

The good governance agenda for decentralization in Uttarakhand, India: implications for social justice

By

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International Development Studies

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Abstract

Title: The good governance agenda for decentralization in Uttarakhand, India: implications for social justice

By Nicola Giordano

This thesis explores the link between social justice and decentralization at the theoretical and empirical level. The central argument is that decentralization as prescribed by the good governance agenda has compromised the constitutional guarantees of social justice in India. Initially, the thesis provides a detailed analysis of good governance, comparing the viewpoints of proponents and critics. It is initially analyzed, in detail, from the point of views of its claims and critiques. The implementation of decentralization is discussed in relation to its good governance rationale and principles of social justice.

Critiques from various schools of thought shed light on the controversies and potential for change emerging out of the current approach. The empirical analysis is based upon field data collected from eight villages in the Indian state of Uttarakhand. Two types of decentralization policies are examined: Panchayati Raj (village governance) and Van Panchayat (forest governance). Both policies are essential to understand how social justice plays at many levels on the grassroots reality: livelihood, self-governance, participation and market pressures. The final discussion establishes the link between empirical evidence and the central argument along with a possible alternative approach for implementing decentralization, namely the Gandhian model of Village Swaraj.

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Rich or poor, we become estranged from the connectedness of things. Moreover we lose sight of our own humanness, a quality that has evolved with the living earth. (Malika Virdi)

CHAPTER I

1.1 Introduction

The focus of this study is on the reduced space for social justice in decentralization practices within the good governance approach. My topic is relevant to development since many international organizations have increasingly encouraged the adoption of this policy - within the SAP framework starting in the late 1980s- but not without resistance from governments, local communities or academics. In this thesis, I argue social justice is not an outcome of good governance in India. In order to assess the validity of my argument, I initially provide a detailed discussion of various debates found in the literature. Furthermore, I go more in depth with my analysis by exploring four different hypothesis in relation to: access to resources, market pressures and the engagement of marginalized groups into forest and village governance. I show through my empirical evidence how managerial institutions are not necessarily inclusive and do not challenge oppression. The objective of this thesis is to provide extensive discussion about the interaction between social justice and decentralization for my case study in Uttarakhand, India. The outcome of my analysis demonstrates how the theoretical and ideological framework of good governance is more focused upon enabling market efficiency than “bringing power to the people”. As the empirical data shows, the dimensions of inequalities, along with livelihood deterioration, are maintained under the current framework for decentralization. The policy consensus on good governance disregards, self-governance practices, the moral

economy of a community and does not enable social transformation. In the end, I argue there should be a radical revision of decentralization practices in order to enable local bodies to have effective scope to bring development and social justice.

In addition to this brief introduction, this thesis consists of four additional chapters. Chapter Two explores the theoretical debates around the good governance approach to decentralization from multiple perspectives. It aims at defining the implications of the good governance approach for social justice and decentralization. In first instance, good governance has been endorsed from influential international organization as a critical policy for the ultimate goal of market integration. Its role in favoring a particular notion of economic efficiency (namely that of neo-classical economics) and formalized institutional processes has significant consequences for decentralization and social justice. Some of some of the criticisms condemn a retreat of responsibility from the state to prioritize democratization with consequent state managerialization in order to accommodate a specific neoliberal national agenda. Some left wing scholars also argue good governance might perpetuate power structures in an attempt of cultural imperialism. The various critiques underline the implications for social justice as a crucial aspect to assess what interests good governance is serving. In this frame, a definition of social justice within a normative tradition linked to the moral economy, essentialism, Gandhi and Ambedkhar is developed. Its conceptualization is then translated into the context of decentralization intended as inclusive practices to ensure the common good and the upliftment of oppression. The exploration of how the political ideology redirects decentralization to interact with social justice issues is also presented. Decentralization is then analyzed

according to its mainstream definitions, implementation and historical trajectory. The failures in implementing decentralization, according to its good governance approach, poses fundamental normative questions that are explored through the analysis of its inherent paradox and how other theoretical frameworks conceptualize its practice. In particular the debates within Institutional Political Economy, Sustainable Livelihood Approach and Neo-Marxist ideology are presented to frame, more precisely, a broader range of critiques of mainstream decentralization and to offer an overview of its alternative uses. The concluding section introduces decentralization in India and its implications for social justice.

Chapter Three introduces the discussion through an analysis of social justice according to the Constitution of India, which enables a more context-specific conceptualization of its definition. In this frame, a detailed analysis of decentralization for village governance decentralization, namely Panchayati Raj, in India is developed. Panchayati Raj is presented according to its origins, organizations and funding. The latter factor is analyzed to present the centralized logic of the government to use resources without much inclusion of the voices from local communities. In this frame, the tensions of Panchayati Raj to be used as instrument to push neoliberal policies are clashing to the potential for social transformation through the use of grassroots politicization and power to the marginalized groups. Furthermore, forest management is introduced as second example of decentralization in India. Its legal framework is presented to underline the government emphasis on productivity of forest resources above livelihood and traditional rights. The role of

government agencies to implement a scientific regime in forestry delegitimizes local knowledge and community autonomy in managing resources. After a broad presentation of the decentralization policies under study, Uttarakhand is introduced according to its social structure, history and current pressures. In this context, Panchayati Raj is illustrated in its implementation and potential trajectories since a state-specific legal framework is yet to be finalized. In the case of Forest governance, Uttarakhand has a very state-specific legal framework namely Van Panchayat. Its forest policy is presented in a historical perspective, from the British Empire to today's pressure to convert common property resources into private property along the good governance logic of forest managerialization. The concluding section introduces the specific area from where the data analyzed in the empirical Chapter was gathered.

In Chapter Four the central problematic is introduced and four causal variables are established in order to expand the discussion and the empirical analysis in line with the main argument. The central problematic is based on the extensive literature offered in the previous chapters and explores how the good governance approach to decentralization does not lead to social justice. Good governance favors a model of development that enables political decentralization to facilitate economic liberalism; in this frame social justice receives limited scope. The emphasis on wage labor, resources commercialization and managerial institutions needs to be assessed in contrast to issues of social exclusion, pressures on livelihood and the capacity of local body to enable democratic dissent.

The critiques of good governance mainly underline its inability to bring genuine democratization as well as its disregard to address the issue of power structures and class relations. The attempt of the empirical analysis of this thesis is to ground the implications of good governance to field reality through the investigation of four main issues. They are summarized as access to forest resources, access and engagement in institutional process and marketization pressures in village and forest governance. Each issue is linked to one hypothesis in order to give a systematic analysis of various implications for social justice in the process of decentralization. To analyze my empirical evidence I use regressions, tables and graphs. In addition to case surveys, I also present a few narratives and in-depth case studies of the villages under analysis. The various methodologies and techniques are combined to strengthen the arguments presented in each hypothesis.

In the first hypothesis I argue that current decentralization practices perpetuate uneven access to forest resources. In order to assess its validity I examine access to resources per village and on the basis of forest allocation. Van Panchayat is also assessed in its capacity to provide forest resources according to villagers' opinions. In the second hypothesis, I argue institutional processes are still exclusionary and maintain great divides on the basis of gender, class and education level. In the third hypothesis, I argue that market pressures, in the context of decentralized forest governance, are negatively affecting people's livelihood. In this case, market pressures are defined as external for public-private partnerships and as internal for government initiatives to commercialize the forest or to integrate local institutions into the mainstream economy. In the fourth hypothesis, I finally argue there is a

fundamental imbalance between economic development and social justice in decentralized village governance even though the constitutional mandate gives equal priority to both. My analysis illustrates the uneven distribution of benefits and locals' opinion that there limited change in their communities. The four hypothesis are linked to central problematic and the various evidence gives evidence to the low scope of social justice in good governance practices.

The concluding chapter summarizes all findings and links my findings with the broader discussion of decentralization and social justice. The analysis of my empirical data demonstrates there is limited scope for social justice in the good governance approach. For example, the evidence about participation from both decentralized forest and village governance indicates a significant divide, in engaging into village politics, along the lines of class, gender and education levels. In the case of forest governance, my regression analysis shows that the scarcity of resources along with village forest allotments by the gov's Forest Dept are negatively correlated with access to resources for households. In addition, the third hypothesis explores how market pressures are compromising the fragile equilibrium between the environment and communities' livelihood. In the case of village governance, the empirical evidence underlines a substantial imbalance between economic development and social justice. Furthermore, decentralized village governance shows some degree of elite capturing in the distribution of benefits and it seems to bring limited positive change, with some degree of increasing conflicts in the community. Overall, local bodies are pressured to become agents of a neoliberal project instead of space for democratic

discussion and dissent building. The Neo-Marxist critique of good governance as policy device to maintain a depoliticized class structure is grounded in the extensive analysis of field data. Although some positive signs are found in regards to participation and infrastructure development, local institutions remain exclusionary with limited capacity for social justice and social transformation.

Concluding the introduction with two fundamental questions: Why India? Why decentralization and social justice? Decentralization as a policy model originally came from the Gandhian philosophy but the actual mandate driven by neoliberal principle is deteriorating the community harmony and reducing the scope for social justice. The constitution of India is a progressive written piece and the principles of equality are inspired by Gandhi's fight for independence. The inability of the current government to implement the funding principle of social justice from the Constitution clearly represents the struggle of India's republic caught between the hazy dream of becoming a modern, individualistic and market-oriented society and its communitarian, Gandhian and socialistic foundations. Decentralization policy within this context fascinates me and its analysis gives interesting insights of the struggle India has to face along with many other societies thrown off in shaky waters where only policies favoring ultracompetitive, rational and selfish behaviors wins over all, not matter what context they are in. The argument of this thesis opens up the necessity to reconceptualize decentralization within other approaches as much as possible far away from the neoliberal logic.

CHAPTER II

This Chapter, namely literature review, explores various theoretical frameworks in relation to decentralization. The central focus for my analysis is the good governance approach to decentralization and its implications for social justice. I initially explore how good governance is theorized and how is critiqued by various scholars and political ideologies. Furthermore, a conceptualization about social justice is provided in order to orient my central argument. The inverse relationship between good governance and social justice is linked to decentralization practices. The implementation of decentralization, as shaped by good governance, becomes the focus of the last sections of this chapter. Decentralization historical origins, definitions and inherent theoretical tensions are finally explored. The Chapter concludes to an analysis of decentralization through different approaches in order to provide a more multidimensional understanding of its inherent paradoxes and alternative definitions.

2.1 Decentralization, the state and social justice: outcome for development

This initial section aims at to exploring the link between decentralization, the state and social justice within past debates previous to the current good governance agenda. The difficult task to link these three dimensions is extensive in the literature and has different implications for development; my attempt is to give an initial perspective of this very discussed and researched relationship. This analysis will be conducive to establish a connection to today's mainstream debates and to my central argument exploring the lack of

social justice in the good governance approach to decentralization.

On the rise of early industrialization, the role of the state was widely debated. Initially, the development discourse identified the government as the realm of experts and technocrats thereby justifying state planning and simplification (Scott, 1998). The push to planning turned out to be a top down approach in order to create growth and a strong economy. The creation of aggregate statistics such as GDP dominated the idea of development. Poverty and inequalities were its inevitable consequences, as long as the average wealth increased, and were considered second to growth, investments and savings. Nationalists, moralists and even economists eventually rejected this idea of development through various critiques, and started invoking the role of national self-reliance to achieve development (Griffin, 1981).

Arising social dissent pushed for a new approach that gives more recognition to development of human resources, poverty alleviation programs and technical skills improvements in order to make the process of capital accumulation more inclusive. The role of the state was seen differently because of a growing consensus to delegate, decentralize and make local bodies more responsible in the process of development. The new logic has not necessarily challenged the capitalist mindset but it has favored transfer of power from groups who dominate at the centre to those with control at the local/state level. Griffin (1981) recognizes power at the local level to be more concentrated and applied more strongly against the poor than at the centre. Greater decentralization has not

necessarily lead to “power to the people”, especially if implemented under high modernist ideologies and without addressing power structures (Griffin, 1981). Even though many international organizations advocated for greater decentralization the distribution of political power did not change. Because of giving priority to policies meant to strengthen capitalism, the condition of many poor did not improve. In order to reverse the current model of development the poor should have the opportunity to organize themselves in institutions of their choice by weakening institutional control and by creating a fairer equilibrium in power distribution across various levels of governance (Keith, 1999).

A change in existing forms of decentralization requires radically different concepts of current ideas about the state and development altogether. In Kerala (India), for example, the concept of democratic decentralization has involved politicization, social mobilization, the inclusion of all citizens in the process of decision-making and sharing of benefits and responsibilities. The Kerala model is an example of radical transformation of state development policies to favor direct participation of all communities in governance (Isaac, 2001). India’s special case of decentralization was also inspired by great political disagreement toward the idea of a state linked to exploitation and systems of domination.

The necessity to conceptualize development outside of its centrally-decided capitalist notion pushed to create different interpretations of its link with decentralization, the state and social justice. In this attempt, it is interesting to discuss the debates between José Carlos Mariátegui versus Haya de la Torre and Gandhi versus Ambedkhar that took place in the

early decades of the 20th century. They offer insightful and contrasting visions of what development should look like. The first debate is a Marxist versus populist struggle in development theory whereas the second offers different views of decentralization and oppression.

Mariategui claimed that feudal and capitalist relations introduced during the Spanish colonial period were the elements of holistic exploitation in Peru.¹ His political and intellectual project prioritizes the integration of indigenous groups into national society to unify the nation by overcoming social, ethnic and economic divisions and exploitation (Radcliffe and Westwood, 1996). De La Torre starting point was similar to Mariategui and recognized the exploitation and suffering of his people. Haya argued that the revolution against feudal and imperialist oppression needed a full development of capitalism within a national framework. He believed the peasants were too weak and the proletariat too small to undertake significant revolution. The experience of hardship could be resolved only with a populist alliance between the working class and the national bourgeoisie in order to push progressive military action. This debate is an example of ideological struggle between favoring peasants and the most marginalized groups and a more modernist middle class based approach to development (Edelman, 2002; Gonzales, 2007).

¹ In order to end the system of oppression he contributed to the ideological struggle against the cultural and intellectual dominant pro-imperialist liberalism. He argued that capitalist stage needed to be skipped in order to form a new socialist state from the beginning. In this transition he gave central importance to class struggle, the indigenous question and to the role of human consciousness as reflection of history and as a crucial force in shaping it.

Mariátegui's advocacy in favour of marginalized groups also influenced his conceptualization of decentralization. He opposed to decentralization if driven by a centralized ideology and if meant to establish a superficial administrative set-up in order to increase control over capital. In his view, the decentralization process requires development of the oppressed regions as governmental entity in its own right before achieving municipal autonomy. The implementation of decentralization within existing regional imbalances and with the current nature of land tenure perpetuates forms of oppressions (gamonalismo, feudalism and bossism) (Farazmand, 2001). The continuous marginalization of local communities is especially linked to the problem of the indigenous population (Indian) and of land. Decentralization is ineffective to solve the basic problems at the local level of Gamonalismo if subdued to a capitalist state (Mariátegui, 1971). Mariátegui's key to decentralization rests on the liberation of the rural population from poverty and discrimination through a powerful system of revolutionary authority that can initiate programs supporting radical agrarian reforms and national unity (Angotti, 1986).

The second debate -expanded later in the Chapter- is between two crucial historical figures for India: Gandhi and Ambedkar. Both agreed on the necessity to pursue new visions for development with a stronger recognition of social justice and equality yet they disagreed on what priority should be adopted for this end. According to Gandhi's view², a village

² Gandhi's search of truth takes him to the conclusion that plurality is the core of reality. His pluralist vision of society does not classify a single distinct unit as the ultimate expression of a community since all identities are its true expression. Gandhi, in this perspective of diversity, envisioned India as the constellation of village republics with complete self-reliance and delinked from mechanisms of external exploitation (Palshikar, 1997)

republic is political in nature and it represents the essence of India in opposition to the creation of modern cities as symbols of western domination and colonial rule. Gandhi argues the emphasis on village reality can be a possible alternative for development opposed to the urban and technology-driven capitalist model. While he invoked the revival of the spirit of traditional village life through empowerment of local bodies (Panchayat), he also found many flaws with the actual system such as the practice of untouchability and lack of cleanliness. Nonetheless, Gandhi romanticized a decentralized rural India in dialectic contrast with the modern industrial west (Jodhka, 2002).

In contrast to the celebration of village life, Ambedkar experienced in his own life the oppression of rural India. For this reason he universalized the experiences of exclusion, exploitation and untouchability to all village realities and critiqued Gandhi's relative softness about the issue of caste and representation (Jodhka, 2002). Ambedkar rejected the role of tradition which legitimizes caste inequality and he actively contributed to reverse the balance of oppression by introducing reservation clauses and special provisions for lower castes in the draft of the Indian Constitution. He struggled to broaden the social base of Indian nationalism through the inclusion of lower castes in order to secure their freedom from external and internal oppression and enslavement. His engagement in the formation of the emerging secular Indian nation was driven by a strong dissent with Gandhi's view of village republic. Ambedkar invoked a process to purge society from discrimination by establishing rights and protection for lower castes (Gaikwad, 1998).

Both debates (Gandhi vs Ambedkar and Mariategui vs La Torre) show the struggle to identify the right strategy to bring social justice as freedom from any form of exploitation within different conceptions of development and of the state. The multifaceted relationship between decentralization and development can be traced in Gandhi's argument of village republic. In opposition to his view, the current capitalist rationale favours an approach for decentralization enabling capital accumulation and power concentration. The dichotomy of these conflicting views, partly originates from the role of the state which can be exploitative or completely decentralized and favouring self-sufficiency of each community. Social justice is a crucial dimension in defining the dynamic link between decentralization and development because it entails the necessary upliftment from forms of internal and external oppressions. Social justice can be achieved by channelling class struggle and engaging indigenous population against bourgeoisie exploitation invoked by Mariategui. Their opposition to the current development trajectory needs to be complemented with an approach to overcome any form of inequality and cruelty existing within the village reality, like the ones identified in Ambedkar's arguments.

In this thesis the notion of social justice is linked to both debates; it recognizes all possible dimensions of oppression, ensures community autonomy from external pressures -for example to conform to a neoliberal project of development- along with individual release from social stigma.³ The state and its inherent power structure, instead of shaping policies

³ For example, in the case of India, the dimension of oppression linked to caste and gender must be addressed and that requires social justice to be a process for social change.

favouring inequalities and exploitation, could rather support self-reliance and traditional social patterns of community through the celebration of local adaptive knowledge while tackling forms of internal oppression from the elites (whether village-based, national or transnational). A stronger recognition of local autonomy in shaping development can provide stronger cohesion and enable the creation of self-understanding for social action. Such action will provide space to channel the struggle for rights to livelihood that have a basis in custom and tradition and involve the most vital interests of community members (Scott, 2002 and 1976).

Yet, it is important to recognize local autonomy and its potential synergy with a state that prioritizes social justice in pursuing political and economic interests for the common good. As Ambedkar recognized, the village reality can also have oppressive internal structures and measures to address the causes and solutions to overcome inherent social problems need to be developed. The expression of diversity, inspired by Gandhi's vision, might be utopian but also raises important points. It requires delinking from global economic dependency and favours a more dialectic relationship among various level of governance in setting development priorities by recognizing each community's history, ethnicity, spirituality, forms of oppression and self governance practices. Diversity cannot be grasped only by a centralized power structure deciding the trajectory for development but it requires a form of decentralization that can facilitate political and democratic awareness in order to free the exploited from internal and external mechanisms of oppression.

The analysis of both debates opens new theoretical spaces to conceptualize the relationship between decentralization, state and social justice for development. Unsurprisingly, the current framework is light years away alternative vision since it aims at universalizing a western project of development questionable at many levels. This thesis will attempt to link social justice and decentralization within the current tensions and debates linked to the good governance approach. The next section will start the analysis by defining the good governance approach. The overview of the approach will facilitate to contextualize the analysis of today's decentralization practices and its link with the neoliberal logic of efficient market and of a minimal state.

2.2 Good Governance: the Neoliberal Perspective

Governance is defined as a system of national administration. The term originates from the business literature about the micro behavior of the firm. The commission on Global Governance defined it as the various ways individuals and public and private institution manage their common affairs. In the early 1980s governance and good governance started to appear in the development discourse, particularly in the research agendas and activities of bilateral donors in collaboration with public and private banks. The idea of good governance became central because of growing consensus among economists and scholars in international relations about the necessity to emphasize more the role of institutions in development. A great increase in numbers and influence of non-state actors and technology in an age of globalization and liberalism renaissance also contributed to its emergence

(Weiss, 2000).

Good governance was quickly embraced as a supportive concept for the spread of neoliberal policies. Its hegemonic interpretation aligned to the neo-liberal ideology, as defined and discussed in this section, will be the basis for reference throughout the whole thesis if not mentioned otherwise. Good governance took on a very particular meaning that referred to public sector management, accountability, legal framework for development, information and transparency and the rule of law. Adherents to neoliberal ideology maintain that if all of these conditions are necessary for markets to function efficiently and expand within a country. The World Bank also pointed out that bad governance leads to lack of human rights, widespread corruption, unaccountable governments and personalization of power. According to its view, good governance must be the natural opposite (Weiss, 2000; Boas 1998). Mainstream decentralization is widely implemented within this approach to achieve good governance goals.

The international organizations that promote the good governance agenda actively shape its definition. The definition of good governance from the World Bank is captured in the following quotation:

Good Governance is an essential complement to sound economic policies. Efficient and accountable management by the public sector and a predictable and transparent policy framework are critical to the efficiency of markets and governments, and hence to economic development. The World Bank's increasing

attention to issues of governance is an important of our efforts to promote equitable and sustainable development. (Preston, 1992: pg V)

The World Bank argument draws from empirical evidence that good governance measured as corruption; rule of law enforcement, accountability and transparency is positively correlated with per capita income. The Bank's studies emphasize the economic consequences of good governance measured as institutional quality. Good governance should favor development by preventing state capture and by following neo-liberal economic principles in order to build an efficient market (ESCAP, 2009).

Some United Nations agencies also support good governance; in the Human Development Report of 2002 Kofi Annan has been quoted:

Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development (Annan, 2002:51).

It is reasonable to assume the United Nations position is mainly supportive of the good governance approach even though internal dissent exists as will be later illustrated. The United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) defines it as "the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of country's affairs" (UNDP, 1997:11). The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) identifies Good Governance as a managerial process of decision-making only possible through formal processes because informal structures lead to corruption. ESCAP also focuses on the participatory side of good governance only possible through legitimate institutions. Participation must be informed and organized and human rights should be

enforced by enhancing the legal framework and institutional processes. ESCAP requires institution that can allow the most marginalized communities to be integrated in the mainstream economy in a participatory way in order to achieve the goals of accountability and transparency as invoked by the good governance approach. What is out of institutional structures, established by policies aligned to good governance, should not be legal and leads to deterioration of society (ESCAP, 2009).

ESCAP's arguments about managerialization of the state to enable efficiency and market-integration are supported also from research-oriented organization like the Research Triangle Institute (RTI). RTI collaborates with the United States government agency for development (USAID). The Institute celebrates the successes of market economies, against the inefficiencies of state enterprises, and promotes more accountable good governance as the right strategy for open markets. In this direction, RTI identifies the most crucial dimensions of good governance in: legitimacy, accountability, management effectiveness and availability of information. The ultimate goal is to achieve the public good efficiently, as retraceable in many neoliberal economic policies of the West. RTI, similarly to ESCAP, views the good governance approach as key to management effectiveness in responding to citizens' needs. According to RTI, decentralization enables the government to provide services and infrastructure while economic liberalization leads people to increase demand for services, willingness to pay taxes and make investments (Johnson and Henry, 2003).

The process to establish a mutual reinforcing relationship between political

decentralization and economic liberalization could allow marginalized groups to receive the right information about the public good and to establish the perfect link between participation and the outcome of building a market economy. ⁴The next section will explain, more in details, the idea that with sufficient information and proper institutions, citizens can voice their preferences and shape government policies and services. The economic arguments of good governance enthusiasts' disregard dissent and forms of resistance are considered as a threat preventing governments from implementing market oriented policies (Jonhnsom and Henry, 2003). Because of the good governance emphasis on formalized decentralization processes with low space for dissent and the notion of economic efficiency, a more detailed analysis of its neoliberal logic will be now introduced.

2.3 The good governance approach to decentralization: theory of public good and efficiency.

This section explains how the good governance approach translates into decentralization according to the assumptions invoked by many mainstream institutions and their agendas. This analysis will lead to some central questions of normative and ideological nature against the way neoliberal economics defines the world. Neo liberal economists have been worked

⁴ In order to establish this linkage good governance supports a policy model implemented along the line of functional responsibilities (provision of physical and social services), access to revenues (tax revenues and control over the resource available at the community level) and political autonomy/accountability (the central mandate is enforced according to local political processes ensuring self-regulation). This requires political processes to be transparent and citizens to be enabled to influence decision through open meetings and citizens advisory committees. Good Governance should favor programs to build technical awareness within marginalized groups by establishing mutual trust and confidence with the local governments and bureaucracy.

their brain hard to show that the ultimate objective of development is to build efficient markets and dismantle state regulation even if this leads to higher inequality and internal conflicts (Harvey, 2007). The strongest supporters of decentralization as a policy tool in good governance are several international organizations. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, International Monetary Fund and World Bank usually converge to support the neoliberal logic of decentralization as the right mean to achieve development.

Their wide consensus is grounded on the firm conviction about the role of the state as the source of all problems in the Third World. According to the neoliberal point of view the bureaucratic apparatus has become too large, centralized and insufficiently coordinated. The amount of state regulation led to less administrative flexibility and limited state capacity to respond to the appropriate changes a market economy requires. The budgetary crisis, faced by many states in the last decades, is seen as a direct consequence of irrational distributive policies and inefficient allocation of resources driven by a politicization of the economy. Hence, decentralization becomes part of a program to create a modern, managerial, depoliticized and efficient state that can base its policies on the goodwill of political and bureaucratic elites. This project conceptualizes individuals as purely rational cost-benefit calculators demanding for policy proposal based on economic and administrative efficiency without state interferences (Haldenwang, 1991).

A model of development along neoliberal lines can be traced in the multitude of papers

published by various international organizations. The good governance approach to decentralization is especially supported by their economic arguments of: accountability, responsiveness and optimal equilibrium of supply and demand of public goods. These terms are central especially for fiscal decentralization, which is under most careful analysis by economists. Accountability is defined as the right and duty of individuals grouped in local communities to self-regulation in compliance to formalized procedures. Decentralized accountability implies a shift in responsibility from the central level to the local level⁵. The trade-off between centralization and accountability is central for economists in their claim for decentralization as a valuable policy because of its sensitiveness to differences in the needs and preferences of different localities (Seabright, 1996). Responsiveness also enables local governments to be more efficient in the provision of what people demand⁶ (Smith, 1985). What emerges from this brief overview of economic concepts invoked by various international organizations is particularly important in the relationship between supply and demand for the public good.

⁵ This process is seen as the optimal policy because it incentives governments to act in the interest of their citizens. The difference between centralized and decentralized government is indeed a matter of distributing control over the central policy implementation variables established at the national level to sub-regional units. Centralization allows government to save resources of coordinating policies between jurisdictions but it also has the potential cost to diminish accountability to the wishes of a particular region or locality.

⁶ Responsiveness is strongly tied with accountability and it is another important argument of neoliberal economists in support of decentralized governments with higher responsibility and easier access to local knowledge. The latter factor is crucial in defining local preferences and priorities, which are essential to truly enhance the efficiency of managing local affairs and services. The challenge economists identify to enhance responsiveness is to determine community demand in absence of competitive pricing and to ensure the public good is internalized locally in order to equate taxation with consumption.

Equilibrium between supply and demand of public goods is the theoretical optimal achievement of decentralization –more specifically fiscal federalism- according to economics (Smith, 1985). The conflicts between economic efficiency and equity in provision of local services trigger equilibrium. The demand side of service provision is expressed through voting and other political activities and decentralization becomes effective by increasing the number of governmental units and the opportunity to express an individual preference. On the contrary centralization faces more constraints in facilitating individual expression for alternative ways to obtain the desired kind of service. According to this economic equilibrium smaller jurisdictions are better equipped to create larger benefits to individuals in return for their participation than larger units of government.

The supply side plays a central role in the optimal equilibrium since it deals with allocative efficiency of the collective goods and the determination of whether the cost of production exceeds the value of services to the community. The argument for a decentralized supply of public good is that the larger the political structure, the greater the tendency to aggravate the weaknesses of public organization and to reduce scope for innovation. Fragmented jurisdictions are expected to maximize consumer's satisfaction whereas; consolidation decreases it by creating state's huge monopolies that will tend to consume a lot of resources and to produce inefficient and unwanted services. Fiscal federalism, within the various forms of decentralization, offers most scope to ensure redistribution (for example, in the form of progressive taxation) and a minimum level of public service to everyone in order to correct externalities and market failures. Good governance decentralization should allow

for the optimal equilibrium to be reached because of effective citizens' engagement in expressing their preferences and local governments' efficiency in meeting public demand (Oates, 1997).

The supply and demand reasoning behind decentralization justifies the neoliberal economic arguments' and their vision of development. The ultimate goal is to build the perfect environment for investments to expand the free market and to establish a capitalistic mindset. All levels of governance involved in a depoliticized and managerial process to create rational economic units out of people freed from state inefficiencies. Unsurprisingly, the various arguments illustrated so far receive various critiques from many scholars and different political ideologies.

2.4 Critiques of Good Governance: implications for devolution and democracy

The first level of critique about the good governance approach to decentralization shows the inconsistencies of its mainstream assumptions in current practices. This section explores how some good governance's economic claims result invalid and the negative implications in the process of democratization. This level of critique does not debunk the approach at its roots but underlines a series of inherent weaknesses.

Part of this critique looks at technical issues and does not reject the good governance vision of development. In particular, it questions the common assumption that devolving

governance to the local level will necessarily generate more efficient outcomes. In first instance, devolution implies the principle of fully informed citizens but evidence shows it usually fails in poor countries because of differential in entitlements between outsiders and insiders. Information and accounting system are also weak in low-income countries and accountability cannot be ensured because of major elite groups capturing. The argument about efficiency in public provision cannot be accomplished so easily since most often oppressed groups look for the central state for protection and relief. Moreover, fiscal federalism faces the constraints of interregional tax competition and different levels of capacity to raise revenues; its enforcement can lead to differential across municipalities in the level of expenditure and inflow of money. The level of technical and administrative capacities also cannot be considered homogeneous and information asymmetries for the central government are combined with the low quality of staff in local bureaucracy (Bardhan, 2002). This first set of arguments about good governance original economic claims does not question its ideological rationale but it is directed to improve current practices in the implementation process.⁷

Whereas the first (institutional) critique focuses upon the assumptions underpinning the

⁷ Policy suggestions comprise ideas to improve the allocation of control rights, yardstick competition and coordination in contracting with local representatives. Secondly the financial aspect of it is explored through strategies to improve local taxes, user fees and central grants programs to raise service delivery. Thirdly more inclusive practices in good governance are recommended through consolidation of electoral advantage and village level market incentives to ensure local people to have full access over local assets. Lastly external support to facilitate policy implementation is envisioned through the supply professional and technical services to local communities and development of finance projects. This is a partial description of strategies to improve good governance practices more specifically in decentralization.

agenda of good governance, more radical critiques question the mainstream objectives, arguing that it is reductionist and undermines democratic principles. Along these lines, Gopal and Vandana Desai (1998) describe mainstream good governance policies as an attempt to managerialise government and to push a shift from supply side to demand side development strategies. UNESCO (Parthasarathy, 2005) also embraces a critical stand over good governance and it identifies an ideological risk of new strategic top-down and hegemonic policies linked to market reform and not actual democratic consensus or social change. The principal criticism is that good governance is exclusively advocated as a means for advancing economic objectives at the expense of other development priorities. Gopal and Vandana Desai (1998) also recognize an inherent risk to implement institutional processes that exclude political pluralism in setting development priorities and may lead to soft authoritarianism. Good governance support for the rolling back of the state from its redistributive commitments can ultimately reduce democratization and subordinates the principles of democracy to the functioning of a market economy. Decentralization framed along the good governance approach universalizes a specific vision of society whereas the policy should be shaped in a culture-specific way with greater emphasis to the democratic dimension of the state (Jayal, 1997).

From this critique, the good governance approach provides a framework of democracy without a substantial process for democratization and excessive priority to market-enabler reforms within inconsistent economic assumptions. Its rhetoric about participation is more oriented to project implementation and not democratic discussion. The views so far

illustrated also suggest more space for disagreement and dissent because development should be a political process of contestation and negotiation within a society. Hence, the government needs to implement corrective measures to the distorting consequences of a democracy instead of reducing its role to manager with low involvement in the development process. Jayal (2007) argues that the role of democracy is crucial especially in dealing with unequal social structures (for example the case of caste system in India) in order to achieve effective participation in politics that good governance alone cannot accomplish. Although some failures of good governance have been identified in this set of arguments, a more radical analysis of its rationale is explored in the next section.

2.5 Good Governance and social justice: An oppressive “civilizing” mission?

Another set of more radical critiques directly questions the good governance agenda and how it is imposed to enable a free play of market forces originated from the urban industrialized North. The following arguments focus on good governance and its implication for social structures/justice/divisions, issues of power structures and traditional practices of self-governance. In this context, the issue of social justice emerges out to be a strong factor in the critique of the good governance approach to decentralization.

The critiques at this level, coming from left wing politics, identified the central objective of good governance decentralization to develop a regulatory and organizational structure so that social regulation helps to stabilize capitalism and its inherent contradictions in the

sphere of capital accumulation. Good governance principles are not based on collective decision-making in which people can exercise their rights but upon the potential to generate profits by efficiently managing resources. In this frame, mechanisms of governance are meant to secure social relations and conditions of production as instrumental for capitalism reproduction (Parthasarathy, 2005). The role of a decentralized state is subordinated to institutionalize the processes of collective bargaining and to provide the right infrastructures required by capital hence, decentralization becomes the best regulatory fix in the transition to Post-Fordism. The pressure upon developing countries to shift to Post-Fordism in order to embrace the logic of accumulation implies a non-welfarist state, a highly fragmented labor market, polarization of exports, reduction in wages, social divisions that can paradoxically lead to obstacles to capital accumulation. Furthermore, the pressures to facilitate international capital also interfere with the fragmented dimension of decentralization in regards to social regulation, local economies and local governments (Schurman 1997).

The capitalist rationale identified at this level of critique about the good governance approach to decentralization address the central issue of power and its distribution. When liberal political theory is applied at the local level the inherent conflicts within society are overlooked. Formal mechanisms of electoral accountability are not enough to change the dynamics of power entrenched in vested interests and structural conflicts between groups. The sources of power usually reside outside the legal framework of representative institutions and holders of economic power are more likely to perpetuate privilege,

hierarchy and oppression. A Gramscian perspective of power ,offered by Taylor (2004), underlines that “trasformismo” through good governance policies serves to absorb possible counter-hegemonic elements into the dominant elites (transnational elites) through a process of compromise and incorporation of individual politicians into the conservative-moderate “political class”. Power cannot be conceived within the narrow terms of a legal framework and the good governance approach to decentralization risks to become part of processes by which dominant classes at all levels force their interest through state rule - based on global policy consensus- and formalized institutions (Smith, 1985; Taylor, 2004). Power concentration implies that most oppressed minorities face further struggles and injustices and experience misrepresentation of their interests.

Another part the critique argues the issue of power is not fully grasped by scholars critiquing good governance only by defending democracy. According to Parthasarathy, (2005) their argument lacks to understand the implications for depredation of traditional practices as a substantial part of the picture. The central argument of this claim identifies good governance as a clear attempt of cultural imperialism. The presumption to civilize other societies disregards the history of community structures and the interactions between formalized processes of governance and common customary practices/traditional institutions. The rhetoric of participation and inclusive institutions is an attempt to make people beneficiaries and legitimisers of programs and processes that do not belong to them. According to Kothari (2001), participatory processes become technical solutions to political economy issues and are driven by a centralized political co-option that requires

participants' engagement into forms of labor and mechanisms of cash transfers for project implementation

The alienating processes of a decentralized managerial state, inspired by good governance policies, leads to depoliticized development. Furthermore, such practices avoid any substantial challenge against the micro and macro power structures in order to accommodate market-oriented policy objectives. Formalized decentralization practices have led to neglect the invisible aspect of effective participation, traditional self-governance, and to reinforce social structures entailing power, assets and status. Actions through formal institutions prevent oppressed groups -which lack power and/or are unaware of the rules-to increase their political participation and, to oppose institutional processes that are likely to perpetuate marginalization (Bandyopadhyay, 2002 and Parthasarathy, 2005). The formalization and managerialization of the state through decentralization does not solve the issue of power and have serious implications for democratization.

Power accumulation, market-imposed mechanisms and disregard of local communities pattern of self-governance are leaving little space for social justice and dissent, in regards to neoliberal policies, through current institutional means. An example in support to this argument can be drawn by brutal experiences of groups resisting against injustices created by externally imposed development projects (for example, forced displacements in dam construction as reported to the Uttarakhand Solidarity Network⁸). Some suggestions to

⁸ <http://www.euttaranchal.com/news/general/mounting-public-pressure-against-dams-in->

revise current pressures underline the need to engage and work with traditional institutions and to enable marginalized communities in fulfilling their priorities without external pressures to “westernize”. Cultural specificity demands different ways to conceptualize development that goes beyond externally imposed policies such as good governance. According to Parthasarathy, (2002) the current approach divorces political democracy from economic democracy since any semi autonomous or autonomous self-governing communities with their institutional structures are out of the picture. The basis for critique explored in this thesis argues good governance to be a “civilizing” mission shrinking space for social justice and dissent by excluding the powerless to fit into formalized processes of decentralization.

The central argument against the good governance approach to decentralization as “civilizing” mission requires a more detailed section about social justice. As briefly introduced in the first section of this chapter, it is intended as inclusive all forms of oppressions. Imposed policies only meant to expand a global market deprive local communities to maintain their right to self-governance and exemplify a form of oppression. At the same time, various forms of power structures and inequalities are maintained and perpetuated at all levels beyond the deceiving rhetoric of participation and liberal democracy proposed by the good governance agenda. The next section will present a comprehensive definition of how social justice can be translated in the context of decentralization.

2.6 Social justice according to different theoretical frameworks

In order to explain the link between social justice and decentralization, it is necessary to briefly overview assumptions and analytic frames about social justice through different theoretical frameworks. Contemporary mainstream economists, for example, see the Western development normative course as conducive to social justice equated with economic freedom and a more enriched society. Justice, in this frame, embeds various forms of right protection and low state involvement in order to create a bourgeois-democratic capitalist order. Postmodernists, in contrast, do not see a unilinear path for development or standards of justice transcending time and space. Their conception of justice follow bundles of beliefs, norms and cultural patterns varying across societies hence its notion can be only situationally understood. Neo-Marxists focus on class dynamics at all levels and sees social change as driven by class interest. They highlight the source of injustice in the unequal relations of production but also in market forces. In the case of neoliberal pressures, inequalities in distribution of benefits are a direct consequence of social class differentiation (Eckstein and Wickham-Crowley, 2003). All these definitions about social justice do not entirely apply to the notion used in this thesis but offer various insights aligned with different ideologies.

For the central argument explaining the relationship between decentralization and social justice, moral economics seem to be most aligned with the original intent of this thesis in

explaining how policies shaped along the neo-liberal logic can be oppressive. Moral economics argue that social views of just and unjust are likely to vary not only with their economic or social hierarchies but also cultural understanding. James Scott (1976) offers a very valid and interesting conceptualization of justice. Exploitation is created in the relationship between individuals, groups or institutions but its notion needs to include both socialist and non socialist dimensions. The Marxist tradition identifies the form of exploitation in the labor theory and surplus appropriation by the owners of means of production. Scott argues that the degrees of exploitative relationship vary greatly and an objective theory is not enough to define its complexities. He introduces a conception of justice that embraces a normative tradition and provides a conceptual link between a priori notion of exploitation and the subjective feeling of the exploited. The Marxist notion of false consciousness to explain the incongruity between these two dimensions overlooks the validity of individuals' perception of injustice constructed around existential needs and cultural values.

Scott (1976) developed a framework of analysis in order to explain the more subjective dimension of injustice according to peasants by looking at two moral principles: the norm of reciprocity and right to subsistence. The former implies that a service received creates a reciprocal obligation to return it at comparable value at some future date. Various anthropologists (Malinowski, Mauss) have found reciprocity, mutual assistance to be the basis for friendship and alliance in traditional societies. The right to subsistence is also a crucial dimension to consider as an active moral principle in the village tradition. It embeds

the assumption that all members of a community have the presumptive right to life according to local resources and the common notion of hierarchy of human needs. It is reasonable to expect lower disparities if the right to subsistence is prioritized within a society because people will view as morally unacceptable any economic situation threatening their livelihood (Scott, 1976). In the case that right is deteriorated, the oppressed will embrace everyday forms of resistance (such as passive non-compliance, deceit, slander, sabotage etc.) instead of overtly challenging strong systems of exploitation with great risk. This form of disobedience challenges the authority by undermining the dominant logic of productivity and legitimacy and can eventually provide the opportunity to lift mechanisms of oppression (Eckstein and Wickham-Crowley, 2003).

According to Scott's argument injustices of policies aimed at serving the interest of the West have negative consequences also on a subjective level for individuals in the community. It threatens their livelihood and traditional system of economic provisioning; resistance will occur if interferences threat community's moral principles and survival. The subjectivity of oppression can be further conceptualized according to the principles of the basic human functional capabilities framework developed by Nussbaum (1992). In her conception of capabilities, she attempts to link the western moral tradition of essentialism reflections with the need for compassion as belief in a common humanity. The universal bond of humanity to survive on this planet has deep implication for social justice and recognizes the necessity to transcend the economic-utilitarian views of today's society. Economic utilitarianism is pervasive and increasingly modeling the world in a way that push

individuals to identify themselves with monetary value. According to Nussbaum's view:

to treat deep parts of our identity as alienable commodities is to do violence to the conception of the self that we actually have and to the texture of the world of human practice and interaction" (Nussbaum, 1992:231).

Beyond the imposition of policies shaped along the neoliberal ideology, oppression also exist from within the community. The principle of connectedness needs to embrace a deeper understanding of the human dimension of oppression and the way it unfolds in every society. The necessity to overcome internal, as much as external, exploitation is found in the Gandhian philosophy of social justice grounded in the principles of: truth, nonviolence and personal suffering. He equates power with the capacity to do violence and he invokes nonviolence as the force for social change to reach the common good (Christie, 2001; Weber,). According to his view an action is just when not harm either parties but the process of self-consciousness about justice is more experiential than theoretical. Although the words of Gandhi might appear utopian, his recognition of the inherent goodness in all humans has profound implications in shaping societies.

Along similar lines, Ambedkar also believed in liberation of the individual and shares common ground with Gandhi in recognizing a communitarian vision of liberty, equality and fraternity (Palshikar, 1996). Furthermore, they both recognize the necessity of social action and valued popular, yet peaceful, struggle as essential to remove injustices. Their belief in moral values as eternal and crucial in coordinating material social life is a common

starting point for social transformation. While Gandhi romanticized village republic and its inherent ability to overcome internal forms of oppressions, Ambedkhar recognized more strongly the necessity to institutionalize liberation from oppression in the modern world. He endorsed the emergence of a political consciousness as agent for fundamental change in Indian society and believed in the necessity to shape a state that countered the discriminatory tendencies of traditional caste loyalties. His ideal for social justice envisions a society where social activism towards the exercise of political power for the purpose of peaceful social revolution can create fundamental principles of equality and justice as opposed to hegemonic domination and internal forms of oppression (Fitzgerald, 1999).

The systematic pressures upon peasants to adopt a utilitarian mindset inspired by neoliberal economics are central in my analysis and can be linked to social justice in its essentialist, Gandhian and moral economics notions. Furthermore, exploitation can be identified in the Marxist theory of labor and in how community's survival is impacted by hegemonic power structures. Secondly, social justice cannot disregard the struggle of the oppressed and marginalized groups within their own community. As Ambedkar and Gandhi recognized, oppression requires social transformation. In a world dominated by complex state structures a pure Gandhian model sounds unattainable, although very fascinating, and orienting existing political institutions in prioritizing social justice -inspired by the Gandhian philosophy of truth and nonviolence- might be more feasible. In synthesis, the way social justice is defined in this thesis entails both human and cultural dimensions as much as all mechanisms of exploitation deriving from hegemonic power

structures. In other words, the subjective dimensions of injustice -derived from exposing local communities to the neoliberal hegemony- along with community-based power structures should be central when policies are designed and implemented. Both aspects relate to decentralization practices and the perpetuation of injustices can be found in the model of development imposed through formalized institutions embracing the good governance agenda. The next section will utilize the various frameworks to conceptualize the relationship between social justice and decentralization.

2.7 Decentralization and Social Justice

The theoretical preference embraces the Gandhian notion of social justice including Amdekhari argument. Furthermore, the way social justice is interpreted also draws from its moral economy normative dimension within an essentialist framework and to the Marxist theory of labor. In first instance, the conceptualization of the relationship between social justice and decentralization is inspired by moral economics' arguments about community and traditional patterns of self-governance and self-provisioning. Yet, it recognizes inherent limitations of some traditional structures if perpetuating oppression (like in the case of the caste system for India).

In my analysis the link between social justice and decentralization is intended as the genuine and real inclusion of the most marginalized groups into the democratic process. It requires forms of oppression to be removed and effective representation of all people at

the local level. In this framework, institutional processes need to reflect patterns of self-governance without the presumption that a Western notion of the state and development are the only possible frameworks. Oppressive hegemonic power structures should be challenged through decentralization practices in order for inclusive and participatory democracy to reach all levels through dialectic interaction across tiers of governance. External pressures to adopt practices aimed at perpetuating power concentration, along the good governance rationale, will disempower marginalized groups and reduce the scope for social justice. More precisely, the neoliberal project to create an international efficient market disregards the real inclusion of marginal groups and other models of development.

The conflict between genuine democratization and market-oriented policies is at the core of this struggle. Social justice, as illustrated so far, might require a kind of decentralization that allows the creation of a democracy in a collectivist sense where the common good in the process of development is agreed at the local level. A collective democratic structure is based on the belief that social order can be achieved without recourse to power relations. The lack of imposed formalized authority presupposes individuals to follow internal morals and have cooperative behaviors (Rothschild-Whitt, 1979). To reach this end, a radical social transformation aimed at abolishing hierarchy at all levels is also needed. If internal structures in the community prevent inclusion of marginalized groups, mechanisms to support their voices are needed. Inclusive decisions making relies on some degree of restriction of individual ends, if against the common good, and on institutional processes meant to overcome oppression at all levels instead of accommodating central policy

objectives.

A collective democratic structure requires a new vision of a decentralized state that does not perpetuate power and capital accumulation but prioritize the right to subsistence and cooperation. Democratic relations, within a decentralized perspective, should not be defined as a pre-packaged notion of western philosophy disconnected from different cultural understanding and communal structures. The state can play a central role because of its great resources and capacity to redirect policies. It can embrace the capitalistic orientation and perpetuate oppressive mechanisms directed to satisfy the thirst of accumulation or it can radically change its overall orientation favoring inclusive decentralization practices. A possible example of synergetic relationship across tiers of governance can be drawn from the experience of Kerala (India) where the principle of subsidiarity was implemented. It allowed for a restructuring of authority so that there is a system of participatory co-responsibility between institutions of governance at the central, regional and local levels. Based on this principle, functions are transferred to the lowest institutional or social level that is capable of performing them (John and Chathukulam, 2003). Although a few exception, (i.e. Kerala) decentralization practices, along the good governance approach, tend to pursue another pattern by pushing local communities to resist a centralized logic of the market that deprives them from their autonomy, livelihood, resources and communal structures. As long as the neoliberal project dominates policy implementation, there are fewer chances to have social justice as central part of state objectives.

The good governance approach for decentralization along the neoliberal logic does not substantially address complex issues of power, livelihood, self-governance, political participation and social status as central components of social justice. The next section will contribute to define the relationship between decentralization and social justice with a more in-depth analysis of the role of the state. A deeper understanding of its role is necessary to have a grasp over policy implications for decentralization.

2.8 The political ideology of the state: implications for decentralization

Decentralization and the state dimension can be seen as a complex relationship and an emerging debate is taking place suggesting new forms of governments to reduce inequalities and to achieve social justice. This new consensus represents a pressing need of a new political project that redirects state policy from a narrow-minded pursuit of economic liberalization to a renewed commitment in social justice. The development discourse of decentralization, minimal state and liberalization has converged into the common idea of state retreat. In truth, the state is still behind the curtain very active in providing the condition for faster capital mobility and directing material resources away from social justice. The real change can be achieved with a radical shift in the political ideology behind decentralization and development; the government in this perspective can be a great catalyser of struggles in the achievement for social change through policy implementation (Lake, 2002).

In the current good governance ideology decentralized institutions are very constrained in action to redirect state policies. Local bodies' struggle is more channeled to attract social welfare limited funds through competition between localities in fear that more monetary generous benefits will reach less well-off places. Private-sector decentralized institutions will have even less interest to pursue social justice because driven by the pure logic of profit. Community-based organizations also face difficult times to build enough capacity to attain social justice goals because of inadequate funding, political influence, administrative complexities etc. Private foundations providing financial resources to decentralized institutions usually operate within extremely short-term horizons. They rather follow current policy trends and quick-fix solutions according to the latest academic trend without radical social change in their agenda (Bandyopadhyay, 2002). Because of conditionalities, lack of funding or low interest, decentralized institutions have limited action for social justice.

The neoliberal agenda is at the basis of local institutions' struggle to endorse social justice issues in their action. According to Lake (2002) ultimate objective remains to depoliticize development without addressing the broader issues of power in order to achieve market-oriented policy goals. Decentralization is implemented to accommodate formal structures or private agents instead of crucial issues of social injustices and segregation derived from social hierarchies of power, resources and status. The institutional set-up invoked by good governance is directly or indirectly preventing the most vulnerable sections to be

substantially engaged in the process of political participation and of social change. Their lack of power and knowledge of the institutional processes is at the root of their exclusion.

The lack of space for social justice linked to exclusionary decentralization practices is strongly linked to the shift to a form of state that is increasingly managerial in nature. Systematic policies of privatization, deregulation and decentralization are implemented at the same time in order to create cultivated consumers. The apparent process and rhetoric of democratization is instead an imposed system of accountability deriving from a “linear” simplified world in which local bodies become routine service providers instead of agents of development. This is a very clear political choice that the good governance agenda supports through the transformation of participation into a multi-articulated processes and mechanisms of service delivery. The fixation of procedural and technical processes with a neoliberal logic of consumerism and market integration is increasingly reducing space for social justice, depoliticizing local bodies and constraining dissent (Desai and Imrie, 1998).

The reduction of scope for social justice in decentralization practices has been happening through various forces: destatization, internationalization, managerialization and denationalization or more precisely the transfer of functions to private agents, global-scale institutions and more local scale levels of the state. The power structure has not been altered substantially by a mere redistribution of the functions to local level of governance. The national state role has not been reduced but directed to accommodate an overall ideological choice that gives more space to a corporate-led focus on development instead of

social justice and welfare. As Harvey claims, a free market requires a deepening of the state to reach social processes that guarantees the preservation of its crucial power structure in the functioning of neoliberal policies (Harvey, 2005:117). An overall ideology change could enable the goal social justice to be pushed from above and be transferred to decentralized institutions as a policy objective instead of a second-order function. Central governments shift away from the neo-liberal arguments of personal responsibility, privatization and efficiency can adopt a new direction toward communal responsibility, social equality, livelihood protection and social inclusion. The crucial issue for decentralization, in this framework, is not a quantitative redistribution of state power but a qualitative redirection of the policies the government is taking and to which power is actually applied (Lake, 2002).

The role of state power can be crucial in changing the current rationale of decentralization but it can hardly happen as long as international organizations pressures many governments to adopt a neoliberal trajectory of development. State managerialization, free market policy goals along with the various constraints of decentralized institutions are limiting social justice to be promoted in the process of development. The past sections explained, in depth, how the good governance agenda brings limited scope to address oppression and social change as much as engagement of local communities in shaping development according to their own needs. The introduction of various critiques helped to have a more comprehensive picture of internal tension in defining decentralization priorities. The next part of this chapter will offer a detailed analysis of how decentralization practice, definitions and its historical trajectories in order to contribute to the empirical discussion and critique

of the good governance approach. The ultimate goal is to link debates and broader conceptual definitions provided so far with the evidence emerging out of its current implementation.

2.9 Good governance decentralization forms and definitions

Decentralization is a difficult concept to delineate and methodological issues in its conceptual analysis gives different and sometimes contrasting shades of meaning to its definition. The definition of good governance decentralization follows the break up into: political, fiscal and administrative (Cohen, 1996). The overall objective of these various forms of decentralization is to create mechanisms in order to transfer of functions to lower tier of governance in various ways (Fulton, 2008).

Decentralization as defined here is a “process of adaptation which contains several phases and it is characterized by contradictions, retreats and juxtaposition” (Curbelo 1986:75). Decentralization, in its mainstream definition, is defined by International Organizations like the World Bank according to the Rondinelli framework. According to his framework there are three main types of decentralization around which vast literature and critique is based upon:

- Administrative decentralization. Its objective is to increase in efficiency in relation to how resources within a community are distributed and managed. It is the most widely used and analyzed. The implementation process in this frame can take up

the form of deconcentration, delegation and devolution (Cohen, 1996).⁹

- **Political decentralization:** It focuses on political participation of local communities at the local and regional institutions level. This form is usually concerned with democratization and civil society to identify the optimal transfer of decision-making power to lower level governmental units.
- **Economic/Fiscal Decentralization:** It seeks to reduce the control of the state in areas of economic regulation and social distribution. The ultimate objective is to reduce state expenditures and to let the market forces free to promote economic development. The process to achieve economic decentralization is through privatization and deregulation in order to transfer public functions in the hands of private parties or individual actors (Cheema and Rondinelli, 1989; Cheema and Rodinelli, 1983).¹⁰

The latter seems to be the most ideologically binding, but also the most widely adopted

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- ⁹In the case of deconcentration, it is implemented through a mere transfer of competences and specific functions to inferior levels of state administration such as local institution or parastate agencies. This is the least extensive form of transfer and having the central government with most control over decision-making.
 - In the case of delegation specific functions are transferred to parastate institutions or local level governmental units in which political parties or interest groups hold corporate status granted under state legislation.
 - In the case of devolution a transfer of government decision making and administrative authority to territorial entities is legitimized by an electoral process and awarded with more autonomy from the central government in which local political parties or interest groups hold decisive influence.

¹⁰ Some examples of economic and fiscal decentralization are: self-financing with user charges; co-financing with users' contribution to service provision or maintenance; expansion of local revenues by improving land distribution or tax collection; intergovernmental transfer of taxes, schemes, grants etc.; employment generating service provisions and cost reduction measures of general scope.

form of good governance for decentralization. A crucial implication of economic/fiscal decentralization is linked to financial dependency, intended as devolution, from the central government. This implies a reduction of local communities' economical autonomy because of pre-fixed limits and priorities over the use of their resources (Haldenwang, 1991). This is fundamental because behind the good governance rhetoric there are pre-conditions to enforce an agenda that can be detrimental for a local community. According to the overall argument, decentralization implemented according to a national policy agenda supporting genuine institutional autonomy at the local level, as opposed to the neoliberal market-oriented framework, can be more beneficial for traditional self-governance.

Decentralization theorized as administrative, political and fiscal requires further analysis of issues arising in its implementation process. The attempt is to maintain the direction of this thesis in questioning the mainstream assumptions behind decentralization. The challenge to do research in this area becomes how to assess limitations and potentials of decentralized governance from its theoretical framework to issues more strongly linked to its practices.

2.10 The Centre-Local dimension in implementing the good governance approach to decentralization

Current practices of decentralization imply some specific terminology and characteristics. First of all the notion of area delimitation is connected to the spatial concern for political

identity. Its creation can be drawn from the region's peculiar culture, history, language, and traditions or following the notion of efficiency. The latter can be particularly problematic since there are often incongruences between the technical delineation of an area and settlement patterns, thus attempts to apply the notion of efficiency in spatial division usually clashes with local interests (Smith, 1985).

Decentralization along with spatial division also involves utilization of appointed field personnel as part of the administrative organization. They are mainly posted to areas, districts, provinces or regions and they are expected to move around across different localities. The field officer is typically a full time career official, appointed, promoted, remunerated and retired according to the applicable bureaucratic procedures. The various parties involved are usually part of a hierarchy with internal methods of co-ordination and control. Hence, the various decentralization policies tend to be highly formalized along the lines of deconcentration and devolution (Smith, 1985). Process formalization, as mentioned before, can lead to neglect the real issues of effective participation, social justice and community's reality in decentralized governance.

Decentralization implies the delegation of political authority through bureaucratic means and low involvement of the local community. Political authority is usually delegated to lower government tiers through constitutional amendments and laws enactment but local institutions gain legitimacy to exert limited tasks according to local needs with restricted autonomy from the imposition of national government specific policies' objectives.

According to Stanyer (1976) bureaucratic decentralization becomes the means to reduce the forces of localism and to enforce similar processes of decision-making and priorities across various regions and localities. A centralized system of policy-making is detrimental for the local communities and would still be enforced within formal bureaucratic mechanisms without much space for dissent and autonomy.

Bureaucratic decentralization can imply different level of autonomy ranging from complete independence to complete integration. Federalism is the process that requires most transfer of power from the central state and it usually requires the local governments to receive power directly from a Constitution and not from the national government. It is also the most delicate since it implies the recreation of new relationships across tiers of governance. A complete transfer is not usually performed right the way, different economic and political interests can create great tensions to fix government priorities (Smith, 1985). In addition to it, federalism is only implemented at the state level since the complete transfer of regulatory capacity at lower levels is not envisioned in the current approach of decentralization. Furthermore, possible level of greater autonomy will not affect the local community to the degree required by social justice because the maintenance of formal processes invoked by the good governance approach still implies decentralization through bureaucratic means.

The implementation issues of spatial dimension, bureaucracy and functional responsibilities are peculiar to the good governance approach. They are part of formalized institutional processes not necessarily aimed at inclusive models of decentralization. They

are introductory notions of a deeper analysis of decentralization in the mainstream development debates in the last 20 years presented in the next section. The historical origins of various debates and ideas will give more ground reality to what have happened in good governance decentralization and possible insights for further analysis of its implications in the implementation process.

2.11 Decentralization initial enthusiasm during the Structural Adjustment Programs

Starting in the late 1980's the continued weakening of centrally planned economies, the rapid growth of international trade and investment, and the end of the cold war have led to a new conceptualization for governance and decentralization. In Latin America, East/South Asia and Central Europe transition from state planned to market economies became the focus for national policy agenda. Giving more space to the private sector, privatizing state enterprises, downsizing large central government bureaucracy and strengthening local governments became all part of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) aimed at restoring markets in the context of good governance. In addition, the new public management movement of the 1990's shaped the way international organizations thought about what governments should execute in order to a build market-oriented, decentralized and high quality service system. Combined with trade liberalization, advancements in information, spreading of financial capital across national borders, these reforms would purportedly spur economic growth (Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007).

Even though local and regional government have been sometimes reluctant to take up this new model of governance, most central governments and international organizations are fiercely pushing forward this policy (Kent, 2007). The international financial institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund were the most fervent supporters of the model. They have persistently encouraged the process of devolving authority to the local level or to the private sector in order to deconcentrate responsibilities from the central government. The state in the process of decentralization has been pushed to reinvent itself to become mission driven, results oriented, enterprising and customer minded. In this perspective, after decades of centralized governance and of state management, there has been a revision about the role of institutions in order to fit with the new approach. The shift in governance favored by international organizations led to new system of rules, mechanisms of interactions across institutional layers and new complex relationships between central government, local institutions and citizens (Grindle, 2007).

As decentralization became prevalent in the development discourse during the 1980's neoliberal economists argued that decentralization -specifically federalism- would increase allocative efficiency by managing public expenditures according to local needs¹¹. Their assumptions were based on the principle that as long as capital and labour are mobile, market-enabling decentralization gives incentive to lower units to perform well in their economical and political tasks otherwise resources will move to other jurisdictions

¹¹ According to their view local institutions are also in the best position to respond to local demand since information about local preferences is readily available. Moreover the system should be an incentive for high quality service delivery because of higher direct competition between federal units and for an increase in accountability because of better local institutions' responsiveness.

(Weingast, 2005). According to Grindle's perspective (2007), public management exponents also developed similar arguments in support of decentralization. Citizens would be more motivated to complain and demand for improvements in the case the service delivered is not satisfactory. Corruption and taxation mechanisms were also expected to improve through local institutions. Decentralization was expected to improve government by providing public officials with better capacity to take on new responsibilities through mechanisms of improved performance and accountability.

Along the idea of efficiency and administration improvement, mainstream political scientists in line with Cheema and Rondinelli also became advocates of decentralization. Their argument in its favour underlines the creation of a stronger participatory local democracy and a reduction of centrally national planning by delegating greater authority to local institutions that have better understanding of the problems.¹² Participation would also enable higher representation of minority groups and higher equity in the allocation of government resources and investments. Decentralization would provide alternative channels of decision-making and reduce local elites' influence in development activities. In their view, decentralization is an opportunity for local citizens to learn skills of deliberation and to understand the mechanisms of accountability, hence strengthening democracy (Cheema and Rondinelli, 1983).

¹² Closer contact between government officials and local communities should increase officials' knowledge about local issues and enhance citizens' participation into politics leading to more effective mechanisms of reward and punishment of local officials' behaviors.

The vision of a more efficient economy, better public service and participation legitimized the pressures on developing countries to adopt the good governance approach for decentralization. The SAP was the right mix of policies to allow institutional reforms along the good governance rationale to accommodate the needs of the market and to link political participation with economic liberalization. In the next section, the drawbacks of mainstream ideas, developed in the 1980's, about decentralization are explained in order to give further critical assessment of the limitation of the current approach.

2.12 What did not work in good governance decentralization?

Evidence in support of decentralization in the late 1990s became very mixed and inconsistent and many expectations were widely unmet. Economists started fearing an increase in public deficit because of decentralization. National fiscal health experts responded by placing mechanisms to tight up central supervision of local revenues and expenditures to avoid debts. The World Bank itself recognized potential risks and weaknesses of good governance decentralization. It warned of widening of regional disparities in the provision of public services, increasing public deficit, the inability for the central government to use fiscal policy to adjust to economic shocks and possible conflict of interests between the national and local interests. The World Bank also suggested to discourage political fragmentation and to replace proportional representation with stronger coalition at the national and state level in order to reduce conflict over policy agenda. According to the Bank, decentralization needed to become more aligned with formalized

structures inspired by organization theory and public finance in order to strengthen central control over sub-national government (Burki, Perry and Dillinger, 1999). Because of the problems illustrated so far, the good governance approach to decentralization was already under scrutiny after a few years from its origin.

Empirical studies performed by Treisman (2007) to assess the various claims of neoliberal economics applied to decentralization showed that most arguments about its benefits and macroeconomic dangers ended up being invalid. A few can hold only given certain conditions that are very difficult to observe anyways. The expected outcomes of decentralization about administrative efficiency, availability of local preferences, accountability and policy experimentations were proven empirically insignificant¹³ (Treisman, 2007). From a public management point of view even the quality of service that was to improve under decentralization was negligible at best. The incentive structures and motivation of local institutions were not necessarily aligned with pressures to improve performance. Corruption, performance measurement inconsistencies and over complex fiscal mechanisms were also identified as persistent problems at the local and central level.

¹³ For example, administrative efficiency does not require political decentralization since local competition among units of governance leads to inequalities and is hard to achieve in the real world. Fiscal incentives deriving from higher tax collection does not seem to improve economic performance. Furthermore check and balances of local governments to keep higher-tier of governance accountable does not happen since “divide and conquer” strategies are still adopted locally hence reducing decentralized units’ capacity to block central interventions. Units of governance are also assumed to be better in gathering local information and increase policy experimentations but evidence shows only central government facing electoral pressures will introduce local policy testing since it has less to lose electorally. Many mainstream assumptions of local institutions capacity to improve economic performance and accountability were exposed to inherent limitations

The various negative feedbacks created a debate about the legitimacy of decentralization practices that in most countries have usually been a top down process rather than the result of grassroots pressure from below (Kent, 2007).

In political participation, decentralization also showed mixed results. Evidence of elite power capturing along with authoritarian enclaves in local settings has exacerbated inequalities and local conflicts over economic, social and political issues. Decentralization claims to bring more people in the process showed wide variability in the case of participation across local governments and not significant social change. Furthermore, decentralization had to face some other major challenges, including weak state capacities at all levels, difficulties in determining the optimal size of local governments and problems of ethnic conflicts and state unity. These problems clash with the vision of decentralization's goal to deepen and consolidate democracy by harnessing democratic values and increasing responsiveness to local interests especially for marginalized groups (Hutchcroft, 2004). The expectations about decentralization to foster democratization did not hold on the ground and social injustices have perpetuated.

After the end of the initial wave of optimism from various scholars, empirical studies showed how the reality of good governance decentralization was much grimmer. Economists did not consider decentralization as a set of service delivery mechanisms in contrast to local communities' practices of self-governance. Other realities in developing countries have strikingly dissimilar understanding of what economists, aligned with the World Bank,

define as priorities for governance and local economy. Along similar lines, public management theories aimed at improving public good delivery through formalized institutional processes resulted ineffective in developing countries. Furthermore, initial enthusiasm about participation did not consider the inescapable consequences of neoliberal policies like greater inequalities and oppression.

The evidence about failures of many claims advanced from the good governance approach to decentralization brings back the centrality of social justice in the picture. The way decentralization was implemented did not fulfill the original expectations hence it's reasonable to argue that the good governance rationale is easily exposed to questioning about its legitimacy. The priorities of development flagged by international organization in decentralization policies are not inclusive of social justice and of the grassroots reality of the oppressed. The managerial state is based on simplified assumptions about society on a very clear neoliberal logic and does not seem to grasp the complexities of local struggles and dissimilar understandings of reality. The evidence of its inefficacy leads to a necessary conceptual re-visitation of decentralization and its critiques through different ideological lenses that will be later illustrated. The next section will introduce the inherent paradox of decentralization caught between the neoliberal project of creating an efficient and growing economy and the process of democratization. This is a point of reflection to assess the tension between two clashing forces in decentralization; each with different origins, objectives, priorities and implications for development and social justice.

2.13 Decentralization and its current inherent central paradox of democratization versus nation-driven neoliberal policies

The ineffectiveness of current decentralization practices leads to the underlining paradox of greater sub national democratization versus the level of autonomy accorded from the central government. Decentralization's indeterminacy results in key decision still made at the central level and policies that follow a pattern highly disconnected from the local reality. At the same time upward pressures are arising from communities attempting to speed the process of democratization and access to decision making (Oxhorn, Tulchin and Salee, 2004). The initial push to implement decentralization within the good governance approach came from the elites and this is a fundamental ambiguity that merits discussion.

The same elites established that decentralization is a set of institutional processes meant to enable a policy framework embracing economic and political liberalization. According to Manor (1999) transitioning to a market economy contrasts with the principle of democratization since it enhances economic insecurity and contributes to socio economical inequalities and injustices. Support for decentralization as a set of mechanisms to reduce rent-seeking behavior from the state apparatus entails the expectation of increased economic efficiency in order to promote national economic development. As shown, this is not necessarily empirically assessed but it entails assumptions about implementation practices that can have profound implication for society.

For example, the theoretical assumption of efficiency implies local leadership in

decentralized institutions to be better than national control. The truth is that local leadership does not have access to resources or experience to effectively implement institutional processes. Political elites have the real control of decentralization as a way to hold on more power by further penetrating society imposing social control like in the case of the Pinochet military regime in Chile. In the trajectory of economic liberalism decentralization is required to establish a depoliticized market-oriented framework. This is needed to promote national development without opening substantial institutional space for social justice and effective local control over the process of democratization (Oxhorn, Tulchin and Salee, 2004).

The contradictions about who has the real control over decentralization practices have led to great doubts about what is the best way to evaluate its successes. The inherent ambiguity leads to open spaces for debate about what critical perspective of analysis should be taken. The relationship between democratization and decentralization does not seem to hold any longer. On the other hand sub national government can be a source of new political alternatives and innovative ideas to create a more democratic and inclusive political system. Current practices have pushed several movements in Latin America (i.e.: FREPASO in Argentina, PT in Brazil, Frente Amplio in Uruguay etc.) at the local and regional level to emerge and oppose to mainstream national policies agendas. State decentralization guided by narrow political criteria and purely economic driven can create unintended consequences of opposition movements proposing for more democratic decentralization and social justice (Oxhorn, Tulchin and Salee, 2004). The issue of control over

decentralization practices is creating resistance; this is additional evidence of lack of social justice triggered by external interference on patterns of self-governance and local autonomy.

The source of dissent can be also explained in the ambiguity of decentralization and the way democracy is defined. The good governance approach is more likely to favor principles of a liberal democracy based on educating citizens to follow a democratic process in order to fulfill their own individual interests in contrast to a more communitarian alternative. The latter alternative implies community interests to be above those of individual voters hence, a very different conception of democracy. The current process of economic liberalization is entangled with decentralization that favors the individual voter above the common good leading to reduced space to build inclusive democratization and social justice especially for the marginalized groups. The levels of inequality and economic dislocations associated to the overall process of transformation into a market economy can lead to conflicts and forms of resistance like in the case of concerted citizen mobilization (Oxhorn, Tulchin and Salee, 2004).

The kind of democratization process becomes a crucial dimension because it can support the good governance ideology within a logic based on consumerism or can embed an inclusive vision that enable social justice. There are various ways to strengthen local democracy and policies favoring a representative kind will rely upon formalized measures to strengthen accountability and service delivery. On the other hand, more direct and

flexible types of democracy can enhance the inclusion of other groups in society and of repressed interests. The real question needs to address whose interests are being served. The spectrum of decentralization practices ranges from managerial to political and the former are preferred within the good governance approach. The implications for social justice in the process of democratization are far more complex than what mainstream rhetoric hopes to convey since it is strongly linked to what interest is ultimately serving (Hambleton, 1988).

Social justice in the process of democratization is part of the fundamental paradox between the neoliberal rationale and the communitarian notion of democracy. The final part of this chapter will explore how the tension between these two forces in decentralization unfolds within different theoretical perspectives. The arguments, exposed so far, has shown current practices of decentralization have not delivered democratization favoring the common good; the reasons are partly linked to ideological tensions and to internal inconsistencies. Deeper understandings of the various debates emerging out of the neoliberal framework will be explored in the next section; more specifically: sustainable livelihoods approach, institutional political economy and Neo-Marxism. The various issues organized in sections delineate what are the tensions and synergies in understanding decentralization through different lenses of analysis. The point of views of different school of thoughts can give interesting insights about critiques and alternative models to interpret decentralization. Their interpretation about current practices is tightly linked to legitimize or delegitimize the good governance rationale and its implications for social justice in the process of

democratization.

2.14 Institutional Political Economy (IPE): from neoliberal techno-manegerialism to political economic populism in decentralization

Institutional political economy perspective has a different grasp of decentralization compared to the good governance approach. IPE critiques the neo-liberal understanding of the market that is limited to property rights and legal infrastructures. IPE instead sees the market as a political construct and the focus should be more on political institutions and processes. IPE, in this regard, provides an analysis of how economic actions by state actors are strongly influenced by their institutions. According to IPE, good governance should be defined differently than what various International organizations have conceptualized according to the neoliberal rationale. In its view good governance is the result of the interface and aspirations of various institutions in the political sphere instead of an outcome of market forces or state intervention.

Roy (2005) argues that institutional structures should be prioritized for the goals of good governance. In order to strengthen institutions, the IPE approach emphasizes the importance of mechanisms to avoid corrupt practices and rent-seeking behaviors while implementing decentralization. Economic elite should be targeted at the local level especially to reduce their political power. In very stratified society, authoritarian regimes might be more suitable to execute pro-poor and decentralization policies. The conditions

to have successful decentralized institutions according to the IPE approach are: a plan for making resources available to local bodies, agreeing on functions that need to be decentralized and the presence of strong egalitarian community-based institutions. Decentralization in this direction is claimed to be crucial to advance democracy and to ensure effective institutions for service delivery, accountability of procedures and political action that is more inclusive of marginalized groups (Roy, 2005).

Particularly for oppressed groups, decentralization should embed anti-poverty programmes along with human resources schemes in such a way to strengthen the impact on local communities. The volume of money spent on education, health and rural development is a crucial indicator for human resource development. More funds in this direction should go along with more specific programs for the most marginalized groups in order to bring development in the countryside where the majority of the population in developing countries continues to live. Local institutions should have more power not only to meet education and health requirements but also for activities such as employment-creation, housing, micro-irrigation and water resource management. These tasks become crucial to consolidate stabilization, efficiency and growth at the local level. Furthermore social policies in this direction should favor distribution and incentive different patterns of growth that are locally rooted. To enhance a stronger local economy institutions should be more able to determine the extent and nature of the way funds are utilized without the interference of the state. IPE arguments for decentralization converge to the rationale of “political economic populism” instead of the “political economic techno-managerialism”

invoked by neo-liberals (Mkhandwire and Rodriguez, 2000).

IPE understanding of decentralization only partly relies on the same economic rationale of development based upon the notion of growth and market integration invoked by International organization supporting the good governance approach. It also supports the existence of a decentralization policy enabling local communities to manage, control and have access to resources for development in stark contrast with the neoliberal arguments for fiscal discipline. IPE underlines the fundamental inability of the current good governance approach to revise its practices since its rationale would rather favor the decline in social sector expenditure leading to lower self-reliance ratios. The mainstream model privileges the reduction of fiscal deficit thus impeding effective and efficient provisioning of social-sector goods and services crucial for development as intended by IPE. Furthermore, good governance invokes the rationalization of public sector expenditure in order to repay multilateral debts or to finance large-scale development projects. Effective decentralization cannot be supported by the good governance approach, which favors a minimal state and great shifts of resources away from welfare-oriented programs (Roy, 2005).

The current trend is showing many governments to be aligned with an attempt to transform their very nature into a minimalist “techno-managerialism”. The tendency to reduce the role of the state leads to absence of decision-making, resource-raising powers and funds for local institutions. Uneven distribution of resources and authority can lead marginalized groups to have less access to socio-economic assets and to exploitation by the informal

local power structures (Roy, 2005). Even though IPE arguments are directed to a strong revision of the current good governance approach toward stronger support to the social sector instead of excessive fiscal cuts; it does not reject the role of economics in decentralization at its roots. IPE instead suggests substantial improvement in the fiscal and institutional arrangements conducive to effective decentralization in order to improve inclusive growth.

IPE is a school of thought that shows theoretically the first contradictions within current practices of decentralization, its emphasis on social welfare already shows a different normative approach in regards to the good governance rationale. The internal contradictions of a minimal state and fiscal deficit bring back the issues of marginalized groups and the lack of support in their regard. The additional insights offered in the next section about the Sustainable Livelihood Approach can deepen the discussion in regards to other ways of conceiving decentralization and its uses.

2.15 Sustainable livelihoods approach and decentralization as political capital

SLA analysis of decentralization tends to focus to local level realities so the shift of decision-making closer to the community is seen as the right strategy to deliver a more responsive and poverty-focused public service. Some pre-conditions are necessary to deal with local power structure in order to achieve successful decentralization such as: elected bodies having enough funds and powers, reliable mechanisms to ensure accountability of

elected representatives to citizens and the accountability of bureaucrats to elected representatives. Decentralization should be a device to enhance transparency and participation in order for SLA projects and programs to meet local conditions and preferences (Manor, 1999).

Decentralization is intended as a process that can provide the institutional framework to take forward the goals of projects established from SLA. The ideal one should assume a concern for local realities and needs on the part of local institutions to facilitate the creation of a livelihood strategy. Successful decentralization integrates a right-based approach and great emphasis on the issues of human rights. Policy suggestions in this direction are: to strengthen the organisation of the poor, to allow people's priorities to be integrated, to provide securing rights of tenure to land and to have civil society more engaged in monitoring the performance of local institutions. SLA gives importance to the relationship between rights, entitlements and the nature of state obligations and how the notion of individual agency -as developed by Amartya Sen- should be best integrated in a collectivist vision (Norton and Mick, 2001).

Even though SLA does give more emphasis on the issues of human rights and poor's agency it does not provide a structural critique of the good governance approach to decentralization. On the contrary, the livelihood approach attempts to internalize part of the same terminology for its development practice. In more details, five assets (capital, social, financial, natural and political) should be managed in such a way to improve

community wellbeing through the processes of decentralization, participation and market liberalization (Allison and Benoit, 2006). SL framework basically internalizes the issues of decentralization such as power structure in its notion of political capital. SL explicitly does not have a theory of social change or political transformation because politics and power relation are seen as exogenous variables in relation to all the other capital assets within a community. For this reason SLA stresses to look at power only in a dynamic relationship without making it a critical factor (Baumann, 2000). SLA is critiqued for its neutrality because it looks at decentralization giving low emphasis on the various issues of social justice and facilitates current practices without a critical review of the dominant political agenda.

Yet, the most recent debate is more complex and there is an emerging awareness of the importance of including politics and power in the livelihood framework. The recognition of the limitations of politics as another capital requires to fill the divide in livelihood analyses between micro-level perspectives and macro-level structural issues. The micro-economic reformulations of livelihoods have tended to disregard how social relations impact livelihoods. A new perspective of SLA is pushing the question of class politics and power to gain more centrality in the debate. Hence, the necessity of more explicit theorization about political processes within the livelihoods' perspective opens up new opportunities to conceptualize and define the priorities of this approach that could turn out to oppose to the good governance agenda (Scoones, 2009).

Even though recent debates have the potential to change SLA political ideas, current practices have not challenged the status quo of the current good governance approach, which is inspired upon neo-liberal principles. At the same time SLA has emphasized into its analysis of decentralization the necessity to allow people's priority to be integrated, to give more emphasis on poverty alleviation and more recently to provide more centrality to the issues of power and politics. These two apparently contradicting directions can be seen as part of the central dilemma of democratization versus marketization. The last theoretical view offered about decentralization is perhaps the most significant because it develops an extensive critique on the logic behind decentralization invoked by the good governance approach.

2.16 Neo-Marxists and decentralization as policy device to reproduce forces of capitalism

In recent years Neo-Marxist writers have offered a more comprehensive explanation of the state at the subnational level especially in the contemporary context of neo-liberal capitalism and decentralization. The main arguments concern the political aspect of decentralization and its impact in the process of capitalism reproduction. The current emphasis Neo-Marxists give is to local and regional governments as crucially important in the reproduction of the forces and relations of production.

In times of economic restructuring at a global level starting from the 80's caused by increased internal and external debt, dependent countries that in the past have created

greater state capacity became more exposed to new pressures for adjustment. Decentralization, in this framework, can be interpreted as an effective mean to face economic crisis. The relation between state and society remain crucial because with the diminishing distributive capacity of the state the ruling elites need to find the best solution in the process of modernization. Current practices of decentralization imply a new way to articulate functionally and spatially the various political arenas and participation and it seems to offer the best solution for modernization (Haldenwang, 1991).

Neo-Marxist arguments look at the current decentralization model as a crucial aspect for capitalism linked to an exploitative state and as an essential element for the renewal of capitalism's productive forces such as capital, manufactured goods and labor power. Decentralization is better associated with labor; a capitalist economy requires a healthy and productive workforce and decentralized local authorities play a very essential role in educating the economy of human capital. The new requirements for the economy lead the state to provide financial support to local governments in the form of housing, education and social welfare. The provision of means of consumption is essential to reproduce the right kind of labor in the logic of capital accumulation. While bureaucracy and corporatist institutions sponsor social investments for economic infrastructures; decentralized units of governance are delegated to manage social consumption in order to adapt labour to the requirements of capitalism's productive forces (Smith, 1985).

Local governments have indeed become an arena of major contradiction according to the

Neo-Marxist analysis between the allocation of resources to profitable production and unprofitable consumption under the form of welfare. The state is responsible for non-competitive activities necessary for the functioning of the overall economic system and appeasement of social conflict. The consequences of this approach for local governments are the production of new inequalities in service delivery and, the establishment of an emerging concept of individual's position in collective consumption. The Neo-Marxist interpretation of decentralization claims that local communities can become strongly influenced by a new conception of ownership and consumption in the logic of profit.

The economic rationale of ownership and the political/social consequences are kept separate in order to achieve the ideological objectives and to sustain the mystification of bourgeois society. The participative dimension of decentralization is seen as an instrument to fragment political practices. The creation of social consensus on an anti-democratic modernization project aims at achieving complete integration of the social forces into the capitalist production process. The objective remains to de-politicize and de-radicalize issues in order to prevent social conflicts and to strengthen neoliberal practices. (Saunders, 1989) Even though local institutions are formally expected to be representative, the lack of effective participation leads to societal hostility in regards to the dominant interests at the centre.

To avoid resistances local authorities are controlled in indirect ways, for example independence of local governments can be reduced by fiscal controls and the allocation of

local functions is sometimes transferred to regional agencies. The concern to maintain the conditions for private production and to control local expenditure only for productive purposes constrains the ability of decentralized units of governance to raise revenues meant to meet social needs. The capitalist state, at the same time, will provide the necessary support for infrastructures such as roads, water supplies, energy and communications. This is achieved through the cooperation between private parties and various layers of governance, under central sponsored schemes, in order to emphasize employment. The central control over local institutions and emphasis on infrastructures ultimately leads to a reduction in the institutional scope for social justice or for class struggle (Smith, 1985).

Decentralized units of governance are serving the purpose of a centralized ideology; this also greatly reduces institutional autonomy. The local government faces various constraints in action, especially by class interest outside the territory of the local community. It only becomes part of the structure and its long-term objectives remain within the interest of the bourgeoisie dominating the working class. For example, the elected representatives increasingly depend on bureaucrats and professional; this represents a clear shift from local political autonomy to managerial practices. Even the attempts to reduce the inequalities always clash with the rationale of a market system whose imperatives are the perpetuation of inequality and the maintenance of scarcity. This conflict can also be understood within the urban bias. The limitation of local democracy in redistributive terms is based upon market driven diversion of funds away from areas of greatest social need (rural areas) into areas of greatest economic returns (urban centres). Less priority to the most oppressed

areas is an additional argument of reduced space for social justice, in decentralization practices, also intended as institutional autonomy (Saunders, 1989).

Even though the ultimate goal is capital accumulation; the good governance rationale of decentralization practices uses the rhetoric of social justice intended as empowerment and participation. The idea of social justice, in this case, is based upon the principles of efficiency in order to initiate a process of inclusion of the powerless in the existing social order without any significant reduction of power from the elite classes. Neo-Marxism has a different and more radical notion of empowerment and invokes a bottom up social mobilization of society to challenge the hegemonic interest within the state and the market. Local institutions, in the Neo-Marxist framework, are identified as agents of conscientisation and collective identity formation around the struggle. Substantial empowerment requires structural transformation of economic and political relations toward a radically democratized society (Mohan and Stokke, 2000). The powerless are instead constrained by practices that follow the capitalist model of development and its notion of social justice.

Behind its rhetoric, the capitalist state is seen as the facilitator of decentralization linked to practices controlled by the bourgeoisie and elite aiming at creating a model of development mainly infrastructure-based with no space for alternatives. Geiser and Stephan (2009) argue that a modernizing state is an alienating external institution that has superimposed western values deriving from colonialism in developing countries. Chatterjee (2009) argues that in

the case of India, along with the alienating state, there has been the “vernacular India” with its own politics of people and traditional roots. Even with the intrusion of colonialism, the traditional structure of society was far from being destroyed as much as elite politics. The coercive apparatus of the colonial state penetrated in the Indian society as well as in many others but it failed to reach below the higher levels of the elite. Social movements and a subaltern political society exist, along with formalized decentralized practices, especially in South Asia and Latin America. Political society or social movements are the source of resistance against the current process of decentralization. They create a trichotomy composed by the state, citizens as defined by western values and indigenous nations or communities. The struggle to create a pluralistic state able to integrate different views about local politics and local institutions is ongoing (Geiser and Stephan, 2009).

The centrality of social justice is especially central in the Neo-Marxist critique to the policy rationale of the good governance approach to decentralization. The link between decentralization and social justice gains greater significance within this debate than the ones explored from IPE and SLA. In this frame, along with the necessity to reestablish policy objectives by changing the rationale behind decentralization, the central question remains how these perspectives can be translated in a complex context like India. India is the country I am going to analyze for my case studies so the linkage between its realities, good governance approach decentralization and social justice is very multifaceted. This multidimensional relationship will be explored briefly in the next section in order to introduce the more analytical section of this dissertation.

2.17 Decentralization and social justice in India

I embrace the idea that various degrees of informal communal decentralized governance in India have been existed way before the good governance agenda was formed. Yet under the good governance global consensus, the release of funds and decision-making power follows a centralized vision for development. Traditional institutions (named Panchayat) with functions of resolving disputes are now transformed into units to implement policies decided at the central government. As next Chapter will show, few states have managed to transform local bodies into politicized arena of dissent against the neoliberal policies the government is adopting. In Kerala, for example, participatory decentralization has managed to counter-act the pressures to favor economic growth and has prioritized social welfare and social justice. In other areas of India, local bodies are still exclusionary and powerless in front of state policies. In these cases, they risk to be transformed into units to spread economic liberalization with the perpetuation of inequalities and creation of conflicts (Malik, 2004). The most important legislation for Indian decentralization, namely Panchayati Raj Act, has attracted much attention for its potential to transfer real power to local institutions and for its constraints in doing so.

The 73rd constitutional amendment meant to constitutionally recognize the Panchayati Raj institutions, the Constitution put down in words their duty to prepare plans for economic development and social justice. The legal framework implies that Panchayat cannot

prepare any plan for economic development if it does not ensure social justice. Even though social justice had received constitutional recognition in the Panchayati Raj Act, the central government ignores it by pursuing economic policies that increase rural poverty, polarize wealth and create new power structures based on the control over resources or benefits distribution. The government does not seem willing to grant untied funds and autonomy to lower tier of governance, ultimately centralizing power in its hands for the development process and policies' objectives.

Even though India embraces neoliberal policies, it also has an active parliament and state legislatures, free print media, constitutionally guaranteed system of decentralization and devolution of power along with a growing and vigilant civil society. The values at the foundation of India's democracy and unity are under assault through the process of liberalization but the struggle to defend them is also taking place. Ultimately the government needs to reorient its economic and social policies for decentralization on the basis of the principles enshrined in the Constitution in order to really achieve a balanced and locally decided development (Bandyopadhyay, 2002).

2.18 Where is this research standing?

The good governance approach to decentralization attracts many critiques. The small space for dissent, self-governance and social justice (as defined in this Chapter) are issues that need to be addressed while assessing current practices. The mainstream idea of what local

governments should achieve follows the good governance approach, which has attracted much support from various international organizations. Yet, the internal theoretical inconsistencies of the dominant approach are also emerging and translating into applied decentralization. This poses fundamental normative question about good governance legitimacy in defining how local governments should function. For the purpose of my thesis decentralization will be assessed empirically in the specific case of India in order to prove how current practices reduce space for social justice.

In my case studies, I support the Neo-Marxist claims about decentralization in relation to social justice. Social justice is defined along the lines of moral economy, essentialism, Gandhi and Ambedkhar. I argue that though the constitutional framework gives substantial support for the concept of social justice and social welfare, the implementation of decentralization policies do not embed any major scope for social and power change. The very oppressed have limited access to formalized political processes and power devolution is transformed into a managerial task in order for citizens (especially the most marginalized groups) to accommodate the good governance agenda that the government embraces. For the case of India, the emphasis on economic development, through decentralized institutions, should be at least not greater than programs aiming at achieving gender equality, equal access to resources, effective participation, oppressed groups representation, preservation of customary practices for self-regulation, space for dissent, measures to ensure effective ownership and control over local resources and conservation of traditional means of livelihoods.

CHAPTER III

In this chapter I explore more in depth the two main central elements of my argument: decentralization and social justice in India. Firstly, an overview of social justice as defined in the Constitution is given in order to orient the reader to a more specific conceptualization for the context of India. Furthermore, I explain the complexities of mechanisms and processes defining decentralization for village and forest governance in India and discuss how both policies apply to my case studies in Uttarakhand. Panchayati Raj stands for decentralized village governance whereas Van Panchayat stands for decentralized forest governance in the specific case of Uttarakhand. The objective is to provide frame to understand how the issues underlined in the previous chapters are linked to the case studies with related contextual specificities.

3.1 From theory to binding legal reality: The Constitutional definition of social justice in India

Social Justice in the constitution of India is an extensive section. I have selected only some specific articles, and judicial interpretations that best relate to my analysis of decentralization.. Social justice as defined by the constitution aims at ensuring equal opportunity and equal protection of the laws. The basis of its notion requires appropriate policies to promote equality with individual freedom and to promote fundamental rights with social justice.

Indian constitution aims at creating a socialist democracy with emphasis on the basic

human rights. In the preamble of the Constitution of India the promise for social justice is expressed in the following words: “We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a sovereign, social secular, democratic, republic and to secure to all its citizens justice (social, economic, political); liberty (of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship); equality (of status and of opportunity and to promote among them all); fraternity (assuring dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation) (Raju, 2006:43).” The above principle already envisages that, social justice - including its economic and political inclusion- is the declared goal of the Supreme Law. In order to achieve the founding principle of the Republic of India there are some basic rights for the people and especially for the most oppressed sections of society that will be used as framework of analysis for my problematic:

- **Article 14** states that “the state shall not deny to any person equality before the law or equal protection of the laws within the territory of India” (Raju, 2006:45). In this article there is a clear rejection to all the policies that create inequalities; in my case study I argue there is a fundamental ideological element of decentralization that can potentially lead to inequalities.

The constitution of India also developed some equality provisions to treat all people equally irrespective of their race, caste, religion, sex, language and place of birth. The conception of equality entails preferential treatment in favor for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes relative to the privileged classes of the society since the former have been subjected to long time oppression.

- How? For example, the Constitution contains special reservation posts for oppressed groups in government jobs, education posts or local institution seats. This reservation is based upon the principle of equality of status and of opportunity stated in the preamble and on article 15: “not citizens, shall on grounds only of religion, race caste, sex, place of birth or any of them be subject to discrimination”. (Raju, 2006:45)
- **Article 21** of the Constitution guarantees the most fundamental of all rights, namely, the “Right to life”. This is the foundation on which the other rights related to social justice are built and it states: “no person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law” (Raju, 2006:71). According to the judicial interpretation, the right to life is the basis to live with human dignity, free from exploitation.
 - The Supreme Court gave a wider meaning to article 21 by adding “right to livelihood” because no person can live without the means of living i.e. livelihood. In the case an individual is deprived of his/her means of livelihood, than his/her right to life is also offended.
- **Article 39** contemplates that the “state shall direct its policy towards securing”(Raju, 2006:85) the following:
 - That the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an **adequate means of livelihood**
 - That the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to sub serve the **common good**.

- That the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and **means of production** to the common detriment.
- **Article 39** has the inherent objective to secure egalitarian society where there shall be no discrimination, inequality, injustice and exploitation in the state. The constitution assigns a very prominent role to and imposes heavy responsibility upon the state to assure a dignified life to all individuals irrespective of his race, caste, color, language, religion and status.

This is a series of the most important constitutional that will be used to contextualize social justice in the case of India. They will guide me, in the following sections, to assess my central argument in relation to the policy and empirical analysis of my case studies. The constitutional definition of social justice is supreme law in a country where most policies promote privatization, liberalization and the increase of FDI. These economic policies are leading to an increasingly deepening of the rural-urban divide and to an increase in inequalities and conflicts (Patnaik, 2007). The middle-class dream bursts in front of the hundreds of millions of oppressed Indians on the edge of survival to accommodate the needs of a liberal market economy with uneven social landscape. Decentralization in India has recently gained constitutional recognition but its intrinsic rationale of democracy and social justice, as envisioned during the struggle for Independence, are in conflict with the pressures to facilitate a free market invoked by the good governance agenda (Karat, 2004).

Social justice is increasingly becoming central in the debate as integral part of the struggle against external forces reducing its space. In order to assess the lack of social justice in the good governance approach I will be relying on the definition provided in the previous chapter along with its notion in the Constitution in order to link my empirical analysis to contextual specificities and theoretical debates. In this regard, an important notion retraceable both in the Constitution and theoretical frameworks is “common good”. Good governance incentive to liberalization leads local institutions to be more exposed to increasing market pressures that widen inequalities, fragment community and foster unequal access to resources and political processes. The negative consequences of these pressures lead to a deterioration of the common good which is tightly linked to social justice.

Secondly, “livelihood” is also central for social justice, in particular for decentralized forest management. The right to livelihood is disregarded when disruption of the environment puts many local communities under hardship and when external forces deprive them from the right of ownership of natural resources. External forces can be linked to corporate-led development activities that breach the constitutional article about adequate means of production and favor the blind logic of accumulation pressuring local communities in various ways; for example people displacement because of dam construction etc. Decentralized bodies, in this dynamic, remain powerless to policies slowly attempting to introduce the market through emphasis on infrastructure, marketization and government sponsored schemes in devolution. These pressures clash against the tasks of devolving

substantial power to the oppressed and ultimately go against Article 39 of the Constitution which aims to establish an egalitarian society. The later sections will show how the various pressures unfold in the context of India and more specifically in the case studies of Uttarakhand.

3.2 Village decentralization under the Panchayati Raj Act

The pressures of neo-liberal policies have arisen only recently whereas attempts to decentralize power through Panchayat started as early as 1947, right after independence. Panchayats originally meant assembly of five in the form of a self-governing council, have existed as local bodies with judicial and police powers since pre-colonial times. Only in 1989 the National Parliament, at the time ruled by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, introduced the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments; collectively referred as the Panchayati Raj Act. When the amendments were ratified in 1992, their objective was to revitalize local governments in rural India by mandating regular elections to locally elected bodies. Individual states were required to enact legislation through conformity acts to devolve power and resources to local bodies, enabling them to function as institutions of self-government. The governance structure created through the Act is inspired by the traditional structure of Panchayats in order to transfer power to an institution that is generally known.

The constitutional amendments provide for some broad mandatory and discretionary

provisions to form local governments, but the implementation of the Panchayati Raj Act remains highly state specific. The mandatory provisions in the Act are to strengthen representative democracy and political representation: establishment in every state of rural local bodies, direct elections to all seats in the Panchayats at all levels and mandatory reservations for untouchables, tribes and women. Discretionary provisions are meant to endow the electorate at the village level with functions and authority to enable Panchayats to function as institutions of democratic self-government (Chaudhuri, 2003). More specifically the main objectives of devolution of powers and responsibilities as stated in the 74th amendment are:

“a) the preparation of plans and implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice.

b) the implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them including those in relation to matters listed in 11th Schedule.” (Indian Constitution, 73rd amendment: 243-G).

All the mandatory and discretionary provisions are meant to fulfill both the needs for economic development and social justice as central objectives for village governance in India.

The necessity to establish provisions to implement Panchayat Raj also came from the widespread political consensus regarding the failures of the bureaucratic and over-centralized apparatus of the Indian state and also from the suggestions of the international community to apply the good governance approach. Yet, the Act aims at revitalizing local

government by promoting greater community participation and fairer representation in the development effort. This policy framework still leads to the central dilemma of what kind of development does the national agenda really envision (Johnson, 2003). The Amendments recognize the importance of social justice in particular as it relates to gendered and caste dimensions of Indian society. For example, there is a specific reservation proclaiming that 30% of all seats should be reserved for women and for scheduled castes. Moreover, scheduled tribes reservation should be proportional to their presence in the territory. Some states just reformed the percentage of reservation for women up to 50% (Raghabendra and Ester 2004). However, the following evidence also shows how empowerment, social justice and real inclusion of the oppressed in the development process are minor concerns in a national agenda that prioritizes infrastructure, employment and market integration. Given the opposing interests of the government; the next section explains more in details how the institutional set-up fulfills its functions to deliver economic development and social justice at the ground level.

3.3 The organization of Panchayat Raj

Panchayati Raj is a system of governance divided in three levels: village, block and district. The lowest level is “Gram Panchayat” which is a deliberative body at the village level and meets at least twice a year. Everyone in the village older than 18 constitutes the “Gram Sabha” which is responsible for electing a council, and choose a Pradhan (chief) and Upa-Pradhan (vice-chief). Elections are held every five years and occasionally political parties

nominate candidates though this is a rare occurrence outside of Kerala. Once elected, the Gram Panchayat Sadasya (Gram Panchayat elected representatives) has some degree of decision-making power. The council decides by majority voting, whereas the Pradhan oversees and supervises the whole political process. The major responsibility of Gram Panchayat is to implement some local infrastructures (public buildings, water, roads) projects according to the type of funding received from the state. Secondly, the Gram Panchayat needs to identify targeted welfare recipients of government schemes, to keep record of births and deaths, to improve public health by providing facilities for sanitation and drinking water, to review the annual statement of accounts and to examine reports of the preceding financial year. As the subsequent case studies demonstrate, these functions are laid down and implemented with a clear bias towards developing infrastructures.

At the second level of Panchayat there is an important tier called the “Block Panchayat” represented by Panchayat Samiti that is the local government body at the block level. More villages together form a Development Block and the Panchayat Samiti is the link between the Gram Panchayat and the District Administration. It usually covers five to ten villages and it does not have jurisdiction over urban areas but only over rural communities. Each elected Samiti represents 5,000 on average (Palanithurai, 2006). Its functions related to infrastructure and employment are: to construct roads, to improve irrigation tanks, to promote cottage industries, to supervise drinking water supply and rural electricity and to enhance agriculture. Its functions related to welfare are: to administer activities in the domain of primary education, to support youth organizations, to deliver welfare schemes

and to implement preventive health measures. Most funding are grants and loans from the State Government (Palanithurai, 2002).

Panchayat's broadest level is "Zilla Panchayat"; it presides over the district level. In other words, there is a "Zilla Panchayat" (ZP) for each 35,000 people on average. It usually gets the funding directly from the state and refers back directly to the District Magistrate in order to underline the development needs of the whole district. ZP members are elected members; associate members, nominated members and their representation are based on the proportion of population in the territory. Its main functions are related to agriculture like: to supply seeds to farmers, to protect crop and to increase agricultural production. It also plays an important role with regard to the infrastructures needed in the district and it is engaged in building communication across villages, setting up and run schools and starting primary health centres in communities in need. ZP is also in charge to develop statistics, survey and evaluation and most importantly to supervise, coordinate and implement the overall development projects. In order to carry all its functions, in some states, ZP forms a district planning committee with powers to examine and propose changes in the draft for development projects prepared by the Panchayats and municipalities. The Government would then consider proposals and priorities in the draft prepared by the District Panchayat Committee when the State Plan is prepared. The District Planning Committee has the power to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Plan (Rajagopal, 1992).

Panchayats have different functions according to its degree of representation but the

eleventh schedule of the 73rd amendment identifies 29 areas where Panchayats at all levels can legitimately have jurisdictions. Many of these are related to agriculture, implementation of land reforms, housing, transportation, rural infrastructures, and to some extent health and education. The legal framework covers a very extensive number of matters yet; it's questionable whether various levels of Panchayat have the actual capacity to carry all of them, as later exposed in the case studies. In fact, as shown in the next section, there is a coherent link across tiers to deliver a kind of development that prioritizes the necessity to build the right environment to expand production through infrastructures, in compliance to a market-oriented framework, rather than ensuring social justice.

The recognition of priorities in one direction does not dismiss the efforts to expand education and effective participation however; there are relevant differences in achievements regarding social justice across states and areas. For example Kerala and West Bengal are renowned for their left-wing political legacy which fully decentralized political and financial power in a participatory manner and accomplished a more inclusive decentralization. In other cases, like in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, power is still retained at higher level of Panchayat and did not significantly brought democracy and power to the people. Panchayati Raj is highly context-specific and greatly depends on how much capacity is transferred at the local level to carry the various functions mandated by the 11th schedule (Narayana, 2005). The next section will explain how the funding structure is central in understanding how the institutional capacity to bring social justice is influenced by central schemes.

3.4 Panchayati Raj: funding limited social justice

Funding for Panchayati Raj and most of the money is highly centralized and channeled from the state government to the district level. Each State government is required to appoint a State Finance Commission to allocate taxes and fees to local governments and advocate for tax devolution and grants. The State Finance Commission is appointed every five years and its responsibilities are to review the finances of the local bodies, to distribute part of the revenues of the State to the local level and to pass on the funds for implementation of various centrally sponsored schemes. Each state has also devolved some power to levy certain taxes and fees only at the village level (Rao, 2000). Evidence suggests that there is great corruption committed by government officials in the process of transferring money to the local communities. Furthermore, financial devolution meant for social needs does not always reach local communities because of its very multilayered and complex bureaucratic structure administered at the central level.

Financial devolution usually come from central sponsored schemes like Jawhar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) poverty alleviation schemes, welfare programs and Gram Panchayat's (Gram Panchayat stands for village institution) own revenue since it is the only Panchayats that could collect taxes, even though it is rarely able to do so. The Gram Panchayat is required to organize at least two meetings per year called Gram Samsad where all villagers and village heads can participate. The Gram Panchayat in this occasion submits the budget and

allocates the funds (Raghabendra and Ester, 2004). The latest and most discussed scheme from the government of India is called National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). It has guaranteed the right of employment to 60 million rural poor in 200 low-income districts since its inception in 2005. The Act provides 100 days of employment for public work per year, at the minimum wage of 60 Rupees (1.50 US dollars) per day, to one rural household member that demands for it and who is below the poverty line. This act provides to Panchayats the opportunity to plan and execute works in the local communities aimed at generating employment and creation of assets. The logic behind it is based upon the capacity of rural communities to build and maintain productive assets and infrastructure, while simultaneously alleviating unemployment. The Act enables the construction of rural and institutional infrastructures like roads in rural areas, water sources such as tanks, canals and activities related to irrigation and land development (Sharma, 2007).

There is some consensus in recognizing NREGA positive impact of providing legal enforcement to the right to employment. NREGA promises the largest employment programme in India. It is seen as a necessary measure to increase agricultural productivity in respect to the immense social and ecological diversity of India in order to bring growth to the rural economy. NREGA is expected to provide relief in time of distress, poverty reduction and enhance private investments in order to lower the fiscal deficit (Shah, 2007). Furthermore, proponents underline NREGA to be an attempt to make the process accountable through social audits and to include the gender dimension with a 1/3

mandatory clause to have women as its beneficiaries (Antonopoulos, 2007). Shah (2009) also argues that employment created under the NREGA unleashes a multiplier effect whereby the income that laborers earn from large-scale public works projects enhances their purchasing power among workers and the production of commodities creates more demand for capital, raw materials and workers. Rural transformation is among the central objectives of NREGA and can be achieved by creating consumers and enhance productivity of small farmers mutually reinforcing the relationship between demand and income through the multiplier effect (Shah, 2009).

In addition to generating employment, the Act also strengthens the livelihood and income resource base of the rural poor and ensures its social security. Yet, a vast difference still exists between how these communities perceive both issues. Most rural communities have sustained themselves on natural resources by owning or using rights to manage them through customary practices. Today indigenous communities depend more and more upon government centralized decision and have reduced choice about how to preserve traditional sources of livelihood through local bodies. According to Lahiri (2007) NREGA rather favors an individual wage labor economy among people whose cultural, political and social life is community centric; this can lead to internal conflicts and inequalities.

Another critique of NREGA recognizes its lack of grievance board for workers complaints especially from the most marginalized groups. People representing deprived sections of society have demanded dismissal of officers along with fairer compensations for unpaid

wages. The issues of welfare rights cannot be enforced as long as the district courts are burdened with thousands of cases and NREGA does not provide measures to create a system ensuring complaints to be heard. A study from the centre for Environment and Food Security shows that in Madhya Pradesh and Orissa 50% of the eligible people demanding employment did not get any work, which means a violation of NREGA's legal framework. Unemployment allowance, in the case there is not work, should also be guaranteed but evidence in some districts of the state shows that hundreds of people did not receive it at all. The money ends up to officials or contractors and Gram Pradhans (elected chiefs) from deprived categories (women, lower castes and uneducated) are blamed for corruption with legal action initiated against them. Almost no one from these groups can approach the Supreme Court to have protection (Rai, 2007). This example shows how the most oppressed groups can be deprived from their right to equality and legal protection in relation to NREGA, which leads to furthering social injustices.

The evidence shows that various schemes are still limited to substantially address the issues of social justice for the oppressed groups. Beyond voting power the most oppressed groups in rural areas do not have actual power through decentralized institutions to deal with livelihood pressures and rights alienation within the current trend of marketization happening in India. They are subtly forced into reforms without protection and perhaps disconnected from local realities. At the same, the struggle of rural India is very real and it's important to underline the positive intent of NREGA to increasingly recognize the importance of agriculture and the unfeasibility of having massive urbanization. The

necessity to build basic infrastructures for basic needs cannot dismiss the inclusion of civil society in setting priorities and institutional autonomy in deciding alternative uses of resources. Even though indigenous communities are still constrained in decision-making, there is surely space to reform by making local institutions more participatory and engaged in democratic expression of dissent or distress. The next section about Panchayati Raj will give a more comprehensive overview of the current tensions and constraints to build inclusive democratic processes and to achieve social justice.

3.5 Tensions, struggles and challenges for Panchayati Raj in India

Panchayati Raj in India is under an intense debate. Defenders' arguments are grounded in a genuine belief in the good governance claims that current practices are good for development. Although there is an emerging recognition that some reforms are needed, proponents of the current model of decentralization for village governance identify the main causes of some failures in a limited commitment to implement formalized and transparent institutional processes. A more critical analysis of decentralization reforms implemented from 1993, in India, points out they have been largely "superficial". Substantial distribution of power and resources in rural areas requires political will to prioritize effective actions to change patterns of social inequalities created by caste, religion, class, gender through effective social justice-inspired programs. Decentralization cannot achieve effective power transfer if implemented within a neoliberal logic, because it perpetuates the constraints for weaker sections of society to engage in social change

(Johnson, 2003).

The benefits of decentralization for village governance to bring real power to the people, as envisioned from Gandhi, seem difficult to accomplish as long as a centralized policy agenda dominates and influence the processes of self-governance. The approach is still top-down in nature and follows a market-oriented policy agenda, which is centrally adopted in most states, while decentralization also aims at revitalizing traditional institutions. The inherent conflict starts at the macro-level; multilateral agencies still favors market federalism in a deregulated economy and Indian states are expected to compete to attract capital and FDI according to the neoliberal logic of accumulation. The States Finance Commissions are conceived as instruments to push neo-liberal policies in order to attract investment and capital finances (Gomez, 2001), instead of favoring institutional autonomy in managing financial transfers.

The consequence of current good governance practices have emerged since the 90s when inter and intra states disparities have started to increase. Intra-national inequalities have lead to internal conflicts and community fragmentation. This has increasingly led to demand for the formation of separate states in order to leave out the poorest areas in the process of transition to a market-economy and to attract more capital. The Indian national government, to cope with these pressures, is adopting limited but flexible federalism through the creation of new states, setting autonomous council and according special status to some areas based on ethnic, regional and linguistic differences. Internal fragmentation is

avored by market-driven liberalization which threatens the functioning of the Indian federal system in the spirit of democratic decentralization. Struggles to arrest the splitting of states are stronger where linguistic nationality consciousness and democratic structures are deeper rooted like in West Bengal, Kerala and other few areas (Karat, 2004). The challenge ahead for Panchayati Raj is to modify institutional structures to promote national unity through ethnic/religious harmony and a democratic system based on social justice prior to neoliberal policies. The approach for decentralization in India needs to be modified in order to bring power to the oppressed by ensuring national harmony and social justice.

Despite the necessity to revise current practices to bring more power to the marginalized groups, there are some positive signals for women arising out of Panchayati Raj and decentralization in general in India. According to Narayana (2005) the reservation rule for women and lower castes is a massive experiment in social engineering that has not precedent in today's world democracies. In some districts of the poorest states, such as Uttar Pradesh, women Pradhan (elected chief representative) are over 50%. This is a clear quantitative advance in the silent revolution of Panchayati Raj and its potential outcome for social change should not be disregarded (Narayana, 2005). A step forward to ensure more inclusion of marginalized groups also comes from the engagement of a few progressive non-governmental organizations. For example, Aagaz Foundation is providing training courses to help elected women to overcome the struggles associated to their political roles. Aagaz approach aims at creating a vibrant political space where the gender gap is filled

through a learning process facilitating communication, speech and action. They are taught in a manner conducive to critical reflection, shared knowledge, strategic/experiential learning, and the overcome of women's self-perception of incapacity. Aagaz foundation is achieving tangible results despite great patriarchal resistances and it is redefining governance from the side of women leaders (Viridi, 2009).

The inclusion of marginalized groups (i.e. women) also requires a radical qualitative jump and that's where civil society and left wing politics are playing a crucial role. Various sources of political resistance are directly and indirectly pushing to convert the 73rd amendment into a tool for radical social transformation. In States like Kerala, elections are fought on political lines and a process of deeper politicization in the village Panchayat is leading to more democratic vigilance over development processes ¹⁴. The radicalization of Panchayat leadership, in some Indian states, has been necessary to enable peasant movements, land reforms and the breeding of democratic consciousness favored by grassroots politicization, civil society building and class struggle. Panchayati Raj does offer

¹⁴ Kerala is a special case for decentralization. The people's campaign for decentralization initiated in 1996 led Panchayati to be implemented in a very politicized manner. Party affiliation is really strong and it influences decentralized bodies more than in other states. Furthermore after the Left Democratic Front launched the People's campaign for decentralised planning, devolution was set at 35 to 40% of expenditures to local bodies. This led to unprecedented planning and coordination among Panchayats and it also led to greater political mobilisation to hold the ruling government accountable of its redistributive agenda. Devolution was maintained and increased and its effectiveness is recognized nationwide. The commitment of the state government to substantial transfer seems to be the premise for success even though Kerala has a very educated population. Findings from OECD studies indicate that Kerala's poor are also more involved in Panchayat than in the other states. In most states the poor are poorly educated, less exposed to the print media, less engaged in political parties and consequently less engaged in Panchayat. Kerala, on the contrary, has a high-educated population forming an active and vibrant civil society. Kerala local governance is intensively politicized and power capture is much lower than other places in India. (Narayana, 2005)

scope for an engaged and vibrant civil society from grassroots democratic institutions. The same potential is retraceable during the freedom struggle, before Independence, when the Gandhian perspective of village mobilization merged with peasant movements under the Marxist and radical leadership (Narayana, 2005).

Panchayat has great potential, yet it also has the serious challenge to enable village India to become agent for a second battle of liberation in the so-called globalised world of neoliberal economics and good governance objectives. According to Malik (2004) resistance can be possible if leadership is radicalized through training, capacity building and radical consciousness to build a new alternative at the institutional level. A non-radicalized Panchayat regime, as the current status in many states, will hardly be more than a representative institution subordinated to higher authority and easily manipulated to accommodate oppressive policy objectives decided at the central level (Malik, 2004). The potential and challenges of village governance for India are at the roots of conflicting visions for development: one based on the principles of neo-liberal economics and the second invoking radicalized self-governance supported by a transformed state that prioritizes the common good.

The two visions of Panchayati Raj are linked to the struggle of adopting the good governance agenda versus the necessity of creating real spaces for dissent and inclusion of the marginalized groups. The second policy under study is decentralized forest governance and it faces similar pressures as decentralized village governance, although in different

ways. Forest management is central to my specific case studies in the state of Uttarakhand. Even though Uttarakhand's policy is different in nature and origins than all other Indian states; it is necessary to understand the rationale of national policy for forest management. Its analysis can help to have a broader understanding of the existing pressures on livelihoods and of the terminology used to favor a market-integration approach along the lines of good governance. The same pressures will also be tracked in the most recent guidelines for the specific case of Uttarakhand Van Panchayat policy.

3.6 An introduction to Forest Management in India

Forest policy is not new in India; the British rule set the first legal guidelines called the Indian Forest Act in 1865. It established the state as the largest owner of forests and divided responsibilities of conservation among its agencies in order to finance its infrastructures projects for India and United Kingdom. Rights and concessions of extraction of fuel wood, fodder and timber from the forests for household consumptions were accorded to villages in exchange for labor contributions in order to maintain the forest stock at the same level of conservation. Before this act passed there was not forest proven to be private and it was commonly managed at the village level (Rangan, 2002).

The current policy framework to manage forest resources in India is called Joint Forest Management alias "JFM". It addresses the problems related with deforestation by promoting a new partnership between local forest dependent people and the state in order

to manage forests in a more sustainable manner and sharing joint benefits from it. JFM is based on decentralization; its objectives and regulations are decided at the local level in a participatory way without actually implement any form of ownership distribution between the local communities and the state. About 22 out of 28 states are implementing JFM in different forms and each one developed specific guidelines based on their own contextual specificities. About 17 million ha forest are covered by JFM and there currently are around 84000 village forest councils (VFC) also named Forest Protection Committees (FPC) engaged in implementing it. Many VFC came to existence also in response to the requirements of local projects by external agencies operating in India (Kaushal and Kala, 2004). Many Indian states have received substantial loans from the World Bank and other external donor agencies to operationalize JFM according to the good governance agenda (Ranganathan, 2003).

3.7 Legal framework and guidelines of Joint Forest Management

The current legal framework derives from loose guidelines contained in the National Forest Policy that was approved in 1988 and the implementation remains state specific. The act recognizes the forests in the country to have suffered serious depletion. According to the government, the main reasons associated to forest reduction are attributable to increasing pressures from excess demand for fuel-wood, fodder and timber. Secondly, the identified factors for resource exhaustion are also linked to lack of preventive measures for forest protection; alteration of forest lands to non-forest purposes -without making sure

appropriate afforestation is undertaken- and the use of forests as a source of revenue. On these grounds, the government of India in 1988 deemed necessary to change direction in terms of forest management by planning, a new strategy of forest conservation. The national forest policy to achieve its objectives embraced the notions of preservation, sustainable utilization and enhancement of the natural environment (Government of India, 1988).

Drawn from the basic objectives governing the National Forest Policy the following citations are relevant for its analysis:

- “Maintenance of environmental stability through preservation and, where necessary, restoration of the ecological balance that has been adversely disturbed by serious depletion of the forests of the country.” (Government of India, 1988:1)
- “Increasing substantially the forest/tree cover in the country through massive afforestation and social forestry programmes, especially on all denuded, degraded and unproductive lands.” (Government of India, 1988:1)
- “Increasing the productivity of forests to meet essential national needs.”
- “Encouraging efficient utilization of forest produce and maximizing substitution of wood.” (Government of India, 1988:2)

The first and second objectives are in line with the environmental concern addressed in the preamble and invoke to management practices more sensitive to the preservation of forest resources. The last two, on the other hand, embrace a terminology common to the

neoliberal notion of “productivity” and “efficiency” linked to the long-term goal of market integration. The same terminology is reiterated in further articles of the Forest Policy acts, for example: “3.1 Existing forests and forest lands should be fully protected and -their productivity improved”. (Government of India, 1988:3) The policy act also encourages local population to improve the productivity of minor forest produce and to retain the revenues coming from them: “3.5 Minor forest produce provides sustenance to tribal population and to other communities residing in and around the forests. Such produce should be protected, improved and their production enhanced with due regard to generation of employment and income.” (Government of India, 1988:5) The process of improving production is assumed to be the priority for indigenous population. This shows that the policy framework emphasizes the issue of production above livelihood along with the rhetoric of environmental conservation.

The policy suggests only some limited degree of ownership of the forest to marginalized groups. It does not address the issue in a more comprehensive way, the forest resources are still assumed to be under the control of the government for its own purposes: “The vesting, in individuals, particularly from the weaker sections (such as landless labor, small and marginal farmers, scheduled castes, tribal and women) of certain ownership rights over trees, could be considered, subject to appropriate regulations; beneficiaries would be entitled to usufruct and would in turn be responsible for their security and maintenance. (Government of India, 1988:6) The neoliberal rationale strongly emerges in government regulations since local communities are assumed to manage the forest as beneficiaries

instead of owners or direct agents in decision maker of how to use it.

In 1999 the National Forestry Action Programme (NFAP) complemented the Forest Policy. The NFAP is a far-reaching long-term strategic plan to be implemented in a time span of 20 years. It identifies a strategy to achieve sustainable forestry development in India by harmonizing the activities of different stakeholders. The NFAP derives from a coordinated effort from the state to manage different inputs from various national and external experts in forest related issues. NFAP fixes five programs to be followed: to protect existing forest resources, to improve forest productivity, to reduce total demand, to strengthen the policy and institutional framework and to expand the forest area. In NFAP the government also recognized the limitation of its financial resources to execute the mentioned agenda. To address its constraints it included an additional clause to increase its effort to mobilize resources from external and internal agencies -for example FAO and UNDP- in order to achieve the proposed objectives (Singh, Sinha and Kumar, 2004).

The government of India decided at The National Conference of the Ministers of Environment and Forests held at Coimbatore in January 2001 to reiterate its commitment to enhance the condition of India's forest. In order to do so, it outlined a new set of strategies to realize the goals of the National Forest Policy. The objectives are: investing in afforestation, control fires, special measures for drought-prone areas and infrastructures improvement (FAO, 2004). It seems, once again, the main concern for the government is to protect the environment through a top-down approach without engaging local communities

in the decision making process of how to manage and preserve forest resources. The government effort to preserve the environment does not provide a clear set of guidelines dealing with the issues of livelihoods and access to resources as central to social justice for local communities living in the forest.

The latest significant government commitment in terms of decentralized forest management and its preservation is set in 2002 and does not show greater space for social justice intended as livelihood protection and access to resources. The National Wildlife Action Plan is structured in six major programs to be achieved in a time span of 15 years. The first is to strengthen and expand the protected area network; the second is to effectively manage protected areas, the third is to preserve species under the threat of extinction and their habitats; the fourth is to replenish degraded habitats outside protected areas; the fifth is to control illegal actions against wild animals and plant species; and lastly to keep monitoring and researching for the best measure to be undertaken in environment conservation (FAO, 2004:120). Even though the national action plan reiterates the commitment to preserve the environment, it still does not address any issue related to people living in forest areas and their livelihood. Although mixed results have been achieved in terms of forest preservation, increasing pressure on the Indian population who relies on forest resources is becoming a major concern. It's reasonable to assume, in the longer run, increasing constraints to sustain forest-based livelihoods and to ensure fair access to resources if the need for market integration and productivity maximization are maintained as fundamental goals for forest management at the national policy level.

Substantial deterioration of the right to livelihood, as defined by the Constitution, for marginalized communities clearly indicates the government low priority for social justice in decentralized forest governance.

3.8 Tensions and livelihoods implications for National Forest Management

The pressures imposed by decentralized forest management policy to efficiently manage the forests and to improve their productivity lead to serious restrictions for traditional forest rights. Their reduction leads to conflict over demarcation of forest boundaries, forest ownership and tenurial rights. The nature of inter and intra-village conflicts also is linked to political interference in the usage of the forest and pressures from government agencies (Forest Department) to commercialize the forest. For example, Manipur forest department decided to constitute JFM with active participation of local villagers in pursue of “usufruct”. The logic of sharing profit without people consent is contained in “usufruct” as the appropriate legal term for deriving profit from property belonging to a third party as long as it is not damaged. This is an example of social injustice emerging out of the rationale of market integration for productive land and forest through JFM. Furthermore, external pressures arise out of big development projects at the expenses of people’s livelihoods without recognition of traditional rights. Joint Forest Management is facilitating the engagement of private parties by using policy guidelines as a tool to encroach upon land of the people living in the forest or hilly areas and shift ownership of resources away from local communities. The rhetoric of environmental conservation, emerging from policy

documents, hides the serious socio-cultural implications of market integration for traditional society; especially for livelihood of communities highly dependent upon forest resources (Shimray, 2009).

A refocus on the question of livelihood is central in redirecting policy priorities to strengthen the rural areas and to address the implications for communities' livelihood based on forest resources. The flawed assumption of market-led strategies are seriously undermining the significance of the biomass economy and neglecting the importance of forest reliance for livelihood. Biomass or biomass-related resources dependence cannot be disregarded and an approach solely based on market-integration can only lead to a decrease in the biomass availability since growth favors intensive extraction at the expense of natural resources. Furthermore, the most deprived sections in forest areas that have a higher reliance on common property resources for their subsistence requirements are the most exposed to hardship. The emphasis on growth is also reflected in the rationale of today's forestry policy of India since some historical structures put in place by the British in order to facilitate the extraction of raw materials have also continued after independence. The most fundamental issue is economic bias of a scientific regime, which excludes and delegitimizes local knowledge and traditional rights. The more recent knowledge system decontextualizes previous approaches in the name of "national interest" resulting in a centralized understanding of conservation, livelihood and forest (Hill, 2000).

In some states like West Bengal significant dissent and resistances against the national

interest from local communities have led to policy shift for decentralized forest management. The left Fronts party initial resistances and dissents achieved some degree of success especially in collaboration with Panchayati Raj institutions and government agencies. For example, the Forest Department in West Bengal, since the mid 1980s, has begun to encourage informal agreements with villagers and explicit recognition of the importance of livelihood as opposed to other states. Its approach also favored a more inclusive planning and monitoring with the local communities. Once again, local resistances to external pressures on livelihoods along with political pressures have resulted in a more positive outcome for food security and planning. In India, except for a few states, most areas with limited political dissent have experienced Joint Forest Management as a top-down policy prioritizing the logic of productivity above livelihood pressures and really constraining the action of local institutions namely Forest Protection Committees (Hill, 2000).

In the next section, the complex dynamics between local institutions, livelihood, social justice and external pressures will be analyzed for the case study of Uttarakhand. Its policies for village and forest governance will be further contextualized in order to better situate the case studies in Chapter IV. The narrowing down is crucial to underline sources of similarities and differences with the current trends at the national level. A brief state introduction will be followed by how Panchayati Raj and Forest policy (Van Panchayat) applies in Uttarakhand and its implications for decentralization and the various issues of social justice.

3.9 Introducing Uttarakhand: from self-reliance to oppression

Before delving into the policies implementation in Uttarakhand I deem important to underline some statistics for the sake of general knowledge:

Table 1: Uttarakhand Statistics

Factors	Stats	Facts
Geographical Area	53,483 Km square	1.62% of total India area
Forest Area	34,662 Km square	4.5% of India's forest
Total Population	8,479,562	0.7% ca of total India population
Rural Population	6,425,812	75.78% of total Uttarakhand population
Ratio Male/Female	964	933 in India
Literacy Male	84.01%	75.85% in India
Literacy Female	60.20%	54.16% in India

Source: Census of India (2001)

Uttarakhand separated from Uttar Pradesh on November 2000 and came to existence as the 27th state of Indian Union on the 9th November 2000. Uttarakhand is a well-demarcated geographical and socio-cultural unit forming a part of the central Himalaya. It is a primarily mountainous region consisting of two divisions: Garhwal and Kumaon. Each division has similar ecological, socio-economic and ethno cultural factors. There is a tendency to view rural Indian in the Himalaya as a model of equality and unity. The near absence of caste and class hierarchies in Uttarakhand is captured by the following quotation:

The (attenuated) presence of caste notwithstanding, hill society exhibits an absence

of sharp class divisions. Viewed along with the presence of strong communal traditions, this makes Uttarakhand a fascinating exception which on is unable to fit into existing conceptualizations of social hierarchy in India. (Guha, 1989:14)

The social organization of Uttarakhand can be considered more egalitarian than other parts of India and the forms of intra caste oppression is perhaps less pronounced. This is a significant factor since agrarian relations and communal traditions did not create the same structures of inequalities and marginalization traceable in most of India.

As illustrated, Uttarakhand has a peculiar social structure. Furthermore, it also has cultural and historical significance for India. It represents a very important place for spirituality since various religious influences spread across the state starting from the 6th century BC furthermore; the sacred Ganges' river originates from its mountain range. Various centuries alternating king rules, hegemonies, invasions and brief peaceful co-existence led to the most recent history of British colonialism. The British Empire governed the region from 1814 to independence and while keeping Kumaon under direct rule; the Garhwal region was restored under the local Raja (King) control under an agreement. After independence the two sections were merged and administered by two commissionaires belonging to the state of Uttar Pradesh.

The history of Uttarakhand is marked by great oppression. Before colonial rule peasants were self-reliant in agriculture and exported food grains to the plains during famines. Relative autonomy (although in various degrees) was granted from various rulers to local

people for their internal affairs. A condition of mutual trust and loyalty between the population and local kings has persisted for a long time. More recently, the British Empire introduced the money economy in the area and performed, according to scientific forestry criteria, intensive extraction of natural resources slowly deteriorating the reliance of local people on their forests. The colonial rule also imposed practices typical of the feudal system including an oppressive forced labour system and it enforced new land regulations favoring private property. After independence, the trend of excessive felling and extraction of resources continued under the Uttar Pradesh administration. Commercial forestry led to biomass deterioration in the mountains and to serious multidimensional implications for the local economy as well as for livelihoods. Villagers have experienced a dramatic reduction of their rights and control over common resources and self-reliance is not guaranteed anymore (Phatak, 2007).

Today's fragile equilibrium between livelihood and forest resources is still compromised. People from the new state of Uttarakhand face great challenges ahead of them; new external pressures can have disastrous consequences for local reliance on the forest. In more details, both the Indian and state governments in partnership with multinational corporations are engaged in large scale development projects that will have dramatic impact for the local population. Hydropower projects are indeed the ones that are currently disrupting a substantial amount of forest, water, flora, fauna and the natural resource base which forms the basis of local livelihoods (Doval, Juyal, Sundriyal, Rana and Sati; 2007). In Uttarakhand, resources and livelihood will be crucial factors in assessing market pressures

and the magnitude of social injustices that local institutions are facing, especially for the case of forest governance. Village governance policy in Uttarakhand, introduced in the next section, also has limited space to oppose the good governance agenda for decentralization. The reasons illustrated link to lack of regulations, resources and political support to guarantee institutional autonomy, social justice and resistance against neo-liberal policy objectives.

3.10 Panchayati Raj in Uttarakhand: Functions, Funding and Structure

The present Uttarakhand was formed in 2000 and the first independent elections for Panchayati Raj were held in 2003. The state is divided in two divisions namely Garhwal and Kumaon with 13 districts Zilla Panchayat, 95 Blocks Panchayat and 7335 Gram Panchayats. The layered structure still does not have a distinct legal framework and it is still partly regulated along the rules governing Panchayat Raj in Uttar Pradesh (U.P). More specifically the documents in force regulating local village institutions are U.P Panchayat Raj Act 1946 and section 63 of U.P Kshetra (Block) Panchayat and Zilla Panchayat Act 1961 which provides the devolution of functions to the Panchayats in conformity with Article 243-G of Constitution of India (Param and Pratna, 2008).

The budget for Panchayat Raj is not a separate section of state expenditures like in other parts of India since its legal framework has not been yet finalized. There are many centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) endowing usually very low amount to Panchayats. The taxation

at district level comes from rent from issues, license fees, share from resin, miscellaneous interest on deposits, income from animals, fairs and exhibitions, journey arrangement, regulation of bazaars etc. The sources of revenue for local bodies are, instead, nil and usually come from taxes on fishponds, shops and festivals. Gram Panchayat can also levy tax to villagers but the law cap is very low: around 5 rupees per year (1 Canadian Dollar= 45 Rupees). The recommendations of the first state finance commission is to distribute only 11% (40% in Kerala) of the state net tax revenue to Village Panchayats and Municipalities (42.23 and 57.7 per cent respectively). Uttarakhand faces similar constraints as many other States to manage autonomously its own projects given the limited funding mainly coming from the State. The funding structure once again shows to be strongly tied to centrally sponsored schemes which objectives are established from higher tiers and meant to follow the central policy objectives (Param and Pratna, 2008).

Without substantial funding, village governance in Uttarakhand has limited action but formal regulations still transfer many functions at the local level and ensure the functioning of institutions according to Constitutional guidelines. At the village level the Gram Pradhan (elected chief) chairs the Gram Sabha (elected council) of the village and the Secretary of Gram Panchayat maintains the minutes of meetings. The issues raised at the village level are sent to block and district Panchayat within 15 days. Gram Sabha is required to identify the beneficiaries of development schemes, determine economic and social development according to the central guidelines, right to select plans in open meetings, monitoring and review of plans. Gram Sabhas have also been rendered accountable to consider and pass

the budget prepared by the village council. Gram Sabhas meetings are held at least once every 6 months and the minimum quorum is 20%. The subjects covered under the village Panchayat in the state are drawn from the 11th schedule: agriculture, primary education, health and family welfare, minor irrigation, social welfare, woman and child development, drinking water, public distribution, horticulture, sanitation, poverty alleviation schemes, rural housing, animal husbandry and rural development. As later illustrated in the case studies, it's unlikely that Uttarakhand's local bodies have the actual capacity to carry all functions to the extent mandated by state regulations or local preferences.

Part of the reason is the recent formation of the state and the lack of a distinct legal framework. In this frame, Uttarakhand does not have district planning committees and a system for preparing a consolidated Draft District Development Plan. In its place there are six standing committees in each Panchayat but their work and influence remains nominal. In each tier there are: Planning and Development committee, Education Committee, Construction Work Committee, Health and Welfare committee, Administrative Committee and Water Management Committee (Param and Pratna, 2008). Each committee has at least one woman, one scheduled caste member, one scheduled tribes member and one person from Other Backward Caste (OBC). In 2008 the parliament has also passed a bill to ensure 50% reservation to women marking a strong commitment to women's participation and as a possible step forward to ensure social justice.

3.11 Early Panchayati Raj in Uttarakhand: potential and struggles

The absence of a State-specific legal framework opens up challenges and potentials for decentralized village governance in Uttarakhand. According to the Constitution, Gram Panchayats should work as institutions of self-government with clearly defined functions, adequate funds and responsibilities. In various State Panchayats Acts there is an emphasis to establish local bodies for better administration and participation of rural areas within a centralized development programme instead of devolving real autonomy at the local level (Param and Pratna, 2008). Even though most states have incorporated some provisions like reservation for women and scheduled castes/tribes, five-year term, constitution of State Finance Commission etc., there has not been substantial devolution of powers and functions to Panchayats except for Kerala and a few other states. This is also the case for the recent state of Uttarakhand, which have not yet allowed for substantial power transfer to women, scheduled castes/scheduled tribes and other marginalized groups. Possible reasons for some states not to have successfully transferred power to the oppressed groups are: elite capturing, resistant bureaucracy and formalization of institutional processes that do not necessarily reflect local needs (Johnson, 2003). The representatives from the more oppressed sections of society still have limited space for action at the institutional level.

There are different debates about how the state should implement village governance in Uttarakhand: for example, according to Pal (2007), the Panchayati Raj State Act should reverse the trend and make the Gram Sabha a strong body empowering people to define their own priorities and guarantee traditional rights over resources. Firstly the preservation

of traditions, customs, cultural identity, community resources of people should be established in view of the largely homogenous culture and traditions of community effort typical of hilly areas, which transcend in nature the existence of other internal divisions. Secondly, Gram Sabha should cover only a small population considering the geography of the territory, in order to do so; a creation of sub-Gram Sabha can guarantee as much representation as possible. Three-layered Panchayati Raj in Uttarakhand should also not lose the opportunity to select and manage district and sub-district government officials in order to avoid conflict between a rigid centralized bureaucracy and the need at the local level. Furthermore, in order to achieve holistic autonomy, the judicial system needs to be strengthened at the local level in order to enable deprived sections of societies to claim their Constitutional rights and invoke for social justice (Pal, 2007). These are some possible visions for the future Panchayati Raj Uttarakhand Act to prioritize social justice.

Bhatt (2007) gives different policy suggestions that are drawn from the necessity of using the market mechanisms to ensure distributive justice in a democratic way. This argumentation links more strongly to the good governance trajectories of market exposure. The starting point for this strategy is the tremendous potential of natural resources to be transformed into wealth through an increasingly educated and disciplined labour force. In order to pursue this objective, village governance in Uttarakhand needs to work on two levels. Firstly, devolution of power to people should be carried out to protect the flight of capital from the state and to create an economy according to local demand. Full participation from the whole community is also needed to ensure a substantial increase in

production, asset creation and value addition. Secondly, decentralization needs to support basic infrastructure development along with the objective to provide people with access to healthy markets where can charge better prices for their goods. Secondly Uttarakhand needs to initiate massive campaign to educate institutions and people to development planning. The range of actions in this direction are: comprehensive technical exercise of making sectorial plans, assessing local needs, financial outlays and implementation, monitoring and evaluating development projects. This possible scenario is driven by the good governance assumption that a healthy exposure to markets should be the focus for decentralized governance along with social justice intended as equity, productivity and efficiency (Bhatt, 2007). The various debates shown so far have proven how this approach disregards the nature of social justice as defined by the constitution and lead to inequalities at many levels.

However, the reality of Gram Panchayat in Uttarakhand today is still linked to its limited capacity and authority. It remains an agent of the government rather than a local autonomous institution working for the people. Hilly areas are facing the hardest time to define and implement activities for development on their own terms because of institutional processes imposed from external forces. In Uttarakhand the magnitude of social and spatial inequalities will not change without adopting a multi-level participatory planning and dialogue with unconditional financial support from the State. Current decisions are still strongly controlled at higher tier of governance where the power structure dominates (Sinha, 2007).

Despite central control, the situation is still very undefined since a future legal document might ease the current constraints and the conformity acts might not dismiss social justice as it appears in 243-G of the Constitution. In Uttarakhand like everywhere in India there is the need to create spaces for social justices through effective inclusion of oppressed groups in democratic processes of decision-making. Moreover in line with the central argument of this thesis, the transfer of real autonomy to local bodies should happen outside centralized schemes. It should entail a policy agenda that avoids form of development distant from local needs and that embraces a vision for radical social change.

The illustrated debates about village governance in Uttarakhand have conflicting visions for decentralization. The debate will evolve further once the State Cabinet approves the final draft for the Panchayati Raj act currently under discussion at the state level. The next section presents a second policy analysis for decentralization in regards to the forest policy for Uttarakhand which has a much longer history than the policy for village governance. Since most communities live in rural area, it would be highly inconclusive to limit this research on issues not directly regarding social justice linked to livelihood and forest resources. For this purpose, the forest policy for Uttarakhand will be further assessed, along with village governance, in order to establish a convincing argument on social justice and decentralization for the case studies further illustrated.

3.12 Genesis of forest policy in Uttarakhand: from struggles against the British rule to

rhetoric of environmental conservation

Van Panchayats is the name of the institutional arrangement for forest management in Uttarakhand and is a unique case of forest management in India. It has a different set up and history than JFM but it still is a very powerful example of how current practices of decentralized governance entail great pressures upon forest institutions. In this framework the following section will start off with a brief introduction of what are the main characteristics of Van Panchayat. Subsequently an extensive description of its current origins, legal changes and today's tensions/debates will follow.

Today's Van Panchayat formation must come from one fifth of citizens in a village and it must have a minimum number of seats reserved for women and unprivileged sections of Indian society. According to the legal framework its legal authority can cover up to five or six villages. A Sarpanch (chief) elected every five years by the villagers is in charge of the Van Panchayat. She/he has the responsibilities to distribute the rights to use the forest for production purposes, to regulate forest-related activities and ultimately to manage financial expenditure. Furthermore, the Sarpanch has the power to call meetings and to act in order to fulfill the collective interest in managing the forest. Another important figure within the Van Panchayat is the Deputy Forest Ranger who is the secretary and is associated with the Forest Department. The Forest Department is the government agency that reviews the working of Van Panchayat institutions and enforces specific programs decided at the central level (Jayal, Prakash and Sharma, 2006). Van Panchayat functioning is changing quite dramatically and the current trajectory is leading to great losses of its special

autonomy gained at its origin.

Van Panchayat (VP) is not a new institution; it was the historical result of local resistance against the ownership and management of forest by the British rule. Prior to British conquest the hill peasantry exercised direct control over the use and management of cultivated lands and uncultivated lands. Resident communities had full control through customary village boundaries defined by cultural traditions and practices. Agriculture and animal husbandry comprised components of the hill farming system and integration of cultivated and uncultivated lands. Before colonial interference, seasonal usage of alpine pastures and grassland along with conservation practices integrated in traditions prevented resource degradation (Guha, 1986).

The Colonial rule, started from 1815, permanently altered the landscape, resource use, through new forest divisions and management practices. In 1823, the colonial regimes set up the first land revenue settlement and established an official division between cultivated and uncultivated lands. Furthermore, the colonial state appropriated the authority to grant to local institutions recognition of village boundaries for common lands. Subsequent boundary changes were introduced but disputes over the old division have remained till today. At the end of the century all uncultivated land was labeled as non-forest land and was declared district-protected Forests under the control of the District Commissioners formed during the British rule. All village common lands were then classified as “forest”, irrespective they had tree cover or not, and converted into state property. The division,

along with impeding some land use, has never been reviewed since the British colonial rule despite the great historical changes in Uttarakhand (Guha, 1989).

Since the beginning of the century till independence the colonial government attempted to tighten its control over forest resources by classifying an extended area of common lands as Reserve forests severely restricting people use rights. Strong resistances from local communities pushed the British government to transfer some commercially less valuable reserves, classified as “Class I Reserve forest”, to the civil administration and to restore people’s rights. An open access regime was created for that purpose with both peasantry and the state engaged in extraction. In the Panchayat forest rules of 1931, provisions were made for Van Panchayat to exercise complete community control over legally demarcated and recognized village forest from Class I reserves and to receive rights to claim and manage civil forest controlled by the District Commissioner. Uncultivated commons were instead classified into categories: commercially valuable Class II forest under the Forest Department, residual forest from Class I reserves and civil/”soyam” protected forest under the civil administration (Revenue Department) (Sarin, Singh, Sundar and Bhogal, 2003).

After Indian independence the state continued commercial forest exploitation with even greater strength than under the colonial rule. The Forest Department and its contractors spread to the remotest areas with expansion of the road network. Local livelihoods were completely disregarded and state policy favored extraction of raw timber and resin for processing by industries in the plains. In the 70s, the Chipko movement had started to

claim that more emphasis must be given to local employment and local use of extracted forest resources. At the same time, landslide and environment damage of intensive forest exploitation declined biomass availability for subsistence needs in some part of the state and the Chipko protests expanded its popular base by including women as central actors for the struggle. In the 80's the issue of forest rights became part of the mainstream environmentalist rhetoric but instead of prioritizing social justice, by recognizing local forest-based livelihood and access to resources, the grassroots struggle was instrumentalized to push for centralized environmental policies and regulations (Sarin, Singh, Sundar and Bhogal, 2003).

Rapid expansion of protected area network, large-scale resource displacement and restricted permitted timber fellings seriously compromised livelihood of hundreds of thousands of people leading to an increase in inequalities in access to resources. Furthermore, the forest department - largest custodian of state property- has not maintained the forest properly to meet people's forest-based needs. The right to livelihood, as defined by the constitution, is being breached in the name of "environment conservation". In addition to it, recent legal changes -explored in the following section- are also contributing to the deterioration of Van Panchayat autonomy. Its capacity to deal with current pressures forcing forest institutions to accommodate market-oriented changes inspired upon the neo-liberal logic of forest commercialization is under great constraint.

3.13 From owners to managers: Van Panchayat legal changes and market pressures

Van Panchayat was created in 1931 through the notification of the Kumaon Panchayat Forest Rules and has undertaken several changes in the last 80 years. The 1931 rules were designed considering traditional communal property resource management practices in the area. They were not included in the Indian Forest Act of 1927 but were specifically arranged for the unique cultural and geographical characteristics of the state. Van Panchayat in the Forest Rules of 1931 received full control over use of its income from the forest resources. However, the bureaucratic complexities to create a Van Panchayat and suspicious attitude toward the administration inhibited their formation in large scale. In spite of administrative problems, the forest condition has improved dramatically under the exclusive control of villagers without external interference especially from the Forest Department. Van Panchayat regulation has enabled local institutions to maintain the ecological balance of soil fertility, water source protection and to support local livelihoods.

Van Panchayats rules were revised again in 1976 and it became the first step to reduce Panchayat autonomy, authority and entitlements. The new regulations restricted the eligible area for formation of new Van Panchayat according to new village boundaries defined in the early 60s instead of the original division established in 1823. The regulation also mandated the allocation of 20% of Van Panchayats income to the district level government and 40% to the Forest Department in order to increase the engagement of state agencies into forest management, since then under village control. Other policies, like the Forest Conservation Act in 1989 and the felling ban, also limited Van Panchayat capacity to utilize

the forest and to deal with disputes over an increasingly confusing spatial division of village forest.

More recently, the World Bank had endorsed a forestry project named VJFM (village joint forest management) of 65\$ million dollars loan over the period 1998-2002. The purpose of World Bank's interferences was to transfer the standard policy model of Joint Forest Management of other Indian states to Uttarakhand, instead of supporting existing Van Panchayat. The Forest Department was enabled to gain control over the only example of legally protected community forest management in India. It promptly initiated commercial extraction by transforming people status from right holders to beneficiaries of the forest, in other words people lost their decision power over extractive use of forest resources. Many Van Panchayats were able to opt out of the World Bank project because of unreasonable transfer of authority to the state at the expense of forest dependent communities and their decision making space (Sarin, Singh, Sundar and Bhogal, 2003).

Even though local communities resisted to the WB pressures, the new Uttaranchal Panchayati Forest Rules in 2005 legally ended the protection of Van Panchayat from programme and practically endorsed the World Bank ideal trajectory to convert common property resources into private property at the mercy of market forces. The latest rules are forcing local institutions to conform to the working in project mode and to the rationale of forest managerialization. The new rules now officially identify villagers as "wage labor" and managers at best, instead of right holders, and greatest authority in decision-making is given

to the Forest Department. Van Panchayat is now forced to make microplan¹⁵, to have joint bank account with the government agencies and to comply with market oriented management plan designed by the Forest Department (Viridi, 2005). This move clearly disregards the central role of local communities in the process of decision-making and autonomy of local institutions.

Continuous attempts to depredate local autonomy and to centralize forest management practices kept pushing strong resistances and fuelled separatist movement that led to the formation of the new state of Uttarakhand (initially part of Uttar Pradesh) in 2000. The initial hopes of a new state to be able to restore informal community forest management based upon traditional practices and right to livelihood were unmet (Sarin, Singh, Sundar and Bhogal, 2003). Even though communal Van Panchayat has proven to be more effective in conservation and in social justice in the context of livelihood preservation; no substantial step forward has been made to expand its capacity. Van Panchayat is actually being constrained more and more from external pressures to enable forest commercialization. This is reflected in a clear shift away from the initial hopes of institutional autonomy to a managerial approach complying with centralized control of the

¹⁵ Microplan: It shall be obligatory on the part of the Management Committee to prepare a microplan on the basis of guiding principles given in the Composite Management Plan for the management and protection of village forest/Panchayati forest for a period of five years with the assistance of the concerned Deputy Ranger/Forester of Forest Guard as may be convenient from administrative point of view, giving due consideration to the requirement of the rightholders and ensuring the ecological balance of the region. The micro plan will be place before the General Body of all the right holders/Self-Help Groups by the concerned Forest Range Officer for its for its approval before it is finally sanctioned by the concerned Sub-Divisional Forest Officer. It shall be the duty of the Committee to strictly follow the prescriptions of the finally micro plan. (The Uttarakhand Panchayati Forest Rules, 2005: Art. 12)

forest from government agencies. The initial special status of autonomous forest management in this area of India -where most people rely on forest livelihoods- risks to be drastically reduced. The central/state governments are attempting to have further control over the forest for their own market-oriented policy interests, hidden behind the rhetoric of good governance, devolution, environmental conservation and empowerment.

3.14 Today's neoliberal discourse in conceptualizing Van Panchayat

As shown current policy changes are slow attempts to achieve forest management more in line with neoliberal principles of private ownership and market integration invoked by the good governance agenda. In this framework, it becomes important to briefly mention some arguments, in compliance to the good governance approach for decentralization, that are increasingly presented in the literature of Van Panchayat. Some market-enthusiast scholars (Balooni Ballabh and Inque) mainly base their studies of forest management of Uttarakhand upon the analysis of: rights to access, rights to management and rights to distributions.

Firstly, Van Panchayat has specific requirement to appoint forest guards to control the forest and to fine any offender depending on the value of product being stolen by people residing outside village forest in order to guarantee the *right to access* to local communities. Balooni, Ballabh and Inque (2007) argue that lack of mechanisms to ensure fines are paid leads village forest to be treated like an “open access resource” for cattle grazing and

harvesting grass even though specific regulation impose the communities to make sure the forest is preserved. Their argument implicitly blame local people no to comply with the guidelines provided by the state of “formalized” access. I argue state regulations are against the interest of local population. For example, the forest guards are required to be appointed by some other ad hoc body whereas traditional forest management relied on people from the community to oversee and protect the forest. is the current attempt to replace what has been considered general practice with some other external procedure, inevitably creates resistances.

Secondly, the *right to management* seems central in conceptualizing Van Panchayat communities. Balooni, Ballabh and Inque (2007) identify communities’ exposure to incursions, encroachments, pilferage and corruption as their inability to develop a plan to properly manage the forest. The argument of right to management is based upon the assumption of how important is to have long-enduring and robust institutions that can monitor, control and decide how the resources should be used. Strong Van Panchayat institutions are expected to provide transparent information, to counteract opportunism and to enable communities to overcome the constraints of co-operation through institutional arrangements.) The illustrated argument shows the implicit suggestion to strengthen formalized procedures and to ease institutional processes based upon the assumption traditional structures in local communities are not cooperative and able to deal with forest resources, even though their entire livelihoods is based upon them. In my view, the government should instead favor a policy to ensure complete access to resources to

communities and complete autonomy to manage them.

Thirdly, another central feature of Balooni, Ballabh and Inque (2002) perspective is the asymmetric *right distributions*. Again, the scholars reiterate that VP is theoretically a good idea but the conflicts over the right distributions need to be solved. I argue it is reasonable to suppose that rights generation if not carefully distributed -especially in a highly divided society like India- might contribute to create inequalities ultimately leading the oppressed to have less forest resources available. Yet, the problem with Balooni, Ballabh and Inque argument is that they blame corruption or inefficiencies whereas, the enforcement of institutional processes that are not internalized by local communities are increasingly pushing Van Panchayat to make compromises over the most essential resources for villagers' livelihood.

The arguments of neoliberal scholars, illustrated in the conceptualization of rights to access, management and their distribution, shows support to legal changes centered on managerialization of forest use. As illustrated so far, the analysis of both policies for village and forest governance, in the context of Uttarakhand, underlines issues linked to the reduction of social justice and to the good governance approach at various levels. They can be traced in livelihood, self-governance, institutional autonomy, market pressures, formalized regulations, forest commercialization and access to resources. These issues should be linked to decentralization practices as crucial elements to assess social justice in the case of Uttarakhand. In the next section, the central argument of this thesis will ground

its analysis of case studies according to the applicability of the various debates and perspectives offered so far to field reality. The empirical section will link the issues explored in the policies of forest management and village governance in a specific area of Uttarakhand: Munsiri. Before delving into the more analytical chapter of my thesis, a brief introduction about this specific area under study is important to introduce its contextual specificities.

3.15 Where in Uttarakhand? Munsiri area: a brief introduction

Munsiri block lies within the central Himalayas of India. It is part of Pithoragarh district and it borders with Tibet Autonomous Region of China. The main rivers named Namik, Gori and Ralam flow in three valleys and drew water from the high mountain ranges that surround the area. The Johar valley in which the Gori River flows is the central one and contains various glacial head waters. It has wide grassland areas and terraces in the upper section and steeper forested slopes in the lower section. Major mountains encircle the whole area; the northern and western sections include 7,000 meters peaks: Nanda Devi, Panchachuli and several others. High mountains, deep gorges and fast flowing rivers along with low infrastructure development make the area less accessible than others (Pangtey, 2006).

The Johar Region history is long and has roots in mythology. Before the eighteenth century, Tibetan Buddhism was well-spread in the area. Hindu religion and culture started

becoming more dominant during the eighteenth century so the language, social system, religious beliefs and rites have closer resemblance with Hindu in Kumaun and Garhwal (the two main administrative regions of Uttarakhand). During colonial rule the influence was limited because of its remoteness but the Johar region has always been a very strategic area for trade with Tibet. After Indian independence and the beginning of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the trade with Tibet ended in 1962. Since a substantial part of the local economy was based on trade with Tibet, people faced great hardship and the worsening of the local economy. The government of India, in the meanwhile, has started absorbing part of the population in its workforce and the more educated locals from Munsiri area are increasingly migrating in search of government jobs or employment opportunities (Pangtey, 2006). Munsiri block still includes many villages that are very remote from road access and have experienced low degree of external influences and conserve deep rooted traditions and culture.

Most villages in the Munsiri area are composed by people who mainly belong to Scheduled Tribes (government recognition for indigenous and tribal groups); the most common group is the "Shaukas". A significant portion of people belonging to the Shaukas who have not been migrated out of the Johar Valley is still engaged into income-generating activities based on traditional means of livelihoods. Their main sources of livelihood are: wool-based cottage industries, sheep farming, cultivation and collection of herbs. The reliance on agriculture is also quite high especially for beans and potatoes, which are also traded locally. The beauty of the location also opens up potential spaces for tourism

respecting the fragile ecological equilibrium in the Himalayas. The field research was mainly based in this area and the following chapter will attempt to create a link between broader evidence of theoretical/policy debates and field reality along with its inherent mess and complexities.

CHAPTER IV

Chapter number four will look at how the issues emerged so far can be translated and assessed empirically. The chapter will develop four distinct hypothesis linked to the central problematic and will delve into a detailed and in-depth analysis about the claims of this thesis. The strongest forces identified so far, reducing the scope for social justice in decentralization, are mainly linked to marketization pressures and the creation of exclusionary and managerial institutional processes. The consequences of disregarding a more communitarian alternative for decentralization can have profound repercussions for the oppressed, livelihood and can fuel inequalities and internal conflicts. The two policies analyzed in this chapter are: Panchayati Raj and Van Panchayat. They are both studied in a specific location of Uttarakhand: Munsiri Block. The Chapter will attempt to create an empirical link to the discussion at the theoretical level and field reality in order to legitimize the central argument.

4.1 The central problematic

Decentralization performed within the good governance rationale is in truth a push for market integration in line with a development trajectory favoring wage labor and resources commercialization in line with economic liberalism. In this framework, I argue that decentralization policies for local governance in Uttarakhand prioritizing market-oriented and managerial institutions does not lead to social justice especially for the most oppressed groups. Social justice is primarily intended according to the Constitutional principles in

line with the theoretical exploration endorsed in Chapter Two.

The main relationships between variables in this framework have to be related to decentralization and social justice. The data used to evaluate the validity of my central hypothesis have to deal with the complex concept of social justice in the context of village governance and forest management for my case study in Uttarakhand. The reasons for me to analyze Panchayati Raj and Van Panchayat is because they are strongly interrelated and they can both provide me extensive and complimentary data to the various issues I am going to analyze within the definition of social justice in the Indian Constitution. Furthermore, the communities I have been studying are strongly affected by both policies - although in different ways- and there is evidence of a clear convergence to a very similar pressure to shift livelihoods and reduce scope for social justice issues.

4.2 Causal variables

For my case studies I have developed clear, concrete and quantifiable causal variables that are linked to the principles of social justice enshrined in the Constitution. The causal variables are the most fundamental linkage between my conceptualization of social justice as inspired by the Constitution and the vast empirical data I gathered during my fieldwork in Uttarakhand.

My causal variables are inspired by the various debates about decentralization and are

based upon the claims that decentralization within the good governance approach is exacerbating inequalities, neglecting the real issues of effective participation, avoiding real social change for the oppressed groups, deteriorating livelihoods, perpetuating social exclusion, creating over-formalized institutional processes and mainly pushing for a model of development inspired upon neo-liberal principles. All these issues are basically linked to my main problematic of reducing space for social justice in the context of decentralized practices; therefore I identified four causal/independent variables which I will analyze to objectively investigate my central argument.

1. **Access to forest resources in decentralized forest management**
2. **Access and engagement into institutional processes and decision making**
3. **Marketization pressures in decentralized forest management**
4. **Pressures for market development in decentralized village governance**

All of them are central to the discussion of decentralization and its implementation and these four principal issues go against the Constitution claims for social justice. These four issues are strongly contextual to my case studies hence the various indicators and information needed are assessed mainly on the basis of field evidence.

4.3 Chain of Causality

This section establishes the main hypothesis to assess my central problematic. Each hypothesis is linked to the main causal variables identified in the previous section and

specify, in details, the broader issues and the data needed. The combination of all evidence from each hypothesis is needed to evaluate the validity (or the lack of it) of my central argument. Each broad hypothesis is built on the issues identified in the literature and in the policy analysis contextualized for my case studies. Each is justified according to principles of social justice illustrated in the Constitution which are also aligned with the theoretical definition provided in the literature review.

➤ **Hypothesis No1: The current policy for decentralized forest management contributes to and perpetuates unequal access to forest resources within and across villages.** (I assume that the current decentralization policy is increasing inequalities in the access to resources on the basis of forest divisions and distribution that do not meet village and household needs. I am also expecting that if the access to forest resources becomes unequal and not decided at the grassroots level, then the forest condition and basic needs are compromised. This goes against Article 21 (right to livelihood) of the Constitution and adequate means of livelihoods in Article 39.

○ *Forest resources distribution:* If forest resources are not well distributed then access to forest resources is unequal and difficult.

- Are people's fuel wood, water and fodder needs met? (Individual interview)
- Do people go outside the Van Panchayat forest to get resources? (Individual interview)
- Do people think the Van Panchayat area is sufficient to meet village

needs (area)? (Individual interview)

- Are oppressed households experiencing less access to forest resources? (Individual interview)

○ *The amount of forest and local needs:* If the forest under Van Panchayat does not meet people and village needs because of its limited size or difficult access, it means decentralized forest governance is constrained in providing equal resource distribution and access to villagers.

- Forest/ Inhabitants ratio within the community (General village information)
- Forest distance from the village (General village information)

○ *Forest condition and Van Panchayat:* If the forest experience some form of deterioration not linked to Van Panchayat autonomous activities, then it becomes important to explore what other factors are deteriorating local resources. The reasons behind forest condition will be particularly explored in hypothesis number 3.

- Do people perceive their forest is healthy enough to satisfy their needs? (Individual interview)
- What are the outcomes of current Van Panchayats practices on the forest? (Individual interview)

➤ **Hypothesis No2: Decentralized forest and village governance within the current neoliberal framework causes and perpetuates unequal engagement in decision making**

processes (especially for the oppressed groups) I assume that the way local institution function do not give enough space in village and forest council to women and oppressed groups and do not create enough institutional scope for effective representation and participation even though some of these groups (usually women) are the most involved in forest work. If the hypothesis is supported from empirical evidence, then implementation of decentralization does not reduce marginalization in participation hence it is limited in achieving social change through local bodies. The tendency to impose over formalized institutional processes without widening the scope for social issues is indeed perpetuating unequal access and distance between local institutions politics and the most oppressed groups. Even though schedule castes and women are granted reservation in the Constitution, this might just not be enough scope to widen democracy, especially if decentralization policies maintain marginalization. This goes against the principle of equality as stated in the preamble of the Constitution of India and articles 14-15.

- *Attendance rate in forest and village governance meetings:* If people and especially oppressed groups do not attend meetings then institutional processes are not going to be representative of the whole community.
 - Attendance rate of oppressed groups at forest and village institutions' meetings. (Individual interview)
 - If not, what are the reasons (descriptive explanations)
 - Attendance rate of villagers at forest and village institutions' meetings. (Individual interview)

- If not, what are the reasons (descriptive explanations)
- *Effective participation in forest and village governance meetings:* If people do not participate in meetings, the institutional processes for decision making are unequal in access –hence not democratic- and prevents from substantial engagement. The second and most important dimension of this issue is the effective participation of women and oppressed groups in village governance (Oppressed groups are the most exposed to social exclusion and if institutional processes are not inducing to their engagement, the problem of inequalities is perpetuated). The distinction between the two cohorts must be emphasized.
 - Are villagers’ effectively participating in discussions and in the decision making process in the forest and village councils. (Individual interview)
 - If not, what are the reasons (descriptive explanations)
 - Are oppressed groups effectively participating in discussions and in the decision making process in the forest and village councils? (Individual interview)
 - If not, what are the reasons (descriptive explanations)
- *Knowledge of the microplan and of what activities are carried out by the forest council:* If people are not aware about the microplan, it shows that over-formalized institutional processes are far from being internalized by local communities. The distance between institutional processes and people’s knowledge about them leads to argue that the current framework

of decentralized forest management impose devices that are not integral part of people's notion of Van Panchayat autonomy and forest ownership.

- What is a microplan? (Policy analysis)
- Do people know about the microplan (Individual Interview)

➤ **Hypothesis No3: Market pressures of external agents engaged in big-scale infrastructure projects and intensive resource extraction (companies, private traders, government agencies, corporations -for example National Thermal Power Corporation-, construction companies etc.) in the areas under decentralized forest governance leads to the detriment of the common good and disruption of local livelihoods:** I assume that the national government is giving incentive to forest commercialization through legislative changes, its agencies and support to the private sector. The presence of commercial actors is interfering and pressuring local communities to shift livelihoods in order for the government to achieve market integration without consultation or negotiation with local units of governance hence prioritizing marketization and shifting livelihoods. This leads local communities to new pressures -not based on their consensus anyways- against people's livelihood potentially compromising their reliance on the forest and reducing the autonomy of local institutions. This issue is crucial because it clearly represents the inherent conflict between democratization and the principles of the constitutions versus the neoliberal agenda of the Indian government. Within this framework, external agencies' interferences and marketization pressures go against article 39, article 21, the right of livelihood specifically to have adequate means

of livelihoods.

- *People awareness of market pressures legitimize their existence:* If the majority of the people are aware about the existence of external companies, it implies people are also exposed to their potential consequences.
 - People awareness about the existence of large development project, private companies and construction works (dams or other major infrastructure projects from Himalayan Hydro Power Limited, National Thermal Power Corporation, Block level, others) in the area (Individual Interview)
 - What are external agencies doing (descriptive explanation of local people knowledge about private companies activities) (Individual Interview)
- *People's perception about the impact of big development project:* The opinion of people about external companies is important to understand the potential consequences of their projects for the common good and local livelihood.
 - People's opinion about external agencies (companies, private traders, corporations for example NTPC, construction companies etc...) and its impact on the forest (Individual Interview)
 - People's opinion about external agencies (companies, private traders, corporations for example NTPC, construction companies etc...) and its impact on the community (Individual Interview)
- *Commercial extraction of forest resources:* If the microplan and the *internal*

institutional arrangement are favouring the commercialization of the forest, it implies a shift from the effort to secure proper livelihoods for local communities to achieve further market integration by transforming people from owners to managers of their own resources)

- Microplan contents (Local politician testimonial)
 - What is a microplan (Legal Framework to provide a qualitative explanation of why is this a relevant variable within the context of market pressures)
- Tree species encouraged to be planted (Local politician testimonial)
- Commercial extraction (medicinal plant, fuelwood, lichen) planted (Local politician testimonial)
- *Funding origin and financial devolution:* If the funding are limited, and bounded by commercial interests imposed by external agencies (for example to open a joint bank account with the Divisional Forest Officer, to use institutional and forest resources for plantations to be sold outside the village etc.) then forest governance institution are serving the interest of market integration instead of local communities' livelihoods.)
 - Funding from external sources, how it was used. (Local politician testimonial)
 - Forest council Joint Bank Account with the Forest Department (Local politician testimonial)
 - Does the Forest Department get to take the 10% on forest resources

sold outside the village? (Local politician testimonial)

- **Hypothesis No4: A decentralization model inspired by the good governance agenda prioritizes infrastructure development more than social justice. The imbalance does not substantially address people's needs and does not improve the condition of the most oppressed:** I assume that village institutions within the good governance approach give strong emphasis to a kind of development favoring infrastructures more than social justice as defined in the Constitution. The legislative framework regulating Panchayati Raj clearly states economic development and social justice are both part of the mandate for local institutions in village governance but I assume there is a clear bias in emphasis on infrastructure and most funding are directed to that purpose. The perception of local people on village governance is crucial to understand what direction is the implementation of decentralization actually taking and I expect it to confirm the stated bias. Because of it, I assume people needs are not reflected substantially in local institutions of decision-making and that their perception sees Gram Panchayat as a mean to achieve infrastructure development instead of social justice showing the significant imbalance between the institutional scope for social justice and infrastructure creation along with job generation. This goes against the actual mandate for local institutions in village governance and the consequences lead decentralized village governance to go against the principle stated in the Preamble and article 39 of the Constitution in particular the notion of common good and adequate means of production.

- *People's perception of village institutions' activities and priorities:* If local people perceive that local institutions only invest in infrastructure projects, it is double evidence of a bias in the model of development perpetuated through decentralized institutions. If people recognize the importance of social justice more than what local institutions are capable to deliver, it underlines villagers' need might not be reflected substantially.
 - What people (and oppressed groups) think is the priority for their communities (social justice, infrastructure, service or employment)?
(Individual Interview)
 - What to people (and oppressed groups) think is done at the local institution level? (Individual interview)

- *People's opinion about how much local institutions have achieved at the village and at the household level:* If people deem that the condition of their village has not changed substantially in the last 5-10 years and that their household needs are not considered in local institutions, it implies that people are not satisfied with the current system of decentralized governance because it gives more emphasis on a model of development that does not necessarily serve local communities' needs.
 - Have the village condition changed substantially in the last years?
(Individual interview)
 - If not, why (descriptive explanation)
 - How much benefits are people at the local level receiving from local

institutions? (Individual interview)

- *Amount and distribution money/resources received by local institutions and for what development projects it was invested. (Appendix 3 shows the expenditure break down of each village institution):* If villages' local institutions only received money to be invested in infrastructure or monetary schemes, it implies the priorities for decentralized institutions remain within a model of development that does not encompass enough institutional scope for social justice hence perpetuate inequalities.
 - Financial devolution for each category drawn from the 11th schedule of local institutions' responsibilities (Local politicians' testimonials)
 - Where does the money come from and how is it invested (Local politicians' testimonials)
 - Are social justice taken up in the meetings (local politicians testimonials)

4.4 Methodology

In the next section the empirical results will be presented assessing the various hypothesis and sub-hypothesis correlated with the principal causal variables through econometric regression analysis and tables. Furthermore, the empirical evidence will be explained through more descriptive and qualitative explanations to give more voice to my numbers

and combine qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

The various empirical materials will be presented without the constraints of only a single “fixed” theoretical framework. The most used methodology is aligned to the moral economy of science approach and founded in the belief that objectivity is a method of understanding. Even though the central argument of this thesis embraces a specific ideological stand, the use of quantification does not seek individual conviction but rather the agreement of a diverse and scattered constituency. According to Daston (1995) the moral economy of science is more about self-discipline than coercion, it seeks impartiality in quantification not as guarantee of the truth of a verdict but as pre-requisite for analysis. The necessary reduction of idiosyncratic evidence does not imply that the path is “really real”; abstraction never eliminates traces of individuality and interest and the history of mathematics applied to social sciences is full of examples of partial impartiality. Data collection often implies a degree of personal interpretation of the answer received.

Impartiality in quantification, in this frame, is intended as genuine effort of self-imposed objectivity rather than as properties inherent in the numbers themselves. The outcome of a research along these lines is not solely focused on interest -might that be political, social or economic- but also on integrity in the process. At the same time, the process of abstraction is influenced by questions of knowing, issues of material conditions and scientist’s personal values. Diversity, in this sense, can lead to multiple competing moral economies within science. Hence, strategies for research are diverse, fluid and pragmatic. Even though some

principles for quantification remain constant across scientific communities, their application remains multidimensional and broader in scope (Grosjean and Fairley, 2009). My research, inspired by the moral economies approach, attempts to create a provisional map to interpret the messy, contingent spaces where societal and scientific values are negotiated. The whole process entails the combination of integrity in the process of quantification but also some degree of flexibility in using other methodologies and to give open interpretation.

Because of the nature of this research, a moral economy approach of science is unlikely to be enough and other methodologies will be used. In Chapter number 2, the way I define social justice also links to the neo-Marxist critique of good governance. For this reason, a methodological approach that strictly conforms to quantification (or a single tradition) does not allow me to explore the complexities of other empirical evidence and claims. I argue the complexity of world reality is hard to grasp if research is not a creative process. Hence, although I mainly endorse the moral economy of science in analyzing my data through quantitative methodology; I also present a few narratives and case studies analysis in compliance to a more Neo-Marxist tradition. In combining approaches I might be dismissed as postmodern, but field evidence embeds so many dimensions that it becomes difficult to dissect their interdependence and mutual relationships with only a single approach. I am aware of the limitations of my data analysis but the attempt is to present a possible interpretation of what I experienced, and assessed, in the field.

My quantitative study, perhaps more predominant, entails the use of graphs, tables and statistical tools including regression analysis. My qualitative evidence entails the analysis of policy documents, some narratives and the analysis of various issues affecting the communities under study emerging out of aggregated and disaggregated data. Most data have been gathered under the form of case surveys hence a fair introduction to this methodology should be illustrated. Each case survey corresponds to an individual of my random sample through the support of translators. I chose case survey because the complexity of the issues under study requires an effective approach to identify and statistically test patterns across individuals. It is particularly suitable for this research because it allows nomothetically research to be complemented with idiographic richness. This is peculiar for an area of research with unit of analysis entailing a broad range of conditions of interest. The procedure adopted in designing my case survey is: (Larsson, 1993)

- To select a group of conditions, variables and sample relevant to the chosen research questions
- To design a coding scheme for systematic conversion of the qualitative case descriptions into quantified variables
- To use multiple methodologies to code empirical evidence and measure their reliability.
- To statistically analyze the coded data.

A case survey approach is conducive to explore wider patterns and degree of generality in

order to understand complex processes and evidence. This enables to go beyond the limitations of strict adherence to a traditional quantitative methodology. A coding scheme is needed to enable statistical assessments and to bridge fragmented evidence to a more comprehensive understanding of various implications that would be otherwise dismissed in a strictly number-based approach (Larsson, 1993) . Coding discrepancies should be embraced in order to underline the complexities of empirical evidence and to identify insights for further research. The possibility to explore literature and develop hypothesis through case surveys and additional evidence is an attempt to bridge the nomothetic-idiographic gap in a creative, dynamic and interactive manner.

In choosing case survey and the methodology so far illustrated, I was supported by Himal Prakriti, an Ngo based in Munsiri that works around issues of forest conservation. The small Ngo is composed by only 3 members and receives not funding. It collaborates and support independent research or university students' thesis projects. The scope of its action is broad and its objective is to raise awareness about issues affecting Van Panchayat along with education about the forest and its implications for livelihood, the environment and ecological equilibrium. Even though the Ngo is composed by only three members, they are engaged in various activities in their community in relation to livelihood preservation, tourism creation, social activism and political activities.

With Himal Prakriti support I was able to gather extensive empirical material mainly from semi-structured interviews (Appendix 1) with villagers and local politicians. I chose to use

semi-structured interviews because it allowed me some flexibility to manage my data and to combine close-ended with open-ended questions. I also realized it was the proper technique within the case survey methodology. A general semi-structure interview was submitted to the whole sample whereas to receive more specific data about the village and forest institutions, a different type of semi-structured interview was used. I interviewed 286 people from 8 different villages in Munsiri area in the course of four months, from May to August 2009. For each village I interviewed the local elected chief representative of the local village and forest institution and different members elected in the council. The villages were selected in collaboration with a NGO I interned for, namely "Himal Prakriti", who supported me through the whole process and provided me with translators. The criterion for village selection was to gather information from heterogeneous areas according to different altitude, remoteness, exposure to external pressures, size, caste composition and safety. Each village had different characteristics and allowed me to gather multiple perspectives from communities apparently close in geographical terms but profoundly different in terms of local politics and social structures. Around half of my sample is drawn from people living in affected areas by dam construction. I chose them because it was significant for my research to assess the interaction between external interferences and villagers. The rest were closer to my home-base and Himal Prakriti. Because of limited resources and time I was not able to move too much outside Munsiri area.

Most empirical evidence is drawn from semi-structured interviews but I also present analysis of the legal framework of Panchayati Raj and Van Panchayat and some brief

narratives throughout the chapter. The results will describe with some degree of generality the interaction of all people interviewed with decentralization practices. Yet, the groups my analysis will focus upon are: women, lower castes and poor households. Their status of oppression and marginalization is central to analyze social justice in relation to decentralization practices. The next sub-sections of this section about methodology briefly explain how I performed the regression analysis and how is my sample structured.

4.4.1 Significance levels for variables

The quantitative analysis of my hypothesis use regressions which are always corrected for autocorrelation and heteroscedasticity and the transformation of all binary variables require the use of dummies through formulas recognized by the software used: SHAZAM¹⁶. Because of the discrete nature of all dependent variables, the regressions are run using the Poisson method in order to normalize the values. The dummy variables D1 to D7 for the first set of regressions indicate the relationship between being located in a particular village and access to a specific resource. The dummies D8, D9 indicate whether each household belongs to a caste considered to be oppressed according to the Constitution. It is calculated by assigning the value of “1” if the participant belongs to a specific caste either scheduled caste, scheduled tribes or general caste. If a binary variable is a dependent variable like in

¹⁶ AUTO/ RSTAT ML= Formula to correct for autocorrelation
DIAGNOS/ HET= Diagnosis for heteroscedasticity
OLS/HETCOV= Correction for heteroscedasticity
GENR D1=DUM(X1)=Generation of dummy variables
TYPE=EPOISSON= Poisson regression

the case of *Outside_n*, then the LOGIT method is used to normalize the distribution. To keep the analysis simple and straightforward, only the variables relevant to my hypothesis will be discussed.

The test to assess the significance level of each dependent variable in my regression the equation $t = \frac{\hat{B}_x - B_x^*}{S(\hat{B}_x)} \sim (n - k)$ is used. Hence, if and only if $|t| > t_{\frac{\alpha}{2}; n-k}$ then my variable is statistically significant in the regression. Given the sample size and critical value α at 10%; $t_{\frac{\alpha}{2}; n-k} = 1.65$. Only when $|t| > 1.65$ then the dependent variable will be considered significant.

Table 1.1 Explanatory table

Statistical Measure	Explanation
$t_{\frac{\alpha}{2}; n-k} = 1.65$	It represents the level of significance in the t-test table. This value is assessed against the t value obtained from the sample.
$ t = \#$	It represents the significance level of the relationship between my independent and dependent variables.

The t statistic assesses the probability of my independent/causal variable not to be significant in relation to my dependent variable. The usual values are 1%, 5% and 10% and to each value there is an associated numerical value 1.65 (10%); 1.965 (5%); 2.570 (1%). If the t value from the regression is greater than any of these values, it means the probability of a relationship between my dependent and independent variables to be wrong is relatively low.

4.4.2 Sample

The sample used is random and is 50% men and 50% women. Because of low knowledge of the language and of the local communities, the translators helped me to interview people who showed interest and time to answer my questions. All participants were selected only if older than 18 years and resident in the village. Although not pre-selection was performed, the overall sample per village reflected a proportional gender and caste break down. The overall ratio of different castes for the total sample tries to represent the communities in the whole area under study. The majority are composed of scheduled tribes hence I put emphasis on this section of the population in my sample as well. General sample information is illustrated in the following two tables. The first table describes the average features of the overall sample whereas the second table breaks it down into villages, caste and gender.

Table 1.2: Sample Size

Sample Size	Average Age	Average Household Land	How many men	How many women
286	42	10 Nali ¹⁷	142	143

¹⁷ 1 nali =80.66sq yards or 66.66sq metres (0.0066 ha)

Table 1.3: Sample divided by village

Village Name	GP	VP	Population	Sample Size (households)	Women	General Caste	Total Scheduled Caste	Total Scheduled Tribes
Sarmoli	X	X	163 families (702 people)	82	41	11	5	66
Jainti	X		125 families (500 people)	37	18	3	21	13
Shankadhura		X	20 families (96 people)	11	6	6	0	5
Tanga	X	X	73 families (309 people)	40	20	18	10	12
Lodhi		X	26 families (129 people)	20	10	16	4	0
Alam	X	X	30 families (149 people)	20	10	20	0	0
Sirtola	X	X	74 families (395 people)	35	18	24	11	0
Suring	X	X	79 families (339 people)	40	20	4	6	30
Total	6	7		286	143	102	57	125

The division according to caste, gender and households interviewed strikes 50% in most cases. Each category represents an even break down of population per village according to those categories.

For scheduled caste I intend: This category includes in it communities who were untouchables. Even though the Constitution of India eliminates the existence of caste and established positive discrimination for lower castes, they are still a social reality in many areas of India. In this research, I included Other Backward Caste (OBC), as defined by the Constitution, in the category of scheduled caste.

For scheduled tribes I intend: The term "Scheduled Tribes" refers to specific indigenous peoples and tribal groups whose status is acknowledged to some formal degree by national legislation. The most common in Munsiri area are named "Shaukas" and a brief description of its characteristics is provided at the beginning of this chapter.

For general case I intend: General Castes are the ones not included in the caste-based reservations guaranteed in the Constitutions and are generally all the castes not belonging to scheduled caste, OBC and scheduled tribes.

As mentioned in the introductory section of Uttarakhand the area under study cannot be considered typical of Indian society. The sample reflects the trend. Scheduled tribes have recognition from the government to be an oppressed class but tribal societies tend to be more egalitarian than mainstream Indian caste-based structure. Uttarakhand embeds social hierarchies that are less strong and allow the basis for sustainable resource use. Although its relatively egalitarian structure, there are still forms of internal oppression especially along the lines of gender and landlessness. Caste conflict might not be significantly present, but while scheduled tribes are the dominant section, scheduled caste also exist and are more likely to experience oppression and marginalization. The various social implications will be explored more in depth while assessing whether local bodies are substantially capable of bringing social justice.

In the next table various facts are presented about the villages in order to give an overview of general information about the communities under study. A broad understanding of

infrastructure access, geographical features and companies' presence will enrich the discussion further for the identified hypothesis.

Table 1.4: Villages details

Village name	Altitude	Access to cemented road	Access to Primary School	Access to Junior High	Access to High School	Companies presence in the area
Sarmoli	Around 2500	300 mt	500 mt In the village	1 km In the village	1 km In the village	NTPC ¹⁸ offices
Jainti	Around 2000	200 mt	250 mt In the village	250 mt In the village	5 km Outside the village	None
Shankadhura	Around 2500	300 mt	500 mt In the village	1 km In the village	1 km In the village	NTPC offices
Tanga	Around 1000	3 km	1-2 km In the village	2 km In the village	11 km Outside the village	Himalayan Hydro construction
Lodhi	Below 2000	5 km	200 mt In the village	3 km Outside the village	12 km Outside the village	Himalayan Hydro construction
Alam	Around 1500	8 km	500 mt In the village	5 km Outside the village	9 km Outside the village	None
Sirtola	Below 2000	2 km	500 mt In the village	2.5 km In the village	10 km Outside the village	Himalayan Hydro construction
Suring	Around 2000	300 mt	250 mt In the village	1 km In the village	4 km Outside the village	NTPC offices

In order to have a more clear assessment of my hypothesis it is important to give a brief overview of what operations the companies, present in the areas under study, are engaged in. Limited National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) is the largest power generation company in India. Its current capacity is of 31134 MW and it has embarked in a plan to

¹⁸ National Thermal Power Corporation

create 75,000 MW by 2017. NTPC is engaged in various dam constructions all over the state of Uttarakhand. It is listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange although the government of India holds 84.5% of its equity. Himalayan Hydro Private Limited is also a corporation partially owned by the government. Its operations are directed to various size hydroelectric projects in Uttarakhand. The company employs the technology of power generation by converting the available potential energy in water flow into mechanical energy using hydro turbines. The areas of Tanga, Lodhi and Sirtola are directly exposed to its operations. Both companies are under study in their interaction with the communities and local institutions; this is a central analysis in order to assess my hypothesis of external pressures and livelihood deterioration.

4.5 Household Poverty Index

The way this research quantify the magnitude of household poverty is not through monetary assessment of income but a more multidimensional measure that includes sources of livelihood, land and whether the reliance on income streams need to be complemented by poverty alleviation schemes. For example a landless family with a secure income streams through a government job will be better off than a landless one with not secure income. The measure is calculated as follows:

Table 2.1: Household Poverty Index

Household Poverty Index	Impact
Less than 3 primary sources of income or resources (excluding government job and shop keeping). ¹⁹	+1
Household private landholdings below village average	+1
Household private landholdings 2 times village average	-1
Household private landholdings ½ less than village average	+1
Landless household only relying on manual labour	+1
Below the poverty line family	+1
Very Below the poverty line family	+1

Hence a number is provided to each household interviewed and the poverty level will range from “0” to “6”. All households with “0” poverty are usually relying on the wage economy that implies a secure stream of income from a government job that also includes a pension at retirement. Households with level “6” poverty usually are landless exclusively relying on manual labor. Most extreme cases of poverty also receive some form of subsidy from the government in the form of a card that will allow the recipient family to purchase food at a discounted price or to avoid medical expenses.

4.6 First Hypothesis: Access to forest resources in decentralized forest management

In this section I evaluate the validity of my first hypothesis whether decentralized forest management leads and perpetuates unequal access to forest resources. In the case the most

¹⁹ It is not a normalized measure according to the size of the household since this specific characteristic of each family was not disclosed to me from all participants. Yet, given the small size of each village; most people have some degree of relation with the members of the community so the complexity of assessing family size was not a task I decided to undertake. I still decided to use the sources of income as significant factor in assessing poverty according to my own sense of the field –given I interviewed all participants in their houses- but I am aware of its inherent limitations. The attempt remains to create an indicator going beyond individual income streams and to define the household profile also according to landholdings and government recognition of its status.

oppressed groups experience some degree of limitation in access to resources compared to the overall sample, then there is evidence of inequalities. The right of livelihood in this case would not be delivered equally as the Constitution prescribes. The levels that are going to be analyzed are at the household and the village levels.

4.6.1 First level of analysis

The first dimension explores resource distribution according to village, caste, forest reliance and poverty level. The assumption is that Van Panchayat has its autonomy, power and capabilities increasingly reduced to provide to everyone, in local communities, the amount of resources needed. Hence the most oppressed might experience less access to what they need for their livelihoods.

Caste, land, poverty and forest reliance are explored in relation to household availability of fodder, water and fuelwood. The variables to determine the extent of household inequalities in access to resources are assessed in the following survey question “What do you think about forest resources/health to meet your household’s needs?” The answers received are: Very little, little, sufficient or in excess. In addition to it, opinions about whether village needs are met under the current conditions and whether people in the household need to go outside to get forest resources are also explored. The following tables describe all variables considered for this first level of analysis:

Table I. 1: Dependent Variables

Dependent Variables	Description	Measurement
Fodder= <i>Fodder_n</i>	Fodder is crucial for livestock and agriculture fertilizer in the area under study.	0=Not at all 1=Very Little 2=Little 3=Enough 4=In Excess
Water= <i>Water_n</i>	Water is essential for life and for agriculture in the area under study.	0=Not at all 1=Very Little 2=Little 3=Enough 4=In Excess
Fuelwood= <i>Fuelwood_n</i>	Fuelwood is the main source of fuel, heat and it is widely used in construction in the area under study.	0=Not at all 1=Very Little 2=Little 3=Enough 4=In Excess
Aggregate Resources= <i>Aggr. Res_n</i>	In order to offset internal fluctuations dependent on the type of resources and village, an aggregate measure can give a comprehensive picture of the constraints of access to resources.	The summation of Fodder, Water and Fuelwood
Outside the forest to get resources= <i>Outside_n</i>	People get resources outside the borders of village forest.	0= No 1= Yes
Village Needs= <i>VilNeeds_n</i>	The opinion of interviewees about whether forest resources are enough for the community	0=Not at all 1= Very Little 2= Little 3=Enough 4=In excess

Table I. 2: Causal Variables

Independent/Causal Variables	Impact Expected on dependent variables	Measurement
Caste= C_n	I expect lower caste households to have less access to forest resources.	It is measured as a dummy variable according to what caste the person belongs to: 1= Scheduled Caste 0= Scheduled Tribes
Poverty Index= I_n	I expect households with limited resources to have less access to forest reserve.	According to the poverty index the value goes from 0 (not poverty) to 6 (high poverty)
Personal Land= L_n	I expect households with not land to have lower access to forest resource because of their lower status and less assets.	It is not a discrete value and in my sample the value goes from 0 to 100 nali per household. 1 nali is around 66 meters square.
Forest Reliance= F_n	I expect forest reliance to increase the necessity of forest resources hence to influence positively to provision and access to resources.	0=Not at all 1=Little 2=Some 3=Completely
Dummy Variables= D_y	I need to understand how significant is to be part of a specific community (y) in access to resources and village needs when I compute the various regressions.	If a person belongs to a specific village a value of 1 is given in order to run the regression.

For this level of analysis implies some regressions that include variables indicated in table I.2. All of them will be assessed with the software “SHAZAM” and the relevant results will be discussed along with a visual presentation of all levels of significance for all variables.

$$Fuelwood_n = \beta_0 + B_1D_n^1 + B_2D_n^2 + B_3D_n^3 + B_4D_n^4 + B_5D_n^5 + B_6D_n^6 + B_7D_n^7 + \beta_8D_n^8 + \beta_9D_n^9 + \beta_{10}I_n + \beta_{11}L_n + \beta_{12}F_n + \varepsilon_n$$

$$Fodder_n = \beta_0 + B_1D_n^1 + B_2D_n^2 + B_3D_n^3 + B_4D_n^4 + B_5D_n^5 + B_6D_n^6 + B_7D_n^7 + \beta_8D_n^8 + \beta_9D_n^9 + \beta_{10}I_n + \beta_{11}L_n + \beta_{12}F_n + \varepsilon_n$$

$$Water_n = \beta_0 + B_1D_n^1 + B_2D_n^2 + B_3D_n^3 + B_4D_n^4 + B_5D_n^5 + B_6D_n^6 + B_7D_n^7 + \beta_8D_n^8 + \beta_9D_n^9 + \beta_{10}I_n + \beta_{11}L_n + \beta_{12}F_n + \varepsilon_n$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Aggr.Res}_n &= \beta_0 + B_1D_n^1 + B_2D_n^2 + B_3D_n^3 + B_4D_n^4 + B_5D_n^5 + B_6D_n^6 + B_7D_n^7 + \beta_8D_n^8 + \beta_9D_n^9 \\ &+ \beta_{10}I_n + \beta_{11}L_n + \beta_{12}F_n + \varepsilon_n \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Outside}_n &= \beta_0 + B_1D_n^1 + B_2D_n^2 + B_3D_n^3 + B_4D_n^4 + B_5D_n^5 + B_6D_n^6 + B_7D_n^7 + \beta_8D_n^8 + \beta_9D_n^9 \\ &+ \beta_{10}I_n + \beta_{11}L_n + \beta_{12}F_n + \varepsilon_n \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{VilNeeds}_n &= \beta_0 + B_1D_n^1 + B_2D_n^2 + B_3D_n^3 + B_4D_n^4 + B_5D_n^5 + B_6D_n^6 + B_7D_n^7 + \beta_8D_n^8 + \beta_9D_n^9 \\ &+ \beta_{10}I_n + \beta_{11}L_n + \beta_{12}F_n + \varepsilon_n \end{aligned}$$

4.6.2 Results first level of analysis

The first regressions will assess the relationship between access to fuelwood and the independent variables (caste, poverty level and forest reliance):

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Fuelwood}_n &= \beta_0 + B_1D_n^1 + B_2D_n^2 + B_3D_n^3 + B_4D_n^4 + B_5D_n^5 + B_6D_n^6 + B_7D_n^7 + \beta_8D_n^8 \\ &+ \beta_9D_n^9 + \beta_{10}I_n + \beta_{11}L_n + \beta_{12}F_n + \varepsilon_n \end{aligned}$$

Table I. 3: Access to Fuelwood

Variable Name	Estimated Coefficient	Standard Error	T-ratio (272 DF)
D1= Jainti Village	-0.54343*	0.3077	-1.766
D2= Sirtola Village	-0.32743E-01	0.3038	-0.1078
D3=Alam Village	0.56557*	0.3308	1.710
D4=Lodhi Village	0.23976	0.3303	0.7259
D5=Tanga Village	0.41116	0.2975	1.382
D6=Sarmoli Village	-0.17484	0.2828	-0.6182
D7= Suring Village	0.40249	0.3004	1.340
D8= Scheduled Tribes	-0.21003	0.1585	-1.325
D9= Scheduled Caste	-0.99211E-01	0.1662	-0.5969
I= Poverty Index	0.54196E-01	0.3576E-01	1.515
L= Personal Land	-0.15905E-02	0.4288E-02	-0.3710
H= Forest Reliance	0.30881 ***	0.5534E-01	5.580
Constant	1.3351***	0.2924	4.565
R-SQUARE =0.3243 R-SQUARE ADJUSTED =0.2944			
Min=0 Max=4 Average=1.877 Std Dev= 1.072			
*Significant at 10% ** Significant at 5% *** Significant at 1%			

In this first regression, to be part of an oppressed caste or poverty level does not play a significance role in access to fuelwood. On the contrary, forest reliance has the most significant impact. Households declaring high forest reliance will be more likely to use more fuelwood than others. The low significance of all other factors can be intended that current Van Panchayat arrangement to meet livelihoods' needs for fuelwood is effective; external pressures are not deteriorating its access yet.

The second regressions will assess the relationship between access to fodder the independent variables (caste, poverty level and forest reliance):

$$Fodder_n = \beta_0 + B_1D_n^1 + B_2D_n^2 + B_3D_n^3 + B_4D_n^4 + B_5D_n^5 + B_6D_n^6 + B_7D_n^7 + \beta_8D_n^8 + \beta_9D_n^9 + \beta_{10}I_n + \beta_{11}L_n + \beta_{12}F_n + \varepsilon_n$$

Table I. 4: Access to Fodder

Variable Name	Estimated Coefficient	Standard Error	T-ratio (272 DF)
D1= Jainti Village	-1.6403***	0.3237	-5.068
D2= Sirtola Village	-0.98503***	0.3042	-3.239
D3=Alam Village	-0.32700	0.3038	-1.077
D4=Lodhi Village	-0.25946	0.3181	-0.8157
D5=Tanga Village	-0.38540	0.2877	-1.340
D6=Sarmoli Village	-1.4986***	0.3057	-4.902
D7= Suring Village	-0.92267***	0.3417	-2.700
D8= Scheduled Tribes	-0.20354	0.1999	-1.018
D9= Scheduled Caste	-0.21230	0.1639	-1.295
D10= Poverty Index	0.69992E-01*	0.4057E-01	1.725
X11= Personal Land	0.11265E-01**	0.4606E-02	2.446
X12= Forest Reliance	0.35499***	0.6385E-01	5.560
Constant	1.9065***	0.3105	6.140
R-SQUARE =0.4415 R-SQUARE ADJUSTED =0.4168			
Min=0 Max=4 Average=1.628 Std Dev= 1.311			
*Significant at 10% ** Significant at 5% *** Significant at 1%			

In this second regression there is a positive relationship between access to fodder and

forest reliance, personal land and poverty level. Poor households show to have more access to fodder, possibly because their source of livelihood is mainly based upon agriculture and livestock and because Van Panchayat can still guarantee its access. Households with land and a high reliance on the forest are more likely to have good access to fodder as well. It is interesting to notice that all the village dummies are significant, that implies that access to fodder is also highly village dependent. Some Van Panchayat is able to manage their resources better than others; hence contextual specificities play a significant role in this relationship.

The next third regressions will assess the relationship between access to water and the independent variables (caste, poverty level and forest reliance):

$$\begin{aligned}
 Water_n = & \beta_0 + B_1D_n^1 + B_2D_n^2 + B_3D_n^3 + B_4D_n^4 + B_5D_n^5 + B_6D_n^6 + B_7D_n^7 + \beta_8D_n^8 + \beta_9D_n^9 \\
 & + \beta_{10}I_n + \beta_{11}L_n + \beta_{12}F_n + \varepsilon_n
 \end{aligned}$$

Table I. 5: Access to water

Variable Name	Estimated Coefficient	Standard Error	T-ratio (272 DF)
D1= Jainti Village	-1.6337 ***	0.4298	-3.801
D2= Sirtola Village	-2.1015***	0.4208	-4.995
D3=Alam Village	-2.7536***	0.4036	-6.823
D4=Lodhi Village	-0.36210	0.5007	-0.7232
D5=Tanga Village	-2.2697***	0.4123	-5.506
D6=Sarmoli Village	-1.3612***	0.4006	-3.398
D7= Suring Village	-0.60161*	0.4287	-1.903
D8= Scheduled Tribes	0.47989E-01	0.2193	0.2189
D9= Scheduled Caste	-0.21488	0.2595	-0.8280
D10= Poverty Index	-0.56202E-01	0.5026E-01	-1.118
X11= Personal Land	-0.70928E-02	0.6068E-02	-1.169
X12= Forest Reliance	0.13676 *	0.7990E-01	1.712
Constant	2.7062 ***	0.4256	6.358
R-SQUARE =0.3086 R-SQUARE ADJUSTED =0.2781			
Min=0 Max=4 Average=1.291 Std Dev= 1.432			
*Significant at 10% ** Significant at 5% *** Significant at 1%			

This third regression clearly indicates how access to water is very contextual specific. Even though forest reliance still has an impact on its access, most village dummies also seems to be reliable estimates in relation to the independent variable. It seems most communities have limited water from their village forests and this emerges from the negative correlation between the village dummies and access to water. The problem of water cannot be linked only to caste or poverty but it is common to everyone and most Van Panchayat faces

hardships to ensure its provision, except for a few cases (Lodhi). Most households need to diversify and get water from other personal sources or villages. The issue is much more extensive and this regression cannot grasp its complexity but just hint to some possible interpretations.

The fourth regression will assess the relationship between an aggregate measure of access to all resources and the independent variables (caste, poverty level and forest reliance):

$$\begin{aligned} Aggr. Res_n = & \beta_0 + B_1D_n^1 + B_2D_n^2 + B_3D_n^3 + B_4D_n^4 + B_5D_n^5 + B_6D_n^6 + B_7D_n^7 + \beta_8D_n^8 + \beta_9D_n^9 + \beta_{10}I_n \\ & + \beta_{11}L_n + \beta_{12}F_n + \varepsilon_n \end{aligned}$$

Table I. 6: Aggregate access to resources

Variable Name	Estimated Coefficient	Standard Error	T-ratio (272 DF)
D1= Jainti Village	-3.8189***	0.8992	-4.247
D2= Sirtola Village	-3.1124***	0.8765	-3.551
D3=Alam Village	-2.5085***	0.8820	-2.844
D4=Lodhi Village	-0.37721	0.8813	-0.4280
D5=Tanga Village	-2.2414 **	0.8332	-2.690
D6=Sarmoli Village	-3.0387***	0.8463	-3.591
D7= Suring Village	-1.1283	0.8507	-1.326
D8= Scheduled Tribes	-0.35487	0.4454	-0.7967
D9= Scheduled Caste	-0.51974	0.3696	-1.406
X10= Poverty Index	0.66132E-01	0.8672E-01	0.7626
X11= Personal Land	0.21590E-02	0.9397E-02	0.2297
X12= Forest Reliance	0.80200***	0.1354	5.922
Constant	5.9464***	0.8764	6.785
R-SQUARE =0.3781 R-SQUARE ADJUSTED =0.3507			
Min=0 Max=12 Average=4.796 Std Dev= 2.6763			
*Significant at 10% ** Significant at 5% *** Significant at 1%			

This regression sums up pretty well what I have been discussing so far. Forest reliance is crucial since it describes the livelihood profile of many communities in the Himalayas. Access to resources is also very community dependent and by including village dummies in the regression, it can be inferred that Van Panchayat are facing struggles to provide enough resources to villagers. The aggregate data implies that village forest does not always meet the needs of households, with a few exceptions. In my second level of analysis, the reasons

behind these findings will be explored much more in depth. The caste and poverty dimension are not significant variables in explaining access to resources. Although the caste variables are not significant in the statistical sense, it does not mean that they are irrelevant. Indeed, nearly all of the estimated coefficients are negatively related with access to forest resources. Moreover, in my field observation I noticed in two cases that scheduled caste had less access to resources.

For example, Sirtola village is composed of different sections, some are 10 kilometers away from the forest, others much closer. Lower castes in this village live in a completely different area of the mountain. Sirtola main village is very close to the forest but scheduled caste households are clustered at least 5 kilometers furtherer away from the forest. In this village, scheduled castes are named OBC (Other Backward Caste) and live in the worst conditions of all other caste groups. Most houses are very small and made of mud and stones, they do not get water from the mountains but from the polluted river also used from dam construction companies. It's reasonable these households also have more limited access to resources.

I found a similar situation in Lodhi village. The first households I interviewed were all scheduled castes; they are the definite minority in the community. Again, they are clustered away from the main village. In this case, they are very close to the place where the dam construction companies are operating. They are all small houses with very big families; they have to work for the National Thermal Power Corporation because they are landless. The

main section of the village is three hours walk and most houses are in the middle of the forest; scheduled castes, instead, live further from the forest and women need to spend long time to get fuelwood.

Although the problem of access to resources could be more communities-related than status related in the regression, it does not imply the struggle for lower castes is not existent. As described for the villages of Lodhi and Sirtola, my field observations indicated the existence of struggle of scheduled castes to get access to forest resources. The fifth regression will assess the relationship between going outside the forest to get resources and the independent variables (caste, poverty level and forest reliance):

$$\begin{aligned}
 Outside_n = & \beta_0 + B_1D_n^1 + B_2D_n^2 + B_3D_n^3 + B_4D_n^4 + B_5D_n^5 + B_6D_n^6 + B_7D_n^7 + \beta_8D_n^8 \\
 & + \beta_9D_n^9 + \beta_{10}I_n + \beta_{11}L_n + \beta_{12}F_n + \varepsilon_n
 \end{aligned}$$

Table I. 7: Going outside the forest

Variable Name	Estimated Coefficient	Standard Error	T-ratio (272 DF)
D1= Jainti Village	-0.18412	0.73210	-0.25150
D2= Sirtola Village	-0.27172	0.72096	-0.37689
D3=Alam Village	-1.0999	0.80913	-1.3594
D4=Lodhi Village	-2.5715**	0.98809	-2.6025
D5=Tanga Village	-0.35138	0.70642	-0.49742
D6=Sarmoli Village	-0.32274	0.67278	-0.47971
D7= Suring Village	-3.3536***	0.95779	-3.5014
D8= Scheduled Tribes	0.80161E-01	0.39381	0.20355
D9= Scheduled Caste	0.45941E-01	0.41627	0.11037
D10= Poverty Index	0.16395*	0.94016E-01	1.7438
X11= Personal Land	-0.37144E-02	0.10295E-01	-0.36080
X12= Forest Reliance	0.18527E-01	0.13910	0.13319
Constant	-0.31546E-01	0.69907	-0.45126E-01
R-SQUARE =0.1392 R-SQUARE ADJUSTED =0.1012			
Min=0 Max=1 Average=0.382 Std Dev= 0.486			
*Significant at 10% ** Significant at 5% *** Significant at 1%			

This regression shows that poverty is positively correlated to going outside looking for resources. This is interesting because it shows that poor households, with less access to personal resources, struggle to have their needs met within the village forest. The model also has a very low R square; hence many other issues are missing to have a comprehensive picture of other reasons along with this explanation.

The sixth regression and last for this set, will assess the relationship between village needs and the independent variables (caste, poverty level and forest reliance):

$$VilNeeds_n = \beta_0 + B_1D_n^1 + B_2D_n^2 + B_3D_n^3 + B_4D_n^4 + B_5D_n^5 + B_6D_n^6 + B_7D_n^7 + \beta_8D_n^8 + \beta_9D_n^9 + \beta_{10}I_n + \beta_{11}L_n + \beta_{12}F_n + \varepsilon_n$$

Table I. 8: Village needs

Variable Name	Estimated Coefficient	Standard Error	T-ratio (272 DF)
D1= Jainti Village	-1.2269***	0.2617	-4.689
D2= Sirtola Village	-1.3048***	0.2591	-5.036
D3=Alam Village	-0.28797	0.2821	-1.021
D4=Lodhi Village	-0.44273	0.2815	-1.573
D5=Tanga Village	-0.44038*	0.2537	-1.736
D6=Sarmoli Village	-0.81586***	0.2408	-3.388
D7= Suring Village	-0.14776	0.2552	-0.5791
D8= Scheduled Tribes	0.48803E-02	0.1289	0.3786E-01
D9= Scheduled Caste	0.90947E-01	0.1355	0.6713
D10= Poverty Index	-0.51669E-01*	0.2808E-01	-1.840
X11= Personal Land	-0.39316E-03	0.3406E-02	-0.1154
X12= Forest Reliance	0.40918E-01	0.4372E-01	0.9360
Constant	3.9916	0.2468	
R-SQUARE =0.2734 R-SQUARE ADJUSTED =0.2413			
Min=0 Max=4 Average=2.32 Std Dev= 0.816			
* Significant at 10% ** Significant at 5% *** Significant at 1%			

This table indicates that the poverty level plays a negative role in the perception of the

forest. The poorest people of my sample are also most likely to have higher forest reliance since their livelihood depends more strongly upon agriculture. In this regression the poverty level is negatively correlated to village needs, which implies that the poor sections of my sample have a more negative opinion about forest capacity to meet village needs compared to others. This is significant because it underlines a problem in distribution of resources at the village level. Even though previous evidence shows that the poverty level is not a significant factor in explaining their access, a distribution problem does exist in the communities under study.

4.6.3 Second level analysis

So far we have seen the presence of an issue related to distribution and access to resources, some villagers have expressed a struggle in accessing to resources and poor households are more likely to go outside the village forest to get resources. Furthermore, the assessment of village needs according to participants' opinions and the aggregate measure of access to forest resources show that the communities under study struggle to meet their needs. The assumption that status of oppression limits access to resources gives conflicting results since both caste and household landholdings does not seem to play a significant role in the relationship with access to resources. Van Panchayat can be assumed to guarantee more equal access to resources than expected in face of its pressures to commercialize the forest from private agents and government policies. In addition to it, high forest reliance is always positively correlated with access to resources; this implies households that need the forest the most can still meet their needs.

Yet, a fundamental problem for local livelihood remains since most households still expressed a limited use and access to forest resources to meet their personal needs but also on a village level. A reason can be traced in the diversification of livelihood for many households but a more in depth investigation can shed some light to other reasons linked to the assumption that village institutions are constrained in ensuring more access to resources because of uneven forest distribution. The second level of analysis expands the previous one by including additional relationships between access to resources, forest area and its distance from the village. The inclusion of these new variables considers a possible constraint in forest access because of the division of the forest decided from State Agencies. The uneven distribution of forest across villages can potentially lead to inequalities among households in the amount of resources available. The central argument for this second level of analysis assume that the divisions do not reflect the actual needs of the population hence depriving local communities from the right to livelihood and common good already defined at the beginning of this sections.

The variables to be used for this relationship do not consider each individual to be part of a specific village as previous regressions hence the village dummies are dropped. The attempt in this case is to give more light over the issue of forest allocation in order to understand how the forest division and distance negatively affects the people in the communities.

Table I. 9: Variables about forest allocation and distance

Additional Independent Variables	Impact Expected on dependent variables	Measurement
Forest Distance= Fd_n	The greater the distance between the forest and the village the more likely the needs of the village are not satisfied hence access to resources is also compromised.	Sarmoli Village= 1 Kilometer Jainti Village= 2 Kilometer Sirtola Village= 3.5 Kilometer Alam Village= 2 Kilometer Lodhi Village= 1.5 Kilometer Tanga Village= 1 Kilometer Suring Village= 1.5 Kilometer Shankhadura Village=5 Kilometer
Forest Area= Fa_n	The smaller the forest area, the less likely village needs are met according to the population sample.	Sarmoli -Jainti Forest=35.5 hectares Sirtola Forest= 25 hectares Alam Forest= 26 hectares Lodhi Forest= 27.8 hectares Tanga Forest= 99 hectares Suring Forest=41.5 hectares Shankhadura Forest=88 hectares
Forest Area/Households= Fr_n	The smaller the ratios of forest and inhabitants per village, the less likely forest resources are enough to satisfy in the population.	Sarmoli-Jainti Village= 0.123 ha/household Sirtola Village= 0.34 ha/household Alam Village= 0.833 ha/household Lodhi Village= 1.069 ha/household Tanga Village= 1.356 ha/household Suring Village=0.523 ha/ household Shankhadura Village=4.4 ha/household

In order to explore the relationship between access to resources and forest allocation in addition to the previous model, the following regressions equation will be used:

$$VilNeeds_n = \beta_0 + \beta_1 D_{1n} + \beta_2 D_{2n} + \beta_3 I_n + \beta_4 L_n + \beta_5 F_n + \beta_6 Fd_n + \beta_7 Fa_n + \beta_8 Fr_n + \varepsilon_n$$

$$Aggr. Res_n = \beta_0 + \beta_1 D_{1n} + \beta_2 D_{2n} + \beta_3 I_n + \beta_4 L_n + \beta_5 F_n + \beta_6 Fd_n + \beta_7 Fa_n + \beta_8 Fr_n + \varepsilon_n$$

$$Outside_n = \beta_0 + \beta_1 D_{1n} + \beta_2 D_{2n} + \beta_3 I_n + \beta_4 L_n + \beta_5 F_n + \beta_6 Fd_n + \beta_7 Fa_n + \beta_8 Fr_n + \varepsilon_n$$

4.6.4 Results second level of analysis

The first regression of this set, will assess the relationship between aggregate access to resources, forest allocation to each Van Panchayat and the independent variables used so far (caste, poverty level and forest reliance):

$$Aggr. Res_n = \beta_0 + \beta_1 D_{1n} + \beta_2 D_{2n} + \beta_3 I_n + \beta_4 L_n + \beta_5 F_n + \beta_6 Fd_n + \beta_7 Fa_n + \beta_8 Fr_n + \varepsilon_n$$

Table I. 10: Aggregate access to resources and spatial division

Variable Name	Estimated Coefficient	Standard Error	T-ratio (276 DF)
D1= Scheduled Tribes	-0.35499	0.3373	-1.052
D2= Scheduled Castes	-0.70434**	0.3485	-2.021
X3=Poverty Index	0.10023	0.9152E-01	1.095
X4=Personal Land	-0.43047E-02	0.9471E-02	-0.4545
X5=Forest Reliance	0.97580 ***	0.1296	7.531
X6=Forest Distance	-0.51604***	0.1620	-3.185
X7=Forest Area	-0.25059E-01***	0.6645E-02 -	3.771
X8=Forest Area/Household	1.5685***	0.2752	5.700
Constant	4.1654***	0.5687	7.324
R-SQUARE =0.3171 R-SQUARE ADJUSTED =0.2973			
Min=0 Max=12 Average=4.796 Std Dev= 2.6763			
*Significant at 10% ** Significant at 5% *** Significant at 1%			

This first regression clearly indicates that forest allocation plays a crucial role in resource access for villagers. The exclusion of the village dummies gives another picture of what type of constraints households are facing. Forest reliance is again a significant estimate of this

relationship, it is high people will have a much higher access to resources. This is positive because it implies that strong forest dependency for individual livelihood leads to greater use of what the forest under the Van Panchayat has to offer. The correlation with forest reliance also signals that Van Panchayat forest can still guarantee resources when households' livelihood strongly depends upon it.

The estimates for forest distance, reliance and household allocation are particularly interesting because they show to be reliable in explaining this relationship. Oddly, the absolute area of forest does not necessarily imply that if greater then households have more access to resources. The regression shows the opposite results in that sense. The reasons can be traced in how the forest is managed by local institutions and the community. In some cases, forest area is not utilized in its entirety because of remoteness and in others the forest is of uneasy access because of its physical configuration. The absolute value does not explain its impact in proportion to the size of the community for example, the forest size of Sarmoli is equals to the one in Suring but the ratio is four times lower. The regression shows that ratios of forest area and number of households have a particularly high level of statistical significance; a higher ratio implies better access to resources. Furthermore, the status of scheduled caste shows to be negatively correlated to access to resources. In sum, this regression implies that the distribution problem can be linked to Van Panchayat forest endowment per family and to households belonging to marginalized sections of society.

The second regression will assess the relationship between village needs, forest allocation

and the independent variables used so far (caste, poverty level and forest reliance):

$$VilNeeds_n = \beta_0 + \beta_1 D_{1n} + \beta_2 D_{2n} + \beta_3 I_n + \beta_4 L_n + \beta_5 F_n + \beta_6 Fd_n + \beta_7 Fa_n + \beta_8 Fr_n + \varepsilon_n$$

Table I. 11: Village needs and forest allocation

Variable Name	Estimated Coefficient	Standard Error	T-ratio (276 DF)
D1= Scheduled Tribes	0.16159E-01	0.1108	0.1458
D2= Scheduled Castes	-0.70797E-01	0.1393	-0.5084
X3=Poverty Index	-0.42805E-01	0.3146E-01	-1.361
X4=Personal Land	-0.21022E-02	0.2767E-02	-0.7599
X5=Forest Reliance	0.94239E-01**	0.4525E-01	2.083
X6=Forest Distance	-0.29723***	0.5933E-01	-5.010
X7=Forest Area	-0.65914E-02***	0.2487E-02	-2.650
X8=Forest Area/Household	0.57134***	0.8868E-01	6.443
Constant	2.6269***	0.1910	13.75
R-SQUARE =0.1853 R-SQUARE ADJUSTED =0.1648			
Min=0 Max=4 Average=2.32 Std Dev= 0.816			
* Significant at 10% ** Significant at 5% *** Significant at 1%			

According to this second regression, the relationship between the opinions about whether the forest meets village needs and forest allocation is still significant. In particular forest distance and the ratio of forest area over villagers explain that the greater the area and smaller the distance, the more likely households needs can be met. It sounds logical but because of unfair spatial divisions and no access to forest administered under government agencies for commercial purposes, the forest allocation is negatively impacting village

livelihoods. The forest area also seems to be negatively correlated to village needs; this value per se is misleading because the real issue is allocation and not the absolute number of hectares per village. The proportional value is indeed more insightful and also more significant.

The third regression will assess the relationship between getting resources from outside the forest, forest allocation and the independent variables used so far (caste, poverty level and forest reliance):

$$Outside_n = \beta_0 + \beta_1 D_{1n} + \beta_2 D_{2n} + \beta_3 I_n + \beta_4 L_n + \beta_5 F_n + \beta_6 Fd_n + \beta_7 Fa_n + \beta_8 Fr_n + \varepsilon_n$$

Table I. 12: Outside village and forest allocation

Variable Name	Estimated Coefficient	Standard Error	T-ratio (276 DF)
D1= Scheduled Tribes	0.21299	0.32184	0.66178
D2= Scheduled Castes	0.18345	0.36777	0.49883
X3=Poverty Index	0.97035E-01	0.84625E-01	1.1466
X4=Personal Land	0.40134E-03	0.10022E-01	0.40048E-01
X5=Forest Reliance	-0.16494	0.12722	-1.2964
X6=Forest Distance	0.56073***	0.18799	2.9827
X7=Forest Area	0.27093E-01***	0.87298E-02	3.1035
X8=Forest Area/Household	-0.78736***	0.29308	-2.6865
Constant	-2.0634***	0.60383	-3.4172
R-SQUARE = 0.0541 R-SQUARE ADJUSTED =0.0267 (Logit)			
Min=0 Max=1 Average=0.382 Std Dev= 0.486			
*Significant at 10% ** Significant at 5% *** Significant at 1%			

This third regression has a very low R square; hence it does not really provide a comprehensive explanation of why villagers go outside. Several variables are missing to render the model more effective in explaining the relationship between forest allocation and the need to go outside the forest to have access to resources. The various independent variables do not grasp what factors really determine people crossing boundaries and conflicting significance levels dismiss the theoretical consistency of this model. Although the model is not satisfactory, it still provides reliable estimates for forest distance and allocation of forest per households. Village forest that are far away and a low ratio per household seem to be reliable estimates to explain why individuals to go outside the forest to look for resources. These results are in line with the previous regressions that indicated that forest allocation and distance are reliable factors in explaining why some households have more access than others to resources.

In conclusion, the various regressions in both level of analysis give some broad insight of what are the pressures upon communities and their access to resources. The allocation of forest according to village size plays a crucial role to explain the extent each households can rely upon its resources. Forest reliance is a very significant factor to access to resources hence the more household depend upon it, the higher its consumption. Furthermore, to belong to a scheduled caste shows evidence to be a negative factor in the use of the Van Panchayat especially within the frame of uneven forest allocation between communities.

Some additional evidence from previous regressions shows that poor households have a

lower opinion about the forest meeting communities' needs and are more likely to get resources outside its boundaries. The first level of analysis also indicates that their access to its extremely village dependent and the recurrent negative relationships between the village dummy and resources variables underline a strong issue of low and uneven distribution of forest resources at that level. The complex picture that emerges is probably just the tip of a much bigger iceberg, but I can infer that there is some evidence showing internal and external problems in resource allocation based upon livelihood, forest allocation and status of oppression.

4.6.5 Third level of analysis

The impact of current practices in decentralized forest management entail that forest divisions -decided at the central level- along with some degree of uneven distribution of resources can be assumed to be significant factors in explaining a struggle to their access and potential threat for the right to livelihood as defined by the constitution. On a third level of analysis, the reasons for better or worse forest will also be explored for this hypothesis. In what form the forest is improving or worsening under the Van Panchayat can shed some more light to the actual concept of "effectiveness" of local bodies. The answer for this question will be explored more on a descriptive basis in order to identify what are the factors that can positively or negatively influence the condition of the forest and its resources. The empirical evidence was gathered from open answers, all codified in the following tables for the sake of an idiographic analysis.

The attempt is to interpret the pattern of aggregate evidence and to understand villagers' reasons to recognize a better or worse forest. This is relevant to assess the argument of conservation that has great scope in the current debates about forest policies and local institutions. The knowledge gap between the two levels of evidence needs to be taken into further consideration to grasp a more comprehensive picture of what form of struggle takes place at the local level and the interaction with various pressures. A more in-depth third analysis can portray local realities in this perspective for the sake of a more enriched understanding of how local institutions interact with issues of conservation.

4.6.6 Results third level of analysis

The question posed to participants for this analysis was “What do you think about the forest condition in the last 10 years?”. The empirics derive from the open answers to explain why the forest has worsened or improved. Of all answers received only 27% reports negative reasons whereas a solid 73% indicates positive feedbacks. This is a positive signal because it implies that local institutions are still able to manage their resources and to cope with external pressures. Van Panchayat autonomy is under threat but a more detailed analysis of all open answers about forest condition indicate that local capacity for conservation is still very present. The following tables explore aggregate and per village data in order to understand positive and negative factors identified by villagers linked to forest conservation.

Table I. 13: Positive feedbacks about forest condition

Positive feedbacks	Number of answers	% Individuals in the sample
Plantation of trees (bamboos, oaks etc.)	87	30.42%
Walling, boundaries	46	16.08%
Good elected-chief / Council in forest governance	44	15.38%
Good Patrol	32	11.19%
Cutting trees ban	21	7.34%
Maintenance	16	5.59%
Enforcing rules	15	5.24%
Community effort	13	4.55%
Grass maintenance	11	3.85%
External Help	10	3.50%
Internal work (Pass system, rules enforcement)	6	2.10%
Pond	5	1.75%
Financial condition	4	1.40%
Empowerment of marginalized groups	5	1.75%

The positive feedbacks are the majority and highest in frequency. The most common reasons identified are: plantation of trees, walling or boundaries construction and strong elected leaders. Villagers find that local institutions for forest management have a positive impact for forest conservation. Hence, the environmentalist rhetoric about degradation and inability of local community effort to deal with it does not hold in reality according to villagers. Van Panchayat is able to manage their forest and perform extensive work for its preservation. Community effort and empowerment also appear to be significant feedbacks. When the forest is a crucial aspect of livelihood for the community, local institutions are engaged not as manager but as communal effort to maintain and preserve their source of subsistence.

Table I. 14: Negative feedbacks about forest condition

Negative feedbacks	Number of answers	% Individuals in the sample
Trees cutting	31	10.84%
Not patrol	16	5.59%
Bad elected chief/council in village governance	15	5.24%
Uneven resource distribution	12	4.20%
Outsiders steal resources	10	3.50%
Population pressure	9	3.15%
Not rules	9	3.15%
Not external help	8	2.80%
Not maintenance	7	2.45%
Poor financial condition	6	2.10%
Not community effort	6	2.10%
Not employment	1	0.35%
Not pass system	1	0.35%

In the table above the negative feedbacks do not have high frequency of all answers received but they are still crucial to analyze. The cutting of trees is identified as main factor for forest degradation along with absence of patrol and poor performance on the part of the elected Van Panchayat chief (Sarpanch). These factors are related to internal issues of local institutions. Other noteworthy feedbacks are linked with issues in resources distribution and outsiders stealing them. It is reasonable to assume that spatial division and access to resources play a significant role in conflicts over distribution at the village dimension. Further, a village break down will identify where these pressures are stronger.

The following tables' offer a breakdown of all answers at the village level to understand where the strongest pressures are and which magnitude do they take at the local level.

Table I. 15: Average opinion about forest condition

Village	Average opinion on forest condition (1= Worsen, 2=Same, 3=Better)
Sirtola	1.35
Lodhi	2.10
Tanga	2.49
Alam	1.55
Suring	1.56
Shankhadura	2.30
Sarmoli	2.90
Jainti	2.62
<u>Weighted Average</u>	2.20

The table above describes villagers' average opinion about forest condition and on average the consensus seems to be positive. In the previous section, some regressions show that some problems of resource access still exist but the overall positive feedbacks about Van Panchayat poses the necessity to identify the negative factors in access to resources outside the action of local institutions. Van Panchayat arrangements and longtime autonomy has preserved the forest, if not improved it. The problems could be the current pressures from recent government policies/private agents to commercialize the forest and from uneven forest allocation that does not reflect village needs. To strengthen the argument, the analysis of aggregate finding broken-down per village indicates that the sample has an overall positive attitude toward the role of local institutions for forest maintenance.

Table I. 16: Positive feedbacks per village

Positive feedbacks	Jainti	Sirtola	Alam	Lodhi	Tanga	Sarmoli	Suring	Shankadhura
Good Sarpanch/Council	43.24%	0.00%	5.00%	0.00%	0.00%	32.93%	0.00%	0.00%
Plantation of trees	43.24%	8.57%	5.00%	70.00%	55.00%	32.93%	7.50%	9.09%
Maintenance of forest	13.51%	2.86%	15.00%	10.00%	5.00%	1.22%	5.00%	0.00%
Walling, boundaries	10.81%	0.00%	10.00%	40.00%	45.00%	13.41%	2.50%	18.18%
Pond	5.41%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	3.66%	0.00%	0.00%
Grass maintenance	5.41%	2.86%	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	4.88%	0.00%	0.00%
Community effort	8.11%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.50%	7.32%	2.50%	18.18%
External Help	2.70%	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	10.00%	0.00%	5.00%	9.09%
Good Patrol	13.51%	2.86%	0.00%	0.00%	7.50%	23.17%	2.50%	27.27%
Not cutting trees ban	2.70%	0.00%	0.00%	15.00%	10.00%	13.41%	5.00%	0.00%
Financial condition	0.00%	2.86%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	3.66%	0.00%	0.00%
Enforcing rules	0.00%	0.00%	5.00%	0.00%	0.00%	17.07%	0.00%	0.00%
Empowerment	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	5.00%	3.66%	0.00%	0.00%
Infrastructure	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.50%	3.66%	5.00%	0.00%

The villagers most inclined to have a positive outlook on forest condition in the last ten years are from Sarmoli, Jainti, Tanga and Shankadhura. Sarmoli and Jainti are under the same Van Panchayat and their villagers gave great consensus about the role of the council and Sarpanch in conservation and forest maintenance. In the case of Sarmoli and Jainti, this is the result of a very strong Council that has worked in the last 10 years to prioritize livelihood and to fight against external pressures. Furthermore, high community effort and

good patrolling are also identified as factors contributing to improve their forest. Both villages, on average, have the best opinion about the relationship between local institutions and forest condition. Further analysis in assessing hypothesis number 3 will explain in details the factors for success. Tanga villagers put more emphasis on plantation and walling work as crucial factors in explaining forest improvement whereas Shankhadura score highest in community effort. Both villages are highly reliant on forest and this is a crucial trigger to maintain strong local institutions for forest governance. These are positive examples of what local institution can do to improve the forest in the eyes of villagers. In general, plantation of trees, good leaders, patrolling and community effort can be assumed success factors.

Table I. 17: Negative feedbacks per village

Negative feedbacks	Jainti	Sirtola	Alam	Lodhi	Tanga	Sarmoli	Suring	Shankadhura
Population pressure	2.70%	11.43%	0.00%	15.00%	0.00%	1.22%	0.00%	0.00%
Trees cutting	0.00%	40.00%	10.00%	10.00%	7.50%	1.22%	20.00%	9.09%
Resource Distribution	0.00%	14.29%	20.00%	5.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.50%	9.09%
Poor financial condition	0.00%	2.86%	15.00%	0.00%	2.50%	0.00%	2.50%	0.00%
Outsiders less resources	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	7.50%	18.18%
Not maintenance	0.00%	2.86%	15.00%	0.00%	2.50%	0.00%	5.00%	0.00%
Not Patrol	0.00%	0.00%	30.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%
Not rules	0.00%	2.86%	10.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	15.00%	0.00%
Not employment	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	5.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Not pass system	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.50%	0.00%
Bad Sarpanch	0.00%	8.57%	15.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	17.50%	18.18%
Not community effort	0.00%	0.00%	5.00%	0.00%	5.00%	0.00%	7.50%	0.00%
Not external help	0.00%	2.86%	5.00%	0.00%	12.50%	0.00%	2.50%	0.00%
Average								

The above reasons identified by villagers are the factors linked to forest degradation. The villages that show highest frequency for negative feedbacks are Sirtola, Suring and Alam. Sirtola villagers identify trees cutting resource distribution and population pressures to be

negatively correlated to forest preservation. In the case of Suring (village part of the World Bank project for forest management), trees cutting, absence of patrol and a bad Sarpanch receive widest consensus as causal factors for forest worsening. Alam villagers also underline resource distribution and trees cutting as negative feedbacks, in addition they identify outsiders consuming resources as another crucial reason for forest deterioration. Sarmoli and Jainti, on the contrary, present almost no negative opinions and their Van Panchayat is recognized to be very well-managed.

According to table I.17 and table I.15 the picture is complex to grasp since all reasons about forest deterioration cannot be explicitly linked only to external pressures or to village dynamics in relation to the Van Panchayat. Probably, to some degree, both play a role in explaining the negative responses in relation to Van Panchayat. Lack of patrol, bad forest governance council, outsiders stealing resources and resources distribution can be understood as internal problems but it's hard to be conclusive about their possible interpretations. Lack of patrol, for example, can happen because Van Panchayat does not receive enough financial support to pay a forest guard. It can also occur when the guard, appointed by a government agency, resides outside the village and is absent or has not knowledge about internal Van Panchayat dynamics. Along with internal problems, the most common negative feedback is trees cutting. It is reasonable to assume that the presence of dam construction companies in the area under the control of Van Panchayat can be a crucial factor contributing to forest deterioration.

The assumption of external interferences derives from a general positive consensus about Van Panchayat work in the last years. Even though, external pressures from company's work or government policies are still at their initial phases there is space to develop a general understanding of what direction internal struggles can take, especially in the case of trees cutting and loss of forest resources. In this frame, it is interesting to notice how central the concept of resource becomes when analyzing villagers' opinions about the constraints local institutions and village forest are facing. If resources are under threat, a clear problem for the right to livelihood and common good can be identified. The evaluation of hypothesis number 3 will extensively link the evidence from the findings illustrated so far with external pressures. The next section will, instead, sum all the various findings and will evaluate if hypothesis number one holds in its rationale.

4.6.7 Conclusions for Hypothesis One

In all three level of analysis the attempt was to understand the relationship between access and condition of resources with current practices of decentralization. In the first level of analysis issues of distribution seem to be strongly village specific. The inclusion of village dummies clearly indicates a general negative correlation with access to resources. This implies that a problem in resource distribution exists. This is particularly evident in the case of Sirtola, Sarmoli-Jainti and Alam. As shown in the second level of analysis, the reasons for these villages can be assumed as limited forest allocation compared to the size of the village but in the case of Sarmoli, the overall action of the local institution in relation to the forest received positive consensus. In the case of Alam and Sirtola, the problems associated

with access to resources can be also linked to an overall negative consensus about the inability of local institutions to ensure even distribution of forest resources, bad council and the cutting of trees. At the same time forest reliance is positively correlated to access to resources hence people who strongly depends on the forest are more likely to have their needs met. This is interesting because it stresses the importance of forest resources for households' livelihood and how its relation with the forest is still very strong. Furthermore, the caste dimension does not seem to be significant and poverty level cannot be confidently linked with unequal access to resources yet; it is negatively correlated to the perception of village forest ability to meet community needs. The assumption of status of oppression is not linked to less access to resources at this level of analysis.

On a second level the problems of distribution assume a much clearer meaning with the inclusion of the variables about forest allocation, distance and area along with the dropping of village dummies. The division of forest is fundamental in describing access to resources. Lower ratios of forest and number of households in the village along with forest distance are negative factors to access to resources. Furthermore, the caste dimension also becomes significant in this analysis. Scheduled castes' households seem to have less access to forest resources on an aggregate level considering the allocation of forest. At this level of analysis, it is reasonable to assume that current forest policy arrangements can lead to social injustices under the form of unfair spatial division and perpetuation of a caste-based access to resources. This interpretation assumes stronger significance since the forest department continues to administer most forest area, for commercial purposes, while Van Panchayat

autonomy is increasingly under threat.

The third level of analysis points out that Van Panchayats, on average, are still able to administer and safeguard the forest in a very effective manner according to villagers' opinions. In the case Van Panchayat does not have enough capacity to preserve and manage resources for local livelihood; problems of various natures will emerge and worsen the condition of the forest. In this frame, Van Panchayat autonomy in communal perspective is crucial to preserve the equilibrium between livelihood and forest resources. The previous policy arrangements have enabled local institutions to preserve the forest and most people have been satisfied with their work. The current legal framework for forest governance in Uttarakhand is based on the principle of forest commercialization, managerialization of local bodies and increased role of the Forest Department. These changes might deteriorate that equilibrium. The imposition of a logic that does not prioritize livelihood could lead to disruption of the forest hence to compromise the right to livelihood as fundamental principle of social justice. Van Panchayat relative autonomy, on the contrary, shows positive consensuses.

Overall, hypothesis number one holds in its rationale. The pressures on local communities and forest resources exist under the form of forest allocation and lead to unequal access to resource especially across villages. Furthermore, Van Panchayats are still able to administer their forests quite effectively but there is evidence of pressures on forest resources especially in some villages under study. Hypothesis number three will explore more in

depth whether a link to external agencies and forest commercialization is reasonable to explain these pressures.

4.7 Second Hypothesis: Engagement in Institutional Processes

The second hypothesis explores the issue of actual engagement in institutional processes for forest and village governance. This is crucial to understand how inclusive institutions are, especially for the oppressed groups. The hypothesis explores attendance and effective participation of villagers during meetings in Gram Panchayat and Van Panchayat. The rationale is grounded in the assumption that current implementation of decentralization in both cases does not provide substantial space for participation for the most deprived section in society.

The evidence will try to give a more descriptive dimension to what are the reasons for not participating through regressions, tables and policy analysis. The structure of my empirical evidence analyzes patterns and frequencies of attendance, participation intended as expressing opinions in meetings and the type of participation or non-participation taking place. Furthermore the dimension of knowledge of institutional processes is explored to identify how they are internalized from local communities. This contributes to understand the interaction of highly structured, externally imposed mechanisms of participation in local bodies and local communities.

A comprehensive picture of participation can be drawn from the results of open and close-ended answers codified from individual survey questions linked to participation. In the case of Van Panchayat the questions my empirics derive from are: “Do you participate in discussion? Do people listens to you? Why and why not?”. A summary of all close-ended answers received for the question about participation is shown in the table down below.

Table II. 1: Participation Van Panchayat

Participation	Never/Little	Some	Often
Van Panchayat	162	20	102

In the case of Gram Panchayat the questions my analysis originates from are: “has your participation (talking to meetings, expressing opinions) increased in the last 5-10 years in Gram Panchayat meetings? Why and how?”. A summary of close ended answers is provided here below:

Table II. 2: Participation Gram Panchayat

Participation	No	Same	Yes
Gram Panchayat	120	41	124

These aggregate measures need to be explored further in following level of analysis. The next sections will use regressions and tables to give as much depth as possible to the issues within participation in local governance.

4.7.1 First level of analysis

The first level of analysis relies upon regressions and is developed around the argument that social change needs to address the exclusionary dimension of political participation in

decentralized institutional bodies. This becomes crucial to create democratic consciousness in the population and to devolve real power to those who lack it. The dimension of participation is not explored only to investigate the patriarchal structure of the society but also to examine the necessity of real change in Panchayati Raj functioning to allow the potential for social transformation in local communities and to build alternative practices.

If evidence shows that inequalities are persisting, then social justice as defined by Article 39 of the constitution is not accomplished and further analysis will be required to understand how to improve current practices. The dimension of analysis for this hypothesis remains at the individual level. The central cohorts for the analysis includes as independent variables: women, lower income people, lower castes, level of education and political responsibility.

The variables are illustrated in the in the next set of tables:

Table II. 3: Dependent Variables

Dependent Variables	Description	Measurement
Attendance in Van Panchayat= AVp_n	Attendance in VP is how often each individual go to forest institution meetings.	0= Never attend 0.5= Attend sometimes 1= Always attend
Attendance in Gram Panchayat= AGp_n	Attendance in Gram Panchayat is how many times in a year each individual go to village institution meetings.	0= Never attend 1= Once a year 1.5= Sometimes once a year sometimes twice a year 2= Twice a year 3= Always (every 3 months)
Participation in Van Panchayat= PVp_n	Participation in Van Panchayat implies how much each individual is engaged in expressing their opinion and whether he/she is listened or not. Furthermore why the individual is engaged or not is explored in an open question.	0=Not participating 0.5= Little participating but not listened 1= Participating but not listened 1.5= Little participating and rarely listened 2= Always participating and rarely listened 2.5= Little participating and sometimes listened 3= Always participating and sometimes listened 3.5= Little participating and always listened 4= Always participating and always listened
Participation in Gram Panchayat= PGp	Participation in Gram Panchayat implies how much each individual have increased her/his engagement in village institutions in the last 5-10 years. A subsequent open question expressly asks the reasons behind each individual expression (or lack of it) of personal opinions and needs during the meetings.	0= Not participation and has not increased 0.5= Participation has remained the same as before 1= Participation has increased

Table II. 4: Independent Variables

Independent Variables	Impact Expected on dependent variables	Measurement
Caste= C_n	I am expecting lower caste to be a factor that decreases attendance and participation.	It is measured as a dummy variable according to what caste the person belongs to: 1= Scheduled Caste 0= Scheduled Tribes
Poverty Index= I_n	I am expecting limited household resources to be a factor that decrease attendance and participation.	According to the poverty index the value goes from 0 (not poverty) to 6 (high poverty)
Gender= G_n	I am expecting to find women with less attendance and participation than men.	0= Man 1=Woman
Education Level= E_n	I am expecting to find people with higher education more prone to attend and participate in meetings	0=Illiterate 1=Elementary education 2=Junior High education 3=High School education 4=Inter-college education 5=Bachelor Degree 6=Master degree
Political Responsibility= P_n	I am expecting to find people with higher political responsibility more likely to attend and participate in meetings.	0=Never had political responsibility 1= Elected representative of forest OR village council 2=Elected representatives of forest AND village governance, or elected chief for one local body 3= Elected member at the block level for village governance 4= Elected member at the district level for village governance If the person was elected in the term before, the value is divided in half.

The regression analysis will include the above factors to give a quantitative assessment of

the relationship between participation and belonging to a deprived section in society:

$$AGp_n = \beta_0 + \beta_1 C_n + \beta_2 I_n + \beta_3 E_n + \beta_4 G_n + \beta_5 P_n + \varepsilon_n$$

$$AVp_n = \beta_0 + \beta_1 C_n + \beta_2 I_n + \beta_3 E_n + \beta_4 G_n + \beta_5 P_n + \varepsilon_n$$

$$PVp_n = \beta_0 + \beta_1 C_n + \beta_2 I_n + \beta_3 E_n + \beta_4 G_n + \beta_5 P_n + \varepsilon_n$$

$$PGp_n = \beta_0 + \beta_1 C_n + \beta_2 I_n + \beta_3 E_n + \beta_4 G_n + \beta_5 P_n + \varepsilon_n$$

4.7.2 Results first level of analysis

This first regression describes the relationship between attendance level to Gram Panchayat meetings and independent variables linked to the caste, gender, education and political responsibility dimension.

$$AGp_n = \beta_0 + \beta_1 C_n + \beta_2 I_n + \beta_3 E_n + \beta_4 G_n + \beta_5 P_n + \varepsilon_n$$

Table II. 5: Gram Panchayat Attendance

Variable Name	Estimated Coefficient	Standard Error	T-ratio (278 DF)
D1= Gender	-0.24558*	0.1379	-1.781
D2= Scheduled Tribes	0.33932 **	0.1402	2.420
D3=Scheduled Caste	0.40279 **	0.1727	2.333
X4=Education Level	0.97329E-01**	0.4506E-01	2.160
X5=Political Responsibility	0.48308 ***	0.9665E-01	4.998
X6=Poverty Index	0.65700E-01	0.4011E-01	1.638
Constant	1.0985***	0.1822	6.029
R-SQUARE =0.1602 R-SQUARE ADJUSTED =0.1421			
Min=0 Max=3 Average=1.624 Std Dev= 1.117			
* Significant at 10% ** Significant at 5% *** Significant at 1%			

The relationship my regression shows a very reliable correlation between attendance to Gram Panchayat and education level, political responsibility and lower castes. This can imply that lower castes are positively linked to level of turnout to village governance meetings since the government does provide benefits and reservation rules for them. Furthermore, educated and elected representatives are also more likely to attend. On the contrary, the status of women is negatively correlated to attendance. Women are still the minority and are little engaged in institutional processes hence the gender dimension remains the most excluded in attending Gram Panchayat meetings.

This second regression describes the relationship between participation in Gram Panchayat meetings and independent variables linked to the caste, gender, education and political

responsibility dimension:

$$PGp_n = \beta_0 + \beta_1 C_n + \beta_2 I_n + \beta_3 E_n + \beta_4 G_n + \beta_5 P_n + \varepsilon_n$$

Table II. 6: Gram Panchayat Participation

Variable Name	Estimated Coefficient	Standard Error	T-ratio (278 DF)
D1= Gender	0.28739E-01	0.5952E-01	0.4829
D2= Scheduled Tribes	0.46511E-01	0.6052E-01	0.7685
D3= Scheduled Caste	0.13570*	0.7452E-01	1.821
X4= Education Level	0.74541E-01***	0.1945E-01	3.833
X5= Political Responsibility	0.94722E-01**	0.4171E-01	2.271
X6= Poverty Index	-0.14799E-01	0.1731E-01	-0.8551
Constant	0.30358***	0.7863E-01	3.861
R-SQUARE =0.0913 R-SQUARE ADJUSTED =0.0717			
Min=0 Max=1 Average=0.507 Std Dev= 0.463			
*Significant at 10% ** Significant at 5% *** Significant at 1%			

The concept of participation is very hard to convey so the way I articulated it in my surveys is through “expressing opinions and dissent during meetings”. In this frame, even though attendance to village governance meetings implies a form of gender discrimination this does not show up in the current regression about participation. Participation seems to be more strongly linked to political responsibility and education level. This can also imply that some form of greater inclusiveness in political process of oppressed groups is taking place through various forms of reservations. At the same time new form of discrimination can follow lines based upon political power and education. The limitation of this model is

found in its low R square hence it fails to indicate other determinants of participation. In the next section a more descriptive analysis of what reasons stands behind participation in Gram Panchayat will be explored.

This third regression describes the relationship between attendance to Van Panchayat meetings and independent variables linked to the caste, gender, education and political responsibility dimension:

$$AVp_n = \beta_0 + \beta_1 C_n + \beta_2 I_n + \beta_3 E_n + \beta_4 G_n + \beta_5 P_n + \varepsilon_n$$

Table II. 7: Van Panchayat Attendance

Variable Name	Estimated Coefficient	Standard Error	T-ratio (278 DF)
D1= Gender	-0.17156***	0.5266E-01	-3.258
D2= Scheduled Tribes	-0.83486E-01	0.5355E-01	-1.559
D3=Scheduled Caste	-0.12500*	0.6594E-01	-1.896
X4=Education Level	0.12632E-01	0.1721E-01	0.7341
X5=Political Responsibility	0.12476** *	0.3690E-01	3.380
X6=Poverty Index	-0.33457E-02	0.1531E-01	-0.2185
Constant	0.70583***	0.6958E-01	10.14
R-SQUARE =0.1108 R-SQUARE ADJUSTED =0.0917			
Min=0 Max=1 Average=0.614 Std Dev= 0.4144			
* Significant at 10% ** Significant at 5% *** Significant at 1%			

This regression shows the exclusion in attending Van Panchayat meetings for scheduled castes and women. Both sections of society along with not-elected members are less likely

to attend forest meetings. The reasons possibly lie in the patriarchal and caste-based structure of society, which maintains oppressive mechanisms within local institutions for forest governance. Ultimately, evidence from this regression shows the existence of constraints related to attendance for the marginalized groups and it indicates the great necessity to give more space to social justice intended as equality in engaging within Van Panchayat.

This fourth regression describes the relationship between participation in Van Panchayat meetings and independent variables linked to the caste, gender, education and political responsibility dimension:

$$PVp_n = \beta_0 + \beta_1 C_n + \beta_2 I_n + \beta_3 E_n + \beta_4 G_n + \beta_5 P + \varepsilon_{n_n}$$

Table II. 8: Van Panchayat Participation

Variable Name	Estimated Coefficient	Standard Error	T-ratio (278 DF)
D1= Gender	-0.93673***	0.1862	-5.032
D2= Scheduled Tribes	-0.20912	0.1893	-1.105
D3= Scheduled Caste	-0.13140	0.2331	-0.5637
X4= Education Level	0.91922E-01	0.6083E-01	1.511
X5= Political Responsibility	0.69787***	0.1305	5.349
X6= Poverty Index	-0.67509E-01	0.5414E-01	-1.247
Constant	1.7878***	0.2460	7.269
R-SQUARE =0.2223 R-SQUARE ADJUSTED =0.2055			
Min=0 Max=4 Average=1.481 Std Dev= 1.566			
* Significant at 10% ** Significant at 5% *** Significant at 1%			

Participation in Van Panchayat includes the same dimension of exclusion for women as in the case of attendance. The gender dimension in my regressions seems to indicate a strong limitation to their participation within forest governance. The patriarchal structure still exists and the current political arrangements for Van Panchayat are not contributing to substantial social change intended as the creation of more inclusive institutional processes. Elected men hold the power and express opinions during meetings while most women are busy working in the forest to sustain their family's livelihood. This picture might very well change since in 2009 the Uttarakhand state government approved to increase the reservation rule for women up to 50%. The implications of possible changes will require further study and assessment in the future. For now the oppression of women still persists and a more in-depth investigation of the reasons affecting participation in Van Panchayat will be presented in the next level of analysis.

The various models related to participation are not necessarily conclusive and I recognize their low significance in grasping full variation of my dependent variables. What emerges out of this broad scope analysis is the gender dimension of participation. Women are less exposed and engaged in institutional processes and the current policies have not truly challenged the patriarchal structure of society. The most oppressed castes are also slightly less engaged only in the case of forest management. For the rest, caste and poverty dimensions do not seem to constrain participation and access to institutional processes. The reservation rule and the benefits are attractive for many people belonging to lower castes; hence discrimination in this case is lower. A really significant role is played by

education and political responsibility; both factors seem to be fundamental for my sample to explain attendance and participation in local institutions. A more in-depth analysis will shed some more light on how all these factors impact participation and what form of inequalities exist within current decentralization practices.

4.7.3 Second level of analysis

The second level explores further the evidence with table analysis to understand the reasons behind participation or lack of it. The results above cannot give a comprehensive picture without exploring the missing evidence in my explanatory variables through the identification of patterns concerning the descriptive dimension of my empirics. Participation is a very crucial factor in democratization and the various reasons associated with engagement in village and forest governance will be explored in the following tables. This relies on the use of more descriptive statistics in understanding the local struggles to be part of process for the most oppressed groups and the constraints for more inclusive politics at the local level.

The tables will represent a codification of all reasons at the aggregate and disaggregate along the lines of gender, caste, education and poverty level. The status of oppression entails a more in-depth discussion about participation intended as expression of personal opinions and needs during the meetings. Participation is indeed qualitatively difference compared to attendance and a value number cannot be exhaustive evidence of its real complexities. The

assumption is to find higher frequency reasons associated to lack of participation among marginalized groups as evidence that decentralization practices need to have more proactive space for social change in order to be inclusive. The empirics are expected to show how reduced is that space for local institution and the consequences for participation for the oppressed groups.

4.7.4 Results second level of analysis

The first tables describe the implications for participation in the case of decentralized forest management in Uttarakhand. The total sample is represented in the following tables; aggregate data is broken down per gender, education and poverty level.

Table II. 9: Participation in Van Panchayat

Participation in Van Panchayat	No. Answers	% of Respondents
Give suggestions about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plantation (15.71 %) • Trees (40 %) • Guard Patrol (7.14 %) • Animal Grazing (1.43 %) • Water (1.43 %) • Rule enforcement (7.14 %) • Outsiders (12.86 %) • Van Panchayat preservation (14.29 %) 	70	24.82%
During meeting not listened or only listen to others	50	17.73%
Sometimes listened and actively talking	45	15.96%
Do not go but family members or husband goes	24	8.51%
During meeting too shy to talk, or no space for talking	23	8.16%
Not going to meeting because they are far away or because do not use the forest	21	7.45%
No information or no interest hence not participation	21	7.45%
Poor and uneducated hence not participate during the meetings	21	7.45%
Household work hence not time for meetings	7	2.48%

In the table above the most frequent reasons about participation is linked to various types of suggestions about the work of local institutions. Only 40% of the entire sample is engaged to some extent in meetings. The residual 60% is not involved in expressing opinions or dissents and might be attending but only to listen. This picture of forms of participation needs to be analyzed according to the various dimensions of oppression. This will guide the reader to understand whether there is a coherent link between lack of engagement and the issue of marginalization for Van Panchayat.

Table II. 10: Participation in Van Panchayat: Gender and caste²⁰

Participation	Women	Men	General Caste	Scheduled Caste	Scheduled Tribes
Give suggestions about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plantation (15.71 %) • Trees (40 %) • Guard Patrol (7.14 %) • Animal Grazing (1.43 %) • Water (1.43 %) • Rule enforcement (7.14 %) • Outsiders (12.86 %) • Van Panchayat preservation (14.29 %) 	10.42%	38.46%	18.40%	26.32%	30.39%
Sometimes listened and actively talking	13.19%	12.59%	24.80%	12.28%	6.86%
Not going to meetings because they are far away or because do not use the forest	9.72%	4.90%	5.60%	7.02%	9.80%
Do not go but family members or husband goes	12.50%	3.50%	7.20%	12.28%	7.84%
No information or no interest hence no participation	5.56%	9.09%	10.40%	5.53%	1.96%
During meeting not listened or only listen to others	17.36%	17.48%	19.20%	19.30%	13.73%
During meeting too shy to talk, or no space for talking	11.81%	4.20%	7.20%	8.77%	8.82%
Poor and uneducated hence not participation during the meetings	10.42%	4.20%	2.40%	10.26%	14.71%
Household work hence not time for meetings	4.86%	0.00%	0.80%	1.75%	4.90%

²⁰ For scheduled caste I intend: This category includes in it communities who were untouchables. Even though the Constitution of India eliminates the existence of caste and established positive discrimination for lower castes, they are still a social reality in many areas of India. In this research, I included Other Backward Caste (OBC), as defined by the Constitution, in the category of scheduled caste.

For scheduled tribes I intend: The term "Scheduled Tribes" refers to specific indigenous peoples and tribal groups whose status is acknowledged to some formal degree by national legislation. The most common in Munsiri area are named "Shaukas" and a brief description of its characteristics is provided at the beginning of this chapter.

For general case I intend: General Castes are the ones not included in the caste-based reservations guaranteed in the Constitutions and are generally all the castes not belonging to scheduled caste, OBC and scheduled tribes.

From this table, very interesting facts about participation can be drawn. Men seem to be four times more likely to express opinions about Van Panchayat issues than their female counterparts. Women are more likely to be represented by family members or their husbands and they feel more strongly about their status of being poor, shy and uneducated. The dimension of gender oppression assumes a clearer notion in this table through the use of descriptive statistics. Although some level of significance was identified in the previous regression, the codified open answers give clearer meanings to women constraints to participation in Van Panchayat. In addition, people from general caste once attending seem to be more engaged in discussion and in expressing opinions of various sorts than individuals from scheduled castes and tribes. The latter recognize some constraints in their lack of education especially in the case of scheduled tribes hence caste discrimination emerges a bit more strongly in the table than in the regression. The next table will explain more in details if poverty and education is also sources of further inequalities in participation within Van Panchayat.

Table II. 11: Participation in Van Panchayat: The relevance of poverty²¹ and education²²

Participation in Van Panchayat	Low Poverty	High Poverty	Low Education	High Education
Sometimes listened and actively talking	17.39%	11.54%	11.70%	23.71%
Give suggestions about <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plantation (15.71 %) • Trees (40 %) • Guard Patrol (7.14 %) • Animal Grazing (1.43 %) • Water (1.43 %) • Rule enforcement (7.14 %) • Outsiders (12.86 %) • Van Panchayat preservation (14.29 %) 	23.19%	28.21%	23.94%	25.77%
Not going to meeting because they are far away or because do not use the forest	5.31%	12.82%	7.98%	6.19%
Do not go but family members or husband goes	3.38%	21.79%	10.64%	4.12%
Not information or not interest hence not participation	8.21%	5.13%	7.98%	6.19%
During meeting not listened or only listen to others	13.53%	28.21%	16.49%	19.59%
During meeting too shy to talk, or not space for talking	8.21%	7.69%	10.11%	4.12%
Poor and uneducated hence not participation during the meetings	6.28%	10.26%	8.51%	5.15%
Household work hence not time for meetings	1.93%	3.85%	3.19%	1.03%

The analysis of participation through the lenses of poverty and education also provide more insights of the various constraints poor and uneducated people face in engaging in Van Panchayat. Even though the poor are more likely to give specific suggestions they are also less likely to be listened in the meetings and are less engaged in village politics because of distance from meetings or low attendance. The significance of education for

²¹ The poverty level follows the indications from the poverty index provided at the beginning of the Chapter. Low poverty is the value from 1 to 3 and high poverty is the valued from 4 to 6. The very poor are usually landless with very limited sources of livelihood whereas the less poor are usually employed in government job and have greater household landholdings.

²² Low education means people who are illiterate or have an education lower than junior high school High education means people who have an education equals or higher than high school.

participation reemerges, like in the previous regressions, whereas the poverty level assumes more relevance in the current table. Discrimination does occur for the poor and uneducated in Van Panchayat meetings and the differences in percentages might not be “statistically significant” but absolutely real. This indicates how important is to use more descriptive statistics for the analysis of participation since it provides a more comprehensive picture of oppression and inequalities within decentralized institutions. The next set of descriptive statistics gives a more insightful understanding of how participation is intended in village governance. The overall sample still shows low participation with around 58% of people who express none or very little opinions and dissent in meetings. The reasons behind this relatively low inclusion are discussed more in depth in the next tables.

Table II. 12: Participation in Gram Panchayat

Participation in Gram Panchayat	No. Answers	% of Respondents
Express opinions about various issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road (25.45 %) • Water (23. 64 %) • Rules enforcement (5.45 %) • Planning (9.09 %) • Village (12.73 %) • School (9.09 %) • Benefits Distribution (9.09 %) • Pension (5.45 %) 	56	15.64%
Increase in knowledge and feeling empowered	44	12.29%
Attendance but only listening and not expressing opinions	39	10.89%
General talk during meetings	32	8.94%
Shy, uneducated and poor hence not participating	30	8.38%
Low attendance and do not talk during meetings	26	7.26%
Not time and interest to get engaged in Gram Panchayat	22	6.15%
Do not attend meetings but not reasons given	21	5.87%
Not listened when trying to express opinions	20	5.59%
Community conflict or not space to talk in meetings	16	4.47%
Household work hence not time to get engaged in Gram Panchayat	15	4.19%
Family members or husband go to meetings at my place	14	3.91%
Political responsibility requires my participation	13	3.63%
Have more time and interest than before	10	2.79%

This table gives a more insightful understanding of how participation works in village governance. The overall sample still shows low participation with around 56% of people who express none or very little opinions and dissent in meetings as table II.1 shows. The reasons behind this relatively low inclusion are presented above. The results are not so grim; there is also a significant number of people who are actually expressing opinions, feeling empowered and gaining more interest and responsibility of the processes affecting local governance.

On the other side the majority is still facing struggles in even attending meetings despite

almost half part. The dominant reasons are linked to limited talking, poverty and education. Part of the sample also identified conflicts within Gram Panchayat that is also translated into low level of listening and limited space for constructive discussion. The disagreement dimension is not given much space in the overall discussion but it can potentially lead to community fragmentation and lower cohesion in the struggle of externally imposed self-governance. The next tables will show if low participation can be linked to gender, caste, education or poverty.

Table II. 13: Participation in Gram Panchayat: Gender and caste²³

²³ For scheduled caste I intend: This category includes in it communities who were untouchables. Even though the Constitution of India eliminates the existence of caste and established positive discrimination for lower castes, they are still a social reality in many areas of India. In this research, I included Other Backward Caste (OBC), as defined by the Constitution, in the category of scheduled caste. For scheduled tribes I intend: The term "Scheduled Tribes" refers to specific indigenous peoples and tribal groups whose status is acknowledged to some formal degree by national legislation. The most common in Munsiri area are named "Shaukas" and a brief description of its characteristics is provided at the beginning of this chapter. For general case I intend: General Castes are the ones not included in the caste-based reservations guaranteed in the Constitutions and are generally all the castes not belonging to scheduled caste, OBC and scheduled tribes.

Participation in Gram Panchayat	Women	Men	General	Scheduled Caste	Scheduled Tribes
Express opinions about various issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road (25.45 %) • Water (23.64 %) • Rules enforcement (5.45 %) • Planning (9.09 %) • Village (12.73 %) • School (9.09 %) • Benefits Distribution (9.09 %) • Pension (5.45 %) 	12.50%	26.57%	20.80%	21.05%	17.65%
Talking during meetings	10.42%	11.89%	7.20%	17.54%	12.75%
Increase in knowledge and feeling empowered	20.83%	9.79%	13.60%	19.30%	15.69%
Have more time and interest than before	2.08%	4.90%	4.80%	3.51%	1.96%
Political responsibility requires my participation	4.17%	4.90%	6.40%	3.51%	2.94%
Attendance but only listening and not expressing opinions	18.75%	8.39%	12.80%	21.05%	9.80%
Not time and interest to get engaged in Gram Panchayat	5.56%	9.79%	11.20%	7.02%	3.92%
Low attendance and do not talk during meetings	11.11%	6.99%	9.60%	8.77%	8.82%
Do not attend meetings but not reasons given	4.86%	9.79%	10.40%	5.26%	4.90%
Family members or husband go to meetings in my place	8.33%	1.40%	4.80%	5.26%	4.90%
Household work hence no time to get engaged in Gram Panchayat	6.25%	4.20%	0.80%	5.26%	10.78%
Not listened to when trying to express opinions	6.94%	6.99%	6.40%	5.26%	8.82%
Shy, uneducated and poor hence not participating	12.50%	8.39%	5.60%	7.02%	18.63%
Community conflict or not space to talk in meetings	6.25%	4.90%	4.00%	3.51%	8.82%

This table clearly indicates that the gender bias still exist in participation within the Gram Panchayat. Even though it did not show up in the regression as significant factor, I argue the model does not grasp the whole picture as much as this table. At the same time it is fundamental to underline a very encouraging increase in attendance and participation of women perhaps because of the recent reservation rule that, starting from 2008, mandates

50% of all seats should be reserved from women. The empowerment process is recognized not only by women but also by individuals in lower castes. This is happening through many channels: women groups, more women in politics, reservation rule, better understanding of the political game etc. This is probably the most significant process of “social reengineering” that the country has ever experienced as Narayana (2005) recognized.

Although positive signals emerge out of my sample, the struggles remain several, women still feel more strongly about their status of low education and shyness and they are more likely to sit and listen instead of speak out. In second instance, the caste dimension does not seem to be a constraint, yet a significant group of scheduled castes (the most oppressed set of castes in my sample) still experience low attendance and engagement in meetings. The next table might indicate whether education and poverty might play a more significant role than the division in caste to explain lack of participation.

Table II. 14: Participation in Gram Panchayat: The relevance of poverty²⁴ and education²⁵

²⁴ The poverty level follows the indications from the poverty index provided at the beginning of the Chapter. Low poverty is the value from 1 to 3 and high poverty is the valued from 4 to 6. The very poor are usually landless with very limited sources of livelihood whereas the less poor are usually employed in government job and have greater household landholdings.

Participation in Gram Panchayat	Low Education	High Education	Low poverty	High Poverty
Express opinions about various issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road (25.45 %) • Water (23.64 %) • Rules enforcement (5.45 %) • Planning (9.09 %) • Village (12.73 %) • School (9.09 %) • Benefits Distribution (9.09 %) • Pension (5.45 %) 	13.30%	31.96%	17.39%	25.64%
Talking during meetings	12.23%	9.28%	12.56%	7.69%
Increase in knowledge and feeling empowered	17.55%	11.34%	17.39%	10.26%
Have more time and interest than before	3.19%	4.12%	4.35%	1.28%
Political responsibility requires my participation	1.60%	10.31%	5.80%	1.28%
Attendance but only listening and not expressing opinions	15.96%	9.28%	12.08%	17.95%
Not time and interest to get engaged in Gram Panchayat	6.38%	10.31%	10.14%	1.28%
Low attendance and do not talk during meetings	10.11%	7.22%	6.28%	16.67%
Do not attend meetings but not reasons given	6.91%	8.25%	6.76%	8.97%
Family members or husband go to meetings at my place	4.79%	5.15%	4.35%	6.41%
Household work hence not time to get engaged in Gram Panchayat	6.38%	3.09%	6.76%	1.28%
Not listened when trying to express opinions	7.45%	6.19%	5.31%	11.54%
Shy, uneducated and poor hence not participating	14.36%	3.09%	6.76%	19.23%
Community conflict or not space to talk in meetings	6.38%	4.12%	4.35%	8.97%

Discrimination in participation goes beyond caste and gender as this table shows. Low education and poverty are both factors that are determinant in understanding engagement in village politics. A significant number of poor people do express opinions and express some limited degree of empowerment. Yet the majority is more likely only to listen without

²⁵ Low education means people who are illiterate or have an education lower than junior high school High education means people who have an education equals or higher than high school.

ever talking or not being listened at all. They also experience the highest degree of consciousness about their status and how it affects their participation. Even though in the regressions poverty did not seem to be a significant factor, this table indicates its importance in participation. Furthermore, education plays a very similar role within Gram Panchayat. Educated people will express most opinions whereas individuals with lower education are more likely to feel shy and unable to express their view during the meetings.

Uneducated people are still elected in the council but are usually left without substantial power to influence decisions of what development projects should be prioritized in the community:

“I am illiterate and cannot count but I was elected council member. I go to meetings every time is scheduled but it does not matter what I say. I am forced to sign documents that I cannot read and because I am an uneducated woman, people think I am not capable to understand the needs of my village. (Nanda Devi, 55 from Suring village)

Furthermore, many marginalized households also experience limited space to express their opinions in regards to what decisions should be made at the village council:

“I used to go meetings but I stopped because there is always too much screaming. I am from a poor household and I do not have voice during meetings. I am never listened and it does not matter how much I try, people think I do not exist. I send my son and sometimes my daughter in law but they are treated the same way. My son is now getting an education and I hope he will be listened in the future” (Neera

Devi, 45 from Tanga village)

Both stories are from women from marginalized households and describe how gender and class can influence how little space a meeting can provide to oppressed members of the community.

The sample's findings in the previous tables and the narratives can give more insights than the regression analysis about reasons for participation. The constraints that prevent specific categories of people to engage into institutional processes are various and encompass gender, education and poverty. These three factors seem to be fundamental in explaining variations in the level of participation and give a deeper dimension to what each regression previously showed. Inequalities in village and forest politics are very real and even though there are some positive signs hinting to profound social changes, they are outweighed by a still existing deep-rooted division along class and gender. Both factors might perpetuate discrimination or lead to further polarization and community fragmentation between rich and poor or educated and non-educated in the process of transition to a market economy as endorsed by the good governance agenda.

The implications of these findings points out that current decentralization policies do not substantially prioritize social justice in the form of inclusive representation yet, there are signs of improvements in regards to gender and caste participation especially in the case of Gram Panchayat. Caste does not seem to significantly impede participation to the politics of village and forest governance. Despite some positive evidence, the process of

democratization still faces strong resistances from rigid patriarchal structures and confronts new challenges in upcoming polarizations along new forms of discrimination along the lines of education and poverty. The next level of analysis will describe how these implications translate in the mechanism of institutional processes and their impact on the community.

4.7.5 Third level of analysis

The third level of evidence is meant to assess how much institutional processes are internalized from local communities in the case of Van Panchayat. The distance between the externally imposed mechanisms and villages is favoring exclusionary formal institutions. The attempt to formalize and managerialize processes that have been communal for generations is a depredation to the right to livelihood and self-governance. The complete disregard for informal forest arrangements in the current policy changes has great potential for struggles. Evidence of how much knowledge about the Microplan for Van Panchayat is found in local communities will shed some more light if this process is actually occurring or not.

A Microplan as previously described in footnote 115 is described in Article 12 of the Forest Rules for Uttarakhand:

“It shall be obligatory on the part of the Management Committee to prepare a Microplan on the basis of guiding principles given in the Composite Management Plan for the management and protection of village forest/Panchayati forest for a period of five years with the assistance of the concerned Deputy Ranger/Forester of

Forest Guard as may be convenient from administrative point of view, giving due consideration to the requirement of the rightholders and ensuring the ecological balance of the region. The micro plan will be place before the General Body of all the right holders/Self-Help Groups by the concerned Forest Range Officer for its for its approval before it is finally sanctioned by the concerned Sub-Divisional Forest Officer. It shall be the duty of the Committee to strictly follow the prescriptions of the finally micro plan.” (The Uttarakhand Panchayati Forest Rules, 2005: Art. 12)

The Microplan as described above is a very complex concept to be internalized by the local community. Even though it is a mandatory dimension of the current policy, the next level of evidence will expect that knowledge and internalization is not happening at the local level. This article is still crucial since it determines a fundamental shift meant to managerialise local institutions and the consequence is that villagers no longer have complete autonomy on their own without approval of the forest staff (Sarin, 2001).

4.7.6 Results third level of analysis

As previously mentioned a Microplan is part of the legal agreement and the next table will provide the average knowledge level of villagers about it. The question in the survey was codified 1 for Yes and 0 for No. This is represented in the following empirics divided by villages:

Table II. 15: Knowledge of the Microplan

Village	% of respondents familiar with the Microplan
Sirtola	0
Lodhi	0.15
Tanga	0.15
Alam	0.15
Suring	0.125
Sarmoli	0.085
Jainti	0
Shankhadura	0
Sample Average	0.011

The average value emerging out of all surveyed villages is around zero. The villages with positive values do include elected representatives of Van Panchayat institutions in the sample. Even though they are included, they do not significantly change the overall low knowledge of what a Microplan is. This indicates how little the Microplan is internalized by local communities hence the process of managerialization is not completely accomplished at the local level since most participants and local politicians I interviewed have not even heard of it. This also shows how distant centralized priorities of forest commercialization and productivity are from the needs of people's relying on the forest for their livelihood.

4.7.7 Conclusion Second Hypothesis

Participation is a very complex concept to grasp and the evidence showed in this section underlines fundamental patterns of existing discrimination for some categories of people in engaging with local institutions.

In the case of Van Panchayat the gender dimension is very predominant and women are less likely to attend and to participate in meetings. This is shown in the regressions and explained in depth in the descriptive tables. Women feel shy and uneducated hence unable to get engaged. Furthermore, housework is so intensive that reduces their time to participate in meetings. The patriarchal structure, in my field sites, exists along with additional constraints for people in the scheduled caste who seem to attend less than others. In the tables differentials in participation between poverty and education levels are also significant in Van Panchayat.

In the case of Gram Panchayat the gender dimension is negatively correlated only to attendance and the degree of exclusion of women from participation does not seem to be significant in the regression. On the contrary, many women in my sample recognize the positive impact of engaging in local institutions. The caste dimension is also positively correlated to attendance and scheduled tribes and caste both participate. The positive trend in the level of oppressed groups' engagement is encouraging. On the other hand, a strong form of discrimination is happening along lines of education and political responsibility. Poor and uneducated experience strong degree of exclusion from political processes at the village level as described in the tables above.

On a third level along with inequalities in engagement within local bodies, there is also significant evidence of low internalization and knowledge of the forest policy legal

framework on the part of people living in the areas under study. This is interesting because it shows how little consideration is given to traditional practices of self-governance by policy makers. Most communities have managed their resources for livelihood in a different way than what the government envisions. The pressures to commercialize the forest are a centralized decision, which does not involve local understanding of livelihood and needs.

Overall the central argument of hypothesis number two holds its rationale from the various evidences presented so far in relation to perpetuation of some forms of exclusive political processes. Discrimination along lines of gender, caste, education and political responsibility reduce space for the oppressed groups to engage in the process of democratization which decentralization should favor. Some encouraging signs as consequence of reservation, women groups and increased knowledge about local bodies are opening potential spaces for social changes but the struggles for women, the uneducated and the poor are still far from being overcome. Institutional processes also need to take more into account local communities' practices and priorities in order to become truly inclusive.

4.8 Third Hypothesis: Marketization Pressures

The third hypothesis identifies the magnitude of marketization pressures upon local communities in the context of decentralized forest management. This refers especially to construction work and how the model of development supported at the central level strongly clash against the principle of self-governance and right to livelihood. The impact of

these market pressures are going to damage the forest and seriously reduce resources and limit the power of local communities and institutions to decide what kind of economic development to pursue. The main evidence will show that the awareness of local people about external agents and what is the expected impact according to their perspectives. This is a crucial aspect to analyze because it stresses the development priorities of the state in strong opposition to the lack of power of local communities.

The objective, for this analysis, is to delineate the power structure and concentration in the hands of powerful corporations in partnership with the central government. Market pressures are indeed source of great struggle for local communities and their analysis contributes to the critique of the neoliberal agenda behind national policies and to the implementation of decentralization in line with the good governance approach. Other evidence describes more qualitatively other type of pressures local institutions for forest governance are facing along with massive development projects. For example, many villages are required to open joint bank account with government agencies, in order for them to integrate in the mainstream money economy, and what evidence was found regarding forest commercialization.

4.8.1 First level of analysis

The first level of analysis shows the overall opinion from local people about the impact of external agencies on the forest and the community. The approach entails the analysis of evidence across different communities in comparative perspective. A descriptive dimension

to my empirics will be illustrated to clearly define the logic behind the various answers received. The implications for the right to livelihood, the notion of common good and means of production are all driving concepts in further discussion.

The impact of external pressures for example will show how social justice is compromised within the logic of profit accumulation invoked by central policies. The complete lack of power of local bodies is not assessed empirically but it is assumed in face of public-private partnerships investing billions of dollars in development infrastructures. The decisions for these projects occur without any consultation with local bodies and without assessment for local livelihood. These pressures are named by the majority of my sample according to the following table:

Table III. 1: Agencies identified as external pressures

Pressures Name	Answers Frequency
National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC)	31%
Electricity work	30%
Dam construction	25%
Powerhouse construction	20%
Mountain tunnel to channel the water	20%
Not knowledge of any external interference	20%
Pipeline assembling	14%
Himalayan Hydro Private Limited	7%

Eighty per cent of the sample recognizes the existence of two main external actors working on their areas. The most renowned are NTPC and Himalayan Hydro Private Limited; both are public-private partnerships between the Indian government and multinational corporations. Most people also identify their work to be related to dam construction and

electricity provision. Its creation requires pipelines, tunnel in the mountains and powerhouse buildings.

The empirical evidence about the impacts of these types of constructions will be assessed through division of answers in categories with the assumption that every villager is oppressed in this context. The general opinions from all communities are gathered from close ended and open answers to the questions: what is the impact of external agencies on your community and forest. The following table gives the aggregate opinion from close-ended answers about their operations:

Table III. 2: Overall opinion about external agencies and market pressures

	Positive	Positive and Negative	Negative	Does not Know
Impact on community	19%	13%	34%	34%
Impact on the forest	7%	8%	53%	32%

The overall feeling is more oriented to recognize the negative impact of external agencies. A very significant pool of people are also unaware or not exposed to them, hence they did not develop a specific opinions. This might also imply some fear of repercussion in expressing a specific comment about them, since the resistance to these pressures is becoming increasingly political. Only a handful recognizes their positive implications especially for the forest which is at the basis of their livelihoods. The following tables will indicate what kind of impacts are perceived from local communities and give a more in-depth understanding of the struggle they increasingly are forced to deal with.

4.8.2 Results of first level of analysis

The first set of tables give an overview about the impacts of external agencies on the forest and communities. The various descriptive statistics are gathered by codifying the open-ended answers from the following question: Are there external agencies (companies, private traders, corporations for example NTPC, construction companies etc...) in the area? If so, what's their impact on the forest? What's their impact on the community? The following tables codify villagers' opinions and a final analysis per village can provide a better understanding of their operations according to the opinion of local people.

Table III. 3: External pressures and negative impacts on the forest

Negative Impacts on the forest	No. Answers	% of respondents who answered to the question	% of all answers received
Landslides ruin the forest	73	38.83%	22.60%
Less trees in the forest	67	35.64%	20.74%
Blasting	25	13.30%	7.74%
Damage for the forest	25	13.30%	7.74%
Less land	26	13.83%	8.05%
River divergence	21	11.17%	6.50%
Pollution and environment damage	20	10.64%	6.19%
Less forest resources	19	10.11%	5.88%
Damage for the animals	14	7.45%	4.33%
Damage for the mountains	9	4.79%	2.79%
Stone dust	8	4.26%	2.48%
Damage for water sources	7	3.72%	2.17%
Damage for the soil	4	2.13%	1.24%
Damage for the people	3	1.60%	0.93%
No financial compensation	2	1.06%	0.62%

In this table evidence shows that negative impacts are much stronger than positive ones for the forest. People especially recognize landslides and trees cutting as the main causes for forest damage. The damage is also identified as multidimensional in nature impacting water, soil, animals and mountains. Furthermore the interferences from external companies result in less land available for people living in the forest and river divergence which compromises agriculture and irrigation. The problems for livelihood are very serious and the pollution and environment damage is widely recognized by the overwhelming majority of people.

Table III. 4: External pressures and positive impacts on the forest

Positive Impacts on the forest	No. Answers	% of respondents who answered to the question	% of all answers received
Not impact on the forest	7	2.05%	36.84%
Employment	5	1.46%	26.32%
Financial compensation	4	1.17%	21.05%
Facilities for Van Panchayat	3	0.88%	15.79%

Very few people give a specific positive opinion about the impact of dam construction on their communities. Some say no impact on the forest takes place whereas others recognizes some positive implications like financial compensation or increase in connectedness. In general the positive comments are quite limited. The next table extends the same analysis considering the repercussions of external agencies on the community.

Table III. 5: External pressures and negative impacts on the surveyed communities

Negative Impacts on the communities	No. Answers	% of respondents who answered to the question	% of all answers received
Pollution and dust	22	11.40%	7.72%
Damage to people	22	11.40%	7.72%
Less forest resources available for the community	20	10.36%	7.02%
Landslides/Danger	19	9.84%	6.67%
Workers from outside creating social problems and depleting forest resources	13	6.74%	4.56%
Displacement and migration because of dam construction	11	5.70%	3.86%
Low wages	4	2.07%	1.40%
Damage to environment	9	4.66%	3.16%
Damage to the village	8	4.15%	2.81%
Damage to the road	3	1.55%	1.05%
Damage to water	10	5.18%	3.51%
Damage to houses	10	5.18%	3.51%
Damage to health	7	3.63%	2.46%
Not financial compensation	5	2.59%	1.75%
Not enough employment	8	4.15%	2.81%

External agencies are still blamed to create great pollution and damages for the people living in the communities under study. Various problems related to displacements, outsiders depleting local resources and general negative impacts on human health are the ones receiving most consensuses as negative feedbacks. Even in this case the damage

becomes multidimensional and entails various implications to water, housing, livelihood and village in general. The majority of answers received recognize the present and potential future harmful consequences of external agencies pressures upon communities. The loss of land and the environmental damage will impact not only the forest but also its fragile equilibrium with the people. This is probably the most serious struggle everyone face in the communities under my study.

An interesting story to give a more qualitative explanation of the impact of dam construction on the forest was told by the elected chief representative of the forest council in Tanga village:

“We invested a lot of resources to build a fish pond in our community. We thought the community effort and a little support from the government could bring fish to the community. Our attempt was actually successful; the fish pond was full of fish till last year. NTPC arrived and started building on the same area, we objected it was going to ruin our village fishpond but we did not receive any answer from the company. The dam construction started and the because of river divergence we were not able to bring water to the fish pond during the dry season. Now the fish pond is dead and the whole area is surrounded by people coming from Nepal living in tents and consuming our forest resources while working for NTPC. Although we are experiencing social problems with the outsiders, we are more afraid of the problems to our water sources caused by the company (Pratap Singh, Tanga village).”

Table III. 6: External pressures and positive impacts on the surveyed communities

Positive Impacts on the communities	No. Answers	% of respondents who answered to the question	% of all answers received
Employment for the community	65	34.57%	22.81%
Electricity provision from companies	20	10.64%	7.02%
Facilities for the communities (road, etc.)	12	6.38%	4.21%
Temple donation from the companies	6	3.19%	2.11%
Not impact on the community	6	3.19%	2.11%
Financial compensation	5	2.66%	1.75%

In this table it emerges that a significant pool of people identifies the possibility of employment and electricity as positive implications of external agencies operations for the communities. A considerable portion of the sample has strong hopes for the prospect of higher sources of income along with an eventual increase in service provision of electricity and facilities. The latter consequence is unlikely to happen since most energy from these projects will be provided to cities to meet their increasing demand leaving villages dark. Employment opportunities are also pretty limited since most labor is short-term and the wage is low and uncertain. The group who responded with positive feedbacks is still limited compared to everyone else but it shows how the pressures of projects aimed at “modernizing” the country can slowly push people already in great struggle and poverty to accept these pressures in the hope of a better future.

So far aggregate measures have been shown without considering the contextual specificities of every village. Some are more exposed than others hence experience struggles in different

ways and to different extents. The first table for further analysis shows the average opinion of each community about external agencies operations:

Table III. 7: Opinions per village about external agencies operations

	Tanga	Lodhi	Sirtola	Jainti	Suring	Alam	Sarmoli	Shankadura
Opinion on the forest (1=Negative, 2= Some negative some positive, 3= positive)	1.60	1.69	1.09	1.27	1.17	1.36	1.28	1.25
Opinion on the community (1=Negative, 2= Some negative some positive, 3= positive)	1.89	2.61	1.93	1.54	1.52	2	1.49	1.33
Not opinion	5%	10%	11%	40%	42%	45%	47%	70%

The aggregate data per village show interesting intra village differences in opinion about external agencies operations on the community. Even though most individuals from every community have negative opinions about the consequences for their forests, there are significant fluctuations in the perception of external pressures for each village. It is interesting to notice how people in some areas are unaware or without an opinion about them. This indicates that not enough information, about the potential consequences of dam construction for people's livelihood, reaches less exposed villages. The positive

consensus, about the impact of external agencies on the community, in Lodhi, Sirtola and Tanga is associated to employment. The possibility to earn some short-term income and the promises from the companies engaged in construction to deliver electricity has convinced a significant amount of people. The interaction with external agents is not seen as necessarily bad because there is a fundamental trust that they can contribute to alleviate the hardships of people living in these areas. Yet, many people in other villages might even refrain to express an opinion because of the possible tensions that might create, even though only 20% of the whole sample is unaware of companies' existence. Hence, only received opinions about what type of impact for the forest and the community will be explored in depth in the next tables. They are not representative of the whole sample but still can indicate, more in details, the opinions per village about external pressures.

Table III. 8: External pressures and negative impacts per village forest

Negative Impacts for village forest	Jainti	Sirtola	Alam	Lodhi	Tanga	Sarmoli	Suring	Shankadura
Pollution and environment damage	2.70%	11.43%	20.00%	0.00%	15.00%	3.66%	5.00%	0.00%
Less trees in the forest	16.22%	51.43%	30.00%	35.00%	22.50%	15.85%	15.00%	18.18%
Less land	2.70%	28.57%	10.00%	10.00%	7.50%	6.10%	5.00%	9.09%
Landslides ruin the forest	32.43%	31.43%	30.00%	35.00%	15.00%	25.61%	22.50%	9.09%
Stone dust	2.70%	0.00%	15.00%	10.00%	5.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Blasting	2.70%	2.70%	0.00%	5.41%	27.03%	29.73%	0.00%	0.00%
Damage for water sources	5.41%	0.00%	0.00%	5.00%	0.00%	2.44%	2.50%	9.09%
Damage for the mountains	2.70%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	5.00%	4.88%	5.00%	0.00%
Damage for the soil	5.41%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	5.00%	0.00%
Damage for the animals	0.00%	5.71%	5.00%	5.00%	10.00%	0.00%	12.50%	9.09%
Damage for the forest	13.51%	8.57%	0.00%	15.00%	10.00%	6.10%	7.50%	18.18%
Damage for the people	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.50%	1.22%	2.50%	0.00%
Less forest resources	2.70%	17.14%	5.00%	5.00%	20.00%	1.22%	2.50%	0.00%
Not financial compensation	0.00%	2.86%	5.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
River divergence	2.70%	2.86%	5.00%	0.00%	32.50%	2.44%	5.00%	9.09%

Most villagers perceive the forest damage to be caused by external agencies construction work. As shown in the initial section of this chapter, the villages most directly affected by it are Sirtola, Lodhi and Tanga. The others are less exposed to them but still at risk. The most widely recognized problem for Jainti, Alam, Lodhi and Suring samples is landslides and their impact on the forest. Furthermore, the most exposed villages recognize the lack

of trees to be a direct consequence of companies' work. Tanga villagers give strong emphasis on river divergence because of soil dumping as another problem caused by dam construction. Sarmoli, although not directly affected shows to be more exposed to blasting and sound pollution than others. Even though some villages face different problems, the struggle is all directed to companies work. The next table shows instead what villagers have identified as positive impacts on the forest.

Table III. 9: External pressures and positive impacts per village forest

Positive Impacts for village forest	Jainti	Sirtola	Alam	Lodhi	Tanga	Sarmoli	Suring	Shankadura
Financial compensation	0.00%	2.86%	5.00%	10.00%	2.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Employment	2.70%	2.86%	5.00%	0.00%	2.50%	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%
Not impact on the forest	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.50%	4.88%	5.00%	0.00%
Facilities for Van Panchayat	2.70%	0.00%	10.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Very few positive feedbacks are received about external agencies in general. Some financial compensation along with the perception of low to no impact on the forests is the most common reasons to recognize a positive impact of companies' operations in my sample. Some answers about employment are overlapping with the same answer for the impact on local community so it's questionable whether employment is a valid answer in the case of village forest. The next table will present the findings about impact on all communities.

Table III. 10: External pressures and negative impacts per community

Negative Impacts for communities	Jainti	Sirtola	Alam	Lodhi	Tanga	Sarmoli	Suring	Shankadura
Pollution and dust	2.70%	5.71%	10.00%	10.00%	27.50%	2.44%	5.00%	0.00%
Outsiders creating social problems and depleting forest resources	2.70%	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	2.50%	8.54%	2.50%	9.09%
Displacement and migration because of dam construction	5.41%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	4.88%	12.50%	0.00%
Low wages	0.00%	5.71%	5.00%	0.00%	2.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Landslides	16.22%	2.86%	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	4.88%	5.00%	9.09%
Damage to environment	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	0.00%	5.00%	2.44%	7.50%	0.00%
Less forest resources available for the community	2.70%	8.57%	10.00%	0.00%	2.50%	7.32%	12.50%	18.18%
Damage to the village	2.70%	2.86%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	4.88%	5.00%	0.00%
Damage to the road	2.70%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	5.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Damage to people	5.41%	5.71%	10.00%	0.00%	12.50%	7.32%	12.50%	0.00%
Damage to water	5.41%	2.86%	5.00%	0.00%	2.50%	6.10%	0.00%	0.00%
Damage to houses	5.41%	0.00%	5.00%	0.00%	2.50%	4.88%	5.00%	0.00%
Damage to health	2.70%	5.71%	5.00%	0.00%	7.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Not financial compensation	2.70%	0.00%	0.00%	5.00%	0.00%	2.44%	2.50%	0.00%
Not enough employment	0.00%	8.57%	0.00%	5.00%	2.50%	2.44%	2.50%	0.00%

The negative effects of external interferences on the communities are also village specific

like forest impacts. Jainti villagers still highlight the negative consequences of landslides on people. The most exposed villages all experience similar struggles closely connected to pollution and dust that is damaging people's health in those areas. Furthermore, the opinions identifying negative impacts in Sarmoli and Suring give more emphasis to social and resource related problems caused by outsiders depleting them, forced migration and a decrease in available forest for the communities. Most villages also recognize the dimension of damage to people inflicted by external agencies work as common ground for struggle. Next table will provide the counter arguments about their impacts.

Table III. 11: External pressures and positive impacts per community

Positive Impacts for communities	Jainti	Sirtola	Alam	Lodhi	Tanga	Sarmoli	Suring	Shankadura
Financial compensation	2.70%	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	2.50%	1.22%	0.00%	0.00%
Temple donation from the company	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Employment for the community	8.11%	42.86%	15.00%	60.00%	42.50%	12.20%	10.00%	9.09%
Facilities for the communities (road, etc.)	0.00%	2.86%	20.00%	10.00%	5.00%	0.00%	7.50%	0.00%
Not impact on the community	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	3.66%	7.50%	0.00%
Electricity provision from companies	2.70%	11.43%	20.00%	25.00%	7.50%	1.22%	2.50%	9.09%

Although negative impacts are stronger for many people, there is a significant section of the

sample that recognizes the benefits of companies' work. This is very important to recognize since the reasons are pretty homogenous and consistent across villages. Employment opportunities and electricity provisions are especially strong arguments to defend companies' operations from the communities most affected by them. I find this apparent paradox quite insightful because it opens up space for my interpretation from field observations and personal experiences. Many villagers from exposed areas are employed as cheap daily labor in companies' construction work and they are promised with prospects of a better livelihood in the wage economy, little financial compensations for forest losses and increased electricity provision for their villages. The villagers more affected by the market economy are already experiencing lack of support in pursuing forms of development more beneficial for their communities. Big scale projects might look like possible positive changes for a areas already isolated and in hardship. At the same time, villages' forest resources are depleted by decreased and damaged land used in construction works and outsiders coming from poorer areas looking for a job.

In addition to the social and environmental problems associated with big-scale development projects, a struggle of villagers employed as workers from these companies also exist. A qualitative example is well described from the words of Basanti Devi from the village of Sirtola:

"I started working for the construction "wala" (means people) one month ago because of a financial problem in my family. I have been crushing stones everyday from sunrise to

sunset and I was promised 2000²⁶ Rupees at the end of the month. I went to get my money and I came home. My husband counted the money and it was only 500²⁷ Rupees. Now I am in debt and I have shoulders problems but demanding the full amount does not work, the company does not listen to us and already hired someone else at my place. I am angry but I am poor and uneducated, they look so powerful and they can cheat us, kya karte hain?”. Kya karte hain means “what can we do”? The struggle of this woman is common also to other people I interviewed and it indicates how the interaction between local communities and external agents is fairly exploitative.

The move to a market economy, with various struggles, is leading to a clear shift from forest reliance to cheap labor which, in the end will make the most rural communities worse off in terms of livelihood. Furthermore, the electricity that will be created is meant to reach the growing cities in the plain and the apparent gains from the wage economy embed inherent injustices like short term, low and uncertain rates for the villagers and large scale displacement. In addition to it, the environmental damage is already occurring according to many people’s opinions. It can become of major proportions and most people are still unaware of the consequences for their livelihoods and forests. Most projects have 20 years lifespan and the government is partnering with corporations to favor this form of short term and exclusive “economic” development.

Decentralized institutions do not really have any political authority to challenge these

²⁶ the equivalent of 45 US dollars

²⁷ the equivalent of 11 US dollars

billion dollar projects and they are forced to cope with them. The limited power at the local level impedes awareness spreading and substantial resistance to stop the consequences of companies operations that, from Basanti's experience go beyond the numbers discussed far and sounds very real for people's daily lives. In spite of the constraints of local institutions, the struggle is becoming more evident. Eight Van Panchayats in the area under my study have now written to the Union minister of Uttarakhand, Jairam Ramesh, to protest against NTPC project²⁸. Although some initial resistance exists, if forest governance was implemented according to the principles of social justice and common good, the struggles could assume a stronger political dimension and become arena of effective negotiation and dissent building. On the contrary, the good governance agenda -aligned to neoliberal principles of economic development- emerging from the more recent legal framework of Van Panchayat, favors forest commercialization, de-politicization and people's as beneficiaries instead of owners of the forest and its resources. These pressures create disconnection from local needs, communities' lack of information and political engagement through decentralized forest governance. This will be explored in the next, more qualitative, section of this analysis.

4.8.3 Second level of analysis

The second level of analysis includes a more qualitative analysis of other kind of pressures other than the ones discussed before affecting directly local institutions. This means what

²⁸ Down to earth magazine, Science and Environment online: "NTPC dam rattles local elections", March 15th, 2010 (http://www.downtoearth.org.in/full6.asp?foldername=20100315&filename=news&sec_id=4&sid=8)

kind of commercial extraction is happening, how influential the forest department is and what is the financial devolution to local bodies. The limited autonomy of Van Panchayat in the power structure is further constrained by initial attempts to further reduce its historical authority over natural resources with policy changes favoring forest commercialization, external influences and limited devolution.

The various pressures to commercialize the forest and the external interference from the Forest Department are increasingly more present. Even though Van Panchayat enjoys more autonomy in remote areas, a significant change is taking place in the relationship between local institutions and government agencies. The Forest Department priorities are established primarily in conservation and management of the forest according to the following lines of actions:

- “Conservation of forests including wildlife and its habitats.
- Providing ecological services to the citizens including conservation of soil and water regime
- Maintenance and enhancement of tourism values.
- Production and harvest of forest produce on scientific lines.
- Generation of employment.
- Participation in developmental initiatives of the Government through activities like land transfer for developmental projects, plantation of bio-fuel species, etc.)”²⁹

²⁹ Forest Department Uttarakhand website: Management Priorities section (<http://www.uttarakhandforest.org/english/managementpriorities.htm>)

Among the key issues the generation of employment and production of forest produce on scientific lines leads to assume that a monetary approach is preferred above livelihood and traditional practices. The government is in concerted action to slowly erode Van Panchayat autonomy in order to pursue some form of commercialization and productivity-oriented approaches.

In this area, the Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) was operating till 2006 and its funding was invested to strengthen institution of self-governance for forest conservation through community effort. FES support was also used to write-up the microplan in a way that countered pressures to transform local institutions into mere managers of the forest. The microplan in many villages under study was indeed transformed through the use of bylaws into a tool to get money from the Forest Department in order to invest into real conservation within a frame of village self-reliance and community full inclusion in Van Panchayat work. In my field sites this is widely acknowledged and FES help is recognized to have substantially supported communities. The funding from the government eventually stopped for political reasons that were in conflict to the course of action the organization decided to undertake. Today's financial reliance mainly remains within the Forest Department or other government departments.

4.8.4 Results second level of analysis

Each table is divided in three sections exploring Van Panchayat financial condition, form of commercial extraction and external influences happening in each village under study. The

Forest Department plays a crucial role since it is the strongest link between local institutions and the government. FD mandate as seen above directs implementation of the forest policy favoring an extraction-oriented approach. In the case studies, evidence of these pressures emerges out of individual interview with various elected representative of Van Panchayat. Furthermore, the opinion of villagers about whether the Van Panchayat has been able to improve the forest or not, links the individual perception to existing pressures on forest reliance and livelihood. In this frame, the average opinion of villagers about forest improvement relative to its maintenance is also provided as an average of the following scale: scale: 1: Worsen, 2: The Same and 3: Better.

Table III. 12: Sirtola Van Panchayat

Van Panchayat	Commercial Extraction	Financial Situation	Forest Department role
Sirtola	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None but forest department gives suggestions about the cultivation of plants for commercial usage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited funding from the Forest Department. FES funding ended in 2006 Pass system does exist for outsiders Not much information was disclosed by the Van Sarpanch (elected chief representative) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forest Department gives suggestions about plantation work, wall repairing, digging work and side preparation. Van Sarpanch (elected chief representative) intends to involve the Forest Department in making the next Microplan.
Has the Van Panchayat's forest improved according to villagers?		Average opinion is 1.35. This implies that the forest condition has worsened instead of improved in recent years.	

Sirtola Van Panchayat does experience some degree of control by the Forest Department

and the trajectory seems to indicate that it is about to increase. Continuous suggestions from the government agency and Van Sarpanch intention to receive its support already identify a growing relationship. A women's collective is also active in maintaining the forest but it does not receive any tangible support from the Van Panchayat. Overall, the condition of the forest is perceived as worsening whereas the relationship between the local institution and the forest department is expected to increase in the future. I cannot conclusively argue that an inverse relationship exist, but there are enough reasons to expect further resource commercialization in the case the government agency gains more control over the Van Panchayat.

Table III. 13: Lodhi Van Panchayat

Van Panchayat	Commercial Extraction	Financial Situation	Forest Department role
Lodhi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extraction of cinnamon leaves and likens are sold to the Forest Department that compensates the Van Panchayat with occasional cheques. The purchased plants are sold to external contractors. • Commercial extraction of Cordyceps Cinaensis (a type of fungi with medical properties) provided the opportunity to retain a 5% cut within the Van Panchayat. Since 2 years ago, the Kumaon development Agency (a regional agency of the government) decides the contractors and does not compensate the Van Panchayat. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pass system is in place. External people from the Van Panchayat are supposed to pay between 20 to 40 Rupees (0.5 and 1 US dollars respectively) to obtain forest resources. • FES support ended in 2006 • Another source of income is the money coming from the Forest department in purchasing commercial plants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest department is deciding which plantation work should be done and appoints the guard who should patrol the forest. • Forest Department also gives suggestion to what kind of medicinal plants should be planted.
Has the Van Panchayat improved according to villagers?		The average opinion is 2.1. This implies the overall feeling is that the forest remained practically the same during the last few years.	

Lodhi Van Panchayat is engaged in commercial extraction but part the Van Sarpanch (elected chief representative) also receives some financial compensation from it. Government agencies are definitely present in local institutions' internal affairs and increasingly more engaged in forest commercialization and medicinal plants extraction. Even though the Van Panchayat receives some monetary return from it, this is expected to decline as for the case of the Kumaon Development Agency. The overall opinion seems to

indicate that the forest has neither improved nor worsened substantially even though increasing external influences might change its condition.

Table III. 14: Tanga Van Panchayat

Van Panchayat	Commercial Extraction	Financial Situation	Forest Department role
Tanga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Van Panchayat levies a yearly fee of 15 Rupees per year (0.33 US dollars). • FES financial help stopped in 2006 • In the last year funding received from the Forest Department was not enough for the needs of conservation work. Hence most activities are carried out through community effort and internal funding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest Department does not play a very predominant role in the Van Panchayat of Tanga. But lack of funding and support might push the local institution to engage with it.
Has the Van Panchayat improved according to villagers?		The overall perception is 2.49. This indicates people perceive the forest has improved during the last years.	

Tanga Van Panchayat does not have much external influence from the government. Most activities are done through community effort and no commercial extraction takes place in the village. The forest is ultimately used just for local livelihood and for not other reasons. The absence of the Forest Department also implies a shortage of funding that has been provided in various forms along with practical support from the Foundation for Ecological Security. This issue could become serious to the point of pushing the local institution to get

down to compromises with the government agencies. So far, the conservation work done through FES and community effort has improved the forest according to villagers' overall perception.

Table III. 15: Alam Van Panchayat

Van Panchayat	Commercial Extraction	Financial Situation	Forest Department role
Alam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Van Panchayat sells green grass on the open market for 1,000-1,200 Rupees per year (22-27 US dollars). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pass system for outsiders does exist. Alam Van Panchayat charges 50-60 Rupees per month for people living outside the forest. On average limited funding reach the village. FES funding stopped in 2006. Funding is planned to come from the Forest Department for the plantation work it suggested. Alam Van Panchayat plans to ask for money to Block Panchayat to implement the microplan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forest Department suggests to Van Panchayat some plantation work (Bamboos, Cedars, Cinnamon leaves, Ash trees and Walnut trees)
Has the Van Panchayat improved according to villagers?		The overall perception is 1.55. People deem that the forest condition has worsened in recent years.	

Alam Van Panchayat is very isolated but interaction with the forest department is increasing. The village is already engaged in selling grass in the open market and the prospect to increase its presence is stronger because of expected higher funding coming

from the Forest Department. The government agency is already suggesting what kind of plantation work and even though it is not clear whether for commercial use, it is reasonable to assume there is a potential for that purpose. In this frame, the general perception about forest condition indicates that it has worsened in the last few years and further forest commercialization will probably not help.

Table III. 16: Suring Van Panchayat

Van Panchayat	Commercial Extraction	Financial Situation	Forest Department role
Suring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial extraction of: likens, Bergenia, Orchids latifolia, Hedychium, Potentilla and Podophyllum (medicinal plants). The Forest Department is not giving permission to the VP to sell medicinal plants outside the village. Only the Forest Department can have full control in selling Van Panchayat resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suring was part of the VJFM (Village-Joint Forest Management) program and lot of money was received during the project implementation from the World Bank. A lot of money was consumed in corruption. Pass system for outsiders exist. VP charges 100 Rupees (2.2 US dollars) annually to people wanting to use Suring forest resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Van Sarpanch is only the agent of the Forest Department and he does not have any real power to go against its decision Forest department decides the rate for labor and how the VP guard should be organized. According to the Van Sarpanch, (elected chief representative) the Forest Department often gives wrong suggestions on the ideal condition for plantation.
Has the Van Panchayat improved according to villagers?		The overall perception is 1.56. People mainly indicated that the forest has worsened under current practices.	

Suring was the part of the World Bank project of Joint Village Forest Management that had the objective to give more power to government agencies in relation with Van Panchayat.

Suring Van Panchayat is the most commercialized of all my field sites. Lot of money was poured into planting medicinal plants to be sold in the open market and the Forest Department became much more dominant in Van Panchayat affairs. This led to great deterioration of Suring's institutional autonomy in managing its forest. Furthermore the community recognized that the forest has worsened in the last years and it is reasonable to assume that the World Bank project has created more problems than benefits by taking away the authority of Suring Van Panchayat over its forest.

Table III. 17: Shankadhura Van Panchayat

Van Panchayat	Commercial Extraction	Financial Situation	Forest Department role
Shankadhura	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None. Van Panchayat is explicitly managed only for local needs and goes against the government imposition to extract resources for commercial purposes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pass system for outsiders exist. • Green grass is auctioned at the village level. An average of 16,000 Rupees (360 US dollars) is collected on this occasion • Fines are hardly collected even though do exist. • Gram Panchayat provide some money (around 5,000 Rupees per annum which equates to 112 US dollars) for water conservation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest Department does not provide any money to the village. • Forest Department is not present and its recent suggestions about bamboo plantation were rejected from the whole community.
Has the Van Panchayat improved according to villagers?		The overall perception is 2.3. This indicated that villagers deem the forest condition to have slightly improved under the current system.	

Shankadhura Van Panchayat is highly controlled by the community. External interferences are limited and avoided. The influence of the Forest Department is nil since the local institution is self reliant in income generation and rejects government agency's suggestions. All forest resources are used exclusively for local needs and external pressures are not invasive. The sample interviewed for this village recognized that the forest has improved under the current practices and Van Panchayat's autonomy.

Table III. 18: Sarmoli-Jainti Van Panchayat

Van Panchayat	Commercial Extraction	Financial Situation	Forest Department role
Sarmoli-Jainti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No commercial extraction. All forest work is done only for local needs. Only plantation for local needs takes place: broad leaves trees, Oaks, bamboo and grass protection. Strong community effort in maintaining the forest (especially from women groups) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarmoli council was extremely able to receive money from the Forest Department according to the terms of the local institution. From the Forest Department around 35,000 US dollars for: water conservation, nature interpretation center, path construction, toilets, camping platform and equipment. Around 15,000 US dollars from the central government for pheasant's conservation. FES funding for water conservation and walling construction Some money from fines, grass auction and community based tourism program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarmoli-Jainti Van Panchayat council do not experience much interference from the Forest Department in using the money. Van Panchayat decided to write up a microplan emphasizing local use of forest resources and prioritizing livelihood and conservation through democratic processes. This was possible through the use of bylaws. The forest department has been pressured to channel the money according to Van Panchayat's bylaws. Resistance to open a joint bank account with the Forest Department

Has the Van Panchayat improved according to villagers?		Almost everyone agrees that the forest has improved under current practices. The overall perception is 2.93	

Sarmoli-Jainti Van Panchayat is a success story. The council was able to create the most vibrant Van Panchayat I came across in my research. The Van Sarpanch effort to prioritize livelihood and conservation was extremely successful since almost everyone did recognize forest improvements under current practices. The use of bylaws was also extremely important in order to pressure government agency to accommodate local needs and to cope with the struggle of externally imposed formalized institutional mechanisms and market oriented pressures. The current policy framework allows for a small window of opportunity to strengthen self governance in Van Panchayat. The Uttaranchal Panchayati Forest Rules of 2001 in article 21 gives the Power to frame bylaws:

“The Forest Panchayat may frame bylaws for the distribution of forest produce among persons entitled thereof, for regulating, grazing, cutting of grass and collection of fuel, to levy fee to meet its administrative expenditure and for any other purpose consistent with these rules.”(Panchayati Forest Rules of, Art 21).

In this frame Sarmoli-Jainti Van Panchayat stressed the importance of livelihood and conservation through democratic institutions. The forest improved through community effort and strategic use of the money from the government agency. The use of formalized institutional processes against commercialization of the forest improved democracy and generated more income for everyone. The political pressures from the council and the insistence to use the money to prioritize livelihood against forest commercialization have

been crucial factors to raise awareness in the community that the forest is a source of wealth for local needs to respect and to protect. The successes of this strategy have been supported from many communities in the area and have created a network of politicians at the state and central level, along with other organization abroad (i.e. AidIndia), recognizing its positive impact.

The Forest Department had to accommodate the resistance to its mandate to favor extractive use of the forest, perhaps because of such widespread consensus of Sarmoli's Van Panchayat success. The chief elected of Van Panchayat has also been able to draw people from outside to learn about conservation and forest and to start a community based tourism program in order to generate income for the village. The combination of various activities meant to favor local needs and livelihood is showing great results, widely recognized and supported by strong community effort especially from the village very active and empowering women collective. The current council is still facing great struggles with the Forest Department to get enough financial resources to maintain current projects and also from public-private partnerships engaged in dam construction that are currently trying to boycott democratic processes in the case of Sarmoli-Jainti Van Panchayat (**Appendix 2**).³⁰

Despite the continuous struggles, the specific case study of Sarmoli allows the Sustainable Livelihood Approach to be used in its analysis within a more politicized dynamic. The council of Van Panchayat through a dedicated effort to prioritize livelihood has managed to

³⁰ <http://www.indianvoice.org/please-endorse-and-circulate-ensure-fair-signatures-p2.html>

leverage its social, political and cultural capital in a concerted way. The engagement of the community has resulted in a very successful push to centralize the discussion on power and politics. The firm belief in democracy and open discussion as potential political capital has channeled people's priority (along the lines of Norton and Mick, 2001) in creating a form of open and systematic resistance against the pressures to commercialize the forest. The externalities of this effort have brought the community closer and have also strengthened, although not exposed in this section, a process of social change³¹. As Scoones (2009) explained, the political process needs to be reinforced in SLA. The approach is only a framework but can be extremely successful if used toward the common good by leveraging the community to be engaged in a participatory political dynamic against external pressures.

This last table for this hypothesis describes to what extent the current forest policy is pushing to integrate various Van Panchayat into the market economy through bank arrangements with the Forest Department. The new legislation also imposes to all Van Panchayats to give 10% of sale proceeds of their resources to the government agency hence decreasing local institutions of their financial autonomy. The following table also links these pressures to villagers' opinion about their forest in order to understand to what extent external interferences impact Van Panchayat condition.

³¹ <http://www.aidboston.org/MalikaViridi/recent.html>

Table III. 19: External pressures to integrate into mainstream economy

Village	Joint Bank Account with the divisional forest officer	10% sale proceed to the Forest Department	Did the forest condition improve according to villages
Sirtola	Yes	No	1.35
Lodhi	Yes	No	2.1
Tanga	No	No	2.49
Alam	Yes	No	1.55
Suring	Yes	No	1.56
Shankhadura	No	No	2.3
Sarmoli-Jainti	No	No	2.9

Sirtola, Lodhi, Alam and Suring have an account with the divisional forest officer associated with the Forest Department whereas not village pays the 10% sale proceed to it because of the general lack of knowledge of its existence or political dissent. Sarmoli- Jainti, Shankhadura and Tanga do not have a Joint Bank Account and show the highest consensus about forest improvement. This is significant because it demonstrates the importance to maintain Van Panchayat autonomy in controlling the forest. External pressures of various kinds seem to deteriorate the forest and people’s livelihoods. This links back to the fundamental need to preserve the right to livelihood as established in the Constitution in order to ensure the common good outside of imposed policy objectives.

4.8.5 Conclusion of the third hypothesis

The third hypothesis tries to understand the complexities and impacts of external pressures with specific emphasis on market ones and how they impact livelihood, forest and the

communities under study.

The first level of analysis showed a very significant perceived damage of multinational corporations in partnership with the government of India for Van Panchayat forest. The majority recognizes the loss of agriculture land, trees and resources for local livelihood. The negative implications are mainly derived from big scale dam construction projects which seriously limit the ability of local bodies to cope and resist against the inevitable losses. The most common perception about their impact on the community is also negative. Yet, there is significant number of people from my sample who identify the positive implications of employment opportunities and electricity provisions. The short term gains of wage labour are hazy and uncertain and people's hopes for a better future are also linked to low awareness about the serious implications of dam construction to their forests and livelihood. This is due to the low capacity of local institutions to get involved in dissent building and lack of support from other sources to build better alternatives for local development. Local institutions, instead of being engaged in deciding what forms of development should be favored for forest dependent communities, are boycotted when resisting to livelihood disruption because of big-scale projects (Appendix 2). I argue that the present hardships will most likely get worse in the long term without substantial resistance and better options or support to pursue development driven by the principles of social justice and right to livelihood.

The second level of analysis tries to ground the aggregate evidence on a village-based case

analysis. The forests most exposed to commercial pressures and with higher interference from commercial actors or government agencies are also experiencing a higher degree of forest degradation according to villagers' opinions. This is not conclusive evidence, yet it signals the effectiveness of community effort and conservation ability when the Van Panchayat can enforce its autonomy and priorities. The success story of Sarmoli-Jainti Van Panchayat shows the possibility to use formalized institutional processes against their own purposes in a democratic and transparent way. The prioritization of livelihood and conservation has been successful and received wide recognition for its positive impact on the forest and on the community as well. The ongoing struggle of changing laws favoring a market oriented approach is not the only one. The same council is also experiencing systematic sabotages from the National Thermal Power Corporation in the process of democratic re-elections (**Appendix 2**).

Overall market pressures within Van Panchayat as institution and as space are present, pervasive and invasive as evidence shows. Various struggles are experienced from the forest and communities in many ways. The rationale of hypothesis number 3 is strongly backed up by the comprehensive analysis provided in this section. The consequence of what indicated is leading to profound social injustices, deterioration of institutional autonomy and power, negative implications for livelihood and environmental damage.

4.9 Fourth Hypothesis: Decentralization and Pressures for Market Development

The fourth hypothesis entails the analysis of decentralization for Panchayati Raj with a

specific focus to identify what are the marketization pressures for this policy. The rationale behind is grounded in the assumption that good governance decentralization would tend to favor institutions that prioritize the expansion of the market instead of allowing more space for social justice. The logic of implementing decentralization without devolving substantial opportunities for the oppressed groups to benefit in social terms from representative institutions is central in this analysis. I expect to find from my empirical evidence, institutions that are not substantially changing the condition of the village and does not substantially reflect villagers' needs. Furthermore, evidence about how the funding structure is channeled will be drawn from single individuals' perceptions about local institutions activities. For the sake of a more in-depth analysis, Appendix 3 provides all expenditures of each village institution according to the elected chief representatives of Gram Panchayat. The understanding of the magnitude of the infrastructure bias in Gram Panchayat reiterates the logic used for policy implementation from the government. The pressures to create or facilitate a market economy are central within the overall argument of good governance.

Positive evidence for the hypothesis implies a disregard of issues regarding the gender dimension of development and the continuous oppression of scheduled castes/class groups. Furthermore, current practices perpetuate lack of autonomy of local communities to make their own decision in regard of funding and projects and most importantly the lack of political will, on the part of the central government, to raise the level of democratic consciousness in the population. Centralized policy objectives seem to take over the spirit

of decentralization as intended in 243-G of the Constitution, which specifically states the responsibilities of village institutions to prepare plans and to implement schemes for economic development AND social justice. As long as emphasis is given to infrastructure and funded by centralized schemes, social justice intended as social change and power redistribution is ruled out and inequalities potentially perpetuated. This breaches with the mandate of decentralized village governance and the ideal of an egalitarian society as stated in Article 39 of the Constitution of India.

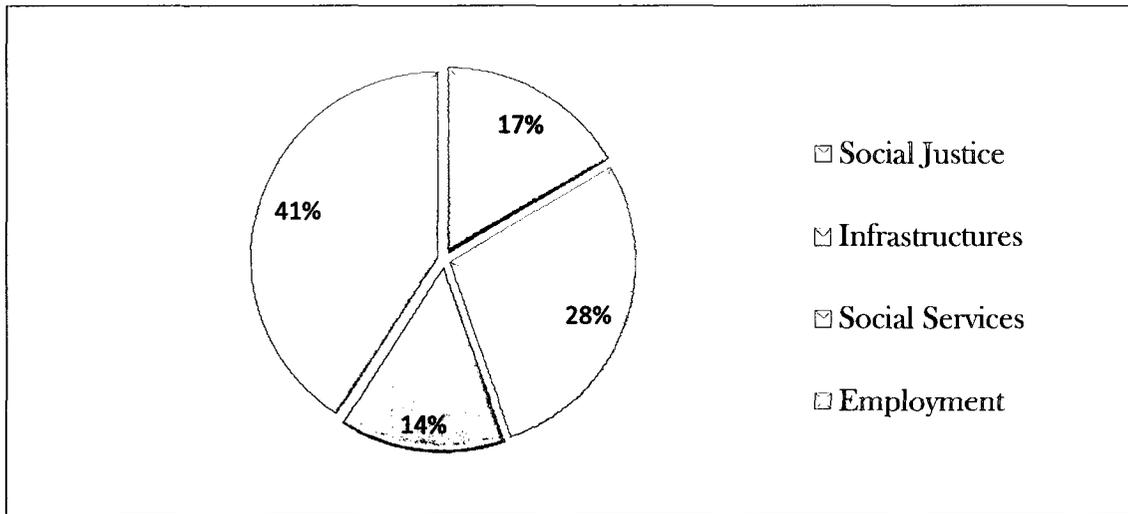
4.9.1 First level of analysis

The first level of analysis looks at evidence from individual answers and explores the priorities of people according to gender, caste and income. Furthermore, their understanding of what Gram Panchayat does in the village will show the extent of infrastructure bias through aggregate and disaggregate measures. The data representation does not require regression analysis but tables in order to visually and empirically show what people think is the role of village institutions and what is actually done. The initial set of tables give an insight on what people understand to be the priorities for the village in relation to decentralized governance from aggregate measures. Further break down in the empirical evidence in order to have a deeper understanding of who says what, will follow in the second set of figures.

4.9.2 Results first level of analysis

The first figure gives an overview of aggregate and disaggregates measures of what people deem as priority for the communities in relation to decentralized governance:

Figure 1: Aggregate Measure of first priority perception for local institutions



In this figure employment and infrastructure delivery seem to be the top priorities for the communities according to people. This finding complies with the objective from higher tier of governance to push people into the wage economy through infrastructure development and wage labor. Social justice and social services received lower priority; the rationale to build the perfect environment for a possible market economy is also identifiable from what people prioritize in village governance. A figure in Appendix 5 shows the disaggregate understanding of these macro-categories in order to orient the discussion about people's priorities. It mainly indicates that the sample seems to favor National Rural Employment

Guarantee Act (NREGA) and manual labor above all. This is a very interesting aspect of the analysis because it reinforces the idea that people are embracing the role of local institutions to develop an economy based on manual labor instead of giving more scope to social justice or social services. It also indicates that people do not necessarily see infrastructure and employment as a bad thing per se; on the contrary local institutions activities fulfills what the sample think is their priority. Perhaps, the activities of local institutions are becoming increasingly entrenched in the common perception about Gram Panchayat emphasis on infrastructures and wage labor.

This following table describes a broke down in percentages of what people think to be top priority and the top second priority for village governance:

Table IV. 1: Disaggregate measures of first and second top priority

Top Priority 1	Total	Percentage	Top Priority 2	Total	Percentage
National Rural Employment Guarantee Act	36	12.59%	Poverty Alleviation Schemes	27	9.44%
Government/Companies job	29	10.14%	Education	23	8.04%
Manual Labor	29	10.14%	Health	20	6.99%
Pension	21	7.34%	Livestock	6	2.10%
Construction Company	4	1.40%	Total Social Service	76	26.57%
Total Employment	119	41.61%	Gender Equality	27	9.44%
School	36	12.59%	Cessation of power conflict	21	7.34%
Water	19	6.64%	Caste Representation	16	5.59%
Road	12	4.20%	Corruption	11	3.85%
Hospital	11	3.85%	Total Social Justice	75	26.22%
Electricity	4	1.40%	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act	29	10.14%
Total Infrastructure	82	28.67%	Government/Companies job	16	5.59%
Caste Representation	17	5.94%	Manual Labor	11	3.85%
Gender Equality	16	5.59%	Pension	8	2.80%
Corruption	10	3.50%	Construction Company	4	1.40%
Cessation of power conflict	5	1.75%	Total Employment	68	23.78%
Total Social Justice	48	16.78%	School	25	8.74%
Education	15	5.24%	Water	12	4.20%
Poverty Alleviation Schemes	13	4.55%	Hospital	9	3.15%
Health	12	4.20%	Electricity	7	2.45%
Livestock	2	0.70%	Road	6	2.10%
Total Social Service	42	14.69%	Total Infrastructure	59	20.63%

This table is interesting because it deepens the analysis of what the sample recognizes to be their first and second top priority about local institutions activities. The outcome shifts to favor social services and social justice to be the priority. The differential across categories is not too strong but there is a significant change that should not be underrated; the sample does feel more strongly about local institutions' role in social services and social justice.

The aggregate measures give a direction and a first level of analysis but a process of disaggregation will be helpful to really delve into a more specific understanding of who says what. Men and women have different understanding of what the priorities are as much as caste and poverty levels. The disaggregate dimension is crucial to weight better the implications for data discussion and analysis in the next tables.

Table IV. 2: First Priority divided in categories

	Social Justice	Infrastructure	Social Services	Employment
Female	14.69%	33.57%	14.69%	41.26%
Male	19.01%	23.94%	14.79%	42.25%
Scheduled Castes	19.30%	31.58%	14.04%	35.09%
Scheduled Tribes	13.60%	26.40%	14.40%	46.40%
General Caste	19.61%	30.39%	15.69%	34.31%
Poverty level 0	16.81%	27.73%	15.97%	39.50%
Poverty level 1	16.00%	24.00%	18.00%	42.00%
Poverty level 2	15.79%	34.21%	15.79%	34.21%
Poverty level 3	11.63%	37.21%	4.65%	46.51%
Poverty level 4	21.05%	21.05%	21.05%	36.84%
Poverty level 5+6	31.25%	25.00%	12.50%	31.25%
Average	18.07%	28.64%	14.69%	39.06%

This table breaks down by various categories “who chose what” as top priority in their communities in relation to local institutions. In first instance, men feel slightly stronger about social justice than women. This goes against the expectations; a possible interpretation is because of women lower engagement in village politics; they might be

more unaware of the potential for social change and empowerment in Gram Panchayat. Secondly, it's interesting to notice that the poorest groups (21% and 31% respectively) indicated that social justice is more of a priority for decentralized governance than relatively better off sections of my sample. They feel more strongly about local institutions duty to pursue social justice as first priority for the community. This is significant because it underlines how important for people living in abject condition to receive social justice more than everyone else. This is especially true for gender equality and caste representation (as the tables in **appendix 4** show) that on average are perceived to be the most relevant issues within social justice for local institutions. The individuals within this group are usually the ones with very little land and almost exclusively relying on agriculture or low diversified sources of income. Further data analysis underlines that the poorest feeling stronger about social justice, for my sample, are usually women and scheduled castes.

Along with social justice, infrastructure also shows significant differences across various groups. There is not strong evidence about poverty level to be associated with priority for infrastructure even though the poorest seem to recognize less than others the role of local institutions in that direction. Women, on the contrary, tend to favor infrastructures more strongly than men. They especially emphasized water, school and hospital and recognized the importance of local institutions to deliver them. On the contrary to infrastructure, social services are recognized across most groups to be lowest priority for the community within the scope of decentralized governance. Not significant differences or patterns emerge across the various groups for social services but the tables in appendix 4 show that

education and poverty alleviation programs are favored the most from all groups.

Lastly, employment received most consensuses as top priority for decentralized governance in the communities under study. The community feels strong about it and the recognition of local institution central role in wage labor is widely embraced. This is interesting because it shows that government schemes meant for “economic development” -mandated by the Panchayati Raj Act- are prioritized. The common perception about its importance might indicate that the communities are positive about the gains from it. It’s hard to say whether the sample chose employment because they also genuinely feel to be their personal priority as much as the top priority for their local institutions and communities. Likely, the emphasis of Gram Panchayat to provide employment -used to build local infrastructures- is increasingly becoming entrenched in the common perception of my sample in priority setting. In the table, another significant finding about employment is that scheduled tribes are more inclined to prioritize employment compared to other castes. Scheduled tribes are also the most dominant section of my sample hence this result have stronger implications on the aggregate measures. A possible interpretation to explain the caste differential could be that scheduled tribes are more engaged in local institutions in terms of wage economy. Scheduled tribes receive special status as much as scheduled castes but experience less oppression because they are the overwhelming majority in the area of Munsiri compared to other groups. The caste differential, in this framework, is specifically found for National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and manual labor and this possibly implies that, in my sample, scheduled tribes are more likely to receive employment than lower

castes in village governance. Lower castes, on the contrary, tend to favor companies/government jobs (as shown in Appendix 5) to a greater extent since they evidently do not find as much employment within local institutions.

The emphasis on employment and infrastructure changes in the next sets of tables which explore patterns of answers about what people chose as second top priority, in relation to village governance. This could enhance better understanding the scope of the shift favoring social justice over employment and infrastructure in a disaggregate manner. So far the aggregate number of women shows to be less inclined to fix social justice as first priority for decentralized governance whereas the poorest sections recognize it as an important duty for local institutions. The previous table has also underlined a caste differential in perceiving employment in priority setting. The next table can shed more light to how the shift in priority setting unfolds according to gender, caste and poverty level.

Table IV. 3: Second Priority divided in categories

Categories	Social Justice	Infrastructure	Social Services	Employment
Female	24.48%	24.48%	18.18%	27.97%
Male	28.17%	16.89%	35.21%	24.56%
Scheduled Castes	29.82%	17.54%	17.54%	35.09%
Scheduled Tribes	20.80%	21.60%	32.80%	20.00%
General Caste	30.95%	21.57%	24.51%	22.55%
Poverty level 0	25.21%	20.17%	28.57%	21.01%
Poverty level 1	40.00%	16.00%	20.00%	24.00%
Poverty level 2	26.32%	15.79%	26.32%	31.58%
Poverty level 3	20.93%	23.26%	27.91%	25.58%
Poverty level 4	15.79%	26.32%	36.84%	21.05%
Poverty level 5+6	18.75%	37.50%	18.75%	25.00%
Average	25.57%	21.92%	26.06%	25.31%

In this table, a strong caste differential polarizes social justice as second choice for general caste and scheduled caste. The polarization follows the same pattern in the previous table but of higher magnitude. It can be interpreted as scheduled tribes' stronger recognition of local institutions' role in other dimensions other than social justice even in their second top priority. Scheduled tribes tend to prioritize social services, as their second top priority after employment. A more detailed explanation of the caste differential requires further exploration that is not provided in this analysis. In appendix 5, the tables about social justice show how gender equality is seen as most relevant second priority. This is followed by cessation of power conflict, which did not show up before, to be perceived as relevant issue in social justice for the sample.

In second top priority women, once again, recognize more than men the role of local

institution in delivering infrastructures (especially school as the table in Appendix 5 shows). The consistency of priority setting for both tables underlines that women tend to have a stronger preference for infrastructure even as second top priority. Their continuous emphasis on school (3 times more than men) can be interpreted as a genuine concern to educate their children. Since many women in my sample recognize the disadvantage to be uneducated, especially when interacting with local bodies of village governance, they feel strongly to reverse the trend for their kids. Furthermore, the poverty level seems to follow a similar pattern. The poorest sections also recognize local institutions' role in infrastructure development as second top priority. In the table before, the poorest groups chose social justice to be the top one whereas in second priority fixing infrastructures seems to receive more recognition. It underlines the consciousness of poorest section to emphasize the responsibility for social justice along with infrastructure to be central in local institutions' mandate.

Social services receive much greater consensus among male and scheduled tribes as second top priority for local institutions. The table might indicate that these groups receive more services compared to women or other castes. The table of social services in Appendix 5 shows a greater preference for education from men possibly because they are more likely to receive it than women. A stronger inclination on the part of men to recognize local institutions' role in social services can be interpreted because they are more exposed to it. Scheduled tribes also chose social services as second top priority more than other castes; they are more likely to receive poverty alleviation benefits than general and scheduled

castes. General caste are usually excluded from benefits since their status and resources are higher whereas the scheduled caste are most likely exposed to oppression of stronger degree and consequently have less access to social services. This is not conclusive evidence about table's findings but possible interpretations based upon field observations and in-depth case survey analysis.

In the table employment receive strong recognition but to a lesser degree than the previous table, social justice and social services. Social justice receives slightly more consensuses as second top priority with respect to employment. The shift in preference for local institutions indicates more strongly a common perception of its important role for local institutions functions. The table in this section and the one about employment in Appendix 5 shows that scheduled castes recognize more than others employment as second priority especially in the case of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and pension. This finding is interesting because it represents a stronger recognition, although quite significant even in the previous table, of wage labor also on the part of lower castes. Most SC households, as shown in the regression in Appendix 6, are more likely to be poorer and landless as opposed to scheduled tribes. Even though they would tend to favor government/companies job as first preference for employment because of limited opportunities to gain from local institutions, they experience more pressure than other groups to exclusively depend on manual labor. This emerges from the table about second priority which stresses the needs of scheduled caste to cope with the hardships of limited resources along with their status of oppression.

The analysis of all these tables gave some insights to what it is deemed as priority within the context of local institutions. Employment received overwhelmed consensus to be a really dominant dimension of Panchayati Raj. In second instance, infrastructure is also widely recognized. Social justice and social services receive more consensus as second top priority. Yet, poorest sections do recognize the latter more than others as top priority. A possible explanation can be that their status of oppression emerges to be a very strong element in their experience with local institutions leading to emphasize social justice as top responsibility for decentralized bodies. As shown previously, they have less space in participation in village governance hence they might feel more excluded. This can explain they might want to favor social justice also intended as higher inclusion in the decision-making process of local institution. The overall evidence from the answers are based upon what people believe to be the priority for their communities in the context of local institutions and it is reasonable to assume that groups' status can influence priority setting. The various interesting insights show that the common perception of villagers in priority setting for local institutions is primarily linked to employment generation and infrastructure development. This shows that people feel the importance of having local institution that can provide the basic necessities but the central question remains: Who gets what? The next section will give an overview of what people think is being done at the village level and what they received from the local institutions.

4.9.3 Second Level of analysis

The second level of analysis describe what people indicated was being done at the village level in the last 5 years. This is significant because it can tell us what have people experienced in terms of local institutions activities and it also indicates how much actual space was given to social justice. Various graphs and tables will show empirical data from all villages according to aggregated and disaggregated categories. All evidence is grouped in the same way as for priorities setting but new categories for additional answers (not fitting in the previous division) are created:

Old Categories

Social Justice		Infrastructure		Social Services		Employment	
Power Conflict	A1	School	B1	Health	C1	NREGA	D1
Caste Representation	A2	Hospital	B2	Education	C2	Gov.nt/Companies job	D2
Gender Equality	A3	Electricity	B3	Livestock	C3	Construction Company	D3
Corruption	A4	Water	B4	Poverty Alleviation	C4	Manual Labor	D4
		Road	B5			Pension	D5

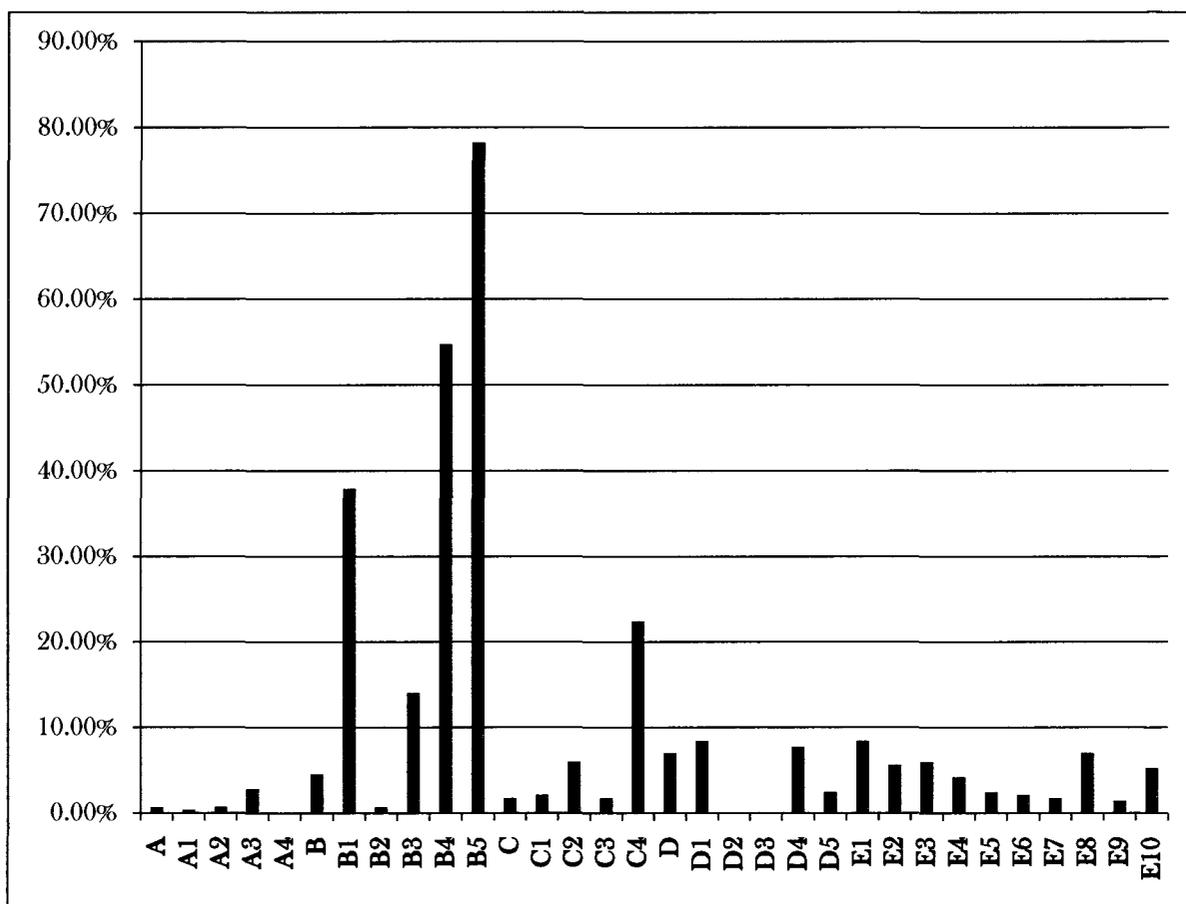
New Categories

Checkdam, walling, digging work	E1
Women's group building	E2
Panchayati office building	E3
Latrines construction	E4
Bridge work	E5
Government support and subsidies (ex: woolen work)	E6
House improvements	E7
Temple construction/ maintenance	E8
Playground/ school kitchen	E9
Not progress	E10

4.9.4 Results second level of analysis

The first level of analysis explores the aggregate measures of all tasks carried within local institutions according to villages. This will be the initial point of further analysis and data break down. For the sake of clarity and precision these categories are codified in letters. Their frequencies are illustrated in the following graph:

Table IV. 4: Aggregate frequency of people's perception about local institutions activities



As this graph shows, the highest frequency is received for all tasks related to infrastructure development. Some also goes to social services with a specific emphasis on poverty

alleviation programs. Some response also fit to the various tasks illustrated in the new categories labeled under letter “E”. Most of these are infrastructure-related but for the sake of precision, I feel more comfortable to break them down into separate groups. Issues of social justice are not part of the activities of local bodies in village governance. In order to complement my quantitative analysis of people’s perception, I present the answers received from all chief elected representatives in regards to what do they think about social justice in village governance meetings. Each Gram Pradhan (elected chief representatives), explains what are the most discussed issues in relation to social justice in the villages under examination.

Sirtola Village:

“There are not major social issues raised in Gram Panchayat in relation to gender matters. During my term there were not social issues discussed relating to gender, corruption or caste (Past Gram Pradhan)”.

“There are social problems and that I need to take them up during my term. People during the last term did not bring social issues in front of the Gram Panchayat (current Gram Pradhan).”

Tanga-Lodhi Village:

“Gram Panchayat tries to solve conflicts over agricultural land issues. If the husband is violent with his wife, the Gram Panchayat will lead both parties to a compromise through a written consent. In the case the violence occurs again, the husband will be sent to court.

Some cases of violence to women are reported to the Gram Pradhan (current Gram Pradhan)”

Alam Village:

“Some conflicts about boundaries issues with other villages are discussed in Gram Panchayat meeting. Women also openly talk about violence in Gram Panchayat meetings. I established a monetary fine to contrast household violence due to alcoholism. The fine is from 50 (around 1 US dollars) to 100 (around 2 US dollars) Rupees to men who act violent against women. If violence persists men are sent to court. Corruption is not discussed in meetings but exists and caste issues are also not raised but that does not mean they do not exist. The given solutions for social justice are only 2% out of 100% of all problems. Water, house problems along with many other issues are a reality in Alam but the amount of money received is limited and the needs would require much more financial support from external sources. I am young but willing to start speaking up in the block Panchayat meetings held in Munsiri to get more support from the government (current Gram Pradhan).”

Suring Village:

“There are conflicts about land. There are also cases of violence against women discussed in Gram Panchayat meetings (4-5 cases per year). The gender issue is seldom discussed in meetings but I give my personal suggestions. In the case violence persist, a fee can be inflicted or the police can also be called. In the last term women attendance and

participation increased and the current people are more open to talk about corruption. I recognize the problem of violence against women and if the case persists more than 3 times then the police will be asked to intervene (current Gram Pradhan).”

Jainti Village:

“Many scheduled castes families live in poor condition but the relationship with other castes is open and not major conflicts are raised. There are not other major issues of social justice brought up in Gram Panchayat meetings like corruption or gender equality during my term (Past Gram Pradhan).”

“There are not caste issues raised and corruption as much as gender equality are not problems affecting the community whatsoever. A women collective is present in Jaiti (current Gram Pradhan).”

Sarmoli Village

“There are not social problems in the community. He does not recognize any gender violence, corruption or caste problem. There are some simple quarrels but nothing that requires serious measures (current Up-Pradhan -vice-chief representative-).”

“There is a pervasive problem of violence in the village due to alcoholism. She used to give personal suggestions but not broad discussion is happening during the meetings. According to her opinion, corruption is also increasingly becoming a problem and money is retained by higher politicians and not given to the people (past Gram Pradhan).”

From the analysis of all interviews, the evidence shows a general aversion to discuss in depth issues of social justice during the meetings. Although, many local politicians are aware of the existence of some injustices, some refrain to recognize any problem at all in the community. From my field experience, the most heart-felt problem, in the villages under study, is alcoholism and the violence against women associated with it. Alcohol is only an excuse for many men to turn violent although, the issue is much more complex and requires a more careful analysis. According to the elected chief of the forest council in Sarmoli the issue is described in the following way:

“Politically, alcohol has a lot of power, it should be seen in a socio-political perspective, you can make a whole community useless by just getting them to drink more and more and then, are not being able to fight and resist. We know of places where people working in a mine, they finish their daily work, they are given very little wages and the same mine owner has a liquor store so whatever money they have, they pay the man, get drunk, go home, fight and go to sleep. They have not time and energy to resist, it is always better to have a half sleepy, half drunk and half given up population because they do not need to fight and the state and status quo can control you. I think the same thing happen in a place like Mungsiari. It’s easy to blame the individual man who gets drunk, goes back and beats his wife but the system seeks to it. It’s so much easier because when the men are drunk they are not going to resist. This creates inequalities; he becomes a victim of his circumstance and he also becomes the oppressor because he’s beating up his family. If men and women have equal opportunities, if economically we were not oppressed and not

treated like a colony -like, keep taking resources-, if people have the self-respect they were able to drink more carefully. When you are frustrated, when you are angry and when you are depressed, alcohol becomes a way to breaking people down. Our resistance here is not on blaming the crime, yes we resist violence induced by alcohol but that is not the only reason. Men are violent in any case, alcohol is only an excuse. Second thing is that the state itself promotes alcohol, it's the second highest revenue in the state and it does not stop selling alcohol. We feel, we have to resist at all levels: politically and along with alcohol there exist some form of organized crime that goes together. It's not just drinking but the whole political problem of alcohol (Malika Viridi, elected chief representative forest council in Sarmoli Village and founder of the Ngo "Himal Prakriti")."

In Malika's words, alcohol is a more complex problem and it has to be conceptualized in its political dimension. Although, the violence created and the injustice against women is the consequence, the cause needs to be identified in the class structure and how oppression can unfold and create further oppression. Local bodies do not seem to have much strength to deal with the problem at its roots. As long as the good governance favours institutions that are mainly managerial and depoliticized, there will be little space to address the structural factors of alcohol and violence. Although, some elected representatives have started to deal with the problem, the struggle seems to be very deep-rooted and cannot be completely eliminated as long as form of exploitation persists at all levels. In this frame, the focus on infrastructure is real and clashes with limited scope for social justice; in the next table a breakdown of all aggregate data is illustrated per each village in order to

understand “who receives what at the village level” and to go deeper in the analysis of my empirical evidence.

Table IV. 5: Perception of local institutions activities: Social Justice

Social Justice	Jainti	Sirtola	Alam	Lodhi	Tanga	Sarmoli	Suring	Shankadhura	Total Percentage of respondents
Social Justice in general	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.50%	1.22%	0.00%	0.00%	0.70%
Power Conflict	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.22%	0.00%	0.00%	0.35%
Caste Representation	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.50%	0.00%	2.50%	0.00%	0.70%
Gender Equality	0.00%	0.00%	5.00%	5.00%	0.00%	4.88%	5.00%	0.00%	2.81%
Corruption	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Social justice is hardly carried out in any form in almost all villages. Most activities are addressed to gender equality but a very few amount of people recognize it as part of local institutions tangible actions. Corruption and power conflict are hardly considered in the range of local institution’s actions.

Table IV. 6: Perception of local institutions activities: Infrastructure

Infrastructure	Jainti	Sirtola	Alam	Lodhi	Tanga	Sarmoli	Suring	Shankadhura	Total Percentage of respondents
Infrastructure in general	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	8.54%	15.00%	0.00%	4.56%
School	43.24%	71.43%	70.00%	40.00%	47.50%	13.41%	32.50%	18.18%	37.89%
Hospital	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.44%	0.00%	0.00%	0.70%
Electricity	16.22%	2.86%	5.00%	5.00%	22.50%	15.85%	17.50%	18.18%	14.04%
Water	59.46%	62.86%	40.00%	50.00%	62.50%	53.66%	45.00%	63.64%	54.74%
Road	91.89%	80.00%	90.00%	85.00%	82.50%	65.85%	77.50%	72.73%	78.25%

Infrastructure is, by far, the most widely recognized action of local institutions. Water, road and school are top three activities carried out within the various local institutions. The village that has implemented more types of infrastructure work, according to people's opinion, is Sarmoli. It also happens to be the biggest of those surveyed and receiving most funding (as shown in Appendix 3 for Sarmoli Gram Panchayat). The construction of primary schools, on the contrary, is widely recognized everywhere especially where recently built. In more remote villages like Sirtola, Alam and Lodhi electricity related activities receive less space than in bigger and better connected areas. Hospital is least considered given the small dimensions of most villages under study (with the exception of Sarmoli Gram Panchayat). It is unlikely a local institution has capacity to provide such a high maintenance infrastructure if the population is limited. Overall, infrastructure development

is recognized everywhere, although in different degrees, to be a significant task undertaken by the village institution.

Table IV. 7: Perception of local institutions activities: Social Service

Social Services	Jainti	Sirtola	Alam	Lodhi	Tanga	Sarmoli	Suring	Shankadhura	Total Percentage of respondents
Social Services in general	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	5.00%	3.66%	0.00%	0.00%	1.75%
Health	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.50%	2.44%	7.50%	0.00%	2.11%
Education	2.70%	2.86%	5.00%	10.00%	10.00%	7.32%	5.00%	0.00%	5.96%
Livestock	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	5.00%	1.22%	5.00%	0.00%	1.75%
Poverty Alleviation Program	43.24%	5.71%	5.00%	15.00%	25.00%	23.17%	22.50%	36.36%	22.46%

Social services have relatively less scope than infrastructure. Even though poverty alleviation program are central for local institutions, there is less limited space for livestock support, health and education. The former is particularly important for the livelihood of local communities under study but the only subsidies are provided through bank loan programs. In this case, local institutions in bigger villages have greater capacity to invest in social services than small and remote ones (look at table 1.4 for village statistics). A possible explanation of intra-village imbalance is that bigger villages usually receive more funding and are politically more influential at the Block and District level.

Table IV. 8: Perception of local institutions activities: Employment

Employment	Jainti	Sirtola	Alam	Lodhi	Tanga	Sarmoli	Suring	Shankadhura	Total Percentage of respondents
Employment in general	8.11%	8.57%	5.00%	15.00%	2.50%	7.32%	7.50%	0.00%	7.02%
NREGA	27.03%	0.00%	0.00%	5.00%	7.50%	4.88%	10.00%	18.18%	8.42%
Companies, Government Job	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	18.18%	0.00%
Construction Job	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Pension	10.81%	5.71%	5.00%	20.00%	2.50%	8.54%	5.00%	9.09%	7.72%
Manual Labour	2.70%	0.00%	0.00%	5.00%	2.50%	2.44%	2.50%	9.09%	2.46%

Employment is a central priority but not the overwhelming majority pointed it out as most relevant task done at the village level. Infrastructure work is related to employment, especially the NREGA scheme, therefore both functions are strongly correlated. Pension and employment in general are also acknowledged significantly. Village differential indicates, on average, that remote villages will receive less employment benefits than bigger and better connected areas. This also shows how the capacity to create wage labor is higher where the market can be better established.

Table IV. 9: Perception of local institutions activities: Extra activities

Others	Jainti	Sirtola	Alam	Lodhi	Tanga	Sarmoli	Suring	Shankadhura	Total Percentage of respondents
Checkdam, walling, digging work	16.22%	2.86%	15.00%	20.00%	5.00%	1.22%	17.50%	0.00%	8.42%
Women's group building	27.03%	0.00%	5.00%	0.00%	2.50%	1.22%	7.50%	0.00%	5.61%
Panchayati office building	16.22%	2.86%	0.00%	0.00%	5.00%	6.10%	7.50%	0.00%	5.96%
Latrines construction	5.41%	2.86%	10.00%	0.00%	0.00%	4.88%	5.00%	9.09%	4.21%
Bridge work	10.81%	0.00%	5.00%	5.00%	2.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.46%
Government support and subsidies (ex: woolen work)	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	6.10%	2.50%	0.00%	2.11%
House improvements	2.70%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.22%	2.50%	18.18%	1.75%
Temple construction/maintenance	5.41%	0.00%	40.00%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%	15.00%	0.00%	7.02%
Playground/school kitchen	0.00%	5.71%	0.00%	10.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.40%
Not progress	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	12.20%	10.00%	9.09%	5.26%

This table sums up all activities that people indicated other than the one fitting in the four categories so far analyzed. Most activities are related to various infrastructure of different nature. Checkdams, village institutions offices, households' improvements or temple-related activities are the most indicated as common tasks done through Gram Panchayat.

This last set of tables is additional evidence of how much emphasis local institutions give to activities that are mainly focused on tangible assets and it underlines a relatively reduced space to any program or task of different nature such as social justice. Decentralization for

village governance, as intended in the legal guidelines, should entail economic development and social justice to have the same space. The case studies show that its implementation seems to favor only one side of the picture. According to villagers' opinions a disproportion between the various categories emerges and might be interpreted as reduced scope for social justice in relation to gender, caste and power conflict. The various dimensions of decentralization are not mutually exclusive, and people strongly recognize the importance of employment and infrastructure development. Undeniably, infrastructures related to water access, road connectivity and schools are deemed necessary by many communities and local institutions are able to bring significant improvements in that direction. Yet, it is reasonable to assume that social change is not expected to happen within a market-oriented approach while the dimensions of inequalities, class and gender are not more central in any way.

The various tables have described so far how the activities of local institutions comply only partially with what people prioritize in relation to their scope. Infrastructure development is the dominant aspect of Gram Panchayat. The provisions of primary education, health, sanitation, drinking water etc. are very widely recognized; infrastructures, in this direction, have positive implications for marginalized communities. Yet, there is a significant imbalance in relation to Gram Panchayat activities on a village level. Remoter communities (Sirtola, Lodhi and Alam) seem to perceive social welfare less than bigger and better connected villages. Furthermore, employment generation also seems pretty unevenly distributed across communities. While communities from more accessible areas (Jainti,

Suring, Sarmoli) receive more support from local institution in employment generation; remote villages seems to have more inactive institutions in the same regard. Furthermore, the next table shows an example that a centralized policy agenda to use good governance practices to deliver “development” does not necessarily lead to substantial distribution of benefits to poorer households for infrastructure and social welfare.

The next table shows the validity of my argument through a more detailed analysis of who gets what. The data is gathered from the question: “Are your family needs met in Gram Panchayat decision? If yes, what?”.

Table IV. 10: Poverty³² and benefits distribution

What was received?	Lower Poverty	Higher Poverty
Nothing Received (excluding BPL VBPL)	72.46%	68.57%
House Subsidy	26.57%	20.00%
Latrines	14.49%	8.57%
Water and Road	9.66%	8.57%
Pension	7.73%	5.71%
Above poverty line Card (APL)	85.02%	11.43%
Below poverty line Card ³³ (BPL)	34.30%	54.29%
Very below poverty line Card ³⁴ (VBPL)	1.45%	25.71%

The goals of creating a redistributive policy to benefits the poor might hold only in part

³² The poverty level follows the indications from the poverty index provided at the beginning of the Chapter in table 2.1. Low poverty is the value from 1 to 3 and high poverty is the valued from 4 to 6. The very poor are usually landless with very limited sources of livelihood whereas the less poor are usually employed in government job and/or have greater household landholdings.

³³ BPL card provides: Health benefits (free hospital) and ratio card (1 kg wheat/5 Rupees and 1 kg rice/7 Rupees)

³⁴ VBPL card provides: Health benefits (free hospital) and ratio card (1 kg wheat/2 Rupees and 1 kg rice/3 Rupees)

according to my sample. Around 70% of the poorest households of my sample have not received anything from their local institutions of village governance. There is a clear imbalance in benefits distribution between people who are relatively poorer and who is relatively better off, and this might indicate some degree of elite capturing. House subsidies, latrines, water, road and pension benefits seem to be distributed more often to people living in less hardship condition than the extremely poor sections of my sample. Yet, it is necessary to acknowledge that poorer people are much more likely to receive below poverty line cards which guarantee health benefits and subsidized price for food. This is not enough; households in the poorest sections live in greater hardship but are less likely to receive water, sanitation and proper housing. Even though, there is a small portion of the sample who has received something, the majority of people still gained very little from their local institutions. While local institutions are engaged in extensive infrastructure development, it remains to be seen who is going to benefit from it. A possible explanation is that the limited transfer of power and support to the lowest levels of governance for all the potential activities that can be carried out through local bodies does not enable communities to experience more substantial distribution of benefits.

4.9.5 Third level of analysis

The third level of analysis explores how people in my sample have perceived change through the action of local institutions. The analysis attempts to give a deeper understanding of how local institutions are perceived in the process of village change. This

is significant because it can show other dimensions of decentralization for village governance and understand the magnitude of its impact on the community. The infrastructure/employment bias is well established and confirms the good governance agenda of enabling wage labor and the facilitation of a market economy. The last level of empirical analysis can give an additional insights to what made a difference, according to the sample, in the last 5 to 10 years and how local politics is involved in this process.

4.9.6 Result third level of analysis

The first table explores to what extent villagers perceived a change in their communities in the last 5-10 years. An average opinion of each surveyed village is initially expressed in a number: 0(Not change), 1(Little), 2(Significant change).

Table IV. 11: Average perceived change in the village

Village	Average Opinion
Jainti	1.135 (Little)
Sirtola	0.65 (Very Little)
Alam	0.825 (Very Little)
Lodhi	1.4 (Some)
Tanga	1.35 (Some)
Sarmoli	1.5 (Some)
Suring	1.19 (Little)
Shankadhura	1.18 (Little)
Average Change	1.21 (Little)

The condition in the village within the context of decentralized village governance has not substantially changed and, according to villagers, little was done. In some areas, a little degree of change was recognized but it is reasonable to argue that local institutions have not

been able to make substantial differences and improvements according to the sample. This leads the discussion to what type of change was accomplished. In the next tables further exploration in this direction can shed some light to define more in-depth the impact of local bodies according to people's insights.

The following set of tables explore in depth a first set of open answers to the survey questions "how has the village changed in last 5 to 10 years" associated to the categories I have included so far. This partially explains what really made a difference in people's eyes about village governance. For the first analysis, the number of responses about change fitting with the categories already established is summed to what the respondent already identified as activities of local institutions and the total percentage of respondents giving the same answers are presented. The change effect would be the difference between answers received only in identifying local institutions' activities and the answers, fitting in the same categories, about what changed in the village through Gram Panchayat actions.

Table IV. 12: Change according to original categories

Category	Total Answers of local institutions activities with change	% of respondents	Change effect
Gender Equality	13	4.56%	1.75%
Social Justice in general	2	0.70%	0.00%
Caste Representation	2	0.70%	0.00%
Power Conflict	1	0.35%	0.00%
Corruption	1	0.35%	0.35%

Social justice does not receive much space at all considering the dimension of change and the percentages remain quite low.

Category	Total Answers of local institutions activities with change	% of respondents	Change effect
Road	246	86.32%	8.07%
Water	174	61.05%	6.32%
School	120	42.11%	4.21%
Electricity	62	21.75%	7.72%
Infrastructure in general	22	7.72%	3.16%
Hospital	3	1.05%	0.35%

Infrastructures are recognized as the most dominant part of change. Road and water improvements are especially seen as what really made a difference within the context of decentralized of governance.

Category	Total Answers of local institutions activities with change	% of respondents	Change effect
Poverty Alleviation Program	84	29.47%	7.02%
Education	55	19.30%	13.33%
Social Services in general	7	2.46%	0.70%
Livestock	7	2.46%	0.70%
Health	6	2.11%	0.00%

Social Services are also seen as integral part of change. Education in particular becomes more recurrent along with poverty alleviation program as crucial dimension of change in the village.

Category	Total Answers of local institutions activities with change	% of respondents	Change effect
Employment in general	60	21.05%	14.04%
NREGA	33	11.58%	3.16%
Pension	31	10.88%	3.16%
Manual Labour	11	3.86%	1.40%
Companies/ Gov.nt Job	2	0.70%	0.70%
Construction Job	0	0.00%	0.00%

NREGA and employment in general are the most frequent associations with change that villagers linked to employment for Gram Panchayat. This is not surprising since local bodies are only able to give most emphasis to tasks related to the wage economy and labor in particular for infrastructure projects.

Category	Total Answers of local institutions activities with change	% of respondents	Change effect
Checkdam, walling, digging work	27	9.47%	1.05%
Women's group building	19	6.67%	1.05%
Latrines construction	24	8.42%	4.21%
Temple construction/ maintenance	20	7.02%	0.00%
Panchayati office building	18	6.32%	0.35%
Not progress	15	5.26%	0.00%
House improvements	13	4.56%	2.81%
Bridge work	9	3.16%	0.70%
Government support and subsidies (ex: woolen work)	8	2.11%	0.70%
Playground/ school kitchen	4	1.40%	0.00%

The last extra category does not show to be dominant in perception of change on the part of villagers. House improvement and latrines are most underlined but not significantly on a wide scale.

My sample indicates that infrastructures, employment and education are most frequent in defining change at the village level within these categories. An additional last table is necessary to point out another set of answers not specifically related to the items described above. The notion of change is far more complex than what described so far and many villagers expressed different opinions about it at a more abstract level. This is extremely interesting to shape a more multidimensional understanding of how the interaction of local institutions, villagers and external actors are changing the condition of the areas under study.

Table IV. 13: Aggregate measures to define change

Change	How many responses (whole sample)
Change as defined in the previous categories	27.37%
Not change at all	26.67%
Change at a different level	45.96%

Even though the majority as defined change as described in the tables above, there is a significant 45% of the whole sample which gave additional definition to it. The next and last table for this section identifies other patterns of answers in order to describe the interaction between local institutions and my sample.

Table IV. 14: Other answers about change in the village

Residual open answers about change	No Answers	% of respondents
More government help, less extreme poverty and some form of development	49	17.19%
Community cohesion and less internal conflict than before	19	6.67%
Not government support, not progress in the village	18	6.32%
Good Council and elected representatives	16	5.61%
Education and poverty divide is on the rise, higher inequalities	16	5.61%
Bad Politicians, corruption and not information	16	5.61%
Community fragmentation, generation conflict, more selfishness	10	3.51%
Higher understanding of political processes, better rights enforcement	11	3.86%
New interaction and ideas exchange with the outside, more technology	7	2.46%

The evidence shows that of the 45% of my sample who identified change at a different level other than what identified so far, a significant portion has a positive attitude toward it. A solid 17% indicated that more government help in concert with local institutions job is delivering some form of development³⁵ hence positive changes are occurring. Another group of people also finds that community is becoming more cohesive and politicians are responsive to their needs. This positive evidence is counter weighted by another significant group of people who recognize opposite effects. Some feel not to receive enough support from higher tier of governance but most interestingly, there is a significant pool that is recognizing a slow process of community fragmentation and higher divides along the lines of education and poverty. The following experiences of two villagers can give a more subjective understanding of change within Gram Panchayat:

³⁵ In hindi: Gram Vikas

“I am old and illiterate and in Gram Panchayat the young educated kids do not listen to me. I thought politics was for the wellbeing of everyone but now when I go to meetings everyone screams to get money and BPL card. I am sad to see the young of this village to be selfish and not listen to old people during the meetings (Tej Singh, 75 years old from Tanga)”

“I am a woman and we were not supposed to go to Gram Panchayat before. Now, I was elected and I see many other women get elected even at Block and Zilla Panchayat. I started to go to meetings and have my voice heard. I feel more empowered and I am not afraid to say my ideas (Premi Devi, 42 years old from Alam)”

This mixed evidence indicates that the picture is not easy to grasp and it is impossible at this stage to be conclusive about what force is stronger at the village level other than the already assessed infrastructure/employment bias of local institutions. This leaves open door for further discussion and interpretations since the picture emerging out of descriptive evidence is complex and further investigation is needed. Clearly, there is a positive perception about local institutions delivering infrastructures, ensuring reservations rules and providing employment but the price for community cohesion and inequalities can be potentially very high. The need to balance the scope for development intended as substantial social change and social justice along with infrastructure delivery and income generating activities seems hard to achieve for local institutions in the current dynamics.

4.9.7 Conclusion Hypothesis Four

The overall evidence presented in this section leads to a very complex picture. The Constitutional framework for Panchayati Raj mandates economic development and social justice as equally important in decentralization. Decentralized governance for my case studies seems to emphasize infrastructure and employment generation above issues of oppression and social justice. This is recognized at all levels, from priority setting to actual activities carried from local bodies. The general association of village institutions to these two dimensions has profound implications for social justice. Even though villagers recognize the importance of all dimensions, the good governance agenda prioritize only a type of development meant to create the right environment for the capital and the empirical discussion reflects the trend.

The first level of analysis identified the nature of infrastructure bias of local institution from people's opinions about what they feel to be the priorities for their communities within the context of decentralized governance. The majority emphasized construction works and wage labor as first priority, yet social justice was identified as second top especially from scheduled castes that, in the communities under examination, are most oppressed. Furthermore, the poorest sections stressed more than others the importance of gender equality and scheduled castes representation as top priority; both dimensions also attracted most consensuses, in relation to social justice, at the aggregate level. The complex relation between needs and what is actually happening at the local level is not easy to summarize but there seems to be a strong recognition of infrastructure and employment generation.

Although they are both important to provide basic facilities it's hard, at this point, to dissect the common perception of priority setting for village governance from the real personal needs of each individual. It is reasonable to assume that local institutions are increasingly perceived as agents to deliver a specific type of development more oriented to provide facilities than social transformation.

The second level of analysis focuses on what is done in practice through local bodies. Social justice has space equal near to zero whereas the overwhelming majority recognizes NREGA, roads construction, water sources work and poverty alleviation programs to be pursued the most. People do recognize the importance of village assets and local institutions are significantly operating in improving the conditions for basic infrastructure and in delivering some degree of social welfare (as shown also in Appendix 4). Some of these projects are bringing some form of development that people perceive as positive; enabling connectivity along with better water access are undeniably important for the communities under study. Given their positive impact for the communities, it remains to be seen whether they actually reach the poor. The evidence shows that benefits are unevenly distributed and the poorest section of my sample are still left without substantial support. If local bodies had the capacity to expand their scope also to issues of marginalization and if had more voices in how to use the funds received from the state for their own local needs, perhaps outcome for social justice would be improved. A substantial change in the relationship between local bodies and the state will require reworking the power equation. The evidence shows, instead, that the outcome of decentralization is more

attached to the monetary dimension in relation to tangible goods. The lack of substantial space for social change and support for autonomous decision-making at the institutional level translates into addressing matters exclusively related to infrastructure, labor and benefits distribution. Most schemes come from the state level and are meant for purposes favoring a form of development that is by nature more economic and market oriented. There is lack of spaces and support for the creation of inclusive alternatives entailing greater engagement of local communities in the process of priority setting and decision making.

The third and last level of this hypothesis describes the nature and the extent of change through local bodies according to people's opinions. This is the most complex and multidimensional issue to understand because it implies different level of analysis. On the aggregate level, change is mainly perceived to be quite limited and along the same bias in infrastructure and employment generation. A significant amount of people (more than 20%) did not recognize any form of change. Going deeper in the analysis the evidence is more mixed. A significant number of people deem the current trajectories of local institution to bring some development but at the same time to bring community fragmentation and new inequalities. This outcome reiterates the importance to develop basic facilities and social welfare, yet people also recognize internal conflicts about benefits distribution and new forms of selfishness and individualism. Community fragmentation is being created along with inequalities based on education and poverty as shown in the hypothesis about participation. The need to bring new inclusive locally designed processes

of change and development through local institutions can reverse the current polarization and lead to the creation of more democratic alternatives. As long as the mechanisms are externally imposed within a specific political agenda, change will most likely not occur or will be merely limited to the formation of a market. Issues of social change are disregarded from the evidence of my sample in regards to the notion of “change”.

Overall hypothesis number four shows the existence of an imbalance favoring infrastructure through employment generation and reducing space for social justice to overcome the various dimensions of oppression existing in the communities under study. The Constitutional mandate for Panchayati Raj underlines the importance to have both dimensions but evidence shows they are not on the same level. Despite the imbalance, there is a significant section of the sample that is positive about the operations of local institutions and this result indicates that social justice and infrastructure development through Gram Panchayat are not mutually exclusive. Yet, a stronger radical push to inclusiveness and resistance to the good governance agenda can lead to more holistic positive outcomes and to avoid potential conflicts within the community. The process of democratization does imply more space for dissent and also more opportunities to create and support more communitarian alternatives for development outside the scope of the good governance agenda inspired upon neoliberal policies.

CHAPTER V

5.1 How much space exists for social justice within current decentralization practices in the case of India?

The four hypotheses have brought some hard evidence about the link between decentralization and social justice for my case studies. Although this is not conclusive for the entire area of Munsiri or Uttarakhand it can provide enough space to make some tentative conclusions. I recognize the limitations of aggregate measures and regressions, but I also find in them the potential to develop a broad understanding of a possible interpretation and validity for my central argument.

It seems social justice is not the outcome of good governance decentralization in India. According to my empirical evidence, the essential dimension of social justice in the link between development and decentralization does not seem to play a substantial role for current practices. The discourse of decentralization is much more complex than good governance, but the pressures to managerialize implementation processes through depoliticized mechanisms and unrepresentative institutions are happening. Traditional patterns of self-governance, self-reliance and local autonomy are replaced with formal bodies unable to address social change or forms of oppression. Local bodies are also constrained in action to create alternatives and dissent against development inspired by the neoliberal logic. There seems to be a fundamental lack of interaction across tiers of governance and local needs are not necessarily taken into consideration. This is a form of

injustice of imposing mechanisms that are not result of actual democratic discussion and perhaps dissent. The power structure at the central level and the imposed goal to create efficient bodies as agents to ensure a transparent transition to what international organization endorse as “trajectory” to development embeds serious consequences for the local communities in rural India. External pressures to prioritize market integration and displace communitarian structures are multidimensional in nature and affect decentralized bodies at various levels.

In the case of forest policy, local bodies are forced to become manager instead of owners of their own resources. The rhetoric of environmental conservation does not address issue of livelihood and current legal changes are reducing community’s autonomy to use Van Panchayat forest resources according to local needs and practices (microplan). The pressures to commercialize the forest are strong through increasing interferences from government agencies and operations. The involvement of the World Bank and the recent changes in the legal guidelines have given more power to the Forest Department and reduced Van Panchayat autonomy. Access to resources is also constrained by uneven centrally fixed spatial divisions leading to uneven distribution across villages. Local bodies in this frame are also facing great environmental damages hence reduction of community’s resources due to dam constructions and big-scale development projects. The delicate balance between people’s livelihood and their environment is violated from big scale projects jointly financed from the government and corporations. Other impacts imply displacement, forced migration, less agricultural land and social problems. Most local

bodies are powerless and are unable to build democratic dissent or knowledge about the consequences of the wage economy for people's livelihood. These external pressures are forms of social injustices and are complemented by Van Panchayat inability to address the persistent exclusion of women and scheduled caste from institutional processes and internal conflicts over resource distributions.

In the case of village governance local bodies face pressures of different nature yet, similar in logic. According to my evidence, the good governance approach is also evident in Gram Panchayat and the overall implementation process is following the lines of monetary schemes meant to enable the market through centralized schemes for infrastructure and employment development. Although both are necessary for basic needs and income-generation, they can potentially become mechanisms to introduce an economy purely based on wage labor and converting communities into objects of a specific neoliberal political project based on accumulation instead of distribution. In the case studies, the overall picture shows uneven distribution of social welfare and quite limited social justice. This is reflected on the type of development happening at the grassroot level. The conflicts between democratization versus economic and political liberalization is favoring the latter force. The good governance rationale does not provide inclusive processes in decision making or spaces for alternative development models. The link between decentralization and development is indeed constrained within a linear logic of what progress should look like. This is also translating into limited change at the village level and internal issues of low gender attendance, the perpetuation of a significant pool of people not able to engage in

discussion and creation of new divisions between rich and poor or educated and uneducated. The disregard of a more communitarian perspective and of tackling internal forms of subjugation leads to potential for social fragmentation and internal conflicts which can ultimately perpetuate exclusion, poverty and oppression.

The overall consequences of good governance decentralization meant to favor market integration as top priority for development and to simplify the complexities of each community are restraining social justice as defined in this thesis. My field research shows a disruption of livelihood, less access to resources, perpetuation of caste and gender bias, new divisions, potential for community fragmentation, environment damage, economic dependency, higher political control, lack of democratic awareness, power centralization hence lack of social justice. Internal and external mechanisms of oppression are not substantially challenged. In this frame, it becomes necessary to improve current practices for decentralized governance and to ensure social justice through autonomous, representative and politicized institutions that can prioritize local needs and effectively interact with the state. I argue better decentralization practices can happen if the Indian central government shifts from the neo-liberal rhetoric of inclusive growth to the notion of community self-reliance. Such change requires a new political will in creating policies that follows the Constitutional definition of social justice more holistically, especially the notion of common good. A new synergetic form of decentralization, perhaps along the Kerala model, inclusive of a power rebalance between various tiers of governance can favor new forms of development based on social transformation and economic development for the

benefits of the local community.

At the same time, it would not be objective to disregard the potential for transformation emerging out of what has been achieved so far in regards to decentralization in India. In first instance, the improvement of some basic infrastructures is widely recognized and supported from the communities under study underlining that social justice is not mutually exclusive with supporting the local economy. On the contrary, it is important to expand the scope of action of local bodies in order to balance some degree of economic development with social justice. Secondly, my case studies show that gender representation is increasing, especially in the case of Gram Panchayat, through reservation rule and higher political engagement of women. This has great scope for empowerment and dissent building since their oppression might change the outcome of local politics. Successful cases of resistance are also increasing like in the case of Sarmoli Van Panchayat that prioritized livelihood and conservation above government pressures to managerialize the forest. In other words, the interaction with external forces or organizations in concert with resistance and women's empowerment can seriously challenge the current model of development as envisioned from the good governance agenda.

Theoretical Implications of case analysis for good governance

This section briefly examines how the empirical evidence can be linked to the theoretical frameworks, presented in the literature review, in relation to good governance

decentralization. The implications of my study underlines some interesting connection to their arguments, in particular related to the Neo-Marxist critique of good governance decentralization.

My evidence empirical evidence can be confidently linked to the Neo-Marxist critique to good governance. The class structure seems to be perpetuated; inequalities in participation and in the distribution of benefits show how members from poor households are still marginalized and have little decision power in village politics. The power structure is also maintained by the elites in the way social welfare funds are allocated; they favor households that are relatively better off and still do not reach the most in need. The elites are not only within the community, but big-scale development projects also aims at achieving a model of development opposed to self-governance and self-reliance and focused on capital accumulation before livelihood. The same pressures emerge out of the recent legal changes favoring forest commercialization and reduction of institutional autonomy. In the case of Sarmoli forest council, the current trajectory in decentralization and development attracted dissent, but government officials along with external agencies have reacted to resistance by boycotting the democratic process of re-election. The emphasis to create managerial and depoliticized institutions is in line with the Neo-Marxist argument of decentralization as policy to establish social consensus on modernization. This process unfolds from the fragmentation of political practices and the transformation of local bodies into agents to fulfill central policy objectives. The little space for democratic dissents and the continuous exclusion of individuals most exposed to struggle prevents social conflicts to challenge the hegemonic interests within the state and the market. Furthermore, funds allocated at the

local level are not untied and mainly focus on maintaining the conditions for production through the creation of appropriate infrastructures and employment generation through wage labor. Although some recognition of the positive implications of developing basic infrastructures, their distribution is not equal across members of the communities and the long-term trajectory endorsed from the current government is undeniably focused on growth and neoliberalism. In this frame, the Neo-Marxist critique seems to hold especially for the evidence showing reduced democratic pluralism and limited action to rebalance the power structures.

The empirical analysis also shows some space to consider the Sustainable Livelihood approach as framework of analysis of decentralization, especially in the case analysis of Sarmoli village. According to SLA, decentralization is a political capital, along with its inherent power structures, and is not seen as endogenous variable. The framework traditionally does not offer a systematic critique to the issues of class relations. The more recent paper of Scoones (2009) introduces the issue of social relations more strongly. The political capital can be used strategically in synergy with the other capitals of a community in order to create political pressures against dynamics that negatively affect livelihood. In the case of Sarmoli village, allowing people's priorities to be fulfilled can be expanded beyond a single limited scope and can be channeled as unifying factor around struggle. The micro-macro reformulations of livelihoods can look at class politics and can challenge forms of oppression through democratic dissent and social awareness. Livelihood is a

central aspect of assessing social justice and SLA offers potential scope to conceptualize political processes as force for change. The political capital inevitably intertwines with the social and natural dimensions of a community. The power structures, maintained by formalized and depoliticized institutions, can exacerbate inequalities at all levels. In the case of natural capital, big-scale modernizing projects compromise the reliance of local communities on their land, forest produces and surrounding wildlife. Furthermore, exclusionary institutional processes maintain power structures, unequal social relations and internal conflicts, hence deteriorating the social capital. Political capital can be seen as a distinct and endogenous variable, in the analysis of decentralization practices, and can critically link structures and processes in understanding the real impact of policies on livelihood. The good governance approach is negatively impacting all capitals but also offering the space to create resistance and to transform power structures. Similarly to the case of Sarmoli village, the political capital -in synergy with the other capitals- can be used to oppose against managerial institutional arrangements. The analysis of the outcome of resistance, under the SLA lenses, underlines that the success is also passed to other capitals in a community.

The Institutional Political Economy does not offer as much space as the Sustainable Livelihood and Neo-Marxist frameworks for resistance. Yet, some evidence from my case studies also confirms some of the critique developed by the IPE approach to decentralization. First of all, funds in village governance are not reaching the marginalized groups and they are mostly centralized. The incapacity of local institutions to be self-reliant is also caused by the nature of funds coming from the state. Although some basic

infrastructures are developed, the local economy is still constrained by a centralized vision for development that reduces the power of local communities to decide how to use local resources. IPE also emphasizes that economic elites should be targeted at the local levels in order to ensure egalitarian community-based institutions. The evidence shows the contrary, members coming from better off households are more likely to get engaged into village politics as well as more likely recipient of money coming from government schemes. The good governance approach aims at reducing budget deficit through allocative efficiency is a reasonable basis of critique about the limited investment of state resources to welfare-oriented programs as opposed to infrastructure development. The IPE invokes growth as outcome of decentralization but in a more equal and inclusive way, whereas good governance does not seem to embed the same objective.

Although my central problematic is mainly based on the critiques emerging out of the Neo-Marxist framework, there is also space to extend the analysis of my findings for other theories. All three frames underline different issues but the extensive amount of empirical evidence allows me to link the broader theories with field reality. The class and power structures certainly remains the most crucial dimensions for the analysis of social justice in the context of good governance. The next section will explore the theoretical model of decentralization according to Gandhi in order to expand the discussion of other frameworks that might better address the issues of power structures in decentralization and development.

5.2 In search of a new approach

My starting point to explore a new approach of decentralization is based upon Gandhi's rejection of the current principles defining civilization that contributed to the present model of progress and development, as we know it. The imposition of the western basic ethos at its very core in its claim "might is right" and "survival of the fittest" have influenced most policies in development and all disciplines. The politics of power and self-interested economics have become the most dominant approaches in conceptualizing modern development policies. Pure materialism in its determinism has left humans with little freedom, lot of oppression and lack of creativity to cutting new radical edges in conceptualizing development.

Clearly the achievements of modern civilization should not be overlooked and its scientific and critical spirit have contributed immensely to understand the natural world, a process of thinking that would still imply the use of abstraction and complex thought processes. Gandhi's critique is more focused on the colonial imperialism that derives mostly from its capitalist tendency of exploitation and that could be found also today although in different form. The current neoliberal policies, for example, are opening new debates about the validity and limitations of economics as a real solution for development. The modern definition of individual identity is based upon the assumption that fullest realization of human potentialities lies in the progressive improvement of the material condition of human existence. The institutionalization of this western assumption has led to separate homo spiritualis and homo economicus with the consequent creation and installation of

religious and political structures upon the assumption of a self-defining subject as the predominant agency in the world. This separation have led to replace the individual/collective connection to any transcendental order with material needs of acquiring wealth, power, prestige and status as the main objective for human existence. The centrality of self-regarding action in a purely material and rational perspective requires continuous satisfaction of human needs and desires yet the incessant expansion of productive capacity is proving to create stronger structures of oppressions and inequalities, to debilitate human's wellbeing and to endanger the fragile equilibrium with mother earth. Gandhi equates industrial civilization with the Upas tree, even though it does provide comfortable shade to weary travellers or workers it infects their body as well (Joseph, 2007).

Within this framework the debate about what best form of governance should be used to accommodate the current policies leads to an inherent paradox. The current decentralization policy for village governance in India and its current implementation is strongly influenced by the neoliberal policies decided at the central level. India's decentralization is the emblem of two conflicting processes: industrialization and democratization. The emphasis on economic growth favours centralization in policy making but democratization clearly prefers a decentralized setting. The former is by far the dominant priority and has led to an industrial civilization that has made life very complex and multiplex requiring further specialization, expertise and rationalization. Decentralization is indeed clashing with a central tendency to establish industrial capitalism

and in order to support such a process; its rationale is transformed to accommodate the needs of the market. Weaker and oppressed sections of society are the worst off because of lacking in material resources necessary for acquiring and mobilizing power hence social justice is much constrained. Even if endowed with the power of numbers, they are still divided in fragmented groups especially in diverse societies such as India (Malik, 2004).

Decentralization practices are not uniform across states and most institutions remain at the embryonic stage without substantial energy and lacking of adequate powers and resources. Furthermore, most funds come from central schemes and local institutions have not decision power in how to allocate the money hence conflict and tensions are rising between officials and non-officials on petty matter. In a nutshell, no real power is being transferred to lower levels of governance especially to oppressed groups (the majority of the population) hence the overall functioning is not-inclusive, highly impersonal and bureaucratic in nature.

At the present moment there is not process in place to let people decide their own priorities over a wide range of crucial activities and key resources through decentralized practices. Only voluntary organizations seem to perform some reactivation of indigenous form of self-help and governance. Decentralization's rationale needs stronger value integration similarly to Gandhi's model in order to enhance the self-regulating capacity of individuals, organizations and communities instead of market-oriented pressures reducing local institutions to puppets of unjust central policies. This argument is of crucial

importance and demands a shift in understanding of decentralization at the international level where policies are imposed and at the national level where policies are implemented.

5.3 Gandhi's model of Village Swaraj: Delinking from exploitation and equality for all

Gandhi has a very powerful understanding of decentralization reflected in his model of village Swaraj aiming at rebuilding community life, guaranteeing substantive equality and complete participation by all. It should be an instrument to invigorate community life as a ground for situating freedom and for developing a proper and creative social and communitarian orientation. As Gandhi views it:

“a structure composed of innumerable villages with never ascending circles. Life will not be pyramidal with the apex sustained by the bottom but an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individuals ready to perish for the villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units. Therefore, the outermost circumstance will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it... no one... will be the first and none the last (Pyare, 1958: 580-581).”

Ghandi's inspiring quote is in convergence with its pragmatic arguments; villages should be economically self-supporting and politically self-governing with non-institutionalized beliefs or religions but an identification with the universe and with service for all. The system should be perpetuating harmony at its core and each one would complement the life of the

other and serve the nation in a spirit of true voluntarism. It might sound radically idealistic but without a strong inspiring model there is not scope for new approaches hence for change.

Gandhi basically invokes a cultural and spiritual ideal of simple living and high thinking and he wants a raise in the standard of life instead of standard of living. This requires a decentralized structure of government in which individuals enjoy maximum freedom of thought, expression and participation in cooperative decision-making and implementation processes. A common effort channelled to raise the levels of humanity within a new radical and revolutionary conceptualization of democracy at its core. The ideal society should also be de-linked from sources of external exploitation, inequality, class domination, class conflict, communal disturbances, strikes and all kinds of violence. Democracy cannot be evolved by forcible methods but should come from within and the majority should tend to reflect down to the lowest level of institutional structure the collective social will. The process of democratization should indeed be put as first priority in decentralized governance. Panchayats can and should have local development without external pressures to conform to a non-industrial civilization and pursue a model based on rural values and informed by notions of modern emancipated consciousness (Roy, 2004).

Village Swaraj is based upon the principle of self-sufficiency mostly confined to basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Gandhi is not against modern science and technology per se, his attitude is entirely rational and scientific since he claims they should become

functions and not dominators of people. He argues the process of industry mechanization should always preserve labour intensity and complement cottage industries instead of killing them and concentrate production in narrow fields/units. Each village should become a production centre and a little republic organically linked with higher bodies but enjoying maximum freedom of deciding the affairs of the locality. Villages hold a very important place in Gandhi's scheme of life and social organization. Indian villages are till today the backbone of India and without them; India will perish or as Gandhi says: "her mission will be lost" (Sharma, 1987). Independent India had to make a choice between its ancient traditional village setting and urbanization forced by an industrial model of foreign domination. In the current industrialization process the centres of power have indeed shifted to cities and the central challenge to define what role villages should play now is surely discussed and needs even more attention in the various debates about decentralization.

The complexities of India's society have indeed increased in the last few decades and new issues are becoming part of the debate (population pressures, market integration, environmental damages, energy requirements, further fragmentation in community structures, increase in inequalities, the hazy dreams of infinite growth at no cost etc.). Decentralization needs to deal with all these contextual factors but its central principle needs to be revisited especially in the context of international pressures upon India to adopt neoliberal policies that gives by far too much relevance to the economic side of human life in an exploitative manner.

5.4 Potential areas for further research: Madhya Pradesh approach shift

Madhya Pradesh government amended the Madhya Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act of 1993 and substituted the words “Panchayat Raj and Gram Swaraj” in the place of “Panchayat Raj”. The operationalisation of Gram Swaraj in Madhya Pradesh is probably one of the most significant changes in the system of governance based on “direct democracy” instead of indirect representative parliamentary democracy. The experience of Gram Swaraj will have serious implications for the discourse on governance, democracy and modernity and needs to be assessed. The premise is that village people can assemble and sit collectively and therefore representatives to represent the views, aspirations, needs and interests of the people are not required. The new system intends to give power to the people and not to their representatives yet the framers of Gram Swaraj was conscious of the hierarchical social order and inequitable power relations in the village. Therefore, to protect Gram Swaraj from becoming monopoly of the powerful, certain provisions have been inserted to safeguard the interest of the larger community and deprived categories in general. Secondly, the devolution structure for all Gram Panchayat -the traditional units of governance in Panchayati Raj- is different, they are endowed with more untied funds coming from the state government and Gram Swaraj are also able to manage its expenditure and operational cost drawing money from Gram Panchayat’s fund (McCarten, 2004).

Gram Swaraj in Madhya Pradesh has emerged from an extensive process of deliberation, refinement and dialogue. There should be more space for analysis of its structure but for the purpose of this thesis is enough. The Gandhian ideological framework inspired the basic structure and body of this new system of self-governance. The primary objective of introducing a new system of Gram Swaraj is evidently to transfer power to the people and take forward the process of democratic decentralisation to its ideal end. The aim is to facilitate social, economical and political autonomy at the village level. Gram Swaraj attempt to radically restructure the governance space according to the Gandhian worldview and also to reduce the increasing conflicts created due to Panchayat elections' process. According to the proponents of Gram Swaraj to lose elections is taken as a personal loss in a village, often leading to disruption of the social fabric. By strengthening the village level autonomy and introduce Gram Swaraj, the Panchayat elections are expected to have less adverse consequences and to reinstate its importance as a social unit and community (Behar, 2001)

The implementation of Gram Swaraj in Madhya Pradesh also has some pitfalls and faces great resistances. The parallel creation of another body other than the traditional Panchayat institutions is leading to confusion, overlapping task and not substantial change in the way judicial and police functions are entrusted to the village level. The latter factor seems to be crucial in Gandhi's claims to achieve village autonomy. The series of problem at the legal and implementation levels are arising and becoming part of a more critical review of its impact. Yet much enthusiasm is supporting this new approach shift hence the Madhya

Pradesh could be the basis for further critical analysis of its internal contradictions and potentials giving voice to a new example in the debate about new approaches to decentralization in India.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Village, people and politicians survey

Village Data

1. Village Name

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2. Village Size

0-20	20-50	50-100	100-200	More than 200
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3. Altitude

Below 2000	2000-2300	2300-2500	2500-2800	Over 2800
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4. Road Access

0-2 km	2-4 km	4-6 km	6-8 km	> 8 km
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5. Primary education facilities access

0-1 km	1-2 km	2-3 km	4-5 km	> 5 km
--------	--------	--------	--------	--------

6. Secondary education facilities access

0-1 km	1-2 km	2-3 km	4-5 km	> 5 km
--------	--------	--------	--------	--------

7. Nearest Public hospital

0-1 km	1-2 km	2-3 km	4-5 km	> 5 km
--------	--------	--------	--------	--------

8. Electricity access (solar, primary etc.)

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Very often	Always
-------	--------	-----------	------------	--------

9. Is there presence of NGOs in the area?

Yes	No
-----	----

10. What are its/their operations for the community?

--

11. Is there presence of private companies in the area?

Yes	No
-----	----

What type?

--

What does it produce?

--

If so, what land are they working on?

--

12. Are there major constructions (for example dams, roads etc.) in the area?

Yes	No
-----	----

What type?

--

Other information

--

Van Panchayat Information

1. Year of foundation

--

2. Number of right holders and council member

--

3. Forest distance from village

Less 1 km	1-2 km	3-4 km	4-5 km	More than 5
-----------	--------	--------	--------	-------------

4. Forest area under Van Panchayat

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5. Number of women in the council

--

6. Van Sarpanch

Male	Female
------	--------

7. Forest watcher (Chowkidar)

Yes	No
How present is he?	
How is paid?	
How directive is he?	

8. Microplan

Yes	No
-----	----

When was decided?

--

What are contents in the Microplan? (If it is possible to get a copy)

<i>Microplan</i>	Contents
Primary tree species	
Local needs	
For sale outside the village	
Any plantation work	
Others	

09. Does the VP generate internal funds inside the Van Panchayat?

Yes	No
-----	----

10. Does the VP have a joint bank account with the secretary of the village forest (appointed by Divisional Forest Officer)?

Yes	No
-----	----

11. Did the VP pay the 10% of sale proceed to the forest department?

Yes	No
Of what?	

12. Did the VP receive any funding?

From whom?	Yes	No	When	How was it spent?	(How much?)
Gram/ Block Panchayat					
State Government					
Central Government					
Forest Department					
NGO					
Others					

13. Did the VP get any assistance from FDA (Forest Development Authority)?

Yes	No
What kind?	

14. How active are the Mahila Mangaldal and other forms of groups within the VP? What type?

Yes	No

**Gram Panchayat
General information**

1. Year of foundation

--

2. Number of permanent residents and council members

--

3. Women in council

--

4. scheduled tribes and scheduled castes in council

--

5. Who is the Pradhan?

Women GE	Women scheduled castes	Women scheduled tribes	Men scheduled castes	Men scheduled tribes	General
-------------	------------------------------	------------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	---------

6. Who was the previous Pradhan?

Women GE	Women scheduled	Women scheduled	Men scheduled	Men scheduled	General
-------------	--------------------	--------------------	------------------	------------------	---------

	castes	tribes	castes	tribes	
--	--------	--------	--------	--------	--

7. When was the last election?

--

8. Does the secretary contribute effectively to Gram Panchayat?

Yes	No
How?	

9. Internal Funds (if data available)

--

Funds Origin and purpose

	Y	N	How were they invested?
NGOs			
Development Scheme			
Taxation			
External Agencies			
Others			

10. What development projects have been carried out in the community in the present term and in the previous term?

	Yes	No	What kind and how many
Core Functions			
Agriculture			
Primary Education			
Health and family welfare			
Minor Irrigation			
Social Welfare			
Drinking Water			
Women and Child development			

Sanitation			
Poverty alleviation programme			
Rural Housing			
Animal Husbandry			
Rural Development			
Social Justice			
Others			

11. Are any social justice issue discussed in the Gram Panchayat? What kind?

--

12. Do people ever bring any social conflict to the Gram Panchayat? What kind?

--

13. Are there committees? What are they doing?

Committees	Yes	No	Activities
Planning development committee			
Education committee			
Construction work committee			
Health and Welfare committee			
Administrative committee			
Water Management committee			

PRIMARY SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Interviewee Data

1. Name
2. Gender

Male	Female
------	--------

3. Age group

Under 20	20-30	35-45	45-60	Over 60
----------	-------	-------	-------	---------

4. Primary source of income for the interviewee and for the family.

Source of Income	Scale			
Agriculture			How much land?	
Livestock			Holdings?	
Trade/ shop keeping				
Government service/ Salaried/Pension				
Manual Labour (landless)				
Tourism				
Wool/Carpet making				
Others				

How much does your household rely on forest resources from the VP?

Not at all	Little	Some	Completely
------------	--------	------	------------

5. Caste

scheduled tribes	scheduled castes (Shilpkars)	Jaimders
------------------	------------------------------	----------

6. Education/Schooling

Illiterate	Elementary	Junior	High School	Intercollege	BA	MA
------------	------------	--------	-------------	--------------	----	----

7. Are you part of the council of the VP? Or in the past (when)

Yes	No
Which Position?	

8. Are you part of the council of the Gram Panchayat?

Yes	No
Which Position?	

Van Panchayat Questions

Dependency and forest access

1. What do you think about forest resources/health to meet your household's needs?

Fuelwood Yes/No

Very Little	Little	Enough	In excess
-------------	--------	--------	-----------

Water Yes/No

Very Little	Little	Enough	In excess
-------------	--------	--------	-----------

Fodder Yes/No

Very Little	Little	Enough	In excess
-------------	--------	--------	-----------

2. Do you need to go outside the forest boundaries to get forest resources?

Yes	No
Where?	

3. According to your opinion is the forest area sufficient to meet village needs?

Not at all	Very little	Little	Enough	In excess	I don't know
------------	-------------	--------	--------	-----------	--------------

4. What do you think about the forest condition in the last 10 years?

I don't know	Worsen	Same	Better
--------------	--------	------	--------

Why?

Individual Level

5. As a woman/man who is also rightholder:

Do you attend VP meetings?

Yes	Sometimes	No
-----	-----------	----

Do you participate in decision-making?

Yes	Little	No
-----	--------	----

Are your needs given due consideration and met in the Van Panchayat?

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Always
-------	--------	-----------	--------

Why?	
------	--

6. Are there conflicts behaviours with other communities?

Yes	No	I don't know
-----	----	--------------

Are there conflicts behaviours within the community?

Yes	No	I don't know
-----	----	--------------

Are there collaborative behaviours with other communities?

Yes	No	I don't know
-----	----	--------------

What kind?

Pressures

7. Do you know about the contents of your village's microplan and forest council activities?

Yes	No
-----	----

Is being implemented? To what extent?

No	Yes
----	-----

8. What do you think about forest department in relation to Van Panchayat?

Directive	Not present	Supportive	No opinion
-----------	-------------	------------	------------

What is the forest department doing?

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9. Are there external agencies (companies, private traders, corporations for example NTBC, construction companies etc...) in the area:

Yes	No	I don't Know			
What are they doing?					
What is the impact on the forest?		Negative	None	Positive	I don't Know
What is the impact on the community?		Negative	None	Positive	I don't Know
Why?					

10. Are there NGOs in the area?

Yes	No
-----	----

What do you think about their operations?

--

Gram Panchayat Raj Questions

Village Level

1. What do you think are the priority needs of your community within the context of Gram Panchayat? Grade your priority according to the categories here below.

<i>Social justice</i>	<i>Infrastructure</i>	<i>Social Services</i>	<i>Employment</i>	<i>Others</i>
Power conflict scheduled castes representation Gender equality Corruption	School Hospital Electricity Water Road	Health Education Livestock Poverty alleviation program	100 days NRG Companies Construction job Pension Manual Labour	

2. Is there scope for these priorities of the village to be put in the agenda of the Gram Panchayat?

Not at all	Little	Some	Good
------------	--------	------	------

Why and for what activities?

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3. Have the village condition substantially changed in the last 5-10 years?

No	Little	Yes
Why? Causes		

Household/Individual Level

4. How often do you attend Gram Panchayat meetings?

Never	Once a year	Every 6 months	Every 3 months
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If never, why?

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5. Has your participation increased in the last 5 years?

Yes	Little/Same	No
-----	-------------	----

Why?

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6. Are your family's needs met in Gram Panchayat decisions?

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
-------	--------	-----------	-------	--------

What?

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7. Are you above/ below/ very below the poverty line?

APL (Above poverty line)	Below poverty lines (BPL)	Very below poverty line (VPBL)
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Appendix 2: Market Pressures

PETITION AGAINST DAM CONSTRUCTION: SIGNS OF STRUGGLE

To:

1. Sri S.Raju , IAS
Commissioner Kumaon Division
Nainital, Uttarakhand

2. Shri N.S. Negi, IAS
District Magistrate
Pithoragarh District,

3. Dr. Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'

Hon. Chief Minister, Uttarakhand
Chief Minister Niwas. Circuit House

Respected Sirs,

We, members of Civil Society groups and concerned individuals from all over the country write to register our protest and concern at the systematic way in which the Van Panchayat elections in Sarmoli Jainti Van Panchayat (Village Forest Council), Munsiri Block, District Pithoragarh, have been systematically sabotaged since December 2009. As you may be aware, elections in this Van Panchayat were conducted on 3 separate occasions- the 12th and 20th of December 2009 and then on the 10th of January 2010. All three times the election process could not be completed as they were disrupted by an opposition of local contractors and contract workers of the National Thermal Power Corporation. This disruption is being raised by the contractor lobby mainly against the Sarpanch of Sarmoli Jainti Van Panchayat and the Panchayat Committee, who has been opposing the vicious activities of NTPC in the land acquisition process and has clearly been gaining the requisite support in the election proceedings carried out three times since December, 2009.

NTPC is currently engaged in the construction of a 261 MW Hydropower Project on the Gori river in the valley. For the purpose of HEP, the process of acquiring private as well as village community land in the region has faced strong resistance communities have been making their voices heard and other groups have also supported the opposition of land acquisition. The Sarmoli Jainti Van Panchayat has been supporting those who are losing the land so as to conserve the village forest, water, flora and fauna and the natural resource base which forms the basis of local livelihoods. The local administration is also in collusion with NTPC that Ms. Malika, the present Woman Sarpanch of Sarmoli Jainti Van Panchayat does not get re-elected at any cost. The private as well as village community land which would otherwise have been easy to acquire has now got a bit harder for NTPC. For the past many years present and past elected representatives of Van Panchayat and other groups supporting the opposition of land acquisition has successfully run an awareness and civil rights campaign against the ways that the companies and administration operate.

The village community and the elected representatives of the PRI- the Gram Pradhan, the Kshetriya Panchayat member and the Zilla Panchayat member- all have made a concerted effort on all three occasions to ensure free and fair elections. However, there has been a growing threat of violence and a total disregard for democratic processes. Ms. Malika Viridi has been facing repeated harassment by vested interests making a complete mockery of the Panchayati Raj Process. This is to request you to please ensure free and fair elections in Sarmoli-Jainti Van Panchayat and to bring to book the disruptive elements that have forced the elections to be cancelled three times already. Specifically, we would like to request to you to ensure:

1. That elections now be held in a safe and neutral place- in the presence of an

independent and impartial senior returning officer.

2. That action is taken against the elements that have disrupted free and fair elections all three times.

3. That the threat of violence against the present Woman Sarpanch, the women supporters and the village community by the opposition be stopped with immediate effect by arranging for security to be provided at the venue to prevent any untoward incident or brow beating of the genuine voters.

Appendix 3: Gram Panchayat funding and social justice

SIRTOLA GRAM PANCHAYAT Funds Origin and purpose

	Y	N	How were they invested?
NGOs		X	
Development Schemes	X		50% of funds arrive from the central government and 50% from the state government. NREGA is the new scheme: 1lakh/year (2,260 US dollars/year). This money is being invested to build water tanks and checkdams.
Taxation		X	
External Agencies/ Government agencies	X		Financial Commission: 1 lakhs/year (2,260 US dollars/year). This money is spent for water infrastructures (ie: water tanks), road and reinforced cement concrete construction.
Others			

10. What development projects have been carried out in the community in the present term and in the previous term?

	Yes	No	What kind and how many In the term 2003-2008
Core Functions			
Agriculture		X	1) School Boundaries (2 lakhs) (4,520 US dollars/year)
Primary Education	X		2) Junior High School (6 lakhs) (13,560 US dollars/year) 3) Computer room (3.7 lakhs) (8,361 US dollars/year)
Health and family welfare		X	
Minor Irrigation	X		1) Water channel construction (3.4 lakhs)
Social Welfare	X		1) Pensions: - 2 widow pensions (400 Rupees/month) (9 US dollars/month) - 6 old people pensions (400 Rupees/month) (9 US dollars/month)
Drinking Water		X	
Women and Child development		X	
Sanitation		X	
Poverty alleviation programme	X		1) Ration cards: - 5 Very below poverty line cards - 16 Below poverty lines cards
Rural Housing	X		1) Indirawas house scheme

			- 1 house (28,000 Rupees=632 US dollars) - 1 house repairing (7,000 Rupees=158 US dollars)
Animal Husbandry		X	
Rural Development		X	
Social Justice		X	
Others		X	

11. Are any social justice issue discussed in the Gram Panchayat? What kind?

According to the previous Gram Pradhan there are not major social issues raised in Gram Panchayat in relation to gender matters. He specifically said that during his term there were not social issues discussed relating to gender, corruption or caste. The new elected Gram Pradhan said there are some and that she would take them up during her term.

12. Do people ever bring any social conflict to the Gram Panchayat? What kind?

People during the last term did not bring social issues in front of the Gram Panchayat.

TANGA-LODHI GRAM PANCHAYAT

Funds Origin and purpose

	Y	N	How were they invested? 2002-2008
NGOs		X	
Development Schemes	X		5 lakhs (11,300 US dollars) per year was invested in reinforced cement concrete road construction, stone patch, checkdam and water work. Schemes' names were not specified.
Taxation		X	
External Agencies/ Government agencies	X		The village development officer (Gram Vikas Adhikari) gave 2 lakhs (4,520 US dollars) per year for some infrastructure job.

Others	X		State level representatives quota: 40,000 Rupees/ once (903 US dollars)
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10. What development projects have been carried out in the community in the present term and in the previous term?

	Yes	No	What kind and how many In the term 2003-2008
Core Functions			
Agriculture		X	
Primary Education	X		1) 3 primary school and 1 junior high school (13 lakhs= 29,300 US dollars) 2) Teacher hours (2.7 lakhs=6,000 US dollars) 3) School boundaries (40,000 Rupees= 903 US dollars)
Health and family welfare		X	
Minor Irrigation		X	
Social Welfare	X		1) Pensions: - 5 pensions (250 Rupees/month=5 US dollars) - Financial help to 5 people without charging interest (5,000 Rupees/once= 112 US dollars)
Drinking Water	X		1) Pipeline repairing (not figure in rupees)
Women and Child development	X		1) 2 disabled children financial support (250 Rupees/month=5 US dollars)

Sanitation	X		1) Road cleaning and grass cutting (community effort for free)
Poverty alleviation programme	X		1) Ration cards: - Very below poverty line cards and Below poverty lines cards given, not amount specified.
Rural Housing	X		1) Indirawas house scheme - 6 houses subsidies (30,000 Rupees)
Animal Husbandry		X	
Rural Development	X		1) Water work, checkdams, path construction (3 lakhs/ year=6,780 US dollars)
Social Justice	X		1) Gram Panchayat's effort to compromise parties 2) Women reservation to work in schools as teacher or as general personnel
Others		X	

11. Are any social justice issue discussed in the Gram Panchayat? What kind?

Gram Panchayat tries to solve conflicts over agricultural land issues. If the husband is violent with his wife, the Gram Panchayat will lead both parties to a compromise through a written consent. In the case the violence occurs again, the husband will be sent to court.

12. Do people ever bring any social conflict to the Gram Panchayat? What kind?

Some cases of violence to women are reported to the Gram Pradhan.

ALAM-DARMA GRAM PANCHAYAT Funds Origin and purpose

	Y	N	How were they invested? Current term and previous term
NGOs		X	
Development Schemes	X		NREGA: 3 lakhs/year (6,780 US dollars).

			The money is currently invested in building chekdams, water conservation and for plantation work.
Taxation	X		Not taxation in Alam but not information about Darma.
External Agencies/ Government agencies	X		From the state government money comes for the 11 th financial commission (1 lakh/year=2,260 US dollars)
Others		X	

10. What development projects have been carried out in the community in the present term and in the previous term?

	Yes	No	What kind and how many In the term 2003-2008 and current activities
Core Functions			
Agriculture		X	
Primary Education	X		1) Primary school floor work in Alam (25,000 Rupees=564 US dollars) 2) 1 junior high school in Darma (8 lakhs=18,080 US dollars)
Health and family welfare		X	
Minor Irrigation		X	
Social Welfare	X		1) Current pensions: - 5 widow pensions in Alam and Darma (400 Rupees/month=9 US dollars) - 3 disabled people pensions for both Alam and Darma

Drinking Water	X		1) Pipeline maintenance for both villages (10,000 Rupees/year=226 US dollars)
Women and Child development		X	
Sanitation	X		1) 20 toilet in Alam were built in the last term (5,000 Rupees/1 latrine=113 US dollars) 2) 70 toilet in Darma were built in the last term (5,000 Rupees/1 latrine=113 US dollars)
Poverty alleviation programme	X		1) Ration cards: - 4 Very below poverty line cards in Alam and 6 Very below poverty line cards in Darma. Health benefits (free hospital) and ratio card (1 kg wheat/2 Rupees and 1 kg rice/3 Rupees) are included. (1 Rupees=0.02 US dollars) - 25 Below poverty lines cards in Alam and 40 below poverty lines cards in Darma. Health benefits (free hospital) and ratio card (1 kg wheat/5 Rupees and 1 kg rice/7 Rupees) are included. (1 Rupees=0.02 US dollars)
Rural Housing	X		1) Indirawas house scheme - 1 houses subsidies (35,000 Rupees=790 US dollars) - 1-2/yr house repairing subsidy in Alam (10,000 Rupees=226 US dollars) - 2-3/yr house repairing subsidy in Darma (10,000 Rupees=223 US dollars)

Animal Husbandry		X	
Rural Development	X		1) NREGA and GBA scheme's money is used for rural development work (checkdam, tal-kal etc.)
Social Justice			Look at 11 and 12
Others		X	

11. Are any social justice issue discussed in the Gram Panchayat? What kind?

Some conflicts about boundaries issues with other villages are discussed in Gram Panchayat meeting. Women also openly talk about violence in Gram Panchayat meetings. The current Gram Pradhan established a monetary fine to contrast household violence. The fine is from 50 (around 1 US dollars) to 100 (around 2 US dollars) Rupees to men who act violent against women. If violence persists men are sent to court. According to the current Gram Pradhan corruption is not discussed in meetings but exists and caste issues are also not raised but that does not mean they do not exist.

12. Do people ever bring any social conflict to the Gram Panchayat? What kind?

The following answer would suit a different and more generic question about what are the current problems discussed in Gram Panchayat and what are the actions forward the Gram Pradhan is willing to take to face them:

Yes. The given solutions are only 2% out of 100% of all problems. Water, house problems along with many other issues are a reality in Alam but the amount of money received is X and the needs would require much more financial support from external sources. Gram Pradhan admits to be young but he's willing to start speaking up in the block Panchayat meetings held in Munsiri. He is also applying for more money to the government.

SURING GRAM PANCHAYAT

Funds Origin and purpose

	Y	N	How were they invested? 2003-2008
NGOs	X		The Gram Panchayat has been received a monetary subsidy for woollen work of around 1 lakh per year of which 50,000 (1,130 US dollars) Rupees is pure subsidy and another 50,000 Rupees is loan.
Development Schemes	X		TSP scheme (tribal schedule population): 6-7 lakhs/ year (13,560-15,820 US dollars). The money has been invested for road

			<p>construction and some other infrastructure work.</p> <p>GRY scheme: 6/7 lakhs/year (13,560-15,820 US dollars). The money was spent for digging and construction work, water channel etc.</p> <p>Indirawas scheme: 1 lakhs/ year (2,260 US dollars). Per year an average of 3 houses were built.</p>
Taxation	X		<p>Around 10,000- 15,000 Rupees/year (226-339 US dollars) from taxation was invested for temple maintenance, functions such as weddings, and road cleaning.</p>
External Agencies/ Government agencies	X		<p>Financial management scheme: 4 lakhs/year = 9,040 US dollars). The money was spent especially to provide more facilities to scheduled tribes and scheduled castes families.</p>
Others		X	

10. What development projects have been carried out in the community in the present term and in the previous term?

	Yes	No	What kind and how many In the term 2003-2008 and current activities
Core Functions			
Agriculture	X		<p>Seeds for agriculture from the block given 2 times/year: 3600 Rupees/2 times per year. (81 US dollars)</p>
Primary Education	X		<p>3) Free uniforms for children in poor families</p> <p>4) School maintenance and cleaning work (1,000 Rupees/year=23 US dollars)</p> <p>5) 1 primary school was built (4 lakhs=9,040 US dollars)</p>
Health and family welfare	X		<p>1) Emergency transport for people to hospital. 3,000 Rupees/year</p>

			(67 US dollars)
Minor Irrigation		X	
Social Welfare	X		<p>2) Current pensions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 8 widow pensions in Suring Gram Panchayat (400 Rupees/month= 9 US dollars) - 5 disabled people pensions in Suring (400 Rupees/month =9 US dollars) - 12 old people pensions (400 Rupees/month =9 US dollars) <p>3) The ex Gram Pradhan intended temple construction as a social welfare activity. (1.5 lakh/year=3,390 US dollars)</p>
Drinking Water	X		1) Pipeline maintenance and repairing (5,000 Rupees/year=113 US dollars)
Women and Child development	X		<p>2) Some rare subsidy to women when in need (reason not specified) of 1-2,000 Rupees (23-45 US dollars)</p> <p>3) Some sporadic contribution from Gram Panchayat to purchase furniture and food for kids of poor families</p>
Sanitation	X		<p>3) 5-6 subsidies for toilet/year (3,000 Rupees=68 US dollars/1 toilet subsidy)</p> <p>4) Community effort to keep the village clean.</p>
Poverty alleviation programme	X		2) Ration cards:

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 8 Very below poverty line cards - 50 Below poverty lines cards
Rural Housing	X		<p>1) Indirawas house scheme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 full house subsidies/ year (81,000 Rupees total=1,830 US dollars) - 3 house repairance subsidy/ year (27,000 Rupees Total=610 US dollars)
Animal Husbandry	X		<p>2) Subsidy/loan for people to purchase animals. Once a family buys the animal using the loan money it has to repay back with the profit it can gain from it. Once it has repaid the loan amount, the government will gift the family with a subsidy. The loan amount changes according to the type of animal the family needs (cow: 6,000 Rupees (135 US dollars), horse: 15,000 Rupees (339 US dollars), goat 5,000 Rupees (113 US dollars). In Suring case in one year 30,000 Rupees (678 US dollars) on average were given as loan and 15,000 (339 US dollars) Rupees as subsidy. Around 10-12 people/year applied to get an animal in this way.</p>
Rural Development	X		<p>2) GRY money was spent for various infrastructure jobs in rural development. 4-5 dhara (water sources) were built for 50,000 Rupees (1,130 US dollars)/each. Reinforced cement concrete and stone path construction were carried out (4</p>

			lakh/total).
Social Justice			Look at 11 and 12
Others		X	

11. Are any social justice issue discussed in the Gram Panchayat? What kind?

12. Do people ever bring any social conflict to the Gram Panchayat? What kind?

There are conflicts about land. The ex Gram Pradhan admitted there are also cases of violence against women discussed in Gram Panchayat meetings (4-5 cases per year). The gender issue is seldom talked about in meetings but personal suggestions are given. In the case violence persist, a fee can be inflicted or the police can also be called. In the last term women attendance and participation increased and the current Gram Pradhan as well as the past Gram Pradhan acknowledged people are more open to talk about corruption. The current Gram Pradhan also recognized the problem of violence against women and he underlined that if the case persists more than 3 times then the police will be asked to intervene.

JAINTI GRAM PANCHAYAT

Funds Origin and purpose

	Y	N	How were they invested? 1997-2002 The new Gram Pradhan does not know the names of the schemes from which she receives the money and the Gram Pradhan from 2003-2008 recently passed away so some data might be inconclusive.
NGOs		X	
Development Schemes	X		GRY: 1.2 lakhs/year (2,712 US dollars). The money was invested in construction work of general scope below listed.
Taxation	X		1 Rupees/ family for administrative fee was asked but very few contributed.
External Agencies/ Government agencies	X		10 th financial commission money: 1 lakhs/year (2,260 US dollars).
Others		X	
The current Gram Pradhan did not give information about any scheme. She mentioned the formation of self-help groups (SHGs) (Panchachuli Samu, Nanda Devi Samu etc.) to get money from the block Panchayat and from the State Bank of India (SBI). These SHGs have worked for the last 7 years for groups of 6-7 Below poverty			

lines people; the block has allocated 10,000 Rupees (226 US dollars) per group whereas the SBI contributed with 15,000 Rupees (339 US dollars) per group. Once the money is received by the SHG the Gram Panchayat will decide how it should be invested (wool work, animals husbandry etc.). The full amount will have to be fully repaid without interest. Recently the SBI has decided to allocate 2.5 lakhs (5,650 US dollars) for the formation of more SHGs in Jaiti and the only extra expense the SHG has to sustain, other than the full repayment, is the opening of a bank account for 20 Rupees (0.45 US dollars)/month within State Bank of India.

10. What development projects have been carried out in the community in the present term and in the previous term?

	Yes	No	What kind and how many In the term 1997-2002 and some information of the work done in the term 2003-2008 and the current activities.
Core Functions			
Agriculture	X		1) Plantation work with the Van Panchayat 2) Subsidy to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes families for agricultural work (5,000 Rupees=113 US dollars/year per family and a total of 50 per year was subsidized) in1997-2002. 3) Currently an “agriculture seed support subsidy” is given to Below poverty lines families (as much as 4,000 Rupees= 90 US dollars per family, in this moment around 15 are benefiting from this scheme)
Primary Education	X		1) Primary school in 2001 (1.91 lakhs=4,316 US dollars) 2) Junior High School in 2007 (6 lakhs=13,560 US dollars) 3) In the term 1997-2002 there was a program called literacy

			<p>program campaign -GRY funding- that enrolled three private teachers to teach to old, handicapped and illiterate people basic literacy. (500 Rupees=11.3 US dollars/month per teacher). The program is not running anymore because according to the Gram Pradhan of 1997-2002 there is a lower interest of learning besides being able to sign in Gram Panchayat meetings.</p> <p>4) In 2009 the floor of school's kitchen is being rebuilt (50,000 Rupees=1,130 US dollars)</p>
Health and family welfare		X	
Minor Irrigation		X	
Social Welfare	X		<p>1) Pensions 1997-2002 (old rates):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 disable people pensions (125 Rupees=2.8 US dollars/month) - 5 old people pensions (125 Rupees=2.8 US dollars/month) <p>2) Now the pensions amount increased to 400=9 US dollars/month and there are about 6-7 old people, 5-6 widows, 2-3 disable people benefiting from it.</p>
Drinking Water	X		<p>1) In 1997-2002 the scheduled-caste water supply scheme used to run (50,000-60,000 Rupees (1,130-1,355 US dollars) total amount given for the following work):</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 water tanks - Pipeline maintenance - Stand post constructions - Water chamber <p>That scheme has now completed its work (2009).</p> <p>2) In 2002-2007 some water tanks were built (number not specified) for an amount of 35,000Rs=791 US dollars/piece.</p>
Women and Child development		X	
Sanitation	X		<p>1) Road cleaning, river cleaning (5,000 Rupees=113 US dollars/year as GRY funding)</p> <p>2) In 1997-2002, 7 latrines were made (2,500-5,000 Rupees(56-113 US dollars) subsidy/1 latrine)</p>
Poverty alleviation programme	X		<p>1) Ration cards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 6 Very below poverty line cards in 1997-2002 and the same number in 2009 - 84 Below poverty lines cards in 1997-2002 and 80 in 2009 <p>2) GRY provides employment for Below poverty lines families. The current rate of labor is 100 Rupees/day (2.26 US dollars) and it is more than double of the minimum rate the government established (47Rs=1 US dollar/day)</p>

Rural Housing	X	<p>1) Indirawas house scheme 1997-2002</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 house full subsidy (12,000 Rupees=271 US dollars). Now the amount more than doubled to an amount around 30,000 Rupees (678 US dollars). - 2 house repairing (9,000 Rupees) <p>2) 4 houses full subsidy from GRY funding (9,000 Rupees=203 US dollars/year), now also the amount of this subsidy increased substantially to 37,000 Rupees=836 US dollars/house.</p>
Animal Husbandry	X	<p>1) The scheme dealing with livestock was implemented in 1997-2002. The scheme consisted in subsidizing scheduled castes families to purchase livestock (calves from Haryana). The amount of 19,000Rs (430 US dollars) was 75% subsidy and 25% loan and 8 total families decided to use it.</p>
Rural Development	X	<p>1) General construction work (reinforced cement concrete, stone path, water channel, checkdam) with GRY and 10th financial commission funding for a total amount of 2 lakhs (4,520 US dollars) /year in the term 1997-2002.</p> <p>2) The current Gram Pradhan listed the most important construction being done at the present moment (2009):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 7 tal-kal (90,000 Rupees=2,034 US dollars)

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 checkdam (1 lakhs=2,260 US dollars) - 1 bridge (73,000 Rupees=1,649 US dollars) - reinforced cement concrete path (30,000 Rupees=677 US dollars) - Stone path (25,000 Rupees=564 US dollars) - At the current moment some money from TSP is also being received for reinforced cement concrete, stone path, road construction and water work. The money is project based so a precise estimate is not possible to disclose.
Social Justice			Look at 11-12
Others	X		1) Some ward members decided to give little support to people going through crisis (ie: losing a son or losing the house etc.)

11. Are any social justice issue discussed in the Gram Panchayat? What kind?

12. Do people ever bring any social conflict to the Gram Panchayat? What kind?

The old Gram Pradhan admitted that many scheduled castes families live in poor condition but the relationship with other castes is open and not major conflicts are raised. He reported that not other major issues of social justice were brought up in Gram Panchayat meetings (like corruption, or gender equality) during his term.

The current Gram Pradhan said there are not caste issues raised and corruption as much as gender equality are not problems affecting the community whatsoever. A women collective is present in Jaiti.

SARMOLI-SHANKADHURA GRAM PANCHAYAT

Funds Origin and purpose

	Y	N	How were they invested?
NGOs		X	
Development Schemes	X		GRY: Around 8 lakhs=18,070 US

			dollars/year NREGA(2009): 96,000 Rupees (2,168 US dollars) 100-200 people demanding Johar Employment scheme: 60,000 Rupees=1,355 US dollars/2008 Scheduled Caste welfare department: 4.5 lakhs=10,164 US dollars/year
Taxation			1 Rupees/Family (0.02 US dollars)
External Agencies/ Government agencies		X	
Others	X		Block level: 50,000 Rupees (1,130 US dollars)/2003-2008 Self Help Groups support: 10 people/5,000 Rupees (113 USD dollars) monthly from government (repayment due)

10. What development projects have been carried out in the community in the present term and in the previous term?

	Yes	No	What kind and how many In the term 2003-2008
Core Functions			
Agriculture		X	1) Subsidy to purchase seeds to 20-25 families (from Block level)
Primary Education	X		1) One bathroom for primary school (15,000 Rupees=339 US dollars) 2) 1 room for school (50,000 Rupees=1,130 US dollars)
Health and family welfare	X		1) Economic help from ASA Ngo (50 Rs=11.3 US dollars/delivery case)
Minor Irrigation	X		1) Water channel: 1 lakh=2,260

			US dollars/2008
Social Welfare	X		1) Pension: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 12 VBPL card - 40 BPL cards - 35 widow pension (400 Rupees=9 US dollars/month) - 55 old people pension (400 Rupees= 9 US dollars/month) - 3 handicap pension (400 Rupees=9 US dollars/month)
Drinking Water	X		1) 1 water chamber (20,000 Rupees=452 US dollars in 2009) 2) 1 water tank (15,000 Rupees=339 US dollars in 2009) 3) Pipeline construction (40,000 Rupees= 903 US dollars in 2008)
Women and Child development		X	1) Scholarships from the government: 18,000 Rupees=406 US dollars/year for 56 children
Sanitation		X	
Poverty alleviation programme	X		1) Ration card: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 12 Very Below Poverty Line cards - 40 Below Poverty Line cards
Rural Housing	X		1) Indirawas house scheme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 8 full house subsidy in 2009/ 38,000 Rupees (858 US dollars) each - 1 repair subsidy in 2009/ 16,000 Rupees each

Animal Husbandry	X		Some support from block level Panchayat
Rural Development	X		<p>3) The current Gram Pradhan listed the most important construction work done (or initiated) in the last term (2003-2008):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reinforced cement concrete path (2.3 lakhs=5,195 US dollars) - 10 checkdam (8 lakhs=18,070 US dollars) - 24 tal-kal (72,000 Rupees=1,626 US dollars) - Panchayat building (3 lakhs=6,776 US dollars) - Stone path (25,000 Rupees=565 US dollars) - Playfield (1 lakh=2,260 US dollars)
Social Justice			Look at 11-12
Others		X	

11. Are any social justice issue discussed in the Gram Panchayat? What kind?

According to the current Up-Pradhan there are not social problems in the community. He does not recognize any gender violence, corruption or caste problem. There are some simple quarrels but nothing that requires serious measures. The Pradhan (elected chief representative) elected the term recognized that there is a pervasive problem of violence in the village due to alcoholism. She used to give personal suggestions but not broad discussion is happening during the meetings. According to her opinion, corruption is also increasingly becoming a problem and money is retained by higher politicians and not given to the people.

12. Do people ever bring any social conflict to the Gram Panchayat? What kind?

According to the Up-Pradhan there are not problems reported in local institutions.

Appendix 4: Tables Priority Setting

Top Priority divided in categories for Social Justice

Social Justice	Power Conflict	Caste Representation	Gender Equality	Corruption	Total
Male	0.70%	7.75%	7.04%	3.52%	19.01%
Female	2.80%	4.20%	4.20%	3.50%	14.69%
Scheduled Castes	1.75%	8.77%	7.02%	1.75%	19.30%
Scheduled Tribes	1.60%	4.80%	5.60%	1.60%	13.60%
General Caste	1.96%	5.88%	4.90%	6.86%	19.61%
Poverty level 0	0.84%	7.56%	6.72%	1.68%	16.81%
Poverty level 1	2.00%	4.00%	2.00%	8.00%	16.00%
Poverty level 2	2.63%	0.00%	7.89%	5.26%	15.79%
Poverty level 3	0.00%	4.65%	4.65%	2.33%	11.63%
Poverty level 4	5.26%	5.26%	10.53%	0.00%	21.05%
Poverty level 5+6	6.25%	18.75%	0.00%	6.25%	31.25%
Average	2.35%	6.51%	5.50%	3.70%	18.07%

Top Priority divided in categories for Infrastructure

Infrastructure	School	Hospital	Electricity	Water	Road	Total
Male	11.27%	0.70%	0.70%	7.75%	3.52%	23.94%
Female	13.99%	6.99%	2.10%	5.59%	4.90%	33.57%
Scheduled Castes	10.53%	8.77%	3.51%	3.51%	5.26%	31.58%
Scheduled Tribes	12.80%	3.20%	1.60%	5.60%	3.20%	26.40%
General Caste	13.73%	1.96%	0.00%	9.80%	4.90%	30.39%
Poverty level 0	14.29%	2.52%	1.68%	5.88%	3.36%	27.73%
Poverty level 1	12.00%	2.00%	2.00%	6.00%	2.00%	24.00%
Poverty level 2	15.79%	0.00%	2.63%	10.53%	5.26%	34.21%

Poverty level 3	6.98%	11.63%	0.00%	6.98%	11.63%	37.21%
Poverty level 4	10.53%	5.26%	0.00%	5.26%	0.00%	21.05%
Poverty level 5+6	12.50%	6.25%	0.00%	6.25%	0.00%	25.00%
Average	12.22%	4.48%	1.29%	6.65%	4.00%	28.64%

Top Priority divided in categories for Social Services

Social Services	Health	Education	Livestock	Poverty Alleviation Program	Total
Male	1.41%	7.04%	0.70%	5.63%	14.79%
Female	6.99%	3.50%	0.70%	3.50%	14.69%
Scheduled Castes	0.00%	7.02%	0.00%	7.02%	14.04%
Scheduled Tribes	8.00%	1.60%	0.80%	4.00%	14.40%
General Caste	1.96%	8.82%	0.98%	3.92%	15.69%
Poverty level 0	7.56%	2.52%	1.68%	4.20%	15.97%
Poverty level 1	4.00%	10.00%	0.00%	4.00%	18.00%
Poverty level 2	0.00%	10.53%	0.00%	5.26%	15.79%
Poverty level 3	0.00%	2.33%	0.00%	2.33%	4.65%
Poverty level 4	5.26%	5.26%	0.00%	10.53%	21.05%
Poverty level 5+6	0.00%	6.25%	0.00%	6.25%	12.50%
Average	3.20%	5.90%	0.44%	5.15%	14.69%

Top Priority divided in categories for Employment

Employment	NREGA	Companies/ Government Job	Construction Companies	Pension	Manual Labor	Total
Male	11.97%	10.56%	2.11%	8.45%	9.15%	42.25%
Female	13.29%	9.79%	0.70%	11.89%	5.59%	41.26%
Scheduled Castes	5.26%	21.05%	0.00%	7.02%	1.75%	35.09%
Scheduled Tribes	16.00%	9.60%	3.20%	4.80%	12.80%	46.40%
General Caste	12.75%	4.90%	0.00%	12.75%	3.92%	34.31%
Poverty level 0	9.24%	11.76%	2.52%	6.72%	9.24%	39.50%
Poverty level 1	20.00%	6.00%	2.00%	10.00%	4.00%	42.00%
Poverty level 2	13.16%	7.89%	0.00%	7.89%	5.26%	34.21%
Poverty level 3	18.60%	13.95%	0.00%	9.30%	4.65%	46.51%
Poverty level 4	10.53%	5.26%	0.00%	5.26%	15.79%	36.84%
Poverty level 5+6	0.00%	12.50%	0.00%	12.50%	6.25%	31.25%

Average	11.89%	10.30%	0.96%	8.78%	7.13%	39.06%
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Second top Priority divided in categories for Social Justice

Social Justice	Power Conflict	Caste Representation	Gender Equality	Corruption	Total
Male	6.34%	7.75%	9.86%	4.23%	28.17%
Female	8.39%	3.50%	9.09%	3.50%	24.48%
Scheduled Castes	8.77%	10.53%	8.77%	1.75%	29.82%
Scheduled Tribes	2.40%	5.60%	8.80%	4.00%	20.80%
General Caste	12.75%	2.52%	10.78%	4.90%	30.95%
Poverty level 0	8.40%	2.52%	10.92%	3.36%	25.21%
Poverty level 1	14.00%	8.00%	12.00%	6.00%	40.00%
Poverty level 2	2.63%	10.53%	5.26%	7.89%	26.32%
Poverty level 3	2.33%	6.98%	9.30%	2.33%	20.93%
Poverty level 4	0.00%	5.26%	10.53%	0.00%	15.79%
Poverty level 5+6	12.50%	6.25%	0.00%	0.00%	18.75%
Average	7.14%	6.31%	8.67%	3.45%	25.57%

Second top Priority divided in categories for Infrastructures

Infrastructure	School	Hospital	Electricity	Water	Road	Total
Male	4.93%	4.23%	2.11%	3.52%	2.10%	16.89%
Female	12.59%	2.10%	2.80%	4.90%	2.10%	24.48%
Scheduled Castes	3.51%	3.51%	3.51%	7.02%	0.00%	17.54%
Scheduled Tribes	9.60%	4.00%	1.60%	4.00%	2.40%	21.60%
General Caste	10.78%	1.96%	2.94%	2.94%	2.94%	21.57%
Poverty level 0	6.72%	1.68%	3.36%	5.04%	3.36%	20.17%
Poverty level 1	8.00%	4.00%	2.00%	2.00%	0.00%	16.00%
Poverty level 2	7.89%	0.00%	2.63%	2.63%	2.63%	15.79%
Poverty level 3	11.63%	4.65%	2.33%	2.33%	2.33%	23.26%
Poverty level 4	15.79%	5.26%	0.00%	5.26%	0.00%	26.32%
Poverty level 5+6	12.50%	12.50%	0.00%	12.50%	0.00%	37.50%
Average	9.45%	3.99%	2.12%	4.74%	1.62%	21.92%

Social Services	Health	Education	Livestock	Poverty Alleviation Program	Total
Male	7.04%	15.49%	2.82%	9.86%	35.21%
Female	6.99%	0.70%	1.40%	9.09%	18.18%
Scheduled Castes	3.51%	7.02%	0.00%	7.02%	17.54%
Scheduled Tribes	8.80%	9.60%	3.20%	11.20%	32.80%
General Caste	6.86%	6.86%	1.96%	8.82%	24.51%
Poverty level 0	8.40%	7.56%	3.36%	9.24%	28.57%
Poverty level 1	12.00%	2.00%	0.00%	6.00%	20.00%
Poverty level 2	2.63%	18.42%	0.00%	5.26%	26.32%
Poverty level 3	4.65%	4.65%	2.33%	16.28%	27.91%
Poverty level 4	5.26%	10.53%	5.26%	15.79%	36.84%
Poverty level 5+6	0.00%	12.50%	0.00%	6.25%	18.75%
Average	6.01%	8.67%	1.85%	9.53%	26.06%

Second top Priority divided in categories for Social Services

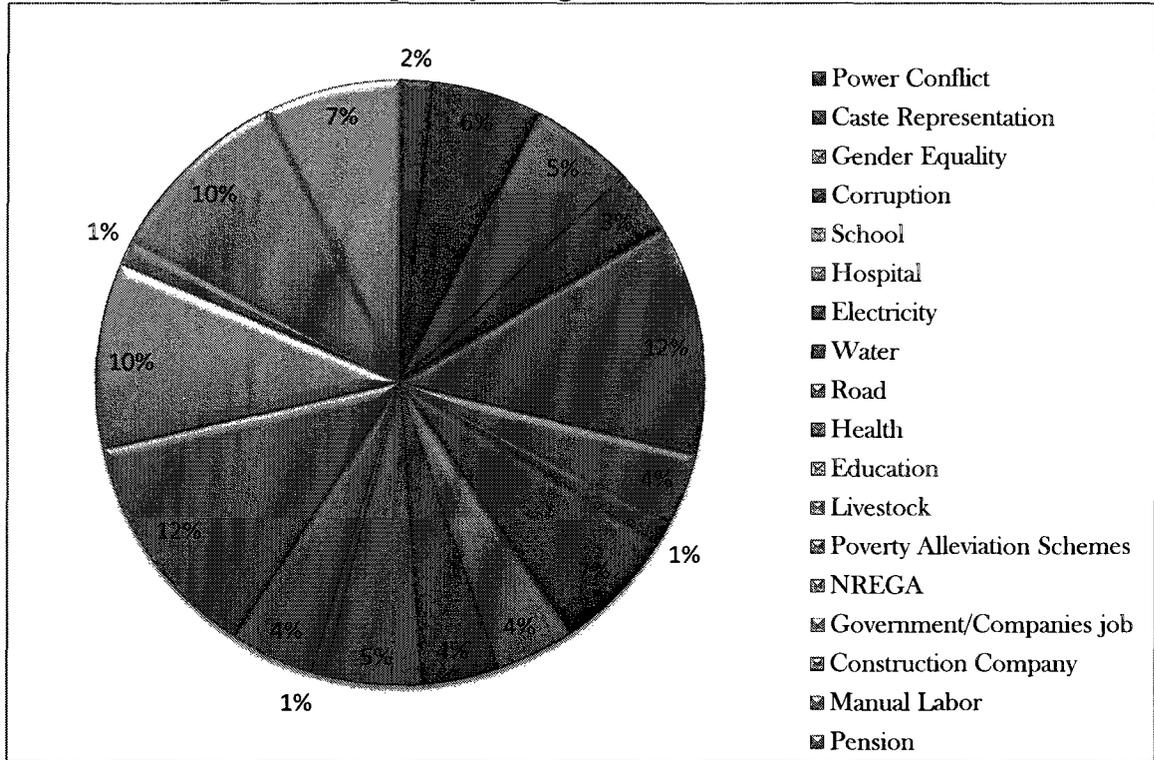
Second top Priority divided in categories for Employment

Employment	NREGA	Companies/ Government Job	Construction Companies	Pension	Manual Labor	Total
Male	12.59%	4.23%	1.41%	2.11%	4.23%	24.56%
Female	12.59%	6.99%	1.40%	5.59%	1.40%	27.97%
Scheduled Castes	12.28%	8.77%	3.51%	10.53%	0.00%	35.09%
Scheduled Tribes	6.40%	7.20%	0.80%	1.60%	4.00%	20.00%
General Caste	13.73%	1.96%	0.98%	2.94%	2.94%	22.55%
Poverty level 0	9.24%	6.72%	1.68%	2.52%	0.84%	21.01%
Poverty level 1	8.00%	0.00%	4.00%	6.00%	6.00%	24.00%
Poverty level 2	21.05%	5.26%	0.00%	2.63%	2.63%	31.58%
Poverty level 3	9.30%	6.98%	0.00%	6.98%	2.33%	25.58%
Poverty level 4	10.53%	5.26%	0.00%	0.00%	5.26%	21.05%
Poverty level 5+6	0.00%	12.50%	0.00%	6.25%	6.25%	25.00%

Average	10.52%	5.99%	1.25%	4.29%	3.26%	25.31%
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Appendix 5: Figure top priority setting break down

Break-down categories of first priority setting



Appendix 6: Poverty and Caste

$$Poverty_n = \beta_0 + \beta_1 D1_n + \beta_2 D2_n + \varepsilon_n$$

Poverty and Caste (Poisson Regression corrected for autocorrelation)

Variable Name	Estimated Coefficient	Standard Error	T-ratio (278 DF)
D1= Scheduled Tribes	-0.34034***	0.1167	-2.917
D2= Scheduled Caste	0.30485**	0.1215	2.508
Constant	0.43123	0.7981E-01	5.403
R-SQUARE =0.0550 R-SQUARE ADJUSTED =0.0483			
Min=0 Max=6 Average=1.453 Std Dev= 1.597			
*Significant at 10% ** Significant at 5% *** Significant at 1%			



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