Power analysis as a tool for ICTD research and project design (Learning Clinic from IT for Change)
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The Power Analysis Model - Handout for Small Groups

The Model
Includes the following elements: Actors -Interests - World Views - Actions - Outcomes
Pertains to the following ICTD Spaces: Technology, Policy and Community

Actors – Who are the actors in this space?

Interests (What is it that actors want in the ICTD space?)
1.   Self interest (Telecentre operator refuses to provide service to someone who cant afford to pay)
2.   Class interests (location of a tele-centre)
3.   Shared interests (broadband wire reaches a village)
4.   Conflicting interests (Open Source and proprietary software)
5.   Long term interests versus short term interests (gender neutrality in interests of sustainability/ scalabilty)
6.   Negotiated interests (Community radio project decides to provide some commercial services)

Questions
1.   *Are there shared interests?*
2.   *Where are interests conflicting?*
3.   *Are any interests compromised to reach 'negotiated' interests?*
4.   *Who is trading what interests?*

World views (What are the belief sets of actors in the ICTD space?)
1.   Individual world view (a tech goodie is worth much more than the mere promise of tech power – gmail, Facebook)
2.   Dominant world view
        Hegemony - the notion of 'invisible power' that shapes the ideological and psychological boundaries of participation.
        Realm of consciousness and culture
        (Financial viability of tele-centres is essential, governments are incapable of acting in ICTD, Open
        Source is clunky)
3.   Folk philosophy - *e-gram* project document (India) - "Most internet users are immature and hence need to be shielded from
        inappropriate content"
4.   Counter cultures (piracy) – accepted as an exception, sometimes feeds dominant interests
5.   ICT as media (both mass media and community media) itself impacts world views

Questions
1.   *What are dominant world views in this space?*
2.   *How are discourses / meanings / terminologies deployed to sustain dominant world views?*
3.   *What ecologies (rewards and punishments) sustain world views?*
4.   *Whose interests are being compromised by dominant world views?*

Action (What do actors do, based on their interests and world views)
1.   Actions arise from interests, mediated by world views
2.   Individual/private action (buy and use a cell phone)
3.   Collective action (Socially marginalised women run a community telecentre)
4.   Policy /state action (setting up technology standards)
5.   Action Spectrum :
      -Degree of freedom - autonomy to shape what is possible (new ways of being and doing in the information society)
      -Degree of constraint - the boundaries that delimit possible action (Vietnam policy on Open Source and proprietary software
      based school programs)
      -Formal opportunity vs substantive opportunity (positive rights – eg. CSC program in India)
6.   ICT impacts the degree of freedom (community mobilization) and constraints (new forms of censorship) of actors

Questions
1.   *Who has resources and who has influence?*
2.   *Who is present and who is absent / Who has voice and who is excluded?*
3.   *What enables and curtails freedoms and choices in this space?*
4.   *How do world views shape actions?*

Outcome (What ensues from actions of all actors)
1.   Outcomes are the confluence of actions of diverse actors, where certain interests and world views get privileged
2.   Tech Goodies or Tech Power ?
      -Absolute outcomes vs Relative outcomes (connectivity vs participation in the information society)
      -Long term outcomes vs Short term outcomes (digitization of books by Google)
      -Participation vs need satisfaction (community radio and community tele-centre)

Questions
1. *How are outcomes perceived by actors?*
2. *What outcomes are legitimized?*
3. *Whose interest was served most by the outcome?*
4. *Whose interest was compromised?*

Case Study – Community Space – e-Choupal

Basic facts – ITC, a large transnational corporate entity, providing closed network of connectivity and services relating to agricultural information for farmers, displacing existing 'middle-men'.

Excerpts from the *Digital Dividend* case study:
A new-age business, CSR, or the most successful telecentre initiative in the world?

"Before ITC introduced us to e-Choupal, we were restricted to selling our produce in the local *mandi* (market). We had to go through middlemen and prices were low. ITC trained me to manage the Internet kiosk and I became the e-Choupal Sanchalak (facilitator) in my village. Today we are a community of e-farmers with access to daily prices of a variety of crops in India and abroad – this helps us to get the best price. We can also find out about many other important things – weather forecasts, the latest farming techniques, crop insurance, etc. e-Choupal has not only changed the quality of our lives, but our entire outlook. " *(a farmer)*

A powerful illustration of corporate strategy linking business purpose to larger societal purpose, e-Choupal leverages the Internet to empower small and marginal farmers – who constitute a majority of the 75% of the population below the poverty line. By providing them with farming know-how and services, timely and relevant weather information, transparent price discovery and access to wider markets, e-Choupal enabled economic capacity to proliferate at the base of the rural economy.

Today 4 million farmers use e-Choupal to advantage – bargaining as virtual buyers' co-operatives, adopting best practices, matching up to food safety norms. Being linked to futures markets is helping small farmers to better manage risk. e-Choupal has been specially cited in the Government of India's Economic Survey of 2006-07, for its transformational impact on rural lives.

ITC's objective is not to be a platform provider for sale of third-party products and services but rather a network choreographer who orchestrates bi-directional demand and supply of goods through a collaborative business model. ITC intends to differentiate itself by serving only those products and services to which it can add value. ITC's core asset is its knowledge of the customer. By transforming the value chain and setting up a platform for procuring commodities from them directly, they now have a foundation for forging a close relationship with the farmers. This relationship leads to a better understanding of the issues plaguing farmers. Through e-Choupals, hubs, and processing centers, ITC has the ready infrastructure needed to implement an alternative channel for distribution of goods and services to rural India. E-Choupals can double as storefronts and hubs as centers for stocking inventory. In the long term, ITC sees vast opportunities from its e-commerce platform and low-cost distribution system. Company officials have expressed the ambition to become "the Wal-Mart of India," and ITC chairman Y.C. Deveshwar told the media recently that "The e-Choupal network will serve area where nearly 70% of the country's population resides…(including) villages with populations of less than 5,000 people where most businesses never venture.

The network of 6,200 e-Choupal centres spread across 40,000 villages has emerged as the gateway of an expanding spectrum of commodities leaving farms – wheat, rice, pulses, soya, maize, spices, coffee, aqua-products. The reverse flow carries FMCG, durables, automotives, banking and insurance services back to villages. e-Choupal is one of the top five alternative channels for LIC Policy sales, and accounts for 10% of the national weather insurance market. E-Choupal has opened a new world for many farmers, accessing information to make better decisions – sale of crops, cropping patterns, use of inputs etc

The e-Choupal system faces multiple continuing challenges. The first is the possibility that radical shifts in computing access could fundamentally alter community-based business models. That is one of the reasons ITC seeks to build and control its own ICT infrastructure. Second, as the number and power of the sanchalaks increase, there is a threat that they will unionize and extract "rents" – unwarranted additional payments based on their increasing influence on the system. Third, ITC's relationship with the samyojaks (ITC's representative in the community) seems to be uneasy, and competitors with the financial muscle to invest for scale could conceivably use discontented samyojaks as the base to obtain market share. Fourth, the scope of the e-Choupal operation, the diversity of activities required of every operative, and the speed of expansion create real threats to execution management.

Excerpts from *IT for Change* case study:

"Large MNCs will come in and give discounts to capture the market; in the long run they have the market share but the local economy takes a severe beating." *(ex-Minister in a report of a parliamentary panel on Foreign Direct Investment in the retail sector. June 2009)*

The nature of control by ITC over farmers in 40,000 villages is to be noted. This control extends over the entire local agriculture ecology through the use of a captive ICT infrastructure, with no regulation or no competition, where these centres serve as sales outlet for specific products/services from ITC. The information system of e-Choupal is within the ITC MIS system and controls the activities of the entrepreneur. Farmers get agriculture information including prices, choice of fertilizers and other farm inputs from e-Choupal which is through the single provider – ITC.

ITC suggests that e-choupal is a public service (including having the facilitator take a public service pledge), however it chooses the centre "entrepreneur" and location on a commercial basis and also procures most of the agriculture produce, cutting off alternative systems - local middlemen and government services. Thus e-choupal locks in a large number of farmers into its network.