facilitators who are the key agents of delivery are supported through research. Those who are involved in curricular design are constantly innovating and incorporating the feedback provided by the facilitators. Arvind says,

“the pedagogy has been developed after so much of research, thousands of things had been experimented”

There are facilitators’ intranets, newsletters where they share their new practices and experiences and learn from each other. Every professional manager who gets hired has to be a facilitator at least one cycle so they learn about the grass-root reality of running LABS. Everyone shares the understanding that they have to constantly learn
from experience and apply the learning in the future. Rajesh’s quote is an apt representation of this quality.

“Here I am not given such a target, my target is livelihoods, I have done a good job, I still won’t rate it as the best job, I can do better, I am trying to implement and learn from the mistakes of the last batch and trying to improve the quality.”

**Dr. Reddy’s Foundation**

LABS was originally an initiative started by a major Indian pharmaceutical called Dr.Reddy’s Laboratories in Hyderabad through their non-profit arm, Dr. Reddy’s Foundation (DRF). DRF is also involved in various other initiatives mostly focused on underprivileged children and youth. So the LABS process and the pedagogy was developed by DRF and Sukumaran describes the relationship between DRF and other LABS centers,

“DRF has now become like a Chief Coordinator. We are working with DRF to evolve training programs for all the facilitators and coordinators of the various centers, to develop leadership, to look at succession planning, to enhance their own knowledge and equip them with higher skills and as a result of this, we are actually beginning to form cadres of people who are professional social workers who can deliver these results, and we may even think about transferability and you also have your own regional identity.”

Bala, one of the managers of DRF talks about the association between DRF and various centers.

“The association is very simple, we replicate our success. Our success is that. We will be helping them run the initiatives. Like the general MOUs any corporation has. We have set teams who handle these processes. We also have a fairly set process. The process starts with a market scan, we identify the local talent, skills, jobs, and initially, I remember that we didn’t know how to do it. Now we have a well established process, that too, in a set number of days, set number of people, what kind of people should be in the team. That also is very clear. Around 10 days to do the market scan, another 5 days to recruit and select the candidates, another five days for curriculum development, which happens simultaneously, and then the capacity building activity happens, the actual
training. These are the costs involved with these. We tell them and it will be directly paid to us. We are a Non Profit and so we only charge costs.”

DRF is headed by its Executive Director, Ms. Nalini Gangadharan, a veteran social worker. It has a few management professionals from premier Indian business schools running the initiative, focusing on strategy, scalability, operations and HR. This is a group of young leader-managers who are mostly in their mid and late twenties, infused with high energy which is fueled by their faith in this process, experimenting with a stint in the not-for-profit sector which leads to the creation of what Deen calls, ‘charged leadership’. He describes,

“there is a lot of turnover at the leadership level. I am okay with it. The reason I am saying because is a two or three year charged leadership. To sustain it. See, whomsoever comes in, after a two or three year stint, would like to go to the corporate world, because there is an attraction I am okay with it. Fine, let them go because, but the continuity of the person who is coming in, he would like to do better than the previous person and comes in with more energy. I think that is great because there is a continuous enhancement of the quality of the input coming in and the quality of the output going out of LABS. I don’t know if you have met Bala who is at Hyderabad, or Bhaskar was an outstanding contributor, Bhaskar who has moved to Airtel. They are all charged young men. Today Arvind is there, but tomorrow he might move, but somebody else will come in. And Arvind has done better than Bhaskar, not that Bhaskar did a bad job, he did a great job, but Arvind has learnt from him and is able to do a better job, it is an escalating effect. I am extremely proud of people like Bhaskar and Arvind, they are really taking a big risk. I think Arvind will do a far better job in any corporation he goes to work for next. Because you have seen the worst and best of the worlds. They are getting to interact with a spectrum of people and the world that most of us don’t get to see. Especially, we are all, as HR Managers or Personnel Managers or Plant Managers are talking about multiskilling, look at any HR Manager or Personnel Manager and see how much multi skilling they have. They are so functionally myopic and here in LABS, they get to learn every role, they would become excellent General Managers and it gives an option for volunteering in different models.”

All the managers talk about the dissonance that they feel in the marketplace when compared to their contemporaries from the b-schools. Bala likens it to a pendulum which
goes to extremes, the pressure becoming higher when they hit the marriageable age, like Bhaskar who quit to join a cellular company’s HR manager. But all of them talk about the immense everyday challenge and satisfaction that working at LABS provides them. In fact, the last I heard was that Bhaskar returned to work at LABS. But this group of young managers play a pivotal role in LABS.

LABS Centers - Facilitators

The various LABS centers were initiated by the local partners/sponsors, be it government bodies or corporations, and supported by DRF through technology transfer and employee development. Each LABS center is staffed by the facilitators of various academies. The role of facilitators is critical to the process delivery in LABS because they are the ones who are in front line contact with different stakeholder groups, in particular the students themselves and the alumni. As Arvind says,

“Our success really comes from the facilitators, their commitment, their delivery.”

One student describes what makes his teacher very special,

“Our teacher, he has taught us so much. even if he is upset with us, he will find ways to communicate and teach us rather than be angry at us. The way he treats us is so special. He teaches us about life. Even if we make him angry, he has every right to get angry, but he will control his temper, he will be patient, think from our point of view and teach us, that is really special. We can go on and on about him forever.”

Academies are the different programs offered by each center. For instance, LABS Chennai’s academies cater to multiple industries by training students in auto mechanical skills, IT enabled services like medical transcription, computer operations, office management, accounting and such applied software skills, home care nursing, retail
management and hospitality. Each academy has a facilitator who is responsible for the entire process, right from recruitment and training to placement. So their primary functions are not only training the youth, but also building relationships with many stakeholder groups like communities, alumni, industry employers and the local police force. Rajesh talks about his experience as a facilitator,

"After joining here in LABS, I was able to meet all categories of people. Right from the poorest of the poor to the richest of the rich and the person handling the highest quality. I am able to mingle with all kinds of personalities. I know what will be the response. Meet all categories of people. I have met the District Collector, I have met all the other leading government officials, I have met the Joint Commissioner of Police, the Commissioner of Police; all categories of people who are really interested in the LABS concept."

Each academy and therefore the facilitator, has a target in terms of number of youth and trained and placed in appropriate jobs. These facilitators are all considered as common resource pool for DRF and LABS in general and therefore ensuring their career progression.

"Suppose for example, we have a good coordinator here who is not able to grow in his career here, and we have the role of a chief coordinator in Pune, we will move him. so that way, we are trying to form cadres of people who are professionally qualified and at the same time can grow within the organization. We are trying to build an institution."

Each center is headed by the Center Head who is accountable for its performance and the other facilitators who have the energy, drive and the ability to start and build a new center are encouraged to do it. For instance, during my stay, I saw two facilitators among the five taking initiative to start two new centers, contribute to the scaling up of the operations and move up on the career ladder. There is no one way to do but it is a very flexible process and really depends on the facilitator and their conceptualization of the new center. For instance, SS, the facilitator of the Hospitality Academy, discovered in
his corporate networks that there was an opportunity to start a new center in a village about 150 miles from Chennai in collaboration with the local plants of a major corporate house there. But Rajesh focused on starting on a new suburban center near Chennai itself, thus replicating the model of LABS Chennai but catering to the neighboring communities of the new center.

LABS Chennai – Sponsors and Mentors

LABS Chennai, while an offshoot of LABS-DRF, is a separate entity in its membership. While LABS was started by the philanthropic foundation of one major corporation, LABS Chennai was started by four organizations which makes its character different. Sukumaran describes how LABS Chennai was different even at its beginning,

“Incidentally this whole thing was promoted by one single corporate giant like Dr.Reddy’s at Hyderabad. I found that that itself was a hindrance for other corporates and well meaning individuals to participate. And so, Chennai labs we had actually started it as a society. I think the name and the style of the organization and the financial structure is very important. So we are trying to put together a structure but which this is an open forum where people can come together and participate without the limelight being hogged by XYZ, in terms of people or organizations.”

Deen confirms the story as a co-founder of LABS, Chennai and someone with the longest involvement in the project,

“ It was a conflict that came up when we started making presentations to other corporates, we could feel the need; they said, if it is Dr. Reddy’s Labs, why don’t you get all the funds from them? If we want to participate, can this be an open forum? So today we have actually formed some kind of corporate consortium and we have signed a MOU on a long term basis, so today it doesn’t belong to anyone, at the same time it belongs to five corporates. So that way it is. And there are volunteers are working with it, the corporates have nothing to do with it. all they have done is to invest some money in it.”

This different configuration of multiple sponsors changes the way corporations and their managers get involved in LABS operations as well as opens up more resources
from the corporate networks than they otherwise would have. The role of corporations in LABS is described by Kartik, HR manager with Murugappa Group, a key sponsor of LABS Chennai,

“the way I see it, what we as corporates are doing is really technology transfer, we have learnt some skills as a business, like strategy, operations, sales, reviews and process management and we are transferring this technology to a non profit venture. and we are doing this on a voluntary basis. ofcourse this is more important than the money we invest in, or hiring the LABS graduates or whatever.”

While the role of sponsors as sources of funds cannot be downplayed, involvement of managers and executives is even more important to sustain the uniqueness of the program. For instance, the Steering Committee for LABS, Chennai is made up of two Heads of HR of major companies, one organizational consultant, and one entrepreneur. Sukumaran one of the members describe the role of the Steering Committee,

“We do the reviews every month, we review the syllabus, we review the performance, we review the targets. I am playing the role of a reviewer, I am also getting involved in improvement programs, looking at new opportunities, new markets, we are also developing new modules. Actually what we do is, we generate ideas, and inspire people within the board, Deen, myself, the Regional Coordinator, and we also meet with DRL once in a quarter to see if they have any new ideas so we can learn from them, and if we have new ideas they learn from us. The person, for example, Nalini comes and sits in these meetings with us and we take stock. And if there are certain things that have not been done also, we try to accelerate them. we also look at resources, so several. We are also planning a visioning exercise for a long term plan which is like a typical business plan for LABS. Deen and I are putting together one, which should be ready in the next couple of weeks or so, a typical long term business plan for Chennai LABS.”

Time and access to resources of these highflying executives is neither easy nor accessible if not for the fact that they are all emotionally involved in this initiative. Rajesh describes how vital corporate support is for the success of LABS and why they get involved:
“The main process that runs this is the corporate support like Murugappa Group, Rane Group, Khivraj who are supporting this venture. How many ever ideas we have, we need the resources to implement it. We get funds from all these corporations. They are getting involved in a not for profit mode, this venture is not to add to their wealth, which is great. Say for example, a new entrant, TVS group is joining. So corporations like this get involved in livelihoods, may be they feel that they have earned a lot and they want to do something back for the society.”

Sukumaran also describes how he taps into his corporate network to support LABS,

“Absolutely, but not only corporates but also our network among corporates to get people with know how, for example, if we are having a problem in the quality of programs, then we get someone from IIIC to come and evaluate it and give suggestions, it may be anyone, he may or may not be interested. But the sheer network, I ring up Gopal Pillai to send Joseph to see how the quality of programs is, can you develop measures of performance to see if they programs are going well, as an outsider what do you see ?”

REVERBERATIONS

Impact of LABS on Business

In the story of LABS, Chennai, most of the key executives who have been involved have had a basic inclination towards work of this kind and LABS provides the right space and opportunity for them to engage in such socially meaningful voluntary work. In the process, they have also gotten their respective organizations involved in LABS in some capacity. As we saw earlier, LABS Chennai came into existence because of a corporate dilemma that was faced by Sukumaran at his workplace and he described how he used the LABS model to address the issue. Therefore, involvement in such an initiative crosses boundaries and has the potential to be crossed over into the businesses that are involved. For example, Deen is the founder and CEO of ‘Center for Effectiveness’, a consulting/training organization that focuses on business process reengineering in manufacturing businesses and training the workforce in new ways of
working. He experimented with this model of vocational training when he was VP-HR of Dupont India when Dupont first began to set up operating units in India. For one of its plants, Deen conceived and implemented a model in which he identified a hundred youth from the community in which the factory was being set up and put them through a two year vocational training in a reputed technical institute, which not only trained them in technical skills but also in the Dupont model of team based work. While they were undergoing the program, they were paid a stipend and then they were recruited to man the factory and thus were able to use the local talent. As part of a larger consulting organizational design project for Dupont that I was undertaking at that point, I also worked with Deen on designing and evaluating this model of vocational training. The success and effectiveness of this model compelled Deen to set up an independent consulting/training organization on similar lines, leaving the safety of well paid employment with a multinational organization. Therefore, his involvement with LABS is almost a natural and seamless next step. Deen himself describes his involvement with LABS,

“There is no point in talking to the whole world about it. Instead do it in a small way wherever we can. I do it in my business model, I do it with LABS. I don’t think we can do it in a big way. Though I try, in my meeting with Abdul Kalam (President of India), whoever I meet, I spend the final fifteen minutes of my presentations on this. In some places, it works, in some places, it doesn’t.”

He calls it his fifteen minutes for the fifteen percent, meaning the lowest fifteen percent below the poverty line. I must add that Deen is an epitome of humility and a very reticent man and therefore, interviewing him about his involvement was like pulling teeth. What he terms ‘doing it in a small way’, as can be seen from the excerpt, has had a
major impact on LABS, because he carries out a critical networking function for LABS by talking about it to virtually everyone he meets. As he himself describes,

   “Latha, I try to sensitize our HR professionals. Like Kannan, I introduced him to LABs and Kuthambakkam and he is now actively involved in it.”

Kannan’s interview corroborates,

   “If Deen hadn’t come and told me about LABS, I wouldn’t have known about it. I was introduced to LABS through Deen, Deen as a consultant, whoever he meets up as a client, he makes it a point to talk about LABS during the last ten minutes after the business is over. He did talk to me and it really touched me in the sense that, you know, I have always wanted to associate myself and add value to that part of the society, you know, education, people growing up, coaching them, mentoring them, possibly it is my own desire to see how, I think I have come up in a particular way, and that is good, and I want to see that reflection on others.”

Deen also told me about an interesting story in which Kannan and Deen introduced an innovation in hiring that helped position the hearing impaired on Pepsico’s production line. They were in conversation when they came up with the idea together when they were working on enhancing the effectiveness of Pepsico factories and this innovation actually won Kannan an international Pepsi co Award for Diversity.

   “In Pepsico, before they bottle the drinks, they inspect the bottles. Most of the bottles have been used for multipurpose, and however much you clean and reuse, some particles may stay back and so they do a physical inspection. It is humanly impossible to inspect thousands of bottles without experiencing fatigue. I was telling Kannan, we are doing something wrong here. We have to try something else. We are putting a normal human being there. And fatigue factors are going to be there. Let us try deaf people. In compensation, their eye sight is going to be far better than the normal person. Today, he took the experiment very seriously, and today, most of the Pepsi plants have used the deaf people for these jobs and their rejection rates have come down far lower than the usual ones.”

**Impact on Students and community**

I present the following success stories that were shared by the interviewees to illustrate the impact of LABS on its students and the communities they belong to.
“For instance, there was a student from a village called Periapalayam in the last batch. It is a village near Tiruvellore. He is the son of a very poor farmer, he came and studied “Hospitality” here. In the fifth batch, we identified a need and started a new course called Hospitality. Through one of the Ramakrishna Mutt, we get students and train them. Now he is working in MTR, in a MTR outlet on G N Chetty Road. And, the particular student, when he joined, he said, when we asked for the registration fee, he said, “Sir, my father is dead, my elder brother is an alcoholic, my mother is suffering. We don’t have money, my mother works as a domestic servant here and there. I have never laid my eyes on a hundred rupee note ever. There is no opportunity”. If you look at Ramakrishna Mutt, they do a lot of religious activities but not many social development activities, but somehow they recommended this student to us, we trained him and got him a job and the first month when he got the salary, he was so happy. We try to stop by and see him whenever we pass that side. We stop and ask him how he is, how his work is. He said, “Sir, I am so happy, I didn’t expect it. I just did not think. I was in the village with no opportunities and I never expected that I would move to a city and make 3000 rupees a month. I never thought my family would improve so much. I can never forget LABS or any of you. In such a short time that too. I never thought.”

“We had one from Tirunelveli. We had a program, a live program in All India Radio. The previous Coordinator Shanmugam did a live program on radio which was broadcast all over the state, through that reference, she came all the way here, stayed in a relative’s house. The relatives did not feed her properly, did not treat her properly, exploited her to do a lot of household work, she used to come late everyday, she used to cry and all that. she studied IT enabled services, specialized in Tally and after finishing the course, she got a job in a company in T Nagar as Accounts Assistant and earned some money. Every month she used to send some money to her mother too. If you see now, from here she had gone back to Tirunelveli and got a job there. So now she is staying with her mother and working there itself and every New Year she used to send a greeting card to us and here we have a ELP procedure. Like she has to repay some money, in addition to the initial registration fee, after they get trained and get a job, they have to pay some money in installments. There is no fixed amount for it, depends on how much they can pay and how much they are willing to pay. It really depends on them and their wish. It is basically to invest in the future of LABS, that particular girl took a demand draft of three hundred rupees and sent it. To that extent, they are very involved in LABS and grateful to LABS.”

CONCLUSION

In this case study, I have presented and described the LABS model and its two elements, LABS Process and LABS Organization. Key dimensions of LABS process are affirmative assumptions, grounding in whole person, grounding of whole person in the community, and a glimpse of the ‘other’. LABS organization describes the relationship
between Dr. Reddy’s Foundation and the various LABS centers, and the different groups of people who are involved in the initiative including Mentors and Sponsors, Professional Managers, and LABS facilitators, with a special focus on LABS Chennai.
PART THREE

PRACTICE-ARRANGEMENT BUNDLES

Overview

Anchored in site ontology, Schatzki (2005), my level of analysis in this study has been the practice-arrangement bundles, i.e. contextualized practice of change. According to this approach, the site of the social is a mesh of practices and material and structural arrangements. Now, I present a brief summary of Schatzki’s (2002) new type of social ontology called site ontology. Social ontology examines the nature and basic structure of social life and social phenomena. Schatzki (2002) writes that since the mid-1800s when the nature of social life became an object of focused thought, social ontology has been divided into two camps: individualists and societists. Ontological individualists maintain that social phenomena are either constructions out of or constructions of individual people and on some versions, their relations. He also writes that there are two types of individualists – constructionists and institutionalists. Constructionists are those who hold the belief that social phenomena consist of individuals and their relations; in their view, what there is in the world to a social phenomena is a collection of actions and mental states of, as well as relations among, individuals. Institutionalists are those who hold the belief that social phenomena are brought into existence by virtue of people holding certain attitudes and beliefs and performing certain actions. Over time, in the Anglo-American world, individualism has become the dominant ontological approach to social life. Schatzki (2002) argues that its ascendancy is due to the affinity between political and ontological individualism, and to the fact that individualism facilitates mathematical model-building and that American social science has a strong scientistic self-
understanding. Prominent advocates of this purest individualism have included Max Weber, Frederick Hayek, John Searle and within organizational theory, Herbert Simon.

Nonindividualist ontologists contest this thesis. While all these ontological societists agree that it is not true that all social phenomena are constructions of or out of individuals and their relations, they also strongly disagree among themselves about what in addition to features of people, individually or collected, is needed to examine or explain social phenomena. Three prominent societist ontologies in the 20th century were wholism, Durkheimian sociology, and structuralism. Wholism focuses on such large-scale phenomena and economic systems and argues that these phenomena are wholes. On this line of thinking, social wholes are what there is to the social that is impervious to individualist analysis. The second prominent societist ontology, that of Durkheim contends that social facts are irreducible to ‘individualist’ ones. They are categorically different from, and subject to types of explanation not applicable to, the latter. Social facts are what of the social that escapes individualism. Being a while is not a defining feature of them. A third prominent form of societist ontology, structuralism, maintains that the possibilities or the composition of such social phenomena as economies or political formations is governed by, or made up of, abstract, non-spatial-temporal structure. Like wholism and unlike Durkheimian social theory, structuralists argue that social phenomena consist in the activities of individuals governed by abstract structures. Parallel to Durkheim and divergent from wholists, however, many structuralists contend that abstract structures govern and compose not just large-scale social, economic, and political formations but also such clearly non-whole phenomena as myths, religions, and languages.
However, in the recent decades, a new approach to social ontology called Site Ontology has emerged. Site ontologies steer a path between individualism and society because like societist ontologies, they immerse the relevant features of individuals in wider, distinctly social settings in the absence of which people with these features would not exist. Like individualist ontologies, they hold that properties of individuals are ontologically continuous with the distinct social contexts in which they exist. Site ontology maintains that social life is inherently tied to a kind of context in which it transpires. In this definition, site is not merely the absolute or physical site. But it is rather arenas or broader sets of phenomena as part of which something exists or occurs. In this framework, sites are not necessarily spatial or absolute constructions, but sites are the practices. A site is therefore, a type of context. What makes this framework interesting is that context and contextualized entity constitute one another. A site is therefore, inseparable from that of which it is the site. While similar constructions have been advanced by Bordieu, Laclau, Mouffe, and Taylor, Schatzki was the first one to coin this terminology and develop it as a distinctive form.

In Schatzki’s (2002) model, the site of the social is composed of nexuses of practices and material arrangements; a mesh of practices and material arrangements. Practices are organized human activities. Any practice is an organized, open-ended spatial-temporal manifold of actions. The set of actions that composes a practice is organized by three phenomena: understandings of how to do things, rules and teleoaffec-tive structure. Rules are explicit formulations that prescribe, require, or instruct that such and such be done, said, or the case; a teleoaffec-tive structure is an array of ends, projects, uses (of things), and even emotions that are acceptable or prescribed for
participants in the practice. To say that particular actions are connected by these three phenomena is to say that these actions express the same understandings, observe the same rules, or pursue ends and execute projects that are elements of the same normative teleological order, namely, those end project-task combinations that acceptable or prescribed for participants in the practice in question.

For example, let us consider the practice of ‘preparation for marriage’ in the context of India where arranged marriage is still prevalent and in the West, where marriage is based on the concept of romantic love. The fundamental assumption about what marriage is meant to do is different in these societies. In Indian society, marriage is not just the union of two individuals, it is the union of two large, extended families who are in turn enmeshed in networks of kinships and therefore, cultural and social compatibility becomes the currency of legitimacy. Given the hierarchical nature of family systems in the society, it becomes the responsibility of the elders to arrange the alliance because they ‘know’ who is appropriate for their family and the child. This assumption guides rules of behavior and emotions of those who are to be married; dating is not a permissible action, romantic love is not a permissible emotion. In contrast, because the west believes in the concept of romantic love and individual choice, marriage is considered to be the union of two individuals and if the marrying individuals are aligned culturally and socially with their families of their respective spouses, it is rather a bonus, neither a precondition to nor an expectation of marriage. Because this model is predicated upon individual choice, it is the individual’s responsibility to find a mate, develop a relationship and get married. To achieve this, the rules of the game are different here. Dating is not simply acceptable behavior, but one that is encouraged even at a very young
age (or at least what would be considered young by Indian standards) through school organized proms etc. The actions in the Indian context would be taken by parents or elders of the individual’s family to search for an appropriate groom or bride, which might mean spreading the word to known people, passing the horoscope, advertising in the matrimonial columns of newspapers and websites in today’s context etc. except for the unusual occasions of individuals breaking the rules and falling love.

Schatzki (2000) also argues that these practices are not aggregates of the properties of specific individuals, for instance, the actions, understandings, rules, desires, emotions of specific people. The actions that compose a practice are, to be sure, ones specific individuals perform. But the organization of a practice is not a set of properties of specific individuals. A practice is organized by an array of intelligibilities, rules, ends, projects, and ways things matter. This array is distinct from, and differentially incorporated into, the minds of participants. While the phenomena of understandings, rules, and teleoafffective structure that organize practice are contained in people’s mental states, for example their understandings, desires, beliefs and emotions, but the organization of a practice itself remains distinct from its incorporation. In the practice of preparation for marriage, the end goal of marriage helps organize the practice of preparation, but is distinct both from any participant’s desire for marriage and from any sum of participant’s desires for marriage. Therefore, understandings or rules do not cause action, but, rather actions express understandings. Which understandings are expressed by a given action depends on several factors: the other actions that actor concerned performs; his or her mental conditions; the situation of the action; and the wider social context, including the practices in which he or she participates. Therefore, a particular
practice depends on the social, historical, and material context in which the activity transpires. Therefore, to study a social phenomenon, it is not sufficient to study the practice, but the practice should be examined in the context of the material-structural arrangements which is the second dimension of this ontology.

In this approach, social reality is not only composed of the individual actions, beliefs, attitudes and thoughts, but material and structural arrangements influence the practice and are in turn in influenced by practice. Using the same example of ‘preparation for marriage’, I will now illustrate the concept of material and structural arrangements. These arrangements might include family structure, schools, friendship networks, role of resources, and other kinds of networks, media, and physical spaces. For purposes of illustrations, I will now address two of these arrangements: role of resources and physical spaces and how they are shaped by and shape the practice of ‘preparation for marriage’. Resources include social, material and cultural dimensions. A high school student going to a prep school in the west can be assumed to have different resources at their disposal in comparison with a same age student going to the inner city public school. This differential access to resources might determine their attitudes to preparation for marriage and their vision about ideal marriages. While a prep school student may think of marriage as a possibility in the distant future because the social network to which he or she belongs may share that belief, an inner city teen may not share the same belief. In the Indian context, similar dynamics operate; for example, the type/caste of family that one comes from and the resources that they have at their disposal would impact their vision of marriage and hence their ‘preparation for marriage’. However, practice-arrangements bundles get reshaped over time.
Now, I will illustrate how physical location influences the practice of ‘preparation for marriage’. For example, there are many Indian migrants living in the US and elsewhere in the West, where free of the space/family/social structure and its attendant rules, who do fall in love with Indians as well as people of other ethnic origins and in their cases, the trajectory of ‘preparation for marriage’ gets changed. Even in the cases of individuals who still operate by the conventional rules of Indian society, certain dynamic contextual changes impact the practice of ‘preparation for marriage’. For example, let us compare an Indian who holds a non-immigrant visa like a student visa or a work visa with an Indian who has been granted permanent residency by the US government. The permanent residency or green card is a lifelong dream of many third world citizens, but it provides a twist in the practice of ‘preparing for marriage’ because while it is reasonably simple for the spouse of a nonimmigrant visa holder to get a dependent spouse visa, it is much more complicated for the spouse of a green card holder, because the spouses become automatically eligible for a green card and join a completely different queue in the visa office. On occasions, this process takes up to three years. This impacts the preparation for marriage practice, because in cases of green card holders, they are forced to look for brides who are already in the US on some kind of visa. This means the traditional modes of searching for suitable spouses by parents for their children are no longer appropriate because traditional modes are dependent on either locally rooted networks or newspaper advertisements. This has led to a boom in the use of web based search services by parents and individuals themselves. Because their search is geographically restricted, parents are now forced to relax their strict criteria about caste and communities. This example also illustrates how a particular practice-arrangement
bundle is nested within other practice-arrangements bundles; in this case the practices of preparation for marriage and marriage are nested within the American visa granting practice and are shaped by it. Thus, practices, arrangements, and practice-arrangement bundles are intricately interlaced, forming among other things, nets of meshes and confederation of nets. And at their widest expanse, they form an immensely complex overall nexus of practices and arrangements that connect, overlap, and interpenetrate in a labyrinthine, unsystematic, and contingent fashion. Moreover, Schatzki (2000) argues that this immensely complex nexus is the overall site of human existence at any given moment. Anchored in site ontology, I have used the practice-arrangements bundle as my level of analysis and present the analysis in this part of the dissertation.

This part is organized into three chapters, chapters six through eight. Chapter 6 uses the critical genealogical approach to describe the impact of colonization and globalization on ecologies and social life of India. In this chapter, I introduce Gadgil & Guha’s (2000) socio-ecological framework, locate the three cases in this framework and describe how the fate of the three cases are intertwined. In this chapter, I also draw on Beteille (2000), Deshpande (2003), Dreze & Sen (1996), Gadgil & Guha (2000), Shiva (2001), Thapar (2000), Tharoor (2001). In Chapter 7, I describe the structural arrangements in the three sites because these structures are the vehicles which enable and get and shaped by the practice of change. Chapter 8 presents the practice component of the Practice-Arrangement Bundle: teleo affective structure, actions and understandings in these sites. In these chapters, I also illustrate how I have folded in the themes the case narratives illuminated.
CHAPTER SIX

A Historical-Socio-Ecological View of the Cases

In this chapter, I describe the impact of capitalization on social and physical ecologies of India. I use the critical genealogical approach and present a historical analysis of the erstwhile process of colonization and present day globalization of India and its impact on physical and social ecology, especially people’s livelihood and ways of life. By using a historical lens, I also address the fourth paradoxical requirement of time that Van de Ven and Poole (1998) prescribe in their model of organizational change. By bringing together macro and micro histories I provide a historical understanding of the Zeitgeist. In the first section, I provide a very brief introduction to pre-colonial India. In the second section, I describe the history of the takeover of people’s commons by the British government and how it impacted livelihood. In the next section, I overview continuing neocolonial practices in post colonial, post independent India. Next, I locate India in the current zeitgeist in globalization discourse, with specific reference to WTO and its impact on marginalized communities. Finally, I contextualize the three cases using the socio-ecological framework developed by Gadgil & Guha (2000).

An Introduction to Pre-colonial India

Artifacts from the Middle Pleistocene Period, i.e. between 700,000 and 400,000 B.P provide the first firm evidence of human occupation of the Indian subcontinent. This was a period of food gatherers. The first urban civilizations appeared in India, around 6000 to 1000 B.C., with signs of settled cultivation of paddy, wheat, animal husbandry, use of iron and wheel, first sign of literacy found among excavations of the Mohanja daro and Harappa civilizations. This was the time
India got its name from the River Indus, which flows in Pakistan today. Indus Valley Civilization came to a natural end due to the geological change in the course of rivers and continuous lifting up of the Himalayas. People moved southward to the fertile Gangetic plains and beyond. This was followed by the emergence of the Bharata tribe, which gave rise to the name Bharat for India. Between 1000 B.C. and 500 B.C., the caste system had emerged although people could still change their occupation, Vedic literature emerged and the Great Indian epics were written.

The period between 500 B.C. and 650 A.D. was the time of plenty and prosperity, an age of great empires, the building of great universities, and a period of maritime trade with Rome, Greece, and Eastern islands like Indonesia, Sumatra, and Srilanka. This age also saw a boom of population, leading to conservation efforts such as vegetarianism and an extreme ethic of non-violence in many sects of the country, especially in the drier and less productive regions. This was also the time when Alexander the Great crossed the River Indus; the whole subcontinent came under the rule of the Mauryas and for the first time India became one political entity.

India has also been home to multiple religions and their influences through the centuries. Christianity came to South India in the first century AD through Saint Thomas, the Apostle. Between 1000 A.D. and 1526 A.D. there were a number of Muslim and Hindu dynasties in various parts of the country and Islamic influences also appeared in the country. 1526 AD was the year the Mughal Dynasty was established by Babur, and this dynasty went to rule into the 1600s when the East India Company was established. This was the period when great Mughal forts and the Taj Mahal were built.
India retained its integrity during this period despite the influx of Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism, and birth of Buddhism, Jainism, and the Mughal Rule. However, the British colonial rule was a crucial watershed in terms of changing Indian political, economic and socio-ecological structures.

Roots of Colonization

Colonization was a quest for global control of resources and the conquest of new areas paved the ways for such control. At this time, Europe was at the peak of its Industrial Revolution and was in need of more resources – land, gold, coal, and steel and more markets for their commodities. By 1860, Britain was the leader of deforestation; it had already denuded most of Great Britain, Ireland, South Africa and the North Eastern United States for shipbuilding and iron smelting. This destructive energy was rapidly converting forests into deserts all over the world (Webber, 1902). For instance, there were only 24 acres per European before Columbus set out to sail and this moved up to 120 acres after the extermination of indigenous tribes in the Americas and Australia. The extermination route was not a feasible option in the ecologically resistant, older civilizations like India and China, regions “within reach and beyond grasp” as Crosby (1986) terms them because of the higher population densities, resistance to diseases, agricultural technology and sophisticated socio-political organizations. There was a need for a different strategy for exploitation in these regions. This strategy was to come in as a trader, move to the role of military adviser and ally through offers of superior military technology, and then transition to rulership through proxy at first and then directly. While, ecological imperialism led to political consolidation in the New World, in India, political control preceded immense
and untold damage to ecological and social systems. The takeover of India by British Crown couldn’t have happened at a more apt time for Britain. Indian teak saved Britain during the war against Napoleon and permitted later maritime expansion.

**Takeover of the commons and the impact on ecology and livelihood**

In 1865, the British crown created the Imperial Forest Department and passed the Indian Forest Act, making the British Crown the largest landowner of the country. This Act brought all the forests and ‘wastelands’ (i.e. common lands and pastures) under British control. What the British Crown called ‘wastelands’ was similar to what De Soto (year) calls ‘dead capital’, people lived in them and off them. They were not wastelands but productive lands that provided extensive common resources for established peasant communities. Thus, this act deprived millions access to their livelihood. As property rights were redefined in ways that conflicted with earlier systems of local use and control, changes in forest ecology occurred, commercial species replaced those that were used for fuel, fodder, leaf manure and small timber, and the established communities of hunter-gatherers, settled and shifting cultivators were deprived of resources. This also affected the artisans who depended on bamboo from the forests for their livelihood and weavers who used to collect silk cocoons from the forests. The artisans had to pay the government for raw materials, which they had had free access to for thousands of years before. The subsistence economy of the peasants and artisans was undermined leading to destitution of millions in a way that had never before been part of the Indian history, despite intense stratification through the caste system.
The imperialist government also encouraged people to bring more area under cultivation because it added to their tax revenue but it reduced the area of the commons, leading to degradation of the environment. The building of the Indian railway network to aid dumping of manufactured goods from Britain denuded most of Himalayas, and the Western and Eastern Ghats, which in turn affected monsoons and created alternating floods and draughts, leading to problems in irrigation and affecting production. In the course of Indian ecological history, the connection between Western imperialism, fuelled by Western capitalism, and environmental degradation is apparent. This, combined with compulsory cultivation of cash crops for Britain’s consumption, led to famines killing millions of Indians. As Thompson (1971) notes that if the customary use of forest rested on a moral economy of provision, scientific forestry rested squarely on a political economy of profits. Moreover, large expanses of woodland that originally belonged to the people were sold at ridiculously low prices to Europeans for development of tea, coffee and rubber plantations, forcing the locals to become wage laborers on the lands that they used to collectively own. The forced movement from subsistence to commercial use, the delegitimization of the community, and the abandoning of restraints on resource exploitation ran counter to Indian belief and for the first time in the history of India, a serf class emerged out of deprived livelihoods.

**Post Independent India**

India’s independence in 1947 did not change much for the poor. In Independent India, exploitation of the poor continued to happen through ‘development’. As Nandy (2000) says, colonialism is a psychological state rooted in
earlier forms of social consciousness in both the colonizer and the colonized. It represents a certain cultural continuity and carries a certain cultural baggage in the minds of a number of Indians like India’s first Prime Minister, Cambridge educated Jawaharlal Nehru, who believed that India needed to catch up with the west and join the bandwagon of development. This led to infrastructure development through building of dams, creating technical and administrative bureaucracy, and sacrificing the interest of the bulk of the rural population, with little regard for social and ecological consequences. What Sreshta (2000) says for Nepal could be said for India too:

“the way I see it, the elites ....are at the root of most social and economic problems haunting Nepal. In the name of development, we pursued our own interests, both individually and as a class. We incarnated ourselves as domestic sahibs, denigrating the poor and their labor. In our attempt to look and become westernized, we have created a monster out of developmentalism, lost touch with our social consciousness and humanity and surrendered our national dignity and culture”.

The Green Revolution brought the use of chemical fertilizers that led to degradation of soil, adoption of grains and methods unsuitable to the particular region, subsidies to rich farmers and displacement of millions through large irrigation projects like dams. It also perpetuated disproportionately high investment in institutions of higher education to the neglect of the primary education, leading to a high percentage of illiteracy combined with the second largest pool of trained scientists and engineers in the world. What also happened was that education during this period emphasized the science of agriculture, leading to loss of local knowledge that has been garnered over generations of relationship with the environment. Gandhiji pointed to this danger in 1935 when he said that modern education makes young people unfit for any useful
function in life because their own civilization is presented to them as imbecile, barbarous, superstitious and useless for all practical purposes. These initiatives have led to ecologically the most complex society in the world in which stone age hunter gatherers, white collar bureaucrats, nomadic shepherds, pavement dwellers, artisanal fisherfolk, shifting cultivators, sugar barons, textile mill owners, software exporters, fuel wood head loaders and engineers co-exist.

Globalization and India

Appadurai (2000) asks,

“What does globalization mean for labor markets and fair wages? How will it affect chances for real jobs and reliable rewards? What does it mean for the ability of nations to determine the economic futures of their populations? What is the hidden dowry of globalization? Christianity? Cyberproletarisation? New forms of structural adjustments? Americanization disguised as human rights or MTV?”

While 350,000 new jobs have been created in the outsourcing industry in India, which is heralded as the liberating force of Indian economy, the first ever labor study of the outsourcing industry published a report that accuses the companies of running sweatshops which are worse than seventeenth century capitalist enterprises. Ten years after the WTO came to India, the anticipated gains for India, where nearly 70 percent of the population is directly or indirectly involved with agriculture and farming, have been almost negligible. The WTO agreement on Agriculture had stipulated a phase-out of subsidies under a time-bound program. For instance, the developed countries were required to reduce farm export subsidies by 36 percent and the volume of subsidized export by 21 percent during 1995-2000. But nothing like this happened. Every nation wanted to maintain its supremacy. As Dr. Sharma (2001) says, “More so with developed countries, which know very well that there is no better and effective
weapon than food. The entire effort, therefore, is to build on and strengthen the supremacy in food”. This can only be done if they are able to continue with massive subsidies that these countries have been providing its farmers. For instance, the American government has provided an additional subsidy of $26 billion to its 9,00,000 farmers. It has also promised to pay an additional $170 billion to its farmers in the next ten years under the new Farm Bill that has been cleared by the US Congress recently. This is not including the $12 billion it provides for market interventions abroad. American agriculture is probably the most pampered in the world and yet it asks the rest of the world to reduce or do away with agriculture subsidies.

The European Union is not far behind. In 1995, when WTO came into existence, it used to provide roughly $90 billion worth subsidies to its 7 million farmers. Six years later, the subsidies have risen to $114.5 billion. The richest trading block – Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) provides agricultural subsidies to the tune of $1 billion a day. India provides $1 billion worth of subsidies in a year, all indirectly in form of cheap fertilizers, power and so on. The amount of subsidy that a cow in the western countries receives is more than the annual income of a dairy farming family in India. India is being asked to do away even these subsidies as part of the Structural Adjustment Programme of the IMF and the World Bank. Such subsidies by the developed nations combined with removal of subsidies for the poor of India have already inundated the Indian market with cheap and highly subsidized imports. For a poor country, importing food is like importing unemployment.
WTO and India

The WTO is a rule-based organization under which each country has to follow the stipulated norms. All the nations were asked to phase out or remove the quantitative restrictions or trade barriers by April 2001 and India has removed and phased out trade barriers in 824 agricultural commodities and products and has become vulnerable to subsidized import dumping, while the Western world continues to maintain its subsidies and protects its agriculture. Despite the fact that India is the largest producer of milk in the world, cheaper imports of skimmed powder have started flooding the market and one can imagine the impact on the dairy farmers of the country.

The Indian Government, aware of the growing disenchantment over its WTO policies, maintained a tough stance at the Doha ministerial. It has also admitted that the hopes of an international regime that talked about establishing a fair and market oriented agricultural trading system that has all but been beguiling. But once again, agriculture and farm trade for all practical purposes have been kept out of the rule-based WTO as far as the rich countries are concerned. It is in agriculture that the most contentious of the issues that the rules of the game are heavily tilted against the developing countries. The WTO’s Agreement on Agriculture had to incorporate the three broad areas of commitment from member states, namely in market access, domestic support and export subsidies. The underlying objective was supposedly to correct and prevent restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets. Six years later, it is now established that these measures have only protected the farmers and farming systems of the developed countries. On the other hand, the trading regime has
ensured that developing countries take time-bound initiatives to open their domestic markets for cheap and highly subsidized imports of agricultural commodities.

Tariff peaks, i.e. high import duties continue to block exports from the developing countries. Tariffs still remain very high, especially in the case of cereals, sugar and daily products. Sanitary measures enforced to ensure quality of the imported products continue to be a major barrier in diversifying exports in horticulture and meat products. Selective reduction in tariffs by the developed countries has also blocked the exports from developing countries. Only 36 developed countries have the right to impose special safeguard provisions if agricultural imports distort their domestic markets.

**Intellectual Property Rights**

Another important area is TRIPS (Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) and its effect on poor countries. The TRIPS agreement was the brainchild of an industry coalition made up of people from the United States, the European Union and Japan. The first initiative was taken by the Intellectual Property Committee, which brought together 13 major US corporations including Bristol Myers Squibb, Dupont, Monsanto and General Motors. This agreement is hugely controversial because it recognizes patents on plants that have been developed through biotechnology using plant varieties that themselves are the results of years of crossbreeding by farmers. Such ‘rights’ can deprive farmers of their rights – the right to develop and exchange their own seed, and ultimately, the right of survival. This implies that TRIPS does not recognize communities’ rights over their resources. This also allows Western TNCs to steal seed varieties and indigenous and herbal drugs
from the third world countries. This agreement on patents also affects public health in poor countries. For example, South Africa requisitioned India for a supply of cheaper generic drugs and this resulted in drug companies filing a court case against TRIPS infringement. Right now the Indian drug company was able to supply the cheap, generic version of the medicine because India still does not have in place a new patent regime on the lines of TRIPS. Once the patent laws are amended to conform to the TRIPS agreement, Indian companies will be forbidden from producing cheaper versions of generic drugs, denying millions of poor access to medicine. Finally, free trade means free movement of capital but not the free movement of laborer. If the developed countries were really keen on a global democracy and free trade, they would also be lifting the restrictions on visas and allow all people from the poorer nations to come into their countries and share their abundant resources. It is simply imperialism under a new form.

Global Environmentalism and India

Let us next look at global environmentalism. Gupta (2000) contends that global environmentalism is part of a qualitative transformation of the world economy whose ramifications go beyond mere intensification of existing trends. It foreshadows the creation of a set of institutions and practices that make up, in Foucauldian terms, a new technology of government. He also says that to talk about these changes entirely in terms of geographical expansion of capitalism is to thus underspecify what is distinctive about the world order. Efforts to push a binding treaty that would mandate conservation failed, owing to strenuous opposition from Brazil, India, and Malaysia. If signed, it would result in international pressure on the Indian government to limit
access to firewood, which would raise the price of cooking fuel, and would raise prices for oil based chemical fertilizers. The Biodiversity convention declares the genetic diversity carefully nurtured by farmers practicing ‘traditional’ agriculture over millennia to be ‘the common heritage of mankind’ but abrogates to mostly First World capitalist institutions the ‘intellectual property rights’ that flow from tinkering with and genetically altering the painstaking preserved resources.

A look at the Kyoto protocol shows us that the Emperor of Kyoto is not wearing any clothes. George Bush, the leader of the world’s biggest polluter, walked out of the multilateral discussions declaring the protocol was “fatally flawed in fundamental ways”. Now, every small area of .05 hectare under trees can be calculated as a sink. Every scrubland is included, as an area with 10 to 30 percent tree cover has been defined as a forest. And even areas with no trees temporarily, but which are expected to revert back to being forests, can be added. Countries can also now add up any management measures taken to improve the productivity of forests, agricultural and grazing lands as their contribution to cut greenhouse gas emissions. The next big concession was on the issue of compliance. In the protocol, the world had to design an enforcement mechanism for the rich and the powerful. The initial talk was for a punitive and legally binding compliance regime, which would put in place severe monetary penalties for not meeting the target. But the final agreement makes the enforcement branch the ‘facilitative branch’ making the protocol a voluntary agreement and not legally binding. The climate negotiations are not really about the environment but the economy and every nation is working overtime to protect its right to pollute. Emerging science tells us that climatic change will result in greater climatic
variation and extreme events like floods, droughts and cyclones and sea level rise, leaving poor people living at the very margins of survival to become even more vulnerable.

**Colonization & Globalization: Different or Same?**

In 1937, George Orwell observed that bourgeois socialists were prepared to demand the death of capitalism and the destruction of the British Empire only because they knew that these things were unlikely to happen. He claimed,

“For, apart from my other consideration, the high standard of life we enjoy depends upon keeping a tight hold on the Empire – in order that England may live in comparative comfort, a hundred million Indians must live on the verge of starvation – an evil state of affairs, but you acquiesce in it every time you step into a taxi or eat a plate of strawberries and cream. The middle class socialist is perfectly ready to accept the products of the Empire and to save his soul by sneering at the people who hold the Empire together”.

The economic formula has not changed much in the last seven decades. The inhabitants of the first world owe their prosperity, comparative comfort and high physical quality of life indicators and their GDP to the inordinate power that their governments wield, the inordinate wealth that flows from that power. Accepting the need for global democracy would mean accepting the loss of this power to ensure that the world is not run for the benefit of the rich.

The commonality among the approaches of domination and exploitation whether it was extermination in the Americas, colonization of India, ‘development’ by the World Bank and the present day mantra of globalization, all these start with depriving the poorest of the world, of their basic security in food and medicine and their livelihood. Deprivation of access to commons did not just deny their basic rights to land but also their livelihoods. For instance, before the Forest Act was passed,
artisans used to take bamboo and silk cocoons from the forests at no cost, and after the Act was passed, they were forced to buy their raw material from the state and their sustenance economy could not afford it. This is quite similar to the current day dispute over patenting of life forms by the Western companies, which forces the poor farmers to buy seeds. For generations, they have not only crossbred and generated a number of seed forms, they are also used to save part of the current year’s crop as seeds for the next season. The British government also imposed very high taxes on local weavers and iron smelters making it possible to dump their cheaper manufactured goods into the Indian market. This is not vastly dissimilar to the unequal tariff structures between various countries that allow the west to dump their surplus into the markets of the developing countries and simultaneously robbing millions of the poor their livelihood.

A socio-ecological view of the cases

In the previous sections, I argued that physical ecologies impact social life and described the zeitgeist in the context of globalization. Next, I present a socio-ecological view of the cases based on Gadgil & Guha’s (2000) original framework. I overview the framework, and develop the concept of class mobility in this framework as a vicious cycle and locate the three cases by discussing how ‘water’ a key resource for survival and prosperity of human groups impacts the three cases. Gadgil & Guha (2000) offer an original framework to understand social stratification from an ecological point of view. This framework divides the society into three categories: Ecosystem people, Omnivores and Ecological Refugees.

Ecosystem people are those who depend on their local environment for their livelihood and meet most of their material needs. The authors suggest that perhaps
four-fifths of India’s rural people, over half of total population, belong to this category. These include small and subsistence farmers, hunter-gatherers, artisanal fisherfolk and the like. As the natural world recedes, capacity of the local ecosystems to support these people shrinks. For example, dams and mines have physically displaced millions of peasants and tribal people in independent India. Bias in the development process passes off costs such as resource depletion, habitat fragmentation, and species loss to the ecosystem people and makes them Ecological Refugees. Ecological refugees live on the margins of islands of prosperity, as farm laborers in the rural areas and as domestic servants in the urban areas. As many as one-third of the Indian population live today such a life as displaces, with little that they can pick up from the natural world, but not much money to buy the commodities that the shops are brimming with either. The remaining one-sixth of the population ends up being the real beneficiaries of economic development, which Gadgil & Guha (2000) describe as the growth of the artificial at the cost of the natural. These beneficiaries are bigger landowners with access to irrigation, urban professionals, lawyers, doctors, investment bankers, rapidly gaining in wealth and prestige, and the ever-growing number of bureaucrats. According to this framework, devouring everything produced all over the earth, leading a luxurious life at the cost of great damage to people and resources all around them, they are the Omnivores of the society.

This model can also be successfully applied to the world at large. Most of the inhabitants of the first world and the elite of the third world are the omnivores driving more and more of the third world poor ecosystem people into becoming ecological
refugees. 20% of the world consumes 80% of the resources. The ‘haves’ form just 23 percent of the population, but occupy 50 percent of the land area, account for 60 percent of the energy consumed and earn 85 percent of the world’s income. For example, an average American consumes over two tones of steel every five years in the form of cars and eats 113 kilograms of meat, whether beef, lamb or pork, every year; and consumes 7822 kilograms of oil equivalent annually. In contrast, an average Indian consumes 50 kg of steel, and eats only 2 kg of meat annually. He barely consumes 231 kg of oil in the form of energy. Esteva and Prakash (2000) call this the divide between social majority and minority.

**Ecosystem People to Ecological Refugees – a vicious cycle**

Mobility among these three categories is not always upward in terms of quality of life and I now position the three cases in this framework and describe the socio-ecological interrelationships between them. I use water as a key organizing resource to illustrate and explain this dynamic interrelationship. Water is a life-sustaining resource that many global citizens take for granted but it is a commodity for which corporate and social battles are being waged at the global level today. What should be a basic inalienable right has been commodified in the global economy. Global consumption of water is doubling every 20 years, more than twice the rate of human population growth while less than one half of a percent of water on earth is available as fresh water. The global private water industry is estimated to be worth US $400 billion, one third larger than global pharmaceuticals, while more than a billion people lack access to safe drinking water and more than five million people, most of them children, die each year from illnesses caused from drinking unsafe water. In the US alone, private water corporations
generate revenues of more than a billion US dollars a year, four times the annual sales of Microsoft. Four of the top ten water companies are ranked among the Fortune 100 companies. People drink more and more bottled water everyday across the world. Americans, for example, consumed 60 percent more in 2002 than they did five years before. All the three cases are bound together by the common concern of water; and therefore, in this section, I use water as a key resource to analyze the three cases and describe how their ability to access and control of this resource affects their shared destinies.

In the first site, Rajasthan, land was plundered for its trees during the British Era which led to the slow and steady degradation of the region. Loss of trees led to erosion of topsoil. Topsoil loss led to inability to catch rainwater and when this was combined with the loss of forest cover, it in turn led to less rain. With monsoons failing, the structures for rain water harvesting were neglected and people lost faith in their land. Loss of water means loss of livelihood to farming communities and in this case it was a loss of faith in themselves, their land and their traditional ways of life. So, slowly, one by one, the younger people left the villages in search of work to the nearby cities like Jaipur and Delhi and the villages became ghosts of their previous selves. Only very old people, women who had to spend close to six hours a day to fetch the water supply for the day, and the children who were tending to the cattle if there were any, were left behind. The proud landowning farmers were reduced to shameful, migrant labor of the urban slums. Those who owned acres of land in their villages were forced to live in cramped hovels or on pavements on the cities, away from their loved ones in loneliness. For these people who are very communal in their orientation, this move meant much more than losing the
presence of their immediate family members, it was a loss of a lifestyle, of their roots, their connectedness to the land of their birth as well as their legends, history, mythology and wisdom. This situation only worsened over the decades, and over that time, their stories of wisdom and prosperity became distant memories, inaccessible to their everyday reality. **Thus, the Ecosystem People became Ecological Refugees.**

In Kuthambakkam Village, my second site, structures of social domination preceded structures of ecological domination. While the Indian caste system predated colonial invasion, the British divide and rule approach to politics pitted one group of Indians against the others. This practice led to rampant caste conflicts and the exclusion of the lower castes from access to opportunity structures and resources led to multiple antisocial behaviors including the one that causes most damage in these communities: the economy of illicit liquor: brewing, sale and consumption. There are many caste divisions, though the major division is between those of the upper castes and scheduled castes. Scheduled caste are the lower caste Hindus, also used to be called the untouchables or *Dalits*. The caste system is instrumental in creating a class system in which the upper caste Hindus own about 85% of the cultivable land in the village, while most of the lower castes Hindus have traditionally worked as laborers on these farm lands. Though 75% of the inhabitants are dalits (the lower caste), they own only around 2% of the land and therefore, work as laborers in the landlords’ farms.

Usually, even in the midst of rampant caste politics, antisocial activities like brewing of illicit liquor and lack of amenities and hygiene, this village has been prosperous due to their longstanding and highly effective rain water harvesting practices. Rain water harvesting has been an extremely important practice in the history of
irrigation in India, because most of the country is dependent on monsoon for its water and it is important not only to save water when they can, but also to ensure continuous renewal of the underground water aquifers as they in turn ensure water supply for the rest of the year and the future. These traditional rainwater harvesting structures like ponds, tanks, lakes, and small earthen check dams not only serve as catchment areas for rainwater during the monsoon season but also continually renew the underground water resources. They are also eco and human friendly because they do not cause the kind of damage like flooding and displacement of villages that are attendant effects of bigger dams; these structures are built around the needs of each village and are their commons. Like many parts of the country, the state of Tamil Nadu has practiced the traditional rainwater harvesting methods and the state is especially well known for its historic Tank Irrigation system. These practices in Kuthambakkam allowed the village farmers to grow three crops a year, which meant that most of the population had steady income and therefore did not go hungry even in the midst of severe drought. But more recently this has been changing with the depletion of water resources by multiple parties. The offenders include private water bottling companies, Coca-cola and the state government. Before I discuss the role of these entities, I need to elaborate about another key player in this predicament: the urban population of Chennai, a combination of omnivores and ecological refugees.

Chennai, its predicament and politics

Chennai is a southern metropolis in Tamil Nadu. This state capital situated on the coast of Bay of Bengal is paradoxically water starved. A sprawling city with a population of over 6 million that looks even more so because of its low skyline, it is growing by the
Like almost every city in a “developing nation”, it is a city of contrasts. Almost every leading software organization of the country has a “development center”; every leading multinational bank operating in the world has its global backend operations in this city; it is also the hub of automobile and automotive industry of the country; hence, almost every new multinational automobile manufacturer has a factory here. It has Pizza Huts, air-conditioned shopping arcades, new and trendy bars and discotheques catering to the yuppie crowd, the omnivores. Alongside posh apartment complexes, it also has slums filled with ecological refugees who are the city’s domestic labor, plumbers and electricians as well as the antisocial elements. The city also has a sizeable population of families that have been living on the city’s sidewalks for generations. It is also a city whose roads can never be in really good shape because it has around five thousand tankers fetching and spilling water to this parched city. Over the last fifteen years, this search for water has spread wider and wider because of the falling water table around the city. Chennai, though now perennially thirsty, was not always this way. Historically, the city's water security was ensured by a network of tanks that stored rainwater and recharged the groundwater aquifers that serve as the primary sources of water for the city’s 6 million people. This network has long since fallen into decay. Most of the watersheds and water bodies have been built upon. What remains has been turned into cesspools of garbage, sewage and plastic wastes. According to the Central Ground Water Authority, more than 80 percent of the city's groundwater resources are already being tapped. The water scarcity in the metropolis reaches crisis proportions every summer.
**Role of state government in provision of water**

State government is responsible for management of water and irrigation; and while almost the entire state is water starved during drought summers, Chennai is a focal area, being the state capital whose population is a large vote bank can be quite influential in the determination of power configurations. During 2004, the year of this case study, due to a drought the water scarcity has commenced around February instead of around May which is the case in most years. In 2005, the drive had become even more acute for multiple reasons;

1) While for many years, water was being pumped from villages on the East Coast Road on the outskirts of Chennai, this year, most of the wells on the East Coast Road have dried up and hence the government had to begin to look for alternate sources of water Similarly, Neyveli, a coal mining township around 250 kms from Chennai that used to supply water for years, was also drying up, as well as causing some major damage to the mines due to such inordinate drop in the water table.

2) Some of the villages organized a protest movement against this indiscriminate pumping of water to supply to the city. A cluster of villages around Madhurantakam Lake that used to be co-operative began to refuse access to their water, and, above all,

3) The central (federal) elections were due in a couple of months, where the state ruling party with its alliance partners is standing for elections. The ruling party coalition could not afford to antagonize the urban population, considering that its large population holds a large vote bank. They were aware that the urban poor wouldn’t hesitate to put them out of power, even though water was a state control issue and not directly pertinent to the central elections. Neither could they afford to antagonize the urban middle and
upper classes who, unlike the urban poor who must depend on government water allocation are able to pay for their water. Nor did the coalition want to alienate the private water suppliers who were used to making a lot of money from this water starved region and especially not when the wheels of the political and bureaucratic machinery were already greased well. Therefore that summer, ground water was being pumped from areas around Kuthambakkam, the second site of this study, around 40 kms away from Chennai.

Apart from the state government that was drawing water from this village to supply the city’s population, there were also three water bottling concerns in Kuthambakkam village. These are proprietary firms owned by individuals who had the forethought to buy about half acre of land each in the village and put in a deep well motor system to pump the water. Their capital investment is limited in scope to the bottles, transportation, and labor for those who bottle and seal water. All these companies used a similar modus operandi. They hire about five to eight women from the local villages, and a couple of men to do the heavy lifting, and invest in a van to transport these employees to work and back home. These women simply fill the cans, and seal them and the men put them away for transportation to the city’s hundreds of retail outlets that distribute the water cans to offices, and households. Additionally, on the outskirts of this village there is a Coca-cola bottling plant set in a large campus of around twenty five acres, equipped with tens of sunken bore wells up to 3000 feet to pump water for bottling operations and uses up to 132,000 liters a day. This plant is a reasonably new arrival to this village, starting its operations less than a decade ago. The present team of managers have taken up their jobs in the last five years, and as per the practice of most multinational companies, the initial green field team has been disbanded once the plant was up and
running. Their mandate is to make the plant profitable and therefore according to them, the ongoing pumping and deepening of wells for the bottling operations is an inevitable business decision.

Recent business reports indicate that Coca-Cola is in a worldwide slump, primarily because its markets in the US and EU are rapidly eroding as consumers get health conscious and obesity becomes a national epidemic. Neville Isdell, the company’s CEO has announced that the company will be focusing its efforts on growing markets in India, China, Brazil and Russia. Coke’s company-owned bottling operations (COBOs) in India, numbering 27, are one of the largest in the world. Coke has also talked about a long term strategy of moving into healthier products like water and therefore is in the attempt to buy out several water bottling companies all over the world. Coke's fledgling water network has come together with little fanfare and still resembles more of a patchwork than a formal strategy. But observers think Coke is aiming at getting a bigger and bigger handle on the world's water market. "They've been aggressive in buying brands," said John Faucher, an analyst with J.P. Morgan. "From an acquisition standpoint, water has been a big focus for them." In 2002, Coca-Cola's global water business grew by 68 percent. Coke spokesman Kelly Brooks said the company's three-year compounded growth rate for water was 59 percent. The once humble commodity has become more important for major Coke bottlers too.

Independent observers say that the permit system for licensing commercial activities involving extraction of water is fundamentally flawed because no means exist to independently verify the quantity of water drawn by companies. In the absence of accurate data as to who is drawing how much, it is virtually impossible to ensure efficient
usage of water and minimize wastage. Engineers from the Tamilnadu Pollution Control Board concede that under the circumstances, figures reported by the industry are likely to be gross underestimates. Even the conservative figures declared by the industry indicate that packaged water units waste anywhere between 15 and 35 percent of the water they draw from the ground. This rampant depletion of ground water resources has led to a major water crisis in this village, in turn leading to loss of livelihood for the large section of the population dependent on agriculture. Today, the village is in the throes of a drought. Almost eighty percent of the population has suffered the loss of their livelihoods and are looking for any kind of work that might come their way, to make sure that their children eat at least once a day. Neighbors and family members share the available jobs, so everyone can have a chance to make ends meet. Communities until recently self-sufficient for water are now on the edge of desperation as their water security is being compromised to serve the interests of the consumers in cities like Chennai.

**The mood of the villagers**

Around water sharing, the Kuthambakkam villagers are split into two groups; one, a group that wants to rally support to protest against the rampant pumping and transportation of water from their village. They feel betrayed and let down by all the powers that be and would like to restore their own rights over their natural resources. Some of them were employed by the soft drink company when the plant started running and then let go of. The second group of villagers is pro water-sharing, partly because they are generous and are willing to share, but partly because they don’t believe they have the power to question or stop this exploitation. Also because they believe that the community will lose even the few jobs that the water bottling plants offer. Like the first group, they...
also draw their conclusions from their experience this year as well as their experience with the bottling companies over the last few years. A third group falls in between the first two groups and can be swayed by either.

There is an ongoing fight against soft drink manufacturing companies in India and a number of grass root resistance movements have sprung up across the country focusing on the issue of exploitation of water. In fact, many NGOs have refused to accept funding for Tsunami relief and reconstruction efforts from Coke. Communities across India are under assault from Coca-Cola practices in the country. This phenomenon is beginning to receive international attention. For instance, New York University and University of Michigan have suspended the sale of Coca-Cola products on their products pending investigation into their labor abuse in Colombia and ecological abuse in India.

What happens to my first two sites influences my third site, Livelihood Advancement Business School (LABS). LABS is located in Chennai, an urban metropolis in South India. Most of the urban poor are ecological refugees from villages like my first two sites. Migration to the cities in search of livelihood has been an ongoing process creating generations of ecological refugees. Possessing no marketable skills in the urban landscape, excepting those who are either entrepreneurial or have the discipline and/or the good fortune to get a decent education, they end up as domestic or casual labor, thus perpetuating the vicious cycle of material impoverishment. They are very resourceful; they have to be, given that they have to earn a living off the streets, honest or otherwise. While the New Economy is extremely welcoming to the qualified, computer literate college graduates, it is extremely forbidding to those who live in the slums. Especially with the menial jobs being replaced by machines, unskilled laborers do not
have much of an opportunity to benefit from the New Economy. Although they live in the midst of urban economic boom, the unskilled laborers continue to go down the material totem pole. Because of the absence of organized social security net, many are drawn into nefarious, anti-social activities like prostitution, peddling drugs and burglary.

**Alternative Paths**

Does this mean we have reached a place of no alternatives? I don’t believe so and I think there are examples, though far and few in between who have achieved a good quality of life without a fanatic drive towards ‘growth’ that legitimizes the exploitation of the planet and its poor. There are examples of creation of local and sustainable economies, both historical and contemporary. From the first recorded rebellion in Indian history by people against the rulers in their fight for access to commons in the 1500s, to the Indian independence struggle, to the present day anti-globalization protest movements, common people have fought for and will continue to fight for their rights over their ‘commons’. Most of these protests were and continue to be extra legal hidden forms of resistance and individual acts of violation resting on the support of a network. Apart from protests, a number of local self-help groups outside of the government and development institutions began to take active roles in changing people’s lives, restoring their spaces and changing their worlds. Mann (1986) suggests that such interstitial emergence is an important pathway of social change. Efforts include conservation of natural resources, reforestation, alternate local governing bodies, resort to local wisdom, and women’s participation in these initiatives. Most of the protests come from the Ecosystem people who face the danger of becoming Ecological Refugees. Fortunately, though Indian democracy is flawed, it is
functioning, nobody is completely powerless and there are always avenues for expression of popular protest, even for the most disadvantaged.

India is not alone in the struggle; every country and region has its own form of protest and that includes the rebellion for aboriginal rights as in the case of the New World countries like the Zapatistas of Mexico and peasant rights in various other third world countries. The Seattle protests against the WTO in 1999 were a manifestation of these protests acquiring worldwide support. 50,000 plus people from all over the world came to protest against WTO’s policies. Before dawn on the opening day of the meeting, thousands of protesters were already on the streets, linking arms and effectively blocking important exits from hotels and entrances to a theatre where the opening ceremonial meeting was to be held. In 1998 Geneva meeting, the delegates had hardly seen the protesters; in Seattle the delegates could not get out of their hotels because of them and today, the anti-globalization protesters are accorded the status of a social movement. What makes these different ‘peoples’ alike is they are all autonomous and mostly independent from and in a few cases, even antagonistic to the state. As Latouche (1993) claims,

“Progress of real significance today may be through a devaluing the paradigm of development – to dethrone it, reverse its paramount status and leave it behind in the pursuit of radically alternative visions of social life. So it is all in their interests to invent, if they can, other games, and to remake themselves to become noveaux riches in other ways.”

Esteva and Prakash (2000) write,

“they (grassroot movements) are pleading for protection of the commons, ways of living together that limit economic damage and give room for new forms of social life. Within their traditional forms of governance, they keep alive their own life-support systems, based on self-reliance and mutual help, informal networks for indirect exchange of goods, services and information and an administration of justice that calls for compensation than punishment”.
Appadurai (2000) writes that although the sociology of these emergent social forms of globalization from below – part movements, part networks, part organizations – has yet to be developed, there is a considerable progressive consensus that these forms are the crucibles and institutional instruments of most serious efforts to globalization from below. It is in this context, the sites under consideration have much to offer that we can learn from because collective action and social movements create new organizational forms (Rao, Morrill & Zald, 2000).
CHAPTER SEVEN

STRUCTURAL ARRANGEMENTS

In the previous chapter, I presented a historical analysis of the impact of capitalization of people’s social life and located the cases in a socio-ecological framework and argued for the relevance of the cases. In this chapter, I present the structural arrangements of the three sites. Essentially, structures are the collective vehicles through which people mobilize and engage in social change (McCarthy & Zald, 1999). From a practice-arrangement perspective, these structures are not only the vehicles for the practice, but they also shape the practice itself. Although, as Drazin & Sanderlands (1992) write, structural entities are not absolutely given, but are representations of an ever moving and evolving social field, observed social structure is what is seen and named amidst the activity of organization members. Table 8 offers a succinct view of the structural arrangements in each site. Table 9 presents the themes from the case narratives that were folded into this element of practice-arrangements bundle.

Table 8 – Structural Arrangements of the Cases

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Case One

Tarun Bharat Sangh (TBS)

In the case of TBS, the central entity is TBS itself, a non-governmental agency that is mostly run by volunteers with a very small staff. It has a very office with two staff members at Jaipur and a small hostel for visitors and an office for all village development activities at Bheekampura. It has at its helm, Rajendra Singh, its founder. Even though he has been involved in the everyday activities for close to two decades, his present role is focused more futuristic and externally oriented. Over the last twenty years, he has become a major spokesperson for water movement across the country and therefore, much of his time is spent traveling and dealing with external agencies. Over the last four years of my association with this site, I have witnessed his changing role in the movement, but with no negative impact on the efficacy of the change project itself. He is presently focusing on Jal Biradari, a national water movement, and building a water
university, near Delhi. Two other key people in TBS are: 1. Kannaiah Gujjar, whose role is to support the social component of the movement and 2. Govind Singh, whose role is to support the building and maintenance of physical infrastructure in the region. Both of them are volunteers and receive a small honorarium from TBS because they are not involved in any other income generating activities. The joint family structure in this region allows their siblings and extended family members to take care of cultivation of lands owned by their respective families. They are also out on the field most of the time. They train other governmental and non governmental agencies and their representatives on water harvesting techniques and management system, through a combination of theory, field visits and practical demonstrations. They also organize Pani Yatras (Water Pilgrimages) for groups of people from across the world to share their accomplishment and advocate for water conservation.

**Gram Sabha (Village Committees)**

Village Committee is an essential structural vehicle of this change process. These are voluntary, autonomous bodies formed in each village. There are around 2000 village committees in the region. Each member of the committee represents the interest of the three to five families within the village and the village as a whole without. Selection of these members is through a combination of election as well as nomination by all the families. When they find that a particular member is unable to represent the families s/he is meant to represent, or that s/he has other preoccupations that does not allow him to participate, the member is let go and another new member is selected. These groups meet every new moon evening of the month. In the Indian belief system, new moon day is an auspicious one, because it signifies new beginnings, growth and development. During
these meetings they discuss various issues that are relevant to the village. The discussions include whether new water harvesting structures need to be built or the existing ones need some maintenance work, if their rules have been followed by all the villagers, funds needs to be raised for a new project. If they agree on the need for a new project, they collect the necessary funds and then invite TBS to support them in building the structures. As mentioned in the case narrative, these are consensual decisions and so they wait for everyone to agree on the utility of the particular structures and the willingness of the family that owns the land on which the particular structure is to be built. This group also monitors the use of environmental resources and they take these rules very seriously. For example, there are fines imposed for breaking of rules and more importantly, a major rule breaker is ostracized till he changes his ways. Their way of ostracism is different, they do not refuse to help him or his family, but they refuse to accept, as they put it, 'even a glass of water' at their houses. Depending on the needs of the particular village, there are also other committees focused on Forest Regeneration and Animal Protection. These smaller committees are formed upon need and disbanded when the project is completed. Some of the committees also encourage the educated youth of the village to teach the children of the community through informal evening schools that use formal schooling curriculum and syllabi. Men and women of all castes are active in these committees, regardless of gender or caste, but younger women are not encouraged to participate in these committees, even though they participate in the actual building of the water harvesting structures.
Arvari River Parliament

Arvari River Parliament is composed of representatives from seventy villages that are situated on the banks of the river Arvari that was rejuvenated as the result of the process of ecological reclamation. These representatives are drawn from the village committees of the village. This Parliament meets twice a year, once again, timed around the natural cycle, before and after the monsoon. The location of the meeting is rotated among the villages and they fight for the privilege to host it. During this meeting, they share their experiences over the past few months, and then discuss about key issues around water usage and environmental conservation. They do not allow any bore-wells or industrial establishments on the banks of the river because they want to protect the underground water reserves. These meetings take on the feeling of a huge local festival, food being cooked and served, women dressed up in colorful clothes, music being played, conversations of serious import, catching up, singing and dancing, children running around and international visitors watching it all with wonder.

Women’s Self Help Groups (SHG)

TBS has also been organizing women’s groups to mobilize savings as well as facilitate their participation in the change process. Mobilizing savings is a way of restoring the dignity of these women in a paternalistic community, not just because they have some money now but also because it restores their own sense of efficacy. It also makes the men take them more seriously as individuals with agency and dignity rather than mere appendages to themselves, which will in turn, facilitates the entry and success of women in roles of leadership. This effort is coordinated by a woman volunteer from
TBS. There is also a two-day annual event when all the women’s groups meet in the TBS campus at Bheekampura.

**Panchayat (Village Governments)**

Panchayat is the elected village government. In this site, the efficacy of this institution varies from village to village and I talk more about how this meshes with the TBS or self-organized structural entities like the Gram Sabhas (Village Committees) in a later section on relationship with government.

**Case Two**

**Kuthambakkam**

In Kuthambakkam, change is designed to be driven through three key structural entities. Elango’s role and presence are pivotal to all the three entities. In my later discussion, I present this as a problematic, that his role in the formal government might be inhibiting his success in the informal role as the leader of the Trust for Village Self Governance, although there are other factors at play. The three structural entities are:

**Panchayat (Village Government)**

This is an elected governing body with constitutionally vested powers for village self governance. In Kuthambakkam, it consists of ten elected ward members with Elango as the President and there is a woman Vice President. In India Affirmative Action takes the route of reservations, and therefore, in democratic bodies, a certain number of positions are reserved for the under represented lower castes as well as women. Panchayat is responsible for collecting local taxes that then it deploys for the use of village in the form of infrastructural improvements or maintenance. State and federal funds also augment their tax collections. They are supposed to meet formally once a
month but they never met formally even once during my visits. But, they do interact with each other on an everyday basis. Therefore, while I have observed the individual interactions of the members with Elango, I have never observed them together as a group. It also means that most communication that happens is one way from Elango to the ward member, or two-way between Elango and a ward member but almost never as a whole governing body. Elango thanks to his exemplary networking ability has brought in funds from government and other agencies to work on infrastructural projects. He then allocates the funds to various projects in the ten wards which are overseen by the respective ward members. The ward members also act as contractors and build in a ten percent margin on the project cost so their effort and time get materially rewarded. Moreover, since most of the labor hired is local, a substantial portion of the funds generated by the village and allocated by the state government is retained in and shred by the village itself. They have worked on many projects like housing, roads, drains, streetlights, sanitation, all of which have improved their physical quality of life tremendously. While partisan politics is very common in this state, Elango being non partisan and the regard that people have for him in general, has allowed the Panchayat to govern in a non partisan fashion. Physically, this office is located next to the temple and the bus stop and therefore, quite centrally located. While do we need to keep in mind that caste led society, being central means being close to the streets/hamlets where the upper castes live, I found no evidence of this preventing people from any caste to approach the office or Elango. This office has one salaried accountant/administrative assistant who is paid by the government.
Trust for Village Self Governance

It is a nongovernmental organization founded and run by Elango in the village. The objective of this agency is to establish a sustainable locally based network economy in Kuthambakkam and train leaders from other Panchayats through the Panchayat academy. It occupies a separate physical space from that of the Panchayat office. During my initial visits in 2003 and 2004, this campus had a small office and a small living area, both for the use of Elango. It also had a work-shed intended to be used for different projects like tailoring, soap making etc. During my later visit in 2005, I found that Elango had raised funds from the British High Commission and the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (of India) to build an impressive classroom setting for the Panchayat academy and a more spacious, modern office for the staff. During this visit, I also found that he had hired a couple of more people to man this trust and that he had started to spend more time in this place than at the Panchayat office. During the period of my study, while this agency had organized more than a few informational sessions for other Panchayat leaders, they had not done much to mobilize the locals except two women’s self help groups that I talk about in the following paragraph.

Women’s Self Help Groups (SHG)

There are two women’s Self Help Groups (SHGs) in Kuthambakkam. Before I describe their activities and my impressions of them, I offer a brief introduction to the concept itself. The concept of Women’s Self Help Groups (SHG) originated with the highly successful Grameen Bank micro-credit model that was first launched in Bangladesh. Professor Muhammad Yunus, the founder of ‘Grameen Bank’ and its Managing Director reversed conventional lending practice by replacing the need for
collateral security by mutual trust, accountability, participation and creativity. Grameen Bank provides credit to the poorest of the poor in rural Bangladesh and uses credit as a cost effective weapon to fight poverty thus serving as a catalyst for social development. As of July 2004, the bank has 3.7 million borrowers, 96 percent of whom are women. The immense success of this initiative that unleashed the economic and entrepreneurial power of women captured the imagination of the world and India was one of them. Various Indian states took a leaf out of this experience and began to encourage and support the formation of Women’s Self Help Groups in their villages. In a typical SHG, women who form the group begin to get involved in small savings, like Rs. 1 (equivalent to 2 cents) every day and the money from the group kitty is then loaned out to group members at very nominal interest rates and the money not only grows through this loaning process but also multiplies through investment in entrepreneurial ventures. The return rate on this model has proved to be higher than regular loan routes.

Kuthambakkam has one sporadically functioning women’s self help group and one that is still looking for a beginning. I met with both the groups and had lengthy focus group discussions with them about their experience, vision for the future and every day life. The first one was formed by Elango when he conceived the idea of low cost street lighting for the village. It consists of fifteen women from lower castes. He put together the group and got them to assemble the lights and paid them for their labor. While it is a major first step in bringing women into the change process, my data suggests that it is not truly an autonomous group yet. Whenever there is a new set of lights that need to be put together, Elango sends word and they all gather at the building that houses the Women’s Development Center. This building is a small two room house which was on the same
street on which I stayed. The second group consists of eleven women of mixed castes and
the leader of the group is a college educated, middle aged woman. A couple of the
women are the wives of a school teacher and a bank employee. While the group was
formed six months before I met them, they had not done anything concrete yet. The
group appeared to want to do something but was still struggling to find the right thing to
do. While both the groups did not seem either autonomous or well functioning at the
moment, data on SHGs suggest that they are powerful vehicles for social change and
therefore it is an important structural element that needs to be paid attention.

Case Three: LABS

LABS provides a useful contrast in terms of its structural dimensions, because
unlike the first two sites that are mostly volunteer driven, community based
organizations, LABS is organized on business principles, even though it is a non profit
organization. Its key structural entities are:

Dr.Reddy’s Foundation (DRF)

Dr.Reddy’s Foundation is the philanthropic arm of Dr.Reddy’s Laboratories, a
large Indian pharmaceutical company. This was the brain child of Dr.Anji Reddy, the
Chairman of the company. They originally started with a project called Police and You,
to work with the police in dealing with street kids. This program has been running for a
decade now and during the initial years, they realized that it is also important to work
with creating livelihood alternatives for the kids to be rescued from life on the street and
they opened a boarding school for these children. The logical next step was to provide
livelihood options for young adults and Livelihood Advancement Business School was
born. This also coincided with the economic liberalization that was happening in the
larger context which opened new avenues for careers in the new economy. Success of this model led to DRF getting invited by the state government to partner with them for creating more LABS Centers. This center is headed by Dr. Nalini Gangadharan, a professional social worker with a solid reputation in the field. She is ably supported by a professional team of managers, most of whom hold a masters degree in business administration from top notch institutions. Even though it is functionally organized, all the professional managers begin by working on the ground with the students and learn the process and on the ground realities.

LABS Centers

There are around twenty LABS centers all over the country and each is independent of the other. This study focused on the one in Chennai, LABS-Chennai. It is headed by a Center Head who is equivalent to a Business Head with targets for number of youth trained and placed in jobs. It also consists of faculty members who are called facilitators of different training streams. At the time this study was conducted, there were six facilitators. The facilitators are not only responsible for classroom training but they are also involved from the recruitment of students into the program from the communities to their placement in companies. This means that they are inward as well as outward focused; they build relationships with the students and their communities and other government representatives, and businesses. They are involved at each step of the process. They also have upward career mobility, if they have the entrepreneurial vision and energy to start a new center or they could also move on to head other centers that have open positions.
LABS-Chennai Steering Committee

LABS-Chennai is the initiative of a corporate consortium with four Chennai based corporations being partners in this venture. They have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to this effect. These companies have contributed to the seed capital and their executives are also involved in mentoring roles. The Steering Committee consists of an executive level representative from each company and a fifth mentor, who is an independent consultant. These companies also encourage their employees to participate in and contribute to the efforts of LABS-Chennai, as mentors to the students and the facilitators, as well as supporting the center as guest lecturers and in organizing company visits by the youth, and trying to offer jobs to the students when possible. For example, Pepsico sponsored a Pepsi Academy, a group of forty students trained especially for Pepsi’s retail distribution network and gave them jobs.

Alumni Association

While the students are mostly material-in-process when they are students, LABS encourages them to stay connected with each other and the institution after they graduate. To this end, they have formed an Alumni Association with branches in every city. While all the alumni from various cities meet once a year in Hyderabad, the city branches meet more often and support each other in their development. Moreover, they are also involved in the process of recruitment of new students. They are also encouraged to mentor and be role models for future generations of students.

Facilitators’ Network

DRF has a facilitators’ network in place to encourage the facilitators from various centers to support each other in their process of development. There is a virtual network
through a listserv, a quarterly newsletter where they share their successes and challenges, and an annual meeting. Apart from this, they are also trained periodically at Hyderabad, both on content as well as pedagogy. They also attend leadership labs to prepare them for success and growth.

**External Structural Networks**

In the previous section, I described the various structural features of the cases under review. Now, I present the structural arrangements in which they are nested. These arrangements may be grouped into two types of arrangements. They are Government Entities and Extra-Governmental Entities including NGOS and corporations.

**Government Entities**

Elected government, like in any other democratic society, has great powers and an even greater responsibility. It becomes even more complex and multi-layered issue in a post colonial society. India is a very young democracy and therefore, the society’s relationship with government is still very much colored by the memories of colonial government, and given the nature of corruption in the society, their memories are reaffirmed by their experiences. There is also the executive wing, i.e. the bureaucracy to contend with. There are three key levels of government in India: Local Government (Village or City), State Government, and Central (Federal) Government. The multi-party system in India adds another yet layer of complexity in the organization and its functioning at every level of government.
Case One: TBS

TBS is a non profit organization working independently of the elected, democratic government and tries to be cooperative with every level of government. Rajendra Singh and TBS are highly respected at a national level. For instance, the water harvesting structures in the Rashtrapthi Bhavan (equivalent to the White House) were designed by Gopal Singh and executed by the engineers of the office of the President. But the state and local politics is a different matter altogether where they have had to deal with some antagonism. The very first tank they ever built in 1984 did not only bring water and prosperity but also government action. The state government irrigation laws were an archaic inheritance from the imperial government which denied the villagers any right of ownership over their common lands and resources. So, the government issued an arrest warrant to Rajendra Singh for tampering with government property. This infuriated the villagers who refused to let him be arrested. They contended that he could be arrested only if all of them could be arrested. Interestingly, this became an important point of acceptance of Rajendra Bhai by the people as well as recognizing their own power as a collectivity. The Government retreated. Similarly, Arvari Sansad, the River Parliament almost immediately on formation had a struggle with the government authorities. When the river came alive and started swelling, with it came the fish. Government without consulting with the villages granted the fishing license to a business. These villagers believe in the principle of Jeevan Daya – Compassion for Life and that includes the fish in their waters. The villagers through the parliament fought this decision through peaceful means (Satya graha) and retained their right and power over the river.
At the local level it is even more mixed. Village Committees and Arvari Parliament are almost a parallel form of local government, though focusing only on environmental concerns and without any corruption. But most of the local government is highly corrupt. Therefore, there is not only a general sense of distrust about the local elected government and the bureaucracy but also a strong need and willingness to be independent of it. There is a sense of trust in their own capacity to deal with their issues and needs on their own.

“But see, not much work happens inside the government, and our role is to reach places where the government doesn’t reach. When they don’t run schools, we run them. And the kind of work we do, government can never do it. Like inside the Sariska forest, even above the Kraska village, there are villages where government goes every five years to campaign for votes, but we work even there. We have built johads and bunds, run schools, women’s groups are into savings schemes there.”

“Look, what is the relationship with panchayat (Elected Village Government)? Nothing, they do nothing. Panchayat is funded by government and the money goes into the pockets of the Sarpanch (head of Panchayat) and others, so people who are corrupt and want to usurp the government money take positions in Panchayat but be it Gram Sabha or Arvari Sansad, no one can take the money her. It is our money and it is used for our initiatives. In government system, each level takes some money and finally there is nothing to do any work”.

I also attribute it to the founding principles of Self Reliance and Ownership (see Chapter 9) instilled in the villagers twenty years ago. During those years, they used to hope and wait for the government to act and under Rajendra Singh’s leadership, they learnt to take control of their own wellbeing. It served them so well that they continue to hold onto them as key values. A village reported a conversation from twenty years ago,

“We told him that government does nothing for us and he told us, “if government doesn’t do anything, why don’t you do it? ” build johads, build anicuts, build bunds. All these words sat in our minds, and we built our first johad, we put in 70% of the cost and TBS put in 30% of the cost. All of us worked on it too.”
But this feeling of mistrust is not so pronounced in some villages, which could be attributed to effective and successful functioning of Panchayati Raj (decentralized village government) in those particular villages. My data suggests that these villages may be more proximate to the local government bodies, like district headquarters rather than villages tucked away in the mountain ranges. Moreover, in some villages, members who are part of the Gram Sabha also hold office in the local government. In these villages, they seem to work together with mutual respect.

“We work together pretty well, if the gram sabha asks for something or writes a note, they accept it”

**Case Two: Kuthambakkam**

In Kuthambakkam, Elango is the local government. Restoring Panchayat (villager government) to the community is what Elango attempts to do. He believes that Panchayat is a community vehicle and people should feel that it is theirs and they own it and that they have the right to demand results from it.

“In the past, people use to complain about the panchayat malfunctioning to outsiders like District collector (DC) or BDOs (Block Development Officers) because they didn’t feel that the panchayat was theirs. But now, they are giving the petition to us, if there is a problem with water or street lights they inform us addressed to me. Now panchayat is a community organization. They will go outside, the outsider will call me. So when that used to happen, I always used to tell the DC to tell the plaintiff to come and talk to me. Tell him to come and find me at my office, my home. Don’t entertain him. Don’t talk about rules. Water is my business, village business, make him part of the system. If he comes here, I tell him solutions to fix his problems himself. A single bolt that needed to be fixed, fix it and come to me and get it reimbursed. Don’t waste four days of your life chasing the bureaucracy”
But his relationship with the state government and its bureaucratic machinery is not very different from the way TBS and its volunteers perceive the role of their state government. Elango tries to minimize the red tape involved with the government processes, while simultaneously building a strong relationship with it, so he can get the government funds and other schemes for his village. For instance, he describes the process of government housing construction in Kuthamabakkam.

“when there is a government house being built in a village, the rule is that the government engineer has to do the plan, grade the plan, approve the groundbreaking, and everything happens under his supervision. But building houses in villages is not a new thing, for thousands of years, villagers have built houses. Even houses with more than one story has been built. But what does the government say? It says that our government engineer has to come and take a look, he has to mark, and stuff like that. What do we say? That government does not have to interfere. Government gives 40 K. let them send someone to see if what we build is worth the money, that should be the thing. Here in kuthambakkam we are building houses worth 40000 rupees. But what the government rule says is, our person should come, because we are dependent on them, our work gets delayed. For example, we might begin work everyday at 8 am with our local mason, whereas we have to wait for the mason, who will come at 10.30, we have to wait till he comes. If we can use and organize the local people to do the work, we will do the work between 6 and 10.30 before the sun really starts scorching but we were able to convince the government. Because panchayat itself is a people’s body, if it is a big superstructure with fourteen stories, then engineering is important, there you need to intervene. But this is afterall a small structure. We were able to convince. Now it is only certification after the house is constructed, to see if it is worth the money that the government is investing in. this is worth more than 40000. Before it was not like this, every time, every stage there is a bill and a lot of bureaucracy. So for many things panchayat has authority.”

Case Three: LABS

In the case of LABS, the relationship with the government entities is of a completely different nature. As their model became successful, various state governments as well as for-profit organizations wanted to partner with them to replicate this model in their respective states or needy districts. This could be partly attributed to the fact that
unlike the people movement of TBS as well as the local government in Kuthambakkam, LABS poses no threat to the power of the government among its people. Therefore, LABS has a very strong and positive relationship with all levels of government and they have partnered with state governments of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra. As mentioned elsewhere, they also have very strong working partnerships with the Police Departments in the cities they function. Most of their recruitment is done with the support of the police because they refer candidates from the Police Clubs which support young adults in troubled communities.

Non-Governmental Entities

In this section, I describe the relationships of the sites with other non-governmental agencies and corporations. Some of the agencies that they are interact are either funding organizations or partners in their work.

Case One: TBS

TBS has built strong relationships with external agencies like UNDP, Ford Foundation, Center for Science and Environment, and other national and international advocacy oriented organizations over the years. They have a number of domestic and international visitors on their campus almost throughout the year. Although TBS never received or accepted any funds from outsiders during the first few years of its existence, UNDP and Ford Foundation have become staunch allies over the last few years in supporting their work in the areas of women’s development and water management. Moreover, even when they do accept funds, they make sure that the community continues to pay for the physical infrastructure and thus own them.
Center for Science and Environment, a Delhi based non-governmental environmental agency has partnered with TBS on many educational and informational sessions, showcasing TBS’s success in their journal and spreading the message of water and environmental protection, the TBS way. More recently, TBS also plays a central role in Jal Biradari, a national level water organization bringing in multiple stakeholder groups together on water related issues.

Case Two: Kuthambakkam

To make these infrastructural investments possible, Elango has not only built relationships with the district level and state level bureaucracies but also with a number of external organizations. Key supporting organizations include the Swiss Development Association that funds part of the housing development work through its Habitat Development Project. Elango has also developed good relationships with the British High Commission, US Consulate, Association of India Development (AID, USA), Ashoka Foundation, Indians for Collective Action (USA), British High Commission, and Sankalp Foundation (USA). Association for India Development (AID) is a Non-Resident Indian voluntary agency that supports development related projects in India through small grants. On the invitation of AID, Elango has visited the US on a couple of occasions and shared his experience in major universities. The Ashoka Foundation, which supports social entrepreneurship through many initiatives, honored Elango with an Ashoka Fellowship. He has also developed an extensive personal network of individuals that he can rely on to raise funds for his projects.
Case Three: LABS

LABS is a concept that offers a new vehicle for social responsibility for many for-profit corporations, especially those who have already been involved in the more paternalistic, welfare-oriented models of philanthropy and community development. This, combined with the fact that LABS is a flexible structure that can accommodate many different kinds of partnership, and DRL or DRF does not want to be the sole driver or wish to garner the entire credit for themselves has made this more of a coalition than a centrally driven organization. This approach has made LABS inviting for more and more stakeholder groups to partner with.

The strongest networks of LABS lie in the corporate community. For LABS, it is the nesting system, because not only do the corporations invest in LABS concept and centers, but corporations also hire the students on graduation. So, every LABS facilitator is encouraged to build and nurture strong relationships with the businesses in the industry that he or she is affiliated with. For instance, the facilitator who handles the Hospitality stream would focus on building relationships with local hotels, conference centers and such businesses, whereas the facilitator who trains the students in home care nursing would build relationships with hospitals, nursing homes and referral agencies. Therefore, LABS has a wide base of connections among corporations/businesses from varied industries.
Relationships between the three sites

It is not surprising that three such well known social organizing efforts are networked among themselves too. Elango and Rajendra Singh know each other, having met on a couple of occasions, but there is no formal relationship between the organizations, which might partly be due to the distance involved and partly because the realities and therefore, the challenges of the two sites are very different, which I will talk about in a later chapter. In contrast, LABS and Kuthambakkam share geographical proximity and therefore, have more connections. For instance, Elango was a keynote speaker at a LABS’ annual Alumni Meet. This relationship came about because Deen, one of the LABS mentors, came to know of Elango and his efforts at Kuthambakkam through his contact at Association for India Development (AID). Deen was so impressed by Elango and his effort that he was instrumental in inviting him as the keynote speaker. This event put Elango in contact not only with the other mentors at LABS-Chennai but also with the facilitators. In fact, Deen was the one who paid for Hema’s (one of my key informants in Kuthambakkam) services at Kuthambakkam because he wanted to support Elango financially.

As mentioned before in the section, LABS encourages its facilitators to set up new centers and move up in the career ladder. Rajesh one of the facilitators, in a conversation with me, realized that Kuthambakkam might provide a potential site for a LABS center, because Kuthambakkam had about a hundred young adults who might have been potential LABS students. The proximity to Chennai also meant that these students might be able to get jobs in and around the city, where they could commute to,
without having to leave the village. Therefore, he met with Elango multiple times to
discuss this possibility. However, Elango decided against the idea because he believed
that this would go this move would undermine his plan to build a sustainable local
economy.
CHAPTER EIGHT

PRACTICE OF CHANGE

In Schatzki’s (2002) model, the site of the social is composed of nexuses of practices and material arrangements; a mesh of practices and material arrangements. Practices are organized human activities. Any practice is an organized, open-ended spatial-temporal manifold of actions. The set of actions that composes a practice is organized by three phenomena: understandings of how to do things, rules and teleoaffective structure. Rules are explicit formulations that prescribe, require, or instruct that such and such be done, said, or the case; a teleoaffective structure is an array of ends, projects, uses (of things), and even emotions that are acceptable or prescribed for participants in the practice. To say that particular actions are connected by these three phenomena is to stay that these actions express the same understandings, observe the same rules, or pursue ends and execute projects that are elements of the same normative teleological order, namely, those end project-task combinations that acceptable or prescribed for participants in the practice in question. Drazin & Sandelands (1998) write that the paradoxical aspect of rules are that they are produced by social action but on the other hand they are experienced as tangible and that this experienced quality gives rules their deep structural character. In this chapter, I describe the practice of change in the three cases. In the first section, I present the three key elements that comprise the rules and teleoaffective structure of the three sites: Values, Vision, Motivations and approach to change. In the next section, I describe the actions that are express the rules and teleoaffective structure of the sites. In the final section, I describe the three key understandings that form part of the practice of change. In Table 10, I tabulate the various
elements of practice that I describe in this chapter. Table 11 presents the themes from the case narratives that were incorporated in the elements of this practice.

**Table 10: Elements of the Practice of Change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rules &amp; Teleoffective Structure</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Understandings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Visioning</td>
<td>Simplicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Concept</td>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Spontaneity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>Dissemination</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Deployment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>Triggers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivations &amp; Approach to change</td>
<td>Discursive Acts</td>
<td>Extra-Discursive Acts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 11: Practice related themes from the narratives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element of Practice</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Local Wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation &amp; Consensus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Protection of the ‘commons’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affirmative Assumptions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Whole Person Process</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Grounding in community</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning Centered organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>Reclamation of the sacred</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integration of differences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sense of togetherness</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Network Economy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Panchayat’s role in Network Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach to Change</td>
<td>Relationships versus revolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maternal model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social change, emotions, economic alternatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Action Vs. theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions</td>
<td>Barefoot Ecologist</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People moved by stories</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A different kind of Panchayat Leader</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Window to the world</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership as mentorship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understandings</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simplicity and Spontaneity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teleo-affective structure & Rules

The three key categories that compose the rules and teleo-affective structure of these sites: Values, Vision, and Motivations. Rules are influenced and reified by the teleo-affective structure which guides the acceptable ends and norms by which the ends are achieved. I also locate each of these categories in extant literature.

Core Values

Traditionally, the study of values has been at an individual level, but studies of organizational as opposed to individual values have become more common than they had been. According to Rokeach (1979), values can be defined as generalized, enduring beliefs about the personal and social desirability of modes of conduct or ‘end-states’ of existence. They are similar to what Reay and Hinnings (2005) call, institutional logics. They are a set of belief systems and associated practices held by the organization as a whole. Meindl (1989) explicates the role of values in resource allocation, a key organizational process. These are the values that these organizations hold as inviolable and sacrosanct and they are intentional about espousing and enacting these values. I have looked at both espoused and practiced values. For instance, even though, in this paper, I focus primarily on the collectively held values, in my second case, while most of the values are espoused by the leader and my data suggests that these do not appear to be shared by the entire community.

While the concept of values appears to be intuitively comprehensible to almost everybody, it is a hotly contested territory in scholarly research. One such contest is around the intentional mutability of values. While Hofstede (1998) claims that only practices are amenable to planned change, but values change according to their own
logic, not according to anyone’s plans, leadership researchers like Shamir et. al. (1993) argue that a key aspect of leading large-scale change is making followers aware of their deeply held values and conscious that other members of the group share these values and that change happens only when the deeply held values are changed. Another area that has been argued over is the role of shared values. Once again, Hofstede (1998) disagrees with the claim that shared values are the core of an organization’s culture because according to him, in a work organization, members have to follow the practices if they want to remain members, but they do not have to confess to the values and that the leaders’ values become followers’ practices. But most culture researchers agree that shared values is a key component of an organizational culture. For example, Pruzan’s (2001) very definition of an organization hinges upon shared values because he defines organization as a social system with the self referential ability to describe itself and reflect upon itself on the basis of its shared values. According to him, shared values are those values which can take on a socially integrative function because they permit coordinated action without formalizing the discourse. Shared values are said to reduce complexity because many events can be directly understood through the shared code of values (Emery & Trist, 1965). Regarding the role of shared values, Voss, Cable and Voss (2000) make an empirical case for how organizational values can affect relational attitudes, which translate into relational behaviors that serve to build and maintain relationships that ultimately result in relational outcomes. Flynn and Chatman (2001) suggest that while strong organizational value consensus might inhibit innovation, strong consensus around the values emphasizing divergent thinking will contribute to the innovation process.
The role of organizational values in organizational change has also been an area of interest to scholars and practitioners alike. For instance, Trice & Beyer (1993) argued that current organizational values are likely to influence the kinds of change goals and means that are considered and discussed and that organizational values are potentially central for understanding the structure, functioning, creation, and change of organizations and their cultures. Hage & Dewar (1973)’s study focused on the salience of values and structural variables relative to change. Their study found that the values of the elite inner circle are stronger predictors to change than even complexity, the stronger predictor among structural variables while the importance of leader values is not to be minimized.

Table 10 presents the values of the sites as found from the data, after which I describe the core values of each site with examples from the data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TBS</th>
<th>Kuthambakkam</th>
<th>LABS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affirmative-</td>
<td>Self Reliance</td>
<td>Affirmative Assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions</td>
<td>Local Economy</td>
<td>Emotional Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation &amp;</td>
<td>Economic Package</td>
<td>Grounding in Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consensus</td>
<td>Social Norms</td>
<td>Ownership &amp; Freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Reliance</td>
<td></td>
<td>Process Integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Norms</td>
<td></td>
<td>Self Reliance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Affirmative Assumptions**

TBS and LABS share this core value and their allegiance to this value has been instrumental in the success of both these initiatives. This grounding in affirmative assumptions has set a self fulfilling prophecy in motion in both these sites. In the case of TBS, this fundamental value has helped the traditionally disenfranchised
population to reclaim their physical and social ecologies and through that, their power to fashion their lives. In the case of LABS, it supports the students in reclaiming their dignity, self esteem, and conscience that in turn help them move forward in accomplishing their goals and claim the world as their own. Now I describe how this value manifests in the two sites with quotes.

The whole process of social change in TBS began with Rajendra Singh’s core belief that this community had answers in itself, its past history and practices. He said,

“When I heard that there was a time when the neighboring village, Brahmanvas, had a market for grains, it occurred to us that if this district was poor for centuries, there wouldn’t have been a market for grains. So, this place must have been prosperous at some point of time and that is why there was a market for grains here. Another thing is that as you may have noticed there are a couple of old, large houses here and there, so they have built a few buildings in this region, and they did not loot somewhere and build them here, they were built from resources in this region. So we started thinking about that world, what times were they, what kind of world was that, what can we learn from those times?”

In this region, these assumptions are not restricted to human beings, but to the whole ecology which has in turn led to an understanding of their whole ecology as a system. As one of the villagers put it to me, if the tiger was well, it meant the whole community was doing well. This displays a very sophisticated understanding of the food chain. In this region, tiger occupies the top of the food chain, and therefore, if the tiger population was thriving, it meant that there was an abundance of deer that the tigers could prey on, abundance of deer population indicates that there are sufficient plants and grasses that they could feed on and so forth. This also meant that they felt responsible to protect the lives of all the living beings in their ecology. For example, a villager told me,
“we believe that fish need to be protected too, none of us eat fish, and we believe killing it is bad. We never kill any animals or birds. Now there is so much fish here.”
Or yet another villager extends this assumption to their belief that whole of nature needs to be valued and protected.

“Who has seen God? To me Nature is the only God. That which gives us to eat, drink, wear, that is the only God. If we eat out of our hard work and efforts, and take care of Nature, then we can be at peace forever.”

Similarly, in LABS, these positive assumptions drive the entire process. First, corporations feel responsible to open opportunity structures and provide access to the youth that they train. Second, they believe that these youth from the society’s margins have the potential to be trained and accepted into the mainstream society. Third, those who are involved in this initiative believe that there are others who are equally socially conscious and can be invited to participate in this process and contribute to it. Therefore, like in TBS, these affirmative assumptions are not restricted to certain stakeholder groups but form the core of their fundamental approach to their process. For example, it is not only extended to the students but also the mentors, corporate sponsors, and facilitators. Considering that this whole initiatives hinges on ordinary people’s willingness to engage and contribute, this positive assumption is vital to the success of the initiative.

One of the LABS faculty members told me,

“The very success of LABS hinges on that belief, that everyone has empathy, the other side, the inner side that wants to give back something, but normally, we don’t call it.”

All the facilitators, mentors and professional managers that I spoke to expressed not just their faith in the capacity of the students but an admiration for their strength and tenacity. For example, one of the mentors talked about what he learned from this process.
“We all know the word street smartness, but only six years ago I learnt the meaning of the word. Street smartness is a child who is in the slum or some place like that, who has gone through all the difficulties of life and is able to deal with them really well. I know every LABS child is street smart, tomorrow they are thrown out of a job, they can handle it. They have gone through all the vagaries of life. If there is anything I have learnt, it is about their street smartness.”

Another mentor expressed his positive beliefs with an understanding of the circumstances, background and context that shape the students.

“These boys are very true to themselves, they have no ulterior motives. They only want to have a good living, a very sincere living, where things go wrong is, when there is nobody to advise them, mentor them, things go wrong, you know. If you were to find out some of the boys have become pick pockets, or gotten into drugs or in any such negative spirals, I don’t think it is because of their interest, or because they want to be that way. when you really talk to them, you know that they are not intentionally not that way. It is largely their circumstances and lack of mentoring and guiding them.

A professional manager who has a MBA said that he saw an intellectual thirst equivalent to his own or his cohort members from his top class business school.

“I could see the same amount of intellectual thirst in them. Despite all of them being dropouts, they have the same amount of thirst which I had or my friends had in a marketing session in BIM.”

In the case of Kuthambakkam, Elango seems to be ambivalent about this core value. While it is obvious that he loves and cares for his village, his hierarchical relationship with the community also comes through both in his language and that of the villagers. For example, Elango said to me,

“Whatever you do, you might do it against his aspirations, but ultimately you are doing it for his welfare. A mother has the right to do it, I have the same right. Ultimately you need it, that is the point. the whole village community has been strong because of some practices that have been forced.”
I present another example in which even though he claims that it is not a dictatorship, the use of a child metaphor betrays a certain hierarchical power-over construction and limited transparency.

“That is not a dictatorship. It is one of affection. When we admonish a child not to do something unsafe, it is done out of love. But there should be transparency, democracy to the possible extent which will not disintegrate the strength of the community.”

Similarly, my data from Kuthambakkam, both the interviews with the villagers as well as my fairly extensive observational data, suggest that they do not necessarily believe in their own ability to change their lives, but rather in their leader’s ability to bring some change in their lives. One of the women that I interviewed said to me,

“Before him, we didn’t know the role of the panchayat. After he became the leader, we are at least aware about it. He keeps doing something or the other. Big changes, like roads, water, street lights, of course it was all government funding, but he was the one who took efforts to get these amenities for this village. He has full support in this village. He really showed us a lot. Houses are being built. He was the one who showed that all this is possible.”

Below, I share a note that I have written on this particular passage in the transcript and this question kept reoccurring in my mind over and over both when I was present there and after during the intensive data analysis and sense making process.

“No claim of ownership of the changes even though Elango says that it is community effort. what is the disconnect?”

**Emotional Engagement/Accountability**

Once again, TBS and LABS share this value while Elango talks explicitly about his lack of faith in emotion driven change processes. In the case of TBS, everyone’s language is infused with emotions and feelings and their expressions. They even attribute
emotions to the land and trees. For instance, one of the villagers said that the lands are now smiling because they have water and are being farmed.

“If there is enough water, land will be happy, people will be happy, animals and birds are happy, all are enveloped in love.”

Almost all of them talk about the role of emotions in their engagement with this type of work, and how their faith and love motivate them to work further on these initiatives. For example, Rajendra Singh made these comments at different points of time in the interview.

“I had given up thinking rationally, gave up making decisions, I did not even stop to think if there was any benefit to what I was doing or even about what difficulties could lie ahead. Enough to say that some emotion took over and it told me to do that, just emotional, emotional energy, commitment. I cannot give any ideological, rational explanations.”

“Today it occurs to me that if I could have been at any other place in the world, I cannot think of a better place for me. Because I have invested my emotions in this place, this space is created with my emotions. This was built on dreams, I have no difficulty living here, I am proud to live here. And behind that pride is the work, the long journey; that kind of journey that went with people, took people along. This was the journey on the log ganga (People Ganga). The happiness of this journey is different. I have been blessed with that happiness.”

During the course of my interviews, various LABS members also mention the role of emotions. For example, one of the facilitators mentioned the role of emotions in the process.

“There is an emotional cycle in the whole process that one needs to be aware of. It is a journey of self exploration for the students and the faculty. It is a self respect boosting journey for them. An experience focusing on the student, which is very unusual for them.”

They also used a business terminology to include the emotional engagement that is required in this work. They called it Emotional Accountability. Key stakeholder groups
like the corporate sponsors, mentors and alumni are held emotionally accountable by the organization and this is a key factor behind the vibrancy of the organization. I quote a statement made a mentor me,

“See, there are a couple of things, there are two kinds of accountability. One is the typical, financial accountability for which we have a clear head. We have the concept of the Regional Head, we now have Heads for each Region. And there is something called the emotional accountability, someone who is attached to it.”

**Cooperation and Consensus**

In the case of TBS, cooperation emerges as a key value. Especially considering the caste ridden nature of the society and the need to build and manage the commons as communities, it is an exemplar of cooperation. While cooperation is a key value, consensus becomes the preferred way of decision making. Until the entire village comes to a consensus around building a structure, they are willing to wait. There have been stories of certain villages taking over three to five years to come to a consensus but they respect the right of people to dissent and have agreed that they will not begin a project till everyone is committed to it. For instance, one of the biggest structures had to wait for almost five years because not every family in the village was ready to make that commitment. In the case of LABS and Kuthambakkam, it does not emerge as strongly. In the case of LABS, it might be partly attributed to the fact that it is a self selected group of people who have come together to work toward a common goal. It might also be because LABS is strongly influenced and managed by professionally trained managers who have put in processes of management that run the organization like a machine while perhaps not providing the space for dissent. Apart from one manager who left the organization for financial reasons, (who in fact has recently joined them back), I have not had a chance to talk to other LABS employees who have left its service, and therefore my data does not
give me access to their decision making processes in case of conflict or dissent. While in Kuthambakkam, it does not get explicitly stated, my experience with the villagers suggest that they do cooperate in their every day lives, even though the context has not yet provided them an opportunity to test it out in the service of the change process. For instance, during my last visit, due to draught, there were very few farming jobs in the village, and there were a few jobs in the housing project undertaken by the Trust for Village Self Governance, families and neighbors were sharing the available jobs so everyone could have access to some earning opportunity. I also speculate that the nature of village life in which people live and work together presents an inescapable reality that binds people together more so than the employees and other stakeholder groups of LABS.

Ownership and Responsibility

What separates the effective cases of TBS and LABS from Kuthambakkam is the sense of ownership shared by all and the responsibility that goes with it. This sense of ownership gets manifested both in emotional and financial terms. For instance, in the construction of every water harvesting structure built by TBS, TBS contributes only minimally in financial terms whereas the villagers contribute the bulk financially either in cash or in kind and unless each village is able to raise the money and the villagers are able to commit to the physical labor involved in building the infrastructure, the project does not begin. Ownership of this kind makes it an exemplar among other hundreds of development projects undertaken by many non governmental and governmental agencies. Such a sense of ownership also brings in a sense of responsibility to the ecosystem as well as towards maintenance of these structures over time. Similarly, LABS tries to build in the sense of ownership among the students and their families through their
involvement. For instance, in case where it is affordable, they encourage the students to contribute financially even if minimally and also encourage the students to refer potential future students and the alumni are encouraged to get involved in the activities of LABS. Even the ownership of Chennai LABS is more distributed than DRF and LABS, Hyderabad. Similarly certain other centers of LABS are co-owned by multiple and different stakeholders including corporations and government bodies. In contrast, in Kuthambakkam, even though the Panchayat government is legally owned by and in service of the peoples, the villagers still feel that they are obliged to the Panchayat for the favors it bestows on them including basic infrastructure and the same feeling is extended to the activities of Elango and his Trust for Self-Governance. This might be the residual effect of the colonial rule and the erstwhile relationship of natives with the governing authorities which is perhaps also reinforced by Elango’s ‘I know best’ attitude and the ensuing behaviors. Kuthambakkam’s contrast in turn makes the case of TBS and its villagers even more special and noteworthy.

**Grounding in Community**

Both LABS and TBS are grounded in community. In the case of TBS it is even more obvious because it is more a people movement than just a development effort by a non-governmental agency in the way it is conceived and operates. Every effort is initiated by the village and its members and spearheaded by the Gram Sabha (Village Committee). Every leader is local even though they are open to receiving assistance and support from outsiders. In the case of LABS, it is less obvious considering the more formal organizational structure through which it operates and the people who man it are paid professionals. But LABS takes every effort to keep its students, its process and focus
grounded in the community. It does it through multiple ways; the initial presentations for recruitment drive in the respective communities, its inclusion of the parents of prospective students in the orientation process, and its relationship with both local employers and governmental bodies including police force. In post colonial contexts with their histories of oppression and alienation from their cultural and social roots, this becomes a very influential value in the way these organizations function. Similarly, Kuthambakkam effort is also very grounded in its local community, in fact, Elango’s economic model is all about strengthening the local economy through creation of a network economy.

**Process Integrity**

Process integrity emerges as a key value at LABS very explicitly and implicitly at TBS. Every member of LABS holds their focus on the underprivileged, i.e. the target group and their process discipline inviolable. Process integrity right from the stage of recruitment to orientation, pedagogical approach, student centeredness, and final placement is held as sacrosanct. Everyone in LABS explicitly states that this is a framework that they would not like to tamper with since it is a process that works well and serves the appropriate target groups. In TBS, they don’t use the terminology explicitly but it is implicit in their assumptions, whether in the way they organize themselves, initiate new projects, formation and frequency of meetings of the gram sabha (village committees), and the way decisions are made consensually. The type of issues discussed and addressed might vary from village to village but the focus on equity, protection of ecology, and the consensual decision making hardly differ. In
Kuthambakkam, there is no set or explicit process; at this point, it is more or less driven by Elango’s interest, and what his priorities are at the moment.

**Role of Social Norms**

All the three organizations adhere to distinct social norms. In the case of TBS, it is a highly caste based society, and there is no effort from TBS or its volunteers to change these norms. While the gram sabha (Village Committee) does bring in members from different castes together and they do make decisions equally, this does not translate into a dissolution of these caste based norms in social affairs. People still marry within their castes and adhere to the rules and rituals laid down by their caste. Similarly, it is a fairly traditional and chauvinistic society and while the gram sabha tries to bring in women representatives, they do it almost subversively in a way that will not disturb the women’s rules to wear the veil in the presence of men. For instance, they hold meetings and rallies of women’s groups separately to allow them the freedom to be and express themselves which they might not feel as comfortable doing in the presence of strange men. While a few teachers of TBS schools try to curb the practice of child marriage, it is still a common phenomenon and TBS has no explicit mandate to challenge these norms. On the contrary, LABS tries to inculcate and socialize its students into a more professional work and social ethic. Where they were casual laborers earlier, they are taught to think about the long term future and in a way orient them to a new idea of a career and personal development and growth versus living in the moment. They are also exposed to corporate style of environment both at LABS and through guest lectures from executives and managers as well as industry visits. They are all trained in conversational English and corporate etiquette. Wherever appropriate, for example in the Hospitality stream, the
students are taught about different kinds of food, table etiquette and how to serve in a upper class hotel. Kuthambakkam is a more complex case as far as social norms go. Elango is from a lower caste family and his presence as a leader brings in more complexity. The upper caste, educated families understand his influence as the Panchayat leader and want to build relationships with him, but it is still an evolving process. Unlike TBS and the villagers of Rajasthan, who share a common economic fate due to their shared dependence on the local ecology for livelihood, in the case of Kuthambakkam, it is not a shared concern and the inequity between different economic classes is very obvious even to a lay observer. This is due to two reasons: given the proximity to Chennai, an urban metropolis and the economic opportunities it offers, the more wealthy, educated villagers of Kuthambakkam are able to take up jobs in the city and are not necessarily dependent on the village economy for their livelihood. While the majority of the poor come from the lower castes, it is not always the case, Elango himself being a case in point. The second reason is the difference between land owning and non land owning sections of the population. Those who don’t own land are dependent on the village and its farming activities for survival because traditionally they work as landless laborers in other people’s farms. With increasing mechanization of agriculture and continuing draught conditions and depletion of water table, these jobs are fast disappearing and these influence the social norms too. Elango believes that economic emancipation is the route to social change and so does not explicitly challenge the caste based and economically driven social norms though he brought in a state government driven initiative called Samathvapuram (Town of Equality) which offers homes to both upper and lower caste families if they are willing to live as peaceful neighbors.
**Self Reliance**

All the three cases share this value even though in the case of Kuthambakkam, it is more of an espoused than a practiced value at this point of time. In the case of TBS, self reliance is preached and practiced at all levels. For example, unlike most villages of the country, they are not dependent on government at local, state or federal level for their livelihood or developmental efforts. In fact, one of their explicitly stated aims is to be able to reach places where the government cannot or do not reach. Being removed from the mainstream economy and its vagaries, they are more monsoon and water dependent for their economic sustenance. Their sense of ownership over the commons and the sense of self-determination over their livelihood makes them extremely self reliant. From the outset, TBS has also consciously cultivated this value. Rajendra Singh explicitly states that ownership and self reliance are two values that his organization strives to create. The aim of TBS is to make itself redundant and in an operational sense it is true in most of the villages. With the process in motion and a taste of success in their initiatives, most village activities are self sustaining.

Similarly, even when Dr.Reddy’s Lab founded Dr.Reddy’s Foundation, the mandate was for it to be self supporting and this is a value that has been passed on to all its members and centers. For each center, while every new center gets trained and supported by DRF, they are also independent and self reliant in getting off the ground, training and placing its students and sustain itself financially independently. This value is also passed on to the students through inculcating the sense of self determination. While the entire model of Kuthambakkam’s network economic model is all about local self reliance, I would say it is still an espoused value because I couldn’t find the evidence of
these claims in the everyday lives of the villagers themselves. They still look up to Elango for instructions and direction and are not self reliant, even though at a macro level, Elango has made the village administration more self reliant, especially through his fundraising efforts for developmental initiatives in his village.

CATEGORIES OF VALUES

In this section, I cluster these values under three categories: Self Concept Values, Relational Values and Social Values. Table 13 provides a quick view of the categories and the values that fall under each category.

Table 13: Value Categorization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self Concept</td>
<td>Affirmative Assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self Reliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ownership &amp; Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>Emotional Accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Process Integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperation &amp; Consensus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Grounding in Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change Attitude towards social norms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Self Concept Values

This is the set of values related to what the leaders and the community believes about themselves, their agency and efficacy. While TBS and LABS share and practice an affirmative set of values around self concept, in Kuthambakkam, these values are espoused by Elango, the leader but I did not find evidence that these are shared by the community as a whole. Values that fall under this cluster are Affirmative Assumptions,
Self Reliance, and Ownership. As Meyer and Rowan (1977) point out, that actions taken as a result of beliefs about the environment, do in fact, construct the environment, as, for example, in self-fulfilling prophecies. In my analysis, TBS and LABS emerge as examples of the impact of positive and affirmative values around self concept, Kuthambakkam emerges as a contrast. TBS and LABS share an allegiance to the core values of holistic affirmative assumptions, self reliance, and ownership which leads to responsibility and freedom.

From the outset, TBS has cultivated the values of self reliance and ownership including physical ownership of the water harvesting structures. For instance, in the construction of every water harvesting structure built by TBS, TBS contributes only minimally in financial terms whereas the villagers contribute the bulk financially either in cash or in kind and unless each village is able to raise the money and the villagers are able to commit to the physical labor involved in building the infrastructure, the project does not begin. Similarly, even when Dr.Reddy’s Lab founded Dr.Reddy’s Foundation, the mandate was for it to be self supporting and it is a value that has been passed on to all its members and centers. While every new center gets trained and supported by DRF, they are also independent and self reliant in getting off the ground, training and placing its students and sustain itself financially independently. This value is also passed on to the students through inculcating the sense of self determination. When affordable, LABS encourages its students to contribute financially even if minimally and also encourage the students to refer potential future students and the alumni are encouraged to get involved in the activities of LABS. Even certain centers of LABS are co-owned by multiple and different stakeholders including corporations and government bodies. In contrast, in
Kuthambakkam, my data suggests that the villagers do not necessarily believe in their own ability to change their lives, but rather, in their leader’s ability to bring some change in their lives. Even though the Panchayat government is legally owned by and in service of the peoples, the villagers feel obliged to the Panchayat for the favors it bestows on them including basic infrastructure and the same feeling is extended to the activities of Elango and his Trust for Self-Governance. Paradoxically, even though Elango’s network economy model rests on the philosophy of local self reliance, the villagers look up to Elango for instructions and direction and do not operate on their own.

**Relational Values**

I constructed this higher order category to hold values about mode of engagement and process. I define relational values as “set of values that govern the relationships between individuals in these communities and the key organizing processes.” In the case of TBS, they even attribute emotions to the land and trees. For instance, one of the villagers said that the lands are now smiling because they have water and are being farmed. Almost all of them talk about the role of emotions in their engagement with this type of work, and how their faith and love motivate them to work further on these initiatives. During the course of my interviews, various LABS members also mention the role of emotions, particularly the concept of Emotional Accountability. Key stakeholder groups like the corporate sponsors, mentors and alumni say that they feel emotionally accountable to the cause of LABS. While members of both TBS and LABS claim that their mode of engagement is through emotional accountability, Elango talks explicitly about his lack of faith in emotionally driven change processes.
With regard to values around process, process integrity emerges a key value in both LABS and TBS. In LABS, process integrity right from the stage of recruitment to orientation, pedagogical approach, student centeredness, and final placement is held as sacrosanct. Similarly, in TBS this value is operationalized through cooperation and consensus. Given the caste ridden nature of the society, their accomplishment of building and managing their ‘commons’ makes them a stellar example of cooperation. Stories of certain villages taking years to arrive at a consensus about their decision to build a water harvesting structure or form the village committee led me to this defining this value as process integrity because but they respect the right of people to dissent and have agreed that they will not begin a project till everyone is committed to it. In Kuthambakkam, there is no set or explicit process; at this point, it is more or less driven by Elango’s interest, and what he sees as priorities in the moment.

**Social Values**

Given the complex nature of Indian society, my data suggests that social values held by these communities play a great role in their attitude towards social norms, either towards continuity or change. Caste system and patriarchic norms are deeply entrenched both in the region in which TBS operates and in Kuthambakkam. While members from different castes work together and in equal capacity at the GS (Village Committee), it does not translate into dissolution of caste based norms in social affairs. People still marry within their castes and adhere to the rules and rituals laid down by their castes. Even while they try to encourage women’s participation, they are careful enough not to do it in a way that does not drastically alter their social norms around relationships between men and women. For example, TBS holds meetings and rallies of women’s
groups separately to allow them the freedom to be and express themselves which they might not feel as comfortable doing in the presence of strange men. While a few teachers of TBS schools try to curb the practice of child marriage, it is still a common phenomenon and TBS has no explicit mandate to challenge these norms. In Kuthambakkam, Elango himself is from a lower caste family and he has to tread this dynamic very carefully. The upper caste, educated families understand his influence as the Panchayat leader and try to nurture their relationship with him, but it is still an evolving process. Elango believes that economic emancipation is the route to social change and so does not explicitly challenge the caste based and economically driven social norms though he brought in a state government driven initiative called Samathvapuram (Town of Equality) which offers homes to both upper and lower caste families if they are willing to live as peaceful neighbors. On the contrary, LABS tries to inculcate and socialize its students into a more mainstream career and social ethic. Where they were casual laborers earlier, they are now taught to think about the long term future and in a way orient them to a new idea of a career and personal development and growth versus living in the moment. They are also exposed to corporate style of environment both at LABS and through guest lectures from executives and managers as well as industry visits. They are all trained in conversational English and corporate etiquette. While the core values are foundational to the establishment of rules, two more elements that make up the teleoafective structure of the sites are: individuals’ motivations and approach to change process, and the vision of the organization.
Motivations and approach to change

The motivation of the individuals who take up key positions of leadership roles in social movement and their approach to change are fascinating because of two reasons: (1) an absence of a clear cost-benefit based motivation to the individual who get involved in social change movements because they usually pay a personal prices for getting involved and continuing to do so and (2) their motivations and beliefs about the nature of change process itself are key elements of the organization’s teleoffective structures. The primary data for this category came from the leaders of these movements. In these cases, all the leaders describe their motivation to get involved in social and/or developmental transformation work in terms of a calling, value of giving back to society and contribution. For instance, Rajendra Singh was raised during the times and in the region where the Chipko environmental movement was in its full bloom, and he constantly talks about how it was a calling and an emotional decision which cannot be rationally explained. Similarly, Elango of Kuthambakkam was active in the Dalit (Untouchable) Liberation movement and his personal attachment to the village and its occupants moved him to take up the position of leadership. Dr.Anji Reddy and the other leaders of LABS, including the corporate executives and facilitators talk about the need to contribute to society.

Both Elango and Rajendra Singh believe that social change can happen only through relationships and located in a place, context and community. Elango describes his approach to social change as one through relationships and not through revolutions. Even though he was a Dalit (Untouchable) activist in his youth, he believes that the Dalit Movement was informed by the western models of revolution whereas his vision for the
community change process lies in nurturing and building of relationships. He also believes that such revitalization of relationships can only happen at a local level, where there is a history between the people involved. His definition of ‘relationships’ is very different from the generic understanding of relationships in the Western Model, but predicated more on the indigenous kinship models. In the kinship or familial model, it is not about relationships between individuals, but more about a shared history, trust woven among a group of individuals. In Elango’s case he is positioned in such a network because he was born and raised in Kuthambakkam. He offers an example of how he resolved an issue with a woman who was angry at him through a community solution of conversation and negotiation, which he contrasts against the western model of protests and revolution. Rajendra Singh shares Elango’s faith in the power of community and its role as the fundamental driver of social change. He says that he learnt everything from the community because he did not have any specific knowledge either about the water harvesting technology or about social organizing and that he just had the concern for community and the commitment to do something.

Though both of them share this belief, in contrast to Elango, Rajendra Singh underplays the role of individual, personal relationships to his relationship with the community at a more general level. It could perhaps be attributed to the fact that Rajendra Singh was not originally from Rajasthan and hence there was no history of kinship when he began his work with the community. But slowly, he began to win a place in the heart of the community. It could also mean that he was not looking for that one or two individuals that he can delegate power to, but was able to let go and trust the community as a whole.
Similar to the other two sites, the leaders of LABS are also purposive in locating LABS’ anchors in local communities, families and various other stakeholder groups including police, government entities and private corporations. LABS is also building new overlapping and interconnected communities through its various initiatives, like its community of facilitators across the country who communicate via internet and other real time events to share their victories and challenges. They also go through a week’s induction at the DRF center at Hyderabad which is as much an opportunity to learn about the process as getting to know people who have been involved in LABS from the beginning. There is also a community of alumni in each center and across the country in who meet in various alumni events. LABS also hosts other events that bring corporate executives, local government officials, and the LABS students, alumni and staff together to learn together. These are the events that everyone talks about as key moments in their association with LABS, from students to managers to mentor; a sense of community created on the basis of shared accomplishment and shared vision for the future. While the core values and beliefs about change process guide the means, Vision is the guiding goal or end that they are working toward. Next, I describe this key element of this category.

**Vision**

The term vision has been defined differently by different scholars (Boal & Bryson, 1988; Conger, 1999; Yukl 1998) but almost all of them agree about its motivational value in transforming and renewing organizations and communities and enhancing individual and organizational level performance (Baum, Locke and Kirkpatrick, 1998; Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1996; Levin, 2000). According to the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, vision means “the faculty of
sight, unusual competence in discernment or perception, a mental image produced by the imagination, the manner in which one sees or conceives of something, the mystical experience of seeing.” It is also an active verb as in envisioning. For many cultures, vision is an ability to see that transcends the physical and moves into the realm of the metaphysical. It is not just forecasting the future by extrapolating the present, but a dream that defies rational understanding and processes but comes out of one’s connection with the universe, the Spirit, (what native Americans call hanbleceya or vision quest). In fact, it is seeing the unseen. My data suggests that there are three dimensions to the element of vision: content, visioning process and location/ownership. However, in this section, I address the first dimension: content because in this model of practice as actions-rules-teleoaffective structure, visioning process is more appropriately discussed in the next section that focuses on actions component of practice. During my discussion of the visioning process, I also write about the impact of the visioning process on the location and ownership of vision. Table 14 provides samples of vision statements from the cases.

**Table 14: Examples of Vision statements from the cases**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Vision Statements</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| TBS  | Vision, without vision, there is nothing else. The physical structure of all these water harvesting structures is nothing without vision. You need a vision for water to do water work. God has given plenty of water, He has no need to use water, and it is our responsibility to protect it. – Rajendra Singh  
During the last meeting we also decided that we would study the entire region for understanding water usage and scarcity and that our members will visit different villages to do this and help spread the message of water conservation. – Local leader  
My only desire is to protect the environment, and natural resources should be available to the poorest of the poor, to make the equity base equal to all, to encourage my community to continue their good work, this is my dream. This is a big dream, I know that, but I believe that when we do something small, if you keep your dream small, the work also remains small. Until we think of the whole world when we do our work, our work will continue to remain small. But it is important to look at the smallest work with eyes for |

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future and the world. My only prayer is that all the places should have water, forests, animals, people should live with love, animals, birds and all the creation all should live in harmony and happiness. That is why I am working. How much of it will come true, I don’t know, but my dream is large. But with this big dream, I will continue to keep doing the small work that I am doing, all my life. My youth went in this work, now I have only vanaprastha and sanyasa to look forward to. In those phases, I want to continue to do this work, I hope God gives me the strength to continue. This, my dream, my commitment, whatever I am doing I want to continue it all my life – Rajendra Singh

Our role is to reach places where the government doesn’t reach. When they don’t run schools, we run them. And the kind of work we do, government can never do it. Like inside the Sariska forest, even above the kraska village, there are villages where government goes every five years to campaign for votes, but we work even there. We have built johads and bunds, run schools, women’s groups are into savings schemes there. – Young local leader

There are about 150 people from seventy villages around the river in Arvari Parliament and all of us agreed on these rules together. During the last meeting we also decided that we would study the entire region for understanding water usage and scarcity and that our members will visit different villages to do this and help spread the message of water conservation. – one of the founders of Arvari River Parliaments

our community should be together like now forever, now I cook for 30 people and this should grow, it should become 40 and 50. we should always be together, affectionate to everyone... Our children should study, maybe one of our girls or boys will become a doctor and set up a hospital in our village itself. They should feel free to do what they want to. Now we have two of our children going to college in Alwar. I did not study but I want all our children and grandchildren to study. – A pioneer woman leader

LABS

What needs to be done to capitalize on this trend is the translation of manpower to skilled manpower. The emergence of service industry also forces the need to create a labor pool. Everything is here to make India a great economic power except the framework to do this transfer. And I believe that LABS has the potential to offer this framework and operationalize this transfer. LABS rural also has the mandate to prevent migration to urban areas by creating employment opportunities in the rural areas, we should not repeat the mistake of China and Mexico, of course these are different settings and the contextual differences mean that we have to evolve different strategies. – Mentor 1

I think it is a social change program, I would position it as a social change program rather than look at it as merely an educational or training program. So, our challenge is primarily to see that labs is scaled up, that we are positioned not just in the urban areas, but also in the semi urban and even rural areas. That would be our vision for LABS – Mentor 2

LABS has to grow worldwide, now it is national. It is in Madras, Bombay, Bangalore, but it has to grow worldwide, every youth has take the benefit from LABS – Student 1
One LABS is not enough, we need more, it is good work, anyone who starts will be doing good work, if they do with dedication and commitment. – Alumni

Kuthambakkam

But if this functions effectively, as envisioned by the constitution or as it originally did in the pre colonial India ... Without demonstrating what we need, we cannot expect. There is no point in saying that it is not enough without demonstrating what we want. Whatever money you have given is not sufficient. I need money for this, this should be demonstrated. Where there is power, nothing was given. If you see the areas where there is power, power has evolved. Grassroots work happened and the power evolved. If it doesn’t stand up, what is the reason? My faith is that you demonstrate it, prove it, make the people accept it. – Elango, the leader of Kuthambakkam Panchayat

Even if the plans are on paper, one should implement it right? That he is trying, that is the main thing. If it remains on paper, what good will happen? It has been six months since we joined together and formed the group, but we haven’t started any major income generation activity yet. Thalaivar (the leader) said that he will help us start something, it will be good if he can take some steps. It will be good to get some income regularly – a women’s self help group member.

All the three sites claim that their focus on sustainable scaling up of operations and converting an experiment into a movement as one of key elements of their vision. For example, in LABS, one of the professional managers who has been working with DRF for over four years now says, “As and when this happened, we realized that this project is replicable and sustainable” and this appears to be a catchphrase for everyone in LABS. Almost everyone that I talked to, including the students and alumni talk about how important it is for LABS for scale up its operations thus benefiting a larger number of people with a great impact on communities. However, in TBS and LABS they are co-held and shared by the members, in Kuthambakkam, at present it is still the vision of the leader rather than the community. While different people articulate it differently, every one of them shares the vision of its growth. One of the mentors of LABS-Chennai, describes it as a cause for strengthening the country’s economic power, while being extremely careful about the need for context to influence the strategy while another says
that it is a social change program that needs to be scaled up. Alumni and students also appear to share the same perspective and it is certainly a shared vision. Similarly, almost every one of the villagers in TBS that I talked to share the same vision for protection of their environment, reclamation of people power over their commons and spreading their methodology to many other villages, regions and countries. Rajendra Singh not only talks about the importance of vision but defines it as a personal vision for his life. Another young local leader describes the vision for TBS as being able to reach places the government does not reach while Arjun Bhai, one of the older leaders instrumental in the formation of Arvari River Parliament describes the vision of this institution as wanting to spread this message to other villages. Lakshmi Bhai, a pioneering woman leader defines her vision in personal and intergenerational terms.

In Kuthambakkam, Elango’s vision (refer to Chapter 4 for a detailed description) is to create a sustainable rural economic model that will work in India. He also wants to demonstrate this model so it can be spread to other clusters of villages. While the community has a great deal of respect and affection for Elango, they are yet to share his vision. A leader of one of the women’s group’s statement illustrates how the onus for accomplishment is still perceived as Elango’s even though they want good things to happen.

Inspirational future-orientation of vision’s content and its relationship to organizing forging new directions have been addressed by scholars (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Galbraith & Lawler, 1993; Gardner, 1990; Tichy & Devanna, 1990). Y.Berson et al. (2001) make the statement that ‘strong’ visions are inspirational and Baum et al. (1998) make the claim that such ‘strong’ visions are associated with higher organizational
performance. In this study, all the three cases can be considered to have ‘strong’ and similar visions in terms of content; which raises the question of why one of the cases is less effective while the other two are more effective examples of transformation, which I address next in the section on Actions.

**Actions**

In the previous section, I described the rules and teleoaffective structure that form part of the practice of change. In this section, I present the key actions that form part of the practice of change. The theoretical categories that I present in this chapter are Visioning and Triggers.

**Visioning**

In the previous section, I described vision as a guiding end, as part of the teleoaffective structure of these sites and that all the three cases can be considered to have ‘strong’ and almost similar vision in terms of content. However, I discovered that the visioning process itself varies from site to site and visioning is a key action in the practice of change. Most vision related scholarship is located in the leadership discourse, and therefore tends to focus more on individual leaders, their styles and characteristics whereas the process of visioning and the location and ownership of vision have not been given much attention. My data further suggests that visioning process and location/ownership of vision are related to each other. In this section, I unpack this relationship with examples from the cases.
Visioning Process

Conger and Kanungo (1998) have documented the role of leaders in creation and articulation of the vision. My data suggests that the development of vision may either happen at the top by the leader like in Kuthambakkam and LABS or the vision might be co-created by the organization as a whole as in TBS. In the case of leader driven visioning process, two steps emerge out of the data, one is development of the vision, and two, deployment of the vision, and effective communication does not mean effective deployment of vision. Effectiveness of dissemination and deployment of vision affects who owns it and how it gets operationalized. Figure 4 places the cases of Kuthambakkam and LABS in this matrix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dissemination</th>
<th>Effective</th>
<th>Ineffective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co-held, Co-owned Vision (LABS)</td>
<td>Not possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineffective</td>
<td>Known but not shared Vision (Kuthambakkam)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The vision of both LABS and Kuthambakkam was developed and articulated by the individual leaders; when LABS was initiated by Dr.Reddy’s Foundation, it was the vision of the entrepreneur-corporate captain Dr. Anji Reddy of Dr.Reddy’s Laboratories. In the case of Kuthambakkam, the vision for creating a sustainable alternative for rural India through network economy is that of Elango’s which he then refined with inputs from the experts as well as the local market information. Even when a strong vision is developed by a leader, its communication and deployment can be effective or ineffective.
and even when it is communicated extensively, it has to be accompanied by effective deployment across all the levels and groups of members who are involved in the organization. For instance, in the case of LABS, over years, Dr.Reddy’s vision has been communicated to various stakeholder groups effectively both internally as well as in the public sphere and it is accompanied by effective deployment internally through their well aligned performance management system for its employees. They do it through regular planning and review sessions at frequent intervals and every employee feels that his or her work objectives are aligned to the overall organizational objectives and this fuels their high performance.

In LABS, deployment does not happen solely through formal processes and structures but also through engagement of emotional accountability of people. While formal processes and structures provided the avenue for deployment of organizational goals and objectives, emotional engagement is invoked through attention to and reengagement with core values. In the case of Kuthambakkam, while Elango has communicated his vision both within and outside the village as evidenced by the press coverage, the accolades that he has received and the funds that he has been able to raise for the housing project as well as his Trust for Village Self Governance, my data does not evidence well planned intentional strategies and practices for deployment of vision among the villagers.

In contrast to both LABS and Kuthambakkam, visioning process in TBS is that of collective co-creation. When Rajendra Singh began his work at one of the villages twenty years ago, he had a personal vision of doing ‘good work’ but the collective vision was co-created among the community as a whole over time, village by village. This vision is
constantly reinvigorated through their formal meetings like the monthly meetings of the village committees and the bi-annual meetings of the river parliaments as well as informal conversations among the villagers.

**Location/Ownership of Vision**

Visioning process, i.e. its development, dissemination, and deployment, has an impact on who owns the vision and where it is located. A co-created vision is co-owned and co-held at the level of the community, and a leader driven vision that is effectively communicated and deployed is similarly co-held. In TBS and LABS they are co-held and shared by the members, but in Kuthambakkam, at present it is still the vision of the leader rather than the community. While different people articulate it differently, every one of them in LABS shares the vision for its growth. For example, one of the mentors of LABS Chennai, describes it as a cause for strengthening the country’s economic power, while another mentor says that it is a social change program that needs to be scaled up. Alumni and students also appear to share the same perspective and it is certainly a shared vision in LABS. Similarly, almost every one of the villagers in Rajasthan that I talked to share the same vision for protection of their environment, reclamation of people power over their commons and spreading their methodology to many other villages, regions and countries. In Kuthambakkam, Elango’s vision is to create a sustainable rural economic model that will work in India. He also wants to demonstrate this model so it can be spread to other clusters of villages. While the community has a great deal of respect and affection for Elango, they are yet to share his vision and the statements made by the villagers indicate this. Even though they want good things to happen to themselves, their
families and their village at large, they still believe that the onus for accomplishment is Elango’s rather than their own.

**Triggers**

My data suggests ‘Triggers’ as one of the key actions in change in the social context. I call them triggers because they trigger change. The triggers could be extradiscursive material acts and/or discursive acts like conversations. Following the footsteps of Gandhiji who said, “You must be the change that you wish to see in the world,” Rajendra Singh describes himself as a transformative leader not in the traditional sense of a leader who transforms the organization, but rather as someone who initiated change thorough personal transformation; transformation of self which in turn incubated the emergence of multiple leaders from the field. According to him, true engagement has transformative potential as the result of a new awareness of self and the system. This belief seems to be widely shared among the other leaders of TBS. When he first moved to Bheekampura village with the intention of doing something for the community, during one of his initial conversations with Mangu Patel, an older villager, Mangu Patel suggested that he clean up a johad (tank). Rajendra Singh responded by spending seven months cleaning and digging the pond all by himself. The villagers who witnessed his action joined him in this work and expressed their support for him when the local police issued an arrest warrant for his tampering with the local irrigation system that is owned by the state government. Similarly, all the other leaders report either stories that they heard, the conversations that triggered their actions which took either the form of building water harvesting structures or forming village committees for managing their natural resources.
Elango, when he decided to return to his village and work for the welfare and development of his village made the bold move of jumping into politics and contest in the local Panchayat elections, even though he is from a lower caste and had to face much opposition from the upper caste groups. On his election, he brought in a lot of available governmental resources for developing the village, like the Town of Equality, a housing project focused on integrating multiple castes under one colony. He was not only able to persuade the state government to pick Kuthambakkam as one of the sites for this project, but was able to innovate low-cost housing technology which allowed them the surplus resources to build a spacious community center. He also invented a low cost, energy efficient street lighting technology, using which he not only brought street lights but also used the local women in assembling these units. Similarly, through hiring of locals for the various village development projects like sanitation, paved roads, building of low cost toilets etc. funded by the state and village governments, he managed to retain part of the funds in the village itself as well as create employment opportunities for the villagers. He is also currently augmenting the funds from a federal housing grant with funds from the Swiss Development Agency and his personal contacts and well wishers to make Kuthambakkam the first hut less village in the country. In this project, he has also invented a new brick replacement technology using mud blocks and sunlight for baking these mud blocks and uses the local workforce in manufacturing these mud blocks for the housing project. He is changing the system through personal action and conversations with outside networks while internally his conversations with the villagers are rather directive than generative.
Dr. Reddy’s Foundation and then LABS was founded by Dr. Anji Reddy. He brought the concept alive by bringing right people to lead the initiative like Dr. Nalini Gangadharan, as well as bringing in multiple stakeholder groups like the community as well as local police force. Similarly, the seed for LABS- Chennai was sown by Sukumaran, an executive with a major business conglomerate when he was looking for an alternative livelihood option for the families that would be affected by the layoffs that he had to undertake in one of the plants of his company. His conversation with Deen, an ardent supporter of LABS concept led to the birth of LABS, Chennai. Generative conversations between various stakeholder groups have been instrumental in the shaping of LABS’ future and its fast paced growth across the country.

**Understandings**

Schatzki (2002) writes that apart from actions, rules and teleoffective structure, another key element of practice is people’s understandings of how things get done. The three theoretical categories that fall under this element of practice are Simplicity, Spontaneity and Flexibility. Table 15 lists the three categories of understandings and their definitions.

**Table 15: Understandings and their Definitions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simplicity</td>
<td>the quality of rules, of being simple, easy to understand and apply.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spontaneity</td>
<td>the quality of organizational actions which happen naturally and without force or planned intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>ease and speed with which an organization responds to changes in the environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Simplicity

Simplicity is the quality of being simple, easy to understand and apply. In art, simplicity is valued as an aesthetic quality. There is an innate simplicity to the way LABS and TBS organize themselves: through the well defined and shared values, their uncomplicated, decentralized structures, and a well established basic process that becomes a guide to operations. In the case of TBS, their mandate is simple; their goal is to reclaim, protect and regenerate their ecology. Every other social intervention is an offshoot of this primary objective and not necessarily intentional or planned but emerges from story to story, village to village. Similarly, they also have a well established process that makes organizing more and more people and villages simple. Simplicity in emergence is not necessarily simplistic but a simple guideline that facilitates systemic deconstruction and analysis of complex situations and spontaneous action based on this analysis and is not a rigid application of bureaucratic rules. The contentious relationship between the villagers and the formal governing bodies provides a good illustration of this element. Given the discordant nature of the relationship of the villagers with the elected formal government, a simplistic rule would be that all the villagers are against formal government, but this would preclude them from participating and partaking of government resources should the situation be right. Similarly, a simplistic understanding that government is benevolent and would take care of the villagers would mean that they lose their sense of efficacy and self determination and expect the government to give them everything that they need and in a way, Kuthmbakkam is emblematic of this malady of trusting the government naively and blindly without understanding the complex politics and histories that govern these systems. Adler (2001) differentiates between
‘blind’ trust and ‘reflective trust’ and argues that post capitalistic organizations require reflective trust. In that sense, neither TBS nor LABS are simplistic or blind in their application of rules; they are complex in their systemic dynamics but they have managed to pare all the complexities down to a relational whole which then allows them access to points of leverage for actionable intervention.

**Spontaneity**

This term emerged in vivo from my interview with Rajendra Singh. I quote, “This is how an emergent organization works. In its spontaneity.” I define Spontaneity as the quality that characterizes organizational actions which happen naturally and without force or planned intervention. Because, when organizations and/or members and/or parts of organization respond spontaneously to emerging opportunities, the organization moves on its own pace with its own inner power, strength, and energy. Examples of stories that illustrate such spontaneous organizing abound in the history of TBS and the people movement that it initiated. I also witnessed and was part of one such key response to a crisis in TBS. When the Rajasthan state government issued an arrest warrant for Rajendra Singh for undertaking a particular construction, on the day he was supposed to be arrested, hundreds of villagers walked miles to the site to offer voluntary labor as a mark of their solidarity and express support for Rajendra Singh and TBS and displeasure against the action of the government. It was a spontaneous response by the people, not organized by TBS or any single village leader. News of his impeding arrest spread from village to village and people just showed up on their own volition. It was almost a festive occasion; they were all chatting, laughing and singing together. A temporary structure for cooking and protection against the scorching desert sun had come up. Men and women
were cooking and serving food, serving water, working on the dam site together and the entire day unfolded spontaneously. When the heat became unbearable, they sat under the shelter singing and laughing, when it was less hot, they got to work even though it was a situation fraught by tension all around. When the government officials came one by one, whoever was in the front talked to them, there were no appointed leaders.

LABS, even though bound more by organizational rules and regulations also offers stories of spontaneous action by its members. For instance, during the initial phase of LABS Chennai, the landlord of the building that it was located kept raising issues of different kinds against the organization. The manager who was handling the situation claimed that the landlord was primarily biased against the students and their socio-economic class. During one such altercation, the manager who was also in his first weeks of employment with the organization, spontaneously decided to terminate the lease and move out because he felt that this negativity would in turn affect the morale of the students. Even though he was not vested with formal power at that point, the organization supported his decision because they could see his conviction behind it even though it meant investing additional resources to find appropriate alternate space.

**Flexibility**

This category is derived from certain key actions and processes that were described by the participants. Flexibility is defined as the ease and speed with which an organization responds to changes in the environment. While Vision intends to create some clarity about the future in terms of where it wants to go and how, flexibility is a more in the moment deviance from that plan. While vision is long term, flexibility is about here and now decision making and action based on the particular context without
violating the core values. For example, in LABS, when they started a new center with the state government of Andhra Pradesh in Hyderabad, a budding metropolis, the government department wanted them to collect a registration fee from the students to reinforce the sense of ownership among the students. While there are also instances of LABS even providing season tickets for bus travel to students, in this case, the government unit was the primary stakeholder and they knew the population. So DRF honored their request by taking a registration fee from all the students. Whereas when they opened a new rural center with the government, they decided that they could not take any money given the levels of rural poverty in India. Therefore, it is not a uniform financial model but one which flexes for the particular context and target population. But they are also very firm that while they will offer such flexibility to clients, there will be no compromise on process or quality. This fine discrimination about what they can be flexible about and what they cannot is guided by their core values.

In the case of TBS, an example of this flexibility is the way they organize their village committees. For instance, each village forms different types of committees based on their requirement. Some of them may even be temporary and may be disbanded once the particular concern is addressed. In the gram sabhas (village committees) of the villages where TBS works, each member of the gram sabha is responsible for and represents three or four families and so it is that person’s responsibility to be present in these meetings on behalf of those families. If the gram sabha finds that if a particular members is unable to adequately represent the families and/or able to convince the families, the gram sabha decides that this person cannot be responsible for these families and the families are required to select new members. Their selective use of technology is
another example of their flexibility. During my final visit to the site in Spring 2005, I spent a few days traveling with one of their local leaders who acts as the resource for technology and architectural issues, where to mark the twentieth year of the movement, he has initiated a survey of the thousands of structures that TBS has helped build in the region. This community which is quite removed from mainstream technological culture and does not even have the primary infrastructure like electricity and telephones has not abandoned modern technology completely. Instead it is being wisely being selective like Gopal Singh using a Global Positioning System Device to map and document the structures.
PART FOUR

FROM THE DIALECTIC TO THE DIALOGIC:

TOWARDS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF CHANGE

Overview

In this fourth and final part of my dissertation, I present the emerging theoretical framework of change. This part is organized into two chapters, nine and ten. In Chapter Nine, I describe the nature of generative capacities for social transformation as predicated upon the interplay between polarized conceptions of change that compose an organization and its organizing efforts. I use and advocate Bakhtin’s dialogic view to do this. The paradoxical and polarized elements of change that I address are Change-Continuity, Structure-Action, Cooperation-Conflict, Internal-External Sources of Change, Long term- Short term perspectives, and Outcome-Process. Based on the interactive nature of these foundational elements of change, I describe the concept of Generative Organizing as the interplay between intentional and emergent organizing for change. In Chapter Ten, I present the implications of this study is its various dimensions and conclude by summarizing the limitations of this study.
CHAPTER NINE
FROM THE DIALECTIC TO THE DIALOGIC: SOURCE OF
GENERATIVE CAPACITIES & GENERATIVE ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE

The objective of this study was to examine the nature of generative capacities and generative organizing for change. In this chapter, based on my analysis, I propose that when viewed from a dialogic perspective, generative capacities rest in the coexistence and interplay between six key polarized conceptions of change in the process of organizing for and understanding transformation. They are: Change-Continuity, Structure-Agency, Cooperation-Conflict, Internal-External Sources of Change, Long term-Short term perspectives, and Outcomes-Process. As Feldman (2004) points out, it is the underlying dynamics of organizing that produces change and therefore to learn about transformation, it is important to try to understand these dynamics. Based on the non-dualistic and dialogic approach to the four foundational elements of change, I describe the process of organizing, one that I term, Generative Organizing as the interplay between intentional and emergent organizing.

Paradox of Change: Dialectic to Dialogic

Change and generative capacities of organizations has occupied the interest of our field for decades. Watzlawick, Weakland & Fish (1974) differentiate between first order change i.e. change within an existing framework and second order change that generates unprecedented, novel forms, that break with the past basic assumptions or framework. Even though the capacity of an organization to generate change has been acknowledged as essential by scholars (Senge, 1990), many also contend that both researchers and practitioners still do not have an adequate understanding of and theoretical framework of

Paradox is an important consideration in the study of organizational change. As Czarniawaka (1997) writes paradoxes constitute an organization’s dynamics and account for its transformations. Cameron & Quinn (1988) argue that an emerging awareness of the inevitability of paradox is evident in recent literature in organizational sciences and observers are becoming more sensitive to the presence of simultaneous opposites or contradictions in organizational behavior. Van de Ven & Poole (1988) define paradox as the simultaneous presence of two mutually exclusive assumptions or statements; taken singly, each is incontestably true, but taken together they are inconsistent. While Cameron & Quinn (1988) distinguish paradox from dialectic, other scholars believe that dialectic approach is one of the views of dealing with paradox along with resolution and avoidance of paradoxes. While resolving or avoiding the paradox are two of the more common approaches to dealing with paradox, as Fiol (2002) points out, these strategies push scholars towards privileging one polarity versus the other and she argues for capitalizing on the paradox; i.e. utilizing the inherent tensions to one’s advantage rather than ignoring or resolving them. Dialectics is another approach is to deal with paradoxes, without resolving or avoiding them; it is to let synthesis emerge from thesis and antithesis through conflict. Hegel conceives of the dialectic as an interactive phenomenon. In this dissertation, I advocate the dialogic approach, an alternate view of dealing with paradoxes.

‘Dialogics’ is a term primarily associated with Mikhail Bhaktin (1895-1975). According to Bhaktin (1986), the entire scope of human life is a dialogic process whereby we find meaning through interaction. His work is similar to the ‘I and Thou’
philosophy developed by Buber (1937). Bhaktin (1986) writes about the dialogic nature of the world, which always wants to be heard, always seeks responsive understanding, and does not stop at immediate understanding and presses on further and further indefinitely. Originally a linguistic device, it has been appropriated and put to use by scholars from multiple disciplines. For example, in the field of organizational studies, many of David Boje’s recent works use different concepts from Bhaktin’s dialogic to study organizations.

Dialogics is the study of the way meaning is constructed out of contending languages within any culture because there is a constant cultural tendency to try to unify languages within an official or unitary language, which is determined by the endlessly changing conditions of the society, which generates new languages and new relations between them. Bhaktin sees the overturning of official unitary language as coming from the unheard, unofficial voices generated in less-recognized areas of society, and this life-enhancing debunking of the official he calls carnivalization, after the model of medieval carnival with its release of folk energies. Even though there seems to be some overlap between Hegelian/ Marxist concept of dialectic and Bhaktin’s dialogic, especially because both the words share a common root and are assumed by many scholars to be similar, Bhatkin categorically writes that dialectic is monologic and not dialogic. He writes,

“Dialogue and dialectics. Take a dialogue and remove the voices (the portioning of voices), remove the intonations (emotional and individualizing ones), carve out abstract concepts and judgments from living worlds and responses, cram everything into one abstract consciousness – and that is how you get dialectics.” (Bhaktin, Speech Genres: p. 147)

The primary difference between dialectic and the dialogic is that while the dialectic approach is predicated upon the need to arrive at a synthesis through conflict,
the dialogic approach permits an ever emerging and renegotiated reality through dialogue between multiple approaches/voices (polyphony). While the dialectic is a movement through a process of thesis-anti-thesis-synthesis in which the synthesis becomes the thesis for the next cycle, dialogics assumes simultaneity and interaction. This is more akin to Clegg, Cunhe & Cunhe (2002)’s concept of permanent paradox, which involves exposing the tension between two opposing entities in conflict, while retaining the contradiction and assuming the permanence of paradox. Western thought is imbued with a style of thinking based on dichotomy and binary opposition (Carr & Zanetti, 1999) which has meant that even when scholars and thinkers write about the dialectic, it has come to mean to construe a relationship of conflict, and moreover, a relationship in which one polarity must be repressed at the expense of the other (Helene Cixous, 1986). In contrast, a dialogic approach to organizational paradoxes would allow us to see the interaction between contradictory positions and thus help us deal with a few of the major polarized conceptions of change.

I propose that when viewed from the dialectic perspective, these polarized entities are in conflict and are positioned in opposition to each other and therefore, it becomes impossible to capitalize on the interplay both the entities. Figure 5 illustrates this approach. I also propose that in contrast, when approached from the dialogic perspective these polarities are in relationship with each other and therefore, there is generative interplay. Figure 6 shows the dialogic approach. Next, I describe the four polarities and their interplay.
Change & Continuity

Fry & Srivastva (1992) write that the idea of change dominates the landscape of modern life and draw our attention to the value of continuity in the midst of change. They define continuity as “the connectedness over time among organizational efforts and a
sense or experience of ongoingness that links the past to the present and the present to future hopes and ideals.” As Bouwen and Overlat (2001: 34) describe,

“There is no continuity without appreciation of the past. People will experience continuity when they can recognize the past in their present actions and intentions for the future.”

Even though scholars like Adler (1992) and Feldman (2004) have attempted to reframe continuity, routines, stability, inertia, the traditional pariahs in the change discourse as sources of change, if change and continuity are conceived as two polarities, most change scholars study change at the expense of learning about continuity. In fact radical transformation, i.e. a fundamental change is construed as leaving behind all notions of continuity. For example, Chia (1999) criticizes the ‘being’ ontology and representationalist epistemology in the study of change because they elevate and privilege stability or equilibrium as the normal state and change as something that happens between two states of equilibrium. In contrast, he offers a framework of ‘becoming’ ontology which privileges change as the only constant phenomenon of social world. On the contrary, my data suggests that interplay between change and continuity is a source of generative capacities for transformation. This interplay is characterized by critical reflection. In this section, I propose that:

An organization’s generative capacity for change rest on its interplay between change and continuity and this interplay is characterized by critical reflection.

Transformation of identities, both organizational and individual, are said to be critical during times of radical change (Fiol, 2002) because redefining who we are as an
organization is about transforming its identity (Marshak, 1993). This view is of particular salience in the transformation of organizations and communities that have been oppressed for centuries. Post colonial and diversity research points out the deep structure identification (Rousseau, 1998). In such cases, effective management of identity changes would seem to paradoxically require both strong ties that connect people to their organization and loose ties that prevent them from getting too attached to the status quo (Fiol, 2002). Therefore, for these communities, it is not sufficient to change to become what they are not, but it is also critical to reclaim their lost identity for successful transformation. In the cases under analysis, there was a conscious effort to reflect deeply about what they needed to continue, as well as what they needed to change. For example, consider the very definition of generative capacity Gergen (1982) : “the capacity to challenge the guiding assumptions of culture, to raise fundamental questions regarding contemporary social life, to foster reconsideration of that which is ‘taken for granted’ and thereby furnish new alternatives for social action.” It is characterized by an element of critical reflection. It is not change for the sake of change, but a thoughtful, well considered approach to change with an understanding of continuity.

In TBS, my first case, the entire process of transformation began with reclaiming their own history, and values of ecological responsibility. They not only went back into the past and reclaimed their values, but they also tied it to the present through their everyday routines engaged in environmental rejuvenation and protection for which they draw their energy from their vision and hopes for the future. As an example, let us consider key value of the more effective cases and demonstrate how the two sites managed to change and yet maintain continuity. One of the core values in TBS and
LABS is their grounding in the community (For a detailed exposition, see Chapter Ten). Historically, in the east, conceptions grounded in a worldview that stresses the relational character of human existence has always been dominant (Ho & Chan, 2001). In the change process, this value translated into an entirely community based responsibility structure like the village committees, and the river parliament in my first case, and involvement of families and communities of students in the third case. Even though the change process, they have made conscious attempts to retain continuity of elements that they want to cherish and protect. It is especially important to note that in the light of most change efforts that aim to ‘mainstream’ the poor alienate and/or disconnect them from their communities of origin, whereas in the case of LABS, they have been conscious about continuing to honor this value. Critical reflection in these cases did not only result in reclamation or continuity but as well as intentional change toward progressive definitions of self identity systems. In contrast, in Kuthambakkam, there is emphasis on espoused change, but this generative interplay between change and continuity is missing, reclamation of identity even less so.

**Agency & Structure**

Another polarized, dualistic debate that abounds in change discourse is the agency-structure debate. While predominantly one-sided focus on homogenizing institutional analysis does not capture the power of agency, those who study agency do not give much credence to the structural conditions that might be constraints to agency. As Archer (1982) points out, “On the one hand structuralist Marxism and normative functionalism virtually snuffed out agency. The acting subject became increasingly lifeless whilst the structural or cultural components enjoyed a life of their own, self
propelling or self maintaining. On the other hand, interpretative sociology busily banished the structural to the realm of objectification and facticity-human agency became sovereign whilst social structure was reduced to supine plasticity because of its constructed nature.” Therefore, scholars still continue to privilege one or the other discourse even though there is a continuing effort to examine the middle ground (Bourdieu, 1993; Giddens, 1984). Giddens (1984) writes about duality of structure; that they are “both the medium and the outcome of practices which constitute social systems.” He defines structure as “rules and resources, recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems.” In his view human agency and structure presuppose each other, rather than oppose each other. While he draws on Levi-Strauss’s conception of rules, he also tied in resources in structure and this included the questions of power, domination, and social change. Similar to Giddens’ conception of rules and resources, Bordieu (1977) advances the mutually sustaining relationship between mental structures and the world of objects. He wrote, “The mental structures which construct the world of objects are constructed in the practice of a world of objects constructed according to the same structure.” (Bourdieu, 1977, p.91) He argues that this mutual reproduction of mental structures and the world of objects constitute temporally durable structures – which he calls “habitus.” Sewell, Jr. (1992) makes a convincing case that while the work of both Giddens and Bourdieu are promising in their conception of the structure-agency debate; both of them need more theoretical clarity and elaboration. His critique of Giddens’ work is based on the unclear definitions of rules and inadequate explanation of resources. He critiques Bordieu’s work on the ground that Bordieu’s conception makes significant social transformation seem impossible because of an impossibly objectified and
overtotalized conception of habitus which cannot explain change as arising from within the operations of structures. He argues that a theory of change cannot be built into a theory of structure unless we adopt a far more multiple, contingent, and fractured conceptions of society and of structure. To this end, he proposes five key axioms: the multiplicity of structures, the transposability of schemas, the unpredictability of resource accumulation, the polysemy of resources and the intersection of resources. He argues these axioms make it possible for agency to truly coexist with structure because agency than can be defined as the actor’s capacity to transcend the constraints of habitus, the capacity to transpose and extend rules/schemas to new contexts, the capacity to reinterpret and mobilize an array of resources in terms of cultural schemas other than the those that initially constituted the array. Structures then become sets of mutually sustaining rules and resources that empower and constrain social action and that tend to be reproduced by that social action even though such reproduction is never automatic. In this framework, agency is implied by the existence of structures even though the specific forms that agency will take consequently vary enormously and are culturally and historically determined. Personal agency is, therefore, laden with collectively produced differences of power and implicated in collective struggles and resistances. This debate in the context of change becomes very relevant because assumptions about either polarity underlie different discourse of change and contemporary change literature suggest that transformation is a complex process operating in multiple and interdependent layers: contextualist (Pettigrew, 1985) and structurationist (Child, 1997; Giddens, 1984), and co-evolutionary (Lewin and Volberda 1999) approaches promote an understanding of
change that takes into account of interplay between structural and agency dynamics, and at multiple levels of analysis. In this section, drawing from my data, I propose that:

An organization’s generative capacity rests on the interplay between agency and structure and this interplay is characterized by a dynamic between facilitative rules, polysemic resources, personal and social actions.

As an example of this interplay I analyze one of the key events in the first case: the formation of Arvari River Parliament. While the key triggers to the formation was the rejuvenation of the river itself, the idea was brought up by Late Anil Gupta, the then Chairperson of Center for Science and Environment, a non-governmental agency working in environmental issues. He suggested that the villagers should make some rules about the use of this newfound water and the villagers in Bhaonta, one of the villages on the banks of the river began to talk among themselves and with other villages in their neighborhood about how to regulate the use of the water from the river. They came upon the idea of forming the Arvari Sansad (River Parliament) to protect and care for their river. One could say that the role of Anil Gupta was crucial in the formation of a structure that was the first of its kind among post colonial societies, and if not for his suggestion, Arvari River Parliament may not have come into existence. But one could also say that even in the face of such a suggestion, readiness of context was equally a determining factor. Many villages had been working on various tanks and earthen dams for a few years when the Arvari River got rejuvenated. Many of these villages had well functioning gram sabhas (village committees) in which they had learnt how to manage the commons of their respective villages and therefore they had the skills as well as the taste of success from these management structures at the village level. These skills were a form of
resource that permitted, in a sense, a readiness among the villagers to embark on Arvari River Parliament. Therefore, the previous history of the villages in such initiatives can be said to have played a definite role in taking the change process to a whole another level. Such interplay between agency that triggered the change process and the context that was ready to respond with agility and robustness to innovate that takes the transformation process to a different scale is an exemplar of generative transformation. Similarly, LABS if founded on the principles of agency, that the marginalized students possess the agency to transform their lives and become productive citizens. It does not overlook the structural constraints in which these students operate. For example, these students are trained in conversational English because they have never had an opportunity to learn or practice English before, but it is a key to the worlds that they are expected to enter. Or as the case narrative suggested, in some cases, the students are even provided with bus fare to attend the classes because there is awareness on the part of the organizers that even the most agentic students might not be able to overcome their structural and material constraints and therefore need the support. In contrast, in Kuthambakkam, this dynamic becomes a vicious cycle. At one level, the villagers are expected to be agentic in taking responsibility for transformation, but their structural conditions are not taken into account. Simultaneously, they are considered to be victims of the structures that they reside in and so are denied any sense of agency. Interestingly, even though the supportive structures like the Village Panchayat, Trust for Village Self Governance and the women’s self-help groups are present, so far they have not been successful at evoking or supporting the agency of the villagers.
Cooperation & Conflict

Cooperation-Conflict is the third key polarized set of conceptions of change as seen in these cases. From Hegel to Marx and later day critical thinkers, many have celebrated conflict as essential to social transformation. In contrast, radical humanists and interpretive thinkers have celebrated the spirit of cooperation as a critical component of social change. My data suggests that for effective transformation, both the mechanisms need to coexist. In this section, I frame my discussion around the proposition that

Generative capacities of organizations lie in the interplay between cooperation and conflict and this interplay is characterized by boundary setting.

Rao, Morrill & Zald (2000) identify three field conditions that influence the activities and patterns of social movements and new forms: the interstices or gaps between fields, hierarchical fields, and fragmented fields and write that social movements that emerge in interstitial and hierarchical fields are bound to be characterized by conflict because usually, there are entrenched issues of power in these contexts. In this category, LABS could be said to be an emergence in a fragmented field which is usually characterized by consensus because there is widespread support and minimal opposition. In contrast, both TBS and Kuthambakkam assume a ‘conflict-oriented’ character in the sense that conflict arises when organized efforts to modify the prevalent institutional order encounter opposition from interest groups opposed to change.

For example, in TBS, conflict has been part of their history over the past twenty years. The primary reason for conflict has been around the claim of ownership of their commons. As described elsewhere in this dissertation, their relationship with the local
and state government has been conflict ridden. Similarly, when they advocated for closing of marbles mines in their state, they had to face death threats from the marble mafia. So far, in such tension filled encounters, the local government has tried to take away something they have worked hard for and the community has taken every opportunity to assert themselves and their power. Their conflict with the local and state government may be a sign of power struggle, because in most of these villages, gram sabha runs an almost parallel government. The local and state level politicians may also be concerned that Rajendra Sigh may run for office at the regional or state level. Most of the Indian laws have been inherited from the British when the laws were meant to keep the people in check, not necessarily support them in their independence. But, every conflict has become an opportunity for the community to organize itself even better and emerge stronger, by claiming ownership for their “commons” and taking responsibility for them. While conflict has characterized their history, cooperation too has been an elemental defining mechanism of their history and the story of TBS is an exemplar of cooperation. Similarly, in Kuthambakkam, in the course of Elango’s assertion and reclamation of self governance for village, he has had to deal with the state government and its bureaucratic machinery. In contrast to TBS, what is lacking in Kuthambakkam is cooperation. While there is a general sense of caring for the other, it is not accompanied by active cooperative processes like that of TBS. Limits to cooperation and conflict are determined through boundary setting for self preservation and preserving the other through non-violence (ahimsa). Even while engaged in conflict, these communities practice Gandhian value of ahimsa, non-violence.
Internal-External Sources of Change

Van de Ven & Poole (1988) point out that historically the change literature while has polarized into two schools in the study of sources of change, developmentalism and accumulation theories, i.e. internal versus external sources of change. For example, scholars like Eisenhardt and Schoonhaven (1990) mostly focus on endogenous adaptation in the course of organizational change and organizational ecologists emphasize the role of exogenous forces (Hannan and Freeman, 1977). While developmentalism argues that change is set in motion from within the system that is undergoing change, and accumulation theories posit that change comes from outside the system. I briefly present the basic assumptions of the two approaches as outlined by Van de Ven & Poole (1988). Developmentalism is based on the two central assumptions of immanence and continuity. It assumes that change is immanent; while external events and processes can influence how the immanent form expresses itself, they are always mediated by the logical necessity of the internal developmental process. The accumulation theory of social change examines how existing social systems are expanded or new ones are established as a means of achieving individual or collective goals. These two traditions are mutually exclusive. This question of whether the source of change lies internal or external to the organization is a question that community development efforts have dealt with (Bandeh et.al. 1996). Fiol & O’Connor (2002) address it from the perspective of identity theory and argue that the capacity and willingness of small groups of insiders and outsiders to engage in a limited activity sparks the change, which then allows the disparate beliefs to co-evolve into alignment over time. Taking the dialogic perspective, I propose that:
An organization’s generative capacity rests on the interplay between internal and external sources of change and it is characterized by mutual transformation.

I anchor this discussion in the initiation of change process in these three sites and how the interplay between internal and external sources of change contributed to transformation of the more effective sites while the less effective site does not feature the interplay. In TBS and LABS, the changes were initiated by external agents. In Kuthambakkam, Elango’s position is more of an insider-outsider because even though he grew up in the village, he had worked outside for many years before he returned to take up this task. While Elango of Kuthambakkam and Rajendra Singh are both charismatic, strong leaders, what worked for TBS is not working in Kuthambakkam village. Both of them are strongly motivated, dedicated and committed to making personal sacrifices for their cause. Both of them share a strong emotional bond with their villages. The district of Alwar and the rest of the state languished in poverty and isolation for decades before Rajendra Singh triggered the change process through the simple action of digging a pond. While it may not be possible to predict with any certainty about how things would have been for these villagers if Rajendra Singh had not chosen to work in these villages, I can say with complete certainty that his presence and actions triggered a huge reverberating process of transformation. Similarly, it is obvious that the response of the villagers and the local emergent leaders who became sources of change I can say with complete certainty that Elango is equally committed but is unable to trigger changes of the same scale in his village. However, while I can speculate based on my data from the more effective examples about Elango could have approached Kuthambakkam’s change
process differently; I cannot claim with any certainty why his leadership has been less effective or how the different approach that I suggest might have led to a better end. Similarly, LABS is also a fascinating example. While there is a strong external leader who founded the organization, its movement and growth has been dependent on multiple stakeholders not just the top managers of DRF and/or LABS. Involvement of various government entities, for-profit and non-profit organizations and communities has sustained this movement and enabled it to spread wider and farther. While it is an organization run more like a for-profit organization internally, they have managed to engage the emotional accountability of these various stakeholder groups. Even if with the resources at Dr. Anji Reddy’s disposal, it would have never reached this level of success if not for the participation of these various organizations in the field. In both the more effective cases, there is not only interplay between internal and external sources of change, my data suggests that there is a melding of internal-external factors over time. Applied purely to leadership as a source of change, it suggests that leadership is a shared social process.

**Role of Time in Change: Histories and Everyday Routines**

The role of time in organizational life has been addressed by scholars (Ancona et.al. 2001; Gersisk, 1994; Orlikowski & Yates, 2002; Van de Ven & Poole, 1988). Gersick (1994) developed the model of punctuated equilibrium for group development; Orlikowski and Yates (2002) have proposed that time is experienced in organizational life through a process of temporal structuring that characterized people’s everyday engagement in the world. Van de Ven & Poole (1988) advocate the use of role of time as a way to address paradoxes. In this resolution, one horn of the paradox is assumed to hold
at one time and the other at a different time. While I have used time as an analytical framework within each case, especially to organize the narratives as well as position the micro-histories of each case within the macro history of the larger context, I have not extended it to a systematic between-the-cases analysis for addressing the various paradoxes. However, my analysis throws light on the relationship between long term histories, both micro and macro, and everyday routines. Time from a historical perspective to position the micro-histories of each site within the macro-history of the country as a whole has been applied in Chapter 7. In this section, I anchor the discussion about the role of time in its relationship between long term view of change and short term view of everyday organizational routines. Feldman and Pentland (2003) reposition organizational routines as a source of flexibility and change thereby raising some important research questions about the connection between organizational routines and change. The role of time and timing is increasingly being pursued as a key dimension in organizational research (Orlikowsky and Yates, 2002 and Amis, Slack and Hinings 2004, Cunliffe, Luhman and Boje, 2004) and I believe that understanding the impact of temporality, both real and perceived, on this relationship between vision and everyday routines may give us some clues about successful organizational change initiatives. I propose that:

An organization’s generative capacity rests on the interplay between long term view of change and everyday routines and this interplay is characterized by mindfulness.
Langer (2000) defines Mindfulness as the process of drawing novel distinctions, which is a cognitive activity predicated upon the subjective ‘feel’ of mindfulness that is of a heightened state of involvement and wakefulness or being in the present. While Langer’s definition of mindfulness is a cognitive state of an individual, I redefine it as a state of consciousness and expanding it to include the object of “Mindfulness” and locate it in context of a relationship with the other. It is being mindful of one’s own presence and space as part of the interconnected web of their history as well as long term vision. It is predicated on simultaneous awareness of the long term and short term perspectives.

**Outcome Vs Process**

As mentioned elsewhere, I added a fifth paradoxical element to Van de Ven & Poole’s (1989) model: outcome versus process orientation in studying change. Many organizations that embark on a change mission succeed and/or fail to varying degrees and there are multiple reasons behind the success as well as failure. Most organizational change literature in the search for parsimonious theories has focused on outcomes because they are more amenable to analysis and not on the dynamic, processual elements. This raises the question: Is organizational change a process or an outcome? I argue is that it is at once a state of being (i.e. an outcome) and a state of becoming and an examination of change needs to look at both. As organizational scholars it is incumbent upon us to study both outcomes and process, so we can learn to keep both alive, and avoid the dangers, either of reification of “static” truths or of faulty memory where certain inconvenient “static” truths are forgotten over the duration of the change process. Many organizations that embark on a change mission succeed and/or fail to varying degrees and there are multiple reasons behind the success as well as failure. In this study, I examined
both the outcomes and the processes of change in the three cases. To study outcomes, I used Ferlie et al.’s (1996) model of transformation as an evaluative framework as well as the arrangements component of the practice-arrangements bundle and the practice component of the bundle to study the cases from a process perspective. I anchor this discussion in the next proposition:

An organization's generative capacity rests on the interplay between process and outcome orientation and this interplay is characterized by mutual guidance.

By mutual guidance, I mean when an organization focuses simultaneously on both process and outcome, one guides the other. Intended and actual outcomes guide the process and the process itself is the vehicle for outcome accomplishment. LABS appears to be an obvious example of this dual focus, given its fairly formal organization structure and goal oriented management of the initiative. For example, all the facilitators (faculty members), the professional managers and the heads of the various LABS centers operate with fixed targets like any business organization. Outcomes in the form of number of students trained and placed in jobs, number of new centers, and number of new strategic alliances and partnerships are tracked diligently and this tracking mechanism helps them make course correction in terms of identifying new opportunities/areas/target communities and even new forms of strategic alliances. However, they are committed to their process integrity as described in their values and therefore, they do not let their ends in the form of outcomes govern their process unilaterally, but it is more a mutually sustaining and guiding relationship. Similarly, in TBS, interestingly and unexpectedly, outcomes are tracked and there are even permanent boards in the walls that track the number of village committees that operate in the region. They also disseminate this
information widely through their frequent publications and to the next level of outcomes that are planned. Moreover, like LABS, they also let the outcomes and process guide each other towards sustainability and growth of their initiative. Based on my analysis of the more effective sites and their attitude towards process and outcomes, I argue that their generative capacity rests on the simultaneous attention to both outcomes and process and the interplay between them.

In this previous section, I addressed the six debates usually conceived in opposition to each other and have argued that applying a dialogical approach, these polarities: change-continuity, agency-structure, conflict-cooperation, internal-external sources of change, long-term and short term perspectives, and output-process, can be conceived of as fundamental elements of change phenomena. Gergen (1984) has clearly defined generative capacity in terms of its quality and outcome. However, he has not addressed the issue of source(s) of such capacities and this dissertation throws light on it. I argued that an organization’s generative capacities for transformation rest on the interplay between these polarities.

Next, I present the concept of Generative Organizing, the interplay between intentional and emergent organizing for change.

**Generative Organizing: Interplay between Intentional and Emergent Organizing for Change**

While organizational change as a topic of study has remained in vogue for decades now (Lewin, 1947; Collins, 1998; Eisenhardt and Schoonhaven, 1990; Hannan & Freeman, 1977; Hatch, 1997; Kanter, 1992; Pentland, 2004, Pettigrew, 1985), different scholars have taken different approaches to change. For instance, Lewin (1947) and
Schein (1996) focused on intentional and planned change interventions, mostly focusing on endogenous adaptation in the course of organizational change (Eisenhardt and Schoonhaven, 1990) and organizational ecologists emphasized the role of exogenous forces (Hannan and Freeman, 1977). Whereas, Burns (2004) points out that the Culture-Excellence school provides another approach to studying organizational change and this approach believes that the world is essentially an ambiguous place where detailed plans are not possible and flexibility is essential (Collins, 1998; Hatch, 1997; Kanter, 1992) and This work draws on the foundational work done by processual scholars who promoted an understanding of change that takes into account of interplay between structural and agency dynamics at multiple levels of analysis (Child, 1997; Giddens, 1984; Lewin and Volberda 1999; Pentland 2004; Pettigrew 1985). As Goldspink and Kay (2004) rightly point out, much of what is interesting in social dynamics may be the result of the interplay between alternative sources of order, the intentional order and the order that results from complex organization. They argue that the nature of this interplay is still poorly understood. This dissertation offers a new framework for exploring this interplay and terms it, Generative Organizing. Data from the three cases suggests that the success of the change initiative is related to whether an organization is able to hold both the polarized ends. In my comparative analysis of the three cases, the relationship between intentional and emergent organizing emerges as simultaneous and co-existent and permanent paradoxical polarities. Based on my data from the three cases, the success of the change initiative is related to whether an organization is able to hold both the entities and if there is interplay between the diverging types of organizing. The three
characteristic features of this interplay are Confluence, Generative Conversations and Alignment. Figure 7 depicts this interplay.

**Figure 7: Generative Organizing – Interplay between Intentional and Emergent Organizing**

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of Intentional Organizing</th>
<th>Features of Interplay</th>
<th>Elements of Emergent Organizing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core Values – Individual/Relational/Social</td>
<td>Confluence</td>
<td>Simplicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>Generative Conversations</td>
<td>Spontaneity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Content</td>
<td>Alignment between intentional and emergent elements</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Location/Ownership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sources of Generative Capacity – Interplay between</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change-Continuity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Structure-Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooperation-Conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internal-External Sources of Change</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Process-Outcome Orientation</td>
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Intentional and Emergent Organizing

Intentional organizing for change has been the focus of many organizational researchers. Ford & Ford (1995) write that intentional change occurs when a change agent deliberately and consciously sets out to establish conditions and circumstances that are different from what they are now and then accomplishes that through some set or series of actions and interventions either singularly or in collaboration with them. Kurt Lewin’s (1947) 3-Step model is a well known example of such planned change approach. This approach assumes that it is possible to intervene in a system and effect change systematically.

Primary criticisms against this approach include those from the Culture-Excellence approach, the processualists, and the post modernists (Burnes, 2004). Kanter (1992) argues that intentional change model is linear and static and that it does not capture the overlapping and interpenetrating nature of the stages of change. Processualists argue that this model does not pay enough attention to different levels of analysis and different time periods and ignores the complexity of the political and cultural processes of change (Pettigrew, 1990). The post modernist and complexity theorists (Boje, 2000; Choi et.al. 2001) argue that organizations are dynamic non-linear systems and therefore, linear predictive models of intentional change are invalid but they also argue that organizations are governed by a set of simple order-generating rules, Schein (1983) says that these rules are rooted deeply in the assumptions and beliefs of organizational founders and early leaders. I define intentional features as those which these organizations hold as inviolable as well as those features that are related to the vision and strategic planning of the organization because the latter also point out to the intention of
an organization. The intentional features that I identify and describe are mostly teleonomic (apparent intention); although through a comparative analysis between the interviews with the individuals and their observed actions, I have recognized certain patterns that reflect the ‘apparent purpose’ even though some of the values and vision have been espoused by the participants. Two key elements of intentional organizing in these communities are their Core Values and Vision (See Chapter 8). Table 16 summarizes the dimensions of intentional organizing in each case.

**Table 16: Dimensions of Intentional Organizing in each case**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of Intentional Organizing</th>
<th>TBS (shared)</th>
<th>Kuthambakkam (held by the leader)</th>
<th>LABS (shared)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1. Vision**                       | 1. Reclamation and protection of ecology  
2. Scaling up and spreading the methodology | 1. Demonstration of Network Economy Model  
2. Scaling up through replication of model | 1. Creation of Livelihood for more  
2. Sustainable Scaling up through replication of LABS model |
| **2. Core Values**                  | 1. Affirmative Assumptions  
2. Emotional Engagement  
3. Cooperation through Consensus  
4 Ownership/Responsibility  
5. Self Reliance  
2. Local Economy  
2. Emotional Engagement  
3. Grounding in community  
4. Ownership and Freedom  
5. Process Integrity  
6. Self Reliance |

According to Holland (1998:122), ‘Emergence is above all of a product of coupled, context-dependent interactions.’ My data suggests that there are three key
elements to Emergent Organizing and they are Simplicity, Spontaneity and Flexibility (See Chapter 8. Emergent features are those unplanned responses that emerge from the day-to-day interactions of all in the organization.

**Interplay between Intentional and Emergent Organizing for Change**

In this section, I describe the interplay between intentional and emergent organizing processes. Key characteristic features of this interplay are confluence of key people, events and timing, generative conversations, and alignment between intentional and emergent elements. I also offer examples from the cases to illustrate this dynamic. The interplay between the intentional elements of vision and values and the emergent elements of simplicity, spontaneity and flexibility seems to be encoded intentionally in the effective organizations and can definitely be said to a critical success factor in their reverberating impact. Now, I describe the three features that characterize this interplay.

**Confluence**

Even when there is an intention to make things happen, my data suggests that confluence of key people, events, resources, and timing is a crucial characteristic of this interplay between intentional and emergent organizing. Feldman (2004) shows through her study, how actions, in the forms of organizational routines can create new resources. The following two stories illustrate how a confluence of people, events, and timing can create new resources for triggering a spontaneous emergence of an organization that can be sustainable and successful. Chennai and Hyderabad are not geographically far from each other and share some professional networks. For instance, Deen, a LABS mentor and a Chennai based productivity and organization consultant has been consulting with Murugappa Group, Pepsico, and Khivraj Motors, three of the four corporations that
founded LABS, Chennai for over eight years and had developed strong personal relationships with key role holders in these organizations. He also went to graduate school with Dr. Nalini Gangadharan of DRF and has been in touch with her through the years. Therefore, he has been the one from Chennai with the maximum association with LABS, its concept and organization. However, the idea for LABS Chennai took roots when Sukumaran, President-HR of Murugappa Group and also a key sponsor and mentor of LABS, Chennai was grappling with his corporate dilemma, a major layoff that he needed to handle in one of the company’s factories located in Kerala. During the interview with me he said that he wanted to make sure “that we don’t leave behind debris in that sense we don’t actually leave behind people who will actually become a social burden” and started to think about generative alternatives to handle this problematic situation. The role of his personal values and his vision of society led him to going the extra mile that he did not need to go as the Head of HR of a for-profit corporation. He then built a partnership with the workers’ union to begin map out the demographic details and skill sets of families that were being affected, to look for helping them transition into other available livelihood options in the region.

Later in conversation with Deen, a consultant and an active LABS advocate, he learnt that LABS, Hyderabad had already evolved a similar model that was turning out to be successful and therefore visited them to learn from them. Once they used the LABS model to help the families of the laid-off workmen in the Kerala factory, Sukumaran was so impressed with the model that wanted to replicate the LABS model in Chennai. He says that his social conscientiousness combined with his business understanding that this is a workable model led him take the next step. As the Head of Human Resources
Department of a socially conscious billion dollar business conglomerate, he had access to the financial resources and influence necessary to bring the concept to Chennai. From then, it was a spontaneous unfolding of events. What seemed to be a fortuitous solution to his HR dilemma led to the formation of LABS Chennai. Deen then brought in Kannan from Pepsi co and Ajit from Khivraj Motors, both of whom were his clients who were ready to partner with Murugappa Group and Deen in supporting LABS, Chennai. Knowing when to intervene and when not to, seems to be an important part of this dynamic. While my data doesn’t lead me to conclude explicitly about how the timing works and how and if those involved gauge it, it definitely suggests that it is an important characteristic.

The story of formation of the Arvari River Parliament provides another example of this dynamic. The key event in this story was the rejuvenation of the river itself. Many villages had been working on various tanks and earthen dams for a few years when the Arvari River got rejuvenated. Following the suggestion of the Late Chairperson of Center for Science and Environment, a non-governmental agency working in issues relating to environment, who suggested that they should make some rules about the use of this water, the villagers in Bhaonta, one of the villages on the banks of the river began to talk among themselves and with other villages in their neighborhood about how to regulate the use of the water from the river. They came upon the idea of forming the Arvari Sansad (River Parliament) to protect and care for their river. Upon its formation, they also came up with simple rules to minimize the use of river water and they also decided to prohibit drilling tube/bore wells on the river banks to avoid draining of ground water. They also decided to move to growing more food grains that consume less water than
sugarcane, a cash crop that consumes a lot of water. In this story, the core values of TBS, protection of environment, reclamation of their commons and self reliance play a key role. A complex organization comprising of seventy villages spontaneously emerged as the result of a suggestion from a well-wisher and is governed by simple rules and processes. Each gram sabha (village committee) elects one representative who would represent the village in the Parliament and the Parliament meets twice a year, once before and once after the monsoon, a seasonal occurrence that guides and controls the fortunes of rainwater dependent farming communities and the venue of the meeting is also rotated among the villages and an opportunity to host this event is a privilege that all of them fight for. Formal membership in the parliament is not a condition for attendance in the meeting because these are open meetings where everyone can listen to the deliberations, raise their concerns and share their opinions. Reflecting their values, both men and women of all castes and ages are welcome to attend these meetings and share their views.

Generative Conversations

In the emergence and growth of TBS and LABS, conversations play a crucial and generative role. Ford & Ford (1995) developing a framework for considering change as a communication-based and communication-driven phenomenon in which they focus on the types of conversations that managers use to create, sustain, focus, and complete a change. They write about four different kinds of conversations for intentional change: conversations for initiative, understanding, performance and closure. An initiative conversation relies on assertions, directives, commissives, and declarations to focus listeners’ attention on what could or should be done. They argue that this ‘call’ constitutes the first phase of a change process. The second type of conversations aid
sense-making and understanding and are characterized by claims made, evidence and testimony given, hypotheses examined, beliefs and feelings explored and contentions maintained. The third type consists of conversations for performance; characterized by an interplay of requests and promises, these conversations focus on producing the intended results. The fourth and final type are conversations for closure; in these conversations, claims may be made that the change is complete and the work is finished, and congratulations or regrets may be expressed that the project is over, but the project is nonetheless declared complete. While it is a very fascinating and useful analysis, this typology focuses on the content of the conversations, i.e. the speech acts, in this dissertation, I address the quality of conversations; drawing on Gergen’s definition of generative capacity, I define generative conversations as “conversations that have the power to challenge the guiding cultural and social assumptions and transform realities.” This requires not only the humanistic and postmodern rendition of ‘voice at the table’ i.e. openness to dialogue with others, but going beyond, it also requires willingness to act on the understanding from these conversations and experiment and innovate with new ways of organizing.

For instance, LABS, Chennai was founded through such conversations among multiple stakeholder groups and it also led to be differently organized from that of DRF LABS model. Chennai while an offshoot of LABS-DRF, it is a separate entity in its membership. While LABS was started by DRF, a philanthropic foundation of one major corporation, LABS Chennai was started and funded by five organizations which make its character different. Sukumaran, a mentor and founder of LABS, Chennai says that he found that reliance on a single corporate giant could be a hindrance for other corporations
and well meaning individuals to participate and therefore, he wanted to organize LABS Chennai differently, as an open forum where “people can come together and participate without the limelight being hogged by XYZ, in terms of people or organizations.” Therefore, LABS Chennai is a corporate consortium and the sponsors have signed a Memorandum of Understanding on a long term basis. As another mentor says, “today it doesn’t belong to anyone, at the same time it belongs to five corporations.” This different configuration of multiple sponsors changes the way these corporations and their managers get involved in LABS operations as well as opens up more resources from the corporate networks than they otherwise would have. Mentors and sponsors tap their networks to get people with necessary skills and know-how to support LABS, Chennai. For instance, the Steering Committee for LABS, Chennai is made up of and benefits from the combined wisdom and support of two Heads of HR of major companies, one organizational consultant, and one entrepreneur. This committee conducts monthly reviews of performance, syllabi and targets while also getting involved in generation of new opportunities, new markets and new modules. They also meet with DRF on a quarterly basis to facilitate exchange of ideas and experiences.

Similarly, in TBS, from the first johad (pond) that was built in Rajasthan to the present day developments in the region, generative conversations have played a crucial role. As one of the local leaders puts it succinctly, “I mobilized my village, told them the story of good work that other villages have done.” Likewise, every water harvesting structure, gram sabha, various committees for regeneration and preservation of jungle, animals and water, Arvari River Parliament all resulted from generative conversations.
This community without access to technology like telephones or internet managed to organize an entire social movement through conversations and story telling.

In contrast to the above examples, from Kuthambakkam, I present two examples from Kuthambakkam when such generative conversations did not happen when such opportunities presented themselves. The first story is about how Elango refused a potential business arrangement that was Philips Corporation to manufacture energy saving street lights. A talented engineer, he invented a new kind of energy saving street lights. He procured the necessary parts from a fabrication industry in Ambattur, a manufacturing suburb of Chennai and proceeded to have them assembled in his own village using a group of women and supply the village Panchayat for installation on the streets. In this manner, he managed to get a temporary source of income for these women and ensured that at least part of the money that was paid by the village government stayed within the community. Based on this success, Philips Corporation approached him to set up a large assembly unit in Kuthambakkam and sell the assembled street lights to other villages in the state and country. He refused the offer because he felt that it was not necessary for his village to usurp all the material benefits that might accrue from this mode of large scale operations. Instead, he chose to offer the technology to other village Panchayat leaders who might be interested to replicate Kuthambakkam’s model in their own villages using their own people. This decision is well aligned with his value of self-reliance and his vision for a local economic model and his clarity about not engaging in large scale manufacturing models which would then concentrate wealth in the hands of a few and is admirable. But from my conversations with him and the villagers, I also know that neither did he consult with his villagers about this decision nor did he explore other
avenues for a collaborative relationship with the company. By making this decision unilaterally, he took away a possible opportunity for a generative conversation among stakeholder groups.

I offer another example of a lost opportunity from Kuthambakkam. I was simultaneously studying LABS and Kuthambakkam because both of them are proximately located, I thought that given the levels of unemployment in Kuthambakkam, a partnership between LABS and Kuthambakkam might be one with potential. I raised this idea with LABS and Elango and one of the LABS facilitators was very interested in pursuing this possibility. We even talked about setting up a temporary center in Kuthambakkam which could disband after training and placing the unemployed youth in viable jobs in and around Kuthambakkam and even in Chennai. But Elango was not open to this idea because he felt that this would not only diverge from his vision of the local economic model, but even harm its implementation. While, I understand and appreciate his legitimate concern that this might take the youth of the community away from the village and its concerns, but similar to the Philips incident, I observed his unilateral approach to decision making. He did not consult with the youth in question or their parents and families nor did he have a conversation with LABS to figure out alternatives, especially considering the fact that while Kuthambakkam is a village based agrarian economy, it is also situated just a few miles away from a major automobile production company and its satellite units. It might have been possible to find ways to bring these satellite units to Kuthambakkam using LABS connections and the lure of a well trained workforce, if we could have brought in the different stakeholder groups for a generative conversation. Feldman (2004) talks about the nature and importance of relational
resources; in the cases of TBS and LABS, relational resources were developed and deployed through generative conversations while in the case of Kuthambakkam, an opportunity to develop and use the existing relational resources was missed because of lack of generative conversation among the network actors.

Alignment between Intentional and Emergent Elements

The third key characteristic of this interplay is the alignment between intentional and elements of organizing, which means that the values and vision of the organization are translated into robust organizational routines which can be simple, spontaneous and flexible without compromising their values or vision. For example, there are no hard and fast rules about the formation of Gram Sabhas (Village Committees) in TBS. When the village sees its necessary, they form it. Village committees are spontaneously emerging organizations, and the responsibility is that of the village and not of TBS which in turns keeps the village self reliable without looking to outside agency to ‘develop’ them. The simple principle is that the committees are formed according to needs by the villages themselves. Since they are formed spontaneously based on their needs, they are flexible about which comes first, whether it is water harvesting structures or gram sabha, it is up to them to determine. When the TBS volunteer leader describes him role, he describes the role of TBS too which is respectful of the core values of TBS and the community, it is in fact futile to separate TBS from the community.

Similarly, one of their core values is Self Reliance and a manifestation of this value is in their relationship with the government which has always been ambivalent, fraught with tension and colored with a certain amount of basic mistrust in the light of their value. Given the history of colonial and post colonial corrupt governments, it not
surprising that for them to reclaim their power over the commons, they have had to fight against their own government. The history of this movement demonstrates that every conflict with government has left the more united and powerful. So while they do prize this sense of independence and self reliance they do not make it a universal rule for all their dealings with government. For instance, the relationship between the formally elected Panchayat (Village Government) and the Gram Sabha (Village Committee) varies from village to village. In some villages, there is overlapping membership and they work well together. For example, in a village, a member of the GS is also a member of the Panchayat and the villagers here feel that this overlap has made their GS even stronger. While their simple rule is that they be self reliant; either working with a healthy local government, or organizing a mass protest against the government to protect their rights over the commons, they are willing to do either. TBS is an example of complex organizing based on simple principles while uncompromisingly upholding their core values.

I found that this alignment between intentional and emergent organizing was missing in Kuthambakkam. One striking manifestation of this lack of alignment was that Elango did not always follow through on his commitments. For instance, during my last visit with him, we visited a neighboring village where he took me to meet with a women’s self help group who runs an embroidery unit. I promised him that I would look for opportunities for business alliances to export this line of products to the US market and that I could also put him in touch with local Indian textile organizations who might be interested in forming similar alliance. I also suggested to him that with his contacts in the Association for India Development, a US based non-profit run by Non Resident
Indians, he might be able to find a fairly accessible distribution network. While he promised to get back to me a few samples of their work, he never did, till I left the country, despite my follow-ups with him. I suspect this was not necessarily due to his unwillingness, but more because he was the sole leader responsible for everything in the village government as well as the Trust and therefore he was truly short of time. Another reason could be because he spends a lot of time outside the village traveling and building networks with outside agencies including development agencies, British Consulate, and other Panchayat leaders of the state whom he wants to train and mobilize to replicate the Kuthambakkam model. There is an obvious disconnect between his vision, values and his everyday routines. He claims that he wants to build a demonstrable model of the local network economy at Kuthambakkam; but his everyday routines apart from his Panchayat duties, are more focused on building extensive external networks than building sustainable livelihood options for his village.

Similarly, all his ideas for local manufacturing like soap making, bakery unit, tailoring unit, food processing have been languishing in the early stages for years now. They are all ideas with great potential and through his detailed market survey in villages of Kuthambakkam and around, he is convinced that there is sufficient demand for these products in the local market. Therefore, implementation of these ideas through involvement of local villagers might result in creating a sustainable local economy but not one of them have seen the light of the day yet because he does not follow through his ideas beyond experimentation to completion. He has also spent a lot of time and resources in creating the physical infrastructure for his Trust and Panchayat Academy which is like putting the cart before the horse, because by his own admission, he wants to
prove that this model could work so he could then help other clusters of villages to replicate this model. Whereas in complete contrast, Rajendra Singh of TBS personally spent seven months in digging the first pond that became the trigger for the miraculous recovery of the region. TBS has a simple building with space for office and visitors, but it was built when the movement was in its tenth year, by which time they had already touched upon the lives of over 500 villages. The model was demonstrated and the long term physical infrastructure followed much later. They have been sharing their model with the world for decades before their decision to build the infrastructure for the upcoming Water University. Without this alignment between intentional and emergent elements, priorities are misaligned leading to a colossal waste of resources. More importantly, without evidence of success, people begin to lose interest and hope. While the vision of TBS is an emergent one, it is guided by sustained action, but in the case of Kuthambakkam, Elango’s vision is neither shared nor emergent but is almost a hard construction that does not appear to have the power to guide emergent organizing. Kuthambakkam and Elango’s leadership confirms McNulty & Ferlie’s (2004) thesis that weak and incoherent reformatory ideology and mixed messages may be an obstacle to radical forms of change within contemporary public service organizations and that a reliance on strong leadership by itself is a weak basis for transformational organizational change in large, complex organizations.

A comparative understanding of the three cases

If one were to conceive the polarities as a continuum, I would place TBS on the more emergent end than LABS and Kuthambakkam. While LABS is more emergent and than Kuthambakkam and Kuthambakkam at present is more or less than purely
intentional in its organizing, this placement could also be an artifact of the social, economic and political characteristics of the respective cases. TBS is a more a people movement with mostly to all voluntary members and is therefore perhaps less decentralized and less controlled while LABS has been founded and supported by managers and professionals from mostly for-profit organizations and therefore, the language and the processes used are reflective of formal organizations and this includes elements of control, decision making, resource sharing, career management. Moreover, a majority of the population in LABS is a floating one, the students spending only three months in LABS and all the staff members including its managers and facilitators, LABS is a career option, a channel that manages to combine their career aspirations with that of their social conscience.

I do contend that the leadership style of Elango is a key factor in the lack of effectiveness in Kuthambakkam. For instance, in Elango’s interactions with Philips Corporation and LABS, if he had engaged in open and generative conversations with multiple stakeholder groups, including the villagers themselves, and other Panchayat leaders and the corporate representatives, they might have perhaps found a way to be respond to this opportunity with more flexibility which might have in turn resulted in some other creative form of economic engagement among the stakeholder groups. I also contend that his decision to turn down these opportunities is directly related to his assumption that his villagers would not be able to evaluate the available data and make a discriminating and appropriate decision and therefore, he made this decision unilaterally which then took away a possible opportunity for a generative conversation among stakeholder groups. Likewise with his approach to vision development and deployment,
and the lack of alignment between intentional elements and emergent organizing practices.

But it would be perilous to conclude that lack of effectiveness in Kuthambakkam lies solely on Elango, his leadership style and behaviors, it is important to remember that for this interplay to happen and be effective, confluence of different elements need to happen, and so, readiness of the organization and the timing are crucial factors. Therefore, it is important to compare the three contextual and historical forces of the three organizations. For instance, the villages in which TBS works, unlike most Indian villages, are not dependent on the government, be it local, state or federal level, for their livelihood or development efforts. In fact, one of the explicitly stated aims of TBS is to be able to reach places where the government cannot reach. Being removed from the mainstream economy and its vagaries, their livelihood is more dependent on their ability to manage their water and ecosystem than on either mainstream economy or government handouts, which they have organized themselves to do well. Their very separation from the mainstream economy might have turned out to be a key strength because points of leverage for change seem far more accessible in the case of TBS.

Unlike TBS and the villagers of Rajasthan, who share a common economic fate due to their shared dependence on the local ecology for livelihood, in the case of Kuthambakkam, livelihood is not necessarily a concern shared by all because class confounds the situation. Given the proximity to Chennai, an urban metropolis and the economic opportunities it offers, the wealthier, educated villagers of Kuthambakkam take up jobs in the city and therefore, they are not necessarily dependent on the village economy for their livelihood. Whereas the landless poor who are mostly poor are
dependent on the village economy because increasing mechanization of agriculture and continuing draught conditions and depletion of water table, farming jobs are fast disappearing and their lack of marketable skills exclude them from partaking in the New Economy. Their proximity to mainstream economy might have also influenced their shared values towards material progress and prosperity. While almost all the villagers in Rajasthan I spoke to shared a concern for the ecosystem as a whole and espouses values of conservation versus consumption, the villagers of Kuthambakkam did not share the same concerns, which is in turn leading to their lackadaisical attitude towards exploitation of their water resources by private bottling companies which in turn lead to reduced employment opportunities in the farming sector.

Another factor which makes TBS an exemplar among other hundreds of failed development projects undertaken by many nongovernmental, governmental and international agencies is their value of ownership. The villagers physically own the water harvesting structures and this sense of ownership brings in a sense of responsibility to the ecosystem as well as towards maintenance of these structures over time. Whereas in Kuthambakkam, it is a different situation; it is far more complex because Elango holds a political office and the villagers therefore might be reluctant to take control over their commons. In a way, Elango’s political status as the elected government official might have triggered an unintended cooptation of the villagers and their power by the formal government machinery. This might be attributed to the residual effect of the colonial rule and the erstwhile relationship of natives with the governing authorities and perhaps reinforced by Elango’s ‘I know best’ attitude and the ensuing behaviors. The fact that the local and state governments in Tamil Nadu, one of the more progressive states of the
country, might have contributed to the laid back attitude of the locals towards their own
power differentials because they tend to trust the government more than the villagers of
Rajasthan.
CHAPTER TWELVE
IMPLICATIONS & CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I lay out the implications of this study and conclude by describing its limitations. The research concern central to this dissertation is the domain of generative capacities and generative organizing for transformation. Based on a comparative case study of three social experiments in India, this dissertation brings a dialogic, holistic approach to the study of organizational change thereby advancing knowledge in five distinct but interrelated ways: paradigmatic, theoretical, methodological, substantive and pedagogic. Paradigmatically, this dissertation offers a framework for holistic ontology thereby transcending the dualistic conception of subjective and objective views of life, based on which it offers an epistemological framework for bringing together ontological subjectivity and epistemological objectivity. It also offers a holistic understanding of change, bringing together the much polarized discourses of Change-Continuity, Structure-Agency, Cooperation-Conflict, Internal-External Sources of Change, Long term-Short term, Outcome-Process and proposes that generative capacities of organizations rest on the interplay between these polarized entities. These polarized entities are conceived of as foundational elements of change. Thus, it advances our epistemological-theoretical understanding of change. Then, this dissertation offers an exposition of Generative Organizing as interplay between intentional and emergent organizing for change. This dissertation also contributes to methodological discourse through adoption of an innovative social ontology called Site Ontology (Schatzki, 2002) and usage of Practice-Material & Structural Arrangements as the level of analysis. Site ontology locates social reality in the site, which is
conceptualized as Practice-Arrangement bundles thereby transcending the polarized and dualistic understanding of conventional social ontology: individual and societist ontological. In this manner, this dissertation offers an approach to transcend the micro-macro divide of social analysis. Simultaneously, it also offers a way to consider both ideal and material elements of a social phenomenon. Table 15 offers a comprehensive view of all these contributions and the different polarities that this dissertation brings together.

**TABLE 17: FROM DIALECTIC TO DIALOGIC: IMPLICATIONS OF DISSERTATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISCOURSE</th>
<th>CONTRIBUTION/INNOVATION</th>
<th>INTERPLAY/BRIDGES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paradigmatic</td>
<td>Holistic Ontology</td>
<td>Subjective &amp; Objective Ontology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemological</td>
<td>Theoretical Framework of Change</td>
<td>Continuity-Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical</td>
<td></td>
<td>Structure-Agency</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Cooperation-Conflict</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Internal-External Sources of Change</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Long term-Short term</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Output-Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical-Practical</td>
<td>Generative Organizing</td>
<td>Intentional and Emergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological</td>
<td>Use of Site Ontology</td>
<td>Organizing for Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of Practice-Arrangement Bundles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Substantive</td>
<td>Use of postcolonial and CMS frameworks</td>
<td>Mainstream Academy and margins</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sustainable local development</td>
<td>Local-Global</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Case Narratives</td>
<td>Action-Theory</td>
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**Paradigmatic: Framework of Holistic Ontology**

Paradigmatically, it offers a framework of holistic ontology that allows the researcher to transcend the conventional subjective-objective dualism thus facilitating the
generation of theory through interplay of ontological subjectivity and epistemological objectivity. Most of the discussion about ontology in social sciences is derived from western philosophical traditions based on dichotomy and binary opposition. Embedded in this fundamental style of thinking, however, are not only oppositions, but also a hierarchy, in that one or other polarity is more or less privileged (Carr & Zanetti, 1999). In contrast, Hindu philosophy in general and the Advaita philosophy in particular rest on assumptions of non-dualism. This entire philosophy can be summed up in a single dictum ‘Tatsvam Asi’, meaning ‘You are that’, that meaning the other. For the Hindu thinkers, the objective world exists. It is not an illusion. In this framework, objective and existential realities are not to be set against each other.

Contemplative traditions like Hinduism and Buddhism are rational philosophies and are not solely based on faith about the existence of God. Ecstasy or emotional excitement is not the goal of Hinduism. The goal of Hinduism is vidya – knowledge, only through which one can be liberated. Knowledge in this framework is not just limited to codified texts but it integrates multiple ways of knowing, action, experience, contemplation and sense making, all through the witnessing of self because self is a microcosm of the universe.

Hindu epistemology is based on the belief that subject can view itself as an object and still continue to be an actor and subject. Recent cognition and consciousness researchers advance the same argument based on rigorous experimentation and neurological studies. For example, Grush (2000) writes that a first person perspective allows a system to conceive of itself as part of an independent, objective order, while at the same time being anchored in it and act as a subject. Conventional subjective-objective
ontology denies a subject the capacity for objective reflection. From the point of view of conventional bifurcated ontology, most qualitative and especially naturalistic inquiry appears to be subject to subjectivity simply owing to its stance on researcher’s phenomenological presence. But, operating from a holistic ontological perspective, it is possible for a researcher to transcend the subjective-objective divide and be epistemologically objective in interpreting data without denying the researcher’s subjective experience of being an actor in a system. This framework has epistemological implications, especially for qualitative work grounded in subjective ontology because it allow such work to go beyond the descriptive mode and provide the space for building knowledge with conceptual-theoretical integrity. Most of Western philosophy has emphasized what Robin West (1993) calls the separation thesis. One of the most common bifurcations is the subjectivity-objectivity debate; one that has been dealt in much detail in Chapter 2. Our quest for tidy theories often precludes an acknowledgement of the underlying ontology – that is, how did these choices come to present themselves in the first place, notwithstanding that the constructed binary itself may be a problematic (Chia, 1999).

In this dissertation, I advance a framework of holistic ontology based on the Hindu philosophy which allowed me to theorize generatively while located in a relational context with the sites. Using this approach, I bring together the previously polarized conceptions of reality: subjectivity and objectivity, thereby proposing that it is possible to combine subjective ontology and epistemological objectivity towards knowledge creation. Next I present the dissertation’s epistemological-theoretical implications.
Epistemological-Theoretical: A theoretical framework of change

Van de Ven & Poole (1988) suggest four paradoxical requirements that must be attained jointly in a theory of organizational change: (1) action-structure Paradox (2) internal and external sources of change, (3) stability and change, and (4) time as the key historical accounting system. This dissertation builds on and expands their model to include two more paradoxical requirements, that of (5) accounting for both outcome and process and (6) cooperation and conflict. Van de Ven & Poole (1988) propose resolution of the paradox through four approaches: live with the paradox and make the best of it, clarifying connections between organizational levels, use of time to relate structure and action, and advancing a new conception of the structure-action relationship. While I draw on them for articulating the paradoxical requirements, drawing Bakhtin’s ideas of ‘dialogics’, I have proposed a dialogic approach that would capitalize the paradox while permitting interplay between previously polarized entities. Using this approach, I propose that generative capacities for change lie in the interplay between Change and Continuity, Structure and Agency, Conflict and Cooperation, and Internal and External Sources of Change, thereby offering a conceptual framework to study the previously polarized entities that are fundamental to change. This dissertation, therefore, is an invitation to engage holistically with organizational phenomena, without reifying either polarity, but allowing their simultaneity and focusing on the interplay between them because it is in this dynamic interplay organization exists and transforms itself. In that sense, this epistemological framework is a direct outcome of my holistic and non-dualistic ontological framework. This framework has also particular relevance in the context of the Burrell & Morgan (1979) matrix that separates the study of change from the study of
continuity or regulation. I argue that both continuity and change exist in organizational life and by privileging one, we miss the other and it is important for scholars to pursue complex organizational phenomena from different perspectives. While I concur with Van de Ven & Poole’s (1988) paradoxical requirements for a formal theory of change, I add two more paradoxical requirements, that of output and process and cooperation and conflict. I also offer a new approach to address these paradoxes by the use of dialogic approach.

**Theoretical-Practical**

This dissertation has theoretical-practical implications. The theory of Generative Organizing brings together the traditionally divided two approaches to change, intentional and emergent organizing for change. Different scholars have focused on different modalities when studying change. While Lewin (1947) and Schein (1996) focused on intentional and planned change interventions, the Culture-Excellence school approaches change on the assumption that the world is essentially an ambiguous place where detailed plans are not possible and flexibility is essential (Burnes, 2004). This dissertation draws on the work done by processual scholars who promote an understanding of change that takes into account of interplay between structural and agency dynamics at multiple levels of analysis (Child, 1997; Giddens, 1984; Lewin and Volberda 1999; Pentland 2004; Pettigrew 1985). As Goldspink and Kay (2004) rightly point out, much of what is interesting in social dynamics may be the result of the interplay between alternative sources of order, the intentional order and the order that results from complex organization. They argue that the nature of this interplay is still poorly understood. This dissertation offers a new framework for exploring this interplay.
and terms it, Generative Organizing. This framework has both theoretical implications for advancing knowledge about how change is orchestrated and implications for practice by providing a blueprint for how to initiate and let change emerge through confluence and interplay. Of the three elements that characterize this interplay: Confluence, Generative Conversations, and Alignment between intentional and emergent organizing for change, confluence is a novel concept based on a non-reductionistic approach. I argue that even when there is an intention to make things happen, confluence of key people, events, resources, and timing is crucial for sustainable transformation to happen. This concept is under explored theoretically and much in line with the rest of the arguments of this dissertation, it underscores the claim that organizational life is complex and every effort should be made to understand this concept and develop it as a construct.

I argue that for sustainable change processes, change has to be triggered through both discursive actions like conversations, story telling and inquiry as well as extra discursive material actions.

**Substantive: Margins to the Mainstream**

Substantively, this dissertation is anchored in post colonialism and CMS discourses. The choice of these sites from the social margins is guided by these approaches and thus is a partial attempt to bridge the gap between mainstream academy and margins, or at the least bringing the margins into the mainstream. India is an important area to study, because, not only because the country is predicted to emerge as one of the key economic powers in the immediate future; Flavin & Gardner (2006) liken the emergence of India and China to civilization changing events such as the rise of the Roman Empire or the discovery of the New World but also because this
growth is going to have an enormous impact on the global biosphere, especially because this growth, unlike the west, does not have the material resources to make investments critical to equity and sustainability. Sunita Narain (2006) summarizes this imperative neatly and argues for how India needs to reinvent the development trajectory. Because, the environmental movement in the west emerged after the period of wealth creation and during the period of waste generation, they argued for containment of the waste but did not have the ability to argue for the reinvention of the paradigm of waste generation and therefore needs a breakthrough in terms of new and inventive thinking. Scholars like Appadurai (2000) and Esteva & Prakash (2000) point out the social experiments in the margins of globalization as the crucibles of new social forms and this dissertation is an invitation to other scholars to learn from these populations. By examining and advocating for sustainable local economic alternatives and contextualizing them in the globalization discourse, this dissertation attempts to bring together the local and global discourses. As Sunita Narain (2006) closes her impressive preface to this year’s state of the world report, it is here the rich must learn its Gandhi. She writes, “It (the rich world) must learn that it cannot preach because it has nothing to teach. But it can learn, if it follows the environmentalism of the poor, to share Earth’s resources so that there is a common future for all.” This dissertation argues that local and global discourses are not divorced from each other but they are rather deeply intertwined. What happens to the water table in a small village in India has the power to reverberate across the globe. Finally, this dissertation also positions the narratives of the three cases in juxtaposition with the theoretical frameworks in an
attempt to demonstrate the interplay between action and theory, particularly through the use of self reflexive research practice.

**Methodological: Multi-level and Multi-vocal**

The concern with finding the appropriate means to study one’s particular research concern has always preoccupied scholars and this becomes even more challenging in the current world that is growing even more complex by the day. This dissertation through its innovative approach to its methodology and in particular, the level of analysis contributes to this debate. Methodologically, it uses the concept of site ontology, a new framework for looking at organizations, and an innovative level of analysis, the practice-arrangements bundle. Site ontology (Schatzki, 2005) locates social reality, neither in the micro of the individualist ontological approach nor in the macro of the societist ontology but incorporates both by locating it in the site. It does it by conceptualizing site of the social as a mesh of practices and material arrangements bringing our attention to neither the individual nor the organization but somewhere in between in a way that encompasses both. Moreover, these practice-arrangements bundles are conceptualized as nested entities thus allowing the researcher the flexibility to examine a particular practice-arrangement bundle in view of the context that it is nested in. By taking a practice-arrangements bundle view of organizing, this dissertation bridged the levels of analysis which usually poses a challenge in studying organizational change. This approach to level of analysis does not only transcend the micro-macro debate but also the polarity that bifurcates the ideal and the material entities that comprise a phenomenon. While the elements of practice, teleoaffective structure and rules incorporate the ideal-discursive or consciousness based entities of an organizational phenomenon, the actions, material and
structural arrangements capture the extra-discursive, materially real but nevertheless no less relevant entities of a social phenomenon. Being grounded in this level of analysis, would allow a researcher to develop a more comprehensive view of a social phenomenon. This dissertation calls attention to the outcomes-process dichotomy that is prevalent in our field. While the ‘being’ ontology based researchers study outcomes, develop effectiveness measures and all, the ‘becoming’ ontology based process researchers ignore the outcomes and results, thus reifying the split even while paradoxically rebelling against reification. This dissertation offers a blueprint to pay attention to both outcomes and process, because these two conceptions are in a dialogic relationship with each other and the only way we could justice to a phenomenon is looking at both and the interrelationships between them.

**A hierarchical view of the framework and its methodological implications**

Another way to understand this epistemological framework is to conceptualize it in the form of a pyramidal hierarchy; hierarchy based on the visibility of elements. This hierarchy impacts how we examine and study these elements. In this section, I discuss these implications from a methodological perspective because to develop a comprehensive theory about a phenomenon, it is important to examine all these layers and their relationships with each other. If the manifest elements give a clue to ‘what’ happens, the less obvious and latent elements have the power to explain ‘why’ something happens and their interrelationships the ‘how’ of a phenomenon. Figure 8 offers a representation of this hierarchy.
I categorize the elements of this practice-arrangement bundle in a pyramidal structure because from the view of the researcher, there is a hierarchy in the access to these elements. Certain elements of this framework are manifest, visible and obvious and one can observe these at the surface level, whether as material artifacts or actions of individuals in the organization. Data pertaining to these data may be collected through observation even over a short visit, although if one wants to observe action over time, one needs to spend time. I call the second category of elements less obvious, because these may not be obvious at surface level but because most of these data may be collected through conversations or other formal data collection methods like surveys. These categories are not really completely watertight because in certain organizations, values may be articulated and espoused more obviously than others. I have classified vision, espoused values, structures and outcomes under this category. Data collection for these elements would involve a more direct and conversational engagement with the site and
the participants. While the elements of the third category, the latent, need to be unearthed because they comprise the underlying foundational belief and assumptions that guide the teleoffective structure of a site. These are not usually visible at the surface level and for unpacking those elements, a reasonably long duration of data collection and an ethnographic approach to watching the everyday life in organizations is vital as well as sufficient preparation in terms of readings and other archival data to understand the context from a historical perspective. For the ambitious scholar who aspires to build a comprehensive theory, it is not only important to understand the different elements which indicate the ‘what’ of the phenomenon, it is equally important to understand the relationships between these different elements and how they influence each other. Regardless of whether it is grand or a midrange or a substantive theory, it is possible to adopt this approach to theory building.

**Pedagogical Implication: Toward Cosmopolitan Citizenship**

Finally, this dissertation has pedagogical implications. This dissertation challenges conventional, polarized and simplistic theorizing of organizational life, because organizational life in today’s world is increasingly getting increasingly more complex and interdependent than ever before. The much in limelight debates about climate change and sustainability is just one manifestation of how interdependent our world is becoming. While the Seattle Anti-Globalization Protest Movement brought the attention of the world and especially its privileged, to the potential issues left in the wake of mindless development of the world, and those who did not pay attention woke up after the Enron story. Aspen Institute survey results (Gentile, 2002) suggest that not only do our MBA students leave with a much narrowly defined values and purpose, they also do
not feel empowered or equipped to initiate and address changes within their own organizations. In the March 2005 issue of Academy of Management Learning & Education, a number of iconic scholars of the field (Walter Nord, Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Jeffrey Pfeffer, John Gapper, Donald C Hambrick, Henry Mintzberg, and Lex Donaldson) agreed with Sumantra Ghoshal’s call for a radical reconstruction of our current approach to management education. In today’s context in which education is becoming increasingly instrumentally vocationalized, it is incumbent upon higher institutions to provide the kind of education that Wollstonecraft (1975) argued for, centuries ago; education that would simultaneously fulfill the functions of preparing individuals for meaningful employment and progressive and cosmopolitan citizenship. Nowhere else is this more important than in business schools, considering the reality of corporatization of the world, which (along with the internet) appears to be emerging as a major forces accelerating the globalization of the world. Dallmayr’s (1998) statement about comparative political theory is equally applicable to our field, especially in what and how we teach our students. He insists that comparative political theory is a process of learning and that

“it can only occur through mutual interrogation and interpellation, through a mode of interaction stopping short of both instant hybridization and pliant surrender. Such interaction, in turn, presupposes the encounter of a situated, but not absoluted, differences where a distinct life-form – a concrete mode of ‘being-in-the-world’ – opens itself up to the challenge of otherness in a manner yielding a deeper, transformative understanding of self and other.”

If we are to bring this spirit of education into our classrooms, it is important to bring critical thinking back in our curricula. Education, then, must conjoin theory and practice, utility and free thinking.
Limitations

In this section, I present the limitations of this study from theoretical perspectives. There are theoretical frameworks that I have selectively drawn on or used in developing certain key ideas, but I have not used them as full-fledged analytical devices throughout the dissertation. For example, I have use social identity theories as one of the key theoretical anchors in my description of Change-Continuity dynamic, but not in the rest of the dissertation. For analyzing or effecting transformation in post colonial and post civil rights communities, identity theory may provide a very useful lens. Similarly, I have drawn on resource theories to illustrate the complex structural dynamics around access to and control of water, a key resource. It is yet another lens that may provide extremely productive for analyzing social movements. Similarly, I have drawn on institutional theory, critical Marxist and sustainability theorists to strengthen my deconstruction of historical, cultural factors at work in the chapters on material and structural arrangements.

Although I have not explicitly used power as an analytical lens in my dissertation study, the two more effective cases suggest that power can be a generative source and creation and reclamation of power, generative mechanisms for social transformation. My examples also show that such creation is not done naively where the space becomes open for everyone to invade and rape, but by setting boundaries and creating criteria for membership judiciously. This line of thought offers scope for further exploration, more importantly in the context of communities that are trying to transform after being oppressed for a long time.

Another theoretical discourse that may be relevant and valuable but one that I have not used is knowledge management and communities of practice (Wenger, 1998)
discourses. These communities do actively develop and manage their knowledge and it could be productive to examine these practices. While I have analyzed the actions of certain leaders in the context of practice-arrangement bundles, this dissertation is not a formal examination of leadership as a change practice. However, as Lowe & Gardner (2000) in their exhaustive review of leadership research point out, we have relatively little systematic knowledge about leadership in social movements and it might be another useful dynamic to explore from a dialogic perspective.
References


Appendix: Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me about your involvement and experience with this initiative.

1. Please think about a time/experience when you felt most engaged, alive and generative in this initiative/community and walk me through that in as much detail as possible. What do you think made it generative for you and the community?

2. Can you talk to me about how, why, and when you made the decision to get involved in the decision? What was the moment/incident that made you become identified and committed to this initiative? What attracted you to participating in this initiative?

3. Can you talk about a time when you felt most reaffirmed of your involvement and walk me through it.

4. Think about a time when you felt that your community/organization had resolved a conflict and walk me through that incident. What gave rise to the conflict and how did you resolve it?

5. If you were to pick two things about yourself and your community/organization that you cherish the most and would not like to change, what would they be? Can you give me examples/stories?

6. If you were to pick two things that have not changed in yourself, your community and your world, what would they be?

7. What moves and drives you as a person? What are your passions and how do you sustain them?
8. What are the forces that move your organization, your community and your world?

9. How do you view the role of relationships in your life and work?

10. How would you define “wealth”? Would you consider yourself “wealthy”? Why would you consider “wealthy”?

11. If you were to go to sleep now and God appears in your dream and grants you the boon that this region will be just as you wish it to be, what would you like it to look like? Could you describe it to me?

12. From your experience, what is the lesson that you would most like to pass on to your grandchildren?

13. For other communities or organizations that want to learn from your experience about how to organize for generative transformation, what would your suggestions/advice be?

14. Do you have any suggestions about with whom else I should talk to learn more about my questions?