Infomediating the Digital Divide:
A Case Study of Sujala Watershed Development Project in Karnataka

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Setting the Context

▸ In a network society, technology is a just a necessary condition influencing the social organisation. (Castells, 2005)

▸ Digital Divide is the unequal access to technology due to physical, social or institutional conditions. (Hilbert, 2011)

▸ Technology has a context for its use and implementation (Norris, 2001)

- ▸ Technology and human actions share an iterative and influential relationship, resulting in technology enactment. (Orlikowski, 1992; 2000)

- ▸ Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) increasingly playing a role in the delivery of development.

- ▸ Increased community participation in development schemes and policies in India
  - ▸ Community needs to be equipped with the requisite knowledge to effectively participate and engage

- Knowledge in ICTD can have the following components (Puri, 2007) :

  - Technology Specific : Scientific knowledge embedded in the technology product in use

  - Application Specific: Specific knowledge emerging from a particular use of technology

  - Community Specific: Indigenous knowledge in the possession of the local community

  - Implementation Specific: Knowledge possessed by the executing institutions

- Emergence of Infomediary in ICTD as intermediating actors who assimilate and organise different kinds of information by the larger community (Fischer, 2010)

How can infomediation facilitate the bringing together of various knowledge (the knowledge alliance) resulting in the effective use of technology?

Method

‣ Case Study of Sujala

‣ 2 Districts of Kolar and Tumkur

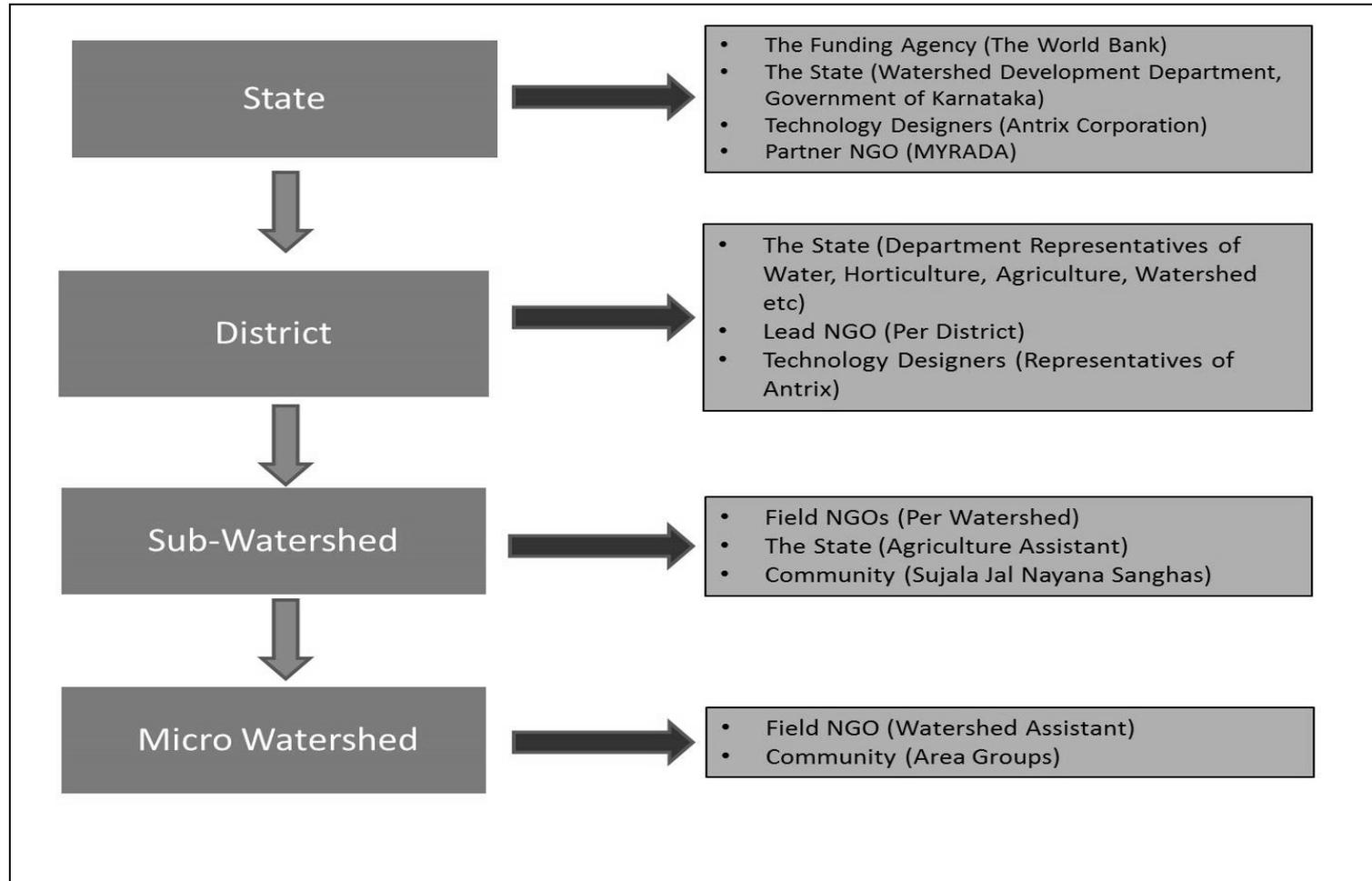‣ Visited in August – September 2014

‣ Who did we talk to?

	Policy Planners and Project Designers	**NGOs (Lead NGO and Field NGO representatives)**	**Community representatives and scheme beneficiaries**	
Rationale for Interviews	To grasp the vision for the scheme and its consequent design, and understand their interactions with technology and other stakeholders	To recognize their role within policy design and comprehend the supporting and hindering factors in fulfilling their role	To understand their role in scheme design and implementation, especially their interactions with the technology used	Respondent Profile

Introducing Sujala

▸ Flagship watershed development project of Government of Karnataka

  ▸ Implemented in three phases (Focus of this paper is Sujala I)

  ▸ Funded by World Bank

  ▸ Implemented in 5 districts: Dharwad, Haveri, Chitradurga, Kolar and Tumkur

▸ Envisioned the use of technology, community engagement and participation, and building of community infrastructure in collaboration with local government officials and non- governmental organisations (NGOs).

Multi Stakeholder Approach of Sujala

State →
- The Funding Agency (The World Bank)
- The State (Watershed Development Department, Government of Karnataka)
- Technology Designers (Antrix Corporation)
- Partner NGO (MYRADA)

District →
- The State (Department Representatives of Water, Horticulture, Agriculture, Watershed etc)
- Lead NGO (Per District)
- Technology Designers (Representatives of Antrix)

Sub-Watershed →
- Field NGOs (Per Watershed)
- The State (Agriculture Assistant)
- Community (Sujala Jal Nayana Sanghas)

Micro Watershed →
- Field NGO (Watershed Assistant)
- Community (Area Groups)

Planning Process of Sujala

- ▶ Formulation of Micro- Watershed Net Plans

  - ▶ Individual structures
  - ▶ Participatory Rural Appraisals (PRAs) for common land structures
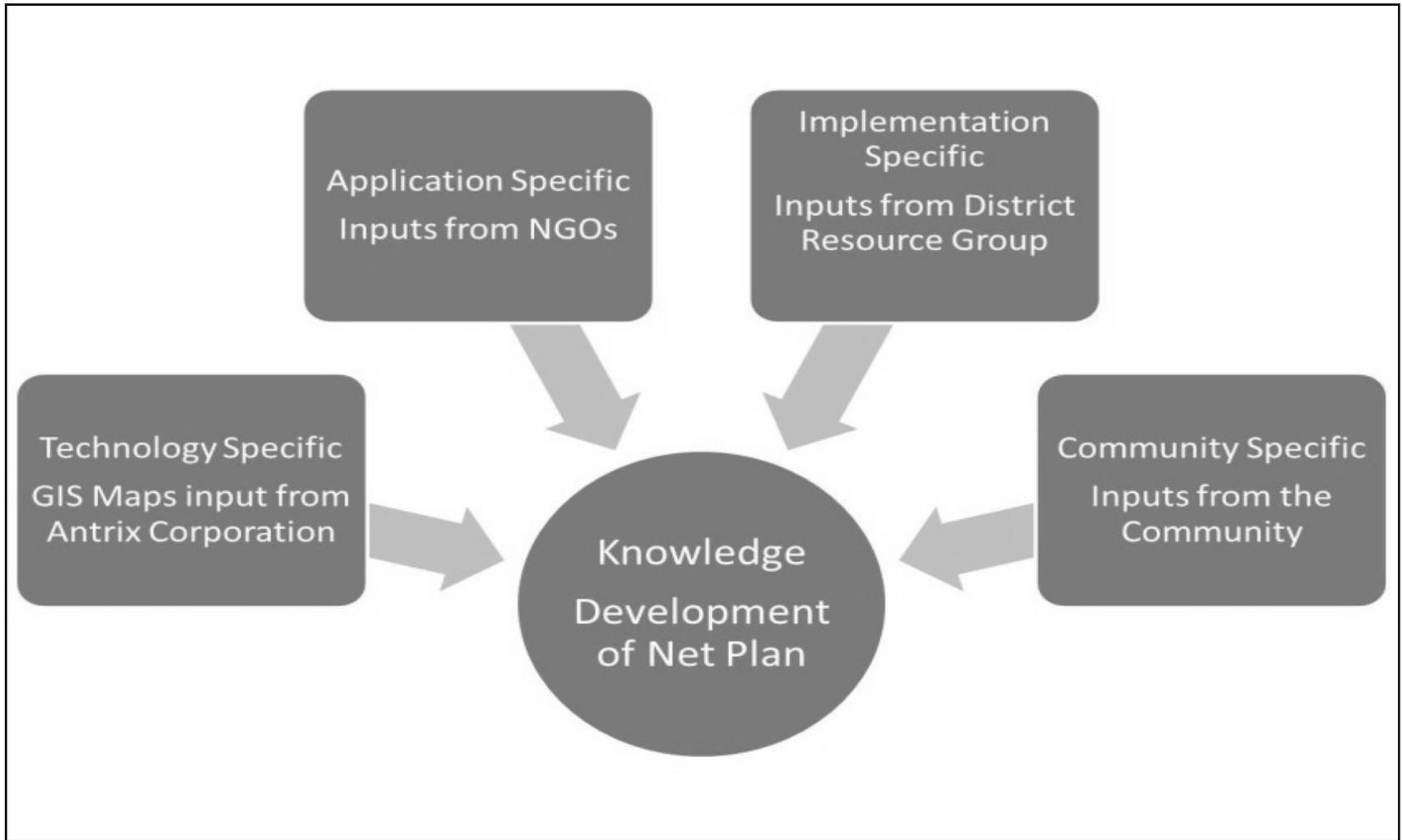
- ▶ Tools used:

  - ▶ GIS Maps comprising multiple layers

    - ▶ Slope map
    - ▶ Cadastral Map
    - ▶ Drainage Map
    - ▶ Soil Map

Use of Maps in Planning Process

▸ To guide decision making

▸ Validation of proposed structures

▸ Conflict Resolution

▸ Mediating Local Power Dynamics

▸ Impact Capture

Transformation of Maps

Soil Map + Drainage Map + Slope Map + Cadastral Map =

Knowledge Alliance in Sujala

Transformation of Map to Knowledge

▶ Role of NGO

    ▶ Facilitating factors

        ▶ Role within the scheme

        ▶ Trust and Social Capital with the community

        ▶ Training with Designers

▶ So what was the role of the NGO?

    ▶ Forging of Knowledge Alliance

Conclusion

▸ Infomediation enabled the community to participate meaningfully in Sujala

▸ Local definition of technology borne out of community's experience

▸ However, need to recognise that given the role of social context, there may be reification of prevailing power structures and relationships

▸ Policy needs to provide for institutional spaces for interaction between different stakeholders, but also equip the participants with requisite capital to effectively participate

▸ Leading to a more equitable use of technology in the process, mediating the digital divide