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Alternative Development in India: Impediments to Grass Roots Communication

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ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA: IMPEDIMENTS TO GRASS ROOTS COMMUNICATION

BY GRAHAM MICHAEL THOMPSON

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research through the Department of Communication Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada
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Table of Contents

Abstract........................................................................................................ iv
Dedication....................................................................................................... v
Acknowledgements....................................................................................... vi
Preface........................................................................................................ vii

Chapter

1. Introduction

Introduction.................................................................................................. 1
Lessons From India......................................................................................... 3
Factors Influencing Quality of Participation............................................... 4
System Constraints on Grass Roots Development....................................... 7
System Theme and Variations....................................................................... 9
Metatheoretical Foundations......................................................................... 11
Application of Grounded Theory to Indian Grass Roots Development......... 14

2. Global Structural Impediments to Participation

The Post-WWII Global System and the Concept of Development............... 20
The Institutionalization of the Global Post-WWII System.......................... 22
System Analogies......................................................................................... 24
The Institutional Structure of Global Development in the Post-WWII Era.... 27

3. The Community Development Program in India

The Modernization of India: International Influences................................. 30
Community Development in India.............................................................. 32
The Failure of Indian Community Development......................................... 38
Parallels with Grass Roots Communications Theory.................................. 43
Intercultural Ethnocentrism, State Authoritarianism and Grass Roots Development Theory: Apparent Paradoxes........... 50

4. Global Patterns of Cooptation

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and Grass Roots Community Participation: The Prototype of Elite Cooptation................................................................. 64
The Cooptation of Grass Roots Development in Latin America, Africa and Asia................................................................. 71
  a. Guatemalan Community Development: The Alliance for Progress.......... 74
  b. Zambian Participatory Democracy, Development and the One-Party State ................................................................. 77
  c. Nigerian Rural Development: Government versus Community Initiative .............................................................................. 81

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5. Technological Constraints to Grass Roots Participation

Formal Theoretical Parallels to Technical Limitations on Grass Roots Development........................................85
Professional Self-Interest as an Impediment to Bottom Up Participation: The Human Face of the Technological System..........................................................89
Large Scale Technological Development and the Absence of Community Participation........................................95
The Reforestation of India: Undermining Community Self-Reliance Through the Destruction of Traditional Society..........................................................98

6. Traditional Grass Roots Development Alternatives

Micro-Organizational Strategies for Development............101
Traditional vs Modern Agriculture: Development for Whom?..110
Nepal: The Denise of Traditional Society, Decentralization and Community Participation........................................116
Community Participation in Pre-Independence Indian Development..........................................................120

7. Contemporary Grass Roots Development Alternatives

Modes of Participation..................................................125
Implementation of the Alternative Development Approach: Participatory Action Research........................................127

8. Conclusions

The Pattern of Impediments to Grass Roots Participation...140
A Conceptual Model..................................................143
Implications for Communications Studies..........................146

Endnotes..........................................................149

Bibliography..........................................................153

Vitas Auctoris.......................................................158
This work is an inquiry into the feasibility of implementing bottom up development programs, utilizing grass roots systems of communications, in India.

The post-WWII political-economy of development in South Asia is examined in Chapter Two, which lists the constraints multilateral and bilateral agencies have historically placed on popular bottom up participation in such schemes as India's Community Development program.

Following a comparative analysis of bottom up development initiatives in India, Latin America and Africa, three interrelated factors constraining grass roots participation in development programs are outlined:

i) The integration of the organization sponsoring the development program into the global market system (growth oriented, employing modern technology and organizational structures in a socialist or capitalist social order).

ii) The type of knowledge system which a program is grounded in.

iii) The culture of the developing nation, or regions thereof.

The final chapters explore traditional and contemporary grass roots development alternatives for future consideration. The defining characteristic of these alternative development strategies is their independence from the multilateral and bilateral development establishment.
Dedication

This work is dedicated to my love Christine who’s unwavering devotion and support enriches my life.
Acknowledgements

To the ever-patient Dr. King for his guidance.

To my friends in Windsor who rounded-out my education (Raj, Ish, Emmanuel, John, Rick, Libby, Mary Jo, Gunder, Steve, Shahgufta and Kam).

To Marlene for introducing me to, and guiding me through, the field of development.

To my favorite parents.

To Dr. Richard Lewis for putting out the fire in the bottom of the ninth.
In addition to being of interest to students of international communications studies—including development, intercultural and organizational communications—this document should prove to be a useful survey of the constraints confronting development practitioners trying to promote grass roots development initiatives in India.

Many of the findings are also relevant for development practitioners working in Africa, Latin America and the rest of Asia, for while conditions differ from country to country common thematic obstacles to bottom up participation exist around the globe.

To make this paper as practical as possible it is founded on a historical survey of the post-WWII development boom and its manifestation in India. This survey is supplemented by interviews with Canadian development practitioners involved in South Asian development projects through umbrella organizations such as South Asia Partnership (Match International, the Canadian Hunger Foundation, the Indian Cultural Development Centre, CUSO and the Aga Khan Foundation) and government agencies such as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).
This undertaking began as an inquiry into the feasibility of implementing the newest variety of participatory development theory by checking it against the history of India's development programs.

As a communication study the aim was to determine the conditions under which it is possible to encourage the growth of active participation, and thus bottom up patterns of communications in developing communities.

This is important because many contemporary development theorists ignore many of the practical impediments that make it difficult, if not impossible, to implement their theory. It is the practitioners working in development agencies that are aware of the problems encountered when attempting to promote grass roots development. As one development practitioner and critic noted: "That [bottom up development] is, as you rightly indicate, a theoretical construct. But from a practical point of view--from an operational point of view--it isn't there: it doesn't exist," (Spellman, 1986).

Since numerous programs in the same populist development genre as Grass Roots theory have been initiated in twentieth century India and elsewhere they can provide us with practical lessons on the type of problems practitioners may encounter
while implementing participative development programs.

The first thing that becomes apparent upon familiarizing ourselves with India’s development traditions is that we cannot hope to successfully understand the dynamics of community participation in development programs by conducting an internal theoretical investigation in isolation from the complex social environment that the theory is designed to change. This is the current strategy of the communications theorists in capitalist and non-aligned Asia who are promoting Grass Roots development theory.

Like the Dependency theorists before them the Asian communication theorists' model is based on a predominantly backward-looking critique of the Modernization model, rather than a positive and comprehensive notion of what development has the potential to be. The biggest deficiency is the way the moral equation in their resurrected bottom up theory blind the Asian theorists to the need to follow up their new construction with some hands on research for the formulation of a realistic implementation plan: theory not anchored in the complexities of the real world does not work.

Some historically grounded research into development programs such as India’s CD program—a forerunner of the new grass roots development approach—is the first step in the work necessary to flesh out the desire of development devotees to
revive bottom up participation in development programs.

The documentation of the modernization model’s failures—essential a step as it is—and the formulation and listing of theoretically desirable development goals will not in itself establish the viability of the new Grass Roots development model. One more step is required before we can embrace this model with any degree of confidence.

Lessons from India

Given the normative parallels between the new participative models and the India’s Community Development program, a viable plan of action cannot ignore the actual development experience of the practitioners involved in the CD program. The Indian community development program was the jewel in the crown of an international CD crusade, initiated in Roosevelt’s New Deal era, and extended to Asia, Africa and South America during the 1950s and early 1960s.

While a look at the CD program provides us with essential information on how State-sponsored participative development programs have fared in the past, an examination of some pre-independence development philosophies and programs in India provides us with historical lessons about the successes and failures of small scale programs of the type now sponsored by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).
This knowledge is crucial for if the communications literature on the new Grass Roots development approach is any indication, the second generation of development scholars is in danger of attempting to reinvent the CD wheel and reliving its frustrating failure.

Factors Influencing the Quality of Participation

Three inter-related factors that constrain the patterns of participation in development programs are the:

i) integration of the organizational sponsor of the development program into the global market system (growth oriented, modern technology and organization); socialist or capitalist.

ii) the type of knowledge system which a program is grounded in.

iii) the culture of the developing nation.

The cooptation of international and national development programs (twisted to serve the interests of elites) has long been recognized as an important political constraint on the quality of grass roots participation in development programs.
and is therefore fairly well researched.

The constraints imposed upon a development program by the nature of the knowledge system guiding the choice of the programs content has been less well discussed because its most common contextual framework—the growth-oriented industrial economy—is often uncritically accepted as the modus operandi of development schemes by socialists and capitalists alike: it is a global axiom of modernity.

Yet, an investigation of India’s development history clearly shows that the organizational factors (form) and the type of technique (content) promoted in the programs are intimately related: they are founded on a coherent system of interrelated factors in a positive feedback relationship amplifying the systems growth. The use of western technique, its administration in western-style rationalized bureaucracies, and its market/state international financial support structure all reinforce the growth of development initiatives that replicate this system in the Third World.

It is the degree of independence from this global system that determines the degree to which a development organization can promote genuine bottom up Grass Roots development. The more it is integrated into this historically western way of organizing social life the less latitude a development organization has for promoting genuine Grass
Roots development. Explanations citing unitary factors in isolation from the whole development environment cannot adequately help us unravel the participation problem in development programs.

Our ability to establish communications sub-systems that facilitate the bottom up exchange of information also varies positively with the independence of development organizations from the international growth-oriented market system.

The irony is that the more independent a development group, and its host communities, are from the global system the less they are able to effect macro-level change. And the more successful they become at developing themselves, as defined by the leaders of the industrialized world, the less they are able to promote real participation at the grass roots level of society. The maintenance of the modern system demands centralized coordination and the acceptance of universal conceptual base for member interaction.

It may be that the scale of social organization is the primary factor constraining the degree of Grass Roots participation. In this case the need for top down social control mechanisms to integrate the various components of a society would vary positively with the scale of social organization.
System Constraints on Grass Roots Development

Alliband (1983) identifies the international and national development agencies with more top down--and NGO/PVOs with bottom up--development because the former are more integrated into the international market while the latter, as non-profit agencies, are less subject to market constraints. The independence of NGOs is only relative for they get the bulk of their money from the same national and international agencies sponsoring commercially based development.

The threat to the market system posed by bottom up development programs was illustrated in the demise of Nehru's CD program which was assailed for its inefficient promotion of economic growth and its alleged socialist tendencies.

The more technically minded, and commercially oriented, India's development programs became after the demise of the CD program the more top down they became. The new national development programs reflected the interests of urban and foreign commercial and political elites.

Even when group media--which hold much greater potential for promoting bottom up communications than mass media--are employed by international and national agencies they are employed as top down devices through which the compliance of the general population is sought. When possessed and employed
by community groups or NGOs these same systems serve the interests of the community first.

Contrary to the assertions of many small-tech and traditional communication theorists, participation will not increase with a shift from one-way mass media systems to the new two-way systems. The nature of participation is a question of power not sheer technique; two-way small-tech and traditional community communications systems such as VCRs and street theatre can be employed in the service of elites as much as marginalized groups (though the latter systems harbor the theoretical potential for much greater community participation in their use).
System Theme and Variations: Historical International and National Constraints on Participation in Indian Development Programs:

Just as it is faulty of the Asian communication theorists to address the issue of participation on a strictly theoretical level, so it would be futile to adopt the opposite stance of looking for the impediments to participation in a strictly micro-level analysis of development practitioner’s experience. What we need is a rational way of combining the two research approaches into a picture that is isomorphic with the structure of the development world. Employing grounded theory we can attempt to combine the two by grounding any larger substantive and formal theoretical implications in the history of India’s development.

Even a cursory look at India’s development history reveals its intimate relationship with extra-territorial financial and political organizations that constrain India’s development: one is irresistibly drawn to a consideration of international factors.

The Indian government’s desire to replace its traditional steady-state subsistence economy with a growth based society is speeding India’s integration into the larger global system and limits the latitude the government has in promoting grass roots development.
Metatheoretical Foundations: From Positivism to Idealism

Part of the failure of scholars to do away with modernization theory is that they have failed to propose a workable alternative says Dean Tipps of the University of California (Tipps, 1973:223-4). Tipps attributes this to the fact that theorists have not made a decisive break with the philosophy underlying modernization theory (Ibid:224). The new Idealistic grass roots development theory appears to make the necessary philosophical break with positivistic modernization theory.

Rejection of the model by Third World scholars and politicians goes far beyond the model itself. The reevaluation of the modernization model is part of an ongoing reexamination of the relationship between the First and Third world's. Western social science has not escaped scrutiny. While the methodology in question is western, it is its positivistic foundation that has been challenged. The universalism of positivism made modernization theory a very convenient doctrine for western nations who self-righteously sought to export their mode of industrialization to the Third World.

The modernization model was compatible with America's new international role after WWII in two ways. The implementation of the model was to check the spread of communism by
simultaneously checking the spread of global poverty and providing new markets for American industry. Second, the positivist premise of the model legitimized the convenient notion that there was one scientifically lawful correct way to develop a nation. Any opposition to the export of the western modernization model was deemed unscientific and political (in the worst sense of the word).

In his reference to a new development paradigm modernization theorist Daniel Lerner is adamant that the new theorists must accept the positivistic premise of universal laws, thereby rejecting the idealistic premise making theories contextually relevant (Lerner, 1967:62-3):

> What we needed then as now, is neither a Western nor a non-Western but a global "development model"...From strident emphasis on "culture-specific" differences we have moved toward acceptance of "regularities" in the human condition. This is the way any new paradigm, worthy of general acceptance, will go.

Moreover, in his criticism of sociologist D.S. Eisenstadt's advocacy of a culture-specific model Lerner reaffirmed his commitment to positivistic social science (Lerner, 1967:61): "I fear that Dr. Eisenstadt's injunction that we seek 'culture-specific' findings may be interpreted in ways that will divert social science from its proper work." That is
social science is assumed to be deductively lawful and any research that does not conform to this criterion is therefore not a proper social science endeavor.

The new grass roots development model implicitly rejects the positivist assumptions of the modernization model in favor of Idealistic assumptions. Theoretically this entails an acceptance of a contextual, interpretive social science while politically it challenges the inevitability of eastern westernization.

The embracing of Idealism by proponents of the new development theory can be seen in their support for development theories that respect the cultural values of their communities. Politically, this fact reflects the aspirations of the Third World which is seeking respect of its cultural differences from the west and adherence to their cultural norms within the nations of the third world.
Application of Grounded Theory to Indian Grass Roots Development

Grounded theory is a comparative method of research rooted in real life situations. Tipps is adamant that the new development paradigm must be derived from comparative research because it uncovers the contextual differences that make different development approaches appropriate in various cultures (Tipps, 1973:224).

...an alternative perspective must be rooted firmly in an empirically-grounded problem structure which clearly specifies both the problems which are to be explained and - most important for comparative analysis - the contexts within which they are problematic...Thus, such an alternative must take seriously the logic of comparative analysis by rigorously defining its units of analysis, classifying them, and comparing the ranges of variation they reveal in relation to a set of common problems.

This method is ideal for satisfying Tipp's appeal for an empirically grounded comparative method. The generation of grounded theory begins with empirical research and therefore is useful for practitioners and theorists alike. Because the research is empirically derived the findings are relevant and readily applicable to the world world (Glaser and
Like other idealistic approaches to research, grounded theory is sensitive to contextual factors because the generation of theory is hierarchically dependent on your data. Also, as with other Idealistic methods, theories are not expected to be universally relevant; they should simply suit their context. Social theorist John Wilson points out the differences in positivist (modernization theory) and idealist (Alternative theories) views of the world that the various schools of development are built upon (Wilson, 1983:118-9):

Positivists place great emphasis on making their concepts precise, unambiguous, and context-free... The idealist cannot follow this strategy... Rather he must depend on the context as he sees it being relevant, a context which is infinite in its zones of relevance (Wilson, 1971:75). For this reason there can be no final, correct description: concepts must be tentative, open-ended. Abstract and formal conceptual schemes must be avoided. No description, however detailed and substantial, must be supposed to be complete. All descriptions are open to modification as new contextual relevances are uncovered.

When generating grounded theory there are two different levels of theory one focuses on, levels that differ only in
their scope of application and degree of abstraction (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:32). Substantive theory is grounded in an empirical area of inquiry such as race relations, organizational communications or space law. Formal theory deals with higher level, more conceptual, topics such as the nature of authority and power, and social stratification. "Both types of theory may be considered as 'middle-range.' That is, they fall between the 'minor working hypotheses' of everyday life and the 'all-inclusive' grand theories." (Ibid:32).

Glaser and Strauss note that it is important to decide what theoretical level one is working at because "the strategies vary for arriving at each one," (Ibid:33). When focusing on substantive theory the researcher would perform a "comparative analysis between or among groups within the same substantive area," while formal theory demands comparative analysis "among different kinds of substantive cases which fall within the formal area, without relating them to any one substantive area," (Ibid:33).

When researching Indian cases of new grass roots development, substantive theory would be generated by a comparison of different cases within India, while formal theory would be created from a comparison of Indian approaches to grass roots development with African, Central American and/or South-East Asian examples. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to
perform a complete formal level investigation because of the complexity of such an endeavor. Yet, we can see important patterns emerging after even a cursory comparison of international development programs.

India appears to be one of the most appropriate countries on which to focus a substantive level investigation of grass roots development for it has an extensive history of well documented government sponsored community development programs in addition to many examples of smaller scale NGO sponsored programs. While the latter cases are not as well documented as the government sponsored programs, it was possible to research them adequately. There are many Canadian NGOs involved in Indian grass roots development programs, in addition to the usual periodical and book sources.

Government workers in the Canadian International Development Agency, the International Development Research Centre, and non-profit agencies such as members of South Asia Partnership are currently involved in grass roots projects in India. Interviews with staff concerned with Asian development in these organizations were carried out in an attempt to gain as much first hand knowledge on Indian development as possible short of visiting the country.

Once the researcher has his/her data about different substantive cases of grass roots development then s/he begins
the comparative analysis (Ibid:35):

...the elements of theory that are generated by comparative analysis are, first, conceptual categories and their conceptual properties; and second, hypotheses or generalized relations among the categories and their properties...A category stands by itself as a conceptual element of the theory. A property, in turn, is a conceptual aspect or element of a category.

While organizational categories--as noted by others--first emerged as important categories differentiating successful grass roots development programs from failures cultural and technological factors (not mutually exclusive) emerged later as important constraints upon bottom up participation in development programs. Most development practitioners and theoreticians take it as a given that that programs sponsored by international and national organizations tend to be more top down than those sponsored by NGOs.

More research pointed out that this was not merely for reasons internal to the organization but had more to do with the degree to which these organizations are integrated into the modern global economic system (environmental constraints).

Within the grounded theory method one carries out an
inductive research technique called theoretical sampling whereby the future direction of one's research is always affected by the current research being uncovered. Following this method it is impossible to predict the nature of one's final findings because one's direction is constantly being modified (Ibid:45): 

Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them in order to develop his theory as it emerges. This process of data collection is controlled by the emerging theory, whether substantive or formal.
The Post-WWII Global System and the Concept of Development

From the outset the need for global international development campaigns were necessitated by the need for our continued economic stability in the post-WWII era and the perceived security threat of socialist encroachment in capitalist spheres of influence. The benefits of development were to be achieved through the growth of foreign trade. Development was to preempt the growth of socialism by raising standards of living in the rural Third World. Whatever the living conditions of the people in the Third World western 'enlightened self-interest' was our primary motivation for the comprehensive and rapid global extension of development aid.

The rules of the development game were designed to meet the needs of the donor countries, and opportunities for grass roots participation were limited to action that actively or passively accepted the system's growth imperative. The potential for implementing non-directive participation is constrained by the nature of the system.

Contrary to the assumptions of modernization theory impediments to bottom up participation exist not only at the individual, community and national levels but also at the international level. This is certainly the case in Indian development.
In the uneasy international environment of the Cold War era the differences between the capitalist and socialist block countries were emphasized within each blocks' sphere of influence for ideological reasons. This war of words continues to blind us to many of the common features of both systems. For our study it is very significant that both systems are firmly rooted in western traditions of growth and progress:

This progress paradigm was avowed on both ends of the ideological spectrum, both by the classic liberal and neo-liberal theorists like Keynes and by the classic Marxist thinkers. The difference in approach lie in the level of the means, the relative role that is assigned to the market versus the state. But the objective was the same: development on the basis of the Western vision of growth and progress. The obstacles for development were indicated only in the traditional sectors and were initially only attacked with economic means (Servaes,1985:4). [1]

United in their commitment to a growth-oriented economic system, and incompatible with the traditional social systems of the Third World, their mutual ignorance about and disdain for traditional sectors is predictable. As far as the cultural integrity of Third World peoples go it matters
little whether the donor is capitalist or socialist, their similarities make them a twin western threat to their traditions. The structural impediments to participation in capitalist and socialist development are equivalent.

The Institutionalization of the Post-WWII Global System

The immediate post-WWII global system, firmly rooted in the undamaged USA, required system growth to ensure its continued stability when the production and consumption demands of the war had ceased. The human needs whose fulfillment could satisfy this production requirement was the reconstruction of the nations destroyed during the war, followed by the development of the economically peripheral—and rapidly decolonizing—Third World.

The US government was deeply worried that the cessation of war production could plunge it into a new economic depression like the one which had ravaged the nation during the 1930’s (Williams, 1962:235). Along with most of America’s leaders at that time Roosevelt’s Assistant Secretary of State, Dean Acheson expressed the administrations concern during the early 1940s that the economy must be allowed to slide back into a depression. Therefore, policies to avoid this potential debacle were urgently pursued (Ibid:235).
To thwart a rebirth of the great depression a twin policy of post-war reconstruction and Third World development was instituted to keep the economy at full production. The function of this massive aid strategy was to swallow the production surpluses of America's thriving economy. Initially the demands of the war and the occupation of Germany "swallowed the whole surplus," (Van Soest, 1978:93-4). After the War the Marshall Plan kept the production and consumption requirements of the economy occupied with European and Japanese reconstruction. "This was much easier because the recovery of a strong commercial partner beyond the Atlantic indirectly served the sales of increased production," (Ibid:93-4).

Yet, as the European recovery took hold its dependence on US economic aid lessened. "This meant that the government of the United States had to find other channels to drain surpluses on [the] medium term...The economic stability of America and Europe and economic balance in the world provided important arguments for the willingness to grant substantial aid to territories lacking in capital," (Ibid:94).

Thus, the strategy of promoting economic development in the Third World began with the call by the industrial world's leaders for economic growth into new market areas. Like Acheson, Roosevelt's Secretary of Commerce, Henry A.
Wallace, identified the Third World as the foreign market America must pursue if it was to avert a post-War depression. Growth was the system imperative that demanded expansion into untapped Third World markets (Williams, 1962:235):

"Private enterprise in the United States can survive only if it expands and grows," he argued, and pointed out that he was only trying to help the businessman do what they themselves advocated. "The old frontiers must be rebuilt," as he put it, and pointed to American economic expansion into the poor, underdeveloped countries as "this unlimited new frontier of opportunities."

__________________________
Systems Analogies

In his book Autonomous Technology (1977:248) MIT's Langdon Winner maintains that it is a common characteristic of large scale technological systems that they "create a crisis to justify [their] own further expansion." This view of technology reverses the prevailing popular theory that social needs stimulate the expansion of market solutions to these wants.

Following this reasoning the discovery of the needy Third World, requiring massive amounts of economic aid to better
itself after WWII, was entertained as a potential solution to our need for system growth. The benefits of the aid to the Third World served to legitimize development not stimulate it.

The underdevelopment of the Third World was an ideologically acceptable problem to which developed nations could apply their idle industrial capacity for the achievement of growth. Taking this view to its logical conclusion, if the hypothesis that the Third World was underdeveloped and needed aid at this time was not accepted we would have had to invent another crisis to which we could apply our economic engines.[2]

When the needs of the developed world determine development arrangements in the underdeveloped world this constrains the ability of Indians to participate in both defining what development means for them and in designing and implementing projects.

Since Grass Roots theory embodies an attack on the western values underlying modernization theory its proponents must expect institutional resistance from the multilateral and bi-lateral organizations founded in the post-war era to promote global industrialization. These organizations and the US government are still among the major development financiers today.
From the outset of the Community Development era in the early 1950s (bankrolled largely by the US government and the Ford Foundation) the Truman administration made it plain that development was to proceed on a commercial rather than a charity basis; on terms that promoted development in the interest of the industrialized West (Van Soest, 1978:97):

The optimism of the developing countries about a flow of capital aid was tempered by Acheson, who added that investments following technical assistance would especially be effected on the basis of profitability. It was not a matter of supplying capital at any cost. A few months later Truman himself said once more that the aid programme was "intended ultimately to bring about a great movement of capital through the channels of private investment."

The needs of our economic system determined the parameters of the development game.
The Institutional Structure of Global Development in the Post-WWII Era

A description of the global development organizations founded by the western industrial nations reveals the lines of force that drive the global market-system. Since Grass Roots theorists and bottom up development practitioners must implement their programs in an environment dominated by these international development heavyweights it is crucial to understand how they constrain the global operation of development.

To speed post-War economic recovery in Europe and Japan, and to eventually promote development in the rest of the non-communist world the US government sponsored the establishment of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1944, as Allied victory was in sight (Bhambría, 1980:44).

These international organizations were born of a widespread concern by US government leaders that America’s post-War economy might backslide into a depression if foreign markets could not be secured to keep the economy at full capacity (Williams, 1962:235). To facilitate this expansion the US government had a twin strategy of promoting the internationalization of American business and for averting the takeover of new territory by economically inhospitable
communist, socialist and/or radically inspired nationalist movements (Roden, 1984:3):

With the exception of the Soviet Union it was also vital for the involved governments [by the creation of the IBRD and IMF] to ensure the existence of a system after the war which would pave the road for a capitalist oriented economy, and stop the movements and changes in the world which so far had led to the creation of the Soviet Union and growth in communist and leftist oriented parties and groups all over the world.

In this Cold War chill in international relations, with the fear of domestic depression uppermost in the minds of US leaders, the western model of development was seized upon as a tool by which the US government’s economic, political and military ambitions could be furthered (Tipps, 1973:1):

The proximate origins of the modernization model may be traced to the response of American political elites and intellectuals to the international setting of the post-Second World War era. In particular, the impact of the Cold War and the simultaneous emergence of the Third World as prominent actors in world politics in the wake of the disintegration of the European colonial empires...
In addition to the economic motivations for extending aid to the Third World the US government was also motivated by the strategic fear of losing global influence to socialist expansion; the two considerations are not mutually exclusive (Ibid:210):

...the idea of modernization has proven congenial to American policymakers, so much so in fact that 'development' came to be viewed as a long range solutions to the threats of instability and Communism in the Third World...

The attainment of western political and economic aims underlying the extension of aid to Third World nations such as India can only limit the ability of India to participate in the fashioning of development programs on its own terms. The rules of the development game have traditionally been drafted by underwriters of development. Therefore, development has historically been incompatible with grass roots development; the Third World has only been invited to be a passive participant in their development. To the extent that today's development establishment is motivated by the same objectives grass roots development will be inhibited.
The Modernization of India: International Influences

The community development drama being enacted across the Third World was also playing in India. As a strategic Asian territory India was courted by the US government after the Second World War and offered aid in the hope that this would thwart the advance of Asian communism. Mao’s guerrillas had recently overthrown Chiang Kai-Shek’s capitalist regime in China, North Korean pressure on South Korea was increasing, and Russia was in the zenith of its post-WWII consolidation of Eastern Europe.

With its mandate to assist in global development the World Bank was pressuring the Indian government to adopt a more competitive internal market within which foreign firms could have greater access. The United States would benefit economically by increasing its access to the markets of the Third World.

If we look at the early days of American aid marked for India we can see both political and economic motives uppermost in the minds of Americans such as Ambassador to India Chester Bowles (Bowles, 1969:125). In his memoirs Bowles noted that of $3.9 billion loaned or granted to India during the 1950s and ‘60s, 55 percent was in the form of surplus American food products. Another 42 percent was in the form of dollars to enable India to purchase American products such as
steel and railroad machinery (Ibid:125). In the form of grants or loans, aid kept the US economy occupied.

In addition to providing handsome rewards to domestic US business, the offering of technical assistance during the 1950s also had strategic aims (Ibid:125):

India’s record of achievement is of great significance to that nation’s future and security. Yet, this record is also profoundly important to our own security. Only through a free India, with growing strength and confidence, can we expect to see the development of a political and military balance to Communist China in Asia...In the same sub-continent, Pakistan is taking equally impressive strides towards national development with US assistance. Together, these two nations hold the key to the future security of South Asia against pressures from Communist China.

American involvement in international aid during the Cold War era was amplified by agencies such as the World Bank and IMF, and the United Nations. While there is international participation in these organizations the US government was at this time the major player in the development game (Ibid:129). Again, the objectives of the donors determined what type of aid was provided and when. The concerns of the Third World were thought to coincide with the our interests.
Community Development in India

A forerunner of the new grass roots development approach was conceived in India in 1951 when a few pilot projects of the Community Development project began. While the program was nurtured as a treasured scheme of Prime Minister Nehru, it received substantial assistance from the US government and the Ford Foundation. American aid for India’s CD program was part of the US government’s international modernization campaign.

In 1951 Ambassador Bowles presented Nehru with a rural development blueprint which formed the basis of the CD program. The administration of the program was coordinated by the Indian government in conjunction with the Ford Foundation—headed by Marshall Plan administrator Paul Hoffman.

A look at the views of Hoffman reveal the economic and security interests that permeated the definition of development by public and private US organizations during the 1950s (Hoffman, 1962:8):

The moral and political reasons for assisting underdeveloped nations are compelling enough by themselves. But there are solid business reasons as well. In the long view, the 100 underdeveloped nations
and territories are the great economic frontier...If per capita incomes in the underdeveloped world were lifted by only 1% per year more in the 1960s than they rose in the 1950s, export markets for the entire industrially advanced world would expand by billions of dollars. For the United States such an increase would amount to an estimated additional $7,000,000,000 in U.S. exports per year by 1970.

Accompanying the economic and political motives behind the US modernization campaign in India we find the familiar top down relationships between the national and state governments and the citizens of India. While people were offered the rhetoric of the new grass roots development model participation was only allowed within the parameters of the state administered modernization program.

Only 'modern' behavior was to be permitted; the path to industrialization was open to discussion, not the decision to modernize. The Ford Foundation's representative in India, rural sociologist Douglas Ensminger, made it clear that 'traditional' behavior was considered deviant by CD administrators (Ensminger, 1972:23). Change was good, and traditional villages were perceived as status-quo oriented, which it was the mission of CD workers to change. Development administration operated on a Human Relations philosophy of management-worker relations. Community participation was
invited as long as management’s ultimate goals were not challenged. Participation was employed, quite sincerely, as a method that would enlighten the community about, what was from the Ford Foundation’s perspective, unquestionably beneficial and necessary work.

As the enemy there was no thought about what positive roles tradition might play in Indian society: regardless of the context it was universally bad (e.g. positivism). Here we encounter one of the fundamental cultural clashes between westerners weaned on a growth-oriented society (based on appropriate public and private institutions) and on India’s steady-state society, where excessive growth is viewed as disruptive.

The administrator appointed by Nehru to oversee the introduction of the CD program was S.K. Dey. Through his writings we see that the program was designed to be everything the new Grass Roots development approach claims to be: grass roots based and guided by the bottom up participation of the program’s recipients (Dey, 1972:8):

> From the limited experience in the short run of the working of Panchayati Raj, it was evident that it had the potential for building up a new leadership organically from grass roots in the field of political democracy.
While noting that CD field workers had trouble learning to respond to the needs of the villagers Ensminger emphasized that, as with the new development approach, the CD program was supposed to take its cue from villagers (Ensminger, 1972:22):

It also took time for the new village extension workers to get experience in helping the people decide what they themselves wanted, and together—the village worker and the village people—began introducing and testing new agricultural practices.

Nehru also said that CD administrators were to avoid excessive central control in favor of spontaneous popular initiative (Nehru, 1954:85-6):

Obviously it is necessary to plan, to direct, to organize and to coordinate; but it is even more necessary to create conditions in which a spontaneous growth from below is possible...Nevertheless, I feel that even the organizational lead should not be tossed like a ball from what is the top to what might if you like, be called the bottom; that is to say, even the initiative for the Community Projects should come, wherever possible, from the people who are most affected by them.
Nehru went on to emphasize that the partnership between CD administrators and the people of India should be one in which the people are involved in the "making of the job and the thinking of the job" not just the labor of the jobs (Nehru, 1954:86).

The similarities in the professed aims of the grass roots Indian CD program and the new paradigm grass roots projects in India are numerous. This provides us with an ideal opportunity to contrast the outcome of the programs from the two different eras, for the only difference between the two is that they were implemented by different types of organizations: the CD program by central and provincial governments and the new initiatives by NGOs and village cooperatives (theoretically).

The moral crusade to modernize the traditional was embodied in a top down government administered program dressed in the garb of western democratic pluralism. By 1957 a three-tiered bureaucratic structure passed the word down from the centre, and ensured that manifest, measurable targets were set and achieved (Karunartne, 1976:96):

With the purpose of harnessing the people's involvement and initiative it was to have a democratically elected body of villagers at the village level. This body was
called the Panchayat, and it was charged with the task of involving the people in the task of development. Each Panchayat was given a Village Level Worker, who had to function as a multipurpose catalyst and extension agent. The Panchayats, for administrative purposes, were grouped into blocks each covering 50,000 to 70,000 people. In turn 15 to 20 blocks constituted a unit.

Unfortunately, this organizational structure turned the bottom up flow of development participation upside down so that they eventually became the instruments through which government administrators set and policed adoption targets for agricultural products and services. This perversion of the original CD program's goals will be elaborated upon later.
The Failure of the Indian CD Program

There were a number of reasons offered for the failure of the CD program. The primary impediments were thought by the programs originators to be the inflexible bureaucratic structure which administered the program in a hail of top down directives and the opposition of vested interests within India for who the program was one of the threatening socialist excesses of Nehru. In the latter case the CD program became a vulnerable political target after the Chinese-Indian conflict of 1962 in the Himalayas, which stimulated an all out political attack on Nehru (Dey, 1972:9):

The venom was directed against every revolutionary concept which Jawaharlal Nehru held near to his heart. Community Development, Panchayati Raj and cooperation became a natural target. The so called elite and the majority of newspapers owned by the custodians of the zeros to whom Jawaharlal Nehru was a positive threat, echoed the sentiments in chorus...The death of Jawaharlal Nehru 27th of May 1964 sealed for a time the glorious chapter of basic efforts for building up political, economic and social democracy from the roots.

For a few of the original architects of the CD program its failure was largely attributable to the organizational impediments India’s colonial bureaucracy placed in the path
of the program. Ford Foundation representative Ensminger charged that the control oriented colonial bureaucracy was incompatible with a program designed to minimize, and eventually do away with, state involvement (Ensminger, 1972:24-5). Ill-equipped to nurture village self-help programs the administration felt comfortable in establishing targets which it pressed villagers to accept in what were supposed to be democratic village meetings. "So strong was the administrative pressure to achieve targets," Ensminger wrote, "that the people who had the final responsibility for getting results felt compelled to falsify achievements." (Ibid:24-5).

Another fatal organizational problem was the impetuously rapid expansion of the CD program which, according to the first Minister of Community Development S.K. Dey, led to the subversion its of grass roots orientation. As the administrative structures that directed the program grew with its geographic scope the symmetrical relationship between the communities and governmental agencies was undermined with the balance of power shifting towards the government. Moreover, as the CD program was swept away on a national wave of political demands the quality of the program dropped because personnel and resources were stretched beyond their limits. The sensitivity and time required to promote the active interest of villagers got lost in the race to expand the program. In a letter to Nehru dated 9 September 1953 Dey

39

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outlined his concerns about the rapid expansion of the CD program (Dey, 1969:30-1):

The machinery of government is gradually being geared up. Unfortunately, however, there is a rising political pressure which demands expansion of the programme at a rate faster than the government agency can rise to. Unless the implementation of the programme can be decentralised and vested increasingly in the representative agencies of the people, subject only to conscious supervision and guidance from the government agency, the government organisation will tend to expand horizontally with a progressive reduction in efficiency. It will in the end be one more Department or a Ministry. A people's parallel organisation, dovetailed to the government agency at all levels, alone can prevent this calamity.

In a more recent evaluation of the CD program Garvin Karunaratne collected numerous writings from administrators, academics and politicians about the successes and failures of the venture. Karunaratne's central criticism gives currency to Dey's fears: "there was no sustained attempt at involving the people and obtaining their participation in the development process, and consequently I would suggest it was a total failure." (Karunaratne, 1976:96).
While Karunaratne correctly read the symptom of the defective program he offers no diagnosis for the failure of the CD program, leaving us with the impression that he thinks the solution is to offer useless generalities such as 'we need to involve the people more.' These are precisely the generalities that preempted a deeper analysis of the constraints placed on grass roots participation, and left the proponents of the CD program impotent in the face of administrative rigidity, the muscle of commercial vested interests and political enemies.

From people's first and secondhand involvement with the CD program we can see the similarity of the community development and new grass roots development paradigm philosophies. There are numerous pointers that we can pick up from the experiences of those involved in the Indian CD program, particularly the structural impediments imposed by insensitive command oriented bureaucracies and vested interests.
Parallels with Grass Roots Communication Theory:

Like India's CD program, Grass Roots communications theory is founded on the ideal of promoting bottom up directed community development, as Belgian professor of Communications Policy Jan Servaes notes (Servaes, 1985:6). Servaes says that the new approach begins with an "examination of changes from [the] 'bottom up,' from the self-development of the local community." (Ibid:6).

Therefore, the bottom up philosophy of the new model is essentially a rebirth of the community development philosophy.

Grass Roots communications systems for development entail a shift from top down, centralized mass communication systems, and formal administrative bureaucracies whose programs reflect the biases of political and commercial elites. The CD program was also intended to undermine the top down British administration with grass roots institutions. Today bottom up communications is to be facilitated by decentralized traditional communication systems that allow the active participation of disadvantaged social groups (White, 1982:12). White notes that many Latin American, African and Asian social analysts and communication specialists believe it is necessary to "develop a more decentralized, participatory communication system that would allow lower-status groups
more direct access..." (Ibid:12).

Traditional village institutions such as the Panchayati Raj were also supposed to nurture bottom up participation during the reign of the CD program in India. It is significant that the communication systems thought to be most compatible with Grass Roots development are still the traditional variety. Traditional systems have currency now with the stress on promoting development schemes in harmony with the indigenous cultures of the host nations. The new model is contextually tolerant and thus promotes indigenous systems, rather than the universal mass media and diffusion systems peddled during the modernization era (Wang and Dissanayake, 1984:22):

'Traditional media' are also indigenous modes of communication but they seem to focus on interpersonal channels and networks of communication, such as meeting places, community tea houses, marketplaces, religious centre, and social-community institutions.

Unlike electronic mass media systems which employ scarce spectrum space for their transmission and which are monopolized by elites, traditional oral-based media are unmonopolizable community resources suited to the purpose of grass roots communications (Jussawalla and Hughes, 1984:256).
Although traditional communication systems theoretically allow more access to community decision-making, and are more culturally appropriate, an examination of community structure in India reveals its hierarchical and status-quo orientation (Heginbotham, 1975).

Within the communications sub-field of development communications, academics and practitioners in western-leaning and non-aligned Asian nations such as India, Pakistan, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Taiwan, and the Philippines have been among the strongest promoters [in addition to Scandinavian theorists] of the new development philosophy alternately referred to as Another Development by academics, or Participatory Action Research by practitioners.

The prime channel which the Asian group of theorists disseminates its views in is the Singaporean journal Media Asia. This journal’s focus make it an ideal journal for presenting new development ideas, still one of the most important issues in contemporary Asia.

Wimal Dissanayake of the East-West Centre Communications Institute in Hawaii provides a succinct but comprehensive overview of four different approaches to development that have dominated the field since its post-War inception. The only model that enjoyed the active support of multilateral and bilateral agencies during the Post-WWII
development boom has been the modernization model. While the others have received academic attention they have not been able to secure significant operational support outside socialist nations.

The latest model is the most important for our study. The question remains whether the grass roots model will remain just another academic curiosity or whether its supporters will be able to establish themselves. Dissanayake has summarized the thinking of the Asian group of communications theorists in an article in *Media Asia*. This group is the prime advocates of the fourth development approach within the field of communications. The primary theme of the new development philosophy--like that of Dependency Theory--is self-reliance at the national and local levels (Dissanayake, 1981:224):

The fourth approach to development communication that is currently gaining wide recognition is characterized by its explicit emphasis on the idea of self-reliance. This approach reflects the desire to integrate strategically a host of ideas related to development that have emerged in recent times. They are:

* popular participation
* grassroots development
* integrated village development
* use of appropriate technology
* fulfillment of basic needs
* productive use of local resources
* maintenance of the ecological balance
* development problems to be defined by the people themselves
* culture as a mediating force in development


It is quite surprising to see how many of these principles are stressed in pre-independence development programs, and the Nehru’s CD program. The pre-independence programs will be looked in more detail later.

The principle of self-reliance is supposed to be operational at the international level—in relations between the powerful and less powerful nations—and at the local level—in relations between a nation’s centre and periphery. Popular participation is viewed as a requisite for the achievement of self-reliance at the local level (Ibid:225):

For self-reliance to succeed, popular participation is absolutely essential. It is a self-evident truth that in the less-developed countries the greatest resource for development is the people themselves.
While the Asian school highlights participation and grassroots involvement in development as essential characteristics of the new approach it does not take into account the historically manifest trend of elite cooptation of all attempts at grassroots participation.

This failure is the Achilles Heel of the new model, for without formulating a realistic strategy to counteract, or at least contain, the inevitable pressure vested interests bring to bear on independent development initiatives, this model is destined for the same fate as the CD programs of the 1950s and '60s: it will be coopted by elites to serve their interests.

Just as the organizational incompetence of the American military in the last twenty years is related to the military's refusal to analyse and learn from its past failures so many failures in the field of development could be avoided if we made a point of learning from our historical failures (Gabriel, 1985).

Johnson of the National University of Australia is typical of academics who, in the absence of a knowledge of historical precedent, naively believe that if people and government have the will grassroots democracy is only a decree away:

**Democracy at the grassroots.** Although often
resisted by the organs of traditional administration inherited from colonial days, the drive towards local self-government is among the strongest of popular urges and promises much, especially in the area of rural development (Johnson, 1983:18).

Few of the theorists who are advocating the promotion of grass roots development are aware that the first generation of community development during the 1950s was founded on the same principles yet was undermined by numerous impediments that still exist today. Without the historical lessons they could glean from these early programs the theorists and practitioners presiding over the rebirth of grass roots development will soon be witnessing its second failure.

From Gandhi's time development practitioners have shown that the only hope for achieving local self-reliance and grassroots participation in development is to maintain the maximum possible organizational independence from established power groups from local through international levels. In contemporary development this means independence from government, and corporate bilateral and multilateral aid agencies which are the main promoters of top down development. Only within this framework can genuine grassroots communications policies by formulated and implemented with any hope of success.
Intercultural Ethnocentrism, State Authoritarianism and Grass Roots Development Theory: Apparent Paradoxes

There is an implicit, but erroneous, assumption embodied within the development philosophy of the Grass Roots theorists: that the use of traditional communications systems will necessarily lead to increased bottom up communications within the community. Here we must confront one of the paradox's of the new alternative development approach.

The source of the confusion is that the same development philosophy has radically different implications when identical principles, such as the promotion of self-reliance and participation, are applied at the international, national or local levels.

At the international level, with the promotion of nonethnocentric development policies stressing self-reliance and increased indigenous control, the anticipated outcome is a more symmetrical relationship between central and peripheral nations. This policy is being endorsed within the capitals of former Latin American, Asian and African colonies.

Yet, when development policies are culturally appropriate, national and community self-reliance may be increased while grass roots participation is inhibited by authoritarian
indigenous social institutions. In this case the promotion of grass roots development principles would itself be an ethnocentric exercise, for it would entail the rejection of indigenous institutions in favor of western-inspired liberal-democratic ones. Therefore, a development philosophy ostensibly in harmony with indigenous cultures at the national and international levels may in fact suppress grass roots participation at the local level.

In Thailand, for example, CUSO (formerly Canadian University Service Overseas) was involved in a project aiding Cambodian refugees in camps across the North-East border. The project was participative yet was in marked contrast to the hierarchical indigenous Thai culture:

In Thailand, because of the culture, the indigenous approach is very much top down. So this project [NET], for instance, is an anomaly. So it struggles against the very way that Thai culture is...So, they’re indigenous in the sense that they are rooted in the reality and understanding of that country and we would hope that they draw on some of the more sensitive and thoughtful people who have thought about how to bring about social change—we would hope—but it doesn’t always happen. In another sense they are not indigenous because they don’t glorify what’s traditional, what’s been there
before. They respect it but don’t glorify it (Brown, 1986).

Even though the NET program went against the grain of Thai society it received the enthusiastic support of key provincial politicians showing that bottom up programs can be acceptable to those in power, though this would not be the case everywhere Brown said.

Indigenous cultural institutions are not necessarily the most appropriate vehicles for promoting bottom up participation, as the Asian theorists argue.

On the other hand, indigenous culture embodies shared community values and therefore holds the potential for increased grass roots participation, depending on the degree of social stratification in a given society. In a diverse nation such as India where stratification by caste, and income, is pronounced there is less potential for introducing grass roots participation through established social institutions. In this case we place ourselves in the paradoxical position of either being culturally tolerant and promoting elitist led top down development, or being ethnocentric and promoting bottom up development.

Grass Roots theory is founded on the western idea that community participation in development enhances individual
democratic input and that community democracy will naturally follow the promotion of indigenous institutions and communications networks. This is certainly not the case in India.

The promotion of traditional community forums as vehicles of participation entails decision-making by elder males, thereby excluding women and youth from active participation. If the Grass Roots theorists left it at this stage they would be undermining their goals of encouraging broad-based community support. Yet, again, they could be charged with ethnocentric interference if they attempted to institute western concepts of democratic participation at the village level.

This paradox is fundamental to all development programs for development implies the promotion of social change which embodies an implicit rejection of the ability of local institutions to satisfy social needs. On the other hand, nonethnocentric development initiatives based on the promotion of indigenous institutions are relatively more status-quo oriented.

An example of such a dilemma facing an NGO is the promotion of women's movements in South Asia by the Match International Centre of Ottawa. Match was established after two Canadian women attended a United Nations conference in Mexico City and
found Third World women in dire need of development assistance, yet not being adequately served by the development establishment.

Match's work begins with consciousness raising in the group involved. This entails the acceptance of western ideas of equality as they apply to gender relations:

For us the gaps are primarily in philosophy. That is, we want to know whether or not these women understand their positions in their societies—vis-à-vis the patriarchy and the larger macro-economic situation. Once they get a sense of their oppression they can then mobilize and organize activities that they feel will help meet their specific problems. [We want to ensure] the activities for women aren't stereotyped, such as knitting and sewing, or just carrying on the patriarchal values on another group of women. So we try to assess, more or less, how independent the group is, whether or not they have a commitment of that set of principles of feminism—in a larger context—or whether they're looking at just exploiting another group of women for business' sake (Yurka, 1986).

Are our ideas of feminism, based on western ideas of
equal rights, universally valid or are our values about
gender relations perceived differently in different cultures?

There are many women's groups within India promoting the
values Match is, therefore their program could not be
considered culturally imperialistic. The question remains
about the universality of development values and their
interpretation by people from different cultures.
The assumption that there was a universal development model
by modernization theorists was rejected by Third World
intellectuals and leaders as paternalistic. Can we assume
there should be universal interpretations of values about
gender relations, even where there is apparent agreement
over the terminology?

It appears Match is aware of this difficulty for the group
stresses placing the values of feminism "in a larger
context," rather than in an absolutist framework. The
promotion of any social values as an end of development
requires the utmost care and sensitivity otherwise it could
descend into ethnocentric arrogance paralleling that of the
early modernization theorists. Apparent agreement over values
can mask radically different cultural interpretations of the
meanings of what are considered shared values. There is no
question that women in India are organizing to improve their
position in Indian society, yet the question remains about
the degree of overlap in the meaning we can expect between
western feminism and Third World varieties.

The first step in the resolution of the development-ethnocentrism dilemma must be to realize that one can respect the cultural institutions of a people while still fighting for the rights of their most disadvantaged groups. In respecting the diverse cultures of India development initiatives must respect local contextual variations.

In his Ph.D research, conducted in Southern India during the late 1960s, Stanley Heginbotham discovered that the bottom up component of the CD program was undermined by hostile control-oriented bureaucracies. Western ideals of community democracy were promoted in a cultural environment westerners knew little about. A grass roots policy had no chance of surviving in such an inhospitable environment:

...the targets that came down through the administrative hierarchies reflected the results of central plans much more than they did the plans—whether paper or real—submitted in the names of villages, blocks, and districts. In interviewing Gram Sevaks [all-purpose village level workers] in the state of Andhra Pradesh in 1954 S.C. Dube found that "time and time again in the course of their training they were told that plans will grow up from the village people, whereas in reality they
had the frustrating experience of finding that
invariably the plans came from the top and had to
be carried down by them to the village peoples."
Within a short time of its introduction, the
process of planning from below was, for all
practical purposes, abandoned. The failure of
planning from below reflected much more than
organizational birth pangs, however. Fundamental
conflicts in concepts of authority, motivation, and
control were involved (Heginbotham, 1975:63-4).

Heginbotham’s postmortem analysis of the Indian CD program
is unique because he goes beyond the list of orthodox
organizational failures that other investigators use to
account for the demise of participation in the program.
He introduces some plausible cultural factors that account
for the program’s failure. Heginbotham says that India’s
administrative traditions—both the indigenous Dharmic-
inspired, and colonial bureaucracies—were control-oriented
and therefore incompatible with the CD program, which was to
take its initiative from the people. Grass roots democracy
was too alien, culturally, to be successfully embraced by
Indian administrators.

In 1869 a member of the colonial Viceroy’s Council began
writing notes on the governing of India (Hutchins, 1967:129).
British India was an aristocratic bastion for Englishmen who
wanted to escape the nineteenth century advance of democracy (Ibid:128). The British administration naturally reflected this bias:

...British-Indian government did come close to approximating the role in which it cast itself: a government of experts which could afford to ignore all considerations external to its own procedures of deliberation...Officials were expected to display mastery, rather than elicit cooperation, to make themselves indispensable, rather than nourish the grassroots of democracy. Such inherent tendencies of any state bureaucracy would inevitably have made India's civil servants unsympathetic to participatory democracy even if strong antidemocratic sentiments had not been widespread...(Ibid:129).

The CD program of 1952 not only contrasted with the roundly-damned colonial bureaucracy, but also the control-oriented Dharmic traditions of Southern India. The Dharmic philosophy advocates the maintenance of a steady-state social system while the CD program was designed to restructure and expand social output through the engine of economic growth. One of these philosophies had to give way. As one might anticipate the established traditional system twisted the newer development system to preserve itself (Ibid:216):
The concept of development is in three respects alien to the dharmic view. First, it implies that the quantity of goods and services produced by a society is constantly expanding. Second, it suggests that structural relationships within an economy will change as new technologies are introduced and new goods produced. Finally, development implies an acceptance of the everpresence of change (Heginbotham, 1975:216).

In the Dharmic tradition social order is maintained by the preservation of long standing social relationships and "a roughly constant flow of goods and services," (Ibid:209). While an increase in the production of goods and services is manageable within the dharmic tradition, substantial structural change is less tolerable.

Therefore, administrators respecting this tradition undermine one of the major goals of development: advancing the interests of marginalized social groups, such as lower caste groups and women, by promoting structural change. Instead, these administrators perpetuated the existing social order by channelling the benefits of development to advantaged social groups: "Many Indian administrators operate from an implicit model of development as the expansion of the supply of goods within the context of a relatively stable
structural balance," (Ibid:216). The goals of development were coopted by an administration operating on Dharmic principles of social organization.

The market-oriented society envisioned by western development agencies is culturally incompatible with the Dharmic tradition. A society where Adam Smith's proverbial invisible hand regulates the chaotic jumble of individual aspirations is alien to India where anarchy is the anticipated result of laissez-faire social policies. In this controlled environment ideas of grass roots participation are not likely to achieve the support of administrative gatekeepers.

Groups promoting grass roots participation through traditional social institutions elsewhere in the world encounter the same type of paternalistic resistance. In Latin America where indigenous political and religious institutions, such as the Catholic Church, are more authoritarian than democratic the promotion of development through these institutions would entail a more authoritarian outcome. With our traditional liberal values North Americans find this option hard to entertain without moral indignation. We would have to display a capacity to tolerate corporatism, hierarchical societies, authoritarianism, and organic-statism (Wiarda,1983:445), among other things.
The use of indigenous language is absolutely necessary to the participation of local people in development. If development is not carried out in the language/s employed in the community, participation will be limited for the want of a common medium of expression.

This occurs frequently in relations between local people and international development agencies, be they NGOs or their bilateral and multilateral counterparts. Since the international language of development is primarily English, and personnel in these agencies only speak English or other colonial languages, this leaves English speaking Indians in the drivers seat in relations with external agencies; people who do not speak English become dependent on others to look after their interests:

...in obtaining this funding you have to largely speak in English. And most of the people at the village level do not speak in English so the possibility of communication is down at that level. That is you not only have to speak in English you have to be able to think in English. And you’ve got to be able to think in terms of western cultural values in order to make your proposal.

And by that I mean you’ve got to be able to think, for example, in terms of objectives, results and goals. You’ve got to be able to think in terms
of time-line--by what time will this be done, what time will next thing be done. You've got to be able to deal with auditing systems so that you can do the accounting.

Now all of these things, including the construct of what constitutes development, is within the English framework of language and thought. So there are very significant practical difficulties in being able to claim that the alternative theories have any meaningful practical implementation potential (Spellman, 1986).

As soon as we involve an international development agency in community development we introduce--by its mere presence--a serious barrier into the ability of local people to take charge of their development. Only English speaking--and thinking--and financially skilled local people can take an active part in the negotiation and maintenance of the funding relationship with the foreign agency. This is precisely the kind of difficulty that NGOs such as Match International of Ottawa are faced with:

That's the primary thing we look at when we look at administrative details. And this [funding negotiations] would primarily go into the skills of who in that group have skills with respect to managing the project; budgets--handling an amount
of money—the absorptive capacity. So we try to assess, again through a question-answer session, just how prepared the group is to take that kind of money and what access they have to banking facilities, and what they understand about their local banking facilities; so we’re sure that they can handle it," (Yurka, 1986).

These are problems that would be extremely hard to avoid short of employing translators of the same culture as the recipients. Again, they are the type of difficulties that impede widespread participation but are overlooked by the alternative development theorists.
The Tennessee Valley Authority and Grass Roots Community Participation: The Prototype of Elite Cooption

In his controversial research on Grass Roots democracy in the TVA development of the Tennessee Valley in the southern USA, Philip Selznick relates the precedent setting case of administrative manipulation of voluntary community development associations by development bureaucrats.

Selznick's organizational and political analysis of TVA development is important because the top down manipulation of grass roots community associations he observed in the TVA program parallels the experience of most other government sponsored CD programs during the 1950s and 1960s.

The Tennessee Valley Project began during the First World War when two nitrate plants and the Wilson Dam were constructed. The $100,000,000 investment was suspended in political limbo while issues surrounding the production and distribution of fertilizer and electricity, and the principles of government versus private ownership were aired by two Presidential commissions and numerous Congressional enquiries (Selznick, 1966:4).

The impasse was temporarily resolved when the Roosevelt Administration passed the TVA Act as part of its New Deal strategy to speed development in what was one of the most
underdeveloped regions of the country; the old South. The TVA watershed includes portions of Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi and Kentucky in an area of almost 41,000 square miles, with a population of over 4 million in the late 1960s (Wright, 1968:3).

As a corporation, TVA’s three man Board of Directors was given authority to construct dams, deepen the Tennessee River channel, distribute electricity and fertilizer. The TVA was also charged with the responsibilities of proper flood control, reforestation, and contributing to “the economic and social well-being of the people living in said river basin,” (Ibid:2).

Selznick argues that TVA and State development personnel employed the voluntary grass roots citizen associations as a means to establish their agenda, and obtain the necessary compliance of the association members. In essence, argues Selznick, the official grass roots associations were manipulated for top down purposes by local functionaries for the benefit of local vested interests. Selznick then argues that to survive in its hostile southern environment the federally chartered TVA had to adapt itself to southern interests merely to ensure its own survival. In the process it relinquished its ability to successfully promote the grass roots participation of the area’s citizenry.
Selznick's argument is relevant in helping to explain the similar failures of large-scale national community development programs in India, Zambia, and Latin America. In fact, he is the only one to come up with an explanation that attempts to encompass the full political, organizational and environmental variables that impinge on the implementation of social change in various locales.

Selznick (1966:217) calls the process of drawing the support of the community into voluntary associations--set-up and run by the development organization itself--political cooptation. Cooptation involves the "unacknowledged absorption of nucleuses of power [the grass roots associations in our case] into the administrative structure of an organization [which] makes possible the elimination or appeasement of potential sources of opposition," (Ibid:218): The cooptation of grass roots organizations is a method of social control, of containing public demands:

These new methods center about attempts to organize the mass, to change an undifferentiated and unreliable citizenry into a structured, readily accessible public (Ibid:217).

The function of the voluntary associations involved in the TVA provide a remarkable parallel to the top down nature of the CD programs in the aforementioned countries. The
associations were employed, like panchayati raj in India, as vehicles of information diffusion and for the setting of and checking up on quotas for development personnel in the communities (Ibid:224). Selznick outlines how grass roots organizations advanced the interests of TVA management in the following summary (Ibid:224):

1. The achievement of ready accessibility, which requires the establishment of routine and reliable channels through which information, aid, and requests may be brought to segments of the population. The committee device permits the assembling of leading elements on a regular basis, so that top levels of administration may have reason to anticipate that quota assignments will be fulfilled; and the local organization provides an administrative focus in terms of which the various line divisions may be coordinated in the field...

3. Administration may be decentralized so that the execution of a broad policy is adapted to local conditions by utilizing the special knowledge of local citizens; it is not normally anticipated, however, that the policy itself will be placed in jeopardy.

The rhetoric about grass roots control is laid bare hear for
what it is: top down manipulation of popular sentiments. This is the state to which community development meetings descended to in India. The filtering of bottom up requests never got off the ground; political and administrative priorities set the agenda from the start.

Tapping Heginbotham’s research we find that in the late 1960s the CD policy of bottom up participation had been replaced in reality by the top down pressure to fulfill performance targets determined by politicians and planners. When Heginbotham asked a District Administrative Officer what is expected of him he replied:

"He must be helpful to the farmers and he must complete the government schemes in a successful way. Now, to be quite frank, that means fulfilling targets. My superiors judge me by my success in fulfilling my targets and in keeping my paper work up to date. One kind of DAO will keep the list of targets always in front of him and push his subordinate AEOs [agricultural extension officers] to fulfill targets," (Heginbotham:100-1).

The Block Development Officer working under a District Officer is imbued with the need to fulfill the targets:

"It is not my duty," he replied, "to tell the
Collector the difficulties. It is my duty to fulfill the targets. He will say that if I am not capable of doing this work then I am not fit for the post of BDO. Though there are difficulties, we must get results in the end somehow. Even if people do not want many of the schemes, it is my duty to convince them. That is the nature of the community development program, to get across many schemes."

Naturally the severe top down pressure to meet targets at any cost inhibits lower level workers from passing up valuable information that should be used to tailor the program to the needs of the villagers they work with. Since modifications are viewed as failures to achieve targets no unexpected information will travel up the ranks to policy makers and community participation is effectively stifled. A Collector discusses his ability to solicit input from his underlings:

Another problem that I mentioned to you before is that most of my staff members don’t feel free to express their ideas openly. This comes, I think, from our administrative traditions. These people naturally have a concern for themselves and they don’t want to anger me. I try to set them at ease, I indicate that I am interested only in a frank expression of business views not in their families
or personal problems. In this way I build their confidence...Also, most of my staff have worked under many difficult superiors so they have become more cautious. There is this great willingness to agree. They would rather agree than set out the difficulties and present their objections. They are afraid of rubbing their superior the wrong way. I try to make them feel relaxed and give them a feeling of partnership in these programs.
The Coptation of Grass Roots Development in Latin America, Asia and Africa.

The cooptation of grass roots development programs not only occurs in India. The same pattern of elite cooptation of state sponsored programs is a problem encountered by practitioners around the world; even in the United States.

From research conducted in three large Latin American cities—Bogota, Columbia, Mexico City, and Valencia, Venezuela—between 1978-82 English geographers Alan Gilbert and Peter Ward (1984) concluded that despite their grass roots rhetoric state-run community development projects were essentially employed as a means of top down social control by the state.

The primary motive behind the introduction of community development programs in Latin America was to ensure the poor were at least passively committed to democracy rather than communism through the alleviation of inequities that might drive the poor towards radical alternatives. The Alliance for Progress was initiated in the region during the late 1950s with US financial and technical sponsorship (Gilbert and Ward, 1984:771):

In Latin America, 25 years have elapsed since the Alliance for Progress began to pour money into
community-participation and self-help projects. Here, too, the primary motive was to promote political democracy and the integration of the poor into society in order to counteract the spread of communism.

Gilbert and Ward (Ibid:780) can help us draw a few parallels between Indian, North American and Latin American community development programs. They say that many of the organizations created to manage popular participation did not emerge from the grass roots but were fashioned from the top down. The community organizations were used as instruments of government legitimation to ensure popular compliance with top down directives. Where genuine participation stimulated unexpected demands for more community control over resources and decision-making, government enthusiasm cooled. Finally, Gilbert and Ward say that any benefits won by these community councils have been trivial. (Ibid:780)

Just as grass roots participation was contained by US and Indian CD programs, so community aspirations were managed by top down Latin American institutions.

The Human Relations school strategy of offering workers decision-making power with the intention of channeling this voluntary participation into officially desired directions permeates the Latin American as it does the Indian CD
programs. In both cases existing power groups benefitted while the poor participated in the perpetuation of their own subordinate status.
Guatemalan Community Development: The Alliance for Progress

Sociologist Ed Gondolf of Illinois' Principia College maintains there is problem in exporting community-based development philosophies from the politically stable US to the relatively unstable nations of the Third World such as in Central America (Gondolf, 1981:1).

Development planners attempted to transfer the lessons learned during Roosevelt's New-Deal-era agricultural extension programs to the Third World. Community development workers carried with them the assumption that villagers and city dwellers would be able to exercise local autonomy in their decision-making, free from the influence of local vested interests and national politics: an ideal that did not even exist in the US (Ibid:2). Shaped by US experience with agricultural extension projects in the 1930s and '40s, and urban planning of the 1960s there has always been the assumption of local autonomy in community development.

For its size and population Guatemala receives the greatest infusion of community development aid from agencies, such as America's AID, the IMF and World Bank, who have sponsored such infrastructure development projects as transnational highways, hydro-electric dams, and hospitals (Ibid:3).

Gondolf divides CD projects into three different varieties:
government social service programs, agricultural and technical assistance programs, and church-sponsored action programs (Ibid:2). The common theme running throughout Gondolf's typologies is that the more closely a program is allied to official government channels the less real structural change it offers the peasants. Even mere agricultural cooperatives are looked at suspiciously by the establishment, if they are autonomous, because they are viewed as wellsprings of organized political opposition (Ibid:5):

The government, however, tends to interpret these organizations not only as economic ventures, but also as political movements. The elites of the country, in and out of government, envision that peasants who make demands stimulate dissent and even revolution. Consequently, the very programs that may be doing the most to ease the anguishing conditions of poverty which nurture revolution, now appear on the "hit lists" of the right-wing "death squads."

The Comunidad de Base--Base Communities, or Basic Christian Communities--of the Latin American Catholic Churches actively attempt to promote social action, based on political education, that deals with the injustices peasants encounter in their daily existence. These communities also promote
basic health care and other social services. Yet, because of their autonomy and the threat they pose to vested interests church workers are in grave danger: "right-wing retaliation respects neither diplomatic immunity nor religious affiliation, as evidenced by six priests assassinated in Guatemala and four US citizens from the Maryknoll order raped and murdered in El Salvador," (Ibid:7).

Gondolf concludes by saying that the most substantial development efforts are the ones in the severest danger, with their planners' lives in danger and their accomplishments offset by the injustices of those in control of the country (Ibid:8).
Zambian Participatory Democracy, Development and the One Party State

Like India, the Zambian government of Kenneth Kaunda established a formal network of development committees reaching up from local communities where input was to be channelled from Village Productivity Committees, to Ward Development Committees, Rural Councils, District Development Committees and on to the capital.

Successive acts—passed after colonial rule was terminated in 1964—established these formal channels of popular participation during the mid to late 1960s. After opposition parties were outlawed, and a one-party "participatory democracy" established by Kaunda in 1973, a parallel party structure was linked to the development committees.

As in India, participation was not meant to begin and end with administrative matters, leaving the decision-making in the hands of the party and urban bureaucrats (Chikulo, 1979:172). Participation was intended to mean "mass involvement both in the execution and in the planning of development programmes." (Ibid:172): the accent was on active not passive involvement.

Rather than facilitating grass roots development the party employed the network as a vehicle for mobilizing popular
support for its programs; and political survival. "Instead of
devolution of authority to the committees at the periphery,
the trend has been one of centralization and consolidation of
power at the center." (Ibid:178). Accompanying this
contradiction between official policy and political actuality
have been pronouncements of political doublethink such as the
"Decentralization in Centralism" policy.

Although grass roots participation in development projects
was not created as envisioned by Zambia's political leaders
we cannot conclude that it was an absolute top down affair
either. Carrying out research in the Kasama District of the
Northern Province of Zambia Michael Bratton found that
patronage networks tied the national government to the
localities in a mutually-dependent relationship. Local
headmen received development resources from the center in
return for containing peasant demands in the periphery
(Bratton,1980:270). Stability in African states depended on
the patronage resources available for use by the state, and
the ability of local leaders use these resources to manage
community behavior (Ibid:270).

Since the center is too weak to enforce total submission
the leaders at the local level have a large degree of
power with which they can employ resources at their
discretion. Therefore, the state is beholden to the local
leaders as much as locals are tied to the state for the
supply of resources (Ibid:9). In this sense there is a two-way dynamic to centre-periphery relations despite the power of the state. Since the state can not reach down to the community level it is dependent on local leaders who depend on the passive support of their community to stay in power. Therefore, the local leaders are dependent on the state for the resources that keep their communities satisfied (Ibid:270).

While this may not be the ideal grass roots/center development dialogue, in a state that is struggling to survive the shift from colony to semi-independent nation, and offer a whole range of new social services, perhaps it is the best that can be realistically hoped for.

Therefore, the case of Zambian development policy and administration shows that just because a nation fails to live up to its grass roots rhetoric does not mean that there is a strictly one-way dynamic between center and locality. While patronage may be a less than ideal distribution mechanism for development resources it may the best we can hope for in conditions of political uncertainty.

In addition, it shows how local elites can coopt the development plans of the state because the state is dependent on local elites to manage community demands. A similar thing occurred during the administration of the TVA program in the
US. State and local agencies were relied upon by Washington to make contact with farmers, even though they were at odds with the goals of the TVA programs. With the federal government dependent on officials out of their jurisdiction they had to accept the undermining of their grass roots goals in order that the program itself be saved. Otherwise the program would have been blocked. As Washington’s TVA plans were coopted by state and local control over extension personnel in the Southern US, so Kaunda was unable to exercise complete control over local development programs. Therefore, it is clear that we cannot count on the ability of bilateral and multilateral agencies to implement grass roots programs from the top down; they simply do not have the ability to do so. Centralized agencies do not have the decentralized extension necessary to nurture grass roots programs independent of local elites, which are generally antagonistic to threatening their local power base.
Nigerian Rural Development: Government versus Community Initiative

After conducting research into community development in Nigeria, Rural Sociologists Ekong E. Ekong and Kamorudeen L. Sokoya of Nigeria related two initiatives—one they deemed successful, and one a failure—that epitomized how to and how not to proceed to with community development.

Their primary conclusion is indicative of a common theme running through the international literature on community development. They argue that government sponsored ventures tend to be less representative—and therefore less successful—than development projects that are initiated by and carried out by sections of the community itself.

The reason for the success of community initiated development, argue Ekong and Sokoya, is that these projects always stem from a real perceived need within the community rather than being imposed from the outside by urban experts or politicians who attempt to inform the villagers about what they really need. Since externally imposed projects tend to be based on what technicians and/or politicians want for the people, or what they believe the people want, they have less a chance of actually meeting the perceived needs of the villagers themselves.
Ekong and Sokaya (1982:218-19) relay a story of a community initiated project linking the towns of Ode-Lemo and Ogere, in the Remo Local Government Area of Ogun State. A federal expressway cut off Ogere’s farmer’s access to their farms on the eastern borders of the village—leaving only a footbridge unable to support heavy equipment. Since the need for a resolution to the crisis was felt by all the farmers in the village—whose families represented 90% of the population—all the money needed for the construction of the five mile access road was successfully raised through levies on village adults and by donations from youth clubs and individuals.

Communal labor was employed in clearing the site and the heavy work was performed by a construction company under community appointed supervision. The road is now in use.

The second project in Ode-Lemo was initiated by "some community leaders who were patrons of the ruling political party in the former western region of Nigeria, in the bid to endear the party to the community," (Ibid:219). Although a community market for farm produce—kolanut—already existed this group decided the village could use a modern market with locked-up stalls.

While the road project employed communal land with rapid community approval the market project received a portion of the communal land, from the village elders, previously used
for the burial of "undesirable elements," because the project was not perceived to be an acute community need. Unfortunately, women could not travel on this land. The cost of the project and construction was born by sources external to the village.

The village Council attempted to ensure the new market's patronage by closing the old market down during the hours the new one was open for business. "The people kicked against this attempt to force the market on them and totally abandoned the use of the market place after an initial partial compliance." (Ibid:219).

Ekong and Sokoya introduce us to the importance of community perceptions when the success or failure of development projects hang in the balance. The success of the road project is attributed to its perceived necessity, while the new market was suspiciously received within the village of Ogere.

In addition, the road project was initiated by trusted people within the community for communal use, while the market was initiated by an unpopular group of politicians who charged rent for the market stalls where there had been none before. This project lacked village credibility, which Ekong and Sokoya suggest is the fate of many externally initiated projects.
They are not arguing for laissez-faire development, merely that the community be intimately involved in the identification, conceptualization and implementation of community development projects rather than being forced to passively accept unwanted 'benefits.'
Formal Theoretical Parallels to Technical Limitations on Grass Roots Development:

There is a stream of social science literature discussing the constraints technique places on social action. Leading this school are such Canadian academic heavyweights as Marshall McLuhan, Harold Innis, George Grant, and Europeans Jacques Ellul, and Lewis Mumford.

Ellul is the most explicit about the role technique places on restricting social freedom. "Technique is the boundary of democracy," Ellul says, "What technique wins, democracy loses," (Ellul, 1964:208). Ellul argues that democracy is limited to the choosing of generalists—politicians—who are supposed to guide the ship of state. Yet, politicians must defer to the constraints laid out for them by technicians and administrators; technique sets the agenda, the politician facilitates the growth of the technical activity our economy has come to depend on:

Popular will can only express itself within the limits that technical necessities have fixed in advance. Can people select engineers? Or accountants, or organizers? Can they pass judgement about methods of work? If they could it would amount to the system (which has actually been attempted) in which judges are elected by the
governed, tax collectors by the taxpayers, generals by the privates. Such a system would represent the only true democratic method. Why is the democratic method not applied in the areas cited, whereas we do elect politicians. For the simple reason that the functions of judge, general, and engineer are considered to be functions of technicians, but the politician is deemed to be a nontechnical functionary: good for everything, good for nothing (Ibid:209).

Where Ellul focussed on the nature of technique in the 1960s, he and other technological theoreticians switched to the concept of the technological system in the 1970s. The prime difference between the two concepts is the open systems view of our technological civilization implicit in the latter concept.

We can apply such a system's view to post-WWII development. Within new nations such as independent India the growth-oriented economy became the yardstick of development in the post-WWII period. The CD program was discarded because its holistic approach was not an efficient enough facilitator of growth. In its stead came Rural Development programs focussing on the diffusion of mechanized agricultural systems. These technical programs rapidly diminished what grassroots participation the CD programs did allow because
they are controlled by specialists averse to community interference in their spheres of influence. Social, economic and political activity had to conform to the growth needs of the system. Participation became a means to the end of growth.

Full grass roots participation in development did not make for a system maximizing growth. Even the development generalist who merely expressed his notions of how all the divisions of a community must benefit from development was overruled by agricultural technicians seeking to maximize the growth in food output through the introduction of quota systems. All notions of grass roots participation died with the growing technical control of development programs; community participation had been coopted by technical and administrative elites around the world. As various development departments were rationalized in countries around the world CD departments succumbed to the control of omnipotent departments of agriculture. The generalist approach of the CD departments also succumbed to the specialist perogative of the agriculture departments. Even the top down Human Relations type of community participation characteristic of the CD program was unacceptable to the technical elites.

Again and again development specialists assessing the historical evolution of India's national development programs
show the conjunction of the decline of community development goals of community participation and the rise of agricultural priorities of increased food production, as directed by the Department of Agriculture (Holdcroft, 1978:46-59).

From the international to local levels technological imperatives are an integral part of the organizational culture inhibiting grass roots participation in development.
Professional Self-Interest as an Impediment to Bottom Up Participation: The Human Face of the Technological System

There is one additional impediment to the promotion of bottom up development in India's CD program. While Selznick introduced us to the mechanism by which grass roots programs become coopted by lower level elites Poston provides us with the reason why they do so, through the example of US foreign aid workers working abroad during the 1950s.

Technical foreign aid workers are motivated by the same instinct of self-preservation as administrators and other vested interests in India. In India's CD program this group of professionals and technicians consisted of foreign aid experts and Indian's trained in the same agricultural extension tradition of developed in twentieth century USA.

Speaking from his experience as a Community Development administrator during the 1950s Richard Poston critiqued the organizational failures of US foreign aid. Poston found that one of the primary roadblocks in the way of grass roots participation was the professional self-interest of the technicians and advisors employed at the United States Operations Missions (USOM) in countries receiving US aid.

Poston says the "USOM was in some respects like a government
within a government," because "in many countries the host
government had grown dependent on foreign aid funds as a
routine part of its own expenditures," (Poston, 1962:52). "In
some countries," Poston wrote, "the USOM director frequently
enjoyed even more prestige than the ambassador because of the
large staff he controlled..." (Ibid:52).

Each USOM was subdivided into sections responsible for
programs such as agriculture, education, and public health.
Much in the same way Roosevelt discovered that it was
dependent on the cooperation of state agencies in the
implementation of the TVA Act, so Truman [and later
Eisenhower in his relationship with the Pentagon] discovered
that theirs goals were easily thwarted by the self-interest
of USOM bureaucracies:

New program proposals were were, of course, subject
to Washington approval, a process which was
extremely slow and tedious, and which was based not
merely upon the broad policy of the President of
the United States, but also upon the professional
prejudices within the bureaucracy which often
operated to thwart the policies of the President
and the intent of Congress.

The decisions as to what programs a USOM was to
support were theoretically based upon the requests
of the host government; but many techniques were
used to cause the host government to request those services that the USOM wished to render; and in many instances, attempts were made to shape a countries program without sufficient regard for its indigenous culture and peculiar needs (Poston, 1962: 53).

Therefore, in bilateral relations the expressed needs of the host country were not respected by western technicians (in defiance of Presidential policy), just as the expressed needs of locals were not respected by Indian CD administrators (in defiance of Nehru), and TVA legislation was undermined by state ministries in New Deal USA (in defiance of Roosevelt).

The pattern is clear. First, participation cannot be politically decried in a top down manner because politicians are dependent on administrators and technicians to implement their policy. Since higher level organizational policy-makers are dependent on lower level administrative workers this bestows lower level workers with the power to obstruct or distort policies that threaten their existence or restrict their latitude.

Second, when this bureaucratic cooptation occurs in intercultural situations resentment is directed toward the nation providing the aid by the host nation's government. This creates an unhealthy intercultural relationship between
the peoples of the nations involved in the development venture when western technicians are seen to be looking after their own career interests at the expense of the expressed needs of government leaders, administrators and people in the host country. Poston list how this self-interest blinded aid workers to cultural conditions in the host country that could undermine their program:

...one of the prime considerations as to what programs were introduced in a given country was not necessarily the conditions that prevailed in the country, but the professional interests of influential ICA offices, without sufficient thought being given to the readiness of the people in the underdeveloped country to make appropriate use of the skills the professional technicians had to offer (Ibid:54).

The very fact that the administration of USOM was divided among different professional specialities was problematic because local's interests were much larger than the scope of a specialist could handle. There was a mismatch between the needs of local people and what technicians were prepared to offer (Ibid:57):

This meant in effect that an assortment of technicians from the various specialized fields
were put on the federal payroll to set up an operation around the world that attempted to fit the people and governments of the under-developed countries into pre-established professional molds...these technicians were given the job of causing their systems for increasing the efficiency of agriculture, and of other things, to be put into practice (Ibid:57-8).

John Spellman makes a similar point over twenty years later about the dampening effect specialists have on grass roots participation in development programs:

Once you require expertism—in anything, it doesn’t really matter whether it is technology, medicine, education, agriculture—then you have limited participation, and you have limited effective decision-making to those who consider themselves, or are considered by others, to be experts. At this point the only thing that any one else in the stream can do is take instructions and directives from those who are involved in designing and conceiving the schemes. So one of the problems with this alternative construction is that very few people are willing to recognize development programs that are not based on expertism (Spellman,1986).
Nevermind trying to attain recognition for programs that are based on indigenous knowledge systems it is hard to find acceptance of programs such as the Community Development program which are based on a more holistic approach employing generalists rather than specialists. Across the world western specialists went to war with generalists promoting the CD type of program and in all cases the specialist approach to sectoral agricultural, health, and transportation development emerged the victor. If western generalists cannot survive in the hostile world of development specialism there is no chance that indigenous systems are going to be accepted by the technological priesthood of development.

Since grass roots participation cannot be decried in a top down manner by multilateral and bilateral agencies involved in development the alternative development theorists have begun to look for new ways of promoting grass roots development. With the failure of external agencies to promote grass roots development the natural alternative is from within micro-level groups consisting of the people who development is ostensibly designed to help. Therefore, the political, commercial and professional elites that impede the transfer of their decision-making power and control of resources to the less privileged can be theoretically bypassed.
Large Scale Technological Development and the Absence of Community Participation:

A brief sketch of one large-scale development project, sponsored by the Government of India and the World Bank (with bilateral aid from European and North American governments) shows why this type of project tends to preempt grass roots participation at the conceptual and implementation stages. [4]

The Narmada Valley Development Project in mid-West India has much in common with the development of the Tennessee Valley in the southern United States. Hydro-electric dam building, irrigation and extraction of forest and mineral wealth are all part of a regional development strategy of the valley region stretching from central to mid-West India (Kalpavriksh, 1985:269). Thirty major dams, and twenty on tributaries of the Narmada are planned. Five dams are Hydro-electric projects, six are to be multipurpose and 19 for irrigation. Finally, 135 medium and 3,000 minor irrigation schemes are planned (Ibid:270).

Up to one million people will be displaced by the project, many unwillingly (Ibid:271). Yet, no realistic plans have been made for the resettlement of the displaced tribal peoples who inhabit the valley. The students interviewing officials working on the project said that the officials had
little concern, or knowledge about, the ways of life of the
people they were forcibly moving:

At no stage have local people been involved in the
planning of the project. When asked about this, some
officials seemed amused—their unstated attitude being
one of scorn for the abilities of the villagers.
Involving them in planning seemed quite absurd. Other
officials admitted, however, that this was a
serious fault in planning, and that the ‘we-know-
best-for-them’ attitude had resulted in the failure
of several past projects.

Is it the technical factor that keeps the tribals from
participating as equal partners in the planning of the
Narmada project? Partly. The tribals are seen as ignorant;
what possible value could be obtained by collaborating with
them on the implementation of the project? Monopolization of
the project by international and national agencies is also a
factor. The projects these agencies sponsor operate on market
principles that override the concerns of economic
‘externalities’ such as the concerns of ‘non-productive’
tribals. None of these constraints themselves provide the key
to the participation puzzle; they are all mutually
reinforcing.

Part of the planning problem results from the ever-present
lack of coordination between government ministries seeking to protect their spheres of influence. There is no single government body responsible for the entire planning of the project. "The same is true for implementation, which has been entrusted to various departments among whom there is hardly any coordination or cooperation" (Ibid:272).

The case of the Narmada Dam project illustrates the contempt which specialists employed by government and international agencies hold for the aspirations of the people immediately affected by their projects. In India, as elsewhere, the goals of grass roots development are incompatible with the organizational cultures of international and national interests promoting technical, market-oriented development.
The reforestation of India is another example of a large-scale development plan that totally ignores the aspirations of the people most affected by the plan. In the name of development the World Bank, national and international aid agencies, are promoting the reforestation of India with trees that cannot support the complex eco-system necessary to sustain the people dependent on these forests for their survival (Dogra, 1983:44).

The decision to replace depleted natural forests with monocultures of commercial trees, such as pine and eucalyptus, and to plant on land previously used for feeding the local populace is not, and would not be, made by the people who depend on the forests for their sustenance (Ibid:44). The tribals and villagers who live in or near the natural forests obtain food, animal fodder, humus for the agricultural fields, building materials and other necessities that are unattainable in the plantation forests (Ibid:44).

The plantations are unable to support the variety of life that is found in the natural forests. Locals depend on the natural forests as a source of foods such as edible fruits, roots, shoots. A report issued by the Harijan Welfare Department of the Government of Madhya Pradesh lists 22 types
of fruit, 8 flowers, 14 leaves, 29 roots and 11 seeds that are the people use but that are only attainable in the natural forests (Dogra, 1983:46-7). To the extent that these foods are no longer available to the locals they will become dependent on external agencies for their food, which they will now have to pay for. As the traditional way of life is destroyed so is the people's self-reliance; a state which development programs are supposed to be nurturing.

With the destruction of the ecologically healthy forests the community finds it impossible to maintain traditional family and social relationships. The aged and youth are busy in the natural forests collecting, contributing to the families upkeep, and maintaining their status as productive members of the family (Dogra, 1983:47).

To talk of the promotion of community self-reliance in the same breath as large-scale market-oriented development programs is a contradiction in terms. If self-reliance were the real goals of international and national development agencies they would be attempting to preserve the traditional way of life through which maximum political and economic decentralization is maintained. Modernization entails centralization and thus precludes community self-reliance and participation. The absence of these ideals in development programs is the reason they are proclaimed as policy objectives.
Again, it is the organizational imperatives of development that impede grass roots participation and the achievement of community self-reliance. The logic of the whole system would have to be changed before these ideals can be successfully realized: a fact which the alternative theorists fail to recognize.

The benefits from the products of the commercial plantations accrue mainly to urban populations, and provides needed foreign exchange. Everyone benefits except the people whose future depends on the continued maintenance of natural forests open to the whole community.

Again, decision-making in the development projects sponsored by national and international agencies leaves out the views of the members of the community in which the project is taking place. Euphemistic labels such as 'community forestry' and 'social forestry' are employed in an effort to provide the impression that the projects involve the whole community. Again, the advances of science and its technical application are monopolized by the commercial elites who coopt the technical and political communities at the expense of those with no economic or political clout. Participation in development is a function of power.
Micro-Organizational Strategies for Development

With the failure of bilateral and multilateral aid programs to foster community participation in development, practitioners and theorists have concluded that the impediment to grass roots participation is structural, i.e., that vested administrative, political and commercial interests are undermining the achievement of genuine social change.

The favored counter-strategy has been to support development programs run by indigenous micro-organizations that are independent of the national and local power structures. This strategy attempts to distance development activities from elite interference by working through indigenous Non-governmental Organizations (NGO)--or Private Voluntary Organizations (PVO) in US terminology.

NGOs are more innovative, with independent leadership that has a greater ideological commitment to social change than protective bureaucrats who are more concerned with the fulfillment of quotas than the development of community self-reliance (Alliband, 1983:10). Participation is viewed by NGOs as an end in itself, rather than a means of achieving the success of top down programs (Oakley and Marsden, 1984:27).
The staff of Canadian NGOs are unanimous in their belief that grass roots development can only be achieved by indigenous NGOs, in conjunction with external NGOs:

"And in it [Robert Chambers book *Putting the Last First*]—and it is very true—the elites and the governments have the low impact type of projects. That is, health care clinics, the building of roads, specialty services such as mother-child health care. They are really sort of traditional and they're not going to raise much commotion within the country (Yurka, 1986).

In addition to the top down approach of government agencies Brown of CUSO says that they simply do not have [or have not allocated] the resources to get down to the local level like externally assisted NGOs do:

Certain national NGOs based in the countries in which we deal are much more effective. In fact they're the only organizations that function at the village level. Government cannot often get down that far. They don't have the resources. So, I think that NGOs can be more effective at the grass roots because they can go in where government can't and they have a different approach of listening (Brown, 1986).
Brown’s observations parallel the development experience in Zambia, and the experience of the US government with the TVA program. Trowell of the Canadian Hunger Foundation agrees that NGOs have better access to the needy, and are more responsive than government agencies. Trowell’s knowledge was gained while working for more than a decade in Northern Ghana:

Generally, we try to humanize everything which is probably different than the governments and the big agencies; they also have that in the back of their minds. They are often discredited, or totally overlooking the minorities, the poor, the women and so on. The little agencies are much better placed due to their infra-structure, due to their shallow bureaucracy and also their special experience; it’s very important [experience] at the grass roots level (Trowell, 1986).

While the strategy of channeling development programs through NGOs is a move in the right direction, thinking on this issue is still cloudy. Most importantly, although the issue of program content has a significant bearing on the quality of grass roots participation, communication theorists largely neglect it. Highly technical programs employing imported western techniques and specialists—such as the promotion of High Yielding Varieties (HYV) of seeds—leave little room for
local decision making. Large-scale technical programs are the
domain of the specialist and bureaucrat who set and ensure
adoption targets are achieved within target communities.

Technological constraints are one of the major factors
neglected in current discussions about the promotion of grass
roots participation in development. Science, technique and
their commercial exploitation in development become dominated
by elites controlling the multilateral and bilateral
development game. Community participation in this type of
development tends to be the means to ensure passive adoption
of programs.

On the other hand, programs that promote the sharing of
traditional skills within the community allow for maximum
local participation because the knowledge already exists
within the community. Acceptance of development programs
based on traditional local knowledge entails a tolerance for
non-western technique and systems of thinking, which
bilateral and multilateral development agencies are
unprepared to do.

Even NGOs which are more suited to this type of traditional-
based development have a hard time swallowing the
implications of such a radical approach; not the least
because they depend on substantial financial support from the
same multilateral and bilateral agencies that are opposed to
this type of development.

The primary fear of large agencies is of a public backlash from negative publicity about the promotion of schemes that are perceived as a waste of taxpayers' money:

But the fear is also fear of--you know, all of us have a constituency of Canadian Public (or European Public) that they have to be sensitive of their feelings and so on...and what the media can do to a group (Trowell, 1986).

The top down nature of large-scale development programs such as dam-building, irrigation, and mechanized agriculture preempt the participation of the community because their technical content is the monopoly of an elite core of engineers, financiers, agriculturalists, industrialists and other specialists.

The demise of the Indian CD program and its replacement by the narrowly technical, and growth-oriented Rural Development program demonstrates that the failure of bottom up participation in development programs is linked to the promotion of highly technical programs.

Alliband (1983: ) offers a chart contrasting the major characteristics of the Community Development and Rural
Development development approaches in India which indicates the internal logic of each. Note the telling patterns of each approach:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rural Development Approach</th>
<th>Community Development Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic Growth Emphasis</td>
<td>Holistic Change Emphasis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency-Based</td>
<td>Community-Based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imported Institutions</td>
<td>Local Institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large-Scale Programs</td>
<td>Small-Scale Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westernization-Outcome</td>
<td>Modernization-Outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Better-Off&quot; Clients</td>
<td>&quot;Poorer&quot; Clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependency Tendency</td>
<td>Competency Tendency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Rural Development there is a convergence of interests between an orientation to growth, large-scale organizations, wealthier clients and imported institutions. Community Development displays a convergence of holistic-humanistic goals, small-scale organizational sponsorship and implementation, and a focus on marginal community groups such as the poor and women. Self-reliance is also a unique feature of the CD approach, while the Rural Development program leads to increasing rural dependency on urban expertise derived from the west.

Holdcroft disagrees with Alliband's classification of the CD
program as one that caters to marginal rather than the affluent social groups in India. Holdcroft argues that with the popularity of the "trickle down" theory of economic development during the 1950s and '60s status quo oriented development programs dominated. CD workers aligned themselves with traditional village elites, strengthening them, rather than promoting the interests of marginal groups (Holdcroft, 1978:19-20).

The Rural and Community Development programs should not be seen as either/or digital choices but should be conceptualized as different programs on a spectrum, with modernization development promoted by large agencies at one extreme and holistic varieties promoted by micro-organizations at the other. While the CD program was a historical example of relatively more grass roots-oriented development approach, the new grass roots development approach would be a more extreme example of a similar kind of program.

The history of CD programs presented by Holdcroft also demonstrate the antipathy between the technical interests of specialists and the community interests of generalists: predictably the specialists won out in India and elsewhere, helping to undermine the bottom up design of the CD programs. US foreign aid was racked by conflict between technical services specialists (especially agriculturalists) and
community development personnel concerned with general community concerns:

It was an ideological battle which pitted the generalist against the specialist, the social scientist (excluding economists) against the technologist, the pluralist against the monist. Usually these conflicts were resolved in favor of technical services personnel who were bureaucratically more established and less abstract in their perception of the development process (Ibid: 22).

With the demise of the generalist and his/her holistic approach to development, international development became the exclusive domain of the specialist; primarily agriculturalists promoting mechanized food production. The evolution of the Indian development programs from general community development, to increased food production through technical agriculture was the pattern of CD programs around the world (Ibid: ).

Hence, while it is crucial to realize that bottom up development is better fostered by micro-organizations at the community level, it is not enough to embody this lesson in indiscriminate support for NGO's. It is also crucial to recognize the role the technical content of a given program plays in shaping the nature of community participation in the
program. The more specialized and western/urban oriented the technical content of the program the more technical and bureaucratic elites will, by necessity, govern the direction of the program, preempting community input.
Traditional vs Modern Agriculture: Development for Whom?

The modernization of Indian agriculture at the expense of traditional farming systems reveals the centralizing force of western technique. Even though traditional Indian agriculture was deemed by western agriculturalists to be highly efficient, it was systematically replaced by alien agricultural techniques requiring chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and specialized seeds. These products in turn require external financing.

In addition, modern agriculture has been a top down endeavor with an attendant loss of the decision-making on the part of peasant farmers. The development of agriculture has followed courses laid down by governments since Independence in 1947 with a policy of increasing the quantity of food produced (Johnson, 1983: ). Yet, food production has been increased at the expense of farmer's self-reliance as widely diffused traditional agricultural practices have been replaced by modern systems based on alien techniques, seeds, fertilizers and pesticides.

India's traditional agricultural systems have been highly praised by western agriculturalists since the late 19th century when Dr. John Augustus Voelker of the Royal Agricultural Society of England toured India and submitted a report on the systems of the time (Dogra, 1983:84):
"I explain that I do not share the opinions which have been expressed as to Indian Agriculture being, as a whole, primitive and backward, but I believe that in many parts there is little of nothing that can be improved, whilst where agriculture is manifestly inferior, it is more generally the result of the absence of facilities which exist in the better districts than from inherent bad systems of cultivation...I make bold to say that is is a much easier task to propose improvements in English agriculture than to make really valuable suggestions for that of India..." Voelker wrote in his report (Ibid:84).

Another contemporary of Voelker, the first Inspector General of Agriculture in India L. Mollison, produced a book titled Text Book of Indian Agriculture in 1901. Mollison emphasized that the tools employed in Indian agriculture were entirely appropriate to the practices and conditions of Indian agriculture. Cultivation in the Bombay Presidency, Mollison wrote, cannot be beaten by anything the West has to offer if compared in terms of neatness, thoroughness and profitableness (Ibid:84).

Dogra says that Dr. R.H. Richaria, a former Director of the Central Rice Research Institute in India, has done revealing
research on the farming practices in tribal villages neglected by government development programs in the Chattisgarh region of Madya Pradesh. Richaria's research casts doubt on the official view that modern agriculture is promoted because of deficiencies in traditional approaches. Essentially, Richaria found that farmers in the remote Bastar district with comparable and larger rice yields from traditional varieties of seeds compared to HYVs promoted in other parts of the state (Ibid:86).

While HYVs require a package deal of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and farm implements that must be imported from urban areas or abroad (requiring scarce foreign exchange for its purchase) traditional farming affords much more community self-reliance. "Traditionally, man, animals, trees (including grasslands) and agricultural fields were inseparable and harmonious components of a single system," Dogra writes (Ibid:86). Local trees provide cattle fodder and fuel for the villagers, while the leaves are used as fertilizer in the fields. These leaves also helped conserve water in the fields and maintain the fertility of the soil (Ibid:86). With traditional organic farming the the farmer is self-reliant; everything s/he requires is present in the community.

Grass roots participation in community decision-making can only be maximized when the community is as self-reliant as possible. If community self-reliance is the goal of
development programs then one has to ask why government and international agencies promoting the demise of traditional systems of ecologically sound agriculture with modern ones that maximize community dependence on external inputs such as HYVs, chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

Officially promoted development has little to do with community participation and self-reliance. This strain of development is for the benefit of those who provide the services and products distributed in development programs. The only reason community self-reliance and grass roots participation has become a priority in development circles is that modernization has destroyed them at the local level.

If grass roots participation and community self-reliance were the genuine goals of planners then they would be promoting the diffusion of traditional agricultural systems. The replacement of traditional farming practices with modern ones leads to a deskilling of local farmers who become dependent on the state for the knowledge, products and credit necessary to succeed. The traditional skills possessed by farmers are usually useful only in a specific environment; it is a system and when part of it is disturbed it becomes inoperable.

In Ethiopia, for example, relocated farmers became instantly dependent on government handouts because their agricultural skills, accumulated over countless generations, were specific
to a certain environment and became useless in their new one:

"The expertise these farmers have developed over their lifetimes—what to plant, when to plant, cultivate, and harvest—is completely bound up in a particular ecology...and becomes almost useless in another," [University of Michigan biologist Sandra Steingraber]. The result she found was to instantly transform skilled farmers into unskilled, ignorant laborers, unable to produce enough to survive. (Adams, 1986: A6).

What have been called traditional ways of life by modernization theorists are much more compatible with community self-reliance and participation because these systems can take advantage of knowledge and skills which are already contained within the community. Since these skills are already institutionalized within the community there is a support system already in place for dissemination of this knowledge. Artificially created institutions, such as the Panchayati Raj, ineffectual in promoting grass roots participation would then be unnecessary.

If we are going to promote the use of traditional communications systems we must also do so in a compatible social environment: a traditionally derived system. Like traditional agricultural skills that become useless in a
modern agricultural system so traditional communications systems can only be relevant to the extent that they exist in a traditional society. Traditional and modern systems are not dichotomous; it is a matter of relative dominance. If modern institutions dominate then there is that much less potential in traditional communications systems as a development strategy.
Nepal: The Demise of Traditional Society, Decentralization and Community Participation

The history of Nepal's development is characterized by an accelerating centralization of community life and a decrease in local decision-making.

To remedy this malady a number of policy measures were taken to restore community participation in development. Ironically, these attempts at administrative decentralization became the tools with which the government promoted acceptance of centrally determined development plans. Community action was channeled into government development programs rather than initiatives conceived and administered by locals. This has been the outcome of all attempts to promote community participation in development programs.

The promotion of community participation did not become a political issue until it was already disappearing at the hands of the bilateral and multilateral organizations that were professing to promote it.

The local organizations that governed community life prior to 1951, when the central government was incapable of interfering in remote areas of Nepal—and their demise since the extension of government administration into these areas—demonstrates that participatory community institutions can
only exist in an environment where they are vital.
Participatory organizations are peripheral ornaments in a
centralized market-economy:

People’s movements for development has a long
history in Nepal. It emerged firstly because of the
felt needs of the people, for example, the
construction and maintenance of roads, roadside
inns or shelters, planting trees, construction and
maintenance of irrigation system. Secondly,
prior to 1951, there was a very weak relationship
between central government and local communities,
the later being composed of ethnic groups. Because
of this weak relationship, local institutions grew
up, oriented and functioning under local
management. These community-based social
organisations "developed their own structures of
authority, devised social services, built
infrastructure and enforced social regulations,"

These organizations are now extinct. Their functions have
been usurped by benign centralized bureaucratic decision-
making on behalf of the populace (Ibid: 218).

Like India, Nepal’s government created a community panchayat
system where community participation was to be mobilized for
the promotion of centrally approved projects:

The recent constitution of Nepal cites "Participation of the people in the process of economic development of the country" as one of the main objectives of the recent panchayat policy. This system has two type [sic] of local institutions: the village panchayat and the class organisation. The panchayat is the basic administrative unit covering approximately 500 households, and carries out various local development activities with the participation of local people (Ibid:220).

In the six current rural development projects operating in Nepal, at the time of publication (sponsored by multilateral and bilateral agencies) "the design and choice of targets is definitely a 'top-down approach'. However, in building infrastructure, the people are mobilized through the local political institution," (Ibid:220). Participation is defined as community action that is stimulated by government agencies for government determined purposes.

This paternal Human Relations type of community democracy is what the larger development agencies envision when they speak the language of participation and community action.
Development practitioners in NGOs know the difference between this top down approach to participation and the authentic approaches typified today by Participatory Action Research. Yet, many of the theoreticians not as attuned to the day-to-day realities of development administration are less aware of this crucial distinction and therefore more liable to make the mistake of advocating the promotion of grass roots development through bilateral and multilateral organizations.

It is theorists, such as White with solid field experience, that are aware of the necessity of promoting grass roots development through organizations independent of elite power structures. White quotes Karl Sauvant who wrote that "the impetus has to come...not from the leading social groups, the middle classes and the professional elites...but from those parts of the host societies that are relatively independent—especially the the intelligentsia and popular movements not wedded to the established structure," (White, 1982:8).
Community Participation in Pre-Independence Indian Development:

Development programs prior to 1947 have as a group more in common philosophically with the new grass roots theory than with modernization theory as embodied in the Rural and Integrated Rural Development programs of the 1960s-1980s.

Generally these historical initiatives were community based programs concerned with balanced, holistic development rather than just economic growth through infrastructure construction. Normative goals, such as equity in distribution were the touchstones of these initiatives. The demise of this type of development provides essential historical lessons for the new development theorists attempting to re-introduce this decentralized variety of development.

The father of independent India, Mahatma Gandhi, believed the preservation of India's decentralized village economies and handicraft technologies were the key to India's development. Gandhi is in the league with the new theorists in that he sees community initiative and control of its destiny as an end of development rather than a means to the end of the promotion of government development goals:

Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a republic or Panchayat having full
powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world...this does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbors or from the world. It will be a free and voluntary play of mutual forces (Gandhi, 1966:70).

As in the case of pre-1951 Nepal each community must be functionally independent if it is to retain its ability to maintain control over its future direction. Here Gandhi's belief in the incompatibility of modern economic and political centralization accompanying industrial modernization and the preservation of local autonomy are manifest.

Gandhi also observed the negative impact the introduction of modern industrial techniques had on India's village life. He summized that the dynamics of modern technology in the market economy lead to a reduction in the quality of village life, self-reliance and community control over its development. Specifically, the extinction of India's handicrafts, which provided employment and dignity to workers, produced poverty in India said Gandhi (Hingorani, 1966:vii). Gandhi's approach to development links local self-sufficiency with a decentralized social and economic structure and the preservation of traditional technique.
Other characteristics common to most of the pre-independence development movements are:

1. The small-scale local orientation of the programs
2. The holistic approach to individual and community development
3. The often spiritual or moralistic foundation of the programs
4. Their grounding in India's cultural traditions
5. Their dependence on individual charismatic leaders

Programs that are often cited as significant in twentieth century colonial India are poet Rabindra Nath Tagore’s establishment of the Sriniketan Institute of Rural Development in 1921, Dr. Spencer Hatch’s Martandam experiment of 1921, and District Collector Brayne’s Gurgaon experiment conceived in 1927 (Mishra, 1981:23-24). The moral and spiritual emphasis common to all these early development programs had great community credibility when combined with indigenous cultural traditions. Unfortunately, says Mishra (Ibid:24), this lesson in obtaining the interest of the community was lost on latter theorists "who became more and more technique and program oriented," to the detriment of a concern with the well-being of the whole community, and the whole person.

122
The moral and spiritual basis of these programs is also found in some contemporary development alternatives such as those found in Latin American and Philippine Basic Christian Communities (BCCs) sponsored by the Catholic Church, and Thai programs involving Buddhist monks (Brown, 1986). Religiously inspired community programs tend to stress holistic approaches to life in contrast to the specialized programs promoted by technical and administrative specialists.

Alliband concurs with Mishra's assessment that the holistic scope of many of the colonial-era programs was one of the crucial features of the programs during this period. The successful programs run by US extension expert Dr. Hatch are good examples:

...it is clear that Hatch's self-conscious concern with comprehensive change—not just physical and economic but also cultural and spiritual—was a major strength of this program. The holistic oversight complemented the scientific, experimental approach by continually monitoring dysfunctional relationships between changes (Alliband, 1983:30).

With the decline of national CD programs during the 1960s and the rise of increasingly technical agricultural programs came a parallel decline in the quality of active community participation. It is this lost element that the new grass
roots theorists are attempting to recover. There is room for investigating the comparative organizational cultures of the traditional and modern development organizations to see how they affected the communities they operated in.
Modes of Participation:

By now it has become clear that there are two radically different conceptions of what participation means in development. The participation historically sought by multilateral and bilateral agencies has been passive community involvement in pre-determined development projects. Their goal is to mobilize the community by informing them of the programs content and the role in which the community is expected to play:

...in this form "participation" equals "informing" and that the basic decisions concerning development have already been taken. This school of thought is unable to disassociate "participation" from government responsibility and control. In its broadest form this form of "participation" can be equated with mobilization (Oakley and Marsden, 1984: 20-21).

The media employed to inform and mobilize the public are one-way delivery systems such as the radio, television, newspapers in conjunction with satellite distribution. These systems are appropriate for the passive nature of community participation in this type of development. Yet, if one holds that active community participation is an end in itself s/he will oppose the previous mode of development and its
corresponding diffusion of information systems.

This second view of participation is founded on the pursuit of community control over its resources and decision-making through the organization of community action groups which raise awareness of community members from within and then encourage the community to act:

A broad distinction can be drawn in the vast amount of literature and the practice of "participation" between "participation" as a means or as an end. Where "participation" is interpreted basically as a means it is essentially describing a state or an input into a development programme; where it is interpreted as an end in itself, it refers to a process the outcome of which is meaningful participation (Ibid:27).

It is this second view of participation that has come to dominate thinking in grass roots communication theory, and its general development theory corollary, participatory action research.
Implementation of the Alternative Development Approach: Participatory Action Research

The organizational structure and ideology of participatory action groups working on a genuinely participative approach to development have much in common with the colonial-era development programs in India. Both view the large, organizational bearers of modernity as the primary threat to community autonomy or self-reliance; the major threat to the quality of life of oppressed Indians.

In both cases this position stems from both the colonial-era and PAG organizations’ rejection of the use of sheer economic yardsticks of development and progress, in favor of more humanistic, qualitative criteria:

In sum, the grass-roots initiatives in India today are in the nature of both a critique and protest against the prevailing model of development and the emergence of a new and alternative approach to rural development that is more holistic, transcends economism and managerial ethics, and is self-consciously political. They are also political on behalf of those sections of society whom modern "development" has rendered impoverished, destitute and starving (Sheth, 1984:261).
PAGs must be distinguished from the charity-welfare type of NGOs that seeks to aid the poor by providing short-term handouts rather than developing the organization and skills of the poor so they can become more self-reliant:

In India you have a wealth, I mean there are thousands of local NGOs operating. The majority I would say are welfare type organizations, that is they are large NGOs that have been set up by do-gooders; by people that are fairly wealthy and want to do it because it's good for their Karma...As a result of that you will find those NGOs, and this is the majority of them in India, very hierarchical. They have boards, they have executives—very bureaucratic...And that is what we see as maintaining that welfare-poverty mentality, because, again, it's a top down approach; you are telling the people what to do and giving them the tools to help them analyze their own positions," (Yurka, 1986).

In addition to the welfare type NGOs their are a significant number of mercenary NGOs who contract to do projects funded by international NGOs. These organizations are less concerned with the development of the local people than with the prosperity of their group:
The majority of the groups...The majority of the intermediaries [intermediate between a foreign NGO and the local people] are not so oriented towards improving the skills of the people in the group. They're more oriented towards the execution of a project and they have a payoff when they work with an NGO, [international] or Canadian. So the orientation is not enough of improving the skills of that group, but it is more simply executing a project; replacing us in other words. But we need more of the development of the people involved," (Trowell, 1986).

Therefore, participatory action groups have attempted to fill the void left by large-scale development organizations, welfare and mercenary NGOs.

Like the pre-independence groups, which remained small-scale operations because of the lack of colonial government support, so participatory action groups tend to be small-scale local operations because of the threat they pose to contemporary elites. Independence from power structures provides opposition groups, such as PAGs, the latitude to survive but preempts the acquisition of the necessary resources to become a significant rival to dominant elites in the absence of a coordinated struggle. To the degree that they pose a threat to the establishment these groups become
the target of elite resistance and subversion:

As long as they view development as a neutral process depending primarily on technical skills they survive. But no group, if sensitive and dedicated to its original charter, can escape the brutal reality. The local bigwigs, the bureaucracy, the politicians, all serve to frustrate any attempts at honest work...Local vested interests become hostile as they sense that the organization will no longer toe the line (Sethi, 1984:307).

To help defend these groups from the more powerful antagonistic forces who have a vested interest in the status quo it is beneficial, says Yurka of Match, that they have connections to foreign NGOs who can keep an eye on the host government and lobby on the PAGs behalf if trouble arises:

"...many of them are completely autonomous—completely autonomous. In most instances it is not in their favor that governments find out about the work they are doing. I’m sure many of the governments are quite aware of which groups are receiving money. In a sense by sending money from outside the country you are acting as a buffer for them and its more difficult for the government to intervene if they know they’re getting money from
the outside, simply because we on the outside can raise a lot more hell a lot faster if something happens. That's not to say it doesn't happen, but we more or less act as a buffer. Many of those groups, though, act completely autonomously to local elites as well and there is definitely a conflict of interest," (Yurka, 1986).

Precautions taken to protect these groups against elite subversion must be done discreetly. Impetuous public confrontation may create new martyrs but will not protect the group from hostile vested interests:

In Indonesia for instance, which is an extremely difficult country to work in, Indonesian organizations that actually do legal aid work call themselves environmental organizations. It's not like Canada. You don't use a public confrontational approach. That would just be suicidal. You have to find ways to stay alive and still do stuff that's effective. And that's an important part of what organizations talk about and how they operate (A Canadian NGO Administrator: 1986).

The community research (participatory action research) that PAGs employ are the traditional communication systems that the Asian group of communication theorists maintain is
necessary for the success of bottom up development. These systems are necessary because they are independent of the elite control mass media systems are subject to; they are social resources not private property. Fals-Borda identifies four techniques employed by participatory action researchers which the whole community can participate in and benefit from, including collective research, recovery of community history, the valuing and using of popular culture, and the production and diffusion of new knowledge. The accent is on the employment of local resources by which a community can build its own interpretation of what is happening in the community, rather than being fed information that legitimizes the status quo. The first two techniques emphasize traditional oral communications rather than mass media:

1. Collective Research. This is the systematic utilization of data obtained in groups or community events such as meetings, assemblies, committees, etc. through collective interchange and discussion...

2. Critical Recovery of History....The following techniques are useful for this purpose: oral tradition and story-telling; elders' testimonies; family trunk archives and depositories; ideological projection, imputation, and other expressions of collective memory... (who)
There are two different methods of initiating this work, says Brown of CUSO, one by an outside worker, the other by a local leader:

"Participatory Action Research: the approach is essentially whether you use an outside animator of village leader—those are two completely different models—to meet with certain groups of villagers, have them discuss their lives, identify problems, try to come to some understanding of the context in which those problems function, identify solutions, take action and then come back and reflect on how that went," (Brown, 1986).

There is a healthy debate going on about the nature of leadership in one type of PAG [Basic Christian Communities], about identifying the limits of the leaders' involvement. One group fears that the leadership is in danger of becoming a top down directive influence in the group, stifling grass roots initiative, while the other fears that too circumscribed a leadership role will impoverish the development of the group. The latter group argues that there is a careful balance between top down, bottom up leadership and that the pendulum should not swing too far in the direction of pure bottom up development.
The problem of elite cooptation acts in a more indirect manner on PAGs and other NGOs. The biggest problem is the absorption of NGO's leadership. Just as elites can twist grass roots programs that are detrimental to their interests towards self-serving ends so the multilateral and bilateral development organizations possess the resources to monopolize development talent. As a result NGOs find it harder to do the necessary work. Without adequate financial support many of the alternative development leaders in India lose their homes, contract diseases related to malnutrition, and are framed into legal battles which they have no resources to fight (Sheth, 1984, 262). The siphoning off of NGO talent is a global problem:

But there is clearly a difference, especially in Africa...but the highly qualified, highly skilled, are with big government or big agencies in the developing world and the little agencies are staffed at a less than optimal level of qualifications and experience...[in Canada] people use CUSO to step to CIDA," (Trowell, 1986).

Not only do the larger, status-quo oriented development organizations monopolize the talent, but the foreign educations the privileged of the Third World receive in North America and Europe imbue them with the ideology that legitimizes the modernization development approach. To this
extent these students are less suitable for the different kind of work required in PAGs:

To the extent that the elite urban level are capable of absorbing these people who are trained in western education, then the reinforcement of the existing development constructs: expertise, technology, science, rationality [western views about them]; all of these things come in to play again. (Spellman, 1986)

That is, the bilateral and multilateral development organizations not only monopolize the skills of Third World talent required for PAG work, but, by virtue of their western educations, their ability to formulate development alternatives is preempted by the assimilation of western ways of seeing the world. The western market-system becomes self-perpetuating as foreign educated Third Worlders take up leadership positions in their nations.

The final impediment to getting off the ground with genuine participative development programs is that the marginalized community groups that you envision yourself working with are nowhere to be found; they are not groups at all, only dispersed individuals out of sight and mind:

Second, one is the organizing, or the
organization, or the lack of organization to use the proper language. The lack of organization of those particularly disadvantaged people. They are invisible they are out of sight. And they stay out of sight no matter what special measures you are intending to take. You get drawn away from them because you can’t see, you can’t identify. The high-risk groups are dispersed. They don’t come together. It takes real initiative to bring them to a real visibility," (Trowell, 1986).

A top down approach is not going to ferret out the people who are in need of the organizing you are attempting to facilitate. Talented people with good community knowledge are needed for this type of work.

If we expand our view of development from a national to the international perspective which encompasses the work of Canadian NGOs we find one final impediment to local control of development programs in the Third World. This problem is the political interference of donor NGO administrators who, on their own initiative or in response to media and government pressure, withdraw and restore funding depending on the political climates of the nations they are operating in.

This weather vane approach to development funding takes the
initiative away from the people who are supposed to be making the decisions in the community. It is hypocritical to talk about promoting bottom up decision-making in development and then not even consulting the intermediary organizations and local people who have been receiving aid before pulling out for reasons that often appear to be abstract and removed from the reality of local people directly affected.

The biggest problem with inconsistent long term funding is that the development of indigenous NGOs, who implement the programs approved by international NGOs, becomes undermined. And with the rate at which governments are replaced in the Third World the funding uncertainties can become a major problem.

Once they cannot obtain funding because of international blacklisting these intermediaries must disband. When international agencies restore funding there is no longer an organizational infrastructure through which to channel funding:

And so many decisions are taken without long term perspective. Few Third World governments last more than three years. There are the Gandhis but few last long. And because today they are lying at this point of the political spectrum, we quit and drop out. Tomorrow they are over here, we try to jump
in, but we've lost our local constituency over there. How can we hope to evolve intermediaries if we make choices on this sort of information on political grounds. (Trowell, 1986).

If we are to take the promotion of bottom up participation seriously then we have to live up to the same criteria that we want our Third World partners to live up to. External donor agencies are just as much a part of the development equation as indigenous organizations and have a role to play in supporting local decision-making through the nurturing of intermediaries. With many frustrating experiences in Northern Ghana caused by political funding decisions by NGOs, such as OXFAM in Britain, Trowell says there is much that can be done by local organizations even in harsh political environments:

So much depends on the actors our there. if they are good, and conscious and able, there won't be problems and they can do good things, even in a bad political climate...And for an NGO to make a decision about Northern Ghana...it used to bug me, because they couldn't see it from [our] internal [perspective]. We have to admit that we can never see it as local people, or NGOs, or even foreigners on the spot; we can't see it.

Part of realizing the ideal of bottom up participation is
attempting to understand the priorities of local people and employing this knowledge as the basis for action. To the extent that politically motivated decision-making in donor organizations and countries interferes with this ideal intercultural relationship between donor and recipient international NGO donors are standing in the way of grass roots development.
The Pattern of Impediments to Grass Roots Communication:

Looking at the application of Grass Roots communications theory for development in a wider political, historical, and ecological perspective we begin to discern common patterns binding together what are often considered discrete elements in the study of development.

An analog meta-pattern subsuming organizational, communications, intercultural, and philosophical aspects of the practice of development reveals itself. It is with a knowledge of this larger pattern that an examination of the feasibility of implementing Grass Roots communications theory in development must be undertaken.

In other words, development operates—to use the terminology of systems theory—within the constraints of a larger system whose dynamics cannot be ignored if realistic communications policy alternatives are to be successfully implemented in development. Policies are not abstract theoretical entities that can be implemented in a social vacuum.

Once one looks at the new alternative development theory in this holistic way one realizes that it is a waste of time to condemn the architects of modernization theory for the manipulatory top down mass media information diffusion systems of the modernization era. These systems are rational
given the logic of the international market-system within which the modernization development program was implemented.

It is necessary to recognize that communications policy is, and will continue to be, only a subcomponent of a larger political and economic system and that alternative policies must respect the logic of the larger system. Therefore, we must first understand the relevant characteristics of the larger system—the environment of development communications systems.

More than simply shifting perspectives in communication theory, it would be necessary to change the system if one wanted to radically change the types of communications policies permissible within the confines of that larger system. This is why most of the groups and organizations that advocate the new theory are themselves peripheral to the global market-state system, be they religious or guerilla organizations. Since it is beyond the scope of these groups to change the larger global system their only option is to change their relationship to the system. By becoming peripheral to the system they increase their operational options by reducing its influence over them. Ironically these groups also reduce their influence over the larger system.

It is precisely the new theories on the necessity of instituting a grass roots development theory within the
sphere of influence of the western industrial systems (Capitalist and Communist) that neglect the larger structural impediments to the theories implementation.

Indian development history shows the conditions for the attainment of a participative, self-reliant, modestly bottom up communication policy, are only realizable within the framework of a traditional steady-state economy: precisely the enemy of those promoting the spread of the capitalist and socialist industrial systems. Therefore, the political prospects for the achievement of a genuine and pervasive grass roots development alternative within the current global political and economic climate appear to be about the same as for the return of Indian feudalism.

Thus, the primary problem with the current academic monologue on grass roots communication theory is that communications policy for development is treated as an autonomous social entity. Consequently systemic factors that could impede the theories implementation are ignored.
A Conceptual Model:

The meta-pattern that embodies all the various political, economic, organizational and communicational aspects of development can be easily mapped onto an analog spectrum, upon which the various aspects constraining the communications patterns of the development projects can be plotted.

The factors listed on the left hand side of the table below are characteristic of modernization development programs administered by multilateral and bilateral agencies, while the factors on the right are typical of traditional and modern development programs administered by micro-organizations such as NGOs. The factors on each side are not exclusive to one type of development organization or another but simply represent general patterns. Any development program factors would not dichotomized as either/or variables but simply conceptualized as fitting somewhere along the spectrum between modernity and tradition for instance:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Development</strong></th>
<th><strong>Communications</strong></th>
<th><strong>Intercultural</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modernity</td>
<td>Mass Media/</td>
<td><strong>Low Context</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial-led</td>
<td>Telecommunications</td>
<td>Ethnocentrism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>Group Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-Tech</td>
<td>Colonial Language</td>
<td>Oral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite</td>
<td>Transmission</td>
<td>Indigenous Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International/</td>
<td>Top Down</td>
<td>Ritual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National orientation</td>
<td>Community orientation</td>
<td>Bottom Up/Horizontal</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>High Context</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Organizational</strong></th>
<th><strong>Structure</strong></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International/</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bureaucracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Western-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expert/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional/</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indigenous-</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Generalist</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
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</table>
The various factors on each side are mutually reinforcing parts of a larger whole. Using the chart we can see the differences between the modernization approach to development and the grass roots approach. The communication networks are in both cases a part of a larger system. That is, one cannot understand the dynamics of communications without understanding its place in the larger scheme of things.

To the degree that they maintain distance from the social system that fosters modernization grass roots communications policies have potential, though in reality traditional communication systems are more often top down than bottom up oriented.
Implications for Communications Studies:

To understand our communications policy options in development programs it is necessary to have a degree of knowledge about the systems in which communications subsystems operate. The error of the Asian communications theorists seeking to promote grass roots communications policies within an alternative development framework is that they have neglected to investigate the dynamics of the social systems in which their new theory is to be implemented.

What is required is an open systems method of investigating development communications issues. There are many approaches to open system research in the social sciences which could serve as potential models. The sub-fields of Historical Sociology and Steady-State Economics both advocate a more holistic research method in their fields of sociology and economics.

Herman Daly’s plea for the field of Steady-State Economics is one such ecological, anti-specialist approach to social studies. The problem with specialist approaches to studying social issues is that they often do not do justice to the scope of the issue under study. Researchers tend to confuse the limited scope of their investigation with the dimensions of the actual social problem:
Probably the major disservice that experts provide in confronting the problems of mankind is dividing the problems in little pieces and parceling them out to specialists. Food problems belong to agriculture and energy problems to engineering and physics; employment and inflation belong to economics; adaptation belongs to psychologists and genetic engineers; and the "environment" is currently up for grabs by disciplinary imperialists. Although it is undeniable that each specialty has much of importance to say, it is very doubtful that the sum of all these specialized utterances will ever add up to a coherent solution, because the problems are not independent and sequential but highly interrelated and simultaneous.

Communications issues have become the domain of various types of communications specialists who have narrowed down the focus of their study to the communications components of larger issues. As a result the relationships between the communications components and other factors remain hidden.

This is certainly the case with grass roots communications theory. The Asian theorists narrow focus on communication issues has blinded them to the real impediments that threaten the realization of their theory. Therefore, their specialization
has rendered their theory almost useless. We need to place the study of development communications systems in their natural contexts so that our theories will correspond with the full dimensions of reality.
1. Emmanuel Wallerstien also lists the similarities between the capitalist and socialist philosophies in his book *The Politics of the World Economy* (1984:181): "At the level of ideology the world of official Marxism turned out to pose no real opposition to modernization theory, despite the fact that it was derived from an ideology of resistance. The official Marxists simply insisted upon some minor alterations of wording. For society substitute social formation. For Rostow's stages, substitute Stalin's. For Britain/US as the model, substitute the USSR. But the analysis was the same; the states were entities that "developed," and "development" meant the further mechanization of social activities. Stalinist bureaucrats and western experts competed as to which one could be the most effective Saint-Simonian."

2. The parallels between Winner's comments on the dynamics of technological systems and international extension of the US economy in the post-WWII period are fetching (Winner, 1977:244-5): "The system seeks a 'mission' to match its technological capabilities. It sometimes happens that the original purpose of a megatechnical organization is accomplished or in some other way exhausted. The original, finite goals may have been reached of its
products become outmoded by the passage of time. In the reasonable, traditional model of technological employment one might expect that in such cases the 'tool' would be retired or altered to suit some new function determined by society at large.

But this is an unacceptable predicament. The system with its massive commitments of manpower and physical resources may not wish to steal gracefully into oblivion. Unlike the fabled Alexander, therefore, it does not weep for new worlds to conquer. It sets about creating them. Fearing imminent extinction, the system returns to the political arena in an attempt to set new goals for itself, new reasons for social support. Here a different kind of technological invention occurs. The system suggests a new project, a new mission, or a new variety of apparatus, which, according to its own way of seeing, is absolutely vital to the body politic...

A hypothesis suggests itself: if the system is deemed important to society as a whole, and if the new purpose is crucial to the survival of the system, then that purpose will be supported regardless of its objective value to the society."

Applying it to the post-war development era we could say that the completion of the war necessitated a new mission
to occupy the economy at a healthy level of growth. This initial mission was European and Japanese reconstruction. Upon its completion the economic baton was passed on to the promoters of Third World economic development. The health of our economic system remains a value of the highest value in our society, while the objective value of the modernization of the Third World did not come under heavy academic scrutiny until the late 1960's, gathering steam in the 1970's.

3. Servaes (1985:15) also describes the same theoretical shift to a more receiver-oriented development communications model: "The former hierarchical, bureaucratic, and sender-oriented communication model has been replaced by a more horizontal, participative, and receiver oriented approach...The present vision is based fundamentally on interactive, participatory, and two-way communication on all levels of society."

4. Johnson contrasts the construction of top down mega-projects, such as dams, with bottom up community action: "The construction of a dam is development, and there may be agricultural development as a consequence. The dam would generally be regarded as 'top-down' development, within which government or another authority determines what is to be done, carries out the work and delivers the benefits to its citizens—whether they want them or not,
as a rule. There is often *bottom-upwards development* too, where individuals or groups take it upon themselves through collective action to improve their income or perhaps make their escape from subjection to tyrannical exploitation...Naturally, there is overlap between top-down and bottom-up development," (Johnson, 1983:15).

"Until recently, governments in South Asia, following patterns set down in colonial times, relied heavily on top-down development," (Ibid:16.)
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158