

Water and Development

Lecture 2

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Society and Households

Basic Unit: The Individual or the Household.

- Households: groups of individuals who are biologically interrelated and/or who depend on each other for emotional and biological needs. *The first collective unit.*
- adequate for most situations but not always, e.g., *the role and conditions of women or girls*
- Proximate causes of these may emanate from outside the household, e.g., these may be cultural or economic.

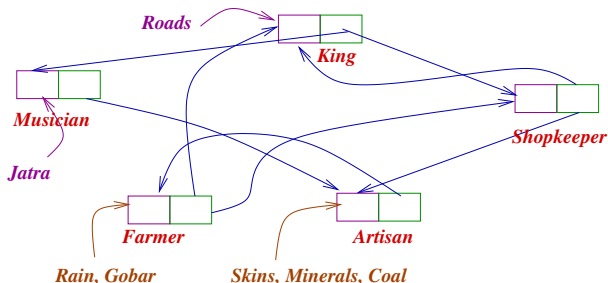
Needs

Having fixed our key interest, i.e., the individual or the household, the development agenda then is to find social structures and practices which best suit the interests and **needs** of the households.

- environmental needs: food, water, shelter, and energy to cook food, for lighting and warmth and so on.
- cultural needs: relationship with other households and with nature. Needs for identity, dignity, community, intimacy and conviviality, narrative and meaning.
 - ▶ life would be boring
 - ▶ life would be impossible: record, organize, transmit and reward knowledge.
- **land etc. are auxiliary**. For example, food \Rightarrow need for land and for irrigation or for forests to hunt, and so on. *sadak* and *bijli*, or education or a ration shop.

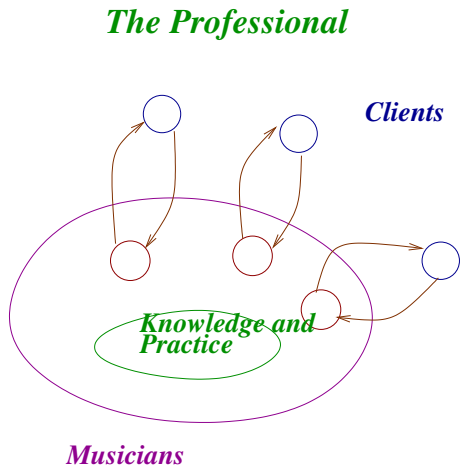
Agents, Roles and transactions

- **Agents**: collection of households, thematically related. Need not be geographically or biologically related.
- **Society** : Panoply of arrangements between agents to provide for basic needs of the households
 - ▶ **well-being** of different agents in a society may be very different.
- Thus, we may say that when agricultural prices fall **labourers** are better off, but **cultivators** are worse off and so are **artisans**.



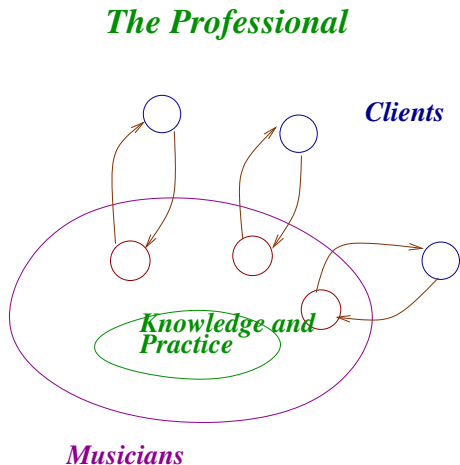
Society-Division of labour

- **The Professional.** Body of knowledge. Charter and clients. Elements of design and implementation. Professional knowledge.
- **Tradesman.** Performance of pre-set activities. May or may not have his/her own tools. Specialized training in ITIs and trade schools. Certification. Adapts to changing scenarios.



Society-Division of labour

- **The Informal Worker.** No set activities. No training. Based on general skills and access to privileges.
- **Delivery of Value.** Transactions may be an exchange of many types of "goods": votes, appreciation, name, fame, money, cultural artefacts, commodities, security, water, food, service, transport.

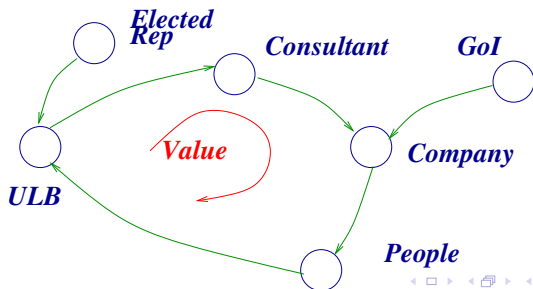


Mess Food

Agent	Gives	Gets	Agent	Based On
Students	Elect	Serves	Secretary	Quality
Students	Pay	Facility	Manager	Bill
Secretary	Supervises		Manager	Competence
Manager	Supervises		Worker	Output
Manager	Pays	Supplies	Supplier	Quality
Manager	Pays	Work	Workers	Hours
Workers	Serve		Students	Food

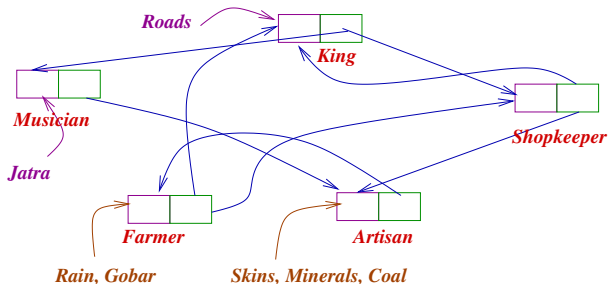
Structure and practices

- Good or bad outcomes are results of:
 - ▶ poor design of social structures and practices
 - ▶ poor functioning of these structures.
- Social Structures: **agents, roles, processes, mechanisms and transactions**
- Connected combination of agents: **social practice**
- Simple: shoe-maker, Complex: Public transport system
- Social Practice: **social purpose and deliver value**



Value earned by agents

- Generated value shared by the agents who participate in that practice.
- **Society:** network of such practices which interact with each other.
- A society delivers welfare to its people only if:
 - ▶ its practices generate sufficient value
 - ▶ it is distributed fairly.
- Basis for analysing equity, sustain-ability and efficiency.



Objectives

Let us attempt to classify social structures broadly, on (i) the types of transaction and (ii) *complex* collectives of agents.

Environment

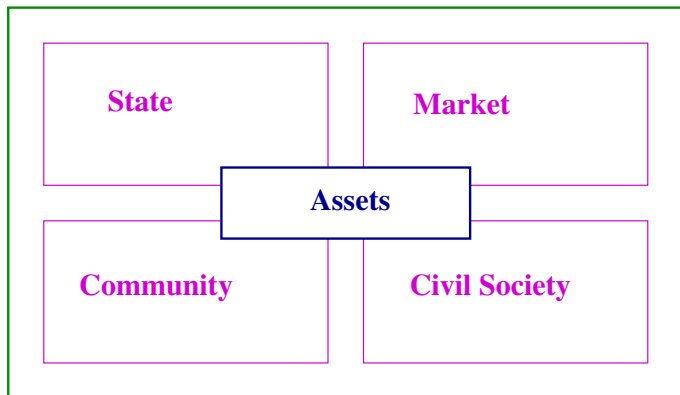


Figure: The basic structure of society

The Market

- production of commodities and services and its distribution.
 - ▶ **tools of production**, i.e., which is used to produce services or commodities.
 - ▶ For example, a truck is a tool to provide *transport*, which is a service.
- presence of money, i.e., a token of indebtedness, value and surplus.
 - ▶ before money: exchange among known people, presents, gifts
 - ▶ institutions, such as companies, brokerages, regulatory bodies.
- Modern day: corporations, employees, simple transactions based on money

The State or the government

- in a democratic framework, is to regulate violence, maintain law and order, enable contracts, and protect property rights and individual dignity.
- Its second role is to enable collective action, e.g., in public transport or a water supply system, a large dam and others,
- to regulate the activities of market agents and *civil society*.

Such collective action allows for a a need of individual households to be met more for people, perhaps more effectively or efficiently or more equitably.

- **Authority of the state:** elected representatives who enact laws.
- the executive (bureaucracy) and the judiciary.

The Indian State

- Federation system of states with a a central government with two houses, viz. the Lok Sabha or direct representatives, and the Rajya Sabha.
- Each state has a state legislative body with a representative (MLA) from a constituency: one tehsil (in Maharashtra).
- **Center List**, (e.g. defense), **State List**, (e.g., rural development functions), and some are **Concurrent**, i.e., both may do.
- Water is in the concurrent list

The Citizen:

- *citizens* receiving *governance services* in return for taxes and usage fees.
- The employees of the state are accountable to the legislative body of representative and through them, to the citizens. MLA may represent over 5 lakh people \Rightarrow thin accountability and familiarity

The 73rd amendment

- To counter this, the 73rd Constitutional amendment brought three major changes:
- *gram panchayat* (GP) as an elected body for each *village*, and the *gram sabha* as the final authority over the gram panchayat decisions,
- it produced a list of activities over which the gram panchayat should have primary control, and finally
- it set up a mechanism for the GP to access state and central funds and to collect local taxes.
- Besides this, it also strengthened the *Zilla Parishad*, an elected body at the district level with some limited powers to tax.

The District

- Important level, after village, is the *district*.
- Administrative head: **District Magistrate and Collector**. **Ultimate Authority**
 - (i) all matters related to land and revenue, fines, penalties and regulation, extraction of natural resources and their distribution, sales of goods and so on,
 - (ii) police functions, arbitration and elementary interpretation of the law, Esp. when one of the parties is the state, and
 - (iii) development functions such as water supply, health, education and so on.
- assisted by the district superintendent of police (SP) and the CEO of the Zilla Parishad, respectively.
- Aided by collectorate, and heads of ULBs. The collector is aided by the *collectorate*,
- Statutory body is the **District Planning Committee**

Civil Society

- **Cultural needs** intimacy, conviviality, identity, narratives and so on. **Also compulsions and coercions.**
- **Examples:** religious associations, education institutions, trusts, cooperatives, loose groups with special interests, collectively owned assets,
- **associations based on community and kinship, membership within caste and sub-caste.**
- **association of professionals**, e.g., or barbers or engineers. These must maintain a body of knowledge, seek approval or *charter* from society, train its agents and to actually deliver service. Most civil society transactions are historical and based on a collective membership.

Civil Society

- Root of development issues: existing and rigid civil society structures which may prevent other associations from arising. For example, an alignment of municipal services by community or socio-economic class may prevent a common understanding of citizen-ship and collective civic behaviour to emerge.
- Poorly performing local or regional cultural associations may allow the market to supply its own cultural products and the subsequent loss of regional role-models.
- Loss of trust is another symptom of poorly performing civil society associations.
- Another common civil society structure are the *village commons*, where a common resource, such as a lake or grasslands, must be preserved through social regulations.
- *social comprehension*, i.e., an understanding of various agents in a society, their roles and behaviours, and the rules governing these.

The structure revisited

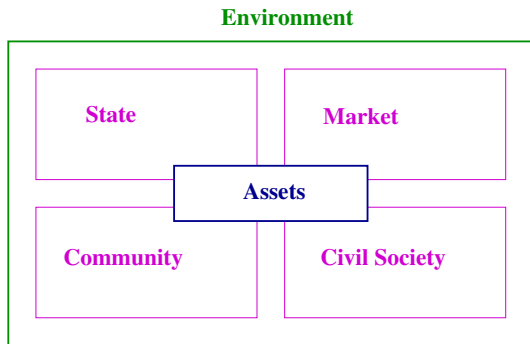


Figure: The basic structure of society

- **State** \Leftrightarrow Equity, **Market** \Leftrightarrow Efficiency, **Civil Society** \Leftrightarrow Sustainability.
- **Assets** : What has been historically achieved.

Assets

- physical assets e.g, bridges and highways, factories and office building. Households are land, the homestead, cattle, a TV, bicycle or a two-wheeler, tools and other productive assets.
- institutions such as public transport which is not only physical assets but also a practice of their use.
 - ▶ documented and formalized, and even held secret as *intellectual property*.
 - ▶ informal and captured in the everyday behaviour of the agents, its schedules and its monthly and yearly rituals.
- physical or conceptual construction, which is amenable to design, which has a clear purpose, which must be built, and which may be used repeatedly.
- cultural asset e.g., library. Another important civil society asset is its university. There are intangible cultural assets as well such as individual reputation and prestige, public image of a political party, or brand equity of a company.

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Analysis of a Social Practice

We have already seen that the value delivered by an agent may be quite difficult to measure, e.g., the value of a security guard for a bungalow. Another important case is that of the value generated by an employee, Esp. in a government. The value delivered by a state department is abstract in many cases, e.g., public health or education, however it must make very concrete payments as salaries. This is ideally done by

- setting delivery objectives and yardsticks,
- designing the structure of the department,
- creating roles and job definitions,
- setting performance metrics for individual roles,
- **devising pay-scales.**

Requires systematic gathering of data which is both internal and external, **knowledge** within the organization.

More examples of Agents

- Shoe company: all activities but division of labour. Also use of money.
- **Teacher**: delivers value to her pupils, whose parents pay fees to the school, and which in turn pays a salary to the teacher. The state may well be contributing a part of the salary.
- value more abstract than immediate satisfaction of a new pair of shoes.
- possibly an investment by the parent of behalf of the pupil for her future well-being, say as a financial consultant.
- state desire: it may want to inculcate a sense of membership in regional and cultural associations, e.g., as a good citizen of Maharashtra.
- **School as a market agent will certainly change value and balance**

Exercise

Exercise: Classify the basic issues such as membership and attributes involved in a transaction. For example, a segregated community of tribal households provides security, collective decision-making, sense of identity and a sense of common destiny. Another example is a community doctor who, while being a market agent, receives trust, respect and the occasional gift, and in return, is also a source of knowledge and advice. Foremost, she must maintain her **reputation**.

Exercise. Identify a service or a product which is now provided by the market but which was earlier provided by civil society. Analyse the chronology and try and explain what may have happened?

Exercise. The word *exploitation*, e.g., of lower castes or economically weak members of society, is used frequently by social scientists. Analyse such a situation in terms of the value created by agents and the value received. Why has such a situation arisen?

Thanks

