

**Organizational Designs for Achieving Sustainability:  
The Opportunities, Limitations, and Dangers of State-Local  
Collaboration for Common Property Management**

(Draft)

by

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Introduction

The emerging discourse of "sustainable development"<sup>1</sup> (SD) advances an organizational critique of past State-sponsored efforts to manage common-property resources. It simultaneously promotes new organizational designs through which State resources and expertise can be applied to the challenges of Sustainability. This organizational critique argues that "top-down" planning and administration have proved insufficiently flexible and adaptive to the complex demands<sup>2</sup> of program implementation at the local level. Proposed organizational alternatives focus on devolved<sup>2</sup> organizational networks that could facilitate local participation in program planning and execution and institutionalize meaningful center-local dialogue. Invariably, these new designs involve the expanded participation of local non-government organizations (NGOs) in State-sponsored programs. Working in concert with State planners, local NGOs (it is argued) can effectively structure local participation in State programs, enforce accountability of central planners to local concerns, and greatly reduce the fiscal cost of fostering Sustainability. State-sponsored designs for the SD of Third World resource systems require, in other words, new liaisons between local NGOs and State bureaucracy. Or so the sustainable development literature implies.

On its face, the integration of local NGOs into State-sponsored programs is a plausible strategy for designing Sustainability on the commons in the rural Third World. Theorists and practitioners of rural

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<sup>1</sup>e.g., Brown, et al. 1990; Cernea 1985; Redclift 1987; and WCED 1987.

<sup>2</sup>Processes of decentralization are typically categorized as either "devolution" or "deconcentration." Deconcentration refers to the strengthening of power and authority of local units of a central government, while devolution describes the increased empowerment of local organizations with no direct government affiliation. As Leonard (1982) notes, "These two forms of decentralization are conflicting. Devolution involves the weakening of the local authority of central government; deconcentration generally involves strengthening it through an increase in the discretion of its agents."

development alike point out that collaboration provides an opportunity for organizations at different levels of hierarchy to offset weaknesses and combine strengths, all in the aim of enhancing the effectiveness of, up until now, often disappointing programs of rural resource management. Additionally, case studies abound documenting the ability of local organizations, usually working autonomously, to foster resource use patterns across village society generally accepted as sustainable. For reasons pragmatic, democratic and populist, innovative cooperative structures linking small, indigenous organizations to larger, expert-driven bureaucracies are touted as a preferred vehicle for refocusing and redirecting planned rural development in directions more supportive of the aims of sustainability. And hence they receive increasing attention in national and international policy arenas that intersect with issues of common property management.

Against this backdrop this paper argues that, although local NGOs can assist State planners and enhance the effectiveness of planned State programs, *currently imagined systems of State-NGO partnership will prove counterproductive*. NGO integration into State programs of the type now discussed in policy circles will most likely undercut rather than advance goals of local participation, block rather than intensify national accountability to local problems, and deter rather than encourage management of rural common-property resources consistent with tenets of sustainability. Furthermore, these outcomes will arise despite -- and perhaps even because—of the rosy organizational recipes and predictions implicit in much of the SD literature. Thus, as presently conceived, small is not automatically beautiful; the introduction of local NGOs into State-sponsored programs will produce outcomes quite at odds with policy goals of sustainability.

Drawing from lessons from an ongoing collaborative program in India, this argument is developed briefly in the paragraphs to follow, a more detailed elaboration is presented elsewhere (Maniates 1990). The paper concludes that, although collaboration can fail to measure up to expectations, such disappointing outcomes are not necessarily inevitable: State-NGO partnerships would seem to yield disappointing outcomes only when analysts and policymakers fail to anticipate counterproductive dynamics inherent in such liaisons. The problem thus isn't so much that State-NGO collaboration is an improper strategy. The difficulty rests, rather, in the SD literature's romanticization of the ability of small local organizations to redress the shortcomings of planned rural development. Critical examination of just how collaborations should best be structured for sustainability has been stifled as a result.

These ideas are discussed briefly over three sections. The first section summarizes the forces driving international interest in State-NGO collaboration as a means for fostering sustainability of the commons. A second outlines the dynamics inherent in such systems, dynamics that appear to militate against sustainable development. And a third offers two future scenarios—one encouraging, the other distressing—for State-NGO cooperation in the rural Third World.

## Forces Driving State-NGO Collaboration For Rural Resource Development

The importance of "local participation" in the planning, implementation and evaluation of State-sponsored programs figures prominently in most discussions about common property management in the rural Third World. "Local participation" is, however, a highly ambiguous concept. For State planners, such ambiguity is troublesome, both conceptually and administratively. How, for instance, does a planner facilitate the emergence of "local participation" in State-sponsored reforestation programs (e.g., Cernea 1985)? How does she or he know when "participation" is present in sufficient quantity and appropriate form in programs to develop and disseminate rural energy innovations (e.g., Agarwal 1983)? How are the competing demands of local groups all vying for participation in and hence the fruits of State watershed management programs to be balanced (e.g., Spears and Ayensu 1985)? These are daunting questions for national and international planners who would seek to inject "participation" into often moribund programs of common property management. Though "local participation" may be necessary to the enhanced effectiveness of such programs, its incorporation into the policy equation greatly complicates associated administrative processes.

The SD literature responds to such complexity by advocating the devolution of responsibility for making participation happen to local organizations operating at the village level. Obviously, State planners—no matter how committed to local participation they may be—cannot hope to micro-manage the nuances of participation in programs for common property development. But (the thinking goes), perhaps "managers" working in indigenous local organizations can facilitate such participation. These "LOs," as they're often referred to, are after all spatially, culturally, and economically tied to rural communities. Their prestige and access to resources often hinge on meeting the needs of the constituents—often the rural poor hardest hit by degradation of common property resources—they serve. And, according to much of the literature (e.g., Fowler 1987), LOs enjoy significant comparative advantage over the more centralized and bureaucratic development organizations of the State. Indeed, many suggest that LOs are innately more efficient, effective, and democratic than the rural extension arms of conventional development bureaucracies in the implementation of rural resource programs. The desirability of NGO integration into State programs is thus almost a foregone conclusion.

Those who advocate State-NGO integration on these grounds conclude that NGO collaboration with the State will enhance the ability of such local organizations to pursue participatory programs at the local level. Local NGOs, they suggest, are long on dedication and local contacts but short on resources and expertise, two commodities that could be readily channeled to them by the State through collaborative networks (e.g., Durning 1989; Esman and Uphoff 1984). Hence, combining State bureaucracy with local NGO should lead to more effective resource management programs, and increased sustainability on the commons. As Leonard noted almost a decade ago:

Rural development requires a new type of decentralization. What is needed is not power for either central government or local organizations but complementary strength in both. Central government agencies, intermediate organizations and local groups all possess resources and capabilities that are needed by others. The challenge is to link these institutions together in such a way that their weaknesses are counterbalanced and their comparative advantages are used. By doing so, a contribution can be made to development

which neither local nor national organizations could achieve. The process of rural development depends on combining the resources and skills...scattered among organizations of different types and sizes (Leonard 1982:193).

During the 1980s, other analysts (see Table 1) joined Leonard in calling for new organizational approaches to the tasks of rural resource development and common property management. (Indeed, many, including Fowler (1987) have characterized the 1980s as the "development decade of organizational redesign.") Their exhortations laid the intellectual foundation upon which many calls for the State-NGO collaboration now rest. It would be a mistake, however, to attribute current policy interest in collaborative structures to these analysts alone. Several other "objective" (i.e., grounded in material reality) forces also have driven policymakers to entertain State-NGO as a the organizational strategy for applying State resources and expertise to the challenges of sustainability on the commons.

One such force is the political embarrassment that has arisen from the persistent disappointment of expert-organized, "top-down" organizational structures to deliver, over the past fifteen years or so, on the promises of sustainable rural resource development (Barnett 1982, Agarwal 1986). These disappointments have prompted inquiry into new, often "participatory" organizational forms for rural development; State-NGO collaboration is one such form.

A second factor has been the paucity of resources available for "sustainable" common-property resource management. Since 1983, international financial flows have favored the rich world over the poor; in 1990, the net transfer of global resources from the poor to the rich will exceed \$55 billion. Under increasing financial pressure, Third World governments seek to stretch scarce programmatic resources, and State-NGO collaboration (where "collaboration" implies a sharing of program costs between the State and local organizations) is one such opportunity to do so. In many ways, the new "volunteerism" characterizing the United State's administrations of Reagan and Bush, or of Thatcher's control in the United Kingdom, represent more an effort by the State to shirk previously assumed responsibilities than any abrupt conversion to the virtues of local initiative and organization. Similar thinking may prevail within many Third World governments.

A third force springs from the growing perception that an "environmental crisis" of sorts is afoot at local, regional, national, and international scales, and that this crisis is somehow rooted in both policy and economic structures insufficiently sensitive to the local impacts of resource use, the local costs of industrial development, and local opportunities and constraints for moving towards more environmentally sustainable practices (WCED 1987). Under this view, an infusion of local perspectives-sometimes in the form of local organizations collaborating with the State-becomes a critical part of any solution. And hence collaboration becomes a necessity.

A fourth, small, but emerging element fostering State-NGO collaboration is a growing uneasiness among many international lenders over the ability of Third World governments to pursue effective rural resource programs. Some lenders now request—and may soon insist upon—greater local NGO participation in government-directed programs of rural resource development (Vukasin 1987). This trend evidently flows from increasing lender concern that a lack of local participation and meaningful national-local dialogue in many

**TABLE 1**  
**ARGUMENTS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE:**  
**A SAMPLING OF OVERLAPPING VIEWS FROM THE EARLY 1980s**

**A Learning Process Approach:**

David Korten (1980): The dominant "blueprinting" approach to planning and executing rural development projects is patently ineffective. Must supplant it with a "learning process" approach better suited to the uncertainty and turbulence of task environments. A catalyst for the 1980s; widely cited, with several short case studies.

**A Strategic Approach:**

Johnston and Clark (1982): The rural poor have been neglected, even harmed, by the "development effort." Fault lies in failure to strategically consider and provide new organizational capabilities made necessary by emerging programs of consumption and production. "Policy analysis perspective" dictates a redesign of rural development efforts with less emphasis on technocratic concerns and more attention to organizational aspects. Oft-cited.

**People-Centered Development:**

World Bank (1983): Moving from large, capital intensive infrastructure projects to smaller, locally specific and labor intensive poverty eradication and resource development opportunities requires new organizations that can knowledgeable and flexibly foster such "people centered development." New kinds of bureaucracies working with diverse intermediary and local organizations are necessary. Suggests a changing perspective on organizational issues by the Bank.

**Local Organizations:**

Milton Esman and Norman Uphoff (1984): Local organizations throughout the Third World function as effective and creative intermediaries in planned rural development. Third World governments and international aid agencies must realign their agendas and structures to foster the proliferation and development activities of these LOs. Different LOs, operating in varying networks, offer different capabilities. An empirical study rooted in exhaustive overview of relevant literatures.

**' Decentralization and Linkages:**

David Leonard (1982): Effective rural development is an exercise in assembling diverse organizations into a working partnership, bound together by incentive structures and coordinating mechanisms. Focus on changing the main, monolithic organizations for development is necessary, but innovative interorganizational linkages are also key. Excellent collection of essays; commissioned by USAID.

**A New Professionalism:**

Robert Chambers (1983): A call to the practitioners of rural development—bureaucrats and academics alike—to examine structures in their organizations and organizational culture that prohibits them from putting "the last first." Argues for changes in distribution of status and rewards organizations for rural development, and in complementary structures. An insightful view from the field.

**Bureaucratic Reorientation:**

Initially sounded by David Korten and Norman Uphoff (1981), later expanded by David Korten and Felipe Alfonso (1983): Large development bureaucracies must reorient themselves towards meeting the needs of the poor. Large monoliths must adopt more flexible administrative arrangements, foster organizational culture that encourages risk-taking, increasing boundary spanning capabilities, and work more closely with intermediate and local organizations. Must look to foster local initiative and organization. A major theme, one echoed throughout the debate.

**Action Research:**

Deepak Bajracharya (1984): Direct interactions are needed between local people and "outsiders"—technology designers and suppliers, government support personnel, donor consultants, agencies—to bring forth rural development processes that meet local needs. Policy intervention must thus be based on research rooted in local communities that fosters local expression of needs. Demands considerable outreach, new focus on part of all development organizations.

Third World States will thwart even the most well-intentioned rural resource programs.

A final force driving the policy system towards State-NGO collaborations is the competing normative stances of Third World policymakers. In the view of some (e.g., Montgomery 1988), Third World administrators of rural resource programs embrace a kind of "bureaucratic populism;" they like the idea of greater local participation in rural development ventures and they seek, through State-NGO collaboration, to foster it. Other analysts (e.g., Dey 1985) argue that these same administrators are in fact threatened by local peoples' movements and employ collaboration as a mechanism of cooptation and control. Research in India upon which much this paper is based (alluded to below) strongly supports the former speculation over the latter. But both forces may be at work.

In some combination not altogether clear, these forces drive accelerating interest among national and international policymakers in State-NGO collaborations. In the face of these developments, the most important question is also the most obvious: Will collaboration measure up to expectations? As presently conceived, in other words, will NGO integration into State-sponsored programs of sustainable rural resource development enhance the effectiveness of such programs? Consideration of this question requires review of how collaboration is envisioned and designed, and of the interorganizational dynamics that emerge from State-NGO partnerships..

### The Design and Dynamics of Collaboration

Though State-NGO collaboration is a much talked about organizational strategy for pursuing programs to foster sustainability, only a handful of such collaborations are formally underway in the Third World. Probably the most extensive example is an effort by the Government of India, initiated in 1983, to disseminate "improved cookstoves" to hundreds of thousands of rural users.<sup>3</sup> These stoves are being promoted by the national government in the hope of reducing the pressures on scarce biomass resources in the countryside while limiting the chronic exposure of women and children to health-threatening cooksmoke. The organizational mechanism of dissemination is distinctly collaborative: Stung by past disappointments of "top-down" rural energy programs, anxious to reduce the cost of government programs aimed at increasing the efficiency of biomass energy use in the countryside, and persuaded in part by a voluminous literature—much of it indigenous—extolling the virtues of "local participation," Indian planners have integrated local NGOs into the design, implementation, and evaluation of the cookstove program. In this arrangement, national administrators make the rules. They set broad policy goals and design procedures for the transfer of resources from the State to local organizations. State-level planners coordinate the transfer of information and resources to local organizations. And local NGOs implement the program by modifying it to local conditions and providing a "social space" for the participation of rural women (the intended beneficiaries of the program) in the design, implementation and evaluation of the program.

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<sup>3</sup>Improved cookstoves are versions of traditional hearths—usually constructed of locally available mud, straw and dung—of improved design. They are actively promoted throughout the Third World as a partial solution to fuelwood shortages and associated environmental degradation, and to smoke-induced respiratory disease. Helpful reviews of the history of improved cookstoves and the varied rationales for their dissemination are found in Evans (1986), Foley and Moss (1985), Skutsch (1986), and Smith (1987).

The architecture of this program rests on several assumptions reflective of broader organizational beliefs prevailing in much of the SD literature. Indian planners, quite obviously, assumed that the administrative costs of making collaboration work would be outweighed by enhanced program effectiveness such collaboration would bring. They, by and large, expected that NGO entry into systems of collaboration would be largely self-selecting: Those NGOs "committed" and "dedicated" to joint goals of reducing pressures on biomass resource systems and fostering local participation in program implementation would be drawn to the program; those that were not would shy away. And, perhaps most important, they expected that local NGOs that successfully fostered sustainable resource development when working autonomously would enjoy similar, even greater success when integrated into a system of interorganizational cooperation and resource transfer. The architects of the cookstove program, in other words, envisioned a whole population of local NGOs sufficiently small to interact flexibly and creatively with local village communities but sufficiently large to cope with the extra organizational demands such collaboration would bring. Collaboration, it was assumed, would only enhance the ability of these local organizations to generate positive change in resource-management patterns at the local level.

Though readily apparent in the design and execution of the cookstove program, these expectations are not particular to Indian energy planners in New Delhi. Look hard and you the same assumptions written in or between the lines in much of the advocacy for new forms of planning and implementation for sustainable development in the Third World. Local NGOs that proved their mettle working autonomously will survive and thrive in collaborative arrangements. Village organizations can serve as a bridge between the rural poor and State planners: such LOs are sufficiently small to "speak the language" of rural resource users but sufficiently large to interact with State planners on a regular basis. Open the door to collaboration and dedicated, enthused NGOs capable of fostering a necessary degree of local participation will rush in. Explicitly or implicitly, these organizational assumptions inform much of the strategizing over how to implement sustainability on the commons.

Do these assumptions measure up to reality, or do they fail program planners once operationalized? A 1987 review of the Indian cookstove program as implemented in Gujarat state<sup>4</sup> suggests a strong tendency towards the latter outcome. Analysis<sup>5</sup> of the outcomes of collaboration, drawn from interviews with national and state administrators, archival work, and close observation of eight NGOs collaborating with the State (see Table 2) indicate that a system of collaboration built on prevailing assumptions about NGO capabilities and behavior yields a pattern of interorganizational behavior at odds with the means and ends of sustainable rural resource development. Five dynamics drove this overall pattern in Gujarat state:

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<sup>4</sup> Gujarat played host to the case study upon which this paper rests for several reasons. The state is known to have perhaps the most capable, active and diverse collection of local NGOs in all of India. It is thought to have one of the best trained and most professional state energy agencies. Moreover, the state government's sensitivity to issues of rural resource management and local participation is among the highest in the country. Gujarat's social and political setting is thus biased in favor of successful State-NGO collaboration. If collaboration can produce effective policy outcomes, it will probably do so in Gujarat. And if problems emerge in this state, they will likely emerge with similar or stronger force in other settings.

<sup>5</sup> Analytic procedures are described in detail in Maniates 1990.

TABLE 2  
THE STUDY SAMPLE OF EIGHT NGOS: A SUMMARY

NGO #	What is the Org?	Who is the Org?	Rationale for Joining NPIC	Technical Abilities	Integrated Programs, W/Strong Focus on Women and Resources?	Knowledge of Local Conditions	Unifying Ideology
1.	Small, Gandhian based organization with a strong focus on rural farming and energy technologies. Organized in 1959. Annual budget about Rs. 90,000. Funds derived from diverse sources: sales of ag. tools, cookstoves, printing business, some government projects.	The family that began the organization plus several employees that manufacture tools, operate the printing press, and train local peasants in printing, tool design & production, & other job skills. All live on the grounds of the organization.	Opportunity to disseminate and test improved cookstove of its own design, and to fund cookstove construction courses for village women in need of job skill and employment.	Very well-developed. The organization, for example, conducts technical training workshops for the government and contributes to technical debates over form and focus of India's rural technology programs.	Yes: Strong persistent emphasis on skills training for rural women, alternative agriculture, and development of rural self-help technologies. Long-standing commitment to agriculture, energy, and rural poor. Regional source of expertise on rural energy use and technologies; presently assists government in maintenance of biogas plants and in evaluation of designs for improved cookstoves.	Well Developed. The organization confines its activities to a limited area and has been operating in the region for decades.	Radically populist: Continued fostering of local economies and self-reliance; rejection of urban led, industrial driven pattern of growth
2.	Broadly focused integrated rural development group that began in the late 1970s with an Rs. 4 million grant for textile corp. Corp. no longer fund the organization, but it still provides office space. Cumulative budget 1985-88 = Rs. 900,000 from a diversity of sources.	1 executive, 1 coordinator, 5 field staff, several office staff and a few student interns.	A variety of interlocking reasons. Program funds was one; curtailed support from industry has forced the organization to seek funds elsewhere. An opportunity to become involved in new villages was another; the org. has been working in a few villages for many years and was seeking to expand its reach. Possibility of follow-up government funding also key.	Moderate: Some past experience with rural technologies, and with job and skills training programs for rural women. No previous experience, however, with rural energy technology program.	Only for a few communities. In most villages targeted for new chulhas, complementary programs were absent as was any in-depth investigation or understanding of local community. In many cases, NPIC was first step in initiating integrated, comprehensive rural resource and employment programs in the community. Improved chulhas disseminated largely by networks of local school-boys. Women were not closely involved, but social distance between boys and women was small.	Very low. Develops a few contacts in the community, usually through the local school system. Works through these contacts—typically teachers—to organize a massive dissemination effort.	A strong "green" focus: Environmental health and enhancement of critical rural self-help capabilities primary focus. Strong suspicion of imported resource "solutions" from the West; advocates locally developed appropriate technologies within the context of vigorous rural education and ecological programs. Participation in chulha program provides a springboard for later pursuit of these issues in variety of villages.

TABLE 2 (continued)

NGO #	What is the Org?	Who is the Org?	rationale for Joining NPIC	Technical Abilities	Integrated Programs, W/Strong Focus on Women and Resources?	Knowledge of Local Conditions	Unifying Ideology
3.	<p>A Cooperative Union operating at the district level since 1948. Assists local cooperatives and implements state cooperative programs. Most programs advance education of local youth or impart job skills to rural women. 1987 budget of Rs. 870,000 derived from member dues earnings from government projects.</p>	<p>Executive director and large teaching and outreach staff.</p>	<p>NPIC was initially seen as another program for youth education &amp; skills development: In 1985, 73 youth were trained and paid for constructing improved cookstoves. Later, the program assumed the role of the major source of funds for the Coop. The group of adolescent masons was replaced by a Coop employee who promoted rapid construction of 1000s of stoves.</p>	<p>Very limited. The primary builder of the cookstoves admitted to minimal training and limited knowledge of the variety of appropriate cookstove designs.</p>	<p>Coop commanded an extensive network of village contacts and had pursued several resource and women-oriented programs in the past. NPIC was first attempt to disseminate rural energy techs for and by women. In part because existing network of contacts consisted largely of male elites in villages, and in part because coop chose to deploy large numbers of cookstoves over short period, few if any poor women were significantly involved in the program.</p>	<p>Surprisingly poor. Coop leaders were too distant from the villages to become aware of the problems and nuances of chulha construction, and the primary mason was seemingly under pressure to build large numbers of cookstoves. Sensitivity to local preferences and the need for user participation in construction thus faltered. Strong resistance to providing any follow up educational programs.</p>	<p>Mildly reformist. Main focus on supporting supplemental economic activity for village "middle-class." Seeks opportunities to broker government programs for these groups.</p>
4.	<p>An integrated health care center focusing on the health and nutritional needs of rural women and children. Organized in 1980, the center serves about 300 villages in a 50 km. radius. Annual budget of Rs. 6,970,000 is met from domestic and international sources.</p>	<p>1 executive director, some 7 program heads, several assistants and a network of hundreds of village health workers residing in villages and working with the health center.</p>	<p>Improved chulha program filled a void in the center's programs: "Appropriate technology" was long seen as an integral part of health programs but never actively pursued. Propagation of smokeless cookstoves permitted organization to fulfill obligation to funders of "appropriate technology."</p>	<p>Evolving. Early attempts to diffuse cookstoves filled with problems. After evaluation and recruitment of technical personnel, technical skills have improved.</p>	<p>Yes, almost by definition. Health program are integrated: nutrition programs are tied to immunization efforts, family planning campaigns and income-generation activities. Focus remains on rural women, especially the poorest. Concern that woodsmoke poses a significant health risk to women prompts strong interest in chulhas that might curtail exposure smoke. Past experimentation with smokeless chulhas (prior to NPIC) has enhanced technical sophistication of the organization.</p>	<p>Well developed. Network of village health workers institutionalizes communication between the center and outlying villages. Half of 300 villages in network have been in system for years. Village health workers make weekly reports, meet monthly.</p>	<p>Strong humanist/feminist: The organization views much economic development as deepening the poverty of rural women and children. Mission is to counteract this trend of impoverishment and, by showing viability of alternative health approaches, prompt government to be more responsive to the poor.</p>

TABLE 2 (continued)

NGO #	What is the Org?	Who is the Org?	Rationale for Joining NPIC	Technical Abilities	Integrated Programs. W/Strong Focus on Women and Resources?	Knowledge of Local Conditions	Unifying Ideology
5.	Field station directed by the Indian Councilor Medical Research. Organized in 1983, the station promotes an integrated, non-pesticide approach to mosquito & malaria control among 350,000 villagers. '86 budget of Rs. 3 million derived from gov. funds w/significant international support.	One director, several research staff, and dozens of informants recruited from villages that communicate weekly to the center.	Needed to maintain organizational presence in villages during periods of reduced incidence of malaria and low mosquito population. Organization feared that at times of low disease incidence, villagers would neglect abatement procedures, which would later then lead to dramatic increase of disease. NPIC offered way for organization to work in village & monitor programs.	Low. NPIC was the first venture into the field of rural energy technology. The technical complexity of the improved chulhas and the degree of oversight and maintenance required came as a surprise. Organization may reduce its future participation in NPIC as a result.	Yes, strongly so. This organization pursues malaria control via behavioral change on the part of villagers leading to ongoing destruction of larvae habitat. Such education and oversight is supplemented by house-to-house monitoring for evidence of disease. Org. pursues a variety of village works project in order to maintain presence during times of limited disease outbreak. Strong history of working closely with women in elimination of mosquito habitat. Chulha program serves as organizational vehicle for strengthening ties to rural poor while supplementing existing health care focus,	High, for these same reasons.	Pragmatically Innovative: Malaria control programs in India are beginning to falter as mosquito vectors and malarial parasite develop resistance to pesticides and drugs respectively. Organization believes that new approaches are necessary. Pragmatic focus, however, may prompt organization to curtail its participation in NPIC if chulha construction continues to drain inordinate resources away from core programs.
6.	Rural development project of a large petro-chemical company. Focus rests on cluster of villages near company headquarters. Company pays salaries of rural development workers; program budget (1987-88 budget = Rs. 30,000) met by diverse funders.	2 coordinators who are on leave from formal executive positions in the company, and 2 field staff working in the villages.	Variety of motivations. Prior work with Gujarat Energy Development Agency led somewhat naturally to involvement in chulha program. Need for continued funding from GEDA played a role. Emerging organizational interest in rural energy issues also key.	Credible. Coordinators were not experienced in chulha construction but prior work with facilitating the construction of pottery kilns generated a healthy appreciation for complexities involved.	No previously established focus on women's resource issues. Some prior concern with issues of rural energy use emerged as part of ongoing attempts to establish village-scale poverty kilns to revitalize local economies. Growing interest in rural energy issues and acknowledged lack of expertise prompted strong interest in improved chulha program.	High. The organization limited its activities to just a few villages, and strongly resisted overtures by GEDA to expand NPIC to outlying villages with which it was unfamiliar.	Primary focus on public service: Fulfills long-standing corporate commitment to rural development. Also provides company executives with useful field experience in project organization and village communication and planning.

TABLE 2 (concluded)

NGO #	What is the Org?	Who is the Org?	Rationale for Joining NPIC	Technical Abilities	Integrated Programs. W/Strong Focus on Women and Resources?	Knowledge of Local Conditions	Unifying Ideology
7.	<p>Village development office of a large agricultural chemical company. Initiated in 1976, until recently the office focused on two "adopted" villages known to the company's founders. 1987 budget of about Rs. 80,000 (plus salaries of company employees) met through project funds from GEDA and company assets.</p>	<p>8 members who work part-time on rural development projects. Overseen by org. executive in charge of rural development programs.</p>	<p>The founding family of the company has a long-standing interest in deforestation and revegetation. While working in villages in 1982 (well before advent of NPIC), company executives became aware of improved cookstoves and began experimenting with different designs. NPIC provided an opportunity to formalize and extend this commitment.</p>	<p>Significant. Developed own chulha and manufactured and distributed dozens of construction molds to facilitate widespread dissemination.</p>	<p>Organization has for several years pursued intensive and comprehensive rural resource programs in a few target villages, with great success. Chulha dissemination activities quickly expanded beyond these Tew villages. Present approach emphasizes extensive propagation of cookstoves throughout 100s of communities relatively unknown to the organization. During the first year of dissemination, heavy emphasis apparently placed on training rural women in construction and maintenance of cookstoves. In later years of program implementation the volume of cookstoves to be constructed expanded and villages more distant from the organization were targeted. Resulting stresses on administrative resources led to a de-emphasis on the difficult task of identifying rural women and poor and insuring their ongoing participation and control.</p>	<p>Alarming poor, for reasons tied to recent scaling-up of the program. Men move from village to village building improved chulhas. Pronounced emphasis on construction but few resources dedicated to user education and follow-up.</p>	<p>Deeply spiritual. Company founder holds deep religious convictions on the importance of public service. This spirit is deeply inculcated in the organization and drives all rural development activities. Indeed, such commitment to service combined with perception that deforestation is a major issue may be dominant force behind recent scale up of organizational commitment to NPIC.</p>
8.	<p>A service and social club for urban adolescents struggling w/ education and career choices. Started in 1976 by community members concerned about "disaffected youth" in town, the organization now meets and works in rooms donated by local school.</p>	<p>An informal, changing group of teachers and white-collar professionals who meet regularly, sometimes with students, to plan activities and focus of organization.</p>	<p>Largely to provide an opportunity for village service work to adolescents in the group. Also brings in much-needed revenue opens the door to other remunerative collaborations with GEDA.</p>	<p>None. Completely new at this. Obtained some training in cookstove construction from a neighboring NGO also working on NPIC under GEDA.</p>	<p>No past experience with rural resource programs of any kind. No ongoing programs in womens' issues or resource management that might complement NPIC. Prior to involvement with chulha program the organization organized urban service projects e.g. blood drives, support of a school for the deaf, etc. Involvement in NPIC comes not from special interest or expertise in womens' issues but rather from desire to develop organizational expertise and credibility in rural energy development.</p>	<p>Apparently very poor. The organization would select villages within which chulhas were to be constructed largely on the basis of an invitation by someone in the village or, more commonly, if someone in the organization had a contact in the village. A work party would then be organized, and members would take a weekend off to build chulhas.</p>	<p>The importance of public service, "youth development," and organizational survival all dominate. NPIC was thus highly attractive in that it provided constructive outlets for young men and women interested in pursuing careers in public service and rural development.</p>

1. Across the sample of NGOs, it became evident that technical competence and curiosity on the part of the NGOs could lead to tension, even conflict, between the NGO and the state coordinating agency. Such tension—driven by differing perceptions of the local-level technical requirements of making cookstoves work in the field—made a collaborative working relationship between the State and technically adept NGOs difficult to sustain. The result was a decline in interest of such NGOs in collaboration with the State, an outcome at odds with that hoped for by the India architects of the cookstove program.

2. A similar dynamic emerged with local organizations that were pursuing a variety of programs in village communities prior to entry into partnership with the State. Such NGOs were sought out by administrators of the program, who expected that local organizations with existing and popular programs underway in villages would be especially effective in integrating improved cookstoves into village life. What became apparent instead, however, was that NGOs with other programs in place found the opportunity costs of collaboration to be too high. Collaboration with the State demanded some organizational resources on the part of the NGO; forms had to be filed, meetings attended, expenditures of resources documented, compromises made. Frequently, the organizational price of meeting these demands was perceived to be overly oppressive. NGOs with active programs in other areas thus came to shun collaboration; they enjoyed access to alternative productive programs for their organizational resources, outlets that lacked the costs associated with participation in collaborative ventures.

3. Conversely, other NGOs with little technical expertise, few if any sustained programs in village communities, and often little or no experience with rural development programs were attracted to collaborative opportunities. For these "second-string" organizations, collaboration offered a chance to develop skills, develop access to new sources of resources, and gain entry into village communities. The opportunity costs of shouldering the burdens of collaboration were low, and such organizations—because of their inexperience, lack of resources and search for meaningful projects—gained much from collaboration. These NGOs were poorly equipped to foster activities in village communities conducive to the dissemination of cookstoves, but they were able and willing to devote sizable time and resources to the task of maintaining good relations with the State.

4. A pattern of State behavior vis-a-vis local NGOs, one that influenced dissemination of cookstoves at the village level, thus emerged. Poorly qualified NGOs were welcome into the program if they appeared enthusiastic, willing to learn, and eager to attend to the state agency's need for documentation, reporting, attendance at meetings, and the like. The state's willingness to embrace these organizations, far from irresponsible, was organizationally rational. The state, after all, was forced by this process of devolution to depend upon a variety of unfamiliar organizations. Faced with uncertainty and vulnerability, the state agency—like most organizations in its situation—opted to reduce both in the short-run by favoring NGOs that seemed willing and able to meet the administrative demands of partnership.

5. Simultaneously, when local NGOs competently disseminated cookstoves, the state often pressured them to expand their programs. This too was organizationally rational for the state (the agency sought to expand the role of NGOs it knew to be successful and, in doing so, reduce its own vulnerability to NGO incompetence). But this action often served to push many NGOs to spread beyond their familiar villages and overextend themselves, producing in the end poor program performance.

As Figure 1 shows, these dynamics emerge from a convergence of "organizational rationalities" set in motion by a system of collaboration tying local organizations to State bureaucracies. Local NGOs with technical skills or existing village programs appear to shun collaboration for reasons consistent with their quest for organizational survival. In similar fashion, NGOs with less developed technical skills and little or no experience with rural resource systems seek collaboration for equally rational reasons. State planners, seeking to reduce their uncertainty and their vulnerability to the actions of local organizations over which they have little control, are inclined to favor those NGOs that most enthusiastically attend to the needs of the State.

The general outcome of this convergence is the marginalization of NGOs capable of meeting the technical or participatory requirements of the sustainable use of the commons. The specific outcome for Gujarat state in 1987 was a generally low level of women's participation in the program, little if any local control over cookstove designs and the pace of dissemination, and inconsistent attention to the technical soundness of cookstoves. The overall effectiveness of State efforts to disseminate improved cookstoves appeared no better than that attained by conventional, "top-down" approaches; in some cases, it was much worse. Consequently, State-NGO collaboration, at least in the Gujarati case, proved unable to measure up to advance billing.

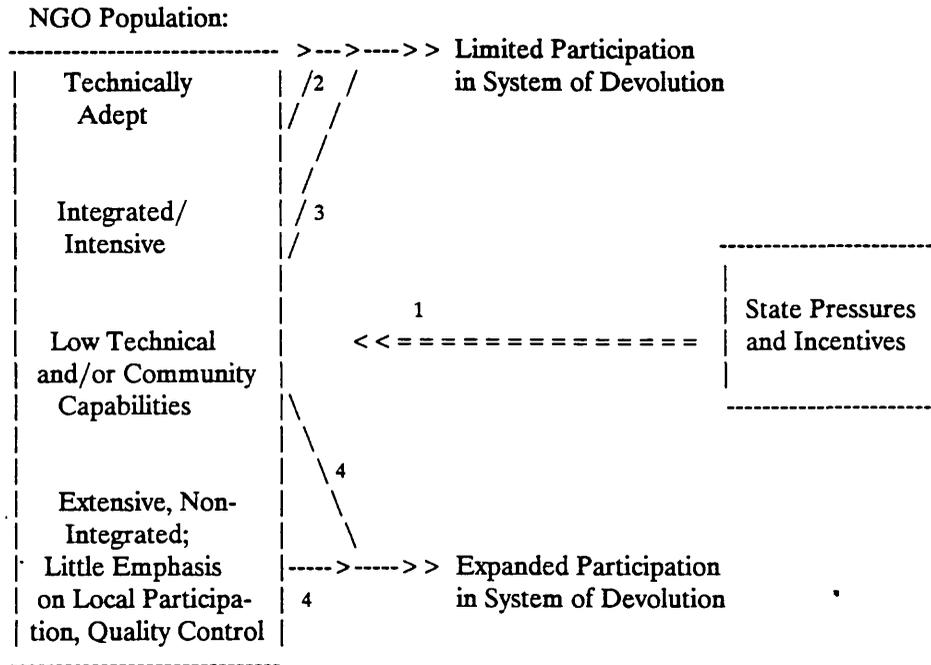
### Implications and Future Scenarios

The Indian experience is not necessarily representative of all State efforts—past, present, and future—to seek collaboration with local NGOs in the hope of fostering sustainable rural resource use. It does suggest, however, that when systems of collaboration are designed and pursued on the basis of core assumptions that ignore the complicating effects of competing organizational rationalities within processes of devolution, awkward surprise can emerge. In the Indian case, such surprise took the form of program disappointment in the face of extensive NGO involvement. Program architects and administrators, firm in their assumption that NGO participation would yield heightened effectiveness, were ill-equipped—conceptually or logistically—to cope with these outcomes. Their response, in large part, was to blame individual NGOs for disappointing outcomes rather than look to more systemic dynamics; and to rapidly implement a monitoring and enforcement program that, though welcome, would have been necessarily less draconian if greater care were taken to make the collaborative process more accommodating to competent and diligent local NGOs.

The broader organizational lessons of this experience are obvious for those struggling with new approaches for applying State resources and expertise to the challenges of sustainable resource use in the rural Third World. In this vein, two points warrant special attention. The first is that the dynamics and outcomes just described emerged in Gujarat *despite* the conscientious and diligent efforts of national and state planners, and of local NGOs. Careless or mischievous implementation was not the source of program disappointment. Instead, the root cause was the fact that all organizational actors proceeded on the organizational assumption of "small is beautiful," and from the view that State-NGO collaboration, once initiated, would require little if any monitoring or retooling. As a consequence of this stance—one clearly evident in much of the SD literature—devolution was largely "unmanaged" once set in motion. Converging organizational rationalities asserted themselves, surprise arose, and outcomes failed to please.

FIGURE 1

EMERGING PATTERNS OF STATE-NGO COLLABORATION: A SUMMARY



<sup>1</sup> **State Response to Uncertainty and Pressures To Deploy.** The state energy agency, ultimately responsible for NPIC implementation, has little direct control over local NGOs that implement NPIC. In the face of this institutionalized vulnerability to actions of NGOs, the state responds the best it can: It seeks to work with organizations that it knows or that operate in familiar (e.g. formal and technocratic) ways, it demands documentation from NGOs on the disbursement of funds and construction of cookstoves, and (in part due to pressure from the center to build cookstoves) it urges "proven" NGOs that have successfully disseminated cook-in a limited area to "scale up" dissemination activities and shift from an intensive to an extensive mode.

<sup>2</sup> **Technical Competency and Interorganizational Tension.** Technically competent NGOs typically are quite effective in their dissemination of cookstoves. In general, their engineering knowledge and curiosity about the technology's fate in the field leads to organizational behaviors of failure embracement, tight feedback with local users, and gradual program improvements, all prompting gradual increases in program effectiveness. These conditions also produce, however, a general reluctance to scale up quickly on the basis of past success. Such reluctance can foster tension with the state agency that seeks expansion of successful programs. Thus, differing perceptions by state planners and local NGOs as to the appropriate scale and pace of construction leads to interorganizational conflict and the gradual exclusion of technically proficient NGOs from collaborations with the State.

<sup>3</sup> **Marginalization of Intensive, Integrated NGOs.** NGOs with history of integrated programs in specific villages were specifically targeted to implement NPIC, on assumption that improved chulhas might be "piggy backed" onto other programs. In fact, NGOs with other active programs frequently find the opportunity costs of collaboration to be too high. Organizational proximity to and dependence on local communities means that the NGO is compelled to engage in extensive user education, participation facilitation, and follow-up activities; this, combined with the administrative and reporting requirements of collaboration, draws resources away from other programs to which the NGO is more dedicated and familiar. Thus, the high opportunity costs of participation combined with often limited geographic influence of these NGOs, suggest their limited participation in devolved programs of rural resource development.

<sup>4</sup> **The Rise of "Second String" Organizations.** As NGOs with technical capabilities and integrated, intensive programs prove to be "self-limiting," the state becomes more responsive to the overtures of other organizations that can (i) meet reporting and documentation requirements, (ii) project an organizational culture sufficiently formalized and accountable to gain the state's confidence, and (iii) build cookstoves. In Gujarat this prompts the involvement of several organizations with little technical expertise, few if any sustained programs in neighboring villages, and little experience in working with the rural poor, but which are capable nonetheless of meeting the basic requirements of collaboration, i.e. reporting to the state and documenting activities. A sizable niche consequently emerges in the program for poorly qualified or opportunistic NGOs.

The second point is that disappointing outcomes from collaboration are not inevitable. Two organizations in the sample of **eight--NGOs #2 and #4** in Table 2--succeeded, despite the convergence of organizational rationalities described earlier, to satisfy both the needs of the State and the local level requirements of program implementation in a startling and effective fashion. A detailed description of the processes and organizational structures behind this outcome is beyond the scope of this paper. Briefly, these organizations did not fit the archetypical mold of the small, diligent, locally based NGO so romanticized in much of the literature. Instead, each was organizationally complex, even schizophrenic: both had evolved elaborate structures for dividing tasks oriented to the needs of rural communities from tasks necessary to satisfy external organizations (i.e., the State) with which the NGO interacted. If organizations of these types were fostered in Third World settings, State-NGO collaboration could yield effective outcomes. Alas, however, focused inquiry into the structures and dynamics of individual local organizations seems curiously absent from the literature. Small remains beautiful (that is, small NGOs are seen as uniformly effective and capable); the success of collaborative ventures is cast as separate and independent from the kinds of local NGOs that might be involved.

Two scenarios thus present themselves. The first envisions a continued policy thrust towards unmanaged systems of collaboration. This thrust would ignore the interorganizational dynamics set in motion by collaboration, the implications of these dynamics for the policy ends of sustainability, and the opportunities for fostering NGO capabilities that might negate the marginalization of competency previously described. The outcome would be disappointing; after so much policy hype, the "new land of rural development" David Leonard alludes to above would be cast aside as another failed experiment. Valuable time would be lost, important resource systems would be degraded even further, and efforts to democratize the development process would be stifled. In the whimsical world of development planning, where one decade's wonder approach is another decade's failed conventional wisdom, the idea of NGO participation in State-dominated programs could be relegated to obscurity. The baby could be thrown out with the bathwater.

A second scenario paints a different picture. It imagines heightened and immediate inquiry into the organizational dynamics of collaboration by those who think about the health of common property resources in the rural Third World and envision a productive role for State power and expertise. It rests on a gradual rejection among proponents of sustainable development of the simplistic "small is beautiful" philosophy now guiding organizational reforms. It sees instead the rise of a more sophisticated analysis of local organizational forms that would indeed prove small enough to interact with village communities yet large enough to cope with the demands of collaboration with the State. It supposes that academics and policymakers could work together to better anticipate the awkward surprises of collaboration before they emerge. And it envisions efforts to build collaborative structures more accommodating to capable and dedicated NGOs working in the rural Third World.

The first scenario is likely to pass; the second is much more desirable. In this juxtaposition of possible futures, the opportunities, limitations, and dangers of State-Local collaboration for common property management become clear. The opportunities are real: "Top-down" planning devoid of local sensitivity is not an effective organizational vehicle for fostering sustainability of the rural commons. NGO involvement in State programs may be necessary, it certainly is desirable. The limitations of such involvement are equally apparent, however. Collaboration meekly based on assumptions about the innate goodness of some mythically

homogenous population of local NGOs will fail to measure up to expectations. The dangers are less obvious, but real: It could be that our failure to rethink the premises for collaboration and our views of local NGOs could produce program disappointment and a counterproductive backlash against local participation in the affairs of the State. Students of common property resources have a significant role to play in minimizing this danger and ushering in new organizational forms for sustainable development.

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