

The Britain-Nepal Academic Council presents:



Photo: Ian Harper

Nepal Study Day 2011



Conveners:

Mark Turin (Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology)
Sara Shneiderman (St Catharine's College)

Wednesday 20 - Thursday 21 April, 2011

CRASSH, 17 Mill Lane, Cambridge

Student travel bursaries generously supported by the Kosciuszko Trust



Centre of South Asian Studies



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CAMBRIDGE

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Britain-Nepal Academic Council

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Programme

Wednesday 20 April

9.20 - 9.50 Registration

9.50 - 10.00 **Welcome and Introduction**

Mark Turin (MAA, University of Cambridge)

Sara Shneiderman (St Catharine's College, University of Cambridge)

10.00 - 11.20 **Panel 1** (Chair: Mark Turin)

James Sharrock (United Nations Mission in Sudan)

Victims and Vulnerability: International Policy Approaches to 'Child Soldiers' in Nepal, 2007-8

Emilie Medeiros (University College London)

An Ethnopsychology of Former Child Whole-Timers: Exploring man-dimag Organisation

Reidun Faye (Centre for Educational Research, Bergen)

Educational Patterns among Slum Youths in Kathmandu, Nepal

Shrochis Karki (University of Oxford)

Education as a Poisoned Chalice: The Chepang Experience

11.20 - 11.50 Tea and coffee

11.50 - 12.50 **Panel 2** (Chair: Sara Shneiderman)

Matthew Maycock (University of East Anglia)

Gender Relations, Constructions of Masculinity and the Maoist Insurgency in Nepal

Jennie O'Hara (University of Manchester)

Can the Widow 'Speak'? I/NGOs and Widows' Voices in Post-Conflict Nepal

Ruth Marsden (University of Edinburgh)

Living 'In Between': Wives of the Disappeared in Nepal

12.50 - 14.00 Lunch

14.00 - 15.20 **Panel 3** (Chair: Pratyoush Onta)

Mona Chettri (School of Oriental and African Studies)

Evolution of an Identity - The Political Re-definition of the Gorkhas of the Darjeeling Hills

Mélanie Vandenhelsken (Austrian Academy of Sciences)
'The True Gurungs are in Pokhara': Nepalese Origins and Sikkimese Indigeneity

Prakash Khanal (Himalayan Development International)
Growth of the Nepali Diaspora in the UK, and Development Prospects of Nepal

Sondra Hausner and **David Gellner** (University of Oxford)
Vernacular Religion: Varieties of Religiosity in the Nepali Diaspora

15.20 - 15.50 Tea and coffee

15.50 - 17.10 **Panel 4** (Chair: Mara Malagodi)

Pratyoush Onta (Martin Chautari, Kathmandu)
The Landscape of Social Science Journals Published from Nepal: An Analysis of its Structural Characteristics

Radha Adhikari (The University of Edinburgh)
The History of Nursing in Nepal: Some Pioneering Personalities

Anna Stirr (University of Oxford)
Tending the Flower Garden: Music, Unity, and Diversity in Nepal's Panchayat Years

Devraj Humagain (Martin Chautari, Kathmandu)
Commentary on the History of Radio Broadcasting Policy in Nepal

17.30 - 18.45 Reception at Centre for South Asia Studies (open to all)

19.00 Dinner at Sala Thong (for invited guests and those who have pre-booked)

Thursday 21 April

9.00 - 10.20 **Panel 5** (Chair: Ben Campbell)

Bimbika Sijapati Basnett (London School of Economics)
The Politics and Anti-Politics of 'Ethnicity' in Development Intervention In Post Conflict Nepal

Poshendra Satyal Pravat (The Open University)
Environmental Justice in the South: The Case of Terai Forest Management in Nepal

Yurendra Basnett (University of Cambridge)
Labour Mobility and Development in Nepal

Annelies Ollieuz (University of Oslo)
Social Work: Serving the Community

10.20 - 10.50 Tea and coffee

10.50 - 12.10

Panel 6 (Chair: Ian Harper)

Stephen Biggs (University of East Anglia) and **Scott Justice** (National Agricultural and Development Forum, Kathmandu)
Diverse Patterns of Agricultural and Rural Mechanisation in Nepal: Employment, Trade, and Energy Policy

Krishna Adhikari (Centre for Nepal Studies)
Micro-Dynamics of Governance of Collective Actions at Village Level in Southern Nepal

Gandhi Subedi (University of Reading)
Designing a User-Oriented Business Process for Land Registration: A Case Study of Nepal

Pat Hall (Language Technology Kendra, Patan, Nepal)
Writing Nepal's Languages Using Computers

12.10 - 13.00

Lunch

13.00 - 14.00

Panel 7 (Chair: Sondra Hausner)

Meena Poudel (Newcastle University)
Returning Home and Making Livelihoods: The Citizenship Struggles of Women Post Sexual Trafficking

Rekha Khatri, Jeevan Sharma and **Ian Harper** (University of Edinburgh)
Pharmaceutical and Public Health Intervention Trials in Nepal

Christopher Evans and **Jason Hawkes** (University of Cambridge)
Sinja to Surkhet: Recent Archaeological Investigations in West Nepal

14.00 - 14.30

Tea and coffee

14.30 - 15.30

Panel 8 (Chair: Pat Hall)

Chiara Letizia (University of Oxford)
Secularism in Nepal: Perceptions and Processes

Yogesh Mishra (Imperial College, London)
Can a Fish Know its Waters? Towards an Ethnography of the Self

Michael Hutt (School of Oriental and African Studies)
Reading Maoist Memoirs

15.30 - 15.45

Wrapping up & Conclusion:
Mark Turin and **Sara Shneiderman**

Speakers' Abstracts

James Sharrock (United Nations Mission in Sudan)

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Victims and Vulnerability: International Policy Approaches to 'Child Soldiers' in Nepal, 2007-8

The 2006 peace agreements stated that all under-18-year-olds in the Maoist Army should be immediately discharged and 'necessary and suitable assistance would be provided for their rehabilitation.' Following UN led verification in 2007, 2,973 underage recruits were identified, 1,843 of whom were discharged in early 2010. Preparation for the discharge was a task led by UNICEF and other international agencies. This paper will look at the basis of rehabilitation and reintegration policies formulated by international agencies during 2007-2008 for underage Maoist recruits and other conflict-affected children. I will critique the extremely broad 'child soldier' definition used by organisations working with children (which arguably infringed the fundamental civil and political rights of those it was intended to help). Many internationals also saw the Nepali child soldiers problem through the prism of inadequate policy guidelines developed during African conflicts. This paper will also stress that perspectives which downplayed the real vulnerability and lack of consent of many conflict-affected children are equally invalid.

I will contrast the policy approach with views of conflict-affected children and young people in Nepal. I will argue that many actors in the Nepali peace process were uneasy with the idea of children's agency and remain unwilling to take into account the different and unique best interests of conflict-affected children and youth.

Emilie Medeiros (University College London, UK)

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An Ethnopsychology of Former Child Whole-Timers: Exploring man-dimag Organisation

Despite substantial academic interest in studying so-called child soldiers, little has been done to conceptualise their psychological functioning and even less done in a culturally valid manner. Addressing this gap requires the phenomenological study of individuals' subjectivity in relation to the cultural ecology from which it emerged.

Narratives of a cohort of informants were documented during an 18-month ethnography in Rolpa and Kathmandu among former child whole-timers (full-time members) of the CPN-Maoist party. Combined with drawings, their theories on child experiences and inner functioning in Nepalese society, as opposed to the party, are explored. My methodology was influenced by Kleinman's approach to the 'anthropology of experience'. Children in armed groups in Nepal were asked to elicit specific structural features of their theories on their constructed subjectivity.

Findings suggest first that *man* and *dimag* are key experiential instances during both social affiliations with their own structure and functions. Nevertheless, a dominating *dimag* and emptied *man* type of inner organisation is identified whilst in the party. Furthermore, the overall functioning of these instances borrows from hydraulic, energetic and electrical models. In the party, *dimag* becomes collective and dominates the whole experiential functioning

through war metaphors. Finally, different types of inter-relation between *man* and *dimag* are identified and are linked with recurrent features found in informants.

This paper will place the results of the above studies in the context of experiential theories of party leaders and other youth forming their close environment. Other conceptualisations of subjectivity in Nepal and South Asia will also be explored.

Reidun Faye (Centre for Educational Research, Bergen University, Norway)

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Educational Patterns among Slum Youths in Kathmandu, Nepal

This paper is based on data from fieldwork conducted in Kathmandu in 2009 and 2010, in fieldwork sites in three *sukumbasi* (slum) settlements in the outskirts of Kathmandu, Nepal. The paper gives an outline of some early findings and discussions related to how education is utilised as a strategy for a better life for young poor people living in the *sukumbasi* areas.

Earlier research has shown that young people in many developing countries are increasingly experiencing it hard to find relevant work, or work at all, after completing their education. At the same time, we observe that education as a strategy for development is promoted in all levels of society and in almost all countries in the world. High expectations seem to be connected to being 'educated', and education is often linked to concepts of 'hope', 'future', 'development' and 'investment'. In analysing this paradox, education is seen as a social capital, used not only to gain access to work, but to achieve personal development and to gain social status. This paper will discuss the social mechanisms that underpin how young people get access to education, what education they choose, and how they use different types of knowledge in order to negotiate social relationships which they hope will lead to employment.

Shrochis Karki (University of Oxford, UK)

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Education as a Poisoned Chalice: The Chepang Experience

This paper examines the role of education, understood here as formal schooling, among the Chepangs, a highly marginalised indigenous community in Nepal. A growing literature has emerged on education, its importance in development, and its impact on indigenous communities; this research contributes to these debates. It investigates the role of education in providing greater freedoms and its perceived role in assimilating indigenous communities. This research seeks to establish Chepang perceptions of education, the importance of education in the rural context, and the quality of education available to this community. The findings are based on ethnographic research, with participant observation, semi-structured interviews, archival research, and 'learning by teaching' as the main research methods. The research was carried out in a rural Chepang village and an exclusively Chepang boarding school in Chitwan. Assimilation was not found to be a particular problem, as Chepangs are eager to become a part of the national mainstream. It is argued that education is a poisoned chalice in the Chepang context. Education—often touted as the way out of poverty—is raising the hopes and dreams of Chepangs, but the quality of their education is so dismal that they are not acquiring the skills necessary to make the transition. Given the numerous constraints (structural and otherwise) that Chepangs face throughout their schooling, it seems unlikely that their current education will make a significant difference to their lives. This nexus of

elevated expectations without returns could have serious consequences for future Chepang well-being.

Matthew Maycock (School of International Development, University of East Anglia, UK)
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Gender Relations, Constructions of Masculinity and the Maoist Insurgency in Nepal

The importance of gender in contemporary conflict has never been more prominent, due to both the changing nature of contemporary conflict and the emerging realisation of the centrality of gender in conflict. However, the gendered role of men and boys in such situations remains relatively unexplored in the Nepali context. Therefore, the links between the Maoist insurgency and constructions of masculinity will be a central concern in this paper, with a core focus on the experience and implications of engagement and non-engagement with violent subject positions for men. My research takes a multi-methods approach with a focus on men's life history and testimony. This paper is based on ESRC funded fieldwork in 2009.

Jennie O'Hara (University of Manchester, UK)

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Can the Widow 'Speak'? I/NGOs and Widows' Voices in Post-Conflict Nepal

Widows have constituted a much-discussed space in discourses around imperialism and postcolonialism, forming the exemplary crux of Gayatri Spivak's seminal work 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' Given the significant number of widows in the post-conflict context of Nepal, debates around widows' voices remain timely. This paper considers responses to the current situation in relation to the policies and practices of international and national NGO representation(s) of widows. Following interviews with representatives from a range of women's and peace NGOs in Kathmandu and London, the paper serves to highlight the ongoing tensions surrounding imperialist attitudes towards women in relation to development work by comparing the intentions and outcomes of local and global NGO work in relation to donor funding, strategic planning and essentialising discourses. The paper aims to highlight the neo-colonialist limitations placed on NGOs and INGOs and assesses how this impacts on the organisations' work for widows in post-conflict Nepal, as well as the role these limitations play in the development, discourse and construction of symbolic Nepali widows.

Ruth Marsden (School of Social and Political Studies, University of Edinburgh, UK)

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Living 'In Between': Wives of the Disappeared in Nepal

Disappearances by state security forces and the Maoists during the insurgency (1996-2006) in Nepal created violent ruptures in the everyday worlds of families of the disappeared and had particular implications for wives. Drawing from narratives and life histories of wives in one district of the Mid-Western Tarai, this paper focuses on the repercussions of disappearances in their everyday lives and gives particular attention to the gendered impacts of loss. Ambiguity about the status of disappeared husbands is transferred onto wives, unsettling relations within the family and community, and creating social, legal and economic difficulties. These wives live 'in between', suspended between being a wife with an absent husband and being a widow, and are compelled to face difficult choices in attempts to renegotiate relationships with parents-in-law and secure a future for themselves and their children.

Through the search for their husbands, many wives have become involved in programmes organised by human rights NGOs, the local victims' association or the Maoists. Despite a lack of recognition for the particular difficulties faced by wives, opportunities have emerged for building relations of emotional support and solidarity with other women who share their experiences of loss. Yet activities which involve travel outside their village homes have also left them vulnerable to further criticism and accusations within their local community. The one recurring demand of these wives is for resolution of the ambiguous status of their husbands through the return of their body, alive or dead: *laas dinus ki saas dinus*.

Mona Chettri (School of Oriental and African Studies, UK)

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Evolution of an Identity: The Political Re-definition of the Gorkhas of the Darjeeling Hills

Gorkha is a name of a district in Nepal; an army regiment; and a blanket term for the Nepali-speaking population in India, especially those living in the Darjeeling Hills. The term is controversial when used as a means of classification of peoples living in India owing to its multiple meanings and its undeniable connection with Nepal. However, the term Gorkha and its socio-political implications have undergone an internal evolution owing to the recent revival of the Gorkhaland movement in the Darjeeling Hills.

On the emotive issue of identity, the word Gorkha refers to all the Nepalis living in India; when used in a political context, it refers to all the people of the Darjeeling Hills, including the Lepchas, Tibetans, Marwaris and even Bengalis, while at the same time creating a distinction from the Sikkimese-Nepali. As the boundaries of the peoples the term is supposed to encompass have become more ambivalent, the political saliency of the term is heightened in the pursuit of federal statehood. By analysing the evolution of the term, this paper will attempt to understand the elusive Gorkha who is in the process of redefining himself in a way that best suits his political environment.

Mélanie Vandenhsken (Institute for Social Anthropology, Austrian Academy of Sciences)

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'The True Gurungs are in Pokhara': Nepalese Origins and Sikkimese Indigeneity

Since its foundation in the early 1990s, the members of the Sikkim Gurung cultural association have been divided over the question of religion: should the Gurungs remain Hindus, as they have been for centuries, or should they 'go back' to Buddhism as Hinduism poses a hindrance to the acquisition of Scheduled Tribe status? The context of the foundation of this association is central to understanding this situation: after the fall of Bhandari's government in 1994 (which did not implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission), the new leadership, keen to join the category of Other Backward Classes (OBC), encouraged the development of ethnic culture, central as cultural criteria are in the Indian reservation system. The inclusion of most of Sikkim's ethnic groups into reserved categories became the core of the political programme of the new government.

This paper will analyse the connection between politics, policies and cultural identities describing the history of the Gurung association since its foundation. The Sikkim state is a key player in this history, but Nepal has been assigned as providing cultural roots that could be transplanted to reconstruct indigenous identity. While Gurungs' cultural practices are diverse

in Nepal, the Sikkimese Gurungs have selected aspects that meet their needs as Indian citizens. This cross-border economy of culture is practiced by the Gurung elite as well as the common villagers, albeit for different reasons.

Prakash Khanal (Himalayan Development International)

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Growth of the Nepali Diaspora in the UK and Development Prospects of Nepal

The number of civilian Nepali diaspora in the UK has grown steadily over last ten to twenty years. The first ever thorough census of the Nepali diaspora in the UK by the Centre for Nepal Studies UK (CNS UK) revealed that the number of Nepali diaspora in the UK is over 70,000. Community-based organisations, and professional organisations including the Nepal Embassy in the UK, suggest that the number could be much higher. It is interesting to see the phenomenal growth of Nepali human and social capital in the UK.

At a time when Nepal faces numerous challenges from every front, the growth of Nepali diaspora in the UK and other countries raises hope. In this paper, I will look at the reasons behind the growth of the Nepali diaspora in the UK, and will explore the link between the growth of Nepali human and social capital in the UK and the development prospects of Nepal. I will address issues including the ways in which human capital in the UK can be mobilised to contribute to the development of Nepal; the possibility of encouraging UK settlers to engage for the benefit of their marginalised countrymen; and the potential of UK settlers as role models for the use of technology in fighting poverty in Nepal. I will also discuss the positions of scholars and development planners on these issues, and explore the possibilities for the prevalent negative perception towards international immigration to be turned into a positive strength.

Sondra Hausner and **David Gellner** (University of Oxford, UK)

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Vernacular Religion: Varieties of Religiosity in the Nepali Diaspora

The Nepali population is one of the most recent and fastest-growing migrant communities in the UK (and as such has recently been in the news, due to the public comments of the MP for Aldershot, Gerald Howarth). There has been a great efflorescence of UK-based Nepali community organisations over the last five years, and some of these have sought to advance a particular religious agenda. Since the ethnic groups traditionally favoured for Gurkha recruitment are present in the UK in greater proportions than in Nepal, the dynamics of religious allegiance among Nepalis in the UK are subtly different from parallel processes in the homeland. Thus, the dominant position of Hinduism is arguably even more contested in the UK than it is in Nepal. In some cases, minority religious groups may win over more members in the diaspora (as with the Tamu Pye Lhu Sangh); in others, individuals may bring a particular set of practices and doctrines from Nepal and start to disseminate them in the UK (as with the mainly Limbu followers of Phalgunananda). At the same time, there is much religious activity shared by most Nepalis and in which ethnicity is far less relevant, for example reverence for Sai Baba and Indian yoga teachers, and visits to religious mediums.

Pratyoush Onta (Martin Chautari, Kathmandu, Nepal)

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The Landscape of Social Science Journals Published from Nepal: An Analysis of its Structural Characteristics

In the almost 60 years that have passed since the publication of the first social science journal from Nepal, no systematic inquiry has been made into the social lives of these journals which comprise a special published genre of scholarly media. This paper will try to establish some basic knowledge of this field. In the first section, I will provide an account of some of the structural characteristics of the landscape of Nepali journals by focusing on a few parameters: journal titles, institutional and physical sites of their production, their disciplinary focus, circulation and the languages in which contents are published. In the second section, I will discuss the reasons for the almost explosive growth of journals since 1990. In the third and final section, I will identify some factors that influence the longevity and continuity of journals in Nepal.

Radha Adhikari (The University of Edinburgh, UK)

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The History of Nursing in Nepal: Some Pioneering Personalities

Nursing in Nepal has a very short history, and most of it remains unstudied. Professional education in nursing began only in the 1950s. Most of the pioneering work towards establishing this profession in Nepal was carried out by western Christian missionaries. Their work life, professional life and motivation towards the profession, and towards Nepal, has not been fully researched. This paper begins to address this gap, and is very much a work in progress. Based on a collection of oral histories and memoirs of these pioneering nurses, I will introduce some of the early work undertaken by missionary nurses from the UK and USA. In addition, I will present the lives of the early Nepali nurses with whom they worked, and begin to sketch an oral history of these early days of nursing.

Anna Stirr (University of Oxford, UK)

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Tending the Flower Garden: Music, Unity and Diversity in Nepal's Panchayat Years

What is known as Nepali *dohori* song today has grown out of many different forms and practices of dialogic song practiced by different ethnic groups, in different languages and musical forms, in many regions throughout Nepal. Yet *dohori* today is seen as a commercial genre associated with a version of the Nepali nation that is very much based in the rural central hills. This paper traces the genealogies of today's commercial *dohori* and the umbrella genre of commercial national folk song (*lok git*) through a history of musical nationalism and associated musical and language ideologies. Outlining how some genres came to be associated with a dominant idea of the nation through choices made at Radio Nepal between 1951 and 1983, I will show how the attempt to unite Nepal's musical diversity into an inclusive national *lok git* genre ended in the over-representation of particular regional styles. Looking at the radio's relationship to other media of musical circulation, it also discusses national song competitions and how they helped form *lok git*'s current generic parameters and styles over others. I will argue that despite the relative homogeneity they engendered in state-sponsored song production, these developments in *lok git* and *dohori* brought the marginalised rural,

feminine, and indigenous into the heart of the national imagination.

Devraj Humagain (Martin Chautari, Kathmandu, Nepal)

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Commentary on the History of Radio Broadcasting Policy in Nepal

After a half-century monopoly of state broadcasting in Nepal, Radio Sagarmatha became the first radio initiated and run by the non-state sector. In May 1997, Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ), an NGO dedicated to environmental clauses, obtained a license to operate a radio in the FM band. Such an achievement became possible only after the historic transformation of the Nepali polity in 1990, one consequence of which was the Constitution of Nepal, 1990 which guaranteed the fundamental rights of the people including their right to information and speech.

However, bureaucracy was not open to change in the early 1990s, which resulted in the independent radio movement in Nepal facing many challenges in its early days. Radio Sagarmatha had come into existence only after a long struggle with this illiberal bureaucracy. This struggle paved the way for other independent radios to be set up in the country. By the end of 2010, the number of independent radios in Nepal had passed the 300 mark and several dozen other radios are in various stages of planning before going on air.

Despite this remarkable growth in the number of independent radios, much remains to be done to enhance the quality of their programs. This paper gives a historical account of the policy development regarding the independent radio sector in Nepal. Based on archival research, it discusses different policies, laws and regulations that have impacted this sector and points out challenges that need to be met at the policy level to improve radio contents.

Bimbika Sijapati Basnett (London School of Economics, UK)

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The Politics and Anti-Politics of 'Ethnicity' in Development Intervention In Post Conflict Nepal

One of the major implications of the decade long civil conflict and the ongoing efforts at post conflict reconstruction in Nepal has been an increasing attention to 'ethnicity' in national development policies. A plethora of ethnic groups have emerged to demand ethnic-based rights, resources and recognition. The Nepali state has expanded the officially recognized list of ethnic groups in the country. Development reports are arguing that accepting Nepal as an ethnically heterogeneous country will lead to a vibrant democracy and more inclusive economic growth. But how are these changes impacting on the ways in which development services are delivered and demanded at the local level? This paper draws on insights from interacting with donors, government representatives and project beneficiaries while conducting a social assessment for a multi-million dollar irrigation modernisation project in Kailali district, between 2010 and 2011. I will argue that there is a disjuncture between the ways in which 'ethnicity' is interpreted and operationalised into practice by the state and development organizations, on the one hand, and development beneficiaries, on the other hand. While the state and donors are increasingly depoliticising ethnicity in practice, variously positioned development beneficiaries are deploying competing discourses over ethnicity to struggle for the distribution of development aid.

Poshendra Satyal Pravat (OpenSpace Research Centre, Faculty of Social Sciences, The Open University, UK)

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Environmental Justice in the South: The Case of Terai Forest Management in Nepal

The concept of environmental justice, with its American origin and Western focus, has now been broadened to include a geographically diverse range of social and environmental concerns. While there is an increasing body of philosophical and empirical literature on environmental justice mostly generated in and focused on the West, very little attention has been paid to its applicability and realisation in the natural resources contexts of the Global South. This paper assesses whether and how concepts of environmental justice can be applied to analyse issues of justice in Terai forest management in Nepal. To achieve this, a modified Western notion of environmental justice is adapted and contextualised in response to the distinctive context of Nepalese society; the framework is subsequently applied to an empirical case study of Terai forestry. The paper reveals that issues of social justice remain at the heart of debates on environmental justice in Nepal and that the conceptions of environmental and social justice interrelate in the practice of forest management. It also highlights various forms of injustice and inequity in Terai forestry policy and practice, which are rooted in the processes and outcomes of forestry sector planning, management policies and practices as well as a number of other socio-economic, political and cultural factors at various levels. The paper thus demonstrates that an environmental justice framework can be used as an insightful tool to interpret issues of fair distribution of benefits and services. It can also be used to interrogate issues of representation and participation in natural resources management in the Global South despite the diversity, distinctiveness and complexities of these contexts.

This paper argues for pluralistic and discursive conceptions of environmental justice that are responsive to contextual differences, concerns, needs, expectations and aspirations. It also argues for a broader framework based on shared and global understandings of the concept with a renewed focus on social justice in environmental decision making.

Yurendra Basnett (University of Cambridge, UK)

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Labour Mobility and Development in Nepal

Labour mobility and remittances have emerged as important economic issues in Nepal. Labour mobility, broadly defined, is the act of labour being temporarily employed overseas. Remittance is the money sent home by labourers employed overseas.

Households in Nepal have historically used labour mobility as a livelihood strategy. But the present situation is at odds with the past in terms of the scale, diversity of destination, and the political and economic conditions under which labour mobility occurs. According to official figures, in 2009 alone, more than 200,000 labourers found employment overseas and sent home 210 billion Nepali Rupees (US\$3 billion), approximately 25% of Nepal's gross domestic production (GDP). It is forecasted that by 2020, labour mobility will increase to more than 10 million and remittance will be 100% of the country's GDP.

Despite the importance of labour mobility to the country's economy, there is little research on its causes and consequences or the institutions governing it. This paper analyses the

economic and political factors that have contributed to the decline in household economic wellbeing, and the lack of economic opportunities for the growing labour force coupled with the historically unprecedented freedom to seek employment overseas. In examining the evolution and limitations of formal institutional arrangement governing labour mobility, the paper argues that there is a disjoint between labour mobility and development policies. This is in spite of evidence that the two are closely correlated. The paper concludes by providing policy suggestions on how labour mobility could be leveraged for economic development.

Annelies Ollieuz (University of Oslo, Norway)

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Social Work: Serving the Community

'Social work' was a central concept in discussions of local politics, community organisations and conflict resolution—the three overarching subjects which I was studying in my fieldwork VDC—in south-eastern Nepal in 2009. When I asked leaders of community organisations about their activities, they usually said something like 'we do saving and credit, and social work'. Like many locally elected politicians, a former ward representative explained that he stood for election 'because I wanted to do social work'; and with regard to conflict mediation, the last *pradhan panch* said 'people didn't have to pay, it was a part of social work'.

This paper will explore how social work is understood locally. I will answer questions regarding which activities are defined as social work, how people earn the title 'social worker', and why people choose to be involved in social work. It will, however, be clear that local definitions of social work are ambiguous. I will analyse one particular manifestation of this ambiguity, the most dominant locally, by looking at the relationship between social work and politics, activities that are defined as very much linked but are simultaneously considered to be very different. Lastly, I will put these observations in a historical perspective. An analysis of social work over time in Nepal will clarify some of the issues discussed, among others the link between social work and development.

Stephen Biggs (University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK)

Scott Justice (National Agricultural and Development Forum, Kathmandu, Nepal)

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Diverse Patterns of Agricultural and Rural Mechanisation in Nepal: Employment, Trade and Energy Policy

In some policy discourses, Nepal is characterised as having a mainly labour-intensive, 'traditional' or 'subsistence' agricultural and rural economy. However, this does not reflect the fact that in recent years many agricultural and rural operations have been mechanised. It is estimated that 2-wheel and 4-wheel tractors now till 15-20% of all land, nearly all wheat on the Terai is threshed by machine, and on the Terai there are now at least 100,000 small-scale shallow pumpsets. The growth of dairy, horticultural, and other rurally based value added chains is generally accompanied by different forms of mechanisation for production, storage, transport and processing.

After a brief introduction reviewing the very different patterns of rural mechanisation in some South Asian countries, this paper explores the history of rural mechanisation in Nepal over the last 30 years. In particular, we will look at the spread of different types of agricultural and rural

mechanical and engineering equipment. We will discuss problems in the collection and use of data in the context of ongoing policy and development debates, and consider reasons for the spread of specific types of equipment. The paper places the discussion of past and future processes of mechanisation in the broader context of Nepal's energy policy, rural employment, rural development and trade.

Krishna Adhikari (Centre for Nepal Studies, UK)

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Micro-Dynamics of Governance of Collective Actions at Village Level in Southern Nepal

In Nepal, intensive exercises are underway to draft and finalise a national framework for governance, to incorporate a federal structure. However, there have been few attempts to understand the *de facto* system of local level self-governance and connect it to wider policy debates. Reflecting on empirical information obtained through in-depth household surveys and institutional analysis, this paper attempts to understand the micro-dynamics of the governance of collective actions (formal and informal) in two Village Development Committees (VDCs) of Rupendehi District.

This study shows that micro level governance of collective action in the two VDCs differs significantly, with a worse situation evident in the southern VDC. Despite high cooperation, the hierarchical power structure in the study villages is constantly feeding unequal social relations. The study explores and identifies the existence of several pernicious norms, tradition, practices and behaviours that were competing with the cooperative and collective expectations. New policies of grassroots self-governance should be able to rectify the existing upwards accountability system, by giving local people power to check and hold their leaders accountable to them. Therefore, the issue of power devolution in all layers of local governance is as important as here as at the central and regional level.

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Designing a User-Oriented Business Process for Land Registration: A Case Study of Nepal

Improvement in the land registration system is a major challenge faced by many land administration organisations. Although providing cheap, convenient and effective services is a Government policy in Nepal, people are not satisfied by the land administration services. This paper seeks to identify user requirements, design a land registration system based on those requirements and validate it. Data are collected from interviews, observation and documents and analysed using a descriptive method. A business process is then designed based on the identified user requirements of one-stop shopping, the integration of land-related services, basic services at the local level, electronic services, the computerisation of records, an integrated information system, a parcel-based system, the use of unique identifiers, an integrated organisational structure and provision of private surveying. The proposed process is divided into four main phases: marketing and pre-contracting; parcel sub-division and contracting; verification and payment; and registration and conclusion. Although this process is designed in the context of Nepal, it can be modified for application in other countries. The proposed process is faster and more efficient than the existing one. Changes in the existing laws, organisational structure and technology are required for its implementation. Prototyping of the proposed process before implementation and further

research on designing a registration process for the transactions of customary and religious land are recommended.

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Writing Nepal's Languages Using Computers

Nepal was officially uni-lingual until 1990 under the rubric of 'one nation, one culture, one language', with that language being Nepali (originally known as Khas, then Parbatiya, and then Gorkali). In spite of government policies, languages survived so that today there are 124 living languages listed by Ethnologue. Most of these languages have no written traditions, though many have been transcribed as part of linguistic and anthropological studies and even written during missionary activity and more recently in the context of political and economic development. Methods of writing have mostly been based on Devanagari, with extensions as needed; even languages with their own mature written traditions, like Newari (Nepal Bhasha) and Limbu, have been written in Devanagari, in order to use the technical support available for Devanagari.

If the writing of languages is going to be effective, the writing must be supported by computing technology to enable texts in the language to be printed and shared on the internet. I will discuss the problems this raises, drawing on work by Michael Noonan, and looking at the cases of Newari, Limbu, Maithili, other languages that aspire to being written such as Magar and Gurung, and unwritten languages. Sometimes a community splinters with different groups favouring different writing systems, with little prospect of compromise. Central to technology is the representation of the writing in the computer, confounded by a standardisation committee focus on writing and not on language. This paper will discuss what can be done about this, from enabling a language to be written in multiple systems and distinctive fonts, to ignoring international committees and pursuing independent national policies.

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Returning Home and Making Livelihoods: The Citizenship Struggles of Women Post Sexual Trafficking

This paper draws on an ESRC project Post-Trafficking Livelihoods in Nepal, which focuses on the development and citizenship challenges faced by women who have returned home after being sexually trafficked. Sexual trafficking is not often seen as a development issue, despite the causes of sexual trafficking being linked in multiple ways to issues of poverty and uneven development. Research has focused on the processes that cause and facilitate sexual trafficking, and policy and aid money target programs that make up a growing 'rescue industry' that focuses on enabling women to leave trafficked situations. Very little research or development aid is dedicated to addressing the longer-term challenges faced by women after they return home. This presentation examines how geographies of stigma and poor access to citizenship negatively shape these women's livelihood options. It explores how returnee trafficked women themselves are organising to demand better livelihood options and have a voice as activists in current citizenship initiatives focusing in particular on current lobbying activities around the Constitutional assembly.

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Pharmaceutical and Public Health Intervention Trials in Nepal

This paper presents preliminary findings from the Nepal arm of ESRC / DfID funded research on Biomedical and Health Experimentation in South Asia: Critical Perspectives on Collaboration, Governance and Competition. Triangulating a number of sources including the US trials registry, the Nepal Health Research Council, and a web search of sponsors, research organisations and journal articles, we present the range of trials being conducted in Nepal. From this we have identified 162 experiments and trials. These studies are of different designs, varying from randomized controlled trials to evaluations, efficacy and intervention studies, impact assessments and diagnostic test trials. They involve a range of Principle Investigators (PIs), sponsors, and Contract Research Organisations (CROs) in the country responsible for the running of the trials. The studies tackle a range of issues and diseases; these include maternal-child health, high altitude research, tuberculosis, malaria, Japanese encephalitis, leprosy, leishmaniasis, and HIV/AIDS. In this paper, we will investigate the ethnography of these studies, the rationale for their selection, the broader research questions and the issues they raise.

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Sinja to Surkhet: Recent Archaeological Investigations in West Nepal

West Nepal has received little archaeological attention, and remains one of the least understood areas in the entire trans-Himalayan sector. We have only the sketchiest outline of its history, and the ways in which this key geographical area was connected to and interacted with neighbouring areas of Tibet, India and the rest of Nepal. This lack of knowledge and understanding has real implications today, as concepts of the past are often manipulated and used in the construction of modern ethnic and political identities.

Recent work in Sinja Kohla represents the first archaeological investigation carried out in West Nepal since the explorations of Tucci and Naraharinath in the 1950s. Findings from this work have revealed much information about the capital of the medieval kingdom of the Khasa Malla, who ruled West Nepal between the 11th and 16th centuries CE, and the relationship of local tribal communities to that past.

Following a hiatus brought about by Maoist activities in the area, investigations have recommenced in the Surkhet Valley, on the southern periphery of the Khasa kingdom. The valley is dominated by the remains of a medieval settlement and large Buddhist temple, and would have been an important nexus in the networks of inter-regional connections that spread across West Nepal during the medieval period.

This paper will present the main findings of both of these phases of work, and highlight some of the issues that have emerged pertaining to the investigation and management of the cultural heritage of West Nepal and their relation to modern communities.

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Secularism in Nepal: Perceptions and Processes

Secularism (*dharma-nirapekshata*) was declared in the Nepal Interim Constitution of 2007 and confirmed in 2008 by the Constituent Assembly's proclamation of a secular republic, thus abolishing a two-century-old Hindu monarchy. Since its first appearance on the public scene in the 1990s, secularism has been generally understood not as the separation between state and religion, but as the state's duty to patronise all religions equally and bring an end to Hindu primacy in all spheres of public life.

Diverse understandings of secularism point without exception to the importance of religion and religious groups in the public sphere. Politicians and state institutions have to walk a tightrope, upholding secular values while balancing the Hindu majority tradition and the claims of minorities, all the while trying to set the stage for a distinctive notion of secularism.

In this paper, I will share some of the findings of recent fieldwork in the Tarai (Nepalgunj, Biratnagar and Janakpur) and in Kathmandu showing that secularism remains a fluid and multi-vocal notion, differently understood and reacted to by different groups and individuals in different settings (religious, political, civil society, legal circles) and very much in the process of being shaped through court cases, PILs, incidents and debates. I will address the meanings evoked by *dharma nirapekshata* in Tarai, and the ways in which court cases are contributing to the notion of secularism at the national level.

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Can a Fish Know its Waters? Towards an Ethnography of the Self

This paper reflects upon the presenter's own experience of producing an historical book on the Peasants' Movement in Nepal in the 1950s ('History as Mindscape', 2010). The ethnographic description of this history writing exercise revealed a precarious relationship between the Self, as a historian, and his two subjects, the author Krishnabhakta Caguthi and his young neighbour, Yogesh Raj. I will claim that on the basis of processes and results, one can not have an *a priori* distinction between such exercises and the history writing carried out by anthropologically/ sociologically informed others. I will further dismiss dichotomies such as tradition-history and dialectic-history as fictions created by and for the gratification of the poor wandering selves who ever position themselves as outsiders.

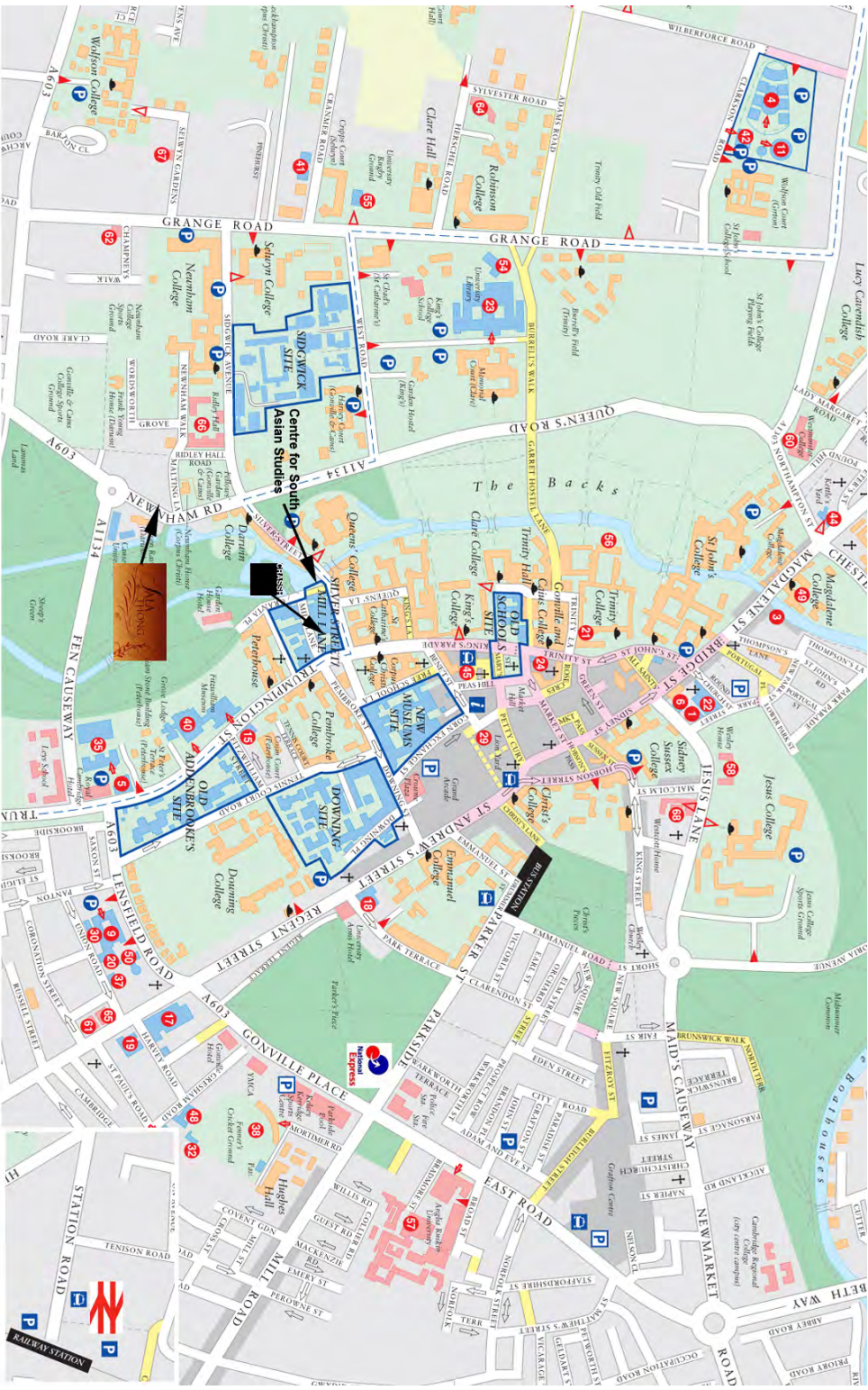
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Reading Maoist Memoirs

In recent years, a large number of books written by individuals who fought on the Maoist side during Nepal's ten-year 'People's War' have become available in the Nepali marketplace. The memoirs (*samsaran*) in particular provide insights into the backgrounds, motivation and subjective experience of Maoist combatants and activists during the war.

During a research visit to Kathmandu in September-October 2010, I acquired 22 Maoist memoirs, all published since 2006. In this paper, I will summarise the content of four of these books and describe their reception by Maoist reviewers on the one hand and Nepali 'civil society' on the other. I will then add my own ruminations on the significance and status of autobiographical writing in Nepal's post-conflict environment.

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