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RE-THINKING SUSTAINABILITY IN COMMUNITY VIDEO: A CASE AGAINST PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY VIDEO PROJECTS IN INDIA

ABSTRACT

In the early years of the new millennium – digital technologies of filmmaking proliferated the Indian sub-continent, promising a revolution in the way media environments were organized in the region. Several community and alternative video projects were initiated in rural and urban areas of India by NGOs, civil society and community media organizations to challenge the hegemony of the mainstream media outlets, especially television news channels. However, cheaper technologies of filming and editing were not sufficient to sustain these community media projects, initiating a deliberative effort within the community media organizations to use advertising as a source of revenue for community video projects, which would then become more sustainable and viable to operate.

This paper uses a political studies framework of participation to contextualize the position of community video in India as a maximalist participatory endeavour that has been rooted in a framework of social justice and empowerment. The text then introduces a case study of a community video project – *Aapna Malak Maa* – where the author of this paper worked as a trainer and a facilitator for the participatory video project from 2006 to 2009. This case study illustrates the maximalist participatory potential of community video that can achieve substantial change, but also that maximalist forms of participation cannot be reconciled with the goals of advertising. The paper further outlines the risk of replacing the maximalist forms of participation in community video with more diluted minimalist versions of participation in media projects which will be unable to reach marginalized sections of Indian society.

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Repensando la sostenibilidad en el video comunitario: un caso contra la participación del sector privado en proyectos de video comunitario en India

Resumen

En los primeros años del nuevo milenio, las tecnologías digitales del cine proliferaron en el subcontinente indio, prometiendo una revolución en la forma en que se organizaron los medios en la región. Varios proyectos de video comunitario y alternativo se iniciaron en las zonas rurales y urbanas de la India por ONGs, la sociedad civil y organizaciones de medios comunitarios para desafiar la hegemonía de los principales medios de comunicación, especialmente los canales de noticias de televisión. Sin embargo, las tecnologías más baratas de filmación y edición no fueron suficientes para mantener estos proyectos de medios comunitarios, iniciando un esfuerzo deliberado dentro de las organizaciones de medios comunitarios para utilizar la publicidad como fuente de ingresos para proyectos de videos comunitarios, que luego serían más sostenibles y viables para continuar.

Este documento utiliza un marco de estudios políticos de participación para contextualizar la posición del video comunitario en la India como un esfuerzo participativo radical que se ha enraizado en un marco de justicia social y empoderamiento. El documento luego presenta un estudio de caso de un proyecto de video comunitario – *Aapna Malak Maa* – donde el autor trabajó como capacitador y facilitador del proyecto de video participativo del 2006 al 2009. Este estudio de caso, ilustra el extremo potencial de participación del video comunitario que puede lograr un cambio sustancial, pero también que las formas extremas de participación no se pueden conciliar con los objetivos de la publicidad. El documento también describe el riesgo de reemplazar las formas maximalistas de participación en el video de la comunidad con versiones más diluidas de la participación en proyectos de medios que no podrán llegar a sectores marginados de la sociedad india.

Palabras clave

Video de la comunidad; participación; justicia social; sostenibilidad; publicidad

Introduction

Within the field of media and communication studies, debates around the democratic possibilities of media practices have a renewed interest in theorizing and conceptualizing participation. In the early 2000s,

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proliferation of digital technologies, especially in the developing countries, inspired media researchers to celebrate the access of media technologies amongst the underprivileged sections of society as an antidote to the growing information control and power of the corporatized mainstream media. The celebrations, however, were short-lived since within a decade, the frailties of the new media became obvious and the early promises of a media revolution did not materialize into substantial forms of social change.

The first section of this paper defines participation in its political studies approach that emphasises equalization of power relationships in decision-making processes, and distinguishes it from other practices such as access and interaction that are enabling conditions for participation to be possible, but not participation itself. It further outlines the post-structuralist approach to participation that tries to theorize participatory practices in their minimalist or maximalist intensities, rather than emphasizing them as binary absolutes. Using this theoretical framework of participation, the paper contextualizes the position of community video in India as a maximalist participatory endeavour that has been rooted in a framework of social justice and empowerment. The second section of the paper introduces a case study of a community video project – *Aapna Malak Maa* – where the author of this paper worked as a trainer and a facilitator for the participatory video project from 2006 to 2009. This case study illustrates the maximalist participatory potential of community video that can achieve substantial change, but also the struggles (especially economic) that community video projects face and often perish before realizing their potential. It further accounts for the trend amongst community media activists and civil society members who advocate for introduction of marketing and advertising as a component of these projects – and argues against these positions by claiming that maximalist forms of participation are cannot be reconciled with the goals of advertising. The paper further outlines the risk of replacing the maximalist forms of participation in community video with more diluted minimalist versions of participation in media projects which will be unable to reach marginalized sections of Indian society.

DEFINING PARTICIPATION

There are a multitude of ways within academia on how to theorise or research participation, however, this paper subscribes to a political studies approach of participation that emphasises *equalized power position of privileged and non-privileged actors in particular decision-making processes.*

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This approach to participation distinguishes itself from the sociological approach to participation. Carpentier's work (2016) is instructive in outlining the contours of these two approaches – the sociological approach that allows a broader scope in its descriptions of participation and the political studies approach that is narrower and focussed on power analysis and decision-making in participatory practices. According to Carpentier, the sociological approach casts a very wide net in its use and theorisation of participation – which gets extended to concepts such as consumption as participation (where consumers are exercising choices by taking part in consumption culture), ritual participation (where individuals interact by engaging in a shared representation, for eg. a shared set of media texts such as newspapers) or cultural participation (where individuals have access to arts or cultural forms, eg. through museums) (Carpentier, 2016, p. 71; Jenkins & Carpentier, 2013, p. 271). Although an element of power can be present in the sociological approach, its conceptual role is seen as supportive at best. The political studies approach to participation however privileges the concepts of power – especially in context of power relations between actors within decision-making processes. This approach is anchored in (and closely connected to) the traditions of political philosophy – including democratic theory and critical studies. With a narrow focus, the political studies approach manages to filter several social practices (such as engagement or interaction) as enabling conditions within which participation can take place – but not as participation itself.

Carole Pateman's seminal work, titled Participation and Democratic Theory (1970) is instrumental in this tradition of theorizing participation by emphasising on the notion of power and decision-making in defining participation. Pateman defines participation in two modes – partial participation and full participation. Partial participation is defined by Pateman as a "process in which two or more parties influence each other in the making of decisions but the final power to decide rests with one party only" (Pateman, 1976, p. 70). Full participation, on the other hand, is defined as a "process where each individual member of a decision-making body has equal power to determine the outcome of decisions" (Pateman, 1976, p. 70). Even while retaining the political thrust of participatory theory, Pateman's definition is able to influence the functional field of participation outside of institutionalized politics.

The second distinctive aspect to a post-structural understanding to participation by emphasising its struggle and intensities – non-participatory, minimalist and maximalist. The minimalist/maximalist dimension of

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participation is aimed at capturing the floating of participation as a signifier such that the contingency of the discursive struggles to establish a hegemony over the meaning of participation, can be accounted for in theorizing about participation (Carpentier, 2017, p. 73). Based on the political approach, Carpentier distinguishes between the minimalist/maximalist versions by clarifying that the more minimalist versions of participation tend to protect the power positions of privileged actors, to the detriment of non-privileged actors, while the more maximalist versions of participation strive for a full power equilibrium between all actors (Carpentier, 2017, p. 70). In this sense, minimalist/maximalist versions of participation are not dichotomous forms, but rather the extreme poles of several in-between positions in which participatory practices are located.

It is important to account for the concept of power used in defining participation as equalisation of power relations between privileged and non-privileged actors in formal or informal decision-making processes. Power is a diverse concept – which has perhaps been inexhaustibly theorized by in academia – and it is beyond the scope of this chapter to account for the diversity and scope of these expositions. However, it is important to briefly account for the Foucauldian theorization of power that is used by the political studies approach in defining participation. Foucault proposed an 'analytics of power' – as an omnipresent force in social relations. According to Foucault, power is co-extensive with the field of social relations such that "power is always already there, that one is never outside it" (Foucault, 1980, p. 141). Foucault's analytics of power is focused on reading the macro-structural manifestations of power in a specific context that emerge out of 'micro-physics of power' that acquire complex forms under a certain set of circumstances (Foucault, 1979, p. 26; Taylor, 2014, p. 17). Foucault explains his micro-physics of power by drawing an analogy with the Newtonian concept of force – "power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization" (Foucault, 1990, p. 92). By making this analogy, Foucault is able to delineate power as a force relation from its source or agent of origin. Multiplicity of force relations refer to the variety of qualitative forms that these force relations may take while intersecting and overlapping in our social interactions where each of them has a significantly different characteristic. Immanence of the force relationships and their sphere of operation in Foucault's definition enforces his idea that power is diffused and embodied in discourse & knowledge – or as Foucault likes to specify "regimes of truth" (Foucault, 1991; Rabinow, 1984).

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ower, as an immanent force therefore is not an institution or a structure, but a relationship of forces not only limited to knowledge, but also present in other kind of relations such as sexual or economic relations (Foucault, 1990, pp. 93-94). These forces constitute their own organization such that although power emerges from intentional aims and strategies devised by individuals, the ultimate outcome of the exercise of power does not result from the "choice or decision of an individual subject" (Foucault, 1990, p. 95; Taylor, 1991, p. 24). Therefore, even though power is exercised by intention, it remains a non-subjective force.

India's experience with community video

Community media has contributed significantly to discussions and practices of participation (maximalist forms) through organizing itself in a way where the role of communities in these media environments has not been limited to content production, but have had a significant say in several levels of decision-making processes. In this sense, achieving maximalist forms of participation within these alternative media settings has been intrinsically linked to normative goals of achieving social justice, asserting human rights, shaping alternative public discourses and creating a paradigm for substantial re-distribution of resources.

Media researchers (Battaglia, 2017; Chadha, Moskowitz & Prakash, 2010; Patil, 2014; Pavarala & Malik, 2007) point out, the antecedents of using participatory forms of video in India are grounded in grassroots activism and social justice struggles. Starting in the mid 1960s, Don Snowden[1], one of the earliest pioneers of *participatory video*, spent a considerable time experimenting with his Fogo process in India till his death in 1984. The clear purpose in Snowden's experiments with using video technology with communities in India was to facilitate learning and social change (Snowden, 1984). Simultaneously, fuelled by a politically charged climate that began with the imposition of the emergency by Indira Gandhi in 1975, along with a diffusion of film technologies such as increased access to Super 8, 16-mm film and synchronous sound emerged the independent documentary that contested the dominant discourse of nationhood and highlighted the cause of marginalized and subaltern persons in India (Jayashankar & Monteiro,

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[1] For more about Don Snowden and his Fogo Process, see http://www.uq.edu.au/ccsc/don-snow-den-1928-1984. One of the only written reflection on his work by Snowden, titled *Eyes, see; Ears Hear*, can be accessed via http://www.participatorymethods.org/sites/participatorymethods.org/files/eyes%20see%20ears%20ohear_snowdon.pdf on accessed on 21st July 2018

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2016). Many independent documentary film-makers, furthered the involvement of these marginalized communities in the filmmaking processes – by initiating collaborative projects with communities. A landmark film documented by Jayashankar and Monteiro is Deepa Dhanraj's *Something like a war* (1991), a scathing critique of the family planning campaign of the Indian state, that embraces the participatory approach in filmmaking by involving the women subjects in the decision-making processes by asking them questions about what they would like the film to be about or where they would like the film to be screened (Jayashankar & Monteiro, 2016). In the following decades, there were a significant number of community video projects, supported by NGOs, that involved trained filmmakers working with marginalized communities to use video as a medium of social change or empowerment. By 1999, *Video SEWA*, a self-organized women's association had produced over 200 video tapes documenting on diverse subjects including innovative production techniques, health information and policy interventions[2]. The Deccan Development Society (DDS), based in Andhra Pradesh, instituted a Community Media Trust in 1998, training 15 women in all aspects of filmmaking. These women have made over 100 films over the past decade, filming the powerful visual and audio narratives of women who are marginalized by illiteracy (Chadha et al., 2010). After successfully establishing over a dozen the community video units across several states in India between 2006-2009, Video Volunteers started the India Unheard campaign by establishing a network over a 200 community based video correspondents spread across 23 Indian states that have produced more than 5000 videos representing marginalized perspectives from across the country[3].

The experience of community video in India lends itself well to the political approach to participation described earlier in this paper, where participation is defined as the equalisation of power relationships in decision-making processes. The framework of social justice and empowerment that has largely been the objective of a large number of community video projects in India have relied on involving local communities, not only in the material processes of film production and editing, but also in several decision-making processes. Therefore, unlike some other media environments, mainstream television for example, where related concepts such as access or interaction are passed off as participation, in the Indian context – enabling a maximalist approach to participation where the community

[2] Retrieved from http://www.sewa.org/Services_Video.asp

[3] Retrieved from https://www.videovolunteers.org/about/indiaunheard/

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members, especially the non-privileged participants, can take control of the media process has been a central theme of community video practice in India. On a macro level, the experience of introducing film and video processes within the rural or urban poor communities in India has yielded significant and qualitative outcomes in facilitating the processes of social change. However, the ensuring maximalist forms of participation in these projects pose significant challenges to the long run outcome of community video projects. The next section of this paper discusses a case study of community video in India – *Aapna Malak Maa* that was started by *Navsarjan* Trust, a Gujarat based NGO working on caste and other social issues in the region. This community video project was established in 2006 with the help of *Drishti*, a *Gujarat* based media collective and Video Volunteers, a US based participatory video organization that provided training, support and guidance in setting up and running this project. The author of this paper worked as a community video trainer for this project from August 2006 to March 2009 – training the community members in various aspects of video production and facilitating the participatory goals of the project by acting as a liaison between the community video unit, the community at large and the organizations that set up this project.

CASE STUDY IN COMMUNITY VIDEO – AAPNA MALAK MAA

The relentless heat waves that characterize the summers in *Saurashtra,* a region in central Gujarat was tempered by the uncanny spell of rains in 2006 that created a humid, sultry setting for an unusual film screening organized by eight local *Dalit*[4] youths in a neighbouring village. The youngsters had reached this village well before dusk – going from door to door – inviting the villagers to come out to the square and watch the community video magazine they had produced on the subject of *community health* later that evening. Some of the village locals volunteered to rig an electricity connection for their projector and a few lights in the village square, even as some others scorned at the so-called lower castes coming and taking over their square for the evening. As the sun went down, the villagers perched themselves around the large projector screen in anticipation. The kids were right up in front, the women all huddled together on one side and the men spread all across the square. Soon enough, the film screening began and the audience watched mesmerised in complete silence. It was the first time

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[4] In the traditional Indian caste system, Dalits are the members of the lowest caste.

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they were watching a video that was not about a world outside their village, but instead it was about their own community. The screening was followed up by a discussion about the health concerns in the village. Several villagers, including women, volunteered to speak up about health issues that concerned them – most of all the chronic cases of dental fluorosis[5] that affected several villagers, including children. The youngsters, supported by local civil society actors agreed to investigate this concern and come back to the village with some explanations for the fluorosis. As the post-screening discussions came to a close, even those who at first scorned at the lower-caste youngsters taking over the village, had a change of heart. The issues raised through the video magazine resonated through all the residents of the village, irrespective of the social hierarchies. Next morning, back at their Community Video Unit (CVU)endearingly called *Aapna Malak Maa* (translated as In Our Land), the youngsters were already brainstorming ideas about how to investigate the issues raised by the villagers and make them a part of their next video magazine. As they investigated the issue further, the CVU team found that most villagers in their region were drinking unfiltered ground water with excessive amounts of fluorine. One of their surveys revealed that over 70% of residents of a particular village with a population of 3000 were showing symptoms of dental or skeletal fluorosis. The poor quality of ground water was not unbeknownst to civic authorities or the local government. In the year 2000, twenty-four water treatment plants were set up in the district – however for reasons of mismanagement by local government, largely controlled by upper caste men, these water treatment plants remained unused for over 5 years. The *Aapna Malak Maa* team put together a video magazine specifically raising the concerns of ground water mismanagement and the related health issues amongst the villages who relied on drawing their drinking water from the village wells. The community video magazine was screened in the presence of government health officials, NGO activists and hundreds of villagers affected by the problem. The government consented to re-operationalize the water treatment plants bringing relief to thousands of villagers living in the region. For the team at *Aapna Malak Maa*, this was a fitting example of the participatory impact – in equalisation of power relationships and decision-making processes – that this new media configuration could create.

　　Aapna Malak Maa was one of the several successful community video projects initiated by Drishti Media Collective and Video Volunteers in

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[5] A chronic condition caused by excessive intake of fluorine compounds, marked by mottling of the teeth and, if severe, calcification of the ligaments.

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2006. The project was started in partnership with *Navsarjan* Trust, a relatively large sized NGO working on the issue of caste across various regions of Gujarat. The project followed a model where the NGO identified a group of 25 villages in a specific geographic location in the state and employed 7-8 persons from this region to be trained as community video reporters, with the help of a professional film-maker or a video journalist, in all aspects of film research, production and screening. The subject of the magazine was decided by an active research process that involved using door to door surveys in the selected villages and hosting public meetings with representatives of the village community and local NGO workers. The community video producers would then would produce a community video magazine on the selected subject, approximately 60 minutes in length, that would draw all its content from the selected villages. The community video magazine highlighted the concerns of the community around the subject by filming short video stories, conducting interviews with the government authorities, as well as suggesting possible solutions to the highlighted problem. Once the community video magazine was ready, it was then screened every evening in one of the selected 25 villages followed with a discussion with the villagers and a deliberation on the proposed solutions to the problem. The role of *Navsarjan* Trust – the NGO, in the process was crucial since the entire activity was financially supported by its organization, however, it had to ensure that the community's participation in the project was not superseded by the internal agenda or existing projects of the NGO. For example, if the community meetings and surveys suggested that the community video magazine should be on the subject of health – *Navsarjan* Trust should consent to support the production of the video magazine even if health was not one of its programme areas. The impact that *Aapna Malak Maa* generated was visible from their first community video magazine that addressed the plight of the villagers in Saurashtra living below the poverty line. The subsequent community video magazines raised issues of health, sanitation and manual scavenging, women's rights, education, caste inequalities amongst others. However, by late 2008 – the regularity of their community video magazine started tapering off and in 2011, the community video project was closed down.

AAPNA MALAK MAA AND THE STRUGGLE FOR PARTICIPATION

The narratives that emerge from the experiences of community video projects in India are largely of change and empowerment – there are several

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other aspects to these projects that seldom reach the outside world. For example, a recurring theme in discussions around community video is the proliferation of cheap digital technologies as an enabling condition for the possibility of community video projects to be created and implemented. However, these celebratory accounts of low cost technologies often underestimate the other costs involved in running a community media project. In case of *Aapna Malak Maa*, the community video unit supported by *Navsarjan* Trust minimally involved seven full time media producers from the community, along with a unit co-ordinator who could liaison with the community and the NGO. It further required other resources apart from cameras and computers, such as a trained filmmaker to work with the media producers, rental space to host the media unit, running costs such as food, travel, electricity etc. In 2012-13, the overall annual cost of running the community video unit was estimated to be in excess of INR 1356000 (approx. 27.000 USD). In the annual report filed by the trust for the same period, their total expenditure on programme and staff is INR 7158450 (approx. 143.000 USD). During this period, *Navsarjan* Trust was running more than 10 programmes across the state of Gujarat and employed more than a 100 full-time persons on its payrolls. Therefore, the cost of running the community video unit would be more than 20 % of the total programme and staff expenditure of *Navsarjan* Trust during that year. It is no surprise that by 2012-13, the community video programme had been abandoned by the organization. Without stressing excessively on the numbers presented above, two important conclusions can be inferred from the experiences of community video in India. First, despite the relatively lower costs of technologies of production, other costs of organizing and running a community video project are significantly high. Second, it is seldom that these costs can be sustainably supported even by bigger NGOs that often have the ability to start these projects, but cannot sustain their costs in the longer run. As a consequence, barring a couple of community video projects (Video SEWA and DDS as exceptions), these projects often shut down simply due to lack of funds.

Even as *Aapna Malak Maa* was being incubated, self-sustainability of the project was a part of the concerns articulated by *Drishti*, Video Volunteers and *Navsarjan* Trust. It was clear at the outset that there were clear benefits for the villagers of Gujarat (community), *Navsarjan* Trust (NGO), Drishti and Video Volunteers (community media organizations) setting up the community video unit. However, the NGO and community media organizations all realized that sustaining the high cost operations of the

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community video unit in the long run will be a continuous challenge. Several discussions were devoted to finding ways in which the project could recover (at least partially) its expenditures. Advertising – as a "holy grail" to sustainability to this process was repeatedly proposed as a way through which the community video unit could be financially viable. The form of advertising proposed was largely replicating the television model, i.e. product advertisement within the community video magazine. This advertising proposal was not only limited to the *Aapna Malak Maa* project but also extended to other similar projects initiated by Drishti and Video Volunteers across other regions of India. The rationale behind pushing for advertising within the community video productions was that the manufacturer of the specific project would be able to reach out to audiences in the villages at lower costs as compared to television which has significantly higher rates for purchasing advertising slots. A significant effort was made by Drishti and Video Volunteers to encourage the NGOs and the community video units to find local businesses who would be interested in advertising in the community video magazine. However, repeated attempts at securing private businesses who would be interested in advertising through the community video project failed – since the project was largely aimed towards sections of society who were marginalized and were not the ideal "consumers" that these businesses were targeting. Much to the credit of the team at *Aapna Malak Maa*, they improvised by starting to create video documentations of other activities and programmes being organized by *Navsarjan* Trust which offset the costs that the organization would have otherwise paid to an external videographer to record and edit these event. However, the scope of these external projects was limited and eventually, the lack of financial resources was one of the primary reasons due to which the community video project was closed.

PARTICIPATION AND ADVERTISING: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

Although the case study of *Aapna Malak Maa* presented in this paper does not exhaust the possibilities of design of community video projects (that may even be sustained by advertising, the total number of community video projects operational in India during this decade is significantly lower than the previous decades is a reflection of the fact that material resources, apart from the technologies of video production and screening, are one of the major impediments to a strong community and alternative media environment in India. The lack of operationally successful community video

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projects in India, however, do not underscore the need for a vibrant community and alternative media environment that can challenge the hegemony of the mainstream corporate media organizations, nor does it diminish the enthusiasm of community media activists and practioners (including this author) to deliberate and imagine the future possibilities for community video in India. With all due respect to the community media practitioners and organizations who advocate for the introduction of advertising as a source of revenue that can sustain community media in India, the normative participatory goals of creating an alternative media cannot be achieved by a mis-placed faith in the private business sector.

The participatory goals of community media in India are rooted in the principles of social justice and fostering an environment where the social and political change is created. Advertising, especially through the private businesses, on the other hand is oriented towards the economic goal of profit making. It is not the argument here that profit making is intrinsically flawed – if anything, private enterprise since 1990s post-liberalisation regime has a meaningful contribution in changing the economic lives of millions of people in India. However, the goals of private enterprise are irreconcilable with maximalist forms of participation, as described earlier in this chapter. *Aapna Malak Maa's* community video magazine is a good illustration where the community video project was oriented towards a section of society – lower caste villagers in Saurashtra – who barely have the means to a respectable livelihood and cannot fulfil the purpose of advertising by becoming consumers, because they simply do not have the economic means that attract private businesses. If, however, any community video project was to be sustained through advertising – it would necessarily be oriented towards those sections of society that could fulfil the necessary role of being consumers, in addition to being the community. While such a community project might become successful and sustain itself over a long period of time, through its ability to generate revenues, but the participatory intensity of the project will be minimalist. This is to say that if maximalist models of participation are considered as those which stress upon equalization of power relations between privileged and non-privileged actors in the decision-making process, then in a project with an advertising based orientation would seriously risk being minimalist (rather than maximalist). The decision-making in a community video project conceived with the private sector advertising as its core income will remain with either the private actors or at best with those sections of populations that already have a reasonably privileged class and decision-making abilities in the Indian society.

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In conclusion, this paper proposes that the media activists and prac-tioners in India need to re-imagine the future of community media in India, not through the support of private enterprise, but through a renewed inter-est of public participation in the development of these alternative media processes. Since the 1990s, there has been a decreasing investment of the Indian government in public goods. In the mid-90s, a common refrain of the government, which was on path to a rampant adoption of global capital-ism, was that it is not the purpose of the government to make bread! Disin-vestment in public sector enterprises and encouraging the private sector to undertake all forms of production (including making bread) has since been the key theme of successive governments. It is, however, necessary for the civil society to take a step back and reflect if the privatisation spree is not throwing the baby out with the bath water. Community video – as exempli-fied by the successes of *Aapna Malak Maa* (along with several other pro-jects that have been mentioned in this paper) – has the ability to impact the lives of millions of Indians. However, the material and economic conditions under which this change is sustainably possible requires continued sup-port not only for running these projects, but also experimenting with newer forms of digital technologies that are circulating in the contemporary. Is it outrageous to consider that the government and the public sector, instead of international aid organizations or private sector companies, might be the institutions who need to support community video in India?

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