EMPOWERMENT AND ITS EVALUATION: A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS AND APPLICATION

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1.   INTRODUCTION

Discussing ''Empowerment and its Evaluation'' as I was invited to do by INTRAC, put me before a difficult dilemma: emphasise the 'technical' aspects, or provide a more comprehensive framework? In case I did the latter, I would have to accept clear limitations because another speaker in this workshop addresses the concept of empowerment specifically. So I would not have to review different theories of empowerment in a narrow sense, and help create clarity in what is and still remains a rather confused field of theories. Nonetheless, obviously I could not dispense completely with a reflection on conceptual framework. The evaluation of empowerment presumably returns to its objectives, that is what evaluation is all about. And the definition of those objectives, both in a general and more operational sense, is connected somehow with broader theories of development as well as with more focused theories of empowerment. Clearly, inasmuch as I could not enter into the latter (leaving that to the other speaker) I still needed to select and argue my own definition of empowerment, if only to be able to clarify problems of operationalisation,—such as the identification of specific objectives and the choice of corresponding indicators. Moreover, it was also necessary to enter, however briefly, into the broader theories of development (sometimes called paradigms) and their relevance for empowerment, in order to elucidate the sort of conceptual orientations which tend to influence--wittingly and unwittingly—the work of NGDOs in the field of empowerment.

On the other hand, how far should I enter into the 'box of tools' of evaluation? There are many manuals on the subject, including the valuable discussions of OXFAM and INTRAC staff like Peter Oakley and Brian Pratt. Enter into such issues like the connection between original appraisal and subsequent evaluations; recommended sources of information, including the linkage but also difference between monitoring and evaluation; use of control groups; selection of stakeholders; timing of evaluation; the definition of effectiveness and impact indicators etc etc? How much could I assume to be already known to my audience, how much still to present in this discussion? Previous experience had shown me that it would be unwise to assume too much in a field still marked by notable debate and confusion. Therefore, some exposition, however brief, of basic concepts and tools of a Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation System (PMES) seemed to me preferable, to help

generate a joint frame of reference. Especially to the extent that such a discussion would manage to relate concepts and tools of PMES with empowerment.

Hence, given these deliberations, I decided to work out a paper trying to do a bit of both. That is, it offers a framework for the evaluation of empowerment, which does consider the role and relevance of underlying theories *and* which at the same time elaborates various operational or 'technical' elements, while trying to link the former to the latter: a fairly integral approach. Such an approach accords well with the basic argument I will be making, time and again, in this discussion. NGDOs like other agents are often not so strong when it comes to think about and explicitly formulate, **ex ante**, their development strategies: what it is they're trying to achieve, why and how, in a given period of time, here and with this particular targetgroup (TG)? Hopefully, both southern NGDOs and northern Private Donating Agencies will benefit from a challenge to become much more specific and explicit in formulating their *working hypotheses*, also in such complicated areas as that of empowerment. I will come back to this in a moment.

The discussion below is structured in the following way. First, I will ''clear the deck'' and provide definitions of the basic concepts linked to a PMES and to empowerment, and then address what I call the 'muddle of empowerment', by distinguishing between empowerment as a means or as an end in itself. Only once all of this has become clear, will I focus on the planning, monitoring and evaluation of empowerment more directly and in some detail. I hope that the unfolding framework will help the participants of this workshop to sharpen the awareness of what they're doing and striving for in the field of empowerment, and then on that basis be able to work out a better PMES for this area.

1.1   The PMES of empowerment

Looking at Monitoring or Evaluation in isolation from "P''—the original planning—basically makes no sense. Unless we are ready to confirm that we act as headless chicken, we must assume that Monitoring and Evaluation have something to do with what we set out to achieve through our interventions, that is, with our initial general and specific objectives. Hence the PME formula. However, given the backward and forward linkages in

intervention cycles, it is really a *system,* hence PME<u>S</u> is a better version of the formula (see graph A).

A first problem that emerges in writing out a PMES from the start is that NGDOs often do not yet have a clear idea, **ex ante**, of what empowerment concretely refers to, here and now; that is, how to formulate the P or objectives of their intervention specifically. What empowerment really entails—not just in general, but in connection with *this* concrete group, in *this* location, in *this* sort of condition etc--often becomes clear only in practice. Moreover, often the NGDO and the TG manage a different discourse, especially at the beginning: the former maybe one of empowerment, the latter one of survival. It is only through a *process of learning,* via intervention cycles, that we discover what the ''empowerment'' of excluded groups and sectors stands for, what is viable in a particular period of time, and what are the best strategies and instruments involved.

A second problem which often arises, refers to the basic point that many doubt whether the premise of the ''*makeability of change''* is really tenable. There is much and valid criticism concerning the linearity and attribution of causality, in the case of a simple goals-means connection applied to complex fields of action. The critique applies particularly to the restricted project framework where NGDOs and donors alike share an immediate interest in the concrete measurement of the outcomes and effects of their work. Indeed, as we will see later, many unforeseen things do happen in processes of empowerment, whether on the part of the subjects of empowerment, or on the side of opposed interest-groups, the state, donors and so on. Nonetheless, the deserved criticism of planning does not entail a license for headless ''muddling'', nor a justification of sheer rudderless activism! We need to carry on, yes, but on the basis of *working hypotheses*: these are needed to help us find out--in a more or less organised manner--what the possibilities and margins are of viable interventions in the area of empowering groups and sectors which are excluded. Monitoring and Evaluation do play a crucial role in this learning process: they provide us with the required feedback on the validity and viability of our working hypotheses, on what we assumed on the outset, and what adjustments are needed. In this sense, monitoring and evaluation represent indispensable instruments of applied action-research (Wils, 1991). But before we go on, let me first define monitoring and evaluation

1.2   Monitoring and Evaluation defined

A simple logframe is useful to briefly set out a series of concepts used in this introduction (see graph B). Despite the many and well-known drawbacks of a logframe, it does permit a succinct and coherent presentation of general and specific objectives, and the configuration of means—inputs and activities—to achieve those objectives. In this scheme of things, *monitoring* refers to the regular collection of information on (i) the extent to which the inputs and outputs of interventions are being generated as envisaged, (ii) the identification of factors which help explain the discrepancies (if any) between foreseen and actual inputs & outcomes, and (iii) the steps to be taken to adjust the programme for the next period. Thus monitoring focuses on the field of operational interventions over which the agent—grassroots groups, NGDO etc—can exercise more control. For example, the number of conscientisation courses being scheduled, the number of first level CBOs established, and so on. Monitoring examines whether the anticipated outcomes are being achieved, and if not, why not? Answers to such questions help an NGDO to adjust its programmes for the next period, that is, rearrange the sorts of things it can control.

Such control is much weaker, however, when it comes to the field, which is the focus of *evaluation.* Evaluation refers to the ''outside projection'' of an NGDO, to the reality and targetgroups whose conditions it tries to change. In evaluation we go back to the upper half of the logframe, that is, to the original objectives and we see whether the results of an NGDO's intervention do or do not bring about the change(s)--effects and impact--which were envisaged. As you well know, in practice quite a few NGDOs wittingly or unwittingly are largely if not exclusively engaged in monitoring—reporting inputs and outcomes, even when they think they're evaluating! Indeed, often NGDOs face problems when it comes to evaluation. Evaluation expects them to look critically and in a moment of systematic reflection--difficult to assume for those strongly inclined towards activism--at their work, from the perspective of their original objectives. For example, see whether all the conscientisation courses and 1st level CBOs do or do not lead women to participate and take a stand in community councils, or slumdwellers to formulate a plan of their own for the improvement of their habitat.

Graph A

Intervention Cycle and PMES
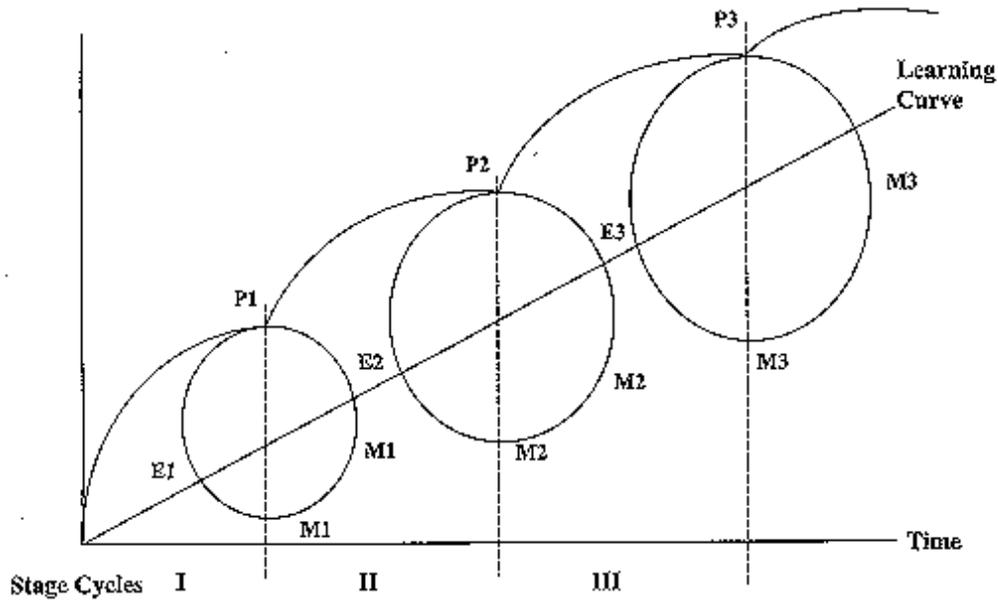
Graph B

Logframe

		Description	Indicators	Instrument	Assumption
Evaluation Related to Objective		General Objectives			
		Specific Objectives			
Monitoring related to Intervention		Activities Programmes			
		Inputs			

Now it is true that it is sometimes difficult to *sharply differentiate between Monitoring* and *Evaluation.* Evaluations are often carried out only every 3 to 5 years, and people are forced to wait a long time for an assessment of the effectiveness and impact of what they're doing. Hence, sometimes grassroots groups and NGDO staff are asked to include, already during their monitoring cycle, a judgement on the probability of achieving effectiveness or even impact. Nevertheless, here we will continue to differentiate, for the time being, between Monitoring and Evaluation: the former as referring to programme implementation, the latter to the achievement of objectives. In both instances indicators are used. What do indicators refer to?

Indicators, in principle, are defined at all levels (inputs, outcomes, effects & impact). They are necessary to check whether the anticipated outcomes are effectively being realised (that is the function of monitoring), and/or whether the anticipated changes are being achieved as laid down in the specific and in the general objectives (that is the function of evaluation). These indicators force us to specify during the planning stage, **ex ante**, those expected outcomes and changes, including the how and when their measurement will take place. This demands considerable insight and concrete experience on the part of the NGDOs and the grassroots they work with. And it is here that often deficiencies are found. Especially because in all cases, indicators must be defined in accordance with the well-known SMART criteria. They must <u>S</u>pecify the targetgroup, its location & baseline condition. Only indicators can be used which can be <u>M</u>easured in one way or another. Indicators should be <u>A</u>greed upon as related to the outcome or objective involved. And indicators should be <u>R</u>ealistic; and be put in a <u>T</u>imeframe.

The *operationalisation of Empowerment* including the corresponding indicators, is a complicated matter. That is what the discussion here is all about.

One further point here is necessary. Often a logframe is considered as an overly static and mechanistic tool unfit to express and catch the ''processual'' nature of development. This criticism is well-deserved as long as the practitioner him/herself applies it as if it were unchangeable from the beginning until the end of an intervention cycle. As manifested in Graph A above—on the learning cycle—the specific objectives, activities and/or inputs of an intervention may and should be adjusted and changed during this cycle, as long and as often as the evidence from Monitoring and Evaluation show the need for such

adjustments. While the analytic ''logic'' of the frame continues to exert itself, its concrete and substantial contents get modified during the process of change. Hence, indicators, too, are neither static nor permanent, change from one stage to another, and reflect the learning of the NGO and the grassroots it works with.

1.3   A definition of empowerment

In accordance with the premise that we cannot really deal with the Monitoring and Evaluation of empowerment without going back to the ''P'', the planning or programming of empowerment, we first need to raise a number of questions related to that ''P''. First and foremost about the way in which empowerment has been **problematised**, if at all: as noted, NGDOs often fail to elaborate **ex ante** the what & the why of empowerment in some detail. Indeed, one of the most strategic points of the whole discussion here is that such a prior or initial problematisation is an essential requisite for any coherent effort to intervene in processes of empowerment, as well as for the evaluation **ex post** of our efforts. Now at this point we need a clear definition of 'empowerment' itself. What is at stake here? We need a simple core-definition. A definition which can be substituted later by any other (argued) definition you would prefer for your own work. But for purposes of our discussion here we need to make a choice. Some define empowerment in terms of control over community resources (e.g. Korten, 1987), others as related to the means required for an escape from poverty[1] (Schneider, 1999). Another group of authors (f.ex Friedman (1992), Galjart (1987), Stiefel & Wolfe (1994)) think of empowerment as involving '*'participation in decision-making*'' on matters important to the empowered subject(s) To me, this last definition seems to be the clearest when it comes to capturing the basic element of 'power' in 'empowerment': the power of decision-making, of choosing between alternatives, also when others don't like it. Decision-making is a central instance where and when power is applied, including the power to influence the behaviour and choices of (rele-

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[1] Note that my definition differs substantially from one like given by Hartmut Schneider from the OECD who refers to ''the gaining of strength in the various ways necessary to be able to move out of poverty, rather than literally 'taking over power from somebody else' at the purely political level'' (524). Schneider (1999) refers to the ''means which are the basis of power'' (knowledge, education, organization, rights and voice as well as financial and material resources'' (J.Intern'l Devt) 11, pp 521-534. In my view, however, it is preferable to keep the *bases* of power and *what the exercise of power really involves*, separate.

vant/significant) third parties. In principle, then, the subjects of empowerment—or as Tandon would prefer it: the ''self-empowered''--are those who normally are, or have been, *excluded* from such decision-making. Inclusion empowers them, gives them power in a sociopolitical context. Empowerment, it should be clear, though linked to social, economic or cultural dimensions is essentially a **political** strategy and process.

Now a few more things need to be clarified, such as the level of empowerment, the kinds of subjects involved and what the decision-making in empowerment refers to. Clearly, the *context or level*--and with it, the related subjects--of empowerment differ enormously from case to case. From the level of interpersonal relationships involving gender and generation, to the level of households, local communities and neighbourhoods, to those of municipalities and districts, regions, societies and even (indeed, increasingly nowadays) the global system. The *subjects* of empowerment, too, vary greatly, for example, from women to children, members (non-heads) of households, Community Based Organisations, slum associations, the poorest, regional and ethnic groups, social classes, national citizens, southern countries and so on.

And as we will see later in some detail: *what ''matters'' in empowerment* (the general objective of empowerment, really), too, obviously varies a great deal. It concerns decision-making over many different things, ranging from control over resources (time, money, household budget, land, labour, use of a community's mobilisation power etc), to access to inputs (credit, government programmes); to holding own leadership and external agents accountable; to the freedom to make life-choices f.ex in the field of marriage & divorce, education, occupation and regional mobility; to the division of tasks, ranging from household chores to non-caste bound free choice of kind of work; to the setting of priorities in community, district or national planning on policies and programs; to the participation in project cycles and so on[2]. For our discussion of the PMES of empowerment, such variations in the *level* and the *what* of empowerment are of great importance, of course: they help define specific objectives of empowerment and the corresponding indicators of change, while meeting, of course, all the time SMART criteria. That is, in each case where empowerment represents a crucial (general or specific) objective of interventions, such

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[2] Special attention should be drawn in this connection to the debate and elaboration of the empowerment concept in women studies. See, for example, Hardon, A. et al. (1997) and Rowlands, J. (1995)

variables like the level and subject of empowerment, and the objective of decision-making being sought (what ''matters''), need to be spelled out in quite some detail. I will come back to this later.
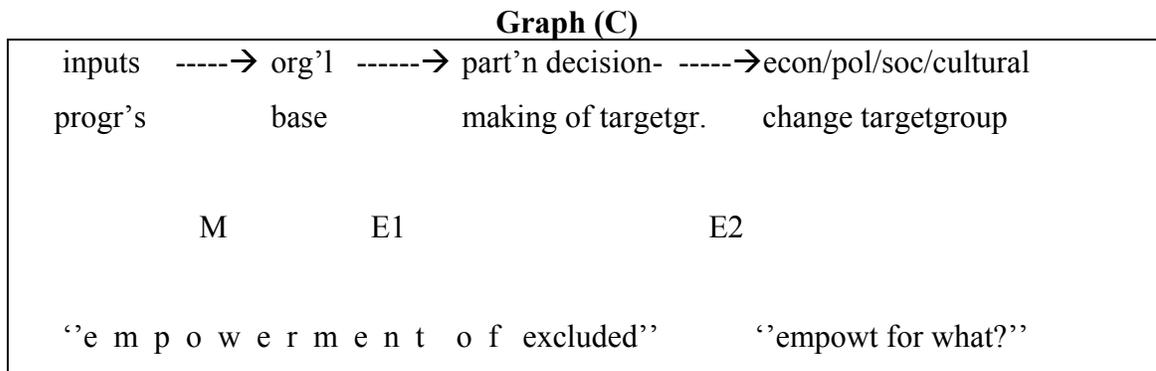
Note that, in principle, the subjects of empowerment--the ultimate beneficiaries--can be both *groups* and *individuals*. True, an empowerment strategy is usually based on organised group interventions. These bring together those who as persons and as a collectivity should, or hope to, benefit from the effects of that intervention. Organised group-action is needed because what empowerment usually tries to bring about, is not a change of incidental arrangements. Instead, empowerment seeks to modify societal and institutionalised norms, customs and/or stratified relationships—often connected with class, gender, generation and ethnicity--which exclude certain kinds of people and sectors from decision-making. Nonetheless, though empowerment strategies usually use group-based actions in order to achieve access to decision-making, the final beneficiaries may be—especially when such access is given an institutional basis—both the collectivity and its individual members. Think, for example, of changes in gender relationships in general and at the household level.

Indeed, given the complexities and paradoxes of participation (Cleaver, 1999), including its recurrent limitations and selectivity, one of the key issues in monitoring and evaluation should always be how broadly and deeply the interventions are reaching those who are excluded. Who exactly are getting effectively organised, and who come to actively participate in decision-making eventually? We are all familiar with differentials which are hard to eradicate; with the poorest who are rarely reached effectively; with leaders who benefit disproportionally and maybe even get coopted by opposing groups; with the most excluded who are least likely to participate and raise their voice; with organisations which help to disempower rather empower the excluded, and so on. Monitoring and evaluation can and should play a crucial role in bringing out such differentials, and help lay the basis for adjustments in strategies, methods and tools.

1.4 The ''logic'' or ''muddle'' of empowerment: empowerment as an end or as a means?

Another point that should be tackled before we can discuss empowerment itself in further detail, is the seemingly rather simple yet important question whether empowerment is an end in itself or a means for something else. That is, restated in other words, empowerment as a general objective or as a specific objective? In the latter case, the emphasis would rest on the question ''empowerment for what?''

Let me begin by summarising a simple but basic ''logical sequence'' which NGDOs often tend to apply when they refer to empowerment:

Graph (C)

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  inputs    ----->  org'l   ------>  part'n decision-  ----->econ/pol/soc/cultural
  progr's           base             making of targetgr.     change targetgroup


            M               E1                       E2


  ''e m p o w e r m e n t  o f  excluded''        ''empowt for what?''
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Suppose we define empowerment for the argument's sake as ''participation in decision-making'' on matters important to the target-group. Then, NGDOs often see an autonomous collective organisational base—itself probably in part the result of their own interventions--as a requisite for such participation. Now in case empowerment is considered an *end-objective by itself*, monitoring looks at whether inputs and actions did help establish such an organisational base (outcome). Then, evaluation checks whether such a base is indeed autonomous and active (effects), and whether this in turn leads to the excluded getting an effective participation in important decision-making (E1). In case empowerment is not an end in itself but *viewed as a means* (or a specific objective), then the question is raised ''empowerment for what?''. Monitoring then does the same thing as before, but in this case evaluation becomes a two-step operation. It checks (i) whether an autonomous and dynamic organisational base leads to effective participation in decision-making (E1), and (ii) whether such participation in turn leads to the political, social, eco

nomic or cultural changes hoped for (E2). In more 'technical' terms: the former would be an evaluation of effectiveness, the latter an evaluation at the level of impact. Note that in reality empowerment—that is, actual participation in decision-making--may not, and does not, automatically lead to such changes. Opposition from other stakeholders, lack of supporting allies or other factors may and do intervene. So it makes sense, at least in principle, to separate the two steps in the sequence.

It should be noted that when one prefers to maintain such a strict separation of steps in the ''logical sequence'', the hoped-for changes presumably resulting from empowerment, cannot and should not be brought back and figure somewhere in the previous step of the sequence—connected with empowerment itself—either as a specific objective or as an indicator of empowerment. Indeed, in this case, the linkage between empowerment and its (other) end-objectives must be problematised, become an area of special interventions, and be elaborated in terms of specific objectives as well, with all the corresponding indicators.

It is, of course, also possible to set things up differently. One could argue that the hoped-for-changes—the ''what matters'' in empowerment—can be considered as impact-indicators of decision-making. The assumption then is that it is not the sheer participation in decision-making itself that counts, but its impact. Indeed, I think that the usual practice of many authors and NGDOs is to take an instrumental (and not an expressive) view of empowerment: it is often not just seen as good for itself, but as a basic requisite for other (often higher and more general) objectives. For example, to achieve equity, transformation of society or alternative development strategies. Most agents are interested in measuring the impact of empowerment, not empowerment itself.

However, (con)fusing the functions of empowerment as an objective by itself and as a means for something else is risky if not basically wrong. Or to put it in other words, it is confusing to consider empowerment *both* as a general and as a specific objective. Doing so entails the risk that empowerment remains a black box, a promising strategy yet mired down in an opaque muddle of goals and means. True, we can give different shapes to the (hypothetical) construction of a sequence or chain of steps in an empowerment strategy. Yet whereas *in practice* steps may and do get mixed up, when we *problematise* the prob

lem and strategy of empowerment **ex ante**, we need to maintain sufficient clarity and transparency, if we want to learn from experience.

Hence, one must be quite clear, from the start, what is the *general* overall objective: empowerment **per se** or some other objective. In the latter case, empowerment comes to figure as a *specific* objective, the achievement of which will hopefully help attain the general one. This is the logical chain as depicted in the ''logical sequence'' indicated above in Graph (C). As noted, I think this is the normal chain or sequence NGDOs usually have in mind: it implies an instrumental use of empowerment. It makes sense, in this connection, to look again briefly at ''what matters in empowerment'', involving answers to the question ''empowerment for what?''. Maybe we could go a bit further than we did in the introduction, and identify the kinds of changes NGDOs tend to look for with the help of empowerment, together with their corresponding impact indicators.

1.5   Empowerment for what?

The scheme below summarizes some of the *main changes usually sought through the application of empowerment strategies*, with some corresponding impact indicators. The list is more for purposes of illustration than pretending to represent an exhaustive listing. It assumes that variables like the subject of empowerment (in terms of class, ethnic, gender, religious, generation etc), the context or level of empowerment (such as interpersonal relations, household, community etc), baseline condition and other SMART-criteria including timeframe, have been or will be specified. Obviously, the still rather general indicators below need such specification for purposes of Monitoring and Evaluation.

Possible general objectives sought through an empowerment strategy

	objectives	indicators
socially	-greater equality of opportunities	greater choice jobs/occupations shifts in division of labour/tasks
	-access/use of services	higher level of education fam'y more use health facilities better habitat conditions
	-higher social status	representation on prestigious ctee shift in intermarriages recognition by outsiders (visits)
econ'y	-better economic condition	higher income own/control more assets
	-better access to econ. inputs	use of credit benefits from economic programs
politic'y	-more effective power	vote actively occupy political/elective posts intervene authorities (claims,protest) intervene in markets (conditions) intervene in allocation of resources participate as citizen in governance get shifts in policies/programmes
cultur'y	–identity more accepted	own programs incl'g special cond's voice/view sought in community music, language recognised

Note that NGDOs (and communitarians like Etzioni, Korten and Friedmann[3]) like to enunciate in their mission statements such broad objectives of empowerment as the ''transformation of society'', ''redistribution of power in society'' or ''shift in power relations'' [4] and ''emancipation''. Obviously, such lofty objectives should be defined by the NGDO operationally in terms of more concrete and measurable elements or dimensions (with their corresponding indicators) like those mentioned above, and in accordance with SMART criteria.

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[3] Communitarans are neo-utopianists from the 80s (US) who think that development and total transformation should be bottom-up and based on communities taking a leading role.

[4] The empowerment of one of the traditionally excluded or powerless parties is obviously a necessary condition for a shift in power relations, as measured by such indicators as freedom in rendering a service, absence of clientalism, ownership of assets etc. But it may not yet be a sufficient condition and other factors may remain important, e.g. the opportunities/space of the powerful to retaliate with or without support of allies and/or the state. If this happens a new (set of) interventions may be needed.

To conclude this section: basic to the whole exercise is to put in center-stage what the NGDO's had in its head when it was thinking about the empowerment of this particular TG. The point I want to drive home is that a greater effort has to go into thinking, from the very start, about the why and what of empowerment, in a close dialogue with the TGs and its different components (poorest, women, young, renters and owners, better off etc). The generalities which can often be found in NGDO statements and reports are little helpful, foremost to the NGDOs and its grassroots counterparts themselves!

2. EMPOWERMENT AS AN OBJECTIVE AND STRATEGY

2.1 Frames of reference of empowerment

Now, turning more squarely to empowerment, as a general and even as a specific objective: what do NGDOs usually refer to when thinking and acting in this field? What ideological and theoretical frame of reference do they apply, explicitly or implicitly? Discussing these questions involves, once again, returning to the P of the PMES of empowerment strategies, before we can look at the ''M'' and especially the ''E''. Consider the scheme (A) below. It sets out a rough typology of theories of development, looked at from the perspective of how the problem of exclusion is analysed, the sort of response deemed necessary, and the foci of empowerment (if any) being applied.[5]

Scheme (A) brings out the connection between general theories, on the one hand, and (the focus on) empowerment on the other. These general theories or paradigms are well known and hardly need much comment. They present different analyses of development and underdevelopment. In some more than in others, a basis is laid for empowerment as a crucial phenomenon and requisite for development and change. In most cases---marked by an (+)—an empowerment strategy is seen as needed or desirable. There is no analytical basis for empowerment only in a ''conservative'' modernisation theory which stresses individual not structural or systemic causes of (under)-development. Hence, it puts an emphasis on *individual* progress, driven by value-derived motivation and by an active use of opportunities (as in theories of innovation and entrepreneurship). But in an interac

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[5] In this connection see also the interesting discussion of Marjorie Mayo and Gary Craig. ''Community Participation and Empowerment: the Human Face of Structural Adjustment or Tools for Democratic Transformation?''', in Craig, G. and Mayo M. (eds), (1998) ''Community Empowerment: a Reader in Participation and Development'', ZED books, London

tionist or weberian, marxian and feminist framework, the empowerment of the excluded is an important if not indispensable vehicle for their advancement.

Please observe also that I tried to work out the overall linkages between the broad theories of society and development, and what NGDOs tend to articulate in their institutional mission statements. Clearly, there are many NGDOs which do not subscribe to a theoretical analysis of (under)development nor to a related response needed to bring the excluded forward, in which empowerment occupies a strategic role. Many relief and service-oriented NGDOs stay aloof from such an approach. Many are satisfied with a kind of relief and service delivery wherein empowerment does not figure at all or only to a limited extent. Together with NGDO observers like Biekart (1999), Clarke (1991) and Fowler (1999) we may regret such a limitation, inasmuch as NGDOs have often made considerable impact exactly in the political field. But that is not the essential point at this stage, so I will leave it to a later discussion, at the end of this paper.

Scheme A

Theories & paradigms in relation to development, and to the response needed, including whether empowerment is needed (+/-) and if so, with what focus

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Theory/ Paradigm	Analysis development (causes obstacle/push)	[- - - - - - - - - - - -In mission statement of N G D O s -]	
		response needed	focus of empowerment (also +/-)
Modernisation	Values/motivation x Use of opportunities	change value/motivation create opport's (f.ex credit) training, skills	- Often no emphasis on empowerment - (-) assistance/ relief - (-) services without organisation beneficiaries - (+) " with org'n (for reasons of efficiency sustain'y) - (+) " with org'n (for reasons of part'n as right, democr'y) - (-) IEGA without org'd access/opp's (as workers, consumers or producers) - (+) " with org'd intervention state/market (idem)
Interactionist	Values/motives x opp's	combin. motiv'n x opp's	- (-) IEGA without org'd access/opp's (as workers, consumers, producers)
	Stratif'n class,status,power Struggle interest/ideas Legitimacy vs protest (rights)	org'n, apex, soc'l mov't charism/rat'l leadership	- (+) IEGA with org'd intervention state/market (idem) - (-) training/education without org'n (individual recipients) - (+) org'd struggle as workers, consumers or producers - (+) org'd struggle for citizenship, rights, claims - (+) org'd struggle for new policies
Marxian	class exploit'n/oppression under cap'm bourgeoisie x state	class-consciousness/org'n leaders, vanguard + allies	- (+) class in & by itself] for redistrib'n ownership & power - (+) org'd class struggle] & for new class/state relationships
Gramsci/ Freire	ideological hegemony	liberation from hegemony	- (+) org'n x counter ideology - (+) pedogagy of the oppressed x org'n
Feminism	Patriarchy under cap'm	consc'n, org'n, apex org'n redistribution power	- (+) struggle at all levels (interpersonal, HH, community etc)

Let me note at this point, however, that sometimes we do find *in a project-related framework*—here located basically under the modernisation theory--a reference to the need for organising and ''empowering'' the beneficiaries. In a moderate and *instrumental version,* the organised participation of beneficiaries in the PMES of the project cycle is recommended for such well-known reasons as efficiency and sustainability: e.g. better fit between demand and supply, and more willingness to contribute labour and payment to implementation, and to support the operation and maintenance of project results, etc. In a more *value-based version,* such active participation of project beneficiaries is considered a ''democratic right'' of people whose resources and future are at stake. The latter version is often (and not surprisingly) associated with higher levels of participation than appear in the first, ''instrumental'' version.

Another point relates to the role of empowerment in the access of the poor and excluded, to *market and state*. Especially in a neoliberal framework—which is not too far removed from the modernisation theory either--the responsibility for service-provision and Income & Employment Generation Activities (IEGA) is to a large extent thrown back to the poor and excluded themselves, as well as to the NGDOs supporting them. In practice, the poor (are expected to) get increasingly organised in groups and associations. Then they intervene in the market-place *directly* as **consumers** (f.ex buying together), **workers** (bargaining for better wages and employment) and as **producers** (f.ex claiming & setting up new schemes for credit & marketing). But they can and do also intervene in the market *indirectly*, via the state, acting as **citizens**, and claiming their right to participate in the decision-making on policies and the allocation of resources. In all cases they get organised and ''empowered'' in a legitimate manner. Empowerment, in other words, is not alien to a neoliberal framework! Organised private initiative is used by the excluded to access both market and state, and help redress inequities by ''levelling the field'', at least to some extent.

But let us now go back to a more general level. It is clear that the general theories referred to in scheme (A), vary in the kind of broad goals they envisage, and hence in *the short and long-term objectives of empowerment* they seek. Whereas more radical theories will tend to give priority to a redistribution of power at higher (regional and national) levels—a view that was long familiar to NGDOs in countries like Brazil and Bangladesh—a

more reformist approach seeks more limited but nevertheless still real changes, for example, in income, access to services, voting power, in policy formulation and so on. Moreover, whereas a marxian analysis will emphasize the central role of *class*-empowerment, an interactionist approach will also stress the importance of *religious, ethnic and other bases of identity and interests*, as well as the *perceived legitimacy of state authority, traditional elites, citizenship and so on*. NGDOs are often unavoidably influenced by such general theories. In practice, however, things are complicated. NGDO empowerment scenarios have to make choices and select their objectives and entry points. Then they are faced with complex and multiple affiliations, often more complex than those envisaged by the theories which influenced them. Yet they must find ways to deal with such intervening variables when it comes to raise consciousness and build up organisations. Then, their capacity to problematise and manage an empowerment strategy in a complex setting, will manifest itself in the way they justify the ensemble of intervention methods and strategies they choose to apply.

All that has been discussed so far, will show up immediately when one looks at the P(lanning) of empowerment and at its later evaluation which is presumably related to the planning's objectives. An NGDO's frame of reference will manifest itself in the sort of specific and general objectives which it has identified and in the justification thereof. In the sort of indicators it applies to see whether these objectives are being achieved. And possibly even in the manner in which such M&E information is gathered, that is, in a more or a less participatory fashion; with a team which is more or which is less mixed in terms of social, technical and political experience; and with Terms of Reference which involve contacting different kinds and levels of stakeholders. In short, in order to understand what a specific NGDO and its grassroots organisations are trying to do, it is important, at least in principle, to examine whether there is (explicitly or implicitly) a frame of reference underlying their work—helping to provide it with coherence and a sense of direction--or whether there is just an admixture of loose conceptual and strategic elements which were assembled in an **ad hoc** fashion.

In my experience—which of course is limited—either the latter is the case, or the frame of reference has remained implicit and hence less accessible for self-scrutiny and debate. NGDOs wrestle with the challenge to adequately problematise the concept, objec

tives and strategies when trying to empower the poor and excluded. As noted earlier, hopefully the framework here presented, however simplistic, will be helpful in taking an overall look at what people are doing, help them to become more aware of that and then (re)order their practice **ex post**.

2.2　Empowerment as a field of NGDO intervention

The NGDOs' underlying frame of reference—whether explicitly formulated or not—is also linked to the empowerment *strategy* which an NGDO tends to apply in its interventions. Strategy here refers to the general choice of routes, stages and steps to be taken, and to the more concrete components to be put in place, through inputs and programmes of activities, in each of those stages. All of this with the purpose to progressively build up empowerment as a process, and generate empowered groups at the end of it.

In scheme (A) it can be seen that *strategy-wise* the general theories vary a great deal, for example, in their preference of *where to begin*. Though all stress the need for grassroots mobilisation and organisation of the excluded, ''vanguard'' and ''populist'' strategies reserve a crucial role for guiding elites. Feminists, by contrast, tend to underline the crucial importance of a process of joint critical self-reflection at the ''grassroots level'', on the meaning and implications of the existential condition of being a woman; this as a point of departure for subsequent steps.

Another ''strategic'' option of an NGDO is whether to apply an ''*access strategy''* or a *''parallel strategy''*. The former is based on empowerment of the poor so that they learn to claim access to legitimate entitlements, such as land, forests and targeted government programmes when and where these exist. This strategy is often applied in India. It implies linking organised or empowered excluded groups to public and/or private sources of benefits. A ''parallel'' strategy can and tends to be less empowerment oriented, though it may also stress empowerment to some extent. The lesser variant consists of an NGDO developing its own broad-based service programs focused on its target groups (as often practised in Bangladesh). Such parallel schemes of NGDOs may, however, eventually be mainstreamed and transferred to the government. A more empowerment-oriented version seeks to democratise society and the economy, including a system of service-provision under the control of the grassroots themselves (people's banks, SEWA's coop's for market
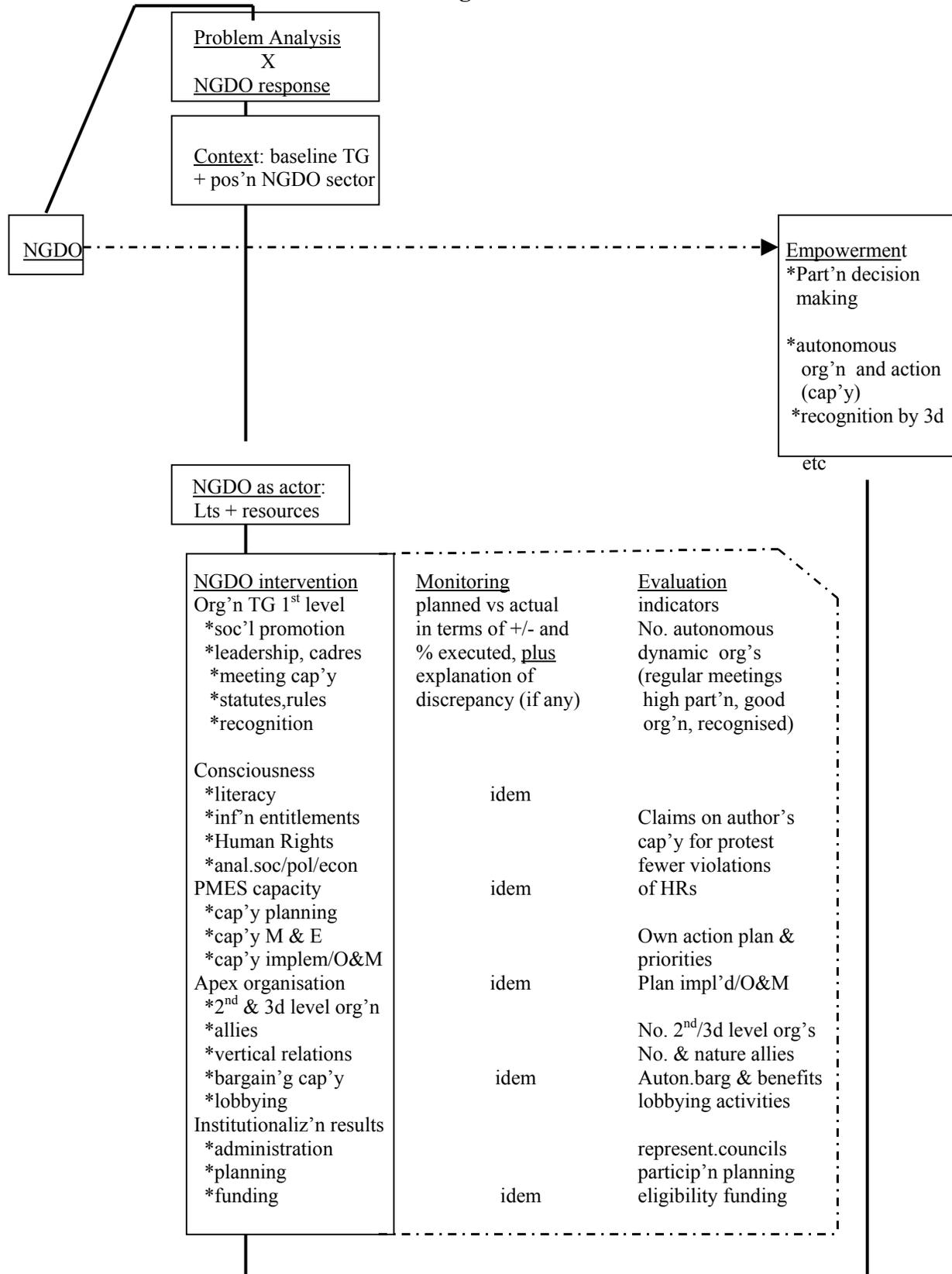
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ing, community schools etc). Indeed, this strategy can be considered even more empowerment-based than an access strategy which, after all, tends to create dependency on the state.

Now, most empowerment strategies share certain components or *stepping stones* (see scheme (B))*.* Practically always we find ingredients like raising *awareness or consciousness*, the development of dynamic and accountable *leadership*, the need for an *ideology* or a platform of ''legitimate'' claims, as well as the necessity of higher-level *apex organisation* and *allies*. Indeed, these components as we will see below in further detail, represent recurrent elements in the empowerment-scenario of many NGDOs.

2.2.1   Factors influencing (the choice and shape of) interventions

Scheme (B) provides a general frame of reference for the analysis of an NGDO's empowerment strategy. It makes clear that the connection between an NGDO and empowerment is not simple and straightforward, but mediated by a set of intermediate—or if you prefer: 'intervening'—variables, ranging from broad including contextual to more proximate variables. First comes the sort of *problem analysis* made by an NGDO, referring back to the sort of overall theories set out in scheme (A), and inluencing an *NGDO's response* as laid down in its mission statement. Then comes the *contextual setting*: the baseline situation of the excluded group or sector involved as the subject of the empowerment strategy, and the general position of the NGDO sector in the society concerned, especially its legitimacy and space for action in the field of empowering the excluded. Such contextual conditions vary notably from country to country and obviously define parameters within which the NGDOs will (have to) act. Next we have the *particular NGDO's own resources and limitations* in the field of empowerment. Relevant are here its human resource base and experience, its network and connections to relevant public and private power elites at micro and macro levels, the geographical scope of its (direct and indirect) outreach, and so on. This whole configuration of variables will have a marked influence on the choices and shape of an NGDO's intervention strategy in the field of empowerment. For example, using the typology I mentioned before, these variables help

Scheme B
Elements of NGDOs' empowerment strategy
& related Monitoring and Evaluation indicators

Problem Analysis
X
NGDO response

Context: baseline TG
+ pos'n NGDO sector

NGDO

Empowerment
*Part'n decision
  making

*autonomous
  org'n and action
  (cap'y)
 *recognition by 3d

etc

NGDO as actor:
Lts + resources

NGDO intervention	Monitoring	Evaluation
Org'n TG 1st level	planned vs actual	indicators
*soc'l promotion	in terms of +/- and	No. autonomous
*leadership, cadres	% executed, plus	dynamic org's
*meeting cap'y	explanation of	(regular meetings
*statutes,rules	discrepancy (if any)	high part'n, good
*recognition		org'n, recognised)
Consciousness		
*literacy	idem	
*inf'n entitlements		Claims on author's
*Human Rights		cap'y for protest
*anal.soc/pol/econ		fewer violations
PMES capacity	idem	of HRs
*cap'y planning		
*cap'y M & E		Own action plan &
*cap'y implem/O&M		priorities
Apex organisation	idem	Plan impl'd/O&M
*2nd & 3d level org'n		
*allies		No. 2nd/3d level org's
*vertical relations		No. & nature allies
*bargain'g cap'y	idem	Auton.barg & benefits
*lobbying		lobbying activities
Institutionaliz'n results		
*administration		represent.councils
*planning		particip'n planning
*funding	idem	eligibility funding

explain why Indian and Bangladeshi NGDOs often are markedly different, i.e. why the former tend to rely on an 'access' strategy whereas many of the latter prefer a 'parallel' strategy. The Indian state has from the 50s onwards been developing and implementing a whole range of poverty alleviating or reducing programmes, whereas the Bangladesh regimes have been far more limited in this respect. They also help account for the tendency of more 'conservative' NGDOs engaged in service provision, not to apply an empowerment strategy while more progressive and especially radical NGDOs, by contrast, often attribute a pivotal role to it.

2.2.2   NGDO intervention in the field of empowerment

Now, the NGDO's *own intervention strategy* as summarised here, consists of the sorts of elements or stepping stones which many NGDOs share, as noted. But as indicated in the accompanying Monitoring column, some or more of these elements may or may not be present (+/-) in any given strategy. And if present, the expected outcomes in each case may not (have) be(en) forthcoming to a full 100%. Moreover, the sequence of steps here depicted may not be neatly followed. As we saw, Freirean and feminist NGDOs may prefer to start working on awareness and consciousness raising—in an effort to first begin changing people's cultural and mental set—before building up organisations. Marxian-oriented NGDOs may want to start with the latter and build consciousness through organised collective action. Likewise, quite a few NGDOs have kept away from government agencies, working with grassroots in isolation, indeed, fostering an aggressive posture towards public authority. Nowadays this is changing. Many NGDOs promote grassroots organisations with both a solid ''internal'' side including a capacity for participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation, and an effective ''external'' dimension including a capacity for bargaining with public and private agencies, and for lobbying at meso and macro levels. Such options are obviously also related to whether the NGDO is applying a parallel or an access strategy.

Lastly, I want to draw your special attention to what I have called the 'institutionalisation of results' of empowerment, in the field of (i) administration (official recognition & registration, incorporation in procedures), (ii) planning (inclusion in platforms and procedures) and (iii) funding (eligibility for public finance). From research we carried out in

the field of Habitat, we observed a notable gap between the 'bottom-up' work of public agencies and NGDOs, on the one hand, and 'top down' reforms like decentralisation and local government, on the other (Wils, F and Helmsing, B, 1998). Sometimes, as in the case of populist mayors in cities like Quito and Lima, participatory planning gave the organised sectors who were traditionally excluded for the first time real access to, and effective participation in, local governance and development. But in many cases where government was decentralised, no legal nor institutional provisions were made for a more systematic and sustained inclusion of the long-excluded, at administrative, planning and funding levels. For example, in many cities CBOs of slum-dwellers or their associations are not officially recognised, nor represented and given an organic place in administrative or planning platforms, councils and procedures. Special intervention programs are needed here to effectively promote such institutionalisation: joint work of grassroots associations with lawyers, NGDOs and politicians[6], to develop proposals for policies & actions in the area of municipal legislation & governance, local finance, and so on.

2.2.3   *Monitoring NGDO interventions and Evaluating their effectiveness*

On the right side of the Intervention bloc in Scheme (B) I have added a Monitoring column, as well as sets of Evaluation-indicators corresponding with the various components and steps of an empowerment strategy. As we saw, *monitoring* refers to: (i) the extent to which the inputs and outcomes of interventions are being generated as envisaged, (ii) the identification of factors which help explain the discrepancies (if any) between foreseen and actual inputs & outcomes, and (iii) the steps to be taken to adjust the programming for the next period. In this sense, Monitoring refers to the ''lower half'' of the logframe, under control of the intervening NGDO, indeed, it refers to that world of intervention itself. It basically sees whether the presumed 'logic' works in this bottom half (that is, the 'logic' of the logframe), i.c. whether the inputs do lead to the outcomes as intended. As

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[6] Indeed, NGDOs have often problems working with politicians in this connection; as a matter of fact, the role of existing political parties in the field of decentralisation and participatory governance is quite problematic. Often due to party competition, communities get divided and separated by clientelism and corruption. Parties (ab)use public funds to buy and strengthen only their own constituencies. And communities have

problems in bargaining with 3d parties, unless they maintain their own unity. Organising seminars of NGDOs and LGOs to codify experiences in this field and try to find good responses could be very useful.

we know, often they do not, or not to the extent (%) we would have liked them to, due to such factors as shortage of experienced manpower, lack of interested participants in the community, and so on. Other times, however, outcomes exceed expectations when an NGDO taps into an unforeseen enthusiasm on the part of its targetgroups.

In principle, the comparison of envisaged with realised outcomes and the effort to account for discrepancies (if any), form the most valuable part of the learning process alluded to at the beginning. They are also indispensable requisites for flexible intervention-management. Even such a simple tool of monitoring as calculating the percentage of reaching anticipated input and output levels is already helpful. For example, an NGDO checks whether the planned number of consciousness raising courses were given, the teaching materials on entitlements and human rights were being produced, meetings with local officials were carried out, and so on. Suppose notable discrepancies were found, say, not enough consciousness raising courses: to what is this due? Lack of interested social promotors, lack of course-leaders, no collaboration of school teachers in making space available? Such an analysis will help show what sort of problem exists: possibly the wrong approach, maybe the wrong pedagogical method and so on? It will then also become clear what has to be done about it. In my experience, at least, NGDOs are often better in enumerating their inputs and outputs, than in indicating whether these were in accordance with earlier targets, let alone explaining--in cases they were not--why this happened. Nonetheless, one can already see a visible improvement in NGDOs, once they have managed to rise beyond *mere description* and begin *analysing* their work at this still behavioral level.

When it comes to *evaluating effectiveness*, we examine whether and to what extent all these interventions, all these efforts combining inputs and outcomes, have really helped to achieve the specific changes that the NGDO—hopefully together with the groups it works with—had set out to bring about. Restated in other words, evaluating effectiveness sees whether the presumed 'logic' works in the next stage of the logframe which links the lower half of concrete interventions, to the higher and more abstract half of the objectives, i.c. the specific objectives of empowerment. Note that, as in the case of Monitoring, Evaluation, too, compares anticipated with actual effects, and tries to account for discrepancies between these two (if any). Here again, much learning can be done. The evaluation should consider the effectiveness of the separate steps as well as their interrelation and

combined effects. The analysis may show that the assumed 'logic' was faulty (for example, in relation to the expected response of the excluded or of antagonistic powergroups). Other factors may have intervened (e.g. a new set of laws), steps been overlooked (such as building alliances), 'fatal assumptions' fulfilled (e.g. a severe repression), and so on. Anyway, the NGDO and its grassroots groups will learn much about the correctness of their strategy and its viability in the context in which they happen to find themselves.

It is assumed, as indicated in the effectiveness-indicators under the Evaluation column of scheme (B), that an NGDO does not just wish to promote grassroots organisations, leaders, cadres and so on for their own sake. It is assumed that such organisations, in turn, will lend the excluded a dynamic and autonomous *organisational base* of their own, which is recognised, holds regular meetings under accountable leadership, and hence is on the way of becoming an actor. Likewise, the anticipated effects of inputs and activities in the area of *consciousness* raising, especially when combined with the effects of organisation, presumably consist of actively voicing claims to authorities and other power holders, based on entitlements and Human Rights.There should also be protest against violations of such rights, leading to a decreasing incidence of such violations. Then, again, all efforts of an NGDO to help increase the *PMES capacity* of the excluded, hopefully led to the autonomous formulation of their own sets of demands and priorities, laid down in their own plan of action. They should also have helped to implement such plans, with the active contribution of the excluded to the operation and maintenance of the results thereof.

Apex-organisation building is meant to help networking and establishing alliances, to connect vertically with powerful public and private agencies, and to bargain and lobby for the interests of the excluded groups at higher levels. All the NGDO's and joint actions in this field are meant to *link the micro to meso and macro levels*. Hopefully they have led to effects like the existence of 2nd and 3d level associations, sets of networks and allies, negotiations with power holders in an autonomous fashion (without the support of NGDOs), and lobbying among relevant publics. Note that the PMES capacity plays a crucial role in this connection: it helps provide the 1st as well as apex organisations of the excluded with a strategic instrument to take and maintain the initiative in claim-making, bargaining and lobbying. Without such platforms and agendas of their own, people get easily

manipulated and divided by others who offer them only certain benefits[7]. Such PMES capacity (should) include the drafting of proposals which are viable, 'technically sustained'[8] and which can be defended at higher levels and a wider audience.

The last step or component—the *institutionalisation of results*---deserves once more special attention if only because it has received so little. In my judgement, as noted, NGDOs too often are satisfied when they are achieving effects, even at meso and macro level, in terms of, say, certain policies and programs. The sustainability of such results, however, depends very much on their institutionalisation in terms of special legally-based rights, procedures and chartered establishments relating to the excluded, in the field of administration, planning and funding. I already dealt with this in the previous section. Empowerment of the excluded should lead to their formal and effective inclusion in a democratised governance system, not owing to the goodwill of a particular progressive mayor or national regime, but anchored in law and official procedure. Evaluating the effectiveness of an empowerment strategy should, therefore, in my view, explicitly extend to this component or step. Provided, of course, that the NGDO included such an objective, **ex ante**, in its programmes of active intervention, in the first place!

2.2.4 *Empowerment strategy and impact evaluation*

Empowerment is seen as the active participation of the excluded in decision-making, in relation to matters important to them: that is the general objective of the strategy and related interventions undertaken (presumably) jointly by NGDO and the organised excluded. Let us suppose that the specific objectives of empowerment were largely being achieved, such as we saw in the previous discussion: the excluded would then dispose of dynamic, autonomous organisations associated in an apex association; be strengthened through a network of allies, and a platform of demands and proposals of their own; be enriched through their bargaining and lobbying capacity at high(er) levels; and getting their

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[7] Indeed, in our Habitat/CDP research we found that for a community's assertive power Community Management (especially its PMES capacity) was more important than (mere) Community Participation (members coming to and speaking in meetings). Cfr Wils, F and Helmsing, B (1997).

[8] As Victor Santuc from Peru put it: NGDOs can play an important role here as they help 'technify popular alternatives'. A still interesting discussion of conditions under which NGDO (empowerment) strategies may and do have an influence at the macro (policy) level in Africa, can be found in Michael Bratton (1990, 87-118)

inclusion accepted at various (administrative, planning and financial) levels. Would such achievements then lead—in accordance with the 'logic'—to the sort of impact that is being sought: their active participation in important decision-making? Of course, from the start, already during the problematisation-stage the ''where'' and ''what'' of such important decision-making must have been defined, and have been used in the formulation of impact-indicators. Does it refer to the community, neighbourhood, city or national level, or even to interpersonal relationships[9]? And insofar as the ''what'' of decision-making is concerned, indicators should refer to real changes as compared to the past, in terms of a real and effective inclusion of the excluded. For example, to a capacity for autonomous organisation and action as related to decision-making; to joint responsibility for budgets, a plan or use of assets; to seats on councils, committees or other relevant platforms; and/or to an explicit recognition in law, by 3d parties.

It is tempting, of course, to recur here again to what we discussed earlier when handling the question: 'empowerment for what'. It is not easy to draw the line between good impact indicators of participation in decision-making itself, and the actual impact thereof on various terrains like policies, resource allocation and so on. Nonetheless, as we noted, it is not just risky but also erroneous to treat empowerment as a means and as an end at the same time.

Another problem is to keep empowerment as an objective independent from what I called the 'institutionalisation' of its results: they do come very close to one another. Indeed, one might consider the effective institutionalisation (legal and de facto) of participation of the excluded in decision-making as impact indicators of an empowerment strategy. But this must then be laid down in these terms in the original problematisation, the definition of objectives and in the intervention strategies. In this case some redefinition would also be needed of what then the specific objectives would be of intervention programmes meant to develop legislative and policy proposals for new procedures and platforms. The products or outcomes of such programmes would presumably lead to debate and public

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[9] In case of the latter, presumably, it is not just the individual case which is at stake—for example in terms of gender or generation—but the more 'generic' kind of relationship. An empowerment strategy at such an interpersonal or household level will be based on the organisation of the parties involved and on their common struggle to modify the terms of such relationships in general. The impact of such a struggle should of course be manifest and measured, in the end, also in individual cases.

attention, which in turn would help generate the institutionalised inclusion in decision-making.

NGDOs are Alices in Wonderland, they define their own world. But like Alice, in doing so they must retain sufficient transparency and coherence in the constructed line and flow of argument, to lend itself to correction and adjustment. Out of the ensemble of elements presented here, and possibly many others besides, each NGDO forges its own tools in accordance with its own frame of reference and concrete situation. Hopefully, when held up against the light of the frame of reference developed here, the profile of particular NGDO empowerment strategies and interventions will become better visible, their strong and their weaker elements, their (lack of) contextualisation as well as possible need for further operational elaboration.

2.3   Something about the methodology and organisation of PMES

Especially in the case of empowerment it would be quite recommendable to apply participatory methods both in problematising empowerment and in the formulation of the PMES related to it. Not just because it is the excluded themselves who should be the first and foremost subjects and agents of their own empowerment, but also because the whole exercise has an enormous learning potential for them. A potential revealing the gains and the losses which can be made in situations marked by—sometimes serious--risk and uncertainty; they move, after all, in a world of power and interests. The burden of responsibility of risk-taking inherent in many empowerment strategies--like the enjoyment of the fruits of achievement--in the end remain those of the excluded themselves. This is a moral point. But there is also the pragmatic line of argument. The sustainability of empowerment strategies and its results, under conditions of vanguardism, is very limited; this is something experience has demonstrated, time and again.

This underlines, once more, the crucial role of participation in planning, monitoring and evaluation: a participatory PMES is a basic vehicle of empowerment of the TG; of mutual accountability between NGDO and its grassroots counterpart; and a sort of guarantee for sustainability of project results. It is interesting that when we researched processes of NGDOs promoting Self-Reliance of rural poor groups in India (their TGs), a participatory PMES was found to play a very strategic role: more than anything else it en

hanced the empowerment of the targetgroup vis à vis the NGDO, and rendered self-reliance into a strategic objective of the population itself (Wils and Acharya, 1997). This self-reliance of course also implied that the TG came to accept, in accordance with what had been agreed from the start, full responsibility for the operations and maintenance—that is, the sustainability--of the results of the joint efforts of NGDO and TG.

Another point has to do with the periodisation and timing of Monitoring and Evaluation of empowerment. It is, obviously, difficult to generalise in view of the tremendous variety of objectives, levels and field involved. It seems hardly realistic, however, to expect that the empowerment of women, outcastes or children will be easy and/or soon generate significant effects and impact. It will be absolutely necessary to break down, jointly, a long-term process into manageable proportions or stages. There will be much need for continuous shifts and adjustments, and for new working hypotheses for the next steps, informed by the evidence from the (participatory) monitoring and evaluation system. Moreover, in this area monitoring and evaluation may have to be combined, maybe more than in other fields of action. Although certain programmes we encountered above do lend themselves well to regular monitoring—such as leadership and cadre training, setting up of 1st level organisations, and capacity development in the field of PMES—other kinds of activities do not or less so. This applies, for example, to building up an apex organisation, helping to establish alliances or promoting a bargaining and lobbying capacity. These are complex and difficult challenges with great ups and downs, demanding a need for flexibility and a skill for understanding politics and tactics which are not simple to acquire. Nonetheless, as noted, such complexity entails no license for sheer activism and adhocism, and it remains necessary to continue seeking a grip even on such complex lines of activity. Evaluations may well have to be carried out more frequently in order to see whether interventions do or do not begin to generate the sort of effects and even impact which are hoped for. Unforeseen opportunities and/or chances may arise, sooner than anticipated; gains may be lost due to new obstacles. It makes no sense waiting a few years to make an assessment of where the journey is going.

2.4 NGDO mission

A few last comments related to the NGDOs' mission. As noted earlier, NGDOs may and often do have comparative advantages in the political field, possibly even more so than in service delivery—even when applied on a large scale. That is where they already have made a notable impact as in the field of human rights, gender, the environment and minorities. The empowerment of those most immediately affected has often been the decisive vehicle which turned the scales of decision-making in their favour. This sort of argument enhances the relevance of investments made by NGDOs and those supporting them, like INTRAC, in the field of empowerment.

Hopefully the workshop implemented during these days helps the NGDOs to clarify their idea about what it is that they want to achieve in their country, sector and locality. That is where evaluation should begin anyway. Northern NGOs which pretend to support Southern NGDOs face great problems because they will need to bridge the gap between their own highly generic institutional objectives, often defined world-wide, and the concrete reality of their counterparts. Region, sector and group-specific frames of reference could help bridge that gap; indeed, these would help facilitate and accelerate the learning process that is so badly needed. We know already more about service-delivery, but already less about Income and Employment Generation. We know even less, however, about such much needed strategies and processes of empowerment and the related Civil Society Building.

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