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Gender, Power and the Knowledge-for-Development Agenda

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Abstract

In a highly influential report written in 1998, The World Bank promoted the idea that a lack of information and knowledge was one of the key barriers to development in the Global South. The hegemonic discursive and financial control upheld by the World Bank and Northern donors continues to generate considerable criticism in development theory and practice. Yet the consequences of the proliferation of knowledge-based development practices into the routine functions of civil society that followed the establishment of the World Bank knowledge paradigm, even where these initiatives have been explicitly designed to be more 'progressive', is an area of development discourse and practice that remains under-researched.

Using a qualitative, multi-site ethnography to analyse the discursive 'site' created by the information flows between and beyond a Northern-based gender information service and their users and recipients in New Delhi, India, this research investigates the function of knowledge-based development aid. Specifically, this study seeks to interrogate the capacity of donor-funded women's NGOs and networks acting as information intermediaries to promote more positive development outcomes through the production and dissemination of information for a range of development stakeholders in both Northern and Southern contexts, notably those groups marginalised from the dominant development infrastructure.

This research suggests that notions of 'progressive' knowledge practice are confronted by three main constraints. Firstly, discursive and pedagogical barriers embedded in information and its delivery persists despite mechanisms designed to improve accessibility. Secondly, the production and dissemination of increased volumes of information has become an end in itself, de-linked from their contribution to development outcomes. Finally, actors based in the 'South' remain unproblematised in knowledge-based development discourse and practice, thereby obscuring class and educational divides that reinforce inequalities not just between the North and the South but also within and between Southern contexts.

Gender, Power and the Knowledge-for-Development Agenda

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Acronyms

APC	Association for Progressive Communications
AWID	Association for Women's Rights in Development
CBO	Community-based organisation
CCSO	Collective case study organisation
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DFID	Department for International Development, UK
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FWCW	Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 (this is also referred to variously as 'Beijing' or the 'Beijing conference')
GOI	Government of India
GONGO	Governmental non-governmental organisation
GDKS	Gender and Development Knowledge Service
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IFAP	Information for All Programme
IGO	International governmental organisation
IK	Indigenous knowledge
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
Infomediary	Information intermediary
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
IO	International Organisation
IWHC	International Women's Health Coalition
IWTC	International Women's Tribune Centre
K4Dev	Knowledge-for-Development
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental organisation

NPO	Non-profit organisation
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
R4D	Research for Development
RIU	Research-into-Use
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WBI	World Bank Institute
WDR	World Development Report
WIDE	Women in Development Europe
WOUGNET	Women of Uganda Network

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1. Introduction: Gender, Power and the Knowledge-for-development Agenda

1.1 Introduction

In its World Development Report of 1998 entitled *Knowledge for Development*, the World Bank promoted the idea that a lack of information and knowledge was one of the key barriers to development in the Global South.[1] This belief has become entrenched in development practice, evidenced, for example, by recent commitments on the part of the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) to spend £300 million of their £1 billion research budget for the period 2008-2013 on supporting research communications, particularly in Southern contexts (DFID, 2008). The World Bank's knowledge paradigm continues to be heavily criticised for its emphasis on technical knowledge transfers from the 'developed' North to the 'under-developed' South as a panacea for failing markets and the promotion of development (see Das, 2009).

Notable amongst responses to the critiques of the World Bank knowledge paradigm are those of women's NGOs and networks, frequently upheld as exemplars of best practice in delivering knowledge as development aid. Through the utilisation of new technologies (Castells, 2000) to create a new 'geography of knowledge creation' (Kleine and Unwin, 2009: 1062), women's information intermediaries are frequently credited with the capacity to work outside the hegemonic constraints of the dominant knowledge infrastructure (see Valk et al., 1999; Mawdsley et al., 2002), thereby disrupting the Northern bias in the World Bank knowledge paradigm (Mawdsley et al., 2002; Mehta, 1999 and 2001; Powell, 2006). This research interrogates the perceived capacity of donor-funded women's NGOs and networks to disrupt Northern discourses and promote more positive development outcomes, particularly for marginalised groups, through knowledge-based development initiatives. The focus in this study is on the 'discursive'

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[1] The uses of the terms 'North' and 'South' are contested in the literature (see Dempsey, 2009: 345), where a range of alternatives such as First and Third World, Majority and Minority worlds, rich and poor countries or aid-giving and aid-receiving countries are widely used. The use of the terms 'North' and 'South' in this study are, however, deliberate, as K4Dev theory and practice persist in dividing the world into North and South. Phrases such as 'Southern partners', 'Southern information intermediaries' and 'Northern donors' are routinely used in policy documents and as part of the practice of organisations and intermediaries engaging in K4Dev. This study will therefore use these terms in order to problematise their specific usage and the resultant implications for K4Dev practice.

site created by information flows between and beyond a Northern information intermediary and their users and recipients based in New Delhi, India.

Section 1.2 begins with a brief overview of the World Bank knowledge paradigm and the key critiques that inform the present study. Section 1.3 considers how a consensus has emerged on the centrality of information production and dissemination to promoting outcomes such as empowerment or poverty alleviation in mainstream development practice by a range of development stakeholders, despite a lack of empirical evidence to support it. Section 1.4 outlines the gap in the literature that the present study addresses, as the assumptions that underpin this consensus raise a number of important questions that have so far been neglected in the literature. Section 1.5 details the research questions that the present study addresses, whilst section 1.6 provides an overview of the thesis structure and the corresponding chapters.

1.2 An overview of the World Bank knowledge paradigm and its critics

The knowledge-for-development (K4Dev) paradigm assumes the need, and indeed desirability, of knowledge transfers from the richer 'developed' North to an 'undeveloped', or 'developing', poorer South in order to facilitate development. The assumption here is that such knowledge is essential in order for developing countries, including former colonies, to experience progress or 'development' in line with the former colonising/neo-colonial countries of the industrialised North. Global inequality is also understood, in this context, in relation to access to 'knowledge', where the North is perceived to be endowed with intellectual and technical resources and the South is portrayed as suffering a paucity of knowledge, lacking both the capacity to absorb existing knowledge or create new knowledge to promote its own development. Such ideas are encapsulated in the long-established notion that scientific knowledge leads to modernity and progress in all its forms (section 2.3 in chapter two).

Although firmly rooted in the historical architecture of development itself, K4Dev emerged as a high profile and specialised form of development assistance with the release of the World Bank's World Development Report for 1998/9 (WDR, 1999) entitled *Knowledge for Development*. The report was a response to the perceived global imbalances in the relative knowledge capacity of developing versus developed countries.

It highlighted the potential of new ICTs to deliver information to people in the developing world at a scale previously unknown and emphasised the role of both education and improving telecommunications infrastructure as central to development. The report also reinforced a market-oriented paradigm within which to understand the relationship between knowledge and economic growth, leading to the adoption of knowledge management practices in development adapted from the private sector. In response to the paradigm shift established by this report, and reflecting historical beliefs that a 'lack of information has been an obstacle to development planning' (Davies, 1994: 3), other bilateral and donor organisations also established K4Dev initiatives to address concerns around 'imperfect information' to promote economic growth.[2]

Drawing on the World Development Report itself (WDR, 1999), as well as related World Bank documentation (WBI, 2008), the views of key proponents (Stiglitz, 1998) and critics (see Mehta, 1999) of this paradigm, we can identify three key assumptions underpinning this knowledge paradigm that are directly relevant for this study:

1. Knowledge is understood as either technical knowledge (know-how) about a particular application such as software manufacturing or birth control, or as knowledge about attributes, including the quality of a product or the creditworthiness of a firm, all of which, the report would suggest, the Industrial North have in greater measure than the resource-poor Global South.

2. Knowledge as defined by the World Bank is a commodity that is value-neutral, tradable, travelling easily across geographical, cultural, social, political and economic boundaries, thus filling information gaps in imperfect markets; its pursuit by the poor will lead ultimately to economic growth.

3. An advanced information and communication infrastructure, particularly the increased capacity to harness new ICTs, is crucial to what the World Bank Institute cites as one of the 'four pillars' of a knowledge economy (WBI, 2008) and a determinant factor in the capacity of knowledge to contribute to improved development outcomes.

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[2] DFID, for example, has invested considerable amounts in knowledge-related initiatives over the years, most recently supporting the development of their Research for Development (R4D) portal (www.research4development.info/), which provides direct access to a database of DFID-funded research.

Theis et al. (2000: 12-13), in a study funded by DFID, liken the World Bank's assumptions to 'traditional models of research' that have a 'tendency to objectify the urban poor as "recipients" of development practice informed by research knowledge, most often produced in the "North"'. Such models, they argue, perceive research and knowledge as 'one way flows' consisting of the extraction of data from the South to the North (the dashed arrows), which is then converted into findings that are disseminated from the North to the South (the solid arrows). Their model of 'traditional research flows' is reproduced as Figure 1.1 below:
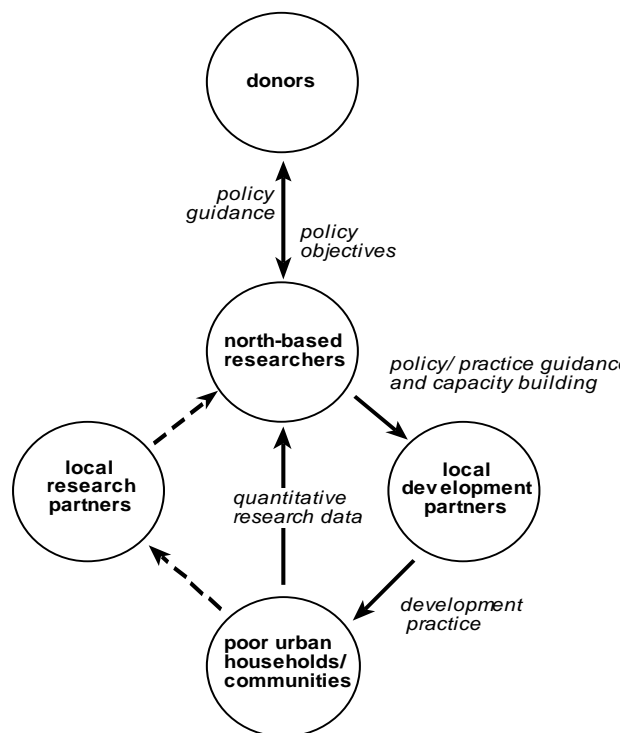
Figure 1.1 Information flow assumed in traditional development research practice

In response to this one-way flow of information, there are three main critiques of the World Bank knowledge paradigm in the literature. The first critique is that there is, as Theis et al. (2000) capture in their model above, an overarching concern around a perceived Northern hegemony in the production, control and dissemination of information (Mehta, 1999; Mawdsley et al., 2002) including broader concerns around the hegemony of the English language in development practice (Lins Ribeiro, 1998; Mawdsley et al., 2002). These critiques argue that information and knowledge of value do not only originate in the North, but must also be understood to be rooted in, as well as emerging from, the diverse realities of life in, and the languages of, the Global South (Kleine and

Unwin, 2009; Mehta, 1999; Powell, 2006). Moreover, as Foucault (1970) makes clear, there are huge power imbalances in the production, dissemination and consumption of knowledge. Thus, inequalities in access to information and knowledge reflect broader inequalities in society. The World Bank's initiatives, and those it has inspired, do little to tackle this problem and, as this thesis illustrates, may even make the problem worse.

Second, information and knowledge are not simply value-neutral commodities to be bought and sold to promote economic development from the information-rich Industrial North (King and Mcgrath, 2004). Increasing the quantity of (technical) information in circulation, as the World Bank knowledge paradigm proposes, does nothing to tackle the profound inequalities that the poor experience in accessing increased volumes of information (Mehta, 1999; Mehta, 2001). Neither is knowledge purely scientific or technical, but instead encompasses a vast array of different social, political and cultural information and knowledge.[3] Furthermore, any information or knowledge made available must be assimilated into, and indeed often competes with, existing stores of knowledge and information, as well as cultural and social influences and experiences that undermine any proposed linearity in the decision-making processes of individuals or groups (see for example, Samoff and Stromquist, 2001; Feldman and March, 1988).

Third, there is an over-reliance on ICTs in the K4Dev agenda. Many scholars have argued that whilst ICTs may in theory have the power to reach all the corners of the earth, in reality barriers persist to their capacity to be truly global. Physical barriers include, for example, a lack of ICT infrastructure (see for example Heeks, 2002). Normative barriers also persist in the pedagogies of computer-based learning and information retrieval (see for example Castells, 2000; Warschauer, 2003; Norris, 2001), and the ways in which these barriers both reflect, as well as exacerbate, gender inequality (see for example Hafkin and Huyer, 2006).

1.3 Knowledge-based development practice beyond the World Bank

When the report was released, the World Bank's approach to knowledge as a form of development aid was, as we have seen, widely criticised. Whilst the hegemonic discursive

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[3] See for example Mehta, 1999 and Mehta, 2001 on the WDR; Foucault, 1980 on knowledge/power; Escobar, 1995 and inequalities in development; Powell, 2006 and multiple global knowledges.

and financial control upheld by the World Bank and Northern donors continues to generate considerable criticism[4], the proliferation of K4Dev practices into the routine functions of civil society has been spared similar levels of scrutiny, let alone criticism. In an increasingly evidence-based environment, K4Dev-based initiatives beyond those undertaken by the World Bank are indeed noteworthy for the lack of hard data to support their existence. To begin with, as King and McGrath (2004) note, there is an absence in the literature on how Southern users are affected by the knowledge paradigm. Secondly, as Madon and Lewis (2003) recognise, the NGO sector has come under very little scrutiny in terms of how information is used and managed for development, particularly within and between organisations. Finally, there is a lack of empirical data to support the assertion that improving access to new ICTs – thus increasing the availability of, and access to, a range of resources including information – will provide real developmental benefits. Whilst there have been some efforts to capture and reflect on how new ICTs in particular may foster a knowledge society, thus contributing to improved development outcomes (see for example, Feek, 2009; Mansell and Wehn, 1998), the purported positive associations of ICTs in particular for development, with a resultant increase in accessible information for hitherto marginalised groups, has been much heralded without any evidence or impact assessment to endorse these claims (see Feek, 2009).

Instead, it is assumed that 'as long as the development sector recognizes the biases in corporate, ICT-based approaches [to K4Dev], and seeks to adapt its usage based on local needs and circumstances, negative impacts can be reduced' (van der Velden, 2002: 32). Theis et al.'s (2000: 15) study cited above offers a progressive model of research communications that seeks to respond to the problem of Northern hegemony by suggesting that 'we should be looking at a new networking model of research, one that to a certain extent is already widely practised but needs to be reinforced founded on concepts of north-south partnership and participation'. Networking and partnership, Theis et al. (2000: 15) argue, should privilege Southern-based stakeholders since,

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[4] See, for example, Das, 2009 on the information and financial power of the World Bank; Barnett and Finnemore, 2004 on the power of international organisations, including not just the World Bank but also the International Monetary Fund (IMF). See Wendoh and Wallace on the discursive and financial control upheld by donors in relation to gender.

> [i]f empowerment is our aim, what we need to do is to produce
> knowledge in a form that is useful and communicable to intermediaries
> on the ground. It is they who are best placed to relate it to the
> experiences of local poor communities, to contextualise it and to
> translate it into a form that is accessible to those communities, using
> local media channels, languages and forms of expression and networks.

The operationalisation of these assumptions about the capacity of Southern stakeholders is captured in their 'networked' model of development research that consists of solid arrows representing two-way communication consisting of circular flows of both data and analysis, reproduced below as Figure 1.2.
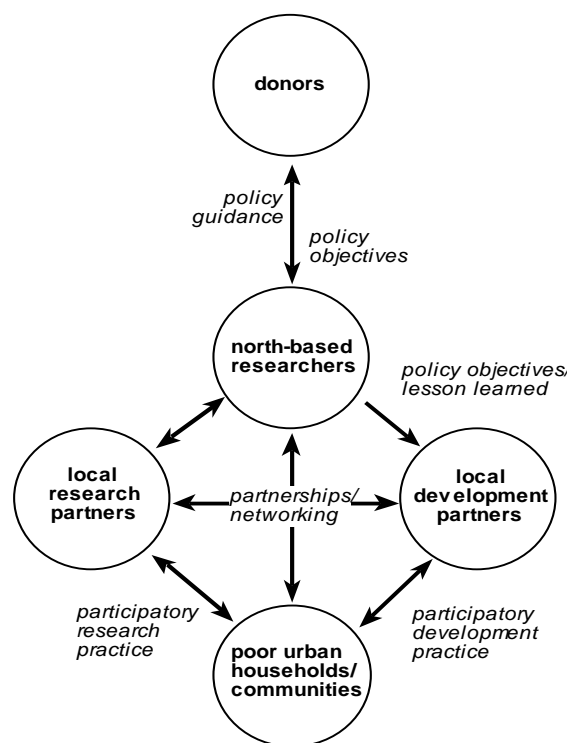
Figure 1.2 Simplified model of network/partnership-based development research practice.

Given the steadily falling costs of new ICTs and the resultant capacity to produce and disseminate vast amounts of information quickly and cheaply, coupled with an overstated belief in the capacity of NGOs[5] to both reach and represent the grassroots (see Tvedt,

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[5] There is an ongoing discussion in the literature around the various terms used to describe non-profit or Third Sector stakeholders, including civil society, NGOs, community-based organisations (CBOs) or non-profit organisations (NPOs). Given that NGO is the term used in K4Dev theory and practice, and that

1998: 75), the last decade has witnessed a proliferation of dedicated knowledge and/or information services for development based in the North as well as the South. These are delivered primarily via the Internet and most receive financial and in-kind support from bilateral and multilateral donors, making a range of information available free of charge to Northern and Southern target recipients, with aims that include development and empowerment. In addition, there has been a growth in Northern and Southern organisational websites that showcase ongoing research and activities linked to development. As the number of information intermediaries has multiplied, their success in highlighting a lack of information as a key problem for marginalised people, particularly women, in developing contexts has increased. The 'lack of access to information' problem has thus generated increased attention and with it increased funding, which has resulted in an explosion in the K4Dev industry. This growth in the number of K4Dev organisations has also had the effect of dampening both external critique and scrutiny of how K4Dev practice has changed beyond the World Bank's knowledge paradigm, as well as what the K4Dev agenda now claims to have the capacity to deliver in relation to development outcomes.

1.4 The problem stated

Notable amongst organisational responses designed to address the shortcomings of the World Bank knowledge paradigm are those of individuals and groups working on issues of gender equality and social justice. Women's NGOs and networks, capitalising on the growth of new ICTs and the possibility of linking local issues to global movements, are frequently credited with assiduously undermining hierarchies in organisations and the associated Northern hegemony in both the production and the distribution of information and knowledge (see for example, Riaño, 1994; Mawdsley et al., 2002). Indeed, women's organisations and associated information networks are frequently perceived as being able to overcome barriers to information sharing and utilisation, including a lack of access to new ICTs. Even where barriers to ICT access exist,

> [i]t is often assumed that the horizontal or circular structures provided by
> women's networks defy the vertical exercise of power and redistribute it,

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'development NGO' is used frequently in critical analyses, this study will use the term NGO to denote any non-profit organisation broadly working within development.

while using the technology for a wider reach and a more friendly use
(Riaño, 1994, cited in Valk, van Dam and Cummings, 1999: 30).

Globalisation, for some feminists, has also facilitated a new, more robust and renewed solidarity or sisterhood among women (see for example, Moghadam, 2005). There is a widespread belief in the capacity of women and women's organisations to transcend other axes of inequality in order to collectively achieve women's empowerment and gender equality (for example see Handy et al., 2006).

Recognising this Northern hegemony in information production and participating actively in, as well as drawing legitimacy from, the exponential and well-documented growth of transnational feminist networks (see Moghadam, 2005; Rai, 2003), organisations committed to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment have adopted a number of strategies to overcome the concerns raised in the critiques of the World Bank's knowledge paradigm. Reflecting the emphasis on networking and partnership with Southern intermediaries captured in Figure 1.2, they have firstly sought to address the gap in the access to ICTs experienced by marginalised groups, particularly in the Global South, through ensuring that information is made available, not just in electronic format, but also in print and other media disseminated directly from Northern information services or through Southern, partner organisations. A second corrective has been to de-commodify knowledge by removing market impediments to its dissemination. The key strategy here has been to ensure that information is distributed freely and made widely available in a range of formats. The third corrective has been to improve overall access to the knowledge infrastructure in terms of both production and consumption. Space has been made for 'Southern voices' within global conferences and attempts have been made to increase partnerships and the opportunities for participatory research with Southern organisations. Related to this has been the privileging of information and analyses on the social, political and cultural aspects of development, which has been a direct response to the focus on the technical and practical knowledge of the original World Bank knowledge paradigm. This emphasis recognises that knowledge is situated, emerging out of social, political, cultural and economic spaces and may originate in the Global South as well as the North. The establishment of growing numbers of women's organisations acting as information intermediaries in both Southern and Northern contexts operating

independently of the World Bank offer a challenge, at least in theory, to the charge of Northern hegemony levelled against the K4Dev paradigm.

Given the proliferation of women's organisations engaged in K4Dev practice, this thesis seeks to **interrogate the potential for 'progressive' knowledge-based development practices to contribute to more positive development outcomes.** This study seeks to achieve this specifically through an examination of the information production and dissemination processes implicated between an information intermediary located in the North and users and recipients of their information services based in New Delhi, India. This study will scrutinise the capacity of these organisations to deliver on two claims:

1. That improved accessibility to information, facilitated in a more democratic fashion to address a range of infrastructural barriers, particularly those experienced by marginalised women, will contribute to more gender equal outcomes and women's empowerment; and

2. That privileging 'Southern' women's voices as part of a broader agenda to disrupt dominant, hegemonic and/or Northern development paradigms promotes a greater diversity in the store of information and knowledge available on gender and development.

The gap in knowledge that that this thesis seeks to fill stems from the fact that the main critiques in the literature of the World Bank knowledge paradigm are incomplete and some of the key assumptions underpinning current K4Dev practice, many of which emerge out of the World Bank's knowledge paradigm, remain unproblematised. This study will further argue that the practical efforts in information production and dissemination undertaken by a range of stakeholders to promote gender equality and social justice, which have been credited with broadening and diversifying the K4Dev agenda beyond the original World Bank K4Dev model, have also been partial. They are partial in that these organisational responses overlook not just the existing critiques of K4Dev, but also insights emerging out of the study of knowledge, power and feminism that may be usefully applied to understanding the role of information and knowledge as forms of development aid.

1.5 The research questions

Given the objectives outlined above, five main research questions emerge:

1. How do the organisations under scrutiny in this study characterise, identify and propose to tackle, the perceived information gap hindering global development efforts?

2. Do the correctives applied to knowledge-based development practices by Northern organisations address concerns raised by critiques of the World Bank paradigm?

3. To what extent do the Southern organisations under scrutiny in this study have the capacity to deliver knowledge-based development aid as Northern organisations expect?

4. What are the effects of similarities and differences in the knowledge practices of the Southern organisations under scrutiny in this study and those of Northern information services?

5. To what extent do the Southern women and their organisations in this study have the capacity, as Figure 1.2 suggests, to promote participation and networking to subvert the World Bank knowledge paradigm as Northern organisations expect?

1.6 Chapter overviews

This thesis is unconventionally ordered, insofar as the study does not progress from a background literature review, through to a methodology, to an analysis of findings and conclusion. Rather, the analysis progresses in relation to the movement of information as it travels from North to South. As such, the analysis will begin with two critical literature review chapters and a methodology that informs the empirical work undertaken for the entire study, with the remainder of the analysis focused on following the information as it travels from North to South. This part of the analysis begins with a detailed theoretical and empirical analysis of the Northern-based discursive 'site', followed by a similar elaboration of the background and empirical analysis of the Southern, discursive 'site', followed by a conclusion.

Chapter two begins with a definition followed by an overview of the historical background to K4Dev, demonstrating that K4Dev is neither a creation of the World Bank nor does it emerge out of a vacuum; instead it is one more incarnation in a long shared history

between knowledge, power and how these are both manifested in, as well as represent, ideals of progress and modernity. This chapter then outlines some of the key theoretical underpinnings of the K4Dev paradigm, linking these to existing critiques of K4Dev and discussing the ways in which some critiques of this paradigm are either incomplete or partial. Chapter three begins to unpack the assumptions underpinning the relationship between NGOs (and women as a part of them) committed to gender equality and the K4Dev paradigm. This relationship is contextualised in relation to both the literature on the NGO sector in development as well as feminism in development. The discussion raises concerns around unproblematised aspects of K4Dev theory and practice, including the tendency to rely on essentialised categories of development discourse as a basis for addressing the shortcomings of the World Bank knowledge paradigm.

Chapter four outlines the methodology for this thesis, which is a qualitative, multi-site ethnography, consisting of interviews, (participant) observation and documentary analysis methods. The empirical evidence is drawn from the study of one *discursive* site; that is, it is not a 'site' in a strictly traditional or geographical sense, but rather is one consisting of information, or elements of a discourse, flowing or being shared between a Northern-based gender information service and its recipients in one Southern city, namely New Delhi, India. These recipients are in turn also producing and disseminating information onwards to promote women's empowerment and gender equality. It is these information flows from the North to the South and within the South, and their capacity to contribute to women's development and empowerment, which constitute the 'site' under interrogation.

Responding to research question two, chapter five uses both the existing literature as well as original empirical, qualitative data to begin an interrogation of the Northern part of the discursive site as embodied in the work of the Gender and Development Knowledge Service (GDKS)[6], a Northern-based gender information service. This chapter unpacks how GDKS's function and values embody notions of good practice in K4Dev that emerge as organisational and practical responses to the World Bank knowledge paradigm, particularly as these relate to goals of gender equality and women's empowerment.

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[6] GDKS is a pseudonym.

Chapter six traces the movement of information as it travels into New Delhi in India. This chapter offers insights into how class and caste inequality are inflected in the overlapping histories of both the non-profit sector and the Indian women's movement, and the resultant implications for India's ambitions to become a 'knowledge society'. The chapter concludes by reflecting on concerns around the geographies of class and caste for the individuals and organisations under scrutiny in New Delhi, providing the basis for the discussion in the empirical chapters.

Chapters seven to ten constitute the core empirical chapters, bringing together the background literature to respond to research questions three to five in this study. Chapter seven interrogates the nature of knowledge as it is received and reconstituted in this particular Southern location, analysing the consequences for closely-held assumptions underpinning GDKS's knowledge practices. Chapters eight and nine provide detailed analyses of the qualitative data emerging from the Southern field site, interrogating the assumptions and gaps underpinning K4Dev practice outlined in chapters two and three and how these are interpreted in the Indian context. Chapter eight focuses on the information production processes employed by the organisations under scrutiny, subsuming concerns around content and language that inform the relevance and discursive accessibility of the information itself. Chapter nine focuses on the relative accessibility of information dissemination processes, including print and electronic formats, as well as the feasibility of improving the availability of information through, for instance, direct mailings or through ensuring that information is distributed to resource and documentation centres. Chapter ten provides an empirical analysis specific to the Indian context of the issues analysed in chapter three, raising concerns around the tendency of essentialising categories in development discourse to obscure more than they reveal about the nature of inequality and poverty in relation to the control over the knowledge infrastructure in Southern contexts.

Chapter 11 is the conclusion, bringing together the gaps in the theory with the empirical findings, drawing out the lessons that may be extrapolated from this study for knowledge-based development theory and practice.

This study is designed to unpack the assumptions that underpin K4Dev as a principal form of development aid, and how these assumptions map onto the knowledge practices undertaken between a Northern gender information service and recipients on their mailing list in one Southern context. As such, it is not simply a critical analysis of Northern donors or organisations like GDKS. Instead, this study echoes Sharma's (2008: xix) approach to her study of a government-sponsored women's empowerment programme, insofar as it is not designed to 'ask whether development, empowerment ... or collective feminist politics are necessary or valuable, but rather to interrogate what these ideas mean in practice'. As such, it is not about determining the efficiency, efficacy or impact of GDKS's knowledge practices, since '[s]uch assessments rest on preconceived notions of what success and failure might look like, how it may be measured, and who might be qualified to make such a judgment' (ibid). Rather, my objective is to interrogate the information production and dissemination processes underpinned by continually contested notions of development, empowerment and feminism, and the implications these critiques may have for the rationale upon which knowledge-based development practice itself is being pursued. This is a particularly important question as increasingly a range of stakeholders in K4Dev, notably donors and other multilateral organisations, are co-opting the correctives to the World Bank knowledge paradigm cited above into their own knowledge-based work. Despite their more progressive appearance, the extent to which these correctives represent a more diverse and effective K4Dev agenda beyond that of the World Bank knowledge paradigm, and whether these correctives enable processes of empowerment and development, remains untested.

2. Knowledge and Power

2.1 Introduction

This chapter – the first of two chapters that review pertinent literature in the area - focuses on power and its articulation in the assumptions underpinning Knowledge for Development (K4Dev) theory and practice. The analysis reveals how knowledge-based development practices, especially within the context of development, reinforce particular elite forms of power and privilege and very specific models of economic development. The K4Dev paradigm as established by the World Bank is rooted in neoliberal development approaches that have been subjected to three main critiques (section 1.2 in chapter one): concerns around Northern hegemony in the production and dissemination of information intended to promote development; the commodification of knowledge and the presumption that increased volumes of information will necessarily contribute to decision-making processes; and the over-emphasis on ICTs as a corrective relating to concerns around the accessibility of information. This analysis elaborates on each of these critiques not only as a way of identifying how notions of progressive knowledge-based practice have evolved, but also to begin to highlight the ways in which the critical literature does not go far enough in addressing the underlying assumptions informing the World Bank knowledge paradigm.

Beginning with a definition of K4Dev as it is understood in mainstream development practice in section 2.2, the analysis goes on to demonstrate in sections 2.3 and 2.4 how K4Dev is not new but emerges out of a broader historical trajectory that privileges notions of modernity and progress that are fuelled by science and technology and measured by economic growth. Having established the historical basis for knowledge-based development practice, the analysis proceeds to elaborate on each of the critiques cited above. Beginning with an interrogation of the nature of 'knowledge' in Section 2.5.1, the first critique highlights the ways in which K4Dev practice has yet to incorporate the theoretical and practical insights emerging out of the study of knowledge in a range of disciplinary contexts. Section 2.5.2 discusses the commodification of knowledge in the World Bank knowledge paradigm and the shortcomings of the responses of information

intermediaries[7] attempting to address this concern. Section 2.5.3 focuses on the over-reliance in the World Bank knowledge paradigm on (new) ICTs, highlighting gaps in the critiques of how ICTs are understood and applied in development. The conclusion in section 2.6 draws together concerns around the broader K4Dev paradigm this analysis highlights and suggests some possible implications for K4Dev theory and practice.

2.2 K4Dev: how is it defined in current mainstream development practice?

The World Bank Institute identifies 'four pillars' that are a feature of successful knowledge economies: economic and institutional regime; education and skills; information and communication infrastructure; and innovation systems (including firms, research centres and universities) that are 'capable of tapping the growing stock of global knowledge [and] assimilating and adapting it to local needs' (WBI, 2008: 5). These 'pillars' form the basis of the World Bank's K4Dev[8] agenda, and have shaped the approaches of many other institutions working within development (Radhakrishnan 2007: 147). A range of agencies, including not just donors but private sector and civil society organisations, subscribe to the K4Dev agenda, evidenced by the widespread use of the term and the breadth of initiatives (and intermediaries) engaged in information production and dissemination to promote development (King and McGrath, 2004: 1). K4Dev has become a kind of orthodoxy where the need to produce and disseminate more and more information is accepted without question.

It is perhaps a reflection of the extent to which knowledge itself is understood by donors as central to economic growth and development that few bilateral and multilateral

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[7] That information intermediaries, increasingly referred to in the shorthand 'infomediaries', are perceived as pivotal to improving the uptake of development research is evidenced by the growing emphasis being placed by donors on supporting their work. DFID, for instance, has recently extended the funding for the 'Research Into Use' programme, which does not directly support researchers or the constituents of development programmes, but rather, will focus their efforts on linking up with 'those who articulate the demand for information on behalf of the poor and those who repackage information to meet that demand (known as "infomediaries"). RIU will strongly encourage new partner-ships with such users' (RIU, 2007: 3).

[8] It should be noted here for clarity that K4Dev practice as established by the World Bank is not a static entity. Even within the World Bank, many of the correctives applied to K4Dev practice in response to criticisms of the World Bank knowledge paradigm have themselves been adopted by the World Bank. This includes, for instance, recognition of the value of indigenous knowledge and the need to address gender and other axes of inequality in the uptake of new information and technology. This study is therefore not a critique of the World Bank per se. Rather, the World Bank knowledge paradigm continues to be a reference point for the purposes of this analysis as broader K4Dev practice, including that of the World Bank, still draws heavily on the assumptions underpinning the original paradigm.

organisations take the trouble to actually define precisely the nature of their engagement with K4Dev. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), however, is one exception:

> Knowledge for Development (KD) is defined as integrating into development programs the ability of beneficiaries to access, utilize, and disseminate information and knowledge. This is done with a view to promoting socio-economic development using appropriate information and communication technologies (ICTs), coupled with the development of required associated skills. ICTs include a wide range of essential tools for sharing information such as radio, television, telephony, and the Internet (CIDA, 2008: i).

Whilst other agencies have not specifically defined K4Dev, many of the practical and discursive elements of CIDA's definition resonate with the knowledge programmes of a range of bilateral and multilateral agencies, reinforcing the continued dominance of the World Bank's original knowledge paradigm. Based on the literature made available by these organisations, which have 'embraced the idea of becoming "knowledge agencies"' (King and McGrath, 2004; 130) and have been key drivers of this agenda in relation to their own partners and constituencies, the main elements of the original World Bank knowledge paradigm remain influential. Whilst innumerable organisational commitments at multiple levels have been made to improve access to information and promote knowledge as a form of development aid, the following examples from large bilateral and multilateral organisations demonstrate the pervasiveness of a belief in an information gap and the need to address it if development is to be achieved.

Sida, Sweden's development cooperation agency, for instance, notes in its policy documentation that '[i]t is increasingly being recognised that knowledge is as crucial a determinant of development as investment capital, skilled labour and appropriate and accountable institutions' (Sida, 2000: 28, as cited in King and McGrath, 2004: 135). That ICTs are crucial to delivering this knowledge is underlined by Sida's Department of Empowerment in a report entitled 'ICTs for Democracy: Information and Communication Technologies for the Enhancement of Democracy - with a Focus on Empowerment', which it commissioned from the Association for Progressive Communication (APC, 2009). In the Preface to this report, Anders Pedersen, the Director for the Department of Empowerment at Sida, reiterates his belief that 'huge investments are made in ICT as an

undisputed and essential component of almost all state and corporate activities and international development cooperation', where 'ICT enhances freedom of expression and the right to information, and increases the possibilities for citizen's participation in decision making processes' (Pedersen, 2009: 1).

DFID outlines its commitment to ensuring 'Global technology transfer and uptake supported as a result of improved knowledge, policies and institutions' in their 'Research Strategy 2008-2013'. The organisation also commits to developing a 'common understanding of regulatory barriers affecting technological innovation for poor people' (DFID, 2008: 45). The UN Millennium Project, through their Task Force on Science, Technology, and Innovation, argue in their report 'Innovation: applying knowledge in development' (Juma and Yee-Cheong, 2005: 1) that '[c]ountries will need to recognize the benefits from advances in science and technology and develop strategies to harness the explosion in new knowledge', noting later on in the report that 'ICT is a powerful enabler of development goals because it dramatically improves communication and the exchange of knowledge and information, strengthening and creating new social and economic networks' (ibid: 49). Nor is this just an abstract notion emerging out of one UN Task Force. The UN's Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) created the 'Information for All Programme' (IFAP), an intergovernmental programme established in 2000:

> Through IFAP, Governments of the world have pledged to harness the new opportunities of the information age to create equitable societies through better access to information ... The challenge the world faces is to ensure equitable access for all people to seize these new opportunities. Information is central to development. Information is essential for survival and sustainability. Information is the pathway to understanding and peace. The Information for All Programme is UNESCO's response to the challenges and opportunities of the Information Society (UNESCO, 2006).

Together these extracts incorporate all four pillars of the World Bank's approach to knowledge for development and economic growth and they alert us to some of the key underlying assumptions of mainstream K4Dev theory and practice:

1. That information and knowledge are value-neutral and their adoption is unproblematic; it is in their delivery that relative accessibility is measured.

2. Following on from this, access to information can and should be improved in a range of ways, and where new ICTs are appropriate, these in particular have the capacity to create a level-playing field and *democratise* access to the information that would allow hitherto marginalised groups to participate in the market.

These assumptions are not unproblematic. Moreover, they are not merely an invention of the World Bank, and do not emerge out of a vacuum. Instead, the dominant K4Dev paradigm and the role of intermediaries within it may be understood as the most recent incarnation of a broader ideological project that is rooted fundamentally in the history of modernity. Before unpacking and problematising the assumptions underpinning the use of knowledge as a form of development aid, the next section will provide a brief overview of the historical basis for the establishment of knowledge-based development aid.

2.3 A brief historical background to K4Dev

K4Dev is rooted in the historical tendency to privilege science and technology education and knowledge as a means to foster development. K4Dev is inextricably linked with power, where the coupling of science with 'the speedier progress of civilization' (Hart and Kim, 2000: 36) are to be found in the philosophy of Francis Bacon who, as early as 1624, articulated a common purpose between hitherto 'separate notions of scientific knowledge, power, and progress' (ibid). During the period of Enlightenment, science and technology became the dominant 'way of knowing' (Melkote and Steeves, 2001: 73) in Europe. This essential coupling of 'scientific knowledge' with 'power', 'progress' and 'civilization' (see Escobar, 1995: 36) has changed little in the intervening period.

The pursuit of technical knowledge as the key to 'progress' found expression throughout the period of Empire. Colonialism was underpinned by the argument that 'developed' economies owed much of their wealth to their superior stores of technical or technological knowledge (Kleine and Unwin 2009: 1050). New institutions were devised to increase the potential wealth that might be generated from the colonial enterprise for the benefit of the coloniser, including 'the introduction of European-style education, Christianity and new political and bureaucratic systems' (Gardner and Lewis, 1996: 5). Education in this instance was not about redistributing power but was instead meant to 'civilise' populations in the imperial colonies through interventions promoted by

organisations linked either to the church or the monarch (Amadiume, 2000; Kothari, 2005).

Early international development efforts focusing on education and learning rooted in scientific knowledge challenged the colonial approach to education. [9] As the world emerged from World War II the focus shifted from being overtly 'civilising' to one where knowledge transfers came to represent a central tenet of a broader (purported) commitment to the redistribution of power in the service of 'modernisation' or 'progress' that would benefit people everywhere, not just the Western industrial nations. This shift was cemented in a speech given in 1949 by US President Harry S. Truman, where he laid the foundations for K4Dev as it is now understood by proposing

> a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas …Greater production is the key to prosperity and peace. And the key to greater production is a wider and more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge (Truman, 1989 [1949]).

Although Truman insisted that the US had limited material resources to assist those nations he referred to as economically 'stagnant and primitive', he privileged the capacity of the 'imponderable resources in technical knowledge' held by the US, which 'are constantly growing and … inexhaustible', as central to 'development' efforts. This plan 'relied much more heavily on technical assistance than on capital, in the belief that the former would provide progress at a lower price' (Escobar, 1995: 36). In this era as in the

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[9] It is important to note here that development as a paradigm, whilst undoubtedly emerging out of, as well as frequently mirroring, colonial relations of production and inequality, are not necessarily located as such within modern development discourse. Kapoor (2004) highlights the work of a number of critical development theorists who have recognised the silence within the modernisation-as-development discourse of the material and discursive effects of empire. He notes that 'structural adjustment and "free-trade" policies of the Bretton Woods institutions … proceed by a disavowal of the history of imperialism and the unequal footing on which such a history has often placed Third World Countries in the global capitalist system' (Kapoor, 2004: 629). These critics have in turn suggested that 'development' may be understood as an historical extension, a new, less overt form, of colonialism, a 'doctrine that resulted in capital goods from "Western" countries finding markets overseas' (Kleine and Unwin, 2009: 1051-2). Echoing Kleine and Unwin's cynical contention that development is as much about new markets as it is 'progress', Sinha (2009: 1), notes that '[t]here is hardly any instance of the powers that be mentioning that 'development' partly serves their own interests'. Kapoor (2004: 634) provides an example in CIDA's justification of development aid as principally beneficial to Canadians, where 'an aid programme can be used as a pretext to open up developing-country markets for Western businesses'. It is in the reassertion of the historical and contemporary overlap between colonialism and development that, as the analysis in chapter three highlights, the persistence of North-South polarities in relation to feminist development discourse is partially rooted.

Enlightenment, 'technology, it was believed, would not only amplify material progress ... technology was theorized as a sort of moral force ... [t]echnology thus contributed to the planetary extension of modernist ideals' (Escobar, 1995: 36). The advantages of knowledge were not, in Truman's vision, to be hoarded in pursuit of power, but rather knowledge was transformed into a commodity, an instrument through which to redistribute power in pursuit of 'development'. Truman's original emphasis on self-help and the application of technology, as subsequent analyses demonstrate, established the neoliberal basis for modern-day development programmes.

Modelled on Truman's vision, the bilateral donor agencies that were established in the Post-war period perceived education and knowledge transfer as relatively linear and unproblematic routes through which to distribute the benefits of growth and industrialisation to the 'Third World' (King, 2005: 72). Modernisation, emerging out of the period of the Enlightenment and tied intrinsically to the promotion of the Western science heralded in Truman's speech, was perceived as a 'relatively unproblematic process of transition from 'traditional' society to 'modernity' ... [where] the countries of the South were expected to follow the same development path as the already industrialised countries (Abrahamsen, 2000: 26). Technology transfer in particular was central to the modernisation strategy, since, as Melkote and Steeves (2001: 54) note tongue-in-cheek, it

> was after all *known* that Western agriculture, medicines, tools, and techniques outstripped corresponding traditional practices. Therefore, it made unquestionable sense that the Third World people discard unconditionally their *primitive* ways and embrace the technologies that had wrought such extraordinary progress in the *advanced* countries of the North ... So, a burgeoning stream of Third World students travelled to the developed countries for training and education, reciprocated by a corresponding stream of *experts* ... gradually flooding the Third World (Melkote and Steeves, 2001: 54, emphasis in original).

These preliminary efforts to address what had become known as the 'information famine' (Hamelink, 2002: 6) through the transfer of Northern technical skills and knowledge in areas such as agriculture, promoted modernisation in the belief they would follow the path of Western development. In turn, an entire generation of Third World students was educated to promote the modernisation thesis, thus effectively establishing a

transnational discourse that privileged Western science and technology. Utilising what would at the time have been new information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as radio, these early forays into development communications resulted in a 'whole industry of extension workers, rural media and consultants' (Hamelink, 2002: 5). In its modern-day equivalent, the task of bridging the gap between the 'information-poor' and the 'information-rich' (Hamelink, 2002: 6) has both fragmented and expanded with the advent of the Internet, satellite television and mobile telephony. The production and dissemination of information is now cheaper, more expedient and more voluminous than in any other historical period. As the subsequent analysis demonstrates, it is on the basis of this revolution in the vastly increased capacity to produce and disseminate information to a large, diverse and global audience that K4Dev stakes its transformative claims.

2.4 Knowledge Economy/Society and the establishment of knowledge-based aid

The K4Dev agenda has also been boosted by an international push towards the development of a global 'knowledge economy'. A combination of factors including globalisation and the ICT revolution has led, according to King and McGrath (2004: 34), to a 'massive increase in information flows and a new economic emphasis on turning information into knowledge'. Radhakrishnan (2007: 147) identifies New Zealand as one of the first sites of the term 'knowledge economy' in the mid-1990s, where it was used to describe how high-tech businesses were able to use 'knowledge to yield economic benefits'. In this period there was a concomitant interest in Europe and the US in the growth of the 'knowledge society'. Although knowledge transfers, as the history above emphasises, were tied inexorably to discourses of modernisation and progress, it was the application of technical knowledge to processes of industrialisation in agriculture and manufacturing that was meant to contribute to economic growth. And whilst, as Castells (2000: 17) notes, 'knowledge and information are critical elements in all modes of development, since the process of production is always based on some level of knowledge and in the processing of information', with the establishment of the 'knowledge economy', a direct causal relationship was concretised between the **creation and codification of knowledge and economic growth**. Thus, knowledge becomes the new

engine of economic growth. Castells' (2000: 17) insights into this new mode of production are again instructive. He argues that

> [i]n the new, informational mode of development the source of productivity lies in the technology of knowledge generation, information processing, and symbol communication ... what is specific to the informational mode of development is the action of knowledge upon knowledge itself as the main source of productivity.

Kleine and Unwin (2009: 1048) note that some commentators have 'even suggested that developing countries in particular could benefit from new ICTs, allowing them to "leapfrog" earlier stages of development that more economically advanced countries had undergone'. They refer to the example of the Asian Development Bank, which contends that 'if poorer countries were to invest in this new basic technology, they could "leapfrog" directly towards a knowledge-based economy' (ibid). Heeks (2002: 1) also identifies a belief on the part of donors that ICTs will 'permit leapfrogging to an "information economy"'. In other words, the mimicking of private sector experience to capture information and knowledge has become a part of the orthodoxy of modern strategies to promote economic growth.

Drawing on the importance of scientific knowledge transfer to economic development, the World Bank formally established knowledge-based aid as a strategy for development (particularly its relationship to economic development) from the 1990s. This was encapsulated in the Bank's World Development Report (WDR) of 1998/99 entitled *Knowledge for Development*. As the following extract from the introduction to this report (1998: 1-2) highlights, this report consolidated historical and private-sector approaches to knowledge as a driver of economic growth, firmly establishing K4Dev as good development practice. This was due in no small part to the changing role of technology in delivering development, linked both directly to the growth and increasing cost-effectiveness of new ICTs as well as to the resultant benefits for economic growth to be derived from creating well-informed markets:

> KNOWLEDGE IS LIKE LIGHT. Weightless and intangible, it can easily travel the world, enlightening the lives of people everywhere. Yet billions of people still live in the darkness of poverty—unnecessarily. Poor countries—and poor people—differ from rich ones not only because they have less capital but because they have less knowledge. Knowledge is often costly to create, and that is why much of it is created in industrial

countries. But developing countries can acquire knowledge overseas as well as create their own at home ... Knowledge also illuminates every economic transaction, revealing preferences, giving clarity to exchanges, informing markets. And it is lack of knowledge that causes markets to collapse, or never to come into being ... Rather than re-create existing knowledge, poorer countries have the option of acquiring and adapting much knowledge already available in the richer countries. With communications costs plummeting, transferring knowledge is cheaper than ever ... Given these advances, the stage appears to be set for a rapid narrowing of knowledge gaps and a surge in economic growth and human well-being.

As already indicated above, the K4Dev 'story' does not entirely begin nor end with the World Bank, but the original model of K4Dev put forward by the World Bank remains extremely influential. Even as K4Dev has been taken up by a range of public, private and non-profit stakeholders that seek to uphold 'progressive' efforts to promote mutual learning and cooperative knowledge creation that take account, not just of science and technology, but also social, cultural and political knowledge, mainstream K4Dev practice closely resembles the World Bank's original model. Whilst the World Bank knowledge paradigm has been heavily criticised, as the next section highlights, important gaps in the critical literature remain.

2.5 Critiques of the World Bank knowledge paradigm

As outlined in chapter one, there are three broad critiques of the World Bank paradigm: a critique of the hegemony maintained by the World Bank in the knowledge infrastructure more broadly, particularly in relation to the control it maintains in the production and dissemination of information and knowledge to inform development; a critique of the commodification of information and knowledge and the implications this has for assumptions around the linearity of decision-making processes; and a critique of the reliance on ICTs. Each of these will be assessed in turn.

2.5.1 Knowledge

The first critique of the World Bank knowledge paradigm relates to its conception of 'knowledge'. Whilst one of the principal critiques of the K4Dev agenda focuses on 'knowledge' by addressing concerns around the hegemony of the knowledge infrastructure held in particular by the World Bank, it does not interrogate this proposition further. Instead it posits the promotion of indigenous knowledge, Southern

partners or Southern-based initiatives as legitimate alternatives. Yet the notion of knowledge is itself highly contentious – 'knowledge' is not value-neutral but rather implicates power relations. This section provides a brief definition and overview of knowledge and how knowledge is related to the circulation of power. It goes on to consider how notions of 'indigenous' knowledge are invoked as a counterpoint to the hegemony of the World Bank knowledge paradigm, and the critical gaps that emerge as a result of this emphasis in knowledge-based development practice.

2.5.1.1 Defining 'knowledge'

Although the terms information and 'knowledge' are frequently used interchangeably in development practice, the two are conceptually distinct and there are well-established theoretical positions which illustrate the evolutionary relationship from data through to knowledge creation (de Kadt, 1994: 100; Davies, 1994). Machlup (1993: 449), contends that the use of information is a process that requires one 'to listen, to look at, to read; in short, it is its reception and, if possible, the full or partial understanding by the recipient'. Haywood (1995: 3) supports the notion of a transformative process linking data to information and knowledge, suggesting that 'the transformation of data into information is thus a process of reception, recognition and conversion … accurate conversion of data to information can only take place when we are able to add value to it from stores of information that we have access to'.

The knowledge that derives from information is in turn dependent upon a transformative process occurring during the communication of information, consisting of the 'absorption … assimilation, understanding and appreciation of … information' (Davies, 1999: 4). Hart and Kim (2001: 35-6), argue that 'information, by itself, does not constitute knowledge ... One must possess some cognitive filtering and structuring mechanism to sort out what is relevant information from among what is not and to incorporate the new information productively into the old synthesis'. Some, like Strange (1988: 122), would argue that '[f]or many purposes, the two terms are interchangeable', although she does note that 'whether it can be communicated or not depends on the ability of the receiver to understand and grasp it: when that is so, it must presumably be categorized as knowledge rather than as simple information'.

All of these insights converge in the belief that knowledge is not an entity but rather that knowledge creation is a process which is experiential and situated. Knowledge creation is also an interpretive process that, given limitations such as context or language, should not be assumed to be automatic. The narrative strands that emerge from knowledge creation processes, as the history of development communications suggests, bring together a range of negotiated knowledges that, whilst arguably continually contested, nonetheless create dominant 'ways of knowing'. Recognising the nature of 'dominant' ways of knowing, and how these are continually co-opted, contested and shifting is crucial within a knowledge paradigm like that of the World Bank that prefigures knowledge as something that is static and immovable.

2.5.1.2 Knowledge and power

Information is representative of, as well as subject to, the peculiar socio-cultural context from which it emerges and is dependent upon the subject position of the individual to whom information is being communicated. Information is therefore not objective but reflects only a partial reality: 'information per se is not a neutral entity' but 'is a representation of an interpreted world' that legitimises 'what is regarded as truthful, valuable and worth knowing' (Postma, 2001: 316). As such, it will reproduce the attendant inequalities of that socio-cultural context, limiting the capacity of others to absorb or utilise information, and thus create knowledge, from those in a dissimilar subject position.

As knowledge is an interpretive process undertaken with available information, knowledge creation processes are also, in turn, mediated by inequality. Contemporary philosophical positions on the relationship between knowledge and power have been perhaps most famously articulated by Foucault (1977: 27), who argued that knowledge and power are mutually constituted:

> Power and knowledge directly imply one another ... There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.

The nature of power in Foucault's position is not static or absolute. Rather, Foucault (1980: 98) reminds us that, '[p]ower must be analysed as something which circulates ... not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power'. Foucault's insights allude to the operation of both structure and agency with respect to how knowledge is understood as a source of power. Strange (1988: 122) argues that knowledge is a form of structural power, where

> the power derived from the knowledge structure comes less from coercive power and more from consent, authority being conferred voluntarily on the basis of shared belief systems and the acknowledgment of the importance to the individual and to society of the particular form taken by the knowledge – and therefore of the importance of the person having the knowledge and access or control over the means by which it is stored and communicated.

Those with power conferred by 'dominant values and discourses' (Jones et al., 2009: 4) are able, in turn, to use their knowledge to shape and reshape social and political environments so that only certain forms of knowledge are valued and legitimated. Abrahamsen (2000: 14) draws together Foucault's articulation of how dominant knowledge is shaped by both structure and agency forms of power to argue that the ascendance into prominence of certain discourses is not accidental:

> This close relationship between power and knowledge alerts us to the fact that the problematisation of a particular aspect of human life is not natural or inevitable, but historically contingent and dependent on power relations that have already rendered a particular topic a legitimate object of investigation.

The contiguous operation of structural and agency power retained by those with knowledge serves to 'legitimate objects of investigation', in turn circumscribing how problems are both defined and managed in development. This power, Barnett and Finnemore (2004) argue, is held by international organisations (IOs). They contend that IOs such as the World Bank 'are often the actors empowered to decide if there is a problem at all, what kind of problem it is, and whose responsibility it is to solve it' (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004: 6-7).

Escobar (1995: 39), elaborating on the origins of 'development discourse' in the decade after Truman's speech, acknowledges the power of IOs but persuasively argues that their

power may not be understood in isolation from the system. Instead he cites the ascendance of modernisation ideals linked to education, technology transfer and capital formation for which the establishment of supporting institutions, including IOs, was so crucial. It is not one institution or programme or idea that defines development, but rather 'a set of relations among these elements' which in turn determine 'what can be thought and said' (Escobar, 1995: 40). Arce (2000: 33) also concedes that 'the authoritative statements of international developmental organisations such as the IMF and the World Bank are extremely important in representing societies and development priorities', but similarly brings their influence under the discursive rubric of what he terms 'the language of development'. The language of development implicates, and must therefore be understood fundamentally, as a function of both structural and agency power.

> Power relations are clearly implied in this process; certain forms of knowledge are dominant and others are excluded. The texts of development contain silences. It is important to ask, therefore, who is silenced, and why. Ideas about development are not produced in a social, institutional or literary vacuum ... It is, therefore, imperative to explore the links between the words, practices and institutional expressions of development, and between the relations of power that order the world and the words and images that represent the world (McEwan, 2001: 103).

Accordingly, the agency power of IOs such as the World Bank may be understood as one element of a broader discursive, structural power maintained by the system as a whole. This would in turn suggest that other stakeholders are also implicated in how power circulates within the system (see Foucault, 1980). As such, information intermediaries who produce and disseminate information and knowledge either as part of, or in response or opposition to, the overarching knowledge infrastructure are not simply providing a benign distributional service but are always in danger of reproducing and reinforcing dominant knowledge paradigms. As Escobar (1995: 42) argues:

> Although the discourse has gone through a series of structural changes, the architecture of the discursive formation laid down in the period 1945-1955 has remained unchanged, allowing the discourse to adapt to new conditions. The result has been the succession of development strategies and substrategies up to the present, always within the confines of the same discursive space.

In other words, a report produced by an IO or donor, or an NGO response to that report, is still framed within the problem definition created and sustained through relationships forged as part of the dominant discursive practices of development.

Knowledge, then, is a process, and may be understood both in terms of structural and agency power, where, as Foucault's insights suggest, power is fluid and may be held by individuals or groups at various points as a result of where they are located in the knowledge infrastructure and depending on the information they possess. And of course, individuals create, as well as react to and accommodate, knowledge. This is an important nuance as it undermines any notion that power in the knowledge infrastructure is always and necessarily wielded by a hegemonic and undifferentiated North over a powerless or voiceless Global South, as critics of the World Bank knowledge paradigm assert. A belief in a Northern hegemony itself establishes a polarity; where there is perceived to exist a Northern hegemony, there must be a discursive opposite. The existence of a Northern hegemony implies that there are alternative, Southern discourses that are effectively silenced as a result of the North's hegemonic position, thus reinforcing the North-South divide as the principle axis of inequality. The language itself limits a broader discussion or understanding of inequality in the knowledge society. The contiguous operation of agency and structural power in the function of knowledge poses a challenge to knowledge practices attempting to seek out and privilege 'alternative' or 'subaltern' viewpoints. Those individuals or groups who recognise inequalities in the dominant knowledge infrastructure and seek to utilise knowledge to empower the disempowered must also engage with the complexity of structural and agency power in the knowledge infrastructure that does not universally marginalise Southern contexts. Attempts to address the imbalances in the dominant knowledge paradigm through privileging the knowledge of disempowered groups through promoting 'indigenous' knowledge overlook, as the next section attests, Foucault's assertion that power, like knowledge, is not fixed but fluid.

2.5.1.3 Indigenous knowledge

What is the role of 'indigenous knowledge' in responding to concerns around the hegemony of the North and its capacity to improve the diversity of knowledge available

within the dominant knowledge infrastructure? As we saw earlier, one of the main critiques of the World Bank knowledge paradigm brings into question the nature of 'knowledge', emphasising not the pedagogical concerns that underpin the knowledge infrastructure and dominant *ways of knowing*, but instead focusing on the North's hegemony in its production and distribution. There is an assumed paucity of knowledge amongst recipient populations in the K4Dev paradigm, which, critics argue, undermines existing, indigenous knowledge systems: 'The standing of poor people's knowledge is diminished and is made out to be something inferior and not universally applicable' (Mehta, 2001).

The solution, many have argued (see for example Mehta, 1999 and 2001; Kleine and Unwin, 2009; Powell, 2006), is to control the problem of dominant, Northern knowledge by invoking indigenous knowledge. Indigenous knowledge has innumerable definitions; Warren (1991, as cited in World Bank Group, n.d.) defines it as follows:

> Indigenous knowledge (IK) is the local knowledge – knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society. IK contrasts with the international knowledge system generated by universities, research institutions and private firms. It is the basis for local-level decision making in agriculture, health care, food preparation, education, natural-resource management, and a host of other activities in rural communities.

Marsden (1990, as cited in Pottier 2003: 3-4), reflects on some of the original thinking around indigenous knowledge in the late 1980s that put forth the view that

> [t]he problems of rural development are no longer seen to reside in the 'traditional' cultures of under-developed people ... 'traditional cultures' are now seen as containing the bases for any effective development ... [this] negotiated, situation-specific approach ... recognises the important, often crucial, knowledge that the traditional recipients of development aid have to offer.

Indigenous knowledge, then, was originally understood to be geographically bounded, static and culturally specific, acting as a counterpoint to the international scope of the dominant knowledge infrastructure.

Emerging in the 1990s as 'the only alternative to the disasters of institutionalized development efforts' (Radhakrishnan, 2007: 147), K4Dev theory and practice began to

privilege, where possible, 'Southern', 'local', or 'indigenous' knowledge[10]. The emphasis was increasingly being placed on improving access for marginalised groups, largely understood to be located in the Global South, to the knowledge infrastructure in terms of both production and consumption, thereby diversifying the sites of knowledge production and acting as a corrective to the World Bank knowledge paradigm. Given its perception as an alternative rooted in local realities and diverse experiences (Briggs and Sharp, 2004), privileging 'indigenous' and 'Southern' knowledge has become established as good K4Dev practice, and now routinely features as a strategic priority even for donors. This is evidenced, for example, by DFID's commitment to promote 'Southern-led' research and communications initiatives in its 2008-2013 research strategy (DFID, 2008), as well as by CIDA's assertion that the 'recognition and dissemination of the indigenous knowledge possessed by the poor, especially women, can contribute to development, competitiveness, and productivity' (CIDA, 2008: 1). Even the World Bank has come to recognise and legitimise 'indigenous knowledge' as a valuable contributor to development objectives, establishing in 1998 an Indigenous Knowledge for Development Programme to 'help learn from community-based knowledge systems and development practices, and to incorporate them into Bank-supported programs' (Wolfensohn, 2004: vii). [11]

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[10] There is a discussion in the literature questioning the extent to which the terms 'indigenous' and 'local' may be used interchangeably, as indigenous knowledge is not always situated or geographically bounded (see Laurie et al., 2005; Jenkins, 2009). As this analysis suggests, however, existing definitions routinely conflate 'indigenous' with 'local'. In turn, the notion of 'local-level' knowledge in development is, as the quotations in this analysis again emphasise, conflated variously with the knowledge in 'rural communities' (Warren, 1991, as cited in World Bank Group, n.d.), the knowledge of 'recipients of development aid' and 'under-developed people' (Marsden, 1990, as cited in Pottier, 2003), and 'poor people's knowledge' (Mehta, 2001). Given that 'indigenous' and 'local' are terms being invoked in relation to so-called under-developed places in the Global South, it seems reasonable to relate this understanding of indigenous, local or place-based knowledge to the increasing emphasis being placed on Southern-led initiatives (DFID, 2008). Here I extend the use of 'indigenous' and 'local' to incorporate the term 'Southern' since, as this analysis makes clear, it is a similarly essentialising short-hand often used to denote the existence of alternatives to the dominant knowledge infrastructure. I will problematise the use of these essentialist terms in K4Dev theory and practice in chapter three.

[11] Interestingly, however, this quotation suggests that this is not a wholesale reconfiguring or reconsideration of dominant ways of knowing, but rather an attempt to find ways to 'incorporate' indigenous knowledge into the dominant knowledge infrastructure. Related to this point, it is also interesting to note that research conducted by Whitehead and Lockwood (1999, cited in Pottier, 2003: 24) suggests that despite this move on the part of donors to privilege local knowledge, policy efforts such as the World Bank's Participatory Poverty Assessments do not reflect the assimilation of local concerns: 'rich empirical detail has not necessarily made policy agendas better attuned to the complexity of local situations' (Whitehead and Lockwood, 1999, as paraphrased by Pottier, 2003: 24). In short, the impact on

Such responses to the World Bank knowledge paradigm that attempt to privilege local, indigenous or Southern knowledge are important. However, there are also dangers in this response, as the following section illustrates.

2.5.1.4 Problematising 'indigenous' or place-based 'Southern' knowledge in the K4Dev paradigm

Attempts to capture local or indigenous knowledge are confronted, for the purposes of this analysis, with two related barriers. The first is that, as we have seen, knowledge, indigenous or otherwise, is not a static entity to be captured, but rather emerges as a result of dynamic processes of co-option and contestation. The second concern emerging out of this is that these processes of co-option and contestation, to which all forms of knowledge are subject, occur within the dominant discursive spaces of development, with profound consequences for how indigenous knowledge itself is understood. Each of these will be looked at in turn.

Firstly, whilst a growing number of academics and practitioners are pursuing local knowledge as one method of subverting hegemonic or dominant discourses, as Pottier (2003: 2-3) emphasises, 'Knowledge production … is embedded in social cultural processes imbued with aspects of power, authority and legitimation; the act of producing knowledge involves social struggle, conflict and negotiation'. He goes on to remind us that local knowledge 'means different things in different places, and different things to people who share the same space' (ibid.). In other words, there is no one body of information or knowledge, but rather, a series of negotiated meanings that are imbued with the power imbalances of particular social, cultural and economic spaces occurring at multiple, as well as competing, levels. 'Indigenous' knowledge is therefore not static or isolated but as much a product of this dialogue and interaction that produces fluid and variable bodies of information and knowledge. Indeed, as Briggs (2005, p. 110) emphasises, 'indigenous knowledge should not be packaged, generalized or "scientized", because such an approach misses the point of the special character of local needs'. He argues that 'indigenous knowledge tends not to be problematized, but is seen as a

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development policy of this recognition of indigenous knowledge is limited. This is further substantiated by recent research emerging out of a UNESCO-funded study on higher education in Africa, which suggests that 'bilateral educational delivery programs' still reflect a North-South binary, where ' the programs' conception [is] in the North and delivery [is] in the South' (Assié-Lumumba, 2008: 232).

"given", almost a benign and consensual knowledge simply waiting to be tapped into' (ibid: 107). In short, indigenous knowledge is also subject to context and is part of iterative, contested and dynamic processes.

Novellino's (2003) analysis of Batak society, an indigenous group in the Philippines who have been granted protected tribal status, highlights the ways in which attempts to tap into 'local or indigenous knowledge' are inherently problematic. Novellino (2003: 291) asserts that the Batak, 'in dealing with outsiders interested in "local knowledge"', 'provide "strategically adjusted" versions of that knowledge'. Whilst in many instances this leads to the persistence of stereotypes of the Batak as backward, Novellino (2003: 279-80) argues that they are not simply victims but are also able to use the projection of their partial knowledge to minimise threats to their livelihoods as well as gain marginalised status which may lead to food or financial aid. This echoes Mosse's (1994) observation that the notion of 'local knowledge' is inevitably partial, where '"local knowledge" is shaped by perceptions of project workers and their ambitions. There may be a "conspiracy of courtesy" which conceals aspects of social life [of participants], or needs may be expressed in terms of the things which the project is perceived as being able to deliver' (Mosse, 1994: 516). Mohan (2002) reiterates Mosse's observation, where the articulation of local 'needs' is manipulated to reflect what participants feel the funder would fund. Furthermore, Mohan (2002: 144) finds in his case study that the 'needs' expressed by the villages only represent a small proportion of those who have a connection with the NGO, and not the village as a whole, thus, 'the NNGO funds acceptable priorities which may not be the genuine priorities of the villagers'.

This leads us on to the second concern, namely the discursive context in which indigenous knowledge in development is continually negotiated. Mosse (1994) questions the power held by 'outsiders' attempting to capture 'local' or 'indigenous' knowledge, suggesting that the knowledge that the outsider gathers is likely to be 'that which already exists in a codified form, as explicit "indigenous theories"'. That indigenous knowledge is that which is already codified is as likely to result from 'the idea that local indigenous knowledge must first be professionalised (ordered and systematised) so that it can be circulated and shared' (Laurie et al., 2005: 484). Professionalising indigenous knowledge, Laurie et al. (2005: 484) argue, 'is intimately bound up in transnational development discourses and

networks', which creates an artificial entity called 'indigenous knowledge' that is circumscribed by the very knowledge infrastructure it is invoked to supersede. More problematically, as we saw with the definitions of indigenous knowledge earlier, 'established geographies of knowledge production ... draw a sharp distinction between (local) indigenous knowledge and the construction of an international knowledge system' (Laurie et al., 2005: 485). Yet given the relative structural power of the overarching development discourse as outlined in the previous section, some critics have argued that for many individuals, communities and groups, it would be 'almost impossible ... to envisage futures that are not bound up in some form of development imaginary' (Laurie et al., 2005: 470, citing Escobar, 1995). As indigenous knowledge is not an entity or, as Briggs (2005) reminds us, a 'given', Laurie et al. (2005: 482) suggest a need to 'challenge fixed-space representations of indigenous knowledge', as indigenous knowledge is not always local, situated or representative of a particular, geographically-bounded group's views or ideas (Jenkins, 2009).

This artificial binary between local knowledge and the dominant knowledge infrastructure cited above is also problematic when we examine the power held over knowledge creation or discourse within 'local' or 'indigenous' communities. Mosse contends that the codified entity that becomes 'indigenous knowledge' in any given context is also more likely to be 'associated with authority' (Mosse, 1994: 519). That indigenous knowledge may represent the authority of some individuals or groups alongside the exclusion of others at the 'local' level is not a nuance that informs the entrenched North-South polarity of K4Dev practice. Instead, Southern-based information production and dissemination is often considered to be more 'authentic' and part of the 'local', offering a counterpoint to the dominance of the North in information and knowledge production and dissemination. One example is in critiques of the dominance of Northern discourses as embodied in the notion of development 'expertise'. In these critiques the North-South divide persists without nuance, where there is a belief that 'Southern' expertise must be given priority, as it is inherently more grounded or representative of Southern or local needs and views, thus retaining greater merit. Kothari (2005: 443), citing Crewe, (1997), for instance, reiterates her belief in the position that 'international development agencies could be persuaded to question their assumptions about expertise and the impact of their

expatriate consultants and make more extensive use of *existing expertise within aid receiving countries*' (my emphasis). This notion that expertise located in, or emerging out of, Southern contexts may be considered as more grounded, thereby subverting the dominance of the North in the knowledge infrastructure, is problematic. As the analysis above suggests, any indigenous or local knowledge is as likely to represent those elements of knowledge already circumscribed and deemed legitimate by the dominant knowledge infrastructure.

Whilst we will return to the question of problematising the geographical marginality implied by the notion of 'Southern'-based development practitioners in chapter three, it is important to note here that an over-reliance on the 'Southern' as authentic or representative of 'local' or 'indigenous' knowledge is an overly optimistic interpretation of the capacity of many Southern intermediaries to work outside dominant development paradigms. It is necessary to interrogate, as this study will do, the socio-economic and political inequalities in which the people charged with producing and distributing information, in both Northern and Southern contexts, are themselves embedded.

2.5.2 The commodification of knowledge and the implications for decision-making processes

Moving on from problematising 'knowledge', a second critique of the World Bank paradigm is concerned with a tendency to treat knowledge as a 'commodity to be bought and sold' (Kleine and Unwin, 2009: 1054). In the World Bank model knowledge is not only understood as neutral and relatively value-free (King and McGrath, 2004: 40) but:

> … knowledge is regularly discussed as a thing that can be acquired or borrowed or appropriated or sold. Rather like automobiles or transistors, knowledge is a thing that can be produced and traded, exported and imported (Samoff and Stromquist, 2001: 637).

Neoclassical assumptions about imperfect information as a principal factor in explaining imperfect markets persist, the corollary being that markets would work perfectly if there was perfect information. As the extract from WDR 98/99 cited in section 2.2 above makes clear, a direct causal relationship is proposed between the need for improved knowledge transfer and uptake, well-informed markets, wealth creation and economic growth. This 'commodification' of knowledge is rooted in the belief that what poor people lack is

access to knowledge that would allow them to participate in markets. Stiglitz (1998) reiterates this relationship between knowledge and markets, maintaining that the poor experience disadvantage relative to the rich due to the inequality of access to information or knowledge they experience in the marketplace.

Radhakrishnan (2007: 145-6) argues that K4Dev is 'underpinned by a neoliberal political rationality' that 'operate[s] under the presumption of a capitalist "free market" comprising expert individuals who rationally calculate their actions according to their position within the market'. K4Dev, then, responds to concerns around the equitable distribution of informational capital, for which better informed markets are perceived as one of a range of neoliberal responses to the 'problem' of under-development or to so-called development deficits; in this case, by identifying a lack of access to information required by markets and moving to ensure access to 'full-information' for those wishing to participate in it. All of those keen to participate in the market and empower themselves simply need to access the information being made available not just by the World Bank but by a range of Northern and Southern information intermediaries.

Yet, as Mehta (1999: 156) notes, whilst 'knowledge [in the World Bank knowledge paradigm] is largely described in technical terms ... knowledge is also cultural, practical and social' (Mehta, 1999: 156). As we have seen elsewhere in this analysis, power is both embedded in, as well as articulated through, the dynamic, cultural, political and social nature of knowledge. The World Bank knowledge paradigm assumes that information and knowledge sharing and transfer occur outside of the power imbalances and inequalities inherent both to existing market systems and the dominant knowledge infrastructure, which risks entrenching further the privilege of what Radhakrishnan (2007: 146) terms 'the ideology of the knowledge economy and the elite individuals who constitute it'.

2.5.2.1 Problematising the commodification of knowledge

Responses to the critique of the commodification of knowledge in the World Bank knowledge paradigm, as noted in section 1.3 in chapter one, have consisted of de-linking knowledge from wealth creation and economic growth per se. This has consisted of, in the first instance, making information widely available in a range of formats to improve accessibility. The focus has also moved away from technical information; there has been

an exponential growth in information production and dissemination in both Northern and Southern contexts that is geared towards support for broader livelihoods issues such as information on HIV/AIDS or reproductive health. There is also a growing awareness around the importance of considering inequality, including gender inequality and how this intersects with other social aspects of development.

Whilst this decommodifying of information is important, K4Dev practice persists in 'the tendency to generate information for its own sake – or the "more-information-is-good syndrome"' (Gow and Morss, 1985: 176, as cited in Davies, 1994: 3). As Davies goes on to argue, '[t]he generation of too much information can be as unusable as too little, especially if it is not explicitly tied to specific decision-making tasks' (Davies, 1994: 3). Taking issue with the term 'uses of information', Machlup's (1993 [1979]: 451) analysis of information use is instructive here. He argues that whilst one may have preferences in the 'mode of information', be it a telephone or writing a letter, 'as far as the use by recipients is concerned, their part in the process of information is confined to listening or reading; everything that goes beyond reception, decoding, and interpreting is no longer a part of information as a process ... use of a mode of information should not be confused with the use of the message or knowledge conveyed'. Machlup's assertions allow us to problematise the tendency in K4Dev practice to conflate modes of information with the usefulness of the message or the knowledge conveyed. In other words, by disseminating ever larger volumes of information to Southern intermediaries in various formats – print publications, CD-ROMs and websites, for instance –attaches a greater usefulness to this information on the basis of little more than the fact that access to the information is supposedly easier. As Machlup's insights would suggest, these two processes – the delivery of information as opposed to the use of information – are better considered as mutually exclusive as the mode of information does not necessarily imply anything about the actual use of this information. A neatly bound printed report or short summary, CD-ROM or a low bandwidth website printed in English may be very accessible, but if the receiver does not have reliable access to the Internet or does not speak English these 'modes of information' will not be used. This seems a rather obvious point but one that

Machlup notes forcefully is frequently overlooked in discussions around information use.[12]

Neither does diversifying the formats in which larger volumes of information are made available necessarily improve its accessibility. Indeed, the neoliberal privileging of individuals as free-market actors persists, where it is presumed that individuals will, if enabled, access the information they need to make better decisions, thereby promoting more positive development outcomes [13]. But, as the following section details, decision-making processes are not only dependent on increased volumes of, or access to, information, as Davies (1994) reminds us. Notwithstanding the critiques outlined in section 2.5.1 on the inequalities embedded in the creation of knowledge itself that would make information or knowledge relatively inaccessible for some even if it was more widely available, there is also a need to address the assumed linearity in decision-making processes underpinning both the World Bank knowledge paradigm and the responses to it.

2.5.2.2 Problematising the commodification of knowledge in relation to decision-making processes

The World Bank's knowledge paradigm assumes 'a generally static and linear model of the policy-making process' (Samoff and Stromquist, 2001: 643), where 'the best knowledge is converted into the best policy, in spite of the range of evidence about the inevitably political and contested nature of typical policy processes' (King and McGrath, 2004: 41). Schryer-Roy (2005: 2-3) provides a brief but comprehensive overview of the literature on 'knowledge translation' that incorporates and builds on concepts such as 'knowledge exchange', knowledge utilization' and 'knowledge transfer' to suggest the

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[12] Machlup's insight is reiterated by Lloyd Laney et al.'s (2003) study undertaken on behalf of ITDG on knowledge networks that looked at the work of organisations working with the poor in Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe and Peru. She suggests that 'organisations [in this study who work with the poor in these countries] do not always communicate effectively with their constituencies, and are often guilty of confusing information dissemination with communication'. She suggests a greater investment in 'infomediaries' to 'unlock and facilitate the transfer of local knowledge and complement it with external information, appropriately packaged and disseminated using innovative and appropriate communications techniques as defined by users' (Lloyd Laney et al., 2003: 3). This study is evidence of the pervasive belief that knowledge-based aid can be corrected or tweaked to, for example, account for 'local knowledge' or improve the accessibility of information through 'appropriate packaging' to address poverty, social justice and development. It is interrogating this presumed capacity that forms the basis for the empirical analysis starting in chapter six.
[13] The focus on the individual as the basis for change as opposed to forging collective interests will be problematised in relation to the neoliberalisation of empowerment discourses in chapter three.

development of more 'interactive and engaged processes' but where the desired outcome is to improve research utilisation amongst key stakeholders in any given policy community. Elements of research on knowledge transfer and research utilisation have been adapted into understanding the capacity of information to promote outcomes including poverty alleviation in developing country contexts (see for example Ramalingam, 2005; Court and Young, 2005; Jones et al., 2009). This includes raising concerns around how these are to be evaluated (see for example Downie, 2008; Butcher and Yaron, 2006; Perkins et al., 2006). These studies similarly suggest that the relationship between research and policy making is dynamic, multi-dimensional, complex and political, where the policy influence of research is determined by its capacity to deliver solutions to problems, packaged in a manner that is appropriate, and communicated either directly or through interactions via networks, policy communities or intermediary organisations. Lavis et al. (2006: 222), in their research on knowledge-transfer as a key input into improving healthcare outcomes in the Canadian context, emphasise that trying to assess impact is best limited to trying to ascertain how, or even whether, information has influenced decision-making.

Nonetheless, there has been a deliberate linking of research to policy in development practice that partly explains the ongoing support information intermediaries receive from donors. Utting (2006) suggests this is a result of a confluence of particular ideas, including governance discourse, the information age and the adoption of managerialism within developing contexts. This has resulted in strategies to strengthen links between research and policy, whereby policymakers have to demonstrate 'efficiency' through the application of evidence-based research and researchers have to continually strive to demonstrate the policy-relevance of their work. Information intermediaries are seen by bilateral donors to play a crucial role in disseminating research results. As Utting (2006: 5-6) highlights, however,

> ... this raises a complex set of questions. They include not only nuts and bolts issues, such as how research findings are packaged and disseminated, and who in the policy process should be targeted, but also whether research is both credible and relevant as far as policy makers are concerned ... They also include sociological factors, notably the fact that the researcher-policy maker nexus is mediated by a host of formal and informal social and institutional relations involving not only researchers, technocrats and policy makers but also activists, lobbyists, the media and

various types of networks. Ideological and bureaucratic realities are particularly important; for example, entrenched ways of thinking and practice, the need to follow the 'party line' within government and development agencies, so-called path dependency and the way ideas 'percolate', as well as the topicality of a particular issue and whether or not policy makers recognize there is a problem that needs fixing. There may be internal resistance to change within bureaucracies, turfs and jobs to defend, economic constraints, and incentive structures that condition the uptake of ideas and policy recommendations based on research.

This extensive extract details the complex environment into which knowledge-based development interventions are entering. This quotation highlights concerns that operate beyond the World Bank knowledge paradigm that treats information as a value-neutral commodity dissociated from socio-political contexts and relationships. Instead Utting highlights, for example, ideological allegiances and self interest amongst many factors that are simply outside the control of individual decision-makers. As Samoff and Stromquist (2001: 643) similarly note, 'information, and certainly knowledge, are not twigs lying on the forest floor, readily scooped up and carried off' by policymakers; instead, policymakers are as likely to rely on 'their own education and experience' as well as draw on other sources of information 'including trusted colleagues and friends' (Samoff and Stromquist, 2001: 644).

The links between information-gathering and decision-making processes, Feldman and March (1988: 411) argue, are themselves flawed. Drawing on extensive work in the field of organisational theory, Feldman and March (1988: 414) suggest instead that available information neither influences decision-making processes nor precludes organisations from complaining that not enough information is available to make a decision.

These observations explain the continued demand for knowledge services at the same time that users complain of information overload. There are three problems here. Users complain that there is too much information which precludes them from obtaining the information they require; 2) users complain that the information they require is not available; 3) information services respond to this claim by trying to increase the amount of information they have and hold. The result, given increasing demands on the time of workers in both Northern and Southern NGOs and agencies, particularly with respect to a

growing 'report culture' and the need for increased documentation in relation to donor accountability (Mawdsley et al., 2002), is that there is very little time left for practitioners to actually read, let alone share or disseminate, information to ensure policy-level impact. Mawdsley et al. (2002: 24) outline this problem well:

> The importance of published material is hard to evaluate. Most NGOs have shelves of books, government publications, NGO publications, manuals and newsletters, but staff usually say that they 'have no time to read'.

Nor are these concerns only relevant for decision-making processes at the level of policymakers or development organisations. It remains unclear how increased access to information for marginalised individuals or groups in developing contexts enables them to tackle the 'complexities' of the institutional structures that Stiglitz (1998) argues are preventing progress or development. The work of Paulo Freire is instructive here. Freire, in his seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), famously articulated a vision of non-formal learning in particular as having the potential to lead to 'conscientisation' and ultimately to enlightenment and liberation from oppression, thus establishing the basis for long-term social transformation. Freire was very critical of a 'banking model of education' (King and McGrath, 2004: 36), where he perceived that 'students … were positioned as passive recipients of deposits of knowledge' (Richards, 2001: 4). Instead he 'advocated an education based on dialogue that would lead to an ongoing process of reflection, followed by action' (ibid.). Whilst long-term transformation in the form of empowerment, social justice or positive development is often the stated objective of information intermediaries in both Northern and Southern contexts, the communication of information not only reflects, but also creates, new inequalities that may effectively exclude those who do not have the capacity, or prior knowledge, to understand or interpret the new information. Drawing on a Freirean analysis, Richards (2001: 5) suggests that 'the role of communication … becomes crucial in exploring, cataloguing, and mediating the multiplicity of meanings within a single culture … communication itself makes multiple meanings, and for participatory development communication to be effective participants must know how to comprehend, construct, and negotiate these diverse meanings in everyday life'. Instead the act of producing and disseminating information as an end in itself assumes that 'recipients of expert-delivered wisdom …

[will] accumulate and store that wisdom in order later to draw on it' (Samoff and Stromquist 2001: 654), an approach that curtails proactive learning.

Given the nature of embedded inequalities in existing market structures and in the dominant knowledge infrastructure, increasing the access to, and the volume of, information produced is not inherently valuable. Where information production and dissemination are not tied, as Davies (1994) argues, to particular decision-making tasks or geared towards more dialogic learning relationships (Freire, 1970), concerns persist around how these processes are meant to promote more positive development outcomes.

2.5.3 ICTs

The third critique of the World Bank knowledge paradigm of relevance to this study is the over-reliance on, and over-privileging of, ICTs as a means to promote more positive development outcomes through increased knowledge production and dissemination. As Kleine and Unwin (2009: 1048) recognise, the growing faith in ICTs, in particular new ICTs such as the Internet and mobile telephony, was not necessarily new, but rather an extension of the historical tendency to privilege technology transfer as crucial to tackling 'under-development'. Sinha (2009: 8), reflecting on ten years of fieldwork in rural India, notes that the adoptions of ICTs is one of the 'sweet narratives' of policymakers engaged in development versus the 'sour narratives' of the 'ordinary people' who are 'in the field' who must cope as the so-called beneficiaries of development. He argues that ICTs are considered a 'magic wand' that wields a 'supposed invincibility of technology-propelled progress' that 'transcends all social, political, economic and cultural barriers to promote friction-free development' (Sinha, 2009: 8).

This pervasiveness of the belief in the transformative capacity of ICTs is probably most firmly rooted in its perceived *democratising* potential. Much of the support that ICTs garners appears to rest on the theoretical capacity of technology to address information and knowledge deficits in an increasingly globalised world, cheaply, efficiently and democratically.

2.5.3.1 The limits of democratic discourse

We must therefore begin by interrogating the extent to which ICTs have the capacity to promote democratic discourses. Based on Habermas' criteria for democratic discourse, Herring (1996: 477), in her study of computer-mediated communication (which consists of Internet forums and other online discursive spaces), derives four key characteristics that render ICTs a potentially democratic medium. ICTs have the capacity, in principle to: improve accessibility; level the playing field; create spaces for a multiplicity of voices; and are not subject to censorship. Invoking democracy is a very common discursive tool in this literature in relation to new ICTs (see for example Saco, 2002). Kleine and Unwin (2009: 1062) posit, for instance, that the internet is crucial to development since, deployed correctly, it has 'democratised the creation of knowledge, and created the potential for a different kind of geography of knowledge creation'. Lins Ribeiro (1998: 331) cites a similar type of optimism, noting that ICTs offer 'a sort of postmodern liberation and an experience of a new democratic medium that empower people to flood the world system with information, thereby checking the abuses of the powerful'. The limits of the democratising potential of ICTs are, as Lins Ribeiro (1998: 332) reminds us, both discursive and infrastructural:

> More prosaic factors limit the implementation of virtual democracy: the cost of computers, related equipment, and services; access and knowledge to the codes of the network; education; knowledge of the English language; and the control of the functioning of the system by many different computer centers.

That the use of the English-language in particular is associated with elitism is not new but well-established and is a prerequisite for participation (Lins Ribeiro, 1998). This, he argues, is confirmation that despite the democratising potential attributed to cyberspace, it instead 'provide[s] another indication that the virtual transnational imagined community represents a world elite even when we consider its most progressive members and institutions' (ibid). This would suggest a systemic critique rather than an individual one, where, despite the best intentions, those individuals who are able to participate are, by definition, elites. Even amongst women, considered as we saw in section 1.3 in chapter one to work outside of dominant power relations, the use of the English language signifies an elite status. Nabacwa (2002: 45) suggests, for example, that

one campaign by NGOs to raise women's awareness of a Domestic Relations Bill in Uganda failed because '[m]any women cannot buy newspapers and cannot read English'. ICTs may potentially reduce the cost of accessing information, but they do not tackle the problem of language.

Ribeiros's and Nabacwa's critiques are echoed by others. Powell (2006: 522-3), for instance, suggests that 'by failing to engage systematically with local languages, the [development] sector limits its understanding of and its ability to communicate with most of its intended beneficiaries'. Mawdsley et al. (2002: 146) also cite language as a key concern for the active participation and inclusion in particular of Southern NGOs in the knowledge infrastructure. Their critique, like Powell and Ribeiro, is limited insofar as they all tend to suggest that 'greater expense in terms of translators' (Mawdsley et al., 2002: 146) may be the answer to address the hegemony of English. This denies, as Kothari (2001: 143) recognises, that '[p]ower is not only manifest in the workings of the development practitioner but also more widely played out by other cultural intermediaries, such as translators'. The capacity of translation to address the relative accessibility of information is revisited in the empirical analyses in chapters seven and eight.

2.5.3.2 Critiques of the World Bank's emphasis on ICTs

In line with the definition of K4Dev in section 2.2 above, knowledge-based development aid depends heavily on old and new ICTs to deliver the changes it promises. A significant proportion of the critical literature on K4Dev has tended to focus on the digital divide and barriers to accessing the technology that would allow ICTs to create a truly level-playing field in information/knowledge production and dissemination. In the existing literature, there is typically a 'digital divide' that is cited as 'threatening to intensify existing social and economic inequalities' (Ayeni and Ramnarine, 2005: 67). Deane (2005: 60), in line with other academics in the literature (see Heeks, 2002), suggests that

> very few of the debates of the last decade on the role of communication in development have rooted themselves in a serious analysis and identification of the problem they are trying to solve. They have almost always been a response to a fascination with what new technology can do, not a serious analysis of the information, communication and voice needs of the poor.

He maintains that the digital divide is a 'red herring', arguing that '[t]here are a series of huge, and arguably growing information divides, between rich and poor countries, rich and poor people within poor countries, urban and rural, literate and illiterate, young and old and so on' (Deane, 2005: 61). Heeks (2002: 1), citing a belief on the part of donors that ICTs will 'lead to the "death of distance" and create a "level playing-field" in which the small and the new compete on equal terms with the large and the well-established', similarly argues that these approaches are lacking, as 'much of it [is] poorly thought out and with little understanding either of history or of development realities ... [with] an overemphasis on the technology itself, to the exclusion of other parameters' (ibid).

Castells' insights into the global digital divide are also instructive here. Despite his own belief in the democratising potential of the Internet, where individuals may potentially demand greater accountability from a range of stakeholders through the use of information accessible via the Internet or networks (Castells, 2001: 155), he cautions that exclusion from the network society is akin to being 'sentenced to marginality' (Castells, 2001: 277). This, he argues, has consequences for the structure and geography of the digital divide and the function of information networks within it, where the divide is 'no longer along the North/South cleavage, but between those connected in the global networks of value-making, around nodes unevenly dotting the world, and those switched off from these networks' (Castells, 2001: 277). This will not be a geographical North-South divide; instead, as Norris (2001: 95) contends, 'the Internet has provided alternative channels of communication primarily for countries and groups already rich in informational resources ... [which] connects the connected more than the peripheral'. In other words, this is a divide between those who have access to networks (i.e., the global wealthy), and those who do not (i.e., the global poor). Indeed, the polarising effect of ICTs creates new forms of inclusion and exclusion based on degrees of connectivity, where the powerful and the powerless are as likely to be occupying the same geographical spaces (Graham, 2002). Although the accessibility of ICTs is undoubtedly spreading, an example of the geographical shift that is occurring is evident in the growing urban-rural divide apparent in ICT connectivity and use, which is in effect supplanting North-South forms of exclusion (ibid). Furthermore, those people who have access to networks and thus global knowledge resources are also more likely to occupy the discursive spaces within the

dominant knowledge infrastructure that allows them to absorb and utilise new information to create and internalise new knowledge. This has the effect of further exacerbating inequality between the resource-rich and the resource-poor in the uptake of global information resources that are meant to assist development efforts.

2.5.3.3 Problematising the over-emphasis on ICTs

As noted above, one of the key assumptions at the heart of K4Dev is that information is empowering and increased access to information is important to development. This leads, in turn, to an over-reliance of ICTs to deliver information (King and McGrath, 2004: 1). The perceived problem, then, is a lack of information to inform decision-making processes for a range of stakeholders, and the solution is a technological one, where the nature of technology, and the more fundamental pedagogical issues related to ICTs and their associated interfaces and underlying exclusions, are never considered. Instead, any barriers to ICT delivery that would allow target groups to overcome the digital divide and access the information they need are to be overcome through Southern-led initiatives, or through 'partnership', 'collaboration', or through the work of 'intermediaries', notably Southern-based ones (NGOs or private sector). These actors are presumed, as we have seen above, to be better placed to address accessibility issues and are likely to be more aware of the constraints faced by marginalised groups in their own areas and ways these barriers may be overcome. These critiques may be grouped broadly into two related categories. The first is that the application of technology as an end in itself, in line with discourses around the knowledge economy, has the capacity to create livelihood options and contribute to economic growth. The second of these centres on the need to harness ICTs to deliver benefits for development more broadly, if only ICT-related resources were distributed more evenly or deployed more equitably. Each of these will be looked at in turn.

Heeks' (2002: 9) work as an ICT for development specialist is a good example of the emphasis on ICTs as an end itself. For instance, in the introduction for a special issue on ICTs and development for the *Journal of International Development*, he 'points to a need for more indigenous development of ICT-based systems' as 'the more implicit Northern assumptions inscribed into ICTs ... often mismatch Southern cultural realities'. Whilst he

recognises that 'Southern designers can also be ignorant of Southern realities', he maintains that 'there is a greater chance of adaptation of ICT-based systems to Southern values, processes, skills, and structures' and thus 'a greater chance of ICTs successfully contributing to development objectives' (ibid). In another article for an online magazine hosted by an NGO/Resource Centre based in New Delhi, he builds on this premise, suggesting that development agencies should move away from 'ICT consumption' that includes initiatives like e-government, to a focus on domestic ICT production, including 'the creation of hardware, software and other components of the ICT infrastructure' (Heeks, 2005a: 11-12). These solutions are still ICT-based where it is assumed that, if deployed fairly and thoughtfully, ICTs have the capacity to diversify livelihood options in the Global South. Hidden in the fine print of these recommendations is a persistent –and ideologically neoliberal – emphasis on the individual alongside a lack of problematisation of whether the pursuit of technology to promote economic growth is necessarily desirable, even if it is decentralised and contextualised. It also raises the question of to whose Southern reality he is referring.

The second critique related to ICTs is in the need to distribute the benefits of ICTs to achieve development objectives. The solutions offered by these critiques are centred on deploying ICTs with a greater emphasis on the need for donors, states and civil society actors to address the social inequalities embedded in the digital divide. Even where gaps have been identified, particularly in relation to social inequalities such as access to healthcare or education that may render the relative access to ICTs less important in the overall distribution of resources (see Souter, 2005: 14-15), the solutions or options proffered largely centre on addressing this so-called 'digital divide' to improve development outcomes.[14]

Kleine and Unwin (2009: 1062), for instance, argue that poverty alleviation efforts can be greatly enhanced by new ICTs 'since new ICTs have the ability to reach very large

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[14] A good example is of a OneWorld South Asia programme (Sharma et al., 2006) that had as its mandate the installation of new ICTs to address local health issues. It demonstrates how the dominant discourse around the centrality of knowledge to promote development can skew development projects away from the expressed material needs and lived realities of poor groups – which in this case consisted of a lack of water and sanitation facilities – towards externally imposed solutions that centre on the application of some form of technology – in this case a telephone – to improve the capacity of poor people to acquire knowledge that may then be applied to alleviate poverty and promote development.

numbers of people at relatively low cost'. This, they argue, relies on 'governments of poor countries and donors alike to concentrate special effort on delivering reliable electricity and digital connectivity across the globe', since

> the networked and decentralised nature of the internet has given rise to new thinking about co-operative and collaborative models of creating software and content which can create more *democratic* forms of interaction and knowledge production (ibid).

Equalising access is still discussed in terms of a North-South divide, where the possibility of creating more locally appropriate ICT-based initiatives that 'level the playing field' are still the main solution to the question of the 'digital divide'. All of these approaches are still limited by the notion that ICTs have the potential to democratise the production and distribution of information and knowledge if only governments and donors could ensure that the ICT infrastructure, including the requisite electricity and cable connections, was established, most notably in Southern contexts.

Yet a number of scholars (see for example Castells 2001; Warschauer, 2003; Norris, 2001) have problematised the social dimensions of new ICTs and the power imbalances implicated in their pursuit as a source of education, productivity and ultimately development. The concern here is that the use of the Internet as a source of knowledge creation, as Castells (2001: 278) emphasises, does not pose a simple technical or infrastructural barrier, but requires 'the installation of information-processing and knowledge-generation capacity', where the use of new ICTs requires a 'new pedagogy, based on interactivity, personalization, and the development of autonomous capacity of learning and thinking [*sic*]'. The provision of information in digital form, rather than improving its accessibility, may in fact require a fundamental realignment of educational practices that accounts for how information may be accessed and knowledge may be created to maximise on the hyper-availability of information in the Internet Age. Echoing Castells, Warschauer (2003: 111) argues that individuals must acquire 'electronic literacies' to engage with, and potentially benefit from, new ICTs. Language is an issue that is frequently revisited in the context of ICTs in particular since, as Norris (2001: 59-60) notes, 'those who can read English are greatly advantaged in the digital world'. Given that the language of new ICTs is English, she further suggests that '[f]amiliarity with English as a second language among the scientific elite may also help to explain the

success of software development and computer manufacturing in ex-British colonies such as India, Malaysia, and Hong Kong' (ibid: 60). Whilst this analysis problematises the social dimensions of new ICTs and the power imbalances implicated in their pursuit as a source of education, productivity and ultimately development, there is no further problematisation of ICTs as embedded in the dominant knowledge infrastructure, representing particularised *ways of knowing*. Finally, it reduces users and producers to an index of relative competencies (ICTs, English-language), as opposed to considerations of how individuals are themselves sites of unequal power relations. These are both themes we will return to in chapter three and again in the empirical analysis beginning in chapter seven.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted key concerns in relation to the assumptions underpinning the World Bank knowledge paradigm. Neither is information value-neutral nor is knowledge fixed or static, whatever the context from which it emerges. Instead, we have seen that the relationship between information and knowledge represents an iterative, fluid and contested process. The distribution of informational resources is uneven, where power is held by those with the capacity to access, and thus benefit from, the dominant development knowledge paradigm. Yet what is clear from this literature review is that the key concern raised by critics of the World Bank knowledge paradigm in relation to delivering knowledge as a form of development aid is access, which tends to be understood only in relation to technology. Put another way, **it is physical, technical and infrastructural, not discursive or normative barriers to knowledge production, dissemination and accumulation that are prioritised in mainstream K4Dev practice**.

The critiques of the theoretical underpinnings of K4Dev would suggest that knowledge-based development practice is likely to face significant challenges in its objective to equalise or even 'democratise' global informational infrastructures, given its largely neoliberal underpinnings. Existing critiques have focused on addressing the 'digital divide', often at the expense of other, more fundamental structural and systemic inequalities. These critical responses have been geared towards both improving ICT infrastructure to promote economic growth and overcoming barriers to ICT access in

pursuit of broader development objectives. Where the type of knowledge has been problematised, this has also been partial, critiquing the tendency to commodify information and knowledge simply as part of a broader critique of neoliberal development paradigms, without any consideration of the inequalities embedded in information and knowledge. Where a Northern bias has been identified in the production and dissemination of information, the response has not been to raise more fundamental pedagogical concerns underpinning the dominant knowledge infrastructure. Instead, it has focused on the democratisation of the production and dissemination process through increasing investment in ICT infrastructure, whilst simultaneously emphasising investments in indigenous and/or Southern-based knowledge as a relative panacea to the hegemony of dominant development discourses within a relatively unyielding North-South binary. Finally, what is rarely problematised in any of this is the embeddedness and attendant inequalities manifest in the people charged with producing and disseminating the information and knowledge on which the K4Dev paradigm depends. The question for chapter three is to reflect on whether bringing together K4Dev with feminism/gender and development improves the capacity of knowledge-based development initiatives, and the people delivering them, to contribute to more positive development outcomes.

3. Empowerment, NGOs and feminisms in development

3.1 Introduction

This chapter begins to unpack the assumption that privileging 'Southern' voices within the dominant knowledge infrastructure, particularly those of women, will be effective in promoting more positive development outcomes such as empowerment. Chapter two examined the notion that ICTs are a democratising force and argued that Southern knowledge, like any knowledge, is fluid and contested, containing both dominant and subversive elements. The previous chapter also discussed the limitations presented by increasing the volume of information produced, even where the emphasis was shifted away from technical knowledge towards knowledge that would contribute not just to economic but social development. These are all problematised as concerns related to the process of delivering knowledge-based development aid, highlighting discursive, normative and physical/technical barriers to the capacity of knowledge to deliver on objectives aims such as empowerment and development. This chapter continues the analysis by problematising the concepts of empowerment and development, as well as the information intermediaries who produce and disseminate the information (technical, political and social) on which more progressive approaches to K4Dev depend.

This chapter begins in section 3.2 with a brief overview of the overlaps between the project of empowerment, originally conceived by leftist and feminist movements as a liberating and progressive undertaking, and the co-option of this term as a neoliberal basis for knowledge-based development practice. Section 3.3 highlights the tendency to essentialise in development discourse and practice, examining 'NGOs' and reflecting upon the image of 'women' as unified, homogenous groups who retain 'imagined' capacities to deliver empowerment through information production and dissemination. Section 3.4 considers emerging concerns in the literature in relation to the capacities of Southern women and NGOs and the resulting implications for knowledge-based development practice. Section 3.5 concludes by drawing together the literature review in this and the previous chapter to identify the gaps the empirical study will address.

3.2 Empowerment

Women's empowerment has become an increasingly ubiquitous 'objective' of development interventions, encapsulated as the third of the Millennium Development Goals. Yet, despite its widespread use in development discourse and practice, empowerment is a highly contested term. This has led one commentator to ask: 'How can it be that people and organisations as far apart politically as feminists, Western politicians, and the World Bank have all embraced the concept of empowerment with such enthusiasm?' (Rowlands, 1997: 9). This section will provide a brief overview of the concept of empowerment, illustrating how feminist development discourses have been co-opted into mainstream development discourse and practice. This section will conclude with a discussion of the slippage between emancipatory and neoliberal discourses on empowerment that privilege knowledge as a key input for development.

3.2.1 Defining empowerment

There is broad agreement in the literature that empowerment as a development outcome 'must be based on an understanding of, and ability to overcome, the causes of the lack of power which lie behind it' (Carr et al., 1996: 3). Whilst extensive theoretical and empirical work has been undertaken on the question of women's empowerment[15], what is more important for the purposes of this analysis is to highlight the recent political and historical significance of this term in various 'struggles for more equitable, participatory, and democratic forms of social change and development' (Batliwala, 2007: 558).

Empowerment has historically denoted an association with *collective struggle*. Information production and dissemination in this context is articulated as one element of what Batliwala (2007: 558) terms a 'growing interaction' between feminist praxis and the conscientisation approaches of Freire developed in the 1970s (section 2.5.2.2 in chapter two) that are meant to contribute to collective processes of empowerment. It is this progressive agenda that many feminist activists in development have argued has been co-opted most forcefully by neoliberal approaches to development (see for example Batliwala, 2007; Cornwall et al., 2008; Sharma, 2008).

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[15] Some key texts include those by Townsend et al. (1999); Townsend et al. (1995); Rowlands (1997); Carr, Chen and Jhabvala (1996); Batliwala (1994); and Moser (1993).

3.2.2 Empowerment as neoliberalism

The 'empowerment' of individuals or groups, particularly women, is widely articulated as an intended outcome of knowledge-based development practices. Yet, as Sharma (2008: xvi; see also Kothari, 2005) reminds us, the deployment of programmes designed to empower people are not without controversy. Given the growing dominance of the co-option of 'empowerment' as a key development outcome over the past 30 years, neoliberal approaches to empowerment are just as likely to dominate development as alternative, more progressive, models. The key difference is in the 'solutions' to disempowerment and a role of the state in this. As Sharma (2008: xvi) points out:

> the neoliberally imagined empowerment logic seeks to enable grassroots actors, and especially women, to fulfil their own needs through market mechanisms instead of relying on state largesse.

Even the flagship women's empowerment programme of the Indian state, the subject of Sharma's (2008: xxvii) study, has as a central premise that women should be empowered to 'set their own priorities and seek knowledge and information to make informed choices', as if to suggest that this information and the environment in which they are making these choices are value-free; they merely need to access the information in order to effect positive change in their lives. Yet this capacity to both access information and act upon it are dependent on a range of factors; some, like literacy, may be addressed by individuals themselves, whereas others, such as enabling environments, require external intervention and are not so easily altered.

This shift into an 'empowerment' discourse within neoliberal development approaches resonates with the analysis of Cornwall and Brock (2006: 47), who identify the existence of 'particular combinations of buzzwords [that] are linked together in development policies through what Laclau (1996) calls "chains of equivalence": words that work together to evoke a particular set of meanings'.

With a range of meanings being assigned to it, invoking the term 'empowerment' into development discourse has provided organisations with a powerful tool to change the perceptions of existing interventions and bring organisations into line with dominant neoliberal discourses (Cornwall and Brock, 2006; Porter et al., in press). In some cases,

the use of the term 'empowerment' makes existing interventions more palatable, further reinforcing the variable and descriptive power of the language itself in creating meaning:

> What is perhaps most ironic about the entry of the term "empowerment" into the chain of equivalence that is today's governance-speak is that the very same projects might now be reclassified, and indeed celebrated, as contributing to "empowerment" goals (Cornwall and Brock, 2006: 53).

Given the shifting semantics of these words, it follows that their use does not necessarily signal intentions to be fundamentally transformative or challenge the status quo. Often the result is that words are de-radicalised or, as Cornwall and Brock (2006: 56) suggest, their 'conflictive elements' are 'stripped away'. This process of de-radicalisation is reiterated by Sharma (2006: 79) in her analysis of state empowerment programmes in the Indian context:

> Governmentalization entails a bureaucratization of empowerment in its professionalization as an expert intervention and in its objectification as a measurable variable. Rendering empowerment into a development program requires setting up appropriate hierarchical structures and bureaucratic procedures. These processes can go against the very spirit of change and equality that empowerment is supposed to connote and engender.

Cornwall and Brock (2005: 1052) also note that these processes may create new forms of discursive exclusion:

> The new vocabularies... creat[e] an inner circle of people who share a common language. The master buzzwords … may create an overarching embrace, but the new vocabularies that arise from them as they are operationalised create patterns of exclusion.

In this context then, empowerment is not necessarily progressive or revolutionary but is a market-oriented concept that has become part of 'great neoliberal strategies for bringing the poor under the control of the state and market ... directed at poor women in particular and often using NGOs as delivery agents' (Porter et al., in press). For the purposes of this analysis, this contradictory position raises the question of how information production and dissemination are conceptualised within this neoliberal, empowerment-centred paradigm.

3.2.3 Problematising the relationship between empowerment, neoliberalism and K4Dev

Neoliberal notions of empowerment focus on an individual's capacity to use information to help themselves. In this respect, '"empowerment" comes to be associated with individual endeavour, self-improvement measures and donor interventions rather than collective struggle' (Sardenberg, 2008, as cited by Cornwall et al., 2008: 3). This articulation of empowerment relies on notions of self-help and the power of the individual to effect change in their own life. Drawing inspiration from Nikolas Rose's (1996) concept of neoliberal political rationality, Radhakrishnan (2007: 145) asserts that,

> knowledge economy discourses ... presume an advanced liberal
> relationship between the individual and the state. In this scenario, rational
> individuals with access to unlimited information "govern" themselves.

The very nature of K4Dev and the empowerment that is hoped will flow from it hinges on the belief that people will act given the right information, and relies on people to actively seek out, engage with, or respond to the information that is given to them. This neoliberal emphasis on the individual resonates with research undertaken in a range of developing contexts, with significant implications for the assumptions underpinning knowledge-based development practice. Schild's (1998) discussion of citizenship in the context of Chilean state formation in the late 1990s is instructive here. She argues that the privileging of the 'individual' and their capacity to help themselves through the appropriation and application of available information represents 'renewed attempts of dominant groups to construct a hegemonic project that articulates elements of socioeconomic "modernization" with a particular conception of citizenship' (Schild, 1998: 96). Citizenship, she further suggests, is 'based on individual subjects as bearers of rights who must entrepreneurially fashion their overall personal development through wider relations to the marketplace' (ibid). The emphasis on entrepreneurialism is echoed in the Indian context, where Sharma (2008: xxxvi) suggests that 'officials blame the failure of redistributive development programs on poor people's lack of maturity, of knowledge, of discipline, and of self-motivated entrepreneurialism'. Those administering development, she argues, 'code self-reliant development as the moral responsibility of common people who have failed in that task and are, therefore, undeserving of rights-bearing citizenship' (ibid). The pursuit of knowledge to promote one's own development in the purview of

neoliberal development discourses is not, therefore, simply one of a range of options but instead becomes moralised.

Dempsey (2009: 332-3) extends a similar critique of the material consequences of romanticising engagement with 'the grassroots' as entrepreneurial groups that represent an alternative development: '[w]hen associated with micro-enterprise, the grassroots takes on a increasingly moral tint, shifting poverty solutions away from collective responses and onto the poor'. Individuals who fail to seek out information or to act on existing information, thus failing to fulfil the entrepreneurial spirit that Dempsey argues is associated with the poor or 'the grassroots' are characterised, in a perverse twist on notions of collective responsibility, as having failed not just themselves but their community and indeed the state in its developmental ambitions. Reiterating this tendency of the neoliberal development paradigm to blame the failure of development on the shortcomings of subalterns, Mohan (2002: 149-150), in his analysis of NGOs and the state in Northern Ghana, contends that related concepts such as 'partnership' and 'devolution' similarly 'spread the risk to "locals" ... [where] the donors can implicate the poor in the failure to achieve development which becomes a subtle form of blaming the victim ... Participatory development can be seen as a sensitive form of empowerment when it works or the result of grassroots incapacity when it fails'.

This analysis offers crucial insights into the assumptions underpinning neoliberally-inspired knowledge-based development interventions, insofar as the emphasis on simply producing and disseminating vast amounts of information can be justified as an end in itself, where the imperative on seeking out and then acting on this increasingly available information is transferred to the poor themselves. In this paradigm, the moral responsibility of information intermediaries ends once the information is made available in the public domain, thus establishing a self-help model that transfers the moral responsibility for the uptake of information resources to those least able to capitalise on them.

3.2.4 Conscientisation or co-option? The growth of a gender hegemony

The co-option of empowerment discourses, and the concomitant emphasis on the individual within the broader neoliberal development paradigm, has had significant, albeit uneven, consequences, for feminist development discourse and practice. Gender and development, initially a subversive response to the gender-blindness of mainstream development, has itself become a transnational discourse (Amadiume, 2000, p. 9; Sharma, 2006). This transnational discourse has similarly become circumscribed by neoliberal agendas that delimit the nature and scope of what constitutes knowledge in gender and development practice to those concerns that correlate with economic development objectives. Nagar (2006: 147) identifies the growth of a 'gender hegemony' to accompany the 'expansion of globalized capitalism since 1989' where, she argues, a consensus on the priority areas for feminist action in development exclude alternative approaches to the development concerns of marginalised women in particular:

> 'Gender mainstreaming' and 'poor women's empowerment' have redefined not only the terminologies and terrains of women's politics but also the sites and meanings of knowledge production. The funding agencies' popularization of 'gender' (instead of 'women'), of a focus on violence against women and HIV/AIDS (instead of infant mortality or price inflation of basic foods), and of microcredit programs (instead of women's unions or land reforms) have enabled new political agendas to emerge. However, these shifts have also had the serious consequences of compromising radical politics. Not surprisingly, the interventions made by powerful NGOs have often ended up serving the interests of global capital ...

This co-option of empowerment by neoliberal development paradigms to achieve limited and questionable economic gains for women reflects the association of K4Dev with economic growth (see section 2.4 in chapter two). It also highlights the depoliticising tendencies of poverty alleviation projects, where marginal impacts are achieved in terms of economic empowerment, whilst more fundamental structures of oppression remain unchallenged (Batliwala and Dhanraj, 2007).[16] Other research on World Bank funded women's groups in Chile (Taylor, 1996) argues that the neo-liberal agenda keeps women

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[16] This finding echoes Molyneux's (1985) distinction between practical versus strategic gender interests, which emerged out of her analysis of Sandinista policies towards women in Nicaragua that addressed their immediate practical interests but did not address emancipatory change that would disrupt the structural or institutional basis for gender inequality.

so busy that little time is available to agitate for wider structural change. Instead, women have been 'demobilized as funding draws leadership energies from protest into self-help activities that legitimize the government's retreat from responsibility for poverty reduction' (DeMars, 2005: 24, citing Taylor, 1996).

Whilst some commentators accept that the creation of collective spaces for women to organise have resulted in considerable shifts in perceptions of women's agency and greater recognition of their views and contributions in different locations (see for example Purushothaman et al, 2004; Creevey, 2004; Raju, 2006), even within these spaces, structures of patriarchal and neoliberal oppression are hard to dismantle. Despite the co-option by NGOs of the 'language of the left', including terms such as 'empowerment' and 'gender equality', '[t]he local nature of NGO activity means "empowerment" never goes beyond influencing small areas of social life with limited resources within the conditions permitted by the neo-liberal state and macro-economy' (Petras, 1999: 434). Even more highly integrated programmes of economic empowerment featuring conscientisation as an integral element of programme design do not guarantee that women will, given the information, recognise, or even be willing or able, to overturn structural inequalities. Raju's (2006) comparative analysis of two grassroots initiatives to empower women in the Indian context draws similar conclusions, suggesting, again in echoes of Molyneux (1985), that economic empowerment does address significant elements of women's practical needs, but does not address strict gender codes. Raju (2006: 292) identifies important empowering spaces for women to engage in more publicly substantial ways. Her description of '[v]illage level networks of trained adolescent girls and women leader-motivators ... mobilis[ing] women ... *to empower themselves by acquiring information* (Raju, 2006: 292: my emphasis), highlights the link between knowledge economy and neoliberal discourses that privilege the role of the individual information-seeker promoting her own economic empowerment that in turn contributes to improved outcomes for her community and family, ultimately generating economic growth. Thus, a policy initiative that may have started out intending to help women 'raise consciousness of their own sense of subordination' seems to have become individualistic and whittled down to fundamentally neo-liberal imperatives:

> I am not suggesting by any means that all empowering processes meant to subordinate women to the neo-liberal order per se. Yet the circumstances,

the domains (for example, livelihood issues) and the specific manner in which empowering efforts have been targeted of late make one wonder if they can be completely delinked from neo-liberal processes (ibid).

What started as a progressive and fundamentally transformative approach to conscientising poor or marginalised women has become co-opted by the mainstream development establishment, depoliticized, bureaucratised and instrumentalised as a key input for promoting limited economic growth objectives, a process that, as the foregoing analysis highlights, has been problematised and well-documented in the literature. The point of departure for this study is that it further problematises the parallels between information production and dissemination for the purposes of empowerment as opposed to neoliberal development.

Although there is an equivalent emphasis placed on the existence of an information gap for marginalised women by both feminist emancipatory and neoliberal development discourses on empowerment, the two diverge on the issue of intended outcomes. In the case of emancipatory feminist discourses on empowerment, information is to be part of conscientisation (Freire, 1970) processes that help women to pursue their own empowerment and development by using information to identify and challenge the systems or norms that oppress them. By contrast, neoliberal development discourses promote increased market participation as a route to achieving economic empowerment from which more fundamental social change will, in theory, flow (see Stiglitz, 1998). In reality these two approaches are not mutually exclusive, and it is the conflation of these two discourses that critically informs the empirical analysis in this study. Development feminists in practice are confronted with a slippage between the position that posits information dissemination as essential to emancipatory development discourses and processes and the neoliberal position that, given the existence of certain discursive and financial limitations, subsumes information production and dissemination activities into the neoliberal, instrumentalising position. The gap that the empirical analysis will address is interrogating the extent to which stakeholders involved in women's rights or gender justice work occupying the discursive 'site' are able to engage in knowledge-based development practices promoting empowerment that is emancipatory rather than neoliberal in character.

Having established the oppositional ideological terrain in which empowerment discourses are embedded, the capacity of intermediaries to utilise information for emancipatory development also depends on how they are materially and discursively situated in relation to the notion of development itself. It is to this question that the analysis now turns.

3.3 The essentialising tendencies of knowledge-based development practice

As section 2.4 in chapter two illustrated, K4Dev will, according to the World Bank, address the inequalities between the information-rich and the information-poor by facilitating a global flow of knowledge. Critics view K4Dev as wielding a hegemonic and undifferentiated Northern discourse and pedagogical power over a powerless or voiceless Global South. K4Dev, as Mehta (1999) points out, negates any regional or culturally-specific knowledge that is not part of dominant discourses that align modernisation and the application of scientific knowledge with social advancement. This discursive dominance is manifested in what Novellino (2003) terms 'pigeon-holing', which consists at least partly of limiting the ways in which the knowledge of recipients or participants in an intervention is circumscribed by the categorisations of the dominant or hegemonic development knowledge infrastructure.[17] Labels such as 'information-rich' and 'information-poor' are also problematic because they reinscribe, as the subsequent analysis reveals, essentialised categories of development discourse frequently used as discursive short-hands that connote broad-based geographical, economic or social characteristics that in fact may obscure more than they reveal about the nature of inequality within any particular region, country or amongst different groups. Problematising labels such as 'villager' or 'the grassroots'[18] and avoiding essentialism in

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[17] Novellino's (2003) case study of the Batak, a tribal group in the Philippines (section 2.5.1.4 in chapter two), is an example of the invisibilisation of alternative 'ways of knowing' that nonetheless derive from the lived realities of marginalised groups. Novellino (2003: 278) cites an instance where the Batak were enjoined to fill in a questionnaire provided by the external, donor-funded project team that was using a 'livelihoods' approach. They had to choose from a list of occupations, including farmer, fisherman and labourer, yet, as Novellino notes, the Batak do not divide or label these tasks as such but instead consider them to be part of the labour of food procurement where, Novellino notes, 'hunting-gathering and horticulture are inseparable components within a single logic of procurement' (2003: 278).

[18] Pigg (1992) problematises the term 'villager' and Dempsey (2009) problematises the term 'the grassroots' as essentialised categories. As the subsequent analysis demonstrates, both are short-hands used frequently to denote the purported capacity of development NGOs to promote development from 'the bottom-up'.

practice is crucial if the individuals and groups engaging with 'development', critically or otherwise, are to achieve the innumerable associative claims made on development's behalf, whether it is commitments to economic growth, empowerment, equality or social justice. The following sections will critically analyse two frequently used essentialisms in development discourse and practice – 'NGO' and 'women' – followed by an analysis of the implications these usages have on the assumptions underpinning K4Dev discourse and practice.

3.3.1 NGOs in development

Problematising the role of NGOs as information intermediaries allows meaningful discussion around the tendency for purportedly progressive knowledge practices to essentialise NGOs, particularly Southern NGOs, and their capacity to deliver knowledge as a form of development aid. This analysis will suggest that the tendency to overstate the capacity of development NGOs is rooted in both the materially and discursively polarised terrain that NGOs occupy in order to facilitate change.

NGOs are perceived as 'key promoters of an alternative development agenda based on participation and empowerment' (Mayoux, 1998: 172), thus benefiting those most marginalised from development. These perceptions tend to emphasise 'grassroots-level accountability and legitimacy, bottom-up approaches, decentralized planning, participatory and democratic ways of working, flexibility, and a motivated workforce' (Sharma, 2006: 67; see also Mayoux, 1998: 173). The perceived legitimacy of NGOs persists because they make 'causal claims' that are deployed 'behind normative appeals', a process upheld by their perceived capacity to be simultaneously 'heard "at the table" where global norms are defined, as well as making themselves useful "on the ground" implementing those norms among the poor' (DeMars, 2005: 24). The power of the normative claim emerges out of a perceived proximity to the marginalised constituencies on whose behalf NGOs claim to work:

> Regardless of the extent to which they are accountable to community
> stakeholders, NGOs are regularly cast as the organizational embodiments
> of the grassroots. Within scholarly and practitioner accounts, they are seen
> as ''closer to the grassroots'' than their state counterparts, or may even be
> equated with the grassroots ... The term grassroots implies local-level,

small-scale efforts that are driven by groups who are directly impacted by
the problems or conditions they seek to change (Dempsey, 2009: 329).

This perception of the capacity of NGOs to operate openly and effectively in pursuit of

empowerment, development and social justice for marginalised groups has resulted in an

extensive literature characterised by polarised debates around NGOs that are 'either

gratuitously critical or excessively optimistic about NGOs' (Bebbington, 2004: 729) that is

too large to comprehensively address here.[19] Instead the focus of this review will be to

locate and critically analyse the *perceptions* of NGOs as democratic, accountable or

representative of marginalised groups within development discourse and practice, thus

moving beyond the tendency in the mainstream development literature for the discussion

around NGOs to be case study-based (Bebbington, 2004: 729). This study instead

considers how perceptions of the *imagined* capacity of NGOs to promote development

through information production and dissemination are shaped by the people and

organisations who exist, as Bebbington (2004: 729-730) argues, both discursively and

physically 'at different points (North and South) along the network'.

3.3.1.1 Locating perceptions of development NGOs

Tvedt (1998) offers one of the most comprehensive and oft-cited critiques of the

perceived capacity of NGOs to deliver development, where he highlights the oppositional

terrain in which NGOs must struggle between co-option and resistance. Citing the

exponential growth of NGOs globally, he suggests that NGOs are part of a system that

acts 'as a transmission belt of a powerful language and of Western concepts of

development, and at the same time as one arena for struggles between different

development paradigms and ideologies' (Tvedt, 1998: 75). Despite the existence of

ideological and paradigmatic struggles, there is, Tvedt (1998: 75) argues, an overarching

framework that renders the vast majority of development NGOs as part of a 'donor-led

system', a system that displays 'systemic relations and practices that cut across space and

time'. It is a system, embodied in the 'routinized practices' of the 'NGO channel's typical

project cycle', that he argues, 'may aim at (and succeed in) helping the poor or supporting

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[19] Some critical analyses and overviews of various aspects of NGOs in development theory and practice
include Edwards and Hulme (1996), Lewis (2001), (Ebrahim, 2003, 2002), Mawdsley et al. (2002), Tinker
(1999) and Wood (2000).

the oppressed, but it is also part of the reproduction process of the NGO system itself'
(Tvedt, 1998: 76).

Tvedt's insights are multifaceted and raise a number of important issues in relation to this
study. The first is that when viewed through this lens, NGOs are part of an overarching
paradigm that views the world through the discursive lens of development. This, as we
saw in the problematisation of development in section 2.5.1.2 in chapter two, is an
arbitrary and Western-centric device that creates an artificially imposed North-South
divide premised on neoliberal notions of modernisation and progress. That the
communicative labour (see Dempsey, 2009) of NGOs effectively reinscribes and
'routinizes' (Tvedt, 1998: 77) NGO engagement seems to undermine the perception of
NGOs as dynamic, democratic or accountable interlocutors for marginalised development
constituencies since marginalised groups are, by definition, outside the 'system'.

3.3.1.2 Donors and the professionalisation of NGOs

The role of donor funding in critiques of the perceived proximity to the grassroots upheld
by NGOs may not be understated. In echoes of the broader critiques of development
discourse and practice as new forms of colonialism (see footnote three in chapter two),
NGOs are frequently accused of promoting their own self interest and those of donors at
the expense of marginalised groups on whose behalf they claim to advocate (see for
example Edwards and Hulme, 1996a; Tvedt, 1998; Petras, 1999; Townsend and
Townsend, 2004).

Related to the growth in donor funding for development NGOs is the increasing
professionalisation of the NGO sector (Edwards and Hulme, 1996a; Tvedt, 1998), a trend
that coincides with the professionalisation of development practice more broadly that, as
Kothari (2005) suggests, has both underpinned, and enabled the expansion of, neoliberal
development paradigms. This professionalisation has also been fuelled by donors
increasingly imposing a degree of managerialism and control on the work of NGOs that
results in a similarity of experiences and outputs in vastly diverse locations (Mawdsley et
al., 2002), thus lending additional empirical support to Tvedt's characterisation of the

relationship between NGOs and donors as 'routinized' (see also Townsend and Townsend, 2004).

The question of the extent to which donors' control of financial resources affects development discourse and practice is well rehearsed (see for example Edwards and Hulme, 1996a; Tvedt, 1998; Petras, 1999; Mawdsley, et al., 2002; Ebrahim, 2003) and does not need to be revisited here in any great detail. The question that this literature raises for the purposes of the present study, however, is the extent to which the perceived capacity of Southern NGOs in particular operates outside of these 'routinized practices'. Indeed, despite these critiques of development NGOs, Southern NGOs are still located in development discourse and practice as closer to the 'grassroots' and representative of alternative development paradigms.

3.3.1.3 Problematising Southern NGOs: elites or grassroots?

Alvarez (1998: 307) notes, 'the concept of non-governmental organization is indiscriminately deployed in development discourse to refer to any social actor *not* clearly situated within the realm of the state or the market – from peasant collectives and community soup kitchens to research oriented policy think tanks'. Due to their geographical location, Southern NGOs are largely understood, as this section highlights, to be either marginalised from the dominant knowledge infrastructure or as ineluctably, and often reluctantly, tied to Northern funding and agendas for the sake of their own survival (see for example Mawdsley et al., 2002; Ebrahim, 2003). Southern NGOs are perceived as being caught in a discursive and financial David and Goliath battle (see Clark, 1991), negotiating a path between resistance embodied in the defence of the material and informational needs and demands of their own poor, marginalised or grassroots constituents, versus co-option into the development fashions of dominant discourses and the often contradictory and endless processual demands of funders and other Northern donors.

What is important to note for the purposes of the present study is that it is Northern NGOs, understood as a 'category', and its collective relationship to knowledge and decision-making processes in developing contexts, that has endured the most sustained scrutiny. Indeed, a growing number of studies (see for example Mawdsley et al. 2002;

Mohan, 2002) have moved away from the tendency for the study of NGOs to be 'case study focused' (Bebbington, 2004) towards a consideration of the wider geographies of their involvement in the processes of development, with a notable emphasis on interrogating the relationships between Northern NGOs and their Southern partners. This type of analysis typically places Northern NGOs as mediators between the demands of donors and of Southern partner NGOs, with concerns expressed about the 'top-down' (Mawdsley, et al., 2002; Edwards and Hulme, 1996a; DeMars, 2005) or dictatorial (Mohan, 2002: 142) nature of this relationship that marginalises the views, agency and independence of Southern NGO partners. Southern NGOs, by contrast, are perceived as crucial interlocutors between Northern stakeholders and marginalised constituencies: '[m]ost donors and NNGOs [Northern NGOs] work with local partner NGOs' since '[f]oreign interests may lack the local knowledge or legitimacy to enter local communities so that partner NGOs are important gatekeepers in reaching the grassroots' (Mohan, 2002: 143). The moral claims to representation asserted by Southern NGOs invite significantly less scrutiny due to their perceived proximity to subaltern groups: 'It is precisely this perceived 'closeness' to local communities and understanding of their cultures that gives the SNGOs [Southern NGOs] their power' (Mohan, 2002: 143).

This perception of NGOs as interlocutors between power brokers and those marginalised from decision-making processes, is reinforced by the rise of neoliberal ideologies underpinning 'privatized states and dewelfarized development' (Sharma, 2008: xxxvi):

> Once the burden of social service provision had been shifted decisively onto poor women and community level 'civil society organisations', 'civil society' itself was cast in an ever more significant role: as an all-purpose intermediary which would simultaneously keep the state in check, make up for its shortcomings, use proximity to 'the poor' to help them to help themselves, and represent the masses who could not speak for themselves (Cornwall et al., 2008: 3).

This neoliberal discourse reveals an implied emphasis on the need to reach and represent 'the poor', 'the marginalised' or the 'grassroots'. These are not meaningful categorisations but instead, as Dempsey (2009: 331-2) argues, act as 'deeply moralizing spatial metaphor[s]' that lead to the

romanticization of the local scale [that] disguises the extent to which local social arrangements are as deeply gendered, classed, and raced as other scales ... Not only is the local scale commonly seen as more authentic than other scales, but it is often conceived of as the antidote to global power. Here, the global is produced as a powerful and corrupting force that acts upon the local. Of course, the ''local'' is never purely local, but is constituted in part by extra-local linkages and practices over time ... Likewise, so-called global processes such as neoliberalism only achieve concrete existence at local scales and within grounded practices. Yet, the metaphor of the grassroots, with its implied hierarchy of scale, has become increasingly tied up with what are seen as more emancipatory forms of development.

It is the 'metaphor of the grassroots', embodying notions of authenticity and the uncorrupted 'local' level where 'emancipatory forms of development' become possible, that is the most important for our purposes. This emphasis echoes the valorisation of the 'indigenous' knowledge outlined in section 2.5.1.3 in chapter two, and the essentialising of the 'subaltern' highlighted by Kapoor (2004), which persists despite evidence to the contrary.

Mohan (2002: 148) articulates what he terms the 'paradox' faced by Southern NGOs, insofar as they are charged on the one hand with representing the grassroots but are in reality accountable to donors, thus minimising the expression of local needs that 'further marginalises and alienates the rural poor'. This tendency to render the Southern NGO as victim is not an entirely accurate characterisation: 'In practice, this assumption [that Southern NGOs are 'close' to local communities] is not always borne out. In many cases the local NGOs behave in equally patronising, dictatorial and bureaucratic ways towards the villages they represent' (Mohan, 2002: 143). He goes on to assert that '[t]hey [the SNGOs] claim to represent the local communities, but have rather patronising attitudes towards them, but know they are beyond reproach' (ibid). Mohan (2002: 148) concludes his analysis by further suggesting that

the real beneficiaries of strengthening civil society have been the local elites ...who use foreign aid and locally generated income as a means of achieving or consolidating their middle-class status ... In emphasising local knowledge, grassroots initiative, and community development this ideology of empowerment generates a discourse of discrete and bounded places amenable to a particular form of intervention that only they, albeit

in partnership, can largely control. Again, the rural poor are only brought in as members of fictionalised 'communities' and are in practice denied any real voice.

Mohan's conclusion is reminiscent of the critiques of Pigg (1992), Botchway (2001) and others of discrete and essentialised categories so frequently used in development discourse such as 'the community' or 'the village' that mask dissent and obscure more than they reveal about the temporal and spatial nature of inequality in Southern contexts. Mohan's observations are borne out in recent case-study based research on NGOs that belie the perception that it is purely Northern NGOs or hegemonic discourses that limit their capacity. NGOs in Bangladesh, for instance, have been found to be subject to organisational cultures that are top-down and hierarchical, often mimicking 'hierarchical and authoritarian social forms' of the political and economic landscape from which they emerge (Wood, 1997: 87-8). The function of elite networks that marginalise poor constituencies and exclude their expressed needs and concerns from decision-making processes have also been uncovered in relation to the involvement of NGOs in land redistribution policy (Devine, 2002) and national advocacy work (Madon and Lewis, 2003: 14).

Extrapolating on these isolated findings to establish a broader systemic critique of the capacity of Southern NGOs to act as information intermediaries is the point of departure for this study, which has consequences for how information, both in terms of the needs and views of marginalised groups, are identified and managed. The implications for the assumptions underpinning K4Dev practice are significant, insofar as this review suggests that the perception of Southern NGOs as democratic, accountable and participatory interlocutors or representatives of alternative knowledge paradigms is constrained by the infrastructural and ideological terrain of development itself. How this limitation is in turn shaped by perceptions of the capacity of 'women' to either represent, or indeed deliver, alternative development, is the subject of the next section.

3.3.2 Women, feminisms and development

The Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) held in Beijing in 1995 established the first international commitments for governments to tackle gender inequality, which in turn led to increased financial resources for the establishment of women's ministries and

NGOs the world over. As a consequence of both the preparation for, and the outcomes of, this process, support for the recognition of women as equal stakeholders in development consolidated and significantly expanded over 25 years of academic and activist research and writing on feminism in development. Groundbreaking work by academic/activists including Boserup (1970), Sen and Grown (1987), Molyneux (1985), Elson (1989), Moser (1993), Kabeer (1994) (to name only a very few) charts the steady march of feminist writing in development from identifying women as economically productive to recognising women not just as victims but also as agents whose behaviour is shaped by capitalism, gender, patriarchy and indeed, development itself. This literature is rich in empirical detail about the struggles of women in a range of developing contexts and is too expansive to cover in any detail here. What is more important for the purposes of this analysis is to locate and critically analyse the *imagined capacities of women* within development, as the previous section in this chapter has done in relation to NGOs. It is through an interrogation of the perceived capacity of 'women', understood as a category, to deliver social change without accounting for the diversity of women's status, relative access to resources and lived realities that implications may be drawn out for K4Dev discourse and practice.

The existing literature on power imbalances in information networks tends to characterise women and women/gender-related work as retaining the capacity to work outside of mainstream, hegemonic constraints (see for example Mawdsley et al., 2002: 136; Valk et al., 1999). Despite well-established feminist theoretical positions that warn away from homogenising tendencies based on group identities (for example Amos and Parmar, 1984; Mohanty, 1991; Spivak, 1988; Yuval-Davis, 1994; and Hill-Collins, 2000), and considerable empirical evidence to the contrary[20], there persists a 'powerful social

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[20] There is substantial empirical evidence accrued through various isolated case-study based research of women's organisations or informal groups that demonstrates the centrality of class politics to problematising and contextualising women's poverty and inequality. For a critique of the politics of exclusion in women's empowerment/micro-credit programmes and self-help groups in the Indian context, see for example Sangtin Writers and Nagar (2006); Nagar and Singh (2006); Murthy et al. (2008); Bhattacharya (2004); Sharma and Parthasarathy (2007); Dwivedi (2007); Batliwala and Dhanraj (2007); and Raju (2006). For critiques of women and class in Africa, see for example Creevey's (2004) analysis of the class-based inequalities that circumscribe the function of women's credit societies in Senegal; Morley at al.'s (2006) study of gender and higher education in Commonwealth universities provides an empirical example of elite capture by privileged women where gender is not intersected with other axes of inequality; Nabacwa's (2002) study of women's advocacy NGOs in Uganda highlights the disconnection between 'elitist women' and the grassroots; and see Gugerty and Kremer (2008) for a critical analysis of women's

imagery of women's solidarity' that is 'underpinned by assumptions of women's inherent co-operativeness with each other' (Cornwall, 2007: 150). Indeed, so entrenched is the myth-making around female solidarity[21] that, as Hilhorst (2003: 66) argues, the *imagery* of a 'global sisterhood', embodied in women's movements and collective action, continues to fuel a substantial proportion of development practice:

> In 1984, Robin Morgan launched the slogan 'Sisterhood is Global'. Like many feminists in the 1970s, Morgan asserts that women share a common worldview as a result of a common condition. This idea has since been thoroughly discredited, with women pointing to divisions based on class and race. It has also become common sense that there is no one singular kind of women's movement ... It is one thing to assert that feminist movements, like other social movements, have a constructed and emerging character. However, at the same time, *we have to acknowledge that particular frozen images of women's movements continue to play a role in discussions and practices of women engaged in collective action* (my emphasis).[22]

Hilhorst's insights suggest that, despite the availability of a substantial body of critical and empirical research about inequality amongst women in a range of (developing) contexts, the development imagination, understood as a paradigm or framework, projects the *imagined capacity* of women (articulated as a constituency or target group) as a legitimate and appropriate target for empowerment and development interventions.

This imagined female solidarity manifests itself as references to 'women' as a constituency who are, by their very nature (and much like the 'imagined' NGO in the previous section) more democratic and accountable and less hierarchical. There is a prevailing tendency in development discourse to both reinforce as well as privilege in particular a homogenous category of Southern women, examples of which are provided by the following two quotations:

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community associations in Kenya, where they find that women are neither, contrary to donor assumptions, better at communicating nor above concerns around elite capture, even at the local level. For a critique of the invisibilisation of class in the politics of women's NGOs in Eastern Europe, see for example Ghodsee's (2006) study of women's NGOs in Bulgaria.

[21] Whilst examples abound in the literature, examples of the generalisations made about the intrinsic capacity of women to prioritise consensus and compromise over conflict (despite how other axes of differences shape material realities in diverse, site-specific ways) is evidenced in the work of Handy et al. (2006), Moghadam (2005) and Morgan (1984).

[22] See also Nagar and Singh (2006: 299) and Alvarez (1998) for critical analyses of class and feminism in developing contexts.

> More critical has been the tendency of development agencies to privilege the information provided by Western feminists and researchers over the often better-informed perspectives of *developing world women* (Goetz, 1994: 28; my emphasis).

> Because the UN's structures give political voice to otherwise weak states and perspectives, the concerns of *women from the global South* could be brought to the attention of more privileged women and raise their consciousness (Ferree, 2006: 17; my emphasis)

As these quotations demonstrate, no further distinction is made by class or privilege in relation to a 'development world woman' or a woman 'from the Global South'. Nor can this tendency be dismissed as another development essentialism that is used merely as a discursive shorthand; rather, as both the theoretical analysis in section 3.3.2.2 below and the empirical analysis highlight, it is one that pervades development practice and underpins the works of information intermediaries in both Northern and Southern contexts. These essentialisms have real material consequences for individuals and organisations that are located within, or indeed align themselves along, dominant perceptions of the geography of poverty and exclusion.[23] Before turning to an examination of this 'geography' and the consequences for key assumptions underpinning K4Dev practice, we must recognise that this tendency does not emerge out of a vacuum. Rather, it derives from the attempts by critical feminists to problematise the dominance of Western feminist thought that has historically essentialised Southern women without further differentiation by other axes of difference, rendering North-South divides the only legitimate axis of analysis in relation to the exercise of power, even within and between women. This is rooted, as the next section highlights, in imperialist and development discourses that render the Global South as the disempowered 'other'.

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[23] It is important to note here that examples do exist of feminist-inspired networks operating at multiple levels that appear to demonstrate a capacity to work across class, caste and ethnic divisions. One notable example is the work of Mahila Samakhya, a grassroots women's empowerment programme funded originally by the Dutch government in India that, as both Sharma (2008) and Porter et al. (in press) note, has helped marginalised women to use the language and tools of the state to subvert the dominance of the state and to demand accountability. It would, however, be difficult to measure the extent to which any perceived success is attributable to shared beliefs in feminism or sisterhood, nor does it diminish the importance of ensuring that development stakeholders understand that positive examples of women working together does not guarantee that all women are willing or able to do so.

3.3.2.1 Locating critiques of feminism and development

The problematisation of the North-South divide is at least partially attributable to scholars studying the discursive and material effects of colonialism and its subsequent withdrawal as a peculiar feature of modernity (Chakrabarty, 2002). The 'nineteenth-century polarity of Orient and Occident', Bhabha (1994: 29) argues, 'unleashed the exclusionary imperialist ideologies of self and other'. This in turn established the idea of what Said (1978: 204) terms 'the Orient' as 'a specific kind of knowledge'. This rendering of the 'other' is, Said (ibid) argues, essentially imperialist, ethnocentric and racist, creating a discursive powerlessness or weakness, where 'the Orient was weaker than the West, which elided the Orient's difference with its weakness'.

Kapoor (2004: 629) cites Said and Spivak's emphasis on 'imperialism's cultural production and domination of colonial societies', where colonial societies are extolled as representing an exoticised 'other'. This results in the 'setting apart [of] certain areas of the world from others' (McEwan, 2001: 95) in a process that Spivak (1985: 247) has referred to as 'worlding': '[t]o think of the Third World as distant cultures, exploited but with rich intact heritages waiting to be recovered, interpreted, and curricularized in English translation helps the emergence of "the Third World" as a signifier that allows us to forget that "worlding", even as it expands the empire of the discipline'.

Given the orientalist (Said, 1978) 'knowledge' of the 'othered' South as weak, it follows, as it did for many Northern feminists attempting to articulate and engage with the concerns of women in the Third World, that 'Third World Women' are disadvantaged not only because they are women but are further weakened and disempowered due to the 'Third World difference' (Mohanty, 2003 [1991]: 40). Scholars thus concerned themselves with gender equality, and the consequences for women living within postcolonial developing societies as both an object of theorising and a site for intervention, where "The Third World *Woman*" is a particularly hallowed signifier' (Spivak 1985: 247; emphasis in original). Building on existing critiques of what McEwan (2001: 97) terms 'Western feminism's unbecoming' in the 1970s and 1980s that resulted from the critical analysis of the overlaps between Western feminism and the imperialist project, Mohanty (2003 [1991]: 25) rightly takes issue with the reductionist tendency of Western feminist discourses on women in the Third World to descend into binaries that render them either

as victims to the political, economic and sexual exigencies of Third World men (and associated kinship structures and practices), or as oppressed objects in relation to liberated Western female subjects. As Mohanty argues (2003 [1991]: 42), these perceptions are 'normed through Eurocentric assumptions' which reveals 'a latent ethnocentrism in particular [Western] feminist writings on women in the Third World'. Whilst acknowledging the 'differences, conflicts, and contradictions internal to Third World women's organizations and communities' (Mohanty, 2003 [1991]: 52), she nonetheless asserts that women in the Third World experience a 'common context of struggle, both historical and contemporary' (Mohanty, 2003 [1991]: 49). This 'common context', she argues, offers a challenge to white, Western feminisms because of the 'particular inheritance of post-fifteenth-century Euro-American hegemony: the inheritance of slavery, enforced migration, plantation and indentured labor, colonialism, imperial conquest, and genocide' (Mohanty, 2003 [1991]: 52). Mohanty (2003 [1991]: 46) deliberately 'foregrounds Third World Women as a political category', thus destabilising the discursive homogenisation and victimisation of women in the Global South by Northern feminist scholarship, in turn reclaiming this discursive space for Southern women as active agents and not passive victims of development's gaze.

3.3.2.2 Problematising feminism and development

This decolonisation of feminism has been crucial for Southern women's movements to gain international recognition (Alvarez, 1998). Yet, despite identifying the danger of essentialising 'Southern women', the basis for the critique invariably reverts back to a prioritisation of the destabilisation of Western, Eurocentric feminist norms. Mohanty (2003 [1991]: 18), for instance, raises concerns about 'middle-class, urban African or Asian scholars who write about their rural or working-class sisters and assume their own middle-class cultures as the norm and codify working class histories and cultures as [the] other', noting that 'the critiques I offer also pertain to Third World scholars who write about their own cultures and employ identical strategies'. She does not, however, elaborate further on the material consequences of this 'othering' tendency for Third World or Southern feminist discourse and practice. Instead she reverts back subsequently in this and other writing to the North-South divide and critiques of the white, Western middle-class feminist as the key 'referent' for development feminist practice, particularly

in development studies, where, as we have seen, she designates 'Third World Women' as a legitimate counterpoint and a distinct political category in relation to the hegemony of Western feminist discourse and practice.

For her part, Kothari (2002: 49) notes a 'tendency to construct a singular category – "woman" – to suggest a commonality of oppression [which] fails to distinguish between the varied histories and imbalances of power among women'. She extends this critique to further problematise the reifying of the 'subaltern' which results from the privileging of the 'Third World woman' in the work of postcolonial feminists. She cites the work of Suleri (1993), who argues that 'the "Third World woman" [is] being invested with an iconicity that is almost "too good to be true"' (Suleri, 1993: 274, as cited in Kothari, 2002: 50). Kothari thus concludes with a note of caution: 'while many writings on race, gender and colonialism provide a challenge to dominant (masculinist and racialized) views, they are in danger of reproducing the very notions and practices they aim to critique'. Like Mohanty, however, she similarly reiterates that the 'the target of the critique has to be the persistent dominance of masculinist and Eurocentric notions, constructions and forms of knowledge', thus leaving open the question of how the 'iconicity' of the 'Third World Woman' (Suleri, 1993) affects feminist development practice.

Spivak (Spivak with Sharpe, 2003: 618) also raises concerns around the notion of geographic proximity to marginalised groups as a proxy measure of the capacity of the imagined 'Southern woman' to represent the subaltern that instead may be reinscribing middle-class values at the expense of subalterns within Southern contexts. This position is highlighted by a discussion between Spivak (1990: 68) and three South Asian feminist academics. Their discussion raises concerns around authenticity as something that can be understood or demarcated, in effect, geographically; in other words, they question the idea that it is the sited woman that is of relevance in the postcolonial critique. They claim that Spivak is 'politically contaminated' as compared to their location as Indian feminist academics, since 'what we write and teach has political and other actual consequences for us that are in a sense different from the consequences, or lack of consequences, for you'. This claim, Mohanram (1996: 284) argues, referring to this interview,

> relegates Spivak's theorising within the confines of a mere
> academic/intellectual exercise in contrast to the former's position which is

located as activist and therefore more 'real'. But their position is categorised as activist not because it falls within the traditional parameters of activist feminism, but rather because of their domicile in India ... [s]uch a suggestion also has implications of authenticity attached to the theorising, practising, and publication of postcolonial theory.

Spivak suggests that, in fact, she perceives them as elites who are 'in as much of the predicament of the post-colonial intellectual as I am' (Spivak, 1990: 70). Whilst Spivak's response is a rejection of their claims to authenticity that derive purely from their geographical location, her critique still privileges the postcolonial condition and its material effect on these three female academics, as the key referent. As Kapoor reminds us, 'Spivak is adamant that intellectuals and elites cannot claim a space uncontaminated by capitalism and imperialism' (Kapoor citing Spivak, 2004: 645).

3.3.2.3 Inequality amongst women: beyond the North-South divide

The point of departure for this study is to consider how power relations are manifested in the Global South beyond the North-South divide so firmly embedded in development discourse and practice, as described above. Alcoff (1991)'s deconstruction of the practice of 'speaking for others', which draws explicitly on Spivak's work, is instructive here. She argues, like Spivak, that unequal discursive practices are partly attributable to the material effects of imperialism. She provides the following example:

> ... in a situation where a well-meaning First World person is speaking for a person or group in the Third World, the very discursive arrangement may reinscribe the "hierarchy of civilizations" ... This effect occurs because the speaker is positioned as authoritative and empowered, as the knowledgeable subject, while the group in the Third World is reduced, merely because of the structure of the speaking practice, to an object and victim that must be championed from afar, thus disempowered. Though the speaker may be trying to materially improve the situation of some lesser-privileged group, the effects of her discourse is to reinforce racist, imperialist conceptions and perhaps also to further silence the lesser-privileged group's own ability to speak and be heard (Alcoff, 1991: 26).

In this example, if we replaced 'First World person' and 'Third World' with 'middle-class Indian feminist' and 'urban slum' respectively, or indeed with any oppositional categories of more or less privileged groups, the statement would be no less salient. Alcoff's analysis reveals two important insights for the purposes of this analysis. The first is that discursive practices involving the representation of others are always mediated by power, however

unintentional, that must be continually evaluated. This, as Alcoff recognises, may nonetheless silence the 'lesser-privileged group', as they are rendered as neither having the knowledge nor the authority to engage at that discursive level. The second insight is that whilst Alcoff's examples echo Spivak's articulation of privilege as deriving primarily from 'imperialist conceptions', whether these are located in the North or South, extrapolating from Alcoff's analysis would suggest that colonialism is one amongst many contexts of inequality that lends discursive authority and legitimacy to one group attempting to speak on behalf of another. And whilst elite practices in a range of diverse contexts may be perceived as mimicking colonial material and discursive practices, they do not, as a result, necessarily derive exclusively from them. In concrete terms, the authorising signature of Southern feminist elites over subalterns in transnational development discourses may represent the colonisation of ideas, but does not in every instance directly descend from colonialism. It may also represent, as the empirical analysis in this study suggests, the juxtaposition of transnational and postcolonial discourses with regionally-specific structural and institutional inequalities that create unique types of exclusion and privilege. These hybrid structures of inequality privilege the voices of those groups who, by virtue of the intersection between postcoloniality and how class, caste, gender, religion or other axes of difference are lived and interpreted in their regional context, dominate these spaces whilst simultaneously silencing those on whose behalf many of the privileged claim these moral and political discursive spaces.

3.4 The implications for K4Dev of investing in the imagined capacities of Southern NGOs and Southern women: Emerging concerns

Mayoux (1998: 176-7), identifying a growth in the number of women's NGOs in the 1990s, including Southern women's NGOs, who are committed broadly to women's empowerment, cautions that

> ... it cannot be assumed that the views expressed by those women who have access to NGO decision-making processes are necessarily representative of other women, particularly the most disadvantaged. There are significant differences between women from different classes, of different ages and marital status, and from different cultures in all aspects of gender subordination ... (Mayoux, 1998: 176).

Bringing together the two strands of theorising that credit Southern NGOs with the capacity to represent marginalised groups and locate Southern women as key change agents in development, we can begin to consider some of the implications for K4Dev practice of Mayoux's cautioned approach. Drawing together Mayoux's (1998: 178) summary of the key objectives of 'gender accountability' in large Northern and Southern NGOs in the post-Beijing period with the assumptions underpinning the World Bank knowledge paradigm, we can identify three key intervention areas of relevance to knowledge-based development practice in relation to promoting gender justice in development: influencing policy processes; demanding accountability from donors; and networking as intermediaries to connect grassroots concerns to decision-making processes. Each will be interrogated in turn highlighting concerns emerging in the literature that locate and problematise the imagined capacity of Southern women, either as individuals or as part of NGOs, to deliver on these broad objectives.

3.4.1 Policy processes and change agents

Reflecting the growing emphasis on evidence-based policy that has underpinned the recent exponential growth in K4Dev services (section 2.5.2.2 in chapter two), there is a widespread belief in knowledge-based development practice that policymakers are key 'change agents' whose viewpoints may be altered given the appropriate intervention and who have a relative degree of power and will to act. Notwithstanding concerns about the policy process itself highlighted in section 2.5.2.2 in chapter two, at a general level, it is not obvious that policymakers and senior bureaucrats themselves may always be considered change agents. Ocampo (2006: viii-ix) points out that individual actors may have concerns outside of change including ensuring their own survival:

> We like to think that knowledge plays a leading role in determining policy, but it is often just opinions partly based on knowledge, which are quite susceptible to the influence of other social factors - that is, again ideology and interests ... these opinions tend to generate 'contagion' - that is, the tendency of the ideas of some actors to be based on those of other actors. The reason is quite simple: it is costly for a specific agent to deviate from the average opinion as, in the case of ideas, it may mean her/his marginalization from access to power and influence.

Again reflecting the issues raised in section 2.5.2.2 in chapter two, any knowledge potentially made available for its utility or relevance is competing with a range of factors for a policymakers' attention, not the least of which is their own self-interest.

Nor is this shortcoming necessarily altered if policymakers or senior bureaucrats are women or those charged with implementing gender mainstreaming. As we saw above, as part of the implementation process in the post-Beijing period, women and gender ministries and bureaucracies were established to monitor commitments to the Beijing Platform for Action. Yet, the establishment of women/gender ministries and gender training for bureaucracies does not necessarily lead to transformative or substantive change. Firstly, as Standing (2007: 106) argues, expecting transformative change to occur within the routine function of bureaucracies belies a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of bureaucracies:

> Transformative actions enshrined in progressive policies on gender require political coalition-building, not just a statement on a statute book and a directive to the bureaucracy to carry them out.

The co-option of empowerment discourses into neoliberal development paradigms has also led to the bureaucratisation (see the discussion in section 3.2 above) of feminist notions of change at the top of the hierarchy. Echoing concerns raised here and in section 2.2 in chapter two about K4Dev as an essentially marketised response to concerns around the equitable distribution of informational capital, itself rooted in neoliberalism, Goetz and Sandler (2007: 168) argue that 'gender mainstreaming is to the work of achieving gender equality and women's empowerment what trickle-down economics is to the work of achieving poverty alleviation'. Gender mainstreaming, they argue,

> concentrates on top-loading and investments in those that are already privileged, in the belief that they will share this privilege and that benefits will flow to change the options and opportunities of those most in need. So we invest tens of millions of dollars in gender training for bureaucrats. We invest in building an evidence base, checking again and again to document the insidious effects of gender inequality to be able to convince our colleagues that this is a real problem. We invest time and money in formulating gender action plans and policies, gender equality checklists and, more recently, gender equality scorecards. In the current bureaucratic logic this makes sense. But just as those who are already wealthy can either use their increased income from tax breaks to create job opportunities for those living in poverty or can simply put it in a savings

account, so too can those who receive gender training place it in their own private knowledge bank and fail to turn it into programming that supports greater equality (Goetz and Sandler, 2007: 169).

The assumption that change will 'trickle down' in a way that is sensitive to, or even transcends, regional or local Southern-based inequalities mirrors the tendency of the neoliberal knowledge paradigm to presume that, as we saw in section 3.2.4 above, the economic empowerment of one woman will have knock-on effects for her family, community and the economy. This is problematic not only because of the concerns raised in relation to the critiques of the World Bank knowledge paradigm in the previous chapter, but because, as Goetz and Sandler identify, and leading on to the second point, it is naive to assume that those with knowledge, even women, will necessarily share knowledge or champion gender equality.

As the feminist literature on avoiding essentialisms (see section 3.3.2 above) reminds us, to assume that women will always advocate for other women or rally around gender justice concerns is also short-sighted. Rai (2002: 5) argues in her study of class, caste and gender in India's parliament, for example, that neither did women at the federal level in Indian politics access their seats through reservation systems, nor does their presence lead to or guarantee any additional benefit for women: 'Women's representation in the parliament, while important on the grounds of social justice and legitimacy of the political system, does not easily translate into improved representation of women's various interests'. She suggests that the pursuit of power will shape the approach of female MPs to policy as much, if not more than, their gender and the desire to uplift other women:

> Most women MPs interviewed did not have women's issues high on their list of interests. Rather, they wanted to be on committees relating to economy, international relations and trade. As ambitious women these MPs want to be where power and influence converge (Rai, 2002: 4).

In her reporting on women's political representation, Kishwar (1996) also finds that key women in the main political parties in India do not promote gender justice issues, as they would see it as a 'downgrading of their status if they were projected primarily as leaders of women'. The implications for knowledge-based development aid are significant, both in terms of targeting policymakers and bureaucrats as change agents, as well as targeting elite women as representatives of women's interests or gender justice concerns.

3.4.2 Donor funding and accountability

In addition to reaching policymakers as key change agents, donor accountability is a widespread concern amongst gender activists in development. Yet, the difficulty of holding donors to account, echoing the analysis in section 3.3.1.2 above in relation to mainstream NGOs, is that bilateral donors in particular are still the principal source of funding for the vast majority of civil society activity, and this is particularly the case for both Northern and Southern women's NGOs. As one study of NGOs in Africa found, 'gender mainstreaming is often perceived by other local NGOs to be for the benefit of donors, rather than for the benefit of communities' (Wendoh and Wallace, 2005: 71). Even where alternatives to transnational gender and development narratives exist, because of donor restrictions on how money is to be spent on gender, there is little room for a genuine alternative or subversive narrative on gender and power to emerge:

> Donor procedures — with tightly framed budgets, timetables, and predicted outcomes — do not enable the kind of work needed for sensitive social and cultural change to take place effectively. Local NGO staff cannot control how they go about mainstreaming gender equality, because of donor conditions and demands. These are often applied in a blanket way across countries and cultures that are, in fact, highly differentiated and work in very different ways. (Wendoh and Wallace, 2005: 73)

The control of funding by donors imposes tangible limitations on the capacity of both Northern and Southern women's organisations to explore new and potentially innovative approaches to communicating information to contribute to processes of women's empowerment. There is a further suggestion that the need to generate 'demonstrable impacts' also skews interventions away in favour of those who are more likely to benefit, and may not, as a result, target the poorest or most oppressed women (Mayoux, 1998).

The professionalisation of non-profit activities cited in section 3.3.1.2 above in relation to mainstream NGOs has, some scholars have argued, also extended to an 'NGO-ization' of feminist movements (Alvarez, 1998; see also Jad, 2007), where NGOs in a range of developing contexts offer (Western) educated women in particular professional career opportunities.[24] As Alvarez (1998: 313) highlights,

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[24] See Sen, 1998 for a discussion of professional non-profit employment in India; Clark and Michuki, 2009 for a discussion of the professionalisation of women's NGOs in Jordan.

the Beijing process suggested that because resources provided by the international development community enabled some feminist NGOs to gather policy-relevant information and maintain permanent staff charged with "interfacing" with UN, government, and media representatives, these more professionalized, policy-oriented strands of the feminist field have become privileged interlocutors with public officials, the media, and bilateral and multilateral aid and development agencies.

This echoes Mayoux's (1998: 186) observations that NGOs do not always create spaces for marginalised women to be involved in decision-making processes even within the organisation, since '[w]here women are involved they are likely to be more professional and articulate women, and poor women are thus by-passed'. The effect has been to create a cadre of elite feminists who, as this analysis of the literature suggests, are as likely to wield information resources in their own self interest as they are to represent or advocate around gender justice concerns for marginalised women.

3.4.3 Networks

The professionalisation of development also has consequences for the reliance on functional information networks as a key mechanism for delivering knowledge-based development aid. The centrality of networks, tied up with the notion that '"social capital" can promote economic development' (Porter et al., in press), has led to 'the view among donors, in particular, that the networks on which "social capital" is built are "normatively good things" (Porter et al., in press, citing DeFilippis, 2002). Networks are not isolated, neutral entities but rather transmit, as Tvedt (1998) describes in relation to the function of NGO networks above, systemic social and political inequalities. Networks can also be inclusionary and exclusionary, where 'interpersonal relations and the networks built on them are not only signifiers of trust: they may also allow, even encourage, collusion, corruption and/or exclusion' (Porter et al, in press). Whilst networks may, in principle, offer the opportunity to promote the greater inclusion of a range of diverse stakeholders in the knowledge economy, as the analysis in the previous chapter emphasises, those individuals and organisations with the discursive and physical capacity to access dominant knowledge networks are also those most likely to be able to capitalise on the opportunities created by any new information or knowledge. This polarising effect leads Stone (2005: 89) to suggest that

caution is needed in assessing the impact of networks. Some observers see networks as contributing to a greater role for civil society and to the democratisation of global policy-making. However, there are strong grounds for concern about access and power. The global agora is not a level playing field for networks. It is characterised by an uneven distribution of resources and a hierarchy of discourses in which relatively few can be public actors. Accordingly, the extent to which global and regional networks become a focal point of public affairs has meaning primarily for those who have the resources, patronage or expertise to enter and traverse the agora.

Recent research in Uganda also suggests that caution needs to be extended to the information networks of Southern women claiming to act as intermediaries between grassroots groups and policy processes. Nabacwa (2002: 26) suggests that, in the Ugandan context, advocacy work undertaken by women's NGOs to effect changes in policy at the national level 'have been detached from the districts and have more often been interpreted as elitist women's issues'. Her research also raises concerns around the imagined capacities of Southern women's NGOs, many of whom claim in principle to maintain such links:

> The major advocacy network for women, UWONET [Uganda Women's Network] respondent said that they have no links with grassroots women … The major assumption that UWONET holds is that its members will include the advocacy agenda in their organisational mandates to ensure that it reaches the grassroots women. However … this has not been the case (Nabacwa, 2002: 48).

UWONET undoubtedly draws legitimacy from their perceived link with grassroots groups, yet, it is a connection that does not withstand closer scrutiny. This practice of presuming links with the grassroots through partner NGOs has significant implications for knowledge-based development practices that privilege Southern actors as suitable intermediaries. It is a theme that is revisited in the context of the empirical analysis in chapters eight to ten.

3.5 Conclusion

There are emerging concerns around how power and inequality are manifested amongst Southern women and NGOs, with consequences for stakeholders who are attempting to promote emancipatory empowerment and development amongst marginalised groups. Despite this recognition, however, significant gaps in the literature persist. Where, for

example, class divides within Southern contexts and concerns around the 'authenticity' of Southern voices are evidenced, as in the numerous case studies cited in section 3.3.2, these types of findings tend to be peripheral or secondary observations and are rarely problematised. Where these findings are problematised, they are characterised as issues for donors to be aware of in relation to particular organisational forms or interventions types such as self-help groups or NGOs. Where broader implications are extrapolated, these tend to be characterised as *problems of development* and the associated language of hierarchy and hegemony that inform discussions of development, echoing Spivak's and Mohanty's privileging of the discursive and material power of postcolonial development. Whilst some strides have been made in actively problematising the relationship between class, feminism and development (Alvarez, 1998; Sangtin Writers and Nagar, 2006; Cornwall, Harrison and Whitehead, 2007) neither in these cases nor in the numerous case studies citied in section 3.3.2, are the lessons from these findings extrapolated back into considering the *consequences for Northern feminist development discourses* that are keen to engage with, and have professed a commitment to, engaging with the 'subaltern'. Scholarship that raises concerns around class, gender and the authenticity of Southern voices is not penetrating K4Dev practice (as the analysis demonstrates in chapter six), even amongst notable development feminists who still invest in an imagined transnational community of feminist activists strategically using information and women's networks to promote empowerment and development for marginalised women (see for example True, 2008; Rai, 2005). Furthermore, there is a notable silence on the nature of knowledge practices that prioritise the production and dissemination of information to promote development that frequently underpin commitments to marginalised groups, notably where these are portrayed as challenges to the World Bank knowledge paradigm.

Turning the lens back onto the assumptions underpinning Northern feminist development discourses leads to a consideration of whether one essentialism – the Southern woman as victim – has been replaced in discourse and practice with another: the Southern woman, by virtue of her geographic location, as both a source and representative of alternative and subversive development paradigms and ideas. It raises the question: what is the nature of the Southern voice in K4Dev, taking into account the diversity of this context? How is it expressed? Given the concerns raised in this literature, this study is less about

providing a definitive answer to this question, which anyway is a deterministic approach that presumes there is an objective truth 'to be found'. Instead the 'answer' to this question is to investigate the social, political, economic and cultural contexts for any representative claims made by the Southern stakeholders (feminist/NGOs) interrogated as part of the empirical study. To what extent is inequality and difference in the empirical site attributable to Amadiume's (2000: 155) notion of the 'Europeanised African woman' who maintains a desire to reproduce European cultures, beliefs and practices, as contrasted with what she perceives as the spirit of African 'daughters of the Goddess'? Transposed to the South Asian context, to what extent is the contrast as dichotomous as Amadiume proposes it is in the African context? What is the nature of any nuance?

Given a backdrop of neoliberalism as an all-encompassing, transnational paradigm, and the concomitant co-option of more progressive notions of empowerment into development discourse, this study critically analyses and locates the knowledge-based practices of Southern women, as individuals and as part of NGOs. Drawing together the analysis of the literature in this and the previous chapter, it focuses on the extent to which progressive knowledge practices address the main critiques of the World Bank knowledge paradigm in both Northern and Southern contexts. It will also interrogate the extent to which the 'imagined capacities' of Southern women themselves, acting as individuals and as part of NGO information intermediaries, are both shaped and constrained by Northern hegemonies and informed by discursive and material North-South binaries. It is important to note again, as in the introduction in chapter one, that this is NOT a case study of one NGO or simply a critique of women's NGOs, but will rather be a broader systemic critique of knowledge-based development practice focusing on the efforts of women and extending the analysis to consider the impact on Northern feminists engaging in knowledge-based development. The literature reviewed in chapters two and three provide an important context for problematising knowledge practices and the implications for understanding any contributions these practices make to processes of empowerment and development for marginalised groups. Before the empirical analysis can address some of these concerns, the next chapter provides insights into the methodology used to investigate these questions.

4. Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed overview of the methodology used to address the research questions. This study uses a qualitative, multi-site ethnography, consisting of interviews, (participant) observation and extensive documentary evidence. Given that the *flow of information* is the principal focus of the inquiry, 'sites' consist of key stakeholder groups and how they differentially 'receive' or access (or not) knowledge services, and how information is 'filtering' within and between those sites located in the North and India. These are not 'sites' in a strictly traditional or geographical sense but instead may be understood as discursive sites, and are defined in relation to the movement of information as it travels from the developed North to the developing South.[25] This study is a multi-level analysis that examines the nature of information as it moves between an information intermediary based in the North through to intermediaries to whom they disseminate information in one Southern context – in this case, India. Before examining the rationale for the methodology chosen in light of all available approaches, the first task is to outline briefly the unique characteristics of the field site(s) for this study.

4.2 Background to 'site'

The choice of methodology needs to be contextualised in relation to the peculiarities of the field study sites under scrutiny in this study. Each will be looked at in turn.

4.2.1 Why GDKS?

The choice of the Gender and Development Knowledge Service (GDKS)[26] as the starting 'site' in this study is important because of its role as a knowledge service. GDKS is a small gender and development information service based in the North, established in the early 1990s to respond to a perceived paucity of information amongst bilateral and multilateral

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[25] As section 2.5.1.2 makes clear in chapter two, one critical response to the hegemony of the World Bank knowledge paradigm has been to privilege Southern and/or indigenous knowledge. As such, information is also travelling from South to North to facilitate the diversity that critiques argue is lacking in the original World Bank paradigm. Given that the present study is focused on the assumptions underpinning the knowledge practices of Northern organisations, the movement of information from South to North is invoked in relation to how it informs Northern practices of information production and dissemination geared towards supporting decision-making in Southern contexts.

[26] All names, as per ethical guidelines and agreements with study participants, have been anonymised. GDKS is a pseudonym.

donors on issues related to gender and development in the run up to the Beijing conference in 1995. Initially run as a consultancy that responded to specific information requests, it has since evolved into an information service on gender and development claiming to serve a range of development stakeholders. Funded by bilateral donors in a 'basket-funding' agreement intended to give them autonomy over work programmes and objectives, GDKS aims to provide a link between theory, policy and practice for practitioners and policymakers, in order to further gender equality, particularly in the Global South. GDKS's products and services consist of a website that offers a searchable database of information resources on how gender intersects with development; research commissioned by its donors on issue areas that cross-cut with gender (e.g., gender and health, gender and poverty) which they release as freely available, stand-alone reports; and newsletters that provide an overview of topical gender and development news. GDKS also occasionally produces longer information packs on key gender and development themes that are disseminated to mainstream and gender specialists who are identified as key development change agents. Much of GDKS's work is done through consultation and occasional collaboration with Southern-based practitioners and information intermediaries. Wherever possible, accessibility concerns are also taken into consideration through the production of information in printed form and through ensuring that websites are produced in a low-bandwidth, making them less time-consuming to access or download. Through these knowledge practices they aim to respond to the key critiques of the World Bank knowledge paradigm.

GDKS is distinct from other types of development NGOs because unlike many Northern (women's) development NGOs, it does not rely on project-based consultancies or direct partnerships with Southern organisations. Instead, GDKS classes itself as an information intermediary, liaising with organisations and individuals, including its External International Committee (EIC) made up of primarily Southern-based development experts and practitioners, on elements of its internally agreed work programme of knowledge services. GDKS takes a very broad view of its 'target' audience and does not have any formal reporting mechanisms that place arduous demands on external or partner organisations, its EIC or its donors. Given all of this, it is relatively dislocated from the recipients or users of its knowledge products and services.

This dislocation sets it apart from the types of NGOs that continue to withstand critical and sustained scrutiny in the literature on NGOs in development. Unlike other critical studies of the NGO sector that have tended, for example, to critique civil society as a 'magic bullet' to promoting more positive development outcomes (Edwards and Hulme, 1996); identified the trend towards a transnational, elite diplomacy in the relationship between donors, INGOs and Southern NGOs (see for example Ebrahim, 2003; Tvedt, 1998); or critique the top-down, managerialist relationship between Northern donors and NGOs with Southern NGOs as partners (Mawdsley et al., 2002), knowledge management initiatives and organisations providing information services are not subject to the same chains of accountability. In the case of GDKS, there is no Southern NGO over whom they are directly exercising control, no funding recipient whom they are stifling and no network partner on whom they are imposing any hegemonic ideas, Northern or otherwise. In the absence of organisational partnerships mediated by funding imperatives, project cycles and any associated upward or downward accountability mechanism, GDKS's capacity to influence more positive development outcomes is wholly dependent on processes of information production and dissemination. So whilst their objectives to advance gender equality echo that of a number of women's NGOs in a range of locations working broadly in development. GDKS's emphasis on information production and dissemination to the exclusion of other types of interventions to facilitate change thereby acts as a control to test the capacity of more democratic, diverse and inclusive knowledge practices to reveal alternative development paradigms and deliver more progressive development outcomes, particularly for marginalised groups.

One methodological concern that must be foregrounded is that I worked as a researcher for GDKS up until the second year of my doctoral research, leaving GDKS's employment prior to the start of my field study. As a result of this relationship, GDKS was very forthcoming in sharing private mailing list details of recipients located in New Delhi, facilitating the Southern-based element of the study. I explained to participants in my study that I was a former employee, and often this created confusion as they would address me as if I still worked at the organisation. It was, however, an important link to establish as it meant I was able to access people and spaces that may otherwise have not been so readily available to a PhD student without connections to GDKS. This nonetheless

created concerns in relation to perceptions of my role as an independent researcher versus someone who represents an organisation (even though I was not technically representing them or any other group). I will problematise this concern in section 4.5.4 below.

Chapter five provides a more detailed overview and critical analysis of GDKS's main knowledge practices, including a more detailed look at mechanisms that are in place to engage with 'Southern' constituencies and prioritise 'Southern' voices. An examination of the nature and capacity of its information products as they move into India will be undertaken as part of the empirical analysis in chapter seven.

4.2.2 Why New Delhi, India?

GDKS estimates[27] that around 6000 people receive their newsletter around the world. Of this, over 560 newsletter subscribers are in India – almost ten per cent - so India as a country represents a significant proportion of this global mailing list. Within this, the vast majority of mailings within India go to the main urban centres – Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai, New Delhi and Pune. Of these cities and of the 560 Indian subscribers in total, 125 subscribers, or almost a quarter (22 per cent), are based in New Delhi, the capital of India. New Delhi therefore represents a significant proportion of GDKS's India mailing list. Moreover, of the twelve information packs specifically targeted at key decision-makers that are being sent to India, seven information packs go to individuals in New Delhi. Conducting my field study in India also meant that I was able to capitalise both on the fact that English is widely spoken, particularly amongst elites in urban centres who are over-represented on GDKS's subscriber list, as well as my functional capacity in Hindi, another national language that is spoken in the Northern region including in New Delhi. This latter language capacity in particular thus minimised the need to seek out translators or transcribers to gather a range of views in the field site.

4.2.3 Who are the Southern individuals and organisations on GDKS's mailing list?

GDKS's subscriber list consists of branches of bilateral donor offices, policymakers and academics, all of whom, as the next chapter details, GDKS actively targets as change

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[27] These numbers are accurate as of October 2006 when this data was first requested from GDKS.

agents. By far the largest group, however, are branches of large Northern-based INGOs and large Indian NGOs and research centres. Mawdsley et al.'s (2002: 29-30) research into knowledge in development NGOs enumerates eight NGO types, only the last four of which are relevant for this study:

> e) Intermediary or 'service' NGOs, which do little direct work at the grass-roots, but mainly provide support to other NGOs. They may provide capacity-building and training, or channel funding and information to other NGOs.
>
> f) Branches of international/Northern NGOs with offices in the South. Increasingly acting as centres for capacity-building and partnership rather than undertaking development work themselves. Professional staff, sometimes including expatriates.
>
> g) Large, indigenous service-NGO located in the national capital and highly professionalised. Range of 50-300 staff, involved primarily in training, advocacy, developing networks and transmitting knowledge. Often extremely well connected globally, and an important actor in NGO alliances lobbying governments and donor agencies at the national and international levels.
>
> h) NGOs located in Europe, mostly working with Southern NGOs by providing information, funding, training and institutional support. There is a wide range in terms of size, mission, professional status, funding sources and outlook.

The NGOs on GDKS's mailing list are highly professionalised, ranging in size from small 'service' NGOs to large research centres which may be categorised as large, indigenous service NGOs, since the nature of their work consists not just of research but also action research, advocacy and lobbying on behalf of marginalised groups. In addition to engaging in a range of other development-oriented activities, these organisations act as information intermediaries to influence decision-making processes and support empowerment and development processes amongst policymakers and grassroots groups alike. Many of the individuals perceive themselves as change agents, working concomitantly within and outside normative development structures to bring to the fore issues around gender equality and women's rights. The majority of recipients are practitioners or activists acting both as individuals and as part of organisations and are users of development information including material produced by GDKS. The majority, in

turn, produce and distribute their own (branded) information on various issues related to gender and women's rights.

4.3 Studying development information flows using a multi-site ethnography

In order to interrogate the imagined capacities of Southern stakeholders in knowledge-based development practice as information travels from the North to India in the Global South and beyond, a qualitative multi-site ethnography is particularly appropriate. This methodology offers significant advantages over other approaches, including substantial quantitative analyses and single-site ethnography. The limitations of each of these for the purposes of this study will be elaborated briefly, followed by an explanation for the choice of multi-site ethnography.

Quantitative analysis is not foregrounded as a principal methodology because it is at present primarily the quantitative measures that provide key indicators of success or failure in the vast majority of evaluation criteria set by knowledge services.[28] Whilst GDKS's monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will be examined in greater detail in chapter five, it is important to note here that in general, knowledge services, whilst engaging in online surveys or ad hoc qualitative feedback, have tended to rely heavily on statistics such as numbers of subscribers or users and website visitors to determine degrees of user engagement and as numerical proof that user 'needs' are being met. The research questions in this study, by contrast, are framed precisely to move away from this purely quantitative picture to understand the 'story behind the numbers' – what is actually *happening* to this information? What do these statistics actually mean, if anything, in terms of how information is being used? What do the statistics reveal, as well as hide, with regards to the function of power in the development knowledge infrastructure? These substantive questions therefore demand a more nuanced, qualitative interrogation.

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[28] Quantitative measures that are easily recorded such as numbers of participants or organisations involved are far simpler to obtain than attempts to measure how or even whether development interventions are having longer-term impacts on the sustainability of particular programmes or the livelihoods of marginalised groups. See for example the critiques of Edwards and Hulme (1996) on how short-term quantitative measures are used to measure the impact of mainstream NGOs and Mayoux (1998) for how quantitative measures are used to assess the impact of gender-based interventions.

The research questions also suggest the need for a methodological approach that is more flexible than single-site ethnography, which typically consists of in-depth study of, for example, one NGO, telecentre or donor organisation in a particular location. Marcus (1995: 96), in his definitive study on the emergence of multi-sited ethnography, describes it as a shift

> from the single sites and local situations of conventional ethnographic research designs to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space. This mode defines for itself an object of study that cannot be accounted for ethnographically by remaining focused on a single site of intensive investigation.

Given the focus in this study on interrogating the capacity of information flows to shape discursive power in development, a methodology that is able to account for the 'circulation' of meaning in 'diffuse time-space' is particularly apt.

Marcus (1995: 105) identifies 'modes of construction' for ethnographic research, where 'multi-sited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations'. Falzon (2009: 1-2), in summarising the basis for multi-sited research, suggests that it is about tracing 'people, connections, associations, and relationships across space (because they are substantially continuous but spatially non-contiguous)'. Taking the 'world-system' as 'integral to and embedded in multi-sited objects of study' (Falzon, 2009: 1), a system in the context of this study that is informed by development, feminism, colonial and postcolonial narratives, the present study, to use Marcus' (1995: 106) terminology, 'follows the thing', where the 'thing' is information. In this sense, the present study seeks to elucidate how information is both shaped by, and in turn is re-shaped, by these meta-narratives, locating information itself as something that is fluid in that it can travel, but not without embedding itself and thus re-emerging in accordance with the contested discourses that underpin the multiple and overlapping world systems through which it travels. It suggests that multi-sited research is a methodology that in fact mirrors closely the function of knowledge-based development practice itself.

Falzon (2009) raises two critiques in the methodology literature of multi-site ethnography of relevance to the present study. The first is what he terms the 'lack of depth' charge, which refers to the shallowness or lack of 'thick' description that single-site ethnography

is credited with producing. The second critique is what he refers to as the 'latter-day holism' charge, where multi-sited research is accused of attempting to study whole systems, whereas critics would argue that 'no matter how fluid and contiguous a research object, it is best studied by focusing on a limited slice of the action' (Falzon, 2009: 13). In the context of the present multi-sited ethnography, we may respond to each of these concerns in turn.

Concerns around the 'lack of depth' in multi-sited ethnography may be at least partially addressed, Friedberg (2001: 362) argues, through ensuring that a clear analytical framework is in place to 'clarify the objectives in each site'. The present field study was explicitly designed to be an interrogation of information flows, where 'sites' were determined through an examination of the existing literature as well as insights derived from my participant observation as a former employee of GDKS. As such, there were clear analytical frameworks in place prior to the actual design of the field study. Friedberg (2001: 363) also suggests that 'the subject matter of much contemporary multi-site ethnography may not even be suitable to the extended timeframe that characterized anthropological fieldwork in the past', a timeframe that facilitated the 'thick' description associated with single-site ethnography. This is further exacerbated, Falzon (2009: 9-10) argues, by the tendency for the ethnographic 'object' in multi-sited research to be 'mobile and/or spatially dispersed'. As information production itself may not be observed, and through its dissemination information becomes spatially dispersed, it became clear that a multi-site ethnography was a more appropriate methodology for the present study. The experience of studying a discursive 'site' echoes that of Hannerz (2003: 211) in his study of foreign correspondents, where he asks, 'What do you do when 'your people' spend hours alone at a desk, perhaps concentrating on a computer screen?' Instead, depth in this study is achieved through documentary analysis, where the information itself is, to an extent, ethnographised; located, analysed, and contextualised with consideration for the world systems implicated in its production and dissemination and how these processes in turn interact with other stakeholders in the system in which the information is continually constituted.

In response to the second critique, this study seeks to interrogate only a small 'slice' of the K4Dev 'action', since it is in fact impossible to study the 'whole' field. Instead,

ethnographic inquiry premised upon understanding the 'local' is supplanted by multiple sites, where one aspect of an inquiry is what links a series of multi-localities, rather than any attempt to study the field as a whole:

> … neither I nor my colleagues could claim to have an ethnographic grasp of the entire 'fields' which our chosen research topics may have seemed to suggest – and this tends to be in the nature of multi-site ethnography … multi-site ethnography almost always entails a selection of sites from among those many which could potentially be included (Hannerz, 2003: 207).

The intention with the present study is not to attempt an interrogation of the entire field of knowledge-based development practice, but rather to focus on one manifestation of knowledge-based development practice that will provide insights into their discursive and material consequences that are, as we saw in the introduction, under-researched.

The decision then to use qualitative multi-site ethnography is well-suited, despite the concerns raised in this literature, as a methodology that allows for a critical examination of the 'discursive' site created as development information travels between the North and India. This multi-sitedness is rooted in GDKS as the starting point of this process, with subsequent 'sites' in New Delhi and beyond chosen on the basis of their relationship to the broader K4Dev infrastructure and the information production and exchange processes that constitute it.

4.4 Determining the parameters for data collection

Whilst compiling documentary evidence has been an ongoing process, data collection through interviews and site visits was undertaken in stages, with a sizable proportion of interviews and site visits, including those completed in India, conducted between October 2006 and April 2007, with subsequent interviews and site visits conducted where deemed necessary between June 2007 and June 2009.

The objective for data collection in the Northern study, including interviews, site visits, participant observation and documentary analysis, was to establish the key assumptions underpinning GDKS's more 'progressive' knowledge practices, as well as to locate and problematise these within the broader development knowledge infrastructure. This data is critically analysed in chapter five.

Using GDKS's print subscriber's mailing list as the population, I formulated three objectives for data collection in the Southern discursive 'site'. The first objective was to establish whether GDKS's information products were actually reaching New Delhi-based recipients. This was to be achieved through telephone calls and site visits designed to verify two things: whether GDKS publications were reaching the named individual on the list and if not, whether GDKS information, assuming it was getting through to the named individual or the organisation at all, was being forwarded to the new person in post, or indeed, to the person originally named on the list who may have moved on to a different organisation. If the organisation hosted a resource centre, additional questions were posed through site visits around how these centres were used and whether GDKS information, once received, was being forwarded to the resource centre for wider distribution.

Of the 126 individuals named on GDKS's mailing list for Delhi, 14 were private individuals, which left 112 people who were policymakers or connected either to research centres, academia, NGOs, branches of large INGOs or IGOs that make up the sample for this part of the study. Completing this tracking exercise was, as section 4.5.1 below highlights, hampered by a range of external constraints. Nonetheless, through telephone calls, emails and organisational visits, I was able to verify whether or not GDKS materials were reaching 71 out of these 112 named recipients.

The second objective was to examine GDKS's knowledge practices and whether they facilitate or contribute to improved decision-making processes amongst these recipients and their local networks, thus promoting more positive development outcomes. The third and related objective was to interrogate the imagined capacities of Southern women and NGOs (see analysis in chapter three) on GDKS's subscriber list as integral elements of the development knowledge infrastructure, in relation to their roles both as users of development information and as producers and distributors of information in their own right.

Given the specificity of these latter two objectives, the mailing list for New Delhi was used to develop a purposive sample.[29] Patton (2002: 40) suggests that this type of sampling consists of

> cases for study (e.g., people, organizations, communities, cultures, events, critical incidences) [that] are selected because they are "information rich" and illuminative, that is, they offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon, not empirical generalization from a sample to a population.

Snowball sampling, which was undertaken through contact with respondents in the purposive sample, also offers similar advantages to purposive sampling, where it is necessary for respondents to have particular attributes (Berg, 2007). In the case of this study, respondents needed to be familiar with, if not active users of, GDKS services, whilst a significant proportion, given the nature of the inquiry, also needed to be active producers of development information in their own right.

The purposive sample was designed to ensure that the study collated the views of people embedded in a range of institutional settings. Using the target audiences identified by GDKS as part of an external evaluation conducted in 2007[30] to categorise the sample, the following list indicates the number of interviews and the number of organisational visits conducted respectively:

- OECD-DAC agencies (4, 1)

- Multilateral agencies (6, 3)

- INGOs (5, 4)

- Southern Government (3, 0)

- Education organisations (4, 2)

- Research organisations (6, 4)

- Media (2, 1)

- Southern NGOs (15, 12)

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[29] Patton (2002) identifies this as a 'purposeful sample' but its meaning is the same.
[30] To maintain the anonymity of GDKS the precise reference for this evaluation is withheld.

Figure 4.1 below models how GDKS communicates with target audiences and how these audiences are defined particularly in the Indian context.

Figure 4.1 Model of GDKS respondents
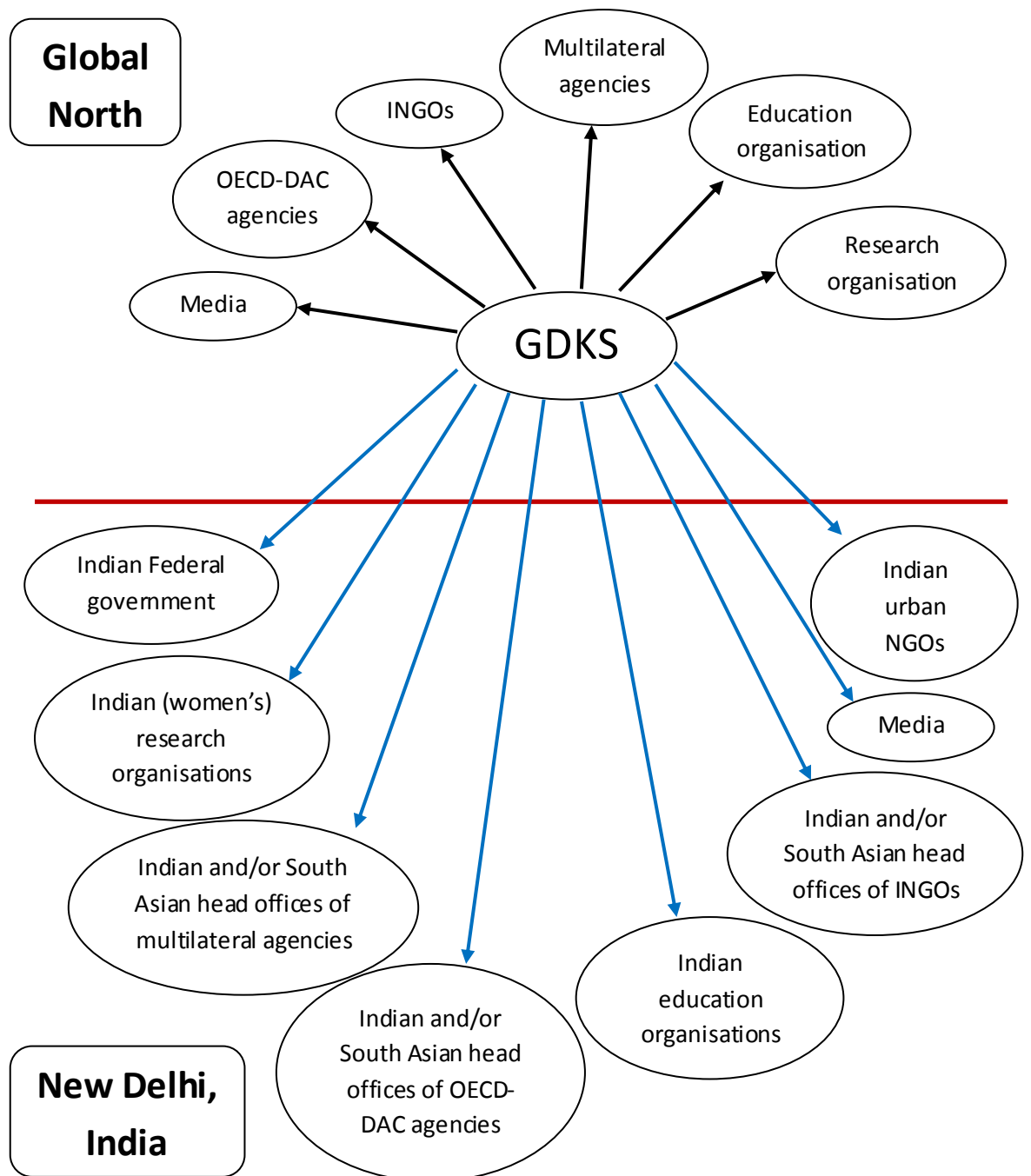
The arrows represent the flow of information from GDKS to individuals and organisations in a range of institutional settings in both the North and the South. The focus for this analysis is interrogating the discursive site created when information flows from GDKS to target groups in New Delhi, India, as indicated by the blue arrows in the model.

In the model, 'Education organisations' refer primarily to colleges, universities or other training centres. 'Research organisations' refer to those entities set up to conduct and disseminate research on particular themes, e.g., gender, poverty, social policy or human rights. 'Urban NGOs' refers to those organisations that may conduct research alongside other types of development practice including service delivery in both New Delhi as well as in other parts of India. 'INGOs' are those organisations that have their head offices located in the North. On the GDKS mailing list it is most often the case that INGO offices in New Delhi are the head offices for India or the South Asian region. 'Multilateral agencies' refers to all UN agencies, the ILO and the World Bank. 'OECD-DAC agencies' refers to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD's) Development Assistance Committee (DAC), which is the 'principal body through which the OECD deals with issues related to co-operation with developing countries' (OECD, n.d). Made up of the participation of 24 countries, in practice there is overlap between the category 'OECD-DAC agencies' and the category 'multilateral agencies' as the OECD-DAC includes multilateral organisations. Nonetheless, its use by GDKS refers to the OECD-DAC member-country participation, represented by their development cooperation agencies. Each of these development agencies in turn has in-country or regional representation, typically in state capitals. In New Delhi are located most of the major bilateral donors country and/or regional offices. Southern government refers to policymakers or bureaucrats employed by government at any level (Federal, Region, District, local). In New Delhi, named recipients are policymakers and senior bureaucrats in Ministries at the federal level of government. Media refers to any organisation engaging in mainstream dissemination via printed, online or visual media. For GDKS in New Delhi this consisted of book publishers and a women's news service. The entire list of (anonymised) respondents interviewed for this study that is cross-referenced to this list of target audiences is included as Appendix A at the end of the thesis.

4.5 Data collection

The data collection methods for this multi-site ethnography consisted of a triangulation of semi-structured face-to-face and telephone interviews and the collection of documentary evidence. In addition, these methods were further triangulated with participant

observation, both in my role as an employee/former employee of GDKS as well as participation in various events in New Delhi and in various sites in the North.

Data collection for the Northern element of the discursive 'site' consisted of semi-structured telephone, web-based and face-to-face interviews with seven key informants working with bilateral donor organisations, academia, other Northern women's NGOs and those working with or alongside GDKS itself. The semi-structured interview checklists for the Northern portion of the study are included at the end of the thesis as Appendices B and C. Participant observation was also undertaken as a former employee of GDKS. In addition, data collection consisted of compiling printed and electronic material pertaining to the activities of a range of Northern-based (women's) NGOs who also (in addition to other activities) act as information intermediaries, including grey literature and material available on the Internet.

Data collection in the Southern field site consisted of organisational visits (as noted above) and face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with key informants on GDKS's subscriber list. Whilst, as the empirical analysis in chapter seven attests, penetration rates for GDKS materials is relatively low, through snow-balling from contacts on the subscriber list, I discovered that there were many more people who were aware of GDKS and other Northern information services, and were users of these services via the Internet, including users who were not named on GDKS's print mailing list but were working at some of the organisations represented on their mailing list. In total 47 key informants were interviewed for the analysis of the Southern discursive site in a range of organisational and institutional settings, with the majority, 31, from exclusively Indian organisations and institutions. Of the 47, 29 were actively working on issues related to gender, with almost all of the respondents also working on issues relating to human rights more broadly. The semi-structured interview checklist used for the Southern portion of the study is included as Appendix D at the end of the thesis.

Of the organisations on GDKS's subscriber list, I undertook a more in-depth *collective case study* of the work of 13 women's NGOs and four women's units within large, mainstream Indian development NGOs. Such methods, Berg (2007: 292) suggests, 'involve[s] extensive study of several instrumental cases, intended to allow better understanding, insight, or

perhaps improved ability to theorize about a broader context'. Collective case studies, he also suggests, 'can be rather pointed in their focus' (Berg, 2007: 283). These two insights together form the departure point for the methodological basis of this portion of the empirical study, insofar as these 13 NGOs and four women's units represent 'instrumental cases' in relation to their capacity to inform the research questions outlined in the introduction. In other words, these organisations undertake a range of non-profit functions, but the in-depth analysis of these organisations and units in this study relates solely to their work as information intermediaries and how they locate themselves in the broader development knowledge infrastructure. It should also be noted that the empirical analysis in section 9.3.3 in chapter nine that critically analyses the function of resource and documentation centres draws not just on the data from those collective case study organisations that host resource centres. For this section additional data was collected to cover a wider cross-section of resource centre types, including those hosted by mainstream NGOs as well as multilateral and OECD-DAC agencies that are on GDKS's mailing list. This list of additional resource centres, along with the full list of collective case study organisations, or CCSOs as they are referred to in the empirical analysis, is included as Appendix B at the end of the thesis.[31] The CCSO numbers accompanying each entry will be used as short-hands to identify the organisations in the empirical analysis in chapters eight to ten.

In order to draw insights that would allow me to theorise about the broader context of knowledge-based development practice, the collective case study was informed not just by lengthy interviews but by the collection of documentary evidence. The data was further triangulated by participant observation as an employee/former employee of GDKS, in addition to participation in six events I attended where one or more members of my sample were present, including gender training, seminars, conferences and a publication launch. This detailed exploration of the work and views of a sample of recipients on GDKS's mailing list allows me to interrogate some of the key assumptions made by donors and Northern organisations such as GDKS concerning the nature of good knowledge practice and the capacity of Southern women, either as individuals or as part

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[31] To maintain the anonymity of the organisations being studied, this list only identifies organisational type and provides some detail about what the organisation does. For ease of reference and consistency, the order of the organisations in each of the tables in the empirical chapters is the same as in the appendix.

of organisations, to produce and disseminate information to promote outcomes such as empowerment and development.

Before outlining the methodological concerns associated with each data collection method, the challenges encountered in data collection are discussed.

4.5.1 Challenges encountered in data collection

Data collection in the Northern site was simplified by the use of email as a way to contact prospective interviewees, all of whom responded very positively to my interview requests and were extremely forthcoming in their views on knowledge-based development. In one case the woman I contacted lived overseas but was amenable to a telephone interview, which I recorded using digital software. In two other cases finding mutually convenient times to meet in person was proving difficult so one web-based interview and one telephone interview were arranged and, with the consent of my interviewees, were also recorded. The opportunities and challenges of these interview types will be dealt with in more detail in the next section.

In New Delhi, those people whom I managed to contact, with one exception, responded positively and were reasonably forthcoming with both their time and their views. I also posted a note describing my research onto one web-based discussion group through which I secured a further four interviews in India.

Certain external conditions, however, limited my capacity to fully achieve the first objective of my study in the Southern site i.e., to track the flow of GDKS's information services as they moved into New Delhi. Whilst the ICT infrastructure amongst elite organisations, including donor agencies, branches of INGOs and NGOs in Delhi is robust, three additional, previously unidentified challenges hampered my efforts to track down all of the recipients on GDKS's subscriber list. The first issue was physically locating the listed addresses, as signposting, particularly in residential areas, was extremely poor. It was most often the case that neither car nor auto rickshaw drivers were very knowledgeable about specific addresses beyond finding a route to a particular colony or area.

These difficulties were further compounded by what many respondents had described to me as ongoing 'sealing drives' to remove commercial premises from residential areas. In the year preceding my field study, then-recent rules in New Delhi had outlawed the location of office space in residential areas, where the vast majority of smaller NGOs are located. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) undertook, in accordance with the Delhi Master Plan 2001, to seal commercial premises operating illegally in residential areas. This sealing drive began in March 2006; although it was primarily aimed at commercial premises, NGOs fell afoul of the new rules. Many of my informants said that this had been a stressful year as the threat of being shutdown or forcibly relocated persisted. Some organisations, in response to this pressure, had in fact moved, but none of this was reflected in GDKS records, nor was it straightforward to find people whom to ask as to where people or organisations may have moved. Other organisations had simply removed signs in order to make their organisations invisible to the MCD.

Strict security measures in organisations, coupled with the variable reliability of the telephone infrastructure, are the second and third barriers I faced in tracking information and the people to whom it had been sent. In certain instances I had contacted the organisation, but the person on the mailing list was no longer employed there. As it was often a junior clerk or operator who answered the phone, it was difficult to explain who I was and what my research was about in order to be forwarded to the appropriate person or department. In one instance, I attempted to visit an organisation in the hope of speaking to someone working on gender and/or knowledge management, presenting letters from both the University of Durham and GDKS explaining who I was and the nature of my visit, but was held by external security who simply refused me entry into the building. In many other instances, although I managed to gain entry into the building, after passing through security I would be held at the reception desk, where people were generally unwilling to provide much detail beyond general information about the organisation itself. In short, the difficulties associated with physical inaccessibility, coupled with issues around security and outmoded telephone systems, meant that following through on the first objective for my study as outlined above, particularly where contact information may have been wrong or outdated, was made even more challenging.

4.5.2 Interviews

These challenges notwithstanding, interviewing proved to be an extremely effective data collection method. Interviews were primarily conducted in person, but as outlined above, there were a few instances where the use of telephone and web-based interviews (using an audio-video interface such as Skype) was deemed necessary.

Interviewing, as Berg (2997: 97) suggests, is a particularly appropriate method where 'investigators are interested in understanding the perceptions of participants or learning how participants come to attach certain meanings to phenomena or events'. Given that the research is an interrogation of a 'discursive' site, interviewing is suitable to really explore issues of interest with relevant people who use, and/or are affected by, information services. The use of 'snowballing' (Longhurst, 2003: 124), where one person interviewed refers me to another and so on, is a very expedient approach, particularly given some of the physical accessibility concerns that I confronted in the field site as outlined in section 4.5.1 above. Moreover, snowballing is a culturally appropriate approach in New Delhi in particular, as personal networks are the key to accessing elite individuals, groups and organisations (see Porter et al., in press). Snowballing also links neatly back into the notion of the site itself as fluid and adaptive. Semi-structured interviews in particular offer the best method of collecting qualitative data in a 'conversational and informal' (Longhurst: 2003: 119) tone on how people use and disseminate information. Opening up the space for dialogue and narrative also allows more subtle concerns around how power may be functioning within these discursive spaces to emerge. Interviews may be completed in a relatively short period of time and may be conducted anywhere at relatively short notice, including the interviewees office, which offers an element of convenience. Triangulated with the collection of documentary evidence and participant observation, any concerns around the authenticity of the information being gleaned from participants are minimised.

As outlined earlier, both telephone interviews and web-based interviews were also conducted. The question is the relative advantages and disadvantages of these alternative interview methods. Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) assert that in their study of perceptions of visiting county jail inmates, telephone and face-to-face interviews were not markedly different. Whilst telephone interviews provide the option of seeking respondents out in

diverse geographical locations (as was necessary for this study), the researcher is limited to those with an active phone connection, and telephone interviews also lacks the visual cues and the capacity to use 'full channels of communication' (Berg, 2007: 109-110). Given that my respondents were primarily urban elites in both Northern and Southern contexts, there was no particular concern around telephone interviewing as being an exclusionary method. Web-based interviews using a Skype video chat, or what Berg (2007: 112) terms a 'synchronous environment', however, mimic face-to-face interviewing very closely, limited only by the reach of technology and any other concerns around the authenticity of data gleaned from interviews themselves.

4.5.3 Collection of documentary evidence

Collecting extensive documentary evidence on the nature of 'progressive' knowledge practices in the 'discursive' site is central to unpacking the research questions. The documentary evidence collected consists of annual reports, mission statements and other forms of organisational documentation in both print and electronic formats as well as grey literature acquired through organisational visits.

One of the biggest advantages of conducting documentary analysis as a key methodological approach is that 'it can be virtually unobtrusive' (Webb et al., 1981, 2004 as cited in Berg, 2007: 327). Moreover, as Berg (2007: 328) goes on to note, content analysis is cost effective, where newspapers, library archives and films may be considered sources of data. In terms of disadvantages, there are two concerns for the purposes of this study. Scott (1990: 22) raises concerns around the validity and reliability of documentary evidence. In the case of the documentary evidence collected for the purposes of this study, not only is it triangulated with interview data, but all of the documents are primary sources consisting of a wide range of format types including annual reports, books, websites and pamphlets that were recently published and in their original formats. With the exception of one evaluation report, none of the documentary evidence represents the views of a third-party on the work of these organisations, whether that is in the form of an evaluation, a newspaper article or an entry on a web-based directory. It is reasonable therefore to assert that the documentary evidence is representative of the views these organisations have of themselves and wish to make publicly available.

4.5.4 Participant Observation

I was until the end of 2005 an employee of GDKS which alters my location to that of both a researcher as well as a former practitioner, thus acting as a form of participant observation that creates a unique epistemological tension. Oakley's (1981) contention that the interviewee is not a subject/object to be studied but part of the process of validating experience, or that the interviewer and interviewee may have shared experiences, resonates with respect to my own location both as a research student and a former employee of a development information service. In the process of arranging interviews, I made my connection to GDKS clear, and as an organisation known for its information services, this stated connection no doubt afforded me access to people that perhaps as a student I may not have had. As such, the interviews were as much about sharing experience and learning as they were about 'fact' finding. It was challenging to ensure that those people whom I interviewed were fully aware that I was no longer employed by GDKS, and was conducting this field study to gather a range of views and insights that would, regardless of where they were to be disseminated, remain anonymous. On the other hand, the connection to GDKS was helpful insofar as people were keen to share insights into how GDKS might improve their services, as I was also clear that I would share general feedback with GDKS as part of disseminating my doctoral research upon completion. This opportunity generated fruitful discussion that raised a number of further questions and concerns that at times revealed interesting contradictions and tensions in the work of those whom I was interviewing, thus contributing significantly to building up an overall picture of knowledge-based development practice in both Northern and Southern contexts.

My attendance and participation at various events in the context of a multi-site ethnography also raises particular methodological concerns. Participant observation may also take place, albeit on a limited basis, in what may be termed temporal sites, such as what Hannerz (2003: 210) refers to as 'ritual events', including conferences, workshops and other interactions, which would be central to gaining insight and understanding into the discursive sites under scrutiny in this study. Indeed, knowledge-based development practices, in addition to the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs), depend crucially on these 'temporal' sites.

Participant observation in a strictly, traditional anthropological sense where one observes how people live or work over a longer period of time is slightly less relevant in the context of this study. Given that much of the function of these discursive sites occurs, as Hannerz (2003) observes, in front of a computer or via the use of ICTs in remote places, opportunities to observe are limited, apart from the temporal sites such as conferences already noted. What he does highlight, however, is the use of email, telephone, websites or the media to keep up with those people interviewed, as he did in his study of foreign correspondents. Extending Falzon's (2009) notion that ethnographic 'depth' may be achieved through the observation of mobile research subjects, I would similarly be able to 'observe' those people I have met or interviewed through email correspondence, checking their websites and news updates of the work they are doing, which are often included on e-mail lists run by their organisations.

4.6 Analysing the data

The approach used to analyse the data for this study reflects the fact that it is an interrogative study of a 'discursive' site and the imagined capacities of stakeholders operating within those sites. For this purpose, then, an *interpretive approach* is appropriate, where 'human action can be seen as a collection of symbols expressing layers of meaning' (Berg, 2007: 304). The interpretation is of the text itself, and of the interview data as it is converted to text, to interrogate the nature and source of ideas and perceptions that shape how knowledge is understood to inform development in both the Northern and Southern contexts under scrutiny in this study.

4.6.1 Coding the data

Whilst, as Weitzman and Miles (1995: 10; as cited in Berg, 2007: 330) note, 'computers don't analyze data; people do', the use of NVIVO, a qualitative software package, to assist with the analysis of the data has been crucial to identifying discursive patterns and themes. The use of NVIVO has also resulted in savings of both time and labour as compared to using index cards or word-processing programmes that do not allow for complex coding, cross-referencing or the creation of a virtual, searchable database of the textual data.

The textual data itself consisted of the transcribed interviews and grey literature collected from site visits in both the North and New Delhi, which I typed up as text files. I also downloaded and created text files of publicly available information from the websites of Northern information intermediaries and the collective case study organisations. All of this textual data was then imported into NVIVO. I began to code all of the data using free nodes, taking into consideration the research questions underpinning the study. As patterns began to emerge, I turned many of the free nodes into tree nodes as I mapped out the discursive relationships and patterns evidenced by the textual data. The screen capture below provides an example of how NVIVO captures this textual coding.

Figure 4.2 Using NVIVO to code textual data
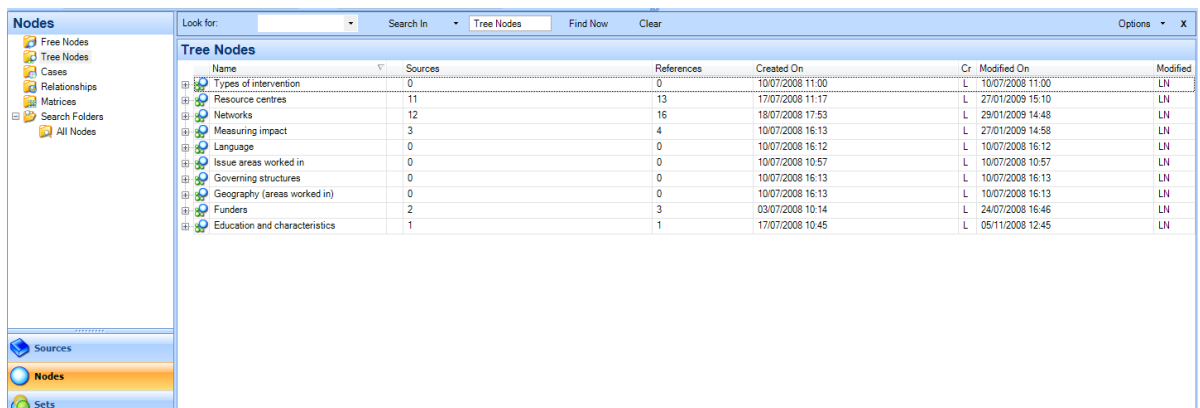
Each of these primary tree nodes is then further broken down using what NVIVO terms 'child' nodes to create trees of data organised around key themes. Table 4.1 provides a sample of the first tree node visible on the screen capture above, and how this node was further broken down using a series of child nodes.

Table 4.1 Sample of tree nodes used to code data in NVIVO

Primary tree node	Child nodes

Types of Intervention	• Research and action research
	• Publication and dissemination
	    o Working papers
	    o Training manuals
	    o Reports
	    o Pamphlets and booklets
	    o Newsletters
	    o Magazine
	    o Journals
	    o Books
	• Projects and Consultancies

	○ Training ○ Research - Linking theory, research, policy and practice - Linking grassroots, field to policy and practice - Creating and disseminating knowledge - Capacity Building ○ Training and non-formal education ▪ Animal husbandry ▪ Beauty school ▪ Handicrafts ▪ Health and hygiene ▪ Record-keeping, money management, marketing ▪ Silkworm cultivation and horticulture ▪ Skills training ▪ Tailoring and embroidery ▪ Health clinics and camps ○ Self-help groups ○ Resource and documentation centre ○ Public education ○ Professional training (gender sensitisation) ○ Peer educators ○ Outreach ▪ Using the Right to Information Act ▪ help lines ▪ Health clinics and camps • Ob-gyn • Immunisation • Fees • Diet-related advice • Counselling centres ○ Information services ○ Giving voice ○ Field or grassroots work ○ Awareness-raising - Advocacy and networking ○ Publication launches ○ Partnerships with other institutions and networks ○ Lobby policymakers ○ International meetings and conferences ○ External events

The textual data was coded using 253 codes in total, organised into tree nodes like the sample in Table 4.1, which facilitated the analysis of recurring patterns, themes and ideas as these related to the capacity of information intermediaries to engage with progressive knowledge-based practices to promote development. The empirical chapters draw out

the implications of this NVIVO data analysis, most of which has been captured and summarised as tables 8.3 in chapter eight and table 9.1 in chapter nine.

4.7 Location, subjectivity and reflexivity – gender, race and what it means to be from the 'West'

Despite my own visibility as an ethnic minority in Western or Northern contexts, there was a very strong sense of my location as one of 'privilege' in relation to many of the local people I encountered in New Delhi. There was a genuine openness on the part of interviewees to share what they were doing, and this perhaps, as Loftsdóttir (2002) experienced, is at least partially explained by my identity as Western:

> My categorisation as 'from the west' gives me access to various resources, thus being from the 'west' constitutes a certain reality, giving one access to things merely because one occupies this imaginary space of identity (Loftsdóttir, 2002: 308).

My location as someone from the West or North stands in contrast to my visibility as someone of South Asian descent. Indeed, whereas Herod (1999: 314) asserts that the prevailing assumption 'that a researcher who conducts interviews with members of different nationalities is automatically at a disadvantage because they can never hope to understand the cultural complexities of that which they are not', this sense of being an 'outsider' as he calls it did not necessarily apply to me. In India in particular I was interviewing elites who were set apart by their status as senior civil servants, by their wealth or as leaders of large organisations. Furthermore, in the Indian context, as a result of belonging to a higher caste group (Brahmin), I myself am considered elite. Despite the fact that I was interviewing Indian elites, my location as a Western researcher who is also Brahmin and ethnically South Asian levelled both the cultural and social divisions that Herod describes. As some of the interview responses cited in the empirical analysis also emphasise, my respondents would often slip naturally into using Hindi alongside English without asking whether I understood Hindi or not, resulting in more informal and accessible discussions with respondents.

In one important way I experienced being an 'outsider' that did, contrary to Herod and echoing Loftsdóttir (2002) above, provide a distinct advantage during interviews. Sabot (1999) documents her experience of conducting research amongst political elites in her

home town in France and as a foreign researcher in Scotland. She argues that her male American colleague, conducting similar research, was able to negotiate much better access to local French political elites than she was able to as a local researcher. In Scotland, however, she was the outsider and found that local political elites were very open even to what she thought might be awkward questions. These very different experiences, she argues, emerge out of a sense of being threatened with a possible backlash should respondents reveal too much to a local researcher with whom they share their social, political and economic context. She contrasts this with the attitude to foreign researchers, who 'do not vote and will go back to their home country after the interview!' (Sabot, 1999: 332). During the period of my field study in New Delhi, many of the elite development stakeholders I met in New Delhi were extremely forthcoming with their time, sharing often copious amounts of documentation and were almost always happy to be contacted via email after our interview. Whilst I did not have a colleague conducting similar research with whom to share my experiences, it is noteworthy that most of the people I interviewed in the North, particularly senior staff at large NGOs and donors, asked for abstracts of my research, as well as a list of questions for our interview. Whilst respondents in the North were also quite generous in many instances with their time, there is no doubt that they were more guarded with what they shared. This may be attributable to the fact that almost all of the people I interviewed in the North were either themselves information intermediaries and/or aligned somehow with the work of GDKS. As a former employee of GDKS, I thus occupied the same social, political and discursive space as my respondents, creating an awkwardness that I did not experience in India.

It is also important to note what it says about my respondents in India that caste and privilege were *not* a concern in interviews with respondents. Particularly in the Indian context, caste, class and privilege are defining features of the social landscape. Indeed, my field study stands in contrast to Subramaniam's (2006) experience of fieldwork in Karnataka. As an upper-class Western-educated Brahmin woman originally from India, her fieldwork with working class women's groups suggested that she upheld multiple identities, some superior, some inferior depending with whom she was working. As the background of most of those whom I interviewed were remarkably similar to each other

and to me in terms of language competence, international experience, familiarity with GDKS and other Northern information services and NGOs and dominant modes of organising information production and dissemination, a rapport and dialogue with those whom I interviewed was easily established, with little concern or suspicion for whom or what I might be representing. As the remainder of this study highlights, the fact that GDKS is almost without exception reaching elites has significant implications for the assumptions underpinning their more 'progressive' knowledge practices.

4.8 Conclusion

Interrogating the capacity of information intermediaries to deliver improved development outcomes through information production and dissemination poses unique methodological challenges. What the analysis has highlighted is that the discursive 'site' created by information flows from the North to the South is best-studied using a multi-site ethnography consisting of a triangulation of interviews, extensive documentary analysis and (participant) observation. Whilst multi-site ethnography has been challenged for its potential to generate robust insights and 'thick' description, the analysis in this chapter confirms that, given the fluidity of the 'site' under interrogation in this study, its benefits far outweigh its limitations, offering practical alternatives to single-site ethnography to tackle the research questions underpinning this study. Through the use of instrumental cases to form a collective case study, this methodology also creates an opportunity to delve much deeper into the effects of knowledge-based development practice in one Southern discursive site. This is crucial since, as King and McGrath (2004; section 1.3 in chapter one) note, the question of how K4Dev is experienced and/or practiced by Southern-based constituencies remains under-researched.

Having established the methodology used to tackle the research questions, this analysis now follows the information trail created as it travels from North to South. The next chapter lays the groundwork for the core empirical analysis in chapters seven to ten that uses the data collected from the Southern field site. The analysis in chapter five uses interviews, documentary evidence and participant observation, in addition to the available literature, to enumerate the assumptions underpinning the work of Northern donors and organisations like GDKS. It is in unpacking these assumptions that we can begin to interrogate the capacity of information intermediaries to deliver more positive

development outcomes such as empowerment and development through processes of information production and dissemination.

5. Contextualising the knowledge practices of GDKS[32]

5.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the key Northern-based case study organisation which forms the hub of the discursive site in the empirical analysis (as outlined in chapter 4). This site consists of information flows between a gender information service based in the North and NGOs that undertake the role of information intermediaries based in New Delhi, India. Mirroring the flow of information as it travels from North to South, this chapter draws both on existing literature as well as empirical data collected specifically for this study through interviews and the collection of documentary evidence (see methodology in chapter four) to inform an analysis of 'progressive' knowledge-based development practice as undertaken by a range of Northern women's organisations. This analysis responds to the first research question (section 1.5 in chapter one) in relation to the Northern part of the discursive site, detailing where the information gap is perceived to be, who it is affecting it, how information services propose to address it and why the information gap persists.

The Northern-based Gender and Development Knowledge Service (GDKS), as outlined in chapter four, is an information intermediary committed to information production and dissemination that promotes more gender equal outcomes in development. It is one example of the critical responses to the World Bank knowledge paradigm undertaken in particular by Northern women, as individuals or as part of NGOs, taking on the role of information intermediaries to reach and thereby empower marginalised women through the provision of, and improved accessibility to, information. This information is targeted towards women as policymakers, practitioners, researchers and activists attempting to 'mainstream' gender into policies and decision-making processes at all levels. There is an extensive literature on the opportunities and challenges of knowledge translation and/or research utilisation to inform policy and practice that provides insights into the production, monitoring and evaluation of information (for development) initiatives and the difficulty of measuring impact, a brief overview of which was provided in section 2.5.2.1 in chapter two. Whilst that research is undoubtedly valuable here, the present

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[32] As noted in the previous chapter, GDKS is a pseudonym and all the names of those people interviewed, as per ethical guidelines and agreements with study participants, have been anonymised.

study is neither an evaluation of one particular service nor a set of processes, nor is it an attempt to assess impact (section 1.6 in chapter one). This study is an examination of how GDKS's knowledge practices embody broader critical responses to the World Bank knowledge paradigm and an examination of the assumptions informing the perceptions of good practice in K4Dev in relation to the *imagined* capacities of Southern women and NGOs. This chapter begins by outlining GDKS's key knowledge practices in section 5.2. Section 5.3 contextualises GDKS's practices within the wider perceptions of good knowledge practice in development as represented by the views of donors, other NGOs and other women's information intermediaries located both in the North and the South. Section 5.4 provides an overview of GDKS's monitoring and evaluation mechanisms as a way to reflect on how it perceives its own knowledge practices. Section 5.5 concludes by linking back to concerns raised in the literature to consider how these assumptions will travel into New Delhi, India.

5.2 The knowledge practices of GDKS

GDKS, with the support of a range of bilateral donors, is committed to 'making the world a fairer place, particularly in terms of gender, [and] justice around gender issues' (SJ, Senior Research Officer, GDKS)[33]. GDKS seeks to utilise communication and networking initiatives in order to 'support progressive change' (HR, Manager, GDKS) through the promotion of alternative forms of knowledge creation which support gender mainstreaming in development and that 'provide information to policymakers and practitioners and activists with the aim of bridging the gap between theory and action' (SJ, Senior Research Officer, GDKS). Its mission and vision emphasise the importance of supporting the capacity-building of both Southern and Northern organisations engaged in gender mainstreaming. Within this, there is a particular focus on questioning 'whose knowledge counts' (HR, Manager, GDKS) and promoting diversity in knowledge creation processes through encouraging the 'multi-directional' flow of information and ideas. These processes are facilitated through the provision of information via websites as well

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[33] Interview respondents are identified in the text by their initials, position and the organisational types outlined in section 4.4 in chapter four (with the exception of GDKS, which is identified explicitly). Whilst all respondents have been anonymised, further details about their organisations along with the dates of when interviews took place are included as part of Appendix A at the end of the thesis.

as emails, newsletters and printed information packs distributed worldwide, with the vast majority of subscribers, according to GDKS's own statistics, located in the Global South.

GDKS may be understood as one response to the perceived paucity of information on how gender intersects with developmental concerns, a gap identified by a group of bilateral donors who supported the establishment of GDKS in the early 1990s. GDKS's establishment coincided with a wider information gap on gender issues in development identified in the run up to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (see Alvarez, 1998). GDKS has subsequently evolved into an online and printed information service focusing on gender issues in development, as outlined in section 4.2.1 in chapter four. GDKS locates itself as an information service ideally placed to serve the more globalised, transnational feminist agenda outlined in section 3.3.2 in chapter three. Its networking and information production initiatives are intended to be more democratic and representative of a range of women's voices, particularly those located in the Global South. As such, this is a project that donors are keen to be seen to support.[34]

Today, GDKS's vision and mission are based on the presumed need for more accessible information on gender and development for policymakers, practitioners and activists working at the interface of gender and development. GDKS perceives its role as supporting those working on the ground in an advisory capacity or people engaged in advocacy, training/education and practical action, particularly in a range of Southern decision-making contexts. As such, GDKS produces information packs, reports and a searchable, online database for two separate but related constituencies. The first constituency consists of perceived 'change agents' such as policymakers and other decision-makers in mainstream organisations, including donors, IGOs and Northern and Southern governments. Information is produced and disseminated to these groups on the basis, not of demand, but perceived need. GDKS targets non-gender specialists with information that may increase awareness and thus influence development outcomes that reflect gender equality and social justice concerns. The second and related constituency

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[34] That perceptions are more important than outcomes in relation to support for gender justice and women's rights initiatives is reiterated by Nabacwa's (2010) study in the Ugandan context. She suggests that donors' support for women's NGOs does not necessarily alter the material realities for poor women, but is important as it fits into the image of donors as 'generally democratic and supportive of good governance' (Nabacwa, 2010: 395).

consists of activists, advocates or practitioners who may use GDKS materials to gain 'added leverage' to their advocacy and practical efforts, thus helping those 'working on these issues' (HR, Manager, GDKS). Unlike mainstream change agents, this function is meant to be more user-led or demand-driven; that is, GDKS strives to respond to the information needs of activists and practitioners attempting to influence both decision-making and practical action in their own socio-political contexts, especially in the Global South. GDKS expects that producing and disseminating information to influence, as well as support, the advocacy efforts of others to influence decision-making and practical action will map onto the demand for information GDKS produces, compiles and disseminates. GDKS also expects that this information gap will at least partially be filled by Southern actors who are empowered to participate through GDKS's more progressive knowledge interventions, outlined below.

Table 5.1 provides a comprehensive overview of the knowledge practices of GDKS and how these respond to the concerns raised in relation to the World Bank knowledge paradigm, as well as the concerns raised by postcolonial development feminists. It is in the application of these correctives to mainstream knowledge-based development practices that GDKS claims to be able to support more progressive development outcomes through information production and dissemination.

Table 5.1 Critical organisational responses to the World Bank knowledge paradigm, the mechanisms GDKS uses and how these presume to address critical concerns

Critical organisational responses to World Bank knowledge paradigm	Mechanism(s) used by GDKS	How GDKS mechanisms presume to address critical concerns
1. Promote Southern, local and/or indigenous knowledge	Commission Southern writers and experts and consult with an External International Committee (EIC) made up of Southern-based experts	Unsettles dominant, Northern development knowledge paradigms
2. Decommodify information and improve availability and accessibility through a range of media including ICTs	Simplify and summarise information in print and electronic formats	Enables time-poor users and those for whom English is a second language to engage with key issues and improve information uptake
	Provide information free of charge in print and electronic formats	Improves reach and accessibility to promote information uptake
	Support translation into non-English languages and encourage submission of non-English language materials in print and electronic formats	Diversifies away from English-language hegemony and improves both accessibility and relevance to non-English language users
	Prioritise low bandwidth websites with minimal graphics, text-only emails and printed materials	Enables users with poor connectivity, either through the Internet or through printed materials, to find the information they need
3. Privilege the views of Southern women and NGOs	Prioritise sending materials to, and networking with, Southern-based women and NGOs acting as information intermediaries	Foregrounds Southern-based intermediaries as part of active networks of change agents with access to the information needs, and knowledges, of marginalised groups
	Establish basket-funding, where donors contribute to a central fund	Prevents donors from forcing a particular idea or agenda on GDKS, creating spaces for alternative, Southern voices

This table represents two sets of related assumptions on the part of GDKS. The first set refers to practices that are presumed to have a direct positive impact on the capacity of Southern users to access the information they need and to facilitate the greater participation of Southern users in the dominant knowledge infrastructure. GDKS's relative success in this will be analysed in chapter seven, the first of the empirical chapters. The second set has to do with the broader assumptions that GDKS makes about the capacities of Southern recipients to respond to the information needs of marginalised groups, engage with their knowledge and promote alternative development paradigms. Drawing on the perceived accessibility to information facilitated by GDKS, these Southern intermediaries are expected to produce, repackage and disseminate information to influence decision-making and promote more positive development outcomes for marginalised groups. Interrogating their capacity to produce and disseminate information as GDKS expects will provide the focus for the empirical analyses in chapters eight and nine respectively. Finally, as table 5.1 suggests, GDKS also presumes that the people charged with delivering knowledge-based development aid have the capacity to simultaneously create, through their geographical and discursive proximity, enabling spaces for the voices and views of Southern stakeholders, particularly those of marginalised groups, in the development infrastructure. Interrogating this capacity provides the focus for chapter ten.

Using the table as a reference point, the analysis in this chapter therefore sets out to expand on, locate and critically analyse each of the mechanisms GDKS uses to promote more accountable, inclusive and democratic K4Dev practices. This process begins by locating GDKS's practices within broader notions of what constitutes 'progressive' knowledge-based development across a range of stakeholder groups in both Northern and Southern contexts.

5.3 Locating the knowledge practices of GDKS within the broader development knowledge infrastructure

Using grey literature, websites and other documentary evidence alongside interview data, this section sets out to locate GDKS's knowledge practices within a broader and growing knowledge infrastructure in place to support information for and about a diverse but nonetheless imagined constituency of 'women' in development, critically analysed in

section 3.3.2 in chapter three. Section 4.2.1 in the methodology in chapter four outlined why GDKS offers a unique analytical starting point for contextualising and problematising the notion of 'progressive' knowledge practices in development. GDKS is also, however, part of a broader landscape of research/information dissemination NGOs/services. These organisations operate either as standalone information initiatives or knowledge practices are bundled together as one of a range of interventions undertaken as part of commitments to raise awareness and/or advocate for gender mainstreaming and women's rights whilst trying to increase, as well as broaden and diversify, the store of knowledge in development both for and about women.

5.3.1 Locating GDKS in the field of gender and women's information services for development

The International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC) is an example of a standalone initiative based in New York. IWTC promotes the view, like GDKS, 'that access to information and the ability to communicate are basic to the process of women's empowerment, to women's ability to re-defin[e] development paradigms', declaring its interest in 'reaching individuals and organizations working in low-income communities who see themselves as information multipliers and/or community change agents'(IWTC, n.d.). IWTC's mission echoes GDKS's desire to reach NGOs 'on the ground' who are perceived to be more aware of local information needs.

The International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC) and the Association of Women's Rights in Development (AWID) are examples of NGOs that engage in information production and dissemination as one of a range of functions. IWHC and AWID are organisations that have broader remits in terms of advocacy and engagement with target audiences, but also identify a lack of accessible information on women's health and development concerns respectively. AWID highlights 'Women's Rights Information' as one of its key strategic initiatives, highlighting the centrality of information production and dissemination to its objective to advance women's rights and asserting its capacity to create discursive spaces in the dominant knowledge infrastructure for marginalised women:

> AWID's Women's Rights Information Strategic Initiative aims to build
> knowledge and understanding of the forces that undermine or promote

130

women's human rights at the global level, put new issues on the agenda of the women's rights movements globally and amplify the voices and perspectives of marginalized women from around the world (AWID, 2008).

IWHC similarly identifies information production and dissemination as one of four key work areas:

We Inform: We analyze and communicate facts and pathbreaking ideas for policy improvement to powerbrokers, health professionals, influentials and other advocates. We produce and publish ideas and strategies to make public health policies work for women and girls worldwide (IWHC, 2008).

This knowledge infrastructure has more recently extended to Southern contexts, evidenced by the growth and establishment of information services including, for example, WOUGNET in Uganda, that is committed to 'develop[ing] the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) among women as tools to share information and address issues collectively' (WOUGNET, 2009). Isis International, based in the Philippines, is a feminist development communications NGO committed to 'facilitating networking and information sharing of women's movements in the global South (Isis International, 2010). Their English-language 'Women in Action (WIA)' magazine claims to

popularise visions, strategies, and information relevant to women's movements. It challenges dominant discourses on development issues and presents southern feminist analyses derived from both feminist theory and praxis. It supports advocacies and campaigns on various issues and links women's organisations, feminist networks, and other social movements (Isis International, 2010).

The International Information Centre and Archives for the Women's Movement (IIAV), which recently changed its name to Aletta, Institute for Women's History, also identifies a persistent information gap both for and about women:

Women who want to stand up for their rights and to improve their position in society need access to information. That is why Aletta collects as much information as possible about women's rights, empowerment, and cultural heritage and shares this information with women all over the world. (Aletta, 2010).

In line with its mission, it has supported the 'Know How Conference on the World of Women's Information', established in 1998 in Amsterdam and then relocating to the Global South and taking place again in 2002 in Kampala, Uganda and 2006 in Mexico City, Mexico. These conferences represent a practical example of the perception of women as

a unified, 'imagined' constituency that experiences a persistent information gap (section 3.2.4 in chapter three) and the consequent need for, and power of, women's information intermediaries. Thus, GDKS is part of a broader movement of women's knowledge services that are viewed as necessary counters to the hegemonic Northern knowledge infrastructure. At the 2002 conference, again echoing the mission statements of most of the women's information intermediaries highlighted above, one session entitled 'the changing role of women's information services' recommended

> the need for women's information services to bridge the gap between practitioners, academics and policy makers [and] the importance of training women to be able to effectively share information using ICTs ... and [to] enable them to share the information across diverse borders (Onsea, 2002: 29).

This conceptualisation of women's information services resonates with the critical responses to the World Bank knowledge paradigm and postcolonial feminist critiques, both together rendering a Southern women's information intermediary as ideally suited to subvert the hegemony of the Northern knowledge infrastructure. Within this, Northern women's information intermediaries are increasingly operating in a way that demonstrates a determination to overcome some of the criticisms made of development organisations, including through the practice of privileging Southern voices and Southern partnerships (as evidenced in Table 5.1), thus counterbalancing the power deriving from their discursive and geographical location.

Having established GDKS as one example of information services committed to information production and dissemination as central to promoting gender equality, women's empowerment and development, the remainder of this analysis will deconstruct Table 5.1, locating and contextualising each of GDKS's critical responses to the World Bank knowledge paradigm. Each heading corresponds with an entry in the table.

5.4 Promote Southern, local and/or indigenous knowledge

Point 1 in Table 5.1 highlights the promotion of Southern, local and/or indigenous knowledge as a key aim of many information brokers, including GDKS. GDKS expects that privileging and commissioning Southern writers and experts as authors of GDKS publications or as external advisors through print and electronic means, diversifies the

range of issues represented in its information products and legitimates it as an organisation. There is a related expectation that it diversifies both the nature and type of media, including old and new ICTs, through which these ideas are conveyed, thus contributing to decision-making processes that may help to unsettle dominant, Northern development knowledge paradigms.

Promoting a diversity of knowledge types and sources, privileging in particular resources and voices from the Global South, is central to GDKS's strategy, as summarised in point 1 of Table 5.1. The Manager of GDKS explained in our interview:

> Looking at information ownership and seeing to what extent we can play a role in facilitating those [South-North] exchanges of information ... Bottom line – if it's relevant and useful, we try to look for a diversity of types of resources and organisations from all the regions as far as possible to ensure we have a diverse database.

The use of advisory panels, boards or committees made up of international, notably Southern-based, experts to promote Southern voices has become increasingly common practice amongst development and feminist NGOs. Both IWHC and AWID maintain Boards of Directors that are made up of external, notably Southern-based academics, development and feminist activists who provide input into key strategic directions and outcomes.

A recent Women in Development Europe (WIDE) publication (Wichterich, 2010) demonstrates that GDKS's desire to privilege Southern-based knowledge represents a broadly accepted critical operational response in knowledge-based development practice to reverse the hegemony and presumed universality of Northern knowledge. An extract from this document demonstrates the ways in which knowledge 'at the grassroots' becomes reified as a static, isolated entity that acts as a counterpoint to Northern hegemony, that is not informed or influenced by development discourse and practice (section 2.5.1.4 in chapter two). This extract also demonstrates how the 'grassroots' itself becomes a moralised representative of 'alternative' development (see Dempsey, 2009 in section 3.2.3 in chapter three):

> Crucial for shaping of alternatives is the practical knowledge and the emancipatory and transformative power of people. At the grassroots all over the world, women and men have already developed and are

practicing alternatives which are mostly community based, decentralised and re-focus on the local or regional economy (Wichterich, 2010: 6-7).

The importance of bringing in Southern diversity in particular is reiterated by other gender and development practitioners based in Northern NGOs. They suggest, for instance, that there is a need for cross-regional learning and sharing and a diversity of perspectives for better policies (ZK, Gender Policy Specialist, Northern NGO). Another respondent suggested that those practitioners based in the North need to ask how we could do more South-North learning, by investing in but also drawing on, the South, where 'their voices should inform what we do' (CH, Head of Policy, Northern women's NGO).

GDKS practices clearly align themselves more broadly with notions of good practice in knowledge-based development. Yet, reflecting on the insights from section 2.5.1.4 in chapter two, there is the question of what this 'Southern' knowledge consists of (see Briggs, 2005), and how it might contribute to change processes. It is a knowledge that is likely to be mediated by the dominant knowledge infrastructure in terms of how it is influenced by development discourse (see Laurie et al., 2005), raising concerns around the nature of what is knowledge (see Foucault, 1972) and who has access to these discursive spaces (see Mohan, 2002). It further raises concerns about how development discourse mediates the ways in which this Southern knowledge fits into the narratives of organisations, including GDKS, attempting to diversify the discourse away from dominant development paradigms (see Mosse, 1994).

The question for the empirical analysis in subsequent chapters is whether GDKS's attempts to create widely accessible and diverse print and electronic information products addresses perceived gaps or, given its location and the pervasiveness of development discourse, may be at best tinkering at the edges of neoliberal development paradigms, or at worst, reinforcing the very agenda it is purporting to shift.

5.5 Decommodify information and improve availability and accessibility through a range of media including ICTs

Although GDKS is not, by its own admission, trying to reach marginalised groups at 'the grassroots' directly, there is an underlying assumption that editing, simplifying,

diversifying and decommodifying available information will make it more accessible. In particular, GDKS assumes that users of its websites and recipients of its printed materials and email alerts, particularly in the Global South, will find the information easier to use themselves. This will ensure that they in turn pass the information on to other people or adapt the information and then pass it on, thus either directly or indirectly supporting the diversification and subversion of the dominant knowledge paradigm, which in turn is presumed to improve both Northern and Southern capacities to influence more positive development outcomes. This emphasis on improving accessibility is central to GDKS's mission and vision, as its staff articulate:

> ... the idea is that Southern-based institutions should be able to have free access to services, encouraged to contribute their work ... We also want to be accessible in how we write so that it is not just gender specialists who can understand how we write, or only those with English as a first language who can understand what we're talking about ... [we're] trying to work increasingly with multilingual resources, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese ... These are the various elements of accessibility that are important to us ... We prioritise those that don't have access to good information services, access to consultants, primarily Southern-based users for that (HR, Manager, GDKS).

> The kind of information we provide is relatively accessible and it helps people understand what the latest thinking on gender is and also how to put that into practice and all sorts of tools and supports, the kind of information you need to help you make a case in your organisation or in your government as to why you should work on gender or what angle you should take and tools to support you to say how it's done ... [all of which is] available free to Southern-based organisations (SJ, Senior Research Officer, GDKS).

The specific mechanisms GDKS uses to achieve greater accessibility, along with the accessibility concerns these mechanisms are meant to address, are outlined in point two of Table 5.1. Each mechanism will be briefly analysed in turn below.

5.5.1 Simplify and summarise information in print and electronic formats

As point two in table 5.1 highlights, GKDS aims to increase accessibility to its materials, especially those which summarise academic and theoretical work, through extensive editing and the avoidance of (gender and) development jargon or academic language, and to simplify complex ideas. These mechanisms are designed to address two key concerns.

The first is that there is a persistent assumption that users in both Northern and Southern contexts, particularly policymakers, are time poor; simplifying and summarising is meant to improve information uptake by allowing users to digest, and thereby potentially act on, the key concerns emerging out of a particular report or piece of activist or academic research. The second is that those users for whom English is a second language, including policymakers and practitioners, will find it easier to read and/or understand GDKS materials, thus increasing the likelihood that its information products will contribute to more informed decision-making processes. The extent to which language concerns may be addressed through these correctives is contextualised in section 5.5.3 below and problematised extensively in relation to the empirical findings in chapters seven and eight. At this stage we can, with reference to both the empirical findings collected from the Northern discursive site as well as a range of existing literature, begin to contextualise the practice of simplifying and summarising complex ideas within broader notions of 'progressive' knowledge practice, as well as problematise the extent to which this mechanism addresses key accessibility concerns for those users who may be time poor.

In terms of the broader context, the importance of ensuring greater accessibility through simplified language to address the needs of users who are time poor is a view shared by other Northern feminists and NGOs. This emerges out of an overarching perception that ideas central to feminist development will not be taken up, notably by development policymakers and practitioners, unless they are accessible and demonstrate a practical relevance. ZK, as a Gender Policy Specialist and an NGO network chair, cites the production of information briefs, drawing out the best available information and putting it on their organisational website as crucial networking tasks, seeing themselves as interlocutors between other NGOs, interest groups and policymakers. She went on to discuss the importance of accessible information, and the need for available information to inform policy that should be 'written in easily accessible terms, taking complexity and making it speak to regular people' (ZK, NGO Network Chair, Northern NGO). GDKS's strategy appears to have met with some success in this respect since, in an interview with CH (Head of Policy, Northern women's NGO), she praised GDKS's outputs as accessible information resources, suggesting that they speak to governments and mainstream

NGOs, since GDKS's work 'doesn't alienate the way academia can', further noting that it is 'really important that practice doesn't get divorced from research'.

There are benefits and risks with this approach and Standing (2007: 108-9) articulates both. She cites the work of Razavi (1997), who suggests that, despite accusations that stripping away complexity leads to instrumentalism or tokenism in how gender is articulated in relation to development, gender advocates in large international organisations nonetheless 'have both to render their arguments meaningful to an ungendered audience, and to do it in a way that makes them more likely to be accepted and acted upon'. On the other hand, Standing (2007: 110) reflects on what she perceives is the outcome of this sort of instrumental simplifying: 'it is perhaps unavoidable that, in needing to provide an orderly route map for busy people, they exclude context and complexity and become banal and mythic' (Standing, 2007: 110). Thus, whilst it is possible that summaries may diversify information uptake amongst decision-makers as Razavi and Standing assert, processes of simplifying and summarising, in echoes of the co-option and depoliticisation of 'empowerment' into neoliberal development discourses discussed in section 3.2 in chapter three, may also 'strip away' or water down the more challenging ideas crucial to fostering more progressive and gender equal development outcomes.

Furthermore, summarising or abstracting research necessarily requires that those charged with the task of filtering must decide what information is of relevance to users, omitting detail that may, in certain contexts, nonetheless prove very useful. There is also the related risk that intermediaries select information that complements or supports their own or institutional agendas. Samoff and Stromquist (2001: 644) succinctly capture the inherent contradiction of the conscious filtering and gatekeeper role assumed by information services, raising concerns about the capacity of organisations like GDKS to contribute to decision-making processes:

> Since useful development knowledge is always locally contingent and situationally specific and often ambiguous, generic 'facts' are at best not likely to be useful to decision-makers and at worst likely to be confusing or misleading … simplifying complex situations into paragraph-long abstracts and sentence-long lessons may have some utility for general discussions, or to initiate training programmes, but does not contribute directly to improved decisions.

Thus, whilst GDKS's efforts at simplifying and summarising are recognised as good knowledge practice to improve diversified information uptake amongst decision-makers, this is likely to have negative as well as positive effects. The question for the empirical analysis in subsequent chapters then is whether GDKS's attempts to improve accessibility through language simplification and the production of summaries meet local information needs (including language and time use concerns) and contribute to subverting or reinscribing the dominant knowledge infrastructure in Southern contexts.

5.5.2 Provide information free of charge in print and electronic formats

GDKS places a significant emphasis on providing information free of charge, either via the Internet or by post, to individuals and resource centres, privileging those users and documentation centres based in the Global South. This policy is designed to address the perceived information gap amongst users and their partners and/or constituents in the Global South. Sending information products free of charge to resource centres or making materials free to download is also designed to increased accessibility, as there is no associated cost to acquiring relevant information, which is also considered to be a concern for individuals and organisations in the Global South.

Like GDKS, IWHC and AWID also ensure that an increased amount of information is available via print and electronic media. Both organisations maintain freely accessible and searchable online databases of information on women's health and rights with summaries to ensure, like GDKS does, that information is quick and free to access. Aletta, Institute for Women's History, having identified a persistent information gap both for and about women, have also created a virtual archive of women's history that is searchable and freely available.

Whilst the cost of obtaining information may be a barrier to access for some users, critics raise a number of concerns around the decommodification of information (section 2.5.2 in chapter two), including: the capacity of increased information dissemination to contribute to decision-making processes where these were not tied to specific decision-making tasks (Davies, 1994: 3); and the tendency to confuse information dissemination and improved accessibility with utility, an issue raised by Machlup (1993; see section

2.5.2.1) and reiterated with reference to practical examples by Lloyd-Laney et al. (2003) in footnote six in chapter two.

The question for the empirical analysis then is the extent to which making information freely available in both print and electronic format that is sent directly to users or to resource and documentation centres, particularly in the Global South, improves its accessibility and either directly influences decision-making, or indeed the capacity of Southern organisations to influence decision-making processes amongst policymakers and/or marginalised groups. A related question is the extent to which the knowledge practices of NGOs in New Delhi under scrutiny in this study recognise and support these types of measures to improve the accessibility of information.

5.5.3 Support translation into non-English languages and encourage submission of non-English language materials in print and electronic formats

As outlined both in Table 5.1 and alluded to above in section 5.5.1, GDKS emphasises engagement with other languages and the need for greater investment in translation, as many do in the literature cited in section 2.5.3.1 in chapter two (see for example, Lins Ribeiro, 1998; Mawdsley et al., 2002; Powell, 2006) as a crucial mechanism to increase accessibility and to diversify existing knowledge stores. This involves, for example, ensuring that materials are available in other languages, notably French and Spanish (which are both spoken widely in addition to English in a range of postcolonial contexts); encouraging users to submit non-English language materials to GDKS's website; and supporting, where possible, translations into other languages where the demand is identified or another organisation is willing to fund and/or facilitate it. The belief is that increasing the availability of non-English language material diversifies the discursive terrain away from the hegemony of English-language based theorising and practice. There is also an expectation that materials available in people's first language will be more relevant.

Like GDKS, other Northern feminist NGOs and gender units within mainstream NGOs, including Oxfam, Save the Children and Christian Aid, similarly prioritise the provision of non-English language resources as a central element of strategies geared towards

addressing critiques of World Bank-inspired knowledge practices. Tools such as translation are also increasingly applied to showcase the knowledges of marginalised women, particularly in the Global South. IWHC, for example, assures users that they maintain 'separate online libraries containing resources in French, Portuguese, and Spanish, including selected translations of key IWHC publications, and other recommended resources for advocates working in Africa and Latin America' (IWHC, 2008a).

AWID's Women's Rights Information Strategic Initiative, cited above in section 5.3, like GDKS, articulates a need for accessibility to be rooted in the increased availability of a greater number of multilingual resources that represent a diversity of voices using a range of media:

> The initiative provides a wide range of information resources in English, Spanish and French, from interactive e-mail discussions and e-bulletins to a high quality global feminist website and print communications. Highly accessible and based on the multitude of voices and experiences, these information resources are an invaluable tool in the promotion of women's human rights (AWID, 2008).

Notwithstanding concerns raised about the limitations of translation (see Kothari, 2001 in section 2.5.3.1 in chapter two), the question for the subsequent empirical chapters is the extent to which translation features as a central strategy for information intermediaries in New Delhi as part of good knowledge practice. There is also a question of the extent to which translation, either of GDKS or proprietary materials, is used to reach grassroots groups, as well as any insight respondents in New Delhi have into the importance of translation as a way to improve the relevance of existing information and promote more positive development outcomes.

5.5.4 Prioritise low bandwidth websites with minimal graphics, text-only emails and printed materials

Alongside concerns around the hegemony of the English language, section 2.5.3 in chapter two outlines the critical responses to the World Bank paradigm that reify the capacity of ICTs to democratise and equalise access to information, in particular for marginalised groups in the Global South. It is in response to these critiques that GDKS locates its own approach:

> Making sure that if someone needs a paper copy of [GDKS information], making sure that people with poorer internet connections in the South can connect to [the website], so [the website] doesn't have photos or anything that would make it a time-consuming site to download (HR, Manager, GDKS).

As Table 5.1 emphasises, GDKS prioritises simply formatted and low bandwidth websites, text-only emails and the dissemination of print materials. The assumption here is that simple interfaces (in conjunction with simplified language and translation) will make it easier for those people unfamiliar with the Internet to find what they need. The posting of print materials is also a critical response to the concerns around ICT infrastructure in the Global South and is echoed by other Northern-based feminist NGOs and practitioners. CH (Head of Policy, Northern women's NGO) emphasises wider concerns around the accessibility of information that are exacerbated by what she terms ongoing 'questions about infrastructure', noting that Southern partners 'are just grateful for materials or resources they can get'. She cites the example of partners in Ethiopia for whom access to technology is a key issue, where 'it takes four hours to send an email'. Where possible she tends to forward materials on email but as her organisation produces its own reports these are disseminated in print format to partners directly. Noting the gendered dimensions of ICTs, she argues it is necessary to 'find ways around it', which may include, for instance, 'picking up the phone instead of sending an email'.

Notwithstanding the concerns reiterated in the previous section in relation to language, there are also the broader inequalities manifested by the use of ICTs as a form of communication highlighted in section 2.5.3 in chapter two. Firstly, inequalities between resource-rich and resource-poor groups are further exacerbated by relative access to electronic information networks, particularly those facilitated by the Internet, where relative exclusion is determined by those who have access to the Internet and those who do not, in both Northern and Southern contexts (see Norris, 2001; Graham, 2002). Secondly, arguments in support of 'levelling the playing field' by broadening and diversifying ICT initiatives to speak to Southern realities denies the social dimensions of new ICTs (Castells, 2001) and the need for new 'electronic literacies' (Warschauer, 2003) that determine the extent to which marginalised groups in particular will be able to benefit from new ICTs.

Given persistent concerns about the lack of technological infrastructure, correctives such as low bandwidth websites, text emails and the posting of print information appear to be widely accepted as good knowledge-based development practice. The question for the empirical analysis then is the extent to which the deployment of ICTs with correctives to address discursive barriers, including simplified language and translation across print and electronic outputs, address social, pedagogical and literacy barriers for New Delhi-based users and their constituents. Given Heeks'(2002: 9) emphasis on privileging 'Southern designers' of ICT based systems for 'a greater chance of ICTs successfully contributing to development objectives', there is a related question of whether electronic communication in the Southern discursive 'site' is undertaken with these correctives to the mainstream World Bank knowledge paradigm in place. This includes posting information free of charge, thus taking account of the 'Southern cultural realities' that Heeks (2002) asserts prevents Southern-based individuals and organisations from maximising on the benefits of ICTs.

5.6 Privileging the views of Southern women and NGOs

The first three points in Table 5.1 have been located and contextualised in relation to broader notions of good practice in knowledge-based development aid and have reflected the critical gaps identified in both process and content in chapter two. These notions of good practice that fuel perceptions of greater accessibility are themselves mediated by an overarching framework that reifies the *imagined capacities* of NGOs and women located in the Global South, as we saw in chapter three, as closer to the grassroots or ground realities. These essentialised groups are, as a result of this presumed proximity, more aware of, and better able to respond to, the information gaps experienced by marginalised women, who are in turn encouraged to participate in, and thus disrupt, the dominant knowledge paradigm in service of their own empowerment and development. These processes of subversion are themselves dependent on the capacity of information intermediaries to diversify the discursive terrain of development itself by creating a space for the voices of the marginalised, which is meant to be facilitated by the more progressive knowledge practices undertaken by intermediaries such as GDKS. Before the empirical analysis can test the extent to which presumed geographies of exclusion map on to the Southern discursive site, spaces have been

created for the voices of marginalised women and the discursive terrain of development has been diversified, GDKS's perceptions of NGOs and women need to be analysed and contextualised in relation to broader knowledge-based development practice.

This final point in Table 5.1 reflects the critical gaps identified in chapter three in relation to the intended outcomes and the people charged with delivering on these outcomes and how these mediate notions of accessibility in K4Dev initiatives. Although the critical gaps in chapter three are dealt with separately for the purposes of analytical clarity, GDKS's reasoning for its knowledge practices both combine, as well as conflate, Southern women and Southern NGOs as ideal information intermediaries that respond constructively to concerns around Northern hegemony in the dominant knowledge infrastructure.

As outlined in Table 5.1, GDKS uses two key mechanisms to address the critical gaps identified in relation to the hegemony of Northern discourses in both development and feminism in chapter three. Each mechanism will be looked at in turn.

5.6.1 Prioritise sending materials to, and networking with, Southern-based women and NGOs acting as information intermediaries

Prioritising sending materials to, and networking with, Southern-based women and NGOs acting as information intermediaries is a corrective that is informed by three key assumptions. The first is that privileging Southern NGOs and women as both users and information intermediaries assumes that Southern-based women and NGOs are closer to 'ground realities', the grassroots or target groups and are therefore more in tune with the information needs of marginalised constituencies. Within this, Southern-based women and NGOs are perceived as a source of alternative development paradigms rooted in Southern realities that will disrupt dominant development discourses. The second assumption is that networking with Southern partners and promoting and participating in women's information networks in particular, including through meetings, conferences as well as via print publications and email updates, assumes that women's networks are active and effective with information being shared within, between and beyond them. The third and related assumption is that those individuals comprising these networks, or for whom information is being produced, are active change agents. Each of these assumptions will be analysed in turn.

5.6.1.1 Southern women as closer to ground realities and representatives of alternative paradigms

As Table 5.1 emphasises, GDKS assumes that Southern NGOs and women are closer to 'ground realities' and thus more responsive to the information needs of grassroots groups, experience extensive and chronic information deficits and are, at the same time, sources of alternative paradigms either in their own right or as representatives of proximate marginalised groups. GDKS's Manager asserts that they reach a

> wide range of organisations, for example, women's organisations ... [who] are much more in tune with the needs of their audiences in turn, so we hear of a lot of people repackaging what we do ... We get it to whom we think will allow us to reach as many people as possible, but there's often another layering of what people will do with our work. It could be extracting a case study to use in training, or taking [the newsletter] and translating it into the local language and disseminating it, so there is a role such organisations and people within them have in interacting with what we do ... We want it to be a two-way process, so try to get what we can from gender advocates that supply information on what's going on in their organisation, their country and feed through that information to us to facilitate exchange. We have a facilitative role in some sense and it is about providing people with accessible information ... to those that have much less information ... We certainly reach a lot of intermediaries, people who will be talking to women's organisations at a sub-national level or grassroots organisations and may act as an intermediary in both ways ... We have this romantic idea that every grassroots organisation has a copy of [the newsletter] in their hand!

The presumed proximity of Southern NGOs and Southern women to 'ground realities', critiqued by numerous scholars in the literature as outlined in chapter two (see for example, Mohan, 2002; Dempsey, 2009), is a firmly entrenched assumption, reinscribed by the persistent belief in privileging Southern voices as good knowledge practice. Northern feminist NGOs emphasise, for instance, that their organisations' 'reason for existence' is to ensure that 'Southern voices are heard by decision-makers [in the North]' (ZK, Gender Policy Specialist, Northern NGO). CH (Head of Policy, Northern women's NGO) identifies 'helping the poorest women', including, for example, 'indigenous women in Peru, who are sidelined, marginalised', noting that it is important to 'support women's organisations directly' since 'people there know best what they need', as they are 'strategically rooted in realities'. This allows her NGO to 'safely and responsibly take the voices of the beneficiaries of their work'. She acknowledges the challenges of being

Northern-based whilst trying to avoid the charge of hegemony commonly levelled at INGOs, since her organisation 'don't have the capacity to work with the smallest or weakest NGOs because we are a small INGO', but nonetheless claiming that they 'always try to meet the beneficiaries of grassroots NGOs, even if we [Northern women's NGO] are working through a national level NGO'.

The discursive slippage between a professed commitment to women 'at the grassroots' whilst admitting that, in reality, reaching the grassroots is entirely dependent on a partner or intermediary NGO, is also well rehearsed. One respondent, herself a donor-based communications consultant, openly accepted that they simply have no choice but to 'make assumptions that infomediaries will be closer to target groups' and 'fund research to NGOs because in theory they are closer [to the poor]' (ML, Communications Consultant, OECD-DAC agency). She acknowledges that they presume that 'the poor are represented by the people [the donor] funds', where '[the donor] tends to work with organisations they know' (ibid).[35]

The notion that Southern-based women (and NGOs) are a source of alternative ideas or paradigms, a critical response to Northern feminist development tendencies to treat Southern women in particular not as agents of change but as victims as outlined in section 3.3.2.1 in chapter three, is similarly upheld as good knowledge practice. ML (Communications Consultant, OECD-DAC agency), despite recognising that Southern academics are 'not a marginalised group', nonetheless asserts that 'exposure for Southern academics is important', reinforcing the belief that Southern voices are potentially a source of alternative voices and paradigms.

The Director (AR, Education organisation) of another Northern-based information intermediary also provides some useful insights into the extent to which Southern-based women and NGOs are presumed to be a source of alternative development paradigms. She cites similar ideals to those of GDKS to bring 'gender perspectives from the South' since 'the knowledge flow is all screwed up'; she acknowledges that they are trying to 'bridge' the gap between academics writing reports for donors that are not informing

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[35] DFID's investment in Research Into Use (RIU) (see footnote one in chapter two) is further evidence that DFID promotes the role of the information intermediary also on the basis of their presumed proximity to poor or marginalised groups.

practice and the work being done in the 'South' that is not informing donor or academic work. The website she manages is designed, therefore, to be 'a platform for many different kinds of writing'. The process consisted of getting in touch with Southern NGOs, including women's NGOs, to find 'alternative' narratives. She does acknowledge, however, the challenge of trying to authenticate a voice, but feels that it is better than the alternative:

> If you say we are representing Southern scholars, what does it really mean, it means nothing. So some of the stuff you will find is Southern in that sense, it's still better than a UN official going and doing three weeks of a field trip and writing out reports or that kind of thing (AR, Director, Education organisation).

Echoing concerns raised by Feek (2009) about the lack of empirical evidence to support ICT-based knowledge interventions cited in section 1.3 in chapter one, her reflections would suggest that the knowledge practices underpinning the information services she manages are driven much more by assumption than sound evidence:

> ... because we have tried to make it kind of driven by people who might in the end use it. So we hope that it will be of [use] -- for example, if we do this systemization of the experience of the women's group, I think other women's group would be interested ... then if we put scholarship up by indigenous women then indigenous women anywhere would be interested in reading it or at the very least, these should inform people who are doing doctoral work or people who are teaching and so on ... (ibid).

A recent publication from WIDE cited above also provides an example of the discursive conflation, muddling and slippage that occurs when Northern feminists, keen to engage with subversive ideas that challenge Northern, hegemonic development paradigms, are crossed with the imagined capacities of Southern NGOs and women. The foreword to the report emphasises that

> It [this short book] is a collection of Indian voices on economic alternatives for gender and social justice which challenge mainstream economic thinking, search for macroeconomic and macro-political solutions to pressing problems, and develop conceptual and practical alternatives in the very local context and in everyday life (Specht, 2010: 4).

The editor of the volume goes on to emphasise that

> As part of stimulating and broadening alternative ideas and practices, WIDE encouraged and invited Indian *civil society actors*, including feminist

activists, scholars and *grassroots representatives*, to write about economic *alternatives to the globalised neoliberal model*. As this model has also become the prevailing development path in India, the collection of articles attempts to compile good practices, concepts and visions about economic alternatives from a gender and social justice perspective ... This is just the beginning of an exploratory journey to outline alternative models which offer space to the diversity of *local initiatives* and a transformative perspective to the various approaches depicted' (Wichterich, 2010: 8; my emphasis).

This introductory text would suggest firstly that all of these writers, in their various positions as academics or activists working with the grassroots, remain unaffected by, or are working outside of, the globalised neoliberal development model. Secondly, it would suggest that these authors have active and reciprocal links with grassroots groups. Yet one look at the pedigree of the list of authors suggests that these are elites, including heads of academic departments at internationally renowned universities, founders of large, urban NGOs and representatives for India on various international committees. Yet by virtue of their geographic location (see Spivak, 1990), these authors seem to retain, by extension, a relationship or connection to the 'grassroots' and a capacity to both represent, as well as generate, 'alternative' paradigms.

The fluidity of the term 'Southern' is also evidenced by AG (GDKS EIC member, Southern NGO), herself a GDKS EIC member and the Director of a Southern-based NGO with ECOSOC status with the UN. Whilst acknowledging that discussions around the North-South divide are 'nebulous terrain', she suggests on the one hand that she has a role in emphasising 'the voice of the people you tend to theorise about', whilst on the other hand, when discussing her Southern-based location in relation to the international context, that her contribution constitutes 'bringing in alternate voices into writing'. She argues that 'every time we scream from the periphery we make our voice known', thus reinscribing the North-South divide and locating herself as a marginalised, Southern voice because of her geographical location, despite her own relatively elite discursive location. This slippage, in other words, is fairly common, and represents an important discursive device that will be revisited in the context of the empirical analysis in chapter ten. The question for the Southern-based empirical analysis then is the extent to which those women and NGOs who are both users and recipients of GDKS materials either themselves represent alternative paradigms, or have access to, and accordingly create discursive

spaces for, alternative paradigms emerging from their own grassroots or marginalised constituencies.

5.6.1.2 Networks

As outlined in Table 5.1, the centrality of networks to the function of Southern NGOs and women as information intermediaries to both reach, and privilege the voices of, marginalised groups, may not be overstated. The presumed functionality of networks has surfaced in myriad ways over the course of this analysis. Indeed, K4Dev practice persists in the assumption that if information is made available, it will be passed on, ultimately getting to where it needs to. This assumption is so embedded that researchers and commentators discussing this issue do not see the need to problematise it. Richard Humphries, a researcher at the African Management Development Institutes' Network in Pretoria and a participant in a recent conference on the role of information intermediaries in development, highlights this tendency in an article for the Inter Press Service (IPS):

> One of the pioneering African virtual networks, the Southern African Regional Poverty Network (SARPN), quickly built an international reputation as a source for diverse research outputs on key policy issues on poverty. Its users are located in universities and in government and development agencies. Of course websites are accessed by an elite group. But knowledge intermediaries accept that knowledge is then, in various ways, passed on to a wider group of people (Humphries, 2008).

The assumption that intermediaries have the capacity to facilitate broader knowledge exchanges through information initiatives clearly persists in practice, which neither problematises the nature of the knowledge itself nor the people, whom Humphries acknowledges are elites, charged with ensuring that knowledge is being passed on.

The four-yearly Know How conferences that took place between 1998 and 2006 cited earlier are a good illustration of the belief in women's networks. These conferences emphasise in particular the perceived need for women-targeted information services that act as critical responses to both the World Bank knowledge paradigm outlined in chapter two and the postcolonial feminist critiques that attempt to redress the perception of Southern women as victims outlined in chapter three. In the 2002 conference, Devaki Jain, a renowned Indian feminist activist, notes in her keynote address

the importance of women producing their own knowledge, in addition to building women's networks to share the knowledge ... emphasiz[ing] networking as a special feature of the feminist movement that brings collective perspectives of issues and gives a collective voice (Onsea, 2002: 28).

This quotation is not from an academic or theoretical intervention, but a perspective that emerges from a practical, activist engagement with feminism in development that helps to locate GDKS's perception of the importance of networks to their own praxis.

Notwithstanding the academic critiques of 'sisterhood' outlined in section 3.3.2 in chapter three, the power of women's networks is undoubtedly underpinned by vague and persistent notions of a global female solidarity. CH (Head of Policy, Northern women's NGO), not wanting to 'pander to stereotypes', suggests that 'women's rights organisations are always the weakest, the smallest, the least funded organisations of everyone ... [and given this] women's networks that we've worked with over time are resourceful because they've had to be, that's what being excluded does to you'. ZK (Gender Policy Specialist, Northern NGO) similarly draws inspiration from networks, particularly Southern-originated women's networks such as Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) and transnational, global feminisms, acknowledging that she believes 'something about solidarity amongst women is important'. She also echoes the tendency to 'hope' that 'it will be the right women' that you reach, reasserting the extent to which notions of female solidarity as opposed to empirical evidence persistently underpin these practices. This emphasis on women and networks, she argues, emerges 'out of our accountability as a feminist movement in the North'. She cites the need to be constantly vigilant given that, reminiscent of Mohanty's (2003 [1991]) critique of Northern feminism, one organisation with whom she works has been 'criticised for a focus on Southern women as objects of inquiry'.

AG (GDKS EIC member, Southern NGO) similarly lauds the power of networks, arguing that she is 'able to find [information] through networks who bring out a real diversity'. She suggests that notions of female solidarity are important, since 'you do feel and you do sense it' (ibid).

AR (Director, Education organisation) also recognises the power of networks, but sounds a note of doubt:

We have been working for 20 years on the belief that networking - and by networking I don't mean Internet, but women meeting, forming an organisation or a collective – does this mean something? ... we don't know if this is true, are women really gaining? Our membership is increasing, but are women really gaining from this kind of networking or do they need to do something else?

The question for the empirical analysis then is the extent to which networks are functional, facilitating the wider exchange of information both from GDKS as well as other sources to contribute both to supporting inputs into decision-making undertaken by Southern partners, as well as supporting Southern-based responses to the perceived information gaps experienced by marginalised groups. There is also the related question of the extent to which networks create discursive spaces for the voices of marginalised groups, particularly women, in the Southern empirical site (see the discussion on networks in section 3.4.3 in chapter three).

5.6.1.3 Locating 'change agents'

In addition to networking to support advocacy and other initiatives to disrupt dominant knowledge paradigms in both Northern and Southern contexts, for GDKS and other Northern feminist NGOs, policymakers are a key target audience for their widely accessible, diverse and decommodified knowledge services. Concerns around the capacity of information to contribute to policy-level decision-making processes, as well as the extent to which policymakers are suitable change agents, emerged in section 3.4.1 in chapter three. Nonetheless, GDKS perceives its role as 'intermediaries, to provide support to those who are developing policy or those trying to put policy into practice' (HR, Manager, GDKS). Within government this would imply that policymakers and senior bureaucrats involved in policy implementation would form a significant part of GDKS's target audience. A deliberate effort is made to ensure a diversity of resources, to 'make sure we have a good balance of different resources from different regions and of different types, like checklists, guidelines that will support policymakers' (HR, Manager, GDKS). In-line with the emphasis on evidence-based policy cited in section 2.5.2.2 in chapter two and in the introduction to this chapter, influencing decision-making processes at the level of policy in both the North and the South, as well as supporting those activists or practitioners attempting to influence policy directly, notably in Southern contexts, is frequently cited as one of the principal contributions of knowledge-based development

initiatives. The importance of policy-relevant information and targeting policymakers as part of knowledge-based advocacy is also reiterated by respondents in other Northern feminist NGOs, whose views on the importance of policy relevant information are highlighted in section 5.5.1 above.

The critiques in the existing literature outlined in section 2.5.2.2 in chapter two in relation to the opacity and complexity of policy and decision-making processes (see Samoff and Stromquist, 2001; Utting, 2006), would suggest that GDKS information services will be competing with a range of other influences that have a direct and indirect impact on how development policies are formulated and implemented. Moreover, the assertion that policymakers have both the power and the will to act on new information is not, as we saw in section 3.4.1 in chapter three, entirely supported by the literature. GDKS has what the manager has termed 'traditional, safe, friendly, warm contacts' (HR, Manager, GDKS), who are the gender advocates in donor agencies and gender-focused people in the different regions with whom they work and whose work they are attempting to support. Reflecting specifically on this type of practice, Guttal (2006: 41) suggests that policymakers are hemmed in by wider institutional forces, where there is no point in trying to look out for 'good' or 'committed' people, emphasising that:

> ... it is futile to try and identify individuals in these institutions who 'care', 'can be trusted', and 'are trying to do some good'. The web of development institutions and interests is far larger than the individuals who inhabit its spaces; to confuse personal qualities with institutional mandates is to tie ourselves up in knots and lose sight of the more fundamental question of how to break the hegemony of these institutions on our thinking and actions.

The question for the empirical analysis is firstly the extent to which policymakers in New Delhi are influenced by GDKS information services. Related to this is whether GDKS information supports, as they hope it does, the advocacy efforts of women and NGOs attempting to influence decision-making processes in this Southern context. There is also the question of the extent to which the users and recipients of GDKS's materials themselves mirror these practices, including an emphasis on policymakers as change agents. Finally, given GDKS's presumption that users and recipients in Southern contexts are closer to the grassroots, there is the question of whether New Delhi-based

intermediaries are also enabling marginalised groups to act as change agents as part of emancipatory, rather than neoliberal, discourses of development and change.

5.6.2 Establish basket-funding, where donors contribute to a central fund

Moving on to the issue of the power exerted by bilateral and multilateral funding, GDKS claims to overcome these concerns through what they term a 'basket funding model', thus allowing GDKS greater freedom to publish a diversity of ideas and materials, particularly from the Global South, to disrupt the dominant knowledge paradigm . Whilst concerns around donor funding have been, as emphasised in section 3.3.1.2 in chapter three, well-established in the literature (see for example, Edwards and Hulme, 1996; Tvedt, 1998), what is more interesting to note here is that, despite the veneer of independence that basket funding is meant to provide for GDKS, donors nonetheless exert an indirect *discursive* control, since attempting to shift dominant discourses does in fact require a direct engagement with the dominant:

> [Information services are a] negotiated process but bottom line editorial control is with us, it never goes to the donor although we might want the donor to have an input in reading if we feel that it might be written in a way which might alienate groups of people then we might show it to the groups of people who we think we might alienate ... Not so bothered about donors or saying anything that goes against their policies as we make clear that if they are funding [our services] they don't have editorial control, but then we obviously wouldn't completely dismiss all the work they are doing on a particular issue ... (HR, Manager, GDKS).

AG (GDKS EIC member, Southern NGO) further suggests that there are funding 'fashions', where she accepts that 'I'm at a risk of creating hierarchies, but global funding patterns mean having projects in particular areas, like rights and domestic violence', again implying that donors retain a more subtle discursive control that is harder to measure. As the literature in the area of donor funding in relation to knowledge practices in particular has noted (see for example Mawdsley et al., 2002), Northern NGOs are often accused of retaining discursive control, reflecting donor priorities and thus sidelining the priorities of Southern NGOs. The question for the subsequent empirical analysis then is the extent to which the Southern women and NGOs in this study are able to privilege alternative views

and move away from funding fashions that risk privileging a narrow range of ideas and intervention types.

5.7 Monitoring and evaluation

Before progressing with the analysis of how the assumptions underpinning GDKS's knowledge practices map onto the nature of information use and knowledge translation in New Delhi, we need to consider GDKS's perceptions of its work by way of elaborating briefly on how GDKS monitors and evaluates its own knowledge practices. GDKS, like many other organisations working in development, is similarly accountable to donors and has over the years developed monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems to try to capture the extent of its value to promoting more progressive development outcomes.

As GDKS's manager admits, the indicators used to measure effectiveness are not terribly robust, nor has GDKS implemented any M&E mechanisms systematically. As outlined in the methodology in section 4.3 in chapter four, there is a tendency not just for GDKS, but for information intermediaries in general to employ quantitative over qualitative M&E mechanisms such as the frequency and diversity of website visitors, the number of newsletters posted or the number of subscribers located in the Global South. These types of measures provide little insight, however, into how or even whether GDKS mechanisms are increasing accessibility, promoting greater uptake of information or contributing to decision-making processes.

This concern about the need for more robust indicators is echoed by a recent external evaluation of GDKS information services[36] which suggested that GDKS's existing measures of influence or impact tended to be 'ad hoc' or 'anecdotal', where it is unclear how or even where GDKS services are being used in any meaningful way. As the subsequent empirical chapters attest, confidence in this type of ad hoc feedback that relies on users to faithfully report both how they used information as well as represent accurately the work that they do and the groups they reach raises serious concerns. Yet this lack of empirical evidence to support GDKS's knowledge practices does not prevent the external evaluator from concluding that GDKS does 'add value', providing 'useful and importance services for development'.

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[36] In order to protect the anonymity of GDKS, the reference for this evaluation is withheld.

This tendency to value information services despite the lack of empirical evidence to support these types of knowledge practices (Feek, 2009) may also be located as a feature of the M&E undertaken in relation to K4Dev practice more broadly. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) undertook a study in 2003 entitled 'Revisiting the Magic Box', which attempts to evaluate the impact of three development knowledge initiatives, run primarily by women, in the Global South. The FAO's evaluation places a similar emphasis on process indicators – including website statistics, membership numbers, participation in international conferences and recognition by international bodies bestowing awards for community-based ICT initiatives – rather than outcomes such as the extent to which these knowledge initiatives are reaching, as well as promoting the voices of, poorer and rural constituents. Instead these cases are heralded largely as success stories of people, mainly women, who have persisted and persevered despite innumerable challenges in resource-constrained Southern contexts. It would appear that concerns around impact are largely overlooked in favour of perceptions of information production and dissemination for and about women, contiguously supported by networking through online forums and in international spaces, as representative of a significant advancement for women, particularly in developing contexts.

The question for the empirical analysis is the extent to which users and recipients in New Delhi support or refute GDKS's measure of its own capacity as an information service. A further and related question is how respondents, including the collective case study organisations under scrutiny (section 4.5 in chapter four), identify and reflect on their own engagement with the dominant development knowledge infrastructure.

5.8 Conclusion

Bringing the discussion back to the first research question of the present study, it is clear that GDKS believes there to be a persistent information gap that is experienced most acutely in the Global South, notably by marginalised groups. Echoing the participatory correctives encapsulated in the model put forth by Theis et al. (2000) and reproduced as Figure 1.2 in chapter one, GDKS further believes that this gap may be addressed through knowledge interventions that, at least in theory, take account of the relative inequalities experienced by groups perceived to be marginalised from the dominant development knowledge infrastructure. This gap persists, Northern organisations like GDKS believe,

because of a need to promote alternatives to neoliberal development paradigms that have at their heart gender equality and social justice.

Rather than any attempt to ascertain impact as outlined in chapter one [37], the remainder of this study is instead an interrogation of the *imagined* capacities of Southern-based women and NGOs as information intermediaries. It is an imaginary that persists in the face of empirical evidence to the contrary. The question is whether women and NGOs acting as information intermediaries are able to overcome discursive and geographical barriers by adapting the information that is made available, either by GDKS but also by other organisations, to suit their local context. Are they able to engage with, and create discursive spaces for, alternative 'ways of knowing'?

Before embarking on the empirical analysis that follows the flow of information as it travels from GDKS to New Delhi, it is crucial to provide a background and historical context to India as the destination for GDKS information services.

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[37] Attempting to ascertain the impact would not only suggest that there is an objective and verifiable impact, which in itself is problematic, but in any case would not be possible due to the sheer range of variables beyond GDKS's control and that function outside of this study in relation to the processes and impacts of information production and dissemination.

6. Problematising the Indian 'Knowledge Society': Class, caste and gender inequality

6.1 Introduction

India, so frequently both the subject and object of theoretical and practical analysis and intervention in development studies by academics and practitioners located both within and outside of India, is simply too vast and diverse to provide any comprehensive overview that would allow us to fully understand this discursive 'site'. Instead this chapter reflects on how India, in its efforts to become a 'knowledge society', cannot afford to engage with the World Bank knowledge paradigm and its blindness to the intersectional inequalities that underpin perceptions of surpluses and deficits in the creation of, and access to, the global knowledge infrastructure. This chapter exposes the gap between the state's aspiration to become a knowledge society and the barriers to achieving this in practice by juxtaposing the Indian state's ambitions with an overview and analysis of how class and caste are inflected in the historical trajectories of both the Indian women's movement and the non-profit sector. This analysis in turn elucidates how these overlapping histories mediate the capacity of women's NGOs in modern-day India to deliver the knowledge on which India's K4Dev ambitions partly rest.

Section 6.2 begins this background chapter by providing an overview of India's relationship to the World Bank knowledge paradigm, encapsulated in its desire to become a 'knowledge economy/society'. Section 6.3 introduces the intersectionality of caste, class and religion in the Indian context as a way of framing discussions of India's ambitions to become a knowledge society. The analysis in section 6.3.1 considers how shifting perceptions of caste and class are subtly altering the nature of inequality in the aggregate, moving on to contextualise the status of women within these shifting class/caste boundaries in section 6.3.2. Section 6.4 reflects on the centrality of class and caste divides to the history of the Indian women's movement, tracing its trajectory as a movement always upheld as distinct from Western feminism, from the pre-independence era to the present day. Women's reservations in political office are discussed in section 6.4.3 as a way of highlighting the challenges of caste, class and religious difference confronting the Indian women's movement. Section 6.5 then provides a brief historical insight into the non-profit sector in India, identifying key overlaps with the genesis and

history of the Indian women's movement. NGOs, women and discourses of empowerment are variously and collectively analysed in relation to their interaction with the Indian state in sections 6.6 to 6.8. Section 6.9 offers a brief conclusion by way of introduction to the remainder of the empirical analysis.

6.2 India as a 'Knowledge Society'

With a population of just over 1.12 billion people, India is often described as a fast emerging global political and economic superpower (see Radhakrishnan, 2007). In the wake of the liberalisation of the economy in 1991, after decades of socialist-inspired planning in the post-independence period, many observers have argued that whilst unprecedented levels of wealth have been created, it is less clear whether liberalisation has had a positive effect on the ever-widening gaps in access to healthcare, education, food and livelihood support between the wealthy and the marginalised in both urban and rural areas (see the discussion in Mawdsley, 2004: 85). One manifestation of the liberalisation of the economy is evidenced in India's aspirations to become a 'knowledge society (Radhakrishan, 2007), signalling the Indian state's tacit acceptance of the purported economic modernisation potential offered by the World Bank knowledge paradigm to promote India's overall development. These aspirations were realised in the establishment of India's National Knowledge Commission in June 2005. The website of this advisory body, which reported in October 2008, states plainly that '[t]he ability of a nation to use and create knowledge capital determines its capacity to empower and enable its citizens by increasing human capabilities' (National Knowledge Commission, n.d.). Radhakrishnan (2007: 143), citing the objectives of the Commission, notes that it is

> premised on the idea that a focus on knowledge will allow India to "leapfrog in the race for social and economic development," and that a society with equal access to knowledge will be one that will develop most successfully and dramatically.

With these ends in mind, the Commission has recommended improving knowledge infrastructures, capturing indigenous knowledge and improving access to education, including universal English language education and advanced education in maths, science and engineering (National Knowledge Commission, 2007). Furthermore, many of these changes are to be delivered through an enhanced ICT infrastructure that will span health, education and legal systems. In other words, as part of a development paradigm, it is a

'blueprint' that reflects well-established mainstream K4Dev approaches endorsed by a range of Northern donors, as outlined in section 1.2 in chapter two, that prioritise education, innovation and entrepreneurship to be supported through new public-private partnerships, all delivered via an enhanced ICT infrastructure. These are also what Radhakrishnan (2007: 143) refers to as '[b]road global principles of efficiency, merit, and progress' that 'tie the various abstractions of the Knowledge Commission into a powerful package'.

These recommendations are clearly disengaged from the range of critiques that are highlighted in chapter two of this study in relation to, for instance, the fluidity and contested nature of, not just indigenous, but all, knowledge. The ideological focus in the report on the individual and the capacity for knowledge to be 'democratised' through a range of measures including improvements to education and new ICTs effectively gloss over the resource inequalities that make the knowledge economy profitable for the few at the expense of the many. A keyword search within the document reveals, for example, that the term 'entrepreneur' appears well over a dozen times, whilst gender appears only once in the main text (it appears twice in the descriptions of the work of two team members). Caste appears once, where one recommendation on school education suggests vaguely that 'disparities based on gender, caste, region etc.' should be reduced 'through differential support' (National Knowledge Commission, 2007: 24), with no more specific guidance on how these disparities may be tackled in practice. The word 'class' only appears either in discussions of 'classrooms' or when the report recommends creating 'world-class' institutions. Women, poverty and religion do not appear at all. This token acknowledgement of inequality in the interim report of the Commission does not seriously address inequality, poverty, regional disparity or variability of access to ICT or other resources. It seems instead to echo the key provisions of the World Bank knowledge paradigm that overlook the relationship between poverty and the nature of exclusion in the knowledge infrastructure. This oversight, as the rest of this chapter details, is particularly problematic for attempts to create a 'knowledge society' in the Indian context.

6.3 Intersectionality: Class, Caste and Religion

Whilst minority faith groups, notably India's substantial Muslim minority, experience greater levels of marginalisation overall as compared to the Hindu majority, class and caste status are still much more powerful determinants of socio-economic status and relative exclusion across faith groups. The Indian context is unique insofar as it maintains, particularly amongst Hindus, a rigid system of social ordering that is rooted in caste labelling, despite the outlawing of caste and the establishment of equality for all citizens enshrined in the Indian constitution. Illegality aside, the sheer scale of the caste system would make the task of dismantling it virtually insurmountable. Caste is tied up inexorably with religion, particularly Hindu religion, although amongst certain groups caste may also transcend religion, where members of what are called 'scheduled' or 'backward' castes may also belong to non-Hindu faiths.

As the division of labour and the ownership of capital largely determine caste status, the system itself mimics the class divisions inherent within capitalism (Mohanty, 2004: 20-1). The key difference is that caste is even more rigid than class and social mobility is almost impossible. Caste status is determined by birth and is therefore fixed until death; thus mobility between castes is impossible and inter-marriage widely condemned. Backward castes have tended to be involved in manual or physical labour, with untouchable and outcastes consigned to manual work of a 'degrading kind' (ibid: 21). Described as 'a complex ordering of social groups on the basis of ritual purity' (Narula, 1999: 24), India's caste system is actually two overlapping systems: the *Varna* and the *Jati* systems. The first of these, 'the Varna system is the ancient division (believed to be roughly 3,000 years old) of the Hindus into mutually exclusive, endogamous, hereditary, and occupation-specific groups' (Deshpande, 2002: 20):

> Brahmins (priests and teachers), the Kshatriyas (rulers and soldiers), the Vaisyas (merchants and traders), and the Sudras (laborers and artisans). [These four groups are also known collectively as caste Hindus.] A fifth category falls outside the varna system and consists of those known as "untouchables" or Dalits; they are often assigned tasks too ritually polluting to merit inclusion within the traditional varna system (Narula, 1999: 25).

The ownership of intellectual and physical capital in recent history (from the late stages of Empire up to the present day) has tended to rest principally with Brahmins although,

historically, royalty belonged to the Kshatriya or warrior caste and both intellectual and physical capital were also owned by the Vaishya or trader caste (Mohanty, 2004: 21). Within these categories there are sub-castes or *jatis* which are, quite simply, too numerous to count and

> are further divided along occupational, sectarian, regional and linguistic lines ... [w]hereas the first four varnas are free to choose and change their occupation, Dalits have generally been confined to the occupational structures into which they are born (Narula, 1999: 25).

As a way of identifying relative poverty and exclusion amongst people belonging to *jatis* within the Sudra caste, the Indian government created a category of 'Other Backward Castes' (OBCs), which in government parlance refers broadly to those who in caste terms are above Dalits but have nonetheless been historically marginalised (Narula, 1999).

6.3.1 The shifting terrain of class and caste

Positive discrimination to combat caste-based inequality emerged with the recommendations of the Mandal Commission of 1978, which suggested extending quotas to OBCs that were already in place for Dalits. These recommendations resurfaced and became law in 1990 under the V.P. Singh administration amidst widespread protests, particularly by youth in lower economic classes from upper caste groups who would not qualify for the reservation (Narula, 1999).

As these protests might suggest, rather than contributing significantly to greater equality amongst caste groups, these reservations have had mixed results. Firstly, as the occupational status of OBCs has not been as historically rigid as that of Dalits, it has meant that OBCs are a far more heterogeneous group than Dalits, many of whom have managed to capture land and power and use it for political gain: '[The OBC category] span[s] such a wide cultural and structural arch as to be almost meaningless' (Jain, 1996: 136, as cited in Narula, 1999: 37). Instead, these reservations have contributed significantly to elevating the status of class and de-linking caste from class status, where the rise of the 'new' Indian middle class 'is the product of [these] ... reservation policies ... for lower castes, which [has] led to a change in the caste composition of the newly wealthy and powerful' (Mawdsley, 2004: 85).

Mawdsley (2004: 85) highlights the work of scholars who suggest that India's middle classes may be understood as

> a transnational class of people who are bound up in the cultural and economic transactions of contemporary globalization, and who have more in common and closer social relations with parallel classes in South Africa, Australia and the USA than with the parochialized 'have-nots' of their own nation.

This transnational class is signified by globalised markers such as the pursuit of English-language education and employment, 'Western' values and branded material goods (see discussion in Mawdsley, 2004: 85).

Language provides a fitting lens through which to observe how higher class status in particular mediates opportunities to participate in the existing knowledge infrastructure. The federal state recognises 22 languages, with the official national languages being Hindi and English (Kumar, 1995); English in particular is spoken widely and used extensively in government at both the federal and state levels, evidenced by the emphasis on English-language education in the Knowledge Commission's report cited above. This extensive usage of English is not unproblematic; rather, it is highly contested terrain that fuels class divides: '[English] continues to regulate access to specialised, professional training; it is linked to economic benefits and it reproduces and maintains cultural privilege' (M. Roy, 1993: 57, as cited in Mawdsley, 2004: 85). Indeed, despite the existence of 22 languages and countless dialects, English-medium education is still coveted as a driver of success; its pursuit results in what Faust and Nagar (2001: 2878) identify as 'social fractures in Indian society by creating and reinforcing a social, cultural, economic, and discursive divide between the English-educated and the majority'.

The corollary to this shift that has elevated class status is that those groups historically excluded from accessing English-language education or employment due to their caste status (notably Dalits but also other marginalised groups within the OBC category) do not benefit from the opportunities provided by reservations as these are, as the literature suggests, quickly monopolised by better-resourced groups within the OBC category. The result is that those unable to access reservations are invisibilised. Echoing the tendency of neoliberal development paradigms to blame the poor for the failure of development (section 3.2.3 in chapter three), these groups are instead blamed for their inability to

improve their class status by capitalising either on the reservations in schools and state employment, or the opportunities afforded by the liberalisation of the economy. The result is that these groups are doubly marginalised from any purported benefits of either reservations or the liberalisation of the economy, since they are both lower caste as well as unable to access the English-language education that would, at least in theory, lead to better employment or greater opportunities in the marketplace that would improve their class status.

6.3.2 Caste, class, patriarchy and women

The original division of labour within the caste system had uneven consequences for women. Caste, patriarchy and religion combined to ensure that women of a higher caste were confined to the home (see Chakravarti, 2004 [1993]). Yet the ways in which patriarchy shaped women's material realities were to be inexorably altered by the elevation of class over caste status for many women, beginning in the run-up to independence. British colonialism introduced a new class structure through encouraging training for Indian men to join their administrative services, but for the most part this tended to mimic the existing caste structure, with most new economic opportunities going to upper caste men. As Mazumdar (1990: 54) notes, reformers had not 'seriously thought of educating women for employment and professions'. But for a small group of women from this new middle class, women's education and training became highly sought after with a growing demand for health and education services to be made available by women for other women (Liddle and Joshi, 1986), with respectability being proffered in particular to careers as teachers and physicians not just for Christian women, but amongst all communities (Mazumdar, 1990: 54). With independence and constitutional guarantees of equality, the opportunities available to this group of women widened.

It in this movement of women into education and professional employment that Liddle and Joshi (1986) have identified a continuous slippage between the constraints of the caste hierarchy and the increasingly emancipatory class hierarchy in middle and upper class women's experiences. Whereas caste has historically resulted in women experiencing greater seclusion as one moves up the caste ladder, changing class values had what they term a 'contradictory effect' on women. Maintaining higher caste status,

they argued, meant greater seclusion for women but as women in this group began to be educated and started working, higher class status and therefore honour could be brought to the family by women in high-status jobs such as teaching, government service or medicine. As Liddle and Joshi (1986: 73) further note, '[i]t was no accident that the women's organisations developed out of the middle class' with the result that class values have had an emancipatory effect on middle-class women at this level.

As the first Commission on the Status of Women in India was to discover between 1971 and 1974, however, this move away from the constraints of caste to the relative freedom afforded by higher class status did not represent the experiences of the vast majority of Indian women, whose experiences of these multiple systems of oppression were tied inexorably and principally to concerns around poverty and exclusion. Mazumdar, as the member secretary to the first committee on the status of women in India in 1971, reflects on her feelings upon discovering this class divide:

> [F]or the first time ... we were coming to terms with the real diversity of cultures, traditions. And that what were called traditional roles, the kind of traditional role models and the culture that we in the middle class thought we needed to break to become independent ... for the first time, it was about coming to terms with the understanding that we were always a very small minority, not the bulk of India's women (Mazumdar with Rai, 2007: 106)

Lower caste women historically had greater freedom of movement, retained both familial and productive rights and responsibilities including, for example, the right to divorce, and whilst lower on the socioeconomic ladder in many cases, caste would not have secluded lower caste women in the same way. So whereas class status (marked by education or language abilities) at the level of the middle and upper classes has been more important for creating spaces for women of these strata, it has left a large swathe of women behind.

Rai (2002), in her study of class, caste and gender in India's parliament (section 3.4.1 in chapter three), also provides some useful reflections on the importance of class in determining women's status: 'The majority of women in the Indian Parliament are elite women. While their public role challenges some stereotypes, their class position often allows them a far greater range of options than are available to poorer women' (Rai, 2002: 3). She categorically states that 'the class from which most of the women MPs

come is perhaps the most important factor in their successful inclusion into the political system (ibid: 5).

How then does patriarchy intersect with this shift from caste to class politics? Whilst patriarchy is undoubtedly a key explanatory variable in women's lived experiences, not just in India but in a range of contexts, in India it is caste and class in particular, not patriarchy, which are the primary dividing lines, where patriarchy's influence shapes the inequalities of Indian's women's lives in unique and complex ways within different class and caste strata. It is the primacy of the class/caste divide that allows some women to manage patriarchy more effectively than others. Haritas (2008: 460) notes in relation to women in politics that '[w]omen from higher social classes possess practical and social resources that allow them to move relatively easily into political roles – including child-care and domestic help'. She highlights that '[s]uch access to domestic or household help avoids the radical role change required of [upper-class] men which would be needed otherwise (Haritas, 2008, citing Richter, 1991). In other words, upper class women are able to shift conventional patriarchal burdens lower down the class ladder, and not necessarily just to other women (e.g., childcare, cleaning, grocery shopping, home maintenance; see also Petras, 1999).

This is also not to suggest that higher class women do universally better at the expense of poorer women and men. Programmes or interventions attempting to access 'poor women' as a category without further differentiation by caste or class would likely mean, for example, that different groups of women within a particular socioeconomic strata may not benefit from an intervention. This is clear from Murthy et al.'s (2008) study of the micro-credit and extension programmes of a large NGO. They note that micro-credit and agricultural extension interventions are unable to reach women in better-off households because of the nature of seclusion practices for women of higher caste Hindu households. Yet given their low economic participation, many of these women should technically be considered 'poor' and may suffer more on the death of a husband, divorce or polygamy. In other words, a more robust class analysis may serve to reveal variations in women's lived experiences of multiple types of oppression.

The shifting terrain of class and caste politics is manifested most dramatically within the genesis and growth of the Indian women's movement, a movement from which all of the

New Delhi-based women's NGOs (and women as part of them) under scrutiny in this study continue to draw inspiration. Rather than acting as a rallying point to create common cause amongst women across a range of divisions, the history of the Indian women's movement has instead mirrored these divisive tendencies, providing a context for informing the analysis of the capacity of women's NGOs in this Southern context to act as information intermediaries for marginalised groups, notably women.

6.4 Class, caste and the Indian women's movement

The original movement for change to the status of women in India was actually led primarily by men (Agnew, 1977: 4; Liddle and Joshi, 1986). Indeed, as Forbes (2004: 252, as cited in Ciotti, 2009: 117) notes, '[t]here would have been no women's movement in India if Indian men in the nineteenth century had not been concerned with modernizing women's roles'. The outlawing of sati, dowry, child marriage and promotion of women's education were all campaigns spear-headed by men (Caplan, 1985; Nanda, 1990) where 'the "woman's question" not only came to dominate public discourse for more than a century, it also became the touchstone of the colonial-nationalist encounter, inscribed with the trope of modernity and the legitimation of political power' (Sen, 2000: 6; see also Chatterjee, 1993). Concerns around missionary-led Christian education and the Westernisation of Hindu women were also key motivators for promoting Hindu education that would also, in turn, support men and, by extension, the nationalist cause (Agnew, 1977; Caplan, 1985). Women's education was instigated to improve women's capacity to fulfil their roles as wives and mothers in the service of a modernising nation (Caplan, 1985: 108), which explains 'the emphasis on home science and simpler liberal arts – rather than more "masculine" subjects like mathematics, sciences, or professional courses like law, engineering etc.' (Mazumdar, 1990: 53). Tied inexorably as it was to Indian nationalism, the pervasive thread was the need to establish indigenous roots and to actively dissociate Indian feminism or the women's movement from Western movements, premised as it was on 'claims to equality ... based on the importance and value of women's traditional roles (Sen, 2000: 24). As such, the women's movement was less transformative in its aims, as it would be seen as divisive for the independence/nationalist movement more broadly. Towards the latter half of the

twentieth century, those women that did become involved tended to come from politically active families (Caplan, 1985: 107; Liddle and Joshi, 1986; Sen, 2000).

With the entrance of women en masse into the nationalist movement, women's societies were established including the All India Women's Conference (AIWC), which lobbied for reforms to women's education (Chauduri, 2004). The membership of these organisations tended to be drawn from the upper classes who were not, contrary to the assumed wisdom concerning the natural course of female solidarity, keen to grant equal voice to their working class counterparts, leading one scholar to observe in 1975: '[t]he organizational structure of the All India Women's Conference is as bureaucratic, hierarchical and centralized as that of any other bureaucracy' (Mies, 1975: 57). Mazumdar's (1990: 65) insights into the class-based hierarchies that fuelled misperceptions of the needs of 'Indian women' are instructive here:

> As for the masses of Indian women – much of what agitated the reformers, hardly touched them. Except for child marriage the other problems taken up by the reform movement meant nothing to them. They had always played multiple roles, as daughters, wives and mothers within the family and as productive partners, or independent earners outside the family.

She goes on to note that

> [t]he greatest failure of the reform movement lay in its inability to expose the nature of the oppression that affected women in different layers of our society, and consequently set any goals that would be meaningful to all women and those who believed in their cause. Instead of being lost, or absorbed in the larger movement, for the elimination of all inequalities, exploitation and oppression in society, the movement for women's emancipation in India remained confined to its urban middle-class roots, and coloured the attitude of most later workers in this cause (Mazumdar, 1990: 66).

Historically women in the run up to independence agitated collectively on a range of issues, but the existence of class/caste divisions have meant that women have always been a heterogeneous group with a range of often competing concerns – many to do with economic concerns – and thus internally divided. Caplan's (1985) account of this history suggests that the main women's organisations at the time, such as the AIWC, did not view women as productive workers, and lobbied, for example, for legislation that prevented women from working in coal mines. Whilst hailed by the 'wealthy, urban upper-caste and

class women' who populated these organisations as a victory, they were unaware that it put large numbers of working class women out of work (Caplan, 1985: 116). And yet, these women's organisations felt that, as 'only a few educated women of the land can speak, on behalf of our sex' (Muthulakshmi Reddy, 1964: 47, as cited in Caplan, 185: 116), they were qualified to represent 'Indian womanhood' (ibid). Mazumdar (1990) illustrates this point using the example of the campaign that culminated in the Hindu women's Right to Property Act. This was 'essentially meant to ensure some economic security to widows among the propertied classes', with the result that 'lower caste women, who had traditionally enjoyed the right to retain such property even after re-marriage lost it as a result of the Act' (Mazumdar, 1990: 53). Clearly, as Subramaniam (2006: 29) notes, 'the ideology of the women's organizations was too Hindu, too middle class, and too urban to appeal to or adequately represent all Indian women'. Instead, it became the norm that the 'movement' came to represent the concerns of upper class/caste women as the universal concerns of Indian women (see Caplan, 1984; Mies, 1975; Subramaniam, 2006).

6.4.1 The Indian women's movement in the post-independence period

In the post-independence period, with equality for women and men guaranteed under the constitution, universal suffrage won and many women brought into politics under Jawaharlal Nehru's Congress government, some commentators have observed a 'lull in feminist campaigning' (Kumar, 1995: 60). The women's movement that emerged in the 1970s, which was at least partly in response to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's state of emergency (see discussion in section 6.6 below), comprised women from the Maoist and far left movements and again came mainly from the educated, urban middle classes (Kumar, 1995). At around this time working class women were also coming together to protest and to form groups through which they could address issues of concern to them. The Shahada movement in the western state of Maharashtra is a good example of women coming together from a similar lower class/caste background within the context of a larger movement to protest for change. As Kumar (1995: 60-1) describes, this movement was by landless tribal labourers protesting the exploitative practices of local landowners. Accounts of this movement suggest that it was women within this that became more militant and active, taking action against male alcoholism and domestic abuse. The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in Ahmedabad is another

example of women of a particular class coming together, largely outside the more urban Indian feminist mainstream, to address their concerns. In this case, it was Gandhian socialists in 1972, led by Ela Bhatt within the auspices of the women's wing of the Textile Labour Association, who established SEWA, the first attempt to establish a women's trade union (Kumar, 1995: 61). SEWA was set up to address the common concerns of women working in the informal sector as vegetable vendors, doing piecework such as bidi rolling in their homes, and other low-earning occupations to collectively deal with the issues they faced, both inside and outside the home (see Rose, 1992).

6.4.2 Indian versus Western feminisms

Even in this period, as in the run up to independence, ambivalence on the part of Indian feminists to actively associate with the ideas emerging out of Western feminism spurred ongoing and often contentious debate. As early as the 1970s, Dalit women's movements made explicit their separation from 'First World feminism', with different groups drawing variously on the Chinese Revolution and the slogans of the Black movement in the USA (Kumar, 1995: 63). But this separation of Western and non-Western feminism has wider appeal amongst politically active women in India. Indeed, this deliberate separation from Western feminism was perhaps the only common feature amongst women's organisations from across the class/caste spectrum, as reflected in Mazumdar's experience of her involvement in the preparation of the report of the Committee on the Status of Women report in 1971:

> By that time [of writing the report] certain newspaper reports about the
> women's movement in the West had started coming in ... sensational
> [stories about] bra burning and things of that kind. So, Urmila Haksar
> [Member of the Committee, appointed in 1972] said, 'this is a fact-finding
> committee. We should be able to say with a clear conscience that our
> report is based on what we discovered in this country and we should not
> be accused of being influenced by all these debates going on elsewhere.'
> So nobody read, none of us had read a single piece of [Western] feminist
> literature (Mazumdar with Rai, 2007: 107).[38]

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[38] Deliberately distancing the movement from Western influence also derives from what Loomba (1993), paraphrased by Mohanram, suggests is 'part of a nationalistic discourse shaped by the nationalistic struggles which located Indian and Western as binary opposites'. This imposed binary has been reproduced within India to define the issues of interest to the 'nation' in narrow ways: 'while such a dichotomy was obviously shaped during nationalist struggles it has increasingly been invoked in contemporary India too for

By the 1990s, amongst lower class/caste women's groups, this ambivalence widened to create cleavages in Indian feminism itself. Growing dissent emerged amongst Dalit and lower-caste women around 'the seeming invisibility of caste inequality to mainstream Indian feminism' (Rao, 2003: 1-2). Citing the work of Gopal Guru, a professor of political science at Pune University, Rao identifies the growth of Dalit women's organisations as critical responses to 'brahminical feminism, a questioning of Indian feminism's hegemonic impulse to speak for, or in the name of, "Indian" women' (ibid: 2). Women's groups in this period also found ways to recast Hindu symbols in a feminist mode, similar to what the original social reformers did with regards to campaigning against sati and dowry, thereby maintaining a distinctly Indian approach to social change (Kumar, 1995: 74-5).

6.4.3 Women's reservations

Despite these class and caste divisions amongst women and women's groups, similar to the momentum that ultimately established a political consensus for OBC reservations, momentum was also established for significant institutional changes in the 1990s, most notably the 73rd and 74th amendments to the constitution in 1993 which

> ... made the three-tier panchayati raj statutory, [and] gave one-third reservation to women at all the three levels: gram panchayat, panchayat samiti and zila parishad. Soon afterwards one-third reservation for women was also ensured in urban bodies, i.e., corporations, municipalities and notified area councils (Mohanty, 2004: 15)

In 1996, the women's movement was out in force in support of a similar constitutional amendment which was tabled (Amendment 81), proposing to reserve one-third of seats at the state level in both houses of parliament. Despite widespread party consensus, the bill was not passed.[39] This has since come to be known as the Women's Reservation Bill (WRB) and a similar attempt was again made in 2003 to have 181 seats of the lower house made into double-member constituencies i.e., to elect one man and one woman,

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defining "the nation" in ways that exclude certain class, gender, or caste positions and interests' (Loomba, 1993: 271, as cited in Mohanram, 1996: 284).

[39] The Indian women's movement did not always support reservations. Prominent feminist activists, both in the run up to independence and after 1974 with the release of the report of the Committee on the Status of Women (Sen, 2000: 46), rejected the need for reservations or special treatment, 'as it was felt that the working of democracy in the normal course would ensure the representation of all sections of Indian society' (Menon and Nigam, 2007: 27). Campaigners like Aruna Asaf Ali as early as 1933 were adamant that 'reservation of seats for women is meaningless and absurd if the demand for equality is genuine' (as cited in Sharma, 1998: 7).

but this also was not passed (see Menon and Nigam, 2007). What is interesting and important about the failure of these amendments at this level is the confluence of caste, class and religion with gender in the politics of the nation. Some parties had objected, saying that if a reservation was earmarked for women, then there must be a reservation within this for women of backward classes, castes and minority religions, particularly Muslim women, arguing that 'since women of backward classes or castes were not as educated as those from the upper castes the latter would corner these reserved seats' (Mohanty, 2004: 15). The very fact that a need was identified for a reservation within a reservation highlights the relative importance of class and caste over gender inequality (see Sen, 2000), thus revealing the central fissure within the history of the Indian women's movement. These fissures, Subramaniam (2006: 61) notes, 'have brought to the fore the dimensions of power across caste and class, sidelining gender power differences'. Given the pervasive nature of marginalised identities in India along class, caste, religion and ethnic lines, it is hardly surprising that, as Menon and Nigam (2007: 31) remind us, 'Indian politics has shown often enough that class, religious, caste (or any other) identity has tended to prevail over gender identification'. Indeed, in some instances concerns around class and caste inequalities amongst women have combined with worrying trends of women mobilising (and being mobilised) around Hindu fundamentalism (Joseph, 2003: 656; Dhanraj and Batliwala, 2007; Sarkar and Butalia, 1995).

This analysis now moves on to consider how the history of the non-profit sector, and development NGOs as part of this sector, overlaps with the history of the Indian women's movement, highlighting how intersectional inequality and the 'woman's question' inform these shared histories.

6.5 Development NGOs in India

Sheth and Sethi (1991) portray the historical antecedents of India's non-profit sector as distinctly oppositional in nature, with the growth of indigenous non-profit service organisations aligning themselves with the anti-colonial resistance, in turn acquiring a political dimension. Indeed, many of these organisations would later become platforms for the independence movement and culminated in the establishment of the Indian National Congress (Sen, 1998). As the previous section demonstrates, 'modernising' anti-women practices was central to the social reform movements and was tied inextricably to

the nationalist struggle. Sheth and Sethi (1991: 51), in a long list of social reform causes, demonstrate this inextricable link between the work of voluntary organisations and the emphasis on 'women' as a site of intervention for reformers keen to prove that India could govern itself:

> ... the example of the missionaries was emulated by modern Indian elites, who became social reformers ... Besides building schools, colleges, dispensaries, and hospitals, the national bourgeoisie was also concerned with social reform. This was defined as the abolition of religious evils, *such as child marriage, practice of polygamy, improvement of the social status of women, promotion of women's education, remarriage of widows, and so on* (Sen, 1998: 206, my emphasis).

This history is important to understanding the centrality of women, initially as recipients, but increasingly in the post-independence period, as political activists, and also as workers and volunteers, in the non-profit sector. Although women were not necessarily organising themselves in earlier periods, nonetheless, it would be these very same issues which would, as the previous section demonstrates, galvanise the Indian women's movement, in turn resulting in the establishment of women's research centres and NGOs in the post-independence period. In other words, the history of India's development NGOs is tied intrinsically to the women's movement and efforts both to empower marginalised groups and to deploy knowledge to achieve these goals.

Sen (1998) further provides useful examples of how many of these ideas came together in the colonial period, many of which are not at all dissimilar in substance to the modern 'development' programme:

> Christian missionaries formed rural colonies from the 1860s until the 1940s with an emphasis on modernization and, to a certain extent, empowerment. The modernization component consisted of emphasis on *self-help, and establishment of cooperative credit societies, health care, and training facilities*. The empowerment component consisted of *adult literacy classes* and establishment of local village councils (*panchayats*) to solve local problems (Sen, 1998: 207; my emphases).

As 'Indians tend to believe in a notion of "voluntarism" which has an essentially romantic connotation, inspired by self-initiative and social commitment' (Sen, 1998: 201), voluntary organisations have historically been perceived as virtuous, epitomising these values. Echoing the analysis in section 3.3.1 in chapter three, Sheth and Sethi (1991: 56) identify this as

a common stereotype held by many observers and policy planners that an NGO is small, convivial, participative and innovative, demonstrates a high leadership quality, is cost-conscious and austere, locally-rooted and responsive, and thus a worthwhile instrument for welfare, developmental and mobilisation organisations programmes.

Echoing the discussion of the imagined capacities of NGOs in section 3.3.1 in chapter three, a belief in this stereotypical image of the voluntary organisation has led some to suggest that 'NGO characteristics render them a priori likely to be more effective in certain kinds of endeavours ... Indeed, this is one reason why government agencies contract NGOs to deliver various services' (Khan 1997: 9).

Sheth and Sethi (1991: 54) provide something akin to a definition of NGOs in their attempts to describe the broad spectrum of modern Indian NGO activity in development. At one end, they argue, are issue-based organisations working on behalf of the oppressed on a range of broad issues such as gender or ecology, or on more substantive issues such as child labour or bride burning, and these activities are observable in both middle-class and subaltern organisations. At the other end of this 'spectrum' is a recycled view from the 1950s and 60s which views NGOs as 'links between Government and people in the process of planning and development', leading to what many have termed the 'professionalisation' of the sector (section 3.3.1.2 in chapter three), where efficiency and service delivery are prioritised. My interest in this study is with what they perceive as the concomitant expansion of service organisations, which, as they describe, are 'fairly independent from the traditional governmental, business, political and religious influences':

> Alongside [NGOs] is a relatively recent tendency of middle-class professional-support organisations involved in serving other organisations, rather than direct communities – through documentation, research, training (both management and skills), networking and publications (Sheth and Sethi, 1991: 54).

Owing both to the relative newness of defining this sector in this manner, combined with a general lack of numerical data measuring the size of this sector, it would be difficult to estimate the number of organisations within Sen's (1998) estimates that would fit this latter description, although they undoubtedly describe many of the organisations populating the subscriber list of GDKS. What the next section makes clear, however, is that the vast infrastructure of non-profit organisations established in the run up to

independence already geared towards delivering literacy programmes, health care and credit facilities would prove essential to the Indian state in post-independence India.

6.6 The modern Indian state and NGOs

The state's relationship with the non-profit sector ranges from viewing organisations as allies in development to outright antipathy and suspicion. Such views have coincided with related political currents in the country, frequently along religious, ideological and party allegiance lines. In other words, different members of the non-profit sector have been variously supported or undermined in recent decades in line with overarching political, religious or ideological tensions at the federal level (see Sen, 1998: 258-259). After Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency in the mid-1970s in response to urban unrest and agitation, many organisations, particularly those associated with women/feminist issues, became deeply suspicious of government (Sharma 2006: 65-6). This emergency was declared in conjunction with Indira Gandhi's *Garibi Hatao* (Remove Poverty) programme which, as Kamat (2002: 11) describes, was a 'populist programme which Gandhi resorted to in response to urban working class agitation against price rise and unemployment and to sporadic rebellions in the countryside'. It was in this period that the Foreign Contributions (Regulatory) Act (FRCA) 1978 was established, which meant that all foreign donations being routed through voluntary organisations must go through the Home ministry, providing what Kamat (2002: 12) terms 'a basis for control' over the non-profit sector, presenting clear bureaucratic hurdles for the work of many organisations. Any organisation receiving external funds was (and still is) required to register with the federal government, and to re-register every year as long as external funding continues.

Foreign funding is a relatively small portion[40] of the overall funding pot for India's registered non-profit sector, dispelling any notion in the Indian context that it is Northern financial control alone that leads to the hegemony of Northern ideas, even in the narrower field of development practice:

> ... foreign funding has been of some significance, and for some NGOs has, in certain respects, advantages over state funding. It is controlled under the Foreign Contributions (Regulation) Act, 1976, or FCRA, and all NGOs

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[40] Given the myriad ways in which money may be channelled through to non-profit work in India, coupled with the sheer size of the sector, it is very difficult to get exact figures, although there is a consensus in the literature that the proportion of foreign to overall funding is relatively small.

which wish to receive overseas funding, whether directly or through an intermediary organisation, must be registered. The Ministry of Home Affairs figures state that in 2003-4 some 15,000 groups in India received foreign funds under FCRA, totalling more than a billion US dollars. However this is still a small fraction of the national budget (Alikhan et al., 2007: 69).

Moreover, what becomes clear is that this relationship with government is continually changing:

> [compared with other nations] in India the state is much more powerful in relation to donor bodies, and has far more in the way of its own resources to fund NGOs. India has already seen a very large increase in subcontracting by the state, and in partnership with the state. In 1993, 90% of NGO funding in India was from foreign sources; in 2003: '*Almost all NGOs* [in India] *are in partnership with government*' (very senior NGO worker) (Alikhan et al., 2007: 74, emphasis in original).

Despite its history as key service providers, the non-profit sector now suffers from a lack of credibility and legitimacy, tied intrinsically to issues of class, which cannot be overlooked: '… the NGO sector lacks much in terms of credibility and legitimacy because of the perceived scale of waste and fraud, and perhaps to an extent, because of their largely (but not entirely) middle class make-up' (Alikhan et al., 2007: 69).

6.7 The Indian state, NGOs and women

The history of state involvement in the non-profit sector more broadly is complex, but it is safe to say that, historically, NGOs, particularly in the context of women, were viewed as ideally placed to be direct service providers to poor, marginalised groups (Caplan, 1984). The legacy of Gandhian/Nehruvian socialist values in the post-independence period meant that volunteer or non-profit organisations flourished to assist with development priorities. Religious and cultural organisations that had existed in the colonial period also continued in the post-independence period (Sen, 1998; Sheth and Sethi, 1991). Indeed, in order to address the significant gaps in basic social provision experienced by the vast majority of people, the Indian state, as the previous sections suggests, has historically relied quite heavily on the non-profit sector to deliver these services, with mixed results.

What the state would provide directly and what the non-profit sector could deal with were defined by the state, despite its socialist, Nehruvian ethos, in distinctly capitalist terms. The Indian state made a deliberate distinction between productive welfare or

social *services*, which are meant to support and enhance human capital, and social *welfare*, which is primarily aimed at weak or vulnerable groups, and includes women (Caplan, 1985: 125; Raju, 2006: 289). This distinction between productive welfare, which in capitalist terms would consist of services such education (with a particular emphasis on higher education – See Sen, 1998; Mawdsley, et al., 2002), housing and health, and social welfare for the marginalised or destitute, is crucial, as the former was perceived primarily as the responsibility of the state directly, whereas the latter was considered something that could be dealt with more cheaply and effectively through the already well-established infrastructure of the non-profit sector; work with women and children in particular was largely considered to be part of their domain anyway (Caplan, 1985: 125).

As class is central to any understanding of the non-profit sector, so too is its peculiarly gendered nature in the Indian context. India's First and Second Five-Year Plans included health and education service provision for women, treating women largely as 'dependents' in what Subramaniam (2006: 26) terms an 'exclusionary process'. This meant that the state formulated and implemented policy on women's behalf without consulting women themselves. This emphasis on women as 'dependents' also extended to an emphasis on women's education and support, geared primarily towards their roles as wives and mothers that was established as part of the upper class political consensus (outlined above in section 6.4) in the pre-independence period.

So embedded is the discursive relationship between women and voluntary work, that NGO functions are feminised, where, as Sharma (2006: 68) argues, the NGO itself takes on a feminine form:

> NGOs are positioned as localized and feminized bodies that take on charitable welfare (maternal) tasks and whose staff members and clients are dependent on outside funds and support. These characteristics deprivilege NGOs vis-a-vis the public sphere of state activity and rights and the for-profit private sector; they are seen as social, economically nonproductive altruistic agencies that do reproductive work naturalized as feminine.

Furthermore, voluntary activity, as Caplan (1985) argues, was both associated with, and tended to be done by, upper class and caste women. Thus, voluntary work, and the work of development NGOs within this, is both gendered and classist in its roots, particularly in

the Indian context. This overlap may be contextualised in relation to how K4Dev has been deployed to serve the Indian state's objectives to promote women's empowerment which, as we saw in section 3.2 in chapter three, is a discursive tool that has been captured by neoliberal development paradigms.

6.8 The Indian state, NGOs, K4Dev and women's empowerment

The Indian state has been quick to co-opt empowerment terminology in service of its developmental goals, particularly in relation to women and its support for NGOs; initially inspired by the work of Paulo Freire (1970) and his belief in the power of conscientisation (see section 3.2.4 in chapter three), women's education was central to state approaches to women (Sharma, 2006: 63; Townsend et al., 2004: 876). Empowerment also came to the attention of the state through the work of Indian feminists with poor, self-employed women; this was parlayed into the discussion documents put together by Southern feminist groups such as Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) as part of the UN conferences, which in turn promoted the state's focus on empowerment (ibid.). As Batliwala (2007: 560) notes in her reflections on empowerment in the context of India, there was a recognition that what she terms 'transformatory empowerment' could not be achieved through a 'magic-bullet route to women's empowerment, such as providing women with access to credit, enhanced incomes, or land titles'.

Instead what was required was a multi-dimensional approach and, as she highlights, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, there were many state-funded, NGO-based initiatives underway in India, focusing on poor urban and rural women, where empowerment strategies moved away from women as beneficiaries to women as agents, and where information-sharing was the principal tool:

> These approaches tried to depart from past interventions that treated women either as beneficiaries of services or as producers or workers. Instead they adopted feminist popular-education strategies that created new spaces for women to collectivise around shared experiences of poverty, exclusion, and discrimination, critically analyse the structures and ideologies that sustained and reinforced their oppression, and raise consciousness of their own sense of subordination. These spaces and the activists working within them facilitated women to recognise their own agency and power for change – their power to organise themselves to confront and transform the social and economic arrangements and cultural systems that subjugated them. *The main inputs in these processes were*

> *new ideas and information, not hand-outs or services*; an opportunity for women to locate and articulate the changes that they wanted to make, and evolve strategies to do so (Batliwala, 2007: 560; my emphasis).

The state's emphasis on empowerment as a central focus in relation to women's development in the Indian context reflects broader trends in neoliberal development discourse and practice, as we saw in section 3.2 in chapter three, that have abandoned their emancipatory roots and now veer worryingly into an excessive focus on the individual as a site for intervention. Indeed, despite the emphasis on empowerment, government and government-sponsored initiatives continue to take rather conventional forms such as micro-finance and literacy programmes. What are now considered 'empowering' initiatives, echoing Cornwall et al's (2005, 2006) discussion of 'buzzwords' in section 3.2.2 in chapter three, do not look much different to the types of activities that have been engaged in historically as part of upper class voluntary work in the Indian context on behalf of women's 'welfare', whether it is the provision of literacy education, training or distributing information on basic hygiene. Bhasin's (1987) observations on literacy programmes for women are particularly insightful in this regard. In a scathing critique of a nationwide call to eradicate female illiteracy, Bhasin (1987:106-7) raises important concerns around the historical and underlying ideological motivations for literacy campaigns more broadly:

> In the past, in India, most efforts made to make people literate have not been related to attempts to liberate people or to empower them. Literacy and even education programmes have led to the domestication of people rather than to their liberation. The content of literacy programmes has not, except in a very few cases, questioned the unjust and exploitative structure of our society. They have in fact been doing the opposite, strengthening and justifying the status quo and the dominant ideology ... [t]he primers, in most cases, have been written by urban, middle-class males for middle-level, male farmers and they propagate middle-class values.

The notion that education might be a route through which class structures are propagated, re-inscribed and cemented may not be a new one, but Bhasin's critique is particularly apposite given that the historical function for educating Hindu women, as Caplan (1985) reminds us, was part of a nationalist project designed to entrench particular class values whilst simultaneously undermining colonial or Christian influences. As the foregoing analysis suggests, education was not necessarily designed to be

'empowering' or as part of a fundamentally transformative or feminist project to challenge patriarchy or oppressive class structures.

6.8.1 Women's NGOs, K4Dev and contested empowerment discourses

Nor is there space within this neoliberal development paradigm's focus on the individual for those marginalised from the dominant knowledge infrastructure to engage with how poverty and exclusion may be addressed collectively and at multiple levels within the purview of (state-funded) development NGO programmes.[41] As Handy et al. (2006: 27) note uncritically, '[i]n India, well-educated and affluent women have traditionally found socially-sanctioned work outside the home in the voluntary sector'. In their study of women founders of NGOs, the higher class/caste status of the majority of the women founders they interviewed was not only perceived as unproblematic but was considered both inevitable and a strength as 'higher-caste women [are] more likely to have the power to combat traditional forces and legitimize socially controversial issues related to women' (Handy, 2006: 51). Whilst upper class/caste women may be more effective communicators or even leaders, this uncritical approach is reminiscent of development discourses that privilege both a category of 'woman' and their involvement in the non-profit sector as inherently unproblematic. Yet, in the context of India in particular as this analysis has repeatedly highlighted, this lack of reflexivity on precisely how class and caste shape women's involvement in the non-profit sector and the impact this has on development outcomes for lower caste/class groups of women is naive.

Kamat's (2002) field experience in India of attempts by a state government to coerce Adivasi or tribal women into income-generating projects such as silkworm cultivation is instructive. She is critical of the state's 'dual strategy of co-optation and repression, and the inability of grassroots organizations to mobilize on a national and multi-issue, multi-class basis' (Kamat, 2002: 21). Instead, state-funded economic development schemes 'disrupt' the potential for grassroots mobilisation on wider issues of land reform or rights

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[41] A notable example of a collective, grassroots response to the neoliberal development paradigm, as cited in footnote ten in chapter three, is the Mahila Samakhya (MS) Programme, originally funded by the Dutch government but more recently taken over by India's Ministry of Education, which has supported collective conscientisation processes amongst marginalised, poor, Dalit women that continue to challenge caste, class, gender and patriarchy through collective rather than isolated, individual efforts (see Sharma, 2008; Alikhan, et al., 2007). None of the organisations under scrutiny in this study, however, are actively involved in any MS programmes or capacity-building efforts.

to natural resources by de-linking economic development schemes from broader social concerns. Yet, given the pervasiveness of the 'development imaginary' (see Laurie et al., 2005 in chapter three), linking 'development' issues with local, indigenous or personal knowledge is crucial if marginalised groups in particular are to be able to identify and problematise the nature of their oppression. Foucault's (1972) insights into exclusion and prohibition are relevant here. He asserts that

> in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its power and its dangers ... In a society such as our own, we all know the rules of *exclusion*. The most obvious and familiar of these concerns what is *prohibited* ... We have three types of prohibition, covering objects, ritual with its surrounding circumstances, **the privileged or exclusive right to speak of a particular subject** ... (Foucault, 1972: 216; italics emphasis in original; my emphasis in bold).

Foucault's insights into exclusion and prohibition in discourse resonate with the experiences of the Sangtin Writers (2006), seven lower class and caste women who work for a large NGO in a North Indian state at the grassroots on women's empowerment and consciousness-raising. These women argue that it is practices of discursive exclusion that prevent them from linking their own local knowledge with the wider terrain of development. The Sangtin Writers (2006: 143) suggest a tendency for NGOs to be single-issue focussed, where 'women's issues' are narrowly defined and bureaucratised and information production and exchange is severely constrained by notions of expertise that resonate with Foucault's assertion that one must be 'qualified' to speak on a particular subject:

> These reflections bring us back to the structures and priorities of women's NGOs, whose narrow focus on 'women's issues' often forecloses spaces for grassroots workers to connect processes of rural underdevelopment and impoverishment with marginalization and disempowerment of poor women. We note the ways in which the inability to make these connections is both manifested in and reinforced by the way in which many NGOs that aim to empower women on the margins of the rural communities end up being staffed and dominated by Hindu and upper-caste grassroots workers, whose critiques of casteism, communalism, and untouchability often remain confined to the material and discursive spaces of offices and organizational meetings.

This forestalling of attempts by marginalised groups, notably women, to agitate on a collective basis and on a multi-issue, multi-level platform is a reflection of the bureaucratisation or depoliticisation of empowerment discourses outlined in section 3.2.2 in chapter three. Furthermore, in the Indian context, this depoliticisation also has a legal face. In what Chhotray (2005) terms the 'contradictory nature of the state', she notes that the Indian state appears to deliberately de-link development work from 'political' activity. The Charitable Trusts Act of 1950, which applies to voluntary organisations, states that

> The achievement of a political purpose, in the sense of arousing in the people the desire, and instilling into them an imperative need to demand changes in the structures of the administration and the mechanism by which they are governed ... is not a charitable purpose' (as cited in Kamat, 2002: 56).

This would appear to run contrary to the very spirit of empowerment. Sharma (2006) makes the very interesting point that state-led empowerment would necessarily result in anti-statist behaviour which, in the end, the state would not be keen to encourage, as it is the state against whom women must rally in order to have their rights defended or upheld.

This growing depoliticisation is reiterated by more recent scholarship, which suggests that women's NGOs perform a range of functions, not all of which are transformative. Nagar and Raju (2003: 2) suggest that many NGOs 'focus on education, communication and dissemination of information aimed at raising women's consciousness within the existing structures, while a select few actively work to identify and challenge the structures responsible for growing social inequalities'. They go on to suggest that the purpose of information production and dissemination is 'not to overthrow the current system and build a new one', but to help 'the poorest women cope better with this reality of shrinking resources and increasing social and economic inequity and injustice by making them more knowledgeable' (Nagar and Raju, 2003: 3).

Linking back to concerns that K4Dev is underpinned by fundamentally neoliberal notions of self-help, the function of many Indian, even women's NGOs, is to help the most marginalised to cope better with the status quo. This may consist of tackling, for example, inequality in the marketplace or in the home, of which information acquisition, itself part

of the neoliberal rationality of the market, is a key component to better oneself and to adapt to these conditions.

That the operation of the neoliberal paradigm is additionally underpinned in the Indian context by narrow middle/upper class- and caste-based behavioural prescriptions and expectations is evidenced dramatically by reflecting on Bhattacharya's (2004) work with the Santal tribe. She argues that the Santals' relatively egalitarian social structures mean that intervention types favoured by both transnational and elite Indian feminist practice to promote women's empowerment are largely irrelevant for Santal women:

> Santal women enjoy greater freedom to travel and greater freedom of sexual choice than the Hindu, Muslim, and other religious groups. They also enjoy less hierarchical distinctions within households. So the nature of the changes suggested for poor women by many gender programs – form women's collectives and seek individual empowerment – actually require the women to fit into a mould (based on the assumption that women are distinctively different and unequal to men) which is not very characteristic of them. Or if we recall that the Santal way of life is based on oral traditions which are more evenly shared among all Santal members compared to the hierarchical access to knowledge and expertise which is characteristic of the other groups (in India and elsewhere) (Bhattacharya, 2004: 25).

Given the Santal's tribal status, however, their caste status is interpreted as equivalent to that of Dalits, from whom elite Indian feminists would undoubtedly presume they have little to learn. Moreover, Bhattacharya's reference to 'gender programs' reminds us of the prescriptive and highly neoliberal nature of conventional gender work, where 'hierarchical access to knowledge and expertise' and the emphasis on the individual have the effect of considerably narrowing the lens through which change is envisioned for marginalised women, whose experiences of intersectional inequality may not resonate with the priorities of elite Indian feminists.

6.9 Conclusion

India's ambition to become a knowledge society is clearly limited by the persistence of inequalities inflected through the intersectional lenses of class, caste, gender, religion, sexuality, age and other axes of difference. This greatly increases the complexity of the decision-making environments into which both GDKS information services, as well as

those of other Southern or India-based information intermediaries, are entering (see Utting, 2006).

The key question for the empirical analysis, then, is the extent to which GDKS, given the complexities of the Indian context, is able to respond to perceived information gaps as they intend. With regards to the empirical analysis of the Southern discursive site, the question is whether the histories of development NGOs and the Indian women's movement mediate the capacity of the collective case study organisations to deliver progress knowledge-based development aid as Northern donors and organisations like GDKS expect. Are these information intermediaries, as GDKS expects, able to create spaces that challenge the neoliberal development paradigm underpinning historical class- and caste-based inequality, to foster dialogical engagement between powerful stakeholders and marginalised groups?

7. Interrogating GDKS knowledge practices in New Delhi, India

7.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to respond to the second research question for this study, namely, do the correctives applied to knowledge-based development practices by Northern organisations address concerns raised by critiques of the World Bank paradigm? The analysis interrogates the extent to which the mechanisms that GDKS uses to address the shortcomings of the dominant World Bank knowledge paradigm work as it intends.

This chapter is the first of four empirical analysis chapters for this study. The analysis draws on empirical data consisting, as outlined in section 4.5 in chapter four, of the outcomes of the tracking exercise I undertook to determine whether information was getting through to named recipients on GDKS's mailing list. It also draws on 47 interviews and 27 site visits with users and recipients of GDKS in New Delhi, representing people embedded in a range of institutional settings.

GDKS's particular model of K4Dev, as chapter five highlights, rests both on the presumed paucity of information on gender and development and the relative inaccessibility of existing information for individuals and organisations attempting to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. In short, the assumption is not simply that there is not enough information, but that the information that is available is inaccessible, for various reasons, to the vast majority of people, notably Southern audiences. GDKS aims to overcome such limitations by producing original research and disseminating existing information on gender and development through its printed information packs and on its websites. It aims to increase accessibility through the application of a range of corrective measures designed to alter and simplify both the nature of the information and how it is communicated and disseminated. The application of these mechanisms, GDKS believes, results not only in the wider dissemination of information from North to South, but in more open, democratic, consultative knowledge systems which ensures that the North also engages in dialogue with, and actively learns from, the South.

Using Table 5.1 from chapter five as a reference point, this chapter begins to contextualise GDKS's knowledge practices in relation to the contradictions inherent in

India's ambition to become a knowledge society explored in chapter six. Mirroring the movement of information as it travels from North to South, this chapter begins in section 7.2 by drawing together the historical background and overview in chapter six to elaborate on the geographies of class in modern-day New Delhi that directly inform the context of the empirical analysis. Section 7.3 then moves on to consider whether, at a basic level, information is getting through to recipients as GDKS intends. The Southern field study data is then contextualised in relation to GDKS's commitment to promote Southern knowledge in section 7.4, with a focus on how users and recipients perceive GDKS content in section 7.4.1. Section 7.5 then revisits Table 5.1 and those mechanisms that GDKS uses to decommodify information. The analysis in this section critically reflects on user and recipient experiences of GDKS correctives to address language concerns in section 7.5.1. Section 7.5.2 considers the extent to which GDKS's correctives address the potential accessibility concerns of those change agents who may be time poor, including policymakers and busy mainstream practitioners, as well as users and recipients unable to access new ICTs due to cost or infrastructural limitations. Section 7.5 concludes by drawing out the implications of these findings for Northern donors and organisations like GDKS keen to engage with progressive knowledge practices to promote more positive development outcomes.

7.2 K4Dev, women and NGOs: Exploring the geographies of class in New Delhi, India

The previous chapter outlined the pervasiveness of class and caste divisions in the overlapping histories of the Indian women's movement and the non-profit sector. This historical overview is used to inform the current geographical and discursive context of New Delhi into which GDKS information is entering. Figure 7.1 maps the location of all of the recipients on GDKS's New Delhi mailing list.

Figure 7.1 Mapping the location of GDKS recipients in New Delhi, India
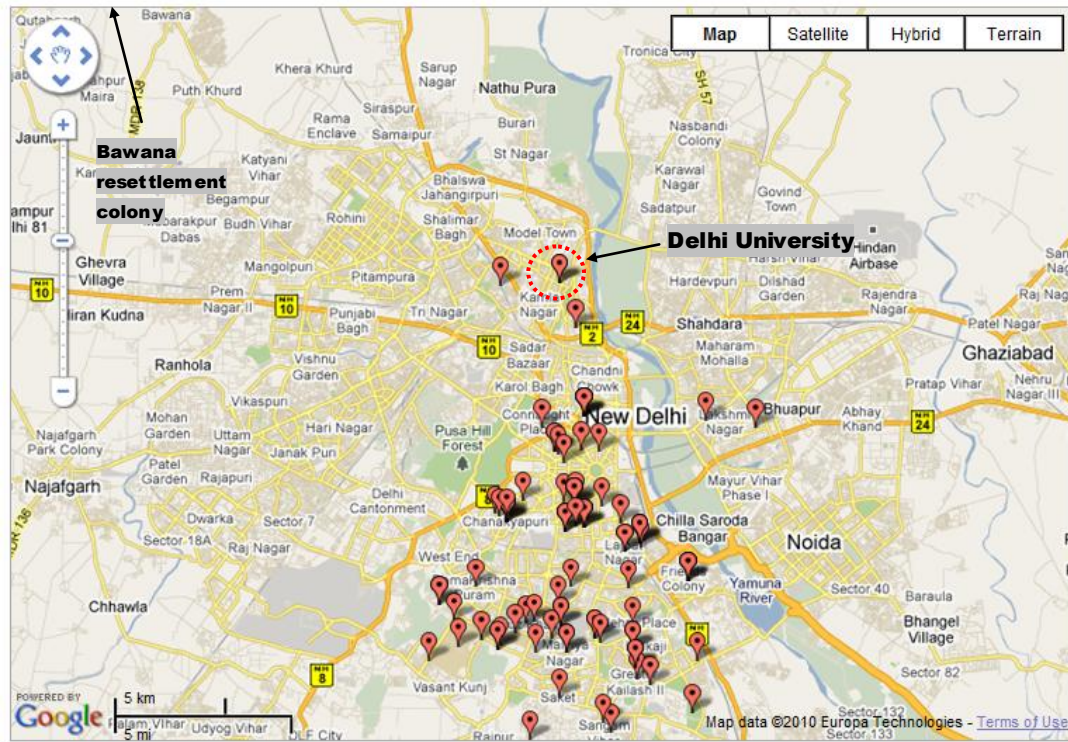
This figure illustrates the concentration of recipients in the centre of New Delhi and, with five exceptions, spreading South in a rough triangle between the river on the east and National Highway 8 on the west. Of the 126 postal addresses on GDKS's mailing list, only five lie outside the triangle of South New Delhi, socio-economically the most exclusive part of New Delhi. Of these five, two are located at Delhi University (marked on the map), itself an elite, world-class higher education institution.

Figure 7.2 enlarges this triangle to detail the location of the 13 women's NGOs and the four women's units (the collective case study organisations) under scrutiny in the Southern-based empirical analysis. It also highlights the concentration of powerful stakeholders who are geographically proximate to the NGOs being examined in this study.

Figure 7.2 Mapping elite geographies in New Delhi, India
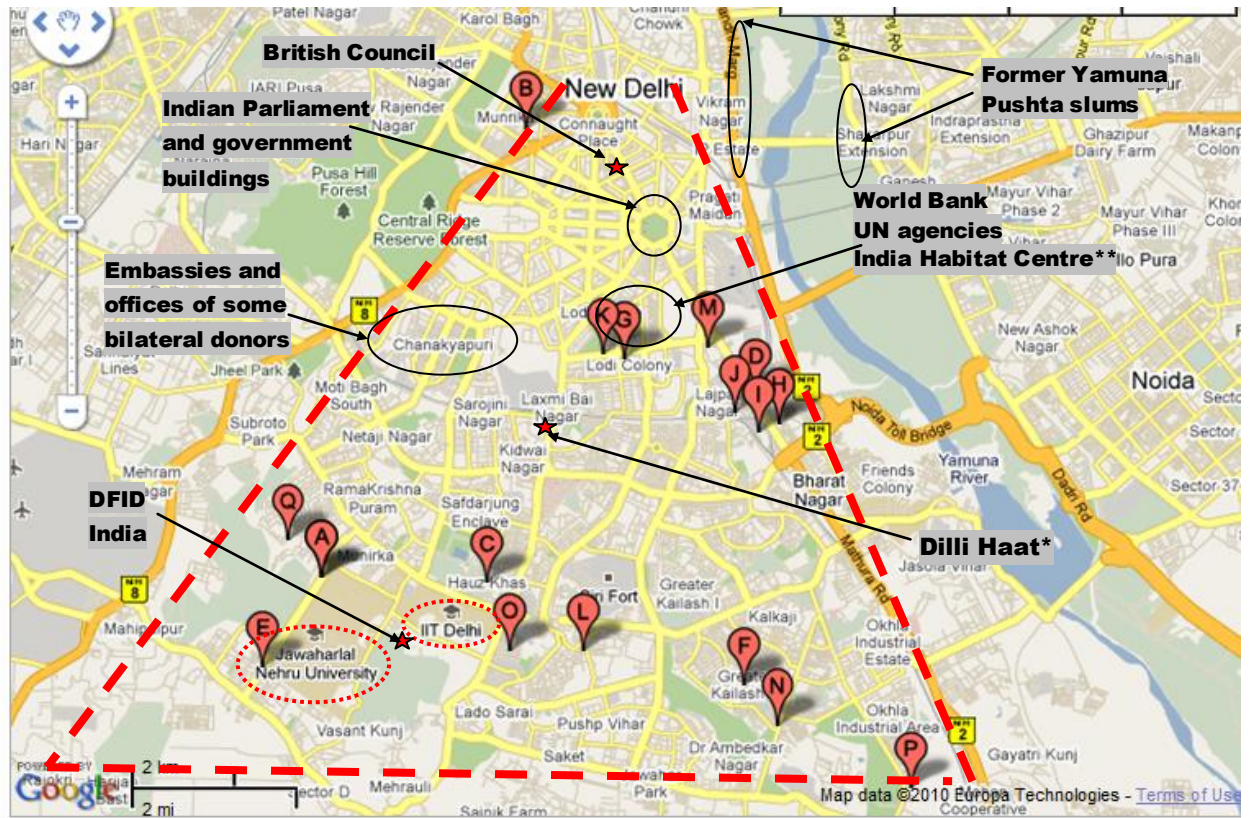
* *Dilli Haat* is a gated and secured shopping area, where entrance is patrolled by armed security personnel. Many of the NGOs on GDKS's mailing list convene to distribute information or host celebrations for International Women's Day in this location. Exclusion is further secured by charging patrons a fee to enter the market area.

** India Habitat Centre is a gated building, featuring an entrance controlled by armed security personnel. It comprises a modern fast food canteen, an American-style bar and grille restaurant and a shopping bazaar featuring, amongst other concessions, a bookstore. It hosts the head offices of large INGOs, Indian research NGOs and IGOs including the ILO. It is also frequently used to host National or Asia-wide conferences, whilst also hosting artist exhibitions and performances in its Atrium.

The locations circled in red, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi are both elite, globally recognised higher education institutions.

This mapping exercise suggests that Central and South New Delhi host an almost disproportionate number of powerful, elite development stakeholders. This includes two world class higher education institutions, embassies and the offices of bilateral and multilateral donors, together with the head offices of large INGOs and Indian NGOs. This power and wealth persists alongside widespread socio-economic exclusion. Perhaps New Delhi, as the capital of India, is simply an exaggerated manifestation of India's wide disparities, fuelled by class divides, between the haves and the have-nots. Nonetheless, New Delhi-based NGOs, perhaps at least partly because of this geographical proximity to power brokers, are repeatedly charged with elitism:

> Anyone who has worked in India knows that criticism voiced by national NGOs of their Northern counterparts is matched only by that voiced by NGOs in state capitals when speaking of Delhi NGOs. And grassroots NGOs often deride those in the state capital as far removed from the real world of the poor (Clark 1999, cited in Townsend and Townsend, 2004: 281).

This notion that New Delhi-based NGOs are twice-removed from the 'real world of the poor' is contradicted, as the empirical analysis attests, by the claims of the collective case study organisations under scrutiny in this study in relation to their capacity to reach and represent marginalised groups within and outside New Delhi.

Before embarking on a more detailed consideration and analysis of the claims of the collective case study organisations, we can begin to unpack the nature of their presumed capacity to act as intermediaries between elite stakeholders and marginalised groups in this Southern location. Using the issue of resettlement as a lens, we can reflect on how the maps in Figures 7.1 and 7.2 inform our understanding of the geographies of class inequality in New Delhi, given the geographical proximity of wealthy and excluded groups (see Graham, 2002, chapter two). Indeed, despite in many instances living alongside the urban poor, attempts by the middle and upper classes in New Delhi (indeed as in many other Indian urban centres) to create gated and secured enclaves within which to live and consume, thus distancing themselves from the material realities of poverty, reflect deeply entrenched middle-class values. These values are tied up with historical notions of working class, lower caste groups as dirty or 'polluted', as well as neoliberal development paradigms that, as Schild (1998) and Sharma (2008) emphasise in the analysis in section 3.2.3 in chapter three, blame the poorest for failed development.

7.2.1 The geography of class: Resettlement and 'cleaning up' New Delhi

Like all cities in India, a large proportion of the poor in the city live in illegal slums. The percentage of people living in slums and squatter settlements ranges from around 16 per cent according to the census, to an estimate by the government of Delhi recording the percentage as high as 52 per cent (Banerji, 2005: 1). In their preparations to host the 2010 Commonwealth Games, the government of Delhi and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), announced plans to 'clean-up' the River Yamuna by demolishing the homes of over 35,000 families who had, over more than three decades, settled and created thriving, albeit 'illegal' and poorly serviced, communities on the banks of the Yamuna river (Menon-Sen, 2006). The Yamuna Pushta slum settlements (see Figure 7.2) were to be 'resettled' to new colonies built by the government and MCD on the outskirts of Delhi, Bawana resettlement colony being one of these (see Figure 7.1).

Apart from the obvious threat to livelihoods posed by moving the urban poor away from the insecure, but nonetheless widely available low-paying cleaning and construction jobs to be found in and around the middle-class colonies of Central and South New Delhi (see Banerji, 2005), the public consultations around resettlement revealed deeply entrenched misperceptions around notions of cleanliness that are rooted in class inequality. Indeed, the eviction of the slum dwellers was predicated in the belief that they were, in various ways, responsible for the pollution of the river by, for instance, the dumping of raw sewage, even though numerous studies have suggested that middle class colonies and industry are the main sources of river pollution (see Bharucha, 2006).

There is also a more subtle discourse around the nature of cleanliness as something that is the preserve of the higher castes, where the urban poor, mainly from working class and lower caste backgrounds, are considered 'people who made the city dirty (despite the fact that many were municipal sweepers, ragpickers and garbage recyclers and thus actively involved in keeping the city clean)' (Menon-Sen, 2006: 1969). This caste-based discourse is also tied up with the neoliberal development paradigm that fuels perceptions amongst the middle classes that the urban poor are a drain on 'taxpayer' services:

The dismal record of the MCD in collecting rates and taxes from middle class colonies, which nevertheless enjoyed continued civic services, and the existence of a well-oiled system where city officials collected lakhs of rupees as "fees" from unauthorised settlements for provision of electricity and water, were both ignored. The pre-eviction campaign, enthusiastically supported by a large section of the print media effectively tapped into existing class and communal biases and saw the emergence of an alliance between the MCD, local politicians with interests in the land market and residents of affluent colonies. They welcomed the evictions as a move that would not only "clean up" the Yamuna and its banks, but would also reduce crime and ease the pressure on civic services (Menon-Sen, 2006: 1969)

This neat package of caste purity coupled with class division, reinforced by a neoliberal development paradigm, thus diffuses any criticism of the complicity between powerful groups that renders the urban poor as 'failures' and silences their needs and voices in the name of overall development. It is in this unique context of class and caste-based inequality that the knowledge practices of the collective case study organisations must be considered.

7.3 Providing printed information free of charge by post

One immediately obvious implication of the tendency for lower caste, marginalised groups to live either in illegal settlements or in distant resettlement colonies, as evidenced by figures 7.1 and 7.2, is that a Northern information service attempting to reach marginalised groups in New Delhi through the post is likely to have difficulty in doing so. In the case of illegal settlements these do not, for the purposes of the post office, technically exist. Where people have been relocated to resettlement colonies, there is a growing body of evidence (see Banerji, 2005; Bharucha, 2006) to suggest that these colonies lack a range of basic services, with postal services being no exception. Whilst GDKS's mailing list in New Delhi is made up exclusively of elite individuals and organisations with registered postal addresses, nonetheless if GDKS does indeed have an interest in reaching marginalised groups in New Delhi, the only way to do it would be to ensure that its printed information products are reaching intermediaries in New Delhi.

At a very basic level, and in line with the first objective for the field study highlighted in section 4.4 in chapter four, we can ascertain from the empirical data whether GDKS materials are actually reaching named recipients as GDKS intends. Posting information

free of charge to users as a strategy to promote information uptake is one element of GDKS's decommodification efforts outlined in Table 5.1. It is a strategy that is likely to be successful where the cost of obtaining information measured through poor ICT infrastructure or to other information sources more broadly, is a barrier to access. Where information infrastructure is poor, posting is designed to increase the likelihood of materials reaching intended recipients or target audiences. It is therefore crucial to verify the extent to which printed GDKS materials are actually getting through to users in New Delhi, thus allowing us to examine the relative success of this mechanism in this Southern context.

For this part of the study I tried to make direct contact with the named individuals or organisations to which material is addressed, as outlined in section 4.4 in chapter four. Despite boasting an extensive mailing list for New Delhi, one of the most significant findings emerging from this field study in relation to the first objective outlined in the methodology is that GDKS materials are simply NOT getting through to the vast majority of subscribers, as illustrated in figure 7.3:

Figure 7.3 Are GDKS print materials reaching named recipients?
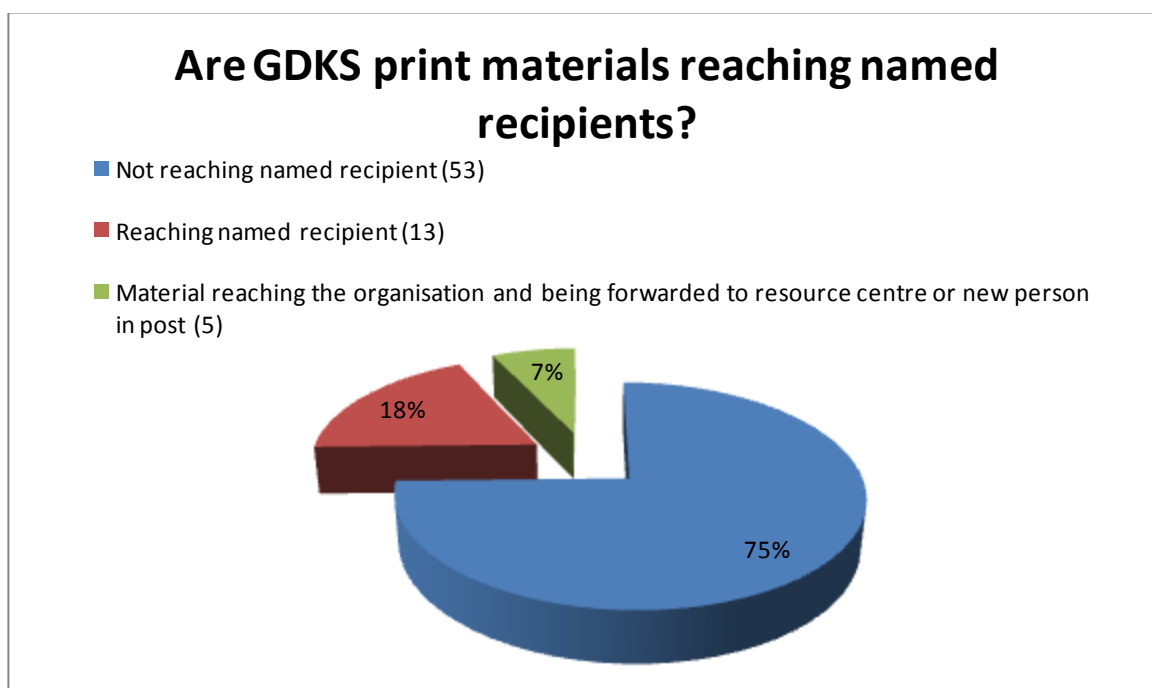
Three main factors help to account for the fact that, of the 71 organisations I phoned and visited for this part of the study, just 13 of the named individuals on GDKS's mailing list

were receiving any printed information. First, the mailing list itself was out of date. This would no doubt be a problem anywhere, but in New Delhi this barrier is compounded by the second factor, which is that post addressed to individuals is not routinely forwarded onwards to that person when they leave the organisation. Instead, post is either re-routed to the new person in post, or if there has been a restructuring and that position or job title no longer exists, the post, in most instances, is discarded. In some organisations bulk mail is opened at reception; if someone at reception sees that an NGO newsletter has been delivered, it may be forwarded to someone who may find it of interest, or if internal communication systems are robust then it will be forwarded to an on-site resource centre – I found only three instances of this occurring. These mechanisms, as the low penetration rates in the graph suggest, are not very reliable.

Thirdly, these penetration rates may also be at least partially explained by some of the externalised factors, such as the sealing drives (section 4.5.1 in chapter four) whereby the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) closed down hundreds of offices (many of which were NGOs) that were illegally located in residential areas. Given these rapidly changing circumstances, postal addresses must also be updated frequently and given that GDKS is a very small organisation, it is perhaps not surprising that some of the addresses were out of date. In many instances, however, addresses were correct but information was still not reaching intended recipients or even the organisation itself. Whilst postal systems no doubt vary in reliability and quality, using postal systems is particularly problematic for information services reliant on these services as a way of reaching users and intermediaries to promote more positive development outcomes.

The implications of these low penetration rates for GDKS materials may be contextualised with reference to GDKS's objectives in relation to the two constituencies identified as target audiences for their printed materials (see section 5.2). GDKS strives firstly to target policymakers and/or power brokers, as well as mainstream development practitioners, to convince them of the importance of considering gender as part of their work. In other words, there is an assumption that a lack of information is available to policymakers and mainstream development practitioners on gender; thus, influence is leveraged through making available information on gender and development that may alter or contribute to broader decision-making processes. This is an information gap that GDKS presumes exists

due to a perceived lack of consideration of gender issues in both policy-making and mainstream development discourse and practice, targeting those people 'that aren't seeking what we have to offer but perhaps ought to be' (HR, Manager, GDKS).

GDKS's commitment to target, where possible, non-gender specialists as part of their mission to assist gender mainstreaming efforts is reflected in the fact that, of their mailing list of 112 individuals in New Delhi, there are 58 non-gender specialists working in bilateral offices, IGOs, INGOs and mainstream Indian NGOs. Of the 30 non-gender specialists I was able to confirm through the tracking exercise that only one person (NJ, former website manager, OECD-DAC agency) reported that she was receiving GDKS materials, but she explained that she did not use the material in her own work. As already noted above, in many instances the individuals listed on GDKS's mailing list had simply moved on since adding their name to the mailing list. In these particular cases, the ability to target non-gender specialists through free printed publications was even more limited since, in the absence of the named individual on the mailing list, material was simply discarded or forwarded according to the whims of the reception desk. The receptionist at one large INGO, for instance, explained that where a named non-gender specialist on GDKS's mailing list is no longer at the organisation, any publication focusing on 'gender' would be automatically forwarded to the people who 'do gender'. One librarian similarly suggested that it was those in the organisation working on gender and development who used GDKS (SZH, Librarian, Southern NGO – CCSO[42] 16), and another librarian suggested that material on gender was not really used or even necessary as they are 'not really working on gender' (S, Librarian, Southern NGO). In short, GDKS publications were only being passed on to, or used by, gender specialists. This suggests that posting printed information to mainstream development organisations where GDKS passively targets non-gender specialists is not effective since, in many cases, materials are, at best, being forwarded to those already working on gender. Any attempt to target mainstream policymakers or practitioners in this manner is therefore rendered largely irrelevant in this particular Southern location.

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[42] As outlined in chapter four, CCSO refers to the collective case study organisations. More details that correspond to the numbered CCSOs are included as Appendix B at the end of the thesis.

With respect to engaging policymakers, none of the eight policymakers on GDKS's mailing list were actually receiving GDKS materials. Most of the people named had moved on and GDKS materials were not being forwarded to them. Of the three policymakers I interviewed, none could recall having received a GDKS pack or of even having heard of GDKS. It is reasonable to assert therefore that GDKS information is not directly influencing the policymakers on their mailing list in Delhi. One informant who is involved in information dissemination to Indian Federal government ministries suggested that, at the level of the federal policymaker in particular, they have plenty of information, or rather too much, more than they can deal with, and that GDKS materials are more likely to be thrown away (AV, Librarian, Research organisation – CCSO 3). KCK, (Senior bureaucrat, Southern government) was unable to recall a time that he needed information for anything. TKS (Retired senior advisor, Southern government) told me emphatically that 'You have PLENTY of information – it's an information explosion ... India has plenty of information ... so much that even we find it difficult to handle', suggesting that non-specific, non-targeted information on gender such as that produced by GDKS is not likely even to be read, let alone passed on.

Nor does the fact that GDKS information is free of charge appear to resonate with most respondents. GDKS, as Table 5.1 in chapter five highlights, strives to ensure that information is free to download or to access, with printed information packs and GDKS reports distributed free of charge to organisations in the Global South. Amongst their users/recipients in Delhi, only CCSO 5 appreciated that GDKS print materials were available free of charge to Southern users. As this organisation is an information NGO relying on the donation of books and materials to operate, this is not surprising. For some, there was simply no awareness that GDKS materials are meant to be free to Southern-based organisations. CCSO 2 even explained that it had actually paid to receive GDKS's information packs in the past (having paid the subscription rate usually applied to 'Northern' NGOs), which suggests that where GDKS information services are valued, cost is not a consideration. In this, as in other cases, cost does not seem to pose an undue barrier to the accessibility of information in urban, middle-class New Delhi. This is not to say that smaller NGOs did not have financial concerns, but the extent to which finance is a barrier to obtaining information may be exaggerated in a city like New Delhi. Some of the

organisations I visited, for instance, had impressive journal collections. CCSO 15 claims on their website that of their 101 journal subscriptions, 28 are international and 73 are national. CCSO 16 claims on its website to feature 150 periodicals. CCSO 2, in addition to paid subscriptions for materials from GDKS as described above, also have subscriptions to a number of key Indian journals. These large resource centres also provide information to practitioners in New Delhi who need to access relevant information that is not available through their own organisational links and resource centres. In short, GDKS users in New Delhi do not appear to be unduly challenged by the physical or financial barriers to obtaining relevant information.

These findings further raise the question of whether sending information to resource centres, which are more likely to have fixed addresses and to feature a wide range of both Northern and Southern materials, are better placed to improve information uptake as GDKS envisions. The key question is: are people accessing GDKS materials through resource centres affiliated with the organisations on their mailing list? The short answer to this question is no. Of the 14 resource centres represented on GDKS's mailing list, only seven had received GDKS materials, and in only five of these was recent GDKS material available. Where GDKS materials were available, there is no record of how or even whether they are being used, although two different librarians suggested that it was mainly researchers and PhD students who use GDKS materials. This is not surprising, as the vast majority of users of the resource centres on GDKS's mailing list are either foreign or domestic researchers, including postgraduate students from Delhi's two main universities. It would seem that posting printed information free of charge, either to individuals or to resource centres, is not necessarily broadening the usage of GDKS materials. The question of whether these resource centres enhance information access to a wider range of stakeholders including marginalised groups in their own socio-political contexts is analysed in chapter nine.

7.4 Promoting Southern, local and/or indigenous knowledge

Having established the extent to which GDKS materials are actually getting through to recipients in New Delhi, we can revisit Table 5.1 to consider the other mechanisms that GDKS uses to challenge the World Bank knowledge paradigm. The first of these

mechanisms is to promote Southern, local or indigenous knowledge. GDKS has a commitment to improving diversity and promoting Southern voices in the belief that this diversity improves credibility and will serve to disrupt dominant or hegemonic development paradigms that hinder gender equality. It is also crucial to its goal to be politically neutral as this diversity would, in theory, assist GDKS in its claim to showcase a range of views without supporting any particular idea or approach. We can therefore test the extent to which GDKS is perceived by its users in Delhi to be representative of diverse, notably Southern, issues and concerns.

7.4.1 Perceptions of GDKS content amongst users in New Delhi

Of the interviewees that identified themselves as users of GDKS materials, none of them were aware that GDKS was committed to promoting Southern voices. Some commented, perhaps unsurprisingly given its Northern location, that GDKS's information services reflected 'Western ideas' (VN, Founder/Director, Southern NGO – CCSO 1); RK, Regional Programme Manager, INGO). Perhaps surprisingly, this perception of GDKS content as 'Western' did not appear to be a weakness. Rather, GDKS's Northern location and their capacity to showcase the work of donors and other large Northern organisations that provide up to date information on the latest trends in development discourse and practice were frequently identified as a strength. Several of my respondents cited GDKS as providing a good, international overview (AS, Resource Officer, INGO; NJ, Former Website Manager, OECD-DAC agency; BB, Manager-Operations, Southern NGO – CCSO 4) that allowed them to keep up with the latest research (NB, Associate Director, INGO).

Yet, despite GDKS's efforts, its information services only seemed to address information gaps in relation to international development information more broadly; respondents still cited frequent information gaps in their own work. This finding echoes Srivastava's (2002) study of information use. She found that amongst various users of women's studies materials in India, Indian source material was, in the majority of cases, preferred over international sources, because respondents felt that information on the Indian context was needed for it to be relevant to their work. Respondents in this study similarly identified a need for India and South Asia-specific information that would directly address the issues respondents face in their work (for example RB, Research Coordinator,

Research Organisation – CCSO 2). Some respondents did, however, suggest that, whilst it would be helpful if GDKS featured more South Asian material, they did not necessarily see it as GDKS's responsibility to fill that gap (for example AV, Librarian, Research Organisation – CCSO 3).

Whilst these findings are neither especially critical nor particularly surprising given GDKS's geographical and discursive location, there are two important implications for Northern donors and organisations like GDKS in relation to received perceptions of more 'progressive' knowledge practices. The first is that GDKS, despite its own professed commitment to promoting a politically neutral but diverse information service, is perceived as international or 'Western'. Related to this is the extent to which the information being provided by GDKS, whether this is perceived as Western or diverse, is providing little more than background information, let alone contributing to decision-making processes that will unsettle dominant paradigms. A more detailed exploration of how GDKS materials are contributing to decision-making processes will be undertaken further on in this chapter.

The second implication is in relation to GDKS's perceived topicality. The perceived topicality of GDKS materials across a diverse group of users echoes the findings of Mawdsley et al. (2002), who identify a top-down, managerialist culture that results in surprisingly similar priorities amongst NGOs in vastly diverse locations. Whereas that study highlights a causal relationship between asymmetrical partnerships of Northern and Southern NGOs and the resultant hegemony in ideas that are imposed on how development itself is defined and implemented, GDKS does not affect that kind of control as part of their information services. In short, as outlined in section 4.2.1 in chapter four, there is no funding or other accountability relationship that would explain why users in New Delhi might be able to relate to what GDKS is producing and disseminating. Instead, it seems reasonable to assert that the perception of GDKS content as topical derives from a shared discursive location with users in New Delhi that reflects the attendant problems of locating and capturing an ill-defined 'Southern' knowledge that is not itself mediated by dominant development discourse. This further raises the question of the extent to which the dominant development knowledge infrastructure in turn mediates notions of

'topicality' amongst these Southern users in relation to their own partners, users or constituents. This is a question that will be taken up in chapter eight in relation to the extent to which GDKS users in New Delhi themselves either represent, or are able to forefront, the Southern-based alternative ideas and paradigms upon which GDKS's progressive knowledge practices depend.

7.5 Decommodifying information

In addition to privileging Southern voices and posting print information free of charge, GDKS employs other corrective measures to address the tendency in the dominant World Bank knowledge paradigm to commodify information. As outlined in the discussion following table 5.1 in chapter five, these correctives are presumed to have a direct impact on the availability and accessibility of information for Southern users, thereby contributing to improved decision-making processes and ultimately more positive development outcomes. The mechanisms outlined in Table 5.1 may be distilled into two broad themes. The first is the emphasis on addressing language concerns. The second is the deployment of a range of mechanisms to improve the reach and accessibility of information. Each of these will be looked at in turn.

7.5.1 Addressing language-related concerns

As outlined in table 5.1, GDKS makes considerable effort to try to increase the accessibility of its publications firstly by simplifying the language and formatting of its information products, in the hopes that its materials become accessible to a range of stakeholders, including those audiences for whom English is not a first language. Secondly, mechanisms such as translation are designed to diversify content away from the hegemony of English-language materials, thus improving the relevance of these materials for non-English speaking groups.

Regarding the question of the relative accessibility of language, the field study revealed at least two constituencies with different needs. The first was made up of the educated middle classes to whom GDKS materials were being distributed on their mailing list. These women did not have problems in physically or discursively accessing the material. Those amongst my sample saw themselves as the target audience for GDKS materials, finding the language and the style easy to understand and the information accessible. One

remarked that it was too basic (RC, Executive Director, Southern NGO – CCSO 6). This suggests that GDKS users in New Delhi may not be the main beneficiaries for the policy of simplifying language. In other words, at least in New Delhi, simplifying print and electronic formats and minimising academic or development jargon does not address any accessibility issues or deficits, since the majority of the self-selecting individuals on GDKS's mailing list are English-medium educated with advanced degrees.

In terms of the second constituency – individuals or organisations working at the grassroots – the strategy of simplifying language might reasonably be assumed to have some value (and GDKS would maintain that this constituency is a key target for simplification). As an analysis of the mailing list suggests, however, few such individuals and organisations are receiving GDKS information in New Delhi (and indeed in India more broadly; section 4.2.2 in chapter four). In any case, feedback from my respondents suggests that GDKS's correctives do not go far enough to improve the accessibility of information for the constituents of the New Delhi-based organisations under scrutiny in this study working directly with marginalised groups in slums or rural areas.

Although GDKS shares this goal of reaching 'the grassroots', with their hope that 'every grassroots organisation has a copy of In-Brief in their hand' (HR, Manager, GDKS), everyone I spoke to in New Delhi, without exception, said they felt that GDKS material was unsuitable in its original form to be passed on to their key constituents at the grassroots and amongst lower class/caste or marginalised women. Given its 'NGO-ish language' (RC, Executive Director, Southern NGO – CCSO 6), the perceived target audience for GDKS materials was variously described as 'senior' (AK, Director, Southern NGO – CCSO 5), 'large organisations at the policy level' (BB, Manager-Operations, Southern NGO – CCSO 4), 'only scholars' (RB, Research Coordinator, Research Organisation – CCSO 2), those at the 'policy level' (GC, Director, Southern NGO – CCSO 9), 'development practitioners' (RT, Senior Gender Specialist, Multilateral agency) and 'not the grassroots – NGOs in urban settings and research organisations' (GG, Senior Information Officer, Multilateral Agency). In short, there was universal agreement that GDKS materials were only appropriate, in this Southern context, at the level of the activist, policymaker or academic fluent in English.

For instance, in terms of the language itself, it was clear, as PM (Director, Programs, Southern NGO – CCSO 11) notes, that those for whom English is a second language would find it difficult to access GDKS materials: 'They [the materials] are speaking to someone whose first language is English, very clearly and understands [their] issues'. The language style, despite GDKS's avoidance of jargon, is what AS (Resource Officer, INGO), termed 'professional'. She argued that, even if there was some English-language competence, which is necessary for their field offices to have as grant proposals and other written work is conducted largely in English, GDKS materials would be difficult to understand. NB (Associate Director, INGO), suggested that

> … so for them [ground-level consultants] reading in itself is a problem, it's not just the question of translation, it's also a question of developing the material in the language that is accessible … even the ones who are educated in English, because they are unlikely to be using English a lot or reading English a lot, they would find this [translation into Hindi] as necessary.

Secondly, in relation to the capacity of translation to improve accessibility, it is important to note that GDKS does not support translation into any Indian language, so the question of whether GDKS's translation strategy is effective in this context does not apply. However, when I proceeded to clarify with NB whether translation of GDKS materials would still render them inaccessible, she responded 'It has to be sort of transformed [or] redeveloped in a particular way' (ibid).

This view, that straight translation would not improve the accessibility of materials, was shared by AJ (Coordinator, Southern NGO), whose slum-based community centre office was located at the crossroads of four large slums in East Delhi. She did not receive GDKS materials directly, but when I showed her one of its newsletters, she suggested that it was a more useful tool than books, which tend to be denser and therefore harder to work with. She said that 'language is not a barrier at all. We can do it [translation], no problem'. But when pushed on whether the adolescent youth who use their facilities would use it if it was translated into Hindi, she said she would 'make just one paper with this, we take the important points' and 'make something very interesting, very catchy for them', making it 'more appropriate for the [adolescent] age group' (ibid).

The barriers, then, to GDKS information reaching down to the level of the grassroots end-user as GDKS envisions requires their users and recipients to 1) obtain the information in the first place; 2) translate it into an appropriate language and adapt it to a particular user group; and 3) determine a dissemination strategy that involves either more printing or oral dissemination, thus creating more costs. As we will see in chapters eight and nine, many respondents lamented barely having enough time and money to produce, disseminate or translate the research they have directly undertaken for funders. GDKS's expectations of these New Delhi-based information intermediaries to obtain and then re-package GDKS information products are likely to far outstrip the financial and material resources of even well-established organisations.

Whilst it is clear that the direct translation of GDKS materials would not, according to respondents in New Delhi, improve its accessibility, GDKS nonetheless hopes and expects that Southern NGOs and intermediaries, who are understood to be 'on the ground', will adapt and translate its information products to suit Southern, local information needs. The discussion in chapter eight will interrogate the extent to which these New Delhi-based organisations use tools such as translation and simplification as part of their own knowledge practices and with what effects.

7.5.2 Improving reach and accessibility to promote information uptake

In addition to translation, other correctives to support decommodification are designed to increase accessibility, thereby promoting information uptake and improving the chance that GDKS information will contribute to development decision-making processes. Referring back to table 5.1, GDKS proposes to achieve this objective firstly by providing information free of charge to individuals, organisations and resource centres by post, privileging those users and documentation centres based in the Global South. As we have seen in section 7.3 above, this mechanism is limited by the vagaries of postal systems and poor internal information-sharing practices that result, in the vast majority of cases, in GDKS materials not getting through, or being discarded once they arrive. Secondly, simplifying and summarising information is also designed to target time-poor users, thereby increasing the opportunities for information uptake and for GDKS information products to contribute to development decision-making processes. Thirdly, in addition to posting information, GDKS strives to enable users with poor connectivity, understood to

be principally located in the Global South, to access its Internet-based information services. These last two will be analysed in relation to the outcomes from the field study in turn.

7.5.2.1 Simplifying and summarising information for time-poor users

Whilst the majority of GDKS print information is not reaching named recipients, what is the relative uptake of information amongst those who are either receiving GDKS printed material or accessing GDKS information services via the Internet? The first task here is to examine the extent to which demand for, and accessibility of, GDKS information, maps on to the information needs and accessibility concerns of gender advocates and practitioners in New Delhi as users of information. Does GDKS, in other words, fill a perceived or a 'real' information gap? What is happening to the information that is getting through?

In terms of use, of the 47 key informants I interviewed in New Delhi, only ten could recall having used its materials. Of these ten, five mentioned that they had photocopied and passed GDKS materials onwards to colleagues, and when asked whether they had received any feedback on its utility, admitted that they had not thought to ask but had not received specific feedback from the people to whom they had passed the materials. Three respondents said they had forwarded GDKS email updates to people whom they felt may be interested and/or had placed printed information in their own libraries/resource centres where available, but they did not receive any feedback from users regarding the usefulness of these resources.

Five of the ten respondents who recalled using GDKS publications stated that they had used the information in order to update themselves on gender and development issues and two could recall using GDKS materials for a specific purpose. In both these cases, respondents used the information for education and training. All ten respondents stated that GDKS materials provided a good overview of issues and an international context, since as practitioners, there was so little time to read up on the latest developments in academic thinking, as we saw above. Improving one's knowledge and personal education were both cited as key reasons to access GDKS or read newsletters.

Yet by far the most consistent response when asked about the utility of GDKS materials, and in line with existing literature on this subject (see section 5.3.2.1 in chapter five), was

instead to cite a lack of time as a key issue not just for reading GDKS materials, but as a general constraint they face in relation to the print and electronic materials they receive. This was the case across professional and organisational types:

> I feel I am suffering from information overload. I can barely deal with my e-mails, forget about the e-lists and then all the PDF files that are bombarding me all the time (RC, Executive Director, Southern NGO – CCSO 6).

> I don't always have time to read (KS, Sector Head, OECD-DAC Agency).

> I don't really use it so much because I am sort of information overload ... (RT, Senior Gender Specialist, Multilateral Agency).

> So much information these days on my desk ... (SR, Professor, Education Organisation).

> So much information, unless you need something in particular, too much to read and find what you need ... (MA, Officer, Multilateral Agency).

> Time is one thing – sometimes we don't have time when we want to do certain things, we just act at that point of time. Suppose I want to have a workshop on NREGA – at that point it would be a relevant thing to do but I just don't have time (RB, Research Coordinator, Research Organisation – CCSO 2).

Whilst GDKS is right to identify time poverty as an issue, GDKS seems to be contributing to feelings of information overload, particularly where the relevance of the information being made available is an issue. Where such information would help is where individuals have a specific need that is filled by a specific publication offered by GDKS. This suggests that GDKS may be filling a gap by making information available to resource centres where individuals seeking such information use those resource centres. This does, however, raise questions about the value of sending copious amounts of printed materials to individuals or organisations on a mailing list. It further suggests that whilst GDKS materials do appear to offer support, it is less clear that GDKS information products and services are contributing extensively to specific development initiatives or decision-making processes as GDKS envisions.

7.5.2.2 Enabling users with poor connectivity

In addition to promoting accessibility through printed materials, GDKS strives to ensure that its information services are accessible to users with poor connectivity in the Global

South, where a lack of Internet access is considered to be particularly acute. As we saw in section 2.5.3 in chapter two, whilst numerous studies have indeed identified a global digital divide, there are important and significant variations which suggest that the argument that this divide corresponds to a geographic North-South divide is exaggerated. To begin with, information technology has continued to develop in all contexts at a rapid pace, often outpacing the assumptions of development organisations. This was evidenced in New Delhi by the fact that not a single organisation I visited had anything less than the latest technological advantages, including the latest IT equipment with high-speed broadband connections. More importantly, no one I met lacked the more fundamental 'electronic literacies' (Warschauer, 2003 in chapter two) that allowed optimal use of the Internet as a vital research and networking tool. This picture of relatively privileged activists working with advanced IT facilities and skills runs counter to the perceptions of Southern organisations struggling with a lack of physical and financial capital that tends to dominate Northern development discourse, as highlighted in chapter two.

Scholarship in this area, given the time lag between field study and publication, has yet to catch up to the revolutionary speed with which urban India in particular has taken up new ICTs, where, in the span of a few short years, wireless and landline connections, coupled with internet cafes, have experienced rapid and exponential growth. Studies such as Mawdsley et al. that came out in 2002 suggested that small and medium-sized Indian NGOs in particular had difficulty accessing information about donors and policies and Northern NGO networks and hence found themselves outside of information loops. Yet on my field visit in early 2007, wireless, broadband Internet access in urban New Delhi was a normalised part of daily work life amongst the elite:

> But then again Internet is easy for people like us sitting in a big city ... even if you think of the electricity supply, somebody in a village may be able to find a computer, but they may not have regular electricity. And then also in the city it's easier to get a broadband connection. In the rural areas you are still depending on your dial-up connections, and the dial-up first of all is not very steady and the download rate is very, very poor (RC, Executive Director, Southern NGO – CCSO 6).

In short, connectivity is not a problem in cities such as New Delhi, even if it is a problem in more rural locations. Thus, GDKS materials are not necessarily more accessible than electronic ones in this Southern location. Indeed, many respondents said they prefer the

functionality of electronic documents, which allowed them to cut and paste relevant passages or ideas into their own documents. In line with the finding that people are time-stretched and are unable to find time even to read, interview responses also suggest that print material is simply bombarding organisations that have access to the information through the Internet. Some informants said that they had a preference for print materials, but only because they did not like reading on the computer or could read it on the train or in bed. This preference was not, however, shaped by a lack of access to the Internet. In other words, no one stated that print materials were preferable because of a lack of access to the Internet or electronic resources. Neither was it important to have print material from GDKS to pass onto their own constituents. As the analysis has highlighted, the majority of GDKS users and recipients do not pass on the materials of other organisations, including that made available by GDKS. Moreover, all of the people I interviewed, as we saw above, said categorically that GDKS materials would not be suitable in their original format to pass on to 'grassroots' constituencies. There is a possibility, of course, that such material helps where Internet access is slower or less reliable, but even beyond this particular field site, a cursory analysis of the GDKS mailing list for India suggests that subscribers are overwhelmingly urban and not rural organisations (section 4.2.2 in chapter four).

Perhaps most crucially, the interview data suggests that print copies, whilst laudable in theory, do not address barriers to using information, since the barrier is not Internet access as GDKS believes, but the content itself. And those who can use or understand the content are likely to have reliable Internet access that would allow them to use these materials if they needed or wanted, whether they are available in print or not. What is clear is that the assumptions GDKS makes about 'Southern' constituencies in relation to IT and the need for print materials to improve information uptake in the Global South do not apply in urban New Delhi, suggesting that GDKS needs greater clarity about who/what is being targeted in terms of its information products.

7.6 Conclusion

The analysis in this chapter has demonstrated that correctives designed to address perceived shortcomings in the World Bank knowledge paradigm in relation to diversifying the store of, improving the accessibility to, and promoting the uptake of, information do

not function as GDKS intends in this particular Southern location. GDKS strives to ensure that a diversity of ideas are represented in its information services, yet it is clear that respondents in New Delhi still considered GDKS to be 'Western' in its outlook, although this was not articulated as a weakness but rather as a relative strength. Mechanisms such as simplifying and translating available information are unnecessary in this Southern location not only because those who made up my sample were all fluent English-speakers educated to postgraduate level, but also because GDKS materials are still considered beyond the reach of users whose first language is not English. Notwithstanding the vagaries of international postal systems, the empirical analysis also raises key concerns around the resources that GDKS invests in ensuring that printed materials are provided free of charge. The internal information-sharing practices of mainstream organisations would suggest that non-gender specialists need to be more actively targeted to be convinced of the importance of considering gender in their own work. Moreover, whilst GDKS correctly identifies that users have little time to read, digest and act on information, GDKS information services do not address these concerns and instead seem to contribute to an even greater sense of information overload amongst respondents. Finally, correctives such as low bandwidth websites and text-only emails, designed to overcome connectivity issues presumed to exist for the vast majority of users in the Global South, are not relevant amongst urban, middle-class NGOs in New Delhi, for whom broadband connections have rapidly become the norm.

This analysis yields two important implications. First, for GDKS, these empirical findings illustrate that many of its closely held assumptions about how its information services contribute to change processes are not reflected in the experiences of respondents in New Delhi. These empirical findings undermine GDKS's internal and external M&E that suggests they provide 'useful and important services for development', raising questions about the long-term viability of M&E processes that focus on process rather than outcome, an issue not just for GDKS but for M&E undertaken in relation to knowledge-based development practice more broadly (section 1.3 in chapter one and section 5.7 in chapter five). Indeed, many of the issues raised are not specific to India but rather raise concerns about many of the closely held assumptions that GDKS makes in relation to the Global South more broadly. There is, therefore, a related concern, given the unanimous

identification of GDKS amongst respondents in New Delhi as a 'professional' or 'elite' service, about the capacity of its information services to promote greater information uptake and contribute to decision-making process not just in New Delhi, but in other diverse Southern contexts that share GDKS's discursive location.

The second, and perhaps more important implication, is in relation to how GDKS's knowledge practices reflect broader notions of progressive or good knowledge practice amongst other Northern donors and organisations convinced of the need to address presumed information deficits in the Global South. That the Global South is not universally information-poor, excluded by language or hindered by limited ICTs access would suggest, as with many other areas in development practice, that a one-size-fits-all solution that does not account for concerns around the nature of geographical and discursive exclusion in the development knowledge infrastructure is always likely to fall short. The question for the remainder of this empirical analysis is the extent to which the assumptions made about Southern NGOs map on to the capacity of the collective case study organisations under scrutiny in this study.

8. Interrogating knowledge practices in the South I: Information production in New Delhi, India

8.1 Introduction

GDKS's knowledge practices are not, as the previous chapter highlights, functioning in the way that GDKS expects, undermining the first set of assumptions about what GDKS believes constitutes good or progressive K4Dev practice as outlined in Table 5.1 in chapter five. The next three chapters consider whether the New Delhi-based collective case study organisations have the capacity to deliver knowledge as a form of development aid as envisioned by donors and Northern organisations like GDKS, taking into consideration the ways in which the Southern-based knowledge practices under scrutiny both mirror and differ from those undertaken by Northern information intermediaries.

As we saw in chapter six, India has stated its aspiration to become a knowledge society, but the achievement of this objective is fraught with concerns around exclusion rooted in a range of intersectional inequalities. These are embodied in the embattled history of the Indian women's movement and in the ambivalent perceptions of a range of stakeholders of Indian development NGOs as both champions of the poor and extensions of the state. It is in the bridging of the gap between disparate and divergent interest groups that the information intermediaries in this study base their developmental ambitions. The analysis of the Southern discursive 'site' brings together extensive documentary evidence alongside the views of respondents in New Delhi, focusing in particular on the work of 13 women's NGOs and four women's units on GDKS's mailing list i.e., the collective case study organisations, as outlined in section 4.5 in chapter four. Drawing on Table 5.1 in chapter five, which represents two sets of related assumptions underpinning GDKS's notions of more progressive knowledge practice, the following three empirical chapters interrogate more closely how progressive knowledge practices persist in promoting the imagined capacities of essentialised groups, notably Southern women and NGOs (see chapter three), to access, represent and make visible the Southern content on which Northern donors and organisations like GDKS depend to promote their organisational objectives. This chapter responds to research questions one, three and four (see section

1.5 in chapter one), focusing on interrogating the capacity of Southern intermediaries to produce information that represents diverse languages and ideas, as GDKS expects.

Section 8.2 locates the assumptions underpinning the knowledge practices of these organisations within the dominant knowledge infrastructure. Drawing both on the widely accepted notions of good knowledge practice and the perceived capacity of Southern women and organisations that underpin GDKS's knowledge approaches (Table 5.1 in chapter five), section 8.3 focuses on how these New Delhi-based organisations, given the number of languages and dialects spoken in India (section 6.3.1 in chapter six), address language diversity. Section 8.4 examines the capacity of the collective case study organisations to access and promote a diversity of ideas that, in accordance with accepted notions of progressive knowledge practice, challenge or undermine dominant development paradigms. Section 8.5 concludes by drawing on the empirical evidence examined in this chapter to reflect on the implications for GDKS's perceptions of good knowledge practice and the capacity of Southern users and recipients, in their role as producers of information, to both reach and represent the views and information needs of marginalised groups on which progressive knowledge practice depends.

8.2 Locating the knowledge practices of GDKS recipients and users

In line with the knowledge economy discourses of the Indian state, and echoing the persistent belief in the existence of an information gap outlined by a range of stakeholders including GDKS in section 5.3 in chapter five, all of the collective case study organisations identify an information gap, and all agree the gap is most acute amongst the 'grassroots', marginalised groups or 'the poor'. Unlike GDKS, however, due to what they articulate as their discursive and geographical proximity, almost all claim to both represent, as well as reach, marginalised groups with their knowledge interventions. In this respect, they should be ideally placed information intermediaries for donors and organisations like GDKS attempting to promote information that reflects diverse, alternative, locally-based Southern knowledges or paradigms with a view to influencing decision-making processes in development practice at all levels.

The organisations examined here identify the 'information gap' for marginalised groups as manifested in three distinct forms:

1. There is a perception that not enough information is available about women, particularly marginalised women, with which to assist in decision-making in a range of contexts.

2. There is an information gap being experienced by women, particularly marginalised women, in relation to their own information needs and how this affects individual decision-making whether this is about, for example, marriage, education or markets.

3. There are no spaces in which women, particularly marginalised women, are able to articulate their information needs or to express their views, concerns or preferences in areas that are of direct concern to them.

The potential role played by the collective case study organisations is that they may ensure that information is made more widely available and accessible, thus enabling women to find the information they need more easily to empower themselves. What becomes clear in the next section is that all the collective case study organisations profess a commitment to filling all three gaps.

8.2.1 Filling information gaps: for whom?

In common with GDKS, all of the organisations investigated here stress that a lack of access to suitable or relevant information is a key factor in the persistence of gender inequality and the marginalisation of women, particularly at the grassroots level. Accordingly, many replicate GDKS's information dissemination practices towards these ends. Two related strategies in particular are employed to fill the information gaps for and about women, as well as women's perceived marginality from decision-making processes more broadly. First, the information gap for, and about, women is addressed through the production and dissemination of information, where the improved availability of information itself is seen as an essential catalyst for change, thereby contributing to processes of knowledge building and, ultimately, overall development amongst women. As the paraphrased extracts from visions and mission statements in Table 8.1 attest, there is broad agreement on the centrality of knowledge to efforts to shape more positive development outcomes and promote women's empowerment.

Table 8.1: Extracts from the missions and visions of collective case study organisations exhibiting a belief in the centrality of knowledge to change processes, particularly amongst marginalised groups43

Organisational focus[44]	On the centrality of knowledge and knowledge-related endeavours to change processes for marginalised groups
1. **Indian women's political rights and representation NGO**	We are committed to research, advocacy and capacity-building to ensure a significant number of women in political office in order to promote the voices and visibility of those, particularly at the grassroots, who are denied opportunities in mainstream development processes. We provide a link between the grassroots and policymakers as we believe that grassroots perspectives should influence policy.
2. **Indian research centre on gender, employment and economic rights**	We are dedicated to engaging in research that will help promote social justice for marginalised groups, particularly women. We aim to bridge the gaps between research, action and policy debate, in the belief that academic research can provide valuable input into both grassroots activism and policy debate, whilst both work at the grassroots activist experience and policy concerns should influence research.
3. **Large Indian research centre on women and development**	We are committed to developing, promoting and disseminating knowledge that affects women's lives and status. We endeavour to achieve this through undertaking research on women and development; promoting training for scholars, planners and administrators; developing and promoting educational training and action programmes for women, especially under-privileged women. All of these activities will contribute to our objective of promoting the participation of women from all levels of society.
4. **Large Indian research and service NGO focusing on the empowerment of women and other marginalised groups**	Promoting the empowerment of women and deprived castes may be accomplished through research, training and capacity building ... Women should be economically self-sufficient and should also be aware of social, political, legal and health issues. We achieve this through mobilizing and conscientising women from the grassroots, regional and international levels to include initiative such as knowledge and capacity building, policy-level interventions and action-oriented research.
5. **Indian information intermediary offering consultancy services for**	Information is power, we share it – You can access it!

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[43] Please note that these mission statements have been paraphrased from their original in order to maintain the anonymity of the organisations in this study.

[44] This heading is drawn from Appendix A to maintain the anonymity of organisations being studied whilst providing insights into the nature of the work these organisations undertake. These same headings will be used for the remaining tables in the empirical analysis. The corresponding number with 'CCSO' in front, as described in Appendix B and in chapter four, is used to refer to the organisation in the text where necessary.

	research, capacity-building and monitoring and evaluation from a gender perspective	
6.	Indian women's sexuality and reproductive health NGO	We believe in the value of partnerships and the need to facilitate information and knowledge sharing.
7.	Indian women's empowerment and consciousness-raising NGO	We are a women's training, documentation, communication and resource centre dedicated to consciousness and awareness building amongst marginalised women in relation to a range of issues that affect their health and livelihoods. We produce and distribute material including publications and communication packages for different groups. We also host a documentation and resource centre to meet the information and analysis needs of other gender and development stakeholders. We also hope to enhance the existing knowledge within the Indian women's movement on women's status in India.
8.	Indian health and development service NGO for women and adolescents	Our mission is to promote knowledge development for women in relation to reproductive health, women's economic opportunities, women's education and skills. Amongst marginalised groups our emphasis is on providing services and information to support adolescent and adult health as well as education and entrepreneurial development that will contribute to the empowerment of women and young people … We aim to take voices from the field to decision-makers.
9.	Indian service NGO focusing on women's and adolescent empowerment in urban slums and villages	We work with women in the 'resettlement colonies' to develop knowledge about issues including reproductive health, nutrition, women's legal rights, and conflict resolution through the dissemination of information and through training. We organize grassroots women's campaigns whilst also conducting policy-level advocacy to promote women's rights.
10.	Indian women's media organisation	With a global audience, our information services penetrate from the grassroots to big metropolises, providing wide coverage of issues and dissemination of development information from a gender perspective.
11.	Indian women's sexuality and empowerment NGO	Information is power. Access to information and knowledge about political, economic, social and cultural structures increases women's control over their lives.
12.	Indian sexuality resource centre	Our objective is to facilitate and strengthen knowledge dissemination by disseminating relevant information through the Internet and print media to increase knowledge on issues of sexuality, sexual health and sexual well being in the South and Southeast Asia.
13.	Indian women's NGO focusing on promoting women's empowerment through education and literacy	Groups marginalised variously by caste, gender, sexuality and/or religion are largely denied access to information and the capacity to learn from it. Information is power, but even where it is available, existing content is not relevant and invariably it is gender-biased. We are committed to producing educational material that simplifies information

		and is not gender-biased, believing that information and knowledge production should be both democratic and decentralised. We also achieve our awareness-raising objectives by publishing reports, papers and making presentations in a range of contexts.
14.	**Large Indian mainstream research centre on social policy and rights – Women's Unit**	Meaningful participation of women in all walks of life would become possible only if they have access to information. To facilitate this, it is imperative to bridge the information gap that exists at present.
15.	**Large Indian research, training and documentation centre focused on women and children closely affiliated with the Government of India (GOI)[45]**	We are committed to knowledge excellence to support national policies and programmes on women's rights and child development through training, research and documentation.
16.	**Large Indian mainstream research and service NGO focusing on governance and participation – Gender Unit**	We believe that knowledge is power, and that by disseminating information through print and electronic media including journals, conferences and academia, more and more people will be engaged in the exercise of knowledge as power, linking marginalised voices with governance institutions.
17.	**Indian mainstream research and advocacy organisation focusing on democracy and governance – Gender Unit**	To promote informed and action-oriented public perceptions, we are engaged in awareness raising and training for capacity building and women's political participation, of which successful dissemination of information is crucial. Producing publications to raise awareness of these issues is an effective way of disseminating information.

What is important to note here is that, although all of these organisations work on gender issues, they are not all exclusively information intermediaries, nor do many of them necessarily perceive their primary role as information intermediaries. Instead, many cite a range of activities, particularly interventions 'at the grassroots' or 'on the ground'. And yet, knowledge building, the centrality of information production and dissemination, and 'information as power' all feature as key elements of their approach to change for women, as evidenced by the table. Even within women's units in mainstream NGOs that are committed to active engagement with the grassroots, there is a continual slippage from commitments to uplift marginalised women and promote empowerment, to characterising the creation and dissemination of knowledge via publications, workshops,

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[45] This organisation is fully funded by government, but as an arms' length organisation, or governmental non-governmental organisation (GONGO), as some call it. As such, whilst it is not really government in the strictest sense, their work does offer a perspective on what the government considers to be appropriate for work undertaken in the name of women's empowerment and development.

seminars and training as the principal means through which this empowerment is to be facilitated. This is crucial as our focus here is not on all the interventions undertaken by these organisations, but rather those interventions that render them a part of the K4Dev infrastructure in particular.

Whilst the first two perceived gaps in information both for and about women may be addressed through the first strategy of producing and disseminating information, there remains the third gap, articulated specifically as the lack of voice and access marginalised women experience in relation to power brokers and associated decision-making processes. At the level of policy, whereas information overload in relation to expert publications was cited as an issue in section 7.5.2.1 in the previous chapter, policymakers still cite the existence of an information gap in relation to reliable information from 'grassroots organisations or the grassroots in India' (KCK, Senior bureaucrat, Southern government). The role of information intermediary between constituents at the grassroots and policymakers, as we have seen forcefully in the Indian context outlined in chapter six and in the literature on the role of NGOs more broadly (see Cornwall et al., 2008 in chapter three), is widely understood as a task most suitably undertaken by civil society.

The second strategy, designed to address the third gap identified above as the perceived lack of space and/or opportunity that women, particularly marginalised women, have to voice both their concerns as well as information needs, is to facilitate entry points for marginalised women to participate in decision-making processes. As many of the extracts in Table 8.1 suggest, the vast majority of these organisations and women's units support the notion that 'grassroots' concerns should underpin policy-making processes. By highlighting grassroots experiences through their publications or advocacy work, they claim to be able to create spaces for the 'voices' of marginalised women, in turn linking the grassroots with the broader development knowledge infrastructure, thus rendering information a powerful force for change. As evidenced by the extracts, many of these NGOs suggest that they have the capacity to work at multiple levels, creating a space for the voices of their constituents by acting as mediators, and thus highlighting their facilitative role between grassroots constituents and policymakers. As GDKS is attempting to reach out to marginalised women to create these alternative spaces for women to

contribute to decision-making processes and to voice their diverse needs, thereby promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, these organisations in New Delhi appear ideally located to assist them in their goals. Table 8.1 highlights the priority accorded to both creating and disseminating information and/or knowledge, as well as facilitating linkages between the voices of marginalised women and decision-making processes, as key strategies for promoting women's empowerment.

Having established how these organisations articulate their discursive and geographical proximity to marginalised groups and their capacity to act as intermediaries between these groups and policy-making processes, the analysis now turns to a consideration of how their knowledge practices either support or undermine these purported linkages in relation to the production of information.

8.3 Interrogating the capacity of GDKS recipients to reach, represent or access, Southern-based knowledge

This section interrogates GDKS's belief that privileging the voices of Southern writers and experts through print and progressive electronic means will diversify the range of issues covered and the nature of the media through which these ideas are represented. These correctives, as we saw in chapter five, are meant to unsettle dominant, Northern development paradigms. This analysis draws together the empirical analysis of the work of these intermediaries that is designed to promote the inclusion of alternative, Southern-based paradigms in the dominant knowledge infrastructure. This analysis will also consider the extent to which these Southern-based approaches echo notions of progressive knowledge practice and thus mirror those of GDKS.

Referring back to Table 5.1 in chapter five, two principal themes may be distilled. The first is the emphasis on improving accessibility through simplified language and translation. The second is that the information GDKS both produces as well as compiles may be diversified through the inclusion of the views of individuals and organisations based in the Global South, thereby addressing the historical charge of Northern hegemony in determining what constitutes knowledge and offering alternatives to dominant development discourses. The remainder of this chapter will examine how these

assumptions map on to the knowledge practices of the organisations on GDKS's mailing list in New Delhi.

8.3.1 Language and translation

GDKS assumes, as we saw in section 5.5.3 in chapter five, that translation is crucial to improving accessibility to their published materials. Section 6.3.1 in chapter six illustrated that language in the Indian context is indeed a barrier at some levels, with English only spoken by the educated elite. Given that GDKS is unable to reach marginalised or non-English speaking groups directly with their materials, we would therefore expect to find women's organisations on the ground, as information producers in their own right, producing original Hindi and/or local language material in India, as well as translating extensively from English to meet the needs of, in particular, their grassroots constituents. Facilitating non-English language information production in both oral and written forms should address the first two perceived information gaps that they all cite as crucial to advancing development for Indian women, whilst simultaneously opening up spaces for marginalised, possibly non-literate women, to share their views and have their voices heard.

Table 8.2 provides a breakdown of how language is used in the operations of the collective case study organisations. What part of their work is conducted originally in Hindi and English and what is translated into Hindi and English? Is there a shared emphasis on both oral and written pedagogies?

Table 8.2: Breakdown of language and translation activities of collective case study organisations

Organisational focus	Hindi		English	
	Original	Translated	Original	Translated
1. **Indian women's political rights and representation NGO**	Oral communication in Delhi slum centres is conducted entirely in Hindi	GDKS and other reference materials are read and then translated and/or simplified for training purposes in slum centres	All research, writing and publication done in English; seminars and conferences conducted in English	None.
2. **Indian research centre on gender, employment and economic rights**	Oral communication in the field, including occasional information-sharing workshops in the field are conducted in local dialect and Hindi where there are also Hindi speakers; field study results are in Hindi	Questionnaires for field studies are written in English then translated for partners to implement; produce a Hindi newsletter that collates English-language material from their own newsletter and summaries of their research studies for 'people in areas who cannot access the English' (RB); some reports, particularly topical issues such as reports on HIV/AIDS, are translated into Hindi to reach a wider audience	All original research, writing and publication done in English; training, seminars and conferences conducted in English; website in English	Field study results are translated from Hindi for use in the report which is written in English; South Indian field office writes reports first in South Indian language and these are translated into English
3. **Large Indian research centre on women and development**	Established a newsletter for rural women in Hindi and Bangla which stopped at the end of the 90s due to a lack of response in terms of materials	None.	All work conducted in English; website in English	None.
4. **Large Indian research and service NGO**	Hindi newsletter from their Gender Resource Centre in Northern India; oral communication for workshops	Training manuals for field-level workshops are translated into Hindi	All research, writing and publication done in English; professional	None.

	focusing on the empowerment of women and other marginalised groups	and training for local or field-level partners NGOs conducted in Hindi; oral communication in their crisis centres conducted in Hindi		training conducted in English; seminars and conferences in English; website in English	
5.	**Indian information intermediary**	Some Hindi materials in resources centre; Produce a diary that is in both Hindi and English	Recently found funding to translate a book on violence against women into Hindi	All consulting, reporting and writing done in English with the exception of the diary, which is produced in both Hindi and English	Some songs from grassroots movements are translated into English for the diary.
6.	**Indian women's sexuality and reproductive health NGO**	Helpline services available in Hindi	Booklets on sexuality designed for young people translated into Hindi	All training, research, writing and publication done in English; seminars and conferences conducted in English; website in English	None.
7.	**Indian women's empowerment and consciousness-raising NGO**	Library has materials originally in Hindi; produce a Hindi newsletter on women´s rights and empowerment designed for neo-literate women; Cassettes and books of songs and poems on various issues	Hindi translations done for topical materials, including a recent manual on HIV/AIDS originally produced by Northern research centre; Primers on gender, patriarchy, feminism and masculinity in Hindi and English.	All training, research, writing and publication done in English; seminars and conferences conducted in English; website in English	None.
8.	**Indian health and development service NGO for women and adolescents**	Oral communication in Delhi slum centres is conducted entirely in Hindi; posters on issues related to Youth rights and a set of 5 training manuals are only available in Hindi	Translated some training manuals and handbooks for work with youth into Hindi, with two handbooks also translated into Bengali and one other set to be translated into Telugu; youth newsletter on their youth website is translated into	All research and advocacy work conducted in English; majority of reports and publications, including annual report, produced in English; conferences, seminars and professional	None.

217

			Hindi from English original, although phrases such as 'gender justice', 'peer educator' and words such as 'ejaculation' and 'NGO' are still in English, as well as numbers	training conducted in English; main website is in English	
9.	**Indian service NGO focusing on women's and adolescent empowerment in urban slums and villages**	Oral communication with Delhi slum women's self-help groups is conducted entirely in Hindi;	They host a coalition of civil society organisations who campaigned to have the Domestic Violence Act passed; the Bill has been translated into local languages for dissemination to women in villages to make them aware of their new rights.	Annual reports and advocacy work at the national level conducted in English; website in English	None.
10.	**Indian women's media organisation**	Training to sensitise Hindi-speaking print and TV journalists on a range of gender issues is provided in a consulting capacity; original radio programmes for broadcast done originally in Hindi on gender issues, including an eight-part series on women's reproductive health	Four articles are translated into Hindi every month for Hindi newspapers	All articles are commissioned in English; majority of training and video productions are done in English, with about half of radio productions done in English; website is in English	None.
11.	**Indian women's sexuality and empowerment NGO**	Training Institutes on sexuality are conducted in Hindi; community-based work conducted in Hindi	Translation of some key materials into Hindi is done for Hindi-speaking activists and grassroots groups	All research, writing and publication done originally in English; seminars and conferences conducted in English; website in English	None.
12.	**Indian sexuality resource centre**	None.	None.	All research, writing and publication in English; resource centre has English-language	None.

				publications; website in English	
13.	**Indian women's NGO focusing on promoting women's empowerment through education and literacy**	Grassroots and rural literacy programmes designed and delivered in local languages (not Hindi); reading and learning/textbook materials are produced originally in Hindi and other local languages in the Hindi belt on issues of gender, literacy and sexuality; facilitated the publication of a local-language newspaper run by marginalised women; resource centre features original Hindi publications; basic literacy primers are originally in Hindi	Key publications on micro-credit, women's empowerment, education, literacy and self-help groups are all translated into Hindi	Advocacy, formal publications including books and reports done originally in English; seminars and conferences conducted in English; website in English	
14.	**Large Indian mainstream research centre on social policy and rights – Women's Unit**	Library subscribes to eight journals in Hindi; original articles written in Hindi by the Women's Unit feature in their Hindi newsletter; Women's Unit has written an article in Hindi for other women's NGOs' Hindi newsletters; sell books available only in Hindi on women and gender issues; field-level training is conducted in Hindi; two Hindi-only pages on the website	None.	Research, the majority of training and workshops, seminars and conferences conducted in English; the Unit's quarterly journal is primarily in English; the website is primarily English, with exceptions noted	None.
15.	**Large Indian research, training and documentation**	Resource centre has original Hindi publications; in a list of 20 compilations they have produced, one is listed as a Hindi publication.	Annual report is translated into Hindi and made available as a PDF on the website; calendar of events translated into Hindi on website	Research, the majority of training and workshops, seminars and conferences conducted in English;	None.

	centre focused on women and children closely affiliated with the GOI[46]			website primarily in English, with exceptions noted
16.	Large Indian mainstream research and service NGO focusing on governance and participation – Gender Unit	Grassroots work on gender mainstreaming, notably on governance and empowerment, conducted in Hindi; distance education certificate courses offered in Hindi	Their main gender training manual has been translated into Hindi (although the words 'gender' and 'agenda' in the main page have merely been reproduced in the Devanagari or Hindi script)	All research, writing and publication done originally in English; training, seminars and conferences conducted in English; distance education on gender available in English; website and online gender newsletter in English	None.
17.	Indian mainstream research and advocacy organisation focusing on democracy and governance – Gender Unit	Field-level research conducted in local languages	A selection of workshop reports commemorating 73rd and 74th amendments over the last ten years have been translated into Hindi	All research, writing and publication done originally in English; training, seminars and conferences conducted in English; website in English	None.

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[46] This organisation is fully funded by government, but as an arms' length organisation, or governmental non-governmental organisation (GONGO), as some call it. As such, whilst it is not really government in the strictest sense, their work does offer a perspective on what the government considers to be appropriate for work undertaken in the name of women's empowerment and development.

Two points are pertinent from an examination of Table 8.2. First, oral and written communication in original or translated Hindi is used to connect with, as well as collect data from, marginalised groups at the grassroots. The second is that written and oral communications in English are used primarily at the level of policy or decision-making, including conferences, seminars and for advocacy purposes. Professional training is largely conducted in English, as is the vast majority of written communication, including reports, books, papers and pamphlets, with no translation of materials from Hindi or other local language into English being done. Each of these will be looked at in turn.

8.3.1.1 Original Hindi material

Undertaking oral and written communication in Hindi (amongst groups in Hindi-speaking areas) is of course crucial to information-sharing processes, but this is not necessarily sufficient to ensure the improved accessibility of information.

As JS (Co-Founder, Southern NGO – CCSO 13) reminded me, Hindi, like English, has its own elite (read: academic, professional) versus vernacular usage and creates its own kind of exclusions and difficulties. Thus, where efforts are made to produce materials in Hindi, it raises the question of who the audience for written Hindi material is, and whether making Hindi-language material available, for instance, online or in urban resource centres, is likely to address perceived information gaps for marginalised, semi-literate women.

CCSO 14, for instance, does offer a range of Hindi-language publications, books and articles, and it offers the only website of the collective case study organisations with dedicated sections reproduced in Hindi (CCSO 7 and CCSO 8 also provide links to Hindi newsletters, but there are no HTML Hindi pages). However, the 'few pages in Hindi' that their journal provides in their otherwise English-language publication to ensure that 'grassroots stories of movements and struggles ... get appropriate space and coverage' (CCSO 14, 2010) appear as little more than a token gesture of inclusivity. As a mainly English-language, peer-reviewed, subscription-only publication, neither is it likely to attract a large non-English speaking readership nor are marginalised groups likely to be even be aware of the 'few pages' set aside for them. As such, whilst it may fill an

information gap about women, it does not fill a gap for women, and neither does it genuinely create spaces for the voices of marginalised women.

The Hindi-language distance education course offered by CCSO 16 is another example of how Hindi translation does not necessarily improve the accessibility of information for Hindi-speaking marginalised groups. They offer distance education courses on gender and society in Hindi, claiming that the course is 'is one of its kind', offering high 'calibre and content' and promoting greater accessibility, even to 'stay at home parents and dropouts' (CCSO 16, n.d.). Considering that it is available in Hindi and they have targeted 'stay at home parents and dropouts', this may suggest attempts at widening participation. Yet they are very clear that the course itself is intended for development professionals, including 'staff of donor agencies (multilateral, bi-lateral, state or non state actors), government officials, civil society organisations, social activists, university students and researchers' (ibid). Stipulating a prerequisite of a Bachelor degree, they further insist that students should have 'easy access to computer and Internet facilities' (ibid). This seems somewhat contradictory, since requirements such as computer access and a completed Bachelor's degree are likely to exclude not just dropouts, but a range of marginalised, Hindi-speaking groups.

Issues around language and pedagogy in Hindi are both highlighted by research done as far as back as 1996 by Madhu Kishwar, the editor of India's first feminist magazine Manushi, who argued in a report on the lack of political representation for women that

> Even for participation at the panchayat level, it is no longer possible for an
> illiterate person to function effectively because the sarkari panchayats
> have been integrated into the vast bureaucratic network, with its reams of
> forms to fill out and its dust-covered volumes of rules and procedures.
> Moreover, the rules are rendered in such opaque Hindi or regional
> languages that even the literate members of panchayats find it difficult to
> make any sense of them ... (Kishwar, 1996).

In short, providing facilities in Hindi or any other language does not, as Kishwar observes, necessarily improve access or increase participation for marginalised groups. The use of spoken Hindi to communicate with Hindi-speaking groups is less problematic, but even here there is a danger in assuming that marginalised groups living in Hindi-speaking areas will necessarily speak Hindi in a manner similar to that of an educated New Delhi-based

urbanite. Moreover, working in Hindi even for the Hindi-speaking states may not address language accessibility, as every region also has its own dialects:

> What we do therefore is to partner with a local grassroots organisation. They speak the local language – it is a Hindi speaking area, but even there it would be their own dialect, which is very difficult for us to understand. I am a Hindi speaker, but even if I go there I don't understand their language because they have their particular dialect. The people with whom I am working are the Garasia, who are tribal and have their own dialect. So we have hired an institution to help us collect this data (RB, Research Coordinator, Research organisation – CCSO 2).

In this instance the Garasia are not simply excluded by English but also by Hindi, having to have their views translated twice before they potentially reach a decision-maker through CCSO 2.[47] That CCSO 2 is unable to reach the Garasia directly or to mediate language differences so that their views do not have to be translated twice undermines GDKS's perceptions of the capacity of Southern-based research organisations to facilitate inclusion in the dominant knowledge infrastructure by lifting language barriers. What is clear is that even where original Hindi material is being written or spoken, language-based exclusion persists.

8.3.1.2 Hindi translations

Some of the organisations investigated here engage in English to Hindi translation. CCSO 11, for instance, makes a point of translating their key publications into Hindi, whilst CCSO 2 and CCSO 4 translate parts of their English-language newsletters to create a Hindi-language newsletter that is distributed amongst grassroots partners or research participants. Still others produce materials in English and have them translated where funding is available and where they feel there is a need (CCSO 5 and CCSO 6). Apart from these ad hoc efforts, these organisations operate almost exclusively in English. CCSO 3, one of the largest and most respected women's research organisations in India works

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[47] Townsend and Townsend's (2004) reflections on fieldwork undertaken both in the UK and in the Global South also raises questions about processes of translation and codification. They note a 'failure to respond to users' ideas even when there is consultation. Echoing the discussion around the pigeon-holing tendencies of development discourse and the concerns around the codification of knowledge raised in chapter two (see Mosse, 1994 and Novellino, 2003), Townsend and Townsend (2004: 281) observe that in County Durham in the UK, '[e]ven where clear views of a community's needs emerge in public meetings, problems of communication may be revealed when the managing agents produce summary appraisals. Similar processes appear stronger in the South'.

exclusively in English. When I asked their librarian (AV – CCSO 3) whether they translate, she said hesitantly:

> I won't say quite a bit. Some ...[I]t's a very expensive affair, you get it done and then you're not even sure how much, I mean, whether all that trouble has been worthwhile or not. Because once you translate ... things you MUST disseminate it properly ...

When I interviewed her colleague and asked her directly, she responded unequivocally: 'No, [our organisation] by and large doesn't do any translation' (IA, Research Fellow, Research organisation – CCSO 3).

Translation presents its own challenges. JS (Co-Founder, Southern NGO – CCSO 13) shared some very thoughtful insights on concerns around translations. She said candidly that even if GDKS publications were translated into Hindi, she would not pass these on to the communities in which her organisation worked. Indeed, seldom had they had material, even in Hindi, which could just be passed on to the community in its original form. She said that New Delhi-based translators would use a formal language style when translating documents from English. She suggested that translators need to unpack the language or terminology being used and need different types of Hindi to do this. This reflects the fact, as we saw above, that translations are also subject to the vagaries of the language into which they are being translated. She reiterated that it is not simply about translation, but about the spirit of the translation, where if a particular concept does not exist in that language (as is frequently the case, for example, when translating sexuality discourses into Hindi), then you have to find a way to translate it that reflects the spirit of the original meaning. She admitted that nobody does feedback on translations for NGOs; this task is instead left to the community worker, since translations have to be routed through individuals or groups who know the readership. If it is a typical translation, then it will only reach the head of the organisation, or it will only be accessible to them; this person would not have time to read or pass it on anyway, even if it was made available in Hindi. She also admitted that her organisation translates executive summaries of their reports into Hindi mainly for community-based partners, but in the knowledge that it is a compromise, as they know that a community-based worker will not really be able to access it.

JS's concerns were echoed by a number of respondents. The nature and quality of translation into Hindi came up repeatedly as an issue. NB (Associate Director, INGO) suggested that one of their programmes has just started translating, because 'Right now it's really small, it's quite ad hoc. For example, we've got things translated in Hindi by professional translators, which was rubbish, because it [was] translated but lost nuances and all that'. The issue of nuance and finding good translators was again echoed by those working on issues of sexuality:

> Finding good translators, is another problem. Even for our own publications it's been a very difficult thing for us to produce them in Hindi. English is much easier, I am not even talking about other languages ... It's because of the subject matter. There are enough people who would be able to translate material from Hindi to English and vice versa, but when it comes to specialised topics like sexuality or may be the environment or even development, if they don't know the subject matter they find it very difficult. And also look at concepts, I mean, in English we so easily say things like sexual autonomy or even sexual orientation; saying the same thing in Hindi, it doesn't exist, the concept doesn't exist (RC, Executive Director, Southern NGO – CCSO 6).

> It may be easier for those straddling Hindi-English worlds, but the language is difficult ... Even saying the direct translations into Hindi of worlds like sexual autonomy are so awkward we wouldn't want it or want to say it! (PM, Director, Programs, Southern NGO – CCSO 11).

Some of the concerns around translation are very basic, where the word 'gender' itself does not exist in Hindi (as it does not in many other languages):

> You don't want Hindi of the academic kind of ... For example gender budgeting, there is no word for gender in Hindi ... There isn't a word. We write gender, g-e-n-d-e-r like that. Otherwise people write '*ling*' but '*ling*' is actually sex. It's not gender ... So, there is no -- because when we got the Rajasthan book translated, they don't know the difference between sex and gender, so they wrote '*ling*' budgeting. So, we said, "*ye ling budgeting nahin hai, ye gender budgeting hai* [this is not sex budgeting, it's gender budgeting]. They said, *kya farq hai* [what's the difference?]. *Aurton ka budget likh dete hai* [we'll call it woman's budget]. *Nahi ye aurton ke bhi budget nahi hai* [No, this is also not a women's budget]. *Mahila budget likh den*? [Shall we call it a woman's budget? (Mahila being another word for 'woman' used in a range of development intervention contexts)]" So you do have these kinds of -- and sometimes for issues like this, maybe it's just good to use the English word [gender] written in that script, the Devanagari [Hindi] script – (FM, Deputy Director, Multilateral agency)

What is clear is that translation is not straightforward even within India where the

language capability exists to have materials translated as so many people are fluently bilingual in English and at least other one main Indian language. Some of these women's NGOs have chosen to by-pass these difficulties by actively avoiding translation and working almost exclusively in English instead. Yet even where translation is occurring, it is still fraught with accessibility issues in relation to simple versus academic language that translators in New Delhi seem to have great difficulty in overcoming in Hindi. These concerns are not dissimilar to the concerns that GDKS tries to address through mechanisms to simplify its own English usage to widen accessibility which are unable to address more fundamental pedagogical issues around learning formats and the emphasis on the written word, an issue that will be revisited in the context of interrogating the communication mechanisms used by these NGOs in chapter nine.

8.3.1.3 The dominance of English

This brings us to the second observation, since it is the dominance of English in the production of ideas that Table 8.3 illustrates so clearly. Written and oral English dominates, including in the production of material. GDKS presumes that organisations 'on the ground' translate from local languages into English, whereas the evidence from this particular site is that the production of original material in Hindi or translating material from Hindi to English is simply not happening. Ideas in the vast majority of cases are being formulated in English and its idioms and then translated, as opposed to original ideas being written or produced in Hindi. That the use of the English-language is associated with elitism is not new but well-established and is, as the analysis in chapter two citing Lins Ribeiro (1998) notes (see section 2.5.3.1 in chapter two), a prerequisite for participation. [48] Furthermore, again as the literature highlights (see section 2.5.3.1), there

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[48] Pigg (1992: 502, 503) asserts in the Nepali context that to associate oneself with the language of development is to associate oneself with being 'developed' or to use the Nepali term, *bikas*. This is a state of being distinct from that of villagers, often labelled as 'backwards', effectively living outside of development. This divide is not manifested only in relation to discourse, but manifests itself in the use of language, where the use of English creates an automatic association with *bikas*, since English, 'and not their Nepali equivalents, are the terms of *bikas*' (ibid: 503). This resonates with a small example from discussions with one respondent whose NGO provides training in beauty and other courses for young women. These young women insisted that their certificates of completion or diplomas were provided in English, suggesting that, like Pigg found in Nepal, the use of English retains an important associative power with notions of progress and development. The certificate itself is rendered more credible or legitimate, as the use of English signifies a kind of elite status as compared to one awarded in Hindi, judged perhaps to be backward or inferior.

are further concerns around the nature of translation, suggesting that intermediaries cannot translate their way into creating a more democratic discourse.

Mawdsley et al.'s (2002) generalisation about language needs to be qualified as well, since they assert that in North India, 'only a few' NGOs have staff that speak English. Whilst generalisations like this may have some truth, these do not account for geographic concentrations – this is particularly important as rural/urban divides in India are so stark. My experience in Delhi, a view reiterated in a range of ways by respondents in this study, is that English is the 'lingua franca' of development, and whilst there is no doubt that New Delhi has its share of local level NGOs working in Hindi, the NGO sector in New Delhi is highly professionalised and certainly all of the organisations on GDKS's mailing list, as we have seen, are elite NGOs who work almost entirely in English. That discussions at the level of policy or discourse in particular are largely conducted in English is a point reiterated by AP (Director, Media – CCSO 10), who, as the head of a media organisation, laments the lack of language resources available to bring non-English speaking journalism into the mainstream:

> ... in India, the entire discourse on development is largely conducted in English. When you look at regional languages, the resources are very few, they don't have reports, nothing is translated into regional language, everything is linear. The result is that they are more or less out of the loop.

NS (Senior Programme Officer, Research organisation), said that at her level she does not even work with partners who do not have English, and has never had any requests for other language materials. Even where materials are being forwarded to grassroots partners or constituents, these were also being sent in English, at least until very recently:

> Every four months we send our newsletter. It's in English, but we have just started from our [North Indian] centre in Hindi, for the Hindi-speaking states. We have a gender resource centre in [North India] for the Hindi-speaking belt. It's just been established around 6 months back (BB, Manager-Operations, Southern NGO – CCSO 4).

Which is not to imply that concerns around the dominance of English and accessibility are not recognised. The belief that simplifying English may improve accessibility for non-English speakers is not a view held by GDKS alone. CCSO 12 works exclusively in English which, given that it has a regional remit, is perhaps not surprising. Nonetheless, like

GDKS, it 'seeks to make available knowledge in English more accessible to non-English speaking countries and also creates knowledge through publications on cutting edge topics' (CCSO 12, 2008). RC (Executive Director, Southern NGO – CCSO 6) was keen to ensure that the quarterly magazine they published used 'a very, very simple matter of fact language':

> So the main idea behind that is to make concepts of sexuality accessible to people particularly in South and Southeast Asia, because the primary barrier is language, and so it's not an academic journal deliberately because these people are not comfortable with English, they are never going to read the academic stuff. So it's ideas about sexuality put in very simple English using different formats.

As the analysis in section 7.5.2.1 in chapter seven made clear in relation to the simplified English employed by GDKS, however, the notion of 'simple English' brings its own problems.

What becomes clear is that, paradoxically, the policy and advocacy work, as well as conferences and seminars – the vast majority of which emerges out of some form of action research and is concerned largely with non-English speaking marginalised groups – is in fact conducted almost without exception in English. Again in contrast to GDKS's expectations, discursive spaces to disseminate information upwards to reach decision-makers and power brokers maintain their exclusivity by being English-only spaces that are not designed to be inclusive of non-English speaking groups.

A publication launch I attended for comic books designed to inform young people about HIV/AIDS and sexuality provides a telling example of the persistence of language barriers and the default use of English as the language of development in elite, urban New Delhi. It also illustrates the challenge of trying to bring the grassroots into elite spaces, as the Hindi-and English-speaking worlds rarely collide in a meaningful way. At the official launch for these publications, a senior figure from a large government-funded health agency was invited to give a keynote speech, with representatives from a range of organisations including donors, INGOs and large national NGOs also in attendance. This launch was also a dissemination workshop to collectively develop strategies on how to optimise the distribution and uptake of the comics. As a working lunch, representatives from

community-level partner NGOs who worked directly with target groups were in attendance.

The comics themselves had been produced in Hindi, as they were designed to target the community or grassroots level, and the community-level partner NGOs who were being charged with implementing the dissemination strategy were primarily Hindi speakers with only a basic comprehension of English. At the launch, however, the keynote speech, all the promotional material, the roundtable discussions and dissemination strategies were being discussed and formulated in English. Moreover, many participants, when given an opportunity to speak, spoke exclusively in Hindi and clearly did not have a functional level of English which led to stilted discussions and a clear lack of involvement from many of the Hindi-speaking partners. At one point a spirited discussion in Hindi between two representatives of the community-level partner NGOs ensued about differing perceptions and experiences of sexuality amongst their adolescent male and female constituents. No provision, however, was made for translation that would have facilitated the inclusion of the English-speaking elite donor and NGO representatives present during this debate. There was no opportunity, therefore, for elite donor and NGO representatives to actually respond to the concerns that these two community-based partner representatives were voicing around differing experiences of sexuality and how these were informed by dominant development paradigms.

This book launch could have been an opportunity to create a mutually dialogical space where community-based partner NGOs voiced their own concerns about the work they are being asked to do. As partners to a large INGO, it may also have been an opportunity to share broader concerns as well as views from the field around their ongoing work with youth and sexuality and the extent to which initiatives like the comics being launched seriously address information gaps and concerns arising out of their community work, thereby bringing these views to decision-makers. Instead this launch was an example of how there appears to be little overlap between the Hindi-speaking and English-speaking worlds, so to speak. This observation echoes the Sangtin Writers' (2007; section 6.8.1 in chapter six) identification of exclusionary discursive practices on the part of elites that limit their capacity as community workers to link their own knowledge to the wider

terrain of development discourse and practice. At this book launch, no meaningful space was created for Hindi-speaking community workers to reflect on the extent to which their knowledge of local information needs and views either supports or challenges the paradigm for change underpinning information initiatives such as comic books.

Given the limitations of language and translation, how do we understand the capacity of the collective case study organisations in this study to address the three perceived gaps outlined at the beginning of this chapter? Whilst plenty of information is being produced in English and some in Hindi about women, the language in which ideas are formulated, even where this is Hindi, clearly persists in limiting the capacity to fill a perceived information gap for marginalised women, and to create spaces for marginalised women to participate in decision-making processes. The language used is clearly not a neutral issue as even simplified English creates, represents and reinforces existing power imbalances between elite groups in India and their subaltern counterparts. Whilst there is some action research conducted in Hindi, even this, as we have seen, creates its own exclusions. What is clear is that the vast majority of research, writing and dissemination remains in English and is not disseminated, translated or altered for further distribution downwards, nor is any local/Hindi language material or publication being translated into English to ensure that grassroots views are reaching upwards into wider decision-making fora. This disconnect between the language needs of marginalised groups and the English-dominated information production practices of the organisations which ostensibly aim to serve them clearly undermines GDKS's expectations of the capacity of Southern-based recipients of their information services to respond more appropriately to language-based exclusions experienced by grassroots constituents.

8.3.2 Privileging Southern women: voices of dissent?

The foregoing analysis discussed the persistence of a discursive separation between colloquial Hindi or local language-speaking worlds and the English-speaking elite spaces where decisions are made and information is shared. This analysis now moves on to consider the extent to which the information that these NGOs produce and disseminate reflects the kind of diversity in issues that GDKS is keen to showcase.

Given the limitations that GDKS faces in meeting more specific demands for diverse Indian information as we saw in section 7.4.1 in chapter seven, we would therefore expect indigenous organisations to be filling in the information gap on India-specific issues. The information they produce and disseminate should, in theory, reflect the diversity of issues affecting the status of women and gender relations as these intersect with other axes of difference including class, caste, sexual orientation, religion, marital status and age, all of which, as we have seen in chapter six, are particularly divisive and often volatile differences in the Indian context.

Yet despite their perceived subaltern status from the point of view of Northern donors and organisations like GDKS, the work of the collective case study organisations seems to take on some rather familiar, almost repetitive forms. As we saw in section 4.2.1 in chapter four, GDKS does not retain a mutually accountable relationship that is upheld via funding agreements or work-sharing; there is therefore no coercive relationship that would explain why the issues that these NGOs focus on clearly reflect some of GDKS's own priorities.

GDKS presumes that the collective case study organisations are better located to define local concerns and solutions in unique ways that GDKS in turn hopes to showcase to Northern and, indeed, global audiences. Yet, reflecting in particular on how class and caste inequalities continue to be inflected in the articulation of the issues facing 'Indian women' today, Stephen (2010) suggests that mainstream Indian feminists 'have for long given step-motherly treatment to [marginalised women's] ... issues'.[49] She further argues that many of the issues that urban, middle-class women's NGOs address, and for which legal and regulatory support is frequently forthcoming, echoing the analysis of the history

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[49] In terms of the issues that are represented, that certain ideas are privileged in line with international discourses that alienate or simply overlook the issues faced by marginalised women, resonates with Alvarez's analysis of the Latin American context. In relation to the Beijing process, she cites some who 'argued that feminist NGOs' and networks' increased focus on national and international policy arenas has distanced them from the grass roots, from the needs and concerns of local women - leading, as one Peruvian put it, to "divorce between the popular movement and the feminist NGOs ... Beijing means very little to most women in our countries". Some complained that '"global agendas" were not being set by the movement' (Alvarez, 1998: 315). This again resonates with the Indian context, where, as we have seen in chapter six, it was historically elite Indian feminists who established the terms of the debate in relation to 'women's issues', reinscribing upper class narratives and expectations onto working class women, a tendency that, as table 8.3 demonstrates, has not changed markedly in the intervening period.

of the Indian women's movement in section 6.4 in chapter six, are those that are only of relevance to urban, middle and upper class women:

> Feminists spend most of their energy and resources organising vigorously on issues like legal reform for domestic violence, property rights, workplace rights, sexual rights, reproductive technologies etc, which are typically urban middle class, and which are not the priority issues of subaltern women. For their part, the legal and policy establishment also respond positively to their struggles, and thus we are witness to many 'progressive' legislations and policies which give the impression that our traditional norms and taboos are now being breached … the mainstream women's groups, while challenging patriarchal norms at one level, are actually reinforcing the hold of Brahmanical caste-class interests at a much deeper level in this process. There are few champions among elite activists for issues such as the poor quality of primary education, health and a non-existent public distribution system, transport, and drinking water shortages. Underemployment and unemployment continue to dog the lives of poor, rural subaltern women as they have for generations (Stephen, 2010).

Stephen's insights echo Nagar's (2006) reflections on the elements of a growing 'gender hegemony' (section 3.2.4 in chapter 3). Both of these observations are borne out by Table 8.3, which highlights the issues covered by the collective case study organisations.

Table 8.3: Issues areas covered by collective case study organisations

Issue	CCSO 1	CCSO 2	CCSO 3	CCSO 4	CCSO 5	CCSO 6	CCSO 7	CCSO 8	CCSO 9	CCSO 10	CCSO 11	CCSO 12	CCSO 13	CCSO 14	CCSO 15	CCSO 16	CCSO 17
Democracy and representation																	
Governance	X	X		X						X						X	X
Panchayati Raj Institutions		X		X										X	X	X	X
Women's movement							X		X				X				
Women's representation, democracy and voting	X			X													X
Economic participation																	
Informal economy		X					X										
Economic empowerment	X		X	X				X	X					X	X		X
Microcredit and microfinance	X			X				X	X	X					X		
Women's work	X	X	X	X				X	X								
Education																	
Adolescent education				X				X	X	X			X		X		
Women's education and literacy	X			X			X	X	X				X	X			X
Legal literacy				X			X	X	X								
Health																	
Adolescent health and support services						X	X	X	X	X			X				
Children's health	X							X							X		
HIV/AIDS	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Maternal health								X			X	X			X		
Nutrition	X							X	X								
Reproductive health		X			X	X		X			X	X	X		X		
Women's health	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X					X	X		
Rights																	
Children's rights								X							X		X
Human rights		X		X							X	X	X	X			
Sexual rights						X	X	X			X	X	X				

233

Issue	CCSO 1	CCSO 2	CCSO 3	CCSO 4	CCSO 5	CCSO 6	CCSO 7	CCSO 8	CCSO 9	CCSO 10	CCSO 11	CCSO 12	CCSO 13	CCSO 14	CCSO 15	CCSO 16	CCSO 17
Women's (human) rights			X	X			X	X	X		X		X				
Youth sexual rights						X		X	X								
Reproductive rights						X		X	X		X						
Violence Against Women and Children																	
Dowry	X			X			X		X	X					X		
Sex selection and female infanticide			X	X											X		
Sexual harassment				X			X		X						X	X	
Trafficking in women and children				X			X								X		
Violence against women	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Women's Empowerment																	
Gender mainstreaming				X				X						X	X	X	
Empower women	X			X			X	X	X		X		X	X	X		X
Self-help groups (research)			X											X	X		
Helping oneself, self-reliance	X			X					X		X						
Social justice	X	X		X			X		X		X						
Women's leadership	X		X	X			X		X		X		X				
Women's participation	X		X	X				X	X								X

234

Given the plethora of NGOs and the diversity of women divided by class, caste, religion, age, disability status and sexual orientation in New Delhi, an organisation such as GDKS seeking alternative formulations of indigenous, uniquely Indian problems could perhaps fairly assume that women's organisations would be working on a range of issues arising out of the genuine needs of local women. Instead the issues that these New Delhi-based organisations undertake are aligned with both historical state and non-profit approaches to women and the 'women's question' in India (section 6.4 in chapter six), combined with more recent, transnational, capital-friendly discourses on gender equality and women's rights (section 3.2.4 in chapter three and section 6.8.1 in chapter six). Table 8.3, which provides an overview of the key themes addressed by the collective case study organisations, reveals that, contrary to their being a real diversity in ideas and initiatives, the work of all of these NGOs falls into seven broad categories: democracy and representation, economic participation, education, health, rights, violence against women and children and women's empowerment.

8.3.2.1 Analysing Table 8.3

An analysis of Table 8.3 highlights that, within these broad categories, HIV/AIDS and violence against women emerge as the most important issues for the collective case study organisations, with all but one engaged in research, advocacy or training in each of these areas. The focus on violence against women, identified by Stephen (2010) above, has historically been central to the Indian women's movement and, given that it is the one issue that unifies women of all caste, class, ethnic and religious backgrounds, this is not altogether surprising. Alongside this is the issue of HIV/AIDS, which has captured a great deal of attention and associated funding from a range of private, bilateral and INGOs in the last few years.

Next in importance according to the table are women's health and empowerment, followed by reproductive health, women's education and literacy and economic empowerment. Looking at the top seven priority issues for these NGOs and women's units, six of them are aligned more with historically Indian priorities for women's welfare, including delivering women's education and literacy. Echoing Stephen's (2010) criticism above, it is important to note that these engagements with education and health do not include campaigning for improvements in universal primary education or healthcare, nor

do they focus on the delivery of primary education or healthcare that takes in a broad spectrum of health needs or well-being. They mimic historically Indian approaches to women's welfare with a narrow focus on educating women about reproductive (and more recently sexual) health as well as nutrition and sanitation to address children's basic health concerns. The emphasis on economic empowerment is especially worth noting, particularly in relation to the grassroots work undertaken by these organisations. Work with slum and resettlement colonies, as well as a significant proportion of the action research, has an economic empowerment focus.

This is not to imply that there is a homogeneity or uniformity in the work areas of these organisations, something that is also clear from the table. Sexual rights in particular is one area where some of these NGOs are moving away from dominant elite Indian feminist discourses and engaging, by their own admission, with Western feminist paradigms (e.g., JS, Co-Founder, Southern NGO – CCSO 13). Vrinda, a lawyer who campaigns on issues of human rights, was a discussant at a sexual rights seminar I attended. She argued in the seminar that 'issues of sex were put away by the Indian women's movement to be instead dealt with by governments and courts, who were taken on the issue of violence' (Vrinda, 2007). This appears to be reflected in the breakdown of priorities for the bigger, older women's organisations and research centres including CCSO 4, CCSO 3 and the government-aligned CCSO 15. Despite all of them discussing women's health, violence against women and HIV/AIDS, sexual rights is a term that seems to be assiduously avoided. Sexuality discourses are considered broadly on the margins and, as we saw in the previous section, there is as yet no adequate vocabulary in Hindi to reach out to bigger and broader audiences or to shift the discourse away from the historical priorities of the Indian women's movement.

This emphasis on the language of sexual rights does, however, coincide with a growing transnational emphasis on women's sexuality issues. Reflecting on the November 2008 Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) Forum in South Africa, a large and well established forum for development feminist activists that occurs once every four years, Harcourt (2009: 134) identifies a 'silence' on economic and social justice issues. She notes that some observers suggested 'that the Forum was more interested in women's sexuality issues than gender and poverty concerns' (ibid). Given that over 2000 women

from around the world were attending, one might expect, as Harcourt did, more diversity of opinion to have been represented. It suggests that a transnational consensus has emerged on the importance of women's sexuality issues. This is not to imply that sexuality is not important; rather, as Harcourt suggests, one might have expected that broader linkages would also be made by the diversity of participants at the Forum between sexuality and sexual rights, and economic and social justice. Moreover, again as Harcourt notes, this sexuality and sexual rights discourse overlaps usefully with gender-based violence, an overlap that is also evident in the work of newer NGOs on GDKS's mailing list engaged in work on sexuality, thus providing a link between transnational (read: sexuality) and Indian elite feminist (read: violence against women) discourses.

What becomes clear in looking at the recipients on GDKS's mailing list is that they do not necessarily represent indigenous, alternative knowledges but instead are individuals and organisations working on pre-determined problems and solutions that emerge out of historical Indian concerns coupled with transnational, neo-liberal development paradigms. This is not to undermine their importance per se, but rather to raise concerns around the extent to which the Southern organisations to whom GDKS is sending information are able to both reach and represent alternative, Southern paradigms on which progressive knowledge practices like those of GDKS depend.

8.4 Conclusion

In line with India's entry into a global marketplace and the concomitant movement of Indian feminists into the arena of transnational development discourse, approaches to Indian women's development now feature a combination of new areas, including sexual rights and HIV/AIDS, whilst still retaining some essential features of historically Indian non-profit work with women, including health programmes and literacy training. And some problems and solutions, such as the emphasis on HIV/AIDS and economic empowerment, given the globalisation of the discourses around women's empowerment, also fit into a broader national and international consensus on what the issues 'are' in terms of women's empowerment, using the dominant discursive language and practices of gender and development that excludes marginalised groups.

The empirical analysis suggests that attempts to promote inclusion for marginalised women by addressing language barriers appear to have limited success. Some of these barriers are rooted in the discursive power of development itself, themselves made worse by knowledge practices that may entrench this discursive power even further.

The implications for this analysis are two-fold. Firstly, in terms of the three perceived information gaps, over-representation of dominant Indian elite feminist and transnational discourses on gender and development risk the persistence of large gaps in relation to information about women in India. It further suggests that the information being produced overlooks key issues of concern for marginalised women. Finally, it is indeed possible that the priority issue areas identified by these NGOs are those of the greatest importance to the vast majority of Indian women. Yet given the history of the Indian women's movement and the critiques of Nagar (2006) and Stephen (2010) cited above, the lack of diversity in ideas and areas of interventions does raise serious questions.

The second implication derives from the observation that the collective case study organisations do, to a large degree, mirror the progressive knowledge practices undertaken by GDKS itself. Yet, despite their geographical proximity (see Figures 7.1 and 7.2 in chapter seven) to both marginalised groups and decision-makers, these organisations do not have the discursive capacity to create dialogical spaces for marginalised women to meaningfully participate in the dominant knowledge infrastructure. It is the presumed overlap between the geographical and discursive proximity of Southern organisations that GDKS expects will facilitate the inclusion of marginalised groups, thus contributing to unsettling dominant, Northern development paradigms. The empirical analysis suggests that the collective case study organisations are falling short of GDKS's expectations of their capacity to produce information that promotes the inclusion of marginalised groups into the dominant development knowledge infrastructure.

9. Interrogating knowledge practices in the South II: Information dissemination in New Delhi, India

9.1 Introduction

Locating GDKS users and recipients as participants in the dominant development knowledge infrastructure reveals, as we saw in the previous chapter, a shared belief in the centrality of information production and dissemination as key inputs into empowerment and development processes, particularly amongst marginalised groups. Despite these commitments to improve the availability and accessibility of information, the dominance of the English language forecloses the discursive spaces occupied by elite development stakeholders. The persistence of English and elite Hindi as the main languages of development in India and the concomitant pervasiveness of both transnational and elite Indian feminist discourses in turn limits the capacity of the collective case study organisations to promote alternative languages and ideas in their information production practices. Yet it is these alternative paradigms that Northern donors and organisations like GDKS expect that Southern organisations are well placed to retrieve as part of objectives to both unsettle and diversify the World Bank knowledge paradigm.

This chapter continues the response to research questions three and four (section 1.5 in chapter one), interrogating the capacity of correctives to the World Bank knowledge paradigm to address key concerns in the delivery of knowledge as development aid. Whereas the previous chapter focused on information production, the analysis in this chapter analyses the extent to which the information dissemination practices of these organisations (referring back to point two in Table 5.1), decommodify information whilst improving its availability and accessibility. This decommodification is to be achieved through engaging in progressive knowledge practices as well as drawing on the presumed capacities of these Southern intermediaries to disseminate information as GDKS expects. This analysis also interrogates the extent to which the dissemination efforts of the collective case study organisations mirror those of GDKS.

Table 9.1 provides an overview of the information dissemination practices of the collective case study organisations.[50] The table is broken down into 'who' is being targeted with information, 'what' information is disseminated, 'where' information is disseminated, 'why' it is disseminated and 'how' information is disseminated.

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[50] GDKS is included on this table to provide an insight into the extent to which their dissemination practices overlap with those of their users and recipients.

Table 9.1: Unpacking dissemination practices

	GDKS	CCSO 1	CCSO 2	CCSO 3	CCSO 4	CCSO 5	CCSO 6	CCSO 7	CCSO 8	CCSO 9	CCSO 10	CCSO 11	CCSO 12	CCSO 13	CCSO 14	CCSO 15	CCSO 16	CCSO 17
HOW																		
Email	X					X												
Networking	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Print mailing	X		X		X		X	X	X			X		X	X			
Information services	X		X	X		X		X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Professional training (including gender sensitisation)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	
Resource and documentation centre			X	X		X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X
Research and dissemination	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Film			X					X						X				
Training and non-formal education		X		X	X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X			X
Peer educators										X	X							
Self-Help Groups		X		X	X			X	X	X							X	
WHO																		
Policymakers/government	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X
People at the field level or grassroots		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X
Media		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X		X	X	
Partner/other institutions and networks	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	
WHAT																		
Books			X (E)	X (E)	X (E)	X (B)	X (E)	X (B)	X (E)		X (E)	X (E)	X (E)	X (B)	X (E)	X (E)		
Website (E or H or B)	X (E)		X (E)	X (E)	X (E)	Blog (E)	X (E)	X (E)	X (E)	X (E)	X (E)	X (B)	X (E)	X (E)	X (B)	X (B)	X (E)	X (E)
Online discussion board	X (E)				X (E)	Blog (E)	X (E)		X (E)		X (E)						X (E)	X (E)

	GDKS	CCSO 1	CCSO 2	CCSO 3	CCSO 4	CCSO 5	CCSO 6	CCSO 7	CCSO 8	CCSO 9	CCSO 10	CCSO 11	CCSO 12	CCSO 13	CCSO 14	CCSO 15	CCSO 16	CCSO 17
Newsletters (for partners, general)	X (E)[51]		X (E)		X (E)				X (E)								X (E)	
Newsletter (grassroots, rural)			X (H)		X (H)			X (H)						X (H)				
Journal				X (E)			X (E)								X (E)			
Pamphlets and booklets		X (B)	X (E)	X (E)	X (B)		X (B)	X (B)				X (B)	X (E)	X (B)				
Reports	X (E)	X (E)	X (E)	X (E)	X (E)	X (E)	X (E)	X (E)	X (E)	X (E)	X (E)	X (B)	X (E)	X (E)	X (E)	X (E)	X (B)	X (B)
Training manuals			X (E)		X (B)	X (E)	X (E)	X (B)	X (B)			X (B)		X (B)	X (E)	X (E)	X (B)	
Working papers			X (E)	X (E)					X (E)			X (E)		X (E)				
WHERE																		
External events and campaigns	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X				
Meetings, seminars, workshops and conferences	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Publication launches	X				X	X		X										
WHY																		
Advocacy and lobbying		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X		X	X			X
Capacity-building		X			X	X		X	X			X	X	X		X	X	X
Awareness-raising	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Public education			X				X	X				X					X	
Empower women	X	X			X			X	X	X		X		X	X	X		X
WHEN																		
To coincide with OR mark an event	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X		X		X
Periodic			X		X	X	X								X	X		X
Anytime	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

E – English; H – Hindi; B – Both

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[51] GDKS does translations but mainly into French and Spanish. They have not translated any of their materials into any Indian language.

We can distil three broad themes emerging out of the table as these relate to point two in Table 5.1 i.e., the decommodification of information to address the accessibility and availability of information. Section 9.2 critically analyses the first of these themes, namely the nature of oral and written dissemination practices revealed in Table 9.1, highlighting an emphasis on the written word that underpins dominant pedagogical approaches to facilitating learning and change. Section 9.3 examines the second theme emerging out of Table 9.1, interrogating whether making information freely available is a priority for these organisations as it is for GDKS. A related focus in this section is whether documentation and resource centres, a key feature of many of the organisations detailed in Table 9.1, improve access to, and availability of, information as GDKS expects. Section 9.4 examines the third broad theme emerging out of this table, namely how these organisations manage issues around connectivity and the relative capacity of grassroots partners or constituents to access information. Finally, section 9.5 reflects on how these organisations monitor and evaluate their own knowledge practices, and the extent to which their monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms mirror those of GDKS as outlined in section 5.7 in chapter five, and if so, with what effects. Section 9.6 concludes by drawing together the empirical analysis in both chapters eight and nine to reflect on the implications for GDKS's assumptions about the capacity of the collective case study organisations to produce and disseminate information as GDKS expects.

9.2 The nature of oral and written dissemination practices

The implication of the separation highlighted in the previous chapter between English and Hindi-speaking worlds, where to speak English is to be associated with 'development', distinct from the 'backwardness' of non-English speaking, marginalised groups (see Pigg, 1992), is that oral dissemination spaces, reflecting trends amongst development NGOs more broadly (section 3.3.1.2 in chapter three), have become highly professionalised and are underpinned by elite written dissemination practices such as reports, books and journal articles. Two important and related issues will be discussed here in relation to this professionalisation. The first is that it establishes basic literacy, and the fundamental pedagogies associated with written learning, as the basis for engaging with 'dominant ways of knowing'. Secondly, privileging basic literacy effectively excludes semi-literate

marginalised groups from participating in the dominant knowledge infrastructure. Each will be looked at in turn.

9.2.1 The emphasis on the written word

Whilst we may expect GDKS to be disseminating using the printed word owing to its discursive and geographical location, the most striking observation emerging from Table 9.1 is the reliance by the collective case study organisations on dissemination mechanisms that also privilege the written word. The table suggests, as the discussion on language in section 8.3.1 in chapter eight also highlights, that some limited oral dissemination occurs with 'people at the field level' who are identified by all but three organisations as key target groups. These organisations communicate with the 'grassroots' through action research, campaigns and events, self-help groups, peer educators and formal and informal education and training that would be subsumed under commitments to public education and women's empowerment. But even these efforts appear to be underpinned by the dissemination of pamphlets, booklets, training manuals and newsletters geared towards grassroots partners and marginalised constituents in both urban and rural areas. As a range of respondents in this study suggested (e.g., RB, PM, BB, VN, RC), however, the vast majority of information they produce circulates within the Central and South New Delhi State-Donor-NGO-INGO-Research centre triangle highlighted in Figure 7.2 in chapter seven. These organisations disseminate their research through the production of books, reports, journals, working papers, newsletters, websites and online discussion boards that are disseminated as part of professional training, seminars, workshops, conferences, email and print mailing; these efforts are mainly subsumed under commitments to awareness-raising and advocacy, particularly in relation to the media, other partners and policymakers.

Extending the critique of GDKS emerging from the analyses in chapters five and seven that finds that simplified language does not address language barriers faced by non-English language speaking groups, the emphasis on the written word itself establishes basic literacy as a prerequisite for participation in the dominant knowledge infrastructure. This finding would therefore suggest that simplifying the language used in printed materials to maximise accessibility does not address other barriers experienced by those

marginalised from these information networks, as it is not only the relative complexity of the language or the relevance of information that determines accessibility (section 5.5.1 in chapter five and section 7.5.1 in chapter seven), but the printed word itself that is problematic in a pedagogical sense. In other words, attempting to facilitate learning from printed materials presupposes literacy, a capacity to learn from the written word and a familiarity with its underlying paradigms and pedagogies. Access to new ICTs also raises similar questions around the underlying pedagogies of learning and written language that the use of these technologies entails (see Castells, 2001; Warschauer, 2003 in chapter three), an issue that is revisited in relation to the empirical data in section 9.4 below.

Kishwar (1996), in her commentary on the opacity of bureaucratic procedures experienced by female political representatives at the level of Panchayats (see section 8.3.1.1 in chapter eight), emphasises basic literacy as a key component to enhance women's political participation. This emphasis is reiterated by FA (Retired Professor, Education organisation), a senior academic who has both studied and worked with government-sponsored women's empowerment programmes in Karnataka. She states quite plainly that it is not possible to do anything, even save, without a basic education. Echoing Machlup's (1993) critique of information use in section 2.5.2 in chapter two, FA argues that all the printed information in the world is not useful if you are unable to read, a truism that nonetheless has not fundamentally informed the work of Northern organisations like GDKS and the collective case study organisations. These organisations persist in privileging the printed word and the associated pedagogies underpinning methods of collating and presenting 'information' that reinforce dominant 'ways of knowing'.

9.2.2 The implications of the professionalisation of oral and written discursive spaces

In addition to the inequalities that we have seen manifested by the use of the English language, the implications of privileging the printed word and reinforcing dominant ways of knowing for marginalised groups are significant. Those groups less likely to be familiar with pedagogical approaches underpinned by the written word are those either with limited access to basic education due to intersectional inequalities, or those groups that privilege alternative information archiving and exchange practices. These issues partly

reflect more fundamental questions of print versus oral traditions of information-sharing, where information presented in a heavily textual format may render it impenetrable, for example, to poorer or excluded women:

> ... they [Indian women's movement] were reaching out to people through other ways ... including the printed word. In India, for instance, so many, many women are non-literate, to rely only on the printed word itself would be a limitation... (IA, Research Fellow, Research organisation – CCSO 3).

Drawing on the discussion around the professionalisation of indigenous knowledge in section 2.5.1.4 in chapter two, knowledge that is not recognisably codified and authorised within the constraints of the development knowledge infrastructure i.e., as part of a textual or oral exchange that uses dominant narrative formats, effectively excludes the knowledges of diverse marginalised groups. Referring back to the gaps these organisations claim to be able to fill, as outlined at the beginning of in section 8.2.1 in chapter eight, the use of dominant narrative formats may potentially address information gaps about women for policymakers and practitioners. However, it is limited in its capacity to address the information gaps experienced by marginalised women and to create spaces for the voices of marginalised groups to participate in the dominant knowledge infrastructure. The emphasis placed on the written word by these Southern organisations in turn has consequences for progressive knowledge practices as embodied by GDKS, which depend on the capacity of Southern organisations to reach and represent the information needs and views of those groups marginalised from the dominant knowledge infrastructure. Given that these Southern organisations do not, through their own knowledge practices, facilitate the inclusion of alternative 'ways of knowing', from the point of view of GDKS, the exclusion of groups who do not engage in dominant 'ways of knowing' is rendered largely invisible.

9.3 Providing information free of charge in print and electronic format

One response to the professionalisation of information, as the foregoing analysis repeatedly suggests, has been to decommodify, and thus democratise, information production and dissemination processes. What is clear from Table 9.1 is that the decommodification of information through increasing its availability (as outlined in Table 5.1 in chapter five) is clearly pursued in earnest not just by GDKS but by their users and recipients in New Delhi. On the one hand respondents have cited having 'no time to read'

and 'information overload' as key concerns in the empirical analysis in section 7.5.2.1 in chapter seven. On the other hand, echoing Gow and Morss' (1985: 176, as cited in Davies, 1994: 3) '"more-information-is-good syndrome"' outlined in section 2.5.2.1 in chapter two, table 9.1 reveals that all of these organisations disseminate copious amounts of information in a range of print and electronic formats, with a notable emphasis on websites, books, reports and training manuals that showcase their research about women. The sheer volume of information being made available in the aggregate, one respondent suggests, does little to address the basic literacy concerns outlined in the previous section:

> The dissemination unfortunately in India has a different lopsidedness, because not all people are educated. If you take women as a target group in their 40s, some states, such as Kerala have 100 per cent educated, but you have some states where 15-20% are educated. Any amount of information you are producing is of no use. Even if you disseminate, how many people or what percentage of women are using it? What percentage of women have the access? It is not the dearth or lack of information – India has plenty of information – plenty so much that even we find it difficult to handle. So I will never say there is a lack or dearth of information ... but otherwise, even whatever is reaching, how much is being used? The rural population in India is 70% and the educated people within this may only be half, what will they do? And even the educated people, after reading what are they doing? Awareness is coming up, but how much each educated woman is sharing what she has gained? ... You may be doing plenty of work in Delhi, maybe state capitals, maybe even district headquarters, nothing is lacking here, NGOs are all working, but beyond district, what is happening? There's a big gap. And even if you are reaching, how much are you giving woman to woman, person to person contact, because uneducated women need this... (TKS, Retired Senior Advisor, Southern government).

Notwithstanding the discursive exclusions enumerated in relation to the professionalisation of development discourse and practice cited in the previous section, in section 8.3.1.3 in chapter eight and in the view quoted above, two issues emerge in relation to decommodification and the extent to which this increased amount of information produced by the organisations under scrutiny in this study address the three information gaps identified in section 8.2 in chapter eight. The first is whether this information represents a diversity of issue areas or whether there is considerable repetition and overlap. The second is how approaches to cost affect the availability and

accessibility of information. Each of these concerns will be interrogated in turn in relation to the extent to which they address perceived information gaps for and about women, as well as how or whether they create spaces for marginalised groups to participate in the development knowledge infrastructure.

9.3.1 Diversity or repetition?

Bringing together the observations of table 9.1 above with those emerging out of table 8.3, rather than a diversity of information being made available, there is in fact considerable repetition and overlap, particularly in relation to violence against women and HIV, clearly the two issues covered by almost all of the collective case study organisations as highlighted in section 8.3.2.1 in chapter eight. CCSO 4 and CCSO 2 have produced publications on HIV/AIDS; CCSO 5, CCSO 8, CCSO 7, CCSO 11 and CCSO 6 all have various handbooks, manuals, reports and books on sexual rights and/or violence again women. CCSO 7 and CCSO 4 both offer specialised training on gender sensitisation for police forces. Furthermore, it must be noted that this overlap and repetition is only that which is identifiable amongst the collective case study organisations; this summary of overlapping work excludes those IGOs, INGOs and donors who are also working on similar issues. And indeed there is overlap in the work undertaken in relation to violence against women by one Women's IGO, and sexual rights by two of the INGOs I visited. This analysis also excludes other women's NGOs in New Delhi who are not on GDKS's mailing list who may be working in similar issues areas.

We may, on the one hand, expect that New Delhi, as the capital of India, is likely to have a greater concentration of non-profit organisations given that other government and donor-based development stakeholders are located in the relatively small geographic area of Central and South New Delhi as mapped in Figures 7.1 and 7.2 in chapter seven. On the other hand, it is important to consider the disproportionate resources that are being spent working on similar issues producing a wide range of printed and electronic material primarily in English. It is a misgiving that is shared by one respondent:

> ... look a lot of the newsletters that are ... circulated amongst NGOs, okay? So the NGO circuit is quite large, it's expanding in India ... if I say, go through 20 newsletters, sometimes I might find that there is so much repetition that sometimes I might feel – why don't we all just get together

and bring out one thing. So that you know, I don't have to look at 20 which are saying similar kind of things, instead, and wasting a lot of resources, I mean, whether it's paper or postage or whatever and effort, because bringing out any newsletter requires a lot of effort. Sometimes you wonder why are we doing it, why don't we bring up out [one] good publication which all of us would want to look at, rather than me having to look at it and then saying, okay, *ye tho dhekha hua he* [I have already seen this] and just put it aside, you know. But what has happened is, there's a logic to NGO functioning, so bringing out a newsletter is like you know, part of your funding agenda, so you say, yes, we'll bring out a newsletter. Who is gaining from it, I don't know. I mean, I am not writing off all NGOs and I am not writing off all the newsletters, but, what I am saying is, there's a lot of duplication, there's a lot of re-inventing of the wheel, there's a lot of repetition ... (IA, Research Fellow, Research organisation – CCSO 3).

Concerns around repetition in published outputs, questions around the intended audience and the expected outcomes of knowledge initiatives are central to this analysis. It is a concern that AV (CCSO 3), as a librarian, maintains in relation to just how well K4Dev is functioning:

> And another thing I would like to say, somewhere I'm getting a little bit disenchanted with all this information thing, in the sense, I feel ... a lot of information ... I feel it's not being used to the extent it is being produced. And the efforts that are spent in bringing these things out, they are not fully utilised to that extent. And I think there is somewhere a gap between the perceptions ... of the people who are producing information, and people who need information and we as information providers too, in between. So we are supposed to match the two – that matching of these three stakeholders you can say, is not happening the way it should happen. And one of the reasons is we don't come together on any one platform as such, there's no dialogue happening between the agencies who are producing information, between the agencies who are processing information, and between the people who are using information. This is where I feel the gap lies.

AV's identification of poorly joined up knowledge practices that result in both information gluts and information gaps echoes Guttal's (2006) observation in relation to development practice that finds donors prioritising research over action. It also reinforces the critiques of Feldman and March (1988) in relation to the irrationality of information-seeking behaviour that identifies information gaps despite a glut of available information (see section 2.5.2.2 in chapter two).

The geographic proximity of GDKS' users and recipients to marginalised groups leads, as we have seen, to a belief that they are well placed to fill the three perceived information gaps identified in section 8.2 in chapter eight. Yet given the language and pedagogy-based exclusions enumerated above and in section 8.3.1 in chapter eight, it would seem that these information production and dissemination activities are not likely to address accessibility concerns since these activities would largely exclude the vast majority of women for whom this information is purportedly produced. Indeed, whilst they are producing (often repetitive) information about women, it is not clear the extent to which disseminating information in these formats addresses the information gaps experienced by women and creates spaces for marginalised groups to participate in knowledge creation processes, gaps these organisations claim, as we saw in section 8.2.1, to be committed to addressing.

9.3.2 The question of cost

The second issue emerging out of Table 9.1 that raises questions around whether the availability and accessibility of information is improved is in relation to the approach to pricing information taken by the collective case study organisations. Many, including CCSO 2 (for their printed newsletter), CCSO 7 (for their information booklets) and CCSO 11 (for their printed reports) charge for their publications, even those that have been translated into Hindi. In some cases, this is a nominal amount which, as RC (Executive Director, Southern NGO – CCSO 6) believes, increases its value and therefore the likelihood that it will be read:

> ... like the [sexuality] books which actually get sold in *Dilli Haat*, so we don't give them away for free because if you give it for free, it's not valued .. if I go to *Dilli Haat* and I start distributing [our] material for free, I know it will be in the garbage can, even if people pay Rs 20 or Rs 30 or Rs 10, they value it. Obviously we are not going to price it like a Rs 500 because then nobody will buy it, but you fix a value or a price that you feel it covers part of your production cost and it makes people take what you are doing more seriously.

Whilst RC's commitment to ensuring that their organisations' publications are valued and not simply thrown away is both understandable and necessary, it does not improve accessibility, since even small amounts of money will be unaffordable for those marginalised groups who can barely afford food or shelter, let alone books. Furthermore,

Dilli Haat, as Figure 7.2 highlights in chapter seven, is a middle-class shopping enclave that is gated, heavily guarded and charges simply for entry into the marketplace.

It is important to note in the context of cost that it is not always marginalised groups who are the target of information interventions, as GDKS presumes, which would explain the cost attached to publications by many of the organisations cited above. A cursory analysis of the publications to which RC is referring, for instance, suggests that the target audience for these publications is not marginalised youth but youth in urban, upper and middle class and caste families. The demographic they are targeting with these booklets are not marginalised in the first place and are as likely to have access to this information via television, the Internet or library books. This is not to diminish the importance of making information on sexuality, as CCSO 6 does, widely available to young people in a cultural context that frowns upon such openness, but to clarify that marginalised groups are not the target of this information dissemination exercise.

Echoing the findings of Stephen (2010) and Mayoux (1998) that suggest that development interventions do not always reach the poorest or most excluded groups, CCSO 6's knowledge intervention cited above raises questions around how notions of marginality are defined in relation to the accessibility of information. GDKS's assumptions about marginalised users in the Global South suggests (section 5.2 in chapter five) that its concerns around marginality from the dominant development knowledge infrastructure extend beyond exclusions based on cultural and social norms. Whilst these are no doubt important, GDKS's concern is to tackle exclusion mediated by the accessibility of language, media such as new ICTs and the hegemony of Northern discourses. GDKS further assumes that Southern or local information intermediaries are better placed to address perceived information gaps mediated by cultural and social norms. It may therefore be reasonable to assert that urban, middle-class youth in New Delhi may be marginalised from discussing sexuality as a result of social or cultural norms, thus offering a justification for CCSO 6, as a local information intermediary, to aim information interventions at this demographic.[52] Yet, as a group, urban upper and middle class youth

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[52] Whilst sexuality and development discourses are not addressed just to elite women, engagement with it on the part of Southern women's NGOs has raised concerns around relevance for poorer women in relation

are not excluded from the dominant knowledge infrastructure, as they are likely to be fluent in English with a capacity to access new ICTs. Nor does disseminating this information undermine Northern hegemonies. Instead, as the analysis highlights in section 8.3.2.1 in chapter eight, sexuality and development discourses and paradigms themselves are embedded in, and emerge out of, the work of Northern development feminists for which there is as yet no equivalent Indian feminist (elite or otherwise) discourse. This finding undermines GDKS's assumption that the collective case study organisations maintain not just the capacity, but more importantly an active and ongoing interest in, always ensuring that their information outputs are accessible to the most marginalised groups. Adding to other evidence and analysis presented in this study in relation to, for example, elite language use, the implication of this finding is that exclusion from access to information is not simply an issue of the North preventing or circumscribing access to the South, but is at times itself mimicked and embedded in the relationship of the Indian elite to its subaltern counterparts.

9.3.3 Concerns around the use of resource and documentation centres

Given the foregoing analysis, what is the role, if any, of resource centres, documentation centres or NGO libraries in improving the availability and accessibility of information? As we saw in section 7.3 in chapter seven, the vast majority of resource centres on GDKS's mailing list either do not receive GDKS publications and where they do receive them, find that they are not being widely used. Do these Southern-based resource centres have the capacity to improve the availability and accessibility of information, particularly to marginalised groups, as GDKS expects they do? Table 9.2 provides an overview of the 14 resource centres on GDKS's mailing list, which incorporates data, as outlined in section 4.5 in chapter four, that was collected specifically about the resource centres on GDKS's New Delhi mailing list. The list of additional resource centres is included in Appendix B.

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to questions of cultural and social norms. FA (Retired Professor, Education organisation), recalled in our interview speaking to rural women's groups who had received 'sexuality' training from what they called 'Delhi feminists'. These women were very outspoken about how they found the training to be both patronising and irrelevant given the more pressing concerns they faced. It suggests that information on sexuality discourses that are not rooted, as the Sangtin Writers (2006) reiterate, in the material realities of deprivation and caste/class inequality will continue to speak primarily to elite groups.

Table 9.2 Resource centres on GDKS's mailing list

Organisation	Mission	Accessible by public	Security	Fees	Number of users	Types of users	Database of materials	Available Languages	GDKS materials
1. **Northern government cultural organisation – India branch**	A world of information and knowledge… at [this intercultural organisation] Library.	Yes	Yes, including passport and security check	To join library there is a fee but then borrowing is free	No numbers but very high and extremely busy on the many times I visited	Students (foreign and domestic), NGO workers, academics, professional workers	Computerised database featuring books, CDs and videos, mostly from the UK	Primarily English, publications	No; 2 people receive GDKS materials here, but not passed on to library (NJ, former website manager, OECD-DAC agency).
2. **IGO – New Delhi office**	n/a	No	Reception-desk with security	n/a	Very few users; staff I spoke to said it is not very well managed	IGO staff	Mainly proprietary publications	English	No; 1 person receives GDKS materials here
3. **Women's IGO – South Asia Regional Office**	n/a	Yes – poorly signposted	Yes	No	Avg 3 people/day, or 10-15 people/wk	Students, NGOs, interns from abroad, DFID, INGOs, Partners from different states, Students for their research – school students, high school	'Mostly we have [our] materials but for references there are also other materials' (AU, Librarian, Multilateral agency)	Primarily English: 'There is a lot of demand for Hindi, but not so many in Hindi available' (AU, Librarian, Multilateral	No: 4 people receive GDKS materials here

7. Large Indian mainstream service NGO	n/a	Yes.	Yes. Sign in at Reception	No.	Avg. 500-600 people per year or 10-11 users per week	Mostly researchers and students, foreign and domestic	Computerised database of materials related to their core work areas on the environment	Mainly English	Yes, but last GDKS mailing was received in summer 2001
9. Indian research centre on gender, employment and economic rights – CCSO 2	This library … was started … with the aim of providing information and documentation support to … researchers, planners and development agencies through sharing and exchange of information material.	Yes.	Yes. Reception desk.	No.	Avg. 10-12 people per month or 2.5-3 people per week	Mainly researchers, particularly those working on MPhil or PhD degrees	Computerised database of mostly English publications	Mainly English apart from their own two Hindi newsletters	Yes. Have a subscription to GDKS materials; GDKS materials displayed on periodical shelves
8. Large Indian research centre on women and development – CCSO 3	'The Library … aims to provide an overall perspective [on] current issues [and] development policies … relating to women and	Yes	No.	No.	Avg. 50-60 users per week	Mainly researchers and students from main Delhi universities; foreign researchers; people from the media	Computerised database; subscriptions to JSTOR archives as well as their own proprietary print and audio-visual collections on	Mainly English but more recently have begun to develop collection in Hindi	Yes. Have almost the entire collection of printed GDKS materials

	strives to fill in the information gaps.'						topics related to women in India.		
10. Indian information intermediary – CCSO 5	'Information is power, we share it … You can access it! … Make it your own space for thinking, reflecting, analysing, learning and networking …'	Yes. In a residential area and poorly signposted	No.	No.	Avg. 3 people per week; also receive 10-15 information requests via email per week	Researchers, students, particularly PhD students	Resources are catalogued on a computer; whilst KRITI consulting focuses on gender, the areas covered by materials in the resource centre is wider	Mainly produce things in English and library has some Hindi but mainly English	Yes. Have availed of GDKS's commitment to provide materials free of charge to Southern organisations and have all of GDKS's materials
12. Indian women's empowerment and consciousness-raising NGO – CCSO 7	[We established] a documentation … centre on issues related to women's rights to meet the information … needs of other women's groups, NGOs and the development sector.	Yes. In a residential area and poorly signposted	Yes. Security guard on ground floor and reception desk.	No.	Avg. 3-5 people per week; in Annual Report, claim 1000 access by visiting, phone or email	Students, housewives and children	Our library [has] over 10000 documents in English and regional languages and about 100 English and 60 Hindi journals and magazines. We also maintain a detailed archive on women's issues, based on clippings from 10 newspapers.	Mainly English but a significant amount in Hindi and some other regional languages. They also produce pamphlets and newsletters in Hindi.	No. One person was receiving GDKS materials.

									We have a video library of about 500 films on women's issues.
14. Indian sexuality resource centre – CCSO 12	It hosts a collection of books, newsletters, journals, and other periodicals on sexuality and reproductive health that are relevant to the South and Southeast Asian region. The library is open to use by professionals working in the field, NGOs, academics, researchers, and students.	Yes. In a residential area and poorly signposted	Yes. Security guard outside on driveway	No.	Couldn't give me an average but XH (Director) said that in the four months since she had joined the centre she had not seen a single person use it.	As usage is so poor, could not provide a profile of users, but T (Assistant Librarian) said it was mostly foreigners who visit, as well as students from the social science departments of the universities in Delhi.	The library has over 3000 documents; most of the database is searchable from their website.	Mainly English.	Yes. A recent GDKS information pack and one other report were in their collection but misfiled.
13. Indian women's NGO focusing on promoting women's empowerment through	The resource centre supports ongoing projects and is also used by students, NGOs and residents of the	Yes. In a residential area and poorly signposted	Yes, security guard outside on pavement.	Yes, but library is still accessible without membership	Avg. 15 people per week	Mostly people from other NGOs and students (SS, Librarian)	Electronic database that, features books and documents on gender, education, communalism,	English and Hindi	Yes. Two old GDKS reports and two of GDKS's information packs. GDKS's newsletters

education and literacy – CCSO 13	neighbourhood. The library has a collection of over 7,000 books, documents and other audio-visual materials.						violence and development. The library subscribes to a variety of magazines and journals as well as daily newspapers.		were getting through but not catalogued and stored in a closed cupboard.
5. Large Indian mainstream research centre on social policy and rights – CCSO 14	'… the … Library … believes that a … just society can be established when the marginalized are empowered.'	Yes	Yes – Sign in at reception desk	No	Avg is 3-4 people per day	Mainly scholars, researchers and students	The Library has stock of 32800 print books as well as a small collection of rare and reference books on social science. It receives 200 periodicals both national and international. The Library also subscribes to 8 journals in Hindi.	Mainly English but some Hindi	No.
4. Large Indian research, training and documentation centre focused on women and children closely	… is a specialised information centre on children, women and other vulnerable groups. The	Yes	Yes	No.		Users include administrators, researchers, students, educators, civil society, media persons, those	This library has a collection of over 23,000 books in English and Hindi, and 22,000 unpublished	English and Hindi	No: 1 person receives GDKS material here.

affiliated with the Government of India (GOI) – CCSO 15	information … is collected and disseminated both at national and international levels.					working with international, organisations and librarians	documents. It subscribes to 17 newspapers and 123 journals and magazines. Of the 101 journals, 28 are international and 73 are national. It also receives around 250 newsletters every year.		
11. Large Indian mainstream research and service NGO focusing on governance and participation – CCSO 16	The Library [provides information] services to [update users] on different themes. The Library [serves] … students, … civil society organisations, academia, government and media.	Yes.	Yes. Reception desk.	Yes. Individual/Student Workers Rs.15.00 per day NGOs Development Workers/Activists Rs.20.00 per day Consultants Rs.30.00 per day	Avg. 10 people per week.	Staff, students, lawyers, trade union leaders, NGO activists, participatory research students	Electronic database of materials; collection of nearly 16,000 books, 150 Periodicals, 19,000 Mimeos and 600 CDs.	Their Hindi newsletter is on Panchayati Raj; mainly it is proprietary and some partner publications that may be available in Hindi Everything else is in English The library is also mainly in English.	Yes, but most recent GDKS publication was from 2003 information pack. The librarian said that 'gender' staff use GDKS.

6. Indian mainstream research and advocacy organisation focusing on democracy and governance – CCSO 17	… support is extended to a wider community … working in these areas … [we] bring out both periodicals, books and video films to [disseminate] … field studies … to a wider range of people … Some publications [are] also translated into Hindi.	No. Only available to those working in their core work areas.	Yes.	Yes. Annual personal membership is Rs. 5000.00 per year	n/a	Some of the clientele of the centre include UN agencies, government bodies, NGOs, national and international development institutions, and individual research scholars from national and international universities and research centres.	The centre is equipped for study with Internet stations, reference and consultation areas … The[y] focus on developing a specialised information base on all … [research] areas of the [organisation] … The[y] also document and maintain the primary data collected by the … research teams.	Mainly English but some materials translated into Hindi	Yes. GDKS newsletter is not included in searchable database but is stored once it is out of date in box files along with other newsletters

Given the relatively small size of South New Delhi as highlighted in Figure 7.2 in chapter seven, the very existence of 14 resource centres in South New Delhi alone (which does not account for all the resource centres in this geographic location not on GDKS's mailing list), would seem a disproportionately large number of specialist social science libraries. Yet their mission statements, extracts and summaries of which are in column two in Table 9.2, claim they have been established in response to recognised information gaps and a need for specialised information services. With all of them boasting large collections of printed and audio/visual materials, these resource centres appear well-placed not just to broaden the potential audience for GDKS material, but to meet the information needs of a wide range of stakeholders.

Again as the table demonstrates, however, none of this is necessarily improving accessibility, widening usage or user types or reaching out to marginalised groups, particularly women. Rather, a range of barriers persist in relation to accessibility with respect to the resource centres on GDKS's mailing list. What is immediately clear is that usage rates, with the exception of the Intercultural organisation and to a lesser extent the library of CCSO 3, are extremely low, despite the best intentions. XH (Director, Southern NGO – CCSO 12) said that in the four months since she had joined the centre she had not seen a single person use it. The average number of users seems to be anywhere from 3-10 people per week, with some, including CCSO 12, having even lower user numbers. Given the inherent limitations that have already been explored in relation to language and the pedagogies underlying dominant 'ways of knowing', it would seem therefore that these resource centres are not likely to improve the reach of GDKS materials.

What is clear, however, is that these resource centres are not themselves ideally suited to distribute information or meet a wider range of information needs, particularly of their own marginalised constituents or target groups, in this geographical location. Beyond limitations around the pedagogy of the printed word that would necessarily exclude non-literate groups, the relative inaccessibility of these centres to anyone other than other elite groups is related to the prevalence of English in the collections of these centres, the relative cost of accessing these centres and the relative inaccessibility of the physical infrastructure. Each of these issues will be looked at in turn.

To begin with, language again emerges as a significant barrier. As this issue has been explored at considerable length in section 8.3.1 in chapter eight there is no need to revisit the arguments, but as Table 9.2 demonstrates, the vast majority of material is available in English and the main non-English language that is available is Hindi which, again as we have seen in section 8.3.1.1 in chapter eight, has its own accessibility concerns.

Second, although the vast majority of these resource centres do not charge for membership or use, most do not have lending facilities and do charge for photocopying or other information services. In the case of CCSO 16 and CCSO 17, user rates are charged, with the latter charging a very hefty Rs. 5000/year, immediately excluding non-elite groups. Yet, one could argue that as most of these centres offer free access and some non-English language material, this should still have a positive impact on the accessibility of information. The biggest single barrier, however, is probably not cost but the inaccessibility of the physical infrastructure itself. As highlighted in section 4.5.1 in chapter four, it was exceedingly hard for me to locate many of these centres, despite having the use of a dedicated car and driver. This was partly because of the sealing drives that have forced some NGOs to either move or remove signage in order to avoid being forcibly shut down. With few exceptions, these organisations were also situated in exclusive, residential enclaves, with no signage. The presence of armed guards, sign-in procedures and, in the case of the Intercultural organisation, security searches of both people and bags, created a sense of intimidation and of entering spaces that were somehow closed or impenetrable. Whilst Southern-based resource centres are held up by Northern donors and organisations like GDKS as crucial to progressive knowledge practice as they are understood to be open to the public, in practice they were nothing of the kind. These centres were difficult for me to access, and would be even more difficult for general members of the public, particularly marginalised groups. It was certainly not possible to simply walk in off the street to any of these resource centres out of an academic interest in gender issues. This type of inaccessibility was surprising to encounter amongst Southern women's NGOs, which retain an imagined capacity, as section 3.3.1.3 in chapter three emphasises, to be more transparent, accessible and open.

Hence, there is a mismatch between the organisations' stated aim to improve the accessibility of information, as evidenced by their mission statements, and the reality of the services they provide. Commitments to reach marginalised groups at the 'grassroots', as evidenced in section 8.2.1 in chapter eight, are ubiquitous amongst the collective case study organisations, with engagement at the grassroots a key priority area for most. For example, AK (Director, Southern NGO – CCSO 5) contends the gap in information is the starkest at the 'grassroots':

> Also [I] realised that while there was such a[n] influx of information coming in into the country and into development work, it was not necessarily reaching the grassroots and it was not really reaching some of the local groups. And it was not reaching [them] because everything seem[ed] to have become projectised and so if you had what was called a resource centre then you could come to that centre and access whatever you wanted. If you were at the periphery, you could forget about reaching the centre.

For AK, establishing an information and resource centre that would be accessible to grassroots groups was a subversive response to what she saw as the growing hegemony of the World Bank, echoing GDKS's desire to work outside of dominant K4Dev paradigms: 'I think the bank was really one of the key enemies we all saw as first in relation to development workers. We just started our careers in development and we saw it all changing just because of this international bank' (ibid). This is particularly interesting since by labelling the Bank as the 'enemy', she casts her own efforts as an information intermediary for people at the grassroots as subversive, resonating with GDKS's vision and mission and rendering CCSO 5 an ideal information intermediary.

AK's reflections are not exceptional but rather represent the continual slippage between what these organisations say they are committed to in mission statements and what they are doing in practice. But Northern organisations, as the donor-based communications consultant admitted (section 5.6.1.1 in chapter five), rely on Southern organisations to accurately represent their capacity as information intermediaries to both reach, and represent, the information needs and views of marginalised groups.

We can again bring the discussion back to the capacity these organisations have to address the three perceived information gaps introduced in section 8.2 in chapter eight –

those information gaps for and about women, as well as the lack of space being given to women to articulate their own views and needs. Whilst we may not expect resource centres to create spaces for marginalised women to articulate their own views, we may perhaps reasonably expect them to be able to fill the gaps both *for* and *about* women. Yet, despite commitments to improving access to information and uplifting the marginalised, most of these resource centres go some way to fill perceived information gaps about gender and development issues as GDKS does, but this function is confused in mission statements, which are read and interpreted by GDKS and other Northern organisations, as representing the capacity to improve the availability and accessibility of information for women, particularly marginalised, women. Commitments to improve accessibility to information are clearly not being realised through the resource centres on GDKS's mailing list in New Delhi.

9.4 ICTs and concerns around connectivity

The third and final broad theme emerging from table 9.1, related to concerns around the emphasis on the written word, regards how ICTs are managed by the organisations in this collective case study, a corrective that features as part of the decommodification measures outlined in table 5.1. Only one NGO, CCSO 6, like GDKS, has a stated commitment to improving the accessibility of their materials on the Internet. Echoing GDKS's own assumptions about the Global South, RC (Director, Southern NGO – CCSO 6) described to me how their quarterly journal was 'available on the Internet, broken up by HTML for low bandwidth', thereby in theory improving accessibility for those without a broadband connection. Yet as the foregoing analysis has demonstrated, attempting to improve accessibility with simple formatting or low bandwidth denies the 'electronic literacies' (Warschauer, 2003; see chapter two) and the associated pedagogies that are necessary for those attempting to learn with new technologies. This is in addition to the fact that, as Table 9.1 highlights, the website of CCSO 6 is also exclusively in English, further narrowing its accessibility to non-English speaking groups.

As for the remaining collective case study organisations, none of their websites are designed with concerns around connectivity at their core. The underlying assumption appears to be that marginalised constituents, partners or groups will not be accessing their online products. This can be surmised firstly from how these women's organisations

and units use the Internet as a medium of communication. From Table 9.1 it is clear that all but one organisation has a website and with the exception of two who feature more than one language, all these websites are in English and require advanced software to display graphics and images. The assumption in the design of these websites is clearly that the potential user has access to an advanced IT infrastructure and more than a basic or functional level of English.[53] Although these websites are primarily designed to showcase the range of activities undertaken by these NGOs, which explains the use of flashy graphics, images and website design, many nonetheless also feature spaces that are meant to facilitate communication and dialogue around key development issues. CCSO 16 and CCSO 6, for instance, both host discussion boards; CCSO 4 has an on-line forum; CCSO 10 has a new media centre on HIV issues and invites submissions of publications or other relevant information on HIV. All of these online boards and forums are in English. In short, these virtual spaces are not simply marketing organisational activities or exercises in improving organisational profiles, but, like GDKS, are meant to be a part of a broader communications strategy to contribute to improved development outcomes. Accessing and utilising the Internet, PM (Director, Programs, Southern NGO – CCSO 11) acknowledges, puts urban New Delhi activists in a position of privilege, but it is one, she argues that they need to harness:

> ... which is why I keep saying that we really need to look at Internet as --
> especially those of us who are privileged, I am definitely putting privilege
> on board, I mean I am not ignoring that. But if we have it, then just bloody
> well use it.

Although many of these NGOs, including CCSO 7, CCSO 11 and CCSO 2, attempt to use this 'privilege' by making Hindi-language materials available free to download, the high resolution website, coupled with the fact that the Hindi titles are reproduced using a Roman rather than Hindi typescript and that the descriptions of the reports are in English, would not widen the audience for these materials. This is not, however, simply about exclusion caused by high resolution websites or the use of Roman typefaces for Hindi words. Despite PM's optimism, attempting to harness this privilege overlooks the

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[53] The irony here is that, whilst GDKS is disseminating information via low bandwidth websites and printed information to, at least in principal, overcome connectivity issues, these Southern organisations to whom they are sending information in New Delhi are, in terms of the bandwidth, making their own information available in even less accessible ways than GDKS.

exclusion inherent to the use of the printed word or the English language that dominates virtual spaces.

The plans of CCSO 10 for an e-network provides a further example of the contradictory position of NGOs committed to using new ICTs to improve access to information. AP (Director, Media – CCSO 10) cited a pressing need to reach out to regional, non-English language journalists since as a group they are 'more or less out of the loop'. In addition to running media-training workshops, which are conducted in Hindi for Hindi-speaking journalists, at the time of our meeting CCSO 10 was planning an 'e-network' whose members would be those who have attended these workshops. She acknowledged that their preferred form of communication with freelance journalists is via email as it is faster, quicker and easier to record ideas and progress. The main purpose of the e-network would be to circulate the news stories being written by Hindi-language journalists to improve overall 'awareness of what's happening in other parts of the country'. Yet, as she herself acknowledges, 'the problem with using email in Hindi is that there is no universal font'. By her own admission, and despite a commitment to training and featuring regional, non-English language journalists, they do not actually receive articles in Hindi but rather translate from English about four articles a month to be distributed to the Hindi-language press. Commitments to bring more regional and non-English language journalists into mainstream development discourses would necessarily be thwarted by their exclusively English-language website, their reliance on email and the Internet to facilitate communication and publishing original material exclusively in English. These two positions are obviously contradictory, demonstrating the ongoing tension between attempting to improve access on the one hand, and the reality of working in an environment dominated by English, and the relative ease of using the Internet to promote organisational objectives and network with funders and other well-resourced partners in India and internationally. In addition to the pedagogical concerns circumscribing access to ICTs highlighted by the foregoing analysis, these empirical findings further suggest that, despite commitments to use the Internet to democratise information production and dissemination, virtual spaces hosting websites, discussion boards and online forums are not designed with the accessibility of marginalised groups in mind.

9.5 Monitoring and evaluating knowledge practices in New Delhi

Whilst this empirical analysis has highlighted that the objectives of the collective case study organisations in relation to creating dialogical spaces and democratising information are not consistently met, how do the collective case study organisations monitor and evaluate their knowledge practices? How do these practices mirror those of GDKS outlined in section 5.7 in chapter five? In the application of M&E mechanisms, the collective case study organisations share two commonalities. The first is that like GDKS, all of these organisations admit that they do not have any systematic M&E mechanism to interrogate the effectiveness of their knowledge practices. Indeed, and unlike GDKS, some admit to having no communications strategy at all. Secondly, and echoing the findings of GDKS's external evaluation cited in section 5.7 in chapter five, the vast majority of respondents in this study agreed that GDKS makes an important contribution to gender and development work in New Delhi, despite, as the analysis in chapter seven attests, the empirical evidence to the contrary. Related to this second point is that, despite the critiques raised in this and the previous chapter, many respondents cited ad hoc and anecdotal feedback as clear evidence of the importance of the information production and dissemination tasks they undertake. Again like GDKS, anecdotal evidence is used in lieu of more robust indicators and empirical evidence which, by their own admission, and echoing the literature in this area (see Feek, 2009) they do not collect. Each of these commonalities will be interrogated in more detail below.

9.5.1 M&E: process versus outcome

Echoing GDKS's unsystematic M&E mechanisms outlined in section 5.7 in chapter five, the main finding in this regard is that all of the collective case study organisations have very weak institutional mechanisms for measuring the impact of their knowledge practices, with ad hoc or non-existent information production and dissemination strategies. PM (Director, Programs, Southern NGO – CCSO 11), echoing GDKS's beliefs in how progressive knowledge practices function, reinforces the persistence of the assumption that producing more and more information is both necessary and crucial, where the act of ensuring it is out in the public domain is the most important outcome, whether or not it represents an expressed information need or indeed is useful to anyone:

I will indiscriminately send out information ... what I would say is that the assumption has always been that we should send it to organisations working on human rights. We would send it to them, but we would also send it to people who may not be working only on human rights because we think that they should have a copy because traditionally they are going to be left out of the loop anyway. So send it to them, at some point, somebody is going to turn it over or it goes into the library. So somebody will read it. I mean that's the kind of logic we are using which can be flawed, because it means that you are just sending out material into this abyss and you don't know what's happening. The flip side of it, having seen organisations and noticing how little material generically gets sent out, especially from organisations who are in, you know, Delhi or wherever, it works for us, I mean it's really worked because people have seen our publications that have never met us ... Very clearly there is no strategy, I mean we produce material, it goes out and sometimes we get responses, sometimes we don't. So we don't know. I do think we need to have a far clearer strategy of how to disseminate, how to send out material. Also because of volume of material is really, really high ... I think yeah, I personally, I am perfectly happy with it going out into the large wide world and actually not knowing what is happening with it. For the simple reasons that there is so little information that is being sent out in quite that manner.

PM's reflections suggest that they are operating on very similar assumptions to those of GDKS in terms of the power of information in its own right to support progressive development outcomes. Like GDKS, M&E systems, and following up with dissemination to understand impact, are virtually non-existent:

Lata: So in terms of a dissemination strategy, there's nothing specific that [your organisation] does?

AV (Librarian, CCSO 3): Not really, not really. It's not a very well-defined dissemination strategy for publications.

For some this is an issue relating to a lack of resources:

There isn't a one-to-one follow-up, no, there isn't because we don't have that kind of human resources, but I can tell you that every mailer that goes out from that, immediately there would be -- maybe 20-30% response, I can say that confidently (AK, Director, Southern NGO – CCSO 5).

That 'ad hoc' and 'anecdotal' feedback supports the work of CCSO 5 again echoes GDKS's tendency, as their external evaluator noted (see section 5.7 in chapter five), to highlight anecdotal evidence that does not in reality demonstrate that GDKS services are being used in any meaningful way. Where attempts to get more formal feedback through online

surveys or feedback forms are undertaken, RC (Executive Director, Southern NGO – CCSO 6) finds, for example, that, like GDKS, these attempts at gaining both a qualitative and more robust quantitative measure (in terms of number of respondents) result in feedback that is nonetheless 'patchy':

> There are no formal mechanisms-- ... In terms of [our newsletter] we're doing a far more formal kind of evaluation. We've put up an online survey on the website where people -- just takes five or six minutes – and we are evaluating it for usefulness of content and also what kind of effect it might be having on people's thinking. Like you say in fact it's not easy to measure and I don't think reading something in [the newsletter] is going to make someone jump up and go and change the world, but if they even think a little bit differently about an issue of sexuality or they say they have learned something new, then that would be good for us. We are also trying to get feedback on ways of improving [the newsletter], asking people what's useful, and what's not useful, what else they'd like to see and stuff like that. So it's patchy, evaluation, you know, feedback mechanisms.

The experiences of both GDKS and the collective case study organisations are reminiscent of Ebrahim's (2003a) analysis of the robustness of 'upward and external accountability' as compared to mechanisms that measure 'downward and internal accountability' amongst development NGOs. As outlined in section 4.3 in chapter four, upward accountability, notably to donors, tends to consist of quantitative measures of process such as numbers of website visitors, reports produced or subscribers, events held or roundtables hosted. These, Ebrahim (2003a: 813) argues, are well developed and managed indicators, whereas more systematic and robust indicators that interrogate effectiveness in relation to medium- or long-term outcomes downwards are 'comparatively underdeveloped'. His analysis suggests that the very system of NGO accountability is skewed in this manner, and the empirical evidence emerging from this study reinforces his view. Furthermore, it suggests, contrary to the imagined capacities of women's NGOs outlined in section 3.3.2 in chapter three, that women's organisations are subject to similar constraints as those experienced by mainstream organisations.

9.5.2 An important contribution to empowerment and development?

Despite the empirical evidence to the contrary, most respondents agreed wholeheartedly, like GDKS's external evaluators, that GDKS is important to gender and

development work in New Delhi and in India more broadly. [54] When asked if they felt that GDKS makes an important contribution, many agreed enthusiastically saying variously that 'it helps researchers or policymakers' (NJ, former website manager, OECD-DAC agency); helps to 'keep myself contemporary as well as get in-depth in understanding on a particular topic' (AS, Resource Officer, INGO); and 'I think all scholars would agree to this ... it makes a lot of issues very clear (RB, Research Coordinator, Research organisation – CCSO 2). [55]

Similarly, many of the respondents in this study claim, as GDKS does, based on their anecdotal feedback, that the demand *is* there for the materials they produce, despite having no detailed dissemination or feedback mechanisms. Whether it is because people are requesting translations (RC, Executive Director, Southern NGO – CCSO 6) or because their organisation continues to respond to a growing number of information queries (AK, Director, Southern NGO – CCSO 5), the argument is that people are unlikely to request information or translate publications if these were not going to be useful to someone. Others argue that the sheer volume of publications they shift, measured by the number distributed at events or the number of print-runs, is a good indicator of demand (RK, Regional Programme Manager, INGO; PM, Director, Programs, Southern NGO – CCSO 11). [56] Given that these organisations do not, by their own admission, have any systematic dissemination or feedback mechanisms, it is impossible to know whether the demand for information they have identified is emanating from the marginalised groups for whom

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[54] It should be noted that these responses may at least have partially resulted from my own position as a former researcher with GDKS, where respondents said what they thought I wanted to hear, despite my clarification that I no longer worked with GDKS (section 4.2.1 in chapter four). These responses may also be explained as a general optimism for knowledge services, since any criticism of GDKS could potentially be levelled against them.

[55] This tendency to value information services despite the fact they are not being used was not limited to reflections on GDKS. One respondent (AS, Resource Officer, INGO) shared her experience of their organisations' attempt to establish an internal newsletter for regional partners. The project was terminated when they discovered that very few people were reading it. She noted that it was ironic, however, despite definitive proof that it was not being used or even read by partners, that the newsletter received positive feedback. That is, when asked if the newsletter was good, all the respondents said they thought it was very good and very well done, yet no one was reading or using it.

[56] Although it is important to note that this behaviour may be at last partially explained by March's (1988; section 2.5.2.2 in chapter two) point that information seeking behaviour is often irrational, where people may continue to make requests for information even if they do not actually need it or are not likely to use it.

they are, as we saw in section 8.2.1 in chapter eight, almost universally committed to supporting and on whose behalf these knowledge practices are purportedly undertaken.

9.6 Conclusion

What is important for our purposes then is not whether privileging Southern voices or decommodifying information are correctives that have an impact per se. Nor is it about or determining whether the demand does indeed exist for these information services as respondents claim, as these are both subjective questions related to questions of efficacy and impact that are, as outlined in section 1.6 in chapter one, not the purpose of this study. Bringing the discussion back to the research questions underpinning this study, the theoretical and empirical evidence to this point has demonstrated the similarities and differences that exist between GDKS and their users and recipients in New Delhi in relation to the function and implementation of progressive knowledge-based development practice. What is clear is that many of the knowledge practices undertaken by the collective case study organisations themselves reflect key assumptions underpinning the neoliberal World Bank knowledge paradigm, insofar as there is a persistent emphasis on the need to fill information gaps for marginalised groups, as a lack of information is perceived as a hindrance to development. Northern donors and organisations like GDKS rely on these Southern organisations to draw on their perceived discursive and geographic proximity to bridge the gaps between Northern organisations and marginalised groups. Signalling their acceptance of elements of progressive knowledge practice as embodied in GDKS's knowledge practices, these Southern organisations place a similar emphasis on, for example, simplified language, selective translation or support for documentation centres to improve the availability and accessibility of information. Yet, drawing together the theoretical and empirical evidence presented so far suggests that these Southern organisations are in reality limited in their capacity to deliver knowledge-based development in the way GDKS and others expect.

The question for the last empirical chapter is to bring the discussion back to the final gap identified in the literature in chapter three, namely to interrogate not just the imagined capacities and limitations faced by organisations deploying progressive knowledge practices in the abstract, but to locate and problematise the capacities of the Southern-based individuals charged with delivering knowledge-based development aid, and the

implications these findings have for Northern development feminists attempting to engage with 'Southern' women as change agents to promote empowerment and development, particularly amongst marginalised groups.

10. Interrogating knowledge practices in the South III: Class and 'Indian' women

10.1 Introduction

This chapter interrogates the assumptions of Northern donors and organisations like GDKS that Southern-based individuals have the capacity to simultaneously create, through their geographical and discursive proximity, enabling spaces for the voices and views of Southern stakeholders, particularly those of marginalised groups, in the development knowledge infrastructure. With reference to the corrective measures in place to address processual concerns (see chapter two) arising out of knowledge-based development practice as outlined in Table 5.1 in chapter five, previous chapters have demonstrated that a range of factors coalesce to prevent these organisations from meeting GDKS's expectations in relation to their capacity to decommodify information and promote alternative, Southern-based paradigms. This analysis moves on to consider the fifth research question for this study: To what extent do the Southern women and their organisations in this study have the capacity, as Figure 1.2 in chapter one suggests, to promote participation and networking to subvert the World Bank knowledge paradigm as some Northern organisations expect? This chapter interrogates the assumptions about the people and outcomes (see chapter three) underpinning point three in table 5.1. It considers whether Southern women and NGOs have the capacity, by virtue of their perceived proximity to grassroots concerns, to advocate on behalf of the marginalised constituents with whom they work, providing insights and information on alternative development paradigms and ideas rooted in local realities to a range of change agents in both the North and South to promote more positive development outcomes.

How do the capacities of Southern-based women on GDKS's mailing list in New Delhi compare to the 'imagined capacities' of women that donors and Northern organisations like GDKS are, as chapter five demonstrates, so invested in? Mirroring the start of the Southern-based empirical analysis in section 8.2 in chapter eight that set out how the collective case study organisations in New Delhi, like GDKS, similarly perceive their facilitative role in the K4Dev infrastructure, section 10.2 demonstrates how the women interviewed in the empirical study locate themselves variously as 'Southern' women and

'Indian women'. From this location derives notions of geographic and discursive exclusion that underpin the efforts of Northern donors and organisations like GDKS to privilege 'Southern' voices. Section 10.3 interrogates this perceived geographical and discursive marginality, citing in section 10.3.1 their active involvement in transnational discourses that expose them to donor-imposed ideological and practical constraints. Section 10.3.2 moves on to consider how their educational and professional backgrounds inform their class status. Section 10.4 revisits the assumptions underpinning GDKS's progressive knowledge practices outlined in point three of Table 5.1, interrogating the extent to which class status informs the capacity of these women to participate in active networks of change agents that facilitate the inclusion of marginalised women. Section 10.5 concludes by reflecting on how the empirical study informs our understanding of the capacity of these women to access and promote alternative development paradigms as envisioned by Northern donors and organisations like GDKS.

10.2 Locating the 'Southern' woman

The previous two chapters reveal that, despite commitments to act as intermediaries to promote the interests of marginalised groups through information production and dissemination, the capacity of these organisations to diversify the discursive terrain through progressive knowledge practices is limited. This analysis now moves on to consider how notions of geographical and discursive proximity inform the perceived capacities of the people charged with delivering knowledge as development aid. How do the women interviewed for this empirical study locate themselves in relation to dominant development discourses? Reflecting the commitments highlighted in visions and mission statements examined in section 8.2.1 in chapter eight, challenging and subverting dominant development paradigms imposed by donors and the Indian state in defence of the discursive and material needs of marginalised groups, particularly women, is how most of the women interviewed for this empirical study perceive their engagement with development. These women actively locate themselves as marginalised from mainstream development discourse and practice, a perception deriving both from their location as women in the Global South and from their identification as 'Indian women'. Each will be looked at in turn.

10.2.1 Women from the Global South

The marginality of the women interviewed for this study is partially derived from their identity as women living and working in the Global South. With the growth and establishment of development as both discipline and practice, North-South divides have become an accepted way of understanding inequality in the world. Yet this is not simply an identity foisted upon Southern women from the Global North; in fact, many of the women I interviewed recognise the existence of a North/South divide, actively identifying with and locating themselves in, the Global South. One organisation has chosen to trade on the tendency in development discourse and practice to privilege 'Southern women', proudly boasting that they are 'based in the Global South and led by women from the Global South' (CCSO 11, n.d.). CCSO 10 offers a variation on this theme, focusing instead on the marginality of women in general: '[CCSO 10] is headquartered in New Delhi, India, and is staffed by an all-women team' (CCSO 10, n.d.).

That these women have chosen to use terms such as 'South' and 'all-women' demonstrates the meaningfulness of these terms in development discourse and all the positive associations that might derive from labelling themselves in this way. The very fact of being a woman in the Global South is itself a signifier of marginality from the point of view of individuals and organisations in the North.

Their marginal status is also upheld by linking themselves with a universalised category of 'Indian woman', a category that, as the history of the Indian women's movement emphasises (section 6.4 in chapter six), obscures more than it reveals in relation to inequality amongst women.

10.2.2 The marginality of Indian women: 'We' in the movement

As the analysis in section 6.4 in chapter six highlights, the centrality of class and the narrow lens it offers through which to identify and address 'Indian women's issues' within the Indian women's movement was identified by some of India's most respected feminist advocates (see for example Mazumdar, 1990). Nonetheless, the Indian women's movement, or the 'movement' as it was referred to by most of the women I interviewed, circumscribes perceptions of their marginality from mainstream and/or Indian development discourse. GC (Director, Southern NGO – CCSO 9), herself a founding

member of two women's NGOs, said unequivocally that 'we consider ourselves a part of the movement'. The mission statements of two other large feminist NGOs also cite the movement as a key influence; they claim variously to be 'Contribut[ing] to the Indian women´s movement by adding to existing bodies of knowledge on women's status in India' (CCSO 7, n.d.) or see themselves 'grounded in the women's movement' (CCSO 13, 2008).

The use of a collective 'we' in discussions around 'Indian women' and the 'movement' also surfaced a number of times in the interviews. One respondent suggested that 'we know as a group we suffer .... and lag behind ... So they [Indian women] group together to help each other' (TKS, Retired Senior Advisor, Southern government). Another argued that 'we are ghettoised in low paid, low skilled jobs, we have to get out of that. The State owes a responsibility that they are able to empower us enough', noting later on in our interview that 'we consider our work as part of the freedom movement for women' (VN, Director, Southern NGO – CCSO 1). Drawing explicitly on notions of feminist solidarity and 'sisterhood' (section 3.3.2 in chapter three), this collective 'we' is possible, one respondent suggested, because, despite the 'politics ... in the women's movement ... women are able to work better together' (AP, Director, Media – CCSO 10).

The ongoing connection to the movement and the use of the collective pronoun 'we' is important insofar as it is the movement that has historically propagated an undifferentiated category of 'Indian woman', which continues to be a key feature of the modern discourse on women and development in India. Coupling this tendency with dominant transnational discourses on gender and development has the effect of prioritising gender and the category of 'woman' as the basis for understanding inequality. In other words, differentiating by gender without an analysis of class would imply that women have problems purely by being women. As highlighted in section 3.3.2 in chapter three, there is much robust scholarship within feminist movements critical of the application of homogenising group identities that create exclusion on the basis of other types of difference, a literature that is no less robust in the Indian context (see the analysis in Purkayastha, 2003: 505). As the next section demonstrates, despite this recognition of the need for intersectionality by activists at a theoretical level, addressing

gender inequality through dismantling patriarchy continues to be upheld as the key area of intervention in practice in this Southern context.

10.2.2.1 Indian feminism in theory and practice

The tendency to promote an undifferentiated category of 'Indian woman' receives some thoughtful and practical reflection from GC (199_).[57] In an article interrogating concerns around Indian women's identity, she discusses the ongoing tensions she perceives between the identity of an Indian woman and her almost universal oppression through patriarchy. She contrasts this with her recognition of intersecting identities, particularly in relation to religion and growing fundamentalism, challenging the dominant, secular view of the Indian women's movement. She suggests that as Indian feminists, 'we have regarded the question of women's identity and autonomy as being of primary importance to women's status' (GC, 199_: 98). She suggests that whilst Indian feminists have always been aware of the 'socially divisive forces of class, caste, religion and culture', an underlying belief nonetheless persists in the 'the universal experience of patriarchal subjugation and sexual control' that ultimately unites 'women as a community' (ibid).

Herself an avowed Indian feminist activist, she concedes that whilst Indian feminism was ideologically rooted in Marxism,

> we had failed to live up to the pluralistic nature of feminism. We
> discovered that feminists can be fundamentalists too' (GC, 199_: 102-3).

This is an extraordinary admission of the homogenising tendencies of the Indian feminist elite, which, as she notes, have effectively excluded women who do not prioritise their gender, and has further alienated women who experience patriarchy as only one amongst many types of oppression.

GC's reflexive recognition of the 'fundamentalist' tendencies of the elite Indian women's movement are not, however, reflected in her work with CCSO 9, an organisation dedicated to women's empowerment in the slums and resettlement colonies of New Delhi and of which she is a founding member. In highlighting their past achievements, the organisation, reinforcing mythical notions of sisterhood amongst women (see section

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[57] GC is, as noted earlier, a respondent in this study who is a feminist activist and founder of CCSO 7 and CCSO 9. To maintain her anonymity, the precise reference for the book chapter that she authored and that is being referred to here is withheld.

3.3.2 in chapter three), declares boldly that 'As women learn and put their knowledge to practice, they pass on their learning to other women, a process which is not directly visible but works with a multiplier effect' (CCSO 9, n.d.). It is interesting and important to note both the emphasis on women's capacity to share knowledge as a key determinant of social change. Moreover, the terminology mimics the objectives of Northern organisations, who, as we saw in section 5.3.1 in chapter five, are committed to 'promoting access to information' to support women's empowerment by 'reaching individuals ... in low-income communities who see themselves as information *multipliers*' (IWTC, n.d.; emphasis added).

Further extracts from CCSO 9's 25-year anniversary report sum up this emphasis on a female sisterhood that has the capacity to transcend class and caste divides where men and, by extension patriarchy, are the primary oppressors. In this report, women are aligned with a desire to 'overturn the power structures in existing institutions and forms of organization of patriarchal society' (CCSO 9, 2001: 8). This patriarchy, the report argues, operates 'regardless of class or caste', where instead women's consciousness emerges out of a 'struggle for equality' that recognises the 'hierarchical power relationships in social and political organizations which have been largely created by men' (ibid). In summing up the achievements of the organisation, the report describes the creation of 'women's spaces ... where we felt empowered collectively and individually, breaking caste and class barriers ... sharing our joys and our sorrows ... and gaining control of our lives' (CCSO 9, 2001: 8).

The foregrounding of patriarchy as the principle source of oppression for Indian women denies the primacy of the class/caste divide in mediating how women variously overcome or are oppressed by, patriarchal norms (see Haritas, 2008 in chapter six; Petras, 1999). Nor is it reasonable to assume solidarity amongst women in slum and resettlement colonies, either as poor women or as members of a particular caste or social sub-grouping.[58] This narrow focus on patriarchy glosses over other types of marginality deriving from class, caste and religion, thereby perpetuating certain forms of institutional

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[58] As footnote eight in chapter three highlights, there is an extensive literature in the Indian context on how interventions targeted at poor women are still subject to class politics that exclude the poorest or the lowest caste members. For examples see studies undertaken by Sharma and Parthasarathy (2007); Dwivedi (2007); Sangtin Writers and Nagar, 2007; Batliwala and Dhanraj, 2007; Raju, 2006).

exclusion. This approach also limits the diversity of both the nature of problems facing Indian women belonging to different social groups and the means through which to tackle them.

What is clear from the foregoing analysis is that the marginality of the women I interviewed derives more from perceptions – on the part of both Northern organisations such as GDKS who profess a commitment to promote the voices of 'Southern' women, as well as the women interviewed for this study in New Delhi – of where 'marginalised women' are geographically i.e., the Global South or within India, as opposed to any real interrogation of the geographies of class within these locations.

This perceived marginality exists, however, alongside their status as elite feminist interlocutors within transnational and Indian development discourses. The discussion in this and previous chapters highlighted the class divides that the use of the English-language reinforces and perpetuates. It therefore seems reasonable to assert that individuals and organisations subscribing to a Northern-based, English-language information service, who are also themselves producing and disseminating vast amounts of information principally in English, are in turn most likely to be elites occupying the stakeholder networks of research centres, NGOs and policymakers that are enabled and sustained by the geographic and discursive proximity of a range of power brokers in Central and South New Delhi (see figures 7.1 and 7.2 in chapter seven). It would suggest that, in echoes of Bhabha's (1994) notion of hybridity, they are not marginalised, but rather concomitantly occupy spaces of exclusivity and marginality in the dominant development knowledge infrastructure, with consequences for their perceived capacity to access alternative knowledges rooted in 'Southern realities'.

10.3 Accessing and promoting 'alternative' paradigms

The elite status of these women derives from their engagement with donor-funded development agendas, which in turn mediate their capacity to articulate alternative knowledge paradigms. We can also expose the nature of their exclusivity through an interrogation of their class position as reflected in their educational and professional backgrounds. Both the limitations of donor funding and the class positions that these

women occupy differentially shape and constrain their work in unique and varied ways. Each will be looked at in turn.

10.3.1 Donor funding

Unlike GDKS, whose basket funding does lend them a degree of flexibility, we have seen in section 5.6.2 in chapter five how other forms of donor funding maintains *discursive* control over knowledge. At a basic level, women's NGOs in New Delhi are limited by the ways in which donors, whether the Government of India (GOI) or bilateral and multilateral donors, fund work on gender and development, mimicking the experiences of both mainstream and women's NGOs in development (section 3.4.2 in chapter three). It would seem that the women's NGOs in this study are similarly constrained in terms of how they might work as much as the topics they choose to work on:

> Basically we are an institute that runs on projects ... mostly it is the rural development ministry and the women and child development ministry, and also sometimes social welfare and justice ministry ...And also Planning Commission at various points in time and National Commission on Women, these are the government agencies that have asked us to do something or other for them. But other than that, it is mostly ILO and UN agencies. They ask for a specific project, title and ask us to do the work and send them a specific budget/quote (RB, Research Coordinator, Research organisation – CCSO 2).

Being given a specific GOI project with strict parameters renders asking difficult questions or changing project designs much more of a challenge. These organisations are also part of the treadmill of finding continuation funding:

> And sometimes you know, the project learnings are actually made into another proposal for continuation so whatever we learn in the first phase, whatever we get in the first phase is actually enhanced in phase two, so we look for phase two funding and carrying on whatever work has been done to the next level ... (BB, Manager-Operations, Southern NGO – CCSO 4).

As RC (Executive Director, Southern NGO – CCSO 6) notes, 'If you want to start a new project, then you pray that funders are on the same wavelength!' As other scholarship in this area has shown (see for example Mawdsley et al, 2002), NGOs must engage with the language and paradigms that donors recognise and are willing to fund. What is clear is that many of these women (e.g., PM, RB, RC, BB) are finding that even within these dominant paradigms, the space for lateral thinking, given donor fashions and the need to

keep both foreign donors and the GOI on board, has a tendency to stifle creativity and narrow further still the ways in which issues and interventions are defined and addressed.

More importantly for our purposes here, funding some issues over others effectively reinscribes the dominance of particular ideas and issues over others, effectively creating and then perpetuating hegemonic development discourses, and frequently in very subtle ways.

AK's (Director, Southern NGO – CCSO 5) experience of working with Oxfam reinforces just how this dynamic constrains research practice and how subtly it operates. She describes how Oxfam wanted to fund research to 'strengthen those [*sic*] [partner] NGOs in study, activities and programs on violence against women'. When she went to the field the people she spoke to told her that child marriage was a big issue. She decided that 'when we are looking at violence against women, we [will] particularly look at child marriage issues'. Whereas she was keen to cite this as a positive example of how she works to ensure that research is locally rooted, it may also be interpreted as narrowing, not widening, the discourse. Put simply, concerns emerging out of child marriage are not explicitly or exclusively related to discourses of violence. Child marriage may be understood in myriad other ways; as a function of cultural pressures; as a function of outmoded kinship practices; as a function of economic necessity or gain. It seems reasonable to assert that violence is one of many underlying factors in understanding child marriage. AK's experience echoes Novellino's (2003; section 2.5.1.4 in chapter two) observation of the tendency for donors to pigeon-hole action research into dominant categories of development discourse. Despite AK having identified child marriage as a key concern, the overarching discourse within which this discussion needed to be framed was violence against women, since that was the research focus that Oxfam had decided to fund. This control was subtle enough that AK herself, rather than citing Oxfam's research remit as a limitation, chose this experience as a way of demonstrating how, by identifying and incorporating child marriage into the research, she was able to work outside of, rather than within, mainstream constraints.[59]

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[59] This example also reinforces the dominance, as highlighted in Table 8.3 in chapter eight, of violence against women as a central and dominant theme in elite Indian feminist discourse, which may also explain why AK did not perceive Oxfam's approach as inherently problematic.

The implications for K4Dev are simply that where GDKS is relying on these intermediaries for information that may provide alternative paradigms and disturb dominant development discourses, these women, and the organisations they represent, are subject to both overt and subtle forms of discursive control exercised by donors.

10.3.2 Educational and professional background

Exposure to varying degrees of Northern/Western and elite Indian feminist theories and perspectives, gained both through education and training, impose further embedded constraints and have a significant impact on practice.

Table 10.1 provides an overview of the educational background of the women in interviewed in New Delhi.

Table 10.1: Educational background of women interviewed in this study

Name	Organisational type	Postgraduate Education	Professional Training
1. AJ	Southern NGO	Masters (India)	
2. AK	Southern NGO – CCSO 5	Masters (UK)	
3. AP	Southern NGO – CCSO 10	Masters (US/UK)	Europe
4. AR	Research organisation – CCSO 2	Masters (India)	
5. AS	INGO	Masters (UK)	
6. AU	Multilateral agency		Europe
7. AV	Research organisation – CCSO 3	Masters (US/UK) and Masters (India)	UK
8. BB	Southern NGO – CCSO 4	PhD, (India)	Europe
9. DK	Southern NGO – CCSO 5	None	
10. DM	Southern NGO	Masters (UK)	Europe
11. FM	Multilateral agency		Europe
12. GC	Southern NGO – CCSO 9	Masters (India)	
13. GG	Multilateral agency		Europe
14. IA	Research organisation – CCSO 3	Masters and PhD (India)	
15. JS	Southern NGO – CCSO 13	Masters (India)	Europe
16. KS	OECD-DAC agency	Masters, India	Europe
17. M	Southern NGO	None	
18. MA	Multilateral agency	MA Gender (UK)	Europe
19. NB	INGO	MA Gender (UK)	Europe
20. NJ	OECD-DAC agency		Europe
21. NJ	Multilateral agency	MA Policy (US)	
22. NS	OECD-DAC agency	PhD (India)	
23. PDD	Southern government	Masters (India)	
24. PM	Southern NGO – CCSO 11	Postgraduate Diploma in Development Studies (Europe)	Europe
25. RB	Research organisation – CCSO 2	Masters (UK), PhD (India)	Europe
26. RC	Southern NGO – CCSO 6	Medical training (India)	Recipient of American Fellowships
27. RT	Multilateral agency	Masters	
28. SG	Education organisation	Masters, (India)	
29. SR	Education organisation	PhD (India)	Europe
30. SS	Southern NGO – CCSO 13		
31. TKS	Southern government	MA, Social Work (India), MA, Social Planning (UK)	
32. VN	Southern NGO – CCSO 1	Masters (India)	
33. XH	Southern NGO – CCSO 12	PhD (UK)	Europe, Beijing

As the table demonstrates, of the 33 women interviewed for this study, 31 of the women are Indian and 26 have postgraduate qualifications, of whom ten have completed postgraduate degrees in the UK. Sixteen have also completed postgraduate training in India. Seventeen of these women have also completed professional training in the US or Europe. With the exception of one woman, all of those women I interviewed belong to higher caste groups.

That middle and upper class/caste women in India should be highly educated, undertaking international training and occupying senior positions in the non-profit sector is not surprising. As detailed in section 6.3.2 in chapter six, Liddle and Joshi (1986: 72-3) observed that class values have had an emancipatory effect on middle-class women. Coupled with constitutional guarantees of equality, middle class women have pursued education and employment in a range of elite professions in the post-independence period. Hence, as the middle class has expanded and the Indian non-profit sector has both grown and professionalised, 30 years on from Liddle and Joshi's study it is not surprising to find very highly educated women in senior positions in the non-profit sector; this is a natural confluence between their historical roles in this sector and what is expected of women at this class level.

Moreover, it is not surprising to find that people educated to a postgraduate level in domestic institutions are well-represented in the non-profit sector. As Mawdsley et al. (2002: 36) note, India invested in their elites, funding universities at the expense of primary and secondary education. Sen (1998) further argues that the growth in the non-profit-sector may be at least partially attributed to a dearth of jobs for many of the educated elites that emerged from state-funded higher education.

Whilst the table highlights that many of these women have undertaken Northern-based education and professional training, the vast majority of women I met had received some or all of their education in elite Indian institutions, many of them in New Delhi itself. This mixture of postgraduate degrees in India coupled with professional training abroad amongst respondents raises questions around the capacity of these women to articulate 'indigenous' feminist or development theories, thus enabling them to represent a diversity of 'Southern' views as Northern donors and organisations like GDKS expect. Two issues emerge out of this discussion in relation to interrogating how their educational and professional backgrounds inform their capacity to deliver 'indigenous' or alternative Southern-based development paradigms. The first concern is to locate and problematise notions of 'indigenous' Indian feminist theory. The second issue is to reflect on the discursive accessibility of the debate itself. Each will be looked at in turn.

10.3.2.1 'Indigenising' the debate

IA (Research Fellow, Research organisation – CCSO 3), a former lecturer at one of New Delhi's universities, said resignedly that, even in teaching, it is Northern/Western sources that dominate:

> ... a lot of writing that goes on, and the South quoting and citing the North more than themselves [*sic*]. I mean, just about every book that we cite will have to be from the North especially if it is theory it is only from the North.

Another recently appointed lecturer in another university's new Women's Studies programme, when asked about her syllabus, told me that everything they used was in English (SG, Lecturer, Education organisation). This was despite the fact that many students had difficulty accessing academic English and needed materials in Hindi and Urdu. She also suggested that Northern or Western ideas dominate teaching, arguing that 'we really need an Indian perspective, but to find ways to combine that Western philosophy'. She says she is often asked to get examples from India, but this is a challenge as they are often not available. This would suggest that the extent of 'indigenous' theorising is limited; indeed, echoing the impetus for establishing *Subaltern Studies* as a way of exploring alternative histories (see Chakrabarty, 2002), there is an ongoing debate about the need to promote indigenous, Indian theorising as a counterpoint to the dominance of Northern or Western scholarship.

The need to promote more Indian-originated theorising has been identified by a study funded by India's Ministry of Women and Child Development entitled 'Developing Indian Perspectives on Feminist Theory and Methodology' (2004-2005). It is a collaborative study by six women's studies centres in India affiliated to Universities. It discusses the importance of developing a more India-centred feminist theory and methodology that accounts for its own historical and contemporary trajectories. It starts by noting that

> It is commonly known that scholarly work and teaching of Feminism and Women's Studies in India has been heavily dependent on western feminist theory. Concepts, though adopted in India, have yet to be indigenized in terms of cultural determinants, location and history (2004-2005: 2).

Yet Spivak (1990: 69) questions what it means to have 'indigenous theory'. She suggests, when asked by Indian feminist academics about the possibilities of discovering or promoting indigenous theory, that 'I cannot understand what indigenous theory there

might be that can ignore the reality of nineteenth-century history … To construct indigenous theories one must ignore the last few centuries of historical involvement. I would rather use what history has written for me' (ibid). This echoes concerns raised in section 2.5.1.4 in chapter two around the assumptions of rigidity associated with 'indigenous' theorising as something that is static or immovable, removed from wider political, social or economic contexts. Some modern Indian feminist scholars, whilst sympathetic to the concerns some Indian feminists express that 'national agendas for feminist work [will be] hijacked by Western interests' (U. Kalpagam, 2004: 334), also recognise the potential contribution of Western feminist theory to scholarship in the Indian context. As U. Kalpagam (2004: 336) emphasises, there is a need to stay vigilant against those social theorists who, in defence of a need to develop 'indigenous theory', decry Western feminism and its emphasis on freedom, as

> often what is hidden in this critique is the attack against this desire for
> freedom. Especially for women, this hidden attack is an attempt to keep
> them under control and put them in their place by patriarchal forces.

This emphasis on reasserting an Indian identity or basis for feminism, as the foregoing analysis highlights, is in fact a historically recurring theme amongst elite Indian feminists. They are keen, as Indian feminists were in pre- and post-independence India (section 6.4.2 in chapter six), to assert an identity based on Indian (and upper caste, Hindu) values set apart from Western feminism, and which, as U. Kalpagam (2004) emphasises, does not directly challenge patriarchy.

10.3.2.2 Indigenising the debate and elite discourses

Again echoing the historically elitist tendencies of the Indian women's movement, the second issue that discussions around 'indigenous' theory raise is related to the language of the debate itself. It is telling that this discussion around developing indigenous theory is occurring primarily in English and in a written format amongst elite feminist scholars and women's studies faculties across the country, implicating a class divide and a certain degree of elitism in how this new feminism and women's studies knowledge is to be 'indigenised'.

This tendency towards exclusivity in shaping Indian feminist discourse is also reflected in writing within and about the movement, which IA (Research Fellow, Research

organisation – CCSO 3) suggests is deliberately moving towards even greater inaccessibility:

> Language is another big issue for us in India. I mean, you know, the language of the academic community is in fact totally divorced from the mass of people. That's why the need to communicate in other languages. I think that is one of the biggest handicaps that we have in India amongst us also ... by and large the writing in the movement or rather I would say the analysis of the movement by women's studies scholars is all in a language which they don't understand, which the mass of women won't understand. And trends in language or trends in academics are such that they're making it more and more dense, more and more abstract ... simple English a lot more women can understand, the more dense you make your language, the more difficult it becomes and people tend to switch off, even students tend to switch off, what is your ordinary women [to do]? And English of course they won't understand. So the movement in any case has to speak in other languages, English is certainly not the medium of communication. It is the medium of communication for like-minded people who are, who may be activists but also academics, for them it's okay, for that interaction it is [okay]. Otherwise in the movement there's no way.

FA (Retired Professor, Education organisation) reiterates IA's position, suggesting that academia is moving away from even articulating grassroots concerns, and raising questions about who precisely the audience is for the work of academics conducting research at the interface of feminism and development in India. Both IA and FA's insights echo the critiques of the Sangtin Writers (2006), who similarly argue that the professionalisation of development discourse excludes them from engaging in theoretical debates that consider the political, economic and social complexities of feminism and development that, ironically, most often have the starkest material consequences for people like them living at the margins of society. Indeed, underlying the tendency of elite Indian feminists to communicate in a medium and language[60] that excludes the vast

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[60] Development, as highlighted in chapters two and three, is something that is rooted in the English language both literally and symbolically. Those who use the language can claim an association with being 'developed', thus locating themselves as Indians committed to 'developing' the rest of the country or their downtrodden or underdeveloped fellow citizens. Engaging in this manner is inherently contradictory, as they are both developed and developing at the same time, again highlighting the tension between co-option and resistance cited by scholars such as Chatterjee (1986) and Nandy (1983) in relation to how the imperial vision is imbued by the colonised (see discussion in Pigg, 1992). This mirrors the contradictory positions held by elite Indian feminists as simultaneously marginalised or 'developing' subjects within global development discourse, whilst pursuing educational and professional goals that set them apart as elite or 'developed', sharing life experiences and ideological sympathies that are, as Spivak (1990) notes (section 3.3.2.2 in chapter three), likely to be more in tune with other elite feminist discourses at the transnational level than those of working class or subaltern subjects within their own geographical locations.

majority of Indian women is the implication that even the question of what constitutes Indian feminism itself is inherently complex and therefore only suitable to be discussed amongst other Indian feminist elites.

The use of 'more and more dense' and 'abstract' language usage on the part of women's studies scholars in India suggests a growing disconnect between elite women writing about the broad spectrum of Indian women's experiences and the marginalised women whom Northern donors and organisations like GDKS believe this work is meant to be supporting. The implications for the progressive knowledge practices of GDKS are significant, given GDKS's objective to broaden and diversify the store of knowledge available on gender in a range of contexts. Instead the class status of these New Delhi-based women, coupled with their educational and professional training in dominant modes of development discourse and practice, suggests they are firmly embedded in the dominant development knowledge infrastructure. This would further suggest that their capacity to promote, or even engage with, alternative paradigms, as GDKS expects, is limited.

10.4 Networks and change agents

The analysis up to this point suggests that the women interviewed for the empirical study in New Delhi themselves embody, through their elite positionality, many of the discursive exclusions that characterise the limitations to progressive knowledge practice outlined in the previous two chapters. Whereas these women may not themselves represent the diversity in views that GDKS seeks to showcase, we can consider the capacity of these women to facilitate the inclusion of marginalised voices into the dominant knowledge infrastructure. What are the implications of their elite positionality and class status for their capacity to reach and represent the information needs and views of poor, marginalised, Southern-based groups as Northern donors and organisations like GDKS expect?

Networking is consistently cited by GDKS as well as the collective case study organisations, as demonstrated in Tables 5.1 and 9.1, as the key to reaching and thus representing the alternative knowledges of marginalised groups. GDKS, as we saw in section 5.6.1.2 in chapter five, privileges the role of networking with women's

information intermediaries as crucial to revealing, and thus engaging with, alternative (feminist) knowledge paradigms rooted in the experiences of marginalised groups in the Global South. Echoing GDKS's progressive knowledge practices, almost all the collective case study organisations, as the analysis in section 8.2.1 in chapter eight highlights, also identify the inclusion of marginalised groups as crucial to their organisational objectives. The collective case study organisations in turn claim to have the capacity, through their geographical and discursive proximity, to link elite development stakeholders and grassroots groups. The analysis in foregoing chapters has, however, identified concerns around the challenges of networking as a mechanism underpinning knowledge-based development practice, including how GDKS's expectations of the ways in which networking operates fall short in relation to their subscribers and users based in New Delhi. This leaves outstanding the question of the extent to which these women engage in networking as Northern donors and organisations like GDKS expect (section 5.6.1.2 in chapter five). What is the nature of the networking activities they undertake? Reflecting on the analysis in the previous section highlighting their educational and professional backgrounds, combined with the real limitations of donor funding on their capacity to address issues that fall outside the purview of dominant development discourse, to what extent do their networking strategies embody more progressive and inclusive approaches to engaging with the information needs and views of groups marginalised from the dominant knowledge infrastructure? The collective case study organisations claim in their organisational objectives to network with policymakers, (partner) NGOs and marginalised or grassroots individuals and groups. The networking approaches undertaken by the women as part of the collective case study organisations in relation to these stakeholder groups are considered in turn below.

10.4.1 Policymakers and partner/other organisations

Links between senior staff of the collective case study organisations and policymakers, other NGOs, academics and practitioners based in New Delhi are very strong, with opportunities to network and engage at events including seminars, conferences, roundtables, publication launches and through professional training. As table 9.1 in chapter nine highlights, all of the organisations without exception engage in these forms

of communication and dissemination. Links with policymakers, other practitioners and funders are assiduously maintained by the collective case study organisations:

> We would make it a point of reaching these people by sending them a hard copy not of this report, but of the annual report so that people should have a glimpse of what ISST is doing. This is the funding agency, the policymakers, scholars, NGOs all over India, especially in Delhi and the institutions, such as the British Council, because we know they would like to access ISST's reports … (RB, Research Coordinator, Research Organisation – CCSO 2).

There are also personal relationships and friendships within these networks that keep elite development stakeholders informed of various events, news and publications. The overall impression is that the development community in New Delhi is very small, English-speaking and well-connected (PM, Director, Programs, Southern NGO – CCSO 11).

Despite the emphasis that almost all of these organisations, like GDKS, place on disseminating information to policymakers to lobby or advocate on key areas of concern, policymakers are not, as we saw in section 5.6.1.3 in chapter five, necessarily always change agents. Echoing Rai (2002) and Kishwar's (1996) insights on women who are interested more in power and less in promoting other women or women's interests (see section 3.3.3.1 in chapter three), TKS (Retired Senior Advisor, Southern government) similarly suggests that in the Indian context, senior bureaucrats charged with making or implementing policy may simply have been assigned to that portfolio without demonstrating any genuine commitment to a particular cause. She suggests that female policymakers are not necessarily more likely to demonstrate commitment to feminist causes, citing the case of a senior female policymaker in the Ministry of Women and Child Development who approaches her job as a bureaucrat, as someone assigned to a post in government and not as a committed agent of change for women, despite herself being a woman. The implications of this for GDKS are significant, insofar as support for policymakers and senior bureaucrats, particularly women and/or those engaged in gender mainstreaming, is cited by GDKS as one of their main objectives.

10.4.2 Networking with the 'grassroots'

Change agents or not, networking with policymakers, key development partners and colleagues consists of active engagement and communication in a range of dissemination

spaces. As the foregoing analysis has repeatedly suggested however, it is the capacity of Southern-based organisations to reach marginalised groups and thus promote their inclusion into the dominant knowledge infrastructure on which GDKS depends for the success of their own progressive knowledge practices. The mission statements of the collective case study organisations, as we saw in Table 8.1, reinforce GDKS's expectation, further claiming to be able to link grassroots groups to policy and other decision-making processes. Given the centrality of networking to the function of this progressive paradigm, the following sections reflect on how the collective case study organisations network or engage with grassroots groups as inflected through their insights into how they perceive that their knowledge-based development interventions are experienced by marginalised groups. The first considers how, given the self-proclaimed capacity of the collective case study organisations to facilitate the inclusion of marginalised groups, the views of grassroots groups are incorporated into impact assessments. The second approach examines the extent to which these organisations are able to support or facilitate changes in the lives of women that are underpinned by emancipatory rather than neoliberal approaches to women's empowerment (section 3.2.2 in chapter three). What becomes clear is that networking with grassroots partners or constituents to promote change in practice tends to proceed in a less dialogical manner than that undertaken in relation to elite development stakeholders. Each approach is considered below.

10.4.2.1 The 'voice' of grassroots groups

When I asked BB (Manager-Operations, Southern NGO – CCSO 4) how they assess impact, her first response was to cite networking with partners and extensive media coverage as signs of impact at the level of policy. When I clarified that I was also interested in how they network to assess impact 'downwards' in the grassroots communities they work in, she cited CSR's work with partner organisations 'on the ground' and the support they provide to them to formulate 'gender mainstreaming action plans'. When I asked her to clarify how they assess the impact of these action plans on the constituents of their interventions, her description of how they 'learn' from their projects confirmed the disconnect between CCSO 4 and the supposed 'beneficiaries' of their programmes:

> For most of our projects we do a mid-term evaluation or interim
> evaluation where the external third-party evaluators come and see what
> the project, or whether the project has made any impact or not. So we get
> those evaluation reports, which are third-party, participatory evaluations.

Bringing in a third-party evaluator may ensure a greater level of accountability for the donor, but does little to create mutually reflexive spaces for NGOs and those groups for whose benefit much of this research claims to be done. Whereas resources are always available to maintain active and reciprocal links through events such as seminars and conferences with a range of perceived elite change agents, resources to promote this type of active dialogical relationship with the grassroots are not as readily available.

Similar to the questions I posed to BB, when I pressed RB (Research Coordinator, Research organisation – CCSO 2) on how they assess the impact of their action research on the groups they are studying, it was clear that neither the capacity nor the resources existed to look at the impact of action-research in any systematic way:

> ... every time I come back from the field, the report that I give has been
> translated into Hindi so that our partner can read and know that this is
> what is happening ... We also try to do information sharing – 'in your area,
> we have found this, is it true, do you agree with this?' Sometimes we do,
> but not every time because it becomes a problem because it needs a lot of
> funds, a lot of time and when you finish one research project you need to
> move on to the next. And sometimes people are not receptive, they also
> don't show much interest.

What is clear is that whilst field research is extracting particular information from grassroots groups, it is less clear that these organisations are able to act as intermediaries, facilitating a dialogue where marginalised groups are able to articulate views and concerns that either respond to particular research areas or that fall outside of narrow research parameters. What is clear is that these NGOs are able to 'reach' the grassroots, but it is less clear whether the grassroots is able to 'reach' them or to reach policymakers or other intermediaries like GDKS through them.

CCSO 2's inability to consistently engage with constituent groups, most of whom are the subjects of research, echoes the concerns raised by Theis et al. (2000) with reference to their simplified model of 'traditional' research communications, reproduced as Figure 1.1 in chapter one, that identifies one-way flows of information from North to South. The

work of Petras (1999: 439), Tvedt (1998), Connell (2007) and others is also critical of those development researchers, practitioners and organisations that tend, as CCSO 2 does, to go 'into the field' to collect data, turning that into theory that legitimises their elite position and sending that data back to marginalised groups as expertise. In reality there seems to be a disconnect between grassroots work and bigger policy, research or advocacy concerns, echoing the language-based division between policy and action research that excluded marginalised groups from elite spaces evidenced in section 8.3.1.3 in chapter eight. This division results in grassroots work done not in conjunction with, but rather alongside but separate to, core advocacy, research and policy concerns. Grassroots work for many organisations seems instead to be acting as a laboratory or 'window' (AJ, Coordinator, Southern NGO) through which bigger issues may be understood, written about, and then disseminated through seminars, workshops or conferences with a range of elite development stakeholders.

10.4.2.2 Impact through the 'success story'

As Table 9.1 highlights, a significant number of these organisations support awareness-raising, literacy training, microfinance or self-help groups (SHGs) amongst marginalised groups, particularly women. Many of these NGOs consequently have 'success story' pages that highlight how their interventions have facilitated empowerment amongst beneficiaries or constituents. CCSO 13, for example, cites literacy training as the means through which a group of women in one village, despite all of their childcare and income-earning responsibilities, have been able to establish and sustain a local newspaper. CCSO 5 cites its support for selling the handicrafts of women living in resettlement colonies as a form of empowerment for these women otherwise marginalised from the market. Yet, rather than demonstrating emancipatory empowerment, highlighting success stories is merely a neoliberal device to shift the burden of change on to the individual to promote development, which is meant to trickle down or extend to others in their group or community – the 'if she can do it, then everyone should be able to' approach (section 3.2.4 in chapter three). Dempsey (2009: 340) is critical of the use of this specific device as a means of measuring impact:

> The image of local communities directing their own processes of
> development corresponds with the potentially emancipatory goals of

alternative development. However, this particular configuration of the grassroots is also potentially problematic in that it may divert attention from the need for wider societal and structural changes in the allocation of resources ... 'good stories' emphasized individual responsibility and the entrepreneurial spirit, both seen as flourishing at the local scale. The metaphor of the grassroots as morally and spatially fixed protects these representations – and their subsequent implications – from prolonged scrutiny.

Whilst these success stories may demonstrate isolated cases of positive change, they do not signal a shift in wider structural or institutional inequalities, but rather that some women have the capacity to improve their lives against the odds. Moreover, in the context of the perversity of the neoliberal development paradigm, it may also constitute proof that those people not achieving what these successful individuals or small groups have achieved are either not working hard enough or do not have the 'right' kind of development information (Pigg, 1992). Echoing the analysis in section 3.2.3 in chapter three, this approach negates claims to citizenship and any related support, rendering those subjects who have not maximised their training, loan or labour scheme as unworthy of support and the cause of under-development. Instead of raising concerns around broader structural or institutional inequalities that may be limiting the capacity of other grassroots agents to facilitate changes in their lives akin to that of the successful individual, success stories in fact strengthen the case to deploy even more information in the form of literacy training, pamphlets or awareness-raising campaigns so that the positive effects of this information may trickle-down to even more people.

The consequences for K4Dev practice are significant, insofar as it is clear in both cases that the views and voices of partner organisations, grassroots constituents or economically empowered women are not meaningfully correlated with critiques of broader inequalities that may inform the policy and advocacy interventions of these NGOs. Furthermore, fora are not being established where a meaningful link between grassroots women and decision-making processes may be forged, as Northern donors and organisations such as GDKS envision.

10.4.3 Differing views of the capacity of 'change agents'
Like GDKS, it would seem that for these women and organisations, active links with the grassroots are, by their own admission, not necessarily as robust and reciprocal as they

claim in their mission statements (see Table 8.1 in chapter eight). I propose that this lack of a dialogical relationship stems from the assumption on the part of the women I interviewed in New Delhi (and their organisations) that marginalised individuals and grassroots organisations are *not capable of being change agents.* The elite users and recipients of GDKS's information services are themselves playing a conscious filtering role as information intermediaries, a process which is underpinned by two assumptions. The first is that grassroots partners or recipients have very basic information needs. The second assumption is that elite Indian feminists are capable of identifying and addressing these simple information needs through their knowledge practices. This second assumption is considered in relation to how their views are informed by their class position and mediated both by transnational and elite Indian feminist discourses.

10.4.3.1 Basic information needs

Marginalised groups are portrayed as having 'limited' information needs within a 'smaller range' (VN, Director, Southern NGO – CCSO 1) of issue areas that needs to be 'adapted and in a simplified language' (BB, Manager-Operations, Southern NGO – CCSO 4), addressing 'day-to-day basic needs and necessities' (TKS, Retired Senior Advisor, Southern government). The underpinning assumption here is that broader development discourses are too complex, where 'even if you translate and put [a GDKS newsletter] in their hand' (ibid), 'grassroots organisations may not be capable of understanding what is written there' (BB, Manager-Operations, Southern NGO – CCSO 4). Processes of simplification are not, as the analyses in previous chapters attest, benign. It is important again in this context to highlight in particular the concerns raised by Foucault (1972) and echoed in practice by the Sangtin Writers (2006) in relation to the persistence of discursive exclusion deriving from perceptions that one must be suitably qualified to participate (section 6.8.1 in chapter six). These reflections would suggest that support for stripping away the complexity of information for marginalised groups, rather than being accepted as fact, must be problematised in relation to how the 'problems' of development are discursively generated and managed in this Southern location.

10.4.3.2 Addressing 'basic' information needs amongst the grassroots

Echoing the attitudes of Western feminists towards 'Third World women' highlighted in

section 3.3.2.1 in chapter three, marginalised women in New Delhi's slum colonies are,

for VN (Director, Southern NGO – CCSO 1), 'victims' who need uplifting:

> I have to remember that working with the marginalised is a tough job.
> Going into the slums in terms of cleanliness, in terms of -- it's tough work,
> you have to repeat and explain, you have to undo their habits of sanitation
> ... of course I have now such an extraordinary relation, we can get them to
> even stand on their head now because the thing is that we have been
> working with them without seeking anything in return just their welfare is
> our return, their well-being is our return ... More than anything else, it's
> the commitment to the marginalised in the country and how to pull them
> up to become like us and so on. Certainly a big challenge for us, we don't
> have barriers, but we do have challenges ... In terms of the four programs
> on functional literacy, on health and nutrition, literacy and ... micro-credit,
> micro-enterprise, all of them find that this is a good package. So that's
> what -- these are the four legs of our grassroots poverty programme.

Insisting that their slum programmes are effective and demand driven[61], in VN's response

to my question about her organisations' work in New Delhi slums are inflected two

related strands of thought. To be 'like us' first requires an engagement with

transnationally inspired development practice that emphasises the centrality of

microfinance and economic empowerment. Secondly, her views tie into historically elite

Indian feminist views of the poor as uncivilised and lacking in 'basic' information, who

need to be taught how to be 'like us' through charitable welfare measures such as

literacy, health and nutrition education, which prioritise women's roles within the family.

These perceptions suggest attitudes that are in line with historical approaches to

women's welfare undertaken both by the Indian state and elite women's NGOs in the

post-independence period. As section 6.4 in chapter six emphasises, they defined the

problems of Indian women through the lens of the middle and upper classes and treated

women paternalistically as beneficiaries of welfare support. These approaches are further

coupled with perceptions of cleanliness that again reflect entrenched middle-class and

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[61] VN's assertion that their slum programmes are demand driven echoes Novellino (2003) and Mosse's (1994) analysis, insofar as people will only ask for the things they feel the programme can deliver – if the NGO says they are going to deliver on these four points, then people are as likely to want them to deliver on these points as they are to ask for something different, given that they have limited options.

upper caste beliefs about poor and lower caste groups as dirty and polluting (section 7.2 in chapter seven).

The specific concerns of slum colonies (including the one I spent time in as part of my field study) have centred on the threat of resettlement, whilst those slums that have been bulldozed and partially resettled well away from city centre (Figure 7.1 in chapter seven) face acute crises in relation to employment opportunities, schooling and access to basic facilities including water and sanitation (chapter seven; see Bharucha, 2006). VN was quite explicit that their work did not encompass lobbying the MCD to avoid demolition, as her organisation recognised the government's claims that slum dwellers are illegal occupants of their land. But even amongst other women's organisations in the collective case study who came out in support of the slum dwellers, and despite the recognition of these material deprivations, the nature of their support echoes to a considerable extent VN's description of her organisations work in the slums. There is a shared emphasis on economic empowerment, underpinned by information dissemination to support broader livelihood concerns including health and literacy, as a way to address the concerns of slum dwellers. CCSO 9, for example, has established self-help centres in the resettlement colonies geared toward feminist health education that 'works to change the status of women through gender consciousness, nutrition and fertility awareness' (CCSO 9, n.d.). CCSO 7 has done extensive research on the specific issues facing slum dwellers, disseminating this research in recent book launches in India Habitat Centre and through the publication of articles in English-language journals. Despite this awareness, their work in the slums has not focused on providing material assistance or lobbying for more schooling or sanitation infrastructure, but instead focuses on feminist consciousness-raising so that women and girls are aware of their rights. These approaches suggest a reliance on neoliberal strategies that depend on increasing the store of knowledge to promote change and to provide the tools for people to help themselves. The emphasis both on narrowly defined action research and the need to provide 'basic' information suggests that marginalised groups lack awareness and and thus have little knowledge of value or the 'right' kind of information (see Pigg, 1992). The implication of this is of course that marginalised groups do not have alternative knowledges and views that are deemed worthy of consideration, let alone any knowledge worthy of codifying and including in

elite Indian feminist discourses or broader decision-making processes (see Sangtin Writers, 2006), apart from that knowledge which is collected and codified as part of pre-determined action research and thus circumscribed by pigeon-holed (see Novellino, 2003) parameters of dominant development discourse and practice.

10.5 Conclusion

These New Delhi-based organisations are not, contrary to the assumptions underpinning progressive knowledge-based development practice, creating dialogical spaces to reveal alternative paradigms and bridge the communication barriers typically understood to prevent direct Northern-grassroots communication and that necessitate the inclusion of a Southern intermediary. Moreover, what becomes clear is that the category of 'Indian woman' in Indian development discourse mimics the essentialising tendencies of the category of 'Southern woman' in mainstream development feminist discourse and praxis. This tendency emerges out of two related perceptions that mimic postcolonial tendencies, but are not themselves exclusively postcolonial in nature. Put another way, these perceptions are not shaped exclusively by colonialism, but by processes of co-option, contestation and resistance between historically Indian structures of caste and gender-based inequality on the one hand and colonialism on the other, thus resulting in systems of gender and caste/class inequality and oppression unique to the postcolonial Indian state.

Firstly, mimicking the tendency of Western feminists to generalise the concerns of 'Southern women', there is a clearly a similar propensity on the part of elite Indian feminists to treat marginalised Indian women as victims and beneficiaries of welfare programmes who are oppressed by kinship structures as well as poverty that leads, as we have seen in this chapter, to perceptions of lower caste/working class groups as engaging in habits that must be 'undone'. The solution proffered by Western feminists (section 3.3.2.1 in chapter three) was that Third World Women should aspire to Western models of women's freedom and liberation. And whilst in the Indian context there is a similar sense that lower caste/class groups must aspire to be 'more like us', there is a uniquely Indian emphasis on supporting women's roles as wives, mothers and daughters. These forms of support are charitable measures geared towards improving the status and quality of life for poor women within families through an emphasis on health, violence

against women, basic literacy and livelihoods support. Addressing the concerns of marginalised Indian women as wives and mothers consists, as we have seen, largely of information production and dissemination, representing neoliberally-inspired empowerment initiatives that focus on the individual. This focus places the developmental burden on other individuals to act in a similar fashion and creates a myth of 'possibilities', but also distracts from wider entrenched and divisive institutional equalities that mediate how individuals are able to access, and act upon, available information.

What is hidden in the recasting of the Southern woman as agent rather than victim (section 3.3.2.1 in chapter three) is that an emphasis on dissolving the North-South barrier on the part of Northern donors and organisations like GDKS does not recognise, particularly in the Indian context, the persistence of intersectional inequalities rooted in class, caste, religion, sexuality and gender, which has created a tier of Southern-based (feminist) elites. These 'Indian' or 'Southern' women in New Delhi draw legitimacy from their shared geographical proximity to marginalised groups. Yet what is evidenced by their alignment with the Indian women's movement, underpinned by their educational, professional and class backgrounds, is that they do not share any meaningful ideological or social proximity to the marginalised women they claim to represent and on whose behalf they claim to be advocating. Whilst urban women's NGOs founded by, and employing, elite, educated, middle and upper class women, like those whom I interviewed, may genuinely have the interests of Indian women at the heart of what they do, neither can they necessarily be representative or claim 'sisterhood' with lower caste/class women, nor are their approaches to women's concerns necessarily going to represent better informed or more egalitarian perspectives on women's needs than those of outsiders.

Yet given that 'Indian women' and 'women in the Global South' are understood to be marginalised from mainstream development discourse, the women interviewed for this study continue to be subaltern subjects within the dominant development knowledge infrastructure, whilst effectively avoiding interrogation of their own exclusivity, or their power to shape the voice of the Indian subaltern within the ideological and discursive spaces of elite Indian feminism. Essentialising Indian women still has the power to create

new forms of exclusion, as it did when the Indian women's movement around the time of India's independence claimed to represent all Indian women. On the one hand the concerns that GDKS is tapping into may in one sense be considered indigenous, insofar as the issues raised by Indian feminist elites do often reflect specifically Indian concerns. Yet given class inequality and the wide variation of Indian women's experiences when crossed with a range of other marginalities, it comprises only a small, mostly elite version of Indian women's concerns. Privileging the voices of these women who, as users and recipients of GDKS information services, are likely to share GDKS's discursive position, does very little to promote more diverse reflections on the question of women's empowerment and how to promote gender equality given that inequality, particularly in an Indian context, is tied so inextricably to class, caste, religion, marital status and age among other things.

Moreover, given both the geographical, but more importantly, discursive location that GDKS occupies, and notwithstanding the critiques of information and essentialisms in development discourse and practice highlighted in the foregoing chapters, GDKS's information outputs are not likely to reach those organisations that may have the capacity to facilitate the dialogue on which GDKS's progressive knowledge practices depend. The findings in this chapter upset closely held notions *on the part of Northern organisations* as to the *imagined* capacities of Southern women (and their organisations), understood as an essentialised category, to facilitate dialogical relationships between a range of stakeholders in development discourse, and particularly amongst women.

11. Conclusion

11.1 Reflecting on the study: what have we learned?

This study set out to interrogate the extent to which 'progressive' knowledge-based development practices have the capacity, as organisations like GDKS claim, to improve the uptake of information amongst a range of development stakeholders to facilitate more positive development outcomes. We have seen that Northern donors and organisations like GDKS privilege the capacity of Southern-based information intermediaries to promote development outcomes such as empowerment facilitated through the production and dissemination of information. The efficacy of these knowledge practices are underpinned by closely held assumptions in development discourse and practice which presume a discursive and geographic proximity of Southern-based stakeholders to groups marginalised from the dominant development knowledge infrastructure. This belief is encapsulated in the model of 'participatory' research communication put forth by Theis et al (2000), reproduced as Figure 1.2 in chapter one. We can use this model as the basis for mapping how K4Dev functions as information travels between and beyond GDKS and its users and recipients in New Delhi, India that reflects the empirical findings in this study (Figure 11.1 below). As in the original model in Figure 1.1, the solid arrows represent the dissemination of (expert) findings and information, whilst the dashed arrows represent data collection. To this model has been added a third type of dotted arrow, which represents the flow of Southern elite informational priorities that may sporadically inform Northern policy and practice objectives, located within the discursive terrain of development as 'voices from the Global South'.

Figure 11.1 Mapping the flow of information between and beyond GDKS and its users and recipients in New Delhi, India
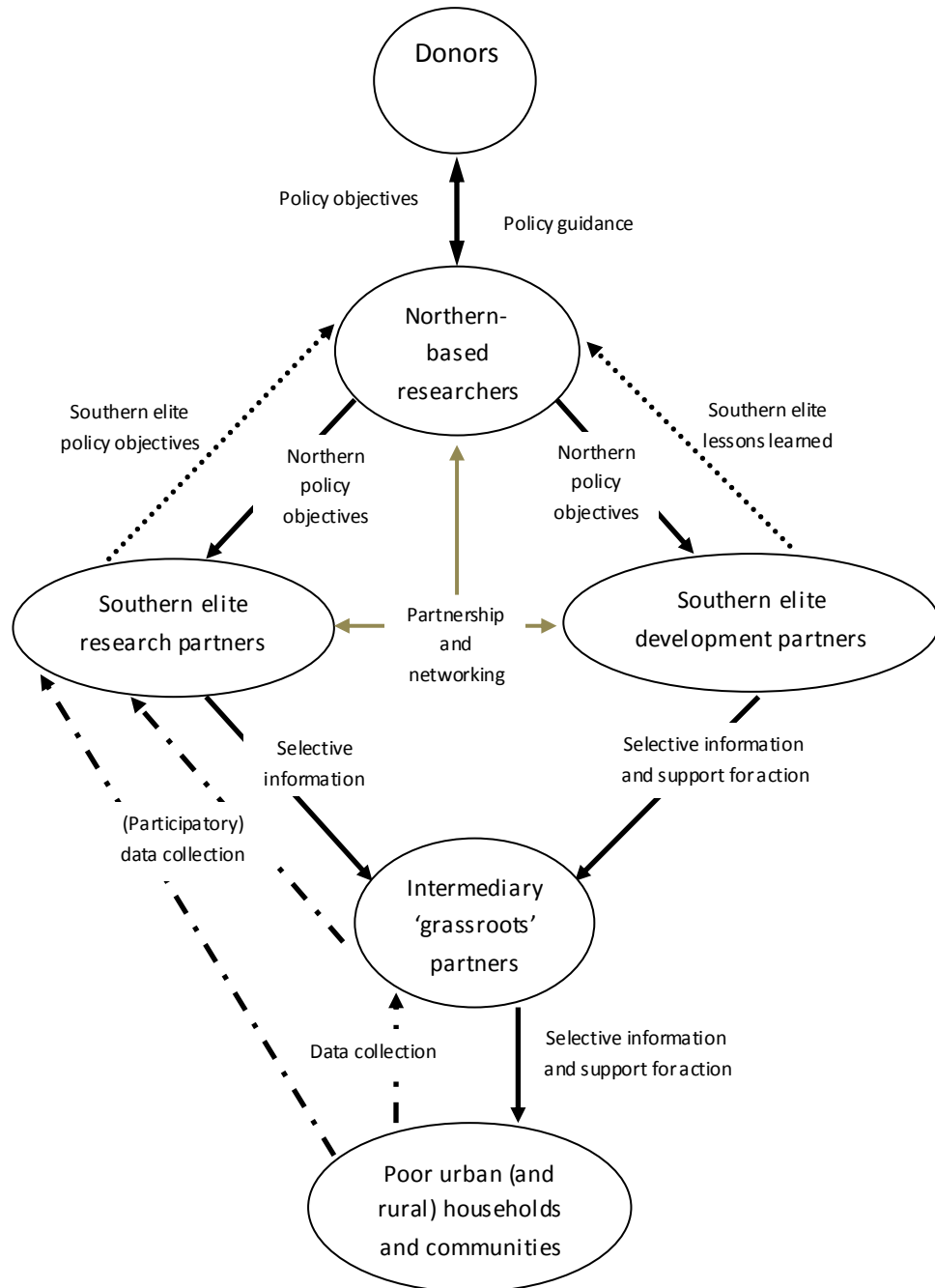
At one level, Figure 11.1 illustrates that some of the aspirations of the original 'participatory' model are functioning as hoped. At one level the participation of Southern-based women and NGOs in the post-Beijing period, acting as both researchers and practitioners, has significantly increased, drawing both the discursive and financial attention of Northern donors and NGOs. It further suggests that Southern-based intermediaries are more firmly integrated into the information loops created not just by GDKS but by networks facilitated and supported by a range of Northern donors and organisations like GDKS. Yet what the model also illustrates is that whilst the one-way, North-South flow of information identified in Figure 1.1 in chapter one does persist, it is also reproduced within the South. Here the North-South divide is mimicked between the Southern elites who populate GDKS's mailing list and their own subalterns, where the one-way flow of information consisting of upward data collection and downward dissemination of 'expertise' (see section 10.4.2.1 in chapter ten), occurs not only between the North and the South, as critics of the World Bank knowledge paradigm so frequently assert, but also within the South itself.

The notion of 'selective' information-sharing highlighted in Figure 11.1 above ties in with the discursive control maintained by donors and elite, transnational academics and practitioners including elite Indian feminists. This control is manifested in the codification of the informational needs and views of marginalised groups that are pigeon-holed (section 3.3 in chapter three) in line with the strategic priorities of informational elites upholding the dominant development knowledge infrastructure. In this model information intermediaries play conscious filtering roles, sending only 'selective' information that they feel fills basic information needs. The question of why knowledge-based development practice is falling short in this Southern location, as Figure 11.1 illustrates, is informed by the findings emerging from the empirical study.

11.2 Interpreting the findings: how do we explain the model?

The empirical findings in this study represent three key outcomes that have a significant impact on the theory and practice of knowledge-based development aid and its capacity to promote more positive development outcomes amongst marginalised groups: embedded exclusion in the dominant knowledge infrastructure prevents access; the

pursuit of 'symbolic value' acts as a quasi-measure of success; and there is an ongoing need to problematise 'the South'. Each will be looked at in turn.

11.2.1 Embedded exclusion prevents access

Information and knowledge, as well as their delivery, are not value neutral, where discursive and normative barriers embedded both in the information and its delivery act as barriers to the accessibility of information.

Exercised both through agency and structural power, this study has found that knowledge-based development practice is unable to effectively mitigate against some of the discursive barriers embedded in information and any resultant knowledge. Mechanisms to address the shortcomings of the World Bank knowledge paradigm, particularly those attempting to decommodify information, are not robust enough to counter exclusion from the dominant knowledge infrastructure. Information, in both its production and delivery, is imbued with the power imbalances of the discursive spaces from which it emerges. This is a point overlooked by critiques of the World Bank paradigm which claim that improved access to ICTs will democratise access to, and the use of, information. Improving access to ICTs may address physical or technical barriers to the accessibility of information, but they deny, as this analysis has repeatedly asserted, the normative and discursive barriers that ICTs embody. New ICTs are only one manifestation of a broader pedagogical landscape embodied in the privileging of the printed word, elite usages of regionally dominant languages (notably in this study Hindi and English), the professionalisation of oral dissemination spaces and other particularised, dominant 'ways of knowing'. Moreover, pedagogical barriers persist, despite the application of correctives that have increasingly become accepted as good knowledge-based development practice for reaching and representing the information needs and views of marginalised groups. This includes, as this study has highlighted, mechanisms such as simplifying language, creating low bandwidth websites, producing text-based emails, ongoing support for documentation and resource centres and translating key publications. These forms of engagement instead create information loops with other elite groups or one-sided communication flows that do little to promote diversity and dialogic partnerships with marginalised groups.

These discursive barriers represent what I term **embedded exclusion**, which is rooted not just in the dominant or transnational ideas and paradigms underpinning development theory and practice frequently targeted by critics of the World Bank paradigm, but is also reflected in the privileging of certain pedagogies of learning and ways of knowing, embodied in the design, coding, presentation and delivery of information that underpins the dominant knowledge infrastructure. Extrapolating from this finding, the discursive location of users and recipients on GDKS's mailing list, manifested in their educational and professional attainment, is tied inexorably to the dominant knowledge infrastructure. Rather than locating these respondents as change agents capable of subverting dominant 'ways of knowing', as Northern donors and organisations like GDKS expect, their engagement with development discourse and practice reinforces embedded exclusions. Despite their geographical proximity to marginalised groups, the persistence of embedded exclusions circumscribes the capacity of these Southern-based individuals and organisations to reach and represent the views and information needs of marginalised groups. As this finding contradicts the expectations of Northern donors and organisations like GDKS engaging with organisations in the Global South, there are significant implications for the broader capacity of progressive knowledge practices to deliver information as a key input into development processes.

11.2.2 'Symbolic value' acts as a quasi-measure of success

The production and dissemination of increased volumes of information to address perceived information gaps by information brokers has become an end in itself, de-linked from any measure of influence or impact on more progressive development outcomes.

Mirroring the neoliberal argument for the potential for wealth to 'trickle-down' to improve the lives of the poor, this study has demonstrated that the promotion of information dissemination as a form of development aid persists in the belief that the production of more and more information will result in a similar 'trickle down' effect. In this paradigm, information, either on its own and/or through the work of intermediaries, will filter to wherever there is a need or demand exists. Respondents in this study acknowledge that they are unsure of whether their limited efforts at applying correctives,

including translation and simplification, as well as decommodification through support for websites and resource centres, really make any difference to the availability, accessibility or uptake of information, particularly for marginalised groups.

Drawing on Tvedt's (1998) suggestion that NGOs 'basically learn and rhetorically internalize the same language', which he identifies as part of a 'symbolic order' embodied in 'routinized practices' (section 3.3.1.1 in chapter three), I would argue that information production and dissemination may be characterised as one such 'routinized practice'. Ebrahim (2002), drawing on March (1988), further suggests that the perception of the value of information production and consumption to an organisation is tied up with notions of competence, legitimacy and social efficacy. In his comparative study of two NGOs, Ebrahim (2002: 105) argues that the generation of information occurs largely for symbolic purposes. Extending this contention, I would argue that the overarching purpose of information production and dissemination amongst Northern and Southern (women's) NGOs in this study, clearly themselves operating within the discursive framework of transnational development theory and practice, is largely symbolic, where these processes become, to a significant extent, ends in themselves. In this context the function of information gathering reproduces certain accepted norms and expectations of organisational functions. The symbolic value of information production and dissemination is therefore multi-faceted:

- These processes represent success, which in turn serve to reinforce particular class or elite positions held by information intermediaries;
- It reinforces the authority or expertise of the intermediary in a particular field of research, strengthening the case both for existing and future funding;
- Given the discursive frameworks that the publications produced by these organisations tend to occupy, which are underpinned by the English language and the application of Western or, in this case, elite Indian feminist paradigms, they serve to reinstitute dominant, frequently transnational or elite ways of knowing or knowledge production;
- Donors are seen to be engaging in key debates with Northern and Southern women's NGOs through funding such organisations, thus creating a sense that donors are open to 'alternative' ideas and approaches;

- The intermediaries themselves have a quantitative measurement tool through which to identify success (section 4.3 in chapter four); and

- All the actors involved retain a sense that a greater pool of knowledge has been made available to fill the perceived information gap that all these development stakeholders agree is hindering more progressive development processes.

Indeed, in the race to create this symbolic value, embodied as one element of the 'routinized practices' of NGOs that represent measures of upward accountability, thorny questions around the capacity of knowledge-based development aid to fundamentally inform or support more informed decision-making processes and subvert dominant development paradigms remain unanswered.

11.2.3 Problematising the 'South'

The North-South binary of development discourse prevents actors based in the 'South', including women, from being problematised as sites of power, thus obscuring the effects of embedded exclusions manifested through class and educational divides that reinforce inequalities within Southern contexts.

'Poor' countries are not homogenous but, like Northern or developed countries, are embedded with multiple, competing and overlapping histories and movements that have shaped class inequalities in particularised ways. Yet there persists in development practice a tendency on the part of Northern donors and NGOs, imbibed in turn by Southern-based individuals and groups, to use essentialising terms such as 'Southern NGO' to describe a whole range of groups, from rural cooperatives to elite urban lobby groups (section 3.3.1.3 in chapter three), without any further differentiation by any other axis of difference, notably class. In practice the term 'Southern' is attached variously to 'NGOs', 'intermediaries', 'women' or 'researchers', creating terms that are not merely discursive shorthands but active categories in knowledge-based development practice that carry with them connotations of individuals or groups who, by definition, are perceived to experience a paucity of both financial and informational resources. The release of a report, a book, or the launch of an initiative by Southern-based individuals or organisations, or the convening of a symposium, conference or seminar in the Global

South, are perceived as contributions to democratising knowledge production and dissemination. The inclusion of locales and actors in and of the Global South is presumed to represent the inclusion of viewpoints grounded in Southern realities.

This essentialising tendency has real material effects on the distribution of both informational and financial resources meant to promote development between marginalised groups and those with access to donors and the dominant knowledge infrastructure in Southern contexts. It is an oversight that also prevents any problematisation of Southern-based individuals or groups as important constitutive elements of the dominant knowledge infrastructure. Where Northern organisations are looking for a 'Southern' voice, there is a real danger that they will overlook the subtle ways in which elite groups in Southern contexts, themselves 'educated' and aligned with 'development', have the power to shape the 'problems' of development as rooted in the relative 'ignorance' of the subaltern (see Pigg, 1992 in chapter eight). Moreover, those organisations or individuals who are able to supply 'Southern' narratives are themselves likely to consist of a self-selecting group who must share certain characteristics to participate in the discursive spaces occupied by Northern donors and organisations like GDKS. This participation is contingent on, for instance, access to the Internet and a command of the English language, whether these stakeholders are located in the North or the South. Those people who have access to networks and thus global knowledge resources are in turn more likely to occupy the discursive spaces within the dominant knowledge infrastructure that allows them to absorb and utilise new information to create and internalise new knowledge, further exacerbating inequality in the uptake of global information resources that are meant to assist development efforts. Whilst the analysis here has been circumscribed by the particularised historical intersection of colonialism with India's caste system, this finding nonetheless raises concerns around the nature of elite formations in other Southern contexts that potentially mediate the nature of, and access to, the dominant knowledge infrastructure, as these run contrary to the expectations of Northern donors and organisations like GDKS. This in turn has profound consequences for how knowledge-based development initiatives continually conceptualise as a key programme feature the privileging of 'Southern' voices and

knowledge as correctives or counterpoints to Northern hegemony in the development knowledge infrastructure.

11.3 Policy and practice implications: recommendations

To what extent can Figure 11.1 be extrapolated to inform knowledge-based development practice beyond New Delhi, India? How might the lessons from this research be extrapolated to other information intermediaries who commodify information as a standalone mechanism to promote more positive development outcomes?

11.3.1 Extrapolating these findings beyond India

As the foregoing analysis emphasises, class and caste stratify Indian society, leading to the creation and persistence of a ruling, elite class. What must be noted here is that India is atypical in a developing country sense, insofar as it maintains a complex research and knowledge infrastructure that exists alongside extreme poverty. Mirroring the knowledge infrastructure of many Northern countries and a handful of Southern countries including Brazil and Chile, India has always invested heavily in higher education, maintaining vast governance structures supported by research and advisory councils in diverse subject areas which, as we saw in section 6.2 in chapter six, underpin its ambitions to become a 'knowledge society'. As such, it would seem reasonable to assert that any research dealing in elites in India is likely to encounter more sophisticated class division than in many other contexts. What is important for the purpose of this research is to highlight degrees of exclusion. So whereas India may be relatively unique in its contiguous maintenance of highly educated elites with extreme poverty, the existence of a powerful ruling class typified by its capacity to function in English and its access to world-class postgraduate education and training is not unique to India. In short, India is exceptional in terms of the sheer size and complexity of its ruling classes, but only represents an extreme version of how ruling classes are likely to exist and operate in a range of Southern contexts.

11.3.2 Extrapolating to the work of other information intermediaries

As we saw in chapter five, strategies to address perceived information deficits in the Global South and to promote a more participatory knowledge infrastructure undertaken by GDKS are echoed across the informational work of a range of diverse Northern and

Southern development stakeholders. Some of the implications of these shared emphases on improving the availability and accessibility of information have been drawn out in the empirical analyses as concerns not just for GDKS but for knowledge-based development practice more broadly. The implications for knowledge-based development stakeholders of the three key outcomes of this study highlighted above may be drawn out in relation to two key concerns: targeting change agents and monitoring and evaluating progressive knowledge-based development practices. Each will be looked at in turn.

11.3.2.1 Targeting key stakeholders

What this study has revealed is that information services need clearer target audiences and need more robust mechanisms to verify that those stakeholders being targeted are likely to be change agents. There are increasingly lists of organisations compiled by reputable organisations, including government agencies, which are available in the public domain and may offer a good starting point in building an updated database of stakeholders to target in different Southern contexts. Contacting people or organisations on lists like this may in turn reveal domestic-level networks and other organisations or grassroots partners that are outside of information loops and who may find access to free Northern information services extremely useful. This was an issue in this field study, as recipients of GDKS materials could not be relied upon to forward GDKS information, resulting in many women's organisations remaining unaware of the services GDKS offers. This would suggest that information intermediaries need to search and engage more actively for appropriate linkages with Southern groups.

Nor is it likely that passive, albeit targeted, information dissemination will improve information uptake, for the range of reasons cited by respondents in this study and outlined above. It is not enough to simply target a particular 'audience' defined by a label such as 'policymakers' with a 'newsletter' which is unlikely to have much impact. In addition to creating streamlined and more targeted information products, information intermediaries need also to consider the range of diverse social, political, economic and cultural contexts in which stakeholders are likely to be embedded, and how these affect their capacity to participate in decision-making processes or to facilitate dialogue amongst constituents of their programmes. This learning requires more active

engagement with stakeholder groups that must consider all aspects of information communication, including to whom information should be sent, what kind of information is useful, in what format and language that information is optimally communicated and in what stage of a decision-making process or a project cycle information is likely to have the greatest impact, given a particular socio-economic, political or cultural context. Whilst this is extremely difficult to achieve in practice, establishing information communications practices that work towards this ideal is crucial if the work of information intermediaries is to have longer-term impact and relevance. One way of approaching information communications, given the invariably limited resources available to information intermediaries in both Northern and Southern contexts, would be to narrow considerably the definitions of target groups. This would involve, for instance, moving away from targeting, 'policymakers in the Global South' (which is an essentially meaningless category), to, for example, 'senior parliamentarians in the Ministry of Trade in India'. These links could be facilitated either in consultation or in conjunction with Southern partners, who could identify individuals or groups who may be persuaded, or who could help persuade others, working in that area. This kind of work could be underpinned by a mapping exercise similar to that undertaken in Figures 7.1 and 7.2 in chapter seven in this study, providing an overview of where stakeholders are geographically located and whether any insights may be gleaned either into geographical gaps or into the relative discursive location of recipients or users. This would have the dual effect of promoting more diverse Southern involvement as per the expectations of progressive knowledge practice whilst retaining a significant catalytic role in overall information dissemination and awareness-raising.

11.3.2.2 Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

The M&E of the work of information intermediaries, reflected both in the outcomes of this study as well as the available literature on the issue, clearly needs to be strengthened. As this study has demonstrated, confidence in ad hoc, qualitative feedback that is not systematically collected and that relies on users to faithfully report both how they used information as well as to represent accurately the work that they do and the groups they reach, is seriously flawed. The claims organisations make in relation to their work, particularly around networking and the capacity to facilitate dialogue in relation to

the information needs of marginalised groups needs to be examined thoroughly. Producing and disseminating information to the 'Global South' may not be approached as an end in itself, where information is then expected to travel to where it is needed through the efforts of Southern intermediaries. Rather, given the empirical findings emerging from this study in relation to the networking efforts of the collective case study organisations, this type of passive engagement is not necessarily going to improve Southern usage, nor will it increase access for marginalised groups and influence decision-making processes.

Moreover, any attempts to decentralise information services through the promotion of active stakeholder partnerships with Southern partners needs to be undertaken with great care. None of the collective case study organisations had strong systems in place to identify the information needs of partners or constituents, and to follow-through on these, even though anecdotally they all felt that they were either filling, or committed to filling, information gaps for and about women. Given this, it would seem prudent to delve beyond how organisations represent themselves and what they claim to be doing versus what they are actually able to achieve given resource and time constraints. This is notoriously difficult to do as respondents in this study were not necessarily reflexive and were very non-specific when talking in particular about the impact of their work and how this is assessed.

We can therefore conclude by suggesting that the correctives under scrutiny in this study, including simplifying or tailoring the information itself, or diversifying the forms and media through which it is distributed, are thus tinkering at the edges of a neoliberal self-help model predicated on the capacity of the individual information seeker. The empirical chapters suggest that tweaking with these mechanisms or assumptions at the edges is not enough, as the analysis raises essential questions around the very basis of how information is produced and disseminated within the dominant knowledge infrastructure, invoking class-based inequalities as a key underpinning structural limitation to facilitating broader inclusion. Class inequality is not so easily dismantled by improving the amount of translation or creating more accessible websites, although certainly better targeted information interventions may indeed have a better chance of achieving broader impacts.

11.4 A note on future research

The key findings of this thesis may be used to inform future study. One key area for future research raised by this thesis is how notions of progressive knowledge practice are manifested in non-English language contexts. This could be particularly interesting, for instance, in Latin America where postcolonial legacies are linked to Spain, or to Francophone Africa where the postcolonial experience is shaped by the historical legacies of France. How does mainstream development discourse differ and how is it similar in these non-English language contexts and how might the findings from the present study be extrapolated to these contexts?

Another interesting area for future research would be to consider how progressive knowledge practice is triangulated with other forms of intervention amongst a wider range of development NGOs. How might the findings from this study inform these processes, and what are their limitations? In this context, it would also be useful to interrogate further the extent to which urban/rural divides affect progressive knowledge practices, perhaps through a comparison between India and another differentially located postcolonial state.

Finally, it would be interesting to pursue tracer studies that attempt to actually ascertain the impact of a particular information dissemination exercise. Given the range of work being undertaken to promote more informed decision-making through knowledge-based development aid, actually following the information trail to interrogate impact would be an important contribution to knowledge-based development discourse and practice. This question could be approached from two angles. The first angle could be to interrogate the impact of the 'Southern voice' so assiduously sought out by a range of Northern development stakeholders. This could be achieved by considering the extent to which Southern views, represented through information dissemination to Northern contexts including through intermediaries like GDKS, actually influence decision-making outcomes in Northern contexts. The second angle could consist of taking the present study further by attempting to assess the impact of knowledge practices amongst marginalised groups in Southern contexts. Whilst the present study has identified the limitations to progressive responses to the World Bank knowledge paradigm, there is as yet little insight as to how these knowledge practices are perceived and experienced by marginalised

groups. What works and what does not work, and how do those groups who are the target of these types of interventions view knowledge practices? How do they perceive their information needs and the optimal ways to have these met? How do they view the relative urgency of their information needs in comparison to their other (material or spiritual) needs?

Whilst clearly addressing some critical gaps in the development literature, the present study has also laid the foundations for future investigations in the field.

Appendix A: Full list of interview respondents[62]

India						
Name	**Position**	**Stakeholder type[63]**	**Organisational focus**	**Age Group**	**Gender**	**Date**
1. **AA**	Founder	Media	Online development communications portal	20-29	Man	25/1/07
2. **AJ**	Coordinator	Southern NGO	Slum-based community centre	40-49	Woman	8/2/07
3. **AK**	Founder/Director	Southern NGO (CCSO 5)	Indian information intermediary offering consultancy services for research, capacity-building and monitoring and evaluation from a gender perspective	30-39	Woman	17/02/07
4. **AP**	Director	Media (CCSO 10)	Women's media organisation	40-49	Woman	5/3/07
5. **AR**	Librarian	Research organisation (CCSO 2)	Indian research centre on gender, employment and economic rights	30-39	Woman	1/2/07 and 14/2/07
6. **AS**	Resource Officer, HIV/AIDS	INGO	Maternal health INGO – South Asia head office	20-29	Woman	23/2/07
7. **AU**	Librarian	Multilateral agency	Women's IGO – South Asia Regional Office	20-29	Woman	22/2/07
8. **AV**	Librarian	Research organisation	Large Indian research centre on women and development	50-59	Woman	2/2/07

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[62] Information correct at time of interview

[63] These stakeholder types are drawn from the target audiences identified by GDKS as outlined in section 4.4 in chapter four. CCSO refers to those people interviewed as part of the collective case study, also outlined in the methodology in chapter four. A summary of the CCSOs along with their corresponding numbers used in the empirical analysis is available as Appendix B.

		(CCSO 3)				
9. BB	Manager-Operations	Southern NGO (CCSO 4)	Large Indian research and service NGO focusing on the empowerment of women and other marginalised groups	30-39	Woman	5/3/07
10. DK	Office Manager	Southern NGO (CCSO 5)	Indian information intermediary offering consultancy services for research, capacity-building and monitoring and evaluation from a gender perspective	20-29	Woman	17/2/07
11. DM	Programme Associate	Southern NGO	Indian women's peace and conflict NGO – South Asia region	20-29	Woman	7/2/07
12. FA	Retired Professor	Education organisation	Indian university	60-69	Woman	29/10/08
13. FM	Deputy Director	Multilateral agency	Women's IGO – South Asia Regional Office	50-59	Woman	22/2/07
14. FT	Assistant Librarian	Research organisation (CCSO 14)	Large Indian mainstream research centre on social policy and rights	40-49	Man	22/2/07
15. GC	Director	Southern NGO (CCSO 9)	Indian Service NGO focusing on women's and adolescent empowerment in urban slums and villages	50-59	Woman	7/2/07
16. GG	Senior Information Officer	Multilateral agency	Women's IGO – South Asia Regional Office	50-59	Woman	22/2/07
17. IA	Research Fellow	Research organisation (CCSO 3)	Large Indian research centre on women and development	50-59	Woman	24/1/07
18. JG	Professor (Visiting Professor in India at time of interview)	Education organisation	Northern university	50-59	Woman	24/1/07

19. JS	Co-Founder; Founder	Southern NGO (CCSO 13)	Indian women's NGO focusing on promoting women's empowerment through education and literacy; Lesbian, gay, bisexual and Transsexual (LGBT) network	40-49	Woman	1/3/07
20. KCK	Senior bureaucrat	Southern government	Indian government ministry	40-49	Man	14/2/07
21. KM	Research Officer	OECD-DAC agency	Bilateral donor (2) – India head office	30-39	Man	6/2/07
22. KS	Sector Head	OECD-DAC agency	Northern government intercultural organisation – India branch	50-59	Woman	2/2/07
23. M	Field Supervisor	Southern NGO	Slum-based community centre	20-29	Woman	8/2/07
24. M	Librarian	Research organisation (CCSO 17)	Indian mainstream research and advocacy organisation focusing on democracy and governance	20-29	Woman	10/05/2009
25. MA	Officer, Economic Empowerment Programmes	Multilateral agency	Women's IGO – South Asia Regional Office	30-39	Woman	22/2/07
26. NB	Associate Director	INGO	Health and sexuality INGO – India branch	30-39	Woman	24/1/07
27. NJ	Executive Officer in the Office of the Representative	Multilateral agency	Children's IGO – India office	20-29	Woman	16/2/07
28. NJ	Former website manager for online development information portal	OECD-DAC agency	Northern government cultural organisation – India branch	30-39	Woman	2/2/07
29. NS	Resource Centre Coordinator	OECD-DAC agency	Bilateral donor (1) – India head office	30-39	Woman	6/2/2007
30. NS	Senior Programme Officer	Research organisation	Northern development research centre, South Asia Regional Office	30-39	Woman	19/2/07
31. PDD	Joint Secretary	Southern	Indian government ministry	40-49	Woman	4/4/07

			government			
32. PM	Co-Founder and Director, Programs	Southern NGO (CCSO 11)	Indian women's sexuality and empowerment NGO	40-49	Woman	2/3/07
33. PT	Receptionist	INGO	Northern development and poverty INGO – India, Nepal and Sri Lanka office	40-49	Woman	22/2/07
34. RB	Research Coordinator	Research organisation (CCSO 2)	Indian research centre on gender, employment and economic rights	40-49	Woman	1/2/07 and 14/2/07
35. RC	Founder/Executive Director	Southern NGO (CCSO 6)	Indian women's sexuality and reproductive health NGO	40-49	Woman	1/3/07
36. RK	Regional Programme Manager	INGO	Children's rights INGO - South and Central Asia office	30-39	Man	29/1/07
37. RT	Senior Gender Specialist	Multilateral agency	IGO – New Delhi office	30-39	Woman	7/2/07
38. S	Librarian	Southern NGO	Large Indian mainstream service NGO	20-29	Woman	5/3/07
39. SB	Human Rights Education Coordinator	INGO	Human Rights INGO – India office	30-39	Man	22/1/07
40. SG	Lecturer, Women's Studies Programme	Education organisation	Indian university	20-29	Woman	1/2/07
41. SR	Professor, Geography	Education organisation	Indian university	50-59	Woman	19/1/07
42. SS	Librarian	Southern NGO (CCSO 13)	Indian women's NGO focusing on promoting women's empowerment through education and literacy	20-29	Woman	26/2/07
43. SZH	Librarian	Southern NGO (CCSO 16)	Large Indian mainstream research and service NGO focusing on governance and participation	40-49	Man	5/3/07

44. T	Assistant Librarian	Southern NGO (CCSO 12)	Indian sexuality resource centre	20-29	Woman	03/02/07
45. TKS	Retired Senior Advisor/ Consultant	Southern government	Indian government bureaucracy	60-69	Woman	19/1/07
46. VN	Founder and Director	Southern NGO (CCSO 1)	Indian women's political rights and representation NGO	50-59	Woman	27/2/07
47. XH	Director	Southern NGO (CCSO 12)	Indian sexuality resource centre	40-49	Woman	2/2/07
North						
48. AG	GDKS EIC member and Director	Southern NGO	Indian women's ICT research and practice NGO	30-39	Woman	25/03/09
49. AR	Associate Professor; Director	Education organisation	Northern University; Northern-based mainstream online information portal	30-39	Woman	27/6/07
50. CH	Head of Policy	Northern women's NGO	Northern women's research and practice NGO	30-39	Woman	17/03/09
51. HR	Manager	Northern NGO	GDKS	40-49	Woman	23/11/06 and 27/11/06
52. ML	Communications Consultant	OECD-DAC agency	Bilateral donor head office	40-49	Woman	24/2/09
53. SJ	Senior Gender Officer	Northern NGO	GDKS	30-39	Woman	23/10/06
54. ZK	Gender Policy Specialist and NGO Network Chair	Northern NGO	Northern research and practice development NGO	30-39	Woman	9/3/09

Appendix B: Full list of collective case study organisations

Collective case study organisation (CCSO) Number	Organisational type[64]	Organisational focus[65]
CCSO 1	Southern NGO	Indian women's political rights and representation NGO
CCSO 2	Research organisation	Indian research centre on gender, employment and economic rights
CCSO 3	Research organisation	Large Indian research centre on women and development
CCSO 4	Southern NGO	Large Indian research and service NGO focusing on the empowerment of women and other marginalised groups
CCSO 5	Southern NGO	Indian information intermediary offering consultancy services for research, capacity-building and monitoring and evaluation from a gender perspective
CCSO 6	Southern NGO	Indian women's sexuality and reproductive health NGO
CCSO 7	Southern NGO	Indian women's empowerment and consciousness-raising NGO
CCSO 8	Southern NGO	Indian health and development service NGO for women and adolescents
CCSO 9	Southern NGO	Indian service NGO focusing on women's and adolescent empowerment in urban slums and villages
CCSO 10	Media	Indian women's media organisation
CCSO 11	Southern NGO	Indian women's sexuality and empowerment NGO
CCSO 12	Southern NGO	Indian sexuality resource centre
CCSO 13	Southern NGO	Indian women's NGO focusing on promoting women's empowerment through education and literacy
CCSO 14	Research organisation	Large Indian mainstream research centre on social policy and rights – Women's Unit
CCSO 15	Research organisation /Southern government	Large Indian research, training and documentation centre focused on women and children closely affiliated with the Government of India (GOI)[66]

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[64] This heading refers to GDKS's target audiences as described in the methodology in chapter four.

[65] This heading is drawn from Appendix A to maintain the anonymity of organisations being studied whilst providing insights into the nature of the work these organisations undertake.

[66] This organisation is fully funded by government, but as an arms' length organisation, or governmental non-governmental organisation (GONGO), as some call it. As such, whilst it is not really government in the

CCSO 16	Southern NGO	Large Indian mainstream research and service NGO focusing on governance and participation – Gender Unit
CCSO 17	Research organisation	Indian mainstream research and advocacy organisation focusing on democracy and governance – Gender Unit

List of additional resource centres for analysis in section 9.3.3

Organisational type	Organisational focus
1. OECD-DAC agency	Northern government intercultural organisation – India branch
2. Multilateral agency	IGO – New Delhi office
3. Multilateral agency	Women's IGO – South Asia Regional Office
4. Southern NGO	Large Indian mainstream service NGO

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strictest sense, their work does offer a perspective on what the government considers to be appropriate for work undertaken in the name of women's empowerment and development.

Appendix C: Semi-structured interview checklist for interviews with GDKS staff

1. How would you describe what GDKS does?

2. What are GDKS's primary objectives?

3. What mechanisms does GDKS use to achieve its mission and objectives?

4. How would you describe GDKS in one or two words and its role in the gender and development community?

5. Who is the audience for GDKS work? Who are you thinking of when you produce the work that you do?

6. How do your information outputs differ to those organisations with a specific advocacy and lobbying remit?

7. How does your commitment to partnership and being more user-led operate in practice?

8. You are also committed to reaching non-gender specialists. How do you achieve this in practice?

9. Would you say there is a conflict or tension between trying to engage the mainstream versus taking a more radical approach?

10. What are your main information products and services? Have they changed at all since I was working here?

11. What is your role specifically as manager?

12. How does GDKS decide what is appropriate GDKS content?

13. What are your editorial policies?

14. Who are the stakeholders you discuss with whom you network?

15. What is the role of new ICTs in your work?

16. How would you characterise GDKS's content and style?

17. How do GDKS users and subscribers respond to the editorial work that goes into your information products?

18. Do you undertake any monitoring and evaluation and if so what is the nature of the feedback you receive?

19. What do you think GDKS subscribers do with the materials they receive?

20. Do you think there is something unique about how women's organisations use these materials as opposed to a mainstream organisation?

21. What makes GDKS unique compared to other Northern women's organisations?

22. What do you think GDKS's contribution would be to organisations working on gender in India?

23. Do you feel GDKS information products contribute to processes of women's empowerment?

Appendix D: Semi-structured interview checklist for respondents based in the North

For respondents based at women's NGOs

1. What is your role?

    a. Do information intermediaries like GDKS help in your work?

2. Do you consider yourself/your NGO to be an information intermediary?

    a. How do you fulfil this role?

3. How important is the role of information intermediary for developing contexts and to promoting more positive development outcomes?

4. What is K4Dev or intermediary good practice?

    a. In your opinion and your existing awareness of what GDKS does, do they represent good practice?

    b. Why or why not?

5. Your NGO appears, like others, to prioritise 'Southern voices'.

    a. How do you understand the term 'Southern'?

    b. Is this merely a geographical distinction or are there other criteria?

6. Whom do you consider to be a 'Southern feminist'?

    a. What is the criteria for being considered a 'Southern' feminist?

7. Why is K4Dev important?

    a. How would it optimally work for Southern stakeholders?

    b. How does that compare to how it does work?

    c. How might barriers be overcome?

8. What is special about women's NGOs?

    a. Do you believe in a kind of female solidarity?

    b. How does this operate in practice?

9. Any other views on GDKS?

For respondents based in other information intermediaries

1. Can you describe the work of your organisation?

2. Is there a gender element to it? If so, what does that consist of?

3. In your work you seem to prioritise 'Southern' voices.

    a. How do you understand the term 'Southern'?

    b. Is this merely a geographical distinction or are there other criteria?

    c. How do you engage with Southern stakeholders?

4. What mechanisms do you use to address concerns around accessibility?

5. What affect does your Northern location have, if any, on your capacity to achieve your objectives?

6. Do you face any language issues? How do you address these?

7. Do you have any regional focus?

8. What are your different information services or products?

9. Do you undertake any monitoring and evaluation? How do your donors impact on questions of evaluation and impact?

10. How do you recruit authors and contributors for your information products?

11. Do you have any feedback on who is using your outputs?

For respondents working with donors

1. Why is this donor funding knowledge services?

2. What are the expected outcomes and what is K4Dev meant to achieve?

3. How does the donor hope/presume K4Dev will work in practice?

4. Are there are any recognised limitations/shortcomings?

5. How is success or failure to be measured?

6. What would you consider to be K4Dev good practice in terms of the role of an information intermediary such as GDKS?

7. How would you describe this role and how would it optimally function?

    a. To what extent does GDKS meet these criteria?

    b. How do they fall short?

8. In a recent evaluation, two key objectives against which GDKS was being measured were increased Southern focus and focusing energy on development impacts, with a particular emphasis on 'Southern involvement'.

    a) What are the criteria for this involvement?

    b) Why is this important?

    c) How is success to be measured both

- In terms of how much Southern involvement has been achieved? And
- The development impact of this involvement?
2. How do these objectives reflect the donors' own priorities in relation to K4Dev?

9. You have recently been involved in a consultation for a donor engagement strategy, where you discuss wanting to reach marginalised groups, particularly the poor, as their voices are important – how was this facilitated?
1. How were target groups decided upon and contacted?
2. How were concerns around accessibility dealt with?
3. What were the criteria for involvement?
4. Were there definitions of marginality in terms of who accessed the process and how they were prioritised?
5. What were the criteria for marginality?
6. How many 'marginal' people were involved via more accessible mechanisms?
10. What are your thoughts on how you measure impact?

For respondents externally affiliated to GDKS

1. Please tell me about the work of your organisation.
2. Do you consider yourself an information intermediary?
3. Please tell me about your experience of being part of GDKS's External International Committee (EIC).
4. What was your experience of producing a report for GDKS?
5. What would you consider to be K4Dev good practice in terms of the role of an information intermediary?
6. There is a particular emphasis on the involvement of Southern stakeholders on the part of GDKS and other Northern organisations, either as partners, or as leaders, in research innovation.
   a. Why is this important?
   b. What are the strengths in how GDKS pursues this objective?
   c. What are the shortcomings in GDKS's strategy to pursue this objective?

7. How important are information intermediaries to promoting more positive development outcomes?

8. What constraints do information intermediaries face in achieving change through information production and dissemination?

Appendix E: Semi-structured interview checklist for respondents in India

1. Name of Individual

2. Name of Organisation

3. Mission, Purpose or Objectives

4. Number of staff – office and field, paid and volunteer Board members – paid, voluntary

5. Board member duties

6. Number/%age of female employees

7. Issues or fields of work

8. Nature of work i.e., research, training, advocacy, academic, working with the poor, intermediary organisation or services broker (clarify how poor clients are and the extent to which they do actually work directly with them

9. Geographic areas worked in

10. Target audience or group – women, poor women, particular caste issues, mainstream

11. Sources of funding – if they are not forthcoming, then ascertain proportion of the funding which comes from State contracts, overseas NGOs, private Indian donors, foreign governments, foundations and other Indian NGOs

12. Number of computers and other IT equipment

13. Availability of Internet

14. %age use of email for communications versus phone and face-to-face. What is the preference?

15. %age/proportion of employees with access to IT facilities

16. %age/proportion of employees with access to Internet

17. Regional offices

18. Dissemination: which of the following do you use?

    a. Internet

    b. Email

    c. Printed reports

    d. Books

    e. Journals

    f. Training

    g. Languages

19. Follow-up

    a. How is the publication or its dissemination followed-up?

        i. Where does the information go? How do you ascertain this?

        ii. Does it reach the intended audience? How is this determined? How do you ascertain this?

        iii. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your dissemination?

        iv. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your follow-up?

GDKS and Development Information Services Questions

1. When you need information on a specific topic, where do you look?

    a. Print? Which publications?

    b. Electronic? Which websites or search engines?

    c. Face-to-face or phone – do you contact someone?

    d. Colleague? Are they a specialist?

2. When you receive a GDKS publication or other newsletter like it,

    a. Is it circulated?

    b. Who uses these?

    c. How are they used?

    d. How often are they used?

3. Receiving research/information

a. Do you receive publications/notices/information bulletins from external sources?

    i. Is it circulated?

    ii. Who uses these?

    iii. How are they used?

    iv. How often are they used?

b. Do you receive training from external sources?

    i. Who is involved in this training?

    ii. How is this training used?

    iii. How do you interact with your constituents?

    iv. Do you provide them with information? What types? What mediums?

4. What impression do you have of the following publication of GDKS (show publication)? Possible prompts:

a. For what is it useful?

b. What are its limitations?

c. Do you remember a recent GDKS mailing?

d. What do you think of the last material you read?

e. What practical use is it?

f. Do you discuss GDKS work at meetings or training courses?

5. Do they fill an information gap? If so, what gap is that?

a. Which GDKS information services i.e., print or website, do you find most useful?

b. Can you provide specific examples of where you may have used GDKS content?

c. Did you follow-up on the outcome of that work you did, where possible? If so, was GDKS material helpful in achieving that outcome?

d. If you did not use, what were some possible reasons?

e. If it had arrived at a different time or in a different format would it have been more useful?

6. What are your impressions of the nature of GDKS content and language?

a. Is it just Western ideas, or do you find that a range of views of represented?

b. It is far from Indian life or the Indian women's movement?

c. Is the language easy or difficult to understand?

d. Have you or anyone in your organisation read GDKS content and found it difficult to understand? Did you dislike it?

7. Who do you feel the audience is for GDKS materials?

a. Do you feel that it speaks to you in your role as _____? If not, whom do you think it is for?

b. What would you change about it to make it more suitable for your work?

8. Have you used or passed on GDKS materials?

a. If so, when was the last time that happened? With whom, or how have you used them?

9. Had you heard of GDKS prior to working with them? What were you impressions of it before working with it? Have your impressions changed since working with them?

10. The aim of GDKS is to reach a wide range of users with accessible information, privileging in particular Southern voices and Southern case studies. Do you think GDKS achieves this aim?

11. Do you feel that GDKS or organisations like GDKS are contributing to the work of organisations working on gender in India? If so, how?

a. What do you find most useful about them?

b. Can you give me any examples?

12. Is there anything do you feel that is unique about women or women's organisations that information is either used better or differently? Examples?

13. Do you think the publication of this newsletter/pack is a valuable or essential use of resources?

a. If so, why?

b. If not, how might these resources be used better?

14. Do you use any other development information services?

a. If so, which ones?

i. Do you subscribe to electronic or written content or both?

b. What do you use them for?

c. What do you find most useful about them?

d. Can you give me any examples?

15. How does your work contribute to improved development outcomes (where applicable)

Could you provide examples? (contained either in reports or through their narrative)

a. Does GDKS or other Northern/Western development communications services contribute to this? Examples?

b. Are there any obstacles to your organisational mission

c. Are there obstacles to using the information available?

d. Can you provide examples?

For librarians:

Who uses the material in the library? How frequently is the library/resource/documentation centre used?

Additional questions:

1. What is the class and educational background of employees in your organisation?

2. How would you characterise the nature of Indian feminist development discourse?

3. How do you rate the importance of information intermediaries to the work of promoting women's empowerment in the Indian context?

4. How do class/caste politics and elitist attitudes affect the capacity to promote change and deliver improved development outcomes?

5. How would you describe the relationship between the Indian state and Indian NGOs?

6. If K4Dev is not achieving what it is designed to do, what do you think is necessary to promote larger-scale change?

7. Are there any good examples of women's organisations or collectives working together and using available information to promote their own development?

8. What is unique about India or South Asia as compared with other regions of the world?

9. What is the role of donors in promoting or undermining longer-term development objectives?

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