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DECENTRALISATION EQUALS PARTICIPATION?
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A CASE STUDY OF VILLAGE RESIDENTS´ CAPABILITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF DRINKING WATER IN MAHOBA DISTRICT, UTTAR PRADESH, INDIA

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Abstract

This study examined to what extent the decentralised drinking water management system in Mahoba district, Uttar Pradesh, India, is participatory. The central questions focused on how participation is taking place, what socio-political factors affect participation, and how the community members explain their capability to participate. Methodologically the study was interpretivist in nature and based on data gathered during independent qualitative field research that was carried out by the author from October to December 2011. A total of 33 semi-structured group and individual interviews were carried out. The research findings revealed that the current drinking water management system does not allow for proper participation for the majority of the stakeholders. This was due in part to ineffective formal institutions, a dysfunctional democratic system, corruption and unequal power-relations. The perception of the rural inhabitants was that proper participation was hindered by factors such as income inequality, gender, education and caste. The study concludes that to increase levels of participation it is imperative that the socio-political obstacles are recognised and that they are considered when designing policy.

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Glossary

gram panchayat	Local elected governing body
gram sabha	Village assembly
pradhan	Elected leader of *gram panchayat*

List of abbreviations

BDO	Block Development Officer
GoI	Government of India
GP	*gram panchayat*
GS	Gramonnati Sansthan
MP	Madhya Pradesh
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NRDWP	National Rural Drinking Water Programme
OBC	Other Backward Class
O&M	Operation and Maintenance
PRI	*Panchayat Raj* Institutions
RDWS	Rural Drinking Water Supply
SC	Scheduled Castes
ST	Scheduled Tribes
VWSC	Village Water and Sanitation Committee
UP	Uttar Pradesh

1 Introduction

It is a human right to have access to safe drinking water (UNGA, 2010) and it is widely recognised that there are great social and economic benefits in improving drinking water access for the livelihoods of households and individuals (World Water Council n.d.).

There have been some great improvements in India in the last decades in the country´s quest to achieve the goal of providing all its citizens with safe drinking water access. In 2010 they had reached 84% of the Indian rural residents with improved access to sources of water (D-Sector, 2010). Nonetheless, there is still a huge challenge in reaching society´s most vulnerable and marginalised people and also to sustain the already established infrastructures (Van Dijk & Sijbesma, 2007: 6). Furthermore, in many regions the groundwater is deteriorating quickly which is threatening the future water security and water access equity (Cullet, 2007; Kale, 2010).

Rural drinking water supply (RDWS) in India has traditionally been a mission for the state governments. This changed in the late 1980s when there was a shift towards a decentralised, demand-led approach with the aim of achieving a more sustainable and equitable rural drinking water management (Sankar, 2006; 45). These reforms were adopted in order to transfer the legal powers over water resources to sub-centre levels, thereby giving a major role to the *Panchayat*[1] *Raj* Institutions (PRI) at three levels: village (*gram*), block/sub-district (*khrettra*) and district (*zilla*) (Vani, 2002).

India´s decision to decentralise echoes international development discourse; the disappointment with the centralised and bureaucratic state has made the call for decentralisation a popular one. Strengthening and empowering local government has been justified not only on the grounds of making government more efficient, but also to increase accountability and participation (Heller, 2001: 132).

Participatory approaches have gained considerable ground in the field of natural resource management (e.g. Blair, 2000; Agrawal, 2001; de Oliveira, 2002; Faguet, 2004). In development policy discourse it is now more or less a consensus that stakeholder participation is necessary for effective and fair distribution of water. This trend has been questioned in academic literature for a number of reasons (e.g. Chhotray, 2004; Cleaver and Toner, 2005; Mehta *et al*, 2007). Some critics claim evidence for the success of participatory local initiatives in governing water is sparse and mainly confined to NGO monitoring reports (Cleaver and Toner, 2005). Analytical frameworks that have been developed for

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[1] The *panchayat* is a political body and constitutionally recognised as an elected unit of local government. The history and meaning of the *panchayat* is discussed in greater extent in 2.3.

water governance stress the need to analyse each situation at a local level in order to understand the different perspectives and roles of multiple stakeholders (Plummer and Slaymaker, 2007).

There are indications that point to a failure in institutionalising genuine participation in local water management in large parts of rural India (Baumann *et al*, 2003a: 8, 24). It is typical that only a few villagers are continuously engaged in the management of water at the local level and that formal institutions are dominated by a local élite (Baumann *et al*, 2003b: 3). It is likely that a number of factors contribute to this shortage in participation, including a lack of interest on behalf of the villagers, a lack of knowledge about the mediums in which to participate, unequal wealth and landownership, unequal power within the village, or a disbelief in dysfunctional governing institutions and structures.

Substantial amounts of research has been done regarding the latter factor (Baumann, 2003a&b; Heller, 2001; Clement, 2009; Bardhan, 2002) and these studies show there is no doubt that state bureaucracies and institutions are difficult to co-ordinate in a decentralised system, having effects on participation levels. However, far less academic light has been shed on the role of local power relations. According to Bardhan, a potential explanation to why some villagers fail to participate in the management of natural resources may lie in a better understanding of the forces at work in the power relations within the village. There is a likelihood that members of disadvantaged classes wield less public power. Therefore, as an attempt to view the problem of non-participation from a different angle, the purpose of this study is to look at how people in Mahoba district perceive their (lack of) participation in the management of drinking water and to uncover any possible underlying power structures that affect the level and form of participation.

1.1 Aim of study

The primary aim of this study is to understand to what extent local drinking water management is participatory in Mahoba district, Uttar Pradesh (UP), India, in view of its historical and current practices and perceptions of relevant actors. How local power relations affect the level and form of villagers´ participation is the primary focus of the research.

In coherence with the study´s overall aim, the following three questions are posed:

- RQ 1*: What socio-political factors affect the level and form of participation in decentralised drinking water management?*

- RQ 2*: In what way(s) does participation take its form and how successful is this system?*

-   RQ 3*: How do villagers explain their capability in participating in local drinking water management?*

To answer the above research questions, the different actors´ understanding and their interpretation of participatory drinking water management were studied using a qualitative study approach.

2 Background

Before moving on to the methodology and the theoretical frameworks, it is important to understand the unique region that Bundelkhand is and how severe the drinking water situation is for its inhabitants (2.1). Equally important to grasp is how the current national drinking water supply management in rural India functions. A short overview is provided in 2.2. The third part of the following chapter outlines the role of the *Panchayat* Raj System (2.3), the cornerstone of rural Indian politics.

2.1. Bundelkhand

The case in this study, Mahoba district, is situated in southern UP. This is the most populous state of India and one of the poorest too. Mahoba district is also located in a region called Bundelkhand, which stretches over northern Madhya Pradesh (MP) and southern UP. The cultural identity of Mahoba is one that identifies itself more with Bundelkhand than with UP. History and language dialect is shared within Bundelkhand and there is a shared feeling of "us against them" towards the central state in New Delhi. This feeling is based on neglect from the central state and on a history of underinvestment in the region. This is currently taking its form in the way of a proposal for the formation of its own independent state, pending in the Indian High Court (Shah, 2012). It remains to be seen whether this materialises or not.

Comprising 13 districts in UP and MP, Bundelkhand holds an area of approximately 70,000 square meters and a population of 21 million (Khurana and Mahapatra, 2008: 9). The region has some of the lowest levels of per capita income and human development in all of India. All its 13 districts are listed in the Planning Commission of India´s 200 most impoverished districts list (NREGA, 2006). Literacy levels are very low, especially among women, while infant mortality is high. The inhabitants rely mostly on subsistence rainfed single crop agriculture and small-scale livestock production for their livelihood. The predominant crops are wheat, grams and oil seeds. (DA, 2009) Seeing that 80% of the population depend on agriculture and livestock earning (Khurana and Mahapatra, 2008: 9), the effects of increased droughts in the last decade have been detrimental. While demand for water for irrigation and domestic needs has been increasing manifolds, the level of groundwater is decreasing at a disturbing pace. The deficit in rainfall has forced large portions of the population to migrate out to larger cities (DA, 2009). For the inhabitants who stay behind, accessing sufficient amounts of potable

drinking water is often a daily struggle. Women and children in particular are affected by the situation, as decrease in accessibility of water forces them to fetch water from distant sources. This leads to both social costs (absence from school, health impacts) and economic losses (loss of wages).

Until the 1970s Bundelkhand managed to meet its domestic and irrigation water demands through traditional methods of water harvesting despite being drought prone. Unfortunately, with time deforestation grew to unsustainable levels and neglect of the traditional systems of water harvesting grew (Khurana and Mahapatra, 2008: 7). With less rainwater being conserved than earlier the results are blatant. Firstly, water available for irrigation has diminished dramatically. Secondly, availability of drinking water has also been reduced. As the main sources of recharging, like tanks, ponds and the forests, have vanished, the groundwater is being recharged to a lesser extent. This has resulted in thousands of hand pumps being non-operational. It has also made the region highly sensitive to drought; without the capability to conserve water even the smallest deviation in rainfall causes drought. The current situation is a result due not only because of the cycle of environmental degradation, but also because of government policies (DA, 2009).

The effects of decreasing water tables have created a drinking water crisis. In some parts of Bundelkhand people face the crisis from February/March until the end of June. Wells and hand pumps dry out in the beginning or even before the end of winter (Vijayvergiya, 2004). This dramatically increases the time women spend on fetching water every day. They spend around 4-5 hours a day collecting 20 litres of water for their families (Khurana and Mahapatra, 2008: 15). In a survey carried out in 131 villages on the UP side of Bundelkhand, only 7 % of the villages had drinking water available throughout the year. More than 60 % of the villages had drinking water for just one month and 31 % had for two months (ibid: 15-17). These figures are clear indicators of the intensity of this drinking water crisis.

The scarcity of drinking water has huge health ramifications. Between March and August the temperatures are often over 40 degrees Celsius and combined with the water scarcity this easily leads to dehydration and diarrhoea (Khurana and Mahapatra, 2008: 16). Closely linked to lack of water is the issue of poor sanitation; a widespread problem in Bundelkhand. Open defecation is the norm in villages and most towns and there is a clear connection to the poor health of many inhabitants.

Figure 1: Location of Mahoba and Uttar Pradesh in India
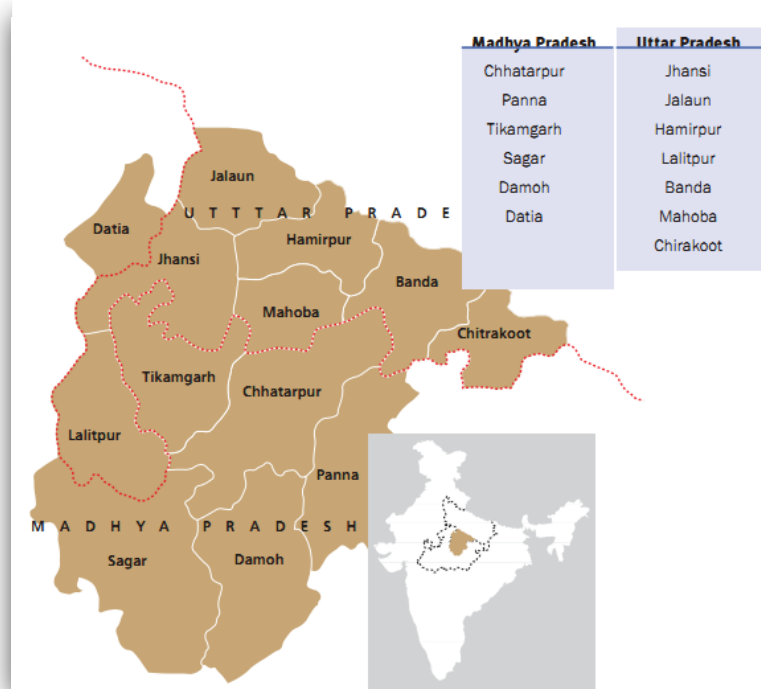
Source: (Khurana and Mahapatra, 2008: 9)

The characteristics of Mahoba district are typical of those in Bundelkhand, with adverse geographical and climatic conditions. Food security is a major problem as dependence on rain-fed agriculture leads to low agricultural productivity. In addition there is poor availability of basic public services like education, health, public distribution systems, transportation, etc. The district is suffering under acute water shortage with increased droughts. As for the groundwater levels, there is no water in the first layer below 12 meters and in the second layer water is available only after 24 to 36 meters. In other words, water is far from easily accessible. The area contains a layer of impermeable rocks with shallow depths, which cause high overflows of rainwater. These conditions lead to soil erosion affecting agriculture as well drinking water (GS, 2010: 3-5). In addition to the challenging climatic and geographical conditions Mahoba district is also subject to, the drinking water crisis is further exacerbated by a history of underinvestment in RDWS.

2.2 Drinking water supply management in rural India

For a long time the public sector has been a major player in supplying drinking water in rural areas. In 1972 the government launched its first large-scale intervention in the form of the nation-wide Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP). Supplying drinking water has since then been a responsibility of the state governments. The idea behind the ARWSP was for the Government of India (GoI) to provide the state governments with more funds and technical guidance, which would lead to improved rural drinking water supply coverage and deal with certain water quality issues. In

twenty years, between 1980 and 2000, this programme resulted in the rural drinking water coverage of rural habitations increasing from 31% to 80% (GoI, 2002a: 32).

Indeed, by 2009 Indian national and state governments had almost reached universal coverage for more than 850 million people in 1.6 million rural habitations[2], but service delivery has unfortunately slipped since then. Now more than 500,000 habitations get less than 40 litres of water per person per day, which was the government standard for adequate service prior to 2009. The challenge of inadequate provision for infrastructure operation and maintenance is further exacerbated by economic and population growth, depletion of groundwater because of an increase in groundwater use, and worsening water quality mostly because of poor sanitation (WSP, 2011).

As a reaction to the above mentioned problems, the policy framework for RDWS in India aims to alter the rural water sector away from a focus on creating new infrastructures towards a stronger emphasis on the provision of improved and sustainable services (GoI, 2010). This new policy attitude has been influenced by the World Bank´s belief in public choice assumptions by which political decentralisation is promoted as a way of connecting demands for services with the obvious need that this is somehow paid for (Baumann, 2000; 16-17). Also coinciding with the Structural Adjustment Programmes at the time, the principle of full cost recovery for O&M and partial cost recovery was initiated by the World Bank. This was done in the form of a pilot project in the 1990s named Swajal (Cullet, 2007: 9).

The stance of donors, such as the World Bank, influencing decentralisation policies in India is that in order for water to achieve its most efficient use it is necessary to treat it as a socio-economic good rather than as a social right in itself. This new policy agenda has meant a paradigm shift with the state changing from being a provider to a water-regulator (Cullet, 2007: 7). Along these lines, the demand-led Swajaldhara programme was initiated by the GoI in 2002. In the official Swajaldhara guidelines, participation is of key importance in order to move from a supply-driven to a demand-responsive approach and the programme also stresses the need for community participation if drinking water management is to become sustainable in terms of O&M (GoI, 2002b: 1). Further, the guidelines also identify the significant role played by PRIs by assigning them with considerable powers and by ensuring that the Village Water and Sanitation Committees (VWSCs) be set up under the gram *panchayats* (GPs) and not as a parallel institution, to avoid the risk of sidestepping the local government (GoI, 2002b: 4). This goes in line with the good governance agenda endorsed by the World Bank which is grounded on the belief that "public goods and services should be provided by the

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[2] In India, habitation is the unit used to measure coverage and comprises a community of households; typically several habitations make up a village.

lowest level of government that can fully capture costs and benefits" (World Bank cited in Baumann, 2000: 17).

20% of all RDWS funds are reserved for demand-responsive projects following the agenda of Swajaldhara (GoI, 2010: 8-9). For such projects to be successful, the state guidelines stress the vitality of functioning elected local governments in RDWS: "The fundamental basis on which drinking water security can be ensured is the decentralised approach through *Panchayat*i Raj Institutions and community involvement" (GoI, 2010, 6).

2.3 The Panchayat Raj system

Historically, the term *panchayat* originates from the Ghandian ideal of *gram swaraj*, which means village republics under independence. Behind the idea of *Gram swaraj* lays a belief that it is not possible to maintain a centralised system peacefully (Sharma, 2009: 27). Nonetheless, due to many assembly members´ belief that the *panchayats* were too rooted in backward socio-economic inequities, the constituent assembly voted against empowering villages in 1945 (Sharma, 2009: 27).

Subsequently, rather than emerging as autonomous local government institutions after 1945, the *panchayats* were instead endorsed as institutions for rural and agricultural development. The Balwantray Mehta Committee emphasised this role in 1957 when it stated that the PRI´s "immediate objective is to ensure that the development of the country side is carried out as rapidly and effectively as possible and through democratic processes" (GoI cited in Sharma 2009: 29).

Economic centralisation for development policy and planning was popular after independence. This was much due to the fact that British colonial administration had left behind a highly centralised system. This background is significant for the current decentralised situation because it shows that for a long time villages were plainly objects of planning (Baumann *et al*, 2003: 6-7). The time between the 1970s and the 1990s was characterised by a strong practical emphasis on centralised development planning, but during this period new social movements emerged that criticised state centralism and debated for local communities to participate in the development planning. In the 1990s the GoI started to adopt decentralisation policies. This can to large extents be explained by advocacy that was promoted from those ascendant movements, and also by international donors (such as the World Bank) who supported the good governance agenda and participatory methods.
 (Baumann *et al*, 2003, 7).

In 1993 the 73rd Constitutional Amendment formalised the PRI and guaranteed the actuality of PRI at three tiers, and also that mandatory elections should be held every five years. Importantly, 33% of all seats in the PRI are reserved for women and there are also strict reservations for Scheduled

Castes/Scheduled Tribes[3] (SC/ST) members proportional to their population (Johnson *et al*, 2005, 942). One cited reason that made it possible to institutionalise the PRI in 1993 was a power shift that occurred in the 1980s (Bauman *et al*, 2003: 17). A recently formed agrarian class used the PRI to sidestep the states in order to enrich themselves. Additionally, in all states there was an apparent demand for greater federal polity. The authors note that "in neither instance were the ruling groups interested in passing power to the local level, but the importance of *panchayats* derived nevertheless as a by-product of their aspirations" (Bauman *et* al, 2003: 17).

3 Theory

A wide set of theories will be used as frameworks in this study. Due to this width, there is no so called background research or literature review *per se* as this is covered in this chapter. Although the thesis is not studying the minute technical structures of the political organs that govern drinking water management at various levels, it is still crucial to review the most common pros and cons of decentralisation as argued by expert academics (3.1). After all, it is a newly decentralised water management system that is in place in Mahoba district. Another important theoretical framework is the concept and linkage between various *powers* within the entity *community* and how this connection affects levels and forms of participation (3.2). Third, the notion of Collective Action is a useful lens to use when analysing villages´ efforts to gather everyone together in the challenge of securing drinking water (3.3). Fourth, yet perhaps most importantly, parts of Amartya Sen´s theory on capabilities is briefly outlined (3.4). This section is essential for trying to understand the perception of the villagers. Lastly, there is a section called *Operationalisation* (3.5) which explains how the various theoretical frameworks are used in the analytical part of the thesis.

3.1 Decentralisation

The notion of decentralisation basically means to transfer powers to the local units of governance from the central government (Blair, 2000: 21). The dissatisfaction with central state planning led to decentralisation becoming more popular in the 1980s and has since been a central piece in development agendas (Manor, 1999). NGOs and international donors alike promote decentralisation and this has made many developing countries to adopt decentralisation reforms. It should perhaps not be seen as an answer to all problems to do with development, but there are certainly some potential for improved governance (Manor, 1999).

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[3] Scheduled Caste, also known as the Dalit, is a grouping of the lowest castes that have historically been disadvantaged in Indian society. Scheduled Tribes, or traditionally referred to as Adivasi, is a term given a heterogeneous set of ethnic and tribal groups in India. The ST, just like the SC, have for long been suppressed in India.

Believers in decentralisation focus on the incapacity of the central state to allocate appropriate benefits (Cullet, 2007: 7). One critic, economist Hayek, claimed the central state planners do not have the "knowledge of the particular circumstances of time and place" in order to respond to local desires (1945: 524). Pro-decentralisation theorists therefore promote decentralised governments as more receptive to local needs and more accountable (e.g. Blair, 2000; Crook and Manor, 1998; Ostrom *et al*, 1993).

One argument that often is brought up is the importance of local-specific knowledge in the field of natural resource management. For this reason decentralised governance ought to suit natural resource management better than a central state plan (Meinzen-Dick and Knox, 1999: 44; Blomquist *et al*, 2010: 620). Equally, powers that govern natural resources should also be able to strengthen local government institutions: "They enable local authorities to act in ways that are useful to local people, giving local people reason to engage local government. When government has meaningful powers and is open to influence by the people they represent, local people are transformed from managed subjects into engaged citizens" (Ribot, 2004: 13).

There are many scholars who have showed that decentralisation reforms have led to increased participation and also to improved local governance quality (e.g. Blair, 2000, Agrawal, 2001; de Oliveira, 2002; Faguet, 2004). However, there are also numerous examples of how decentralisation can result in elite capture which in turn decreases the efficiency, increases inequities and corruption (Dreze and Sen, 1996; Francis and James, 2003; Woodhouse, 2003; Montambeault, 2008; Kakumba, 2010).

Decentralisation and good governance are often believed to be a par. This may be because good governance is thought to lead to an improvement of equity by increasing local participation (Meynen and Doornbos, 2006: 227-228). The intention of good governance is to achieve political and economic equity. Political equity means democratic decision-power and acknowledgment of the various demands of different resource users and economic equity means the equation of costs and benefits (Poteete, 2004: 13,17).

Some claim that the good governance agenda had a tendency to oversee the opponents to decentralisation, for example state bureaucrats who are scared to lose their powers and clientist networks. Moreover, it is also pointed out that decentralisation supporters have a tendency to ignore power relations and patronage patterns (Meynen and Doornbos, 2006: 228). Decentralisation critics point to how decentralisation often leads to an increase of economic inequalities by strengthening social divisions (Poteete 2004: 12-3). There is also a lot of information on how local elites abuse their powers on behalf of weak social groups (e.g. Oyono, 2002; Pacheco, 2002).

It is common that local elites manipulate elections for their own gain. Because poor people are socially and economically dependent on the elite they are forced to vote for them (Ribot, 2004: 27-8). However, it should be kept in mind that elite capture is very location and context-specific (Bardhan and Mookherjee, 2000: 135). For example, Olowu (2001: 57) shows that elite capture not necessarily always is negative and in fact local government can often make use of their knowledge and resources. Indeed, some kind of elite domination in heterogeneous societies may be inevitable and it does not have to result in all benefits going to the elite (Mansuri and Rao, 2003: 42).

3.2 The community and power

Baumann *et al* argues that in the debate over participatory natural resource management the imagined community has often been small with territorially-bound units and a distinct relation to a specific natural resource. It has for long been appreciated that communities are heterogeneous and characterised by unequal power relations, but it was considered that these did not compromise the essential unity of the community. It was assumed that with a bit of adjustment and negotiation communities could be turned into an ideal unit to control natural resources. This image of the community has been one of the motivating factors behind the expansion of programmes for decentralised participatory natural resource management. However, this expansion has been generated more by a faith in the community and its natural resources than by real evidence (Baumann *et al*, 2003a: 20-23).

Not only are communities far from homogenous and conflict-ridden, but individuals are most often caught up in "overlapping circles of relationships" (Baumann *et al*, 2003a: 23). These can be linkages through work, electoral politics, or relations based on family, caste and religion. Further, a common defining feature of communities is the nature of state intervention. Jeffery and Sundar point out that, in the case of forest management, "what appears to be rules set in place by autonomous communities may in fact reflect a long history of state intervention and differentiation between different categories of people" (1999: 39). For example, the community is regarded as a settled entity and is expected to have an identifiable relationship to a particular resource, from which others are thereafter excluded.

In this regard, the term user group or stakeholder is often used to ease the definition of these relations and enable programme implementation (Nelson and Wright, 1995: 5). In contrast to the assumptions made about the community, the term stakeholder implies a "society made up of free-floating actors, each with different interests which they pursue by bargaining with each other in interactional space" (Nelson and Wright, 1995: 6). This disregards any idea of the different actors being part of a system in which there are uneven bargaining powers. In such a community it is probable that the most powerful will prevail. As reasoned by Agrawal, defining user groups and laying out an institutional design for

interaction does not address internal power relations and can therefore be an insufficient basis for collective action based around common interest. Indeed, Agrawal argues, the evidence on devolution of the control over natural resources – although not conclusive – indicates that such programmes in fact often increase local insecurity as newly devolved structures and power relations are added to existing local arrangements (Agrawal, 1999).

3.3 Collective Action

Collective action is when it is required that more than one person contribute to an action in order to reach an outcome (Ostrom, 2004: 1). People living in rural areas and use natural resources engage in collective action on a daily basis when they for example plant or harvest crops together; operate a local drinking water system; and when meeting to decide on rules for the above.

Efforts to influence policies for managing water and other natural resources should take into account factors that increase the likelihood that individuals will engage in their own collective action to manage the resources (Ostrom, 2004: 2). If these factors could be better understood then policies can be developed that increase the level of collective action. Previous research shows that no blueprints exist that can reliably solve collective action problems. Researchers have, however, identified the most common collective action problems within communities and also some attributes of groups and resources that facilitate successful solution to collective action problems. Bandiera *et al* (2005) point to two community characteristics that are particularly ineffective for collective action, namely socio-ethnic heterogeneity, and income and asset inequality.

1. Socio-ethnic heterogeneity

Communities that are homogenous along the lines of ethnicity, religion and social class, are normally stronger in collective action. Existing empirical evidence indicate that, in general, heterogeneous groups hinder cooperation in the provision of local public goods and in the management and maintenance of common property resources (Bandiera *et al*, 2005: 478). There are four major reasons to this:

- Socially homogenous communities are better at solving collective action problems due to higher likelihood of sharing a similar taste and may therefore find it easier to agree.
- Individuals might simply dislike working with others outside their group, thereby making cooperation less likely in heterogeneous communities.
- Different groups may disagree on how to share the private benefits associated with collective action or less happily share the benefits accruing to members of the other groups.
- Social heterogeneity might undermine the ability to devise mechanisms that sustain cooperation.

Along the same lines, and related to this study, Banerjee *et al* (2004) show that heterogeneity along caste and religious lines in India is associated with lower level public goods provision. However, contrary to Bandiera´s conclusions, Banerjee *et al* found that water facilities in particular, such as wells and handpumps, are more likely to be found in heterogeneous societies. This may indicate that people do not want to share water in particular with others outside of their own social group.

Nevertheless, overall the existing findings indicate that heterogeneity along caste, religious or ethnic lines is correlated with lower contributions to public goods, higher extraction levels from common resources and poorer maintenance of common infrastructure (Bandiera *et al*, 2005: 480).

2. <u>Asset inequality and the distribution of net benefits</u>

Theoretically, the effect of inequality depends on the characteristics of the particular good that is distributed unequally. For example, Olson (1965) argued that if a person earns a sufficiently large share of the benefits of a certain good then he would be willing to bear the full cost of the public good. Still, according to Bandiera *et al* (2005: 480-481) asset or income inequality might affect collective action for two reasons:

- Inequality generates distinct group identities such as social classes, which then increases the level of social heterogeneity which affects cooperation as discussed above.
- Asset inequality is often related to the benefits that are accrued from the provision of public goods or conservation of common resources. For example, individuals who own a lot of agricultural land will probably benefit more from investments in public irrigation schemes.

Similar to Bandiera´s framework around collective action, there are also other scholars that support this line of thinking in relation to decentralisation efforts. Cheng *et al* (2003), for example, show that social, cultural, religious, linguistic, and other distinctions are likely to affect the implementation of decentralised participatory resource management efforts. Likewise, the composition of the stakeholder community can affect successful implementation of decentralisation initiatives by affecting communication, trust, and extent of prior experience in interdependent activities (Taylor, 1998).

3.4 Capability Approach

The capability approach by Amartya Sen distinguishes between commodities, capability, human functioning, and utility. The following figure explains the links between these.

Fig 2: Sen´s Capability Approach

Commodity → Capability (to function) → Function(ing) → Utility (e.g. happiness)

When judging quality of life we ought to consider what people are capable of achieving. Different people and societies differ in their capacity to convert income and commodities into valuable accomplishments. For example, the commodity requirement to be able to appear in public without the company of a man typically depends on cultural factors such as social convention, custom, status or class (Sen, 1999: 70-71). Basically, it is not enough to look only at the commodities each person can successfully command. Instead we need to take it a step further and look at how people are able to function with the goods and services that they have.

It is therefore important to favour the construction of conditions by which people have a real chance to judge the kind of lives they would like to lead. Social and economic factors like elementary health care and basic education are important not only in their own right, but also for the role they can play in giving people the opportunity to "approach the world with courage and freedom" (Sen, 1999: 63). These considerations require a broader informational base that focuses in particular on people´s capability to choose the lives they want to live.

Poor or lacking levels of participation in water management can be seen as an unfreedom under which some villagers suffer. Development consists of the removal of various unfreedoms that leave people with few choices and opportunities. With freedom in the centre people should be seen as actively involved and given the opportunity in shaping their own destiny, and not just as passive recipients of centrally planned development programmes. In this process the state and society have important roles in strengthening and safeguarding human capabilities (Sen, 1999: 53). In Sen´s view, only when individuals are given adequate social opportunities can they effectively shape their own destiny and help each other (Sen, 1999: 11).

While the democratic institutions sure are important, we should avoid viewing them as mechanical devices for development. Their use is conditioned by our values and priorities and by the use we make of the available opportunities to participate. In this context Sen stresses the importance of organised opposition groups (Sen, 1999: 158). It is important that public debates and discussions are permitted by political freedoms and civil rights and that they play a major part in the formation of people´s values. For example, a more informed and less marginalised public discussion on environmental issues may not only be good for the environment, but it could also be important to the smooth functioning of the democratic system itself.

3.5 Operationalisation

RQ1 is a structural question and also context specific at the community level. It is more descriptive than the other questions and so there will not be as much theory used in the analysis as with the other two questions. In RQ2 the focus moves to another stage; the analytical attention lies on the community, the individual level, and the informal and formal institutions, and whether the current participatory system actually makes people participate. Collective action, decentralisation, and community and power will all be used in this section. In the last research question, RQ3, the matter of the subject is the perception the villagers have of their capability to participate in the management of drinking water. Individual and personal relationships are at the centre and the question is whether or not the villagers get the chance to engage in securing drinking water for their families and themselves. Crucial in this chapter is the realisation that seemingly similar people hold diverse capabilities and freedoms, and this also goes for people within the same community. It is a highly subjective issue and that is why it is so important to hear the perceptions of several villagers in order to be able to draw any conclusions. The capability approach is very well-suited to analyse this research question.

4 Methodology

4.1 Research design

The meta-science position of the research is important in order to clarify the focus of the study, for the questions asked, for decisions on data to be collected and for intended results of the analysis (Mikkelsen 2005: 135). Epistemology is concerned with the question of what can be known (Bryman 2008: 13). The epistemological position of my study belongs to *interpretivism*, in which I as a social scientist need to grasp the subjective meaning of participation in water management. The focus is on processes, processual change and understanding. I seek to understand human behaviour rather than just explaining it. Ontologically the research is constructionist, and by this I mean that social phenomena and their meanings are continuously being created by social actors (ibid: 19). I do not believe social entities possess a reality independent of social actors.

It is critical to be conscious of what type of study is being engaged in (Mikkelsen, 2005: 127). The objective of this research has been empirical, rather than normative or constructionist. This means the focus has been more on how the nature of participation *is* in water management, and how this can be *explained* and *understood*. This is different to how participation *should* (normative) or *can* (constructionist) be.

Mikkelsen emphasises the need to differentiate between *type* of studies and *form* of studies. The type of study is strongly linked to the nature of the research question. To this end, my study is mainly

interpretative in nature in that the focus is very much on the *perception* of the villagers and how they perceive the causes to strong/weak participation. However, there are also elements of descriptive and exploratory studies in the research questions. Having a mixture between study types is often very healthy for a good research (Mikkelsen, 2005: 131).

Based on my epistemological and ontological stance, and very much linked to the above research design, I opted for qualitative data collection. I am attempting to understand human action, i.e. the institutions that govern villagers´ level and form of participation, and to this a qualitative approach is fitting in which I let the empirical material influence theory rather than the opposite. In this rather inductive approach, I begin with concrete empirical details and then use these to work towards more abstract ideas (Mikkelsen, 2005: 168-171). It is an attempt to give a more "bottom-up" perspective, in which the point of view is the one of the subject´s in the empirical analysis. Importantly, in qualitative research there is emphasis on greater generality in the formulation of initial research ideas and on interviewees´ own perspectives (Bryman, 2008: 437).

4.2 Case selection

I chose a collective case study approach as I believed that the study would benefit from different perspectives on participation in water management (Creswell, 2007: 62). By carrying out research in three villages with varying drinking water situations and forms of water management participation I sought to strengthen the ability to generalise the results. The downside when analysing more than one case is that the overall analysis may become diluted (Creswell, 2007: 63). In my research, however, I do not think too much depth was lost as I purposely focused on and worked more with one of the villages, Village B[4].

By focusing more on Village B I could get in-depth understanding of the villagers´ perception of participatory water management. About twice as many interviews and group discussions were held here compared to the other two villages. I also spent more time in this village and stayed over a few nights, sleeping in a family´s house. The other two villages were used more as a form of control mechanism to check that the collected data was reliable.

The cases were chosen following purposive sampling, in which the selection of units of analysis is a combination of selection for heterogeneity and homogeneity (Bryman, 2008: 375). I wanted a balanced sample of villages in which water management issues could be compared but in which heterogeneity was also significant. Following my informants´ advice, these three villages were part of the original seven villages I first visited. In the end these three were chosen for the study because they had in common certain aspects of water management participation problems. Simultaneously, they

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[4] Please see Appendix 1 for details of the studied villages.

also differed in how strong their GPs were. I was told Village A has relatively active and strong governing institutions, Village C is suffering from poor water management institutions, and Village B has attributes that puts it somewhere in the middle. This is why Village B was selected as the main target for the research.

4.3 Research Methods

"It is the substance of the matter – the questions to be answered – that must guide the selection of methods, and not vice versa" (Mikkelsen, 2005: 139). To this end, my research questions focus on the respondents´ perception of participation and are a purely qualitative study. The investigation techniques used in collecting data on the field have been participant observation, group interviews and semi-structured interviews. Additionally, I have reviewed secondary literature on the topic. As the study is interpretivist in nature, the data-collection has focused on collecting information and at the same time understanding about the form and level of participation in drinking water management. Following grounded theory, the research has been an iterative process (Bryman, 2008: 12), in which I have jumped between basic purposes, issues, aims, methodology and choice of data. This not only mirrors the complex reality of life in Mahoba district, but this process has also been important for my research to move forward.

In terms of data collection, I initially intended to attend *gram sabha*[5] (community meetings) and GP meetings in order to observe the nature of these gatherings. This might very well have widened my understanding of the real power relations between the villagers attempting to participate in water management. Unfortunately, however, there were no *gram sabhas* held during my stay in Mahoba due to state elections that were due in January 2012. As in most parts of India, political activities come to a stand-still at times of elections. Being unable to attend these meetings, I had to suffice with interviewing the villagers and the GP members on the nature of these meetings. Sometimes the optimal data is difficult to obtain, and therefore *access to data* also determines the construction of data (Mikkelsen, 2005: 160).

4.3.1 Interviews

This study builds mainly upon empirical material collected during field research in Mahoba district during November and December 2011. Qualitative semi-structured interviewing, in both individual and group interviews, was my main data collection method. A total of 17 respondent interviews, 7 group interviews and 9 key informant interviews were conducted. Together with my interpreter I managed to arrange good gate keepers in each village. These individuals were especially important for setting up the first one or two interviews in each village. After this, snowball sampling facilitated many of the next interviews; the first interviewee would direct me to another two respondents, etc.

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[5] This is a mandatory village assembly that is held 2-4 times annually for all the voters within a GP.

These are small villages in which everyone knows each other, so once I was introduced to one person the rest came easily. Simultaneously, however, theoretical sampling was also an important strategy for the study. Based on the relevance for my research questions and guided by my theoretical framework, I identified key informants at the local level (Silverman, 2003: 130-131). Getting in contact with GP leaders and other high profiles in the village was relatively easy.

I soon noticed it was a challenge to deal with many of the respondents, including key informants, as my topic was seen as politically sensitive. Unequal power relations were clearly an important issue, but it was also a delicate topic. In village C, where participation was probably the worst, I had some influential individuals watching me carefully and I could sense the suspicion. At times it was obvious some respondents were hesitant to speak honestly. Local culture made it a challenge to interview the respondents in private. Especially women were rather hesitant to be interviewed behind closed doors, but also some men did not see the point in such arrangements. Often we would start the interviews in private, but then some curious neighbours would sneak in to listen and also engage. In some cases this lack of privacy meant respondents were cautious to speak their free mind and to be critical of status quo. On the other hand, there seems to be an obsession from Westerners about privacy (Mikkelsen, 2008: 344). Insisting on privacy and closed doors may therefore cause more harm than anything else, as it can disturb the existing situation between villagers.

All the interviews were semi-structured. Different formats were used for ordinary villagers, VWSC members and *panchayat* members. It only took a couple of interviews to realise that the way I asked the questions determined the answers. After a few interviews I became better at formulating the questions and, crucially, communicating the right formulations to my interpreter. In hindsight I wish I had not begun with some of the most important interviews, and rather started with less central interviews.

The way the questions were formulated depended on the respondent and on the kind of interactive relation I had with him/her (Kvale, 1996: 35-36). Mostly empirical questions, but also some normative and constructionist questions were asked in order to tease out more information. At a number of occasions it was apparent how the respondents in the course of the interview came to change his/her descriptions or meanings about a theme. The process of being interviewed can clearly produce new insights and awareness (Kvale, 1996: 31).

In the interviews I tried to register not only what was said, but I also tried to interpret the meaning of what was said (ibid: 30). This search for the meaning of central themes in the life world of the subjects has unfortunately been drastically hampered by language barriers. This has probably been the biggest

constrain in my research and unfortunately plenty of information has been lost due to translation issues.

A central aspect of my research was to ask the respondents for their definition of *participatory* water management. Rather than choosing a definition found in academic literature, it makes more sense to formulate a definition of the concept as it is experienced by the actual water users. This, however, proved more challenging than anticipated. Initially it was a translation problem, as the word described to them in Hindi was too academic and not something people without higher education knew of. Even after this was rectified it was difficult to have the respondents explain what *participatory* meant to them. After some time analysing, and after having interviewed a key informant, I realised this was probably due to a lack of confidence. For years these people have been told by governments and NGOs that the key to everything is being able to read and to have an education. The large majority of the villages are not literate and this causes a lack of confidence, which in turn made the respondents hesitant to speak out about their perceptions about water management.

4.4 Coding

After the interviews had been transcribed I analysed the notes a few times. I generated an index of terms which were divided into categories/themes. Codes that somehow captured the qualitative richness of each phenomenon were noted down. I tried to recognize patterns, and based on those to think in terms of systems and concepts. From this I tried to interpret and give meaning to the data (Creswell, 2003: 191-195; Mikkelsen, 2005: 181; Bryman, 2008: 550-555).

5 Results

Before analysing the results from the data collection it is important to point out the three villages´ various characteristics[6].

Village A is better off due to a damn that was built nearby the village around 20 years ago. The damn has made irrigation easy in these otherwise dry lands. This has resulted in increased productivity and a general improvement in living conditions as people have moved from simply farming for their own needs to being able to sell some surplus produce to nearby villages and Mahoba town. The drinking water situation is rather good and clean drinking water is usually available at short distances throughout the year. Physical attributes such as electricity, handpumps and an open but functioning sewerage system are in place. There are over 30 handpumps available which is a very high number for Bundelkhand. The village has very skilled handpump mechanic who keeps all the water extraction

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[6] Please see Appendix 1 for more details of each village.

mechanisms in great condition. In Village A, as in most villages, the SC and OBC[7] households are divided geographically. The SC area is really a lot worse of compared to the OBC areas. Interesting in this village is that the large majority of the population belong to OBC; 70%. 20% are SC while 10% are General Class[8].

Village B is the larger of two villages in its GP. Its drinking water systems are rather poor. There are quite a few handpumps spread around the village, but they are not reliable throughout the year. Sometimes in the dry months women and children are forced to walk further away to other open wells. During these droughts long queues by the wells often lead to quarrels and fights between the women. The general view inside and outside of the village is that the current *pradhan* is hard-working, professional and has a good purpose in mind. The village is benefitting from a good tarmac road that makes travel to Mahoba easy. There is no electricity, something most inhabitants are openly disappointed with. SC is the largest category here with approximately 60%. OBC is 30% and General Class is 10%.

Fig 3: Location of case study villages in Mahoba district
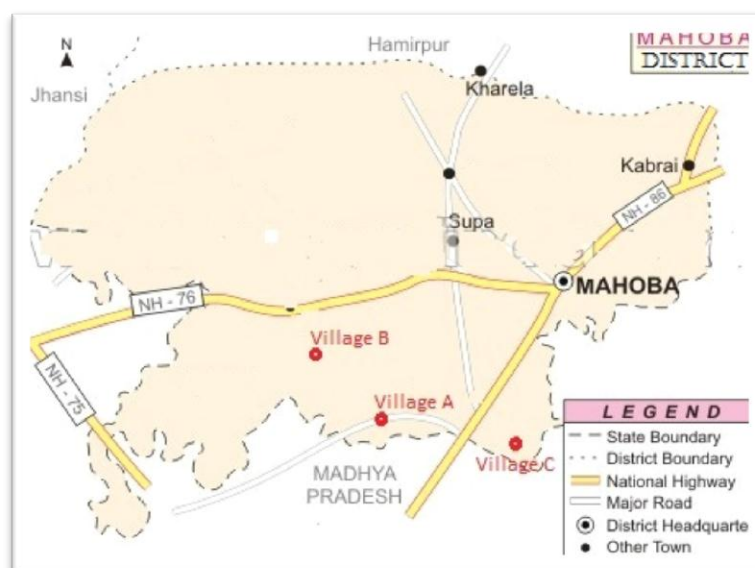
Source: www.mapsofindia.com

In Village C the overall socio-economic situation of most villagers is worse than in Villages A and B. This is due in part to a more difficult water situation; both water for irrigation and drinking water are often scarce and of poor quality. Drinking water from several of the sources has a high dosage of salt and is dangerous to drink. It is hard to dig or drill deep into the ground as the village has a thick layer

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[7] The OBC, Other Backward Class, is another definition for the peoples who are "economically and socially backward", but who still are "more developed" than the SC.
[8] General Class is a term used to denote groups who do not qualify as SC, ST or OBC. General Class people normally belong to a higher caste.

of non-permeable rocks. There is only one handpump that seems to have good quality drinking water. The political situation is far from ideal, with the two villages under the same *panchayat* being on bad terms with each other. With most of the poor quality drinking water in Village C, the inhabitants walk to the other village to extract drinking water and this leads to conflicts. The area around the village is dryer than normal in Bundelkhand and this affects the overall living conditions in most households. People really struggle for survival. The approximate ratio of caste groupings here is SC 60%, OBC 35% and General Class 5%.

The rest of this chapter is divided into three sections; one for each research question. In the first part, 5.1, some of the loopholes in the local PRI system are revealed. Corruption and power-relations are two socio-political factors that affect participation and are discussed in 5.1. In 5.2 there is an analysis of the ways in which the respondents participate. In the final section, 5.3, we turn to the respondents´ capabilities to engage in water management.

5.1 Socio-political factors

This section seeks to answer RQ1: *What socio-political factors affect the level and form of participation in decentralised drinking water management?* The first major factor is the ineffective formal institutions which demotivates many community members. Second, the way the democratic system plays out is criticised. This is followed by a discussion on the destructive powers of corruption and, finally, an analysis on some of the various power-structures present in Mahoba district.

5.1.1 Ineffective formal institutions

Before turning to the varying characteristics of each village´s gram *panchayat* (GP), it is important to note that the three villages also live under diverse geographical circumstances. The inhabitants in Village A have been blessed with clean reliable drinking water sources all year round. This is much to do with the nearby damn which is used for irrigation of the village fields. With irrigation secured this has meant that the available groundwater can be used solely for drinking. In Villages B and C, as with most other villages in Bundelkhand, the farmers are often forced to pump groundwater to water their fields, leaving less groundwater for drinking, cleaning and washing purposes. In other words, Village A has a considerable advantage in terms of drinking water which is important to keep in mind when analysing the villages´ GPs.

Therefore not too much focus should be on the drinking water situation in Village A when examining the village GP. The positive state of drinking water does not necessarily correlate to a smooth running of GP, nor to a participatory drinking water management system. The *pradhan* has been running the GP for 15 years and during this time he has gained a poor reputation as a man who does not stick to

his promises and duties (A15, 10/12/2011; A17, 10/12/2011[9]). In fact, the *pradhan* himself does not know what responsibilities the *panchayat* hold in terms of drinking water management (PA16, 10/12/2011). When asked about their attendance to the *gram sabha* many of the respondents in Village A replied that it was pointless to even try to participate as the *panchayat* would not act according to their decisions anyway (A14, 10/12/2011; A16, 10/12/2011; 17, 10/12/2011). According to these villagers, much time and energy is wasted on discussing matters back and forth in the various committees and then in the end it is always the *pradhan* who makes the final decision regardless of peoples´ opinions.

On the other hand, one respondent did back up the *panchayat* and judged it as "doing its best – it is not easy to please everyone" (A15, 10/12/2011). The physical infrastructure of the village in terms of roads, electricity and sewerages are of high quality if compared to other Bundelkhand villages. A functioning sewerage system should not be underestimated when it comes to sustaining a drinking system with clean water. There are also around 30 handpumps in place – an impressive figure. These observations indicate that the *panchayat* must have done something right. Still, the response from the interviews paint a picture that perhaps a whole lot more could have been done would the GP have been more effective and open to villagers´ participation.

It was observed that the GP in Village B seemed effective in the sense that the members got things done. The *panchayat* has, since the *pradhan* took office three years earlier, made sure that toilets have been constructed in the primary school, that a new handpump has been built and that there is a large pipeline project waiting to be started. In this plan a pond is to be created in the outskirts of the village and from there safe drinking water will be pumped through the pipelines to a number of public taps around the village. The project plan is currently pending for its funding at the state level. It seems that witnessing the above actions have triggered many villagers to engage in questions regarding drinking water.

However, one of the *panchayat* members that were interviewed was clueless regarding the current issues being discussed in the GP. This sort of lack of knowledge from *panchayat* members is not uncommon but appears destructive in terms of GP reputation. In stark contrast to some of the proponents of decentralisation mentioned in 3.1 (e.g. Blair, 2000; Crook & Manor, 1998; Ostrom *et al*, 1993), this suggests that a decentralised government not necessarily is more accountable to local priorities. Numerous respondents expressed concern about the capabilities of the *panchayat* members

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[9] Please see Appendix 2 for lists of the interviewees. If the reference starts with A, B or C it means it is an individual interview in respective village. References starting with G indicate a group interview. *Panchayat* and VWSC members are referenced with P and V respectively. Lastly, the key informants are referred to with the letters GS.

to run the body in an effective fashion (B7, 7/12/2011; B8, 7/12/2011; GB6; 11/12/2011). They spoke of seeing the GP as unorganised and this inefficiency left them unwilling to participate more in drinking water management.

The criticism towards the GP was loudest in Village C. Their scepticism is rooted in that the *pradhan* spends very little time in the village due to him residing in Mahoba town. One group of people said "no wonder [that the] GP [does] not do nothing because [the] *pradhan* [is] never here" (GC4, 8/12/2011). Others defended the *panchayat* by pointing to the difficulties they face in geographical and climatic terms. As one lady put it: "Nothing has been done [by the *panchayat*]. They constructed another handpump but there is no water there because of stony layer. They cannot dig deeper because of the stones. That is not *panchayat* fault" (C10, 8/12/2011).

One of the key informants, Dr Khare from Mahoba-based NGO Gramonnati Sansthan, also spoke of how important a strong effective GP is in order to receive the involvement of the villagers. According to him, it boils down to the *pradhan* and *panchayat* members not knowing their own responsibilities as a governing body. The villagers are not ignorant; they can see through this lack of awareness. The disillusions them and results in them not seeing any point in engaging with the leaders (GS8, 9/12/2011). In a sense you cannot blame the *panchayat* members for this. They have received no formal training after being elected and there seems to be very little, if any, instructions coming from district or state level (PB1, 6/12/2011; PA6, 10/12/2011; PB7, 12/12/2011). No wonder the *gram sabhas* do not attract many participants when the villagers have limited respect for the knowledge of the GP members and for the effectiveness of the GP as a governing body.

5.1.2 Democracy

Inhabitants in all three villages are conscious of local politics. Many of them are very critical of not only the politicians, but also of the whole political system. There are three main concerns regarding the current form of democracy that villagers found affected the form and level of participation. These issues are discussed next.

5.1.2.1 Several villages under one panchayat

GPs in Mahoba district more often than not consist of two or three villages. Historically this was not the case but it has become common in later days in an attempt to make governance more efficient and cost-effective. Currently you need at least 1000 voters for each GP, so if a village has a population less than 1000 it must join with another village to form a GP (GS8, 9/12/2011). It turns out the respondents view this form of division as counter-active to its intended purpose. Simply put, the *pradhan* who is in power has a tendency to favour his or her home village and neglect the other villages in the GP. In Village B the current *pradhan* is from the very same village and almost univocally the respondents point to this being of great benefit for them. A group of women said "the former was from Palka and

he developed Palka. This one is from here so he is working for Majalwara" (GB6, 11/12/2011). One *panchayat* member also pointed to how this system has worked against Village B in the past, as the *pradhan* has mostly been a resident of the other village, i.e. Palka (PB2, 7/12/2011).

In the other two villages this issue was never brought up as a problem. In Village A this is simply because there is only one village in the GP so this challenge is non-existent. In Village C, on the other hand, there are two villages under the same GP, but in recent times the *pradhan* has always been a resident of Village C. Therefore Village C would have been the main beneficiary of the projects that the *pradhan* has put in place. Unfortunately it turns out they still have not benefitted from having a fellow villager as *pradhan* as he has misused his power (this will be discussed more in 5.1.2.3).

With the above observations in mind, it seems the 2-3 villages GP system can be abused by the *pradhans* who chose to invest more in their home villages at the expense of the other partner village. This was also confirmed by a key respondent who reported that it is a common problem in Mahoba district and that it leads to disillusionment on behalf of the neglected villagers (GS8, 09/12/2011). As one respondent put it: "Why should I go there [to *gram sabha*] before [when the *pradhan* was from another village]?" (B8, 7/12/2011). Then again, in theory and also to a certain extent in reality there lies a potential in being two or three villages under one GP if this can be utilised in terms of exchanged knowledge and experience. Ironically, Village B actually exemplifies this potential in their pending project proposal which has in large parts been copied from their sister village. The *pradhan* has confirmed this himself (PB7, 12/12/2011).

5.1.2.2 Opposition parties

In rural India free and regular elections take place which in theory is a major strength, but in reality the elections and their results are often manipulated by local elites (Ribot, 2004: 27-28). Nevertheless, democratic elections are very important for at least attempting to ensure downward accountability of elected *panchayat* members to the village inhabitants. Although this study is focused on non-electoral channels of participation, it cannot be ignored that the process of elections is essential for an accountable and thereby an approachable GP. Having elections also means having a multi-party system in which opposition parties compete against each other. This was actually brought up as a problem by many respondents when conducting the interviews.

There are always losers in every election. These losers were candidates who were running for *pradhan*. Having lost the election they would together with their supporters start working against the winning *pradhan* in the GP. As a lady in Village A put it: "In some issues it [i.e. the opposition parties] has created the problem. It is the implementers and the people who suffer then" (A15, 10/12/2011). Another respondent claimed that "the envy from opposition parties" is the main reason

why so many people do not participate in water management (B4, 6/12/2011). As a matter of fact even the current *pradhan* of Village B agreed with these statements, saying "it would not be politics unless there were some against me" (PB7, 12/12/2011).

It might appear that the above discussion is a simple problem common in any non-perfect democracy. That may be, but the issue was raised so often during the interviews that it had to be deemed significant. Also the staff from Gramonnati Sansthan were very quick to point this out as a major flaw in terms of participatory politics. Ramawatar said "The current politics divides the people. The one who wins gets his people around him" (GS9, 11/12/2011). His colleague noted that the formation of a GP that welcomes everyone is not happening in Mahoba district right now (GS8, 9/12/2011). Indeed, the election process seemed to divide the villages between parties and destruct rather than improve quality of life. Ironically, having a multi-party system demotivated many villagers to participate in the *gram sabha*.

5.1.2.3 Pradhan holds supreme power

When speaking to the villagers about the *panchayat* in Village A and B people would naturally refer to the decision-making institution as the *panchayat* or the GP. In Village C, however, people seldom used the word *panchayat*; instead they always referred to the *pradhan* when speaking of important political issues. For example, Laltiya said "Lack of unity. People need to be united for this [democracy]. *Pradhan*, only what he says can be done. Nobody listens to the poor." (GC2, 8/12/2011). These sorts of statements were repeated over and over from most people interviewed. In the other villages the *panchayat* members at least claimed that decisions were made together within the GP, but in Village C there were no such indications. Even the deputy *pradhan* explained that the responsibility of planning and managing water projects lies in the hands of the *pradhan* (PC4, 8/12/2011).

Also in the other two villages was the supreme power of the *pradhan* observable. Again it was a *panchayat* member who admitted that it is the *pradhan* who is responsible for planning and monitoring the village water management in Village B (PB1, 6/12/2011). In Village A a strong and outspoken woman spoke of the power one gets as a *pradhan*, and she admitted that this was the main reason why she had run for *pradhan* in the previous election (A16, 10/12/2011). One of the consequences of this concentrated power at the hands of the *pradhan* is clearly a lack of motivation on behalf of the villagers to participate in, for example, water management issues.

The only person who can balance the power of the *pradhan* is the Block Development Officer (BDO). For every village the state government has appointed a BDO who is the chief of administration for the GP. Together with the *pradhan* the BDO is the signatory of all important decisions and must also be present at the *gram sabhas* (GS8, 9/12/2011). It was pointed out that the relation between the *pradhan*

and the BDO is extremely important for each GP. In case of disputes between the two, there are high risks of prolonged stalemates. The reputation of the relationship between the BDO and the *pradhan* is infected on another level too, namely in terms of systemic corruption (GS8, 9/12/2011). Together they have total control of the village funds and they must sign all transactions together, which makes moving funds around as they wish very easy. Next, the systematic corruption between the *panchayat* and the people is discussed.

5.1.3 Corruption

Many respondents voiced concerns regarding how the *pradhan* usually only helped his family and friends. These findings are supported by for example Besley *et al* (2005: 23-24) who show that *panchayat* members´ households and people associated with the political party of the *pradhan* benefit more from government programs. That the *pradhan* is corrupt was told by respondents in all three villages. In Village B three respondent explained in a group interview that the *pradhan* took bribes when the new handpump was constructed and that this was "almost a normal thing" (GB7, 11/12/2011). In Village A a respondent praised the *pradhan* for having spent funds on infrastructure, but that unfortunately he is also corrupt (A15, 10/12/2011). Apparently it is common that people pay something under the table in order to have services built nearby their houses, for example handpumps (B4, 6/12/2011).

Key respondents also painted corruption as a major flaw to the decentralised participatory system. According to these experienced social workers, there is corruption on a daily basis between the GPs and the villagers (GS8, 09/12/2011; GS9, 11/12/2011). As an example, one respondent explained that the *pradhan* controls a mobile water tank which is sometimes used during droughts to transport clean drinking water from Mahoba to Village C. This water, however, the *pradhan* only allows friends and family close to him to use. "Some of the people who have bad relations with *pradhan* they go directly to buy the water [outside of the village] instead" (PC4, 8/12/2011). Firstly, this shows how the *pradhan* abuses his position in order to help people within his inner circle and, secondly, it also exemplifies how the inhabitants get lured into voting for the *pradhan*, as everyone obviously would like to have safe drinking water for their family during droughts and being loyal to the *pradhan* may make life easier. This stresses Ribot´s (2004: 78-28) point of how in a decentralised system poor people easily can be manipulated to vote for elite candidates because they are socially and economically dependent on them.

5.1.4 Power-relations

So far it has been demonstrated that the political playing field is rather uneven in the villages and does not allow for everyone to participate. The system with its ineffective governing bodies make it possible for the *pradhan* to act independently by abusing the power for the benefit of his or her inner circle at the expense of sister villages and people belonging to opposite parties and/or friends. Many

people are also hindered from participating in drinking water management because of imbalanced power structures. The most prevailing of these power-factors is the one between the relatively rich landlords versus the poorer workers.

Many respondents spoke of strong landlords playing a central role in the *gram sabhas*. It appears to be more incentives for the large landowners to participate in the meetings than there are for the landless people. "Landlords are usually powerful and like to administer things. Want to impose things", said Dr Khare (GS8, 09/12/2011). It comes down to the fact that many villagers are economically dependent on the landowners. Many of them work on the landlords´ fields and do not want to get on bad terms with their employers or potential future employers. Being wealthier than most others the landowners also exploit this within the *gram sabha*. The *panchayat* members are also interested in securing good relations with the wealthy elite for their personal gain and so they allow the landlords more space than others to express their opinions. This echoes the argument by for e.g. Meynen and Doornbos (2006: 228) that decentralisation can sometimes overlook local power relations, which clearly can be an obstacle for participatory water management.

Especially in Village B did unequal landownership appear as a major obstacle to participation. The respondents complained that "the rich people attend the *gram sabha* more often than the SC[10]" (GB7, 11/12/2011) and that the people who own little land but still attended the meetings were usually neglected (GB6, 11/12/2011). Indeed, the weaker sections of the community think they have nothing and feel separated from society, and in particular from the *gram sabha* (GS8, 9/12/2011). This supports Agrawal´s (1999) (see chapter 3.2) proposition on uneven bargaining powers in which the most powerful prevail. It is comparable to Mahoba district where decentralised governance structures and new power relations have been added to existing local arrangements, i.e. landownership inequalities. The issue of economic differences within the community will be analysed further in chapter 6.3.4.

5.2 Forms of participation

This section is much shorter in length than the other two sections, which is due to the more direct research question that is being answered, namely: *In what way(s) does participation take its form and how successful is this* system? A high success rate is when all spheres of society are given a good chance to participate in water management. A low success rate is when large parts of the community are hindered from engaging in drinking water issues. Three major means of participation were observed in the villages. Firstly, through the formal institutions, secondly, by own initiatives, and lastly, via male relatives acting as messengers.

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[10] In this scenario the respondents spoke of "the rich versus the SC" as if the poor and the SC are equivalent. This is most of the time true, but should definitely not be taken as a general rule.

5.2.1 Formal institutions

The *gram sabha* is generally seen as the most important structure in the *panchayat* system and whenever it is non-functional then accountability from the GP towards the villages will be weak (Baumann, 1998: 8). In all three villages only a minority attend the *gram sabhas* on a fairly regular basis[11]. The most repeated reason to the non-appearance was that nobody at the *gram sabha* listens to what they say so why should they bother going. This was told by women and men numerous times in all three villages.

Others complained over how the *pradhan* or the BDO would often show up several hours late and by that time most voters would already have given up and left the meeting. It is also clear that in the *gram sabhas* the respondents were not holding the *panchayats* accountable, which is the opposite of what decentralisation proponents argue. The inhabitants are unaware of their rights and of the *panchayat´s* duties and usually the *gram sabhas* are either scarcely attended or not taking place on a regular basis. Therefore it seems that some academic supporters of decentralisation (e.g. Blair, 2000; Crook and Manor, 1998) do not fully estimate the vitality in having an educated population that are aware of their rights in order for them to respond to local politics.

All three villages had some sort of VWSC established. In Villages A and B the VWSC was part of the GP, while in Village C it was an external committee. Disappointingly, these bodies were totally unknown to most respondents. Those who did know of the VWSC said these institutions had no importance whatsoever, as the *pradhan* had no interest in handing over any decision-making power (B9, 7/12/2011; C19, 8/12/2011). Those respondents who had participated in the VWSC meetings described them as more of sanitation awareness-raising functions than anything else (C19, 8/2011).

5.2.2 Own initiatives

For many of the respondents participating in drinking water management did not have to mean engagement through dialogue or decision-power at the official level. An alternative form of being your own agent to secure your own drinking water is through initiatives that bypass the *panchayat* institutions. With many of the villagers having lost faith in the politicians it is not uncommon that they take the power in their own hands. Typically this will occur in instances when a handpump or a well require maintenance and the *panchayat* is too slow and inefficient to deal with it. The people most dependent on the water source will then come together and raise money for the reparation of the source. These kind of efforts in a way disregards Bandiera *et al´s* (2005) ideas of the importance of socio-ethnic homogeneity and asset equality as pre-requisites for collective action to take root. In these villages it appeared that if nothing could be expected out of the GP, then matters had to be taken care of by the community. Then again, these sort of actions hardly influence local policy making.

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[11] See Appendix 1 for approximate numbers of participants at the *gram sabha*.

The *pradhans* that were interviewed claimed the community members are welcome to visit their personal house to discuss matters of interest. A few of the respondents who were reluctant to attend the *gram sabhas* cited this as a way for them to raise their voices. Usually smaller issues would be dealt with in this manner while the bigger decisions were discussed in the *gram sabha*. However, it appeared that the *pradhan* would be more approachable if he/she resided in your home village and - even better – if you had a good personal relation to him/her. This, relating back to the theory in section 3.1, is another case of how decentralisation can lead to a sort of local elite capture by which personal contacts become key for fruitful participation in drinking water management. This comes at the expense of less politically or economically influential groups.

5.2.3 Male relatives represent

As will be elaborated deeper in 5.3.1, gender plays a big role in how participation takes place and for many women it is not even an option to attend the *gram sabhas*. Rather than being present themselves, women are supposed to convey their messages and opinions to the *gram sabha* through a male family member. It is difficult to estimate how successful this culture of representation is and how much information is actually conveyed back and forth. From a purely practical point, however, it is highly likely that women would miss out on a lot of information and, even more so, in terms of influencing water distribution policies. By not being present they cannot participate in the actual discussions nor actively raise their opinions. It therefore appears as a highly unsuccessful system.

For the women who live in households where many if not all men have migrated[12] the situation is even more problematic. For those women there is nobody to convey their opinions. Undeniably there are great inequalities evident in terms of bargaining power between the genders. As argued by Agrawal (1999) and discussed in 3.2, user groups and an institutional design for interaction does not necessarily address internal power relations. The current efforts in collective action in Mahoba district are insufficient if not the role of gender is addressed further and women given not only the constitutional right but also the cultural right to participate in the *gram sabhas*. The role of gender is analysed further in the next chapter.

5.3 Perception of capabilities

This section aims to answer the following question: *How do villagers explain their capability in participating in local drinking water management?* The respondents brought up a wide range of issues in terms of their capabilities. Gender inequality is a centre argument and is analysed first. Thereafter follows a discussion on how important economic wealth is for the capability to participate. This is followed by an analysis on the lack of interest and belief in participation, which is linked to

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[12] Economic emigration and its effects on participatory water management are discussed in greater detail in 5.3.4.

unawareness about the GP and its duties. In this section illiteracy is also discussed as an often cited reason for non-participation. Lastly, the role of caste is discussed.

5.3.1 Gender

In the interviews it was apparent that the group of people who have by far the smallest chance to participate in water management are women. Just by trying to initiate the interview this was noticed. When hearing what the interview was about, many women would insist that their husbands better answer those questions. "You should consult with the men regarding this", said one lady (B8, 7/12/2011) and this exemplifies the general attitude. Women have been taught that it is not their place to speak out loud in public but to keep their opinion within the family. Traditionally it is a very male-dominated culture in Bundelkhand, but elders do speak of positive trends in the last decades pointing to more rights for women (C12, 8/12/2011; C10, 8/12/2011).

Nowadays it seems about 10-15% of the participants at the *gram sabha* are women[13]. Additionally, at least a third of the GP members are women, so there are evidently women representatives at the *gram sabhas*. However, men and women alike indicated that women seldom speak at these meetings. As mentioned above, drinking water is an issue which affects women the most as they are the water fetchers, the ones who care for the children when they are sick from drinking dirty water, etc. Yet, more than half the number of all women interviewed showed an unwillingness to participate in water management. Those women´s subjective impression is that there is no reason for them to take part in for e.g. the *gram sabha*. In the capability approach this is an example of how a deprived person has not been given a real opportunity to judge the kind of life she would like to lead. In other words, the respondents who claimed unwillingness to participate had not attended school and therefore they lacked an appropriate informational base to choose from.

It is tradition in many parts of India that teenage girls marry men from another village. This means many women are required to move to another new village at an early age. During the interviews it appeared that a small number of women, in total four out of all the women in all three villages, were much more vocal and confident than the other women. What they had in common was their history. They had not been subject to the tradition of moving to another village at marriage. Instead, they had married with someone from their home village. This appears to have had very strong effects on how these women live their lives. Women who live their lives in the same village that they grew up in are much more confident, socially stronger and more outspoken, than women who moved to the village as teenage wives. All these four women participated actively in the *gram sabha* and were well-respected in the community.

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[13] This percentage is based on estimates given by the respondents.

In difference to the other women, these four women were living with the freedom of having the capability to choose participation in drinking water management. We must acknowledge that different societies, people and cultures may have different values and aspirations – especially important bearing in mind my role as a foreign researcher. Yet still, this small group of women demonstrate that the weight women undergo as teenagers when they marry into an unknown family in a new village where they become extremely dependent on their new family, is a very heavy weight indeed, to the point that they most often do not even consider speaking their voice publicly regarding matters that affect them directly, such as clean drinking water.

5.3.2 Economic wealth matters

This is a considerable factor in power-relations and for community members´ capability to participate. During the observations and interviews a few different angles to this issue appeared.

Most of the inhabitants in these villages have to work very hard to make ends meet. This means long days on the field. Some work on their own farms while those who do not own land have no other choice but to work on the landowners´ farms in return of a salary. These poorer people are heavily dependent on their working hours on the field. If they want to provide for their families they cannot afford missing out on a working day. Unfortunately for these people the *gram sabhas* in all three villages are held during the day on normal weekdays. Typical hours are between 11am to 4pm, which is a period when most people need to work. This means the majority of the villagers do not even have the logistical possibility to participate in the *gram sabha* even if they would want to. On the other hand, people who can participate are the ones who do not necessarily have to work on the fields during the days and those are usually the landowners.

In other words, there is a tendency that more well-off individuals can participate in drinking water management through the *gram sabhas*. Respondents in all three villages confirm this is the case (A16, 10/12/2011; B9, 7/12/2011; C10, 8/12/2011). Simply by being present more often, they can influence water management to a greater extent and probably in a fashion that benefits them personally. This demonstrates that critics of decentralisation have a point in that decentralisation can increase economic inequities by reinforcing local social divisions (Poteete, 2004: 12-13). This also rings true of Bandiera *et al´*s (2005: 480-481) theory that income inequality generates distinct group identities, in this case social classes, which in turn increases the level of social heterogeneity which affects cooperation. It is a vicious circle in which the rich and powerful increase their influence over and over, unless the so called poor person can utilise available capabilities to raise his/her voice in the public space.

Due to economic hardships many men from the villages are forced to emigrate to larger cities in search for seasonal work. This has countless effects on society. One of them is that poverty of this kind

affects their wives in practical terms by placing even more burden on their shoulders to care for the family. Secondly, with their husbands absent they have now lost the person who usually conveys their voice regarding drinking water management in the *gram sabha*. Some of them may speak through another male relative, but that is not possible for everyone. Subsequently, the capability of the poorer people to participate in water management is severely hindered by the fact that they are economically deprived.

5.3.3 Education

Knowledge, awareness and education are important for a participatory management system. Several aspects of these issues were discovered when conducting the study.

Knowledge, or lack of knowledge, is an obstruction to participation which many respondents carry with them. The capability of the community to participate in the management of their own drinking water is severely hindered by so many of them not knowing what their rights are, what is actually plausible in terms of drinking water management, and what the GP responsibilities are. For example, several respondents believed it was meaninglessness to even attempt participating as they considered the geographic and climatic conditions to be hopeless. In fact, there are several examples of villages in Bundelkhand who have managed to secure safe drinking water throughout the year with the same, if not worse, physical conditions (Khurana and Mahapatra, 2008). Further, barely anyone knew neither their drinking water rights nor the responsibilities of the PRI, including the *panchayat* members themselves. Although the GoI claims to lead a demand-led RDWS it is obvious that the village residents are not given sufficient information to be able to involve actively and shape their own destiny. The state is failing in its role to strengthen and safeguard human capabilities (Sen, 1999: 53).

Several respondents reported a lack of interest in participating unless the matter directly affected them and their family. "Only people who can benefit go to the *gram sabha*" explained one lady (GA5, 10/12/2011). This was something mentioned by several respondents and it may point to a lack of community feeling within the villages, but more likely it is yet another way for poverty to express itself. Most families are in a situation in which they cannot afford to engage in matters that are not crucial for their lives. However, it may also be an indication that people struggle to see the bigger picture. In small communities as these there are very few matters that do not affect everyone. In other words, the lack of basic awareness and time (which is directly linked to income) are not only important in their own right, but also as hindrances for people to act out their capabilities.

However, emphasis on education should be carried out cautiously. These communities have long been told that it is absolutely essential that they learn to write and read. If they want a good life for themselves and their families they need to be literate as this widens their employment possibilities.

This has been campaigned nationally in India as well as by foreign development agencies. While education and literacy certainly is of paramount importance for the development of these villages, this focus has had the effect of lowering the confidence of the illiterate inhabitants. Very many respondents, especially women, were hesitant to discuss water management due to reasons such as "I am illiterate and I don't know" (B5, 6/12/2011); "only skilled people can attend the *gram sabhas*" (A15, 10/12/2011); and "we consult you to speak to the literate people and not us" (GB1, 7/12/2011). This belief that they are too stupid to participate in water management is a very destructive perception that severely limits their capabilities. It is a false perception which they have been fed by the state and society itself.

5.3.4 Caste

As with many other aspects of life in India, which caste one belongs to determines how much one can participate in local water management. "The *panchayat* does not listen although we [SC people] come with many ideas" (GB6, 11/12/2011) is an example of what was frequently cited during the interviews. Especially in Village C where the percentage of SC was much lower than in the other villages did caste appear as perhaps the biggest unfreedom – lower caste people were simply not given as much space in the *gram sabhas*. It was reported that OBC and General caste not only participate more, but also have better access to clean drinking water as more handpumps are situated near their houses (A14, 10/12/2011). Representation in the GP is also strongly influenced by caste. Although voters are increasingly voting for development agendas, caste is still a dominant factor when people place their votes every five years (GS8, 9/12/2011).

Theoretically, there is a clear link between caste and capability deprivation. Caste acts as an unfreedom in that it hinders some people from having the social opportunity to effectively participate in the creation of their own destiny. However, in Mahoba district it is difficult to confirm whether Banerjee *et al*´s (2004) thesis that water facilities are more likely to be found in communities divided along caste holds true. What is clear in Mahoba district though, is that Bandiera *et al*´s (2005) concept of socio-ethnic heterogeneity leads to a weakness in the community to deal with collective action problems. The ability of the community to cooperate is undoubtedly undermined by caste.

6 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to study the socio-political factors that affect participation in rural drinking water management in Mahoba district. The research also addressed how people participate and how they perceive their capabilities to participate. The main findings are outlined below.

The local formal institutions are experienced as unprofessional and dishonest by the villagers. The GPs are ineffective and this has made many inhabitants indifferent to participation. There is,

understandably so, a strong dissatisfaction with the current democratic system in which the *pradhan* holds supreme power and uses this for the benefit of his/her close supporters, leaving little vocal space for other residents. Corruption in many forms is widespread and the sections of society that hold more power are the biggest beneficiaries.

The main forum for participation is the *gram sabha*, which is attended by only a limited group of people. As most villagers feel they are not being heard in these meetings, they have lost faith in the system. Women are still not culturally fully welcome to the *gram sabhas* and must trust their male family members to convey their message – a method which hardly functions.

The hardship most women undergo disallows them the capability to participate at all. As married strangers in a village they were not borne in, they rely to 100% on their husband and his family for social survival. It is an extremely challenging seat to raise your voice from. Economic inequalities appear as a major hindrance to participation and it takes its form through emigration, lack of time and in the end increased power to the economically well-off. Lack of awareness is indirectly cited by many respondents as a cause to their lack of participation. Indeed, without adequate information it is not possible to make decisions and influence policy. Unfortunately society´s constant focus on education has resulted in the illiterate women losing confidence and giv en up on participation. Similarly, people belonging to lower caste are by tradition not allowed the same space in *gram sabha*.

In the end, there are opportunities as well as risks involved with decentralised participatory water management. More power to the communities also means more responsibility on behalf of the local people. After all, it is between these individuals and groups of people that negotiation needs to occur. These discussions must be open and include everyone in order for water to be distributed fairly. It is essential to recognise the socio-economic structures that are embedded in society. Power structures and inequalities are present in all societies. What differs the successful systems from the unsuccessful ones is that the former usually is aware of the structures and address them transparently and appropriately. This is what is required in Indian policy making too. Village inhabitants must be recognised as active agents, otherwise they easily turn into needy dependent objects. Dialogue between policy makers, the villagers and the GP members is key to guarantee that policies relate to reality on the ground

Furthermore, if participation is to increase, it is important that the GP hold discretionary power and turn more accountable to the people. Awareness of rights and responsibilities is a necessity if the more marginalised groups are to select truly representative GP members and reach more sustainable water services. This is challenging to achieve with the presence of strong tendencies of elite capture. Exclusion of lower castes and women is highly embedded and will not pass overnight, but by

constantly highlighting these inequalities and by incorporating these inequalities in policy making, meaningful participation can hopefully become reality in the near future.

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Appendix 1: Characteristics of Study Villages[14]

Attribute	Village A – Tindoli	Village B – Majalwara	Village C - Mamna
No of villages in *panchayat*	1	2	2
Main village in *panchayat*	N/A	No	Yes
Population size	1850	2078	3035
Religion	Hinduism	Hinduism and Islam	Hinduism
% SC population	20	60	60
Main occupation	Agriculture	Agriculture	Agriculture
Main crops grown	Grams, oil seeds, sugarcane	Grams, wheat, potatoes	Grams, sugarcane, wheat
Distance to Mahoba	15 km	18 km	13
Approach road to village	Concrete road	Concrete road	Mud road
Members in GP	11	13	11
Gender ratio in GP	5 women, 6 men	4 women, 7 men	5 women, 6 men
Caste ratio in GP	4 SC, 7 OBC	7 SC, 1 OBC, 5 General	3 SC, 5 OBC, 3 General
***Gram sabha* attendance**	70-100 ppl/meeting	50-70 ppl/meeting	50-100 ppl/meeting
Approx. % of women attending	10%	15%	10%

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[14] This data is based on the respondents´ statements.

Appendix 2: List of Interviewees

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Interview no[15]	Respondent[16]	Village	Date	Gender	Age	Caste
B1	Uma Srivas	B	6/12/2011	Female	30	SC
B2	Rajavati	B	6/12/2011	Female	32	SC
B3	Lolu Anuragi	B	6/12/2011	Male	68	SC
B4	Hitendra Singh	B	6/12/2011	Male	31	General
B5	Genda Rani	B	6/12/2011	Female	60	SC
B6	Chandraprakarth Rajpoot	B	6/12/2011	Male	30	OBC
B7	Mohammad Naqim	B	7/12/2011	Male	39	SC
B8	Gayantri Devi	B	7/12/2011	Female	56	General
B9	Hitendra Singh (again)	B	7/12/2011	Male	31	General
C10	Gori Dulhen	C	8/12/2011	Female	60	SC
C11	Bati Devi Kushwaba	C	8/12/2011	Female	30	OBC
C12	Chharrani	C	8/12/2011	Female	90	SC
C13	Pyarlal	C	8/12/2011	Male	55	SC
A14	Ramcharan Ahuragi	A	10/12/2011	Male	37	SC
A15	Ramrati Devi	A	10/12/2011	Female	43	OBC
A16	Gyandevi	A	10/12/2011	Female	32	SC
A17	Ramlal	A	10/12/2011	Male	34	SC

KEY RESPONDENT INTERVIEWS

Interview no[17]	Respondent	Position	Village/ Organisation	Date	Gender	Age	Caste
PB1	Prasad Verma Kalaka	Vice-*Pradhan*	B	6/12/11	Male	32	SC
PB2	Muvina Begam	*Panchayat* member	B	7/12/11	Female	35	ST
VB3	Matadin Vishvkrma	VWSC member	B	7/12/11	Male	46	OBC
PC4	Ramsevak Raikwar	*Panchayat* member	C	8/12/11	Male	70	OBC
VC5	Mahuh Samadriya	VWSC President	C	8/12/11	Male	45	General
PA6	Grijraj	*Pradhan*	A	10/12/11	Male	51	OBC
PB7	Brajbhan	*Pradhan*	B	12/12/11	Male	48	OBC
GS8	Dr Khare	Director	Gramonnati Sansthan	09/12/11	Male	55	General
GS9	Ramawatar	Social worker	Gramonnati Sansthan	11/12/11	Male	39	SC

GROUP INTERVIEWS

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[15] A stands for Village A, B stands for Village B and C stands for Village C.

[16] These are not the respondents´ real life names. Fake names have been given here in order to secure their anonymity.

[17] P stands for *Panchayat*, V stands for VWSC, GS stands for Gramonnati Sansthan and the letter that follows stands for the village. For example, PB2 means *Panchayat* member in Village B, interview number 2.

Interview no[18]	Respondent	Village	Date	Gender	Age	Caste
GB1	Bharti Rajpoot	B	7/12/2011	Female	30	OBC
	Bhuri Sekhmansuri			Female	50	ST
	Siya Gulsta			Female	36	OBC
	Ramdevi Rajpoot			Female	35	OBC
GC2	Laltiya	C	8/12/2011	Female	35	SC
	Sanjay			Male	17	SC
	Vdaybhan Varma			Male	20	OBC
GC3	Asaram	C	8/12/2011	Male	45	OBC
	Kausal Kisor Samadhi			Male	40	General
GC4	Ramdayal	C	8/12/2011	Male	22	SC
	Sumitra			Female	35	SC
	Miralal			Male	22	SC
GA5	Gundagrani	A	10/12/2011	Female	60	OBC
	Neeraj Kumar			Male	23	General
	Rampal			Male	45	OBC
GB6	Mankunwar	B	11/12/2011	Female	40	SC
	Savitri			Female	50	SC
	Kattu Rahi			Female	55	SC
GB7 11/12-2	Latora	B	11/12/2011	Male	42	SC
	Ramcharan			Male	41	SC
	Vranda			Male	55	SC

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[18] G stands for group interview and the following letter (A, B or C) indicates in which village the interview was conducted.

Appendix 3: Interview Guides

Guide for individual interviews

Date: Village name: Interview number (today):

A.   Socio-economic information:
  1. Name
  2. Age
  3. Gender
  4. Caste
  5. Main source of income
  6. Education
  7. Married
  8. Economical status
     a) Do you own land?
     b) Type of house you live in?
     c) Do you have a toilet?
  9. Size of household
  10. Number of children

B.   Water situation:
I: How and from where did you take your drinking water today?
I: Do you get sufficient amounts of clean drinking water on a daily basis throughout the year for you and your family?
I: What are the biggest most urgent drinking water issues for you?
I: What are the biggest most urgent drinking water issues in your village?

C.   Water management:
I: What has been done by the panchayat in recent times regarding these issues?
I: What are the responsibilities of the panchayat in terms of drinking water?
I: Management of water in villages is supposed to be participatory. What does participatory mean to you?
I: Are there some people who participate more than others? If so, what is the reason for this?
I: Do you participate in Gram sabhas/meetings with panchayat and/or VWSC?
I: How often do they meet?
I: What is normally discussed in these meetings?
I: Why do some people attend these meetings?
I: What are your drinking water rights?
I: What are your ideas for a better distribution of drinking water?
I: How can you voice these ideas to the panchayat?
I: Who in the village are benefitting the most from the current water management?

Guide for *panchayat* and VWSC members

Date: Village name: Interview number (today):

<u>Socio-economic information:</u>
    11. Name
    12. Age
    13. Gender
    14. Caste
    15. Main source of income
    16. Education
    17. Married
    18. Economical status
        d) Do you own land?
        e) Type of house you live in?
        f) Do you have a toilet?
    19. Size of household
    20. Number of children
    21. Have you received any formal training since being elected?
    22. Do you have any family members who are/have been members of the *panchayat*?

<u>Accountability</u>
I: How many members does the panchayat have?
I: How many panchayat members are women?
I: How many panchayat members belong to the SC and OBC?
I: How many panchayat members are also members of the VWSC?
I: How many Gram sabhas does the panchayat hold annually?
I: How many villagers normally attend the Gram sabhas? If not so many, why is this?
I: What does participatory water management mean to you?
I: How do you ensure participation of the community in the water activities of the panchayat?
I: How do you ensure that people receive water-related benefits from the panchayat?
I: Is the panchayat involved in the selection of beneficiaries for schemes? If so, please describe the procedure.
I: Do you think that the villagers have the right to question the panchayat members on the operation and management of water in the village?

<u>Powers:</u>
I: What water related responsibilities have been given to the panchayat by the government?
I: What are the biggest challenges for the panchayat to carry out these responsibilities?
I: What are the major water problems in your village?
I: Are there any conflicts over water in the village?
I: If there is a VWSC in the village, what are the separate responsibilities between the VWSC and the panchayat?

<u>Operation*:*</u>
I: How does the decision-making process look like?
I: How are water operation and maintenance costs covered?
I: Who is responsible for planning and managing water projects?
I: How are the priorities decided on?
I: How is planning carried out and who are consulted before planning starts?

I: How is funding for water-related activities from district/state/national level functioning?