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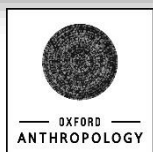
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## 19th Nepal Study Days
### 13-14 April 2022

*Conference Abstracts Book*

**Hosted by:**

OXFORD ANTHROPOLOGY

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Hosted by Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology

**University of Oxford**

**With**

**Centre for Nepal Studies UK**

(www.cnsuk.org.uk )

Centre for Nepal Studies UK NS

**19th BNAC Nepal Study Days**

**Hosted by Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Oxford**

**64 and 61 Banbury Road Oxford, OX2 6PE**

**13-14 April 2022**

**Contact: bnacstudyday@gmail.com |+447411558732, +447962254274, +447861492654**

(NB: For participation, registration is required: Please register here: https://forms.gle/voBEbJzdfaCBuVoSA. Closes on 11 Apr 2022)

## Conference Programme

*(Please note the times indicated are UK time, which is 4:45 hours behind Nepal's time)*

**Parallel session A** (Both days): 64 Banbury Road & Online (Teams link has been emailed to all registered participants**)**

**Parallel session B** (Both days): 61 Banbury Road & Online (Teams link has been emailed to all registered participants)

| Day 1: Wednesday 13th April | |
|---|---|
| 9:00 - 9:45 | **Entry (registration)**. Venue: 64 Banbury Road & online. (Teams link has been emailed to all registered participants) |
| 9:45 - 10:00 | **Introduction: Krishna Adhikari** (BNAC Chairperson) |
| | **Welcome: David Gellner** |

| Parallel Sessions | | |
|---|---|---|
| Time | Parallel Session A - 64 Banbury Road & online<br>(Teams link has been emailed to all registered participants) | Parallel Session B - 61 Banbury Road & online<br>(Teams link has been emailed to all registered participants) |
| 10:00 – 11:15 | *A1. History and Cultural Production (panel I)*<br>**Chair:  David Gellner** | *B1. Health (panel I)*<br>**Chair:  Jeevan Sharma** |
| | **Musing on the Memory of Performance: From Content to Context of Selected Tharu Folk Songs** *[online]*<br>***Mohan Dangaura***, *TU, Nepal* | **Socio-economic Inequalities in Hypertension, Diabetes and Overweight in Nepal: A Decomposition Analysis of 2019 Nepal STEPwise Survey** *[online]*<br>***Uttam Paudel & Bihungum Bista,*** *Nepal Health Research Council, Nepal* |

1

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|---|---|---|
| | 'Guru Rinpoche is Shivaji': Identity and Ethnic Boundary Drift in Nepal's Ethnic Paintings *[in person]*<br><br>*Jingwei Li*, Sichuan University China | Manifestations of Trauma amongst Ex-combatants in Nepal *[online]*<br><br>*Heidi Riley*, University College Dublin |
| | Liberating Arniko to Transcultural Complexity *[in person]*<br><br>*Zezhou Yang & Tainyi Chen*, SOAS, University of London, & Heidelberg University | Effect of School Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene on Health Status of Basic Level Students' in Nepal *[online]*<br><br>*Mohan Kumar Sharma & Ramesh Adhikari,* TU, Nepal |
| **11:15-11:30** | **[Coffee] Break** | |
| 11:30–12:45 | *A2. History and Cultural Production (panel II)*<br>**Chair: Michael Hutt** | *B2. Health (panel II)*<br>**Chair: Ram Prasad Mainali** |
| | Transit Kathmandu *[online]*<br><br>*Dikshya Karki* | Covid 19: Coping Strategies Among Nepali Community in the UK *[in person]*<br><br>*Naresh Khapangi Magar,* Centre for Nepal Studies UK *[In person]*, *Padam Simkhada,* University of Huddersfield *[online]*, & *Krishna Adhikari,* University of Oxford *[In person]* |
| | The Making of Colonial Darjeeling, 1830-1930 *[In person]*<br><br>*Mingma Lhamu Pakhrin*, JNU, Delhi | Sustainability of Community-based Health Promotion Interventions on Maternity and Neonatal Care in Nepal: Findings from Ten-Year Controlled, Non-randomised Study *[online]*<br><br>*Padam Simkhada [online]*, University of Huddersfield; *Vijay Singh GC,* University of York; *Edwin van Teijlingen,* Bournemouth University; *Sharada Prasad Wasti,* University of Huddersfield |
| | Gurkha Knife in Polish War Two Memoirs *[In person]*<br><br>*Paulina Stanik*, University of Warsaw | Using Participatory Visual Approaches to Engage Communities in Public Health Research: Openings and Obstacles for Listening to Ethnic Minority Women in a Participatory Video Project in Rural Nepal *[online]*<br><br>*Sarita Pandey*, University of Essex, School of Health and Social Care |
| **12:45-13:45** | **Lunch**<br>*(BNAC Executive Committee Meeting 61 Banbury Road)* | |
| 13:45-14:45 | *Plenary 1: Nepal Conversations: Rethinking Knowledge Production and Exchange* | |

| | 64 Banbury Road & online (Teams link has been emailed to all registered participants) |
|---|---|
| | (Coordinators: **Uma Pradhan**, *UCL (moderator)* *[in person]*; **Nimesh Dhungana**, *University of Manchester, (moderator)* & **Kumud Rana**, *University of Zurich* *[online]* |
| | Panellists: **Sara Parker**, *LJMU*, **Sohan Sha**, *Martin Chautari*, & **Janak Rai**, *TU (tbc)* |

| Time | Parallel Session A - 64 Banbury Road & online (Teams link has been emailed to all registered participants) | Parallel Session B - 61 Banbury Road & online (Teams link has been emailed to all registered participants) |
|---|---|---|
| 14:45 – 16:00 | *A3. Politics and Federalism*<br>**Chair: Krishna Adhikari** | *B3. Youth and (Social) Media*<br>**Chair: Stefanie Lotter** |
| | **Analysing Nepal's Foreign Policy: A Hedging Perspective** *[in person]*<br>**Raunak Mainali,** *Centre for Social Change Nepal* | **Mapping Social Media Use Among Youth Organizations Post-2015 Earthquake** *[in person]*<br>**Phoenix Kenney,** *University of Cambridge* |
| | **What does Federalism Mean for Political Representatives and Stakeholders?** *[online]*<br>**Jayanta Rai**, *SOAS University of London* | **'Gurkha Lives Matter!' Digital Divides and Youth Activism in Britain's Gurkha Justice Campaigns** *[in person]*<br>**Premila van Ommen**, *University of the Arts, London* |
| | **Challenges and Opportunities of Federalisation in the Nepalese Health System**<br>**Pasang D. Tamang** *[in person]*, **Padam Simkhada and Bibha Simkhada** *(University of Huddersfield),* **& Edwin van Teijlingen,** *University of Bournemouth.* | **Sustainability of Online News Media in Nepal: Financial Models and Prospects** *[online]*<br>**Prabesh Subedi**, *Digital Media Foundation* |
| **16:00-16:30** | | **[Coffee] Break** |
| 16:30-17:45 | *Plenary 2: Dalits*<br>**Chair: David Gellner**<br>**A** - 64 Banbury Road & online (Teams link has been emailed to all registered participants) | |
| | **Changing Dynamics of Discrimination Based on Caste and Practice of Untouchability: An Intergenerational Experience** *[online]*<br>**Ujjwal Sundas & Gopal Nepali**, *Samata Foundation* | |
| | **Facing Multi-Layered Deprivation: State of Dalits of Nepal's Tarai** *[online]*<br>**Rakshya Ram Harijan,** *Chief Attorney Office, Madhesh Province, Nepal* & **Krishna Adhikari,** *University of Oxford* *[online]* | |
| | **Dalits as subjects, Dalits as authors** *[in person]*<br>**Michael Hutt,** *SOAS* | |

3

| 18:30 | Dinner at Nepali Restaurant | |
|---|---|---|
| **Day 2: Thursday, 14 April 2022** | | |
| 9:30-10:30 | *Plenary 3  Roundtable on Jeevan Sharma's book*: <br> <mark>64 Banbury Road & online  (Teams link has been emailed to all registered participants)</mark> <br> *Political Economy of Social Change and Development in Nepal* <br> Panellists: **David Gellner,** *Oxford University* (Moderator) *[in person]*,  **Mallika Shakya,** *South Asian University* *[online]*,  and **Ramesh Sunam,** *Waseda University* *[online]* | |
| **10:30-10:45** | **[Coffee] Break** | |
| Time | Parallel Session A - 64 Banbury Road & online <br> (Teams link has been emailed to all registered participants) | Parallel Session B - 61 Banbury Road & online <br> (Teams link has been emailed to all registered participants) |
| 10:45 – 12:00 | *A4. Migration (panel I)* <br> **Chair: Krishna Adhikari** | *B4. Education* <br> **Chair: Tejendra Pherali** |
| | **Widening the Theoretical Remit of Return Migration and Reintegration** *[in person]* <br> *Prakash Khanal, Himalayan Development International* | **Roles of Technology and the English Language in Reinforcing or Reducing Marginalisation in Low-resourced Contexts** *[in person]* <br> *Saraswati Dawadi [in person]*, *Agnes Kukulska-Hulme and Mark Gaved [in person], Open University, UK* |
| | **Characteristics of Labour-Migration between Nepal & India** *[online]* <br> *Deepak Chandra Bhatta, Far-Western University* | **Bureaucratising Social Justice: The Reproduction of Social Inequality through Scholarship Programs in Nepal** *[in person]* <br> *Uma Pradhan, UCL [in person], Todd Wallenius [online], Karen Valentin [online], Aarhus University* |
| | **Exploring Marital Relationships and Health of Non-migrating spouses of Low and Semi-skilled International Migrant Workers From Nepal** *[in person]* <br> *Shraddha Manandhar, University of Huddersfield [in person], Edwin van Teijlingen, University of Bournemouth, Padam Simkhada (online), University of Huddersfield, Philip Brown.* | **Participation of Nepalese Female Students and Faculty in International Academic Community-Challenges and Impact** <br> *[online]* <br> *Anna Sadecka, University of Warsaw* |
| **12:00-12:20** | *PhD Dissertation Prize 2022 – Announcement*. <mark>64 Banbury Road & online  (Teams link has been emailed to all registered participants)</mark> | |

| 12:20- 14:00 | Lunch | |
|---|---|---|
| 13:00-14:00 | *BNAC General Assembly (AGM)- BNAC Members only.* 64 Banbury Road & online (Teams link has been emailed to all registered participants) | |
| Time | Parallel Session A - 64 Banbury Road & online<br><br> (Teams link has been emailed to all registered participants) | Parallel Session B - 61 Banbury Road & online<br><br>(Teams link has been emailed to all registered participants) |
| 14:00 – 15:15 | **A5. Migration (panel II)**<br>**Chair: Jeevan Sharma** | **B5. Gender and Development**<br>**Chair: Ben Campbell** |
| | **Trapped in Debt: Invisible Violence of Migration in Nepal** *[in person]*<br>*Ina Zharkevich, University of Oxford* | **Causes of Low Performance in English: Perspectives of College Teachers** *[online]*<br>*Gambhir Bahadur Chand, Far Western University Nepal* |
| | **Hearts in Australia, Souls in Nepal: Migration and Affective Intergenerational Aspirations** *[online]*<br>*Amrita Limbu, Western Sydney University* | **An Overview of Menstrual Normativity in Nepal** *[in person]*<br>*Stefanie Lotter, SOAS &  Neeti Aryal Khanal, TU* |
| | **They too Served: Nepali Women and Children of the British Gurkha Regiment in Asia (1947-1971)** *[In person]*<br>*Hema Kiruppalini, National University of Singapore* | **Categorising the Uncategorised: Understanding the Diversity and Marginality of Gurkha Women** *[online]*<br>*Sanjay Sharma, National University of Singapore* |
| 15:15-15:30 | [Coffee] Break | |
| Time | Parallel Session A - 64 Banbury Road & online<br><br> (Teams link has been emailed to all registered participants) | Parallel Session B - 61 Banbury Road & online<br><br>(Teams link has been emailed to all registered participants) |
| 15:30– 17:10 | **A6. Energy, the Environment, Earthquake**<br>**Chair: Ina Zharkevich** | **B6. Occupations and Diversification**<br>**Chair: Stephen Biggs** |
| | **Notes From a Buffer Zone of Just Energy Innovation** *[in person]*<br>*Ben Campbell, Durham University **& Manoj Suji**, Independent Researcher* | **Current Demands in the Nepali Electricity Sector: For a Social Reproduction Theory of Infrastructure.** *[online]*<br>*Mikkel Vindegg, CICERO Centre for International Climate Research, Oslo.* |

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|---|---|---|
| | **People, Animals and Escalating Tensions: The Case of Bardia National Park (BNP)** *[In person]*<br><br>**Nolwen Vouiller,** *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales* | **Understanding Risk in High-Altitude Mountaineering through Climbing Sherpas' Narratives in Nepal** *[online]*<br><br>**Medhavi Gulati**, *Panjab University, India* |
| | **Reconstruction Narrative of Nepal Himalayas** *[online]*<br><br>**Kamal Bahadur Mahat,** *Triveni Rural Municipality* | **Experiments in Collective Farming in Nepal, Bihar and West Bengal: Lessons for Land Reform and the Agrarian Future of the Gangetic Plains** *[online]*<br><br>**Fraser Sugden**, *University of Birmingham* |
| | **Living and Dealing with Landslides: The Political Ecology of Landslide Risks in Nepal** *[online]*<br><br>**Ramesh Shrestha,** *[online]*, **Nick Rosser & Ben Campbell** *[In person]* *Durham University; &* **Katie Oven,** *Northumbria University* | **Identity and Cultural Change among the Nepali Youth in Rushmoor, UK** *[in person]*<br><br>**Prajol Gurung,** *University of Oxford* |

*(The BNAC would like to thank the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, the University of Oxford for hosting the NSDs and supporting the event.)*

*Parallel Session A1*

*History and Cultural Production (Panel I)*

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*Chair: David Gellner*

## Musing in the Memory of Performance: From Content to Context of Selected Tharu Folk Songs

*Mohan Dangaura, Tribhuvan University, Nepal*

This paper analyzes the historical context of the Dangaura Tharu folk dance songs of Nepal. The study analyzes Tharu subjectivity by assessing the performance as an agency. The primary discussion is based on the issue of Kamaiyahood in the songs of the Tharu community. Dangaura Tharu ethnicity resides ranging from the Dang district to the margin of Farwest Nepal. This study interprets the role of memory in the folk performance of the community. The research concludes by justifying the abundance of Kamaiyahood, spatial memory, and empathy for nature in the community's folk performance. To evaluate the context of performance, Richard Schechner's idea of performance as a fortitude for identity has been applied critically. To supply the research with credible contexts of folksongs, Alan Dundas' concept of folklore as identity has also been considered. Thus, the research finds the displacement from inner Dang valley, spatial memory, and the Kamaiyahood contributing to the background of Dangaura Tharu folk performance.

## 'Guru Rinpoche is Shivaji': Identity and Ethnic Boundary Drift in Nepal's Ethnic Paintings

*Li Jingwei, Sichuan University, China*

This paper argues that ethnic paintings express situational identity adjusted by social change and ethnic boundaries. Based on anthropological fieldwork focusing on painter and mercantile communities, the social-political connotations of ethnic paintings are discussed by applying Foucault's discourse analysis. In Nepal, with the democratization since 1990,

visual expression of identity adopts new representations as people are engaging in ethnic politics and cultural activities based on the construction of ethnicity. The two genres of ethnic painting, paubha and thangka, have experienced and developed a cross-boundary mode of operating industry in response to remaining traditional in a changing society. In the narrative of value construction, the expression of ethnicity also demonstrates varied patterns of identity drift toward nation, state, and civilization. The discussion shows that ethnic identity and its boundary are not only based on a disciplined ethnicity, but also selectively resonate with potentialities among politics, market, and global values through the hidden art of negotiating with authorities.

## Liberating Arniko to Transcultural Complexity

*Zezhou Yang, SOAS, University of London, & Tianyi Chen, Heidelberg University*

If one has to choose one name to exemplify the historiography of so-called cultural contacts between Nepal and China, the name of Arniko is most likely to be chosen. Since the mid-20th century, Arniko, the ancient Newar artist and architect who worked in Yuan China in the 13th century, has received an excellent reputation as possibly the most famous cultural envoys between these two countries. Even a highway in Kathmandu is named after him.

However, this paper is not another one of those studies that tirelessly reiterate Arinko's achievements. Departing from the conventional discourse around Arniko, this paper aims to explore the epistemological question: how can we know Arniko, more general, the conventional discourse of Nepal-China relations, differently?

To answer this question, this paper proposes two varied interdisciplinary approaches to interrogate Arniko as an invented character in modern times. The invention, in this paper, does not imply that Arniko is pure fiction but suggests that he is a cultural product of diverse, even ambiguous historical backgrounds and sources. However, the transcultural complexity surrounding Arniko has been flattened in modern times, reducing it into the fixed template of Nepal-China friendship. Therefore, the first approach, drawing on multilingual materials, investigates the modern cultural politics of Arniko, looking into how it was invented, namely, confined. The other approach goes back to the life and works of Arniko in the 13th century. It re-examines his identity as a Nepali artist who worked in China and argues that instead of a bridge between Nepal and China, Arniko was one of the artists that applied the Newar style artistic taste into various art creations according to different art traditions throughout a larger area of East and Inner Asia.

Altogether, both approaches work to liberate Arniko, the artist, architect, and cultural character, to multi-layered power-geometries. By doing so, this paper argues for the transculturality of Arniko. It belongs to a larger project which seeks de-centralised, multi-layered, and border-crossing attentive methods to explore Nepal-China contacts beyond national narratives.

*Parallel Session B1*

*Health (Panel I)*

*Chair: Jeevan Sharma*

## Socio-economic Inequalities in Hypertension, Diabetes and Overweight in Nepal: A Decomposition Analysis of 2019 Nepal STEPwise Survey

*Uttam Paudel & Bihungum Bista, Nepal Health Research Council, Nepal*

Socioeconomic inequalities in non-communicable diseases (NCDs) should be scrutinized and relevant actions are needed to reduce their negative consequences. This study aims to assess the socioeconomic inequalities in most prevailing NCDs - hypertension, diabetes and overweight in Nepal and to assess the determinants in terms of their contributions to the inequalities. This study uses the cross-sectional data from the national STEPS survey on chronic NCDs in Nepal conducted in 2019. The survey implemented a multistage clustered sampling design among 6,475 participants aged 15 years or above in both urban and rural areas of Nepal. Decomposition analysis using STATA software version 13 was done to further explore the inequalities. Concentration indices (CI) revealed that hypertension (CI = -0.02) is concentrated among the poor, while diabetes (CI = 0.252) and overweight (CI = 0.190) were found concentrated among the non-poor. About 56.4% of the pro-poor inequalities in hypertension was explained by age, followed by low education 21.9%, disadvantaged ethnicity (15.2%) and currently married adults (6.4%). Similarly, above 75% of pro-rich socioeconomic differences in diabetes is explained by age and the rest by primary education of adults. For overweight; the male sex is found with the highest contributor in inequalities followed by age, disadvantaged ethnicity, primary education and marital status. All the models explained at greater than 97% of the estimated socioeconomic inequalities in NCDs in Nepal with a small non-explained part of the inequalities. There is a pro-poor high inequality in hypertension as substantially explained by young adults and pro-rich inequalities in overweight and diabetes as explained by many socioeconomic and demographic factors. This concludes that strengthening the implementation of poverty-alleviation programs among poor, and gender (male) responsive policies and health

education promotion with equity-focused interventions are urgent to control the escalating burden of NCDs and inequalities in NCDs in Nepal.

## Manifestations of Trauma amongst Ex-combatants in Nepal

*Heidi Riley, University College Dublin*

The primary aim of this research is to better understand how trauma manifests amongst ex-combatants, focusing on the People's Liberation Army in Nepal. The research will examine factors that produce and perpetuate trauma within this group, and the ways that trauma impacts on both violent and non-violent behaviours. This research takes the position that, although engagement in violence is an obvious source of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), there are other factors that need to be considered in better understanding trauma in ex-combatants. Factors such as childhood experiences, disillusionment or ostracization in post-conflict, gender norms, or lack of a sense of agency, may all play a role in inducing or perpetuating trauma. Taking these factors into account provides vital insights into the complexity of conflict-related trauma amongst ex-combatants and can be indicative of how it manifests in certain behaviours and interacts with policy interventions.

The study primarily involves the implementation of the 'Impact of Trauma' (IoTs) survey for data collection. This is a survey tool developed to examine lifetime exposure to traumatic experience. Trauma is measured by using tested clinical scales, on anxiety (GAD-7), depression (PHQ-9), and PTSD (PCL-5). Questions on wartime traumatic experiences are taken from the Harvard Trauma Survey and it also includes questions on access to support mechanisms. The IoTs survey will be implemented with a sample of 100-150 ex-PLA in Nepal, ensuring that 30% of the sample are with women ex-PLA. Data collection has not yet begun but the presentation will be based on the background to the project. This will include a discussion of both the development of the IoTs as a data collection tool and findings on trauma amongst ex-PLA discussed in my new book, *Rethinking Masculinity: Ideology, Identity and Change in the People's War in Nepal.*

## Effect of School Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene on Health Status of Basic Level Students' in Nepal

*Mohan Kumar Sharma, Tribhuvan University,  & Kathmandu, Nepal and Ramesh Adhikari,  Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu Nepal*

Access to the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programmes at schools are the basis of a child's right to be healthy and to get quality education. This study examines the

association and effects of WASH facilities available at schools on health status of basic level students, ranged from the six to eighth grades in Nepal.

This study applies causal-comparative research design within two groups: availability of the improved and unimproved WASH services at the schools. The study used random sampling and selected 768 participants. The sample size 768 was calculated using the standard statistical formula and selected stratified sampling method. Equal, 384 samples from each group were selected. The Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) version 25 was used to analyse the data using u nivariate, bivariate and multivariate data analysis.
The school WASH facilities was found having significant association with students' health status (p=<0.001); nearly two thirds (64%) of respondents from unimproved category and more than two fifths (41%) from the improved schools were found to be sick. Likewise, respondents' age had positive association with health status (p=<0.001) the older the respondents the more sick they are likely to be. Three fifths (59%) of respondents aged 15-19 as compared to the higher than half (51%) ages of 10-14 years reported to be sick. Correspondingly, gender and health status of the respondents also has association (p=<0.05). Ethnicity and health status of respondents was found to be significant (p=<0.001). The WASH services had significant effect to students' health status with crude Odds Ratio (cOR.388; CI, 290 - .519, p=<0.001), even with the inclusion of other socio-variables (aOR = .442; .302 - .646, p=<0.001). The female students were more likely to fall sick (aOR = 678; CI, .502 - .915, p=<0.01) compared to male students keeping all other variables constant in the model.

The study findings suggested that it would be better to envision the WASH awareness programme in school, especially targeting the students, as there is an evidence for the need to increase preventive as well as the therapeutic efficacy of the potential infections.

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## *Parallel Session A2*

## *History and Cultural Production (Panel II)*

*Chair: Michael Hutt*

### Gurkha Knife in Polish World War Two Memoirs

*Paulina Stanik, University of Warsaw, Poland*

The Second World War, also described as a mobile war, created numerous opportunities for intercultural encounters – among others, between soldiers of the Second Polish Corps and the Gurkhas of the British Indian Army. In this paper, I focus on a single element highlighted by the Polish memoirists in their war accounts – the khukuri knife. Although it is used as a multi-purpose tool in Nepal, it contributes to the image of a fierce Gurkha soldier thanks to its reputation as a lethal weapon. The knife attracted much attention during the war, and it seems to have been the most well-remembered element of the representation of the Nepalis in Polish Second World War memoirs. In the narratives, the knife appears in rumours sweeping the armed forces and in observations made by the authors who cooperated with the Gurkhas; a single author recalls holding it during an operation on the Italian peninsula. Apart from situating the soldiers' fascination with the dagger within the framework of Polish men and masculinity studies, I aim to trace earlier Polish-language publications discussing the khukuri and Nepal to situate the discourse in a broader national context.

### Transit Kathmandu

*Dikshya Karki*

This presentation analyzes the cinematic representations of Kathmandu in Nepali, Hindi, and English language films and mainly those from 'new Nepali cinema'. In discussing a 'far out, 'off the map' city from the global South that continues to be framed from a touristic gaze of medieval pagoda-style architecture and mystic mountains I use an alternate lens to focus on a visuality that emerges from massive urbanization and economic, social and cultural changes in the Kathmandu valley. In order to investigate the effects of globalization and migration on the cityscape as seen in films, I will begin with a history of modern Kathmandu

and move into the analysis of the liminal states of the city as a transit point for social, economic, criminal, and social activities in films. The city takes multiple forms of transit from a physical transit to other global cities via the international airport, to a criminal transit for its South Asian neighbors who use the open India-Nepal border and a mystical transit for its foreign visitors seeking a spiritual mystical experience. I assess the multiple meanings of these transits understood through Kathmandu's path to modernity, rise in a migrant population, unplanned urbanization, and social and economic inequalities.

## The Making of Colonial Darjeeling, 1830-1930

*Mingma Lhamu Pakhrin, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India.*

This study tells a complex yet fascinating story of Darjeeling. It retraces the process of development and transformation spanning over a century where Darjeeling occupied a place of prime importance in the colonial administration and governance of British India. By doing so, it attempts to locate and investigate the "actors of transformation," both British and native[1], to uncover the nuances of the story of making of colonial Darjeeling. It has been established that the emergence of sanatoriums or health depots, and later hill stations, in the Indian subcontinent during the nineteenth century paved the way for the creation of a "space"[2] which allowed the Europeans to live separately from the "others" and recuperate from the tropical diseases of the plains. The production of colonial Darjeeling also met with similar fate and hence it was driven primarily by the need to establish a sanatorium for European convalescents. But here, soon enough the co-existence of two spaces became evident. While one space catered to the invalid European soldiers and convalescents, the other space catered to the British government's need to conduct and monitor various transactions-economic, political and social. Colonial Darjeeling became a negotiated space for multiple stakeholders-various "actors of transformation."

The study investigates the initial period of the formation of colonial Darjeeling with the deliberations centring the establishment of a sanatorium. It demonstrates how colonial Darjeeling as a "threatened frontier" became evident during the same. Besides, it highlights the key roles played by various actors-settlers, both European and non-European, labourers and Committees- in the process of establishment of the sanatorium as part of the making of colonial Darjeeling. It further delves into the significance of the very characteristic of Darjeeling as a frontier in the eastern Himalayas. It narrows its gaze upon this vital element of colonial Darjeeling to explore the development of its relations with the people, within

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[1] I am aware of the negative connotation associated with the term "native," however, its usage entails my lack of an appropriate word for the same.

[2] The term space here is used to denote a geographical area.

and beyond its frontier, and the intricacies of various transactions occurring between the frontiers of Darjeeling and its neighbours. It does so by examining the four main aspects, namely, "Frontier Crimes," "In between Frontiers," "Movement and emigration" and "Disturbance, Suspicion and Apprehension." It illustrates the intensification of the colonial gaze beyond the Darjeeling frontier-the "unknown" land of Tibet. Titled "The "Tibetan Turn": Communication, Intelligence and Agents," it uncovers how both that gaze and the place from where it was gazed became significant factors and determinants of the imperialist project to make inroads into Tibet. The bridging element between the two was the establishment of roads and communications and the collective production of knowledge and information where native and local intellectuals played crucial, yet dynamic, roles as the political and "cultural brokers." Lastly, it explores the political developments and assesses the extent of the national movement's outreach in colonial Darjeeling.

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## *Parallel Session B2*

## *Health (Panel II)*

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*Chair: Ram Prasad Mainali*

### Covid 19: Coping Strategies among Nepali Community in the UK

*Naresh Khapangi Magar, Centre for Nepal Studies (CNS) UK, Krishna P Adhikari University of Oxford, & Padam Simkhada University of Huddersfield*

As a large proportion of the global population has experienced some form of psychological distress during the Covid-19 pandemic, there have been calls for more research exploring coping mechanisms. The United Kingdom is one of the hardest-hit countries, and the Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) community has been disproportionately affected. Although there has not been systematic research so far, it is believed that the Nepali community in the UK has also has shared the same fate if not suffered more. This paper aims to explore the Nepali community's experience, particularly the coping strategies adopted by them to survive and manage the impact of the pandemic.  We were particular interested to understand the influence of the method adopted at the home country. In doing so we adopt a framework consisting modern vs traditional methods.

A total of 30 Nepali people living in the UK for more than ten years were recruited for the in-depth interviews for this study. A native-Nepali speaking researcher conducted interviews in Nepali and all the interviews were transcribed and translated into English before being analysed thematically.

This paper unfolds that the Nepali community in the UK has adopted mixed coping mechanisms as used in their home and host countries. Varieties of traditional Nepali coping strategies, such as using herbs known for their curing ability, belief in God, and having authentic Nepali foods known for high nutrition, are the main themes that emerged from the study. The Nepali community maintained, and also strongly followed, the rules and guidelines set up by the host country too. The research's major finding is that the Nepali community's coping strategies have multiple layers at individual, family and community levels.

The understanding about the roles that the social networks and family/community structure play is significant to achieve public health goals; therefore, this research's findings are expected to help policymakers to understand the psychology of Nepali people in the UK and to adjust plans and policies accordingly. Our study suggests a need for appropriate psychosocial support programmes that strengthen positive coping strategies and mitigate malpractices during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Sustainability of Community-based Health Promotion Interventions on Maternity and Neonatal Care in Nepal: Findings from Ten-Year Controlled, Non-randomised Study

*Padam Simkhada, University of Huddersfield, Vijay Singh GC, University of York, Edwin van Teijlingen, Bournemouth University & Sharada Prasad Wasti University of Huddersfield*

### Background

There is a need for evaluating the long-term impacts and sustainability of maternal health interventions in low-income countries. This paper evaluates the sustainability and post-intervention impacts of community-based health interventions to promote maternity and neonatal care uptake in rural Nepal.

### Methods

This was a ten-year controlled, non-randomised, repeated cross-sectional study (2007, 2012 and 2017). A total of 1225 women of childbearing age, who had their last child less than two years ago, participated from both intervention and control areas in three consecutive

surveys. The sample was drawn using the census methods from both intervention and control sites. Difference-in-difference analysis was performed to estimates the effects of the intervention over the study period.

## Findings

The post-intervention period increased women's likelihood of attending ANC visits in the 1st trimester (OR-1.9, 95% CI, 1.23-2.88), uptake of TT vaccine (OR-13.3, 95% CI, 5.79-30.38), Skilled Birth Attendant visits (OR-2.1 95%CI, 1.25-3.37), institutional delivery (OR-1.8, 95%CI, 1.11-2.9), PNC visits (OR-3.8, 95%CI, 2.34-6.24) and breastfeeding within one hour (OR-2.9, 95% CI, 1.77-4.87). Women in the richest wealth quintile had a 12.3 times (95% CI, 3.72-40.45) higher likelihood of seeking at least one ANC service than their poorest counterpart. Women with at least a primary education were 2.8 times (95% CI, 1.45-6.37) and those with secondary education and above were 4.6 times (95% CI, 1.79-40.45) more likely to seek ANC services than women without education.

## Conclusion

Community-based health promotion can have a long-term effect on the uptake of rural maternal healthcare services in the postintervention period. It concluded the behaviour change program has shown long-term effects which has strong implications around sustainability for policy and practice in the maternal health promotion in low-income countries.

## Using Participatory Visual Approaches to Engage Communities in Public Health Research: Openings and Obstacles for Listening to Ethnic Minority Women in a Participatory Video Project in Rural Nepal

*Sarita Panday, University of Essex*

## Introduction

Community engagement through co-designed participatory research among ethnic minority women in public health research is an area of limited academic research. This community case study documents narratives of local women in a community engagement using Participatory Video (PV) among ethnic indigenous and Dalit women in rural Nepal, and also reports on openings and obstacles to engagement in public health research.

## Methods

I facilitated a 15-day PV training for seven local women in a village in Sindhupalchok District. Women participants were given the freedom and space to engage with other local women and determine the content of their story for the PV. The participants co-produced a short film narrating the experiences of women who had had child marriages and screened it in the local community.

## Key Findings

The film produced in the PV process comprises narratives of women who face severe overlapping challenges because of being child brides. Women identified health needs mediated by their specific identities (for example, married as children and from Dalit - untouchable groups and poor and school dropouts and face peer pressure and face family violence and health issues). PV was useful for local women to gain understanding of the socio-cultural factors which lead to child-marriage, such as cultural practice, poor economic conditions, peer influence, and lack of social support. Despite some risks to women participants and researchers, engaging with people through PV training and screening events were useful to raise confidence of local women, and to raise awareness of child marriage in the village.

## Conclusion

Public health policy should reflect multiple social identities that intersect at the individual level to reproduce interlocking systems of opportunities and oppression (i.e., gender oppression, caste-based discrimination). Similarly, CE in public health programmes and research should focus on marginalised and oppressed groups to ensure research impact for these groups.

## *Parallel Session A3*

## *Politics and Federalism*

*Chair: Krishna Adhikari*

### Analysing Nepal's Foreign Policy: A Hedging Perspective

*Raunak Mainali, Center for Social Change, Nepal*

Wary of its significant dependence on India, Nepal has pursued a policy of hedging in order to mitigate potential future risks. The harmful consequences of this dependence were on display in 2015 when a blockade along the southern border with India resulted in massive economic losses for Nepal at a time when the nation was recovering from an earthquake. To insure themselves against a similar fate in the future, Nepal has chosen to hedge by pursuing closer relations with China. This paper analyses and outlines how Nepal has deployed this hedging strategy. It argues that Nepal's relations with China, albeit improved, is not enough as India still retains a monopoly on Nepal's economy. The increasingly hostile and polarised nature of Sino-Indian relations also means that hedging is not a sustainable policy and if the rivalry between the regional powers worsens, Nepal may be forced to "pick a side".

### What does Federalism Mean for Political Representatives and Stakeholders?

*Jayanta Rai SOAS, University of London*

After a decade-long 'People's War' and another decade of political struggles about how to restructure the country, with the 2015 Constitution Nepal has been made into a federal democratic republic, creating seven provinces and 753 local bodies. The decade-long constitutional negotiation on the restructuring of the state along federal lines revolved around what powers should be devolved and the delimitation of internal boundaries, which involved intensive border work around where lines are drawn, how constituencies are formed, and who has the right to represent and speak on behalf of which groups.

The debate has now moved to another set of issues: what power, authority and resources should be held by the federal, provincial and local levels, and who has benefited from the new federal system? This paper will address these questions by drawing on findings in the

ongoing fieldwork for my PhD thesis – semi-structured interviews, focus groups and observation in the federal parliament in Kathmandu, and in Province 1 and Madhes Province. I will illustrate the different perspectives, understandings, interpretations, expectations among political representatives and various stakeholders, and their contrasting versions of federalism – as a means to achieve development, to deliver effective services and material wealth, or to reflect identity and achieve inclusion and equality through political representation.

## Challenges and Opportunities of Federalisation in the Nepalese Health System

*Pasang D Tamang, University of Huddersfield, Padam Simkhada, University of Huddersfield, Bibha Simkhada, University of Huddersfield, & Edwin van Teijlingen Bournemouth University*

Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) was responsible for meeting the health needs of people in Nepal prior to the federalisation. However, after the federalisation, the authority and the responsibility have been shifted to the local authorities which will have impact in the delivery of health services at all the levels. Hence, this study aimed to explore the challenges and opportunities raised by the federalisation in the Nepalese health system.

This study employed a qualitative methodology which consists of semi-structured interviews with health service users (N=15), health service providers (N=16), and health managers/policymakers (N=17) in Nepal.

The health service providers did not face any challenges in seeking the health care services from the health facilities due to the federalisation rather they found the health workers availability has improved after the federalisation.  The health managers/policymakers thought that federalisation has brought more opportunities than challenges. However, the health service providers thought that there are more challenges than opportunities such as having limited/no technical trainings or up-to-date knowledge on their area. Some health managers as well as health service providers in local level perceived that the coordination has been bit easier than before after the federalisation. All the health service providers and local health managers agree that the political leaders seem motivated and gives them time to listen to their action plan. However, when the time comes for implementation then there is a huge challenge in the implementation part. Health managers/policy makers and health service providers felt that there is need for the context-focused health system and need for policy revision.

Some of the opportunities due to the federalisation were improvement in co-ordination, staff availability in health facilities, and motivated political leaders, while the challenges were in implementation and limited or no training availability.

## Parallel Session B3

## Youth and (Social) Media

*Chair: Stefanie Lotter*

### Mapping Social Media Use Among Youth Organizations Post-2015 Earthquake

*Phoenix Kenney, University of Cambridge*

The purpose of this study is to observe how youth organizations engaged with each other online after the 2015 Gorkha earthquake. A positive youth development (PYD) framework suggests individual and collective growth through youth civic participation. In Nepal, young people have received and expressed enthusiasm for their potential role in socio-economic development. Also informing this study is literature arguing youth vulnerabilities can be exacerbated in crises. My work provides one example of youth-centric humanitarian response. I conducted virtual research for a master's dissertation in 2020. COVID-19 presented certain challenges to research at that time. Social media provided an accessible and rich data source. More so, as a methodology, social media analysis is contextually relevant because Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter were used by youth organizations in Nepal in post-earthquake communications. This study considers the advantages and disadvantages of social media as an organizational tool and research methodology. Other activist movements also utilized social media to organize events, spread messages, or offer an alternative to in-person protests. Critics, however, see social media-based activism as empty performativity. I recognize the limited scope of my social media methodology as I could not observe any in-person or embodied events. However, rigorous content mapping, thematic, discourse, and visual analyses reveals patterns across social media that show young people in Nepal were successful in self-organizing three distinct phases of earthquake recovery: immediate, intermediate, and long-term recovery activities. After triangulating participant-created social media content with other peer reviewed and grey literature, I highlight a connection between successful youth self-organization and the Youth Vision 2025, a youth-centric policy promulgated by the Ministry of Youth and Sport in August 2015. In conclusion, this study provides evidence for more youth-centric pathways for development.

## 'Gurkha Lives Matter!' Digital Divides and Youth Activism in Britain's Gurkha Justice Campaigns

*Premila van Ommen, University of the Arts, London*

In the summer of 2021, Gurkha veterans in the UK launched a series of protests and hunger strikes which pressured Nepal and Britain's governments to agree to hold bilateral talks on Gurkha grievances for the first time. Also for the first time in 32 years of Gurkha justice campaigns, a highly visible and significant number of diaspora youth was seen protesting alongside elderly pensioners. This paper gives an overview of how these youth came to be present at the hunger strikes, and discusses digital divides that prevented previous engagement with such political activism. It questions the extent to which generational uses in social media technologies may have played a role in creating gaps of information alongside cultural and historical factors.

The paper presents digital ecosystems used by different generations and groups of campaigners: the hunger strikers, Gurkha veteran groups, British Army veterans, and the range of youth who predominantly belong to Gurkha army families. It also brings a personal perspective in detailing my own roles in initiating a youth focused campaign to support the hunger strikes. I discuss the strategies employed modeled upon social media activism that exploded in the wake of 2020's Black Lives Matter protests, and the creation of a micro network of youth influencers. I also discuss the impact of academic scholarship, about pension policies and historical discrimination of Gurkhas, in the ways which they were used for youth activism. In doing so, the paper presents both research about diaspora politics, as well as the ways research may find itself politically engaged.

## Sustainability of Online News Media in Nepal: Financial Models and Prospects

*Prabesh Subedi, Digital Media Foundation, Nepal*

Internet-based news media, also known as online news media, have a relatively short but fascinating history. This newly evolved medium has brought multitudinous innovations and opportunities in the media and communication industry. It has simply redefined how mass and public communication works. Despite having so many exciting points, some challenges to rise and thrive in this youngest media are on the surface. Question of sustainability, more specifically, having an appropriate business model is considered a major one. This study reviews existing business models in online news media across the world and connect their relevance in the context of Nepal. It analyzes unique trends and practices followed by Nepalese online outlets and discuss their straight from financial sustainability aspect.

## *Plenary 2*

## *Dalits*

*Chair: David Gellner*

### Changing Dynamics of Discrimination based on Caste and Practice of Untouchability: An Intergenerational Experience

*Ujjwal Sundas, Samata Foundation, Nepal and Gopal Nepali, Samata Foundation, Nepal*

Factors such as political, economic, technological, socio-cultural and legal contribute to societal change. Process of social changes may be imperceptible and can be cumulative, i.e., one may not easily perceive the processes of social change, although it is always taking place. Globally, there has been a substantial development in the education system, more advancement of technology, growing urbanization and effects of global trends, etc. But due to the pre-existing caste structure and Hindu cultural values built in thousands years, any form of new dynamics get dissolved into status quo causing a sluggish change.

This study applied a qualitative method, focusing on intersectionality of gender, geography and diversity of the respondents and employed cross sectional approach to study the lived stories of Dalits in Nepal covering the last 70 years. Inter-generational lived stories of Baby boomer, generation x and millennial Dalits are captured. Convenience sampling method was employed for the interviews.

Factors determining the social changes, factors impeding the social changes and the state of new equilibrium in the society has been analyzed through lenses of prevailing caste systems. The older generations experienced higher degree of oppression. The middle-aged Dalits were less suppressed, given access to education and other opportunities. Dalits from the younger generation are not explicitly discriminated. Many of the youngsters from millennial category have not experienced extreme form of discrimination today.

There have been some changes in the society in regard to caste-based discrimination and practice of untouchability. But the progress has not been as desired by the Dalits. Today, discriminations are not blatant but still continue in implicit manners. The traditional values seem quite stubborn. The impeding forces need to be tackled jointly by Dalits and non-Dalits. More needs to be done in academic and practical field for sustainable changes.

## Facing Multi-Layered Deprivation: State of Dalits of Nepal's Tarai

*Rakshya Ram Harijan, Chief Attorney Office, Madhesh Province, Nepal, & Krishna P. Adhikari, University of Oxford*

Formally treated and known as untouchables, Nepal's Dalits (13% of the total population) are the historically most excluded and oppressed macro category in Nepal. Despite huge constitutional changes and institution of affirmative action in recent decades, many of them continue to face everyday societal ostracism (for example, in socialisation, commensality, and inter-caste marriages). Most of them are landless (land is a vital source of physical capital in Nepal), are illiterate or barely educated, and are very poor. Though things are starting to change, they still have negligible representation in both the public and private sector.

Nepal's Dalits are a relatively understudied group but there has been some recent efforts by both by the Dalits and other scholars to understand the position of the Hill Dalits. Tarai Dalits (4.7% of Nepal's population, CBS 2011), whose social and economic position, and overall representation in public and private sector, and level of everyday exclusion is much below the Hill Dalits, have been rarely studied.

This paper combining the lived experience of the first author in Kapilvastu and ethnographic research by the second author in Nepalganj in 2021-22, with review of secondary sources, attempts to map the Tarai Dalits' position in a broader comparative framework. In doing so, it attempts to build on a comparative perspective: between Pahadi and Madhesi Dalits, and between Dalits of the eastern and western Tarai. It also discusses the influence they have from across the border in India, where similar systems exist.

The paper concludes that the Tarai Dalits' agendas are neither included in the Madhesi rights movements, nor are they fairly represented in the Nepal's mainstream Dalit movements. These movements, as well as governments at various levels, need to pay special attention in order to address the multi-layered deprivation that the Tarai Dalits face.

## Dalits as Subjects, Dalits as Authors

*Michael Hutt, Emeritus Professor, SOAS; Research Affiliate, Dept of Social Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, University of Oxford*

The Hindi word *dalit* ('broken', or 'oppressed') is the term most commonly used in contemporary South Asian discourse to denote members of the range of largely artisanal castes formerly known as Untouchables. Dalits number approximately 3.5 million in Nepal, constituting 13.22% of the total population, according to the 2011 census (Gellner et al. 2020). Despite huge social and political change over the past 60 years or so, Dalits remain at

the very bottom of Nepali society in terms of all key development indicators. They continue to face discrimination, exclusion and violence, both direct and structural, and efforts to improve their condition are routinely compromised by pervasive social stigma.

The under-representation of Dalits in Nepali-language literature until the late 20th century—both as the subjects of texts and the authors of texts—is very striking. A category of Nepali-language writing labelled *dalit sahitya* only began to emerge after 1990.

In my paper I will report on the research I have conducted on this issue to date, which has necessarily been desk-based and under pandemic conditions, looking forward to the fieldwork I hope to commence in May 2022. I will introduce a selection of Nepali-language texts produced by non-Dalits in which Dalit characters and Dalit-related issues have been portrayed. Most of these were published before Dalits began to author such texts themselves; a few are of more recent origin. It is possible to discern a progression in this literature from what Laura Brueck (2014) calls 'narratives of pity and condescension and fetishization' to texts that display at least a measure of 'Dalit consciousness'.

I will then offer some preliminary remarks on the Dalit-authored literature that has appeared in more recent years and on the debate that has arisen about the definition of *dalit sahitya* and the authoritative representation of Dalit issues.

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## *Parallel Session A4*

## *Migration (Panel I)*

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*Chair: Krishna Adhikari*

### Widening the Theoretical Remit of Return Migration and Reintegration

*Prakash Khanal, Himalayan Development International (HDI)*

Migration researchers argue that male and female migrants have different migration, return and reintegration experiences. Many migrants who wanted to settle permanently in a host country return home without completing their migration cycle, when unknown forces such as unexpected events in the family, in the home country or in the host country or sudden change in their own personal circumstances. Remigration, or return migration is not a myth, as argued by some researchers. According to researchers up to 80 percent of the emigrants

return home or migrate to a third destination. My research study, although not generalisable across the entire population of Nepali migrants in the UK or return migrants in Nepal, does support the findings that female return migrants' experiences remigration and reintegration in the home country particularly differently.

The female migrants' experience of return migration and reintegration in the society that they had left behind some time ago could be filled with nostalgia, difficult and different as compared to male return migrants because of the preconceived and predetermined role of female that continues to dominate Nepali society. With the intention of delineating the current state of theoretical development on the factors determining or influencing female return migration and their reintegration, I would like to examine the return and reintegration experiences of Nepali female return migrants exclusively based on the following research findings: The female migrants may find some sociocultural and religious norms and practices, such as lack of personal freedom, respect for personal opinion and traditional norms such as seclusion during the monthly menstruation cycle, as well as prejudice against inter-caste marriages. Their empowerment associated with migration makes it hard for them to accept male dominance, male patriarchy in the family and indifference in the society. Some among them challenge the power hierarchies, while others migrate again. They feel that the archaic social values prevalent in the Nepali society undermine their existence, humiliates them, and discourages them from transfering their knowledge and experiences.

## Characteristics of Labour-Migrants between Nepal and India

*Deepak Chandra Bhatt, Far Western University, Nepal*

The history of labour migration between Nepal and India is long. It is estimated that more than 30 million Nepali people have migrated to India for earning though this number is not confirmed officially. Mostly people from Sudurpaschim province choose India as their destination for searching employment. Similarly, north-Indian people prefer to choose nearest border towns in Nepal in search for better opportunities to earn. The purpose of this study is to compare and contrast the characteristics of labour migrants between the two countries. With a paradigm of post-positivism, QUAN-QUAL methodology was adopted for this study. Quantitative methods included a survey of a sample of 650 households. The quantitative data were analysed in SPSS version 20. This study is focused in Bhimdatt Municipality of Kanchanpur district.

Majority of the migrants from each country (64.6%) were males between the ages of 18 and 40 years. The mean age of Nepali and India labour-migrants was 28.9 years and 32.9 years respectively. About 30.5 percentage of females in Nepal and 36.8 percentage of females in India migrated to their destination with their husband. Of the Nepali women, about 83.2%

are involved in receiving remittances. The majority of the migrants of both countries come from the economically marginalized and socially backward communities. Almost all Nepali labour migrants are Hindus while Indians migrants belong to Muslim, Hindu and Sikh communities. The majority of Nepali labour-migrants were better educated than the Indian labour-migrants. Some of the migrants' children join the schools in their parents' working destination. The livelihood status of Nepali labour-migrants seems better than Indian labour-migrants. However, most of labour migrants from both migrant groups were living in poor conditions at their respective destinations.

## Exploring Marital Relationships and Health of Non-migrating Spouses of Low and Semi-skilled International Migrant Workers From Nepal

*Shraddha Manandhar, Edwin van Teijlingen, Padam Simkhada, & Philip Brown, University of Huddersfield*

Over half of all Nepali households have at least one family member currently abroad or living in Nepal as a returnee. Because of economic and social constraints and household responsibilities, male migrant workers usually leave their spouses and children behind. This study explores the impact of labour migration on the marital relationship and health of spouses who remain behind in two districts of Nepal. Four interviews were conducted in two districts (one municipality per district), Nawalparasi and Tanahun, with municipality health section chiefs (2) and female community health volunteers (2), and 15 with women and one with a man who stayed behind while their spouses worked abroad. Most women said that the separation had not weakened their marital relationship barring the lack of intimacy. Women said that regular communication with their husbands over the internet helped them to stay connected and maintain emotional intimacy. Happiness that their husbands were earning money, hopefulness for a good future, and partners' foreign employment being very common in their community were major reasons why women did not perceive separation as having a negative impact on their relationship. While some reported having additional work in the absence of their husbands, leading to tiredness, loneliness, and stress, overall, women said their health was not affected in their husbands' absence. The one male participant, however, said that his marital relationship had been affected badly and hence his mental health. We recommend longitudinal quantitative and qualitative ethnographic studies to uncover details of whether and how marital relationships and health are impacted over time among partners who remain behind.

## *Parallel Session B4*

## *Education*

*Chair: Tejendra Pherali*

### Roles of Technology and the English Language in Reinforcing or Reducing Marginalisation in Low-resourced Contexts

*Saraswati Dawadi, Agnes Kukulska-Hulme & Mark Gaved, Open University, UK*

The ReMaLIC project is exploring marginalised young students', and their parents' and teachers' lived experiences of using technology for teaching and learning, and their perceived value of English for their life opportunities in four low-income countries in Asia and Africa (Nepal, Bangladesh, Senegal, Sudan). The project is researching the factors and barriers that affect their access, opportunities and motivation for learning through technology and using English. This presentation will share preliminary findings.

We have collected first-hand accounts of the experiences of young people aged 13-15 years (n=160) and their parents (n=64) and teachers (n=32) from 16 different schools in the four countries to understand their perspectives. Our aim has been to bring the least heard voices to the forefront and to stimulate discussion on how to provide marginalised children with better access to technology to enhance their learning. This presentation will report on our early findings which provide insights into marginalisation, and the roles that ICT and English language learning play in the children's education. After describing 'new conceptualisations' of marginalisation in education, this presentation will give an account of the research: the contexts in which the children live, their marginalisation, and the multi-tool methodology used for collecting data. Using data from the four countries, we will illustrate marginalised children's, as well as their teachers' and parents' access to and use of technology for teaching and learning English. How the children value English, and their motivations and opportunities to learn it will also be presented. Finally, the presentation will cover the factors and barriers that contribute to gender differences in access and opportunities.

27

## Bureaucratising Social Justice: The Reproduction of Social Inequality through Scholarship Programs in Nepal

*Uma Pradhan, University College London (UK), Todd Wallenius, Aarhus University (Denmark) & Karen Valentin, Aarhus University (Denmark)*

The role of formal education in the promotion of social justice has remained a longstanding concern in scholarly and political debates on social inequality. One of the mechanisms through which governments and educational institutions attempt to mitigate economic and social disadvantages, and thus to make schooling more accessible for children of marginalized backgrounds, are various scholarship programs that provide financial assistance to cover education costs. In this paper, we draw on ethnographic data on the distribution and negotiation of scholarship programs at two Nepali state-run schools as part of independent research projects. Anchored in the cross-field of educational anthropology and the anthropology of bureaucracy, we examine the details of the scholarship distribution process—application procedures, home visits, examinations, selection criteria and documentation requirements—thereby exploring the ideas and practices that shape the selection of scholarship recipients at different stages of the distribution process. By bringing together these two research fields, we understand schools not just as sites of learning, but as institutions that control and regulate access through bureaucratized mechanisms. We particularly pay attention to process that is inherently selective and requires social and cultural capital that many of the targeted students and families do not possess. In many cases, therefore, the most deserving students fail to obtain scholarships, countering the intentions behind the programs and falling short of the ambitious rhetoric of social justice. This paper argues that, paradoxically, despite the emphasis on social justice and equality, the need for financial assistance programs in Nepal results from existing inequalities and the gradual commercialisation of education, leading to what we term a 'bureaucratisation of social justice'. Therefore, while the prospect of promoting social justice through education sounds promising discursively, in practice the contradictory nature of formal schooling privileges those most capable of navigating bureaucratic practices and institutions through the use of existing economic and cultural capital.

## Participation of Nepalese Female Students and Faculty in International Academic Community-Challenges and Impact

*Anna Sadecka, University of Warsaw, Poland*

The aim of this presentation is to discuss the results of participation of Nepalese female students and faculty in international academic community. The context for the analysis is longitudinal research regarding participation of the Nepalese in the European Commission educational projects and their visits to Poland in the years 2010-2017. It focuses on the

long-term results of academic mobility and the perception of its impact on one's professional and personal development.

The study has shown that even though participation of female students and faculty in international mobility programmes is proportionally significantly lower than their male counterparts, the impact and value added of the results is extremely high. Women who decide on studies or research abroad acquire desirable knowledge, skills and competences, build their self-confidence and professional aspirations and continue their academic and professional development after return to Nepal. They manage to successfully reconcile traditional domestic roles with ambitious professional career and civic engagement. This can be an example for other Nepalese women who would like to follow their path and help build the image of women who are ready to assume high-level professional, social and public roles.

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## *Parallel A5*

## *Migration (Panel II)*

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*Chair: Jeevan Sharma*

### Trapped in Debt: The Invisible Violence of Migration in Nepal

*Ina Zharkevich, University of Oxford*

International migration in Nepal is often praised for its significant contribution to the nation's economy, but it comes at great personal cost to migrants and their families: this "industry" thrives on personal and family debts. International migrants from Nepal have to pay between 1,000 and 60,000 USD to brokers-cum-smugglers, depending where migrants are going. By borrowing huge sums of money at high interest (36%), many of soon-to-be migrants are trapped in a debt cycle even before leaving Nepal, with their departure often postponed by brokers-cum-smugglers in order to reap higher profits. Be they legal migrants to the Gulf or irregular migrants to the USA, many migrants take years to repay the debt, if at all, as the interest grows so rapidly, even with family members back home making huge contributions to the repayments. Drawing on in-depth interviews with (ir)regular migrants and their families, this paper will investigate  the relationship between  the growth of debt-

driven and debt-financed migration and the increasingly precarious lives of migrants and their families as they become trapped in persistent debt. What does it mean to live in debt and what bearing does it have on migrants and their families?

## Hearts in Australia, Souls in Nepal: Migration and Affective Intergenerational Aspirations

*Amrita Limbu, Western Sydney University*

This article focuses on the intergenerational nature of migrants' aspirations and the emotions that attach to them. Drawing on Ahmed's (2014) notion of "affective economies" that emphasises that emotions circulate and accumulate affective value, I show how aspirations attached to migration or the "mobile aspirations" (Robertson, Cheng, & Yeoh 2018) are affectively experienced by their family. While studies have explored aspirations for permanent residency (PR) in the West, as well as the pathways to PR, there is less documentation of how parents experience their children's migration aspirations, including for PR abroad. This article addresses this particular gap. Taking the case of Nepali education migrants in Australia and their transnational families, I explore the parents' emotions when their children aspire for PR overseas. I argue that migration aspirations create a different kind of intergenerational affective economy between parents and children. This article is based on a multi-sited ethnography among Nepali education migrants in Sydney, Australia and their families in Nepal.

## They too Served: Nepali Women and Children of the British Gurkha Regiment in Asia (1947-1971)

*Hema Kiruppalini, National University of Singapore*

The impact of India's decolonisation in shaping the transnational lives of British Gurkha families within and between the Asian region(s) post-1947, is an area of study that has received comparatively little scholarly attention. This paper offers a gendered perspective on inter-Asian military migration by directing a gaze to Nepali women and children and interrogating the extent to which they were deeply embedded in the processes of transnational soldiering. It seeks to foreground the lived experiences of women and children both within and beyond the context of the British Army's gated military bases in Asia. The roles and contributions of a range of Nepali women – Gurkha wives, nurses, *dhai amahs*, and teachers – deserve to be examined as they add to our knowledge of the gendered processes that informed military labour mobility. This paper will draw on empirical data gathered from multi-sited archival research and ethnographic

fieldwork conducted in Nepal, the United Kingdom, Malaysia, and Singapore. It will also illustrate the utility of a visual ethnographic approach in piecing together life histories.

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## *Parallel Session B5*

## *Gender and Development*

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*Chair: Ben Campbell*

## Causes of Low Performance in English : Perspectives of College Teachers

*Gambhir Bahadur Chand, Far Western University, Nepal*

This presentation aims to explore teachers' perspectives on the causes of low performance in English and suggestions for the improvement in the college-level students. Low performance or high percentage of students' failure in English is a burning issue in Nepalese universities. Considering this hot issue I collected data from twenty teachers teaching in the college level in the Far Western part of Nepal using qualitative research approach. The study used primarily two questions to collect their perspectives and shared the questions using Google form. Collected data were analysed forming two themes based on the questions: causes of low performance and suggestions for the improvement. The collected data showed that classroom communication, teaching, learners, curriculum, and the evaluation system are the main causes of low performance and they have suggested increasing interaction in the classroom, changing teaching methods in the college level, revising the existing courses, and changing the examination system in the university to improve the level of performance of the students, specially in the college level.

## An Overview of Menstrual Normativity in Nepal

*Stefanie Lotter, SOAS University of London & Neeti Aryal Khanal, Tribhuvan University, Nepal*

The paper traces the evidences of menstrual normativity through detailed study and analysis of National Civil Code, *Naya Muluki Ain* 1854, first comprehensive written law of Nepal. I argue that the law codified prevailing norms and practices of patriarchal Hinduism through detailed categorization of purity and pollution followed by punitive measures for

breaching caste and gender norms. Menstruation features scantily within the code, indicating that regulating the menstruation and pollution associated with it was a personal matter under the authority of household patriarch. The code however establishes menstruation as an important life-cycle event that determines the ritual status of girls/women and also their access to resources including property. The paper concludes that these historical legacies of menstrual normativity continue to influence menstrual norms and practices today.

## Categorising the Uncategorised: Understanding the Diversity and Marginality of Gurkha Women

*Sanjay Sharma, National University of Singapore*

Gurkha women are undefined, overlooked, overshadowed, and marginalised in the literature and on popular discourses that often glorify the Gurkhas. The available definitions tend to limit their diversity—for instance, the colloquial Nepali word *lahureni* connotes only the wives of the Gurkha soldiers. My definition of Gurkha women accommodates the diverse groups of women belonging to the families of Gurkha soldiers and/or women who have served with the British Army as soldiers, nurses, teachers, and other professionals. These women have existed as a non-category in social history and memory and the colonial and postcolonial discourses. I have arrived at approaching this paper with an ambitious chore of categorising and theorising the subjective experiences and identities of Gurkha women. Categorising the uncategorised is a complicated and meticulous task. The categorisation may not be primordial as I am building on the differences within and carving the boundaries with pre-existing definitions. My aim here is to assemble and juxtapose a wide array of subjectivities, experiences, identities, and histories that help categorise the diversities of Gurkha women and unpack their marginality.

This paper will introduce and interact with my primary research interlocutors—the Gurkha women. There could be both enabling and coercive factors that structure what Gurkha women as a category is, what its limitations are, what the challenges are, what fosters the category, and what lies underneath. I will also highlight that the diversities and differences of Gurkha women exist not just as a category, but also within it. The intersections and interactions among these social aspects decide whether there is polarisation or continuity among individual women or as groups. The polarisation or continuity depends on the temporal and spatial shifts in identity formation.

## Parallel session A6

## Energy, the Environment, Earthquake

*Chair: Ina Zharkevich*

### Notes from a Buffer Zone of Just Energy Innovation

*Ben Campbell, Durham University & Manoj Suji Independent Researcher*

Nepal's possibilities for sustainable energy transition increasingly occupy public attention, and social scientists need to become more involved. This paper concerns installations of domestic biogas systems to replace burning fuelwood in Nepal, which have reached surprisingly high numbers, but what do we know of the domestication of this technology in terms of functional sustainability (especially the need for access to daily inputs of dung), and as regards the role of cooking fuel in socio-cultural significance (sensitivity of how meals are produced at the heat of the hearth)? Research conducted during lockdown with residents of Chitwan presents a field for anthropological attention ranging from the intimacy of kitchen life to the dynamic politics of access to the commons. This highlights the need to look beyond household levels of consumption to wider enabling contexts for energy sustainability.

### People, Animals and Escalating Tensions: The Case of Bardia National Park (BNP)

*Nolwen Vouiller, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, France*

The Bardiya National Park (BNP), established between 1988 and 1989 in southwestern Nepal (Tarai), is facing more and more challenges. The human population, consisting of various Tharu groups (mainly Desauri, Deukhuri and Dangaura) and castes (Brahmin, Chettri, Untouchables) is increasing along with endangered and potentially dangerous animals: tigers (Panthera tigris), leopards (Panthera pardus), Asian elephants (Elephas maximus), Indian rhinos (Rhinoceros unicornis), various snakes (mainly Russell's viper, king cobra, and krait) or crocodiles (Gavialis gangeticus or Crocodylus palustris). The area of the Park (968 sq.km) remains the same, although it is linked with Banke and some animals migrate to India. Due to issues of resource use, space and other reasons, attacks on humans, livestock

33

or destruction of crops and houses have become a daily reality. Pandemic, floods, recent constructions, NGO's intervention and tourism (made essential but still unstable), have added further difficulties to what many call "Human-Wildlife Conflicts" (HWC). This study is based on a first three-month fieldwork in Bardiya at the level of Shivapur-Hattisar village during summer 2019 as part of an anthropology thesis (UCLouvain, Belgium), as well as on six further months of study in the same place, from August 2021 to January 2022, as part of a PhD in anthropology (EHESS France - ULiège Belgium). The aim of this presentation is to expose current tensions in this area, both between animals and humans, but also between humans: tensions about borders, territories, as well as relationships and emotions.

## Reconstruction Narrative of Nepal Himalayas

*Kamal Bahadur Mahat, Triveni Rural Municiapality, Salyan, Nepal*

The purpose of this paper is to analyze reconstruction processes, interventions, and consequences in Dolakha district of Nepal.

The paper draws mostly on participant observation/ ethnographic fieldwork method used for this research. I stayed in Dolakha district from March 2018 to April 2019 when I was working with the Housing Recovery and Reconstruction Platform (HRRP). Data collection tools including participant observation, Focus Group Discussions, case studies, person to person interviews, field visits, meetings with stakeholders, monitoring and evaluation visits with government and development partners are used for this study.

This ethnographic study finds that the reconstruction process was mainly centered in quantitative aspects, i.e. numbers of houses built more than ninety percent whereas ignored qualitative aspects such as cattle spaces, *aangan* (courtyard), storage and public spaces.

The Research paper seeks only about the cultural aspects of the reconstruction process not focusing on the structural parts of the houses. This research will have implications to focus the reconstruction actors in the qualitative, cultural aspects of the houses and livelihood of the householders in future.

Reconstruction was iterative. My participants were focused on receiving the tranches from government and non- government actors in the first phase of rebuilding their houses. They added upper storeys, verandahs, *aangan* (courtyard) cattle spaces to their houses in following phases.

## Living and Dealing with Landslides: The Political Ecology of Landslide Risks in Nepal

*Ramesh Shrestha, Durham University, Nick Rosser, Durham University, Ben Campbell, Durham University, & Katie Oven Northumbria University*

"Raja le dekhdaina, mato le boldaina" meaning *the king (those with power) does not see and the land (that witnesses everything) does not speak* was a quote by one participant of my ongoing PhD research, which simply highlights how marginalized groups like Tamangs are deprived of access to decision-making and decision-makers. Using a political ecology approach, this paper attempts to understand the underlying causes of landslide vulnerability of people of Sindhupalchok, a bordering district that was the most affected by the 2015 Gorkha earthquake. Preliminary findings suggest that landslide risks are not only associated with the physical aspects like geology and hydrometeorology, but are also associated with the socio-economic and cultural dimensions. Despite many socio-political transformations in Nepal including the local elections after almost two decades, the locals feel either no or only very little changes in terms of disaster risk reduction. Findings also highlight that the landslide impacts and risks outweigh the benefits gained from rural road construction that, in general, are constructed without adequately consulting locals and without following environmental protection measures in the study area. The policies and institutional set-up for landslide risk reduction are in place but have not been much effective. Small to medium scale landslides that cumulatively have the potential to cause damage comparable to large scale but less frequent events, such as the Jure landslide, are quite common in my study area. However, these are often undermined and neglected by the authorities, posing a serious challenge to achieving the targets of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. This study has also captured some local coping and adaptation measures practised by the local communities of my study area and highlights how such measures are at the brink of extinction due to changing socio-economic dimensions.

## Parallel Session B6

## Occupations and Diversification

*Chair: Stephen Biggs*

### Current Demands in the Nepali Electricity Sector: For a Social Reproduction Theory of Infrastructure

*Mikkel Vindegg, Centre for Climate Change, Oslo*

This article uses work and state relations at a Nepali electricity office as a staging ground for bringing the labour of repair squarely into focus in the ethnography of infrastructure. A trio of electricians at the office had a torrid time trying to address an ever-increasing number of complaints. Customers were under the impression that the electricians were both lazy and slow, despite even compromising safety regulations to get more work done. Although the electricians' jobs may be comparatively stable and privileged, they put their bodies on the line to service an often-unappreciative public. This shows that infrastructures are made of people, not simply constructed by them. This is often skirted over in the anthropology of infrastructure, which frames repair through its absence and insufficiency, in rare ethnographic engagements with those who do repair work. A suggested response to this deficiency is found in a social reproduction theory of infrastructure.

### Understanding Risk in High-Altitude Mountaineering through Climbing Sherpas' Narratives in Nepal

*Medhavi Gulati, Panjab University, India*

The ill-timed death of 16 Sherpa climbers on Mount Everest in the 2014 avalanche changed the way risk and death were interpreted in high-altitude mountaineering. Nepali climbers demanded that an adequate reimbursement was to be provided to the aggrieved families, and each Sherpa be insured against death and injury on the mountain. While most of the demands were recognised, many Nepalese climbers still feel that their earnings from expeditions were unjustifiably low. Even as prominent training institutions such as Khumbu Climbing Centre and Nepal Mountaineering Association bolster mountaineering industry in Nepal, an eminent risk of fatality continues to exist. In the past, several climbing Sherpas

have died and many others were severely injured on 8,000 metre or higher mountains as a result of hypoxia, exhaustion, strong gales, avalanches and frigid conditions. Based on a study conducted in Nepal throughout the 2019 and early 2020, discussions and prolonged conversations with key government officials at Department of Tourism elucidate the changing role of Nepalese climbers, particularly in the aftermath of the 2014 Everest tragedy. The paper further illuminates the transformation of Sherpas' vocations as well as the Nepalese mountaineering industry. Drawing on qualitative interviews with 43 climbing Sherpas, the study will explore first-hand narratives on risk and dying in the mountains, providing insight into their Lifeworld.

## Experiments in Collective Farming in Nepal, Bihar and West Bengal: Lessons for Land Reform and the Agrarian Future of the Gangetic Plains

*Fraser Sugden, University of Birmingham*

This paper outlines the outcome of a participatory action research project in Saptari of Nepal, and the adjoining plains of Madhubani Bihar, and the North Bengal Tarai – to identify radical new ways of addressing the challenge of landlessness, land fragmentation and tenancy across this belt. It asks the question as to whether farmers' collectives, which pool land, labour, capital, and skills to create medium-sized production units, offer a more viable model of farming for resource-constrained smallholders rather than individual family farms? Groups of marginal and tenant farmers, catalysed by the project, evolved into four different collective models with varying levels of cooperation, gender composition, and land ownership/tenancy status. Based on 5 years of action research, this paper examines how the models evolved and their divergent outcomes. All groups have gained from cultivating a single contiguous plots in their efficiency of irrigation, labour and machine use for land preparation and water supply, and from economies in input purchase. Collectives have also been extended into the agro-processing sector. Several collectives of tenant farmers have also enhanced their bargaining power vis-a-vis an entrenched landlord class and thus been able to negotiate lower rents and refuse long-standing feudal obligations. However, the models differ in their extent of economic gain and their ability to handle gender inequalities and conflicts over labour sharing. The paper explores the historical, regional, and cultural factors that could explain such differences across the models. It thus offers unique insights into the processes, benefits, and challenges of farmers' collectives and provides pointers for replication and further research.

## Identity and Cultural Change among the Nepali Youth in Rushmoor, UK

*Prajol Gurung, University of Oxford*

Informed through research for an MPhil dissertation, the presentation will address the change of attitudes on topics of identity and culture within Nepali youths in Rushmoor, UK. I will address how youths make sense of their identity and existing notions of cultural difference and how they generate a new understanding of difference and solidarity.

Though the youth might express similar ideas of nationality, ethnicity, and community, shared by the older generation, the youths approach these tropics with different and diverse understandings. Within the youth, a stronger Nepali identification over ethnic or religious belonging is articulated and celebrated; I will examine how this developed for the youths in Rushmoor. I will attempt to explain this through the topic of education, family life and the idea of struggle, where various life trajectories and experiences of the youths combine to generate a collective sense of identity and belonging.

I also argue for the presence of 'cultural memory' within the youths, in their discourse surrounding culture and identity, which is predominately essentialised through racialised difference. My use of cultural memory does not emphasise a cognitive or biological logic, it is an analytical means to advocate the imagined nature of culture present with the youths, where the recollection of the past and lived experience of the youth is subject to contemporary concerns. I use the idea of cultural memory to explain why the youths confidently pronounce their cultural difference that shapes their identity, which is arguably ambiguous and contradictory when examined.

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