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Designing Local Irrigation Organizations for Democratic, Equitable, and Ecologically Sustainable Social Development: Theory and Two Cases in Nepal

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David Freeman has taught, consulted, and engaged in research in the domains technology and society, social conflict, natural resources management, and water resources research for 34 years. He has focused his efforts on South Asia (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal) and on the Western United States. Among his publications are *Technology and Society: Issues in Assessment, Conflict, and Choice* (1974); *Local Organizations for Social Development: Concepts and Cases of Irrigation Organization* (1989); and *Choice Against Choice: Constructing a Policy Assessing Sociology for Development* (1992). He is now preparing another book manuscript for publication tentatively entitled *So Much More Than Rivers: The Quest to Manage the Common Property Water Resources of Colorado's Poudre and Platte*.

ABSTRACT

What kind of local organizations effectively mobilize local people—their knowledge, material resources, and loyalty—and empower them to provide important community infrastructure in a manner supportive of successful democratic, equitable, and ecologically sustainable social development? What kind of organizations provide vehicles for meaningful participation in social development, and constitute viable links between central government ministries and local social-ecological niches in the countryside? What attributes do effective organizations have that distinguish them from organizations in third world contexts; most specifically, the ideas will be illustrated by materials drawn from a comparison of two irrigations systems in Nepal- one at Sursia-Dudhaura (a heavily subsidized failure) and another nearby at Bangeri (a farmer managed success). How water users are organized has everything to do with water productivity, equitable distribution, and ecological sustainability of production agriculture.