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**PENETRATING LOCALITIES:
PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT AND PRAGMATIC POLITICS
IN RURAL ANDHRA PRADESH, INDIA**

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Penetrating Localities: Participatory Development and Pragmatic Politics in Rural Andhra Pradesh, India

Summary

This research sets out to explore the interface between the new politics of localisation and the political process in India. Governments and donors have increasingly emphasised the locality as the primary unit of development and politics. This new trajectory has been manifest in the increase of community-based organisations and mechanisms of participatory governance at the local level. From the late 1990s, the south Indian state of Andhra Pradesh emerged as one of the most important examples of this new developmental politics and this research sets out to explore how local dynamics changed as a result.

Political economy approaches tend to focus on state-periphery relations in terms of interest groups or vote banks. By contrast, this research found the village to be an enduring unit in the political system through which political identity manifests itself through three features. First, participation in local elections is driven by common forces of politics of parties, caste and corruption but its outcome is dependent on the specific context at the village level. Second, new participatory institutions created through state policy were found to merge with informal practices at the local level and produce a complex interplay between the new local and state identities. Third, analysis of leadership found evidence of a well-defined system of organisation within party groups at the village level, which were shaped not by party institutions but by the inner workings of village politics.

These findings give cause to reassess the way in which we understand policy and political change. I do so by expanding on Skocpol's polity approach, which focused attention on the dynamic interplay of policy and social structure. Drawing on elements of the 'political development' theory, the concept of a 'developing polity' approach is elaborated on, to better explain the complex interplay between local and higher level politics. These findings have implications for understanding both political change in India and development strategy. The macro-perspective on the decay of political institutions is contrasted with a local perspective that finds evidence of the vitality of party politics at the village level. This has a number of important implications for development, both in terms of the way in which we analyse participation and the way in which participatory development can be translated into political change.

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Abbreviations, acronyms and glossary

AP Andhra Pradesh

BC Backward Classes

BJP Bharatiya Janata Party

CBO Community-based organisation

CBN Chandrababu Naidu

CM Chief Minister

CMEY Chief Minister's Employment for Youth scheme

CP/INC Congress Party, Congress, Indian National Congress Party

CPI Communist Party India

CPI(M) Communist Party of India (Marxist)

DWCRA Development of women and children in rural areas

GoAP Government of Andhra Pradesh

HDI Human Development Index

KI Key Informant

JB *Janmabhoomi* programme

L lakh, 100,000 Indian rupees

MLA Member of Legislative Assembly

MP Member of Parliament

MPTC *Mandal Praja* Territorial Constituency Members

MPP *Mandal Panchayat* President

NTR NT Rama Rao

NGO Non-governmental Organisation

NO Nodal Officer

OBC Other Backward Castes

PACS Primary Agricultural Co-operative Society

PAI Political Activity Index

PMEY Prime Minister's Employment for Youth scheme

PRI *Panchayati Raj* Institutions

SC Scheduled Castes

SHG Self Help Group

ST Scheduled Tribes

TDP Telugu Desam Party

TRS Telegana Rashtra Samithi

TSS Telegana Sadhana Samithi

VDC Village Development Committee

WM Ward Member

WSC Watershed Committee

WUA Water Users Association

ZPTC *Zilla Parishad* Territorial Constituency

Glossary

aarukotla Anddhrula atma gauravam self-respect for the Andhra people

ayatcouncil

benami ghost names (transacted in the name of a fictitious person)

bigha a unit of measurement of area of a land,

brahmins a priestly caste

crore 10 million or 100 lakhs rupees

dalit a member of the lowest caste (untouchable)

garibi hatao abolish poverty

Goud Toddy tapping caste

gram panchayatsvillage governments

gram sabhavillage meetings

goonda thug

janata for the people

Janmabhoomi Government of Andhra Pradesh's participatory local development programme, literally '*land of one's birth*'

karikatalu village worker or grassroots cadre

lakh 100,000 rupees

Lok Sabha lower house of Parliament

Madiga A scheduled caste group

Mahabharata an ancient philosophical Sanskrit epic

Mala A scheduled caste group

mandal panchayat village level governing body

munsifvillage head

Naidu warrior caste

nayakalu leader

naya netasnew leaders

Naxalite militant Communist groups

pallis habitations of lower castes

panchayat governing body

panchayat samiti village level governing body

patwar village accountant

pyravee the art of approaching officials for favours and making the wheels of the administration move

Rajya Sabha upper house of Indian Parliament

Reddy high caste, land owning aristocracy

rupees Indian currency, 48 rupees equals £1 at 2002 rate

sangham association

shramadan voluntary contribution of labour or the spirit of self help

toddy the fresh or fermented sap of Asian palm trees, used as beverage

Abbreviations of anonymous villages

KB, IP - villages in Nalgonda district

BVP, PGP– villages in Prakasham district

Chapter 1: The Politics of Development and the Development of Politics

1. 1 Introduction

This thesis emerges from a long-term fascination with village politics developed during countless hours of discussion in various parts of rural India. Villagers do not willingly engage in discussions of village politics with outsiders but once one starts asking the right questions, a complex world of intrigue opens up - one that is populated by events, issues and actors that have immense significance for rural denizens but have little impact outside their immediate localities.

As Beteille (1965) observed, political processes at the village level have an informal character whose analysis requires tools of a different kind from those that are conventionally used by political scientists. In fact, it can be questioned whether the word 'politics' means the same at the level of the village and the state (ibid:141). Yet for the majority of the poor, the village is the first and most important arena for public participation; it conditions their participation and their outlook (Ruud 2000:1). As such, penetrating village politics is both a political as well as a developmental challenge.

Rural India has undergone immense changes over the last three decades on account of successive waves of democratisation, as well as, economic and social mobilisation. These changes have served to undermine the conceptual clarity of the village as a unit of analysis for understanding rural poverty. At the same time, it has become increasingly apparent that the poor do not automatically benefit from democracy and economic growth. This realisation has led donors and governments across the world to adopt new approaches to development that have emphasised the need to develop the capacity of the poor through institution building at the community or local level (Manor 2003).

In 2000, when this research was originally framed, the tension between formal participatory governance reforms and community participation were starting to become apparent. Nowhere was this clearer than in the South Indian state of Andhra Pradesh where a new, dynamic Chief Minister was spearheading a high profile and controversial campaign that sought to mobilise community participation in local development that bypassed the constitutionally sanctioned system of democratic decentralisation. Chandrababu Naidu was certainly not the only politician in India to support such programmes; what made him different was the scale and degree of political support that he gave this new trajectory in development.

One important manifestation of this new development trajectory was an esoteric campaign style programme called '*Janmabhoomi*' (which literally means land of one's birth). Under this programme, the state administration, which included ministers and other local government officers, were mobilised to visit all villages in the state and hold open meetings with them to discuss development priorities and grant projects to the community. These projects were to be implemented by the villages themselves or through the multiple user groups and committees that had been set up to manage aspects of village development.

I first learnt of this initiative during a visit to the state. While travelling in villages, I observed wall paintings with the *Janmabhoomi* logo blazoned on walls and buses and came to know from the villagers that this was the initiative of the Chief Minister, Chandrababu Naidu and his political party. What struck me was the degree of penetration which is indeed rarely found in such government programmes. This is what led me to find out more about the approach and the strategy that lay behind this unique programme.

The significance of this new trajectory in development needs to be understood in the context of what Kohli refers to as the 'crisis of governability' (Kohli 1991) and the near systemic decay of political institutions in India (Kohli 2000, Manor 1983). Successive

waves of democratisation has brought the lower castes and other historically marginalised social groups within the ambit of electoral politics (Yadav 1999, 2000) but they have also eroded the influence of the local 'big men' who once held sway of local politics and formed the vital link to the higher levels of the political system (Kohli 2000). The political functionality of this relationship has been intensively studied as a means to explain the success of the India National Congress Party (INC), which was India's main political institution until the 1970s (Weiner 1967, Kothari 1964). According to Weiner (1967), the success of democracy during this era was based on the existence of two political cultures - the modern culture of national politics and the vernacular culture of local politics, and the capacity of the party organisations to emerge as a mediator between them. Successive waves of populist mobilisation undermined this distinction, resulting in a 'vacuum of authority' at the local level. Populist leaders have been largely unable to make their influence penetrate effectively to the local level and as result, India's polity has become more fluid and difficult to govern (Manor 1983).

For most politicians in developing democracies, the local space is a *terra incognita*¹ in which social structures and behaviours 'function according to their own rules' (Ruud 2000:1) and hence cannot be understood without 'travelling down the various levels of the political system' (Kohli 2000:228). As Kohli argues, rather than assuming that social structures are given, it is important to recognise that social and political actors at the periphery are actively involved in shaping the use of authority and in the process, both the state and society are reformed from below (ibid). Fuller and Benei (2000) coined the phrase the 'everyday state' to highlight the distinction between politics in the local space in contrast to the 'large scale structures and epochal events' that characterise state or national level politics in India. Chatterjee coined the term 'political society' to focus attention on the 'ability of particular population groups to mobilise support to influence the implementation of governmental policy in their favour', with the result that there was 'no equal or uniform exercise of the rights or citizenship' (Chatterjee 2006:60). As Heller (2000) argues, successful decentralisation is contingent on the

¹ I am grateful to James Manor for alerting me to this concept, and have borrowed the term from his writing (Manor 1983).

presence of a well-organised party and a well organised civil society which serves to make the critical connection between local politics and the state.

This thesis sets out to contribute to this debate on the 'new politics of localisation' in the context of India. Using the case of Andhra Pradesh as an example, the study shows how the focus on the locality by state politicians can be a pragmatic response to the broader political and governance challenges in a highly politicised bi-polar polity. Yet, when one looks beyond the macro-political economy to the local level, a more complex picture of politics emerges, one in which the policy process is mediated by a newly invigorated village politics.

As the remainder of this chapter sets out to show, the focus on the locality as a site for development (Harriss et al. 2004:1) evokes fundamental questions regarding the construction of the polity in developing societies. These questions have tended to be downplayed in favour of accounts of the dual process of 'globalisation' or the meeting between policy approaches from international organisations and new possibilities of political action from the local level (ibid). As theorists of political development have long since argued, the relationship between local and national politics is the main force in the process of political change and underpins the central challenge of governance. The 'developing polity approach' set out below seeks to understand how the new politics of development is based on the search for the 'institutional fit' (Skocpol 1993, Houtzager 2003) between pragmatic electoral compulsions and the distinctive politics of rural localities.

1.2 Theoretical Considerations – The New Politics of Localisation

Donors and governments have increasingly focused their attention on the locality as the 'primary arena for development and politics' (Harriss et al 2004). The spread of democracy in the developing world has been accompanied by a growing sense of disquiet regarding the effectiveness of representative politics and centralised developmental states and an indiscriminate hostility towards large-scale political

organisations (Houtzager 2003) - especially political parties. What is needed, it is argued, is a new politics - one that promotes the empowerment and inclusion of the poor through 'local spaces and practices' (Harris et al. 2004, Mohan and Stokke 2008).

The mainstreaming of the new politics of localisation into practice has been manifest in a significant increase in funding and institution building efforts that are directed at the community level, resulting in the establishment of an array of community based organisations (CBOs) and new mechanisms of participation in local governance. The 2004 World Development Report was an important milestone in this regard, by framing discussions of voice and accountability towards the interactions between users and providers, rather than voters and the state (World Bank 2003). In many parts of the developing world, this new development trajectory has progressed in parallel to existing systems of the local government, leading one observer to label this the 'second wave of decentralisation' (Manor 2004). The effects of this second wave are contested. For some, it represented a potentially damaging force of polycentrism that undermines the long-term project of democratic reform (Manor 2004). Others see the creation of new political spaces as an important prospect for the deepening of democracy (Gaventa 2006, Cornwall and Coelho 2007). Donors have played an important role in promoting this new trajectory in development, leading some observers to argue that this represents a new politics in which the primacy of the state has been undermined (Harriss et al. 2004, Mohan and Stokke 2008).

The remainder of this section starts by exploring three perspectives of the politics of localisation. The first sees the state as the driver of change, drawing largely on the experiences of experiments with formal decentralisation reforms starting from the 1990s. The second prioritises the independent role of local or community level politics in shaping the process and reflects emergence of participatory development in the decade that followed. The third attempt, which is a more interactive analysis of state and society, draws on the polity approach (Skocpol 1993) with a more recent attempt to apply this to a developing country context (Houtzager 2003). The last section sets out to adapt this model with greater attention to the distinctive forms of politics in a

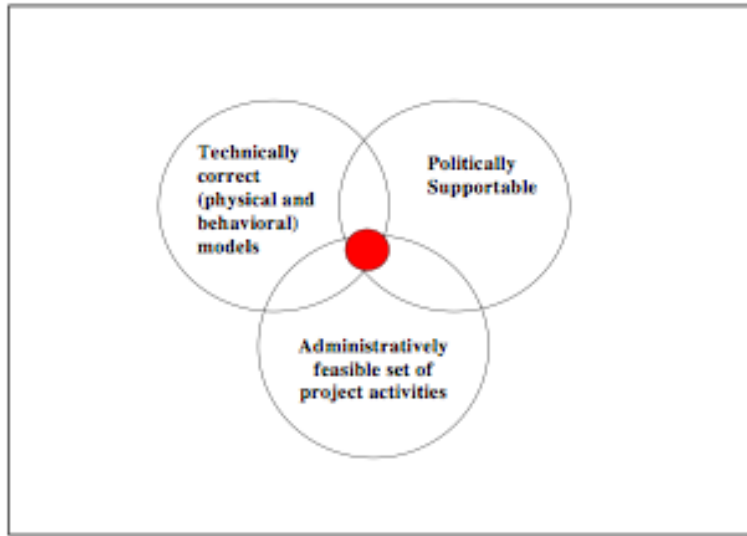
'developing polity'; this marks the key departure of this research and serves to establish the detailed research question that guides the empirical analysis of local politics in the field research.

1.2.1 Politics of localisation

Decentralisation has been attempted across the spectrum of political system, ranging from relatively stable multi-party democracies to authoritarian and 'fragile' states (Crook and Sverrisson 1999). The popularity of the approach focused attention on the need for a political economy of development. As Manor (1998) argues, administrative reforms need to be understood as a 'double-edged sword', one that was equally effective in promoting 'genuine empowerment' as it was in extending 'narrow or partisan advantage' (Manor 1999:33-36, also see Slater 1989) by directing resources and allocating authority to certain social groups. A more nuanced account, which has been explored by Manor in this analysis of the political economy of decentralisation (1999) and a less recognised analysis of democratisation (1998), shows how even the most committed reformers need to 'strike a balance' between what is desirable and what is doable.

For over two decades, the technocratic thrust of decentralisation emanating from the World Bank, in particular, has been met with an increasingly vocal critique in favour of understanding institutional change as a political process (Slater 1989). This debate crystallised in the 1990s during the decade of decentralisation and sought to draw attention to the significance of decentralisation as an ordering political space (Mohan and Stokke 2000). The 'political approach' aimed to highlight the extent to which technical designs needed to be planned in a way that pays attention to political feasibility and administrative capacity (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Looking beyond technical design



(Source: Pritchett et al 2006:9)

The political approach sought to emphasise the dangers of “institutional monocropping” (Evans 2002), or the transplanting of 'best practice' across different contexts. The political approach to decentralisation drew immense support from the intensive analysis of a handful of leading cases: namely, of decentralised planning in Kerala in India (Heller 2000) and participatory local budgeting in Porto Alegre in Brazil (Baiocchi 2003). These cases highlighted the importance of context and the link to the political process and especially to the important role played by well-organised left-of-centre political parties (Heller 2000) and a strong and capable civil society. While on the one hand these 'successes' indicated the potential of what Fung and Wright (2000) termed 'empowered deliberative democracy', on the other, they defined an entirely different analytical challenge, i.e., one of exploring the fit between policy and politics in a developing democracy.

Arguably, the most important constraints to reform in a developing democracy are imposed by the compulsions of the electoral cycle. As Crook and Sverrisson (1999) argue, most decentralisation reforms take some time to get established and in reality, it

may take at least 10 to 15 years in a context of financial and political stability, for a system to show any results. This commonly overlooked reality has a number of important implications and not in the least in terms of focusing attention on tangible results in the short term, which often limits or affects the prospect for the type of long term transformation envisaged by theorists of empowerment.

The recognition of the importance of understanding participation as a political process focused attention on identifying the structures of political support within the electorate. As Boone argued, '(g)overnments may have important stakes in established powerbrokers and in established local-level social and political hierarchies that can extend beyond the reach of the state' (Boone 2003:25). It is, therefore, important to attempt to characterise both the way in which society is constituted at the periphery and the character and power bases of the national ruling elite which are embedded in particular kinds of alliances with local or regional elites and frequently reflect long histories of conflict and political bargaining (Crook and Sverrisson 1999:2).

Boone (2003) proposes four models to describe the types of centre-local relations that are pertinent to participatory reforms. The first describes a scenario where the ruling elite seeks to build its powerbase through alliances with established local or regional elites who are both congenial to its interest and have some degree of autonomy. In the second scenario, the ruling elite sets out to circumvent locally powerful groups for a range of motives ranging from ethnic or ideological differences. The third scenario is associated with consolidation or renewal of an already powerful elite or the creation of a new set of elites who have been marginalised. The fourth strategy, termed as 'neglect isolation', is said to emerge in contexts where societies are not organised and where rural elites lack the necessary clout to challenge the centre.

The political approach to decentralisation aims to look beyond the concept of 'political will' by emphasising the importance of the 'fit' between state and social structures. As Crook and Sverrisson (1999) argue, there is sufficient evidence emerging from across the world of examples of each of these four models which have resulted from different

political conditions. However, this approach tells us less about the capacity of the states to control the flow of power and resources to the local level.

1.2.2 Localisation of Politics

Toward the end of the 1990s, the scaling up of participatory or community driven development programmes and the links to the state focus attention on the growing significance of local politics which illustrates the effect of local dynamics on development policies (Chhotray 2004, Veron et al 2003). Kaviraj (2001) states the key question eloquently, arguing that policies formulated at the national or state level are often distorted beyond recognition by the time they are implemented at the village level. While the effectiveness of the state was in question, it was becoming increasingly apparent that there were other forces that affected the implementation of the development policies.

The concept of the 'everyday state and political society' sets out to highlight the significance of the gap between the locality and the broader polity. In his overview of this analytical approach, Harriss (in Fuller and Benei 2000) argues that the weakness of the state gives cause to focus attention on the extent to which the experience of citizens is shaped by the quotidian interactions with local bureaucrats and politicians (Ruud, in Fuller and Benei 2000, also see Corbridge et al. 2004) and confers salience on everyday forms of discourse and strategies played out at the local level. For Ruud, the state is mediated through gossip and folk forms, as well as, the narratives of corruption that people construct in their everyday lives. This gives cause to challenge the concept of an identifiable civil society or public sphere as western thinkers conceive it. The importance of the approach proposed by these theorists lies in the extent to which these local patterns of interaction take on an aggregated significance as they are reproduced in various ways across a multiple of local spaces, affecting the lives of the rural poor.

While the focus of these recent ethnographies of modern India has been on re-

conceptualising the state, there are important implications for understanding the political process. As the previous sections have sought to show, analysis of participatory development involves a decision regarding the models adopted. There is a tendency to develop proxy categories like elite capture and informal institutions that are derived from analysis of the broader political context, yet there is a need to consider how successfully these translated into the local context. Conversely, developing analysis of participation with too narrow a lens that ignores broader patterns at the supra-local level gives rise to an artificial construct of the distinctiveness of the locality in relation to the broader polity. As theorists of the everyday state have argued, there is a need to focus greater attention on understanding the significance of distinction between local-level politics and the political system, based in a broader concept of political development. As the following section aims to show, local politics can be seen as counteractive to participatory development or enabling the deepening of democracy.

Elite Capture

The discussion of 'elites' has taken a different form as part of mainstream narratives on participatory development in the local space. Elite capture is widely cited as one of the main threats to successful community-based development. Just as the benefits of involving communities in poverty alleviation programmes are well acknowledged, so too is the fact that 'endogenous community imperfections' (Platteau 2002) undermine the pro-poor outcomes of these programmes. In response, policy actors and analysts have sought to overcome the problems of capture through two main routes. The first has been to improve project design so as to insulate projects from elite domination. The second has been to focus on empowerment of the poor as a means to develop their capacities vis a vis the elite.

Evidence suggests that it is unrealistic to expect (external) development initiatives to equalise power relations or by-pass the so-called elite in the short or medium term. In

a recent review of World Bank projects, Mansuri and Rao surmise that ‘most (community development projects) are dominated by elites, and both targetting and project quality tend to be markedly worse in more unequal communities’ (2004:21). They go on to argue that a ‘distinction between potentially “benevolent” forms of elite domination and the more pernicious types of capture is likely to be important for understanding project dynamics and outcomes’ (Mansuri and Rao 2004: 30).

The changing nature of elites in rural areas has been highlighted by recent research in local politics and participatory development in rural India. With a few exceptions (see Ananthapur 2007), there is a broad consensus about the decline of the traditional axis of rural authority along the lines of social status. As Krishna (2002) argues, the traditional elite have been replaced by a new set of political entrepreneurs or *nayanas* (new leaders) who are younger and more educated than their counterparts. Manor (2000) refers to these people as fixers (Reddy and Haragopal 1985) who have particular skills in mediating between villagers and higher-level bureaucrats and politicians. Importantly, the status of these elites is not conferred upon them exclusively by their caste or landownership but rather by their ability to adapt to the new compulsions of democracy and development in rural India.

The erosion of pre-existing structures of social² and political organisation has not been a uniform process across Indian states³. Yet, there are clear indications of this trend from a range of different contexts. For example, in his study of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, Krishna finds no evidence of a permanent grassroots-level political party

²The declining importance of caste in rural India is highly debatable, especially in light of the macroscopic picture of caste-based exclusion and differential development outcomes. However, there is emerging evidence that challenges this on the basis of micro-level ethnographies (Krishna 2003) and a broader literature on the decline of traditional models of the village social order, or the dominant caste model proposed by pioneers like Srinivas (1959). Clearly, this is an important issue that demands further research.

³These studies highlight the extent to which the transformation of the rural socio-political power structure varies across a state and even districts. In the latter half of his paper, Manor provides an interpretive account of inter-state variations in the stock of fixers and the use of this resource by party leaders (2000). There is a need for more detailed empirical research on these differences so that the implications for the design of community driven development and decentralisation projects become better understood.

structure. 'Rather than aligning themselves with any particular political party, ..., young, development-orientated leaders in villages usually drive hard bargains by playing off one political party against another' (2002: 152-156). Even where well-organised party structures are found at the local level, namely in the period of Leftist dominance in West Bengal, recent ethnographies have shown that the controlling influence of the parties is far more limited than is often assumed (Veron et al 2003, Williams 2001)⁴. The implicit conclusion of these recent studies is that the quality of local leadership remains crucial in determining developmental outcomes at the local level.

While the terminology differs, there is a broad recognition that this new breed of rural elites, brokers or fixers, genuinely serve the people whom they claim to represent and play a crucial role in driving and distorting the democracy and development in rural India (Manor 2000).

'Most fixers tend to be more concerned with their own interests and careers than with the welfare of the people whom they serve, but they are not strangers to altruism. Many take real pride in having helped to arrange benefits for grassroots groups. More crucially, nearly all fixers understand that villagers in most parts of India are now so politically aware and assertive that it is insufficient for them merely to avoid large-scale profiteering. Fixers must also deliver something tangible. Only then will they be able to generate the esteem at the local level on which their careers depend. So the distinction between their self-interest and their ability to assist rural dwellers is something of a false dichotomy.'

(Manor 2000:822)

The resilience of these codes of conduct that act to regulate or constrain the business of brokerage is likely to be an important determinant of the pro-poor outcomes of emerging forms of elite capture in rural India. Far from being homogenous groups who are aloof from ordinary villagers, the new elite provide services on which the poor rely and, as such, are assessed according to their performance and the fixing fees that they demand. Furthermore, a more fluid local society can potentially expand the pool of aspiring elites and increase competition between these local actors.

⁴The myth of the CPM as an enabling influence on decentralisation has rarely been questioned. The two accounts referred to here are some of the only empirical studies to have tested (and in the process, significantly challenged) the assumption of the party's pro-poor organisational capacity.

Informal Institutions

The importance of institutions has defined the current wave of development theory and practice. It has also promoted the need for a better understanding about how institutions actually work in a developing society. One important aspect of this has been the perceived need to question the dualities between state and society, institutions and organisations, political and social arenas and to focus instead on the processes of interaction that give rise to institutional change (North 1996:15, IIPG 2010). Equally, there is a growing sense of the need to reflect the fact that institutions are affected by context and take the form of 'norm patterns' which shape behaviours rather than externally defined principles (Lauth 2000:23).

The concept of informal institutions has gained prominence as a means of explaining institutional outcomes (Helmke and Levitsky 2003), both in terms of the apparent success of formal institutions, as well as, their failure; but more importantly, the reasons why institutions do not work in the same ways in different contexts. The examples cited by Helmke and Levitsky highlight the broad canvas of issues that informal institutions can help explain, ranging from effective limits of presidential powers to the oil that makes the electoral system function. Indeed, '(t)he term informal institution has been applied to a dizzying array of phenomena, including personal networks, clientelism, corruption, clans and mafias, civil society, traditional culture and a variety of legislative, judicial, and bureaucratic norms (ibid: 726 - 7). In short, informal institutions tend to be used as a means of giving structure to outcomes that cannot be explained without reference to culture or social analysis.

The concept of informal institutions is widely used in the context of local development projects, where the need for conceptual clarity is perhaps the greatest. As a recent evaluation report on World Bank community-driven development project concludes, bank projects have tended to focus on formal organisation and manifestations of collective action and that 'customs and conventions that could be specific to a

particular community and are important in determining collective activities have received inadequate attention' (2005:39). The report goes on to say that 'little thought appears to have been given to how formal structures that are created under a bank intervention will affect the informal organisations, customs and conventions of a village society and how the interactions of the formal and informal rules could influence empowerment (World Bank 2005:40). Failure to assess informal institutions, the report concludes, is a major determinant in the lack of sustainability of CBOs.

The use of the term informal institutions in the context of institutional change at the local level gives cause for greater conceptual clarity. Hans Lauth argues that 'formal institutions are guaranteed by state agencies and their disapproval is sanctioned by the state, (whereas) informal institutions⁵ are based solely on their existence and their effectiveness' (2000:24). According to Lauth, informal institutions are dependent on formal institutions; 'they live, as it were, at the expense of the (formal institutions), exploiting them for their own purpose, by either partially occupying or penetrating them' (2004:26). While they develop 'indigenously', they exist in relation to the formal system in ways that complement, substitute or conflict with formal institutions (2000).

The concept of informal institutions has been used to describe dynamics that are manifest at different levels of society. Taking India as an example, caste is often cited as one of the most important informal institutions that shapes the political process and social interaction more generally. Yet, as Srinivas (1959) showed, by adapting this concept to the local level, caste patterns do not translate into events. In his analysis of the 'dominant caste', he shows how the question is not one of externally defined notions of primordial rank but rather one of local expressions, which can vary between localities. More recent analysis has supported the low level of correlation between caste (as well as wealth) and participation in local affairs and has posited the importance of new structuring variables, notably education and awareness (Alsop et al

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Lauth focuses his discussion on Informal Institutions of Political Participation (IIPP) which come close to the commonly adopted notion of informal institutions used in the literature discussed here.

2000). Similar questions have been posed to reassess the role of political parties through studies that have highlighted the variations that are determined by local events, issues and actors rather than structures that emanate from outside the local space (Veron et al. 2004).

Deepening Democracy

One important contribution to this debate has been elucidated by Gaventa (2006) and the participation team at the Institute of Development Studies who have argued for the need to assess 'local spaces' and participation as a route to influencing higher-level politics and deepening democracy. The 'PowerCube'⁶ highlights the important distinctions between 'closed', 'invited' and 'claimed' spaces, each of which can vary in terms of the degree of visibility of power, which is enacted within them. The concept of an invited space comes close to the type of externally created forums for participatory decision making, whereas closed spaces represent those in which 'decisions are made behind closed doors' (Gaventa 2006) which, together with 'claimed spaces', constitute the effective informal institutions that Lauth argues exist in dynamic dependence with formal institutions. Whereas Gaventa is concerned with the way in which citizens and social movements create effective space from below, the current trajectory of participatory development raises the question of how political and policy actors at the state level respond to the prevailing patterns in the social structure.

The scaling up of participatory development has been closely linked to the deepening of democracy (Gaventa and Valderrama 1999, Gaventa 2006) and the demand for good governance. One important arena of interaction lies in the interface between community-driven development and the local governance structure, both of which form the centre of interactions between citizens and the 'front line' service providers and elected representatives. Another important set of interactions relate to the encounters with the state and the political system and hence, people's participation

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www.powercube.net accessed 30th October 2010

and perceptions of politics in general. This latter set of issues has tended to be downplayed in analysis of the politics of participation and demands a more prominent role in order to understand the type of initiatives discussed in this thesis.

The need to refocus attention on participation in higher-level politics has been under-explored by theorists who focus on the spaces and mechanisms of political participation (see Gaventa and Valderrama 1999). As a result, there is a tendency to overlook some of the lessons from the broader literature on political participation, which looks beyond the narrow definitions of influence in the selection of government personnel and the decisions that they make (Verba et al. 1978) to provide a more holistic account that includes 'elections campaigning, collective action around policy issues, contacting political representatives and direct action like protests and demonstration' (Bratton 1999:552).

Situating local political participation in the broader context of state politics demands a different framework of analysis. Political participation tends to follow a 'cumulative structure' where the various types of political activity are not comparable units but are instead, elements in a pattern of political behaviours (Krishna 2002). For instance, someone who attends party meetings, a relatively intensive activity, is also likely to be an active member of political parties and involved in a number of other activities such as campaigning, contacting public officials etc.. Indeed, it is unlikely that participation in more time-intensive activities will occur independently. This approach has a number of important implications for the way in which we understand the electorate and by extension, community members in a developing democracy.

The model of political participation that is relevant for analysis is fundamentally dependent on the broader question of the relationship between state politics and local-level politics. As we see below, this poses the need for an analysis of the nature of the polity, and in particular, the penetration of national or state politics to the local level. However, before moving on to this discussion, it is important to note that even in contexts where these links are not explicit, there is cause to question the political

salience of local politics.

1.2.3 The polity approach

Theda Skocpol first elaborated the polity approach in 1993 in her study of social policies in the United States (Skocpol 1993). The approach sets out to overcome the limitations of the state and society centric approaches to understanding the construction and outcomes of public policy. The approach views the polity as the primary locus of action, yet understands political activities as conditioned by the institutional configuration of the state and society and emphasises the dynamic process of interaction across the state - society divide. As others have recently argued (Houtzager 2003, Joshi 2008), this model is particularly relevant in seeking to understand contemporary development prescriptions and the political institution arrangements that underpin them.

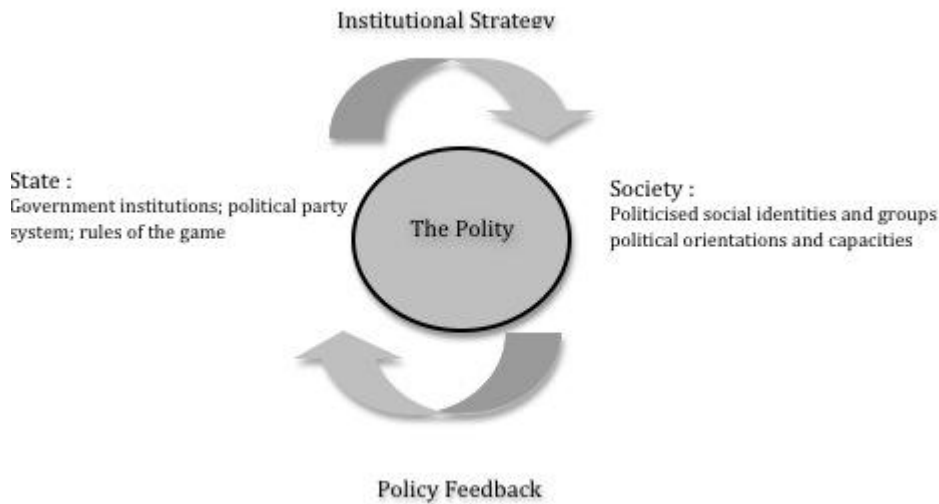
The polity approach explores the dynamic interface between state and society and emphasises the need to pay attention to the perspective of politicians - both in terms of the ways that policy processes are structured, enabled or constrained by the political organisation in which they operate. It also opens up the analysis to account for the broader pressures or concerns that politicians face, including international and domestic struggles, which contribute to what Skocpol refers to as 'state formation'.

The social arena is not seen as an autonomous domain but rather one that is shaped by the relationship to the state. Social structures are broadly defined to include cultural patterns and capacities, as well as, the extent to which 'politically active' groups are influenced by political structures and processes (1993:47). However, rather than substituting political determinism for social determinism, the social domain is understood as one in which 'social and political factors combine to affect the social identities and group capacities involved in (..) policymaking' (ibid).

Defining both state and society in terms of their interaction reflects the emerging view of the need to bring the state back into the analysis of politics and policy (Migdal 1988), and explores the extent to which the state is embedded in society and vice versa. In exploring the other two principles of the polity approach, Skocpol takes this broad debate a step further by using it as a means to explore policy effectiveness; not in terms of technical design, but instead, in terms of the degree of 'fit' between political institutions and group capacities (Figure 2).

Skocpol's analysis of institutional 'fit' understands policy as a key instrument that affects state society relations. Policy choices determine 'access and leverage to some groups and alliances, thus encouraging and rewarding their efforts to shape government policies, while simultaneously denying access and leverage to other groups and alliances operating in the same national polity' (1993:54). This interpretation of policy as an important part in the historically changing relationship between social groups and the state, as we see below, is of particular relevance when understanding participatory development.

Policy choices are formed through an iterative process of 'policy feedbacks'. Just as policies can shape access to influence, they can 'affect social identities, goals and capacities of groups that subsequently support or ally in politics' (Skocpol 1993:58). Just as theorists of path dependence approaches have argued, policy making, therefore, needs to be understood as feeding into the long term process of social change, as well as, being affected by past performance and experience.

Figure 2: Polity approach

(based on Skocpol 1993)

While the polity approach marks an important departure from more static models of state-periphery relations implicit in the political approach to decentralisation (Blair 2000), there is cause to question the extent to which the state and society can be treated as unified concepts in developing societies. The following section presents an important modification to the polity approach that aims to bring in the aspect of the distinctive politics in developing societies or political development.

1.2.4 The developing polity approach

The concept of political development emerged during the 1960s as a framework for comparative analysis of societies undergoing the transition towards modernity. The process of democratisation, as it has unfolded over the last three decades, has led most theorists to reject the fundamental axioms of the approach as part of a broader rejection of the concept of democratic transition, or what Carothers calls the 'sequencing fallacy' (2007) and the need to focus instead on the 'continuum from low to high quality democracy' (Linz and Stephan 1996). Yet, as this section sets out to show, the concept of political development can be useful both in terms of exploring the dynamic process of political change and the potential interaction between different types of politics in a single polity. In particular, the approach focuses attention on the

distinctiveness of the local polity and the governance challenges this invokes.

The contrast between the modern and post-modern views of the locality is evident when we consider Karl Deutsch's description of social mobilisation. For Deutsch, this entailed an 'overall process of change that happens to substantial parts of the population which are moving from traditional to modern ways of life' (1961: 493). Critical to this process was the physical and psychological mobilisation away from the confines of the locality in ways that enabled citizens to forge new patterns of association, cognition and identification, which in turn, gave rise to new types of political behaviours associated with modern politics. For Deutsch, modern forms of democracy depended on the erosion of the locality in social, economic and political terms.

Deutsch's uncompromising definition of modernisation laid an important foundation for the seminal body of comparative political analysis, which came to be identified as political development. This school of thinkers, which included Lucian Pye, Samuel Huntington and Myron Weiner, made important contributions in terms of detailing the challenges that surround the core model of linear political change. The more nuanced account of political change set out by Huntington (2006) shows how this linear model of political development is not so much a prescriptive path, but rather a basis to understand the types of tensions and challenges that faced polities in transition and therefore, the governance challenges that politicians face in a developing polity.

A key concept underpinning political development is the distinction between traditional and modern politics and the evolution of the relationship between local and national politics. In a conference on local-level politics held in 1966, Swartz and his peers converged around views that local politics was defined by multiplex relationships (Swartz 1969). The concept of multiplex relations refers to the clustering of economic, social and political authority in local leaders and hence, the blurring of boundaries between personalised or familial power, which others have termed traditional politics (Huntington 2006: Chapter 3). This is a view that has been explored in depth by

anthropological accounts of traditional political systems which have emphasised the gaps between the familiar social structure of rural man and the alien political system (Tinkler 1969). Yet Swartz and his colleagues emphasise the difference between local politics and local-level politics. While the former was constructed through multiplex relations, the latter was incomplete in the sense that it was affected by actors outside the immediate local context (Swartz 1969).

This characterisation is important in that it creates a seamless field between tradition and modernity. Nonetheless, constructs that help to explain the distinctiveness of the local polity find a place in the narratives of Swartz's contemporaries as useful analytical devices that provide a local expression to the kind of large-scale transformations proposed by Deutsch. One important example of this is provided by Huntington (2006), who describes the progression of party formation from local patronage to the emergence of a mass party organisation through the various stages of interaction with supra-local politics. Another is Scott's analysis of the erosion of patron-client relations which is rooted in the rejection of clientelist ties to local powerbrokers (1972). These approaches share a common understanding: the distinctiveness of local level politics and the extent to which this is not simply eroded by the progression towards modern political systems (c.f. Deutsch 1963), but rather are changed through dialectic forces across the local-supra-local divide.

The emergence of 'simplex' (as opposed to multiplex) political (Swartz 1969) relations that characterise the modern polity entails a fundamental change in the role of the locality, which ceases to be a formative unit of social and political organisation. Central to this is the concept that people move across localities or are able to consider local events and actors with a broader (comparative) perspective which is enabled through membership of new forms of identity based associations and exposure to information beyond the locality. Yet as Huntington (2006) argues, this process imposes new challenges in terms of maintenance of political order, where the challenges lie in creating new institutions to respond to changing demands.

For Huntington, the breakdown of local ties does not simply lead to the creation of new types of political institutions. Instead, it imposes new challenges for the political elite in terms of building new political institutions in their place. For Huntington, this process defined the critical governance challenge in a developing polity, which he understands as the maintenance of political order. La Palombara (1971) stated this challenge most clearly, labelling it the 'crisis of penetration'. Large-scale social and political change imposes new challenges on state elites, not simply in terms of responding to the demands but in terms of making their influence penetrate to the local level. The crisis of penetration can occur for a number of reasons, including changes in the territory's limits or the emergence of regional demands and demands new technologies of governance to ensure that state elites are capable of asserting themselves locally. This additional element of the challenges of governance and order defined the major political challenge of participatory local development.

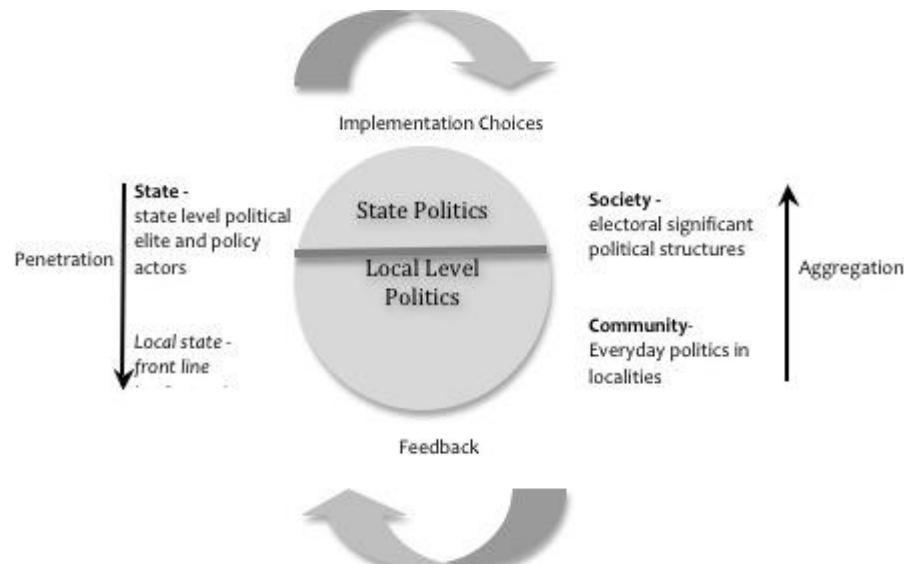
The relevance of these arguments to India will be explored in the following chapter but it is important to emphasise the fact that the types of challenges discussed here find salience beyond the democratic context. As Huntington argues, the important distinction between governments lies less in the type of political systems than in terms of the degree of governance (2006).

In this section, I have set out to show how the concept of political development serves to encapsulate many of the key challenges of governance and development that have tended to be downplayed by a unified concept of the polity. While it is important to focus on the interplay of state and society, there is cause to question the relationship between local politics and the larger polity and the extent to which a similar set of assumptions can be applied in terms of the nature of politics encountered across the different levels of the polity.

A 'developing polity' approach can be proposed as a means to assess the structural distinctions in the political system in developing countries. As Weiner argues, there is cause to consider the existence of 'two political worlds' that operate in a developing

polity, each of which functions according to a different set of rules. Just as the polity approach focuses attention on the interplay between state and society, there is equally a need to explore the interplay between these at different levels in the system. In the context of participatory development, the focus of attention needs to be on assessing this process of interplay between the state and the community (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Developing polity approach



The model proposed here builds on the same set of assumptions regarding the primacy of state elites as drivers of participatory development but sets out to challenge the assumptions of the unitary concept of society. Introducing the distinction between society and the community assumes that state elites are most likely to be concerned with the effect of polity on larger social and hence political relevant structures. However, the arena of interaction and hence, feedback takes place at the community level. While it is recognised that the local state of implementing agents play a role in shaping these interactions, emphasis is given to the autonomy of the locality as a political space.

1.3 Implications and Questions for Research

The degree to which this autonomy is established is the first additional research question that this model aims to suggest. The political behaviours of community members cannot be assumed. At times, their actions are based on their perceptions of supra-local politics. At other times, they respond to their direct experience of politics, based on encounters in their localities. The nature of this relationship cannot be deduced; rather it needs to be a core question for analysis.

The second new question this approach raises is the degree to which the state level political leadership is capable of making its influence penetrate the locality. While the major focus of this debate has been on understanding the relationship between authority and incentives within the bureaucracy, this approach suggests a different emphasis - one that focused on the extent to which the state is capable of affecting political dynamics in the local arena. It is recognised that these dynamics are forged significantly through the relations between the community and the agents of the local state. However, there is cause to treat these as a single cohesive and blurred element as opposed to the supra-local state and society.

The model of a 'developing polity' enables a new approach to thinking about political strategy in a way that responds to the specific nature of the participatory development as it is evolving in Andhra Pradesh and other developing democracies. The proposition can be stated as follows. Politicians have an interest in improving development outcomes at the community level in as far as this provides a 'fit' with the established or potential alliances on which they depend on for their re-election. Direct engagement at the local level has the potential to deliver these outcomes more effectively and to overcome many of the structural hindrances to institutional change. However, the success of this approach is likely to have broader and significant impacts of the informal structures of political participation, namely, in terms of altering the

fundamental basis of political behaviours of the rural poor. As a result, the understanding of these structures, the capacity for change and the implications of these changes will shape political strategy. An analysis of the process requires thinking like a politician and the need to pay greater attention to understanding the hidden structures that inform policy choices.

This research set out to explore various aspects of these broad questions relating to the nature of the developing polity, with reference to the specific issues arising from the new politics of localisation. Three key questions form the basis of the following political analysis:

RQ1: What are the drivers of local electoral politics?

The process of electoral politics is one of the most important windows through which to observe the strength of the relationship between local and national politics. Democratic decentralisation provides the opportunity to understand this further. While a direct comparison between political behaviours in local and national election is beyond the scope of this research, there is scope to assess the extent to which the factors that influence voters' decisions are shaped by local or national issues. The influence of parties and aggregated caste dynamics are two important aspects of this in the Indian context, which can be compared to the influence of local actors, issues and events. In the context of Andhra Pradesh, where formal decentralisation has been undermined both formally and informally, a further aspect to this research question is the extent to which the local election remains important, and if so, why?

RQ2: To what extent do parallel initiatives in community-based development give rise to new patterns of local politics?

One important aspect of the new politics of localisation is the direct focus on institution building at the local level, parallel to democratic decentralisation. For the first time, the case of Andhra Pradesh provides the opportunity to explore the

cumulative impacts of a range of different types of local institutional strategies which have the highly visible political support of the Chief Minister. The extent to which this centralised political push extends to the local space is key to understanding the nature of the developing polity. Whether or not the national political leadership is able to shape the local space through these initiatives and the extent to which the resultant dynamics is associated with this higher-level influence, are two important aspects of penetrative politics. This process of penetration, when mediated by local dynamics can be both positive and negative for the regime. Equally, the association with higher-level politics can potentially create new dynamics that rise above local politics.

RQ3: Who are the ‘leaders’ at the local level, and how are leadership networks shaped by new local institutions and opportunities created by participatory local development?

The importance of local elites in shaping the new politics of localisation has been discussed above. This research set out to further this discussion in the context of the multiple process of localisation in Andhra Pradesh with a view to better understanding the extent to which ‘local’ leaders are defined as distinctive actors in the polity and the extent to which this leadership is influenced by aspects of the higher level of the polity, namely political parties and higher level party aspirations.

These research questions form the basis of the structure of the empirical sections of this thesis, which are discussed further in the final section of this chapter.

1.4 Conclusion and Structure of the Thesis

This chapter has explored the challenges of applying the framework of politics to understand the new politics of localisation. The polity approach provides an important means to overcome the statism of politics of state-periphery relations but downplays the distinctiveness of the developing polity. Analysis based at the local level overcomes these problems and also draws out both the complexity and the salience of local

politics in creating political change. As theorists of the everyday state have argued, these quotidian practices and the daily interactions that take place locally are important not only for the people involved but also in terms of defining the state.

Understanding the dynamic interaction between state and society is an important step in the direction of understanding the dynamic process of state formation and the extent to which social demands (and potential demands) shape the polity. The adoption of the polity approach in the developing country context provokes new thinking of the policy making process, based around the search for an 'institutional fit'. This chapter has set out to show how there is a greater need to explore the potential for this 'fit' to take place between different types of politics, as theorists in the 1960s were aware when they were promoting the concept of political development.

The developing polity model aims to provide a means of encapsulating the type of complexity noted by the local perspective on participation and political change and to link it to the state. New questions emerge from this approach, namely, the extent to which state level politicians can engage with local politics and more importantly, the extent to which political behaviours can be characterised and are forged between the local and supra-local level.

The next chapter provides a more detailed account of the methodology underpinning this research and the broad focus on comparative analysis using both quantitative and qualitative techniques and the ways these were adapted to meet some of the key challenges that arose in the field. Chapter 3 (*Developmental Politics in Andhra Pradesh*) traces three decades of politics in Andhra Pradesh, and the transition from Congress-dominance to regionalist populism. Indicative of the broader pattern of political change in India, the latter phase serves as an example of what Kohli terms as the 'crisis of governability' (1991). Set against this backdrop, the chapter provides an outline of the broad strategy adopted by Naidu to create a 'new politics of development'. While capturing the attention of international audiences, Naidu's strategy was oriented toward domestic compulsions. The analysis focuses on the broad principles of his

strategy to reconfigure politics through radical and controversial innovations directed at the rural voters, and in turn, resting his fortunes on the impact of these innovations at the ground level.

The chapters that follow explore three distinct arenas of local politics:

Chapter 4 (*Electoral Politics: The Distinctiveness of the Village Polity*) explores participation and processes around village elections in four localities. The *gram panchayat* elections provide an important lens through which to understand both the political challenge of rural development, as well as, the construction of a developing polity. Despite being starved of formal powers, village elections are the most intensely fought contests in the political system. The chapter explores the general patterns of participation across villages and uses detailed analysis of local events, issues and actors to understand the drivers of participation and electoral outcomes.

Chapter 5 (*Participatory Politics: Changing the Narratives of Village Politics*) focuses on the institutional innovations brought in by Naidu as part of this strategy to develop a new politics. The significant penetration of this strategy was manifest in three key mechanisms (village interface, community mobilisation and community contributions). Drawing on the analysis of perceptions, the analysis highlights the systemic distortion of implementation by local actors and its implications for the image of the state. The analysis highlights the importance of the aggregate impact of these initiatives in sharpening local identities and creating political resources that stimulate village politics.

Chapter 6 (*Elite Politics: Systems of Capture*) delves deeper into the issue of leadership. The analysis explores the emergence of a new type of village leadership that combines the pragmatism of new elites with the structures of factionalism. The chapter presents a model for understanding village leadership through disaggregation and explores the wide range of drivers within the inner working of political groups in the village. It highlights the extent to which leaders drive the process of politicisation at the village level, enabled by policies projected on the village from above.

Chapter 7 (*Conclusion*) provides an overview of the key findings of the research and examines the implications for both understanding Indian politics and the politics of development.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Overview

The previous chapter highlighted the importance of making the influence of the state level politics leadership penetrate the locality. The developing polity approach aims to focus attention of the interface between the 'two worlds' of politics, which in turn, raises the question regarding the pattern that shapes politics in localities. This chapter shows the methodological approach used to uncover the hidden narrative of local politics.

The methods used to understand rural politics play a significant role in determining the findings and therefore, conclusions. The spread of participation and its use in large-scale programmes has led most researchers to frame their approaches in a way that understands the aggregate trends arising from micro-processes. More intensive ethnographies have demonstrated the added value of what Geertz (1973) described as 'thick description' which at the same time, demonstrates the challenges of generalising findings. This research sought to find a middle ground between intensive approaches and generalisation.

This research was conducted in two phases. During the first, a detailed analysis of politics and participation was carried out in four villages, sampled to reflect differing political relations between the village and the higher levels of politics. In these villages a range of issues was explored, including the relationship between electoral politics and participatory development project and the role that gender, social relations and political activity played in determining the pattern of participation. One important finding of this research was the degree to which the 'political stratum' was distinguished from other villages and the extent to which relations within the stratum determined politics in the village. In order to investigate this further, a second phase of fieldwork was designed, which focused on identifying leaders and analysing their relations in a large sample of 13 villages. Interviews with a broader set of informants at

the district and state level were carried out to support the village analysis, with the main focus being on the former. In all, fieldwork was carried out over the period of one year (Table 1).

Table 1: Phases of Field Work

January 2002 – February 2002	Interviews and secondary data collection in Hyderabad to determine sampling and recruit assistant.
February 2002	Piloting questionnaire (Nalgonda)
February 2002 – April 2002	Field research in two villages in Nalgonda
May 2002	Preliminary analysis of data
June 2002-July 2002	Field research in two villages in Prakasham district
August 2002	Preliminary analysis of data (UK)
September 2002	Piloting of ‘Political Stratum Analysis’
October – December 2002	‘Political Stratum Analysis’ in three locations (13 villages) ⁷

The remainder of this chapter is divided into three parts. The following section (2.2) discusses development of the methodology, based around the concept of comparative case analysis, and the way this was adapted to the key research questions. Section 2.3 provides further detail on the application of this methodology, namely issues of sampling and the design of the research instruments. The final section (2.4) discusses some of the main key challenges and opportunities of this type of research and implications of the analysis.

⁷ Piloting of the political stratum analysis was carried out in a new *mandal* in Nalgonda, not covered during the first phase of field research. The original intention was to return to this *mandal* for final data collection, but this was not possible due to personal constraints.

2.2 Methodological Approach

Addressing the linkages between village politics and the policies and strategies at the state level required an approach that combined depth and scale and which most importantly, allowed for a flexible and exploratory approach. From the outset, there was little doubt in my mind that intensive village studies would be revealing in terms of unveiling patterns of politicisation that have been largely overlooked by large scale quantitative research. As the previous chapter shows, the critical question for understanding the new politics of localisation was in the extent to which rural citizens could be understood to be 'villagers' (or members of a specific village) or individuals who are shaped by aspects of an identity (i.e., gender, social and political) that is not tied to the locale.

In order to address this question, a hybrid approach was needed that both compared the villager's political behaviours and the context in which these behaviours were potentially shaped. The traditional methodological choice between randomly sampled or large N quantitative studies on the one hand, and intensive village case studies on the other, both presented limitations in terms of the depth of exploration and the generality of the findings. There are issues that have been explored in-depth by Charles Ragin and formed the basis of what he referred to as the qualitative comparative methodology (1994).

Intensive case study analysis, according to Ragin, results in an 'empirical intimacy with case studies (that) comes at a very high price' (1994:301), namely, that of complexity and the lack of comparability. In Ragin's formulation, the number of comparisons that can be addressed increases geometrically as the number of cases increases. In short, case-based research increases variables. The complexities of relationships that determine events in in-depth case study research results in what Ragin refers to as an 'indecipherable cacophony of co-linearity' (1994:307) that defies comparison. Quantitative research, on the other hand, aims to reduce the complexity. In doing so, it

underplays the importance of the specific factors that determine an event or outcome, while offering more 'robust' replications of the validity of findings.

Ragin's characterisation of the different approaches aptly describes the methodological challenge of this research design. If we assume the village is a 'case', there are equal dangers of representative sampling (largeN) and in-depth analysis (small N). Whereas the former responds to the need to reflect within-state variation, the inherent compromises in terms of depth mean that the important variables will be overlooked. Small-scale studies cannot claim representativeness. Ragin's approach seeks to find a balance between these approaches by selecting a small number of cases that display the key mix of factors that are pertinent to research.

Taking Ragin's model of comparative case study analysis as a guide, the selection of these cases aims to capture the key variations that were pertinent to the specific research questions, namely, the relation between local party support, the regional political profile and the state. In addition, the importance of reservations in the *panchayat* elections provides an additional set of core indicators. In contrast to the longitudinal or experimental approach, the selection of 'village types' forms the basis of this analysis. Taking this framework as a starting point, the objectives of the approach aims to explore the complexities of local variation as a means of isolating or capturing the key driving forces of local politics.

The questions that guided this research required a further level of methodological innovation, besides the drawing of the optimal lines of intensity and comparability between cases. In order to test the extent to which the 'village' or the local polity was a significant factor in shaping political or participatory behaviours, the design also needed to enable the analysis of other factors that shape behaviours; factors that were less tied to the local polity and instead, were influenced by supra-local identity. To do so, a qualitative methodology was built into the comparative case approach, by random stratified sampling respondents with the four villages in a way that ensured

representation of gender and social groups. By doing so, a relatively high intensity of sampling was carried out, taking one in every fifth household, to ensure that the nuances of participatory behaviour would be captured. This process set out to ensure that the differential political behaviours of caste, gender, political affiliation and level of political activity would be accounted for, so as to account for the potential of these independent or supra-local identities to influence local politics.

The combination of quantitative methods and case based analysis has certain limitations. Unlike traditional quantitative studies that seek to downplay the esoteric qualities of the locality, drawing a relatively sizable sample from only four villages means that these effects are ever present. However, as the following section shows, the process of sampling was designed in a way that would ensure that key political and social factors were accounted for, so as to reduce the potential bias that could be expected.

2.3 Application of Methodological Approach

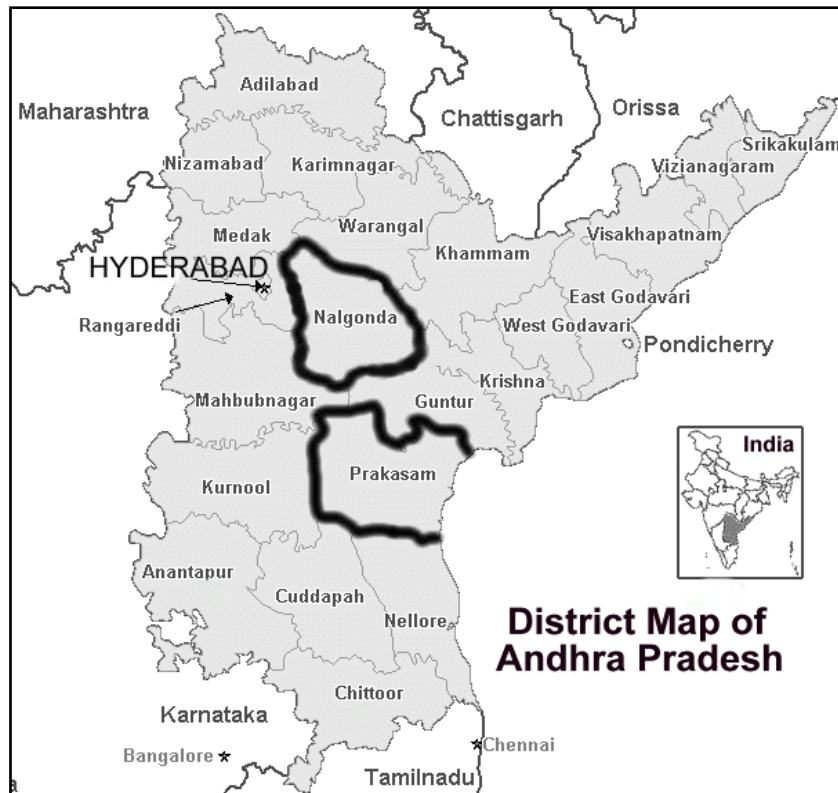
This section provides more detail on the way in which the methodological approach set out above was applied in practice, including the selection of field sites, and the design of the interviews.

2.3.1 Selection of Field Sites

Andhra Pradesh is a highly diverse collection of regions, people and histories; its very cohesiveness has constantly been questioned since the formation of the state in 1954. The historical evolution of the state of Andhra Pradesh has given support to the view that the modern state is the merging of three distinct regions of Rayalaseema, coastal Andhra and Telangana. Accordingly, there has been a tendency for researchers and policy analysts to build empirical representation on a design that covers all three regions (see Rao and Dev 2003). However, the village level case study approach opens

a far broader set of challenges that limit the reliability of regional comparisons. There are significant differences between regions, for example, from the rich Delta Krishna district to the tribal-dominated border areas of Srikakulam in the 'coastal' region. As this research shows, looking at the drivers of politics 'from below' also reveals significant differences between localities even in seemingly similar political and geographic areas.

Figure 4: Selected districts in Andhra Pradesh



Basing the sampling strategy on the key research variables rather than on the broader social and economic variation in the population suggested a clear focus on political assessment. Thus, a three stage selection process was established, keeping in mind the specific research questions to be addressed: based at the district, *mandal* and village level. The fact that party-based elections are held at the *mandal* level in Andhra

Pradesh meant that it was possible to draw in detailed electoral data issues by the electoral commissions, based on the 2001 *panchayat* elections.

Keeping in mind the broader social pattern in the state, analysis of the three main regions in Andhra Pradesh revealed a higher degree of similarity in the party political variables between the coastal region and Rayalaseema, contrasted to Telangana, where opposition parties had a stronger presence. Further, in order to reduce the effects of the divergent levels of social and economic development within these regions, it was decided to base research in areas with similar development levels, using data from the state level of the Human Development Index (HDI) in Andhra Pradesh and from the National Census Bureau, Nalgonda (in Telangana) and Prakasham districts (in coastal Andhra). These two districts ranked thirteenth and fourteenth respectively, out of 22 districts in terms of HDI (see Annex 3). The first stage of sampling aimed to reduce the effects of varying levels of literacy, the level of urbanisation and downplay the role of tribal governance systems and administrative arrangements.

The second stage of sampling aimed to identify areas within these districts that highlighted the differences in political support drawing on data at the *mandal* level elections, as well as, the assembly and parliamentary elections in order to finalise the selection of *mandals*. The selection was influenced by the degree of access to field areas and proximity to localities where it would be possible to be based outside the village for an extended period of time. In view of the confidentiality agreements with the participants (discussed below), the actual selection of research localities is not declared.

The third level of sampling involved the selection of village, or *gram panchayats* for the research. The process of selection involved discussions with key informants (KIs) at the *mandal* level but, more importantly, field visits to at least five villages in each region to determine the actual electoral dynamics at the village level. The selection of the four

villages that formed the sample for the first phase of research was further informed by the allocation of reservations for lower-caste members for the position of *sarpanch*.

Table 2: Electoral outcomes in four localities

(Female members at all levels except in the wards are shown in bold; reserved seats are indicated in brackets)

<i>Mandal</i> code/district		SP – NALGONDA		KP – PRAKASHAM	
Village code	Year of election	KB	IP	BVP	PGP
Present <i>sarpanch</i> Winning margin %	2001	TDP (BC) 9.4	INC (SC) 7.8	INC (SC) 4.5	TDP 2.9
Main contestant	2001	INC	TDP	TDP	INC
Ex- <i>sarpanch</i>	1995	TDP	INC	TDP (BC) ¹	TDP (BC)
<i>Mandal panchayat</i> committee member	2001	INC (BC)	CPI(M) (SC)	TDP (SC)	
Ex- <i>mandal panchayat</i> committee member	1995	CPI(M) (SC)	CPM	TDP	
Composition of <i>gram panchayat</i> (ward members)	2001	5 INC 6 TDP	3 CPI(M) 3 TDP 3 BJP 1 INDE	5 TDP 5 INC	5 TDP 5 INC
Member of the State Legislative Assembly (MLA) Runner up and margin	1999	INC defeated TDP by 7.45%		TDP defeated INC by 0.23%	
Ex-MLA Runner up and margin	1994	TDP defeated INC by 21.53%		Independent defeated INC by 7.17%	
Notes on assembly election		SC reservation in both terms		Seat did not change hands over this period	

¹ There was a lot of ambiguity over the affiliation of this candidate. The dominant story is that he was elected under INC (as the TDP candidate was withdrawn) and then he changed allegiance to the TDP within the first year.

Source : Andhra Pradesh State Election Commission and field data

As Table 2 shows, the objective to delineate the party alignment at the *panchayat* level is complicated by two factors. The first is the narrow margins of the winning candidates at the village level which, as discussed in chapter 4, is not only lower at the village level, it is also the product of the highest levels of participation of any democratic

contest in the Indian political system. Secondly, while the *sarpanch* is recognised as the main political position at the village, the multi-tiers and overlapping system of direct and indirect elections means that there are other analogous posts in the village and in an important relation to the higher level of the political system. As chapter 6 discusses, the proliferation of these posts is a way of accommodating leaders within parties and managing the opposition. As a central subject of the research, the political identity of a village does not offer a straightforward criterion for selection.

Equal weightage was also given to ensure representation of social variables, namely, gender and caste. In India, the *panchayati raj* system aims to ensure representation of lower castes and women through a system of reservation that runs from the ward to the assembly levels. Here too, there are complications in that, often, candidates elected under reservations are 'proxies' for higher caste men and party leaders; this is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 4.

Overcoming these challenges requires intensive work at the stage of sampling, as it was only by visiting a selection of *panchayats* in the selected *mandals*, that a sense of the local dynamics could be ascertained. Given that the core hypothesis of this thesis, roughly states that 'village politics vary considerably between localities based on a combination of actors, issues and events', the main purpose of these visits was to confirm the victory and strength of the different parties, as well as, a mix of politically prominent and poorer more marginal localities, in areas that shared a political and social context.

2.3.2 Outline of the selected villages

KB village

Located on the banks of the River Musi, this village enjoys semi-irrigated lands and proximity (10km, with good connections) to Suryapet, which is one of the important

towns in Nalgonda district. Politically, this village is relatively peaceful, though it has good representation from the INC, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) {CPI(M)} and the Telugu Desam Party (TDP). The reign of the TDP, now in the hands of the elected backward class (BC)*sarpanch*, is supported from the sidelines by the *Reddy* ex-*sarpanch*. There are some petty contractors but no real dominant powers. The noticeable feature is the level of conflict negotiation that takes place in the village, which draws on all parties and all castes openly and freely. High caste domination is not noticeable any more in this village which has a large BC population dominated by the *Gouds* though there are no *Malas* in the village. The village is reasonably unified, spatially and socially and earns considerable funds from the auction of the sand collection contract from the riverbed. This contract is illegal, yet accepted as necessary. The administration of the funds has, in the past, resulted in conflicts, which villagers choose not to discuss in any depth with outsiders.

IP village

Compared to KB, this village is a lot more isolated with fairly poor connectivity. It has a strong identity from the past, with the CPI(M) fading to the new, young and BC dominated TDP. High caste power is still a major issue in the village – *Reddy* houses are located in a separate area of the village and walls surround most of the larger dwellings. The village is divided into clear BC, SC (*Mala* and *Madigal*) colonies and further divided into two sub-sections on either side of the tank. The village has a large number of active youths and youth groups and in the whole district, it was voted as the one of the success stories for the Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA). At present, politics in the village is becoming diverse, with active members from all the major parties like CPI(M), INC, TDP, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), as well as, from Telegana Sadhana Samithi (TSS) and Telegana Rashtra Samithi (TRS). Currently, a coalition of anti-TDP parties holds the *panchayat*.

BVP village

BVP is the smallest and probably the poorest of the villages despite being near a main

highway and a small town. Due to flouride contamination in the groundwater and overcrowding in the main village, the scheduled castes SCs were moved to their own colony some ten years ago, which seems to have contributed to the lack of unity in the village. While currently the *sarpanch* is a *dalit* from the Congress party (and living in the colony), the high caste TDP from the main village are its biggest power brokers and control most of the funds in the village. The TDP party has some old leaders and some younger and ambitious cadre who are very powerful. The village is factional with two groups (TDP, INC) which divide people within castes. While there is a lot of house building in the village, especially in the SC colonies, the allocation of this is highly politicised. In the allocation of land, though the *Reddies* continue to dominate and are favoured, now the *Naidus* are strong contenders for the allocation of land as well.

PGP village

Though PGP village has many *Reddy* households, the *Naidus* have clearly achieved a hold over power in the village. The TDP *Naidu sarpanch* managed to win the election by proxy in the last term and rose to his true position of domination after his wife had been elected *sarpanch*. He is close to the MLA and personally manages all contracts – sharing very little with the TDP cadre. Development activities in the village are frequently covered by the local press, reflecting the fact that this is a well-known and politically important village in the *mandal*. The *Reddys* are mainly from the Congress party and have no power or even means to contest under the regime. Violent conflicts have arisen in the past and now, they do not dare to get involved. The *Mala* colony is home to the TDP *mandal* president, so the success of the TDP reaches sections of both high and low castes. The *Madigals* are more divided than the *Malas* and lack leadership.

2.3.3 Defining the locality

This brief account of the main features of the sample villages serves to highlight the challenges of selection based on a simple typology or core variables. It also serves to

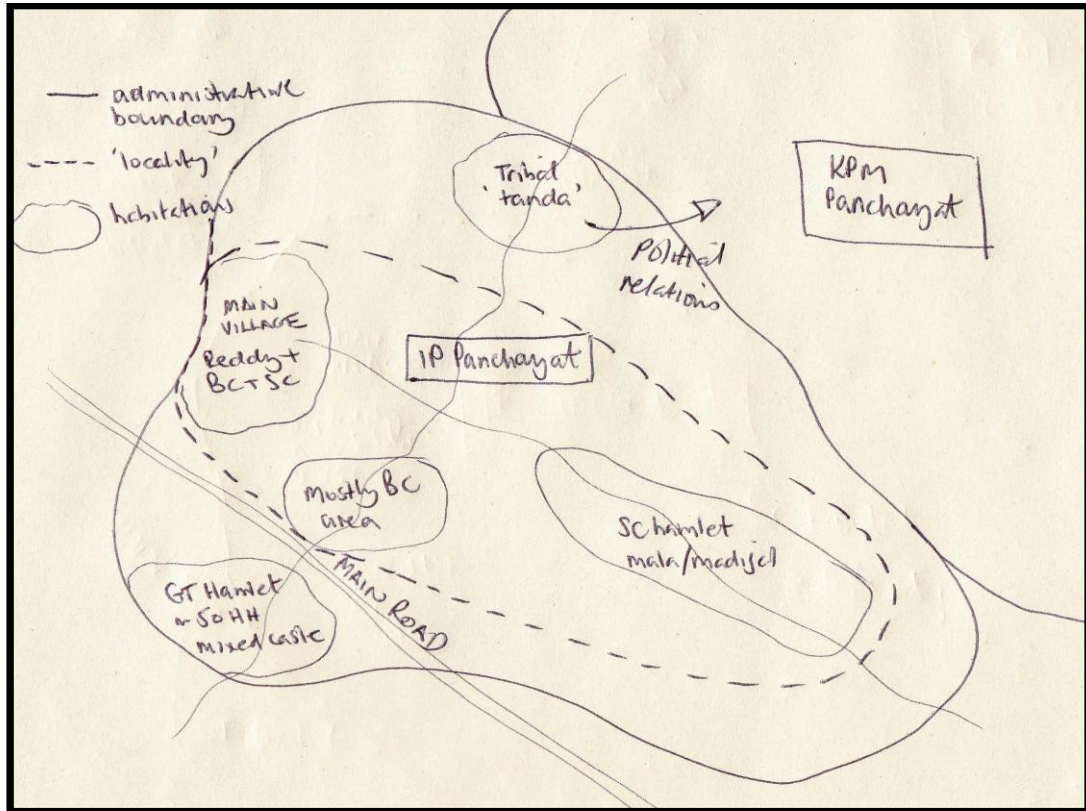
show the extent to which the politics in each village is a contest between various groups and the extent to which the elite drive this politics. Yet, it cannot be assumed that the politics of the elite equally affect all people who live in the political unit. In this section, further details on the importance of identifying a political unit will be provided.

The concept of the 'village' as an analytical unit has long since been a subject of debate. Dumont and Pocock (1957) famously argued that the Indian village is only an architectural and demographic fact. Fieldworkers confer on the village a kind of sociological reality which it does not possess. The approach taken in this research maintained the notion of the 'village' as a subject for empirical enquiry, a notion that was constantly being questioned. Unlike other states in India, Andhra Pradesh adopted a system of local governance that is based on relatively small local units. Most of the villages visited were 'single village *panchayats*' which implies that the lowest unit of administration is largely synonymous with a locally understood notion of a village. However, when working within the village, it soon becomes apparent that villages consist of various parts, including hamlets and colonies that are administered together with the main village, caste-based neighbourhoods (or *pallis*) normally consisting of the lowest castes, and even multiple *pallis* or habitations of different lower castes. As such, the village is rarely a homogeneous unit.

As stated above, sampling of households was carried out on the basis of household lists that were compiled for 'official' purposes of health monitoring or voting. In a number of cases, it was found that selected respondents lived in a hamlet or part of the village that was considered to be separate from the 'main village' where most of the samples were found. Figure 5 shows the political 'sketch map' used to define the political locality with the IP village *panchayat*. As most other *panchayats*, IP comprised of a number of different habitations, each with its own character and different composition and political dynamics. Also, like most villages, IP has a 'main village', which in this case, was dominated by high castes, where most of the main political meetings took place, in

preference to the more open *panchayat* building which was also located there, along the main village road.

Figure 5: Identification of a political locality (sketch)



Source: Author's field notes

There were two other areas of the village that were a key part of this main *panchayat* politics. The first was a largely BC area, and the second was a mixed SC area. Two other habitations in the village were found to be marginal in the affairs of this political locality. A tribal hamlet to the north of the village was of little interest to the *Reddy* elite of IP village, except when it came to the time to vote when the elite would woo them with money. At all other times, it was the tribal leaders who would approach the powerful *Reddy* leaders in the neighbouring *panchayat*. At the south of the village separated by the main road, there was a mixed caste hamlet of around 50 households. Discussion with the members of this small hamlet made it clear that they chose to stay clear of politics in the main village, and that they had their own sub-set of leaders and competition within their own unit. Based on these findings, the decision was made to

restrict the sample to members of the 'effective political locality' and exclude others whose views would reflect a different set of concerns and dynamics.

While these cases were rare, they nonetheless serve the purpose of highlighting the term 'village' which is used loosely to describe effective units in which the politics was played out. In many cases, hamlets and sampled respondents were left out of the research on the basis of the fact that their responses reflected a different set of issues and concerns. In other cases, where villages were divided into a main village and significant hamlets, the sampled respondents were included. By doing so, a definition of village politics was implicitly adopted that focused on the politics events, issues and actors that took place around an identified concept of a village. Thus, the importance of assessing the extent of the socio-geographic marginalisation in rural areas needs to be flagged as a topic that requires further research.

2.3.4 Structured survey

The design of village level research aimed to draw on the analytical rigour of qualitative research with the depth of the perspective of ethnography. During the first phase of the research, the key element of this strategy was the adoption of a high-density sampling approach. In each village, secondary data resources were located and used as a basis for the sampling. In two villages in Nalgonda, recent household level records collected by the local health provider were used. In Prakasham district, voter lists that had been marked up by local political leaders to indicate householders were found to be the most reliable source of information of households in the village. In order to capture the diversity of the experience within the village, a random sample of one in five households was selected by counting down through the ordered list. Using a higher ratio of respondents in the village than usual was found to be an important approach to access and analyse localised dynamics.

The first and most important purpose of the village-level household sample was to select individuals for the structured survey. Sampling was carried out at the household level in order to ensure wide coverage within the village, across castes and neighbourhoods. Within the households, individuals were identified as respondents. Using the village lists, it was possible to select individuals within the households to maintain an even balance between men and women, young (less than 40 years old) and old. Replacement was allowed at the individual level (within households) but not of households. Overall, the response rate among those present in the village was high, but there was some bias towards male respondents which was at the behest of family members.

The high density sampling approach and structured questionnaire served two important purposes. The first was to elicit key information of participation in various arenas at the village level. The second, and the most important purpose, was to ensure that all social groups in the village were covered during the village research. The need to take steps to ensure that the research was not biased by the opinions of 'elites' or a core of villagers underscored the development of techniques to interact with the village as a whole, the most well known of which is the transect walk. Often, these approaches can significantly alter preconceptions of researchers. In the case of political analysis, ensuring that the marginal voices of the village are heard is of paramount importance. By taking a high-density sample, it was possible to ensure that any bias from the central part of the village of higher caste villagers would be avoided. While random sampling techniques provide a similar assurance, the approach adopted in this research allowed for a more detailed examination of the multiple voices and experiences in the village (see below).

The structured questionnaire (see Annex 5) was piloted in Nalgonda district prior to implementation. It was not, however, possible to test this questionnaire in both regions prior to implementation. As a result, some minor modifications needed to be made to reflect the specific contexts.

Questions in the structured questionnaire were divided into six main sets:

- participation in elections
- party support
- participation in *Janmabhoomi*
- membership of CBOs
- social and economic background

The use of a questionnaire provided an opportunity to interact with a wide cross section of the village in a private space. Villagers, on the whole, were found to be used to people arriving in the village with questionnaires in hand. There was a high degree of curiosity and, at times, suspicion that selected participants would be eligible to receive 'benefits' but this tended to lessen over time. On the whole, the questionnaire proved to be a good tool to make space to interview people in their own homes, without the intrusion of onlookers. Interviews normally lasted an hour and allowed for adequate opportunity to discuss issues related to the questions or those which were of a broader nature. The 'use' of the questionnaire as a tool for private discussion was found to be an important part of the quasi-ethnographic approach.

2.3.5 Key informants and leaders

Over the course of the first phase of the research, a total of 111 KI interviews were carried out, most of which were with politically active men and women at the village level and at the *mandal* level. These interviews were unstructured and were designed to develop an understanding of the underlying issues, events and the actors that shape local politics. The information from these interviews was further reinforced by the discussion that followed the structured interviews, where respondents would develop key issues. As discussed below (section 2.4.2), the gradual development of an understanding of the context was an important aspect of this research by which further discussions could be had and more information probed for; to fundamentally construct a 'narrative' of local politics from fragmented sources.

During the first phase of this research, a rough guide for selecting KIs was made, which was used to develop a basic understanding of the issues in the village. This included:

- present *sarpanch*
- ex-*sarpanch*
- *Mandal* committee member
- at least two members of the *gram panchayat* committee, especially those who support a different party from the *sarpanch*, as well as, low or high caste members
- any caste leaders
- heads of village party committees, or leading party activists.

In addition to these, other informants included local members of the legislative assembly (MLAs), *mandal* party presidents and members of the district *panchayat* committee, depending on whether these actors were involved in village politics.

2.3.6 Phase two: understanding the political stratum

A key finding of the first phase of this research was that a defined sub-set of villagers could be identified in each village, referred to as the political stratum. The members of the political stratum were actively engaged in politics as party workers or leaders and were widely recognised by the rest of the village as such. The importance of understanding this was that it led to the development of a second phase of research, which extended the original research objectives. This focused exclusively on the identification and analysis of the political stratum which was based on a larger sample of villages.

The members of the political stratum are widely acknowledged by 'ordinary villagers' in Andhra Pradesh who often refer to them as 'leaders' (using the English term) or the Telugu words *karikatalu* (village worker or grassroots cadre) or *nayakalu* (broadly

means leader, generally the older established leaders⁸ are referred to as *nayakalu*). As the analysis in Chapter 6 shows, there are important internal divisions between the leaders at the village level, with clearly a defined hierarchy of importance, as well as, divisions (or groups) along factions or party lines. Understanding these dynamics and testing the extent to which these patterns were common between villages required a different methodological approach that was evolved into a rapid leadership analysis tool.

The key challenge in understanding the leaders was that they are not defined by their position. In many villages, the 'official' leader or *sarpanch*, was not the most important person in the village party or their political group. Often the most powerful people did not hold any formal positions and tended to allocate positions to lower level party workers. As such, the only reliable method for identifying leaders was 'reputational sampling'. Given the level of politicisation and awareness in the villages of Andhra Pradesh, this was made possible by simply asking, 'who were the most important leaders in the village'. The challenge lay in ensuring that the analysis was not limited to the views of a limited set of prominent leaders or a single group. To overcome this, a structured approach was developed which aimed to ensure that a cross section of perspectives were taken into account. In each village, at least four or more KIs were identified, who were selected to ensure representation of different caste groups, women and the main political parties. The various lists of leaders who were nominated by these informants were then compared to identify the key common names and a sample list of the main leaders was derived from this. This list contained between eight to fifteen names of leaders in a village. These leaders were then interviewed using a structured interview format, which asked about their experience as leaders, shifts in party allegiance, and their social profiles. As with the structured interview, this process also provided opportunities for open-ended discussions with key leaders on a one-to-one basis. In total, 181 leaders were selected from 13 villages using this approach.

⁸ My thanks to Nageshwar Rao for clarifying these terms.

The leadership analysis was carried out in the same *mandals* as in the first phase, where two or three more villages were purposely selected, for the sample to reflect a broad range of issues or typologies. For example, cases where high levels of factionalism or conflict were observed were included, as well as, the more cohesive villages.

Table 3: Overview of data sources

Method	Number of informants <i>Methods of selection</i> research instrument	Sample area	Type of information	
			<i>Survey</i>	<i>Comparative analysis</i>
Survey	244 villagers - <i>random sample of one in five households, then one individual was selected, chosen by gender (half were women) and age (half were less than 40 years old)</i> - questionnaire	Two proximate localities in two regions: Telangana and coastal Andhra	Participation and perception of local governance to understand the key dimension of inclusion/exclusion (according to caste, gender, age etc.,)	Comparison between different localities and the factors that dictate these differences Personal accounts of events, issues and actors in the village.
Key Informants	111 KIs - <i>informal - village leaders, party workers, journalists, government officers, school teachers etc.,</i> - unstructured interviews	Four localities (as above) and the surrounding area	Issues relating to development programmes and politics from informed participants/actors	Detailed information on specific local issues, events and actors, investigation through 'snowballing'
Leaders' Analysis	181 leaders - <i>reputational sample based on five points of reference</i> - semi-structured interviews	Thirteen (4+9) localities from three locations <i>(this phase of the research was piloted in five additional localities)</i>	Who are the leaders? Background, activities and affiliations	Ranking of leaders, their relationships, constructing village histories

Villages where parties had managed to hold onto power for more than one electoral term were selected alongside those where the party had changed in the last elections. Again, using Ragin's model of comparative qualitative analysis, the objective was to include as many variations as possible, in order to provide a basis for analysis of

generalisation. In addition to these two *mandals*, one further *mandal* was selected in Prakasham district where four villages were selected. The second *mandal* in Nalgonda district was the site for the pilot study of the leadership analysis, as it was not possible to return to repeat data collection using the comparable formats that had been developed.

2.3.7 Data handling

The methodological approach that was developed for this research evolved from the core objective of testing the influence of the locality in structuring political participation and therefore, the need to strike an effective balance between comparative analysis of localities and rigorous assessment of patterns of participation. The methods described above were developed, tested and refined in the field and include the addition of new phases of research to follow up on key findings and to test these further. Together, this year long field study resulted in a rich body of data that included quantitative and qualitative evidence (Table 3), which forms the basis of the following chapters.

The analysis presented in the following chapter draws on a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. Data from structure surveys was entered into excel spreadsheets and analysed using the statistical software SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). During the analysis, proxy codes and indexes were also used to explore relationships. One example of this is the Political Activity Index (PAI) presented in Chapters 4 and 5. Quantitative data was used primarily to explore trends in participations (by locality and social variables) and to a limited extent, to explore correlations between participation in elections and other participatory fora. Though the sample size for the first phase of the research is large (n=244), it was decided not to rely on further statistical measures to explore these relationships. Two reasons are given for this. Firstly, the sample is drawn from a limited number of villages. While respondent selection was carried out on a stratified random sampling basis, this was not designed to be representative of a larger population. Secondly, the use of the quantitative data (in both phases of

analysis) is limited to developing indicative trends that are explored through the qualitative data. This process is reflected in the structure of the following empirical chapters.

There are a number of sources of qualitative data that are drawn on in the analysis: verbatim comments from the structured questionnaires, interview notes and case studies. Verbatim comments were entered into a word processing package and analyses using coding methods. Field notes were drawn on to develop case studies used in the following chapters.

2.4 Challenges and Opportunities in the Field

Extended field studies of this kind helped to reflect on the research process and the complexity of 'data gathering'. This section explores some of the key challenges and opportunities that arose on the field, many of which had an implication on the analysis. The following discussion aims to highlight the degree of learning that takes place in the field, as part of a continued process of reflection and iterative analysis. These refinements and development of the methodology are as important as the constant reconsideration of the research questions or core issues that the research aims to address. The following section aims to draw attention to the importance of these decisions that are made in the course of the fieldwork, during the many hours, days and months spent in the village, and the extent to which the refinement of the methodology during research can help to better reflect the issues encountered in the field.

2.4.1 Relating to the subject

Data collection required weeks to be spent in the village, during which time we became increasingly involved in village life. From the outset, I decided to stay in a neighbouring town and travel to the village daily, mainly to avoid being identified with any particular

household or area of the village where I was to spend two months and also so that I would be able to move between different villages in the same area. My presence naturally attracted attention and although this waned over time, I was constantly aware that people participated in my discussions in part due to some expectation that by this, they would gain some form of entitlement or benefit from the government. I was also aware that people entered into discussions with me regarding the performance of government programmes and corruption in village affairs with the expectation that I would relay these grievances to high authorities. Despite my best efforts to explain myself, it is difficult to avoid these issues in rural India.

Fieldwork at the village level was conducted mainly in Telugu and sometimes in Hindi. It was, therefore, necessary to work with a research assistant who would administer the questionnaire in my presence which allowed me to engage in participant observation. In the village we used a questionnaire that was written and filled out in English, with Telugu translation, which also allowed me to be involved in the process of probing and exploring for responses. In many ways, working with a translator shaped the interactions in the village and conditioned the process of access. During the year in the field, I worked with three different assistants, each of a different caste, background and origin. The contribution of those who helped me to interact with the villagers is greater and far more significant than has ever been acknowledged in literature on fieldwork.

I soon became aware of the fact that the villagers were very eager to know the background of my assistant. During the months in which I was involved in fieldwork, I worked with a man who was a Muslim. He preferred to use his short name Abbas. Soon he was asked to disclose his full name which revealed his religion and through further questioning, his origins and family background. Once this process of identifying the 'newcomer' in the village was established, it was equally clear that interactions with certain parts of the village were easier than with others. This was further validated by the fact that when I returned to the village for the second phase of the research on

leaders with another assistant who came from a different background, interactions in the villages were subtly different. This can be explained, one could argue, by the skills of the researcher, but as the following case shows, aspects of identity are often more obvious for 'locals' than to the foreign visitor. The establishment of a commonality between the interviewer and the respondent opens and by interpretation can close the lines of enquiry.

One example serves to highlight the complexity of the relationship with respondents and the extent to which one's identity is drawn into the research.

While interviewing an elderly *dalit* woman, we asked her which party she supported. She grew suspicious and persisted in challenging our motivation for asking all these questions. We told her that this was part of an academic research project and that we had not come from the government or any political party. We told her that we were also going to talk to a lot of other people in the village and that we would not tell anyone what her answers to our questions had been, assuring her that we could miss out that question or strike her name off our record if she so preferred.

Her concern was that her sons were government employees and that they would scold her if "something happened".

'You can say, "trust me", or "believe me", but how can I know for sure? No one has come to this village and asked people like me these questions before.'

Not satisfied with our explanation, or by our assurance of confidentiality, she wanted to know which party we supported. We told her that since I was from another country, I could not vote in India, but she insisted on being told which party my assistant supported, which he did. Reassured, she told us that she too supported the Congress. She then proceeded, for the next hour, to tell us about her problems with the current TDP leaders in the village and how the leaders from her party have no power under the current regime. Finally, she wanted to check that her name had been included in the questions, lest she miss out on any loans or other benefits from the government!

Excerpt from the author's field notes

2.4.2 Constructing Village Narratives

The following chapters draw heavily on the analysis of village events, issues and actors, which are constructed from various discussions. In such cases, there is rarely a single

'truth' or an objective source and the researcher is constantly engaged in the process of the construction of narratives. During the course of the research in each village, I became aware of the fact that I was in the process of constructing this 'narrative' on the basis of fragmented parts of a whole that possibly did not exist for any single individual who was located in a particular sub-context within the village scene.

Some examples of this include the construction of events that led up to the last *panchayat* election, where the various strategies and machination of actors took place between clear, single parties or factionally divided groups. Often, lower level leaders confessed limited knowledge of the 'actual events' that were eventually recounted to me by lead protagonists and there was always a slightly different version of the same event that could not easily be resolved. As such, the construction of narratives was necessary by a largely interpretative process in contexts where seemingly insignificant events were of great importance to the people who lived in a particular village.

The process of constructing narratives often entailed adapting to the different perspectives of the respondent. In a context where party divisions were so clear, and where the identity of being a 'leader' so important, it became important to be able to see village events and issues through the eyes of the respondents. Particularly in the case of leaders' interviews, understanding the networks within parties and the issues within the cadres was an important means to steer interviews to specific issues that concerned the respondent. Party affiliation, as well as, the immediate concerns of their part of the village defined the concerns of 'ordinary' villagers. The creation of a narrative of local politics was a construction. Awareness of this and the constant questioning of the validity of these constructions were on-going issues for me during fieldwork.

2.4.3 Ethics and presentation

The type of material presented in this thesis is sensitive and requires adequate measures to protect the respondents who have participated in the research. A lot of the discussion that follows explores cases of corruption and other aspects of malpractice. More specifically, the research took place at a time when these issues were a topic for discussion in the state media and the state assembly and at times, were being debated at the national level. As such, measures have been taken to ensure the anonymity of all respondents, and their locations. Names have, therefore, been changed, or codes used, for all places below the village level and all local respondents.

Field notes were the main unit of record keeping. As all interviews were conducted in Telugu (or Hindi), I was reliant on the translations given. During the write up, quotations were further 'sanitised' to convey meaning but only to the extent that these reflected the substance of the discussion that was verified with my assistant in the field.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has dwelt on the broader approach of responding to the key research questions set out in Chapter 1 and the specific processes for implementation. The challenge of striking a balance between qualitative research and representation has been discussed, along with the strategy for implementation through sampling and choice of research tools. As the following chapters show, this methodology resulted in a rich body of data and allowed for the development of analytical approaches during the fieldwork process and during analysis based on the finding that emerged from the field, and in response to the specific issues of political change and development strategy in Andhra Pradesh that are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Developmental Politics in Andhra Pradesh

'... the priority in India for the new century is that both old-style politics and old-style governance have to change, the country can no longer afford them' (p10)

'... the end of politics is governance, not mere ruling. ... the politics of populism can be replaced by the politics of development. The latter too can be made to pay electoral dividends' (p17)

(Naidu 2000)

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the political context in Andhra Pradesh as a means of understanding the specific strategies pursued by Naidu when he assumed the posts of Chief Minister of the state and the President of the TDP in 1995. Once the southern citadel of the Congress Party, political change in Andhra Pradesh was shaped by institutional decay, identity politics and populism, which, coupled with the distinctive features of regionalism and centre-state relations, produced a situation that closely resembled the 'crisis of governability' hypothesis proposed by Kohli. Against this context, Naidu represented a new breed of politicians who openly acknowledged these challenges and promoted solutions that appealed to the international community.

As the quotations at the head of this chapter taken from Naidu's own autobiography show, there was a conscious attempt to confront the widely acknowledged challenges of governance in India, namely, the rise of populist politics and competing demands of an awakened electorate. This chapter starts by charting the trajectory of political change in a state that is characterised by regionalism and a dominant middle caste politics. As section 3.3 shows, this laid the basis for a highly successful model of politics of accommodation, making Andhra Pradesh the citadel of the Congress party in 1960. As in other parts of the country, the breakdown of this model was the product both of the centralisation of the Congress party at the national level and the increased assertiveness of the lower castes, which paved the way for a

new political force driven by the populist appeal of the early TDP under the leadership of the cinema icon, N T Rama Rao (section 3.4).

The remainder of the chapter explores the transition of the political strategy that took place when Chandrababu Naidu took over the leadership of the TDP in 1995. Section 3.5 describes the shift from populism to managerial politics and the emphasis placed on governance reform that captured the attention of international commentators and donors, notably the World Bank. However, as section 3.6 shows, there was another element to Naidu's strategy that has received less detailed analysis and which was played out at the local level. While some attempts were made to follow through on the reforms to local governance set in place by his predecessor, the major thrust of Naidu's institutional reforms were informal and designed to be responsive to political requirements of managing participation and party building in a highly fluid and mobilised polity. The discussion in this section outlines the implementation of significant changes in the institutional structure and incentives for local political leaders through the *Janmabhoomi* programme and the associated rapid proliferation of user groups, which served to refigure the local institutional structure without undertaking formal governance reforms. In doing so, this chapter sets up the context for the following three chapters, which examines these interactions between institutions and local politics in the study villages.

3.2 Context and Governance Challenges

Andhra Pradesh, the fifth largest state in India, has a population of about 85 million people (India census 2011). While a number of estimates have ranked Andhra Pradesh as one of the most successful states in terms of poverty alleviation (Harriss 2000) and other aspects of social and economic development⁹, it remains relatively backward. The literacy rate has risen in the last decade from 44.09 percent to 61.11 percent (1991-2001) but has fallen slightly below the national average of 65.38 percent (Suri 2002:7). Female literacy rates in rural areas (1991 figures) are as low as 29.7 percent in

⁹The State of the States, India Today, May 19 2003

the region of Telangana, with a state average of 34.9 percent (Dev and Rao 2002). Roughly, 73 percent of the population resides in rural areas and nearly 80 percent of the workforce depends on agriculture.

Andhra Pradesh was the first state in India to be formed on linguistic principles. It is composed of three regions that were combined in two stages. In October 1953, the Telugu-speaking parts of the Madras Presidency, coastal Andhra (or the Circars) and Rayalaseema, combined to form the Andhra State. The present state of Andhra Pradesh was not formed until three years later, when the largest princely state in British India, the dominion of His Exalted Highness, the Nizam of Hyderabad was included and Hyderabad city became the capital of the new state. Inter-regional disparities and the politicisation of regional identities of Telangana (part of the former Nizam's state), coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema, have affected politics in the state since its formation. Demands for accommodation of locally powerful regional leaders have been a key factor in party politics (Ram Reddy 1989).

Most observers have agreed that 'caste has been the basis of political grouping and mobilisation of electoral support (in Andhra Pradesh) right from the beginning' (Srinivasulu and Sarangi 1999:2449). It is therefore useful to outline the major groups in the state. The emergence of two intermediary castes, the *Kammas* and the *Reddys*, has been central to the political and social history of the state. Despite the fact that the *Reddys* and *Kammas* constitute only 6.5 percent and 4.8 percent respectively of the population (Srinivasulu and Sarangi 1999), they have become what Srinivas describes as 'dominant castes' in the state. Their influence is regional, with the *Reddys* concentrated in the Telangana and Rayalaseema regions, and the *Kammas* in the delta region of the coast. However, diversification of economic interests, strong horizontal networks across regions and their mutual claim to 'ruler' status have contributed to their dominance, despite their traditional inferiority to the *Brahmins* (3% of the population) and *Vaishya* castes.

Other rich peasant castes such as the *Kapus*, *Velamas* and *Rajus*, have played a more limited role in state politics (Suri 2002:12), largely due to the fact that their presence is concentrated in smaller pockets. Various caste groups that are known by the names of traditional hereditary occupations, mainly artisan and service occupations, have come to be collectively known as the BCs. In 1982, the Second AP Backward Classes¹⁰ Commission recorded this diverse group as representing 44 percent of the total population, making them a complex but vital political force in the state. The heterogeneity of this group undermined their political impact (Kohli 1990) but reservation policies in economic, political and administrative positions were one of the main political tools used by successive governments in Andhra Pradesh to co-opt the growing elite within these groups (Ram Reddy 1989: 298). The lowest castes or SCs, have been of political importance for a longer period than the backward castes, especially following Indira Gandhi's pro-poor campaign to alleviate poverty in the 1970s. The attempt to develop a lower-caste vote bank had the unintended effect of mobilising the BCs as an electoral force which contributed to the decline of Congress-style politics in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In Andhra Pradesh, the SCs collectively represent 17 percent of the population (Srinivasulu 1999). Among these, around 90 percent fall into two sub-castes, *Madiga* and *Mala*, whose division has increased owing to the emergence of autonomous demands between sub-castes and subsequent re-categorisation. The other two important social groups in Andhra Pradesh are tribals (6%), who are largely concentrated in the forest areas of Andhra and Telangana and Muslims (7%). Muslims have a distinctive presence in the urban and semi-urban unorganised service sector (Srinivasulu 1999), but their political impact has been concentrated in the city of Hyderabad and parts of Telangana.

The dominant middle caste, combined with divisions among the middle and lower castes, helps explain a high level of political awareness among the Andhra Pradesh electorate. Indeed, overall turnout figures during elections put the state roughly third among all Indian states, following the Left-dominated states of Kerala and West Bengal

¹⁰ The 'class' aspect of defining backwardness or disadvantaged social groups has been interpreted largely in caste terms in Andhra Pradesh (Ram Reddy 1989:299)

(Annex 1). As we see below, this has had important implications for the pattern of electoral altercations in the bi-polar polity post-1983, where relatively small swings have produced massive electoral changes at the state assembly and parliamentary level. This in turn, one can argue, has demanded the employment of increasingly creative political strategies that I trace below through an examination of the three main phases of politics in the state.

3.3 Phase 1: Decline of the Congress Citadel

The formation of the state of Andhra Pradesh settled much of the political factionalism of the post-independence break-up of the Madras Presidency and established the Congress Party in the middle ground of politics. The influence of the high-caste *Brahmins*, who had been important in the pre-independence politics of the Madras Presidency, became negligible as the result of an intense period of competition and compromise within the Congress between the late 1940s and the 1950s¹¹. The capacity of the Congress to act as the main political institution (Suri 2002, Weiner 1967) meant that opposition parties led by dissidents had limited enduring impact and served largely to mould and reshape the party machinery through the politics of alliance. Competition between factions became a source of strength for the party during this early period. Factional leaders were an important source of local support in this regionally heterogeneous new state.

The accommodation of elites and regional interests was managed in a way that aimed to balance stability within the party as well as factional interests within the state. This was a balance that was constantly under negotiation and eventually led to the downfall of the CP. The emergence of a powerful state-level figure, N Sanjeeva Reddy, from the initial contest for chief minister, was contained by Jawaharlal Nehru, who personally persuaded Reddy to take over as president of the party in January 1960. The first *dalit* Chief Minister, D Sanjeevaiah from Rayalaseema, was appointed as his successor in a tactical move to woo the weaker sections of the party and to create a more neutral

¹¹ See Weiner 1967 chapter 8 for a detailed account of this period.

focus for rival factions within the party. The strategy was not just symbolic. In May 1961, Sanjeevaiah's government issued orders for a 25 percent reservation of seats in educational institutions and jobs in government services for the socially and educationally backward classes (Suri 2002). This provoked controversy within the party, but proved to be an important step in creating a lower-caste base for the party.

The Congress was successful in usurping the ideological ground of the most successful regional Communist movements in India, an achievement which was aided by ideological splits between the Leftist parties in the mid-1960s (see Srinivasulu 1999, Suri 2002, Selig-Harrison 1956). In the first elections to the new state in 1962, Congress managed to poll 47.3 percent of the popular vote and win 177 out of 300 seats in the state assembly. Up until 1983, Congress held a clear majority in the assembly and won between 46.8 percent and 57.4 percent of the popular vote in parliamentary elections, and 52.3 percent and 39.3 percent in state elections (Suri 2002). During this period, Andhra Pradesh remained a stronghold for Congress despite its nationally fluctuating fortunes. In the 1967 Lok Sabha (lower house of parliament) election, the party was routed in as many as eight states but managed to retain Andhra Pradesh.

Similarly, in the 1977 election, when the Congress was completely routed in almost every corner of the country following Indira Gandhi's authoritarian rule during the emergency period, the party sent a record 41 members to the Lok Sabha from Andhra Pradesh. Other parties that contested during different phases had only a marginal influence. The Swatantra Party was the only party to establish an effective non-Congress and non-socialist political ground but proved to be no match for Congress in playing caste and regional cards to build popular support. The brief revival of the mainstream anti-Congress movement by the Janata Party was similarly short lived (Suri 2002:20).

Following the leadership vacuum created by Nehru's death, Sanjeeva Reddy returned to prominence as a member of the 'syndicate' of senior Congress leaders (Suri 2002). In the absence of Nehru's leadership, state-level factional struggles intensified, and

initially, were accommodated within a flexible and open-party structure. However, the zero-sum nature of personality clashes and struggles between the state and national command became evident from 1966 when an agitation broke out over the location of a steel plant (Reddy 1989). The then-Chief Minister, K Brahmananda Reddy, sought to embarrass his rival and former faction leader, Sanjeeva Reddy, who was at that time, the Union Minister for Steel and Mines in Delhi, by pushing for the location of the plant in Andhra Pradesh. A similar destructive personality battle was fought when demands for regional separatism in Telangana developed an explicitly political dimension under the control of a key faction leader within the Congress, M Chenna Reddy (Srinivasulu 1999:10). As with the case of the steel plant, the impetus for these disagreements came not from the opposition parties, but from dissident factions within the Congress and had long-term effects of cementing enduring resentments and rivalries between the party elite.

In the 1970s, inter-party conflicts took on a different turn under the leadership of Indira Gandhi. A series of tactical, non-factional loyalists with little or no political base in the region were promoted by the party high command in Delhi to the position of chief minister. The first was a *Brahmin* from Telangana, PV Narasimha Rao and then, after his resignation, J Vengala Rao, a member of the *Velama* caste who was from Telangana but close to the *Kammas* of Andhra Pradesh. Indira Gandhi's strategy in appointing these figures was to undercut and destabilise the dominant castes and factional leaders who could pose a potential threat to control from the centre (Ram Reddy 1989:284). This strategy was supported on two fronts, through the creation of high-profile, anti-poverty programmes that could mobilise sizeable vote banks directly and through rebalancing the party leadership in the state by giving more seats to weaker sections.

This new thrust from the high command of the party changed the face of the assembly, 50 percent of which was occupied by newcomers, with significant increases in female and Muslim candidates (Vaugier-Chatterjee 2009). However, restructuring the party was more far-reaching and costlier than intended. The anti-poverty campaign was

orchestrated from the centre and aimed to directly reach the poor. The use of radical popular slogans (*'garibi hatao'*: abolish poverty) and bureaucratic channels of implementation intentionally bypassed local intermediaries and power brokers among the rich peasantry and regionally powerful factional leaders (Srinivasulu 1999:11). The breakdown of patron-client relations resulted in a failure of political communication (Reddy 1989:285). A weakened local leadership meant that there was no renewal of the party organisation at the local level resulting in a void in leadership and a lack of dynamism at the periphery of the party structure.

The strategies of Indira Gandhi paid off in the short term at the state level. Yet despite the fact that the party held out in the post-emergency elections, the subsequent splits in the national party polarised the state-level leadership. Brahmanada Reddy chose to remain with the 'official' Congress Party and led the state-level party in rejecting Indira Gandhi's new Congress Party, describing its formation as 'illegal, unconstitutional and dictatorial, aimed at destroying collective leadership and establishing a personality cult.' (Suri 2002: 25). The split saw the return of the dissident, M Chenna Reddy. This was a complex period in terms of the balance of power between the state-level party and the Delhi high command with four chief ministers installed during one legislative term (1978-1982). Indira Gandhi became the sole factor in the Congress power structure that was relevant to the state-level party. The government was highly centralised and most of the state leaders turned into sycophants or dissidents (Suri 2002:26). The feeling that local interests and state autonomy were being undermined was not restricted to the elite. Discontent was rife within the electorate, paving the way for a new entrant onto Andhra Pradesh's political stage.

3.4 Phase 2: Limits to Charisma – the Initial Years of the Telugu Desam Party

Into this vacuum stepped a highly popular film star, N T Rama Rao (popularly known as NTR), who founded the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in March 1982. With no prior political experience, NTR's success can be attributed to both the strength of the anti-Congress sentiment, as well as, in no small measure, to his iconic status in the popular

imagination. NTR, a multi-millionaire actor from the *Kamma* caste, entered state politics with virtually no political base but within nine months, he managed to garner leaders and votes by capitalising on the strong anti-Congress wave in the state. His party manifesto spoke of clean administration and the elimination of corruption and the removal of economic restrictions on investment and enterprise. The new party promoted candidates with professional backgrounds¹², whose claims to a clean slate in terms of corruption were guarantees based more on their political inexperience than their moral fibre (Kohli 1990:86).

Much has been written about the importance of NTR's mythical status and popular following and his expert use of stage-management skills in his public appearances. NTR was a household name across Andhra Pradesh having acted in 274 Telugu films and was especially popular among rural illiterates and women. He was best known for his portrayal of gods from Hindu mythology who saved the poor and disposed of all that was wicked. He skilfully drew on the imagery and idioms of cinema in his campaign speeches, which he delivered to breath-taking effect, promising to restore the self-respect of 60 million Andhra people (*aarukotla Andhrula atma gauravam*) and to end the corrupt political culture that had flourished under the Congress. As Kohli argues, 'clad in his saffron robe – the traditional garb of India's holy men – and riding around in a convertible transformed to look like a chariot, NTR might have been a figure from the *Mahabharata*, reincarnated to protect the dispossessed from worldly evils' (1988:998).

NTR's cinematic backdrop also had a more practical political application. His use of modern media on the election trail and his existing fan base of some 600 NTR fan clubs across the state made him a radical and forceful entrant onto the landscape of Andhra Pradesh politics (Kohli 1998, Bernstorff and Gray 1998:Ch 1). In 1983, the TDP ended the Congress party's dominance with a landslide victory, securing 46.8 percent of the popular vote and 198 seats in the state assembly. The power of the party was tested

¹²Rather than seek to draw these discredited professionals into the TDP, NTR made it a point to promote professionals into politics who, like himself, were considered 'clean' because of political inexperience. In 1983, 125 of TDP ticket holders were graduates, 28 were post-graduates, 20 were doctors, 8 were engineers and 47 were lawyers.

one-and-a-half years later when the Congress supported a *coup d'état* within the TDP. Former Congress member Nadendla Bhaskar Rao spearheaded the split when NTR was in the United States undergoing heart surgery. Congress used the office of the state governor for this purpose. The coup failed when mass protests under the banner of 'save democracy' lobbied in favour of NTR with the result that Congress was forced to withdraw its support to the defectors. In the 1984 Lok Sabha election following this, Congress went from an all-time high of controlling nearly all of AP's 42 seats in the Parliament, to an all-time low of just six. After being reinstalled in 1985, NTR called a mid-term election and managed to increase his share of seats in the assembly to 202, three more than in the 1983 election.

NTR's election success in 1985 was the culmination of a number of factors. His dethronement evoked a wave of sympathy in the state and consolidated his electoral alliance with anti-Congress parties. As a result of considerable infighting within party factions, the Congress party's response was tempered by their inability to project a single credible leader. Added to this, the populist policies already put in place by NTR were more concrete than anything Congress could propose (Ram Reddy 1989:289-291). These elections also displayed the political maturity of NTR as a political tactician. Due to the increased importance of regionalism that had emerged in the 1983 elections, NTR contested and won in constituencies chosen from all three regions of the state in 1985. This was the first time this strategy had been adopted in Andhra politics, and served to successfully appease discontent and expand his popular support in the state. NTR chose to retain his seat in Rayalaseema, the region that was the most volatile (Ram Reddy 1989: 291).

NTR's period as chief minister up until 1989 cannot be merely described as populist. He set in motion a series of reforms that struck at the heart of the system of governance, setting in place a new relationship between the state leader and the people. The policy of reducing the retirement age for government employees from 58 to 55 years was heralded along with pronouncements and criticism of these employees by the Chief Minister himself. He accused them of becoming anti-people and corrupt in a way that

had never been heard in the state before (Suri 2002:30). Despite legal battles from the ruling Congress Party in Delhi, NTR successfully abolished the Legislative Council and village officer's positions, both of which were important bastions of the Congress Party (see below). He also established the highly popular Rs. 2/kilo of rice scheme and *janata cloth*, which was another subsidised scheme for clothes and reduced power tariffs for farmers. Yet after sweeping the polls in 1983, the TDP lost the election to Congress in 1989 but returned with a massive mandate in 1994.

Until this point, the state seemed to have settled into a pattern of sorts - of a collaborative two-party system driven by anti-incumbent altercation with neither Congress nor the TDP showing any capacity of effecting any real change in governance. The Congress Party cadre below the state level were bolstered by their electoral gains in the 1987 *panchayat* elections. This was also an indication of the positive effects of the new local party organisation, which had devolved authority over candidature to the district-level committees (Suri 2002: 32). The state assembly and parliamentary elections were both held in November 1989. Congress won 39 out of Andhra Pradesh's 42 Lok Sabha seats and 51 percent of the popular vote. In the Assembly elections, Congress got 62.1 percent of the seats and 47.2 percent of the popular vote. Congress held the Assembly until 1995, under three chief ministers but the party was beset with factionalism, rising communal and Naxalite violence, as well as, allegations of serious corruption. The sympathy wave following the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi was vital in ensuring that Congress survived the 1991 Lok Sabha election (Suri 2002: 34).

During the 1994 elections, Congress president, PV Narasimha Rao, personally oversaw the party and championed the successes of his economic liberalisation policies at the national level. This campaign was countered with welfarist rhetoric by NTR, backed by promises to reintroduce the two rupee rice scheme, impose total prohibition and provide power at subsidised prices to farmers. His pro-poor policies earned him the backing of the Communist parties. The TDP swept the polls, securing a three-fourths majority in the assembly on its own and 51.3 percent of the popular vote with the help of two Communist parties, the CPI and the CPI(M).

3.5 Phase 3: The New Era of Telugu Desam

The turning point for the TDP came in 1995, when NTR's son-in-law, Chandrababu Naidu (CBN), organised a successful coup within the party and assumed leadership. Naidu had played an important role in fending off the previous coup in 1984. This time, he used his skills as a backroom party organiser to end the era of a charismatic leadership with a new phase characterised by pragmatism and economic reform (Suri 2002:39)¹³. The assumption of party and state leadership by Naidu did not result in the same pro-democracy outbursts that had followed the earlier coup and the new regime was consolidated when NTR died four months after being forced out of office. NTR's wife challenged CBN's right to the NTR legacy but in the 1996 and 1998 Lok Sabha elections, this challenge was nullified. By 1999, state politics had settled into a volatile two-party contest. Yet, despite capturing nearly three percent more votes than the TDP in the national election, Congress gained only five seats in the Lok Sabha, compared to the TDP's 29.

When Naidu took over as Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, he faced three main problems. First, he was a career politician who understood the workings of party organisation though he lacked the charismatic appeal of his predecessor. While the former attribute played a major role in confirming his right to succession among the party legislators, he, nonetheless, faced a significant challenge in establishing his image among the electoral masses. Second, over a decade of political altercation between Congress and the TDP had forged social cleavages in a state dominated by two rival castes, the *Reddys* and the *Kammas*, and a highly complex set of alignments among the lower castes. As in other states, while the logic of caste dominated politics, it did not provide a base for effective governance. Third, the populist policies pursued by TDP's

¹³ Naidu was elected to the Andhra Pradesh legislative assembly in 1978 from the constituency in Chittoor district. He subsequently became a minister and held the portfolios of archives, cinematography, technical education, animal husbandry, dairy development, public libraries and minor irrigation between 1980 and 1983, under the Congress government. He lost his (Congress) seat in the 1983 election, and three days later, he joined the newly formed TDP to work alongside his father-in-law, NTR, as the general secretary of the party.

founder had led to a severe financial crisis, one that Naidu was already aware of since he had held the post of finance minister under NTR.

The distinctiveness of the 'Naidu era' has been widely recognised by commentators of this period. Much of this attention has been focused on the ambitious set of governance and economic reforms that he put in place. While Naidu was certainly not the only chief minister to embark on reform, he was certainly the most high profile (Mooij 2003) and professional. When a World Bank team visited the state in 1996, Naidu succeeded in securing an unscheduled meeting where he presented a powerpoint presentation of his model of economic development in the state. Impressed, the World Bank president apparently turned to his country director and asked how soon they could get a team to Andhra Pradesh (Kirk 2004:34-6). This agenda is articulated in a document called Vision 2020 (1999), which was commissioned by McKinsey, a management consultancy firm. The document outlines critical economic sectors and strategies for rapid growth, along with recommendations for people-centred governance.

The engagement of external experts and the courting of international finance earned Naidu a controversial reputation in the state, especially among the vociferous Left. Yet, as the following analysis aims to show, the 'real politics' pursued by Naidu was far more complex in that the mantle of neo-liberalism merely diverted attention away from a new brand of developmental populism. As one commentator put it, 'like a political wizard, Chandrababu Naidu pulls out one welfare scheme after another from his hat, averaging one every week' (Suri 2002), in an effort to forge new and effective coalitions of support and fundamentally, to respond to the internal pressures of awareness and decay in the state. Another eminent observer called him, '(the) first politician in India who did not talk in terms of the weaker sections and the poor, even during times of elections'¹⁴. It was this conscious effort to recast the electoral equations in the state

¹⁴D. Narasimha Reddy, Dean, School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad, quoted in Frontline Magazine.

that formed the basis of Naidu's efforts to influence the mass or internal political culture in the state.

One important and largely unrecognised aspect of Naidu's strategy was the extent to which he continued to draw on the mantle of the Telugu Desam founder, despite the fact that he personally had engineered his downfall. NTR's name and legacy was referred to in Naidu's party campaign materials, yet the roots of this connection were far deeper as became clear during my discussions with party cadre at the village level. Naidu also proved himself adept in the use of communications tools through the reinvention or repackaging of on-going policies and programmes, namely the women's self-help groups movement and the broader issue of local development funds.

The other mantle Naidu took on was a project from the national level. From 1998, the TDP formed the largest state-level partner in the ruling National Democratic Alliance, a position that Naidu used to its full advantage¹⁵. Not only did he establish himself as force to be reckoned with but also it was a force that appeared to typify the new direction that had come to characterise economic and political change in India. It had very real and politically important ramifications in terms of the leeway that this gave him to pursue controversial policies at the state level.

3.6 Politics of Localisation

Successive regimes in Andhra Pradesh have made extensive and often pioneering use of the instruments of public policy to achieve social and political mobilisation. The land reform programme under Congress started in 1950 and continued through the 1970s, and created fundamental changes in the tenancy laws by dismantling the system of landlordism (see Ram Reddy 1989). Reservations for disadvantaged castes in education, administration and political institutions have been consistently used in Andhra Pradesh

¹⁵ CBN had also been rumoured as a potential candidate for prime minister of the United Front (1996-1998), but he made it clear that his agenda was focused on his state and was content to play a 'kingmaker' role in negotiating the candidates of two successive prime ministers, as well as, key cabinet assignments, among the disparate parties in the coalition (Kirk 2004:34)

from a relatively early period, as a means to co-opt the growing elite from non-forward castes. Policies of reservation were put in place on a caste basis and have served to promote political and economic advancement of elites within castes, as well as, reinforcing caste divisions, particularly within the backward castes (Ram Reddy 1989).

3.6.1 Reforming the formal system of local governance

One of the most important policies from the perspective of grassroots mobilisation was the initiation of one of the first formal systems of local governance in the country in 1959 based on a three-tier structure (district, intermediary and village)¹⁶. Effectively, the emphasis of this system was on the intermediary level, the *panchayat samiti*. In a 1964 amendment, the size of this tier was enlarged, and roughly approximated the assembly constituency. The *panchayat samiti* was an important body of political control¹⁷ as well as of political accommodation. These early enactments of democratic decentralisation were relatively progressive on paper, and included provisions for the reservation of seats for women and SCs and STs. However, effective powers devolved to these bodies were limited and their autonomy in political and administrative matters restricted. Changes to this system were relatively minor until the TDP entered the political scene.

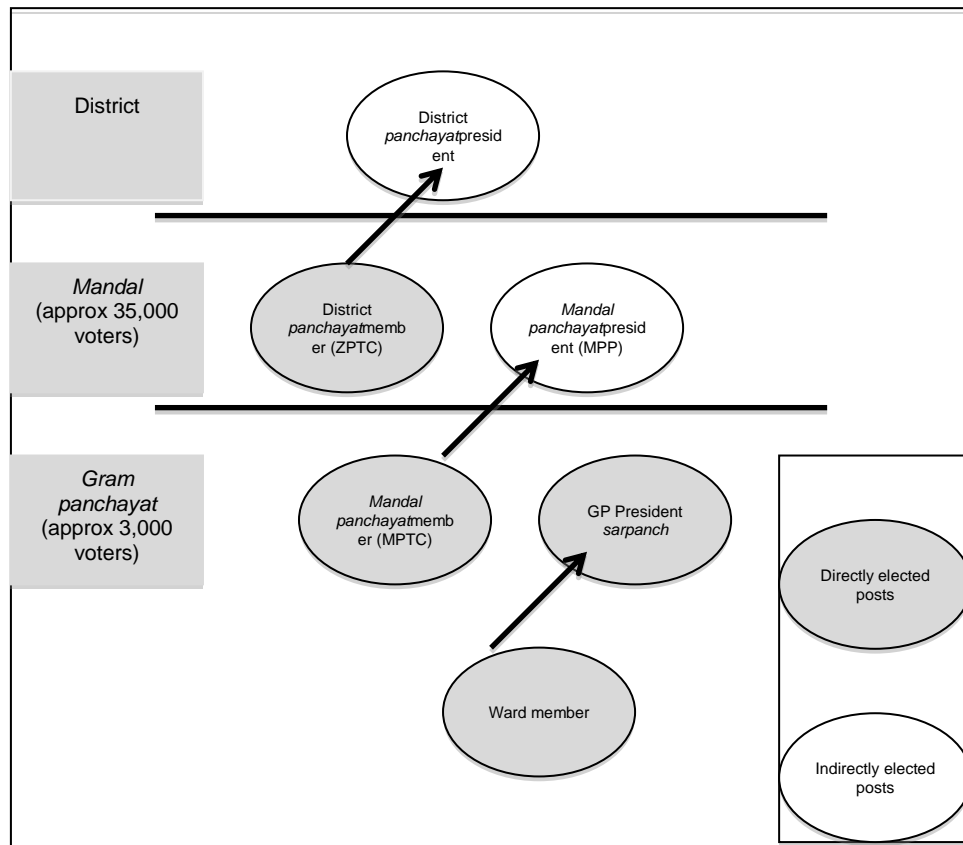
Early in his first term in office, NTR successfully removed or reformed three institutions perceived to support the Congress Party power. These were a) the system of the village officers (see Eashvaraiah 1985) b) the legislative council and c) the *panchayat samiti*. Of these, the last was the most ambiguous and indirect as a political manoeuvre. The 330 *panchayat samitis* were replaced by 1,104 *mandal panchayats* and reservation for positions was raised from 21 percent to 50 percent, following the addition of BC quotas. The creation of *mandals* implied two things, establishing the institutional structure for moving the government closer to the people and vastly increasing the

¹⁶ For a full review of the legislative changes to the *panchayats* in Andhra Pradesh see ISS 2000 and World Bank 2000.

¹⁷ Political calculations were made on the basis of the dual channels of the members of legislative assembly and the *panchayat samiti* president. Where the Congress lost one seat, efforts were made to capture the other. Effective powers were mediated through the seat held by the party (interview with BPR Vithal, Chief Secretary of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad, March 2002).

number of positions within the political system. The impact of this reformation was initially limited by political and bureaucratic reluctance to surrender power to local bodies (ISS 2000).

Figure 6: Structure of elected local governance posts in Andhra Pradesh



The passing of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment for democratic decentralisation at the national level led to the State *Panchayat* Act of 1994 which retained the three-tier structure of *gram panchayats* at the village, *mandal* and district level. Elections to *mandal* and district posts in the Andhra Pradesh *panchayat* system were to be conducted on party lines¹⁸. The decision to hold direct elections for candidates to the three tiers, as well as, for the village president had three consequences. Firstly,

¹⁸ The 73rd Amendment gives states discretion to decide if intermediary and district level bodies are to be elected on party lines. It does however prohibit party based election to the village level. The argument as to whether parties should be allowed to participate openly in local bodies dates back to the Ashok Mehta Committee report in 1957, and has been heavily influenced by Gandhian idealism. The small size of the *mandal* level in Andhra Pradesh effectively makes a mockery of the attempt to formally isolate the village from party politics.

constituting the local bodies required voters to cast ballots in four elections. This did not deter voters and turn out remained high, exceeding that of assembly and parliamentary elections. Secondly, positions and opportunities for political engagement and direct campaigning were greatly increased. Finally, organic linkages between tiers were severed with the introduction of direct elections at the ward, *Sarpanch*, *Mandal Praja* Territorial Constituency (MPTC) and *Zilla Parishad* Territorial Constituency (ZPTC) level. (World Bank 2000:24). Given the fact that the *sarpanch* and MPTC tend to cover the same constituency, this meant that these posts were often shared between opposition parties, as we see in the following village case studies. One can surmise from the reluctance of the regime to reform this latter aspect that the political strategy of politicisation is deliberate, not so much in terms of guaranteeing electoral supremacy but in terms of broadening the scope of political participation from the village upwards.

The TDP held all the district president posts and 63 percent (the remaining were won by Congress) of *mandal* president positions in 1995. The 2001 elections saw this grip eroded when the ruling party held onto only 12 out of 22 districts and maintained a margin of only 46 *mandal* president seats over Congress (480 versus 434). However, the percentage of votes polled by the TDP in this election was slightly more than the percentage of votes it polled in the 1999 assembly elections, leading some observers to rightly conclude that the extent of the loss was not as great as the figures would lead one to believe (Suri 2001). The Naidu regime refused to accede to demands for the devolution of the functions and finances of the 28 rural development functions that the 11th Schedule of the Amendment recommends for transfer to the local bodies. As in other states, sporadic mobilisation by civil society and even organised interests within the local government failed to have any real effect on the state policy towards decentralisation, which itself was entering into new and largely uncharted territory.

3.6.2 Informal reforms in local governance

Janmabhoomi

The formal system of decentralisation from 1995 was accompanied by the initiation of an alternative system of grassroots participation by the TDP. The extent of these informal reforms was arguably the most important aspect of Naidu developmental politics in the rural areas. Naidu transformed an experiment by NTR to 'bring the government to the doorstep of the people' in 1997, into the high profile campaign in development politics called the *Janmabhoomi* (JB) programme, a flagship initiative of the party. *Janmabhoomi* was not just a government programme. In the operational guidelines, it was described as a 'people's movement for reconstruction and revitalisation of society' (GoAP 1997). No specific funds were allocated to the initiative. It was conceived as a new approach, which draws resources from existing government schemes, both state and centrally funded (Naidu 2000:203). Its primary objective was to mobilise people to become active participants in development and to recast the perception of the government in public opinion - from provider to facilitator.

The JB programme had three core components: taking the government to the people, micro-planning and the voluntary contribution of labour. The initiative was centred around village-level meetings, conducted by teams of local bureaucrats who toured the *mandal* in a campaign-style exercise spread over a week or ten days. The entire village was invited to participate in these meetings where development programmes were announced and grievances and applications for schemes collected. The initiative provoked a lot of controversy, much of which centred on the fact that these gatherings were parallel to and potentially usurped the *gram sabhas* (or village meetings) and the system of democratic representation that is prescribed in the *Panchayat* Act.

Initially, the village gatherings were held four times a year but after 2001, they were held twice a year. The JB rounds were more akin to a campaign than a sustained

process of institutional and administrative reform¹⁹ in part due to the intensity of the communications campaign that surrounded each round²⁰. A *mandal*-level team of local officials from all departments, headed by a deputed coordinator called the Nodal Officer, toured the *mandal* conducting up to three meetings in different villages in a day. The programmes were advertised through both the state public relations department and the local press and television. In the week leading up to the meetings, jeeps fitted with megaphones and *Janmabhoomi* banners passed through the *mandal*, and the State Planning Department organised the dissemination of advertising materials on a massive scale. State and district level politicians and bureaucrats also used the JB to interact with the villagers. The Chief Minister himself travelled by helicopter and conducted high-profile village meetings along with a panel of high-level politicians and bureaucrats²¹, and the media was invited to cover the events.

The village meetings provided a platform for senior bureaucrats as well as local politicians to directly confer schemes and projects on villages, proving a means to stamp the identity of the ruling party as one that was responsible for the distribution of funds. It is estimated that nearly 60,000 projects, most of which were considered small works of between 1-3 lakh rupees (\$2,000-\$6,000) were implemented in the scheme's first five years (Deshingkar and Johnson 2003). No funds were allocated to the programme under a specified budget heading for *Janmabhoomi*. Instead, funds were channelled from various central and state-level government schemes in what was basically a repackaging exercise aimed at stamping the identity of the regime on all

¹⁹ The campaign aspect of the JB programme is not just restricted to the scope and scale of the programme. The time of the JB programme is one of frantic activity in *mandal* and district offices. Demands on officers are sometimes considerable. By way of illustrating this, the Government Order (GO Rt. No. 295) issued by the Planning Department containing the guidelines for the 17th JB due to be held on the 1-10th June was issued only two days before the commencement.

²⁰ For the 16th JB round in the state, the publicity materials produced were as follows: 970,000 Telugu posters, 30,000 Urdu posters, 1,420,000 Telugu handbills, 30,000 Urdu handbills, 450,000 JB caps, 49,500 JB flags, 70,000 stickers, and 100,000 stickers for school children (information from the District Public Relations Officer, Nalgonda). It was not possible to obtain estimate of the budget publicity, but observers openly suggested that it was higher than any other development programme in the state.

²¹ In one of the CM's village meetings – 2 ministers, 1 Politburo member, 2 MPs, 2 MLAs, the director of the Women Financial Corporation, the district collector, and the superintendent of police were also present (The Hindu 05 May 2002). It is not surprising that it is these meetings, where VIPs attended, that got the most press coverage. For an account of two such meetings see Ayyangar 2000.

funds that reached the village level. The diversion of funds for the JB programme provoked fierce protests from the opposition at the time and even statements from the central government. It was, however, notoriously difficult to trace the source from which funds were drawn (Reddy 2002), though it was well known that the funds channeled to the JB committees far exceeded the (negligible) funds devolved to the *panchayats* (World Bank 2000).

Yet it is important to note that even the World Bank failed to articulate a clear position on the virtue, or otherwise, of this creative channeling of funds. On the other hand, as Reddy (2002) surmised, donors were impressed by the extent to which this strategy seemed to be effective in making funds move to the local level, though they had reservations in terms of the long-term implications for the democratic decentralisation processes.

The programmatic scope of the JB was deliberately ambiguous, and it came to be used as a platform for the implementation of a number of other special schemes under the TDP. The most important of these was the Food for Work programme. Between September 2001 and July 2002 the Government of Andhra Pradesh (GoAP) received rice allocations from the central government which had a market value of 30 billion rupees (Deshingkar and Johnson 2003). The scheme was implemented across the country as a rapid poverty relief initiative. The GoAP distinguished itself in its ability to use its sway with the ruling coalition at the centre²² to avail of over half of the total allocations for all Indian states, and at an alarming pace, amidst allegations of rampant corruption (ibid).

User Groups

The JB also became a central organising principle for a range of concurrent government programmes, many of which were supported by donors, aimed at promoting self-

²² The TDP held 28 Lok Sabha seats, and was the second largest partner in the ruling NDA coalition in Delhi. Naidu threatened to withdraw support from the BJP following the communal massacres in Gujarat and he was pacified with more rice and allowed to continue the food for work programme until the end of June despite widespread allegations of malpractices (Deshingkar and Johnson 2002).

reliance through user groups. User groups were formed at an unprecedented speed in Andhra Pradesh during the Naidu regime and covered a wide array of development issues including watershed management, forest management, education and maternal and child health (Annex 2). These committees were formally included in the *Janmabhoomi* meetings, during which the progress was assessed and scrutinised. By far the most prevalent of these were the women's SHGs, a programme that pre-dated Naidu but was given a new identity as part of the broader development strategy of his government. According to one observer, by 2002, approximately 20 percent of rural women were part of women's SHGs (Mooji 2002).

The user groups were more than just a part of the Janmabhoomi, they represented a new approach to development that spanned sectors and projects. Broadly stated, the constitution of user groups followed the emerging principles of the citizen's engagement in design and management of local development that were promoted by donor programmes. The initiatives in this direction in Andhra Pradesh extended far beyond this, not only in the rapid expansion of women's groups but also through the creation of state specific programmes for the formation of youth groups, mothers' committees, as well as, the specific innovation of the *Janmabhoomi* coordination committee.

The sheer scale of this proliferation demands an approach of analysis that looks beyond the sectoral or service delivery impact and instead, that sees the process of organising of communities or interest groups as one that has its own inherent qualities. In doing so, there is scope to cast the frame of analysis in broader terms and explore the linkages between the proliferation of development committees by Naidu's Telegu Desam and the parallel initiative reinvigorated the process of party organisation. One of the most important innovations undertaken by Naidu was the creation of a plethora of committees within the TDP, including at the village level. Unlike other parties, the village committees were organised with the post of the village president created. Using data provided by the central party office in Hyderabad, it is suggested

that approximately two thirds of the total TDP members would hold posts in an official party committee.

The impact of this proliferation is explored in greater detail in Chapter 5, as part of a focused analysis of the impact of informal reforms in the local space in the patterns of participation. To date, this is the first analysis of this kind in Andhra Pradesh and possibly in any contemporary political development context, and in conjunction with analysis of the dynamics around formal local governance institutions, explores the broader picture of state penetration to the local level.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of the broader patterns of political changes in Andhra Pradesh and the challenge of governance. Set against this backdrop, the widely held image of Naidu as a new breed of professional leader in India takes on a different perspective - as a leader who was faced with serious political challenges that were firmly embedded in the specifics of state politics. This chapter has shown how the response to these challenges took two forms. The first took the form of highly publicised and ambitious reforms that sought to replace the politics of populism with the politics of development in ways that courted the attention of international observers and major donors. The second was more informal yet arguably more far reaching and focused on the creation of new institutions and incentives at the local level through the implementation of the JB programme and the rapid proliferation of user groups. Of these two, the latter strategy of developmental politics has received less attention than it deserves, both in terms of the effectiveness of these informal institutional changes and the political objectives that underpin them. The following chapters will explore this in greater detail, through a local level political analysis of participation, politics and leadership in selected localities.

Chapter 4: Local Democracy - The Distinctiveness of Village Politics

‘Village *panchayat* elections are intensely political even where political parties do not participate. The principle is simple, where there is power, there is always politics. If you want to eliminate politics from local government or any level of government, then you must take away power. If there is nothing left to fight over, then politics will wither away.’
(Weiner 1962:209)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the political processes around village elections in Andhra Pradesh. Despite being systematically weakened by the state, political activity has anything but withered away at the local government level. The election of the village president (*sarpanch*) is the most intense contest in the multi-tiered democratic system, attracting nearly 10 percent higher turnout than in other elections. While this confirms the broad narrative of the distinctiveness of India's democracy in comparison with more developed countries (Yadav 2000), the implications this has for understanding the rural voters' encounters with politics have not yet been subjected to a detailed analysis. The following analysis explores the extent to which the participation gap is driven by similar factors that have shaped Indian politics in general, namely identity, corruption and party politics and the adaptation of these factors to the special context of rural localities.

Village governments (*gram panchayats*) have long played an ambiguous role in the Indian political system. The concept has its origins in a traditional system of governance that, in many parts of the country, existed long before independence. Traditional *panchayats* took the form of a council (*ayat*) with five (*panch*) elders who played a role in resolving disputes and were closely linked to the hierarchical patronage networks that characterised traditional politics. The emergence of these institutions into the modern system of governance took place unevenly between the different states.

Andhra Pradesh, along with Karnataka and West Bengal, is considered to be among the forerunners in terms of formally devolving powers to rural institutions, having held three local government elections (in 1978, 1983, 1988) prior to the establishment of a national framework for *Panchayati Raj* (Raghavulu and Narayana 1999:123).

The eventual passing of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment in 1993 was a watershed moment in the course of decentralisation, setting in place a broad three-tier structure of democratically elected governments at the district, intermediary and local levels. The amendment also proposed a list of 29 subjects to be devolved to the new *Panchayati Raj* Institutions (PRIs). However, responsibility for legislation was conferred on the states. As a result, the new *panchayats* have been subject to the influences of state politics that in most states has undermined the capacity of the *panchayats* to fulfil the developmental and governance functions for which they were envisaged.

The *Panchayati Raj* system has nonetheless ensured that India became one of the most important laboratories for the study of participatory politics in the world, not only for understanding the politics of decentralisation but also for the institutionalisation of participatory governance. The new *panchayats* included provisions for positive discrimination. One third of the seats at all levels were reserved for women²³ and reservations are granted for lower castes and STs on the basis of their proportion in relation to the overall population. Despite the tendency for higher castes and men to control the reserved posts by proxy, there is emerging evidence of the positive impacts of reservations on decision-making (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2001).

The institutionalisation of participatory processes is another important aspect of the design of the modern *panchayat*. Village councils are required to hold meetings, called *gram sabhas*, between two and four times a year to pass major resolutions which are recorded in official records. Based on a large-scale, multi-state survey, Beseley, Pande and Rao (2005) showed that the lower castes are more likely to attend these

²³ Since July 2011, reservations for women in local bodies have been increased to 50 percent.

meetingsthan the higher castes. The social determinants of participation have been a major focus of empirical research on local governance in India, which has served to highlight the extent to which education and access to information are more important in determining attendance than social status (Alsop et al 2000, Krishna 2002:12). Yet opportunities for participation do not ensure effectiveness. In an innovative research project, which analysed transcripts of *gram sabha* meetings, Ban and Rao (2009) found that the more land a person owns, the most likely it is that their preference will be discussed in village meetings. Disadvantaged groups participated in these meetings, but rarely dominated proceedings. The study also found that where the post of village president was reserved for the lower castes, landed groups tended to have more control in public meetings held by the *panchayat*.

These findings have highlighted the need to supplement quantitative analysis with qualitative exploration to understand the informal institutional mechanisms of participation. In her study of village elections in Karnataka, Anathapur (2007) finds evidence to suggest that the emergence of the new institution has done little to displace the pre-existing customary institutions, especially senior caste leaders of the higher or forward castes. The broader process of political and economic mobilisation has not eroded these elite-dominated customary institutions. Rather, the elites have been able to successfully adapt themselves to the local government, often controlling it from behind the scenes.

One area of agreement lies in the limited role allowed to political parties at the local level. With a few exceptions, the state *Panchayati Raj* Act prohibits the use of symbols at the *gram panchayat* level. In Andhra Pradesh, parties are allowed to participate at all levels of the PRI except in the *gram panchayats*. Even in the case of the overtly politicised *panchayats* in West Bengal, recent empirical research has challenged the claim that well organised cadre based organisations imply organisational and ideological coherence at the grassroots level (Williams 2001). In other states, the roles of parties in village elections have rarely been a subject of research. It can be suggested that this oversight is prompted by a combination of the assumed incapacity of India's

party institutions and the presumption that discussions of any party involvement is illicit or taboo. In the case of Andhra Pradesh, both were found to be untrue.

The emerging evidence of the process of participation at the *gram panchayat* level gives cause to question conclusions regarding institutional outcomes that are based on large-scale multi-state studies. As Chaudhuri and Heller (2002) argue, the act of participation has an inherent plasticity that is influenced by various factors embedded in the local context. Yet, it is also clear that understanding these hidden mechanisms requires intensive analysis especially as these mechanisms have produced results that are hard to generalise and are likely to vary significantly between states.

The following discussion describes the general narrative of *gram panchayat* politics as it was encountered in four villages in Andhra Pradesh. This is a narrative dominated by a type of politics not commonly associated with village governments in India, focused exclusively on the contest for elections rather than the accountability and performance of representatives. This is partly due to the appropriation of the concept of *gram sabha* by the *Janmabhoomi* (Chapter 5). The policy to reduce the power of the *gram panchayats* served to alleviate the demands on the state but did nothing to reduce the intensity of the contests, which was controlled by the drivers of party politics, coalitions of identity and widely acknowledged corruption and vote buying.

4.2 Patterns of Participation

This section draws on the qualitative data from a survey conducted in four villages, covering 244 respondents randomly selected and stratified to include roughly equal representation along gender and age lines. Compared to similar surveys, the sampling methodology was relatively intensive and respondents were selected from 50 to 68 households per village. This intensive approach enabled a closer exploration of the relationships between voters in the local space and allowed comparison between different villages. Interviews with respondents were open-ended and included detailed discussions on specific local events, issues and actors. This combination of methods

enabled the researcher to get a sense of the perceptions, experiences and strategies of voters and the local narratives around village elections. The following analysis focuses on three important aspects of this narrative: the participation gap, political stratification and political space.

Table 4: The participation gap

	Tier	Number of voters	Turnout %	Winning vote share %	Margin of victory %	No. contestants polling >5% of vote	Total number of contestants
Draw from sample Area (18 sample points)	GP (<i>sarpanch</i>)	2,554	82.15	52.9	9.43	2.22	2.94
	MPTC	2,857	73.79	55.16	15.70	2.39	2.78
Random sample of 18 sample points from across Andhra Pradesh	ZPTC	35,934	70.35	50.65	12.65	2.61	3.28
	MLA	174,939	69.41	51.56	12.46	2.11	6.55

Source: Field data

4.2.1 The participation gap

While it is recognised that the intensity of democracy increases as one travels down the political system in India (Yadav 2000), the implication of this demands more analysis than has been given to date. The establishment of PRIs meant that rural voters participated in a multi-tiered democratic system, from the village to the national level. A unique data set from Andhra Pradesh which includes village elections, based on the official records of the Electoral Commission, appears to support this assertion but it also introduces a number of important caveats. While we do see a steady increase in voter turnout by one to two percentage points between state Assembly, district and intermediary tier (*mandal*) elections, the turnout increases by nearly 10 percent between the *mandal* and the village level elections. The data also indicates that the margin of victory is narrower at the village level and that the number of candidates

contesting remains relatively limited. As a result, it is possible to suggest that participation rates do not simply increase at the village level but that this intensity is evidence of close political competition between clearly defined groups.

Table 5: Political participation in panchayat elections N=244

N= 244 %		Gender		Caste group		
	Total	Men	Women	SC/ST	OBC	General
Canvassing: Did someone ask you for your vote before the last elections?	93.4	92.9	94.0	89.7	95.2	94.5
Voting: Have you voted in all gram panchayat elections since you were old enough to vote?	86.9	87.4	86.3	83.8	89.2	87.0
Political Support: Do you support a particular political party?	80.3	83.5	76.9	77.9	80.9	81.5
Party Activities: Attended a political meeting in the last one year?	33.6	44.1	22.2	26.5	44.6	29.3
Campaigning: Campaigned for a candidate in the recent <i>gram panchayat</i> elections?	32.0	42.5	20.5	33.8	34.9	28.3

Source: Field data

As a seasoned national-level politician observed, rural voters cannot escape politics unlike their urban counterparts²⁴. Yet the extent of the participation gap has an added salience in Andhra Pradesh, due to the specific institutional structure. The creation of the *mandal* system by NT Rama Rao considerably reduced the size of the intermediary tier. As a result, the constituency of the directly elected members roughly approximated the *gram panchayat*, a unit for which villagers are responsible for directly electing a president as well as a local ward member. As a result, the 10 percent jump in turnout between the *gram panchayat* and *mandal panchayat* does not actually

²⁴ Interview with Jaipal Reddy, then Member of Parliament and President of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Party Committee; Delhi, August 2002.

represent a significant difference in the size of the constituency covered by the post. This apparent anomaly demands a closer examination of the significance attached to these posts and the extent to which institutional design shapes participation.

As in any democratic process, participation in politics is not limited to voting. The survey data showed that nearly all (93.4%) voters were contacted by a candidate in local elections; and about one third were involved in campaigning and had attended a political meeting in the previous year (Table 5).

These findings roughly approximate trends in other parts of India²⁵. Out of five people, four expressed a clear allegiance to a party, while one in three people had attended a political meeting in the previous year. A similar number of people were directly involved in campaigning for a party or candidate. The majority of people (83.5% of men and 76.9% of women) supported a particular party. There was, however, a high degree of variation in terms of involvement in the party's political activities. Men were twice as likely to attend political meetings and campaign on behalf of candidates than women, indicating that women tend to be less engaged in rigorous political activities. This finding is surprising, given the extent to which the emergence of the TDP in Andhra Pradesh has been linked with appeals to women. However, as we see in the next two chapters, the new politics of the TDP focused on creating alternative political spaces for women's active participation through SHGs (Chapter 5), leaving the core stratum of political leadership as a largely male dominated space (Chapter 6). The disaggregation of political activities also indicated some divergence in the patterns between caste groups, with BCs being more likely to be active in parties than other groups. The reasons for this will be explored later in this chapter.

²⁵ In his study of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, Krishna found that only 43% of villagers reported campaigning on behalf of any candidate (or discussing electoral issues with others) during the previous election to the local government; 33% attended rallies or meetings held for electoral candidates (2003). Alsop's study (2000) finds similar proportions to those in my sample, with 42.9% of people taking part in campaigns and 32.8% attending party meetings. Manor's study of Karnataka includes data regarding intermediary tier elections. He shows that 23.2% of people took part in campaigns, though the levels were far lower for SCs (18.5%). He also shows that marginally more people (25.3%) campaigned in an election at a higher (district) level, which is contrary to the arguments made here (Crook and Manor 1998).

The participation gap emphasises the importance of the *sarpanch* as an actor in the political system. There is little doubt over the extent to which the elections of all these posts, including the majority of ward member posts, are conducted on party lines. As the in-depth analysis below shows, party allegiance and complex coalitions that emerge at the village level are not always clearly evident, even to *mandal*-level leaders, yet at the village level, the political nature of these contests is evident. The intensity of the party-based competition means that candidates invest heavily in these elections, to the extent of paying for votes and even transporting migrants back to their home villages to vote. As a result, the general picture that emerges is one in which political intensity is driven by local politicians who put a high degree of personal and political value on winning these contests.

Analysis of the reasons for choosing a particular candidate indicates the extent to which party politics prevails. Most respondents gave multiple reasons that affected their decision. The extent to which these reasons are context specific and interrelated limits the effectiveness of straightforward ranking. However, analysis of the total responses and clustering responses according to themes, shows that the party's political factors were the most important motivation for voting, followed by personal qualities of the candidate and the promise and potential of benefits. Surprisingly, caste considerations were not widely articulated as factors affecting choice, but as the discussion below shows, issues of identity remain deeply embedded in the electoral process.

Table 6: Reasons cited for choosing a sarpanch candidate

	Derived coding headings					
	Party allegiance	Personal qualities	Development activities	Caste	Requested to vote	Family
	Total citations 116	Total citations 84	Total citations 64	Total citations 25	Total citations 22	Total citations 6
Citation frequency	Verbatim comment clusters (citations)					
60	Voting along party lines (45) Voting for a party on the basis of family/tradition /or long term support (42) Voted according to party alliance* (17) Support for the ideology/objectives of the party (12) Failure of their old party to deliver (6)	Fairness, mixing with all communities, honesty (59)	Promises of village development works (schools, road formation, drainage); or personal benefits (loans and house building)	Agreement among members of caste to vote for a particular candidate, potential benefits from representation from caste member, support nomination of own caste member (25)	Requested during campaigning, personally visited by candidate (or having promised to vote for the first candidate who approaches them) (22)	Supported candidate from own family (6)
50						
40						
30						
20		Leadership skills, political/official connections, ability to promote development in the village (25)	(46)			
10			Benefits received from the party/ candidate in the past (18)			

Source: Field data

This section has set out to highlight the main patterns of participation in local elections in Andhra Pradesh, and has drawn attention to both the increased degree of intensity at the lowest level and the degree to which party politics are implicated within the ‘participation gap’. In time with the framework set out in Chapter 1, this raises a number of important questions relating to the nature of politics: whether this is a reflection of higher level politics, where local politics is driven by traditional or other distinctive forces, or whether indeed, there is a new politics emerging at the local level. The following section uses a more detailed analysis of the quantitative data to further

the exploration of the patterns in the local polity, before extending the analysis of the qualitative data.

4.2.2 Structuring the local polity

Given the degree to which the party's political engagement was embedded within intense politics in the local space, the contrast between those who were active and less active was clear when talking to respondents. While some were both keen and well informed about local political affairs, others were either disinterested or decided to remain removed from entering into these discussions. These differences in the type of respondents (as politically active, passive or somewhere in between) were very apparent during the interview process and led the interviews to take on a different course, depending on the political activity of the respondent. Where the interviewee was politically active, conversations would diverge into detailed accounts of local political events, issues and actors. Where respondents were politically passive, there was often little to discuss on these matters. Where they had consciously withdrawn from village politics, respondents often took the opportunity to discuss their feelings on the negative changes in local politics, parties and leaders.

In order to explore the varying levels of participation in more detail, an index of participation was constructed that combined scores for six main indicators. While a useful tool for interpretation, political stratification is often difficult to define in empirical terms. Methodologies for measuring political participation have been developed by theorists (Almond and Verba 1965, Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, Verba et al. 1978 and Brady, Verba and Schlozman 1995), which are largely based on Western politics, in the context of national elections. Adapting these concepts to the local setting in a developing country requires that the specific indicators that are salient within a specific political setting need to be identified.

Figure 7: Political activity index

The structured interview identified six political activities to measure people levels of participation. The responses from these questions were simply combined in order to construct a PAI. Scores of one or zero were assigned to respondents. Hence, the maximum score would be 6. All respondents said they had participated in at least one activity.

The activities and scoring system are as follows:

- Voted in *panchayat* elections since old enough to vote: *all/ most (1), few / never (0)*
- Campaigned in last *panchayat* elections – *yes (1), no (0)*
- Attended political meeting in the last year – *yes (1), no (0)*
- Member of a political party – *yes (1), no (0)*
- Any members of family are politically active – *yes (1), no (0)*
- Regarding incentives to vote did you – *spend money yourself/refuse any offer of money (1), accept/not offered (0)*

The sample was divided into three categories, based on the scores and were therefore, classified as either Low, Medium or High depending on their level of political activity.

PAI	Description	n	%
Low	One activity	92	37.7
Middle	2-3 activities	95	38.9
High	4-6 activities	57	23.4
Total		244	100

Given the comparatively small size of the sample and the intensity of the contextual analysis, it was possible to experiment with various models and indicators on political participation to derive a best fit or proxy variable for analysis. The PAI that was developed had six key variables, which included some less-widely adopted indicators, in addition to participation in elections and party politics. It was also decided to include an indicator relating to involvement in 'political corruption' practices, where increased political participation was defined by the rejection of offers of money for votes or personally contributing to election campaigns. Hence, the construction of this index was grounded in the quantitative and qualitative data as it emerged, rather than being defined at the design stage.

Table 7: Factors affecting levels of political activity

		Political Activity Index			
		Low	Medium	High	Total (%)
Gender	Men	36 (28.3)	49 (38.6)	42 (33.1)	127 (100)
	Women	56 (47.9)	46 (39.3)	15 (12.8)	117 (100)
Caste	Scheduled Caste	31 (45.6)	23 (33.8)	14 (20.6)	68 (100)
	Backward Caste	24 (28.6)	38 (45.2)	22 (26.2)	84 (100)
	Other (Forward) Caste	37 (40.2)	34 (37.0)	21 (22.8)	92 (100)
Education	None	55 (43.7)	54 (42.9)	17 (13.5)	126 (100)
	Primary	12 (26.7)	14 (31.1)	19 (42.2)	45 (100)
	Secondary	21 (38.9)	22 (40.7)	11 (20.4)	54 (100)
	Higher	4 (21.1)	5 (26.3)	10 (52.6)	19 (100)
Age	18-30	29 (37.2)	33 (42.3)	16 (20.5)	78 (100)
	31-40	28 (38.9)	22 (30.5)	22 (30.6)	72 (100)
	41-50	18 (40.0)	15 (33.3)	12 (26.7)	45 (100)
	51+	17 (34.7)	25 (51.0)	7 (14.3)	49 (100)
Party	INC	28 (36.8)	33 (43.4)	15 (19.7)	76 (100)
	TDP	28 (28.6)	34 (34.7)	36 (36.7)	98 (100)
	No Party	31 (64.6)	16 (33.3)	1 (2.1)	48 (100)
	Other	5 (22.7)	12 (54.5)	5 (22.7)	22 (100)
Village	KB	31 (45.6)	25 (36.8)	12 (17.6)	68 (100)
	IP	11 (17.5)	25 (39.7)	27 (42.9)	63 (100)
	PG	30 (47.6)	24 (38.1)	9 (14.3)	63 (100)
	BVP	20 (40.0)	21 (20.0)	9 (18.0)	50 (100)
Total (%)		92 (37.7)	95 (38.9)	57 (23.4)	244 (100)

Source: Field data

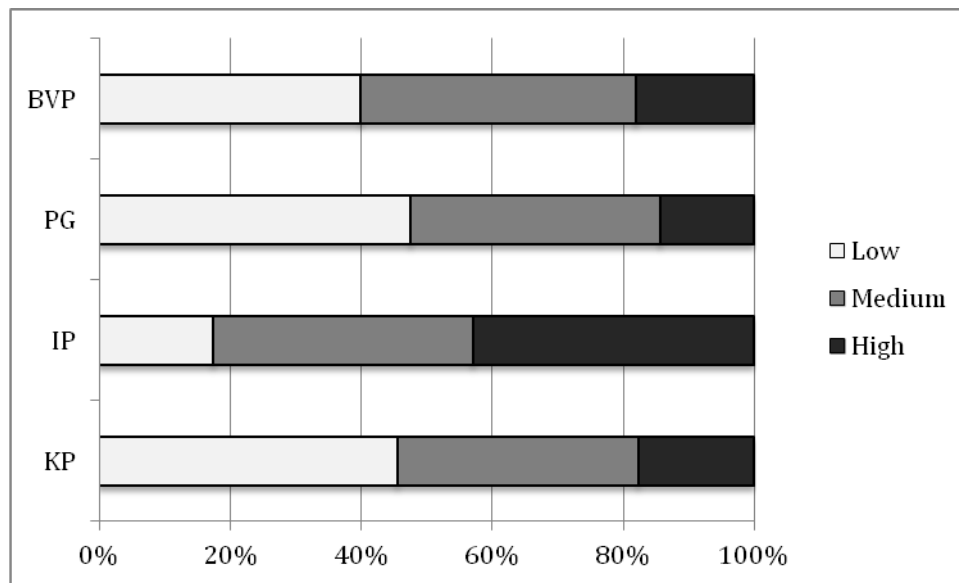
Discussions at the village level highlighted the fact that political activity tended to be defined at the household level. In cases where the husband was politically active, wives tended to be relatively involved even if they were not party members. The PAI (Figure 7) provides a proxy estimate for typologies of political participation. Based on the distribution of scores across the sample, the individuals were assigned levels of participation²⁶ and further analysis was carried out to understand the strength of the factors that shape participation in the local space. The actual assignment of the

²⁶ As Ahmed (1975) argues, the distribution of behaviours between the strata of participants is rarely even, and that a relatively small number of active participants have a disproportionate role in shaping electoral processes. Given the complexity of the factors that define qualitative typologies, it is recognised that this qualitative measure is relatively crude and does not reflect the same typologies of voters that draws from qualitative data.

levels of activity has been designed to roughly divide the sample into groups, where people who scored one or less are termed as 'low' (37.7% of sample), those who scored between 2 or 3 were termed as 'medium' (38.9% of sample) and those scoring 4 or more were termed as 'highly active' (23.4% of sample).

The PAI serves to highlight the significant gender disparity in participation, with 33.1 percent of men falling into the category of 'highly active' as against only 12.8 percent women. As suggested above, there are some differences between caste groups but these are marginal, with the proportion of caste that is 'highly active' ranging from 20.5 percent for SCs, 22.8 percent for Forward Castes, with the BCs being slightly higher at 26.2 percent.

The index also allows for a closer examination of the extent of other social determinants of participation. Education, or access to information, has been widely cited as a determinant of participation at the local level in India (Alsop et al. 2000, Krishna 2002), yet the data from Andhra Pradesh suggests that this relationship could be more complex. Over half (52.6%) of the respondents with higher than secondary education and 42.2 percent of those with primary education are highly active in politics. People with no education are the least likely to be highly active (13.5%). However, this trend is not even. Only 20.4 percent of people with secondary education are highly active in politics, which is lower than would be expected. Hence, while there is a general pattern to support the claim that educated people are more likely to be active in politics, there is evidence of different factors at work for different groups that require further analysis. Age does not seem to be a significant factor, however, older respondents (50 years and above) are less likely to be active in politics. There is a slight clustering of highly active people around the 31-40 years age range, which is supported by the more detailed analysis of village leaders in Chapter 6.

Figure 8: Political activity in villages

Source: Field data

The fact that party affiliation affects the level of activity is a highly significant finding, though it is one that has received little attention to date. Over two thirds (36.7%) of the TDP supporters were highly active, against 19.7 percent of the Congress Party supporters. Surprisingly, those who do not support any particular party are unlikely to be politically active. This finding highlights the qualitative differences between parties and their organisational capabilities. As discussed below (Section 4.3.3) and in Chapter 6, the Telugu Desam has been far more effective than the Congress in terms of generating its party base through the creation of party posts and associated positions on developmental committees, which have incentivised cadres and opened up space for new entrants to enter into active politics. The Congress, on the other hand, was widely perceived to be stagnant, with the same party leaders dominating local party units for decades, with less emphasis being given to mobilising new party members.

The other significant finding is that patterns of political stratification are relatively even between villages but can be shaped by specific factors that affect the political opportunity and issues locally rather than at the higher level (Figure 8). The sample on which this analysis is based is drawn from two regions and, therefore, from different parliamentary and assembly segments. Thus, one would expect to see regional or

higher level political differences being reflected in the local trends, indicating a higher level of political activity at the regional level. However, this does not seem to be the case, as the breakdown of the three strata of political participation is similar among the villages, implying that each has an established set of 'highly active', 'active' and 'passive' participants.

There is one important exception in this. In the village of IP the number of the 'highly active' participants is far higher than in the other villages. This apparent anomaly can be explained by the fact that five main parties were found to be active in IP, as opposed to the two or three parties found in the other villages. The inclusion of the additional parties, namely the Telangana based party (Telangana Rashtra Samithi) and the national level Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which became locally active owing to alliances with the other parties, opened up political space in the village for additional leaders to emerge and hold positions of authority. The importance of the opening up of political space and the ways this can be done outside the party system is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

The emergence of similar patterns of political activity in the villages suggests that there is a process of internal stratification that takes place in villages that are politically aware and thereby, politically mobilised. The existence of political activists is influenced by the availability of opportunities. The presence of politically active villagers is also likely to affect the behaviour of others in the village, either making them dependent on their leaders or alienating them from active politics²⁷. The increase in the numbers of the politically active strata is not necessarily commensurate to the proliferation of opportunities in the village. Rather, that it is likely that there will always be a group who choose to withdraw from active politics for a variety of reasons including lack of interest. Further, as mentioned above, it is likely that increasing active politics in the village is likely to result in the growth of a group of villages who are 'actively passive' and who withdraw from politics out of protest or a sense of alienation. While the data

²⁷The relational quality of participation has been explored by Pritchett (2006) in his study on social capital in Indonesia.

does not allow for the distinction to be drawn between the 'passive' and 'actively passive' voter, this would be an important consideration in future research on the new politics of localisation.

4.3 Political Drivers and Local Contexts

The analysis of the quantitative data on political participation has highlighted the significance of the gaps between the local and the higher levels of the political system, and the extent to which this is driven by 'modern' politics. The analysis also serves to show how the local space retains a salience rather than being eroded by political activity. Political activity is affected by local events, issues and actors and retains an internal cohesion that resembles a more traditional notion of politics. This section draws on the qualitative analysis to examine the three key drivers of local politics in more detail, namely, caste, entrepreneurship and political institutions through the analysis of the specific events, issues and actors that shaped electoral outcomes in the 2001 *gram panchayat* elections in four localities.

The purposive selection of cases sought to represent the varying political relations between regional politics and the village, as well as, the role of reservations for women and the lower castes. In three of the sample villages, the post of *sarpanch* was reserved for people other than the forward castes and in the remaining village, the post was reserved for a woman. The contest for *sarpanch* was the main focus of village elections and was fiercely fought with a margin of victory as low as 2.9 percent in one case. Despite the closeness of these contests, the outcome of the *sarpanch* election serves to define the political identity of the village. In discussions at the *mandal* level, political leaders would commonly refer to villages as TDP or Congress villages. Yet a closer reading of these contests point to the need to situate these elections within the multi-tiered democratic system, as well as, the long-term process of political change. All but one village selected a representative from a different party to represent them in the *mandal panchayat* (see Figure 6 in chapter 3). While party control over the *sarpanch* position changed only in one village between 1995 and 2001, all villages had new

representatives, in part due to the policy of revolving reservations between terms. In all villages, the *gram panchayat* committee was divided between a relatively equal number of members from parties opposed to and supporting the leading party.

In order to understand the political process around the *gram panchayat* election, it is important to take into account the broader context of political histories and the interplay between the various levels in the political system. The qualitative component of this research uses in-depth interviews with a wide range of stakeholders as a means of developing a narrative of political events around the last election. This process of developing political histories demanded piecing together information from sources that are inherently biased. As others have argued, this process highlights the limitations of adopting Western notions of a public sphere in the context of the village (Ruud 1996) and challenges the notion that proximity can be equated with transparency and openness of discourse. In practical terms, constructing village narratives or political histories involves the researcher as an active participant who is required to make judgements on the character and motivations of actors in the absence of any reliable means of verification. As evidence of this, two of the three key 'drivers' that have been identified, i.e., identity and corruption, were virtually absent in the responses to the direct question of 'how did you choose a candidate in the *sarpanch* elections?' Yet, as the following examples aim to show, these, together with party political factors, play an important role in defining the space in which these choices are made.

4.3.1 Caste: identity politics

Literature on developmental politics reveals an ambiguous narrative on the role of caste in local politics. The broad narrative of political change in India that was explored in Chapter 2 is perhaps worth restating here in brief. Viewed from the macro level, the emergence of identity-based politics played an important role in eroding the dominance of local elites and paved the way for a democratic upsurge among the lower orders of society (Kohli 1970, Kothari 1997, Jaffrelot 2003, Kaveraj 2000). Identity-based politics has enabled the lower castes to assert their numerical strength

in state and national politics, yet the process of institutional decay has meant that the benefits of this transition have not penetrated evenly to the local level. In this context, institutional provisions for reservation in local governments have ensured that caste identity has remained integral to rural votes, which raises important questions regarding the extent to which the politics of aggregation and decay influence the local level.

Reservations along the lines of caste were introduced together with gender-based reservations with a view to introduce equality of opportunity. The general finding from these four villages was that there is little cause to suggest that women's reservation has had a major impact on Andhra's highly politicised *gram panchayats*. If a woman was elected as *sarpanch* she had been elected on behalf of her husband and it was widely accepted as the norm that she would, in that role, be only a proxy for her husband. A few cases of politically active women were found, most of whom were household heads. These findings appear to contradict the more positive analysis of the women's reservation policy in India (Jain 1996, Strulik 2003, Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2001). The reasons for this lie in the broader context of developmental politics in Andhra Pradesh that sought to promote women's empowerment outside the *panchayat* system, which is discussed in the next chapter. In comparison, caste-based reservations are a key driver of the political process at the *gram panchayat* level, which challenges general narratives of identity politics and political proxies.

The emphasis given to numerical aggregation among the lower castes as a driver of political change has long since underplayed the importance of distribution. While this is an issue that has received little detailed analysis, it is clear that there are significant variations between castes and even politically powerful groups tend to be concentrated in certain regions. While the importance of these variations is less obvious in state or national elections, they are critical for understanding the politics of localisation.

Table 8: Analysis of respondents by caste

District	Nalgonda		Prakasham		
Village	KB	IP	BVP	PGP	Total
Scheduled Castes/Tribes (SC/ST)					
<i>Madiga</i>	18	12	7	10	47
<i>Mala</i>	0	7	6	1	14
Scheduled Tribes	2	0	1	0	3
Total SC/ST	20	19	14	11	64
Backward Communities					
<i>Yadav</i> (cowherd/milkseller)	1	15	5	0	21
<i>Mutrasi</i> (fishermen)	2	13	0	0	15
<i>Gouda</i> (toddy tappers)	13	1	0	0	14
<i>Munuru Kapu</i>	10	0	0	0	10
<i>Kumhar</i> (potter)	4	0	0	4	8
<i>Vaddera</i> (stone cutters)	0	1	1	5	7
<i>Rajaka/Chakali</i> (washermen)	0	2	1	2	5
<i>Padmashalli</i> (weavers)	3	0	0	0	3
<i>Mangali</i> (barbers)	0	1	1	0	2
<i>Vadrangi</i> (carpenters)	1	0	0	0	1
<i>Kamsali</i> (blacksmiths)	0	0	1	0	1
Total BC	34	33	9	11	87
Other (Forward) Communities (OC)					
<i>Reddy</i>	11	10	13	18	52
<i>Telaga Naidu</i>	0	0	23	10	33
<i>Arya Vasya</i>	0	0	2	0	2
Kamma	0	0	1	0	1
Muslim	3	1	1	0	5
Total OC	14	11	40	28	93
Total	68	63	63	50	244

Source: Field data

Detailed analysis of the caste distribution of the randomly sampled respondents in four localities highlighted the extent to which the logic of caste-based politics can vary between localities (Table 8). The classification of voters in terms of scheduled castes, backward and forward communities belies a wealth of complexity in terms of the more tangible caste identities that fall within them. In Andhra Pradesh, the divisions between *Malasand Madigas* cut through the larger pattern of state politics. In IP and BVP, both communities were present in significant numbers, but in KB and PGP, most SCs were from the *Madiga* community. Similarly in the case of the forward caste groups, in two villages in Prakasham District (BVP and PGP) the *Reddy* and the *TelagaNaidu* populations are predominant, though in Telangana, the *Reddys* are the only major forward caste group. The case of the BCs is more complex. Even this limited sample included twelve distinctive caste groups, and only in Telangana are the BCs a major social group. Within these two villages, the dominant population is very different, despite being located within the same *mandal*. In KB, the major BC groups are the *Goudas* and *Munuru Kapus*, while in IP it is the *Yadavs* and the *Mutrasi*.

The numerical strength of castes has long since been understood as a driver of political contests at the village level (Srinivas 1959). The variation of the configuration of castes, together with the allocation of reservations, provides an important indication of the nature of the political contest that emerges in a single locality. The general pattern is that a reservation for a BC *sarpanch*, for example, tends to result in opposing parties selecting candidates from different communities, as was the case in KB village.

However, parties cannot rely on a single caste block to win the elections and, therefore, the party division tends to spread to other caste groups. As a result, the entrance of the lower castes into village politics is often an externality of the struggles between them and the higher castes. The case study of BVP village serves to show how this process of induction can serve to undermine the political strength of the lower castes.

Case Study: Dividing the lower castes

When the post of *sarpanch* was reserved for a SC candidate in BVP village in 2001, the high caste party leaders were forced to select candidates. As in many villages in Andhra

Pradesh, the SC population is divided between *Malas* and *Madigas* who live separately. In the case of BVP village, the two caste groups occupied the same *palli* located along the entrance road to the main village, but situated on either side of the road. This sub-caste division becomes the logical point through which the higher castes sought to mobilise votes and undermine the numerical strength of the SCs. Most of the lower castes in the village were Congress supporters, and the party leaders selected a man who had no political experience but was widely considered as a *Madiga* caste leader. By offering political and financial rewards, the TDP, without any difficulty, mobilised a controversial local figure from the *Malacommunity* to stand against the Congress candidate. As a result, the divisions between the SCs were aggravated to the point that SCs spoken to during the course of this field research refused to enter certain streets in their own colonies. These resentments further worsened when it became apparent that the *Madiga sarpanch* was powerless and was being used by the higher castes who undertook village wars in his name. Reflecting on this case, one BC leader feelingly concluded that 'the high caste leaders are using the SCs as *karipaku*²⁸ in their parties, but we are actually the salt which is necessary for every curry'.

The localisation of identity politics blurs the boundaries between caste and family. In many of the villages studied, the term 'lineage' was found to be more useful in understanding loyalties and dominance²⁹. Lineage, in this sense, refers to extended family groups, where the family name is retained, yet the groups are larger than the extended family but smaller than a clan that extends across villages. For example, the *sarpanch* of IP village came from the *Nakrekanti* family, the largest group sharing a family name within the SCs in the village. The extent of the *Nakrekanti/non-Nakrekanti* split was considered more important than the competition between the *Mala* and the *Madiga* castes within the local SC community. In the same village, the *Nagareddi*

²⁸ Curry leaves, flavouring used in food in South India

²⁹ Thanks to Dr Siva Prasad for making this distinction clear to me. Lineages of this kind are different from the extended family in that the rules relating to rituals after a death are not generally strictly adhered to. This is because it becomes impractical to follow such restrictive traditions when the lineage extends to a large number of people. Lineages are sometimes referred to as clan, but normally only when they spread over a wider geographical area than the ones being discussed here.

lineage is the numerically dominant subsection of the *Reddy* caste. The *Nagarreddis* had played the dominant political role in the village for generations. In BVP village, the *Anam* clan, also from the *Reddy* caste, claims to account for 60 percent of the population of the main village. A member of the *Anam* lineage had played the dominant role of *munsif*³⁰ in the past and kingmaker and continues to hold great influence over the choice of candidates for political office in the present day. The necessity of vertical alignments between high and low castes can also be a force behind political change in the village. In the village of KB, the election of a BC in a reservation post was a long-term struggle between the higher castes, as the following case shows.

Case Study: Caste as a means to political change

Until about 15 years ago, a follower of a powerful, regional Congress politician dominated KB village. Acting as a feudal elder, this leader managed a group of *goondas* (thugs) who engaged in extortion and theft of toddy, crops and animals. The elder also had powerful links to the MLA and the *tehsildar*³¹. His dominance was challenged for the first time when an upper caste youth returned to the village after completing his education in the city. As a student, the youth had been active with the youth Communist Party. On returning to the village, he joined the newly emerged TDP and joined forces with the *Goud* caste leader. Owing to the numerical strength of their caste in the village, the *Gouds* provided an important entry point for the youth leader. The *Gouds* were not ready to join the TDP though most of them sympathised with the party, but supported the youth leader in opposition to the Congress elder.

In the elections for the *Goud sangham* (association of toddy tappers) president, the TDP managed to win. However, the Congress elder drew on his connections with the

³⁰ One of the regional names given to the village head before reforms in democratic decentralisation.

³¹ Local administrative head under the old administrative system. As *tehsils* were larger than *mandals* the *tehsildar* was more like a mini district collector than a *mandal* development officer.

local officials³² to declare the results void on the basis of the fact that the old *sangham* (that he controlled) had not been formally dissolved. The TDP youth leader took six months to lobby the excise ministry to overturn this decision, and in the mean time, the Congress elder distributed toddy trees for the year and production started. The Congress elder managed to collect dues from about 70 percent of the *Gouds* saying that the money would be invested to develop the *sangham*. When the next elections came, he threatened to retain the money unless his choice of candidate remained as *Peda Goud* (head of the *Goud sangham*). He was successful in coercing the *Gouds* to elect his candidate for a final time. In the third election, the TDP managed to get their candidate elected. Two months of serious, violent conflict ensued in the village, as people were unwilling to accept the shift in power in the village, finally ending in a meeting where the majority of the *Gouds* joined the TDP. The domination of the Congress elder ended, forcing him to leave the village.

Set against this context, the decision of the former *sarpanch* to promote a *Goud* leader reflects a longer struggle within the village. The new *sarpanch* of KBvillage was widely considered to be fair and honest and was the ex-president of the numerically dominant *Goud* caste in the village. As one BC woman from KB said, “The *sarpanch* is such a man that if he had one handful of rice, he would distribute it equally to all people.” He was also noted for his ability to move with and maintain relations with leaders from all communities. It is also common knowledge that he was a heavy drinker, illiterate and among the local leaders, was comparatively poor. Some, but not all, voters saw the latter as a virtue. As one woman said, “The present *sarpanch* is poor and as we are also poor, we think he may be able to solve our problems.” Hence, we can conclude that support for the TDP candidate can be attributed to both the personal standing of the *Goud* leader and the political tactics of his *Reddy* supporters. One important factor was that despite his antagonism towards the opposition, the TDP leader allowed the Congress *Reddys* to control the post of the MPTC, which was unreserved in the 2001 election. This subtle process of political accommodation was brokered through the

³²In relating this case, we were told that the elections to the *Goud sangham* were organised by the excise ministry, and their local officials, as ‘toddy’ were subject to taxation.

leaders in the interest of ensuring a degree of harmony between opposing groups in the village.

These contrasting cases serve to underline the fact that, while caste plays a vital role in village elections, the exact form that this takes is determined by factors that are deeply rooted in the local context. These cases also serve to show how the concept of proxy leadership, or management of positions by higher caste leaders, is a graduated concept. Cases were found of lower caste elected leaders who were puppets in the hands of their high caste patrons, as in the case of PGP village cited below. However, the complex nature of the caste alignment means that these relationships are necessarily managed in a way that reflects the mutual dependency between parties and is based not on a defined logic but rather on the skills and strategies of individual actors.

4.3.2 Entrepreneurship: Money Politics

The linkage between money and politics has been a consistent theme in studies of contemporary Indian politics. In her reflection on the 'disarray' of party politics, Hassan states that, 'parties and politicians have been accused of eroding the democratic system by practising corrupt politics, eschewing a long-term stand on national interest and maximising their personal gains and influence' (2002:2). One of the claims in favour of localisation is that leaders at the local level are more likely to be held accountable for their actions and that corruption would therefore be reduced. However, in Andhra Pradesh this was not found to be the case, and money was widely accepted to be the oil in the electoral process.

Village level political leaders were not shy when it came to talking about their involvement in the corruption of politics for personal gain. The level of 'investment' in local elections was viewed as an indication of their importance and capacity. As a result, it was relatively easy to develop a unique data set (Table 9) on electoral expenditure of 15 villages, which reveal important trends that have received little

attention to date. In considering this data, it is important to note that there was very little party financing involved in village elections in Andhra Pradesh, as candidates were largely responsible for mobilising funds themselves. Also, unlike other contexts in India namely West Bengal³³, the funds were largely used to pay voters for their votes rather than being used in other forms of ‘bribery’ in the election process.

Table 9: Spending on 2001 sarpanch elections

Data collected from 15 villages; amount in lakhs (Rs. 100,000)

	Average expenditure incurred by winning candidate	Average expenditure of main contestant	Total expenditure	Maximum spent by any candidate	Minimum spent by any candidate	Number of villages
All villages	2.3	1.5	3.8	10	0.3	15
SC reserved seats	1.2	0.7	1.9	1.5	0.5	4
BC reserved seats	2.8	1.2	4	10	0.3	6
Unreserved seats	2.6	2.6	5.2	8	0.7	5
Seats reserved for women	2.4	1.3	3.6	10	0.7	7
Open seats	2.3	1.8	4.1	8	0.3	8

Source: Field Notes

The average expenditure incurred by a *sarpanch* contestant in 2001 was Rs. 2.3 lakhs , which is roughly 11 times the Rs. 20,000 limit set by the Election Commission.

Unsuccessful candidates spend, on an average, two-thirds (Rs. 1.5 lakhs) the amount spent by the winners and the minimum spent by any candidate was Rs. 30,000.

Expenditure incurred by SCs on reserved posts was roughly half of what was spent by other castes and despite reservations, backward communities spent marginally more than forward castes. No variation was seen in cases where seats were reserved for women, indicating that male proxies led these contests. Indeed, the highest expenditure (Rs. 10L) was spent on a seat reserved for a woman.

³³My thanks to Glyn Williams for this information (pers. comm)

Total electoral costs are an open secret in the village. While there is little doubt that the majority of funds are used to buy votes, voters themselves are generally unwilling to admit that they have accepted money. As one man put it, “A thief cannot tell you that he is a thief.” When respondents were asked if they had received incentives, only one in five people admitted that they had received incentives. The extent of under-reporting is suggested when we consider that nearly half as many reported that they had personally contributed to election funds³⁴. Broader discussions revealed that cash incentives ranging from Rs. 100 to Rs. 500 were often distributed over a number of days (and even after the elections). In some cases, the flow of spending rose significantly and unexpectedly in the evening before the elections as a result of one candidate suddenly feeling insecure about his chances of success. Non-monetary gifts were also important. Evidence was found that *sari* blouses and men’s shirts, soft drinks and trips to the cinema for the youth were offered around election time. One ward member even undertook the construction of a small temple in his ward, recounting that he felt people would respect the fact that he did not waste money on alcohol. By far, the biggest incentive is alcohol, distributed in the week leading up to the elections.

While there is clear evidence that higher expenditure tends to lead to victory, it is hard to determine the extent to which the vote buying ensures that votes are polled. The linkage between vote buying and polling cannot be disregarded³⁵. As one SC man told us, “We took Rs. 200 from the TDP; if anyone had given us more, we would have voted for them.” Some voters confided that they had taken money from both parties,

³⁴ Out of those questioned, 12 percent refused to answer, or said they did not know. Nine percent of people said they had contributed money themselves to the candidate or campaign fund. Sixteen percent said they had been offered incentives, but they had refused them.

³⁵ It should be noted, however, that not all election money is spent on buying votes from individuals. Money is also used for conducting campaigns, arranging vehicles to get people to the polling booths and even to hold rallies of supporters in tractors when filing nominations. Also, lump sums are given to vote bank holders, as well as, other political leaders to limit the competition. Discussions with a senior police officer revealed that giving money to the local police is an important means of ensuring elections are ‘controlled’. While this is common in assembly, *zilla* and *mandal* elections, I could find no evidence that this was the case in village elections. The lack of evidence does not mean it does not happen. In other villages, the role of the police was crucial which suggests that this support may have been purchased.

believing that this is all they would ever get out of the *panchayat*. For many voters, short term guaranteed returns were more attractive than the long term (greater) good of transparent and fair local elections.

It is clear, however, that certain portions of the electorate expect elections to be a time when liquor flows freely and when people return to the village with the help of the candidates. As another man belonging to the SC told us,

“You could rename this ‘election liquor’ It is not good or tasty. I normally buy better brands myself. But the *sarpanch* had sent a tempo to bring me and 20 other workers back from Mysore to vote; he gave us food and drink for a week which means that we should vote for him. It is only fair.”

The importance of money politics adds a dimension of risk to the process of participation. A number of the respondents felt that prolific spending on elections was a negative trend and voted against the parties that had spent the most. People refused bribes for a number of reasons. Some refused out of fear of recrimination. One person belonging to the BC told us, “If we take money and the candidate loses, after the elections, they will come and scold us.” However, it seemed that nearly an equal number of people refused money on principle. An elderly man told us, “To take money is to degrade one’s social standing, as once people take money, they lose the power to ask anything of the leaders after the elections.” He went on to say, “It’s not worth getting a bad reputation for the sake of just 50 or 100 rupees.”

The scale of election spending suggests that it is a minority of voters who feel that vote buying undermines free choice and democratic rights. Nonetheless, discussions with the elder people, who felt free to criticise money politics, highlighted the broader impact on participation. In the words of one villager,

“Politics is linked with money – that is why I do not attend party meetings. I refuse the offers of liquor and money and I cast my vote for the candidate and party I wish to support, my vote is not for sale. The elections were not fair

because all the people were bribed by liquor and money and this influenced the result.”

One of the unique features of India's democracy is the extent to which the 'dirty' aspects of politics are openly discussed - both at the national, as well as, the community level (Ruud 2000). In the case of Andhra Pradesh, we find that the recognition of the machinations of the political leadership can also have a tangible impact on the villagers' sense of security on the local political space. The case of the *Vaishyas* in PGP village is especially poignant. This small community of 15 families come from a successful business community. The families from this community were interviewed in the initial sample and they reported that they had voted in all village elections. It was during discussions with one of the younger members of one of the families that a story was revealed, which was subsequently verified. None of the *Vaishya* households had voted in the last elections. Ten years ago, when the TDP candidate had lost the election by just one vote, he had accused the *Vaishyas* of voting for Congress and had beaten them severely. Disturbances had also broken out in the build-up to the last elections. As one of the *Vaishyas* told us, “The situation is very bad, so we, as a caste, will stay away from the elections.” We discovered this was not the only case. One woman belonging to BC eventually confided in us. At first the TDP candidate came and made her promise her vote, then the Congress candidate who visited her told her not to cast her vote. She stayed away from the polling booth, saying “We cannot support any single party in the village – for if we do, we cannot live here.”

Minority groups are most at risk in Andhra Pradesh's highly charged local elections. In PGP village, members of the Muslim and *Kamma* community were interviewed; both were migrant communities and both chose not to cast their votes in the elections. A few other cases emerged from other communities. Comments from one member of the BC adequately sums up the attitude of this small neutral minority.

“Both parties came to us to campaign for our votes – so we should remain neutral. We have two votes; perhaps in future we should give one to each party. We are barbers, we work in this village and we need the help of both groups.”

There is some evidence that the increasingly high stakes around local elections is a relatively recent phenomenon. Some of the older members in the village who used to be politically active also chose to stay away from politics for different reasons. The perspective of this group serves to place the changing political culture at the village level in a historical context. As one formerly politically active, forward caste man told us,

“The present generation of political leaders is not listening to the older generation leaders. Even if we give suggestions, no one bothers, so I do not wish to offer advice anymore. Personally, I do not like the behaviour of the villagers and the political leaders. (These days) each individual aims only to get the maximum personal benefits out of everything. For this reason I now stay away from elections and politics.”

4.3.3 Political institutions: party politics

The narratives regarding the role of caste and political corruption serve to highlight the extent to which local politics are shaped by specific actors, events and issues at the local level. The discussion has also served to show the extent to which political parties are deeply embedded in the local context and the extent to which party politics emerge as the main reason on which voters base their choice of candidate. This section explores in more depth the two aspects of party politics at the local level, pragmatism and ideology and the implications this has for understanding political behaviours at the village level.

The general picture of party politics at the village level is one of pragmatic alignment that is weakly linked to party institutions. The existence of a multi-party system provides a structure around which activists have been able to articulate rivalries that are deeply embedded in the local context. Leaders invest significant amounts of money to win elections in the name of the party, but there is little evidence that higher-level party leaders contribute significantly to these campaigns. The party units at the *mandal* and district levels play a role in recognising local leaders and deciding on whom to

allocate the unofficial party ticket, it is normally given to people who are capable of mobilising the funds required to contest. However, the village leaders have a high degree of autonomy when it comes to engineering the alignments that are necessary at the village level. The following two cases serve to highlight the different ways in which party politics is articulated through highly localised and personalised machinations of the village leadership.

Case Study: Coalitions of Caste and Party

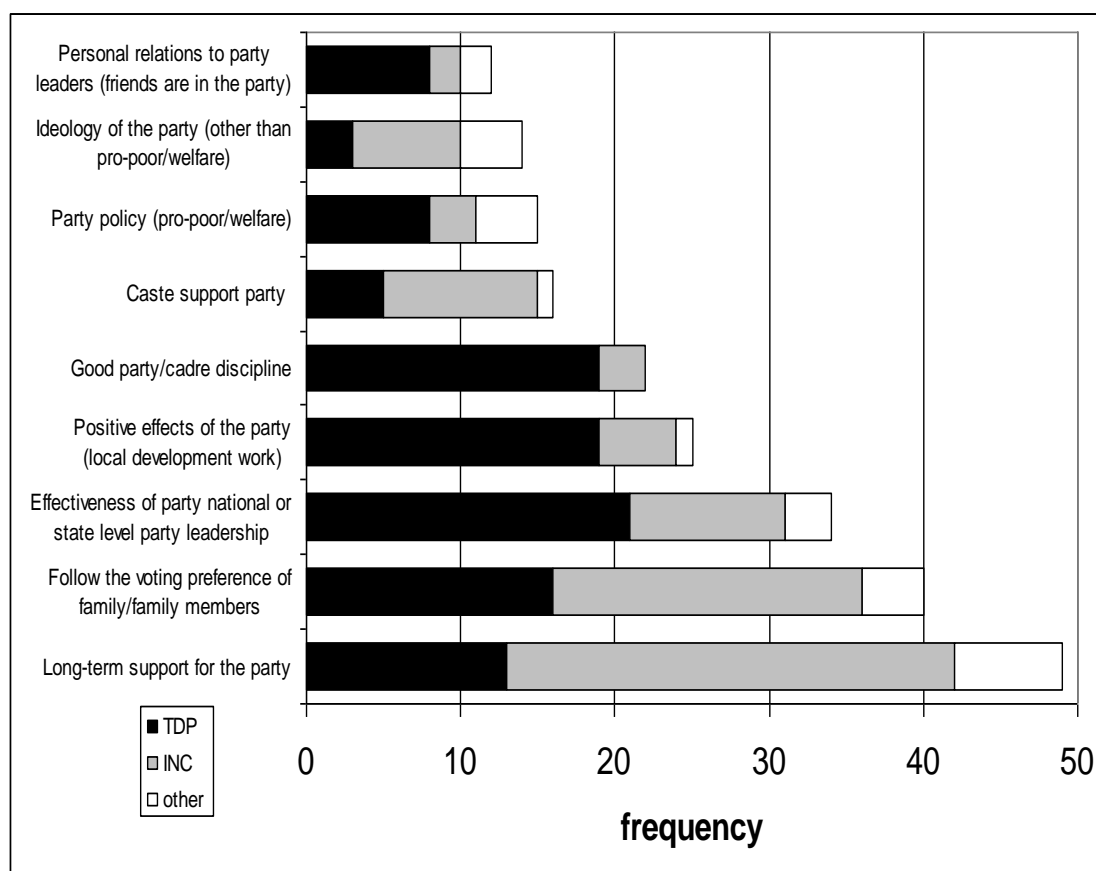
During the 1980s, IP village was dominated by the CPI(M) under the leadership of an influential *Reddy* who was still in the village at the time of this research. The CPI(M) leaders used to have a strong following among the SCs and certain active youths from the BCs. However, during the mid-1990s there was a gradual shift away from the CPI(M), initiated by some of the BC and SC youth, as they were not getting opportunities within the *Reddy*-led party. The village Congress was dominated by a powerful group of five *Reddys* who controlled the majority of contracts and committees at the village level. Though parties have always been important, dominance was really expressed through *Reddy* power, and time and again, parties have colluded to perpetuate this dominance.

In the lead up to the 2001 *panchayat* elections, it seemed that this situation was set to change. An active BC leader who had joined the TDP two years earlier had been instrumental in mobilising many of the new development programmes of the ruling party, including setting up night schools for adult learners and supporting women's SHGs. Sensing the growth in numbers of TDP sympathisers, the *Reddy* leaders decided to form an alliance between the Congress, BJP and CPI(M), despite the fact that these parties were in opposition at the state level, in an effort to stop the new TDP leaders from coming into power.

In the election just before this research was conducted, the post of *sarpanch* was reserved for an SC. The *Reddy* alliance agreed they would support a Congress candidate for *sarpanch*, and arrangements were made to allocate ward member seats. A

financially crippling struggle between brothers (one from TDP and one from Congress) in which each spent more than Rs.1.5L resulted in the *Reddys* getting their candidate elected. The BJP candidate was allocated the post of *up-sarpanch* (name given to the deputy *sarpanch*) and an SC woman from the CPI(M) was elected as the MPTC. It was widely known that the SC *sarpanch* was a puppet of the *Reddys* who used to appropriate all contract works in his name. With an SC in the post of *sarpanch*, the *Reddys* were able to hold significant sway in the *gram panchayat*. In contrast, the TDP was effectively sidelined. This was despite the fact that among the sample of respondents interviewed in the village, the TDP held the largest proportion of supporters of any single party within the village.

Parties play an ambiguous role in village politics. Intense engagement in village politics brings voters into close contact with party politics in their everyday lives and demands that they express party loyalties. Yet the nature of these local contests means that the identities of parties and the axes of competition are highly mutable and subject to the machinations and strategies of pragmatic local leaders. This paradox has important implications for understanding the aggregation of local politics. Party politics provide the most important link between the local and supra-local level in the political system. The multi-party system at the state level also provides the opportunity structure for new political forces to emerge which challenge the entrenched dominance of high caste leaders. This raises the question - what types of patterns emerge?

Figure 9: Reasons for supporting political parties

Source: Field data

Despite the evidence that shows that party identities are shaped by local events, issues and actors, clear evidence emerges to suggest that political parties in Andhra Pradesh have clearly defined identities. Figure 9 compares the reasons respondents gave for supporting a particular party and shows clear differences between the character of the parties, the TDP and the Congress. As the oldest and most established national party, the Congress Party relies heavily on the long-term support of families based around caste identities and proximity to the national level leadership. Support for the TDP, in contrast, was largely based on the perception of the current state leadership and the specific policies that Naidu was identified with. Importantly, TDP supporters also cited the effectiveness of local party workers, or cadres, and party discipline as reasons for supporting the party.

The strong identities of political parties are closely linked to loyalties that are openly recognised in the village. Long-term support to parties is considered to be critical to accessing benefits. The latter point was made clear when we spoke to members of the *Madiga* community in KB village who had continued to support the Congress since the time of Indira Gandhi, some three decades ago, when some of their communities had received houses under her anti-poverty schemes. The fact that they had received little from governments since, and that the village had elected a TDP *sarpanch* for the last two terms did not induce them to change parties. Rather, they felt that their long-term support means that they would be first in line when the Congress came to power in the village. More generally, 'party jumping' as it was referred to, was considered by most people to be a sign of bad character and something that is not undertaken lightly.

4.4 Conclusion

The analysis of village elections examined in this chapter highlighted the distinctiveness of the village as the arena in the political system. This distinctiveness is evident both in term of the participation gaps between the village and the next level in the political system, which is shown to be as much as ten percent, a fact which has so far received little attention in current discussion on the democratic upsurge and democratic decentralisation in India. The fact that this high level of intensity takes place in a context where local bodies have comparatively limited financial and administrative power challenges the assertion in the quotation at the head of this chapter, that politics is related to power.

The analysis presented highlights the dynamic interplay of local and higher level politics. There is some evidence that the 'village' can be a significant variable in affecting the intensity of local politics, or that the intensity of village politics is affected by local factors. As the case of IP village shows, the most important factor contributing

to this is the number of parties, which further underlines the fluid relationship of local and supra-local factors at the local level.

More generally, there is strong evidence to suggest that there is a pattern of stratification of villagers that is common across villages. The PAI has been constructed to explore this finding, with the awareness of the limitation of quantifying the multifaceted nature of political participation at the local level. Nonetheless, there is scope to argue that the disposition to participate in activity is one of the most important characteristics that defines a villager and that there is a limited correlation between the degree of political activity and caste, though there remains a significant gender gap, which reflects the fact that the 'logic' of caste politics varies between localities in a way that is different from the broader narrative of political change at the higher levels of the polity.

The analysis explored some of the drivers of local politics, namely money and political parties. The high level of expenditure recorded in Andhra Pradesh not only reveals new insights into the working of local elections in India, it also highlights the extent to which this is driven by personal 'entrepreneurial' incentives rather than more organised party financing. Nonetheless, political party affiliation emerged as one of the main factors influencing people's decision to vote, which strong differences evident between the identities of political parties at the local level.

The broader picture that emerges from the analysis is that there is an interplay of local and higher level politics that shapes the democratic process at the local level. The focus on local elections helps to identify the importance of this relationship, but it is evident that the process of democratic decentralisation does not drive the intensity of local politics alone. The following chapter will explore the influence of parallel initiatives at the local level, as part of the new politics of localisation and the role of informal reforms in the local space.

Chapter 5: Participatory Politics: Changing the Narrative of Village Politics

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the creation of new participatory spaces at the village level. The broad political strategies that informed this radical experiment have been discussed in Chapter 2 and need only to be briefly re-stated here. The *Janmabhoomi* programme was used by Naidu as a means to create his own identity through a distinctive brand of 'effective populism' that built on the legacy of his predecessor, NTR. As a shrewd political organiser, he was also aware of the need to overcome the limits of identity politics by creating new identities and coalitions of voters in a way that would cement his political strength. Set against the backdrop of the previous chapter, here we seek to see to what extent these political strategies translated into the local space.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the reforms that are the subject of this chapter are informal in the sense that these bypass the formal process of decentralisation and arise, in the main, from initiatives that are weakly institutionalised. As this chapter shows, the types of 'reforms' are not only responsive to local conditions and enable an institutional fit to local processes; they also involve a complex relationship between the local and the national level that influences their effectiveness.

As Kaviraj notes, policies that are formulated at the state level are often distorted beyond recognition by the time they are implemented (2001). The *Janmabhoomi* placed enormous strain on the bureaucracy and demanded fundamental changes in practices. The centrally managed programme required unprecedented levels of information gathering and reporting, physical visits to habitations for the quarterly state-wide programmes and public appraisal on performance, which sometimes resulted in well-publicised dismissals. The immense political force behind the programme served to ensure that resentments could not be articulated leading the

programme to achieve unparalleled success in terms of the degree to which it penetrated to the local level. Nonetheless, there was significant scope for distortion in the process of implementation, which I argue, was part of the design.

This chapter draws on data collected in the four villages following the same methodology discussed in Chapter 4. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first describes the three main institutional innovations that were implemented under the mantle of the *Janmabhoomi* programme: a) direct participation b) the creation of user groups and c) the mobilisation of voluntary contribution for village development. The analysis of these three mechanisms focuses on the de facto process of implementation and the way that they were represented in public discourse and practices at the local level.

The second part of the chapter explores some of the general changes that respondents attributed to the *Janmabhoomi*, either directly or in the reflections on interactions in the village, namely, the bounded nature of empowerment and the complex construction of the image of the party.

5.2 Changing Patterns of Participation

Research in four villages was carried out in 2002, five years after the launch of the *Janmabhoomi* programme and two years before the State Assembly election was held. Many commentators suggest that the programme was waning during this time, largely due to pressure of state financial resources, and that popular discontent was starting to become evident³⁶. As a programme that had drawn considerable attention, with several observers suggesting the programme was linked to the broader neo-liberal economic agenda associated with Naidu (Reddy 2002), there had been very little analysis of the impact at the local level.

³⁶ This is based on discussions with K. Srinivaslu and K Suri during the course of 2002. In addition, an internal media analysis conducted by the District Public Relations Office in Nalgonda district shows that the majority of press coverage was negative.

Table 10: Perceptions of qualitative change in development since the Janmabhoomi

		Yes	Some/same/ no difference	No	Dk/ref	Total N (100%)
A. Do you feel there has been more development work in your village since JB?	Total	63.1	17.2	9.0	10.7	244
	Men	68.5	17.3	11.0	3.1	127
	Women	57.3	17.1	6.8	18.8	117
B. Since the JB, do you feel that the real needs of the people have come forward and been heard? ²	Total	45.1	(7.0)	22.5	25.4	244
	Men	52.0	(8.7)	26.8	12.6	127
	Women	37.6	(5.1)	17.9	39.3	117
C. Since the JB, have the schemes intended for the poor reached those that need them the most? ²	Total	22.5	27.9	32.0	17.6	244
	Men	24.4	28.3	37.8	9.4	127
	Women	20.5	27.3	25.6	26.5	117
D. Since the JB, has the selection of beneficiaries become more open and transparent? ^{1, 2}	Total	11.6	28.0	31.6	28.9	225
	Men	12.0	31.6	41.0	15.4	117
	Women	11.1	24.1	21.3	43.5	108
E. Since the JB, has your knowledge of development schemes increased?	Total	61.1	-	14.8	24.2	244
	Men	72.4	-	13.4	14.2	127
	Women	48.7	-	16.2	35.0	117
F. Since the JB, do you think that corruption has increased?	Total	33.2	25.8	13.1	27.9	244
	Men	44.9	22.8	15.0	17.3	127
	Women	20.5	29.1	11.1	39.3	117
G. Do you think that the JB should continue?	Total	64.3	2.5	10.7	22.5	244
	Men	66.1	3.9	16.5	13.4	127
	Women	62.4	0.9	4.3	32.5	117

¹ This question was added after the first 19 interviews had been conducted, hence the base is 225

² The option of 'some of the needs...' was not part of the structured questionnaire. As with questions d) and e) we found that in the coastal districts, some people replied that these responses were only true in the case of TDP cadre. In the case of d) and e), these answers have been added into the category of 'some of the time'.

Source: Field data

The degree of awareness around the programme cannot be overstated. Without exception, all the people we spoke to in the village knew what *Janmabhoomi* was, and to varying degrees, strongly identified the programme with the ruling party and the Chief Minister himself. As such, questions regarding the performance of the programme were intricately linked to statements of broader performance of Naidu's

TDP. As Table 10 above shows, nearly two-thirds (63.1%) of the respondents felt that the programme had resulted in increased development in their village and a similar number (64%) felt that it should be continued.

This evidence of the broader support for the programme takes on an additional significance when viewed together with the negative perceptions of the programme. Over a third (38.9%) of the respondents felt that corruption had increased or had failed to improve since the launch of the programme, and the lack of transparency was shown to be one important factor. The perception survey also indicated that increased awareness and space to articulate needs failed to translate into positive outcomes in term of benefits reaching the poor.

The following analysis of the key components of the *Janmabhoomi* explores some of the anomalies between the broadly positive image of the programme and the poor performance at the village level. There is a clear indication that the programme had a positive impact on knowledge and awareness, which was felt most strongly among the men (72.4%). Two other explanations are explored below: the political polarisation that surrounded the programme and the implicit distinction between programme ideal and local implementation.

5.3 Institutional Innovations

This section explores some of the key institutional innovations in the local space, implemented as part of the new development politics of Chandrababu Naidu. This is being done from the perspective of their effectiveness at the local level. This approach differs from programme specific assessments, and enables greater understanding of the informal processes of implementation, the perceptions that shape participation, and the interplay between various initiatives in the local space.

5.3.1 Reinventing the *gram sabha*

The concept of the *gram sabha* is the foundation of the local governance system in India. The recreation of the concept under the *Janmabhoomi* fundamentally changed the nature of the forum, replacing elected leaders with local officials and used these forums as a direct means of communication between village and state, both to propagate messages as well as collect information. While these changes undermined the democratic aspects of participation, they served to stimulate popular participation that massively outweighed the formal system of *gram sabha* under the *panchayati raj* system. This section sets out to explore the ways in which informal changes in the institutional structure at the local level altered the nature of participation by creating new spaces and new forms of engagement outside the formal institutional and political system.

Public meetings held under *Janmabhoomi* programme attracted very high levels of participation, not only compared to the *gram sabha* in Andhra Pradesh, but to other parts of the country too. Over half the survey respondents had been to at least one JB meeting (53.9% of women and 55.9% of men) though only 11 percent of men and 10.3 percent of women said they had been to 'all or most' JB's held in the village. Overall, 21 percent of respondents had, at some time or the other, raised a question in the JB (23% of men and 19% of women)³⁷. It is important to note that gender played no significant role in affecting participation rates (Table 11), which is sharply contrasted with the findings in the previous chapter that showed that there was a significant gender gap in more active forms of participation in local governance, namely in terms of attendance at meetings. This indicated that *Janmabhoomi* was successful in creating a more open space for participation that was distinguished from the more politically intensive forums around the *gram panchayats*.

³⁷ The report issued by the Chief Planning Officer of Nalgonda District shows that 38% of the village had attended JB. On the basis of reports from the villages we visited, this is likely to overstate the attendance in a single and recent round.

Table 11: Direct participation in Janmabhoomimeetings

			How often have you attended the JB meeting in your village?			Have you ever raised a question in the JB?	
			All/ Most (%)	Some/ few (%)	None (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)
Total		244 (100)	11	41	48	21	79
Gender	Men	127 (100)	11	45	44	23	77
	Women	117 (100)	10	38	52	19	81
Caste Category	SC	68 (100)	15	44	41	28	72
	BC	84 (100)	12	33	55	15	85
	OC	92 (100)	7	47	47	21	79
Education	None	126 (100)	7	33	60	15	85
	Primary	45 (100)	18	40	42	18	82
	Secondary	54 (100)	9	52	39	30	70
	Higher +	19 (100)	21	68	11	42	58
Age	18-30	78 (100)	9	44	47	22	77
	31-40	72 (100)	13	39	49	25	75
	41-50	45 (100)	13	44	42	16	84
	51+	49 (100)	8	38	53	18	82
Political Activity Index	Low	92 (100)	3	51	64	11	89
	Medium	95 (100)	7	40	53	16	84
	High	57 (100)	28	58	14	46	54
Party Affiliation	None	48 (100)	0	46	54	8	92
	TDP	98 (100)	17	44	39	28	72
	Congress	76 (100)	7	36	58	18	82
	Other	24 (100)	17	38	38	25	75

Source: Field data

More generally, attendance does not seem to have been biased in favour of any particular social group, though there is a weak indication that lower castes, younger villagers and educated villagers are more likely to attend the programme regularly and participate actively by asking questions. SCs were more likely than forward castes to attend *Janmabhoomi* meetings regularly. It was found that there was a direct co-relation between education and active participation in meetings. Out of those with higher education, 42 percent were likely to raise questions at the

Janmabhoomi meetings while only 30 percent of those with secondary education would possibly do the same, as against only 15 percent of those with no education. Age seems to play a limited role in influencing the decision to attend meetings but people below 40 years old seemed more likely to raise questions at these meetings.

While there is evidence that the *Janmabhoomi* initiative created a more open space, in which women in particular were included, there remains a strong correlation with other forms of political participation. Those that were classified as 'highly active' in *gram panchayat* politics, as defined by the PAI, were the most likely to attend meetings regularly and only 14 percent of these highly active people did not attend any meeting, against an average of 48 percent. Nearly half (46%) of those who are highly active in local politics are also likely to raise questions at the *Janmabhoomi meetings*, against only 11 percent of those who were in the lowest category of political activity.

We also find that party affiliation plays a role in shaping participation in the *Janmabhoomi*. TDP supporters were more than twice as likely to attend meetings regularly when compared to Congress supporters (17% of TDP, 7% for INC) and only those who supported a particular political party reported attending meetings regularly. The differences on party lines appear to be significant, but possibly less than expected, given the high degree of identification between the *Janmabhoomi* and the ruling party. Indeed, this data can be interpreted as an indication of the lack of clear partisan orientation of these meetings, in contrast to the reputation of the programme at the national level. The reasons for opposition parties remaining involved in the programme are discussed at greater length later in this chapter and the next, where it is argued that these new fora of participation were designed to both develop the party cadre and within the local space, open up space for political engagement.

These findings, based on the quantitative data, suggest that there are some important changes in the nature of participation as the result of the introduction of the *Janmabhoomi programme*. While there is a strong correlation with other forms of political participation, there is evidence that the space for participation was

effectively opened up to include those who are less politically active or inclined - notably women, the lower castes and the youth. In order to understand this, the following section discusses the nature of the participatory forums that were created under the JB as a precursor to a more detailed discussion of the qualitative aspects of the encounters with the new participatory spaces.

5.3.2 New Spaces for Participation

The success of the JB in attracting interest at the village level was largely due to the consistent presence of the state. As noted in Chapter 3, the *Janmabhoomi* was led by a 'nodal team' of local officials from all the main departments at the block level administration. District and higher-level officials (at times, including ministers and even the Chief Minister) were also involved and they attended meetings selectively, focusing on the high profile meetings. While headed by local government officials, emphasis was given to involving the representatives from SHGs and other development committees who were invited to sit on the dais, as part of the *Janmabhoomi* team. The elected *sarpanch* and ward members were not formally part of this process, which underlines the distinction that was made with the democratic local governance. The format of the JB meeting was defined centrally, through the Planning Department, and was closely guided by the Chief Minister who ensured that each meeting was initiated with a common message from himself (see Ayyanger 2000 for more details³⁸). Following this formal opening, the meeting then focussed on developing local priorities for national programmes like *Neeru Meeru* (a programme to create awareness amongst people for ensuring their participation in land and water resource management) and the JB development project, hearing grievances or petitions and reporting against the Action Taken Reports from the previous meetings.

³⁸It was a conscious decision not to attend any of the JB meetings as part of the fieldwork, on account of the official status of these meetings, the potential for identification with the ruling party programme as a monitor, and the degree of local media involvement. Hence, I am reliant on the report by Ayyanger (2000) and local media and narratives accounts on the format of the meetings and the report from villagers regarding the meeting in their area.

Officials were compelled to hold the meetings on the appointed days. As one nodal officer told me, even if the people boycott the meetings, the officials are duty bound to attempt to enter the village³⁹. The officials reported that they could not stop coming to the village, as these meetings were the direct decree of Naidu, as set out in government orders. A local party activist from the Congress Party told us that when he challenged an official for implementing the TDP's programme, he was told, "We have to come. If you oppose it, we will come to the entrance of the village and register our effort to hold a JB meeting."

Table 12: Main reasons cited for attending, or not attending Janmabhoomi meetings (unprompted, multiple response)

Reason to attend Janmabhoomi meeting <i>N (sample 244, responses 175)</i>	% of total responses	Reasons not to attend Janmabhoomi meeting <i>N (sample 244, responses 296)</i>	% of total responses
To get benefits/government schemes	27.4	Due to agricultural/domestic work pressures	43.2
To lobby officials for benefits/make complaints	20.0	Not interested	9.8
Because it was happening in the village/ to watch	18.3	No point/no benefits/no action ever taken	8.8
To get information/knowledge of village development schemes	14.9	Does not attend public meetings / stays in the home	6.8
Requested to attend by SHG	12.6	Not called or informed about meeting	6.4
To do service for the village	4.0	Due to migration/working away from village	5.1

Source: Field data

The lengthy agendas of the meetings meant that villagers had to effectively sacrifice a full day's work to attend; yet the opportunity to access government schemes and

³⁹ Another example was reported in the press. Farmers were reported to have stalled GS for the week, complaining of poor power supply. The Joint Collector said the *gram sabha* meeting would be held, using police force if necessary. The police did not come and the nodal officer (NO) was mobbed. The youth proposed locking the NO in a room, but village elders intervened to stop this. The Collector told the NO that he had to stay in the village till the meeting ended and then come back, which he did. (Hindu – 7/6/02)

directly lobby public officials stimulated attendance. The JB was used as a forum for the distribution of individual benefits and community development works to the village. Villagers reported that this was the major incentive in attending these meetings (see Table 12). Schemes like the issuing of ration cards, pensions and obtaining passbooks that used to require a trip, or a number of trips, to the *mandal* office, were now done in the village.

Respondents did, however, express a growing sense of disillusionment with the meetings, especially with the incapacity of officials to respond to the demands raised in these meetings. All 'grievances' raised during *Janmabhoomi* were meant to be recorded and 'Action Taken Reports' were to be read out in the following round to report on progress of applications received and the progress of the inquiry. Official data shows that nearly all applications made in the JB had been 'resolved',⁴⁰ though this was not widely reflected in the discussions with villagers. As one man told us, "The joke is that the officials are taking our applications and selling them as scrap paper to wrap *palli* (groundnuts) in."

The disjuncture between the image and practice of *Janmabhoomi* was widely evident. While even a cursory reading of the state-level press during the JB rounds presented an impressive picture of errant government officials being called to account, suspended or even sacked on the spot, there was no evidence of such dramatic action in the study villages. This concurs with Ayyangar's (2000) findings, that the effectiveness of these meetings was confined largely to the handful of villages where very senior government officials were in attendance, along with the media (2000), as part of a carefully orchestrated publicity exercise by the Chief Minister to create a pragmatic separation between the party and its ideals and the administrative machinery in which it functions. Far from being a hidden agenda, the awareness of this aspect of the programme permeated local discussions around it. When asked if he had attended

⁴⁰ The official statistics issued by the Planning Department show aggregate achievement under JB for the state in 1-16 rounds of JB - 94.2% of petitions for 'non-financial community needs' (2.59L applications) and 92.8% of petitions for family needs (59.3L applications) have been resolved. The 'resolution' of these complaints includes rejections of the petition and the passing on of the problem to higher levels of administration.

these meetings, one villager told us that,

“We are never informed about the meetings – despite the fact that the office is next to our house. My knowledge of the scheme is gathered from the television. But, I am aware that the party and president are doing the work faster now – previously there were delays. We can only get benefits directly from the government though for political reasons, we cannot go through the president and the *panchayat*.”

The partisan nature of the JB was widely felt in all villages and there was a clear difference in the narratives generated by different party groups in all the villages. It was common to be told by opposition supporters that JB meetings were nothing more than ‘TDP meetings’, and benefits were given only to party supporters. We found no evidence to support this latter claim based on the survey data, though there are reasons to suspect such data on account of the inherent biases of self-reporting. There is, however, evidence to suggest that the institutionalisation of the public meetings had little impact on the role of political intermediaries in the allocation of benefits and in the informal economy of bribery or ‘speed money’ as a part of everyday village life.

Villagers in the Nalgonda region referred to the need to do *pyravee* to access benefits, a term that was reported by Haragopal and Reddy (1985) in their study nearly two decades ago. *Pyravee*⁴¹ does not simply mean paying a broker or middleman to get work done as many analysts have suggested. It implied a far more subtle and sustained process of influence and ingratiation with influential villagers, as well as, officials. As we see in the next chapter, it also relies on non-financial aspects of support, specifically, political support. When asked what was the most important characteristic of someone who received government benefits, over 80 percent of the sample respondents across the two regions felt that maintaining good relations with officials and having political connections were the most important, which were outweighed by other criteria of wealth, education, caste and gender (in order of importance).

⁴¹ *Pyravee* refers to the art of approaching officials for favors and making the wheels of the administration move in support of such favours (see Haragopal and Reddy 1985)

Interviews with officials and local leaders provided further evidence of the extent to which the allocation of benefits and projects was managed outside of the public forums. Leaders and voters alike were of the opinion that it was impossible to have an open *gram sabha* in the village, as the party would come in the way. In the case of meetings of the *gram panchayat* committee, it would be more correct to say that parties defined the meeting. Opposition ward members tend to either not be invited, or to stay away. In contrast, it was the local officials and higher-level party leaders who acted to shape the performance of JB, so as to ensure that it was a public success. As the president of a *mandal panchayat* in Nalgonda District told us,

“You cannot find out about all the needs of the people through the formal village meetings conducted through the *Janmabhoomi*. Time is limited, also there are many government employees and there is too much of an agenda. Most importantly, some people cannot discuss official matters in that forum. What the people tell in private cannot be expressed in a public meeting. We have to think about political problems and hence the JB has its own limitations. Making unofficial visits to the village before the public meetings to talk with the leaders can be more effective in knowing the needs and issues of the people.”

High expectations and poor implementation can often produce discontent. As the discussion below shows, this was a calculated risk by Naidu that paid off, in the short term at least, firstly, due to the capacity of the villages to engage both at the local and supra-local level and secondly, the JB was only one part of a complex strategy to penetrate local-level politics.

5.3.3 Self-Help Groups: Mobilising New Identities

The creation of CBOs was another important aspect of Naidu's vision of people-centred development. These groups, he argued, have been 'quite successful in reducing leakages in the delivery system while creating a sense of ownership among the people benefitting from such development schemes and programmes'⁴². In an earlier chapter,

⁴² Chandrababu Naidu, speech made to the 49th N.D.C. Meeting, 1st September 2001, Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi, access at <http://planningcommission.nic.in> on 17/05/2006

the impressive statistics of this proliferation have been discussed, which raises the question of the extent to which this picture was both disaggregated to the local level, and the effectiveness and identity of the groups within the local space.

In order to examine the impressive claims of the published data regarding the creation of SHGs, the research approach prioritised reported membership by respondents rather than officially recorded data. This approach revealed that the overall impact of CBOs was far more limited than one would expect, and that older forms of associational activity prevailed far more than has been reflected in recent literature on this subject. While education committees, mothers' committees, water-users and watershed management groups all existed on paper, people were, on the whole, unaware of these groups.

Table 13: Membership of associations by caste/category

Source: Field data

Caste group	Total (N= 244)	Women's Credit Group	Caste	Co-operative Society	Farmers' Association	Religious Association	Youth Group	Milk Society
SC/ST	68	46	31	8	5	8	6	0
BC	84	47	56	21	7	2	1	0
OC	92	32	10	37	8	5	3	6
Total	244	125	97	66	20	15	10	6

Over three quarters of households⁴³ (77%) considered themselves members of at least one type of association. Of these, women's SHGs were by far the most prevalent and over half the households had at least one member of a SHG. Importantly, the array of newly created education committees, mothers' groups and watershed and water-users' committees did not feature in their responses, while caste and co-operative associations were found to be among the most important groups in the village, both of which are not included in the government's claims regarding SHGs.

There are a number of important differences between women's SHGs and the groups that the government claims to have formed in the state. One is the newness of the terminology (mothers' groups, for example) of some of the more recent creations, which limited the villager's identification with these initiatives. The women's groups, in contrast, have a long history in Andhra Pradesh and many were formed under the DWCRA, with the name still widely used at the village level. Another possible reason is related to the target-driven formation of these groups by the line department's local officials who had received inadequate training was that they often had insufficient interest and who were compelled by tight timelines to meet demands from the district and state level. Most importantly, with the exception of women's SHGs, only the office bearers are recognised rather than the intended users.

This latter point was powerfully argued by one parent of a schoolchild who had not revealed when asked whether he was a member of the school committee;

“Committees are powerful, but are restricted due to the set base of beneficiaries. In the case of school committees, the parents just elect the committee. Moreover, only the committee chairperson is important, not the committee members. In reality, any important function of the committees like construction work and anything involving funds is still done through the village leaders. In some cases, the leaders even control the process of election. At best, the impact of the user committees is to set up an alternative structure of power

⁴³ The data here is presented at the household level, as respondents were asked to include immediate family members when answering these questions.

to the *panchayats*, but it is only the village party leaders who can benefit from any diversification of power.”

We can further substantiate this argument through the case of Chintam Padma, who was elected Village Education Committee Chairperson in 2001 in BVP village. When asked about her role, she told us that when the officials come, she goes to the school to sign ‘the book’ and that it was her husband who had asked her to contest the elections, which she won as there were no opposition. Her husband was not politically active but was a supporter of Congress. She told us that they are supposed to meet at least three times a year, but “actually they only meet when the JB meeting takes place and all the teachers and (women's) SHG members call her.” So far, there have been no funds allocated to the committee so she felt that there was no role for her.

Arguably the major factor behind the recognition and visibility of the SHGs related to the fact, that much like the *Janmabhoomi*, these initiatives did not require any formal institutional reforms. Unlike the water user groups, education committees and even mothers’ groups, the SHGs do not affect the working of any department or existing service delivery structure. Hence, they do not reallocate or affect the pattern of power and authority at the administrative or local governance levels. They were merely an additional space for participation that did not directly impinge on the interest of actors or institutions. By the same token, the SHGs had little or no formal power, yet it was possible to confer public recognition upon them through the forum of the *Janmabhoomi* or through the region and district meetings. This important distinction between SHGs and other organisational innovations in the local space demand more attention than it has received in discussions on the new politics of localisation, especially in light of the effectiveness of these groups as platforms for broader political mobilisation.

5.3.4 Mobilising Women

While the impact of user associations was largely limited to the political stratum in the village, women's SHGs were found to have had a major impact on village life, much of

the credit for which was attributed to the Naidu regime. A striking 79.5 percent of men and 66.7 percent of women interviewed felt that women's participation in women's development had increased in the last five years. New government policies associated with the TDP, especially SHGs and the *Janmabhoomi* initiative, were the most frequently cited factors affecting this increase (Table 14). While only just over half the women we spoke to felt that women participated actively in politics, it is interesting that the women felt their involvement in campaigning and that the 'new leaders' who had arisen through the SHGs, were the most important aspects in any perceived increase. In contrast, men felt that reservations for women in the local governance system was the most important factor in women's increased political participation, but women felt that their increasing ability to 'move around the village' independently was important. Overall, the increase in women's participation was among the most important changes in the village that was directly attributed to the Naidu government.

Reversed realities: participation and the public space

The members of women's SHGs were by far the most dynamic new entrants to the public sphere, a phenomenon that was closely associated with the JB. As Mooij (2003) notes, the focus was on numbers rather than quality. Analysis of the quality of group formation was beyond the scope of this research, and emphasis was given instead to understanding the emergence of a new symbolic construction of SHGs as a political space. Discussion with members revealed that most expected to receive the Rs. 25,000 revolving grant that some groups had received, but for the vast majority this remained an expectation that had yet to be met. More importantly, however, it was widely recognised that women were required to participate in public meetings to ensure their entitlement to programmes, thus reversing the concept of empowerment that was being promoted by donor agencies whereby collective action translated into public or political action (see World Bank 2005).

Table 14: Major reasons for increased participation of women in village development(unprompted, multi-response)

	men n=127	women n=117
Formation of SHGs	55.1	45.3
Result of government policy/schemes/JB	30.7	22.2
Increased awareness, confidence or education	7.8	6.8
Population increased	7.1	4.3
Holding public posts	7.1	0
Availability of jobs	0.8	6.0
Involvement in contracts	3.9	0.8

Source: Field data

The dynamism of women's participation was driven largely by the relationship to the JB. A number of the JB rounds had a specific focus on women and in all rounds, participation of women was a required aspect of the programme. Village-level animators (village level workers) were required to motivate their members to attend the JB, and often, they were required to organise women to attend mass meetings at the district level. Many times, these meetings were thinly veiled political rallies that were commonly referred to as 'Chandrababu Naidu meetings'. One woman told me she had been to the district headquarters, which was 50 kilometres away, to attend a Naidu meeting. 'We were told to wear blue saris and white jackets, and they (meaning local leaders) supplied tractors.' Women saw that participation in these public meetings was an exciting new phenomenon. These were not just political meetings, but meetings held specifically for women. The publicly hailed success of these meetings was made possible due to personal incentives, as well as, the drive by local women's group leaders to facilitate their attendance.

The emphasis given to public involvement was equally evident at the village level as it was outside the village. As one lower-caste woman told us:

“The leaders of (the thrift) groups came to my house so that I could attend the JB with the permission of my husband. I told him that this way we might get a buffalo loan if I went to the meeting. Otherwise, my husband would not have let me out of the house to attend a meeting.”

These changes in participation were closely linked to the Chief Minister. SHG members in the village identified the programme directly with Naidu. The ability of this pro-woman strategy to penetrate to the village level is remarkable. Many of the SHG members told us that they had received ‘letters from Chandrababu Naidu’, encouraging them to attend the JB. The letter even included a phone number they could call if they had any difficulties. Men and women alike were equally conscious of the pro-woman focus of the regime. Some even went so far as to say that, as a result of this focus, ‘men have become women, and women have become men’.

This section has served to highlight the extent to which the high degree of political support for SHGs served to open the space for participation of women, in a relatively short time. As discussed earlier, one important reason for this was the informal nature of the institutional innovation that did not directly alter any of the existing formal institutional structures and created a new basis for mobilisation that was conferred salience owing to linkages of the state to the centre, and especially to the Chief Minister. As a result, the performance of SHGs in terms of direct financial support and saving benefits was secondary to the symbolic importance of these groups and the promise of future benefits. Though beyond the scope of this study, the relationship between the political and economic significance of these groups and the distinction from the formal political process, changed in the years that followed, firstly, the observation that SHGs came to be seen as vote banks by local political leaders (Powis 2007) and later, when the realities of mounting debt promoted by the private sector investment in the micro-finance sector began to be widely acknowledged⁴⁴.

⁴⁴See for example ‘Andhra’s Small Debt Trap’ in the Indian Express 24th October 2010 and CGAP 2010.

During the period of this research, the success of SHGs in terms of creating new spaces for participation that indirectly shaped the broader local political space, further highlighted the importance of the local space as a unit of developing polity. The dialectic between local space and the state is a good example of how the process of political mobilisation is not linear, and how localities remain salient, and the implication this has for developing newly mobilised groups within the crowded and politically intensive, local space. This strategy of Naidu's to mobilise collective identity between these informal local groups was found to be effective in bringing women into developmental politics without threatening the interests of the largely male political leadership.

5.3.5 Community contributions - institutionalising corruption

The third innovation of the new development ethos that Naidu sought to promote was *shramadan* which literally means voluntary contribution of labour or the spirit of self-help. In the official rhetoric of the campaign, the concept of *shramadan* was intended to focus on the mobilisation of local teams of students and other villagers to conduct development activities like drainage clearance and environmental programmes. While there was some enthusiasm in the early years of the JB for this, the impact was somewhat limited. Far more important were the conditions of local contributions in terms of money or labour as part of the implementation of local civil works, like road building, tank clearance and infrastructure development, which were managed through the *Janmabhoomi*.

In formal terms, local officials were required to collect requests for civil work in the JB meetings, and this list was then finalised to include the names of local executors, normally either the *sarpanch*, or a SHG. Previously, works of this size had to go through a process of tendering but under the terms of the JB, work was allocated on the basis of the willingness to raise the required community funds (30%, or 15% if the works

were in SC/ST areas). These contributions had to be deposited with the *mandal* office before any funds were sanctioned.

It was an open secret that the vast majority (some say up to 90%) of the contributions to these works were paid by single contractors. In the case of small works, generally less than Rs. 10L, these contracts went to local leaders, either from the village or the neighbouring villages, who implemented work under the name of the formally nominated executer who received a small cut as part of the arrangement. The common trend was that contractors deposited the amount, entered into informal agreements with the officials, and inflated the rate of the works by at least the amount of the contribution. While it was difficult to obtain detailed estimates, experienced contractors told us that these payments to various officials amounted to approximately 14 percent of the total value of the contract. It was widely understood that a contractor could expect to retain their original 'contribution' as well as secure profits of anything between 10 percent-20 percent of the total value. Based on these crude estimates, the general pattern was that the value of the work implemented under the informal system of contribution was less than half of the actual value of the contract.

Contracting systems of this kind are common in India and had long since been used by the Congress government in Andhra Pradesh as a means to mobilise funds for members of the Legislative Assembly. The key difference under the JB system lay in the reduction of the size of contracts, which led to the creation of a small army of petty contractors at the village level⁴⁵ who were forced to enter into corrupt practices owing to the system of contributions. Importantly, these new contracts did not impinge on the interests of larger and well-established contractors who operate at the district level and possess licences to carry out their work. What JB did was to introduce a new level in the contracting process that allowed local political leaders to enter into the process within the local arena by bringing into the contracting process small scale works that would have formerly have been implemented directly by line agencies.

⁴⁵ Interview with BPR Vittal in Hyderabad, October 2002.

The scale at which these new mechanisms for local development projects were implemented was significant. In the first 16 rounds of the JB community works (covering a five year period), official statistics show that 11,25,350 community works were implemented at cost of Rs.18 billion (about US\$400 million). According to reports from the *mandal* officials for eight villages, we found that an average of five or six works was sanctioned under the JB in the five years since the programme had been launched. One village received 14 works, and the total value of the work varied from Rs. 600,000 to Rs.1, 800, 000. At a time when *gram panchayats* were not providing sufficient funds to cover general maintenance costs (Rao 2000), the *Janmabhoomi* provided a channel for high level of discretionary funding outside the system of local government.

The success of the programme lay in the alignment of incentives among the range of stakeholders between the village and the state. The system of community engagement removed the need for tendering and monitoring. As one local TDP leader told us, “Transparency under the *Janmabhoomi* is superficial and is restricted to the issuing of notices and writing on walls. In order to find out about the use of funds we need the engineers' reports but these are next to impossible to access. Furthermore, with no centralised information on development works, and the potential for replication, 'double billing' of works was very high⁴⁶.”

This attention to quantity rather than quality generated impressive statistics at the state level regarding the quantum of contributions generated to offset the burden on state finances. The high visibility of the programme and the tension between the dynamism and the effectiveness of the JB development works were openly debated, and the programme was a frequent target for politicised allegations. The opposition made repeated statements regarding not just the levels of corruption, but the political

⁴⁶ In an interview with an MPDO in Prakasham District, we were told the JB had made it virtually impossible to keep track of the works being implemented in his jurisdiction and that there was no consolidated list of work implemented under various schemes. This particularly dynamic officer had initiated his own system of photographing all development work but still felt that he was unable to verify payment claims.

biases that aimed to facilitate 'looting' by TDP cadres⁴⁷. While the allegation of corruption is beyond question, in this research we found little evidence of overt partisanship in the nature of the programme; rather we found a more complex process of politicisation, which is explored in greater detail in the next chapter.

At the local level, implicit agreements between implementing officers provided incentives for both local leaders and officials to implement civil works, driven by private incentives rather than public good. Critical to this was the removal of the local government, as one leader told us,

"JB is only about funding – and the government is putting all the money into JB. If you give 30,000 you will get 70,000. How can we pay money to the *gram panchayat*?"

The new culture of contracting virtually removed the potential for local accountability, as the requirement of advance payment and the risks associated with delayed payments and negotiation of 'cuts' to various parties virtually precluded 'ordinary' villagers from competing for contracts. Indeed, we encountered a number of cases where less-experienced and influential villagers had taken on contracts and lost money in the process. As a result, villagers became increasingly dependent on influential local leaders to bring development activities to the village.

The comments by a young, male, village-level political aspirant show the importance of these local leaders in the development process;

"Political consciousness is to know how much money there is coming, and what is happening in other villages. People have started to ask questions, in the JB meetings and outside. But the contractors will not give responsible answers – they do not feel accountable to us. There are a few rich contractors and those who take the contracts will benefit – these are mostly political leaders and people who

⁴⁷ To cite one example - Hindu 18/06/02 – 'ZP chief's forum to move court action against CM. ZP chairperson from Khammam District seeks permission to prosecute CBN for diverting funds meant for local bodies, SGSY funds have been given to District Collector's discretion, and linked it to contribution schemes.' Ranga Rao claims that a District Collector has gone on record saying, "In his district Rs 3.4 crores from EAS, Rs 3 crores from the rural water supply scheme, Rs 4.79 crores from the 10th finance funds and Rs 3 crores from the rural roads scheme were diverted by the state government. (Ranga Rao 2003:29)

resolve disputes in the village. These leaders already have good relations with the officers, and these good relations are vital to get anything. Ordinary people are living hand to mouth, they are asking for the contracts, and the officers say yes. But they have to miss their daily work and go to the *mandal* office to get them.'

Reports on the level of corruption in the JB works indicate a high degree of complicity on the part of the administration to support the institutionalisation of a 'skimming off' culture. While accountability controls seem to be weak, this does not necessarily imply an overall increase in the level of corruption when compared to previous systems of direct implementation. The major change lies in the visibility of the corruption, brought about as a result of local involvement in the small scale contracting process that was more accessible and open to scrutiny to villagers. As stated above, an important aspect of this increased accessibility was the awareness of the need for contractors to make pay-offs and therefore to reduce the size of the work against bills.

The contracting culture is another good example of the 'institutional fit' in a developing polity. The division between local and larger contracting work reflects the distinction between the local and the higher level of the polity. Equally, the extent to which the ability to execute contracts was linked to the capacity of leaders to use their political links, mobilise upfront resources, and negotiate pay-off to local officials, which reflected the realities of the local political society and the competitive and hierarchical nature of local leadership.

5.4 Aggregate Impacts

The three key elements of *Janmabhoomi* discussed above can be interpreted as a complex and innovative political strategy to change the narrative of village politics. The reinvented *gram sabha* in the form of *Janmabhoomi*, served to ensure a direct link between the apex and the localities, one that could be controlled and adapted directly by the Chief Minister. The mobilisation of user groups, especially women, provided a means to create new patterns of political participation and new coalitions of support within hitherto under-mobilised voters. The institutionalisation of community contributions drew in the potential synergies between the initiative of local leaders and

the weak administration to rapidly ground civic works. To the extent that this was true, the *Janmbhoomi* presented an important innovation in developmental politics.

The distinguishing feature of the *Janmabhoomi* was the creation of an overarching mantle for a number of institutional innovations, and the extent to which elements of the programme fed into one another. The symbolic branding of the programme through the statewide campaign meant that the image and experience of the initiative remained distinct from the system of local governance. However, these aggregate impacts also served to create new divisions in the local space. Two main impacts are discussed in the last section - the first is the sharpening of identities, which was the most apparent among newly mobilised women, and the second was the intensification of the distinction between leaders and ordinary villagers.

5.4.1 Sharpened social identities

The *Janmabhoomi* programme defined a new development era in the village in that it reached different people in different ways. While the creation of new identities can be seen as a shrewd political strategy to mobilise new constituencies, especially for women, it also gave rise to other aspects of identity within the local space. This section explores how opening the space for participation resulted in other aspects of identity becoming more apparent, namely, education and caste.

Education

Education was frequently cited as a factor that affected women's willingness to participate in public meetings, as a proxy for a sense of knowledge and freedom. Whereas men told us they did not attend public meetings for lack of interest or due to pressure of work, women tended to cite their lack of knowledge of public affairs, which they explained in the following terms, "In our caste, women do not go outside the house. I do not know any of this (*questions referring to the JB*), my husband and elder son know about village development". However, some of the women we spoke to were

of the opinion that it were the restrictions imposed by men rather than the lack of interest of women that kept them from participating in the JB meetings. The women were aware of these restrictions but were unwilling or unable to challenge them⁴⁸.

The linkage between gender and education is implicit in both the quantitative data, as well as, from our discussions with village women of various social backgrounds. Half the women in the sample said they had received no formal education and it was more than likely that a villager with no education was a woman rather than a man (of those with no formal education, 69.2% were women and 35.4% were men). The significance of education was far greater for women - both in distinguishing them among the other members and in terms of the social values of their household or social group.

In-depth discussions with the less-active women revealed the extent to which the performance of public participation served to sharpen identities at the village level, especially among women. When asked if she participated in the JB, one SC woman in KB village told us, "Illiterate people cannot understand the proceedings of the JB, they are not even aware of the place where the JB is conducted." These views were not limited to the lower castes. In PGP village, we were told by one woman, 'We do not go to JB because we are illiterate. It is good, but because I have no education I will not give it importance. Education is a must.' Similar comments by a member of the minority Muslim community in IP village serve to further support the argument that education was more important than social identity." We were also told, "Initiative is taken by the politically active people during *Janmabhoomi*; educated people ask questions, uneducated people do not have any value."

⁴⁸ From our observations in the villages, we found that social sanctions on women seem to be stronger in coastal Andhra than in Telangana. Some of the reasons suggested for this were the participation in the anti-Nizam insurrection and the role of women in this movement, as well as, the higher prevalence and social acceptance of alcoholism in Telangana. While there is insufficient evidence to test, this factor did crop up in conversations with women in the village. One woman said lower-caste women are more active politically due to alcohol consumption. The tendency for lower caste women to produce and consume liquor was evident in the Telangana region of this study – the social norms against drinking being far more rigid in coastal Andhra. It should be noted that the area of Telangana that I was working in had a high *Goud* population. Toddy taping, or palm wine production, was common, whereas very little production was taking place in the area in Prakasham district despite the fact that the same trees grew there.

Caste

On the whole, lower-caste women were more mobile than high caste women, on account of the social sanctions of respectability impressed upon the latter by their families. Lower-caste women are clearly freer to move around the village than high caste women, one of the reasons being that lower-caste women are more likely to take part in daily labour on other people's lands and to take part in seasonal migration work. Out of the 62 people from the sample who said they had migrated out of the village for work for an extended period, only five were from the forward castes. Roughly half of those who migrated were women.

Sub-village identities became more acute as a result of the renewed vigour given to the public sphere since the JB. Diversities of gender, caste, education and political involvement became more visible and these perceptions of difference found their way into local discourses. One high-caste woman told us that she went to the JB but was pushed to the back by the lower-caste women who said that the schemes were intended for them. They argued that the JB was for the poor and needy like them. After this experience, she did not attend village meetings again. For reasons either due to direct experience of this kind or the sharing of such experiences in private spaces that we found people talking in terms of gender, education, poverty, political identities and assertiveness when discussing their personal relations to the public sphere. We, therefore, cannot talk simply in terms of preconditions to participation. We can, however, talk in terms of personal attributes that result in inclusion and exclusion – and the reproduction of these processes in village discourses⁴⁹. This process leads to the situation in which people will simultaneously support the role being played by the JB – i.e., its effects on awareness as well as financial benefits – and at the same time, exclude themselves from the perceived benefits.

⁴⁹ We did find some cases of participation being bounded by strategies of those with vested interests. Some men in the village told us that they had wanted to raise an issue in the JB, only to be told by the leaders that all petitions had to be submitted on paper prior to the meeting. This we later found is not part of the protocol.

The literature on social inclusion has long since emphasised the multiple aspect of identity to counter the narrow focus on gender and other single dimensional aspects of exclusion. The dynamic process, by which different aspects come to the fore as women become more engaged in local affairs, highlights the practical implications of the theory of participatory development. The central theme of this thesis, i.e., the importance of understanding the local polity, the process of sharpening identities also shows how increase in participation is dynamic and creates reactions based on the relations to others, within the local arena. The importance of the new identities stems from differences of education and caste rather than gender and is an indication that the space for participation is constrained not only by local relations but also has broader issues of identity.

5.4.2 Village politics and the state

As noted above, institutional changes were found in the increased visibility of the distinction between 'leaders' and 'ordinary villages'. In the absence of longitudinal data, the fact the leaders have become more prominent in villages in Andhra Pradesh as a result of the initiatives associated with *Janmabhoomi*, can only be tentatively proposed. As already stated, comparison to other accounts of local development suggest that the leadership has been more dynamic at the local level than in other states, and this was reflected in local discourse. As one village political leader told us,

"JB has had little real impact, as common people are only requesting for ration cards. They think, 'JB is coming, what will we get...?' Common people do not understand what JB is. It is only the political leaders who are asking about contracts. But this is not transparent. These contracts are being negotiated through the political leaders and officials. The same people are taking contracts, even though other names may appear on the paper. As a result, the JB is less a pro-poor project than the *gram panchayat* system."

Just as there is a high degree of consensus over the divisions between leaders and non-leaders in everyday discourse, there is a broad awareness of the type of activities that leaders are engaged in. The villagers' acceptance of high levels of corruption and supporting the continuation of the programme is evidence of this. In practical terms,

‘normal levels’ of corruption are often justified in terms of a return on investments, and it is common for voters to express the view, “It is my opinion that corruption is natural as they (the leaders) are spending so much on elections.”

Given the extent to which *Janmabhoomi* and associated innovations were associated with the ruling party, one would expect also to see a sharpening of the divisions between leaders from different parties, or partisan attitudes and practices towards the current development processes. However, it was observed that this was only partially true. While opposition leaders tended to raise objections to the partisan nature of the *Janmabhoomi* during discussions, in practice there was a tendency to limit any forms protest or dissent. Discussion with local leaders revealed that, when interacting with the local administration government, it was rational to appear to be in harmony and unity - across party lines and factions. On the whole, internal factions and competition was seen as more likely to lead to a loss to the village as a whole.

To illustrate this, it is important to note that in reviewing the defining moments and events in village political histories from all 18 villages visited, events and protests in JB were never significant. This does not mean that events like disputes over contracts sanctioned in JB were not significant but that these disputes were never articulated in the meetings themselves. Conflicts over issues relating to the JB were taken up outside of the formal meetings and often through different channels. It was also common for political leaders from all parties to conduct informal meetings, sometimes in conjunction with higher leaders and officials to formulate a mutual position raising these issues in the JB.

Given the extent to which the JB was associated with the ruling party, one would expect opposition members to use these local meetings as an opportunity to protest against the regime. In fact the opposite was the case. Taking the 16th round of JB in Nalgonda District as an example, only 12 villages were officially recorded to have

boycotted the JB⁵⁰. In these cases, villagers stopped the officials from entering the village until certain demands were met. This is a surprisingly low figure considering the widespread discontentment with the initiative and the fact that all opposition parties claim to have organised public agitations in the JB. The local cadre, who had to live and work in the villages, told us that they tended to ignore these party orders as they were found to be infeasible. The local Communist and Congress leaders we spoke to told us that they were told by the party to organise protests at the meetings but did not, because despite the strong feeling among leaders that JB was a pro-TDP partisan event, trying to stop the JB would be seen by the people as 'anti-development'. As one local Congress leader told us, "When the TDP leaders are doing the work, the Congress workers are not opposed to it, as they are doing good work for the village. We should not take into account the corruption in the village as the work is small." Stopping the JB would only result in the stopping of benefits from the government. Thus, a desire for the benefits forced some degree of unity and collusion towards a common objective between parties. While we found a few cases where local disagreements over the allocations of work resulted in the work being cancelled, in none of these cases was the JB used as a forum to raise these issues.

One of the reasons for this was that JB cannot be understood purely as a partisan programme, as discussed above. While there was a strong degree of identification between the ruling party and the initiatives discussed here, the actual implementation was not exclusively focused on TDP cadres. Local contractors from opposition parties were able to take on contracts and the process of including all parties and of opening the political space was an important aspect in driving these state led initiatives down to the local level. The management of these new initiatives by the local political stratum is discussed in more depth in the following chapter. Here, however, it is important to highlight the extent to which the presence of the state, rather than elected leaders, as the front line of the programmes was found to be important in

⁵⁰ This is based on an official report prepared by the District office in Nalgonda as part of their regular reporting to the Planning Department.

shaping the political behaviour of local leaders in order to contain their local difference within the local polity.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter explores the influence of various informal reforms in local institutions and the creation of new spaces for participation. The case of Andhra Pradesh during the time of this study was perhaps unique in terms of the degree of institutional innovation and, more importantly, the high degree of political ownership for these initiatives. The concept of *Janmabhoomi* is complex and provides a flexible and responsive structure for a number of disparate initiatives that had significant penetration due to a highly centralised implementation structure. The example of ensuring that messages from the Chief Minister were read out in each and every habitation is indicative of this.

The analysis has shown the extent to which identification with the higher levels of the polity was important in motivating the new dynamics of participation, especially among women through the self-help initiative. In one sense, the central identification behind this highly penetrative initiative enabled women to enter the participatory space. The analysis has also shown how this was 'defined' and took place largely outside the more embedded politics. The rapid pace of mobilisation contributed to awareness of the ruling party's objectives. It also set in place the potential for the image of the state to be shaped by local encounters.

The analysis has presented evidence of the scale of corruption in local contracts and the broad acceptance of this as a new political culture. Analysis of the perceptions of the people also reveals the fact that the villagers could distinguish between the intentions of this programme and its actual practice. This is further evidence of the distinctiveness of local politics. The following chapter takes these issues forward, and probes more deeply into the nature of local leadership and the drivers behind the action of the local leaders.

Chapter 6: Elite Politics: Systems of Capture

“For everyone there should be a party for without a party you cannot go to the leaders and get support. Active workers in the party will get direct support and help from higher leaders. There are cooperative relations between party cadres; if there are disputes they can solve them with the help of the ‘big leaders’. In case of financial need or accidents, they can get help. There are more leaders in the Telugu Desam Party, so it is easy to interact with the higher leaders and officers, to get access to information, to follow up issues in the office and to help cadres in the village.

Though there is competition among the party cadres yet there are opportunities. Hard work and a good reputation will be rewarded. Within two years, a party worker can get a position at the *mandal* level, in four to five years he can be a district leader. If he is selfish and ignores the interest of the party he will remain at the village level.”

- Senior village level political leader, Andhra Pradesh

6.1 Introduction

The importance of village leaders emerged as the pre-eminent theme of the analysis of participation and politics at the village level in Chapters 4 and 5. The analysis highlighted the extent to which the particular set of policies initiated by the Naidu government significantly expanded the space in which these local leaders operated. This chapter explores this phenomenon of the rise of village leaders in more detail, drawing on evidence from a second stage of fieldwork that focused on leadership analysis in a large sample of villages.

The nature of rural leadership is a critical part of the broader characterisation of politics. As the introduction shows, the concept of political development maintains as a central principle, the contrast between traditional and modern politics, where the latter was constructed around ‘multiplex’ relations that blurred personal, kinship and faction issues focused on the locality. The emergence of modern politics, under this concept, is tied with the breakdown of these local ties and the emergence of new identities. The extent to which institutions of governance evolve to respond to these

changes was a critical component of the governance agenda as articulated by Huntington (2006).

The process of democratic transition has served to challenge the clarity of political development and of late, there has been a renewed interest in the potential for democratic change to emerge from within local space. The operationalisation of this through decentralisation and participatory local development has served to highlight the pervasive influence of local 'elites' in shaping this process. The case of Andhra Pradesh give cause to explore this in greater detail and to further understand the systemic patterns of local leadership and their relations to the broader political process.

The following analysis shows the interplay of local and supra-local politics in the construction of the local leadership. The analysis, based on comparative analysis of leadership networks, highlights the process of stratification within leadership networks and the importance of parties in cementing the divisions between them. While these patterns resemble the type of factional politics analysed by Brass (1965), the patterns of leadership in Andhra Pradesh display a blend of both local and national politics.

6.2 Leadership in the Local Polity

The concept of a leadership network has received little attention in recent studies of local development. Seminal analysis by Brass in the 1960s shows the importance of the hierarchy of leadership emanating from a central core and surrounded by layers of leaders with varying levels of power and influence. The following section sets out the model of local leadership that was encountered in Andhra Pradesh, one that is driven primarily through a system of stratification that resembles that which is described by Brass, and to a significant extent, the more recent characterisation of 'local elites'.

6.2.1 Disaggregating the political stratum

The striking clarity of the concept of the 'village leader' in rural Andhra Pradesh belied a significant diversity in the types of leaders. Contrary to studies in other parts of the world, the various leaders identified were leaders in terms of the level of political engagement rather than the 'domain'⁵¹ in which they operated. Moreover, variations in terms of the intensity of involvement in village politics translated into clearly defined typologies and a general picture of a disaggregated political stratum emerged.

Reputation sampling stimulated only by the question, "Who are the most important political leaders in your village?" was made feasible in villages in Andhra Pradesh for two reasons. Firstly, the key, prominent party leaders were relatively easy to isolate in most villages. These formed the first point of contact for the cross-referencing of the sample. Secondly, political leaders have an impact on the villager's everyday life, and hence definitions and clarity of thoughts and ideas regarding this category were well constructed within the villager's own discourse. We can add two further observations to this. Other forms of mediation have been overtaken by the compulsion to adopt political identities and the mediation of disputes has become politicised. Secondly, the distinction between village leaders and higher political leaders (who operate at the *mandal*, district and assembly levels) are well defined. The evidence suggests that the process of sampling village political leadership adopted here would not have been possible in many other states in India, and indeed in Andhra Pradesh before 1983.

⁵¹ See for example, analysis of leadership in Cambodia which found more than 30 definitions of a 'leader' and at least five domains of operation, including knowledge, religion, administration and politics (Vimealea 2009)

Table 15: Disaggregating village leadership

	Category attributes	Sub-category description	N (%) within sample
1	Apex leaders Persistently lead in events (key agents in multiple events) Own political relations outside the village Key source of patronage locally High (personal) investment in politics	1a Consensual leaders <i>Uncontested local leaders, with a long history of political involvement. Usually drawing their role from a strong nexus between personal and political status. Unlike any other village leaders, the consensual leader holds significant sway in all major decisions and actions of other party workers within the village</i>	12 (6.6)
		1b Faction leaders <i>Factional relations, active in creating splits within parties at the village level. Possessing a strong personal support base but limited by the presence of a greater number of rivals. More often than not, rivalry is temporary and is resolved in the long-term by defections or changes in the party hierarchy.</i>	14 (7.7)
		1c Emerging uncontested leaders <i>New leaders who have assumed a dominant position, often by filling a void left by a lack of leadership within a village-level party. Their position is often the result of having defected from their parties to head a weaker party organisation</i>	3 (1.7)
2	Secondary leaders Dependent on higher leaders Own sources of patronage, used to build personal support base Importance in one or few events Prepared to invest in party development Politically very knowledgeable	2a Current 'secondary' leadership <i>Prominent in local affairs, well known for being political leader, play a leading role in village affairs and spend time dealing with everyday issues. More accessible to 'ordinary villagers' than the apex leaders, but tend to work with a particular group (caste, farmers, area of village etc.,)</i>	29 (16.0)
		2b Silent leaders <i>Either: has status on the basis of being a former apex leader or: currently involved in political activity outside the village</i> <i>Still has important effect at the local level, though tends to defer to apex leaders in matters of execution. Likely to be acknowledged by party people outside the immediate locality. Usually behind the scenes, has the potential to play a lead role when the occasion demands</i>	13 (7.2)
3	Cadre/party workers Working for the leaders and the party Politically aware, but rely on information from local party leaders Dependent on local leaders for position, opportunities and promotion	3a Primary cadres <i>Achieved local recognition and aspire to develop political careers</i>	38 (21.0)
		3b Secondary cadres <i>Pure followers, active in party affairs (albeit limited scope), some ambitions but not dynamic in achieving them</i>	41 (22.7)
		3c Tertiary cadres <i>Followers with no real political ambitions (including proxy candidates)</i>	25 (13.8)
4	Others	Problem cadres <i>Cadres who were selected for promotion and positions, and then became problematic to the party (disrespect for 'order')</i>	2 (1.1)
		Old style leaders <i>Members of the old school of leaders but those who have ceased to play an active role in village politics and are not recognised outside the village</i>	4 (2.2)

Source: Author's field notes

The typologies of village leaders set out in Table 15 are based on an interpretation of leader's status drawn from the analysis of political histories and events in each of the villages studied. Leadership was divided into three main categories: 1) apex leaders 2)

potential or actual agents (or secondary leaders) and 3) supporters or cadres. One further level (4) has been added to describe a small set of ex-leaders, who used to be influential in the villages but currently have no effective voice in village politics – which in itself we find to be evidence of the changing political culture in villages in Andhra Pradesh.

The principal factors that differentiate levels within the political stratum are control over patronage, information, autonomy and political relations. Continuity of leadership or the degree to which leaders have played an active role in a series of village 'political events', is also a significant factor. Brass' (1965) statement that there can only be one leader in a faction is not merely accurate, it also provides an insight into the process of party competition and the functional hierarchies that develop between political leaders at the village level. The importance of apex leadership and a leader's inner and outer circles are not simply an extension of historical dominance. A significant number of the 'apex leaders', in the villages we studied, rose to positions of power in the last seven years through their ability to imbibe the values and skills of the new political culture of village politics in the state. As the evidence below suggests, the displacement of the old leadership due to village-level political manoeuvring by current apex leaders, as well as, the support of well-organised party organisation in the case of the relatively new TDP, was more common than some of the older studies on village politics in Andhra Pradesh would lead one to believe.

The relationships between levels of leaders are pragmatic and functional and have become increasingly important in the context of expansive and penetrative politicisation. The structured hierarchy serves as an opportunity for aspirants to enter the political stratum without challenging the existing leaders.

It is important to note that this opportunity structure is based predominantly on political events in the village. While leaders may hold aspirations for political careers that extend outside the village, the difference between village and higher politics is evident. In one case, we found a retired ex-minister, ZPTC members, MLA aspirants and

district-level party leaders residing in one village, all of whom had disassociated themselves from direct involvement with 'village politics'. At best, these 'higher leaders' would act as advisers or mediators in village affairs (category 2b in Table 15). Apex village leaders draw heavily on external connections with higher-party leaders and their power over village level secondary and tertiary leaders is based both on their custodial control of these relations and the benefits they accrue from dedicated village-level party work. The pragmatic and functional reliance of followers on their apex leaders' resources and connections are 'modern' in the sense that the legitimacy of the leader's role and the potential to defect where leaders act illegitimately were found to be relatively high.

In most villages, there were two or more parties present and, therefore, space for more than one apex leader and his group. The hierarchies of leadership described in Table 15 are thus, hierarchies within village-level parties. In order to understand the shape of the political stratum in the case of competitive village factions or parties, one needs also to account not only for the relation between apex leaders but also between their groups. A strong group will have an apex leader or leaders and the associated circles of secondary and tertiary cadres. Weak groups have significant gaps, either lacking apex leaders or secondary leaders. The power vested in these groups changes over time, determined by the control over resources and institutions within the village, electoral fortunes of the party and the support they can derive from higher-level leaders. The balance of power does change and pragmatic cadres are responsive to these changes.

Not all political groups have a well-developed structure of apex, secondary and tertiary leadership. Villages vary in the extent to which well-organised networks have been formed. Often, this is dependent on the extent to which local factions pre-date party politicisation, and in some cases, the traditional system of negotiation through caste, heads or elders have controlled village governance and local conflicts until relatively recently. The village histories we collected, however, suggested that the process of transition to modern forms of party-based competition is pervasive. This synergistic

process has limited the potential for traditional or customary (Ananthapur 2002) forms of governance to continue to hold any relative significance at the village level.

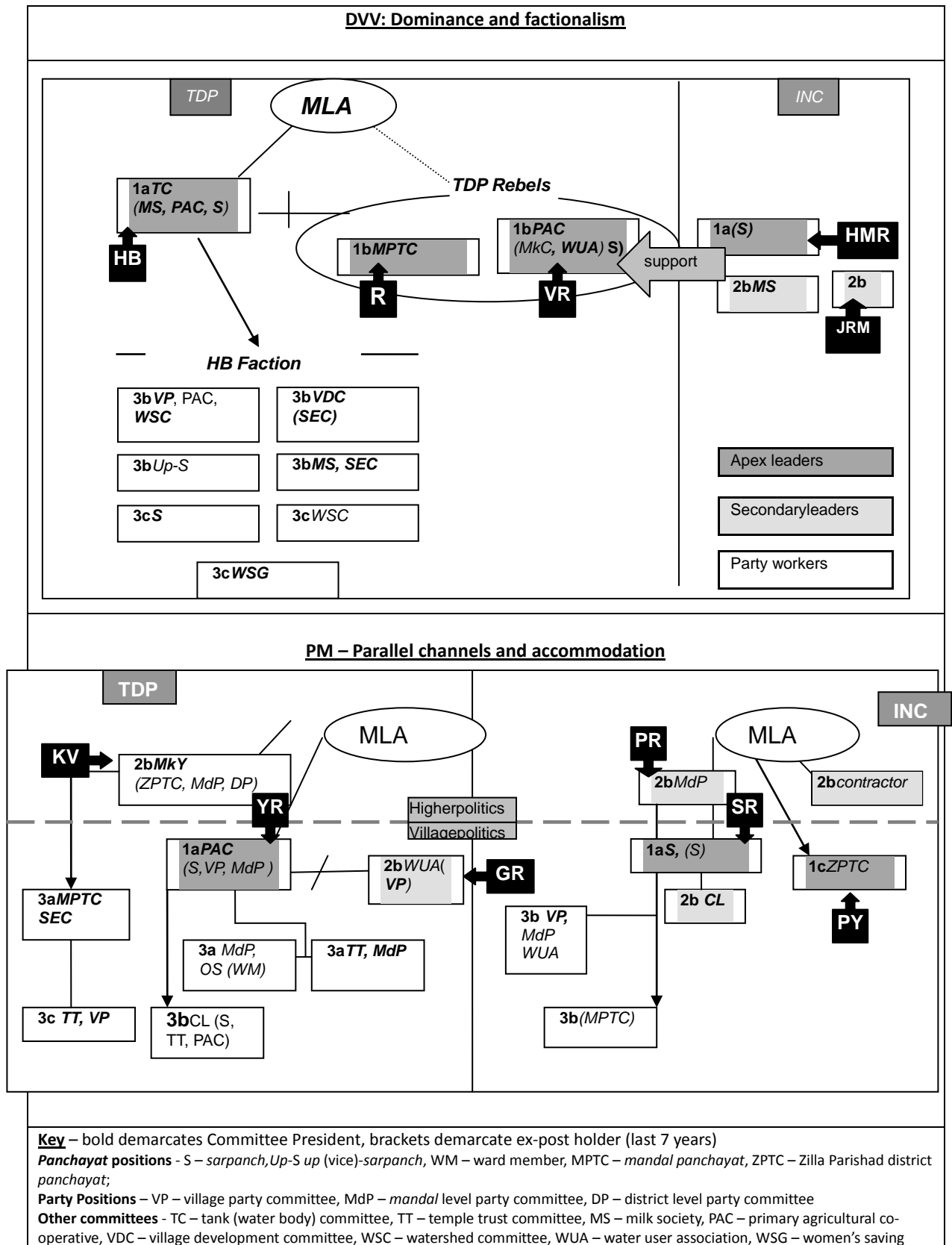
Establishing an ideal structure was an important means of understanding the strengths and weaknesses of these networks in the village. The distribution of leadership below the apex leadership varies significantly between one village and the next. Where sub-leaders are clustered around the secondary level, the apex leadership is more prone to challenge and faction. Where followers are mostly from the tertiary cadre, the party is likely to be less dynamic. In this way, disaggregating leadership serves two analytical purposes. First, it highlights the importance of party-based networks as an opportunity structure for rural leadership. This is an important departure from the analysis that sees village-level political agents as a set of individuals competing for control of village resources. Second, it analyses the strength of the internal compulsions of the political stratum based on the personal and political ambitions of the leaders.

6.3 Political Networks in Practice

The establishment of an ideal structure of leadership is an important means to understand the nature of leadership in specific contexts. This section shows how this structure is played out in a specific context and on this basis, draws out some of the key themes that emerge in village politics. The discussion focuses on two contrasting examples of village political structures (Figure 10) and the specific narratives that these reveal.

Three main themes emerge from this discussion. The first is the importance of political parties in cementing the divisions between groups or faction in the village, and in doing so, ensuring their relations with the higher level of the political system. The second is the ambiguity of positions vis a vis local development, social and political committees, and the extent to which the importance of these committees is conferred upon these positions rather than what is ordained by their formal role. The third key theme is the extent to which the creation of positions is important in mobilising local party cadres.

Figure 10: Mapping leaders, positions and parties – two contrasting cases



group, MkY – Market Yard Committee, SEC – school education committee, oil seed committee, CL – caste leader, MLA – member of legislative assembly.
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Dominance and Factionalism: DVV Village

In the first case, in DVV village in Prakasham District, *Kammas* are the only high castes in the village and their population is roughly equal to that of the SCs (1,400 *Kamma* households, 700 SC *Mala* households, 400 SC *Madiga* households, 300 BC households). The TDP held the *sarpanch* post in the last two elections; previous to that, the apex leader of Congress (HMR) was the *sarpanch*. The present strength of the TDP is indicated by the fact that this was the only village where a building (formerly a school run by an NGO) had been designated to the party office, which was situated at the head of the main T-Junction in the heart of the *Kamma* colony. The apex leader of the TDP is HB who held the previous *sarpanch* post because his wife had been elected to the post ; he holds the present post by proxy control of the post of an SC woman. He currently holds no positions apart from the being head of the tank committee, for which he has been nominated by the MLA, previously he had been the agricultural co-operative society chairman and the milk society president. He told us that it was a ‘party policy’ that no one should hold two major positions in the village. He describes himself as a full-time politician and has only a small landholding (1.5 acres). He has moved to the village relatively recently and lives on rented property.

The TDP currently holds all the key positions in the village, barring one watershed committee (the TDP controls one) and a private milk society that was formed to counter the overt TDP dominance in the village. When asked about the party’s dominance over all the positions, he told me, “We are using and building our power democratically.” HB currently controls virtually all the positions in the village through his close support of new political aspirants who constitute what is now a majority faction within the village party. The position of village president, *up-sarpanch*, *sarpanch*, milk society chairman, school education committee chairman, water-shed committee secretary and women’s self-help group (SHG) leaders are all held by his group. In addition, he has created a new post of village development committee (VDC) chairman, which has no power

effectively but has given political employment to the ex-SEC chairman from his cadre. In an interview, HB said that he had been offered a party position at the *mandal* level but he “decided to stick to the village” with which he was fully involved.

A year before the fieldwork, a rebel faction emerged within the TDP, headed by the current co-operative chairman (VR) and the MPTC member. These men (especially VR), were factional apex leaders who had rebelled against the single-handed control and ‘silent factionalism’ of HB. This conflict had built up over three years, but two events ensured that the disaffection resulted in a new faction. The first was during the selection of the co-operative vice president. After the election of the president, HB allegedly refused to abide by the president’s (VR) selection of the vice president and instituted a split amongst the directors even though he was not part of the committee. This caused the society to be suspended for six months. Officials came to try to resolve the issue and decided they would accept VR’s choice of candidate, as HB was not part of the committee. VR managed to retain his faction as his new followers realised that HB was restricting VR’s threat to his dominance. It had also become clear that the MLA by this point was not recognising other senior cadres in the village. The split intensified when one of VR’s supporters, R (or rather his wife), did not receive the party ticket from the MLA for the MPTC elections. HB proposed a relative of R’s for the party ticket in an attempt to divide R’s supporters. R managed to win the election with the support of the Congress leaders and a respected elder leader (JRM), who normally did not get involved with village factions. JRM felt R’s case was just and advised the MLA that factions would be intensified if HB was given the party ticket. Despite moving the polling booth in an attempt to increase the turnout of his supporters, HB lost the election.

Stories of HB’s ‘silent factionalism’ abound. His strategy has been to confer positions on weak tertiary cadres and in the majority of cases, he has taken up all the work in the village under their names. His strength as a leader is threatened by his unwillingness to bestow power on potential primary leaders. The present factionalism with the party has had little impact, as HB has the backing of the MLA. The TDP rebel group told me

that the faction exists only within the village and in the assembly election they would remain loyal to the MLA. They are, however, waiting to be formally approached by the MLA, as they feel that he has tacitly supported factionalism within the party, and is “playing with leaders who have earned their status through years of party work”. Other less powerful leaders are now cautious to develop real autonomy having seen the dangers of “being raised by HB and then dropped, like VR and R had been”. VR described the situation as, a uni-polar administration in the village, with absolutely no chance for a secondary leadership to arise. Factions within the party have led to dissatisfaction, as there is no way that this disaffection may be expressed.

At best, they could appeal to the higher leaders within the party but VR felt this would only result in a “mutually destructive process of competition” and would damage the interests of the party as a whole. The best the senior leaders could do is to restrict the autocratic management of democracy by encouraging the wider electorate to ensure that provisions for elections are upheld. This happened in the case of the last *sarpanch* elections, held three months after the MPTC elections. HB and the senior Congress leader (HMR) decided to negotiate a unanimous election without consulting anyone outside their apex circle of leadership. TDP offered eight of the 12 ward members to Congress and the agreement was that the TDP would take the *sarpanch* seat. At the last minute, Congress, along with the rebel TDP faction, instigated their SC candidate to call for an election. The TDP won eventually, but the agreement on the division of ward members was upheld with the eight posts being shared by Congress and the rebel TDP faction. The power of the ward members is negligible, as during the agreement between the apex leaders, there was apparently a signed agreement to say that the ward members would not be able to overturn decisions made by the *sarpanch*.

Accommodation of Interests: PM Village

In contrast to the domination and factionalism in DVV, the situation in PM village is one of successful accommodation of interests. The village lies in a constituency in which a relatively weak SC MLA from Congress defeated the TDP in 1999. The ex-MLA remains active, having been promoted since his defeat to district party president and *Rajya*

Sabha member. Both the *mandal* party president from Congress (PR) and a powerful TDP leader (KV) also reside in the village. These two leaders remain removed from direct involvement in village affairs but are still important enough to promote cadres and resolve disputes in the village. While the MLAs remain the main source of command in each party, the TDP leader (KV) directly nominated the victorious MPTC, and another tertiary leader to the temple trust committee presidency and the position of village party president. Within Congress, the *mandal* president (PR) promoted the president of the VP and supported the ex-MPTC. One further channel of command has opened up recently within Congress, that of the victorious ZPTC (PY). He was directly nominated by the MLA and at 28 years of age, he is the youngest ZPTC in the district. He was chosen firstly on the basis of his caste (*Yadava*), and secondly, as his father was a classmate of the current MLA. As he is new to politics, he is yet to develop his own support base in the village but generally, his responsibilities are towards the *mandal* as a whole.

The contest for the *sarpanch* election has alternated between the TDP and Congress for the last four terms and the contest is between the two *Reddy* leaders who have either held the position directly or by proxy. The present *sarpanch* is from Congress (SR). During this previous term, he was mostly staying in the nearby town and so was removed from village disputes to a large degree. The TDP ex-*sarpanch* (YR) is the largest landowner in the village, said to have assets amounting to more than Rs. 1 crore (about \$200,000). He has personally contributed to many village development work projects and while the Congress *sarpanch* was absent from the village, he played an active role in village dispute resolutions. Two factors are said to have led him to lose the last elections. His involvement in dispute resolution made him unpopular. His cadres also complain that his self-importance as a mainstay of the village made him complacent, and that he was “inaccessible to cadres” during the campaigning.

The major complaint against him was that he did not spend enough money during the last *sarpanch* election. As this was the first *sarpanch* seat to be allocated to the general category, the competition between the two high-caste *Reddys* was fierce. The cost of

the election spiralled. The victorious candidate feared YR's capacity to bribe the voters. At the last minute he borrowed money, spending a total of Rs. 8 lakhs on his campaign. Some people believe that the rival TDP candidate (and ex-TDP village president - GR) had been paid by the Congress to contest. Despite the adverse effect on party relations, a few believe that GR's involvement was the main reason the TDP lost the election. The defeated TDP candidate (YR) became the president of the agricultural co-operative, which, in addition to his good relations with the ex-MLA, meant that he continued to be one of the most important figures of influence in the village.

6.4 Interaction Between the Local and Higher Levels of the Polity

These cases have served to show how the configuration of local political networks can vary between villages, both in terms of the degree to which power is distributed between party cadres and in the relationships between the competing networks that are played out. One common theme in both these cases is the importance of linkages between the local and the higher level of the polity and as a consequence, the implicit delineation between these two political worlds. This role of the higher level of politics has taken two main forms -one, the relations to higher level party leaders and two, the development of new political resources.

Leaders outside the village

Both the cases explored above demonstrate the importance of the linkages to the local MLA, or the MP, and the senior leaders in the village. A sharp distinction can be drawn between DVV and PM based on the fact that the former had only one senior politician, in the absence of an effective linkage to a Congress Party (CP) leader. The lack of this linkage undermined the capacity of the local CP to emerge as an effective force against the TDP. Further, disaffection in the secondary leadership in DVV resulted in the emergence of a factional force in the local TDP. In the case of PM, the existence of senior politicians from both major parties led to the creation of a broader and more balanced political space in the village.

One would expect there to be a reciprocal relationship between the local party cadre and the MLA, where the MLA would rely on the former to develop vote banks around election time. In such cases, one would expect the MLA to play a major role in selecting the apex leaders and work closely with them to develop the party capacity. While this study did not explore the contrast between local and higher level electoral politics, the qualitative data suggests the relationship between these two tiers is more one-sided than that because though the local leader is dependent on the MLA for patronage, the MLA himself tends to remain removed from village politics as much as possible. The cases above show how the MLA can play an important role in arbitrating in disputes and the extent to which these decisions can influence local politics, even to the detriment of the party, by promoting splits or even defections in cases where the MLA is unable to willing to accommodate the interest of competing senior village leaders effectively.

The MLA plays an important role in giving importance to local leaders. Nearly half the respondents claimed personal connections to the present MLA in their area. It was also clear by interviewing leaders that contact with leaders below the assembly level was not considered worthy of mention. Interaction with village leaders is common to all villagers, but it is the (infrequent) rubbing of shoulders with the MLA that makes a leader. Hence, “moving with village leaders”, and “being introduced to the local party leaders and the MLA” is rare and something that is earned through loyalty to local leaders. As one youth leader told me,

“I started as cadre, worked hard, forged relationships with higher people – and this is what made me a leader. You cannot become a leader just by being wealthy or by spending money on village development. Leaders need to be available to the public and they need to have high positions, a good image, political party affiliations, including relationships with leaders who have a higher position.”

6.5 Institutional Space and Ambiguity

The second important interaction between the local and the higher level of the polity is the extent to which policies to promote the formation of user committees acted to open political space at the village level. This offered the lower level leaders the chance to gain recognition which provided them with the incentive to work within parties. In addition, the development of local party organisations further added to this expanded institutional space.

The importance of committees was highly mutable, dependent on local circumstances rather than formal power. One can illustrate this with a case relating to school education committees. These committees are elected by parents of schoolchildren at a meeting where votes are cast by the show of hands. In most villages there is more than one school and the formal powers of the committees are limited to the monitoring of the attendance and appointments of teachers. Where funds are allocated to the school (for the construction of buildings or compound walls) the power of the committee increases. However, in most cases, these contracts are informally allocated to leaders outside the committees. In the majority of cases, the committees, headed by politically neutral candidates, are ineffective. Significant exceptions were found to this rule, however, as we found in the following case.

In PGP village, the election for the education committee was due to be held two months in advance of the *sarpanch* elections. The process that occurred can only be understood in terms of displaced caste-based factionalism that was transferred to the relatively innocuous space of the school committee elections by virtue of the impending *gram panchayat* elections. The school children's parents were from both parties, but there were more from the TDP (dominated by the *Telaga Naidu* caste). In this village, the CP members were predominantly from the *Reddy* caste, and most of the *Reddys* sent their children outside the village to study in English-medium schools. Knowing that the TDP would win, the Congress apex leaders stopped the elections by

tearing up the papers that were being used to record the result. With the help of the local MLA, the TDP filed a case against the Congress leaders and when re-election was held, the police were called to the village after violent disputes broke out. The TDP leaders succeeded in 'managing' the second election with the complicity of local officials. Details of this were hard to establish with any degree of certainty. For obvious reasons, accounts were different according to which 'group' the informant was aligned to. However, there is some degree of certainty about the fact that the TDP leaders instructed the village to formally close the voting process two hours before the allocated time. The Congress claimed it had succeeded in mobilising the majority though the parents had been precluded from voting.

This case represents a trend whereby, the interface between existing political networks and factions are articulated through relatively innocuous events in the village. The way in which political significance is transferred to these events requires that one to consider the matrix of positions at the village level as potential space for political leaders to express their power. It is also a method by which to make use of their power by well-developed networks of leadership. Analysing the diverse set of social, developmental and political associations as components of a matrix of power and influence at the village level has so far not been attempted. To date, some work has been conducted on the interactions between the PRIs and natural resource managements committees that have extensive formal powers, often in excess of the PRIs (Chhotray 2004). The absence of the analysis of political influence in associations with less formal power (like education management and SHGs) is conspicuous. The assumption that the potential for political capture is dependent on the extent of formal powers is questionable where party and factional networks are well organised. To understand the process of interface one needs to distinguish between positions within the matrix not purely in terms of formal institutional provisions, but in terms of the value that leadership networks are capable of adding to these positions.

6.6 Drivers Within the Local Polity

What compels village leaders to strengthen a local party group rather than operating through individual channels? Loyalty to factions can be explained as directly related to the political spoils that a faction has direct or potential control over. According to this logic, one could argue that followers of faction leaders base their loyalty on the 'justice' or even transparency in the distribution of patronage, as well as, their self-assessment of their own potential vis-à-vis the opportunities or rewards conferred on them by their leaders. Rational choice arguments, however, need to be tempered by the importance of kinship, caste, emotive and charismatic issues which also influence the guru-disciple relations between leaders and followers (Brass 1965:55). One cannot assume at present that local political leadership is a direct extension of higher-level politics within the state. As the following section shows, there are a number of incentives for leaders to join party groups, not all of which are financial.

Conducting interviews on the motivation of leaders to become involved in politics is prone to biases, as the references to altruism do not only justify their own position as leaders with power and influence, but also protect the character of the party they represent. Despite this, it is wrong to be sceptical about suggestions of altruism. It is not uncommon that senior leaders who have a family history of village or community leadership, as well as, the benefit of political skills and connections, to be considered locally as performing a service to the villagers they represent. Similarly, caste leaders or public-minded members of communities within the village were considered favourably where they had enforced the redistribution of power within the village away from dominant or landed leadership groups. The dangers and biases of relying on the perspectives of politically skilled informants have led some researchers to base the analysis of more objective assessments of leaders' backgrounds to uncover the nature of the political agency.

6.6.1 Social background

Occupational differences do distinguish the leaders from the non-leaders⁵². Against a base line of around 50 percent illiteracy, only about 10 percent of the leaders had received no formal schooling and around three quarters were educated to the secondary level or above. The fact that nearly 20 percent of the leaders had undergraduate degrees or post-graduate qualifications was very striking. In terms of occupation, the sample of leaders shows very clearly that their source of income is non-agricultural. We found that 43 of the 181 leaders (23.7%) named politics, contracting for construction work or collective professional functions (leading labour gangs or private cooperative leaders⁵³) as primary or secondary sources of income.

There are other aspects of the relationship between occupational background and politics. Ration-shop dealers, as well as contractors, rely heavily on political connections. Corruption and the need to maintain amicable relations with higher politicians and local government officials are in many cases, central to the 'effective' implementation of contracts. In the state, allegations of corruption in ration-shops became stronger after the Food for Work Programme channelled the payments for rice through ration shops. We came across one case, which was not an exception, where the village ration-shop dealer had been charged three times with illegally selling off rice. The charges, made by the *mandal* revenue officer and the vigilance department were dropped and the dealership was retained, principally due to the support of a local TDP leader. Decisions over the allocation of ration-shop dealership and contracts are highly politicised. They are an important form of patronage, often extending to the level of the MLA or the MP. Politics is not just a way of life. It is also a livelihood where politics is based around control and influence over government resource allocations.

⁵² A rough comparison can be drawn between data from the sample of leaders and data from the 'general sample' of the electorate in the table in the annexure.

⁵³ The evidence relating to master weavers or leaders of weaver working groups that was found in one of the coastal *mandals* can be seen as specific to that area. It, nonetheless, opens up the potential for suggesting that the regional variations in occupations and the style of working (i.e. reliance of professional leadership) does alter the nature of political leadership.

Indeed, it is reported that the Chief Minister himself said that political cadres within the TDP should have alternative sources of income,⁵⁴ in an attempt to create a culture of party workers who do not survive purely on politics. Evidence of landownership, especially in the general sample, was not reliable enough to draw any firm conclusions on this. Hence, we adopt an agency-based analysis which focuses on the personal motivations of villagers to play a role in the party or factional networks.

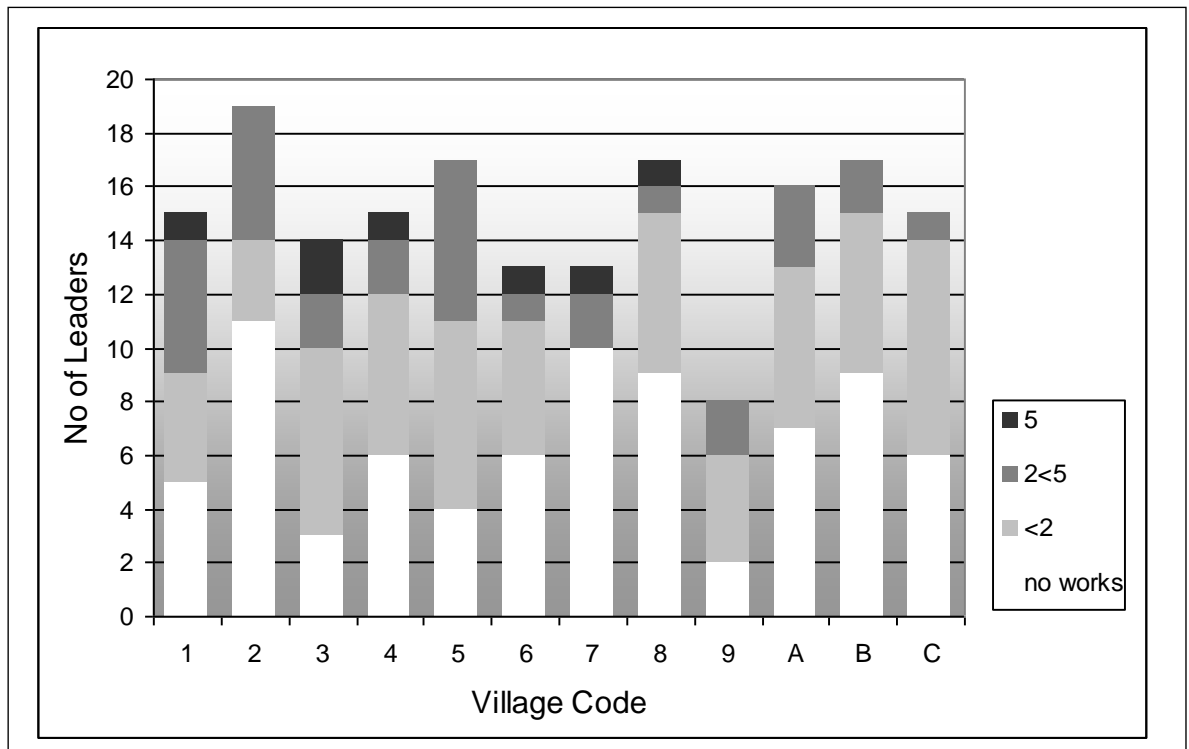
6.6.2 Risk factor which provides personal security

One motivation for involvement in party politics that is frequently overlooked is the personal security that it provides. This is best illustrated by the following example. In KB village, a dispute broke out when water from one field overflowed onto the harvested crop in the field that lies below it. A violent conflict took place over three days resulting in the murder of the offending party. A number of people, all from the *Reddy* community, had been involved in the conflict, most of whom claimed to have intervened in an effort to stop the conflict. There was a youth called RR among this group. An inquiry was launched by the police resulting in a charge sheet being issued against nine villagers, including RR. All nine villagers were taken to the district jail for three months in an effort to 'cool off' the dispute in the village. Finally, five of the villagers were charged and sentenced to four years in prison. RR, however, was not sentenced though he denies that it was because of his political connections that he managed to go scot free. He feels that the experience taught him the importance of maintaining political connections. Since this episode, RR has become active in the TDP youth committee. His parents want him to stop his political involvement and give up his political aspirations, precisely due to the violence which they saw led to murder. For RR, however, it works the other way round. He feels that the protection he can get from political connections is much more valuable than the potential for conflict in political involvement.

⁵⁴ Interview with Prof K Srinivasulu on 29 September 2003.

This is not an isolated case. It is clear that the involvement of the police in local disputes is increasing. Allegations of 'false police cases' are common, as are instances of leaders changing parties in order to avail of party political support to fight real or false police cases. Conflicts between village parties are often being taken outside the village and many leaders expressed the view that cases that were previously settled within the village are being referred to the police. Cases and counter-cases are a common means to re-articulate local conflict. We found a number of cases where the lack of party support, or the lack of capacity of parties to support cadres who have cases lodged against them, causes concerned cadres to defect. It is not uncommon to find that party members are proactive in managing these defections where leaders of the opposition represent a significant support base. Where these shifting alignments carry significant implications in terms of relocating power and resources, it seems likely that the incentives to use legal and other means to discredit or remove competitors would increase. While there was a clear sense that there had been an increase in conflicts over the last decade or so, it was not possible to substantiate this through the data the researcher had collected.

Figure 11: Distribution of value of contracts undertaken by leaders over the last two years (value in Rs 100,000 (L))*Source: Field data*



6.6.3 The profit motive

Political involvement is also motivated by the potential for rewards in terms of wealth and status. While financial rewards are important, the reduction of leadership to a rational, micro-political economy perspective on leadership is a common oversimplification. Leadership is an important avenue to secure personal profit, both in controlling distribution of benefits within the village as well as forming direct contacts with higher political leaders and officials. The potential for financial gains has been intensified in AP due to the new contracting arrangements ushered in through the JB. The lack of accountability in these disbursements is both an opportunity for local leaders, as well as, a challenge to research. Due to the prevalence of *benami* transactions, or transactions made under ghost names, on rural development works and the multiple channels of funding available to local political leaders, it is almost impossible to get any reliable information of the involvement of local leaders in

development activities. Reports from the leaders themselves provide the most reliable evidence on this.

Roughly half the leaders interviewed had executed small scale civil 'work' themselves or in conjunction with other leaders. Among the leaders who had been involved in financial work, 60 percent had executed work of Rs. 2L or less over the last three years. This implies that out of the Rs. 300L worth of work, the total contingent of leaders had been responsible for, over half (i.e., Rs.162L) were carried out by only 28 leaders. The dominance of one or few contractors over the largest accounts, which would net in the largest amounts, as well as, the distribution of minor work across a number of cadres, is a pattern that is common across all villages studied (see Figure 11).

Local observers suggest that the connection between status and contracts signals the change in political culture towards individualism and the consequent breakdown of order within village political networks. As one senior village leader reflected,

“Leaders used to act in public interest, now those who are guiding politics have vested interests and a non-transparent form of politics is emerging. Society is developing a tendency towards earning money as fast as possible. Politics is being seen as a way of making money. The fault is not so much with the party, but with the grassroots cadres. From ward members upwards, leaders want to earn money and consequently now spend all their time meeting the MLA. In my time, politics was not a full time occupation as it is now.”

The opportunities to engage in contracting work are not limited to the senior most leaders. Of the 24 apex leaders in the sample, only 10 had been directly engaged in contracting works. By contrast, 73 of the 106 party workers have been involved in some form of contracting work. These results might be misleading, to the extent that it is likely that the apex leaders often act as mediators or brokers for the award of contract to cadres and in the process, might be financially involved. However, it does show that engagement in financial dealing is open to lower level party leaders.

The local configuration of power is vital to understand the way in which contracts are

distributed. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the lack of overt dissent or protest toward the *Janmabhoomi* by local leaders belonging to the opposition party can be explained by fear of undermining the developmental flow. The other reason was that the JB was not purely a partisan scheme, as is evident from the flow benefits. Overall, 54 contracts with a value of Rs. 150.5 lakhs were awarded to the TDP leaders in the sample, and 41 contracts totalling Rs. 118.5 lakhs in value were given to Congress Party leaders. A further nine contracts were awarded to leaders representing other parties. While this indicated a slight bias towards the ruling party, these differences cannot be construed as representing partisan distribution.

Interpreting these findings, it becomes clear that the allocation of contracts is dependent on local factors, namely the relative strength or capacity of local leadership networks, rather than decisions of higher-level leaders. It is likely that one of the main factors behind this was the creation of a new set of local contracting processes for the implementation of village works that neither affected nor attracted the interests of higher-level contractors.

Political and Social Activities

Similar reflections on the changing local political culture are common and not just within the older generation of village leaders. Not all political leaders are able or indeed expect to enter into contracts. Contracts are biased in favour of the rich and experienced. Furthermore, a minority of village leaders claimed that they did not get involved in contracts to insulate themselves from corrupt practices and consequent public scrutiny. The nexus between political leadership and financial control is nonetheless, an important aspect of the relations between the political stratum and the village as a whole. It is not, however, a sufficient frame of analysis to describe the internal dynamics of the stratum itself. The figures cited above are open to a different interpretation. The bulk of the political stratum comprises of sub-leaders who are not full-time politicians and are not principally involved in executing contracts. Yet they play an active role in strengthening the network itself. The accumulation of status and

power are more important – both as a means to enter into competition over contracts and as an end in itself.

The functions of village-level political leaders are not restricted to campaigning for democratic control. Attending and organising party meetings, performing social services through conflict resolution and supporting government initiatives are a more important part of the diverse functions of village leaders (Table 16). Together, all these aspects contribute to what leaders call ‘party work’. Strengthening the party within the village is a means of increasing the collective power of the party or its factional networks. It is also a means of gaining personal prestige and a means of differentiating members of political networks from its non-members.

The social aspects of leadership are also important, as leaders will be seen meeting together, either collectively, or in party-based or factionally defined spaces. The meetings are essentially closed-door meetings. Attending informal meetings of leaders and cadres is time-consuming, but to be called for them is a mark of respect.

Leaders are called upon by the rest of the villagers to add status and importance to social gatherings. In one village, the *sarpanch* told us that he was invited to a social function in the village almost every day. We were also invited to some of these functions – one to celebrate the completion of a new house and one to mark the first death anniversary of one of the villagers. At these events, we invariably found that a significant portion of the leaders we had sampled were also present.

Table 16: Activities of village-level political leaders**N=188 (unprompted responses)**

Party Activities	n	Development Activities	n
Organising party meetings/mobilisation	59	Attending JB and other development meetings	27
Attending party meetings	58	Development activities (monitoring or supporting activities in the village)	10
Implementing party instructions	19	Dissemination of information about government schemes	3
Encouraging party membership	18	Contracts (supervising)	1
Meeting MLA, leaders	16		
Finding problems of party cadres (representing issues)	14		
Following local leaders	4		
Election Activities	n	Social activities	n
Campaigning	24	Conflict resolution and <i>panchayats</i>	38
Contributing expenses for cadres/campaigns	24	Assisting people to meet government officers	23
Party decision, selecting candidates.	17	Assisting people in dealing with the police	15
Collecting money from cadres	2	Taking people to hospitals	2
<i>Source: Field data</i>			

The division between social and political functions of leaders is somewhat blurred. Arbitration over disputes is also a key social function of leaders. It is also a means of developing political skills and earning respect in the village. Youth leaders are often seen either presiding directly over conflicts or supporting and learning from more experienced leaders. In Brass' (1965) description of the circles of leadership, he lays stress on the importance of developing personal bonds between aspiring and established leaders. He describes this as a 'guru-disciple' bond. We found that many youth leaders had a clear idea of where they sit in the hierarchy of power in the village.

One such youth told us, “All parties are like families, where there are big leaders and small leaders. Now I am young (27 years of age), so I just listen.” The more dominant response, however, was that the new leaders no longer wait to develop themselves as cadres as they would have done earlier. Thus, if they do not get recognition, they are likely to shift to a party where they will. The reason for this increasing pragmatism lies in the new opportunities for ‘political employment’ offered by the formation of new positions of power and stratum at the village level.

Finally, there are some trends in the data to suggest that the activity of village leaders is indeed affected by the party they are affiliated to. Crude conclusions can be drawn from the evidence to show that differences exist in three major areas. The first is in ‘taking part in membership campaigns’. Of the 15 leaders who mentioned this as part of their regular work, all but one was from the TDP. However, it should be noted that the result could clearly have been influenced by the fact that the party was conducting an enrolment drive during the time of fieldwork. Second, involvement in the ruling government’s development initiatives, namely *Janmabhoomi*, was mentioned as ‘party work’ only by TDP leaders (with the exception of two non-TDP leaders) which in itself, is not surprising, though the fact that this was seen as ‘party work’ is worthy of mention. The last activity where a clear party bias was evident was ‘organising people and mobilisation’, where the number mentioned by the TDP people was double the number of people from all other parties combined (32 against 15)⁵⁵.

These trends need to be treated with caution and examined through specifically designed survey instruments in order to be robust and reliable. However, in line with the broader argument developed here, the TDP has been remarkably successful in changing the playing field of local politics and most importantly, enlarging the resources and avenues for participation. In the following section, this process of mobilisation is examined in greater detail, and the importance of internal resource distribution within networks of leaders is highlighted.

⁵⁵ Other party biases emerge from the data but the reliability is limited by the small sample. However, it is worth mentioning that TDP was more active than all other parties in the following areas: ‘providing expenses for cadre and campaigns’ (15 against 10), ‘implementing party instructions’ (11 versus 5).

6.7 Mobilising the Elite

The PRIs offer limited opportunities for leaders in order to gain positions of power in the village. The creation of the new participatory spaces discussed in the last chapter has been important in expanding the space for leaders to find positions of power and influence. Due to the rapid and extensive nature of the formation of user groups and CBOs, information and the potential for capture has been biased in favour of the local political leadership. The impact extends beyond this, as the political potential of these committees has created a critical mass of people for the changing leadership culture in the state. They are, however, not the only parallel channels to the *panchayat* which are important in the wider scope of village governance and development. Primary agricultural cooperatives, milk producers' societies, temple trust (or endowment committees), tank committees and other farmers associations have been in existence for many years. In addition, civil associations such as caste groups, religious groups and youth groups were active in varying degrees in the villages we visited. Finally, since the restructuring of the TDP, party committees have been established by the ruling regime in all villages in the state. Opposition parties also have committees, but they were less vibrant in the majority of cases.

The number of committees, as well as, all positions of leadership within these committees far exceeds the capacities or the needs of the political stratum to co-opt them. The extent to which the matrix of associations is 'captured' by political leaders is vitally determined by the size and capacities of the stratum itself. On the whole, one can assume that leaders have better access to information and hence, are able to mobilise themselves more effectively to control the elections for CBOs directly or indirectly by installing members of their groups in positions that they can then control. It is common to find that apex leaders have found avenues for the expression of their dominance through water users management committees and WSCs, especially where they are precluded from contesting the *sarpanch* elections due to reservations.

Despite the capacities of leaders to dominate these positions, we still found cases where even the apex leaders were not aware of the fact that the watershed

committees would become financially more powerful than the *panchayats*. One particular case was indicative of this. In DVV village, the TDP had become dominant in village politics, mainly due to the activities of their apex leader (from the *Kamma* caste, one who describes himself as a 'full time politician') called Harish Babu (HB). When the official from the district visited the village to announce the project, the apex leaders from both parties (TDP and Congress) were not aware that the watershed committees would be in control of Rs. 20 lakhs (approximately \$40,000) of funds. HB was not involved at this stage. When the project was sanctioned, HB decided, in consultation with the Congress leaders and the MLAs, that as two committees were to be formed, one should be 'given' to the TDP and one to Congress. Both of these committees were chaired by politically inactive farmers who had succeeded in getting their names recorded by the officials during their initial visits to the village. When Rs 20 lakhs was sanctioned to these committees, the TDP nominee decided that he did not have the skills to undertake the construction work (where skills implied dealing with corruption and the local official), and that by assuming the post he would upset the balance of power within the village party. As he put it, 'out of respect' he transferred the de facto powers over the funds to HB. The check dams constructed by HB were washed away in the first rains. Despite complaints and a monitoring visit by the officials, no action was taken. Informants felt that there were two reasons for this. Firstly, HB had paid the 'correct' bribes (10% to officers and 5% to political leaders, which was less than the 25 percent that members of the Congress-supported committee admitted to paying). Secondly, due to the political compromise in the formation of the two committees, the pressure from the opposition party leaders was silenced.

The understanding of the process of interface between political networks and the matrix of positions of potential power in the village is complicated by the fact that control over associations is not always direct. None of the works by the WSCs were officially recorded as being done by HB, which proved to be a challenge for this research. In this case, firstly, political control had been hastily passed on to HB due to the inexperience of the WSC committee chairman and secondly, because the formal

financial power that he found himself in control of, was far in excess of his local political status.

6.8 Political Order

The rapid proliferation of CBOs in Andhra Pradesh serve to create a set of resources that effectively expanded the political stratum. Yet rather than resulting in 'radical polycentrism' (Houtzager 2003), what emerges is a comparatively ordered political society in which institutions are adapted to the needs of the leaders and not vice versa.

It is often the leaders themselves who limit the potential for conflict and competition. In the case of the watershed committee in DVV village, the chairman had been 'moving with' the apex leader for two years and had also held the position of primary agricultural cooperative (PACS) secretary. Despite his experience, he reflected on the disjuncture between his chairmanship of the watershed committee and his relative status and skills as a leader with these words,

"I am not educated and therefore, I think I should not continue further in politics. Moreover, I am a farmer and cannot spend the time that is required to become a political leader. For that, education, time and experience are all necessary. Without these one cannot have a direct link to the MLA and other leaders. Without these connections there can be no return (profits) for party work. Even in these positions (watershed committee and primary agricultural cooperative), we cannot get a profit and there are no salaries for position holders. Right now, only if I go to the higher leaders along with HB will I get recognition. Working as a cadre is a loss, you lose a day's work going to senior leaders and only the senior leaders can earn money. We will support HB as our leader as he looks after the party cadre and spends money for the progress of the party. But speaking for myself. I am not interested in becoming one of the leaders within the party for all these reasons."

In this case, the chairman's loyalty to HB had been assured because of the direct benefits HB had granted the chairman. The house, in which we conducted the interview, is a large concrete construction, paid for by two housing grants intended for SC beneficiaries with less than five acres of land. HB diverted these grants (of over Rs.

20,000, of which he had to give Rs 1,500 to the local officials) to the chairman and other cadres as reward for their 'party work' despite the fact that the chairman was high caste and had over ten acres of land. HB himself was eager to point out that he had no land and lived on rented premises in the village.

Thus, the 'virtuous circle' of leadership development is cumulative and iterative. Apex leaders rely not only on their relationships with higher leaders but also with their supporters in the village. An important means of motivating cadres, even where the de facto control over these positions did not rest with the position holders, was to confer positions on them. As one leader told the researcher, "Without some position, we will not be recognised by the 'big leaders' and the MLA." Positions offer a means of recognition and have been an important means to instil dynamism in village level political leadership. Cadres frequently 'jump' parties when they see that there is the potential for the immediate granting of status through position. One leader described the symbolic aspects of these rewards in these terms,

"Chandrababu Naidu has been successful in increasing political employment in the state. In our village, the TDP committee will not be functioning and all other committees will be effectively headed by the same set of senior leaders. They are not important positions, they are there only to encourage the party cadres that they are being given positions."

6.9 Conclusion

The compilation of these cases serves to show the extent to which a new type of elite politics had emerged in Andhra Pradesh, one that combined elements of new leaders and factionalism. The development of the political stratum was significantly hastened by the creation of a plethora of new CBOs, as well as, the availability of flexible funding for local development activities. These external changes were played out on the ground through a dynamic interface with the actions of the local leaders, who we have

seen in this thesis, became an important part of the broad process of stratification and dynamics of local politics.

The discourse has presented a detailed account of the context specific nature of leadership and the contests between leaders and from this has sought to extract a model of analysis that helps further the understanding of local politics. The innovations in terms of 'disaggregating the political stratum', that is at the core of this analysis, resembles the type of models of factional politics described by Brass and others while analysing local politics in India over four decades ago. Against this backdrop of the evolution of local political leadership, I have sought to show how there are distinctly 'modern' characteristics in the new local leadership that arose in Andhra Pradesh, especially in terms of the importance of parties in defining the vertical division in the village leadership network and in creation of the opportunity spaces in the context of which the leadership took place. The central theme of this thesis i.e., the complex picture of the interplay between local and state politics, is further clarified by the analysis of the external innovations made in local institutions as a result of which positions and resources at the local level were created.

The analysis of local political leadership adds considerably to the prevailing notion of the 'local elite' and seeks to highlight the systemic process of the structuring of local politics and the distinction between local and higher level politics. The findings from this analysis further support the need to reconsider the polity approach and to assess the dynamic process of political development. The clarity of the political stratum in Andhra Pradesh is possibly exceptional but it is likely that similar patterns can be found in other states in India, albeit with varying degrees of party organisation. There are a number of implications that can be drawn from this analysis, namely, in terms of the male bias of political participation at the local level, and the distinction between civic and political participation which has received limited attention in the current developmental discourse on participatory local governance.

These findings have broader implications for the understanding of the process of democratic change and the role of development programmes in shaping leadership or 'elite cultures' at the local level. While comparison with the long-term process of change is beyond the scope of this analysis, there are indications that new leaders have emerged in Andhra Pradesh and that this was partly in response to specific development initiatives. The extent of penetration of politics and the influence of state level elites challenge the prevailing notions of political change in India - this has been discussed in Chapters 1 and 3. However, the interpretation of these changes forged along a clear distinction between local and higher level politics is critical and needs a more disaggregated account of politics and political change in developing polities and by implication, a re-examination of the construction of the polity in countries like India.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This thesis has provided a detailed account of local politics in contemporary India through the lens of the new politics of localisation. At the time of planning and undertaking the fieldwork for this research, there was an emerging debate about the subtle change in the approach to participatory local democracy. As discussed in the introductory chapter, support from democratic decentralisation was gradually being outstripped by new initiatives that sought to promote direct participation in the design and management of local development projects. As an early observer of this trend, Manor termed this the 'second wave of decentralisation' (2005) and highlighted its potential damaging impact on the process of democratisation. Taking the case of Andhra Pradesh, this thesis sought to explore the politics behind this process.

The case of Andhra Pradesh is arguably one of the most important examples of this new trajectory in participatory local development, on account of the high degree of political support that underpinned radical 'informal' reforms in local institutional structures. It was also a state that, around 2000, attracted a great deal of international attention on account of the neo-liberal policies of the new Chief Minister, at a time when Andhra Pradesh emerged as a forerunner in state level economic reforms due to changes in the nature of the Indian federal system. As my early visits to the state showed, there was a different story emerging - one where the new dynamic leader of the state was actively pursuing a domestic agenda by driving this political influence down to the local level through a new form of developmental politics.

While the context of state politics in Andhra Pradesh is important, this thesis focused on the broader issues of the nature of local politics in a vibrant and predominantly rural based democracy. The 'new politics of localisation' focused attention on the local arena as a driver of economic and political change. Theorists of this new trajectory

(Harriss et al 2004) have highlighted the extent to which this required a significant change in the understanding of political processes, one in which the locality has emerged as a primary area of development (Harriss et al 2004). At the time of writing this thesis, new perspectives on the framework of political analysis based on the pioneering work of Theda Skocpol in the 1990s were emerging. The 'polity approach' offers a means of focussing on the dynamic interaction between state and society in the policy making process, opening the scope for exploration of the effects of reform on the demands that emanate from society, and by implication, the construction of society in relation to the state.

The framework proposed at the start of this thesis set out to further elaborate on the polity approach in relation to the specific features of a 'developing polity'. The discussion drew on the much-neglected work on political development that had emerged during the 1960s and increasingly seen as less relevant following the 'third wave' of democratisation during the 1970s and beyond. The proposed framework for the 'development polity' approach set out in Chapter 1 sought to highlight the relevance of the concepts of political development to thinking about state-society relations as a means of contextualising contemporary work that shed new light on the importance of informal institutions and local elites as being part of the political process. Two elements to this approach were discussed. The first is the need to assess whether the polity contains different types of politics, akin to the modern/traditional typologies set out by theorists of political development, which were central to the understanding of the 'crisis of penetration'. The second was the need to disaggregate both state and society and explore the linkages between the higher and local levels.

The concept of the local state drew from emerging thinking based largely in the Indian context that gave rise to the concept of the 'everyday state' (Fuller and Benei 2000). This body of work laid the important foundation for examining the unitary concept of the state in India and highlighted the importance of everyday practices in shaping citizens' encounters with both the administration and politics (Ruud 2000). Drawing heavily on this work and the approach it offered, this thesis set out to further explore

the politics and the political implications of this, through an in-depth exploration of contemporary local politics at the village level.

The key contribution of this thesis is the exploration of the nature of local politics and the process of political stratification of voters and leaders at the local level, in particular. These issues have been examined in a way that seeks to understand the relationship between higher level and local politics through three lenses: local elections, participatory development and leadership. The following section (7.2) reviews the main findings of this stream of analysis.

Given the time taken to reach final submission of this work, it is important to recognise that thinking on these issues has further evolved. Discussion of the development in empirical and conceptual work is provided in section 7.3, which focuses on the extent to which political analysis has become increasingly central to the donor discourse on development and specifically, on emerging discussions around the concept of political settlements. Against this backdrop, the broader implications of this research are discussed in section 7.4, which focuses on the relevance of the developing polity approach.

7.2 Summary of Findings

The methodological approaches discussed in depth in Chapter 2 set the challenge of striking a balance between in-depth qualitative case studies and an analysis that is representative. A mixed method approach was developed that was based on a limited set of cases but introduced methods that resulted in a large sample that enabled an exploration of the politically salient issues of caste, level of political participation, as well as, gender and age. The need to focus on the 'locality' reflected on the specific innovations in the state of Andhra Pradesh that conferred a new salience on the village as a political space despite the weak commitment to formal democratic decentralisation. The complexity of the 'cases' and the definition of 'the local space' served to circumscribe the findings of this research and the implications that can be

drawn from them on issues that are central to the analysis of local politics in particular and political change in general.

Following an analysis of the political and policy context in Andhra Pradesh (Chapter 3), the empirical section of this thesis reflects three distinct research questions relating to elections, participation and leadership. Analysis of village elections (Chapter 4) highlights the distinctiveness of the village as a unit in the political system. Despite the powerlessness of locally elected bodies, elections for village governments were found to be fiercely contested events that were driven by the forces of party, identity and entrepreneurship. While these contests resembled political contests at the higher levels of politics, the manifestation of these forces was highly contextual and deeply embedded in the specific histories of the villages. Despite this high degree of contextual specificity, analysis revealed an internal process of stratification that was common between villages and this was interpreted as evidence of the distinctiveness of village politics.

Village elections were driven by the ambitions of leaders rather than formal powers of the local bodies and the positions within them. In seeking to explain this, it becomes clear that local elections cannot be understood in isolation from the broader political process and other policy innovations that penetrated to the local level. The presence of parties challenges the notion of political decay and the weakness of party structures in India and this analysis presents important evidence of the importance of party identity and the extent to which parties enjoy the support of general voters. Alignment to a party is an important means of ensuring access to benefits though local actors often intervene this access. This further enforces the view that villages are distinctive areas in the political system but it also highlights the extent to which the deepening of party politics is driven by factors that extend beyond local electoral politics.

The arena of participatory politics in Andhra Pradesh was shaped directly by the state. The analysis (Chapter 5) focuses on three mechanisms that significantly impacted village politics: the village assembly, user groups and local contributions. The analysis

highlights not only the extent to which these changes circumvented formal democratic decentralisation by creating a more direct interface between the villagers and the state but also how the implementation process served to intensify village politics and political awareness.

This analysis differs from other recent accounts of participatory development (Chhotray 2004, Veron et al 2003) that have focused on specific schemes or sectoral reforms. The proliferation of local institutions in Andhra Pradesh (many of which were indeed not new) had a number of aggregate effects and produced some important new dynamics that were widely acknowledged. These included the new culture of contracting, direct engagement of the higher-level state in participatory spaces and the mobilisation of new identities, all of which were the result of a combination of institutional innovations and strong state support. While there is a clear limitation in terms of drawing temporal comparisons based on a single study, there is some evidence to support the view that these changes were significant and rapid.

The dynamism of the initiatives launched under the mantle of the *Janmabhoomi* programme reveals certain anomalies. On the one hand, the presence of the state created new identities which rose above local politics, for example, the dynamism of the women's groups in creating space for participation outside the male dominated field of local politics. On the other hand, the proliferation of institutions and resources at the local level was responsible for invigorating local politics, whose force ensured that non-political participation was restricted or contained. Elements of politics permeated political and civic spaces, as seen in the sharpening of other aspects of identity, namely of literacy and caste, based on interactions at the local level.

A further aspect of the anomalies of participation related to corruption. The evidence highlighted the extent to which the *Janmabhoomi* programme institutionalised informal practices of corruption and how this became an accepted part of the local development process, largely due to a system that required community contribution. While it could be argued that the emergence of systemic corruption in programmes

that were strongly identified with the ruling party would be damaging, this was not found to be the case. The analysis suggests that villagers were able to distinguish between the image of the programme and the performance on the ground and by implication discern between practices of the local leaders and the higher levels of the political system.

The importance of local leaders in defining village politics demanded closer attention and the second phase of fieldwork was designed to further develop the understanding of these local actors. This theme is explored in more depth in Chapter 6. Contrary to the dominant discourse on 'elites' and *naya netas*, the research showed that local leaders functioned as part of well-defined structures that served to stratify the leaders and govern their interactions. While these structures resembled systems of factionalism associated with 'traditional' politics in India, the drivers influencing the decisions and practices of the 'elites' were found to be very modern. The linkages to parties and local bureaucrats who were effectively brokers for development contracts defined the leaders and the internal distribution of development schemes and positions of importance played a major role in developing networks of leaders within the village.

The creation of a typology of leaders is an important contribution, one which highlights the common patterns of local leadership, structured around hierarchy and groups. The specific configurations within these patterns varied between villages and served to define the politics of a specific village. The development of this second phase of fieldwork initiated a form of analysis that could be used to make comparisons between villages and therefore, to better understand the complex narrative of politics in a particular village.

The analysis of leadership also explored the internal drivers of local politics and the complex interaction between political parties and local motivation of profit, security and social status. The alignment of these two aspects of the developing polity acted to ensure that elements of higher-level politics penetrated to the local level. The analysis

also showed the extent to which the (external) state was effective in stimulating the deepening of party politics through the creation of space and position and resources, and how essentially it was the local leaders who gave order and significance to these structures.

While these three aspects of the new politics of localisation (elections, participation and leadership) served to structure this research, what emerges strongly is the fact that these cannot be treated as separate domains. The following section draws out the common trends that emerge across these three areas of local politics, before exploring the broader implications for understanding the political context in a developing polity.

The first common strand relates to the importance of political stratification and the extent to which political behaviours are defined by encounters with local events, issues and actors. The detailed analysis of village politics reveals the complexity of caste and other key aspects that are assumed to have influenced political processes and the limited extent to which these dictate the nature of local politics. One reason for this is the heterogeneity of caste composition in the lower units of the polity, namely, the village. The discovery of esoteric coalitions between parties and divergent trends in caste-based alliances are evidence of this and they challenge the accounts of politics in contemporary India that are based on national or state level trends. While this study did not seek to compare political behaviours in local and national elections, there is sufficient evidence to question this relationship in greater detail.

This analysis shows how the degree of political activity is an important defining feature of a villager, one that is not directly correlated to primordial characteristics of caste, age or education but rather is defined by relations or encounters in the local space. There are significant differences between the awareness and behaviours of leaders and the more passive villagers which is substantiated by their engagement in electoral and participatory politics. Further, there is evidence that the capacity of villagers to engage activity is determined, in part, by the internal dynamics of the village polity, or relations between villagers. Parties, positions and resources can serve to activate the village

polity but the strength of this internal ordering suggests that this process of stratification is an inherent feature of local politics.

The second common pattern that emerges is the extent to which men dominate in local politics and by implication, the limited nature of empowerment through the participatory development processes. While we did encounter active and clearly exceptional women leaders, their capacity to influence the inner circles of the political stratum was limited. The analysis set out to show how the dynamism of local politics and participatory spaces has served to alter or sharpen identities, within the general category of gender.

Arguably, the most important contribution of this research has been the deeper exploration of the nature of leadership in the contemporary rural context. Clearly, these findings cannot be generalised as there are certain aspects of the context that play an important role, including the regeneration of the Telugu Desam Party organisation under Chandrababu Naidu and the specific history of the rural fixer that differs in other states (Manor 2000). The positioning of this analysis in the broader context of Andhra Pradesh's politics was not the objective of this analysis, through these it is possible that some important implications for the understanding of the existence of party organisation in contemporary India and the specific routes to party building that the case of Andhra Pradesh could contribute important insight into. My objective in this research was more limited, which was to focus on describing the type of politics at the local level.

The type of leadership found at the village level in Andhra Pradesh has two important implications. The first is that party politics and local politics are not only compatible; they interact in ways that serves to deepen the penetration of parties in ways that challenge broader theories of mobilisation and decay (Manor 1983, Kohli 2000). It could be argued that the pragmatic alignment between party organisation and local politics was a deliberate strategy of Chandrababu Naidu in an attempt to develop a party organisation in a relatively short space of time. Subsequent political events in the

state, that saw the Telugu Desam Party defeated in the 2004 elections, also highlights the fragility of this strategy. The second important implication relates to the understanding of corruption at the local level. This is a theme that has been developed by this author in another work (Powis 2007) which argued that the apparently high level of rent seeking at the local level was largely channelled into a complex series of payments to local officials, as well as, to a higher level of party leaders. Most importantly, this payment was needed to support lower level village party workers to ensure the status of leaders to act as 'brokers' for the village. This evidence is important in shifting the focus away from the notion of self-serving 'elites' as propagators of corruption and highlights the importance of leaders in driving the process of development to the local level.

The innovations in terms of developing methodologies for analysing networks of local leaders have a broader relevance which is beyond the Indian context. Subsequent to this research, this framework has been developed and tested successfully in very different country contexts like Burma, Cambodia and recently, Nepal (in an unpublished work by this author) where it was further validated. This approach has important relevance in the light of a new work on political analysis that is reviewed briefly in the following section. In the remainder of this chapter I set out to draw the broader implications of this research against the context of a more recent analysis of the need to understand the political context in developing countries.

7.3 Updating the Conceptual and Empirical Context

This thesis sought to develop a number of themes in the literature on politics and development that were emerging at the time this research was being formulated. There have been some developments and new areas in this literature in the interim period, which will be explored in this section before reflecting on the broader implications of this research.

The introductory chapter briefly analyses three strands in the literature related to the new politics of localisation. The first is the political approach to decentralisation that focuses on the politics strategy of state level 'elites', based on the understanding of centre-periphery relations. The second takes a bottom-up approach, focusing on the local space as an arena of potential change and emphasises the importance of local institutions and non-formal forms of political action as a driver of democracy and political change. Work on this latter intellectual trajectory has continued to attract interest and important work, much of which has been managed through the Institute of Development Studies research group on Participation, Power and Social Change. Some important aspects of this work include the analysis of 'unruly politics' (Hossain 2010, Khanna 2012), new considerations of the broader nature of citizenship and spaces for participation (Cornwall et al 2011) and the implication for understanding the deepening of democracy (Gaventa 2005). These newer contributions to the debate on the nature of the new politics of localisation has furthered the understanding of the importance of forms of civic and political action at the margins of the state but, as discussed in the introduction, has downplayed the importance of the old style forms of politics that they challenge.

The challenge of connecting local politics to the larger system remains in much of the more recent analysis of the everyday state and informal institutions. A recent paper by Williams et al. (2011) on a similar initiative to those undertaken in Andhra Pradesh, called the Kumbashree in Kerala, offers further evidence of the limited extent to which new 'invited spaces' are autonomous from the broader political process. Other recent analysis in Afghanistan (Brick 2008) and Africa (Kensall 2008) point toward the resilience of traditional politics and customary practices, how these differ between contexts, and questions of whether development interventions should aim to go with the 'grain' (ibid) of indigenous forms of governance or seek to change them.

The more recent literature highlights the need to understand politics in order to promote effective development strategies, an issue that has increasingly been recognised as a part of donor thinking. As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, the proposition that politics is central to the process of poverty reduction which was

set out by Whitehead and Molina (1999) has paved the way for a new commitment by donors to engage with issues relating to politics. Over the past few years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of political economy and institutional analysis by the World Bank (2007, 2009) and other major development agencies (DFID 2009). In the broadest sense, political economy analysis aims to look 'beneath the formal structures' with a view to revealing the 'underlying interests, incentives and institutions that enable or frustrate change' (DFID 2009). To date, the major focus of this emerging approach has been to assess political economy issues at the country, sector, and most recently, the project level (World Bank 2009).

One of the most important departures in this regard has been the recognition of the need to engage directly in the political process in order to achieve the objective of pro-poor development. The UK Department for International Development has been a leader in this field, with an approach that centred on the concept of 'political settlements' (see Parks and Cole 2010; Khan 2010). This framework sets out to chart the progress of 'elite' pacts as a means of understanding the political process of social inclusion and state stability. These developments are cited as examples of the growing interest in understanding the political context and the formal and informal process that shapes this (See Hickey 2006).

While the recognition of the importance of political analysis marks a significant shift in the mainstream development discourse, this remains a field where more needs to be done. A recent review of the last five years of work on political settlements has highlighted the lack of clarity of concepts and the limitations of the approach being used currently. Laws (2012) identifies sixteen different definitions of political settlements in recent documents all of which focus on the pacts between 'elites' and highlight the confusion between peace settlements and political systems. The critique of the political settlement approach has drawn attention to the fact that any such negotiated basis for governance or power sharing is essentially dynamic and that often the objectives of inclusion and stability are contradictory. Most importantly, Laws emphasised the limitations of focusing on a national level political settlement based on a unitary concept of state and societies. As he states, "Both are always characterised by

internal differences and a variety of interests and forms and degrees of power, especially in developing societies and weak institutions' (Laws 2012:1)

One important development in this field of work lies in the paper by Parks and Cole (2010) who propose the notion of a secondary political settlement that lies at the sub-national level, existing in relation to the central coalition of interests at the centre. While not developed in detail, there is a lot of potential in furthering this approach as a means of situating local politics in the context of the broader polity. The final section reflects on the model proposed in this thesis, of the developing polity and the extent to which this sheds light on the evidence from Andhra Pradesh.

7.4 The Possibility of a Developing Polity Approach

The broader objective of this thesis was to further the understanding of the relations between the state and the locality. The polity approach was proposed as one important framework to achieve this and the introductory chapter proposed an innovation in this approach that took into account the notion of distinctive 'political cultures' that co-exist, as first suggested by Weiner (1965). The 'developing polity approach' drew on elements of the political development school of thought to posit the existence of different type of politics in different spaces and thus, focused attention on the interaction between the national and the local. This approach enables analysis of some of the apparent anomalies that emerge from the evidence of political processes, actors and institutions that have been discussed earlier in this chapter.

The developing polity approach introduced the distinction between the higher-level state and society and the local state and community. The methodology and research questions focused on the two extremes of this relationship and have been based on research at the village level. As such, the broader complexities of the multiple intermediary institutions, including district level government and political structures based around assembly and parliamentary constituencies, have been simplified as

parts of the higher level state and political system. The model serves to show how distinctive arenas in the polity co-exist and interact.

What is clear from this analysis is that the local space is not an autonomous domain, and that villagers are both influenced by events at the higher level of the polity, as well as, at the local level. The interplay between these 'two worlds' of politics is mediated by a range of institutions, including participatory development polices that directly shape the local space and parties and whose influence is driven by local forces within the enabling context of the larger political processes. Taking women as an example, politically mobilised villagers straddle these two worlds, with a strong awareness of the state level policy and policy processes though their direct encounters take place at the local level. Theorists of the everyday state and the broader critique on the unitary concept of state and society have underplayed the importance of this dualistic engagement with politics.

The evidence suggests that the policy process around institution formation works in a complex way, based around the interplay of local and state level forces. While the 'political approach' to decentralisation can help explain the policy choice to by-pass formal institutions of democratic decentralisation, it tells us less about the way in which informal reforms are played out. The creation of multiple institutions for participation and resource control can be understood as a political strategy for political penetration oriented expansion of the political stratum. However, the effectiveness of this process was determined by forces at the local level and the capacity of local leaders to appropriate new spaces to develop their local networks and power in the village. As such, the question of the institutional fit between state and society needs to be understood as a more complex process of the interplay between two distinct political arenas, which are beyond the direct control of the state level political elite.

The need to bring politics back into the discussion of state-society relation has been a central theme of this discussion. The evidence presented in this thesis strongly suggests that political relations and political leaders are more important than administration in shaping interface with the state. Not only does this contrast with the more general accounts of political decay in India, it also strong suggests the need to

consider the role of politicians in deepening development and democracy more carefully and the importance of political parties in this process. Viewed from the perspective of the state, the extensive penetration of parties might be less evident. This research, however, serves to show how reality can be very different when seen through the lens of village politics.

Whether or not the existence of parties implies a relationship to the state level electoral system remains a question that lies beyond the scope of this research. The developing polity model proposes a relationship between community and society based around the capacity for aggregation of political behaviours or the extent to which votes adopt political identities that translate into larger voting patterns or electoral forces. The apparent importance of the local polity as a distinctive space seems to challenge the clarity of this relationship and further research would be needed to test whether the formative role of parties implies that this linkage is established.

The strength of the evidence of the distinctiveness of local politics in Andhra Pradesh supports the view that the developing polity approach can be further developed and applied to understand the political and development process and offer a slightly nuanced perspective on understanding the process of deepening democracy and the apparent anomalies that emerge. The capacity of the framework to encompass the dualistic behaviours of rural voters, which respond to both local and state or national level political issues and the extent to which it can account for the interplay of local and national patterns of politics, namely, aggregate caste and party political identity, alongside the importance of local events, issues and actors. It is hoped that this study will stimulate further research in this area, as well as, develop concepts that may be further explored by this author to enrich the understanding of the politics of development.

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Annex 1: Electoral data**Turnout for state and parliamentary elections**

Year	State Assembly elections			Parliamentary elections		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
1962	64	68.12	59.81	64.72	69.03	60.35
1967	67.15	72.76	65.57	68.67	72.08	65.26
1971				60.35	64.65	56.03
1972	59.71	64.99	58.56			
1977				61.8	66.38	58.58
1978	72.92	76.13	65.75			
1980				56.94	62.22	51.76
1983	68.69	71.6	65.83			
1984				68.97	72.7	65.3
1985	67.57	71.06	64.1			
1989	70.37	73.78	67.04	70.43	73.79	67.07
1991				61.42	65.94	56.87
1994	71.02	73.6	68.43			
1996				63.02	66.44	59.61
1998				66	69.46	62.61
1999	69.15	72.07	66.24			

Source : Election Commission for India reports, www.eci.gov.in

Andhra Pradesh Assembly Election Results 1962-2004: Seats won and percentage of votes secured
by major political parties

	Congress		Telugu Desam		Left parties		Other major parties
	Seats won	Votes secured %	Seats won	Votes secured %	Seats won	Votes secured %	
1962	177	47.3	-		51	19.5	Swatantra 19 (10.4)
1967	165	45.4	-		20	15.4	Swatantra 29 (9.8)
1972	219	52.3	-		8	9.2	Swatantra 2 (2.0)
1978	175	39.3	-		14	5.2	Janata 60 (28.8) Congress (R) 30 (17)
1983	60	33.6	198	46.3	9	4.8	BJP 3 (2.8)
1985	50	33.6	202	46.2	22	5	BJP 8 (1.6)

1989	182	47.2	73	36.6	13	5.2	BJP 5 (1.8)
1994	26	33.6	219	44.1	34	6.5	BJP 3 (3.9)
1999	91	40.6	179	43.8	2	3.3	BJP 12 (3.7)
2004	185	38.6	47	37.5	15	3.4	BJP 2 (2.6) TRS 26 (6.7)

Data drawn from Suri 2002, 2004 and Government of India Election Commission Reports (www.eci.gov.in)

Andhra Pradesh Parliamentary election results 1957-2004

Seats won and percentage of votes secured by major political parties

	Congress		Telugu Desam		Left Parties		Other major parties
	Seats won	Votes secured %	Seats won	Votes secured %	Seats won	Votes secured %	
1957	35	51.5	-		2	15.6	
1962	34	47.9	-		7	21.1	
1967	35	46.8	-		1	19.4	
1971	28	55.7	-		2	9.0	
1977	41	57.4	-		0	7.4	
1980	41	56.2	-		0	7.1	
1984	6	41.8	30	44.7	2	3.6	BJP 1 (2.2)
1989	39	51.0	2	34.5	0	4.3	BJP 0 (1.5)
1991	25	45.6	13	32.8	2	4.4	BJP 1 (9.9)
1996	22	39.7	16	32.6	3	5.3	BJP 0 (5.7)
1998	22	38.5	12	32.0	2	5.5	BJP 4 (18.3)
1999	5	42.8	29	39.9	0	2.7	BJP 7 (9.9)
2004	29	41.6	5	33.1	2	2.4	BJP 8.4 (0), TRS 5 (6.5)

Data drawn from Suri 2002, 2004 and Government of India Election Commission Reports (www.eci.gov.in)

Local government election results 2001 (and 1995)

	Total constituencies	TDP	Cong	BJP	CPI	CPI(M)	TRS	Others & Ind.
ZPTCs								
Coastal Andhra	422	232	178	1	2	--	--	9
<i>Rayalaseema</i>	231	123	103	1	1	--	--	3
Telengana	441	157	165	11	5	15	84	4
Andhra Pradesh	1,094	512	446	13	8	15	84	16
% votes								
1995 <i>Panchayat</i> elections, AP	1,038	694	274	6	12	23	--	29
MPTCs								
Coastal Andhra	6,429	3,229	2,655	53	44	54	--	394
Rayalaseema	2,729	1,373	1,189	26	19	10	--	112
Telengana	5,422	1,749	1,807	200	141	216	1,043	266
Andhra Pradesh	14,580	6,351	5,651	279	204	280	1,043	772
1995 <i>Panchayat</i> elections, AP	14,129	7,227	4,696	160	281	342	--	1,423
<i>Mandal</i> presidents								
Coastal Andhra	420	233	163	2	3	2	--	17
<i>Rayalaseema</i>	229	113	110	1	1	--	--	4
Telengana	435	134	161	5	13	18	83	21
Andhra Pradesh	1,084	480	434	8	17	20	83	42
1995 <i>Panchayat</i> elections, AP	1,036	653	283	6	18	26	--	50

Sources: Suri 2004, Andhra Pradesh State Election Commission Reports 2001.

Votes polled to parties in ZPTC elections 2001 (%of valid votes polled)

Region	Party	TDP	Cong	BJP	CPI	CPI(M)	TRS	Others	Ind.
Coastal Andhra		49.46	45.97	1.04	0.74	0.61	--	0.48	1.68
<i>Rayalaseema</i>		49.50	45.33	1.63	0.57	0.68	--	0.37	1.91
Telengana		35.36	32.52	4.22	1.84	3.53	20.44	0.13	1.95
Andhra Pradesh		44.09	40.72	2.36	1.13	1.74	7.80	0.33	1.82
Nalgonda		36.3	34.82	1.03	3.76	8.07	15.09	0.51	0.09
Prakasham		52.03	44.79	0.08	1.57			0.02	1.51

Source: Andhra Pradesh State Election Commission Reports 2001.

Annex 2: User groups in Andhra Pradesh: coverage and year established*

Name	Date started	Estimated number in state by 2002	Details
Women's SHGs (DWCRA)	on going since 1982	475,000	Up until 1994, only 10,000 groups were functioning; the expansion after this point has been unprecedented, yielding an estimated coverage of over 6 million women (averaging 12 per group). In 2001, the corpus fund of groups was estimated at over 1,000 crores (half of which was financial assistance) Other savings groups were started under the DPIP Scheme (<i>Velugu</i>) which started in 2000 in 180 economically backward <i>mandals</i> and was scaled up in 2002 to cover 861 <i>mandals</i> .
Youth employment groups (CMEY)	1997	37,885	331,000 youth covered by end-2000 under the Chief Minister's Employment for Youth scheme, CMEY (after which the programme was renamed <i>Yuva Shakti</i>). It is meant for groups of 15+ members or more, above the age of 18 years with family income less than Rs.11,000 per annum. One 'motivator' is selected from each group. Groups are required to save Rs. 5,000 over six months to be eligible for a Rs.1L grant. Groups undergo training modules including health/AIDS awareness and entrepreneurial development. Other youth groups are formed under Prime Minister's Employment for Youth (PMEY) scheme.
WUAs	1997	10,292	About two thirds of these are in small irrigation systems where the entire physical system is managed by a single WUA; while in the other third, several WUAs share management responsibility. 4-10 members in committee, each farmer (water user) in the coverage area has a vote, regardless of size of landholding From January 1998 to March 1999, 22,887 works were undertaken, of which 70% were implemented directly by the WUAs.
WDC	1997	5,499	The budget allocation of Rs.22.5 lakhs for a watershed area of 500 hectares. 10% of the construction cost is to be borne by the landowner in whose lands the works are carried out. This may be borne by contributing cash or by physical labour
Forest Committees	1997	6,616	15 members in each committee, half of whom should be women.
SECs	1998	99,618	All parents of the children in a school are members and from among them they elect a chairperson and three others, one of whom should be a woman and one

			<p>SC/ST. The committee meets every month and looks into various aspects of school education, like improvement of infrastructure, the standard of teaching etc., and also ensure 100% enrolment, monitoring of mid-day meals, motivating drop-outs to return to school and the recruitment of 'vidya volunteers'.</p> <p>Only 15,009 were elected, through a show of hands. Most of these groups were nominated.</p>
Mothers' Committees	1998	36,436	<p>Each committee comprises of eight members. Two are mothers of children who are in the age group of 1-2 years, two are mothers of children of 3-6 years and two are mothers of adolescent girls. The other two are women in the age group of 18-45 years, preferably a pregnant woman and one with an infant. 8,816 committees received grants of Rs.1.25L to build day-care centres. Other responsibilities, to recruit child care centre workers, ensure child nutrition and motivate adolescent girls to enrol in skills development courses.</p>

This table draws from various sources including Sitaram 2002, GoAP 1997, WB 2000

Annex 3: Key development indications - state and sampled districts

	Andhra Pradesh	Prakasham	Nalgonda
Population density	275	173	227
% Rural population	72.9	84.7	86.7
% SCs*	15.9	20.0	17.7
% STs*	6.3	3.6	9.7
Rural sex ratio /1000	983	969	969
Rural literacy rate			
-male			
-female	66.1	67.4	67.0
	44.4	42.0	40.7
SC literacy rate [#]	31.6	31.4	24.6
% of male rural workers who are:			
cultivators			
agricultural labourers	31.4	31.9	33.7
	37.9	36.9	30.3
% of female rural workers who are:			
cultivators			
agricultural labourers	21.9	21.5	20.7
	60.7	61.8	63.6
HDI2001 **			
Education index		0.579	0.578
Health index		0.839	0.795
Standard of Living index		0.540	0.496
HDI		0.373	0.496
HDI district rank in Andhra Pradesh (out of a total of 22 districts)		14	13

[#] 1991 figures

HDI uses child mortality rate (0-4), literacy rate

Data from drawn from Census of India, 2001Statistical Abstract of Andhra Pradesh 2001

** Subrahmanyam in Rao and Dev (2003)

Annex 4: General and leaders sample - social background

Background		N	%	Remarks	General sample% (N = 244)
Gender	Men	164	90.6		
	Women	17	9.4		
Age	<30	22	12.2		
	30<40	53	29.3		
	40<50	72	39.8		
	50<60	20	11.0		
	60+	14	7.7		
Caste Category	SC/ST	28	15.5	Tend to be selected/used Mobile and fragmented	
	BC	85	47.0		
	OC	68	37.6		
Education	No formal schooling	19	10.5	28 graduate degrees, 7 post-graduation degrees	51.6
	Primary	24	13.3		18.4
	Secondary	79	43.6		22.1
	Higher	59	32.6		7.8
Occupation	Agriculture	140	60.6	Private job/business (24), artisan/weaver (15), insurance agent (3), shopkeeper (1), auto-rickshaw driver (1), housewife (1)	
	Non-Agriculture	45	19.5		
	Skilled Professional	3	1.3		
	Other	43	18.6		
Multiple response: 68 respondents mention two main occupations					
Current party affiliation	TDP	96	53.0	26.7% of leaders have changed their party since 1983 (i.e., since the inception of the TDP) 42.5% of leaders come from ‘political families’	
	INC	71	39.2		
	Other	14	7.7		
**mistries are local labour group leaders					

Annex 5: Research tools: questionnaires used during field research

Household Interview: Participation in Politics and Development

(English translation)

Individual Questionnaire:

Respondents must be of voting age

(Please read this at the start of every interview)

My name is _____ and I am conducting a survey regarding people's participation in village level development. This work is being carried out as a research project for a university in the UK. This information is very important for understanding any problems in local development and how they can be best addressed. I would appreciate it if I could ask you a few questions on your experiences. This will only take a few minutes.

All your answers will be confidential – your name and the name of the village will not be given to anyone outside of the research team.

Would you be willing to take part in this survey: Yes/No

If no, then still try and record the basic information below.

A1: Name:
A2: Gender :
A3: Religion:
A4: Caste:
A5: Village/hamlet/thanda:
A6: <i>Gram Panchayat</i> :
A7: <i>Mandal</i> :

If it is inconvenient to conduct the interview now, could you specify a time that would be more convenient?

If refusal – then record reason why

Interview Log

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Comments</i>

In order to give you a chance to answer the questions, can I request that we conduct this interview in private?

If not possible, record the names of the other people present and their relationship to the respondent below:

Introduction – please read

From 1997, the government of AP has aimed to promote people's participation, equality, and accountability in local development, through a combination of the *Janmabhoomi programme*, the *panchayat* and other local organisations. We are looking to try and find out your experiences regarding these initiatives to understand how they have contributed to the process of development in the village.

(an extra page has been included at the back of this questionnaire for comments from respondents – please mark the question number to which the comments were raised)

Elections

B1 In talking to people about elections, it is found that they are sometimes not able to vote because they are not registered, they don't have the time or they have difficulty getting to the polls. Think about *panchayat* elections since you were old enough to vote. Have you voted in all of them, in most of them, in some of them, rarely voted in them, or have you never voted at all in a *panchayat* election?

Never voted in <i>panchayat</i> election	1
Voted in some	2
Voted in most	3
<i>Don't know/not sure</i>	8
<i>Refused to answer</i>	9

B2 In the last *panchayat* election, did you yourself try to talk to people and show them why they should vote for one of the parties or candidates?

Yes	1
No	2
<i>Don't know</i>	8
<i>Refused to answer</i>	9

B3 Did you attend any political meetings, rallies, speeches etc., in support of a particular candidate?

Yes	1
No	2
<i>Don't know</i>	8
<i>Refused to answer</i>	9

B4 What were the major factors influencing your decision to vote?

B5 Do you feel the elections to the *grampanchayat* were conducted fairly and allowed the most popular persons to be elected?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	8
Refused to answer	9

B6 i) Are you a member of a political party? If so which party?
 ii) Is anyone in your household a member of a political party? If so, which party?
 MARK DON'T KNOW AS 8 AND REFUSAL TO ANSWER AS '9'

a) <i>Respondent</i>	Party
b) <i>Other – state who (relationship)</i>	

Meetings

C1 In the last year, have you initiated contact with any of the following persons regarding village development issues, and if so, what was the purpose?

READ OUT LIST

Person Contacted	Issue
a) <i>Sarpanch</i>	
b) <i>Up-sarpanch</i>	
c) <i>Ward panch</i>	
d) <i>Other panchayat member – MPTC/ZPTC</i>	
e) <i>Mandal Officer</i> Who:	
f) <i>Other district level officer</i> Who:	
g) <i>MLA/MP</i> Who:	
h) <i>I, myself, am a panchayat member</i>	Tick if true:
i) <i>Local NGO/social worker – give details</i>	
j) <i>Village Administrative Officer (VAO) or patwari</i>	

Who:	
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C2 Of the 16 *Janmabhoomi* meetings held in your village over the last five years would you say you have attended all of them, most of them, some of them, few of them, none of them?

All	1
Most	2
Some	3
Few	4
None	5
<i>Don't know/not sure</i>	8
<i>Refused to answer</i>	9

C3 (ask persons responding to other than All to question C2)
What influences your decision to attend/or not to attend a *Janmabhoomi* GramSabha when it is held in your village?

C4 In your experience were these *Janmabhoomi* meetings - (circle for a,b,c)

READ OUT	Yes	No	D/K	Ref
a) A forum for lively discussion and debate by villagers?	1	2	8	9
b) A good means to get information on government programmes?	1	2	8	9
c) A means by which villagers can keep a check on the activities of officers and the <i>panchayat</i> ?	1	2	8	9

C4 i) Have you, or any member of your family contributed voluntary labour, finance or any other form of support to JB or development activities in the village – through *shramadaman* or by other means? – *give details*

C5 Now asking about meetings held by the *gram panchayat* or *gram sabha* conducted by the *sarpanch*, without officials present and open to the entire village.

Thinking back over the last year, according to you, which of the following statements are true?

No public meetings were organised in the last one year	1
Meetings were held, but I did not attend	2
Meetings were held, and I attended some of them	3
I have attended all public meetings called by the <i>panchayat</i>	4
<i>Don't know</i>	8
<i>Refused to answer</i>	9

C6 Have you, over the last year –

	Yes	No	Issue raised
Raised an issue in the <i>Janmabhoomi</i>			
Raised an issue in the <i>gram panchayat/gram sabha</i>			

C7 Thinking back to the time before the *Janmabhoomi* programme started five years ago, do you feel that any of these statements are true?

	TRUE	FALSE	D/K	Refused
a) There has been more development activity in the village by the government	1	2	8	9
b) The role of the <i>sarpanch</i> and <i>panchayat</i> has become bigger	1	2	8	9
c) The real needs and concerns of the villagers have been heard	1	2	8	9
d) The development programmes have reached those who really need them	1	2	8	9
e) On the whole, has your awareness/ knowledge of government development programmes increased?	1	2	8	9

Exclusion from benefits

D1 Thinking about the distribution of government and *panchayat* schemes and programmes in the village, which of the following do you think is true?

Everyone gets a fair share	1
People who are more powerful get a higher share of benefits	2
Benefits go to those who need them the most?	3
Some programmes are distributed more fairly than others?	4
Selection of beneficiaries is made public	5
Government officials select beneficiaries	6
The <i>panchayat</i> plays a major role in selecting beneficiaries?	7
Don't know/not sure	8
Refused to answer	9

Comments:

D2 Are there any development programmes or village activities that other members of the village have access to but you or members of your household do not? (*mark spontaneous responses first and then read out the list, mark these two in a separate box below.*)
add comments and other schemes/programmes where necessary

	Spon.	Prompt	Comments
i) Education/schools			
ii) Health services/clinics			
iii) Government loans/credit			
iv) Housing assistance			
v) Water supply			
vi) Agricultural assistance			
vii) Employment opportunities			
viii) Fair justice			
iv) Contact with higher officials			

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D3 What qualities or attributes do you think a person needs to get greater access to development programmes and to obtain a greater share of benefits from them? (tick the first three mentioned – do not read out the list)

High caste	1
High education	2
Large wealth	3
Men can have more influence than women	4
Political affiliation	5
Religious belief	6
Better information of rules and programmes	7
Better contact with officials	10
Other	
Don't know/not sure	8
Refused to answer	9

Membership in other groups

E1 Are you a member of any of the following groups or associations?
Are there any other groups you are a member of/or you participate in?

Group	Name	
Farmers' group		1
Cooperative Society		2
Saving/credit group		3
Religious group		4
Caste		5
Youth group		6
Other		

Information Access

F1 Which of the following sources do you consult regularly – i.e., at least one a month – for news and information (on current events and development issues) (if yes, try to get details of the newspaper's name, the channel watched or the key persons mentioned)

Household members	1	
Neighbours	2	
Village leaders, prominent persons, political party	3	

Radio	4	
TV	5	
Newspapers	6	

F2 What kinds of information do you seek from these sources?
(give complete answers below)

F3 What is your level of education? (number of years of schooling);

G Other.

Please list the number of people in the household with their age and gender:

Name	Age	Male/Female

G1 What is the main occupation for your household? (*list up to three, underline the main one*)

G2 How much agricultural land does your household have? (*in bighas*)

Irrigated	
Unirrigated	

G3 Animals owned

G4 Does anyone in your family have a salaried job? (give details)

G5 House type – *Kutchha* 1 *Pucca* 2

G6 Does anyone in your household migrate for work during the year? (*give details*)

G7 Do anyone in your family work on anyone else's land on a regular basis or do you employ labour on a contract basis? (give details)

G8 Does your household rent land from anyone on a regular basis or rent land out to someone? (give details)

Would you be willing to take part in further discussions on these issues?

Yes/No

Many thanks for your cooperation. Your involvement in this study is much appreciated.

Group discussion and key informants' schedule: semi-structured interview-
record name and caste of all the participants

What is the purpose of the *panchayat*?

Do most people vote in the *panchayat* elections?

Was the election conducted fairly?

What are the characteristics of the elected members – why were they elected?

What were the major competing groups in the village election?

Who are the most influential members in the present *panchayat*?

What role does party politics play in the *panchayat*?

Who else in the village influences the *panchayat*?

What are the features of the influential people?

Construct the timeline of your village/GP politics

Have you attended a *gram sabha* held by the *panchayat*?

How often are they held?

What kinds of issues are discussed at these meetings?

What kind of attendance is there normally? (men, women)

Who participates mostly?

Can one say what one wants in the *gram sabha*?

Does the *sarpanch* make him/herself available to the village to discuss issues?

Do programmes delivered by the *panchayat* go to the most deserving?

What is the role of *Janmabhoomi*?

What all the 16 rounds been conducted effectively?

What was the attendance like, has it changed over time?

Is the JB a good forum to raise concerns in?

Is there any political party involvement in the JB?

What kinds of issues are discussed in the JB?

Do issues get acted upon?

Are benefits distributed fairly in the JB?

What the differences between *Janmabhoomi*, *gram sabha* and ordinary
gramsabha (in terms of attendance and issues discussed?)

What do you feel are the major changes in village level development since the
start of JB?

What other committees exist in the village - development and other (especially
political)?

What are their roles and relations between committees?

Who are the leaders of these groups?

What is the background of leaders?

Who are the most influential persons in the village... why?

Map the institutions and their relations

Other events that have shaped village development and local politics

Leaders interview summary

Semi-structured interview

What positions do you currently hold?

Which party do you support?

How long have you been involved in politics (noting key positions held and party changes)

What do you see as your role as a village leader?

Who are the leaders outside the village you regularly contact and for what kind of issues?

Have you personally been involved in local contracts? (if so, name and record source and size of contract)

What are your views on the current government and in particular, the new initiatives like *Janmabhoomi*?

What are the key challenges you think face your village?

What are your political ambitions?

<end>