

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
SANTA CRUZ

**KNOWLEDGE, NATURE, AND NATIONALISM: THE UPPER KARNALI
DAM IN NEPAL**

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

SOCIOLOGY

by

Christopher J. Butler

June 2016

The dissertation of Christopher J. Butler is
approved:

Professor Ben Crow (chair)

Professor Deborah Gould

Professor Andrew Mathews

Tyrus Miller
Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

© Copyright by Christopher J. Butler 2016

All Rights Reserved

Table of Contents

Commonly Used Abbreviations	vi
List of Figures and Tables	vii
Abstract.....	ix
Dedication	x
Acknowledgements.....	x
Introduction – Dams, Development and Water Politics in Nepal	1
1. <i>Big Dams: Rise, Fall, Rise, Critiques</i>	6
World Commission on Dams	8
Controlling the View on the Ground	11
2. <i>Making the State with Dams</i>	12
Official Knowledge.....	18
Governmentality	21
3. <i>Re-envisioning Water</i>	24
Water Scales to Waterscapes.....	25
Hydrosocial Futures.....	28
4. <i>Current issues in hydropower development in Nepal</i>	30
5. <i>Hydro Proprioception</i>	37
Chapter 1: “The Jewel in the Crown”: a Critical History of the Upper Karnali Hydropower Site	44
1. <i>Introduction</i>	45
2. <i>Background</i>	48
3. <i>Approach and Method</i>	56
4. <i>Configuring Upper Karnali</i>	57
Justifying Upper Karnali.....	66
5. <i>Conclusion</i>	79

Chapter 2: Capital Hydro Visions in Nepal	80
1. Introduction	80
2. Hydropower and Neoliberalism	86
<i>Neoliberalism(?)</i>	87
<i>Water and Neoliberalism</i>	92
<i>Hydropower and Discourse</i>	95
3. Methods.....	98
4. Data and Themes	102
<i>Hydropower as destiny</i>	102
<i>Hydropower as development</i>	106
<i>Performing the neoliberal</i>	108
5. Discussion – What Will Become of Water?	110
Conclusion	114
Chapter 3 – Conspiracy and Nationhood and India	116
1. <i>Introduction – Forested Negotiations</i>	116
2. <i>Whence Conspiracy Theories? And Why?</i>	132
3. <i>Border Disputes, Rebellion, and King Birendra</i>	137
Maoist rebellion and peace process.....	138
King’s assassination	139
4. <i>River Agreements and Treaties between India and Nepal</i>	141
5. <i>Ganges Basin Strategic Assessment</i>	148
6. <i>Discussion</i>	153
Chapter 4 – Lives in Suspension	158
1. <i>Introduction</i>	158
2. <i>Is this resistance? What does “resistance” actually tell us?</i>	163

3. <i>Ideology and Hegemony</i>	169
4. <i>Data</i>	179
5. <i>Discussion -- The Tyranny of Waiting, Lives in Suspension, and Subduction</i>	189
Conclusion – Wherefore Upper Karnali?	207
<i>Afterword – For Future Consideration</i>	217
<i>Appendix A – Development Timeline of the Upper Karnali Hydroelectric Project</i>	220
WORKS CITED	227

Commonly Used Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CPN(M)	Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) - radical splinter party that broke off from UCPN(M) in 2011
CPN(UML)	Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist)
IPPAN	Independent Power Producers Association of Nepal
NC	Nepali Congress Party
NEA	Nepal Electricity Authority
UCPN(M)	Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) - the original Maoist party which initiated the civil rebellion in 1996; they join the government as a formal political party in 2007
UKH	Upper Karnali Hydroelectric Project
WB	World Bank

List of Figures and Tables

Introduction

Figure 1 (page 41): A diagram of the various populations engaged in debates over the Upper Karnali Hydroelectric Project.

Chapter 1

Figure 2 (page 50): A map of the large-sized hydropower projects in Nepal as of 2014. The green blocks indicate projects already completed. The white blocks are currently planned for construction.

Figure 3 (page 51): The Upper Karnali Hydroelectric Project Site, including the proposed dam site, power house, and tunnel.

Figure 4 (page 63): 2014 peak load and energy need predictions from Himalayan Power Consultants compared with actual reported figures for 2014.

Chapter 4

Table 1 (page 160): Survey question: What was your opinion about the attack on the GMR buildings?

Table 2 (page 180): Survey question: How will the dam affect this area?

Table 3 (page 181): Survey question: How will the dam affect the water?

Table 4 (page 181): Survey question: When will construction on the dam begin?

Table 5 (page 187): Survey question: Who should be responsible for the river and water?

Table 6 (Page 187): Survey question: Who should be responsible for compensation?

Table 7 (page 193): Survey question: Where do you get your information about the dam?

Table 8 (page 195): Survey question: Do you think the information you know about the dam is reliable?

Table 9 (page 196): Survey question: Do you know the terms of the agreement regarding electricity distribution and shares?

Figure 5 (page 198): Map: The Upper Karnali Hydroelectric Project Site, including the proposed dam site, power house, and tunnel.

Table 10 (page 200): Survey question: Will you buy shares in the Upper Karnali Hydroelectric Project?

Abstract

Knowledge, Nature, and Nationalism: the Upper Karnali Dam in Nepal

Christopher J. Butler

This dissertation is a critical examination of the activity and politics surrounding the Upper Karnali Hydroelectricity Project (UKH) in western Nepal. Though Nepal has 6,000 rivers, the rural parts of the country are largely without electricity while load shedding prevails in the urban areas up to 12-14 hours per day in the dry season. Against this backdrop, UKH occupies a unique space as Nepal's first mega-project. Debate rages over how UKH should be employed to generate development in Nepal: Should it be used to produce electricity for domestic use or to export the power to India to generate badly-needed state revenue? Contributing to the debate is the presence of UKH's constructor: the GMR Consortium, an India-based infrastructure developer. The debate around GMR and its intentions has laid bare many long-running tensions between Nepal and India around the topic of water and Nepali sovereignty, in general.

Dedication

For Carole and John,

for Ruth and Irwin,

for Laxmi and Xiang...

but mostly and especially for Jenny – my love, my light,

and, through and through, the most beautiful person I've ever known.

Acknowledgements

I've sat down to write these acknowledgements no fewer than twenty times.

Certainly not because I don't have anyone to acknowledge, but because I can't imagine how and where to start.

I feel so fortunate that my academic interests were drawn to Santa Cruz, initially in admiration for Ben Crow's research. But once on campus I realized how lucky I would be to learn from so many incredible professors: Candace West, Craig Reinerman, Miriam Greenberg, Dana Takagi, Andrew Szasz, Anna Tsing, Greg Gilbert, and Margaret Fitzsimmons. Most especially, I am indebted to my dissertation committee of Ben, Debbie Gould and Andrew Mathews. What I have produced is a mere shadow of their collective wisdom, but could not have been produced without their support

and guidance. Finally, the administrative support of Ann McCurdy, Mizuki Hisaka, and Barbara Laurence meant I didn't have to worry about anything more than studies.

During my field research in Nepal, I had a wonderful place to call home at the Nepal Centre for Contemporary Research, headed by the generous polymath, Bishnu Upreti. In Kathmandu and beyond I am indebted to a long roster of people who gave me more time and effort than was reasonable for a blundering graduate student to expect: Dipak Gyawali, Ratan Bhandari, Ratna Sansar Shrestha, Dwarika Dhungel, Santa Bahadur Pun, Suresh Chalise, Bhoj Raj Poudel, Ajoy Karki, Gurabar Singh Thapa, Hari Pandit, Indra Manandhar, the late Iswer Onta, the late Jeewan Thanju, his brother Rajendra, Mohan Manandhar, Pramod Rijal, Santosh Nepal, Upendra Gautam, Gosai KC, and Sagar Prasai.

In the field, Rajan Maharjan, Tijlal Thami, and Jeevan Chhetri were indispensable guides and translators. And better yet, wonderful traveling companions.

While at Santa Cruz, my co-hort—Ruben Espinoza and Jim Misencik—were a wonderfully supportive cast who remain my good friends today. If not for their companionship outside the classroom, I might have done nothing but work.

Generally good people include Tracy Perkins, Sarah Romano, Bernie Zaleha, Andy Bockus, Matthaus Rest, Austin Lord, Amelie Huber, Hikmat Khadka, Abigail Brown, Sara Shneiderman, Mark Turin, and Colin Hoag.

Because they fit in no other category other incredibly wonderful people who are my family away from family: Ram Thami, Anita Thami, Komin Thami, Shanti Thami, Shristi Thami, and Sunita Thami.

Introduction – Dams, Development and Water Politics in Nepal



Steel cable strung across the Karnali River, marking the future site of the Upper Karnali Hydroelectric Project (photo by author).

At the time of this writing, the Upper Karnali Hydroelectric Project (UKH) appears much as in the photo above. Some concrete stanchions have been plugged into opposite sides of the river where they will presumably be used to support heavy construction equipment. But apart from those pillars, UKH is still largely a figment of imagination, still an intangible symbol of possibility, and still a project whose eventual construction, shape and form remains the focal point in obdurate battles over the future of Nepal's development path, its natural resources, and its sense of nationhood.

Life without electricity or life with only intermittent electricity is the norm in Nepal. Sixty percent of the rural areas are not electrified save for consumer-level solar installations. In the urban areas, residents contend with load shedding all year long, ranging from 2-4 hours per day in the summer months, and as much as 12-14 hours per day in the winter (NEA, 2014). At the same time, all Nepalis seem to know about the hydropower potential of the country (Lord, 2014), which could easily light up the entire nation with enough surplus to be exported and sold at a hefty profit. And yet, in 2014, Nepal was generating only 740MW of electricity from hydropower (NEA, 2014). To put this in perspective—as one Nepali hydro professional did for me—the Grand Coulee Dam in Washington state generates 7,000MW of electricity on 33 turbines for residents living in the Columbia River basin: Washington, Idaho, and Oregon. “Take three of those turbines from one dam,” my informant told me, “and you have more electricity generated than in all of Nepal. And we have 6,000 rivers. 6,000!”

UKH was initially sited in the 1960s as an auspicious location for a hydropower site but issues with funding and transmission kept the project in check as Nepal addressed more immediate issues in agriculture production and politics. Financing from international donors and lending institutions renewed interest in UKH in the early 1990s, but the People’s War from 1996-2006 halted major infrastructure investments in the rural parts of the country. With the close of the civil war, political parties vied heavily to recruit supporters based on their visions of Nepal’s future,

which invariably included commitments to developing its hydropower potential. In the wake of this renewed momentum for hydropower, the GMR Consortium from India was awarded the license to develop UKH in a competitive bidding process in 2008.

Nepal is quite like their neighbors in this regard. On a regional level, several South Asian countries have pinned a hefty portion of their future growth to hydropower from dams (Crow & Singh, 2000; Pomeranz, 2009). To ensure their success, state and corporate authorities have privatized many natural resources formerly considered to be common property, a process that dispossesses rural residents of land and water access, and delivers a serious impediment to already difficult livelihoods (D. Harvey, 2004; Jodha, 2008). Nepal is no exception to this trend. In a country the size of the state of Indiana, Nepal hosts two dams with two more currently under construction, and seven others proposed for construction within the next decade (Dharmadhikary, 2008).

Since the end of the civil war, the new Nepal republic has moved forward only haltingly, and today faces a delicate balancing act. It is attempting to grow the national economy, primarily through hydropower export, and to provide meaningful representation to the rural areas from whence the insurgency sprang (Hutt, 2004) and where the dams will be located. Whatever its financial and political promise to the country as a whole, the introduction of dams into rural areas of Nepal will disrupt

established patterns of water access and land for local residents, reallocating benefits from local riparian users to new groups of beneficiaries at the regional or national level (Khagram, 2004). As a result, Nepal finds itself vice-gripped between pressures from geopolitically-powerful neighbors seeking hydropower, and rural Nepalese whose livelihoods will be directly impacted.

Broadly speaking, this dissertation explores national and local perceptions of the relationship between dams and development. From pre-modern ideas of these “useful pyramids” to a mid-20th century inception of dams as “temples of modernity” to their more recent interpretations as Promethean ventures that produce significant costs and disputed benefits, hydro ventures have always been necessary to complex society, but modern iterations occupy a much more complicated space in today’s energy landscape. In spite of substantial local resistance and transnational protests from INGOs (Khagram, 2004), dams remain a central tool for development and state-making, particularly in the Global South (Dharmadhikary, 2008; Rivers, 2012).

Central to this transition of dams from promise to “problemshed” (Mollinga, Meinen-Dick, & Merrey, 2007) are two sets of questions that guide my research on dams in Nepal: 1) How are various parties—the state, the private sector, and civil society—building and transmitting their particular hydropower visions of Nepal’s development and future? The answers to this question can tell us much about the

process of development, official knowledge, and the contestation around these two topics. In addition, this question can provide insight into how different groups of Nepalis view the country's natural resources and gradual entry into global markets, and, on the flip side, how perceive and respond to the free market forces already present in the country. 2) How or in what fashion do rural residents view their role and the state's role in promoting hydropower development? Since an attack on the UKH site in Aril 2011, local response to the dam has been quiet and resistance minimal. How should we interpret this situation? The first set of questions necessarily engages issues of knowledge production, while the second is informed by traditions and innovations in state power and resistance studies. Taken together, these questions, I believe, raise important concerns about the process of development generally, and help us understand how state power is exercised in times dominated by neoliberal ideas.

As global capital and state-making efforts continue to push into the furthest reaches of the developing world, these questions, I believe, will generate provocative insights for understanding 1) how rural areas of the global South resist and negotiate global economic forces while attempting to maintain livelihoods and identity; and 2) how states and corporations, buttressed by global capital, disturb and reconfigure themselves to produce new sources of value.

In this introduction, I will review the various schools of literature that inform this dissertation, starting with a brief review of the history and relationship between large hydropower and development, particularly as it has evolved in the Global South. Then I will discuss how states attempt to gain or reinforce their power through processes like hydro development, employing various technologies an attempt to produce “official knowledge” that simultaneously promotes their visions while quieting dissent. In the third section, I explore newer concepts that have emerged in political ecology and critical water studies and how these ideas can enhance our investigations of socio-natural settings like watersheds and hydropower projects. Finally, I will present details on the current hydropower and political contexts of Nepal as a means to orient the reader to the specific views and challenges that inform the actors who provided the data for my research.

1. **Big Dams: Rise, Fall, Rise, Critiques**

“A society that can’t bring water in will perish. And a society that can’t move water out will perish. The manipulation of water is not a choice once you’ve reached the level of complex society. In fact, you can’t have a complex society on any other condition except manipulating water.”

– *Joseph Amato, Professor Emeritus of History, Southwest Minnesota State University (Boleman, Butler, & Cihak, 2008)*

The history of large dams in the past century reflects a cycle of great faith (1920-1970), doubt and recrimination (1970-2000), and a return to what should be called “modified faith” (2000-present). As rivers will jump their banks if the flow is

disturbed or interrupted, so has academic scrutiny interrupted the original flow of dams as technical means of development and transformed them into contested symbols of political representation and social tools of power and control. As the quotation above suggests, dams throughout history have been treated as *fait accompli*, a necessary tool for transforming natural resources into human ones, a predestined end product for accommodating the growth and expansion of human settlement around the globe. Histories about dams (Schnitter, 1994; Verghese, 1994) celebrate the ingenuity and hard work of humans to overcome terrains and topographies that had resisted settlement. But more than that, dam systems, such as the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Sardar Sarovar Project, have enabled humans to *prosper* in seemingly inhospitable environments, providing technology to domesticate natural resources and unleash water's material potential to serve economic, social, and political goals.

Dam building in South Asia and Nepal, in particular, have followed this same trajectory of great enthusiasm for large dams, protest and push back in the 80s and 90s, followed by a resurgence of big dams in favor of generating large-scale power. Nehru's commitment to dam building in India prompted Nepalese state officials and South Asian dam proponents to openly bemoan the untapped hydropower potential resting above them in the Himalayas (Verghese, 1994). A period of rapid dam construction in India justified by questionable narratives of water scarcity (Mehta, 2001) subsided in the late 1980s when protests against the proposed Sardar Sarovar

dam garnered international attention from activists (Baviskar, 1997; Fisher, 1995). Meanwhile, Maoist rebels declared war on the Nepalese state and made large infrastructure development projects, like dams, their initial main targets (Fujikura, 2003; Roka, 2004). Rural communities in Nepal then turned to micro-hydro projects to keep power and revenue local, but these too failed due to lack of oversight and support from the state (Shenker, 2010). Since the end of the civil war in 2006, focus has returned to the potential of large dams to generate revenue, promote consistent electrification, and remedy drinking water shortages in the Kathmandu Valley. Similarly, these dam projects have also been buttressed by narratives of scarcity that fail to scrutinize the massive intakes of water by multi-nationals such as Coca-Cola (Rademacher, 2011). Still money poor and fragile following the civil war, the Nepalese government has opened itself anew to foreign investment to build large dams (A. Dixit & Gyawali, 2010). However recent success of activism at West Seti and publication of reports such as Chintan and Shrestha's *Dams in Nepal* (2005) indicate that significant resources will remain ready to scrutinize and oppose future state projects.

World Commission on Dams

From the 1930s to the 1970s, state officials touted the success of large dams for providing not only rural electrification, but also for considerations of food security, local employment, skills development, and associated expansion of infrastructure such as roads and schools (Iyer, 1989; Verghese, 1994). However, mounting statistics

(Dams, 2000) about displaced people (an estimated 80 million by 1990) and fractured ecosystems (60% of the world's rivers affected by dams and diversions), accompanied by wide scale transnational protests against future construction of large dams would spawn the World Commission on Dams (WCD) in February 1998.

To build a dam with a human face: this was the unstated goal of the WCD, motivated by two worldwide shifts in the perception of dams and development: 1) changing notions about the appropriate relationship between the state and its citizens; and 2) an increased recognition of the social and environmental impacts of dams (Dams, 2000:25). The first shift mirrored a similar sea change in development that occurred in the 1980 and 90s, calling for agencies to put development in the hands of the stakeholders. Rather than issue blueprints for development programs across countries, critics like Robert Chambers (Robert Chambers, 1994; R. Chambers, 1995) argued for development agencies to embrace roles as facilitators who employed participatory methods for more culturally-appropriate results.¹ The second shift represented the overall effectiveness of environmental and social activists to demand more attention for the more human and less obvious impacts of large dams.

The WCD report issued 26 guidelines for large dam construction, the number of which immediately drew criticism from the World Bank and various countries for

¹ However well-meaning the intent of participatory methods, development critics would note that it, too, was fraught and beset by power relations at the intra-local level (Cooke and Kothari 2001).

being too numerous and thus unwieldy (Briscoe, 2010). While the material influence of the 26 guidelines on the dams constructed after 2000 will ever be a matter of speculation, what cannot be disputed is how the report altered the frame in which large dams were conceived and constructed by both pro-dam and anti-dam activists. The World Bank responded to the WCD by mining more deeply positive outcomes related to dams, as the illustrated by title of Bhatia et al.'s book, *The Indirect Economic Impacts of Dams* (2005). Their text attempts to tease out ever more subtle connections between power generated by large dams and economic improvement. Meanwhile, anti-dam NGO's, activists, and some academics sought new methodologies and avenues of inquiry that attempted not only to present a more holistic and nuanced picture of large dam impacts (P. H. Brown, Tullos, Tilt, Magee, & Wolf, 2009; Dao, 2010; Tullos, 2009; P. Vandergeest, Pablo Idahosa, and Pablo S. Bose, 2007), but also to encourage investigation of the meaning of water and rivers in local contexts (Blatter & Ingram, 2001:334).

Others critics voiced concerns that the WCD report might scuttle the potential for large dams in the future at the expense of local people who could benefit. John Briscoe's blistering response in a 10-year WCD retrospective featured in *Water Alternatives* (2010) claimed that activists and NGOs who clamored for the WCD were no different than some development institutions who sought to build dams: they both pushed their interests over the interests of local people who would be most directly impacted. Moreover, Briscoe claimed, anti-dam NGOs sought to undermine

state authority in developing countries, a situation even more undesirable because “anti-dam NGOs... are not accountable to anyone except their fellow advocates” (2010:410). Less strident voices than Briscoe’s urged caution on the grounds that large dams were flawed, yes, but still an eco-positive for sustainable development (Goodland, 2010; Scudder, 2006). The fears of Briscoe, Goodland and Scudder proved unfounded in part as large dam building resurged in the late 2000s, due primarily to China’s increasing overseas expansion in dam building. As of August 2012, Chinese corporations and financiers were involved in 308 dam projects in 70 countries (Rivers, 2012). However, the China’s general remove from global environmental conversations and non-democratic political process have meant that Chinese contractors are generally less likely to adhere to environmental guidelines and more likely accept projects in politically unstable areas with high levels of corruption (Rivers, 2012:5).

Controlling the View on the Ground

Scholarly work on development provides revealing glimpses into how the actors in these hydro sagas have attempted to produce, and have prevail, their vision of the worlds impacted by large dams. For example, what is most notable about the WCD’s 26 guidelines is not what they do or do not accomplish, but rather how they present as a representation of the anti-dam stance, hoping to inspire reactive performances

of allegiance from states and NGOs around the world to this new mode of dam building—even when actually adhering to those 26 guidelines presents a logistical and practical impossibility. Invisible, yet central, to this performance stand “local people” who are from both sides of the debate depicted as “poor, powerless rural people,” and thus defined as development subjects on whose behalf intervention is warranted and thus legitimized (Escobar, 1995; Ferguson, 1994). Stacey Pigg’s work in rural Nepal confirms this process as she details how the strong presence of development experts in Nepal generated polar identities of *bikasi* (developed) and *abikasi* (undeveloped) that shaped state-local interactions (1993). From the activist point of view, local identity as indigeneity should provide the basis for legitimacy, but in writing about the Arun III dam in Nepal, Forbes found that activists tend to privilege place over politics, delimiting the space of the local as strictly bounded by a watershed (Forbes, 1999). In the process, power dynamics among co-habiting but different ethnic groups are influenced. Ambrose’s study illustrates that NGO-driven activism, like development, can be de-politically implemented and produce unintended shifts in local social arrangements that harm the very people they intend to serve (Ferguson, 1994).

2. Making the State with Dams

“What we call Man’s power over Nature turns out to be a power exercised by some men over other men with Nature as its instrument.” – C.S. Lewis (2001: 54)

What is the state of the State of Nepal right now? What can be said of a republic that formed in 1990, contended with civil war for 10 years, absorbed the former rebels into the government, and in the past 23 years has been presided over by 20 different governments (D. Thapa, 2012:55)? In this section, I will explore what the social scientists have to say about the state's use of dams and official knowledge in the project of state-making.

As James Scott (2009) has written, the formation of states is commonly told as a backward and naïve people gradually incorporated into an advanced and more prosperous society and culture. More often, Scott tells us, the actual history shows rural people, particularly in the hills of South and Southeast Asia, eluding states, carving out a symbiotic relationship wherein rural people move back and forth across a permeable boundary between the non-state spaces and the formal state. Though Scott acknowledges this elusion is less possible today, his stories of "Zomia" serve as an important reminder that states often do not, and cannot, actually possess the monolithic control and comprehension they strive to affect.²

The politics of natural resources are inextricably bound to the politics and aspirations of nation-states as the resources hold the productive potential to grow the state's economy and political legitimacy. Therefore, dams should be analyzed in

² In chapter 4, I will consider whether Zomias are possible any longer, given my observations of local resistance and livelihoods at the UKH site in western Nepal.

relation to the state, its institutions, its technologies of control, and its everyday practices. While dams are proffered by the state as means to “develop” the latent productivities of its subjects for the “common good,” dams also serve several ancillary objectives: as material rhetoric to the its subjects; as a symbol to neighboring countries of a state’s legitimacy (Sivaramakrishnan & Agrawal, 2003)³; and as a means of justifying intervention and control of natural resources. Constructing a dam to serve these multiple objectives requires the deployment of various technologies to make the dam appear to be the very thing needed in the very place it should be.

Dams assume an emblematic role in debates over water resources and an examination of hydrodevelopment, in particular, can shed light on debates over development and the environment more generally. In this way, dams present as hybrid objects (Forsyth, 2003), commonplace structures that reflect a variety of historic framings and experiences particular to certain actors or societies while also having been the subject of nearly a century of scientific study. Thus, an interdisciplinary study of dams and associated actors on multiple levels can function heuristically to reveal the connective tissue that enjoins humans and the

³ Nepal’s original king, Privthi Narayan Shah, referred to Nepal as a delicate yam between two boulders, a remark in reference to its imposing neighbors, India and China. Today, Nepal is attempting to fashion itself as the gem between two boulders, holding access to mighty rivers whose torrents out of the mountains could generate untold numbers of megawatts for the growing economies of both countries. And perhaps Nepal has good reason to think this way: both China and India have publicly acknowledged feeling threatened by Nepal’s ties to either country.

environment.

As a hybrid object, one of the many roles that dams assume is as an edificial representation of the state. But how are dams imbued with “state meaning? Unlike Marx (1978), who saw the state as the tool of the ruling classes to maintain production, and Weber (1946b), who defined the state as bureaucratic institutions with monopoly control over the use of force, Gramsci (1971) dispensed with these physical notions and suggested that the state formed in conjunction with civil society, gathering its authority and separation through the project of hegemony. Hegemony worked to create and maintain a body of common sense knowledge that would be used to subjugate subaltern groups whose consent would be more difficult to obtain. As a project requiring consistent maintenance, hegemony could be strengthened through ideological state apparatuses (Althusser, 1971), such as churches and schools, used to purvey and naturalize the ruling ideas in the minds of citizens. Ideological state apparatuses combined with disciplinary technologies of separation and scheduling worked to create self-governing subjects, which became especially important in the 18th century as growing urban populations provided a visible threat to ruling authorities (Foucault, 1979). The work of Gramsci, Althusser, and Foucault provided essential tools for social scientists to move beyond the idea of a reified state “up above” and instead to focus on the everyday governmental practices employed to present a strong state. In this dissertation I will consider how these ideas of have

been used to promote state and private sector visions while flattening possible resistance from civil society and local residents at hydropower sites.

Yet the reified state persisted through academic discussions (Abrams, 1988) and elicited further analysis that offered alternative conceptions and models. Mitchell asks how the statist approach “created [the impression that] certain aspects of what occurs pertain to society, while others stand apart as the state (1991:89). In other words, if, as Gramsci noted, the state forms in conjunction with civil society, then how does the state ascend to a dominant position and what else can we attribute to this phenomenon? Mitchell calls the state’s dominance an illusion that generates, like other rationalized projects, unintended consequences. As an example, he recounts the development of Aramco, the American oil consortium that operated extra-politically, neither officially part of the state nor civil society, and yet enjoyed royalties drawn from American tax dollars while wielding significant political power in the Middle East. The case of Aramco, Mitchell notes, “shows [that] producing and maintaining the distinction between state and society is itself a *mechanism* that generates resources of power. The fact that Aramco can be said to lie outside the formal political system, thereby disguising its role in international politics, is essential to its strength as part of a larger political order” (1991:90, my emphasis). A statist approach, Mitchell argues, takes the agency of the state for granted and asks “Who dictates state policies?” while he advocates an approach that sees entities such as

Aramco as part of arrangements that work to maintain the *apparent* separation of state and society (1991:91). Aramco was empowered, in part, by the American state, but its true power derived from a series of contingent relationships that the American state could not control.

Thus reconceived, the state, for Mitchell, becomes a scrambling, struggling hegemonic project searching for reinforcement through private capital extensions, like Aramco, while appearing to be assured and judicious to the home population. The “state,” in that view, relies not only on ideology (as Gramsci would have it) but also on production of difference and separation through government projects, supervision, representation, and organization—all of which, I argue, can be witnessed through the construction of a large dam. In this way, dams are state-making projects of representation and legitimacy, and the goal of social scientists should be to examine those practices up close (Hansen & Stepputat, 2001; Scott, 1998).

Nepal’s early attempts to develop UKH were thwarted by attacks by Maoists (P. Adhikari, 2011; Forbes, 1999) and NGO-driven resistance. Now with the Maoist party having taken a formal place in the parliament, the government is again turning to develop hydropower projects across the country (Dharmadhikary, 2008). Official statements about UKH point to the revenue generated in order to fund state development projects, and the benefits of rural electrification. Given my

interpretation of the state, these dams can also be read as a series of representations employed by the government to demonstrate competence, concern, and power, and to pre-emptively thwart additional thoughts of rebellion still lingering in the rural areas. A review of critical dam studies also reveals practices of state representation through calls to nationalism and the production of scientific knowledge.

Official Knowledge

Dams function as nodes of control (Bryant, 1997), the point at which concerns about territoriality, the commodification of water, and urban/rural interests meet (Aditjondro & Kowalewski, 1994). But dams are only the visible outcome of development and state-making representation. They embody multiple processes through which negotiation of benefits and costs are allocated at different scales, temporal and spatial. For example, the drafting of MOUs between the Nepalese government and transnational dam builders has received heavy scrutiny in the press because the percentage of revenue and free electricity that Nepal will receive not only influences the rural areas to which that power will be delivered, but also the fates of politicians charged with leading these negotiations, as well as the various ministries (e.g., Energy; Finance; National Planning) who stand to grow their programs as a result of money earned.

Perhaps the most common trope for state-making is to employ “official knowledge” to anticipate and override possible contentions that may arise in the

process of developing programs and infrastructure that might precipitate particular ecological conditions—an idea that Blaikie seized upon in Nepal more than 20 years ago (1985). The origins of this practice date back to colonial times. In the Indian state of Orissa, D’Souza (2006) recounts how British occupiers, despite successive failures in hydraulic control to prevent floods, used each opportunity to deepen the discourse of local ignorance and to justify capitalist relations in land that ultimately stripped the landscape of its embedded political and social relations. Fairhead and Leach found that Guineans in colonial times were repeatedly accused of taking too many trees, when in fact they had been planting more than they appropriated (1996). More recently, Klingensmith’s history of the Damodar Valley Corporation (2003) in eastern India recounts how it adopted the vocabulary of its tutors from the Tennessee Valley Authority, and shaped its institutions and discourse in such a way as to demean and disregard local knowledge. As each of these studies indicates, state-making requires our attention to how these encounters produce political and social identities and how these representations of nature and people gain or lose political power.

In other words, the powerful institutions use official knowledge to “make” a particular environment. For social scientists, this production calls us to understand how dams are infused with meaning and operationalized as practice, and to investigate the anxieties associated with, in the case of Nepal, potential insurgents

lurking in rural areas as well as the related lack of development that alienated the rural areas in the first place (2006). Ideas of hydropower as a solution to (or enabler of) government deficiencies are integral to my investigation, because human actors often inflect their assessments of the “common good” and environmental stability with moral logics (Worster, 1994) and specific subjectivities (Agrawal, 2005). Through ideas and practices of ecological and developmental order, pro-dam advocates configure acceptable reasons and ways for dams to inhabit watersheds. But these moral/ethical/logical dimensions of ecology and development are not predetermined or fixed. They are modified as needed to be useful to the dominant group and resisted by marginalized groups as they stake their own claims to power or seek political change.

While dams tend to be a far more public and visible process than other types of resource development, at the local level, they remain shrouded in rumor and confusion, which state functionaries can exploit in the project of state-making. Hydrodevelopment, Karen Bakker notes, heavily weights its discourse with the language of development (1999). In this way, the Mekong River in southeast Asia was framed by officials as a “corridor of commerce” that could bring six riparian states together in mutually beneficial economic development, promoted by multi-lateral donors whose support of these dams added proper international gravitas to the negotiations. In the process, the discourse of commerce and nationalism obviated

the related environmental effects and lower irrigation flows caused by the proposed dams. Blaikie and Muldavin (2004) observe the how Chinese and Indian dam officials strategically employ the upstream-downstream thesis to justify interventions of hydraulic control. This thesis constructs land users upstream as irresponsible, and thus responsible for the destruction below. The proposed dams, then, are built to “protect” downstream residents. Not coincidentally, Blaikie and Muldavin note, these upstream users also reside in mountainous areas that have, historically, been home to rebellious outbursts and protest.⁴ Qing’s long-standing reportage on the Three Gorges Dam in China supports this assertion (1998).

Governmentality

The Foucauldian concept of governmentality (1980b) draws my attention to the technologies that the state and anti-dam activists employ in order understand how both camps attempt to create subjects that self-govern in accordance with narratives that prioritize the need for rural electrification and national development. Many Nepalis who stood to be displaced admitted they were reluctant to leave, but sufficiently convinced the nation’s gain was worth their loss. One respondent admitted through tears: “It is difficult for us to leave the place we have lived for

⁴ Blaikie and Muldavin also note how separate discourses are strategically rejected, accepted and brought at felicitous points in time. For example, in the 1980s most Indian and Nepalese politicians accepted the posited Theory of Himalayan Environmental Degradation (or THED) as it justified continuing relationships with international aid organizations. However, when dams were proposed for the mountain regions of India and China, environmental activists invoked THED as a reason to prevent construction (Guthman 1997). At that point, Indian and Chinese officials aligned with the academics they had earlier rejected by dismissing THED’s unscientific conclusions.

generations. If it helps in development of this place and the country, I am ready to do so" (interview notes, Sattala VDC, July 14, 2012). However, other respondents were less easily convinced of UKH's inherent good: "We need to demand our government listen to us first before talking to dam companies" (interview notes, Dhungad VDC, July 17, 2012). As a result, it appears the various and variously-layered narratives of pro-dam and anti-dam sentiment are producing multiple territories in a single contested space (P. Vandergeest & Peluso, 2006).

The orthodox interpretation of governmentality presumes official knowledge has one-way power, and that docile bodies are easily impressed from above; some development work has conveyed this view (Escobar, 1995; Ferguson, 1994). But more recent scholarship from Mathews (2008), Mosse (2003), and Murray Li (1999), demonstrates that the actual accomplishment of rule requires intimate and contingent practices operating in the spaces between state and local, through the interlocutors dually responsible for conveying the state's wishes while attempting to foster some degree of acceptance of the state's desires at the local level. Mathews' investigation (2008) on the disconnect between state forestry policy and actual rural practices revealed a tangled web of silences, official "knowledge," and ignorance—all of which was contingent upon power dynamics that changed in relation to a region's political clout and willingness to mobilize resistance. This focus on development interlocutors also reveals how the "legitimacy" of official behavior relies not on a stalwart conformation to expectations, as professed to superiors, but rather on a

careful tracing of paths between fields in which bureaucrats need to satisfy multiple and sometimes conflicting demands through obfuscation (Mosse, 2005). Murray Li's analysis of an Indonesian resettlement program argues that the reified state "would be even more vulnerable to exposure without everyday compromises that characterize the relationship between state functionaries and citizens" (Li, 1999): 316). Collectively these studies not only provide revealing insights to actual development practice, but, in doing so, confirm a conception of the state as an inherently unstable and scrambling entity where hegemony is not consent but a terrain of struggle (S. Hall, 1987).

State-making through dams does not proceed uncontested; however, that is not to say local residents are unable to gain some advantage or desired end using the channels extended by the state and dam companies. McCormick's study of dam-related participatory methods in Brazil (2007) found that lay perspectives expressed in these forums had been incorporated into expert and governmental discourse, which, in some instances, had led to concrete policy changes that enhanced resettlement procedures. Her findings imply that civil society demands for government responsiveness depend on "different kinds of knowledge being transferred between groups" (2007:257). While McCormick's research points to generative outcomes, Gupta and Sharma (2006) note that the rumors and secrecy that frequently surround development projects also serve to fuel resistance to expert

knowledge in the form of corruption stories which tell of non-locals standing to benefit disproportionately from the proposed intervention.

My research supports these ideas and will be discussed in this dissertation. At UKH, many respondents answered questions about the potential benefits or costs of the dams with conviction. But when pressed for details about the number of people to be relocated, the amount of megawatts to be produced, the dollars per hectare to be offered in compensation, and many other finer points of the memorandum of understanding, confusion reigned. In addition, stories of suspicion and negligence about state bureaucrats, GMR, and local government officials were injected into nearly every interview. These tales, in some cases, worked to undermine the respondent's professed enthusiasm for the future dam, revealing that outward hopes were high, but inward expectations of the dam coming to pass were low. On one hand, the lack of firm and consistent information from the state might suggest a deliberate ignorance of local concerns in dam planning, or, on the other hand, an obfuscation, because if local people knew the all the stipulations of the pending MOU, they could ground their complaints in details that might bolster their resistance.

3. Re-envisioning Water

Earlier in this chapter I referred to a quotation from Joseph Amato that refers to the centrality of water to complex society and the necessity of moving water in and out of human spaces for complex society. The quotation does not, however, call our attention to the contingencies of moved water; that is, how access to water is changed, and how changing access to water restructures lives and livelihoods, sometimes violently. Furthermore, discussions of water around dams tend to focus on its “modern” form, which is to say, abstracted, technical, and asocial (Linton, 2010). Understanding how people make sense of and relate to water is fundamental to the formation and revisions of water networks (i.e. rivers, watersheds, aquifers) and the various power relations that are dependent on and conditional within these networks. As just one example, Nepalese bureaucrats and dam builders define water as a “source of hydropower” and their success depends, partly, on having that definition prevail over the definitions of riparian residents who have an entirely different relationship to and conception of water. In this section, I will discuss how new conceptions of watersheds as waterscapes informs this dissertation and raises important questions about who controls water, who defines water’s purpose, and who has access to water.

Water Scales to Waterscapes

Political ecology is predicated upon a plurality of stakeholders in resource management, and the influence of external and historical socioeconomic processes in shaping nature-society interactions in local settings (P. Blaikie, 1985;

Robbins, 2003). And scale is central to the analysis of these processes. Brown and Purcell (2005) criticize political ecology for privileging the local scale and overlooking how scales are politically constructed and mobilized. In that vein, the construction of upstream/downstream scales related to dam impacts occupies a central position in the debates between states and anti-dam activists (Khagram, 2004; McCormick, 2010; Rothman & Oliver, 1999). For example, Glasson and Chadwick's primer on environmental impact assessments cites the importance of scale in defining the scope and depth of dams' perturbations on the environment. As EIAs are intended to provide decision-makers with analysis of the "total environment" and the "intangible/unquantifiable" future effects, the decision of where to demarcate the extent of those effects has significant meaning for debates about relocation, compensation, and environmental reparation (2013):23).

To avoid falling into conventional categories of water, space, and administration, I prefer to employ the term "waterscape" (Swyngedouw, 1999) to examine how flows of water, power, and capital converge to produce social arrangements over time and space, as well as the particular characteristics of the power relations that shaped those arrangements. By this definition, a waterscape is not only the context within which water is contained, but also a "socio-natural" entity (Loftus, 2007) in which social power is embedded in and shaped by water's material flows and symbolic meanings, and which becomes manifested through a wide array of physical objects and forms of representation (Loftus, 2009; Swyngedouw, 2004).

Several examples of this work—though some may not employ the term waterscape—provide direction. Swyngedouw’s work on the Spanish waterscape shows how political power and national identity were produced through a national program of large dams that would foster development by transferring water from the one section of the country to another. Baviskar (2007) notes how the construction of dams and privatization of water in South Asia have altered social relations and institutional arrangements within villages and between levels of government. Mosse’s study (2003) of the waterscape in Tamil Nadu reveals how the state insinuates itself into the various nodes and networks of the irrigation landscape and demonstrates that water management is never outside of politics. At smaller scale, Harris (2006) demonstrates how changing practices around irrigation defined and altered gender dynamics in Turkey. As each of these studies indicates, treating politico-ecological problems as waterscapes suggests a richer, more holistic portrayal of power and social arrangements with water as a central element rather than as a taken-for-granted presence around which these dramas are played out.

A waterscape attempts to construct and enact a particular “worldview” around water (Linton, 2010) that becomes materially evident in the institutional arrangements and technologies and the cultural and symbolic meanings embodied in water, which have been featured in sociological and anthropological studies (Baviskar, 2007; Orlove & Caton, 2010).

Hydrosocial Futures

To make water a central actor in a social scientific analysis, we need to ask how water prompts us to rethink the notion of techno-politics, and to reframe water as simultaneously “socio-technical” and “socio-natural,” to use the terms employed by Karen Bakker (2012). Because water is an “uncooperative commodity” (K. Bakker, 2003), a focus on the materiality of water requires us to engage with the various properties and forms of water: as essential to life and environmental health, as a necessary input for industry and agriculture, and as a culturally meaningful substance (Strang, 2004).

Water is multiple in its meanings and materiality. From this perspective, water is not a singular object of epistemology for which abstract knowledge can be produced. Its properties are not static. Water reveals its complex biophysical identities in particular moments: it is a substance that must be removed from a swampy land, a force that can dislodge and open minerals deposits, a medium for transporting vessels, and a nutrient-bearing substance that can be deposited on arid land. As a result of the modes in which it finds itself, water can be and become a border, a resource for regeneration, a foundation for empire, a means of nation building, and a material linkage between past and present. In the recent history of Israel and Palestine, for example, water has at different moments in time been a historical object, a territorial object, and a biopolitical object, with implications for diverse ontological politics (Alatout, 2010).

Studies on water in the political tradition focus on the politics that permeate the social relations of control over, and access to, water resources in various contexts. These studies have advanced political economy and policy-interested analyses by highlighting the ways that modes of water management are politically, materially, and discursively driven, as opposed to questions about distribution (K. Bakker, 2003; Kaika, 2003; Swyngedouw, 2004).

Newer conceptions of water as socio-natural have enabled political ecology to move away from thinking about water as a resource external to social relations, and toward water as infused with social relations (Kaika, 2003; Loftus, 2007). As Swyngedouw writes, “water is a ‘hybrid’ thing that captures and embodies processes that are simultaneously material, discursive and symbolic” (2004:28). Social relations—as played out through institutions and artifacts such as water laws and hydro-infrastructure—shape how water flows through the waterscape and yet are also themselves shaped by water. Drawing on Worster’s idea (1994) that human-environment interactions constitute a dynamic and dialectical process through which nature and society make and remake each other, more recent work has taken this notion further by regarding the waterscape as constituted by material and discursive socio-ecological processes (Thomas Perreault, 2006) as opposed to interactions between people and nature as discreet entities.

Reworking water from a hydrological cycle into a hydrosocial one reflects the imbrication of water's social relations into its physical materiality through the previously-discussed concept of the waterscape. Swyngedouw (2004) and Loftus (2007) apply a hydrosocial perspective to their Marxist analyses of the links between water, social power, and capital, focusing primarily on policymakers, water users, and social groups lacking access to water. Yet few studies, in my research, have applied a hydrosocial perspective to dams. In this regard, a hydrosocial perspective will provide a useful framework for approaching water in two ways: by extending existing work on the production of "expert" or "official" knowledge by hydropower advocates, and explicating the resistance or counter-narratives that opposition groups produce as resistance.

Nepal's lack of hydropower development could be said very generally to be owed to the lack of political stability and lack of available capital in country, as well as foreign money's reluctance to invest in its financial climate. But there are also many practical challenges to developing hydropower that are unique to Nepal. I summarize these challenges in the next section so as to provide a general landscape of working knowledge on this topic. Together they help frame the larger debates of hydropower and the more granular concerns of hydro professionals and civil society agents who work in this sector.

4. Current issues in hydropower development in Nepal

I amassed this collection through more than 100 interviews with hydro-related actors, several ethnographies of energy- and environmentally-focused conferences, and a review of hydropower related articles in major Nepali newspapers dating back to 2011.

Run-of-River (Arora) v. Storage Dams. Every dam is considered either run-of-river or storage, though more complex hydropower schemes may include both. Run-of-river hydropower is merely for power generation. These schemes use available river currents to spin turbines for electric power. Generally, RoR schemes are considered less environmentally disruptive or invasive because they are usually smaller in size and they do not hold the water like storage dams. Given the steep topography of Nepal running up to the Himalayan mountains, RoR seems like an obvious fit for the country's many rivers. However, the flow of Nepali rivers between the monsoon and winter months varies greatly. So if an RoR project is listed as 80MW, it might only produce that level of wattage during the monsoon season when river currents are highest due to a combination of heavy rains and melting glaciers. During the dry season, RoR schemes can drop as much as 90% in terms of their productivity, making them unreliable for nearly half the year.

Storage dams are constructed as the name implies: to hold water in order to build up "head" that is channeled below the structure to spin electricity-producing

turbines. However, the storage aspect of these dams can also be used to hold water during times of heavy rain to minimize flooding, or to save water for the drier months of the season when it can be released to augment flows to farmers downstream. Storage dams are generally much larger than RoR and considered more environmentally harmful as they stop the flows and currents of rivers that provide ecological services (e.g., oxygen, nutrients) to plant and aquatic life in the surrounding area.

By Nepali law, the Hydropower Act of 2001, all hydropower schemes must release at least 10% of the river's flow during operation. Or, in other words, no scheme can impede more than 90% of a river's flow at any time. However, due to the vast changes in river volume in Nepal between monsoon and winter seasons, the 10% mandated release is an extremely small amount of water between November and April.

Too little regulation. In an effort to speed up hydropower development, the Hydropower Act of 2001 relaxed the conditions necessary to obtain a hydropower development license. These conditions included a lowered amount of capital needed to show intent to build, and fewer environmental hurdles. As a result, entrepreneurs and business people of all stripes lined up to obtain licenses whether or not they had the money and/or expertise to actually develop the site. Many of these licensees attempted to profit from the license itself, hoping that the nation's need for

electricity would force the state or some other entity to offer large sums in exchange for the license. These hydropower sites were referred to as “*jholamaa khola*” or rivers kept in the purse. The Government of Nepal amended this portion for the Hydropower Act in 2013, putting an end to this practice and revoking the licenses of those developers who had failed to make sufficient progress in the past five years. Subsequent licenses would be issued with a five-year window to develop and the clock would start on the day of the issue.

Too much regulation. This complaint was most common among private sector hydro professionals in companies attempting to build mid- to large-sized dams, generally above 20MW. In short, they complained about the number of hurdles required by the Ministry of Science, Technology, and the Environment (MoSTE)—the ministry responsible for ensuring due process for minimizing the ecological impact of hydropower construction and operation. Furthermore, the government was criticized for not streamlining the regulatory process which requires separate applications submitted to and approved at the Department of Forests, MoSTE, and the Department of Electricity Development (DoED). Since the government imposed the shorter time window for development, many hydro professionals said they would lose up to two years just obtaining approval from the various government ministries.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). While Nepal’s economy contains enough capital to finance small and mid-sized hydropower projects (<100MW), these

schemes cannot provide the robust and reliable power necessary to sustain urban areas and industry. Storage dams are much more expensive to build, and some Nepali economists have argued that Nepal does not possess the necessary capital in-country to construct these projects (Neupane, 2013). Therefore, foreign direct investment appears to many as an unavoidable future partner in hydrodevelopment (D. N. Dhungel, 2011; Gangol, 2014). With this acknowledgment, many in the hydropower sector and civil society also profess a wariness about FDI based largely on the country's experiences with India and international development agencies, in which they believe Nepal is consistently asked to renounce its sovereignty in ways that are detrimental to its long-term future. This issue will be discussed in chapters 2 and 3.

Power Purchasing Agreements (PPAs). Once hydrodevelopers receive clearance regarding the environmental regulations of their proposed project, they must obtain a power purchasing agreement from the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), the country's monopsonic buyer of all power produced in Nepal. NEA has consistently lost money since its inception in the mid-80s, the product of a World Bank idea to coordinate power forecasting and development in Nepal. At the time, a single entity buyer like NEA made sense given that Nepal's electricity demand and production were extremely low and there had been little planning or foresight into the country's power future. But as the country has grown economically and attempted to develop its economy through industry and production, NEA has been less able to keep pace with the growing complexities and demands of the emerging

Nepali power market. Furthermore, nearly every informant told me, NEA is hampered by deep corruption and union contracts that lead to unavoidable inefficiencies and financial loss.⁵

NEA and hydro developers are also beset by a no-win situation when it comes to power purchasing agreements. Bank interest loans come with 12% interest, which means that projects need to make at least 16-17% profit in order to attract investors. However, tariff rates on electricity are so low that NEA loses money on nearly every PPA it has approved. A seemingly obvious response to this situation would be to raise the consumer tariff to a point at which NEA could avoid loss and hydro developers could make some profit. But the level at which those conditions would arise would also make electricity unaffordable to the average Nepali, which is why the tariff has remained unchanged since the 1990s (Foundation, 2011). So hydro developers, if they can obtain a PPA, often fail to meet the bank interest payments, which has led to many abandoned projects over the years (S. B. Karmacharya, 2012).

NEA faces an additional struggle when it comes to foreign investors. These groups will only sign agreements that deal in U.S. dollars. Against the weak and often devaluing Nepali rupee, this presents an insurmountable challenge to NEA for

⁵ One informant told me, "Today NEA has 10,000 workers and produces 740 megawatts of hydropower. That is an unacceptable employee to production ratio" (field notes, 8/28/13). Another informant who works for a successful mid- to large-sized hydro development company in Kathmandu told me that he'd been invited to apply for the Managing Director's position at NEA. Based on his stature in the hydropower community he was fairly certain he could get the job. But ultimately he declined the offer because he said, "I didn't want people showing up at my house every day with gifts and asking for favors. I could make more money as the [Managing Director], but it would be worth the hassle."

maintaining profit or even solvency in these agreements. For example, the Khimti hydropower scheme—built through a Nepal and Norway partnership—developed in the 1990s was signed in U.S. dollars when 25 Nepali rupees equaled one dollar. Since then, the Nepali rupee has devalued precipitously, hovering in the 60s through early 2000s and today is nearly 100 on the dollar. This agreement has been massively profitable to Khimti investors but has been a tremendous annual loss to NEA. As Nepal must have foreign investment to develop its hydropower potential, we can see the financial bind this situation presents.

Legal matters. Because of the volatile political atmosphere that has characterized the Nepali state for the past twenty years, much of its legislation is out of date, and sorely in need of revisions that reflect the present climate of economic development. Beyond this challenge, legal scholars have noted that much subsequent legislation—for example, the interim constitution passed in 2007—contains language that contradicts and/or complicates many of the provisions in previous water resource and hydropower acts (Radon & Shrestha, 2012). For this reason, one Nepali legal scholar told me, it is conceivable that every hydropower project constructed since 2007 may be susceptible to legal challenges that could delay construction.

Beyond the issues of hydro development, the out of date legislation in Nepal also forebodes important concerns about insuring environmental protections and proper modes of compensation for affected populations. For the time being, until the

proper updates to Nepali legislation are complete, international agencies such as the World Bank, IFC, and Asian Development Bank have been holding developers to their own institutional standards of planning and construction.

5. Hydro Proprioception

In the West, when you click on a light, you know the light will come on. Here we never know. That makes it fun. We never know what will happen.

Before 1970, if you went east to west across Nepal, you had to dip into northern India.

Birendra wanted to complete the highway so that [the trip into India] wasn't necessary. Everything was complete except the last 100 kilometers in the west. Saudi Arabia gave us the money and a Chinese firm won the construction bid. They would finish the job in two years. Then India objected to the project on security concerns. They said they didn't want Chinese workers so close to India. So, Nepal took the job away and gave it to India and they took twenty years to finish the project just so travelers would have to travel through India. They would do that to us.

The British lion [empire] had a big heart. Even though they exploited India, they built hospitals and schools and railroads. India's has a fly's heart. If India had Britain's heart they could have build the Karnali Chisapani dam, but India is too worried about being dependent on Nepal for power.

No country has ever been raised from the outside. No country. All development must come from within.

Nepal has never been on the edge of making so much money before. We have always struggled. And now we think the money is there [through hydropower] and we so scared and so anxious about what will happen. Who will get that money?

As these select and disparate phrases from my interviews might suggest, it poses a challenge to characterize in a few words or ideas the significance of Nepal's hydro development. Some have described it as the "making of hydropower nation" (Lord, 2014) while others trumpet hydropower as an inevitable choice for heralding positive change into this long beleaguered and impoverished nation (D. N. Dhungel,

2011; J. L. Karmacharya, 2007; B. Thapa, 2013). A third group voices concerns about compromising the long-term benefits of Nepal's water resources and national identity in the rush to obtain electricity (Gyawali, 2013; Pun, 2014a; R. S. Shrestha, 2014a, 2015). What I see, and what I will describe in the following chapters, resembles something more complex and variegated and raises questions about state power, development, national identity, neoliberal economic policy, and the role of natural resources in relation to all of these. The resultant political climate Nepal I think of as hydro proprioception: the abiding sense of relative position the nation has regarding its various parts and populations. Developing Nepal's hydropower potential is about achieving a balance. It is wrapped up with ideas of shaping itself into a nation with an identity that can overcome not just the civil conflicts and political stalemates of the last two decades, but the long-standing inequities structured into society through the caste system. It's about a large number of Nepalis across caste and ethnicity who are slowly coming to terms with the reality of failed development, exhausted by the manipulating presence of foreign institutions who lend money and support only under conditions of their making. While at the same time, knowing that Nepal's growth and ability to improve its livelihoods cannot advance without some form of outside assistance.

The remainder of this dissertation attempts to wrangle with these issues and render a slightly clearer picture of the state of Nepali hydropower development and hydro politics. To do this, I present four chapters, each focusing on a different

population.

In *chapter 1*, I present a critical history of the Upper Karnali Hydroelectric Project through a range of sources, including newspapers, feasibility studies, environmental impact assessments, and interviews. With this material, I delineate two major strains of hydropower views that I call exigent and deliberative. The first camp is populated primarily by private sector hydro professionals and state agents who believe that Nepal should commit to rapid development of its hydropower potential with a focus on electricity alone for domestic consumption and export to India, which needs the power. This group believes that time is pressing for Nepal to capitalize on India's needs and that Nepal's best path for development is to increase its revenue through engagement with foreign markets and by attracting foreign investment. The deliberative groups is comprised primarily by civil society water experts and non-elite Nepalis who respond to exigent views by suggesting that a lone focus on electricity production short changes the real value of Nepali rivers and water. They advocate for multi-purpose storage dams that can assist downstream residents with flood control and dry season irrigation. They advocate for a slower path to development with less reliance on India (whom they distrust for historical reasons) and international financial and development agencies (whom they distrust because of the lack of progress over the last 60 years).

Chapter 2 takes a closer look at the private hydropower sector in Nepal to examine how they are attempting to shape views about hydropower so as to facilitate an industry that is both more amenable to domestic entrepreneurs, and more attractive to foreign investment. But their motivation is not solely for personal gain and profit. Rather they represent Nepal's resident community of free market advocates who espouse neoliberal values in response to what they see as a failed half-century of state-led development. Attracting foreign investment, in this case, should not invoke fears of loss sovereignty or capitalism run amok. Rather foreign investment and free markets represent the best possibility for Nepal to raise its collective standard of living through closer association with global finance. Given this point of view, I present some of the discursive themes that emerged through my interviews with private sector hydro professionals and consider how these ideas may influence Nepal's future management of natural resources.

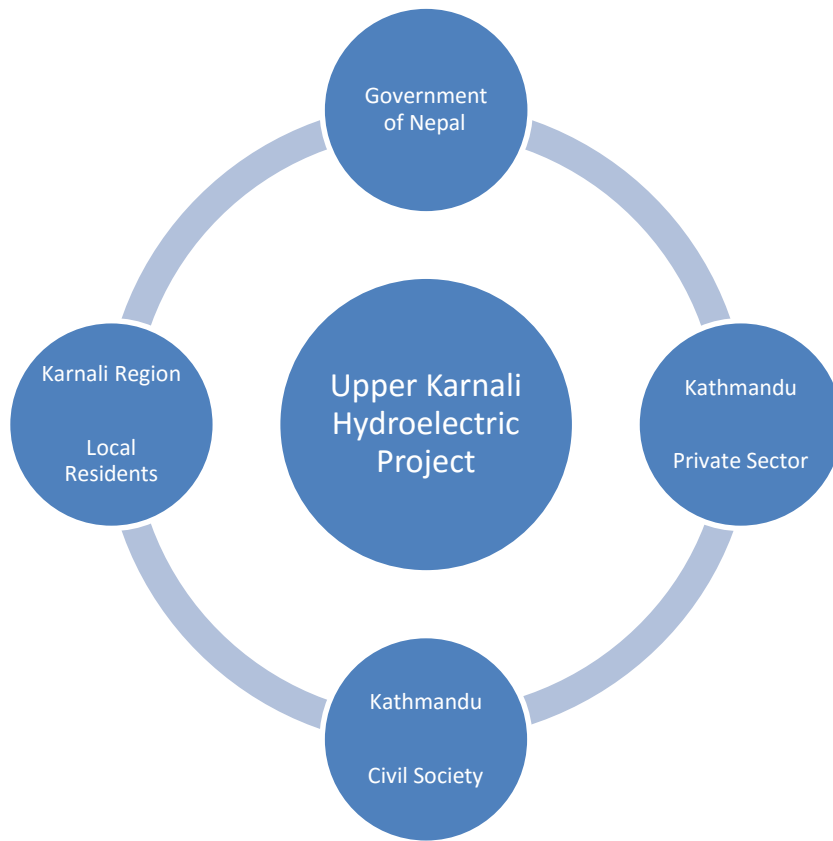


Figure 1. A diagram of the various populations engaged in debates over the Upper Karnali Hydroelectric Project

In *chapter 3*, I explore the significance of a prevalent conspiracy theory discussed in relation to the Upper Karnali Hydroelectric Project. In short, the conspiracy theory posits that UKH is a disguised attempt by India to imperially advance on Nepali natural resources, and the World Bank has enjoined this efforts. The theory is most commonly offered by civil society experts and non-elite Nepalis. Because UKH is still unbuilt, I am unable to deny or validate the “correctness” of the theory; instead I focus on the value and meaning of conspiracy theories as a subject of interest, and suggest that the “resource colonization” theory serves simultaneous

roles as a counter-narrative to free market hydro development, and as a nation-making discourse that seeks to separate Nepal from India and from the confounding onrush of global markets. In the process, I trace a brief history of Indo-Nepal relations that explains the origins of their current day mistrust.

Finally in *chapter 4* I attend to the UKH site and the three districts surrounding the proposed construction. Here I go back to the start of my interest in UKH as a topic of study: an April 2011 attack on GMR buildings near the dam site. In the wake of that attack resistance to UKH has been minimal, counter to my expectations. This realization generates questions about what qualifies as resistance, and what to think when resistance appears minimal when so much literature suggests resistance is always present. Following that discussion, I propose the issues of long-term waiting (for the state, for development) imposed on rural populations has contributed to this lack of resistance over time and represents perhaps a new form of domination, where the state subdues potential resistance, but without appearing to do so.

I believe this approach is unique in the sense that I am able to present primary data from the four major populations involved in the Nepal's current hydro dramas (figure 1). Other excellent hydropower studies tend to focus on one population in particular (Baviskar, 1997; Fisher, 1995; A. Hall & Branford, 2012; Lord, 2014; Rest, 2013) and perhaps lose some of the synthetic power of considering this data in toto. What emerges, I think, is a more accurate and lucid picture of how "development"

proceeds, not through dint of force, but on the backs of multiple and multivariate forces—discourse, capital, and politics—that lurch forward collectively, unevenly, proprioceptively to find purchase in defining the coming decades of Nepali social life.

Chapter 1: “The Jewel in the Crown”: a Critical History of the Upper Karnali Hydropower Site

The Upper Karnali Hydropower Project (Muni) in western Nepal symbolizes and lays bare the persistent challenges to developing nations that wish to increase their energy base using available natural resources. Though the Karnali Bend site was first scouted in the 1960s, today it remains unbuilt and the source of considerable tension between the private sector, civil society groups, and the Nepali government. These groups tangle over two points: 1) whether to export the energy from UKH to India or use to address national energy shortfalls, and 2) whether to build UKH as a single-purpose run-of-river project or as a multi-purpose storage dam serving irrigation and flood control as well as power generation. Underlying these tensions is larger concern about the role and depth of Indian influence in Nepali affairs.

As science is not distinct from politics (Bourdieu, 2004), as society is not distinct from nature (Cronon, 1996), as technology is not separate from society (Bijker, Hughes, & Pinch, 1987), Latour’s actor-network theory and its insistence on troubling commonly accepted truths provides a generative reminder that the development of hydropower in Nepal should be investigated down to the most granular, factual level. As such, it is impossible to declare what hydro development can or will achieve for Nepal. Rather it is a battle to marshal information in strategic fashions that will determine Nepal’s hydro future. Supporters of UKH in its current

iteration value the dollars, free energy, and exposure to foreign markets to be earned through the project. Detractors of the current model argue that a multi-purpose storage project has uncalculated economic benefits (e.g., flood control) to be gained. Both sides, however, remain uncertain about ecological factors that would affect UKH, such as climate change, altered river flows, and the potential for glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs). Using official documents related to Upper Karnali (e.g., environmental impact assessments and feasibility studies), newspaper accounts, and editorials, this chapter presents a critical history of the UKH, paying attention to the development visions expressed through discussions of the benefits, politics, and science of hydropower generation.

1. Introduction

The proposed Upper Karnali Hydroelectric Project on the Karnali River in western Nepal will be the country's first mega-dam and the largest in the country at 900 MW. UKH has been the focus of intense debate for three decades, and even though still not yet under construction, the project has become a symbol of the continuing struggles between the competing demands of Nepal's modernizing economy, its political relations with India, and sustainable use of its rivers and natural resources.

Political stability in Nepal has proven elusive since 1990. Thus, the elaboration of UKH, as a major development project, has been subject to the buffeting forces of Nepal's turn to democracy, a ten-year civil war, more than twenty short-lived

government administrations (D. Thapa, 2012), and a radical split within the UCPN-Maoist party, which historically has opposed all foreign-funded infrastructure projects. At the time of this writing, UKH sits under the regime of Prime Minister Sushil Koirala and President Ram Baran Yadav, who preside over an interim legislative body called the Constituent Assembly (CA). The CA is presently charged with drafting a constitution after which Nepal will hold new elections for parliament.

Given this volatile political landscape, the management of UKH was taken away from the Ministry of Energy and handed to the newly-formed Investment Board of Nepal (IBN) in September 2012. IBN's formation was spearheaded by then-Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai, the former co-leader of the Maoist rebels during the civil war, to attract and facilitate foreign investment in Nepali projects. As a parastatal, or oasis institution (Butler, 2014), IBN occupied a unique position in the Nepali governmental space, inside and outside, and with much autonomy to develop the projects within its purview. IBN's manager, Radesh Pant, a successful Nepali bank president and former American pharmaceutical company executive, won his position through a competitive process and assembled a staff of primarily western-educated Nepalis. To develop its earliest contracts and negotiating strategies with foreign entities, IBN enlisted the help of a Britain-based law firm, a relationship supported by the Department for International Development (DFID) and the World Bank. Hence,

within the more orthodox ranks of the UCPN-Maoist (UCPN) party, Bhattarai's move to form IBN—and thus open Nepal to foreign investment—marked an abandonment of its principles and sparked an internecine struggle between radicals and pragmatists that resulted in the formation of the more hardline CPN-Maoist (CPN-M) party, headed by Mohan Baidya, in June 2012.

But away from party politics, in the realm of the development visions of Nepali citizens, UKH stands at the crossroads of two paths for harvesting natural resources, particularly water and hydropower. One calls for expedited development of hydropower for export to raise much-needed revenue for the country and to transmit a global message that foreign investment in Nepal can be profitable. Foreign investment, these parties argue, is unavoidably integral to developing Nepal's economy; therefore, it is country's responsibility to shape and realize itself as attractive to investment. This path is populated by the private sector and politicians within the Nepali Congress and CPN-UML parties, primarily. They view India as a challenging but necessary partner in development, and they encourage an openness to liberalizing Nepal's economy on the basis that fifty-plus years of state-led development has yielded negligible gains, especially in energy. The best approach, they argue, is to grant the private sector a larger and less obstructed role in infrastructure development. They envision that Nepalis, rural and urban, will benefit by the revenue these projects will generate and they are confident that provisions for

affected populations can be suitably guaranteed through proper legislation and informed negotiation with corporations.

Across the river, metaphorically, the second position prefers a more deliberative and slower approach that addresses Nepal's energy crisis first and favors multi-purposes dams to serve irrigation and flood control needs as well. This group also holds a generally suspicious or unfavorable view about the level of Indian influence in Nepali affairs, though many are open to foreign investment generally. This group is comprised primarily of former and current government employees and civil society experts (e.g., Nepal Water Conservation Foundation) and locally-founded alternative development organizations (e.g., Karnali Jalshrot Limited and Civil Society Alliance for Rational Water Resources Development in Nepal) who frequently voice their concerns in the form of newspaper editorials, legal actions, or public interest conferences dedicated to water issues.

2. Background⁶

The first exploration of the Karnali river area (figure 1) dates back to the 1960s when Nippon Koei, a Japanese engineering firm, was enlisted by the United Nations to recommend hydropower sites in western Nepal. Nippon Koei did not

⁶ For a full timeline of important events related to Upper Karnali, please see appendix A at the end of this chapter.

recommend the Karnali Bend⁷ site (figure 2) where UKH is scheduled for construction. They did note, however, the area's general welcoming viability for hydropower generation (HPC, 1989). In the early 1980s, the newly-formed Water and Energy Commission Secretariat of Nepal (WECS) recommended the Karnali Bend site to the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which had commenced a study of the entire Karnali basin, including a potential 10,000 MW hydropower site south of Karnali Bend at Chisapani. The government of Nepal (GoN) and the World Bank consequently hired Himalayan Power Consultants (HPC) from Canada to study the Karnali Bend. They offered a range of possibilities between a multi-stage 4,180MW storage dam to a 240MW run-of-river project. Given Nepal's internal power demands at the time, and the potential for cross-border trade with India, project KR1A, the UKH site today, was recommended at 240MW. HPC called the site the "jewel in the crown" of the Karnali region. Yet a third feasibility study was commissioned in 1997-1998 by the World Bank and carried out by Canadian International Water and Energy Consultants (CIWEC), including an environmental impact assessment. CIWEC recommended a run-of-river project at the KR1A site at 300MW.

⁷ The "bend" in Karnali Bend refers to a unique 60 kilometer stretch wherein the south-flowing river turns sharply due West and then northward again before making another westward turn where it merges with the Seti River. For a bird's eye view of the Bend, consult figure 1. For a closer view, see figure 2.



Figure 2. A map of the large-sized hydropower projects in Nepal as of 2014. The green blocks indicate projects already completed. The white blocks are currently planned for construction. The Upper Karnali site is indicated by the red arrow (K. Dixit, 2007).

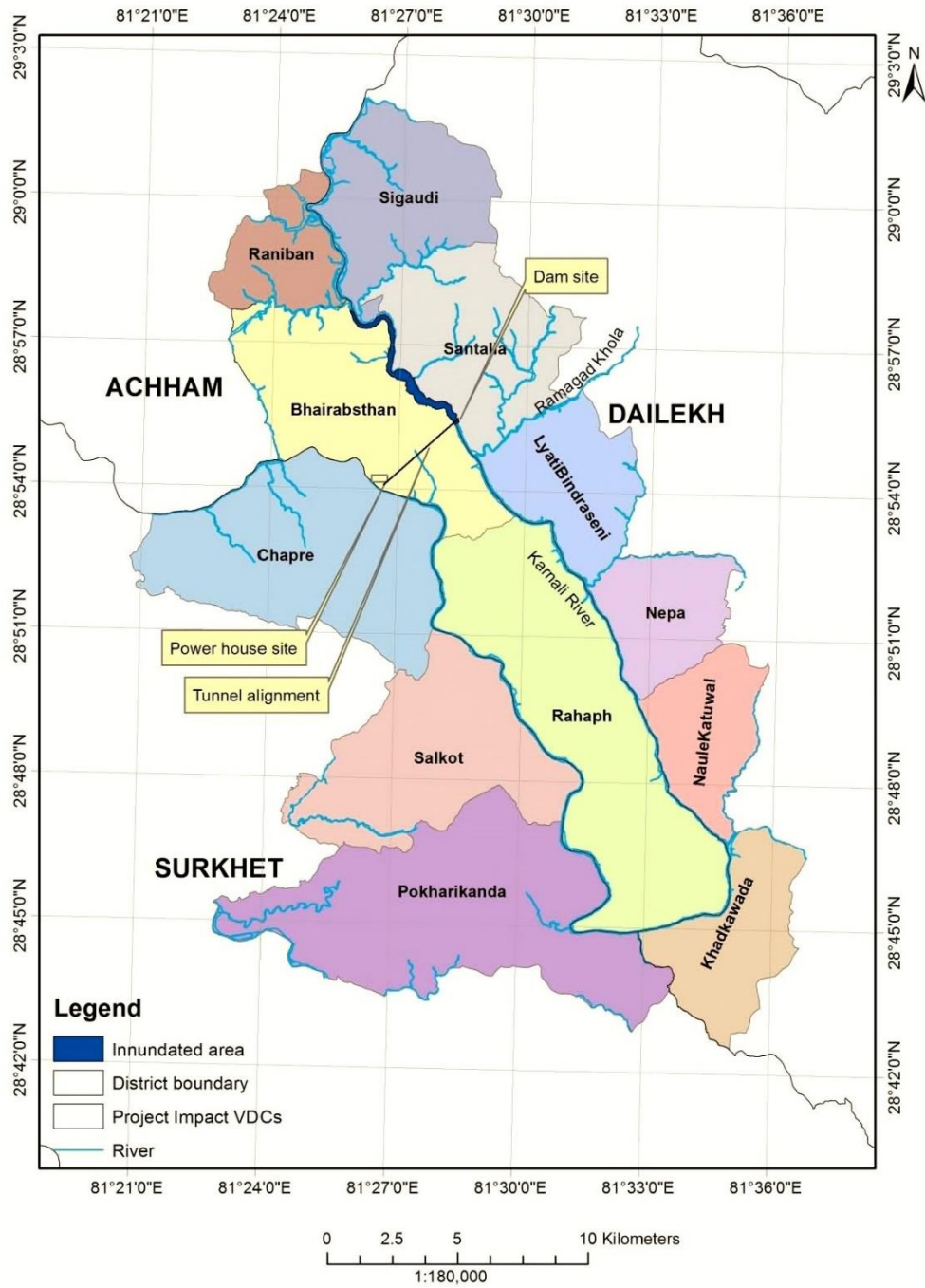


Figure 3. The Upper Karnali Hydroelectric Project Site, including the proposed dam site, power house, and tunnel. Districts included in this map have been identified as “affected” through the environmental impact assessment (NESS, 2012).

The People's War from 1996-2006 prevented further development of UKH until 2008 when the GMR Consortium of India, a privately-owned infrastructure company, was awarded a license to develop the site. The memorandum of understanding (MOU) between GMR and the government of Nepal states UKH would be built as a run-of-river project solely for electricity production at 300MW (GoN, 2008). Of note for this discussion, articles 2 and 3 of the original MOU, now supplanted by the September 2014 PDA, lay out two important points of dissent regarding UKH.

1. The government of Nepal will receive a 27% equity stake, free of cost.
2. The government of Nepal will receive 12% of the monthly generated power, free of cost (GoN, 2008, 3-4).

Within days of the MOU's passage, the UCPN-Maoist party held a press conference to warn against going forward with UKH. Later, in September 2010, the party requested the government to shelve all hydropower projects being developed by Indian companies. They cited Article 156 of the interim constitution as the basis for the complaint, which states a two-thirds majority is required for passage of treaties relating to natural resources (His Majesty's Government, 1990). The Minister of Energy, Ram Sharan Mahat, a member of the pro-business Congress party, responded that only projects on the border of India and Nepal that involve distributing benefits between the two countries require parliamentary approval. From this point, security concerns and small agitations marked and delayed the next three years of UKH,

culminating in April 2011 when a group of fifty vandals torched GMR's building at UKH. They would later be identified as members of the Baidya faction of CPN-Maoists.⁸



Fenced off site of the former GMR office in Dab, Dailekh district, Nepal. On April 23, 2011, vandals torched the building in the afternoon. Four GMR employees were inside but escaped unharmed. The new GMR office would be fortified with military protection (photo by author).

When Baburam Bhattarai became Prime Minister in August 2011, his leadership would make an unexpected turn toward foreign investors and capital-friendly initiatives. The next month, Bahadur Bogati, also of UCPN, was appointed as

⁸ To reiterate for clarity's sake, given the numerous political parties and factions in Nepal: the UCPN-Maoist (UCPN) party was the rebel combatant group that instigated the civil war in Nepal from 1996-2006. Since the UCPN joined the government formally as part of the peace process, a more radical faction—the CPN-Maoist—has formed. They adhere more closely to the original 40-point demands (Bhattarai, 1996) that inspired the original rebellion.

Energy Minister and quickly declared that foreign investment was necessary to hydropower development in Nepal. A week later the IBN emerged, but its role and the geographical scope of its mandate was undefined until April 2012 when Bhattarai announced that all hydropower projects over 500MW would be taken from the Ministry of Energy (MoE) and given to IBN for development. The move was quickly interpreted as a message that projects inside traditional government ministries were unduly delayed by political maneuvers. The move is perceived publicly as a slight to MoE and the Department of Electricity Development (DoED) and perceived by MoE and DoED as such. They answer by responding slowly to IBN requests for information and assistance (E. Shrestha, 2014; Staff KTM Post, 2014b).

Since the formation of the IBN, the advances and resistance to UKH persisted in see-saw fashion, but the composition of the opposition changed. While Maoists factions continued to agitate against Indian development of UKH, Nepali civil society experts increased their voice against the project on terms that the current iteration 1) undersold the value of the UKH site, 2) lacked due process and transparency, and 3) ceded too much of Nepal's water control to India. This group began publishing editorials in a range of publications, newspapers, and programs. As there was no project development agreement (PDA) yet approved for UKH, the 2008 MOU was still the ruling document, and civil society experts continued to poke holes in its vaguely worded clauses. Of particular concern were articles 36 and 37, which stated:

36. GoN acknowledges that due consideration may be accorded to GMR-ITD Consortium for the allotment of upstream / downstream project, if any.

37. GoN shall ensure that the development, implementation and operation of upstream / downstream projects by other developers shall not be detrimental in any way to the Project (2008).

Despite government assurances to the contrary, concerned parties read these clauses as enabling GMR (hence, India) to dictate Nepal's authority over its waterways. In fact, some civil society experts in research interviews said that India had no desire to see UKH built.⁹ India's sole intent was to prevent Nepal from being able to control the flow of water southward to the Ganges basin where 700 million people live and to which Nepali rivers supply a majority of its water (World T. W. Bank, 2012). Given those considerations, it still seemed a far stretch to think a private company like GMR was doing the government's bidding at a great cost to itself. Meanwhile, foreign developers began pushing back on IBN in October 2012, requesting PDA revisions, perhaps capitalizing on growing public discontent regarding available electricity, to push through their demand to have the *force majeure* clause apply to political and bureaucratic obstacles as well as natural. GMR was part of this

⁹ This idea will be explored further in chapter 3, where I discuss the origins and power of conspiracy theories surrounding the Upper Karnali project.

group. Whether or not they were successful is still unknown because the UKH PDA signed in September 2014 has been declared confidential.

3. Approach and Method

For this chapter, I have conducted a review and content analysis of Nepali newspapers, news magazines, and one influential water-themed Nepali journal¹⁰ (*Hydro Nepal*) in an attempt to delineate the contending perspectives on UKH. As UKH is the country's first mega-hydro project and first major hydropower project to be built by a private Indian concern, discussions and remarks about the dam tend to reveal an individual's larger visions about development, political relations, and the appropriate modes and manner to utilize the country's natural resources. In total, I examined more than 400 articles in various Nepali newspapers and magazines dating back to 2001, news stories as well as editorials. As the battle to define UKH is largely a battle to define the public's vision of the future, all parties involved in UKH use the media for generating and endorsing their particular views about the project. As such, using public documents such as newspapers is an appropriate subject for analysis. While there are many excellent studies about the contention that precedes and accompanies hydropower development (Karen Bakker, 1999; A. Hall & Branford,

¹⁰ In the interest of full disclosure, I need to say that I serve as an executive editor to *Hydro Nepal*. In this role, my responsibilities are wholly focused on clarity of language and adherence to the standards of academic journals. I do not serve as a content shaper or gatekeeper of any kind. In other words, while my title is "editor," I am not asked, nor do I offer, editorial remarks on the content of the articles.

2012; Islar, 2012; McCormick, 2010), curiously little focuses explicitly on how these battles are waged in the most public of all media—newspapers.

I employ Latour’s actor-network theory to provide some interpretation and foregrounding for the later chapters of this dissertation. The connect between Latour and development studies is not a mature one, but Donovan provides a compelling dialogue between them to suggest how they might be fruitfully joined (2014). Latour’s fundamental contention about the objectivity of facts behooves the researcher to “get inside science and techniques” to introduce political considerations to the realms of science where they had previously been excluded (Latour, 1988). In this way, we are reminded to raise questions wherever expertise threatens to close public debate and limit democratic participation (Callon, Lascoumes, & Barthe, 2011).

4. Configuring Upper Karnali

For nearly 40 years hydropower development has lingered in the minds of all Nepalis as the promise to a better life: school children can tell you the country’s hydropower potential in megawatts as determined by Hari Man Shrestha in 1966: 84,000MW. And the development of hydropower is invariably portrayed as prerequisite for the country’s development as a whole. However, there are social and environmental costs, according to civil society experts in Nepal, that are not being incorporated into the wider economic calculations by pro-business political parties,

private developers, and other interests behind schemes like UKH. While much of the opposition is consonant with dam resistance in other locales—environmental and social concerns—all parties in the debate share the belief that Nepal cannot improve its economic prospects, nor the livelihoods of its people without electricity from hydropower. The question is a debate over optimum value. And in some ways, this debate between equity and quality of life is reminiscent of Guha’s distinction between northern and southern environmental movements, wherein the former focus on livelihood improvements and the latter emphasize equity and justice concerns {, 1989 #1558}.

For example, some experts claim that the economic promise of UKH as a run-of-river project is greatly exaggerated as seasonal flows will cause the project to operate below capacity for eight months a year and hold back water during the months when it is needed most (Pandit et al., 2014). In order to be financially optimal, critics suggest that the government force a reconsideration of other dam configurations that were recommended in past feasibility studies, that I will discuss in a moment (Pun, 2014a). As well, critics of UKH believe that a multi-purpose storage dam to augment dry season irrigation and hold back water during torrential monsoon rains could be additional features to serve its own residents while exacting more service fees from India. At this point in time, however, a maneuver to re-start UKH would require finding grounds to halt the project, declare its PDA illegitimate, and begin the

study process again in a country where growing energy demands outpace the growth of available energy (NEA, 2014).

Questions about the economic potential of UKH have been debated in public ever since the 2008 MOU which GMR signed to develop at 300MW and then re-negotiated in early 2009 as a 900MW project. The changing MW capacity reflects the difficulty, and perhaps the true futility, of forecasting demand, and, as such, economic development from a single optic: energy. The 300MW project, as endorsed in the feasibility report from Canadian International Water and Energy Consultants, was said to be the most “economically viable,” meaning that it represented an optimum balance of expense and profit based on Nepal’s energy demands at that time, and the potential for export to India (1998). Ten years earlier, Himalayan Power Consultants had drawn the same conclusion on the similar grounds:

It is clear that any development of over 500 MW will produce power and energy in excess of domestic requirements in Nepal for the foreseeable future and will thus require confirmed export markets to justify implementation. Accordingly, the evaluation of schemes larger than 500 MW are beyond the scope of the study (1989, 10).

The 300MW figure held for ten years until GMR pushed to increase the capacity to 900MW presumably because “confirmed export markets” materialized, notably, at the same time that the World Bank and other lending institutions began prescribing market linkages as Nepal’s best option for strengthening its economy (T. W. Bank, 2012). However, even with northern Indian states desiring more energy, critics argue

UKH will only produce 36MW of energy during the low flow dry season months— exactly when that power would be needed in country the most. So why export in that case?, they argue. But private sector and government advocates for UKH say that the power is too far away and currently without transmission lines through which to bring it to Kathmandu. Plus, they claim other, smaller projects closer to the capital will come online sooner than UKH, which would eradicate Kathmandu’s current energy shortage. As you can see, from either side, the debate lies not in determining present values, but conjecturing about the future in convincing fashion.

Looking more closely at these concerns over UKH configurations, we can also begin to delineate how various sides of the hydropower debate frame and justify their positions. The sides of this debate I will label, for simplicity’s sake, *exigent* and *deliberative*, careful to note that these positions are less polar than representing two ends of a continuum along which hydropower actors can fall. Exigent actors stress the need to develop Nepali hydropower quickly to take advantage of India’s need for power, and they claim revenue earned through this export is the most valuable asset to be acquired for purposes of development. Deliberative actors suggest that moving too quickly to develop Nepali rivers for hydropower generation will compromise the country’s future in the long run and they stress the potential environmental services of hydropower (e.g., flood control, irrigation augmentation) as key factors for any dam project. Using the official documents and media representation of UKH, I will

explain how these two sides of the debate attempt to marshal information to support their visions of hydropower development at UKH.

Underlying most contestation about UKH is the aforementioned 1989 feasibility study carried out by Himalayan Power Consultants (HPC), an international team of energy consultants with funding provided by the World Bank. For their study, they scouted 18 locations throughout the Karnali basin and ranked the six most promising sites based on possible layouts, cost estimates, and benefit evaluations—all within the energy context of Nepal *at that time*. UKH, they wrote, “is potentially a highly attractive site that can be developed to meet domestic load growth in Nepal in the early years of the twenty-first century (1989: 15-1). As cited above, they recommended UKH as a 240MW run-of-river project to satisfy domestic demands with any larger construction accounting for potential export sales. HPC judged UKH to be not only the most economical, but also the least environmentally impactful as its construction could use natural features of the area to provide infrastructure for the project. They estimated the entire project to cost \$365 million USD at \$1,520 per kilowatt to construct, a comparatively low expense-to-profit ratio (HPC, 1989). As the report was advisory in nature, HPC also provided alternative development configurations in an appendix to their report. They wrote:

A primary purpose of the... study was to evaluate projects in the Karnali basin that would be suitable to serve load growth in Nepal. Due to the small size of the Nepal power system, very large hydro projects

are not viable for this purpose. However, the potential for development of a large hydro project suitable for power export to India should also be recognized as an alternate development opportunity at such a site as Karnali Bend (1989: H-1).

Among the alternative configurations that HPC suggests, many in civil society experts prefer a scheme that would include a storage dam upriver of UKH at a site called KR1B that could generate 4,180MW of electricity by utilizing as the 410' slim mountain range that passes between the reservoir and power house as a natural dam (figure 2).

In the time that has passed since the HPC report, electricity demand has changed and grown in ways that were not foreseen in 1989. Even with the internationally expert evaluation of this team¹¹, HPC would have struggled to imagine and incorporate into their forecast the liberalization and industrialization of India's economy and the annual average eight percent growth rate since 2003 that would drive a sharp increase in energy needs in northern Indian states (W. Bank, 2015). As well, they could not (and did not) account for a scenario in which Nepal's overall electricity coverage would increase from 14% of the country to 40% while at the same time, dry season load shedding in urban areas grew from a two hours a day to fourteen. In their section on load forecasting, HPC predicted Nepal's peak load

¹¹ The evaluation team was headed by O.T. Sigvaldason, a water engineering expert from Canada and with roots in Norwegian hydro development. The team was comprised of Nepali and international experts, including Paul Terrell from Bechtel Incorporated of Germany, a global leading firm for engineering and energy development. The Nepal side was headed by Janak Lal Karmacharya who served as a country delegate to the World Commission on Dams and now heads the Clean Energy Development Bank in Kathmandu. As well, the team received support from a World Bank team of unnamed advisors and staff.

demand for 2014 to be 812MW when in actuality peak load demand was 1,201MW. HPC also predicted the total energy required for Nepal in 2014 to be 3,604GWh; NEA reported total energy needs for 2014 to have been 5,909GWh (figure 3).

	HPC prediction for 2014	NEA reported total for 2014	Prediction shortfall
Peak load demand	812MW	1,201MW	389MW
Total energy required	3,604GWh	5,909GWh	2,305GWh

Figure 4. 2014 peak load and energy need predictions from Himalayan Power Consultants compared with actual reported figures for 2014.

It is predictive gaps like these that have provided space for contestation between exigent and deliberative sides of the hydropower debate and by juxtaposing the editorials of some prominent public intellectuals, we can provide more substance to the range of criteria that form the visions of these parties. As well, we can begin to expose the matters of fact (such as demand forecasting) that certain groups attempt to proffer as energy imperative and destiny.

The deliberative argument is put forth most put forth most forcefully by Santa Bahadur Pun and Ananda Bahadur Thapa, two civil society experts with roots in the government side of hydropower and electricity. Each has written several articles and op-eds urging the government to halt the 900MW UKH and to return to the HPC feasibility study that offered larger, alternative configurations for construction at

Karnali Bend. Pun and Thapa's greatest concern is that going forward with 900MW UKH will preclude the possibility of any other construction at the Bend, thus underselling its fullest economic value for shorter term gain. Pun, a former managing director of the Nepal Electricity Authority, and since then outspoken writer on the topic of Nepali water issues, says "hydropower technocrats" have consigned the 4,180MW project to "oblivion out of ignorance" (Pun, 2014b). To wit, he says government officials have been publicly denying the existence of a possible storage project at Upper Karnali. Pun quotes the HPC study, as a reminder, "*the most economical way of developing the full power potential of Karnali Bend will result from construction of a large storage dam... any development at Karnali Bend should include consideration of a major storage project as being part of the ultimate power development of this site [italics in original]*" (Pun, 2014a). Thapa, referred to by Pun as the "godfather of Upper Karnali Storage," formerly served as the Executive Secretary of the Water and Energy Commission Secretariat for Nepal. He acknowledges the correctness of Pun's argument, but takes a slightly different tack for endorsing a storage project, stressing the 410 feet of natural head provided by the mountain range that would enable a "peaking energy generation cost... exceptionally low not only in comparison with its run-of-river type variant [sic], but also in comparison with other [planned] mega storage projects like the Kosi Dam Project and Karnali Chisapani

[downstream] (A. B. Thapa, 2014a).¹² Thapa's point here is that constructing dams "beyond a certain [height] leads to exponential increase [sic] in dam cost. This is one of the main reasons why excessively high dams are not found to be highly attractive" (A. B. Thapa, 2014c). The underlying assumption of both these arguments is that Nepal would benefit for the long-term and more profitably if it focused on the storage project which would require foregoing more short-term available power, and money to be reaped from its export.

The exigent position is represented by Ram Sharan Mahat, a former Finance Minister and leader of the Nepali Congress Party, and Kamal Raj Dhungel, an economics professor at Tribhuvan University and associate to Samriddhi, a free-market think tank based in Kathmandu. Mahat describes the Congress party as "pro-investment industrial" (H. B. Jha, 2011) and has been a long outspoken critic of Maoist obstructions to infrastructure development. During his term as Finance Minister, Mahat played a central role in the IBN-GMR negotiations, particularly on tax issues, the minimization of which, he believed, would launch UKH as a "catalyst for development of similar projects" (Sharma, 2011). Dhungel has written several editorials in favor of creating a "friendly" environment for investment. In a 2011 article that focused on the 2008 MOU, Dhungel urged quick construction of UKH to

¹² In a separate article on Upper Karnali, AB Thapa wrote, "There are very good sites to build a large storage dam at the beginning of the bend. Thus, it makes [a storage project at UKH] far superior to the 10,800MW Karnali Chisapani project in terms of per unit capacity investment coast because its hydropower station would be operating at a firm head two times greater than that of the latter though the total length of the water of both these [projects] would be almost exactly the same" (2012).

avoid the fate of “sustained depressed economic activity” in which the “country will fall to a level worse than today’s.” In other words, Dhungel proposes a causal relationship between the increase of available energy and economic growth, a scenario which has played out in some instances globally but could only be said to be generally true with regard to economic development, in particular (Ayres & Warr, 2009; Fouquet, 2008; Georgescu-Roegen, 1971). To strengthen his point, he presents UKH as an opportunity to escape an energy poverty trap, which bears responsibility for political instability, citizen unrest, and economic disorder (K. R. Dhungel, 2011). Notably, he does not seem to consider that social challenges such as political instability may be responsible for the lack of energy development, and not vice versa.

Justifying Upper Karnali

Beyond the economic principles of the exigent v. deliberative debate, the tropes and strategies employed by either side warrant further scrutiny because they provide deeper insight into how and on what grounds Nepal’s battles over hydropower and natural resources take place. All arguments, it should be noted are marshaled in the service of “national interest.”

Deliberative – Gift of Nature

The most common idea to deliberative arguments is to portray the Karnali Bend site as a “gift of nature,” endowed to Nepal with special purpose. Pun writes, “With a design flow of 236 cubic meters per second and a mere 2.2 km tunnel to obtain a

head of 141 meters... [Himalayan Power Consultants] called Upper Karnali a ‘jewel in the crown’” (Pun, 2014a). Ratna Sansar Shrestha, a board member at Butwal Power Company and vocal critic of UKH, echoes Pun: “Mother Nature bestows natural resources to every country, harnessing of which not only sustains the country’s economy, but also leads to prosperity” (2014a). As mentioned above, Thapa calls the 410’ natural dam “a rare gift” provided by the mountains “for free” between the reservoir and powerhouse (A. B. Thapa, 2014c). In one essay, he says going forward with the 900MW UKH is tantamount to the Taliban’s destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha status in Afghanistan (A. B. Thapa, 2014b) wherein the “vast hydropower potential of Upper Karnali... [would be] at risk being plundered” (A. B. Thapa, 2014c). He speaks to Nepal’s fixation with development or bikas (Pigg, 1993), writing, “Civilized society anywhere must be concerned if the existence of such a most valuable natural resource is threatened. The intelligentsia of our country in particular must be concerned and should help to save this most precious gift of nature from being devastated” (A. B. Thapa, 2014c). Common to all the arguments is the implication that proper utilization of Nepali natural resources is maximal utilization and that maximal use will drive and strengthen the reputation and economy of the country.

Deliberative – Sovereignty and India

In 2004, Nepali Times writer Navin Khadka wrote “All aid comes with strings attached, it’s just that some countries are better at hiding it.” He quotes former Finance

ministry advisor Keshav Acharya on the topic of Indian aid, in particular: “[It] comes under India’s strategy to maximize benefits from Nepal’s natural resources. This has been seen in the past and it is still valid” (N. Khadka, 2004). Acharya’s sentiment has been roundly echoed throughout Nepal’s private sector and civil society alike, who believe the country has been taken advantage of through past water treaties and been powerless to enforce India to hold up its obligations to those agreements (D. N. Dhungel & Butler, 2015b; D. N. Dhungel & Pun, 2008; Pun, 2015). By awarding UKH to GMR, critic Ratna Sansar Shrestha says the government has made its rivers into “*kamlaris*,” indentured young girls who often never achieve their freedom (personal interview 3/22/2015).

Into this frame, the long-standing contention of the Maoist parties complements the opposition from other Nepali groups. They have been outspoken against Indian involvement in Nepali infrastructure and natural resources, largely because they believe India has deliberately hampered development and supported the government during the civil war. Immediately following the conclusion of the 2008 MOU, Maoist leaders began a protest campaign against UKH and GMR. At a program in Kathmandu in February 2010, Phanindra Nepal (of the Greater Nepal Movement¹³) told the audience, “While our own people continue to remain deprived

¹³ The Greater Nepal Movement is a political organization dedicated to restoring the country to its original boundaries from the late-1700s, prior to British Raj and subsequent Indian republic which, they claim, have seized territory and resources that originally belonged to Nepal.

of electricity, India will take every possible advantage from such projects... The government should have learnt from past experiences of Koshi and Gandaki projects. Our water will be misused by India for irrigation and other purposes free of cost. Indian dominance of Nepal will aggravate if these issues are not taken seriously” (Staff KTM Post, 2010a). As the negotiations between GMR and the government continued, the rhetoric grew more serious. Maoist Politburo member Dharmendra Bastola said his comrades would shed blood if GMR were allowed to construct UKH: “Awarding the project to GMR is an anti-national move” (P. Adhikari, 2011). Other Maoist complaints suggest that the agreement between GMR and GoN was “only for the interest of investors” (Staff HT, 2011) and that history should tell Nepal to re-consider its approach to India overall: “We wasted some 92 years waiting for India to come and develop us and our water resources through hydropower... it’s time for India to self-evaluate its role, rather than for us to continue asking ourselves what went wrong or what could have been done differently in light of mutual gains” (Siwakoti, 2012).

Taken together, expressed uneasiness about India from civil society, the private sector, and the Maoist parties indicate an abiding concern about sovereignty in the wake of the civil war and its relationship to development in Nepal (find sources to show similar experiences). At the core, these warnings against relationships with India demonstrate how these groups believe that true development will need to be endogenous, or at least, in relationship with countries that have a only a fiduciary

interest in Nepali rivers. India's concerns for energy, security, and, water, these Nepali groups believe, make India an unsavory partner for natural resource development.

Deliberative—Lack of Process and Democracy

Even before GMR had won the contract to build UKH, the Maoist party (then-unified) had indicated it would investigate and challenge the process, especially if the winning bid came from an Indian corporation. Maoist parliamentary member, Lokandra Bista, said not enough research into the potentials had been completed: "We will not let these projects go ahead... if they do, we will take whatever steps are necessary, and local people in project sites will not let construction begin" (K. Dixit, 2007). After GMR and GoN signed the 2008 MOU dissenting groups began railing against the process. According to government officials, GMR had been selected through a global bidding process overseen by parliamentary committee with representatives from all the major parties (Sangraula, 2008). Opponents of UKH were immediately dubious. Mohan Baidya (prior to establishing his more radical faction) told a Maoist gathering of infrastructure interests, "The project is inappropriate because the construction right handover to the Indian company has not been transparent... the government must be stopped by the government" (Staff TN, 2010). In 2010, Maoist lawyer, Satya Pahadi, asked to see the name of the Maoist representative who signed the agreement. Energy Minister Prakash Sharan Mahat refused the request, only to say

“Both the finance committee and parliament committee formed to look at the project proposals had representatives of the Maoists” (Staff KTM Post, 2010b).



The Karnali river at morning from the banks in Chapre, Achham district, Nepal (photo by author).

These request denials for more information regarding process have backfired against the government, which feels in this situation that confidentiality is more effective and expeditious. But the denials have also opened space for UKH dissenters to cast doubt about the legality and validity of the projects, a goal that is easier to achieve when much of the public already holds a dim view about government processes. However, while protest is easy, having projects like UKH overturned through legislative means is a much more difficult task—current legislation isn’t

specific enough on how opponents can effectively do this. Gopal Siwakoti, a legal scholar on water issues in Nepal and Maoist allegiant, explains as one example, the existing Electricity Act, which has not been updated since 1992, allows for the government to enter into bilateral contracts for the generation, transmission and production of electricity without a bidding process (2012). Thus, civil society and activists have been limited to filing writs in the Supreme Court against projects like UKH. None of these has been successful (Staff KTM Post, 2014a; Staff Rep, 2015).

Exigent—Energy Crisis (scarcity regimes)

Load shedding has been a feature of Nepali electricity supply since the early 1980s when the World Bank supported the formation of the Nepal Electricity Authority to manage generation, distribution, and transmission. Since that time, the hours per day dedicated to rolling blackouts in the urban areas has grown from two per day to upwards of sixteen hours during the annual winter months. No one involved in hydropower debates would dispute the need for increased electricity for the benefit of the country. But proponents of exigent hydropower development have employed the crisis in several ways to channel political will to their position.

For one, invoking the energy crisis and load shedding provides ample material for criticizing the government, particularly over issues of corruption and program ineffectiveness. At a conference sponsored by the Independent Power Producers Association of Nepal (IPPAN), several speakers used the opportunity to critique NEA and the government's poor oversight of NEA's work. Said one executive, "Today NEA

has 10,000 workers and produces 740 megawatts of hydropower. That is an unacceptable employee to production ratio” (field notes, 8/28/13). Secondly, the energy crisis has provided the exigent position a vantage point from which to diminish the arguments of protestors, brandishing Maoist and like-minded opposition as detrimental to the country and “anti-development.” In the wake of the attack on the GMR building at UKH in 2011, Pradeep Gangol, a hydropower executive, said “The recurrence of such incidents is deplorable, especially in a situation when the country is facing [a] serious power crisis... In the case of Upper Karnali... the investors, who have secured licences [sic] under the global bidding process after fulfilling the requirements, are a discouraged lot” (Staff KTM Post, 2011b). Third, proponents of the exigent position have acknowledged mistakes made regarding existing hydro agreements and policies, but they employ the energy crisis as a means to atone for poor decision making. Lawmakers investigating the MOU process for the West Seti dam inquired about the lack of transparency in awarding the contract to the Three Gorges Corporation from China. The Minister of Energy, Posta Bahadur Bogati (UCPN) offered the “grim energy scenario” as justification for the haste in signing that agreement (Dhakal, 2012). The language and framing of the issue calls to mind Mehta’s work on the “real” and “constructed” water scarcity that grips northern India (Mehta, 2001).



Terraced hillside in Rahaph, Achham District (photo by author)

Exigent—Necessity of Foreign Investment and Markets

The exigent position ascribes to the indispensability of foreign investment for Nepal's hydropower development, and development more generally. While certain Maoist factions and proponents of the deliberative position argue that foreign investment is tantamount to neo-colonialism (Siwakoti, 2012), exigent groups push the notion that Nepal simply lacks sufficient capital to build projects on its own. Writing about the cost of Upper Karnali, Kamal Raj Dhungel notes, "The estimated cost of Upper Karnali is \$1.8 billion [USD]. This amount 1.7 times less than the total expenditure of the government, while 1.6 times greater than the capital expenditure of the fiscal year 2009/10" (2012). According to Arjun Neupane, an advisor to international and Nepali banks, the combined core capital of all Nepali banks (in 2013) was \$907 million USD

with another \$10 billion USD in deposits (2013:16). By law, Nepali banks are limited to a 50% exposure of core capital in hydropower projects; thus, all Nepali banks could loan approximately \$450 million USD in a “given loan maturation period” to hydropower. Taking the cost per megawatt for hydropower construction at \$800k USD (Pradhan, 2008), Neupane writes, “that means Nepali banks can finance up to a maximum 250MW of hydropower projects in a period of 8-10 years (the usual loan maturation period)” (2013:16). Even if one were to dispute Neupane’s numbers some percentage up or down, it can be seen that the belief in the necessity for foreign capital has strong support if one also believes that expeditious development of hydropower is the best path for quick energy growth.

Upon this premise of too little capital, exigent groups defend foreign investment in UKH on the premise that it will beget more foreign investment and exposure to markets. In this closed circle argument, then, acts that obstruct foreign-developed infrastructure are branded as against national interest, for an unfriendly environment to investors will discourage future growth. As such, in 2011, then Energy Minister Gokarna Bista criticized the attacks on GMR at UKH on the grounds that it would discourage government’s plan to attract investors (Staff KTM Post, 2011a). But a “friendly” atmosphere for foreign investment requires more than a lack of obstruction; that environment also must foster a confidence in netting returns to the company.



A woman carries a copper *gagri* full of water in her *doko* in Santalla VDC, Dailekh district, Nepal (photo by author).

*Exigent—Time for the Private Sector*¹⁴

Many in exigent hydropower groups speak easily about their frustrations regarding state-led, donor-funded development and they suggest the recurring failures of government support the idea that private sector growth will be the future of Nepali development. Mohan Manandhar, the director of the Niti Foundation, a policy-focused organization with funding from George Soros' Open Society Foundation, proposes free markets as the answer to a litany of historical wrongs regarding hydropower:

One of the problems that plague hydropower in Nepal is how it has been treated over the last century... as a source of personal pocket money for a select few – the Ranas, then the monarchy, followed by the Panchayat and now by the 'democratic' political leaders. Even though electricity feeds into almost every single citizen's life – from the elder to the young student – hydropower development has remained in the clutches of a select exclusive group and often been conducted in a non-transparent manner (2011).

The private sector and its reliance on free markets, they propose, can succeed because they are "extra-social," above politics and political debate. Jawed Ashraf, India's commercial counselor to Kathmandu, explains that joint river projects have become so politically sensitive in Nepal, the private sector was necessary to bring Upper Karnali along, as it "couldn't have been done as a government to government project" (qtd. in K. Dixit, 2007).

¹⁴ I will explore private sector attitudes toward hydropower and development more thoroughly in chapter 3.

Of course both sides have ready arguments to each other's position. While exigent groups urge the need for foreign capital to build Nepali hydropower, deliberative views say more creative financing options are available such as pre-construction shares and funds from remittance.

Curiously, both sides of the hydropower debate are strangely mum regarding the physical and environmental risks of dam building. Nepal experiences several earthquakes per year, and geologists have been long fearing an 8+ Richter scale quake that would have the power to dislodge large infrastructure such as hydropower dams (Ravilious, 2014). The water bursting downstream from cracked reservoirs would overwhelm rivers and irrigation channels in southern Nepal and northern India along which mostly poor residents reside. These concerns are dismissed by both exigent and deliberative groups, who argue that if every environmental disaster was posed as a reason not to build, Nepal would never have electricity. But this is not to say that environmental issues have been completely set aside in planning UKH. In a recent open letter to the prime ministers of Nepal and India, 12 prominent water experts not only endorsed several points of the deliberative view of hydrodevelopment, but also argued that the interrupted flow of the river for 20-21 hours per day would "have a devastating impact on downstream irrigation projects... and on the wildlife reserves of Bardia National Park in Nepal and Dudhwa National Park in India" (Pandit et al., 2014).

5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided a critical history of UKH by portraying how the debate over the configuration of the dam has been transmitted and strategized through the press by members of government, the private sector, and civil society. I offer as an interpretive instrument the formation of exigent and deliberative parties within the hydropower debate, who are not opposed *per se*, but represent ends of a continuum along which actors, near and far, can be placed. The exigent position seeks rapid hydro development for the purpose of raising revenues through electricity export to India, which, they believe, will encourage additional foreign investment in Nepali infrastructure. This investment and revenue can be used not only to promote the private sector but also to fill government coffers for program development. The deliberative position encourages slower development of Nepali hydropower with an eye for promoting multi-purpose storage projects that can assist flood control and irrigation as well as provide energy. To support their ideas, they suggest that UKH surrenders control of Nepali natural resources to India, and makes too little use of the country's natural resource endowments.

Chapter 2: Capital Hydro Visions in Nepal

There has been much excellent analysis of hydrodevelopment in South Asia, but none of these studies has examined closely the point of view of the private hydropower community. Exact reasons for this are unknown to the author, but likely could be that entrée into this field is difficult and that private hydro professionals often equate social science with environmentalism. Using Gusterson's idea of "polymorphous engagement" (1997) I combine findings from 35 interviews with private hydro developers as well as ethnography from three hydropower conferences, to explore Nepal's private hydro community, paying particular attention to how these individuals view water, the role of government in hydro development, and more generally their opinions about neoliberal principles regarding free markets and government regulation. In sum, the collective views expressed hold significant implications for the future of Nepal's natural resource management.

1. Introduction

Nepali military in drab green uniforms lined the walls of the main ballroom at the Soaltee Hotel in Kathmandu. A couple of bomb-sniffing shepherd dogs pulled impatiently on their leashes. Nepal's interim president Ram Baran Yadav was late but no one looked alarmed. Business-suited men socialized amiably over cups of coffee and tea, waiting for a former Miss Nepal, as master of ceremonies, to

beckon them to their seats. And then the ballroom went dark. The first of seven power cuts for the day.

That this was a hydropower conference couldn't have made the irony any thicker. After President Yadav and other ministers arrived on stage, the crowd took its seats and sat through a morning of benedictory wishes from the Nepalese government, the country representatives of well-known lending institutions, and a few foreign diplomats. Each speaker told the audience that the future of Nepal depended on hydropower development. Then the President left the conference.

In the afternoon, the head of an interest group representing private hydro developers addressed the crowd. He spoke of the need to create "bankable" projects that would appear "friendly" to foreign companies and assure them of a "return on investment." But the prospect of improved electricity and infrastructure for Nepal, he said, was only half the story. If Nepal could capitalize on its 6,000 rivers, hydro development could move the entire country out of the category of developing countries and, by virtue of free markets, signal the fulfillment of the democratic principles first pursued during the *Jana Andolan* of 1990. His remarks were met with vigorous applause and he concluded his presentation with a slide showing a quote from Confucius: "Set the goal right, but if it cannot be reached, don't adjust the goal. Hasten the pace."

The optimism and political orientation of his presentation reflects to what degree the private sector of Nepal feels the current political transition presents a strategic interstitial moment for neoliberal ideas to take root in Nepal's economy and politics. Having emerged from a decade-long civil war while enduring more than twenty changes in government since 1990 (D. Thapa, 2012, p. 55), Nepal finds itself presently scrambling to write a new constitution and elect a new parliament.¹⁵ In addition, hydro-related policies are in sore need of updates: the most recent water resources act dates from 1992 and the most recent hydropower development policy from 2001. The last national water plan was written in 2005. Meanwhile, the private sector has emboldened its cries for free market reforms that would take available capital for economic development out of state coffers and place it into the hands of entrepreneurs. In the sessions that followed the private hydro representative, the Q&A sessions were notable for lengthily-limned complaints from hydro developers about government regulations and the government's inability to understand its proper role in Nepal's economy.

¹⁵ The parliament approved a new constitution in September 2015, but its passage and ratification were strongly protested by Nepalis living along the southern border who objected to its plan to establish a federal system and the new stipulations for obtaining citizenship (Haviland, 2015).



Signs line the driveway into the Soaltee Crowne Plaza Hotel for the 2013 Power Summit hosted by the Independent Power Producers of Nepal (IPPAN). Photo by author.

Social science-oriented research on hydropower in Nepal is a relatively young but rapidly developing field of interest (D. N. Dhungel & Pun, 2008; Forbes, 1999; Rai, 2007; Rest, 2012). However, scholars can draw from a rich and varied library of existing work that discusses hydrodevelopment throughout much of South and Southeast Asia (inter alia Karen Bakker, 1999; Baviskar, 1997; P. M. Blaikie & Muldavin, 2004; D'Souza, 2008; Delang, Toro, & Charlet-Phommachanh, 2013; Ghosh, 2006; Matthews, 2012; Nixon, 2010). Each of these studies contribute to a debate relevant to Nepal and other developing countries that are presently striving to

develop a stronger energy base against growing concerns for climate change and natural resource depletion. The literature covers a range of institutions from dam companies to INGOs that focus on water issues. But it lacks an in-depth investigation of the views of individual private hydropower developers, who, along with concerns for free market conditions, see water as serving needs for power generation above all. Given that much in Nepal in terms of legislation and long-term planning is presently “up for grabs,” understanding the views of the private sector merits greater attention.

Almost any school-aged Nepali child can tell you the number of rivers in Nepal (6,000) and the mega-watt potential of the country (83,000MW as determined by Hari Man Shrestha in 1966). It is this sort of evidence that gives one an early impression of how water, and rivers in particular, have been wedded to the nation’s vision of itself. In this way, discourse stands as an artifact full of meaning and political motive. If Nepalis view rivers as a means for development, the shape and contours of that development can be revealed through its conversation and vocabulary about that future.

This chapter explores the discourse of private hydro developers through the lens of the Upper Karnali Hydroelectric Project (Muni). This is a useful approach, I argue, because many relevant tensions about national hydropower and water plans are

contained in this project. These are three tensions that I reviewed in chapter 1, and reiterate here:

- UKHEP is to be constructed as a run-of-river (Arora) project, meaning it will only function to generate electricity.
 - Proponents say RoR is appropriate for the site, and will displace the fewest number of people possible.
 - Critics say the RoR construction unsells the value of the site. They would prefer a multi-purpose dam that stores water for irrigation and flood control, as well as generate electricity.
- GMR, the Indian contractor to build UKHEP, will retain a 73% share of profits, while Nepal's government receives 27%.
 - Proponents believe this is a fantastic deal for Nepal's government for very little investment. The money earned could fill government coffers to be applied on social and environmental programs.
 - Critics believe what Nepal gives up in terms of river use rights does not make up for the free shares.
- The current iteration of the UKHEP calls for 88% of the power to be sent to India with the remaining 12% to illuminate places along the transmission corridor that will bring this electricity to Uttar Pradesh.
 - Critics of this stipulation argue that all available power should be kept in Nepal until load shedding is eliminated.
 - Proponents argue that the lack of transmission lines from Karnali to Kathmandu make this an unfeasible option.

The terms and viewpoints expressed by hydro developers reflect a hegemonic project (Gramsci, 1971) at hand in Nepal in which private sector advocates are seeking not only premier rights to decide water use for the country but also to make an argument for free markets and diminished government regulation. Understanding this point of view will have valuable insights for understanding the future of natural resource use in Nepal more generally. Furthermore, focusing on private hydro answers the call of Brenner *et al.* who suggest that too much investigation of

neoliberalism has been located “at some distance from centers of hegemonic power” (2009, p. 201).

In the first section, I review current definitions of neoliberalism, including and which tenets have found their way into hydropower discourse. Then I examine recent literature that explores the connections between neoliberalism and natural resources, in particular, water. In section two, I offer a quick word about methodology and the need to “study up” into powerful institutions that influence hydropower development in Nepal. In section three I present data, arranged thematically, taken from 35 interviews and ethnographies of several hydropower conferences in Kathmandu between June 2013 and June 2014. I follow that section with a discussion about the potential ramifications of neoliberal ideologies taking stronger root in Nepal natural resource policies.

2. Hydropower and Neoliberalism

H ydropower and water figure prominently in the neoliberal visions of governments (Budds, 2013; Thomas Perreault, 2006), international finance institutions (Pomeranz, 2009; Whittington, 2012) and transnational capitalist elites (Lee, 2013; Robinson, 2005). Economic growth requires a reliable source of energy that is powerful enough to support industry, but also stable enough to provide consumer-level electricity twenty-four hours per day. Against the wishes of some

international environmental groups, such as International Rivers, IFIs are once again promoting hydrodevelopment as a source of energy, arguing that hydropower qualifies as “green energy” compared to other carbon-based options (W. Bank, 2014). As such, a considerable amount of capital has become available to countries seeking to develop their energy base. Historically in developing countries, IFI funding has run through state governments, and this has certainly been the case in Nepal (Panday, 2012). However, private Nepali entrepreneurs are using the current political transition to stress their potential as the new face of development. For IFIs, hydrodevelopment can play an incisive role in their desire to “discipline” irresponsible states that have not more eagerly or properly adopted free market principles. Capitalist elites, meanwhile, see the transfer of economic power control from the government to the private sector as a growth opportunity.

Neoliberalism(?)

Exact definitions, interpretations, and forms of neoliberalism are a matter of wide, and occasionally rancorous, debate (Collier, 2012; A. Marcus, 2008). Early work noted the environmental and social impacts of neoliberal policies, while more recent scholarship has reimagined neoliberalism as less an artifact and more a complex, dynamic process that, like all hegemonic processes, proceeds through contestation and attempts to surmount its own contradictions (Heynan & Robbins, 2005; McCarthy & Prudham, 2004). Given this rather miasmatic explanation of neoliberalism,

a few definitions are worth exploring to note all the strands of thought that come together in this field.

Centeno and Cohen call neoliberalism a program that “stresses the necessity and desirability of transferring economic power and control from governments to private markets” (2012, p. 318) while more broadly, Jessop (2002) envisions neoliberalism as an economic and political project that seeks to liberalize trade (particularly international trade), privatize state controlled industries and services, and introduce market-oriented management practices to the reduced private sector. Politically, neoliberal programs attempt to roll back regulatory restraints on corporate practices while simultaneously constructing a new legal framework that increasingly indemnifies businesses and corporations against potential interference from the government and/or the citizenry (D. Harvey, 2005). McCarthy and Prudham (2004) have called attention to the various ruling class alliances that support neoliberal visions, not only for implementing free-market ideas, but also for the commodification and privatization of nature and natural resources.

As an economic ideology, neoliberalism was a means for the capitalist system to survive its own contradictions (Polanyi, 1944), in this case the economic slowdown of the early 1970s, a period during which major western economies saw their growth rates halve and unemployment rates rise precipitously (Helliwell, 1988). Centeno and

Cohen write that neoliberal advocates proposed to solve this crisis by restoring state solvency by attracting the money of a growing world financial market. This new influx of hard currency earned through exports and renewed monetary stability enticed other western leaders to also adopt neoliberal principles of debt discipline, lower tax rates, and diminished social sector funding. As western countries regained their footing, neoliberal ideas seeped into the IFI policies—such as the Washington Consensus (Williamson, 2009)—that now granted loans on the conditions that borrowers cut politically defended entitlements in order to pay off their debt obligations, and thus escape the fiscal pressures they were beset with. Presumably, the loans would be used develop private sector industries that would help developing nations enter world markets and fill government coffers with new found export and tax revenues, but the examples of success were few and far between. In fact, most countries with Washington Consensus-inspired funds labored only to service their loan repayments (Blyth, 2002; Prasad, 2006).

Neoliberalism represented a rupture between labor and capital that had characterized the postwar economy (Glyn, 2006; D. Harvey, 2005), and its ascendance was bolstered by financial success in the years of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, whose tenures solidified belief in free market policies (Yergin & Stanislaw, 1998). Opponents of neoliberalism, meanwhile, discovered that the few living examples of their politics were slowly disappearing as the Soviet Union, India,

and China began to experiment with planned economies and special economic zones. In this environment, union membership declined rapidly, disdain for the working poor increased, and governments began incarcerating more and more people, typically minorities and the marginalized (Garland, 2002).

Politically, neoliberalism sought to reduce the state, but research showed that states rarely shrunk in any meaningful way, while some actually became more entrenched (Jessop, 2010; Weiss, 1997). In the West, especially the U.S., investor confidence trumped political polls as the guiding metric of national success, a shift that Ong (2006) argues marked significant changes in state responsibilities and state citizenship. Rather than the state as a protector of its populace, it now was perceived as a competitor in a global market charged with satisfying investors so as to keep private capital invested in its economic frame (K. Mitchell, 2003). This shift, geopolitically, was expressed by the rise of anxieties about growth, inflation control and debt management, as opposed to the now supposedly-antiquated concerns of industrialization, national self-sufficiency, and military dominance (Abdelal, 2007).

Globally, the supremacy of the United States and the hegemonic appeal of its promises (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1999) were aided significantly by the so-called “Asian Tigers,” a small group of countries that appeared to use market mechanisms to climb out of poverty into wealth, and which stood in stark contrast to the falling

economies of Latin America that had opted for state-centered import-substitution industrialization, or ISI (Prasad, 2006). The Asian Tiger story was not so simple, however. Neoliberalists said South Korea and Taiwan represented the centrality of market reforms and comparative advantage. But future research would show that the Tigers benefitted more from effective states that had navigated successfully a uniquely time-specific global economic environment (Cummings, 1987). In spite of this research, neoliberal ideas have continued to spread eastward from Asia, fomented by the rise of India and China, leaving many in developing nations wondering how their country can benefit from world markets.

As this brief history demonstrates, it is perhaps not difficult to see why scholars have called neoliberalism “the most powerful ideological and political project in global governance” (McCarthy and Prudham, 2004, p. 275). The triumph of this ideology (as Bordieu puts it, “tyranny of the market”) cannot be denied. However, as an ideology, as a project, neoliberalism is not inevitable nor monolithic as its proponents would believe. Neoliberalism is a hegemonic project (Gramsci, 1971) both material and ideological, subject to contestation from a variety of social agents (Rupert, 2005). Neoliberalism is less an expression of technical knowledge and science, but rather a dominant paradigm that maintains its supremacy through the support of political alliances between and among elites who seek to capture

resources in such a manner that supports their ideology, and against the citizenry and civil society actors who dispute their potential benefits of that system.

This battle is very much current and alive in Nepal right now. And it is taking place on the field of natural resources, in particular water.

Water and Neoliberalism

As Karen Bakker has written, water is an uncooperative commodity that defies easy inclusion in neoliberal visions of growth (2003). Water flows over borders, water changes paths, and water morphs from solid to liquid and back again. All of these properties, in some way, make water resistant to commodification, privatization, and enclosure. But this does not deter neoliberal interest groups from attempting to capture water in various forms to serve its larger objectives of free markets and diminished resistance on capital accumulation. In fact, in developing nations especially, all natural resources, but especially water and water infrastructure, can be considered part of the hegemonic apparatus through which forms of “common sense” are constituted and disseminated (Ekers & Loftus, 2008).

When various groups compete to establish the merits of a specific form of water use, we might also understand them to be struggling over the shape of a future society in which a preferred exchange relation dominates. In the case of water in

Nepal, that preferred relation as envisioned by the private sector (explored more fully below) is one where profit is privileged over use and need. When people in Kathmandu attempt to turn on a light or appliance powered by hydroelectricity, they find themselves unwittingly positioned within a myriad of relations and power dynamics that bind them to the success of neoliberal ideas and the survival of capitalism. The policies that result from or emerge out of the current struggles over water in Nepal will not be a product of natural law or some other historical mechanism. They will represent ideological shifts that framed how these conditions were perceived and responded to (Centeno & Cohen, 2012) and will reflect to what extent market-oriented infrastructure has succeeded in promoting neoliberal institutions (Henisz, Zelner, & Guillen, 2005).

Whatever can be said about neoliberalism—its forms, objectives, and ideology—it is key to remember that it is plural, and that each specific instance is shaped by geographic limits and created by active, semi-autonomous institutions and the environment in which they compete. Like Hayter and Barnes (2012), then, my view of neoliberalism is one that is coproduced and flavored with the character of the space in which it is found. To detect these particular contours, research on nature and neoliberalism will require more nuanced accounts that admit difference, possibility and agency, and “scratch away at the contradictions, incompleteness, and limits of neoliberalism” (Lewis, 2009, p. 118).

To this end, excellent models of scholarship are extant, much of it having emerged in the wake of Erik Swyngedouw's pioneering studies on water infrastructure development in turn-of-century Spain and during Franco's dictatorship (1999, 2007). In his work, Swyngedouw demonstrates how water was manipulated to transform Spanish society and ecology over time. Specifically, he shows how national identity and political power were formed before and during Franco's time, as interbasin transfers, via modern hydraulic engineering, were used to move water across the country to serve populations that would help consolidate his autocratic power. As Budds notes, Swyngedouw's work revealed the materiality of water (through interbasin transfer) and its discursive formations (e.g., who is Spanish?). Kaika's work on hydrodevelopment in Greece recounts how water scarcity in households was used as political leverage to justify tariff increases and dam construction (2006). Relevant to this article, growing hours of load shedding are disrupting older channels of power that have run through the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), and now serve as the battle cry for private hydro developers who wish to see NEA disbanded. Budds (2013) and Perreault (2008) provide compelling accounts of water provision methods serving a fundamental role in pushing through neoliberal reforms in Chile and Bolivia, respectively. In each of these accounts, water functions as "lubricant" of capital accumulation because all economic development activities require water (Swyngedouw, 2004). In this way, capturing water becomes

an accumulation strategy (D. Harvey, 2003) that attempts to overcome the challenges that water presents in its various transboundary forms and depths.

Hydropower and Discourse

The formulation of Gramsci's notion of hegemony—a prevailing common sense formed in culture and diffused by civic institutions—includes types of economic behavior because economic rationality, he writes, responds to material necessity by constituting a complex of beliefs from which objectives are proposed to the collective consciousness (Gramsci, 1971, p. 412-413). Discourse, then, becomes an important tool for presenting those beliefs in careful, rationalized statements supported by recognized validation and made within communities of experts (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983; Foucault, 1980a). Discourses assume, according to Peet, “the shape of policies suggested to governing bodies” (Peet, 2002, p. 56). Thus, discourse, in this light, can reveal telling insights as to how language and policy obscure or naturalize material arrangements that serve those in positions of power.

Accordingly, much excellent work on hydro development in the Global South has charted the paths of discourse as nations and transnational capital interests have sought to make hydropower and associated hydro arrangements appear incontrovertible in regards to a citizenry's best interests.

Bakker noted that politicians and professionals along the Mekong River employed several ideas to promote that waterway as a “corridor of commerce... drawing six riparian states together in the pursuit of sustainable development through economic and infrastructural integration and cooperation, promoted by multi- and bilateral donors and lending institutions” (1999, p. 210). Metaphors such as these sought to transform the Mekong from a Cold War “front line” to an economic zone in which countries could pursue sustainable development promoted by large donors and lending institutions. This progressive commodification of the Mekong’s waters, Bakker argued, would ultimately direct revenue flows to capitalist elites who would profit disproportionately on the back of a naturalising discourse that promised economic development more generally.

In Laos and Brazil, hydropower development has been shaped as the optimal path for development. Delang et al. describe efforts by the Lao government to exit the group of least developed countries by 2020. To achieve this goal they have convinced much of the public that the only way to do this is by attracting foreign capital (2013, p. 160). As a result, water has been prioritized for dam construction while displacing smallholding coffee farmers without having adequate compensation plans in place. The Lao government’s justification of the displacement in service of the common good reflects D’Souza finding that dams are always proposed as “class neutral” (2008). Meanwhile, the administration of President Rousseff in Brazil works

to present hydropower, which already supplies 80% of the country's energy, as environmentally benign and reliable source of employment with undeniably positive multiplier effects (A. Hall & Branford, 2012).

Discourse around hydropower has also been employed to support water grabs or expropriation of water from across borders in service of national interests. In Laos, Matthews describes a nascent civil society that is unable to defend itself from Thai corporate interests that draw valuable capital out of the country. Aided by the World Bank, the Thai government positions itself as helping its neighbor make the best use its resources (2012). Colonial France engaged in what Pritchard calls "hydroimperialism," justifying its hydro interventions in North Africa on the grounds that the French were bringing development to these foreign lands. Specifically, Pritchard notes, French technical elites invoked metaphors of "circulation" and "flow" to suggest a smoothness and ease of operations (2012, p. 605), when in fact, these terms obscured the processes and politics under scrutiny (T. Mitchell, 2002).

Just as discourse can be used to promote ruling interests, it can also be contested by subaltern groups who either co-opt and modify the predominant common sense, or who deploy their own ideas to countervail against the government and private interests. Writing about the Koel-Karo movement in Jharkhand, India, Ghosh notes that locals opposed to hydropower projects embraced a transnational

discourse of indigenous rights that had been successful in other sites and replicated that success. However, the deployment of that discourse, he writes, gave rise to a politics of recognition that created a specific definition of “indigenous people” that unintentionally marginalized the vast majority of *Adivasi* living in India (2006, p. 503).

As these examples show, the webs of discursive strategies simultaneously produce and police boundaries. Therefore, we must interrogate beneath the glimmering sheen of hydropower discourse to ask about the distribution of costs and benefits, and to link these material arrangements with multiple scales as constructed by both state and non-state actors (Delaney & Leitner, 1997). Each of these studies, though excellent, take for granted the business point of view, assuming it to be, more or less, generalizable to neoliberal principles about free markets and government regulation. On the topic of hydrodevelopment, most of the extant literature equates business interests with an instrumental and abstract view of water, as a tool for production and bringing forth capital (Linton, 2010). My interviews and analysis will show that, in the case of Nepal, the private sector’s perception of its role in the development of the country and the role of water in that development are more complex.

3. Methods

Nader's encouragement to "study-up" not only sought to reveal the attitudes, processes, and structures of elite institutions and actors, but also served as a call to strengthen social science's "democratic relevance" by providing citizens with "something about the major institutions, government or otherwise, that affect their lives" (1972, p. 294). When studying the powerful, the researcher generally has less power than the researched, and as such, studying up provokes serious reflection on the research relationship while contesting assumed understandings of the subject.

Based on my field experience, many private hydro developers equate social science with environmentalism, an attitude cultivated through Nepal's experience with the World Commission on Dams (WCD), and the political struggles over the Arun-3 project in the 1990s (Rest, 2012). In their assessment of "Dams and Development," the WCD's framework (2000) for hydropower construction, Dixit and Gyawali (2010) note that Nepal had already been abiding a majority of the commission's recommendations, and that the entirety of the report was unlikely to find smooth implementation in Nepal's current political climate, which regarded western interference as inappropriate, if not colonial. Meanwhile, Forbes (1999) cites a source in her study on Arun-3 who notes the hypocrisy of western environmentalists who hail from countries that have strong energy bases and emit tremendous amounts of carbon pollutants. This exact sentiment was echoed in

several of my own interviews with private hydro developers.

Building a rapport that evokes plain-spoken sentiments from elites can be difficult not only for reasons of access but also because the powerful are adept at maintaining their privacy, extremely guarded and practiced in what they reveal, and to which audiences (Gilding, 2002). As Weber noted long ago, the ability to control symbolic resources is part of what defines a status group as elite (1946a). Thus, interacting with elites for research requires a variety of postures on the part of the researcher, sometimes deferential, sometimes accepting, and sometimes accommodating (Aldridge, 1993; Galliher, 1980). This is not the same idea as practicing deception, but rather reminds us that rapport-building with informants requires different tactics as determined by power dynamics. Warwick (1974) reminds us that apart from clandestine techniques or strategic neutrality, established methods already offer all the necessary tools for learning about the powerful. It's just a matter of knowing how to frame the interaction in such a way that the informant feels his or hers is the only reasonable position to have.

There are times, however, when tactics alone are not sufficient to elicit meaningful information and here's where the metaphor of studying-up should not be taken too literally. In their study of private schools, Gaztambide-Fernandez and Howard (2012) suggest that the obfuscating dynamics of elite interactions and valent

categories of status bring us back to Nader's larger exhortation, which is to study up, study down, and study sideways.

For the reasons discussed heretofore, this chapter discusses research collected through Gusterson's idea of "polymorphous engagement" (1997). This collection of methods suggests interacting with informants across a number of sites, and sometimes in virtual form (e.g., e-mail). In Gusterson's words, polymorphous engagement "preserves the pragmatism... that has characterized anthropological research but also displaces it away from fetishistic obsession with participant observation" (1997, p. 116). In my research, participant observation in the office was not possible, though my fieldwork did involve a component of participant observation as I attended hydropower conferences and visited several hydropower company offices throughout Kathmandu. As well, I employed other eclectic techniques such as careful attention to newspapers, web-based news agglomeration sites (e.g., Nepal Energy Forum), and Facebook pages dedicated to Nepal hydropower.

In this article, I will be discussing data primarily collected through interviews and from hydropower conferences, many of which I was able to attend due to my position as an editor for a water-themed professional journal in Nepal. Most of the 35 interviews I will discuss were taken in corporate offices, though several were conducted in the subjects' home. The interviews were semi-structured around eight

questions that explored the respondent's opinions on the role of government in hydrodevelopment, the challenges of working as a private hydropower developer, and the subject's attitudes about the role of water in developing Nepal. Though most of the subjects did not work directly with the Upper Karnali project, each interviewee's thoughts about that project were solicited so as to learn more about their views on Nepal's water resources and relationship to India, more generally. I open-coded the data using Atlas.ti software, observing instances where informants remarked about natural resources, the role of government in developing Nepal hydropower, and the relationship between Nepal's water to its national self-image.

4. Data and Themes

If discourse is a means by which hegemonic projects foment a new common sense, what are the tropes and ideas that Nepali private hydro professionals are employing to promote neoliberal ideas of free markets and diminished government regulations on capital?

Hydropower as destiny

Most commonly, private sector hydro professionals invoked hydropower (and associated free market reforms) as Nepal's destiny, a march to the "end of history" that began with the *Jana Andolan* in 1990 and continues today as the country defines itself anew after civil war. And that new definition equates democracy with free markets. As a speaker from the Nepali Congress party stated at

the IPPAN conference, the “1990 democratic revolution opened the way to the private sector... the [economic] unfairness that preceded 1990 remains an unfinished task. The foundation has been set for private growth.” His comments were later endorsed by an Indian hydro professional who told the audience, “the only remaining question [on hydro] is ‘when?’ When we find that answer, Nepal will be the richest country in the region.”

This narrative connection between free markets and Nepal’s democratic revolution is supported by another commonly cited theme: Nepal as a hydropower nation. Nearly every informant insisted that Nepal’s future required capitalizing on its water resources through hydro electricity generation for consumption and export. In the words of one influential hydro developer, Nepal’s emergence as a hydro nation would correct a long history of developmental wrong turns.

“First the Ranas tried to develop us as a timber nation. But it’s hard to get timber out of the hills, logistically. And it’s environmentally bad to take it out of the terai. Relying on wood created more problems than benefits. Then the West tried to make Nepal an agriculture (sic) country. This made sense because we were extremely poor and we needed more food. But now that our per capita has increased, it doesn’t make sense to have an economy based on agriculture because we have so little land that can be productive or profitable. Hydro[power] makes sense because it adds value to the water. Irrigation and flood control take that value out of water. With hydropower we can take value from the water without taking the water.”

This informant clearly understood the power of a strong narrative and his story suggests that Nepal's moment had arrived.

Hydropower and the free market reforms necessary for its capitalization were, in the minds of informants, *fait accompli*. The only troubling variable was time, and how much would pass until the private developers could begin generating power. And in this sense, time, they believed, was truly money. One informant explained that "every kilowatt we don't generate is money lost twice because we have to spend those lost rupees on carbon fuels from India. Instead, we should be selling power to India." Another informant said the government was spending too much time debating the forms of hydropower and combination of storage versus run-of-river dams when "we should just build them. Just build them... domestic, export, it doesn't matter. The market will sort things out. Our inability to build is costing us dollars." Some respondents suggested that the current political transition in Nepal made decisiveness and action even more important, perhaps recognizing the strategic advantage of an unsettled government. As one informant stressed, "With the upcoming elections, timing is critical. The new parliament must understand how the free market can help the country." Another informant suggested that delays in hydropower construction could have more serious consequences: "We cannot wait any longer for development. This will lead to unrest again, the longer it takes."

Beneath these concerns for Nepal to embrace its destiny and to make expeditious strides toward hydro development sits a view of water that Linton calls “modern,” which is to say abstract, technical, and asocial (2010). Respondents did not discuss water in terms of its social relations to people, except for specious connections between increased tax revenues from water that could be spent on people, presumably through government programs, which private developers do not trust in the first place. But herein is the neoliberal paradigm revealed: government’s responsibility should be to enable the free market to flourish so that the people may have a share of that future wealth. Another informant summarized the situation this way: “The government does not understand that every cumec of water that flows from our country is rupees lost. I say, let no drop of water flow from our rivers without generating wealth.”



A panel discussion on “Meeting Nepal’s Domestic Demand” at the 2013 Power Summit, hosted by the Independent Power Producers of Nepal (IPPAN). Photo by author.

Hydropower as development

Though much critique has been written about Nehru’s praise for “temples of modernity” (Khagram, 2004; Klingensmith, 2003), the idea that hydropower and development are linked persists in the minds and discourse of Nepali private hydro professionals. As Pigg (1993), Rest (2012), and Forbes (1999) have argued, the idea of a modern nation-state in Nepal is densely woven with ideas about development, or *bikas*. Pigg, in particular, noted how the lack of infrastructure in rural areas marked villages as inferior to the urban sites, a connotation that rural residents internalized and which trickled down to their impressions themselves and their homes. In his

study of Arun-3, Rest discovered that many residents in the Arun valley actually welcomed large scale hydro projects not only for the electricity, but also for the infrastructural improvements that would come along with that construction: roads, medical clinics, and ancillary businesses.

Seizing upon this preoccupation with development, private hydro professionals frame hydro electricity as fundamental to Nepal's eventual rise. One informant told me, "We know that in modern society, everything is closely linked by electricity." A Nepali hydro developer speaking to the conference listed all the ways that electricity could enhance the country's prospects: economic growth, health, education, disaster management, and political harmony. Another interviewee put the need for development in simpler terms: "We have a whole generation that doesn't know what twenty-four hours of light is like." But the need for development through hydro electrification is not so simple, according to some. I was told by multiple informants that the government and people needed to "educated" to trust the private sector. One project manager explained the problem this way: "Sixty-six percent of the Constitutional Assembly are trained in the communist tradition (belonging to the UML, UCPN, or CPN parties) and they do not trust the private sector to deliver. Even the Congress party. They say they are pro-business but they are not completely faithful to capitalism. They are still in the mindset of state-led development, even though that hasn't worked for us." Another private developer insisted that free

markets for development were not about earning more money, but “helping people to transform... but when you give this message, people think there is something wrong with you.” Comments such as these suggests that, on some level, private sector developers understand that theirs is a position to be established vis-à-vis competing visions and that the “naturalness” of free markets is as much synthetic as organic.

Performing the neoliberal

My interviews and conference notes revealed that promoting a discourse of free markets and minimal government interference requires adopting a particular vocabulary of technical terms that attempt to depict an environment that is standardized and fair, and assessable by empirical observation, and thus apolitical as well. All my interviewees invoked terms such as “benchmarking,” “backward and forward linkages,” “responsibility,” “implementation gaps,” “accountability,” “consistency,” and “fair returns.” When talking about raising capital, either foreign or domestic, private developers described the need to give “confidence” to investors. When asked how to do that, most respondents presented ideas for “streamlining” government requirements for construction. Rather than having to obtain project approval from several different ministries, interviewees spoke about the need to present “one window” to “fast track” construction. The government’s responsibility was to provide secure “payment mechanisms” by which

investors could be certain to recoup their investments. More “bankable” projects (i.e., projects in which lending institutions could be assured a certain margin of earnings) would be possible if the government would repeal the value-added tax, or VAT, applied to construction materials and services, all in the name of appearing “investor-friendly.”

What emerges from this performance is a sense that capital, for all its proposed productive power, acts more like a *divo*, requiring just the right amalgamation of conditions and circumstance to be enticed out of its resting place to shower its beneficence on everyone (Tsing, 2000). For all the discussion of how to develop Nepal through neutral “innovations” and “mechanisms,” it would seem the real goal was to minimize risk for the investors, but not for those who need that investment. The simpler processes that my interviewees called for seem to operate more like code for eliminating all potential contingencies that would deter capital from coming into country. Similarly, for all the advertised merits of free markets, there seems to be no end to the necessary preconditions required for its flourishing. But the discourse employed by the private sector in Nepal attempts to cover these disjunctures by creating a seamless relationship between exogenous capital and endogenous needs. The hegemonic project underway is to make invisible, at least in talk, the tension wires holding up the act. Given the current vacuum of leadership in

government and the outdated hydropower and water policies still in place, it would appear the private sector might just be successful in selling this illusion.

5. Discussion – What Will Become of Water?

What does this discourse mean for natural resource management in Nepal? Given the country's need and desire for electricity, it would seem that larger environmental and social concerns will not receive priority consideration. Moreover, we can see that people in the private hydro sector see their work as integral to more significant changes in the political and economic landscapes of Nepal. In this way, creating smoother and more "business-friendly" processes for dam construction are not only in service of hydropower, but part of a more significant project to liberalize Nepali markets while eroding the past legacy of state-led development. In the coming years, as Nepal establishes its constitutions and updates its water and hydropower policies, it will be interesting to note what new alliances and forms of power emerge in respect to natural resource use.

But in some ways it is still too early to understand or know how the current push for free market reforms from the private hydro sector will affect natural resource use and policy. However, we might draw some instructive lessons from parts of the Global South where these patterns have preceded the current episode in Nepal.

Delang and Toro have observed how Laos' rush to join global natural resource markets, which includes granting exclusive land rights use to private actors, has pushed rural residents to the periphery where less and less land is available. Politicos in Laos stress the need for sacrifice in the country, but "these sacrifices are expected from those with the least political power: minorities, farmers and the poor living far from the centres of power, Vientiane and the regional capitals" (2013, p. 162). In Brazil, Hall and Branford note that the current form of development—highly dependent on natural resource export—has been imposed top-down with little public debate and exacts a large toll on the Amazonian ecosystem, overriding the best efforts of civil society actors to leverage environmental claims (2012, p. 857-858). Islar's work (2012) on Turkish hydropower makes explicit the connections between the advance of neoliberal programs and the privatization of small scale hydro which stress use-for-profit over more socially-oriented development goals. Budds historical review of Chile's neoliberal adjustments in the 1970s (2013) demonstrated how water not only changed in its position of that country's economic planning, but also how water served to consolidate elite power and corporate alliances during the transition from dictatorship to democracy.

Should Nepal be concerned about suffering one or more of these fates? Scholars would say, "Yes, but..." Like capital itself (D. Harvey, 2005), neoliberalism

continually morphs into new forms, using crises that otherwise appear fatal as a means of recreating itself. And, while neoliberalism programs around the world bear similarities in their orientation toward free markets and natural resource use, the chameleon character of neoliberalism (Brenner et al., 2009) and the particular contours and limits in which those programs are situated leads to effects that are anything but predetermined. To this end analytically, Hayter and Barnes make instructive use of Tsing's concept of friction which refers to the process by which an idea is remolded and reproduced in a regionally specific institutional and material framework. Consequently, they argue, "neoliberalism becomes different in each place, locally hybridized" (2012, p. 199). For Nepal, then, we might investigate the sites where neoliberalism comes up against its limits and how certain conditions—poverty, political instability, high migration—influence its power and form. Here are just a few questions worth remembering in the coming years:

1. Do neoliberal ideas hold more or less purchase in a country where per capita income lags behind the rest of the region?
2. Does the new constitution (September 2015) make it easier or more difficult for private sector interests to stake their claims? Will IFI's aid those claims, or maintain support for state-led development?
3. Does the high migration of proletarian and agrarian workers to other countries help the private sector by minimizing the potentially resistance population? Or will the experiences of migrant workers abroad erode people's faith in free markets and capital more generally?

What does seem common among earlier studies of neoliberalism and natural resources is a tendency toward accumulation through dispossession (D. Harvey, 2004). This occurs when certain blocs of capital grow through the destruction of

noncapitalist or state sectors of production. In India, Whitehead (2013) and Jodha (2008) have both noted how privatization of resources amidst a rural population still heavily reliant on those materials for livelihood has led to greater pauperization. Into this definition of accumulation through dispossession, we might substitute Nepali private hydro as the growing bloc of capital against rural populations (noncapitalist) and state ministries currently charged with natural resource management and electricity production. As one example, the memorandum of understanding signed between the government of Nepal and GMR for UKH in 2008 contained one particular clause that, in the minds of critics, transferred wholesale use rights to GMR.

37. GoN shall ensure that the development, implementation and operation of upstream / downstream. Projects by other developers shall not be detrimental in any way to the Project (GoN, 2008).

The controversy focused on the term “other developers,” which many critics feared could be interpreted to mean Nepali citizen upstream or downstream who wished to use the river for irrigation, fishing, or any other conceivable use. This 2008 MOU has been superseded by a new project development agreement for UKH that was signed in November 2014, but has not yet been made public. So we cannot know yet how this clause remains in the new contract or has been modified.

As a final piece, future studies might also focus on how international capital is attempting to dispossess Nepal of its resources on the backs of Nepali private firms.

Over a drink at a private hydropower conference, a European hydro manager told me that gaining a majority stake in Nepali projects was relatively easy. He said, “It always happens this way... you have a 30% stake to begin but then [the Nepali firm] needs your technical and financial help and you up your stake that way. Local developers always run into problems and those problems are how we improve our holdings.”



Water collection pond in Bhairabsthan, Achham district, Nepal (photo by author).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to add some depth and complexity to the views of private sector professionals regarding how they view natural resources and the proper role of government in the growth of hydropower. These individuals are engaged in a project to establish the “natural” superiority of free markets and

diminished government influence in Nepal's development. Nepal's post-1950 history is a long story of state-led development without much appreciable gain (Panday, 2012; N. Shrestha, 1997b), thus free-marketers see the current political transition as key moment to have neoliberal principles become the new "touchstones of reality" (Polanyi, 1944, p.142) by which the country will guide itself. The degree of their success in the coming years under the guidance of a new constitution and soon-to-be elected parliament will have significant ramifications for how the country establishes new frameworks and policies for managing its natural resource base. The discourse of private hydro professionals pushes a belief that Nepal has no other "best option" for its water than to develop hydropower above other possible uses. To this end, the policies and acts that will require updates post-parliament elections are certain to be influenced by the success of neoliberal ideas in the current moment.

Chapter 3 – Conspiracy and Nationhood and India

1. Introduction – Forested Negotiations

I arranged an interview with a gentleman who had written some thoughtful hydropower op-eds in a Kathmandu newspaper. He worked for the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), but had considerable experience in the private sector as well. His essays were cogently reasoned with assertions resting on top of solid data and pulling from case studies of hydropower in other South Asian countries. I was looking forward to our conversation at the Bakery Café in Hari Bhawan. He arrived wearing an expensive-looking suitcoat and quickly explained that he was off to a wedding following our conversation. I asked about his background and training, which included a bachelor's in engineering from an Indian university followed by a master's degree from Tribhuvan University in Nepal. Before coming to NEA, he served in the Ministry of Energy and offered to make introductions for me with the current Secretary and his staff.

Regarding hydropower development in Nepal, my informant believed politics was the problem: "Economics and politics should not mix," he said disdainfully like so many hydro professionals I had heard say exactly the same thing at several other hydropower conferences. Though he was an engineer and worked for NEA, my informant was impressive in his knowledge of the entire process. "Public meetings at dam sites don't work for public relations. You need to use educated company representatives to go out to the people... environmental impact assessments are too

boiler plate. They're too much information and not good information." We moved into the question of electricity export in Nepal. He said that wouldn't be possible for several years, and certainly no sooner than 2017. Beyond that, pricing was an issue: Nepal could not afford to offer kilowatts to India at a price India would accept." When I asked about Upper Karnali and its income potential for the government, my informant sat back in his chair and twisted his lips in a wry smile, like he was about to let me in on a big secret. He leaned forward again and told me, "GMR has no intention to build that dam. They will not build that dam. They are just holding the license so no one else can stop that water from coming to India." But why would they do that, I asked. Why would they hold the license and not build the dam? Every passing day represented more money lost. Even someone with only the slightest business acumen could conclude it wouldn't make sense. He nodded in response to each question and explained that GMR's losses at Upper Karnali would be compensated by the Indian government in the form of future projects: roads, airports, harbor docks, and convention centers. I expressed more hesitance to believe, but my informant insisted: between 70-80% of the water into the Ganges basin comes from Nepali rivers (T. W. Bank, 2012), he told me. India does not want Nepal to have the ability to control that flow. The same thing was happening on the Arun River in eastern Nepal whose hydropower license was now legally in the hands of Sutlaj Jal Vidyut Nigam Limited from Himachal Pradesh. If Indian corporations held those licenses and could negotiate terms that prevented Nepal from erecting other

projects on their rivers—as many believed was stipulated in clauses 36 and 37 of the current agreement (chapter 1)—the Indian government would be wise to support corporations willing to do that on its behalf.

Truth was, I had heard this assertion before, from many other people, but this was the most tidy version of it: corporations and the state scheming together to control Nepal's rivers to keep water flowing to the Ganges basin where groundwater exploitation and contamination is a perennial problem for India's northern states (Ahmed & Umar, 2008; Singh et al., 2012; Umar, Khan, Ahmed, & Ahmed, 2008). And while his theory had a certain political logic, I couldn't quite believe the Indian government and private corporations headquartered in India would have devised such a complex ruse. Besides, there was too much evidence to the contrary. I had been to the dam site and seen GMR employees at work. I had seen the medical clinic GMR built in Ramghat (humble though it was) and spoken with several hydro professionals in Kathmandu who knew GMR officials personally and said they had every intention to build at Upper Karnali. The project was too lucrative not to build, they told me: GMR had lost money on recent projects in Istanbul and Delhi, and Upper Karnali was their best bet to recoup those losses. Furthermore, I had been to Gokarna Forest Resort where members of GMR and the Investment Board of Nepal (IBN) held three days of negotiations in early September 2013. If GMR did not plan to build Upper Karnali, then it was engaging in an elaborate and expensive charade to

show otherwise. At the end of the day, weighing the evidence, the conspiracy theory of “resource colonization” seemed unlikely.

Two months prior to this interview, I sat at a conference sponsored by the Independent Power Producers of Nepal (IPPAN)—a 2-day gathering of panels and Q&A sessions regarding hydro development in Nepal. At that point in my research, it had been difficult to make contact with anyone in GMR or IBN. In the afternoon session on the second day of the conference, I was sitting next to an Indian gentleman who worked for Energy du France. His French co-worker sat to my left. I introduced myself as a researcher, but did not mention my particular interest in Upper Karnali. At one point, he spoke across me to his colleague in a lowered voice, “Hey, GMR and IBN are meeting at Gokarna Forest next week to work out some details... three days... September second.” Now I had been scouring all Nepali newspapers for weeks prior to learn where contract negotiations stood, and all related articles reported only amorphous details, “Negotiations are ongoing.... They are reviewing documents... [Radhesh] Pant was happy with their progress.” But nowhere had it been reported when and where they would be meeting.

I booked a room at Gokarna Forest Resort¹⁶, a luxurious hotel well outside my price range, but worth a gamble in terms of the access I might be able to gain.

¹⁶ Gokarna Forest Resort: <http://www.gokarna.com/>

Gokarna sits northeast of Kathmandu, up the road a few kilometers from Boudhanath, the largest Buddhist stupa in the world. It is a true resort: peaceful, green and clean, unlike the chaos of everyday Kathmandu. You can golf at Gorkarna (one of only a handful of courses in the country), play tennis, or swim, or take drinks in lounges that appear British colonial with bars of polished oak, bird paintings on the walls, and hunter green colored comfy chairs arranged in social circles. Oddly, the resort also features a hunting lodge, though few, if any, Nepalis view hunting as a sport or pastime.

After checking into my room, I went straight to the second-floor room where the negotiations were being held. A young woman sat at a table outside. I told her I was here to listen to the negotiations. She said with a concerned look, "I don't think you can go in." I asked, "Are these meetings open to the public?" Given the controversy surrounding Upper Karnali, I knew they weren't open to the public, but I wanted to be actually told that. She said she couldn't let me in, but she would ask her superior during the next scheduled break if I could observe.

I sat on a couch in the lobby nearest the hallway down which the negotiations were taking place. The IBN and GMR staff filed out for lunch. I watched them pass to see if I recognized anyone in the mix. I didn't. No one stopped to talk to me. I followed this group into the restaurant where they were having a buffet lunch. I was the only other person in the room. A few people looked up and smiled at me, but no

one showed interest in talking. After lunch the teams returned to the conference room and the doors were closed. I asked the woman at the table outside the room if I could go in. She informed me that her boss had said, “no.”

Undeterred, I stayed at the Gokarna for the next two days determined to make contact with someone, and short of that, at least take note of how these negotiations were taking place in terms of the setting, how the parties interacted outside the negotiation room, and gleaning what I could from the discussions they made over drinks at the end of the workday.

The next day, I sat outside the conference room again and by this time I was starting to receive looks from the negotiating teams. Partly, I assumed, because I was obviously not Nepali nor Indian, and partly because the resort was nearly empty except for the negotiating teams and me. There were two British men who sat with the IBN team, and I assumed they were representatives from Herbert Smith Freehills, a British law firm that IBN had contracted to assist them in the negotiation process. This was an interesting move as there is a long-standing feeling among Nepalis (that I will discuss below in greater detail) that India has consistently outmaneuvered them in treaties and agreements due to an inferior ability to negotiate. The presence of the British lawyers, I wondered, would send what message to GMR? To India?

At dinner that evening, a young man from IBN—Sunil—approached me in the buffet line and said he’d been told I was interested in learning more about the

project. I explained my research briefly and said I was interested in seeing the negotiation process if that were possible. Sunil said it wouldn't be possible and didn't provide a reason why not, but he asked me to make an appointment with him next week to talk about the event at the IBN offices. I returned to my seat and watched Sunil rejoin his colleagues. As their heads turned in my direction, I could tell he'd revealed the reason for my strange presence at Gokarna. Every one of their faces was young and bright. And in the days milling about the resort, I also realized each of them spoke exceptionally good and lightly-accented English, the kind learned through university educations abroad. My subsequent meetings with IBN staff, two weeks after the negotiations, would show this to be the case: young staff from privileged Nepali backgrounds and having been educated in American universities and worked in American corporations¹⁷, now returned to staff the state's "one window" solution for large infrastructure projects in Nepal.

¹⁷ Through conversations with IBN staff, I learned many of them had been formerly employed at American corporations as varied as Amgen, the biotechnology company, and Victoria's Secret, a subsidiary of L Brands Incorporated.



The exterior of the main hotel at Gokarna Forest Resort, where the Investment Board of Nepal and the GMR Consortium held negotiations to discuss the project development agreement for the Upper Karnali Hydroelectric Project (Photo by author).

The next morning smaller subsets of the negotiating teams took breakfast in a canopied area outside the restaurant to engage in the “working breakfast.” Most of the GMR staff were identifiable by their monogrammed knit polo shirts, with red, yellow, and blue letters “GMR” stitched across the left breast. The IBN team dressed in more standard business suits and ties. As they were far across a green space from the restaurant I had no hope of overhearing any conversation, which was probably the point of the location. Discretion in business manners: this is what investors like: discretion. I noted how very stereotypical these negotiations appeared in the

luxurious space, covert and serious, and followed by nightly drinks where they recapped the day talking business. For all those hydro professionals (chapter 2) who called for Nepal to show itself “friendly to investment,” was this the presentation they were hoping for?

Foucault (1979) describes the technologies and discourses employed to discipline people through separation, normalizing judgments, and hierarchical observation. I thought about how the negotiations surrounding Upper Karnali had come to appear as business negotiations anywhere in the world. Many Nepali business people and politicians I had interviewed were convinced that learning appearances like these were essential to Nepal’s development, that the country could not progress without enticing foreign investment, which, in addition to a host of other performative gestures, required assuring capital that it could conduct its dealings in secrecy and quiet. In what ways, and to what extent, did these meetings represent the disciplining of the Nepali nation and its gradual entry into world markets via hydropower? What potentials and alternatives might be silenced in the course of this disciplining?

Many Nepalis still practice a form of borrowing called *dhukuti*¹⁸, where a group of individuals pay a fixed amount of money into a pot each month and each

¹⁸ Dhukuti is a storage box used for family valuables or surplus grain. Thus, modern day dhukuti is a form of financial self-help derived from this idea of a communal storage of grain to be shared in times of low production (Bajracharya 1995; Pun 2013).

month the pot is allocated to one person who can then make an expensive purchase that he or she would not be able to afford otherwise. Among many Nepalis *dhukuti* is a preferred form of borrowing because the transactions are conducted face to face, you know your co-borrowers personally, and the transactions retain a tactile quality of money given out, money received (Bajracharya, 1995; L. B. Pun, 2013). Banks and the increasing invisibility of capital still feels alien to many Nepalis and unwise, if not unworthy of trust. This skepticism of invisible money has been supported many times in recent history through various global financial crises wherein many lost substantial sums in “paper wealth.” But this is a fading sentiment in Nepal as the “will to improve,” the will to develop continues to permeate and discipline Nepali relations to money (Murray Li, 2007; Pigg, 1993).

I walked down to the golf course that was empty. Along the first tee, two billboards flanked the fairway, one for a local whisky, the other for a Kathmandu bank. The lockers in the changing room for the golf course featured brass plates affixed to polished wooden doors. Observing the names, I was surprised at the number of non-Nepalis who kept lockers here, about 50% of the lockers. I presumed these were last names belonging to diplomats and employees of foreign embassies. Stepping outside again, rain had begun to fall. The woman staffing the pro shop offered me an umbrella to walk back to the hotel. On one side of the umbrella I noticed the Shell Oil icon. On the opposite side, a Gokarna Forest Resort insignia.

Upon closer inspection, my umbrella was clearly a Shell Oil branding product repurposed for the hotel. A curious emblem, I thought.

The next morning I checked out of the hotel. Several GMR staff were sitting in the lobby alongside their luggage, waiting for a shuttle to the airport. They appeared excited and affable—either excited to be returning home or satisfied with the conclusion of their work, or both. My sojourn to Gokarna did not yield much particular information, access, or data, and yet, regardless of what I now knew or still needed to learn, it seemed clear to me that Upper Karnali was very much a real project and going forward to actually happen. So why was I told by so many that GMR did not intend to build this dam?

Since the advent of democracy in Nepal, the state could be said to be having, in one form or another, a crisis of “performance/representation,” failing to maintain a dominant position “in the realms of meaning, discourse, and display” (Nugent, 2010:694). Starting with the abolition of the Panchayat system in 1990 and the first elections for parliamentary representation, the state of Nepal has struggled to establish a stable presence for its subjects. Six years after the *Jana Andolan* or “People’s Movement,” a Maoist rebellion ignited and gripped the country for the next decade. In 2001, the crown prince Dipendra assassinated his father, King Birendra, and several family members, precipitating despair and conjecture from many who still believed the monarchy occupied positions within Hindu cosmology. In early 2005,

responding to frustrations with the peace process and the effectiveness of the Nepali army, King Gyanendra¹⁹, declared emergency rule and sacked the government, an action that would inspire many to call for the complete abolition of the monarchy, which was achieved in 2007. The civil war ended in 2006 with an agreement to reserve positions for the former Maoist rebels in parliament (A. Adhikari, 2012). This quelled conflict but did little to satisfy citizens as the next ten years of democracy and parliamentary rule become embroiled in quick, successive overturns of government and very little accomplished in terms of service delivery and national development (D. Thapa, 2012). Today, due to a prolonged battle to write and ratify a Constitution, two earthquakes in April/May 2015, and a several month blockade of the southern border with India, the Nepali state cannot be said to be any closer to resolving this crisis.

It is perhaps too easy an observation to note that a project intended to electrify and illuminate a large swath of Nepal rested upon processes shrouded in darkness like negotiations held at exclusive hotel resorts, wherein the futures for millions of Nepalis are discussed in secrecy. *Batti* is Nepali for “power.” When load shedding occurs people call out “*batti gayo*” for power is gone, and “*batti ayo*” when power returns. Walking into a store or some other facility that depends on electricity for operation, one can simply ask “*ayo?*” or “*gayo?*” to learn if they will be able to

¹⁹ Birendra’s younger brother and the subject of many conspiracy theories regarding his role in the King’s assassination in 2001. Many explained to me that Birendra had been beloved because at heart he was a poet and an artist. His wife, Queen Aishwarya, wrote several Nepali ballads that are famous throughout the country. But Gyanendra, they told me, “was just a business man.” Gyanendra does hold controlling interests in several Nepali businesses, including Surya cigarettes.

conduct business there. Load shedding schedules are printed in the paper and now there's a smartphone app to plan your activities around times when power is available or not. And yet with this every day presence of fleeting electricity, and the need for improved illumination, more and more Nepalis feel that state and financial processes are becoming harder and harder to see.

Some of this is merely perception, of course. In the times of the monarchy and Panchayat, Nepali people questioned and suspected less how decisions were made, as the reach of the state and the caste system combined to stifle critical views (Bista, 1991; Whelpton, 1991). Since the rise of democracy, and its assumed inherence with transparency, suspicions about how government decisions are made have risen dramatically. But all of this cannot be attributed to the rise of democracy in Nepal. With the advent of free markets and the substantial influence of development agencies in Nepali affairs (S. Shah, 2002; N. Shrestha, 1997a), it seems to the average Nepali that more and more of life is left to machinations not of their choosing, or knowing. While *dhukuti* keeps transactions within the familiar, democracy seems to have unleashed centripetal forces that have rent Nepali society apart through civil war and rendered it stagnant by virtue repeated parliamentary stalemates. Perhaps this partly explains the revived support for the Rastriya Prajatantra Party in Nepal, the far-right royalist and Hindu national group? In the most recent elections, it claimed the fourth largest number of seats in parliament (Mallet, 2013). As a friend and supporter of the royalist party asked me rhetorically,

“Would you rather be ruled by one lion or one hundred mice? Who will do a better job?”

Social backdrops like these—a weak state apparatus—are fertile grounds for conspiracy theories to grow (G. E. Marcus, 1999). Many people had offered me the “resource colonization” theory. The persons who believed this theory defied strict categorization, but mostly they were active members of civil society and/or the general population, rural and urban. In general, conspiracy theories about India’s involvement in Nepali affairs are abundant, so it didn’t seem to me that this one should be given special consideration. It seems nearly everything in Nepal is discussed in relation India’s apprehension of the situation.²⁰ But what is striking about this situation, in retrospect, is how much India and conspiracy theories had become implicated in the texture of everyday life in Nepal. Depending on the context, just invoking the word “India” in Nepali conversation operates like shorthand for range of qualities associated with being a bully and conniving. For many Nepalis, India lives “out there” in their imaginations, an entity that is unidentifiable and unknowable as it is rapacious and untrustworthy. Along the history of these two neighbors, India has always stolen from Nepal, first its land on the southern border, but now they were coming for its water and rivers, many told me. At first, I troubled myself with trying to

²⁰ See “China’s and India’s Charity in Nepal Has a Hidden Political Agenda,” by Manu Balachandran and Heather Timmons, published in *Quartz India* on April 28, 2015, just three days after a 7.8 magnitude earthquake in Nepal. <http://qz.com/392295/chinas-and-indias-charity-in-nepal-has-a-hidden-political-agenda/>

solve the “resource colonization” theory, or at least to explain it away on “crippled epistemologies” (Sunstein & Vermeule, 2009). But it dawned on me that it was less important to know the “truth” of these theories than to explore what they meant, what they represented in terms of Nepal’s sense of itself vis-à-vis India. It would be more important to investigate the texture of this theory to learn how India figures in the nation-building aspirations of Nepali citizens.

In this chapter, I will examine how the “resource colonization” conspiracy theory can tell us something about Nepal’s own sense of itself as a nation and a represents a position that many Nepalis claim in resistance to what seems to them the inexorable march of their country toward free markets and globalization. To do this, I will begin by explaining the relevance and value of conspiracy theory as a subject of inquiry. In the next section, I will present a brief history of India and Nepal relations as they relates to suspicion and manipulation of Nepali affairs, from land grabbing to the Maoist conflict. Then I present three Indo-Nepali water agreements that are the seeds of the current mistrust that characterizes the resource colonization conspiracy theory. This history is key because nearly all my key informants—60 plus interviews in all, within the private sector and civil society—expressed concerns about dealing with India to develop hydropower. Analyzing these water treaties, I propose, helps explain the hue and cry that arose when GMR was awarded the contract to build Upper Karnali, and the consequent rise of conspiracy theories about GMR’s intent to build. Finally, I will examine a special report issued by the World Bank

in 2012, which endorses a view of Nepali hydrodevelopment that focuses on power generation and export, much in line with the exigent view described in chapter 1. Because India also desires to see Nepal develop its rivers in this fashion, many civil society water experts have criticized the report as unfairly slanted in India's favor and more proof of the collusive nature between external forces against Nepal. Even private sector advocates who potentially stood to benefit through future relationships with India companies voiced a wariness about making India the main partner for developing hydropower in Nepal. "Just look at all the damage caused by the bloody Indians with the Faraka barrage... Bangladesh just suffered flood after flood... India does not believe in regional cooperation," a hydropower investor told me. "For a time, the Indian government would boycott any meeting that had the word 'transboundary' in it," said a former government civil servant.

Finally, in light of these historical moments, I will discuss the potential meanings and significance regarding the "resource colonization" theory in relation to Nepal's nationhood, keeping in mind that the form of this conspiracy narrative, and the context in which it has emerged, is significant beyond the verifiability of its truth. In this way, the "resource colonization" theory says less about Upper Karnali and more about how critics of that dam are marshaling alternative possibilities to the neoliberal visions endorsed by Nepal's burgeoning private sector and development agencies.

From this point, I will remain agnostic about the “resource colonization” theory as Upper Karnali, as of this writing, is still not built, so the theory cannot be putatively confirmed nor debunked. This use of conspiracy theory as a tool to understand national imagination, I believe, is unique and will provide novel insights into the contestatory practices and visions that are shaping the present day Nepal.

2. Whence Conspiracy Theories? And Why?

Vernant describes the emergence of the Greek "public" as a process of unveiling in which powers, formerly obscured in the hands of aristocrats, were revealed for all to see (1983). His observation suggests that liberal democracy inheres to concomitant desires for transparency and plain observation. Enlightenment writers endorsed humans' ability to master their environments through science and reason to discover to truth. Fundamental to their view of modernity was the notion that human action could be rationalized and the workings of society made legible to its citizens.

Contemporary aspirations to transparency could be said to constitute another way of celebrating the rationality of modern society (Hetherington, 2012): a world whose processes operate in plain view, and are thus amenable to the logics of reason. In this ideal world, suspicions and doubt are kept at bay through observation and deliberation. In this ideal world, there are no darkened corners from which conspiracies might be hatched. In this ideal world, conspiracies are exotic and vapid, the nonsensical conjectures of inferior thought.

This academic view of conspiracy theories prevailed into the 20th century. Richard Hofstadter viewed them as “paranoid delusions” and Popper equated conspiracies with secularized religious belief. “To modern scholarly ears,” Ostler wrote, “the language of conspiracy sounds bizarre and irrational” (1995:25). Keeley (1999) similarly concluded that most academics find conspiracy theories to be without merit.

However, conspiracy theories abound in the social world and obligate us to ask why. Weber, Marx, and Freud suggest associations between the onset of modernity and human suffering in psychological and social ways (Giddens, 1990; Gould, 2011). While their warnings about iron cages, alienation, and schizophrenia found significant purchase and influence in social thought, none of them challenged the inevitability of modernity’s ascent or the assumptions that modernity would eliminate superstition, local cultures, and irrational convictions. In our world of multiple modernities—characterized by powerful multi-national institutions, authority couched in far off places, and rapidly changing forms of production and finance—conspiracy theories can provide an illuminating object for study.

For this chapter, I employ Sunstein and Vermeule’s definition of conspiracy theory as a theory that “can generally be counted as such if it is an effort to explain some event or practice by reference to the machinations of power people who attempt to conceal their role (at least until their aims are accomplished)” (2009:205).

Within a conspiracy theory, acts and actors are all understood in terms of the conspiracy, connected by a single plot, and unconvinced about the potential for contingency or unintended consequences. By definition conspiracy theories are attempts to simplify the complex by imposing linearity and causality on a welter of social forces; and everything confirms the basic narrative of the conspiracy. To the individual who believes in the conspiracy “history and politics serve as reservoirs of signs that demand (over)interpretation... and signify for the interpreter far more than their conventional meaning” (Fenster, 1999:11).

Within the last 20 years, conspiracy theories have been fruitfully explored to shed light on the seeming capriciousness and fluidity (Bauman, 2013) of modern life. In their chapter on alien nation zombies and millennial times, the Comaroffs explain the revived interest in conspiracy theory as a means to “interrogate the experiential contradiction of neoliberal capitalism in its global manifestation” and the means by which it bestows immense wealth to those who control its technologies and threatens the lives of those who do not (2002:782). Kendall examines how South Koreans from various social classes read IMF restructuring through a shamanic lens in an attempt to de-mystify IMF’s “welter of concealed powers in distant places, both foreign and domestic, whose veiled operations had wreaked havoc... on many simple lives” (Kendall, 2014:18). In Suharto’s Indonesian “New Order,” Schrauwers illustrates how rampant corruption and abuse of state power led many to latch onto conspiracy theories as a means to “sketch out an alternate, unseen terrain whose reality makes

sense of, and transcends, the obscure workings of corruption” (2003:145). Studies such as these suggest that ordinary people sensing a loss of control over their lives look for narratives which assert a semblance of control, and along with that, the illusion of the potential for emancipatory change.

These studies are perhaps more important for suggesting that people do not simply listen to and act upon ideas conveyed in global ideoscapes (Appadurai, 1990). In their desire to maintain meaningful lives, people create and convey their own ideas and images that co-produce the world along with global forces from without. Through this ideological work people attempt to shore up their vulnerability by asserting beliefs that dominant forms of power continue to work in obscurity, shaping the course of social events that do not always benefit the majority. In this way, global institutions that espouse terms like transparency, openness, and fairness must engage constantly with local argot that expresses suspicion and doubt.

Conspiracy theories push us to wonder if there is more happening in the world than meets the eye. Despite claims to represent the public good and to deliver “fairness” to the polity, official processes—like hydropower negotiations for Upper Karnali—are anything but “transparent.” A conspiracy theory challenges claims like these and breathes life into the idea that just because in some cases “overarching conspiracy theories are wrong does not mean they are not onto something” (Fenster, 1999:67). Not only do conspiracy theories provide evidence of individuals struggling

to navigate and rapidly changing and seemingly less tangible world, they also ideologically address structural inequalities, and in this way can be viewed as constituting a response—a resistance—against real and perceived inequities and corruption in our midst.

A critical approach to conspiracy theory, then, demands viewing these theories as symptomatic of a particular economic, political and social context. Rather than dismissing them as pathologies, they should interest us as social phenomena and as specific discursive formations. As such we should find interesting the wider social and political implications of conspiracy theories, the reasons for their existence, and the way they may be socially and culturally productive (Ortmann & Heathershaw, 2012). This approach requires drawing from theoretical traditions that are explicitly reflexive and critical, a pose that I attempted to strike in my interviews with the many people who told me that “India wants to control our water.” To avoid potential pitfalls while tracing and interpreting conspiracy theories, I recall the Comaroff’s insistence to conduct ethnography “on an awkward scale,” seeing the global in the local and vice versa (1999:282).

To the literature in general, this chapter adds a new locale to the many global sites of conspiracy theory investigation, and is unique for attempting to show how conspiracy theory may be analyzed to assess how citizens of a particular location express their national aspirations through this form of discourse. I want to suggest

that the “resource colonization” theory acts as a boundary making stance in the very current, very fluid contest to define Nepal’s future. Those who support and espouse this theory, I argue, envision a nation that defines itself in contra-distinction to India’s whose rapid move to liberalize its economy has unnerved many Nepali observers who believe a similar step (through hydropower) would not be in the best interest of the country.

3. Border Disputes, Rebellion, and King Birendra

Local historians tell you that Indo-Nepali relations have been marked by border disputes since 1769 when Prithvi Narayan Shah of Gorkha unified the many kingdoms of Nepal into a single nation. The flat plains of southern Nepal crossing into India and the lack of hard physical demarcations between the countries meant that land grabbing and shifting ownership would be difficult to police (Whelpton, 2005). The ousted Shah confederacy requested assistance from the East India Company to take back Kathmandu. The campaign failed miserably (Pemble, 1971). Meanwhile, Gorkhalis made aggressive raids into Tibet prompting a Chinese response that forced the Nepalis back to well below Tibet. Shah’s younger brother appealed to the East India Company for their intervention, which they provided, but which resulted in Nepal signing a treaty with the Chinese that prohibited their trading rights in Tibet (Lamb, 1986). Seizing upon this fresh weakness in the Shah regime, the East India Company expanded their sphere of influence in Nepal through trade and

finance. Growing Nepali opposition to this expansion precipitated the Anglo-Nepalese War in 1814, in which British forces prevailed. The resulting Treaty of Sugauli, signed in 1816, called for Nepal to cede roughly 1/3 of its land (Whelpton, 2005), and most of the provisions pertaining to land and borders are still actively disputed today, in formal and informal channels. Indeed a quick look at the Wikipedia page for the “Treaty of Sugauli” features an entire section for “Alleged Boundary Conflict.”²¹ A quick search on the informational website Quora turns up several entries for Indo-Nepal border disputes under various headings such as “Why Does India Encroach on Nepal’s Land,”²² and “Shouldn’t India Hand Back Territories Like Darjeeling?”²³ At bottom of these pages, you can sift through countless related discussions regarding India’s presence on Nepali land. And the claims are not only one way. Northern Indians in Bihar have complained of Nepalis removing international border pillars in an attempt to reclaim land they believe to have been theirs in history (NepalNews, 2011).

Maoist rebellion and peace process

These long-abiding suspicions of illegally claimed and re-claimed land took on special significance during the Maoist rebellion when India’s relation to the conflict seemed unpredictable to many analysts. Upreti (2010:223) claims India supported both warring parties in an effort to preserve its interests in Nepal regardless of the

²¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Sugauli

²² <https://www.quora.com/Why-does-India-encroach-Nepals-land>

²³ <https://www.quora.com/Shouldnt-India-hand-back-territories-like-Darjeeling-Kumaon-and-Garhwal-back-to-Nepal>

outcome, and only sided with the state when it was clear the Maoists were prepared to join the government. Muni provides support for this idea, and recalls that New Delhi offered to host the November 2005 talks that resulted in a 12-point agreement and was an important first step in resolving the conflict. However, in contrast to Upreti, Muni portrays the Indian government acting shrewdly rather than waiting opportunistically to see who might emerge from the conflict victorious (2009). Meanwhile, Nepali novelist and social critic Manjushree Thapa (2010) alleges that India maintained a steady and inappropriate pressure on negotiations throughout the peace process to ensure that conservatism prevail in its northern neighbor. After the 2008 parliamentary elections when Maoists won 38% of the seats, Rakesh Sood, India's ambassador to Nepal, "jumped to the forefront" of negotiations, pushing aside the United Nations, and ran behind-the-scenes interference on the new Maoist-led government, thus contributing to its disappointing ineffectiveness and ultimate demise. In her article, it should be noted that Thapa's allegations are based largely on secondary sources alongside plenty of opinion. However, for purposes of our discussion, it is the stridency of her claims and allegations that indicate the general distrust of India that ran throughout the Maoist conflict and after.

King's assassination

First-hand accounts (Chester, 2011; Magistad, 2001) attest to the events on the night of King Birendra's assassination in June 2001 at the hands of his son, who was upset that his parents did not approve of the woman he wished to marry. But beyond that

story, speculation on how India may have pulled strings to trigger the assassination began immediately. Just three weeks after the palace murder, Baburam Bhattarai made stirring allegations published in the *Monthly Review*. At the time Bhattarai was still heading the Maoist rebel party at the height of the conflict and several years away from becoming prime minister. In his commentary, he suggests that because the King's younger pro-India brother Gyanendra was absent the night of the killings and because Gyanendra's son—who *was* in the palace that evening—emerged unscathed, this could not be accidental. He goes on to connect the assassination with India's general opposition to Maoist politics and desire to expand its influence in Nepal (2001). General Bibek Shah of the Nepali Army writes in his memoir (B. K. Shah, 2011) that Dipendra certainly killed the King and his family, and that India motivated the killings because Birendra wanted to modernize the army's arsenal, which India opposed because it feared those weapons falling into Maoist hands. Even more surprising to the reading public was Shah's story that India trained and provided safe haven for Maoist rebels during the conflict, a statement that would lend credibility Upreti's position that India played both sides of the war in an effort to keep in good standing with the eventual victor.

Within the public at-large, these stories and allegations about border disputes, the Maoist conflict, and the King's assassination come in even wider varieties and colors regarding India's hand in these matters. Through my research and extensive time sitting in tea shops around rural and urban Nepal, I have learned that

the specter of India hangs over every conversation about Nepali politics and economics. India is the big brother who in some ways does shape and shadow the actions of its smaller, younger sibling. But many Nepalis also tell me that India is blamed for too much, that those who would hold India responsible for Nepal's state of affairs are trying to deny that most of their social problems lie within Nepali people themselves.

4. River Agreements and Treaties between India and Nepal

Indo-Nepali river treaties and agreements date back to 1920 and the British-sponsored Sharda Barrage on the Mahakali River.²⁴²⁵ The project was conceived to provide irrigation to farmers of the western provinces. In exchange for 4,000 acres of forested land and 50,000 rupees, the Sharda Barrage agreement allowed Nepal to withdraw 4.25 cumecs of water in the dry season and 13 cumecs during monsoon; the amount India could withdraw was not specified. Many other details regarding the construction and maintenance of the barrage were either not discussed or disclosed, which enabled India to extend the left bank afflux bund of the barrage another 100 meters into Nepali territory in the 1950s (Gyawali & Schwank, 1994). In the eyes of many Nepalis and Nepali water scholars, this agreement marks the beginning of India's resource colonization in Nepal (R. S. Shrestha, 2014a). For the river

²⁴ The Sharda River in India is known as the Mahakali River in Nepal. It is the same river.

²⁵ The Sharda barrage communications exchanged between Nepali prime minister Chandra Shumshere and the British field representatives are available in annexes 3.1 and 3.1.1. (pp. 338-340) in (D. N. Dhungel & Pun, 2008)

agreements and treaties to follow, scholars and citizens largely believe the Indian slights are twofold: 1) India has outmaneuvered Nepali delegations responsible for negotiating these treaties through either artifice or guile; and 2) after the treaties are approved by both parties, India does not uphold its obligations, and Nepal is powerless to enforce stronger adherence to its provisions. These feelings, I believe, partly explain the current concern of many who believe that GMR is merely holding the Karnali River at the behest of the Indian government.

Kosi Agreement (1954)

Because of the Kosi River's tendency to change course and carry high sediment loads, it has often been referred to as the "Sorrow of Bihar" because of the annual floods it would deliver on the millions living in that north Indian state. The Kosi Agreement—not officially a treaty—signed in 1954 stipulated a 3,700 foot long barrage of 56 gates, built 26 miles downstream of Chatara, just north of the Indian border (B. B. Thapa & Pradhan, 1995). The barrage was completed in 1964 and provides flood control and irrigation services to farmers in both countries. While the barrage offered immediate support over the next two decades, it became clear to many Nepalis, who noted the delta forming around the structure, that the barrage would need modification and improvement if it were to be a reliable structure in the future (N. Khadka, 2003). In 2008, massive rains in early August drew flood warnings from river engineers in Bihar who feared an impending flood. Flood Control commissioners in Delhi took 12 days to respond. On August 17, the Kosi breached its banks, displacing

50,000 Nepalis and 2.5 million Indians, and killing hundreds. Pun notes that at the time of the breaching, the flow of the water was reportedly only 146,000 cusecs at a time when “normal’ flood discharges were in the vicinity of 350,000 cusecs with the recorded high of 900,000 cusecs” (2009a:2). His observation suggests negligence on the part of the Indian commission responsible for improvements and maintenance of the barrage.

The question of compensation has dogged the Kosi Treaty since its inception: for the Nepali land acquired to build the barrage, the timber extracted for construction, and payments to individuals displaced by the structure or affected by floods and altered river patterns. The general feeling of water experts suggests that Nepal entered into the agreement without securing proper benefits for Nepal and with no means for enforcing compensation, which India has delayed on multiple occasions and still has yet to deliver (Bisht, 2008; D. N. Dhungel & Butler, 2015a). The revision of the agreement in 1966 did include preferences for hiring Nepali labor and personnel (B. C. Upreti, 1992:102), but critics allege those were small gains when compared to the 199 year lease on Nepali lands secured by the Indian government. By comparison, Pun notes that hydropower projects to private companies are granted only on a 30-year build-own-operate transfer basis, with strong requirements for maintaining a minimum generation capacity at the time of transfer (2009a:1).

Gandak Agreement (1959)

The Gandak River also flows into Bihar and historically has devastated India with regular flooding. In 1959, Nepal and India signed the Gandak Agreement to address those flooding problems with plans to provide irrigation, and later hydropower generation up to 15,000kW. The agreement stipulates that if India should generate power on this river, it would have to “supply power to [Nepal]... to an aggregate maximum of 10,000kW up to 60% load factor at [a] power factor not below 0.85 (Nepal & India, 1959). Like the Kosi agreement, the Gandak agreement includes provisions for compensation to Nepal for land acquired by India. Also like the Kosi agreement, it has been criticized by scholars who viewed India’s right to build on Nepali soil as an encroachment on national sovereignty and territorial integrity (B. C. Upreti, 1992:105). The agreement was revised in 1964 to increase the amount of water Nepal could draw from the area around the barrage. Since then Nepal has sought additional revisions, but they have not been approved (K. Upreti & Salman, 2011:651).

While there are many angles to consider why Nepal continues to be dissatisfied with the Gandak agreement, focusing specifically on the role of the Joint Commission on Water Resources (JCWR) provides an interesting example (D. N. Dhungel & Butler, 2015a). The JCWR formed as a bilateral solution to addressing water issues between India and Nepal, comprised on both sides by river and water experts from the two countries. Despite their charge to meet every six months, the commission has met just seven times since 2000 (D. Dhungel, 2004). At these

infrequent meetings, the Nepal delegation has made repeated requests for India to make required improvements to the barrage as Nepalis living in that area have suffered frequent inundation due to technical problems with the structure. A review of JCWR meeting minutes over the years documents requests like these and the Indian pledges to meet these requirements, which as of today are still unfulfilled (D. N. Dhungel & Butler, 2015a:6-8).



Suspension foot bridge linking Achham district with Dailekh district, Nepal (photo by author).

Mahakali Treaty (1996)

Nepali regret and recrimination unleashed in the wake of the Kosi and Gandak agreements pales in comparison to the ire expressed regarding the Mahakali Treaty, ratified in 1996. Shrestha's commentary from four years ago is just one of many similar sounding complaints: "It should not be forgotten that the proposal here is NOT for India to pay for water flowing naturally; payment is for storage of water, requiring Nepal to suffer from inundation and involuntary displacement" (2014c). Pun (2009b, 2011, 2012), Gyawali and Dixit (1999, 2000), and Mirumachi (2013), among many others, have all leveled allegations of, if not illegal, certainly unethical behavior on the part of the Indian government. Mirumachi, in particular, notes that the "Indian government seized [an] opportunity to construct unilaterally a part of the Tanakpur Barrage in Nepali territory when the legal status of the [Mahakali Treaty] was still being debated in Nepal" (2013:317-318).

Included in the Mahakali Treaty were provisions to build a high dam called the Pancheswar Multi-purpose Project (PMP). The PMP would produce 6,400MW while providing dry season water augmentation and wet season flood control by virtue of its large reservoir. However, despite the establishment of various joint committees and pledges from the JCWR to finalize the terms of this project, the detailed project report has yet to be produced 20 years later (Pun, 2012). Gyawali and Dixit write that Nepali politicians were bamboozled into supporting the Mahakali Treaty due to Indian insistence that "large water resource projects are synonymous... with development"

(1999:558-560). Today, nearly all of the provisions and plans of the Mahakali Treaty remain unfulfilled, but many Nepalis still clamor for revisions of this document so that a more equitable distribution of benefits may be guaranteed (R. S. Shrestha, 2014c).

These three treaties form the foundation upon which many Nepali suspicions about India rest when it comes to water and rivers. They also provide meaningful fodder from which many Nepalis have molded their current aspirations for national (including water) sovereignty. While I could explore the intricacies of these negotiations more closely to understand how Nepal is and is not responsible for the negative externalities associated with these water agreements, my point has been to illustrate the repeated pattern in which Nepal has felt duped and manipulated by the Indian government. In sum, these treaties represent the Nepali state's crisis of performance/representation in its hydro-relations with India, thus generating a great deal of citizen doubt in the state's abilities, as well as an even stronger suspicion of Indian intentions toward Nepal.

5. Ganges Basin Strategic Assessment

In the struggle to determine the proper path for Nepali hydropower (chapter 1), those three water agreements figure heavily in the context surrounding any water negotiations with India. Then in 2012, the World Bank wrote, but did not release²⁶,

²⁶ The GBSA report was leaked in draft form in 2012. I never learned the source of the leak, but several people I interviewed for my research had copies they offered to share with me. The final report was not issued until 2014 after revisions. While some material of the report was updated, the main recommendations were unchanged between the draft and final:

the Ganges Basin Strategic Assessment (GBSA), a document that laid out their particular apprehension of the area, including a set of recommendations for how Nepali rivers should be developed with regard to the modality of dam to be constructed. In Nepal, the report was received unfavorably as water experts interpreted the World Bank's general assessment of the basin and related recommendations to be slanted in India's favor: run-of-river projects built primarily to export power to India. The hostility directed toward the report was intensified by the World Bank's rebranding of hydropower as "green energy" (Schneider, 2013); its effort to spur development away from carbon-based energy²⁷. Given that the World Bank is a prime financier of Nepali hydropower and its development efforts in general²⁸, the recommendations in this report would appear to its Nepali readers to have major implications for the future of Nepali hydro development. Combined with India's history of taking exploitative positions on Nepali water treaties and failing to fulfill its obligations to those treaties, the World Bank's endorsement of Indian positions on Nepali water would give the impression of powerful institutions in collusion.

https://www.southasiawaterinitiative.org/sites/sawi/files/Ganges%20Strategic%20Basin%20Assessment_A%20Discussion%20of%20Regional%20Opportunities%20and%20Risks.pdf

²⁷ Another quotation from the same article, from Rachel Kyte, the Bank's vice president for sustainable development: "Large hydro is a very big part of the solution for Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia... I fundamentally believe we have to be involved" (Schneider, 2013).

²⁸ From the World Bank's Projects and Programs page for Nepal: "As of March 2014, the World Bank has 20 active projects with a net commitment of about \$1.506 billion. This includes 17 active IDA projects with a net commitment of about \$1.375 billion and three active Trust Fund projects of \$5 million and above with a net commitment of \$87.5 million." The projected fiscal commitment to Nepal in 2015 is \$557 million. The World Bank's interest in hydropower is commonly expressed through its financial arm, the International Finance Corporation, which provides loans to infrastructure projects in developing countries. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/nepal/projects>

As for the report itself, India's reputation for data secrecy would be the first obstacle to distract critical readers from the report's content (S. B. Pun, 2013; Rasgotra, 2004; Sanstha, 2012). Even the World Bank authors would acknowledge this weakness in the executive summary, and suggested hopefully that the report would "lead to greater cooperation in the management of this shared river system, beginning with a shift from information secrecy to information sharing" (T. W. Bank, 2012:11). India's unwillingness to collaborate in data sharing had been a central topic during an inception workshop for a research group from Wageningen University that I attended in March 2014. Indian civil society participants in this workshop (including the pre-eminent water activist, K.J. Joy) lamented frequently that data secrecy was the state's attempt to thwart civil society resistance. In early 2015, I was invited to attend an IUCN-sponsored conference—Access to Water and Climate Data in South Asia—to present a paper on ways to democratize data sharing in South Asia, premised on the fact that India would continue to be an unwilling participant in this process. Concerning the GBSA, *Jalshrot Vikas Sanstha (JVS)*, a Nepal-based water NGO, noted the report "draws its conclusions based on model results that utilize the input data from Nepal and Bangladesh, which represent only about 15% of the total basin area" (2012:12). Pun remarks that Tibet is missing from the report, which he calls "puzzling" because several Ganges tributaries have sizable basins there (2013:5).

Beyond the missing data, Nepali critics took issue with the World Bank's basis for issuing its recommendations. In the report's executive summary, the authors

highlight ten “fundamental questions” about the Ganges basin which they answer in an attempt to frame the validity of their recommendations (2012:11-16). JVS responded that beyond the possibility of making valid recommendations on such little reliable data, the World Bank was guilty of taking a top-down, technocratic view of basin issues: “It is nowhere mentioned and clarified how these ten fundamental questions represent the current mindset of most stakeholders living in the basin” (2012:14). Furthermore, JVS recalled that the World Bank had been a large proponent of the stakeholder-driven approach within Integrated Water Resource Management, but in the current document “has blissfully avoided this [concept] in issuing its findings” (2012:15).

In the end, the GBSA recommends developing Nepali rivers with a focus on hydropower generation for export and trade with India. The authors suggest that building large storage dams for the additional services of flood control and dry season augmentation are not in the best interest of the region “because downstream benefits and tradeoffs among downstream water users are smaller than previously assumed... *the immediate economic benefits are surprisingly unclear*” [my emphasis] (T. W. Bank, 2012:127). Recall in chapter 1, that proponents of the deliberative approach to hydro development support multi-purpose dams because 1) they maximize the value of the river by providing multiple services such as flood control and irrigation, and 2) these additional services would give Nepal more bargaining

power when dealing with India, because of the latter's reliance on Nepali rivers.²⁹ In response to the Bank's conclusions, JVS writes that annual flows to the Ganges basin are 500 billion cubic meters, while the potential storage of Nepali dams, when built, could be 125 billion. Why would the authors not want to recommend storage in this case, when groundwater exploitation and floods are perennial problems? Pun notes that 576 million Indians live in the basin (47% of the country's population) and wonders, then, "how... the Bank can make the sweeping remark" that low flow augmentation would not be crucial to India" (2013:5). The Bank does acknowledge that storage dams in Nepal could effectively double the flows available in the dry season, but says, again, this "economic value" is unclear because the issue hampering agriculture in the basin is not available water, but poor productivity (2012:12). Pun calls this a "deliberate attempt to... downplay the value of water" (2013:10). His remark suggests Bank is making its recommendations based on the fact it *could calculate* the economic benefits of hydropower export (kilowatts times rupees entered into a demand forecast model) and because downstream benefits are less easy to determine in hard, calculable figures. In other words, if "value" cannot be determined through a rational assessment of costs and benefits, the World Bank could make a recommendation suggesting otherwise. Which is not to say they were

²⁹ I want to reiterate at this point, for keeping a balanced assessment, that the "expedient" party of hydro development favors power generation for sale and trade, believing that this capital exchange is the best way to improve relations with India. Furthermore, this group also believes that the money reaped through hydro-electric export would ultimately be more beneficial to Nepal by filling state coffers to support public programs and by growing Nepal's private sector economy, which is already heavily built around hydropower development.

making the best recommendations possible, but rather offering a recommendations they could make.

In conclusion, the reality of the GBSA is that neither the World Bank authors nor the Nepali critics could presume to offer a strong, let alone definitive, picture of the Ganges basin. But because the report does support India's preferences regarding hydro development for export, and because India remains reluctant to share hydrological data, it can be appreciated how the World Bank's report appears to some Nepalis as another piece of evidence in collusive forces against them. With regards to water, Nepal has historically felt dominated and vulnerable to India. The addition of the World Bank and its money and "expertise" heightens the doubt and suspicion.

6. Discussion

Quoted above, Mark Fenster said that just because in some cases "overarching conspiracy theories are wrong does not mean they are not onto something" (1999:67). Given the "resource colonization" theory that many of my informants believe, what might they be onto even if they are ultimately wrong about Upper Karnali and the nation's identity as it evolves vis-à-vis India? It is too easy to dismiss these theories as lunacy, or people deceived by a false consciousness. So what can we say about the role, intent, and purpose of the "resource colonization" theory in?

In the social sciences, seeing is believing. Like the Romantic poets who explored the sublime, we are equally entranced by invisibility of power. In this chapter, I believe the sentiments expressed by my informants belie the notion that conspiracy theories reduce the world's complexity at the expense of better understanding. In fact, the evidence and arguments presented by Nepali water experts suggest the opposite as they call attention to the contradictory logics and unfulfilled promises of its rival nation and international finance institutions. In doing so, they breathe life into subaltern views of engaging transboundary water issues. By expressing their suspicions of power, and making allegations against actors more powerful, they "rake over the coals of events in search of the sense... of their sociability (Taussig 1987:394).

Like the ambivalence expressed by many global cultures toward capitalism (inter alia M. L. Bastian, 2003), many Nepalis—educated, experienced, or not—feel alienated by modern processes, which, in the case of hydropower have become unintelligible behind the obscura of shares and demand forecasts, within private negotiation sessions held in pricy resorts, and within the meeting rooms of development agencies. Many Nepali experts—those in the deliberative camp—view the World Bank's recommendation to focus on exporting hydropower as a too easy ploy for monetary gain at the expense of longer term benefits that do not appear on a fiscal bottom line, such as livelihoods enhanced through flood control or by

augmenting low season irrigation flows. In doing so, they also question the value and accepted wisdom of liberalizing a nation's economy: For while India's economic gains have been great in the past two decades, Nepalis have also watched their neighbor continue to struggle with persisting inequality and growing environmental degradation.

In this regard, I would like to conclude that the "resource colonization" theory challenges UKH, India, and the World Bank, resisting these institutions as well as the processes that are embedded in the world of development and hydropower. The suspicions expressed in conspiracy theories challenge the confident claims of globalizing institutions that trumpet transparency and free markets as their guideposts. From this perspective, the "resource colonization" theory might be understood as a populist attempt to impose an alternative narrative onto processes in such a way as to create a new public space or discourse to contest these alienating modes of operation, or at least to destabilize and resist their inscrutability and seeming inevitability. This is accomplished by giving voice or materiality to the anxieties or "agency panic" (Melley, 2000) of Nepalis who are increasingly of the conviction that their actions are being controlled by someone else, that they are making their own nation, but less and less making it as they would please (Marx & Engels, 1978). Populism in Nepal has been a more and more frequent phenomenon since its rise in the 1990 revolution for democracy. The Maoists regularly invoked

populist discourse to rally the impoverished to their cause (von Einsiedel, 2012), and now that the rebels have formally joined the government, the latest forms of populism appear directed outward, unifying Nepalis against the perceived smothering machinations of its southern neighbor backed by secretive associations with power international institutions. Long having been in the hands of development agencies and an estranged and clientilistic government, many Nepalis aspire for the means to have meaningful antagonisms and debate that defy the negligence (from the government) and high-handed control (from DAs) that have characterized their post-1950s experience. Conspiracy theories offer Nepalis a way to revise the social fabric, at least discursively.

The “resource colonization” conspiracy theory might also be understood as a boundary marking event, a maneuver at nation-building. As the long history of Indo-Nepali relations has been marked by secrecy and intrigue with land grabbing, assassinations, and now imperial water grabbing, the conspiracy theories expressed by my informants express a desire to pull focus away from transnational powers and neighbors who would pull them forward into processes that are not only shadowy and unpredictable, but also unfriendly. As people express concern that India would occupy Nepali rivers, they also express a longing for the “deep horizontal fraternities” that—for good or bad, for real or imagined—once shaped the ideas of nationhood in Nepal (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2000:305).

Perhaps, then, Nepal may be in the formative stage of (another) revolution, one that seeks to disengage from the stronger institutions that have benefited a ruling elite without providing meaningful redress to the lives of most Nepalis. Conspiracy theories like “resource colonization” are inspiring debate about the economy and social order, which in turn, can spark conversation about citizenship and the proper constitution of the state (West & Sanders, 2003). Like other revolutions in history, it was those debates that generated new vocabularies and insights that generated an empowered sense of human agency to contest the “objective” forces of history.

Nepalis are struggling against hegemonic configurations of power, using conspiracy theory to take part in Gramsci’s “war of position.” In the minds of many Nepalis, what is at stake is nothing less than how the nation comes to be constructed and oriented toward the future. My analysis suggests that in regard to hydropower, Nepalis can attempt to exploit the contradictory processes (short-term gains v. long-term resource exhaustion) that go into constituting dominant ideas about hydro development as expressed by the World Bank in the GBSA. Conspiracy theories reveal that these contradictions not only express the divergent forces exerted by various agencies, but also the contested terrain of public representation that Nugent, at the start of this chapter, reminds us could lead to the downfall of secrecy in public affairs and promote more democratic opportunity (2010).

Chapter 4 – Lives in Suspension

1. Introduction

On April 16, 2011, leaders and members of the UCPN-Maoist, Nepal Workers and Peasants (NWPP), and Rastriya Janamorcha parties disrupted a public program organized by the GMR Consortium to discuss the plans for building the Upper Karnali Hydroelectric Project (P. Thapa, 2011). According to newspaper reports, a Nepali GMR staff member had just finished delivering a progress update to the crowd when several crowd members turned physical, breaking and destroying items in the room, including the projector, microphone, and a GMR banner that hung behind the podium. Following the meeting, Bharat Kumar Regmi, a spokesperson for the UCPN-Maoists³⁰ declared they would continue opposition to the Upper Karnali dam “as it would not benefit the Nepali people.” The NWPP leader, Jagya Bahadur Shahi, seconded these claims and reasserted his party’s allegiance to opposing the project.

Safety at the UKH site had long been a concern for GMR officials and the Indian government. For while the civil war was now five years finished, disturbances in the form of project disruptions in rural areas were still quite common. In January 2010, India’s foreign minister, SM Krishna, submitted a statement to the Nepali

³⁰ The UCPN-Maoists would split into two parties not long after this incident: the UCPN-Maoists, led by Baburam Bhattarai and Kumar Pushpa Dahal, and the more hardline CPN-Maoists, led by Mohan Baidya. The tension over the Upper Karnali Hydroelectric Project and its ownership by an Indian corporation would be a major rift precipitating the division.

government saying Indian investment in the future would be uncertain unless Nepal could ensure safer working conditions. In a statement to the media following his visit with Nepal's prime minister Krishna reported, "I conveyed to the leadership of Nepal that [they] must develop an environment of trust and confidence to attract investment from India... Indian investors, who provided capital and employment opportunities in Nepal, should be given all due protection" (Humagain, 2011). The very next day, a group of 60 people made a brazen daylight attack on GMR's local office buildings in Paltada, near the future site of the dam. They overwhelmed two security guards on duty, and set fire to all three buildings, which included a dormitory, office, and storage facility. Four GMR staff members (all Nepali hires) escaped unharmed. Immediately after the incident, the district-in-charge for the UCPN-Maoist party, Thir Bahadur Karki, denied his party's involvement in the attack.

Knowing this context, I went to UKH in 2012, and again in 2013-14, expecting to find many people in the area supportive of the attack, well-versed in the terms of the current contract, and generally opposed to GMR. I had developed this expectation based on my general knowledge about Indo-Nepali relations and what I had learned from research with hydro-related professionals in Kathmandu. At Upper Karnali, I found the opposite was in fact true. When inquiring about the attackers and the attack on the GMR buildings, most respondents attributed the act to a rogue group of politicians who were acting not under the motivation of local opposition, but rather in line with directives from party leaders in Kathmandu who were more

focused on bringing UKH back into the arms of a Nepal-based construction firm and with the understanding that the power generated would serve Nepalis first and exported for profit second. Respondents stressed that national party leaders did not have local livelihoods in mind when taking political action. I made my initial inquiries about the attack with people near the dam site. I reasoned they might have financial motives for opposing the attack as those living near the UKH site would be first in line to 1) benefit from the increased commerce in the area when construction began, and

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
supportive	4	3.5	3.5
unsupportive	41	36.0	39.5
neutral	22	19.3	58.8
not answered; no opinion	4	3.5	62.3
did not hear about attack	43	37.7	100.0
Total	114	100.0	

Table 1. What was your opinion about the attack on the GMR buildings?

to 1) benefit from the increased commerce in the area when construction began, and
2) benefit from compensation if their lands were inundated.

But as the research continued and I moved further away from the dam site, I found that attitudes about the attack on GMR remained generally disapproving of the attack. Table 1 shows 114 respondents answering the question “What was your response to the attack on GMR?” Thirty-six percent of respondents viewed the attack on GMR “unfavorably,” while 38% claimed not to have heard about it. That second response seemed curious and unlikely given the prevalence of radios in Nepali rural homes and given the long-time presence of UKH in the local imaginaries of residents. Could respondents have been denying knowledge of the attack to avoid speaking about it? Perhaps, despite my introduction as a neutral researcher, they may have suspected I was conducting covert research in the name of GMR or the state? These are questions I continue to consider, but it is sufficient to say that only a few respondents (4 of 114) were supportive of the attack on GMR in April 2011.

While opposition to UKH seemed low in my study area, it was also difficult to say there was anything approaching excitement or anticipation in the responses from local people. Rather they expressed frustration and weariness at how long they had been waiting for the dam to arrive, frustration at the lack of information shared regarding timetables, compensation, and the environmental impacts of the dam. Was this resignation? Was this quiescence in the manner that Gaventa explored in Appalachia (1982) wherein poverty and a deep-rooted sense of powerlessness prevented the development of political consciousness? Was there any reason to suspect local people would be able to have their demands heard and possibly met in

a process that valued their participation? Or would these decisions be meted out in Kathmandu between ministries and GMR officials?

A large portion of subaltern and resistance studies are predicated on the idea that resistance is always present, that in any situation of power, resistance must also be a force (Scott, 1976, 1985, 1990). In this situation, as I explored local people's sense of their situation, what could be called resistance? And if I called it "resistance" then what could be said about it? What could it say about the ability of people to affect social change, and what would it reveal about state processes and power?

In this chapter, I will explore these questions primarily through 110 interviews conducted in the 10 affected VDCs around the dam site at Upper Karnali in 2014, as well as 60 preliminary interviews from 2012 and 2013. In section 1, I will summarize the debates surrounding the issue of "resistance" and why in the case of Upper Karnali, residents might be expressing an unconventional form of resistance that may still serve a role to voice grievances and bears witness to a political consciousness that is important, if not particularly effective, in instrumental ways.

But if the style of resistance I witnessed is not effective—and to date, it does not appear to be—then why not? And what to make of those respondents who welcome the dam? Are they being duped or misled by propaganda to pursue counterfeit interests? Or, if resettlement and compensation is genuinely preferred (even if they are unaware of the terms), what has happened to make that alternative

preferable to staying in one's current home, on one's current land? I address these questions in section 2, where I heed Auyero's call (2010a) to document less well-marked forms of domination, which in the present case deals with time and the effects of waiting on political consciousness. In the final section, I wish to propose the term "subduction," which I think more aptly describes the form of oppression at Upper Karnali and other sites around Nepal where local populations have been systematically materially neglected and deprived of political representation. This effect combined with poverty and high migration, I argue, allows the state through subtle, even unintentional, ways to neutralize resistance and subdue populations that were formerly hostile and motivated.

2. Is this resistance? What does "resistance" actually tell us?

Scholars have long wrangled with two questions that remain very much in discussion in the fields of social movements and resistance studies:

1. Why do some people appear to acquiesce to their domination?
2. What constitutes resistance?

Question 1: if domination hurts the interests of subordinate groups, why do subordinates appear to consent to that domination? Why don't they rebel or at least resist?

These questions originate with Marx, and though he never employed the term “false consciousness,” it is often attributed to him as a way to explain how the destructive nature of capitalism is hidden from the proletariat. This happens in two ways. First, Marx and Engels argued that people’s ideas are shaped by their economic position in the world, and that “the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas... The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the mental means of production” (1978:172). In this way, the ideas and interests of the ruling class are presented as the ideas and interests of everyone, thus obscuring the proletariat’s true interests. Secondly, Marx employed the terms “commodity fetishism” and “alienation” to explain “how the social character of men’s labour [*sic*] as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labor” (1978:320). As workers become alienated from the work they possessed outright in pre-capitalist times, they also lose an understanding of the larger social forces that shape their work, especially the conflicting class interests between themselves and their employers.

Similarly, and more recently, Gaventa (1982) searched for these answers in Appalachia where grinding poverty sits alongside immense wealth. He posits that quiescence in the powerless was produced and maintained by “three-dimensional” power relations wherein power is exercised not only as the capacity to prevail in political contests but also to determine what issues become subject to politics and, indeed, whether or not issues and problems can be identified as such by those they

affect. Powerlessness, he argues, is bred through domination over time that manifests itself among the powerless as “extensive fatalism, self-deprecation, or undue apathy about one’s situation... The sense of powerlessness may also lead to a greater susceptibility to the internalization of the values, beliefs, or rules of the game of the powerful as a further adaptive response” (1982:17). In this way, Gaventa continues, “those denied participation... also might not develop political consciousness of their own situation or of broader inequalities” (1982:18). While Gaventa’s investigation proposed compelling ideas about quiescence, it was only a first step in applying a more sophisticated and nuanced analysis in the field.

As Charles Tilly considered these questions about domination with apparent consent, he grouped the literature’s responses as follows:

1. *The premise is incorrect: subordinates are actually rebelling continuously, but in covert ways.*
2. *Subordinates actually get something in return for their subordination, something that is sufficient to make them acquiesce most of the time.*
3. *Through the pursuit of other valued ends such as esteem or identity, subordinates become implicated in systems that exploit or oppress them (in some versions, no. 3 becomes identity to no 2).*
4. *As a result of mystification, repression, or the sheer unavailability of alternative ideological frames, subordinates remain unaware of their true interests.*
5. *Force and inertia hold subordinates in place.*
6. *Resistance and rebellion are costly; most subordinates lack the necessary means.*
7. *All of the above (1991:594).*

Social movement scholars of the structural variety tended to focus on

responses 4 (false consciousness), 5 (coercion), and 6 (scant resources) wherein the interpretations and responses of the oppressed remained stamped beneath a taken-for-granted domination. But responses 1-3 point to subordinates as negotiating the terms of a domination that only appears to be acquiescence. That strain of analysis initially found articulation through E.P. Thompson's history of the English working class (1966) and matured through the work of Michel deCerteau, James Scott, Ranajit Guha, and many others dedicated to explicating the ideas and practices of subaltern groups, who, they would forcefully argue, were not the passive and fully dominated recipients of oppression, but rather active resisters and negotiators. In this way, scholars could provide more nuanced and sensitive portrayals of vulnerable people, and avoid falling into easy tropes that branded these groups as unmotivated or passive in their submission.

Thompson's work on the English working class begins in a world just prior to the sharp rise of the capitalist political economy. He describes a European peasantry disrupted by commercialism and hungering nation-states that rent apart existing social ties in the countryside and inspired a "double movement" (Polanyi, 1944) of resistance from peasants. Thompson argues that the seemingly spontaneous acts of resistance to authority in England in the 1700s were actually deliberate responses to a violation of the "moral economy of the poor," a consensus that required authorities to support and maintain a sufficient food supply in times of scarcity. In other words, a moral economy proposed the existence of norms that social arrangements should be

structured to respect the subsistence needs of the poor. When this ethic is breached, the oppressed community is aroused to protest. Thompson explained in a later essay: "My object of analysis was the *mentalité*, or, as I would prefer, the political culture, the expectations, traditions, and indeed, superstitions of the working population most frequently involved in actions in the market" (1993:260). On another level, the concept of the moral economy served to present victims of domination as "historical agents," and thus, Thompson argued, it would be the researcher's responsibility to deliver justice to these groups by discovering their "authenticity" and "autonomy."

Discovering the "authenticity" and "autonomy" of oppressed groups requires looking at informal action, or everyday practice, as suggested by Michael deCerteau. DeCerteau (1984) focuses on the devices, actions and procedures that people use every day to subvert disciplining powers. As an example, he illustrates "*la perruque*," a tactic by which workers trick employers into thinking they are working when they are attending to personal matters (1984:24-26). As opposed to strategies, which are the tool of the powerful, deCerteau poses tactics as the domain of the subordinated who must take calculated actions as opportunities present themselves. If strategies represent a mode of domination wherein the powerful have considerable knowledge of the environment, then tactics represent the artful and spontaneous measures of oppressed people to "use, manipulate, and divert" the cultural products and spaces imposed by external power (1984:37). In other words, strategies are the tool of structured domination, while tactics are utilized by less organized groups and with

less forethought. As one example of tactics in action, Robin D.G. Kelley's description of working class African-Americans in the segregated South describes how daily rider complaints and spatial maneuvers on Birmingham buses supported more high-profile acts of civil disobedience (e.g., Rosa Parks), and "served as a window into the more complex consciousness of African-American people," thus diminishing the idea that false consciousness could uniformly suppress and distract the oppressed from addressing their grievances (1994:102).

These definitions of tactics and rhetoric play a key role in Jim Scott's depiction of resistance and of peasants as "historical agents," as will be discussed in a moment. However, to suggest that unorganized oppressed groups rely on spontaneous tactics and rhetoric might indicate a slide back to the "mob mentality," that oppressed groups act not out of justified grievance but due to some irrational and viral impulse that inspires violence and mimicry. However, work on ideology, hegemony, and power from Althusser and Gramsci help to understand how even the most spontaneous reaction demonstrates a measured and historically framed response behind it.

3. Ideology and Hegemony

When Louis Althusser wrote that “man is an ideological animal by nature,” he was attempting to develop Marx’s thoughts about ideology in such a way as to retain the historical materialism of Marx while avoiding slippage into claims of false consciousness, of presenting individual subjects as dupes within an impenetrable structure (1971:167). To do this, Althusser needed to rework some key Marxist ideas. To Engels, ideology was “a process accomplished by the so-called thinker, conscious indeed but with a false consciousness. The real motives impelling him remain unknown to him, otherwise it would not be an ideological process at all” (qtd. in Williams, 1971:65). In other words, ideology obscured the real world—the exploitative economic base. But Althusser argued that ideology was not plainly false, as Engels would have it, but rather a socially constructed representation of individuals’ relationship to their real conditions of existence (1971:109). In this way, Althusser claimed, the material world or real world was not something external, shrouded beneath ideology, hidden from our view, but a *product* of our relations to it as mediated through ideology dispensed by ideological state apparatuses (1971:146). Like Foucault, Althusser argued that ideology was material, embedded in the practices and institutions that governed the lives of individuals, and interpellated people into concrete subjects capable of being governed (1971:116). The act of interpellation revealed the co-constitutive nature of ideology and individuals. The police officer on the street hailing a citizen elicits a response precisely because the

both officer and subject are always-already subjects within ideology. Thus Althusser's depiction of ideology portrays individuals as dominated within a system embedded in an ideology that appears natural and inevitable, but does so in a manner that avoids tropes of false consciousness. However, and importantly, Althusser's move to present ideology and subject as mutually constitutive, opened up the possibility to view individuals as possessing some agency to interpret, shape, and respond to ideology on a personal level.

Like Althusser, Gramsci rejects the economism of Marxist orthodoxy and insists that culture was a central aspect of promoting ideology. Ideology, for Gramsci, is a central, though not totalizing, element in the struggle for hegemony: the non-violent forms of control exercised through a range of dominant cultural institutions and social practices, from schooling, museums, and political parties to religious practice, architectural forms, and the mass media. In this way, Gramsci argued, the dominant class sought not only to have its ideas prevail, but also to seem as common sense and natural to subordinated people (1971:255-258). But unlike Althusser, Gramsci emphasized the centrality of struggle in the project for hegemony. He noted that common sense was not static and immutable, but something that might be contested and potentially altered. The contradictions between the ruling ideology and the lived experience of subordinates, Gramsci argued, opens up the possibility for challenge and revolt. In this way, subaltern individuals emerge as significant actors to

challenge and destabilize the ruling ideology, a project that would require not only political and economic organization, but cultural as well (1985:41).

These two important intellectual developments from Althusser and Gramsci form the foundation beneath Jim Scott's three seminal works on peasant lives in southeast Asia (1976; 1985; 1990). These texts defined the field of agrarian resistance while generating much discussion about the concepts of hegemony, everyday resistance, and power. *The Moral Economy of the Peasant* takes inspiration from Thompson's work about formerly-agrarian Englanders who shared an ethic based on the reciprocal exchange of gifts and redistribution in times of need, as opposed to the individual pursuit of self-interest. Working in Southeast Asia, Scott shows how the riskiness of subsistence farming encouraged rural cultivators to build a system of mutual aid and collective protection. The moral dimension of peasant life, thus, is presented as not as a framework of ideological domination by the state or elites, but rather as a mutually agreed upon system of rights that establishes the peasant as a conscious historical agent: "This emphasis on rights confers on him a history, a political consciousness, and a perception of the moral structure of his society" (1976:188-89). And Scott invites us to conceive of the "agency" of the peasant as being a complex process with considerable prudential reasoning, rather than a simplistic response to the deprivation of basic needs. This invitation serves to remind us that peasant responses do not derive from irrational impulses. In other words, *Moral Economy* represents Scott's first attempt at interrogating domination and

resistance to discover a self-formed and autonomous personhood capable of resistance—and possibly revolutionary potential—in the form of the peasant.

Toward the end of *Moral Economy*, Scott writes:

It is especially at the level of culture that a defeated or intimidated peasantry may nurture its stubborn moral dissent from an elite-created social order. This symbolic refuge is not simply a source of solace in a precarious life, not simply an escape. It represents an alternative moral universe in embryo – a dissident subculture, an existentially true and just one, which helps unite its members as a human community and as a community of values. In this sense, it is as much a beginning as an end (240).

In *Weapons of the Weak* (1985) Scott attempts to discover such a place as described in this excerpt, where peasants participated in projects of improvement while simultaneously engaged in local class politics. Working in “Sedaka,” a rural Malaysian village, Scott documents the impact of the Green Revolution on peasants over the course of eighteen months. Comparatively speaking, *Moral* presents the front stage of domination and resistance, while *Weapons* moves back stage to record the pervasiveness of foot-dragging, sabotage, and double talk among subordinates who remained quiet during public encounters with state agriculture officials. The forms of resistance that Scott documents require little to no coordination or planning and “make use of implicit understandings and informal networks; they often represent a form of individual self-help; they typically avoid any direct, symbolic confrontation with authority” (1990:240).

K. Sivaramakrishnan has written that *Weapons* provides a framework that “combine[s] the structural transformation of production relations in agriculture with a concern for meanings, emotion, identities, and their political charge (2008:324). In other words, Scott was interested in more than how peasants attempted to avoid capitalist economic intrusions on their livelihoods. Through his observations, he describes the various elements of peasant action and being that formed a counterhegemonic culture at different levels of society. In *Weapons*, Scott transforms the “symbolic refuge” of the peasant village depicted in *Moral Economy* to an active site of resistance full of meaningful actors with revolutionary potential:

When flight is available—to the frontier, to the cities—it is seized. When outright confrontation with landlords or the state seems futile, it is avoided. In the enormous zone between these two polar strategies lie all the forms of daily resistance . . . such resistance, conceived and conducted with no revolutionary end in mind, can, and occasionally does, contribute to revolutionary outcome (1985:349).

With this statement, Scott implies that the seemingly insignificant actions that comprise resistance in this rural setting could actually, unintentionally, accumulate in such a way as to foment a large-scale rejection of state-sponsored capitalist intrusions.

Both *Moral Economy* and *Weapons* assumed that in any particular setting experience endowed the “weak” with a shared mentality, but neither of these texts focused on or problematized the creation, maintenance, or transformation of the

peasant viewpoint. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1990), on the other hand, focuses on these "hidden transcripts" that peasants create and deploy in the course of unequal public encounters. A hidden transcript has something in common with internal monologues and muttering under one's breath, with the crucial difference that people in a given structural position create them collectively and share them. As an object of analysis, Scott attributes real existence to these transcripts, locating them firmly in human minds. He claims to read them more or less reliably. Thus, every subordinated population seems to produce a unitary and shared transcript, but this raises more questions related to my research: What are the boundaries of relevant populations and a single hidden transcript? How far does a hidden transcript reach? Do subordinates ever resist the hidden transcript?

The real virtue of *Domination* was to challenge the conception of hegemony described by Gramsci and others. Scholars who had read hegemony in subjects' apparent docility, Scott argued, had witnessed only their "public transcript" and overlooked the "hidden transcript" beneath the veneer of visible action. In focusing on overt rebellion, previous scholars had ignored the less obvious ways that subalterns challenged their domination and this would be a key intervention for Scott and others to follow. For example, Mathews' work (2005) on the history of opposition between Mexican forest departments and indigenous people



Riverine hamlet in Raniban, Achham district, Nepal (photo by author).

demonstrates how foresters and farmers—both, in some form, resisting the state and each other—shape mutually beneficial conditions by creatively navigating the dictates of the state. Studies like Mathews’ present a compelling model to emulate and a starting point from which to generate fresher insights into the concept of resistance and the workings of power. In sum, the arcing path of Thompson to Scott to present day resistance studies marks the evolution of the so-called “mob mentality” to an understanding of individual resistance that defies typical observation and testifies to a political consciousness in all people that present alternative possibilities for imagining future social relations. Or, at least, indicate that the potential for change is always present, even in the most quiescent settings.

Question 2: What constitutes resistance?

Since the publication of *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, the “everyday forms of resistance” paradigm has received considerable scrutiny and criticism: for “romanticizing” (Wedeen, 2003) and “fetishizing” (Kellner, 1995) resistance, for conflating agency with resistance (Mahmood, 2001), for lacking ethnographic “thickness” (Ortner, 1995), for essentializing so called “subordinates” (O’Hanlon, 1988), for eschewing class conflict (Brass, 1991), and for creating a false dichotomy between resistance and power (T. Mitchell, 1990). Sahlins (1993) calls resistance the “new functionalism” while Brown (1996) says the study of resistance became obsolete through overextension and its obsessive focus on theories of power. Overall, this critique of resistance studies alleges ubiquity to the point of meaninglessness. Poetry among Bedouin women (Abu-Lughod, 1990), silence among community workers in Scotland (Rose, 1997), and the lifestyles of Indian courtesans (Oldenburg, 1990) have all been cited as forms of resistance to various relations of power, implying that if even the smallest, most trivial actions can be interpreted as resistance, does that category have any useful analytical meaning for investigating power and domination?

Many of these critiques were traced back to, and have their roots in, Scott’s work. In *Weapons*, Scott argues that subalterns are aware of the oppression they face and that they are able to imagine alternative social orders. Their submission is simply

due to the fact that the costs of rebellion are too high. This acknowledgment of cost calculation has brought criticism that a rational actor rests beneath Scott's individual peasant, a position at odds with ethical environment described in *Moral Economy* (Tilly, 1991). Scott does recognize that subalterns may rise up in response to attacks on their honor or dignity and not merely in pursuit of material gain (1990:23), but, in the end, Tilly says, Scott employs a "crude individualized rationality to explain rebellion" (1991:599). Subordinates, Scott argues, are able to accurately assess the degree of domination to which they are subject, as well as their capacity to succeed in rebellion. Put another way, Scott seems to assume a direct correspondence between domination and resistance: "[S]imilar structures of domination, other things equal, tend to provoke responses and forms of resistance that also bear a family resemblance to one another" (1990:21-22). If this is true, it could only be because the same rationality informs all subalterns' perception of their particular situation. Thus, we can see that Scott commits the error of essentializing subaltern response, or as Theodossopoulos would allege, Scott "exoticizes" it and lumps it into a undifferentiated mass that flattens the very agency and personhood it was trying to acknowledge and liberate (Theodossopoulos, 2014).

On the topic of hegemony, later scholars would accuse Scott of committing, more or less, the same error. Fletcher (2001) notes that if there is no hegemony (as Scott alleges in *Domination*), then there is no need to question the origins of resistance: we know subalterns rebel when they are dominated and exploited and it

is in their best interest to do so. In becoming the dominant paradigm, Scott's framework obscured the need to ask questions concerning the origin and cause of resistance. Subalterns, in Scott's view, did not need to emerge from a false consciousness to resist; they had never been subject to false consciousness in the first place: the presence of a hidden transcript proves this, according to Scott. Thus peasants, in this depiction, were seen to act from a uniform autonomous space that had never been colonized by elite propaganda. In this way, Scott ironically flattens and neutralizes the more complete subjecthood of peasants he sought to render in the first place.

Finally, autonomy and autonomous spaces constitute another theoretical problem. Donald Moore argues that Scott assumes some sort of "autonomous, sovereign self" and his idea of hidden transcripts points to areas that power does not saturate or colonize (1998:350-351). Moore suggests that realms of autonomy, in Scott's words, are what allow people to resist and to see through past hegemonic frames "to penetrate and demystify the prevailing ideology" based on their daily experience (1985:317). But Scott is mistaken to believe such an autonomous space exists. The challenge, Moore writes, becomes to move theoretically beyond spaces of subalternity and resistance outside power and domination, and to understand their "mutual imbrication" (1998:353). In other words, peasants and peasant communities cannot stand outside dominant paradigms, as Scott suggests they do. Rather, proper investigation of resistance needs to start from the premise that peasants and peasant

communities are inextricably bound to larger social and economic spheres. I believe Moore's argument is the proper framing of the resistance context.

4. Data

At this point, I want to turn to the responses from people living in the 10 VDCs around the UKH construction site. As I mentioned above, resistance was difficult to detect in the responses in the many interviews (formal and informal) I conducted. Most respondents diminished the importance of the April 2011 attack on the GMR buildings at Paltada, or did not feel inclined to even acknowledge knowing about them. I puzzled greatly over this issue because while resistance did not appear present in these conversations or in the actions I observed, repeated themes could not be ignored.

For one, there were very few people with whom I spoke who could be said to have sufficient knowledge about UKH: neither the terms of agreement (as they stood in early 2014), nor the process of construction, nor the impact a hydropower plant would have on the river and riverine environment. The sheer number of "I don't know" responses and unanswered questions indicated that information about the dam was scant (figures 2, 3 and 4). GMR opened an information center in Dab after the April 2011 attacks, but my review of the log book showed that very few people

chose to take advantage of this facility.³¹ The lack of knowledge among local people was uniform in the sense that no demographic group (by caste, education level, income) had more or more accurate information. One had to wonder if this lack of information represented an intentional program on the part of the state and GMR, or reflected a lack of interest from local people.

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
don't know	20	17.7	17.7
less available water	12	10.6	28.3
floods; inundation	79	69.9	98.2
diminish water quality	2	1.8	100.0
Total	113	100.0	

Table 2. How will the dam affect this area?

³¹ I visited the GMR information center at Dab in October 2013 and signed the log book. When I returned in February 2014, and signed the log book again, I counted only eight visitors between my visits. Four of those visitors were political representatives.

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
don't know	30	26.1	26.1
will not affect	4	3.5	29.6
stop water	31	27.0	56.5
diminish water quality	25	21.7	78.3
floods / landslides	25	21.7	100.0
Total	115	100.0	

Table 3. How will the dam affect the water?

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
doesn't know	98	85.2	86.1
within five years	14	12.2	98.3
never	2	1.7	100.0
Total	115	100.0	

Table 4. When will construction on the dam begin?³²

³² At the time I asked this question, no one knew for certain when the dam construction would begin as the final contract had not yet been signed and released to the public. However, the fact that so few people would venture a guess (16 out of 115) suggests a lack of confidence in their ability to predict due to the fact that UKH had been a "possibility" for 40 years.

I dismiss the idea that local people lacked interest in the dam because among the interviews and conversation I heard a repeatedly expressed fear about the dam breaking and the flooding and devastation that would follow (figures 2 and 3). My research concluded ten months prior to the Nepal earthquakes in April 2015, but prior to that Nepalis have long been anticipating another large earthquake like the Nepal-Bihar 8.0 magnitude earthquake in 1934. Living in the hills below the Himalayas, all Nepalis are aware of the general seismicity of their country. Because of that, local people seemed to fear the possibility that UKH once constructed would not withstand a large tremor. And because they had little information about the dam, these fears were vibrant and indicated a future existence that could imperil them and their livelihoods. Furthermore, there seemed to be great misunderstanding about the volume of inundation that would occur as a result of the dam's construction. Because the project will be built as a run-of-river project, the reservoir will be relatively small, displacing only 225 homes immediately upstream of the dam (NESS, 2012). So I was surprised to hear people living downstream who believed their land and homes might be claimed for the sake of the project.

Despite these fears of flooding, there was also an abiding sense of welcoming the dam. When I asked respondents what they hoped the dam would bring, most could list multiple benefits they would enjoy, including employment opportunities, improved irrigation, improved security, and electrification. Respondents were able to link the availability of local electrification to many other parts of their lives, though

they did so in curiously general terms. Electrification would bring “development” or *bikas* (Pigg, 1993). I posited other hypotheses of why resistance to the dam seemed muted or non-existent:

1. Contact with the outside through media and circular migration had delivered stories of better lives and living conditions in other places that had electricity. For this reason, the prospect of resettlement may not appear unwelcome to many respondents. As one moves up the Karnali from south to north, into the hills, the standards of living drop steadily (Poudel, 2013) as there is less and less arable land available and residents are forced to mete out a living on less money and for more work.³³
2. Many thought they would be eligible for compensation with the dam and they preferred that opportunity to the difficult lives they currently led. This presumption, for most respondents, would have been entertained without just cause because the official terms of compensation had not yet been finalized by the state and GMR. Many people living along the river near to the dam site could reasonably assume compensation. But many respondents who believed they might be eligible for compensation lived up in the hillsides or in distant downstream VDCs which would likely not be eligible.
3. Some respondents, particularly those in commerce livelihoods such as owning stores or local hotels, understood that the dam construction period would create a boom period for success that could last up to a decade or more. This is reasonable premise, but dismissed because it is one held by a very small minority. In the 10 VDCs around UKH, more than 90% of the residents identify farming as their main occupation.
4. As I briefly mentioned above, the promise of electrification and respondents tendency to link it with improved lives, even if only generally understood, seemed to provide a meaningful level of satisfaction. This should perhaps not be surprising given that discussions about developing UKH date back to the late 1960s. As solar panels and smaller forms of hydro have appeared in rural

³³ This assertion is supported by a review of income levels and average land holdings in VDCs along the Karnali river in Nepal using Poudel’s reference guide (2013).

areas, respondents can appreciate the general advantages that electricity presents in terms of daily living.

5. Fatigue from Maoist conflict diminished people's willingness to resist.

In Kathmandu, many hydro professionals and state officials I spoke with were quick to pathologize (Theodossopoulos, 2014) the April 2011 attack on the GMR buildings and said that IBN and GMR were doing their utmost to provide timely and accurate information to UKH residents. Regarding the attack, many dismissed the action as “politically-motivated” and “carried out by outsiders” as if any act could be apolitical³⁴, or one's right to oppose a government intervention depended on his or her organic connection to the area. Surprisingly, many local respondents echoed these very sentiments. When I asked hydro professionals in Kathmandu why there was so little knowledge or erroneous knowledge around the dam site at Upper Karnali, they claimed political party leaders from central offices intentionally skewed facts in order to keep their constituents ignorant, dissatisfied, and fired up (which obviously wasn't working). But here we have a rather convenient excuse for IBN. In this view, it might be suggested that IBN's poor information sharing with locals might have been justified on the premise that anything the state or GMR tries to convey about the dam will inevitably be turned into a point of contention through the

³⁴ This branding of antagonistic acts as “political” was common between Kathmandu and Upper Karnali. “Political” was frequently used as a code for anti-nationalist, on the assumption that infrastructure projects in Nepal had an unquestionable benefit for the country in the service of common good. At hydropower conferences, presenters and speakers dismissed comments from the floor that invoked politics: “We are not talking about politics today.” Branding resistance as “political” was also employed to associate an act or individual with the Maoist party who were frequently derided as politicizing everything (Thapa 2012).

deceptions and personal ambitions of party leaders who represent their own interests, not local people's. Much less generously, Kathmandu respondents said that local people were too uneducated to understand the complexity and necessity of hydropower construction, seeming to indicate that a company or government office's intention to "inform" or "create dialogue" with local people starts from a position that true understanding will not be possible.

So, how to explain the lack of resistance? Is it necessary to do so? Is it sufficient to say that those who were not opposed to the dam or who did not seem more openly resistant at least, had adopted "development discourse" (Escobar, 1995; Ferguson, 1994; Gupta, 1997; Pigg, 1993)? If local people are aware of their oppression, where is the alternative social order that Scott says they envision? Why does it appear that people at Upper Karnali have accepted the dam, more or less, as *fait accompli*? I propose that the local response to UKH seemed to represent a form of development schizophrenia, of a repeating pattern of promise and frustration: on one hand local respondents wanted to believe in the dam and the ensuing benefits it would afford; on the other hand, they envisioned living in existential fear of the dam breaching and drowning them beneath incomprehensible amounts of water. This duality of perception, changing from moment to moment, I believe, offers a suitable description to Moore's idea that resistance and power, subalterity and domination, are mutually imbricated and processual (1998). As indicated in the hypotheses above, though UKH is geographically located far from centers of power in Kathmandu, local

people are well-aware of the many worlds they co-habitate. In the days of monarchy, peasants looked to the King and local authorities to provide economic guidance and work. Development “experts” arrived in the 1960s with new seeds, implements, and visions of how agriculture could be improved (Pigg, 1993; N. Shrestha, 1997a). The advent of democracy in 1990 offered peasants the chance to vote. When these votes did not produce material results for their livelihoods, the Maoists voiced their collective grievances through civil uprising. The last local elections were held in 1997, meaning that residents have not had proper local representation and franchise in now 18 years (Tiwari, 2011; N. K. Uprety, 2014). The end of the Maoist civil war brought new hope for democracy, but that process has been stalled as government leaders fight over the content of the Constitution and foreign investment stays away from this unpredictable finance-scape.

Still, the “I don’t knows” so prominent in my data cannot be ignored. How could interpreting “I don’t know” provide a meaningful framework for addressing contemporary challenges related to the study of movements, protest, and activist research? I hesitate to label “I don’t know” as resistance because those responses are fixed in time and space, elicited at a particular moment. To draw more dramatic conclusions would, I believe, undermine my ability to appreciate the interplay of social practice (Herzfeld, 1997; Juris, 2007) and overextend the idea of resistance in ways that have already been roundly, and justly, critiqued (M. F. Brown, 1996; Ortner, 1995). Rather, I want to suggest that “I don’t know” stands as an implication of the

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
government	52	45.2	45.2
local people	35	30.4	30.4
dam developer GMR	1	.9	.9
all of us	7	6.1	6.1
other	7	6.1	6.1
don't know	1	.9	.9
Total	113	100.0	100.0

Table 5. Who should be responsible for the river and water?

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
doesn't know; no opinion	7	6.1	6.1
government	88	76.5	82.6
dam developer	16	13.9	96.5
local people	3	2.6	99.1
Total	114	100.0	

Table 6. Who should be responsible for compensation?

state's neglect and, in the case of UKH, it seems like the last remaining "weapon of the weak" in the subaltern arsenal. Local people have long been forsaken and neglected by political leaders and development professionals of all stripes. They gave up on these groups for material provisions long ago. But, in this instance, "I don't know" may serve as a collective reminder to each other that the government, no matter how weak, has a responsibility to its people. "I don't know" may not be a sign of a pre-political consciousness, but perhaps speaks to a post-political worldview wherein the space of traditional politics appears as an ultimately feckless, foreign, and undissolvable morass. Maybe resistance is neither rational nor dialectic. Perhaps we should conceive of it as hydraulic, flowing toward weak points and gaps in the reigning structure, slowly—but lightly, gradually—eroding the weak spots of official actions and discourse, producing just enough effect to keep the state scrambling to shore up its dominant position (T. Mitchell, 1991)? Thus, in the present case, my study of resistance reveals less about local response, and more about state processes of domination that I will explore in the next section. When I asked respondents who should be responsible for development, for the water, for the project at UKH, a majority said the government (figures 5 and 6). In spite of all the neglect, in spite of all the frustration, local people around UKH still believe that the government is the body capable and responsible to remedy their frustration and to deliver long-promised development to their area. Is this allegiance or domination? Is it either?



Irrigation tubing running between natural spring and fields in Rahaph, Achham district, Nepal (photo by author).

5. Discussion -- The Tyranny of Waiting, Lives in Suspension, and Subduction

In this section I want to continue to explore possible reasons for the lack of local resistance to UKH, and to examine further how that lack of resistance may tell us more about state processes of domination. It should be acknowledged that UKH provides perhaps an extreme case of waiting and suffering through which to conduct this study: the families have suffered a civil war, seen their families pulled apart by the need to migrate for work, toiled decades in a subsistence lifestyle, and all while waiting more than 40 years for the promise of development in the form of

electricity. But extreme conditions such as these should not be a reason to dismiss the analytical potential of a site like UKH. Instead, this extreme case can be instructive and illuminating for its ability to show a problem or process in particularly clear relief (Zussman, 2004).

My interest turns to a recent thrust of social study that attempts understand how suffering, time, and domination are entangled with people's own conceptions of time and hopes for the future. As Bastian notes, though "'time' and 'community' are multiply intertwined within a myriad of key debates in the social sciences and the humanities... the role of conceptions of time in social practices of inclusion and exclusion has yet to achieve the prominence of other key analytical categories such as identity and space" (2013:94). So the literature around this topic is nascent, but several studies have answered to document this less well-marked form of domination (Auyero, 2010b). Harvey (2012) explores the possibility for a sociology of suffering through the lives of people living in the epicenter aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and the attendant tribulations of waiting for relief. Bastian (2013) examines the time waiting for and the moments chosen by the Australian government to extend official apologies for historical wrongs. Auyero and Swistun (2009) study the links between environmental suffering and collective perceptions of time among the residents of Flammable, an impoverished and contaminated district in urban Argentina. These studies indicate that the importance of a temporal dimension has been recognized (Sewell Jr, 2005), but also that time has yet to achieve the same kind of analytical

footing and nuance as other concepts such as space and identity. On the other hand, the relationships between subordinated groups and the state has been thoroughly historicized and documented (Bayat, 1998; Chatterjee, 2004; Goldberg, 2008; Joseph & Nugent, 1994; Wedeen, 2003). But this subfield focuses intently on episodes of contention or insurgency, while overlooking the dynamics of daily, routine engagement of the dominated, in this case rural peasants, with the state and corporate entities. A topography of the engagement between the poor and the oppressors “should include systematic attention to the forms in which powerless actors perceive the present and the future... to the ways they see themselves in relation to that present and future time... to the sources of these beliefs, and to the practices these understandings generate” (Auyero & Swistun, 2009:19).

The act of being made to wait is, in a sense, a form of oppression. We accept in modern society that to be kept waiting for a long time is to understand that your time is less important than the time of the person who imposes the wait. Bourdieu wrote that waiting is how an individual or group can experience the effects of power: “Making people wait... delaying without destroying hope... adjourning without totally disappointing” are fundamental processes to domination. Accordingly, he encouraged research to document and analyze “all the behaviors associated with the exercise of power over other people’s time both on the side of the powerful... and on the side of the ‘patient’ as they say in the medical universe, one of the sites par

excellence of anxious, powerless waiting” (2000:228). Less powerful people³⁵ forced to wait for extensive periods of time grow weary or quiescent as they hang upon an endless stream of unfulfilled promises because the alternatives may be few and resource-dependent. But how does this “objective waiting become subjective submission” (Auyero, 2011:8)? A look at the dynamics of waiting can help us understand how agentic individuals with aspirations to better lives become not citizens but virtual wards of the state.

At Upper Karnali, local residents have been promised “development” for nearly a half-century. Each new leader—king, Maoist, elected representative—has pledged to deliver a better standard of living and failed to deliver. In the case of UKH and other areas like it, a future corporate intervention is often cited to explain and justify the lack of government work to develop the area. During some preliminary research at another dam site called West Seti—which has also been “in development” for more than 40 years—I spoke with an older gentleman who told me this story:

When I was young, my father told me to learn a trade and not to farm because this whole area would be flooded one day. So I learned how to be a carpenter and I was ready to move but no one built the dam. I told my son the same thing. Don't be a farmer because we won't be

³⁵ The rural poor at UKH invoke a remembrance of Engels' description of the working class: one that "that is a playball to a thousand chances, [and] knows no security in life" (2010:128)

able to farm here. Now I think he's going to be telling his son the same thing (interview notes, July 16, 2012).

Other respondents at West Seti and Upper Karnali informed me that once the dams came into discussion, they ceased all development activities. They did not want to invest resources in a road or school or other form of infrastructure in an area that would one day be inundated.

Other informants told me the government expected the hydro corporations to provide the needed investment. The road along the eastern flank of the Karnali river is in notoriously poor condition and, in the monsoon season, can be perilous. But it is also well-traveled mostly by Tata trucks and public buses running people from Nepalgunj in the south to points north in Jumla and Mangalsen (inter alia R. Khadka, 2015; Pandey, 2015). By chance I met an official with Nepal's department of roads having lunch in a roadside shop. I asked him when they were going to improve the safety and condition of the Karnali highway. He responded that they were waiting for GMR to begin work on the dam because they would have to "double-cut" the road— increase its width from one to two lanes—in order to move their heavy construction equipment and materials to the dam site.

Waiting for promised physical improvements is a large-scale form of deprivation, but on a personal and family level, the lack of information dispersed among local residents indicates a form of "putting off" vulnerable populations who are thus deprived of the ability to envision, plan, and feel agentic about their futures. As

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
don't get information / doesn't know where	40	35.8	35.8
local political party	21	18.8	54.6
GMR office or rep	30	26.8	81.4
local people; hearsay	16	14.2	95.6
media	5	4.4	100.0
Total	112		

Table 7. Where do you get your information about the dam?

discussed in the previous section, the lack of information about UKH—its construction, the terms of the agreement, its impact on the environment—troubled nearly every respondent and more than a third did not know where to get information about the dam (figure 7) Local residents might have appealed to local politicians for information, but local elections had not been held since 1997, and many respondents expressed a healthy skepticism about the reliability of the information from party sources. It seems their credibility had been lumped into a general distrust about politicians at the national level. As figure 8 shows, confidence in received information about UKH was low and, at best, conditional. It was not just that local residents didn't have information about the dam. The information that they did claim to know—but was often incorrect—they often doubted anyway. In every

interview, I asked respondents, “What else would you like to know about the dam?” and “To end our interview, what else would you like to say about the dam?” More than half the time respondents answered plaintively “I don’t know,” or “I don’t know anything. What else is there to say?” Sometimes I sensed my questions about the dam embarrassed respondents because, in front of an “expert,” they may have wanted to present themselves as engaged and knowledgeable but could not be.

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
no	30	26.3	26.3
yes	49	43.0	69.3
not sure	32	28.1	97.4
not answered; skipped	3	2.6	100.0
Total	114	100.0	

Table 8. Do you think the information you know about the dam is reliable?

Because information was scant and unreliable, the UKH site was fertile ground for rumor. As was discussed in chapter 3, rumors may have been employed strategically by some respondents—though through my data collection, I could not know—but it certainly indicated that local residents were feeling desperate for information, even if that meant latching their hopes and beliefs to facts and

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
no	106	92.2	92.2
yes	8	7.0	99.1
yes, but misinformed	1	.9	100.0
Total	115	100.0	

Table 9. Do you know the terms of the agreement regarding electricity distribution and shares?

figures that were not credible. The terms of the contractual agreement between the state and GMR drew the most circumspection and very few respondents knew the correct terms (figure 9) even though it had been in the press many times over (P. Adhikari, 2011). The terms of the contract at that time when I conducted my research were 88% of electricity exported to India and 12% retained for use in Nepal. Regarding the profits of the hydropower sales, GMR took 73% and gave the remaining 27% to the Nepali government. Of the 27% share to the Nepali government, a specified percentage would have to be distributed to local government offices. The dam would generate a maximum of 900MW. The rumors around these facts—colored by Nepali predispositions toward India and politicians in general—were as follows:

- GMR says 88% of the electricity will be for export, but they will actually export more than that because they will hide the amount of electricity staying in

Nepal.

- None of the 12% of electricity will be used locally. It will all be sent to Surkhet and Nepalgunj (two urban areas south of UKH).
- The hydropower plant will actually be built at a larger capacity than 900MW and GMR will reap benefits from that surplus.
- The 27% share will stay complete in Kathmandu. There are no means to insure that the national government will disburse that money locally.

To counter to the last of these rumors, there is extant a provision in the Electricity Ordinance of 2007 to insure local distribution of royalties from hydropower plants. Thirty-eight percent of those royalties go to the district office, which in the case of Upper Karnali, means that the affected districts of Surkhet, Achham, and Dailekh would have to share that figure three ways (12.6% each), and 12% of the royalties go directly to the impacted village development committees, which would be split four ways at Upper Karnali between Raniban, Sigaudi, Santalla, and Bhairabsthan (figure 10). The ordinance further stipulates that the royalties be spent on development infrastructure and human resources.

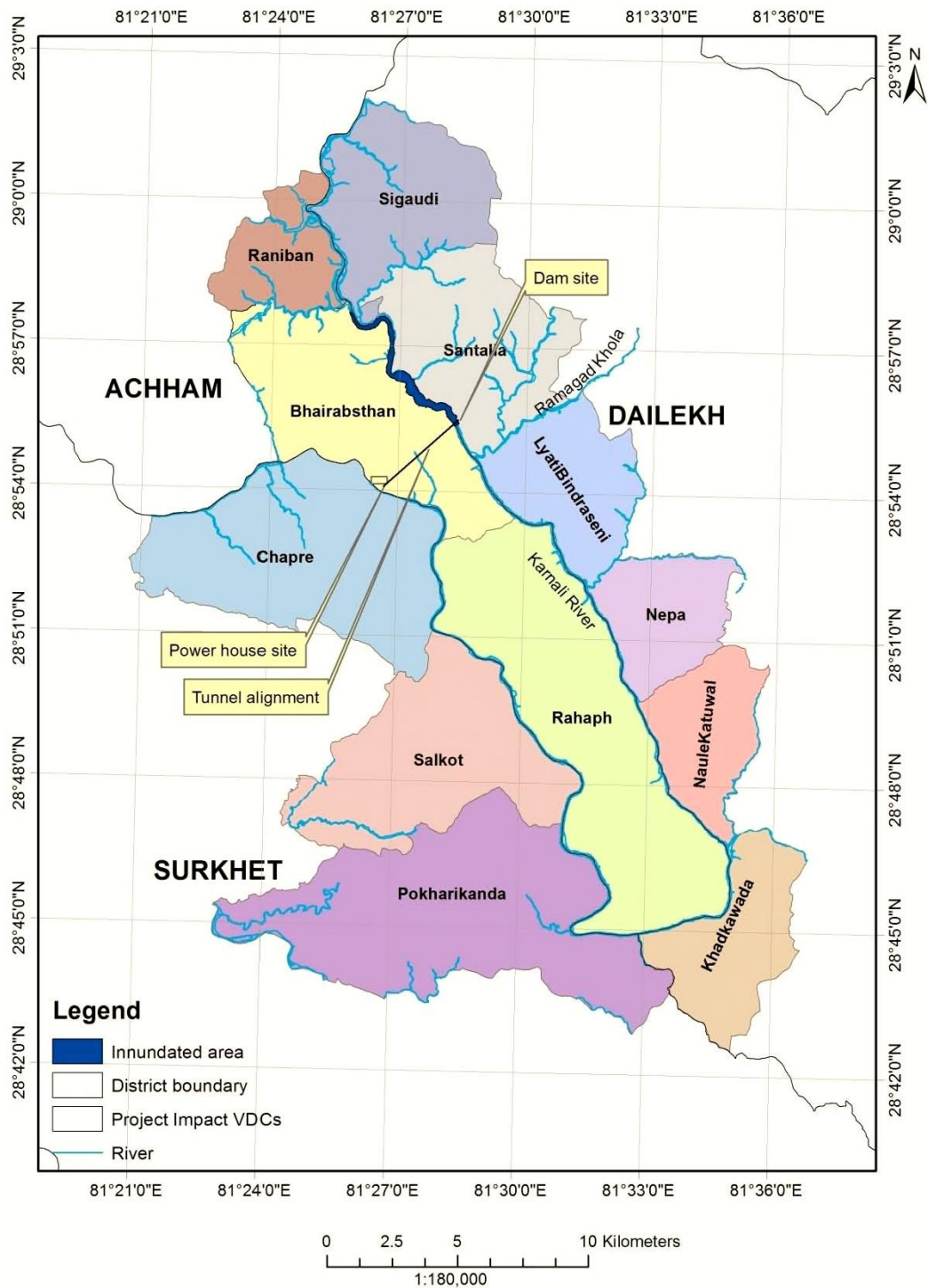


Figure 4. The Upper Karnali Hydroelectric Project Site, including the proposed dam site, power house, and tunnel. Districts included in this map have been identified as “affected” through the environmental impact assessment (NESS, 2012).

But despite the fact some could be plainly rejected, most rumors, like those above, provided lots of spirited conversation in my interviews. And the persistence of these rumors testified to the fact that information was lacking and local people in their hunger to fix a future for themselves often supported “facts” that had no support.

In a similar way, the specter of investment shares available for purchase also fixed local people in a suspended state as they either did not know what shares were (in a meaningful sense of the term) or suspected they would not be able to afford them (figure 11). Only 18.4% of respondents said they would buy shares if offered by GMR. Share offerings are a relatively new and strongly-supported program related to hydropower development (Tamot, 2014). Governments and corporations feel they encourage support and responsiveness from publics by creating a mutual interest in guaranteeing the profitability of the project. My data on the question of shares demonstrates that the concept of shareholding is shrouded in mystique and misunderstanding, but at the same time entices individuals through the promise of additional income. In this way, the residents at UKH appear like Chilean housing debtors seeking the possibility of government relief: “I have to believe” (Guzmán, 2014). While the subjects in his study await help, the operations and administration of the payment are unknown and mysterious to those who need the money. Similarly at UKH, the promise of additional income obscures the social and political relations of the practice while maintaining among local populations the need for patience, the

need for compliance, and the need to wait.

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
no	21	18.4	18.4
yes	25	21.9	40.4
doesn't know what share is	19	16.7	57.0
depends on price	43	37.7	94.7
shares should be free	2	1.8	96.5
not answered; skipped	4	3.5	100.0
Total	114	100.0	

Table 10. Will you buy shares in the Upper Karnali Hydroelectric Project?

When shifting our focus back to the state and its cozying relationship to transnational capital, the view that emerges reveals a more insidious form of oppression by the state because it appears in the “best interest” of local people and the country, and not deliberate—a sin of omission rather than commission. Making people wait and holding their expectations at bay is a key component of this form of domination. To be kept waiting removes the possibility of finding someone on whom to blame the conditions of the current situation at UKH. Blame the current leaders and they point their fingers at their predecessors or colleagues. Blame GMR and they blame the Nepali government, Nepali people, or declare themselves, as a

corporation, neutral in these matters. The lack of resistance to UKH, however, should not be read as local passivity or quiescence in the face of difficult times. Instead, I propose that people around UKH and other hydropower sites in Nepal under long-term development, have led “lives in suspension,” trapped by not being able to know what they would need to know to plan and activate better futures. By not knowing what they would need to know to make informed choices about their present. As well, they are still weary and wary from the experience of the civil war. And without proper local political representation for the past 18 years, amidst a civil war and decade-long political stalemate in Kathmandu, residents don’t have a vessel from which to draw this information reliable, or a channel through which to voice their concerns. In total, local residents apprehend their condition as relegation from the state.

It might follow logically or rationally—like one of Scott’s peasants—that this enduring disregard of local populations by the state would cause them to remove all their collective expectations of the state. But actually the reverse is true. The state remains as powerful and necessary to local populations as ever. When asked who should bear responsibility for compensation, for development, for the condition of the water, a vast majority of respondents said the government (figures 5 and 6). Ignored, delayed, and obfuscated for decades, the continued trust that UKH residents invest in their government resonates with Auyero’s informants who await government assistance: “You need to hang hope on something” (2012:145).

In geology, the term *subduction* refers to the convergence and collision of tectonic plates wherein the thinner of the two plates is forced below and subsumed beneath a thicker plate (King, 2015). If one of the goals of a tempography is to learn how submission works and how it is experienced (Auyero & Swistun, 2009), then I want to propose *subduction* as a particularly useful term for describing the process of state domination in the case of Upper Karnali. Subduction in the case of state processes I define as the long-running and systematic neglect of vulnerable and marginal populations to a degree at which these populations yield compliance to state and capitalistic forces. In the case of Upper Karnali, this chapter illustrates how local residents around UKH have waited more than 40 years for the promise of electricity (and hence development) to arrive. Through this period, they have continued to labor in physically demanding conditions, surviving the psychological and corporeal horrors of a civil war, forbearing the continual disappointments of the democratic process since 1990, and today still wait for the state to fulfill these many promises, and for this reason offer little resistance to state actions. Thus, subduction zones—another geologic term—might refer to the areas where state interests intersect with Zomias (Scott, 2009; Shneiderman, 2010): distant populations that have historically resisted or avoided stronger incorporation into a nation-state. In these zones, capitalistic forces in the form of transnational investment backed by state authority creep slowly (like tectonic plates) into these spaces, withholding their

true power until the conditions are exactly right for maximizing profit and control. Thus, we might think of subduction as governmentality (Foucault, 1980b) plus infrastructure and all its attendant promise for easier lives, economic development, and better futures. Infrastructure—in this case hydropower—impresses in a gradual, seemingly inevitable fashion, a particular form of economy and order on dominated populations. Subduction then might be viewed as a new governing technique to create docile bodies (Foucault, 1979) who are rendered too weak to challenge the established political order. While participating in the local resistance to the Narmada Dam in Gujarat, India, and witnessing the eventual state victory in that matter, Arundhati Roy concluded this about the *adivasi* who would be resettled after construction.

Once that's done, what do they have left? Only you. They will turn to you, because you're all they have. They will love you even while they despise you. They will trust you even though they know you well. They will vote for you even as you squeeze the very breath from their bodies. They will drink what you give them to drink. They will breathe what you give them to breathe. They will live where you dump their belongings. They have to. What else can they do? There's no higher court of redress. You are their mother and their father. You are the judge and the jury. You are the World. You are God.

Power is fortified not just by what it destroys, but also by what it creates. Not just by what it takes, but also by what it gives. And Powerlessness is reaffirmed not just by the helplessness of those who have lost, but also by the gratitude of those who have (or think they have) gained.

This cold, contemporary cast of power is couched between the lines of noble-sounding clauses in democratic-sounding constitutions. It's wielded by the elected representatives of an ostensibly free people. Yet no monarch, no despot, no dictator in any other century in the history of human civilization has had access to weapons like these (2001:135-36).

It seems to me that Roy's is describing a process that results from the nebulous working of modern capital and state craft. For sure, the case of Narmada should be differentiated from and not assumed to be similar to Upper Karnali, but the inability not only to resist these advances of power, but also to find oneself, at the end, in thrall of them, when all the available options to improve one's life require submission and compliance. Subduction, then, is perhaps a better term to explain the cultural dynamics of development in the age of neoliberalism: a resistance flattened by time spent waiting, time spent toiling, time spent increasingly aware that many others, at home and abroad, lead better lives than you and for no appreciably good reason, and under the aegis of an unresponsive state.

This is not to say that UKH will actually, definitely be built. As of this writing, the agreement is less than a year old, and at the actual dam site, very little work has been completed due to a blockade of materials from India into Nepal. But this is to say that if UKH is not built, does go away—again—into the imagination of state officials and Nepali citizens, it probably will not owe much to local resistance. The fault will be found inside the macro-influences of capital forces and transnational politics between Kathmandu, New Delhi, and investors around the globe, the result of

marginalizing neoliberal practices that result in punishing the poor and disenfranchised (Ortner, 2011; Tsing, 2005; Wacquant, 2009 2012).

In Nepali, a pair oft-used expressions are somewhat emblematic of the country's durable outlook. *Ke garne*, usually asked as a question, means "what to do?" It is also often expressed rhetorically as if to ask hopelessly, "what can be done?" *Jindagi yasto chha* means "life is like this" and it is akin to the English expression "That's the way it goes." Exoticizing interpretations of these conversational throw-away lines suggest that they reflect the Buddhist influence in Nepal, a verbal way of distancing oneself from material hardships that vex daily life. More secular, though no less exoticizing, explanations interpret these phrases as reflecting the hearty Nepali attitude of powering through difficult times: "Life is like this, so we go on."

At the end of this chapter, it's difficult not to read these phrases as inscribed on the bodies and implanted in spirits of rural Nepalis who wait. These phrases don't reflect passivity, resignation or quiescence. Rather they speak to an insidious process colonizing their presents and their futures. The people at UKH are not hopeless, but they express little hope in their current situation. It is possible that they exist in a moment of "inbetweenness" when new ideas emerge and engage the general public (Fox & Starn, 1997). While migration may drain rural areas of valuable person power and political presence, it is also possible that these movements could energize rural

populations as people discover, join, and form new social networks (Tarrow, 1993). In this chapter I have only briefly attempted to learn what message residents at UKH absorbed from the raid on the GMR buildings in April 2011. As power and resistance are mutually imbricated in space, identity *and* time, we should not preclude that in spite of past and present circumstance, rural Nepalis will not be responsive to possibility and opportunity in the future.

Conclusion – Wherefore Upper Karnali?



The Karnali river viewed from Bhairabsthan district, across the river from Santalla
(Photo by author).

In the introduction to this dissertation, I referred to UKH as a hybrid object (Forsyth, 2003) that reflects a variety of historic framings and experiences particular to certain actors or society while also having been the subject of scientific study. As such, hybrid objects can function heuristically to reveal the integument that binds different sets of actors to each other or actors with the environment. Similarly, Star and Griesemer (1989) invoke the usefulness of artifacts posed as “boundary objects” which maintain different identities in different social worlds. Boundary objects—such as UKH in the present study, and industrial forestry in Mathews’ study (2008)—can

enable coordination and collaboration among various parties (whose interests may be different), but can also become the focal point of contestation as these same parties employ their visions and “knowledge” to stabilize and/or de-stabilize particular opinions about hydropower in Nepal.

In this work, I have attempted to show how the “object” UKH has occupied a unique interpretive position in the minds of many Nepalis, all of whom desire electricity and development, but who also share a range of incongruent fears and concerns about how that development will proceed. Will the nation’s autonomy be compromised by allowing Indian companies to develop Nepali rivers? Will local residents be given a proper voice to state their claims, but, more importantly, be provided with accurate information about how hydropower will impact their lives? Is electricity generation for export a more preferable or “reasonable” priority at this point in time compared to bringing electrification to the rural areas and ending urban load shedding? Should Nepal vest its development dreams in free market enterprises or renew its hopes for state-led initiatives and programs? What are the prospects for social change in Nepal in an atmosphere where governance seems in near-constant disarray and subaltern voices have been squelched beneath grinding poverty and systematic neglect by the state?

As UKH is not yet built, the parties disputing the configuration of the dam are having battle over determining what will happen “beyond the dam, after the dam, for the

nation.” Whoever is more successful in transmitting that vision and inculcating it into the nation’s vision will emerge victorious. But this is not to say that one party’s victory will be unequivocal or nakedly decisive. Rather, each party is engaged in a dialogic exchange where they are attempting to determine the modes and depths of Nepali development more generally. For example, the gaps in energy demand forecasting and the actual demand (chapter 1) have provided space for both the exigent and deliberative positions to maneuver their ideas about how Nepal can more optimally plan for its future. As such it leaves interesting practical questions yet to be answered:

Will an alternative to the 900MW export model for UKH currently under development emerge?

Will civil society water experts be able to surmount, shape, or influence the aspirations of the private sector to establish their desire for a slower, more holistic vision of hydro development?

Is it possible to suggest that the private sector, at this particular historical conjuncture, is best suited to develop Nepal’s electricity coverage and entry into global markets?

But as I propose these questions, I realize I am falling into a trap of sorts, asking, essentially, “What is to be done?” As Ferguson pointed out more than two decades ago, this question is rife with political assumptions that can easily lead to “answers” that depoliticize social problems and ultimately fail to create the changes to which they aspire (1994:279). However, as an alternative, a critical development perspective, such as Ferguson employs in Lesotho, does not, in his words, provide “an

intellectual and cosmological framework for interpretation [nor a] progressive political program for responding to disastrous economic and social failures” (1999:250). Bruno Latour’s actor-network-theory, then, may offer a perspective that moves through the teleological cul-de-sacs of critical development perspectives (Donovan, 2014). Latour argues that researchers too often seek political relevance, but the social explanations they offer are often particular to individual conjunctures in time and space and within a globalizing world that changes in unpredictable ways (2005). Rather, Latour suggests, social scientists should focus on empirical work that reveals present forces and maps the networks between different populations (human and non-human) that limit connections or create opportunities to advance visions and politics. In other words, I have tried to avoid answering the question “what should be done?” and focused instead on the vectors of power and tension lines (e.g., nationalism, India, free markets v. state-led development) that undergird the politics of hydropower in 2015 Nepal.

This position, I suggest, has been more analytically useful, allowing a more powerful and productive foregrounding of the field of hydropower development in Nepal, and in such a way that science and facts and political positions become just another line of interpretive connection between populations and modes of politics among publics. As I discussed at various points in this dissertation, basin assessments, feasibility studies, and energy forecasting models in Nepal have been unreliable and mosaical—a reality that both the private sector and civil society apprehend and have

sought to exploit accordingly. Exigent parties point to the “hard figures” of load shedding and revenues to be earned from hydropower export. Deliberative parties of hydrodevelopment buttress their claims on the fact that no mega-dam yet exists in Nepal, so they are able to complicate and distress any productive vision of electricity export that exigent parties endorse. As well, cross-border electricity trade with India has yet to begin and deliberative parties have used this impasse to suggest that selling power to India will not produce expected returns, and worse, diminish Nepal’s nascent political stability and aspirations for sovereignty. Exigent parties can point to the number of people living without electricity and years of ineffectiveness by the state to develop an energy base. Thus, by pulling apart these debates, we can see that in Nepal’s hydropower landscape, “nothing is beyond dispute” (2010:478).

Latour’s suggestion to “compose the common world” (2010) has been an important reminder to elaborate the co-constitutive actor-networks that comprise not just hydropower and development, but the “pluriverse” of publics (Corbridge, 1998) that are enmeshed in the current debates about energy. Donovan endorses this approach to development for two reasons that have also been endorsed in this study. 1) “Compose” is an appropriate term because a composition (in terms of development projects) can fail and be re-built and re-designed, which is not something captured well in the teleological approaches to development, which tend to see those projects as ending in and of themselves. For example, a water pump project that ultimately is adopted or abandoned by the local population does not

mean the story ends there. It continues on and informs subsequent projects and the people they are meant to serve. Similarly, this academic project will continue to follow the evolution of UKH and Nepali hydro politics in general. The impacts of this process are still nascent and open for additional influence and change. The game has not been set. 2) Composing the common world provides imperative to include entities outside the collective (2014:882-883). In the case of the current study, this has meant attempt to present not just key actors

This is the point at which Latour's radical call for including non-human objects in the actor-network chain becomes the prime mover within these debates on hydropower. For the key node in every discussion about UKH is the dam itself (the hybrid object; the boundary object), through which all parties (actively or not) express their level of engagement with the country's larger project of development. The object that links the population of Karnali Bend with the civil society and private sector groups in Kathmandu is UKH and we might imagine that chain as an object along which people's desires for development, and for "multiple modernities," are communicated, translated, and interpreted. Within these expressions we can better attend to the conditions that [individuals] themselves regard as modern (Ferguson, 2006:167). Because access to electricity and the mode of that access has as much to do with ideas of membership in Nepali society, modernity, and global markets as it does with improving quality of life and opportunities for economic advancement. As I have attempted to explain in this dissertation, people's views of UKH have more to

say about issues of livelihood security, nationalism, governance, and free markets than they do about hydropower per se.

Returning to Donovan, he astutely notes that ANT ontologically networks everything, however, some things “exist within chains of translation that allow for better ability to meet goals through mobilizing people and resources” (2014:885). This concept is of key importance to development because it disallows the post-development view of emancipation as defined between the opposition between entanglement and autonomy (Latour, 1999), what Latour calls the modernist mistake of conceiving “growth and development without attachment” (2011:76). Instead, Latour’s view focuses not on separation or isolation of proper populations for development interventions, but rather suggests that our attention is better paid to scrutinizing the networks and replacing bad attachments with better ones. As Mosse reminds us, “people become ‘empowered’ not in themselves, but through relationships with outsiders” (2005:218). Electricity and its reliance on grids for transmission and distribution provide a welcome metaphor for envisioning these attachments. But the grid only provides the frame those attachments. It is the quality and shape of those attachments that will enable people to better attain their goals and realize their aspirations. Those attachments will be more fully realized in the coming years as UKH is built or not, is constructed as a 900MW run-of-river or reconfigured as a storage project. This remains the unexpressed heart of the hydropower development debate in Nepal. And, it should be noted, as it was briefly

discussed in chapter 2, poor people desire these attachments on their own terms even if it means joining networks that stir our uneasiness with neoliberal ideas, capitalist production, state control, and modernist enterprises (Ferguson, 2006, 2009; Foucault, 1980a; Scott, 1998).

It is not just UKH that occupies this contested position in Nepali water and energy affairs. This process is being presently repeated across the Nepali waterscape at several sites. Arun III in the east, which was shelved in the late 1990s when the World Bank succumbed to pressure from environmentalists (Rest, 2013), has been revived, the license acquired by an Indian conglomerate. The 750MW West Seti project is in the hands of China International Water and Electric Corporation, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Three Gorges Corporation. The recently proposed 1,200MW Budhi Gandaki Hydroelectric Project has been called the future “Pride of Nepal,” as all of its financing, design, and construction will be domestically produced. For each of these projects, this hydro drama will be played out again, reproduced but with variations on the dominant themes, each of these themes quadrangulated between the state, the private sector, civil society, and local populations. Each one informed and shaped by the projects like UKH that have gone before it.

Regarding the state and its presence in Nepali hydro development, I would like to contend that this dissertation has added fruitfully to discussions about the form and function of the state that fits well within the work already conducted on

water politics, primarily in regard to hydrosocial engineering (Karen Bakker, 2003; McDonald & Pape, 2002). I depart from these previous studies in the sense that I avoid conceiving of the state as a real entity, and attempt extend this work into a consideration of hydropower (Ekers & Loftus, 2008). To do this, I employed Gramsci's concept of the state (1971) as dispersed and centralized and embraced his insistence on studying the state from below (chapter 4) to provide a view of the state that is witnessed in the expressions of rural Nepalis, who have been simultaneously overlooked by the state while still remaining in its thrall. The Nepali state draws its real power in rural areas not from what it does, or how it appears, but by "almost always being there" through a litany of development promises dispensed through local politicians. My future work will look for other settings through which to attempt a comparative study of this setting, at first intra-nationally, but then extending to other nations and regions.

Finally, I think this study provides another example from which to draw stories and evidence about the evolution of free markets and the specific contours of neoliberal ideas in the Nepali context (Lewis, 2009). While the concept neoliberal is a matter of meaningful debate (Centeno & Cohen, 2012; Hilgers, 2013), the progressive or disruptive potential of exposing Nepal to more private investment, of placing more of its infrastructure and development goals in the hands of private entities remains a matter of intense anxiety. As one of my respondents indicated, though Nepal has become increasingly friendly toward foreign investment and free markets,

approximately two-thirds of the parliament belongs to parties that emerged out of the communist tradition: CPN-UML and UCPN-M. These politicians were groomed early to have suspicion of capitalist enterprise, but have now readjusted their views, though not comfortably, to consider private sector solutions for state problems. Through UKH and other hydro schemes, the private sector could prove to be an amenable and even progressive solution to the seemingly intractable presence of corruption and clientilism that has wracked Nepali governance. Should Nepal find itself at that point in the future, this would provide another uneasy example of a neoliberal accomplishment, much like Ferguson's suggestion that cash transfers could, in certain contexts, be an appropriate solution to poverty (2009).

On the other hand, when we view the state of information and livelihoods at the Upper Karnali site, we can also easily envision another development project that results in a reallocation of benefits to communities and parties who were not asked to sacrifice for the gain. Denizens around UKH could meet a fate much like the one million living along the Yangtze River who were moved so that Three Gorges Dam could generate power for those living in far off places like Wuhan, Shanghai, and Hangzhou (Lee, 2013; Qing, 1998). The attempt by those in the private sector to frame Nepali rivers as key to the country's success and democratic future (chapter 2) simultaneously devalue the usefulness of those rivers to those populations living around the dam site. In this way, private hydro developers attempt to create difference in the value of rural areas that might be tapped for hydropower by

invoking old tropes about national destiny and fulfillment. Local residents in this view become impediments to that progress, unwelcome disruptors of that narrative. Similarly, this view of water invoked by private hydro developers repeats the dualistic separation of human from nature (Cronon, 1996), a necessary distinction to make before any action that seeks to assert human dominion over that environment. Local people in this frame are made to appear as inhibiting the natural order of things, their desire for information and need to be relocated treated as unnecessary but obligatory steps before allowing the country to realize its potential (D. Harvey, 1996).

Afterword – For Future Consideration

I formally concluded the data collection for this dissertation in September 2014, just as the project development agreement (PDA) for UKH was signed by the Investment Board of Nepal and the GMR Consortium of India. However, as mentioned several times in this work, UKH is still not built and there remains much about its eventual configuration and construction to be up for debate.

Since the signing of the PDA, several other significant events have transpired and will likely influence the ongoing debates about UKH. In October 2014, Nepal signed a new power trade agreement with India (P. M. Shrestha, 2014) that in the minds of some observers greased the wheels for exigent development of hydropower (R. S. Shrestha, 2014b). As the agreement laid out specific provisions for licensed electricity buyers and sellers to engage in cross-border trade, it would seem the

negotiating parties were giving the private sector silent assent to focus solely on the electricity generation aspect of hydropower and not the irrigation and storage potentials.

In April 2015, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck Nepal, the epicenter 100 miles west of Kathmandu. While immediate attention after the earthquake was given to emergency relief and long-term rehabilitation of living spaces, focus has recently turned again to hydropower and seismicity. As I mentioned in chapter 2, and in other pieces (Rest, Lord, & Butler, 2015), concerns about seismicity and hydropower schemes were relatively absent from interviews, treated more or less as an unavoidable risk, so much so that it didn't merit discussion. Today, that situation has changed. The country has a collective understanding that re-building will be a long-term process that requires energy, but that the means to procure that energy should not be in a position to exacerbate natural disasters like earthquakes. Therefore, most current plans, I have been told, are being reviewed against for strength and durability, not only in the case of an earthquake, but also for anticipated increasing flows as glaciers continue to melt more rapidly in the Himalayas.

Nepal passed a new constitution in September 2015, after a nearly three year process. But in the minds of southern Nepalis, the new legislation contained many provisions that did not include their needs and concerns. Once again, southern Nepalis complained, the hill Brahmins have pushed through their own desires at the

expense of the south (P. Jha, 2015). In response, southern Nepalis—also known as Madhesi—began a several month-long blockade of important highways coming from India to Nepal. Within weeks, Nepalis were running out of medicine and fuel and other important staples. Many Nepalis blamed India for not taking a stronger hand in removing the blockade, which was enough evidence for some to conclude that the blockade was India’s doing. India responded that the issue was a national one for Nepal and they would keep a neutral position until Nepalis could reach an agreement to resolve the blockade on their own (K. Dixit, 2015). The blockade was called off in early February 2016, but the animosity and suspicion it fostered toward India is still simmering. So it seems more than coincidence that this past January, unknown vandals (Staff, 2016) torched GMR’s Kathmandu office.

My future studies of UKH will necessarily have to engage how these events have colored and shaped the hydro aspirations of various parties in Nepal, as well as the Upper Karnali project itself.

Appendix A – Development Timeline of the Upper Karnali Hydroelectric Project³⁶

Date	Event
1962-1966	United Nations hires Nippon Koei, a Japanese engineering firm, to survey the Karnali area to recommend hydropower sites.
1980, 1984	<p>Water and Energy Commission Secretariat (WECS) of Nepal prepares report on the Karnali area for purposes of hydropower generation.</p> <p>Later, after ranking potential hydropower sites in Karnali, they recommend investigation of the Karnali Bend site to the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which had commenced a study of the entire Karnali basin, including a potential 10,000 MW hydropower site south of Karnali Bend at Chisapani.</p>
1986-1989	Himalayan Power Consultants conduct feasibility at study for the Karnali Bend site, commissioned by the World Bank. Based on Nepal’s internal power demands at the time, they recommend a 240MW power plant. This site will later be referred to as Upper Karnali.
1997-1998	The Nepal Electricity Authority, with funding from the World Bank, commissions Canadian International Water and Energy Consultants (CIWEC) to conduct another feasibility study and environmental impact assessment for the Upper Karnali site. The report cites Upper Karnali as a 300MW project.
December 2006	Water Resources Minister, Gyanendra Bahadur Karki, opens global bidding for UKH. In the request for proposals, Karki writes, “as the country cannot consume this amount of power, the developers

³⁶ These events have been documented and corroborated through government publications checked against media reports.

	would have to find the market,” suggesting that an award would necessarily have to focus on export.
January 2008	<p>GMR Consortium from India, a privately-owned infrastructure company, is awarded a license to develop the Upper Karnali Hydroelectric project (Muni). The Italian-Thai Development Company (ITD) is a minority-partner in the project. The MOU between GMR and the government of Nepal (GoN) states UKH will be built as a run-of-river project solely for electricity production.</p> <p>Key points of the UKH MOU state:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. GoN will receive a 27% equity stake and 12% free energy. 2. GMR retains the remainder 73% stake and exports 88% of the electricity produced to India. 3. UKH will be built for a 300MW generation potential. <p>The UCPN-Maoist party holds press conference in Surkhet to warn against going forward with UKH.</p>
December 2009	MoE approves capacity upgrade of UKH from 300MW to 900MW.
February 2010	Himal Hydro begins constructing 30 meter tunnels at UKH site.
April 2010	Indian hydro investors, including GMR, meet with GoN to request a security guarantee. At this meeting, GMR pledges to complete UKH by 2016.
September 2010	<p>UKH detailed project report completed.</p> <p>UCPN-Maoists ask GoN to shelve all hydropower projects being developed by Indian companies on the basis of Article 156, which states that a two-thirds majority is necessary for passage of treaties relating to natural resources. Ram Sharan Mahat, the Minister of Energy and member of the Nepal Congress party says only projects on the border of India and Nepal that involve distributing benefits between the two countries require parliamentary approval. The injunction fails.</p>

	<p>The Department of Electricity Development in Nepal claims project development agreements (PDA) for seven hydro projects, including UKH, will be completed within the month.</p> <p>GMR meets with the Ministry of Energy (MoE) to request a 35-year build-own-operate-transfer (BOOT) period for UKH. Per the Hydropower Act of 2001, export projects will be granted a 30-year BOOT only. GMR also requests to begin infrastructure work prior to receiving its generation license and financial closure to insure completion of the project within three years, as required by GoN. No progress or resolution of these issues is announced.</p>
December 2010	PDA talks between GoN and GMR resume.
April 2011	<p>UCPN-Maoist members disrupt a GMR public-information program in Dailekh at the dam site.</p> <p>Vandals ransack and torch a GMR building at the UKH dam site. The vandals would later be identified as members of the Mohan Baidya faction of the UCPN-Maoist party, which maintained a program of obstruction for all Indian-built infrastructure in Nepal.</p>
June 2011	<p>GoN approves deployment of Army troops to secure the UKH site. The UCPN-Maoist party says its party members within the Army will not be allowed to be sent for this work detail.</p> <p>Eighteen sister parties to the UCPN-Maoists declare to join agitation of Nepal Army dispatched to UKH.</p>
August 2011	Baburam Bhattaraj, co-leader of the Maoist rebels during the Civil War (1996-2006) and head of UCPN-Maoist party, is elected Prime Minister of Nepal.
September 2011	Bahadur Bogati (UCPN-Maoists) appointed as Energy Minister. He claims foreign investment necessary to hydropower development in Nepal. His comments suggest an internecine struggle between hardlines and pragmatists in the party.

	<p>The Investment Board Act of Nepal 2068 is passed by the interim-legislature to form the Investment Board of Nepal (IBN). IBN is charged with promoting “economic development of the country by creating an investment-friendly environment by means of mobilizing and managing public-private partnership, cooperative and domestic and foreign private investments, for making the process of industrialization orderly and rapid, for the development of infrastructure and other sectors to create employment opportunities, and to offer meaningful contribution to poverty alleviation.”</p>
October 2011	<p>Prime Minister Bhattarai calls for foreign investors to develop hydropower projects in Nepal.</p>
January 2012	<p>MoE fast tracks the UKH PDA.</p>
February 2012	<p>UCPN-Maoist members in Dailekh burn Prime Minister Bhattarai in effigy, calling for, among other things, UKH to be developed and operated locally.</p>
March 2012	<p>Asian Development Bank expresses concerns about project start-up delays, citing UKH as an example.</p> <p>UCPN-Maoist Secretary C.P. Gajurel disowns his party.</p>
April 2012	<p>MoE announces that UKH PDA could be signed within the month.</p> <p>MoE recommends giving seven percent of Nepal’s 27% free equity stake in UKH to be given to locals.</p> <p>Prime Minister Bhattarai directs MoE to hand over UKH PDA negotiations to the newly-formed IBN. He also states that all hydropower projects over 500MW will be supervised by IBN. The move is seen by many as a slight to MoE. The MoE perceives it as such.</p>
June 2012	<p>IBN approves a new PDA template, drafted with assistance from Herbert Smith Freehills, a London-based law firm, supported in</p>

	<p>the effort by Britain’s Department for International Development and the World Bank.</p> <p>Two-thousand local residents rally in support of UKH at the dam site.</p> <p>GMR pledges to spent \$15.7 million USD for developing the UKH area, including a 30-bed hospital, higher secondary school, and a technical school.</p> <p>UCPN-Maoist vice-chairman, Mohan Baidya, announces the formation of the CPN-Maoist (CPN-M) party. In his speech, he accuses UCPN-Maoist leaders, Baburam Bhattarai and Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) of destroying the achievements of the “People’s War” from 1996-2006. CPN-M maintains a staunch opposition to foreign-backed infrastructure development (particularly India) and the export of electricity to India prior to solving the energy crisis in Nepal.</p>
<p>September 2010</p>	<p>CPN-Maoist party sends 70-point demand to Prime Minister Bhattarai. In 1996, Bhattarai, then the head of the nascent Maoist movement in Nepal, authored a 40-point demand to the Government of Nepal.</p> <p>IBN approves GMR’s environmental impact assessment (EIA).</p>
<p>October 2012</p>	<p>Three transnational hydropower developers, including GMR, oppose the new PDA template introduced by the IBN in June. A source in the IBN said the three companies claim their work in the country preceded the introduction of the template and thus these companies should “not have the template’s provisions... imposed on them.” At issue, in particular, is a <i>force majeure</i> clause that the companies should be applicable political and bureaucratic obstacles, as well as natural disasters.</p>
<p>November 2012</p>	<p>IBN announces PDA negotiations will be pushed back a month.</p>

<p>December 2012</p>	<p>IBN tells the National Information Commission that the PDA template, which had been approved in June 2012, has not been approved. The about-face suggests that hydro developers complaints voiced in October 2012 have been successful in bringing about their sought-after.</p> <p>GMR's license for UKH, set to expire after three years per Nepali law, is extended to accommodate the lengthy negotiation process.</p>
<p>February 2013</p>	<p>IBN announces that they will produce separate PDAs for export projects and domestic use projects.</p>
<p>March 2013</p>	<p>GoN introduces a project negotiation agreement (PNA) which sets an 18-month limit on PDA negotiations as a means to "bring developers within [a] time frame" for finalizing contract terms.</p> <p>Prime Minister Bhattarai replaced by sitting Chief Justice Khil Raj Regmi. Bhattarai's departure was in response to a political deadlock in the first Constituent Assembly in May 2012.</p>
<p>June 2013</p>	<p>The Supreme Court stays the PDA negotiations between IBN and GMR in response to a petition filed by 29 individuals of the affected districts around UKH. With the petition, the plaintiffs attempt to invalidate the project by saying GMR failed to start the project within three months of signing the 2008 MOU, which is still the presiding ruling document at this time. Furthermore, they claim the government's decision to upgrade the project from 300MW to 900MW lacked transparency, and express concerns that the project may bar Nepalis from using water resources without prior consent of the developer.</p>
<p>August 2013</p>	<p>Supreme Court lifts its stay order on UKH, clearing the way for PDA negotiations.</p>
<p>October 2013</p>	<p>Constituent Assembly elections held to draft a new constitution, a necessary prerequisite to re-establishing a parliament, the last one dissolved in January 2007. Since then, the legislature of Nepal</p>

	has been interim status, which explains why much Nepali legislation requires updating.
January 2014	GMR announces it seeks equity partners for UKH. IBN says UKH PDA is “80% complete.”
February 2014	GMR sells a 49% stake in UKH to Electricité de France (EDF).
March 2014	IBN says UKH PDA finished within a month.
July 2014	IBN announces UKH PDA negotiations in the final stage.
September 2014	IBN Board approves the UKH PDA.
December 2014	The International Finance Corporation (IFC) announces intent to purchase a 10% share in UKH.
January 2015	GMR and Nepal’s Department of Irrigation complete study to determine downstream effects of UKH on downstream projects.
February 2015	Petition filed against UKH in the Supreme Court. The writ cites Article 156 of Nepal’s interim constitution which requires a two-thirds majority for passage of treaties relating to natural resources.

WORKS CITED

- Abdelal, R. (2007). The rules of global finance: causes and consequences. In R. Abdelal (Ed.), *Capital Rules: The Construction of Global Finance*, (pp. 23-42). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Abrams, P. (1988). Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State (1977). *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 1(1), 58-89. doi:10.1111/j.1467-6443.1988.tb00004.x
- Abu-Lughod, L. (1990). The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power through Bedouin Women. *American Ethnologist*, 17(1), 41-55.
- Adhikari, A. (2012). Revolution by Other Means: The Transformation of Nepal's Maoists in a Time of Peace. In S. v. Einsiedel, D. M. Malone, & S. Pradhan (Eds.), *Nepal in Transition: From People's War to Fragile Peace*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Adhikari, K. P., & Goldey, P. (2009). Social Capital and its "Downside": The Impact on Sustainability of Induced Community-Based Organizations in Nepal. *World Development*, 38(2), 184-194. doi:10.1016/j.worlddev.2009.10.012
- Adhikari, P. (2011, June 13, 2011). 900MW Upper Karnali Project: Maoist Leaders Warn Government over Contract. *Kathmandu Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2011/06/13/nation/900-mw-upper-karnali-project-maoist-leaders-warn-govt-over-contract/222830.html>
- Aditjondro, G., & Kowalewski, D. (1994). Damning the Dams in Indonesia: A Test of Competing Perspectives. *Asian Survey*, 34(4), 381-395. doi:10.2307/2645145
- Agrawal, A. (2005). *Environmentality: Technologies of Government and the Making of Subjects*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Ahmed, I., & Umar, R. (2008). Hydrogeological framework and water balance studies in parts of Krishna–Yamuna interstream area, Western Uttar Pradesh, India. *Environmental Geology*, 53(8), 1723-1730. doi:10.1007/s00254-007-0778-7
- Alatout, S. (2010). *Water multiple in Israeli politics*. Paper presented at the Environmental Politics Workshop, Berkeley, CA.

<http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/bwep/colloquium/papers/Alatout-berkeley%20alternative%20introduction%20and%20framework.pdf>

- Aldridge, A. (1993). Negotiating Status: Social Scientists and Anglican Clergy. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 22(1), 97-112.
- Althusser, L. (1971). *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Appadurai, A. (1990). Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 7, 295-310.
- Arora, V. (2009). 'They are All Set to Dam(n) Our Future': Contested Development through Hydel Power in Democratic Sikkim. *Sociological Bulletin*, 58(1), 94-114. doi:10.2307/23620837
- Auyero, J. (2010a). Chuck and Pierre at the Welfare Office. *Sociological Forum*, 4, 851-860.
- Auyero, J. (2010b). Chuck and Pierre at the Welfare Office. *Sociological Forum*, 25(4), 851-860. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40927649>
- Auyero, J. (2011). Patients of the State: An Ethnographic Account of Poor People's Waiting. *Latin American Research Review*, 46(1), 5-29.
- Auyero, J. (2012). *Patients of the State: the Politics of Waiting in Argentina*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Auyero, J., & Swistun, D. (2009). Tiresias in Flammable Shantytown: Toward a Tempography of Domination. *Sociological Forum*, 24(1), 1-21. doi:10.1111/j.1573-7861.2008.01084.x
- Ayres, R., & Warr, B. (2009). *The Economic Growth Engine: How Energy and Work Drive Material Prosperity*. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.
- Bajracharya, B. B. (1995). Dhukuti System: A Preliminary Study. *Unpublished report submitted to GTZ-SFDP, Kathmandu*.

- Bakker, K. (1999). The politics of hydropower: developing the Mekong. *Political Geography*, 18(2), 209-232. doi:[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298\(98\)00085-7](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298(98)00085-7)
- Bakker, K. (2003). Archipelagos and Networks: Urbanization and Water Privatization in the South. *The Geographical Journal*, 169(4), 328-341. doi:10.2307/3451572
- Bakker, K. (2003). *An Uncooperative Commodity: Privatizing Water in England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bakker, K. (2012). Water: Political, biopolitical, material. *Social Studies of Science*, 42(4), 616-623. doi:10.1177/0306312712441396
- Bank, T. W. (2012). *Ganges Strategic Basin Assessment: A Discussion of Regional Opportunities and Risks*. Retrieved from Kathmandu, Nepal:
- Bank, W. (2014). Hydropower. Retrieved from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/hydropower>
- Bank, W. (2015). *GDP Growth (Annual %)*. Retrieved from: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG>
- Bastian, M. (2013). Political Apologies and the Question of a 'Shared Time' in the Australian Context. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 30(5), 94-121.
- Bastian, M. L. (2003). "Diabolic Realities": Narratives of Conspiracy, Transparency, and "Ritual Murder" in Nigerian Popular Print and Electronic Media. In T. Sanders & H. G. West (Eds.), *Transparency and Conspiracy: Ethnographies of Suspicion in the New World Order*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Bauman, Z. (2013). *Liquid times: Living in an age of uncertainty*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Baviskar, A. (1997). *In the Belly of the River: Tribal Conflicts over Development in the Narmada Valley*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Baviskar, A. (Ed.) (2007). *Waterscapes: The Cultural Politics of a Natural Resource*. New Delhi: Permanent Black.

- Bayat, A. (1998). *Street Politics: Poor People's Movements in Iran*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bhatia, R., Cestti, R., Scatasta, M., & Malik, R. P. S. (Eds.). (2005). *Indirect Economic Impacts of Dams: Case Studies from India, Egypt and Brazil*. Washington DC: The World Bank.
- Bhattarai, B. (1996). 40 Point Demand. Retrieved from <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/nepal/document/papers/40points.htm>
- Bhattarai, B. (2001, June 21, 2001). The Letter of Dr. Baburam Bhattarai on the Palace Massacre in Nepal. *Monthly Review*.
- Bijker, W., Hughes, T., & Pinch, T. (1987). *The Social Construction of Technological Systems: New Directions in Sociology and History of Technology*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Bisht, M. (2008). *Revisiting the Kosi Agreement: Lessons for Indo-Nepal Water Diplomacy*. Retrieved from New Delhi: http://www.idsa.in/idsastrategiccomments/RevisitingtheKosiAgreement_Mehta%20Bisht_220908
- Bista, D. B. (1991). *Fatalism and Development: Nepal's Struggle for Modernisation*. Calcutta: Orient Longman.
- Blaikie, P. (1985). *Political Ecology of Soil Erosion* (1st ed. Vol. Longman Development Studies). London: Routledge.
- Blaikie, P. M., & Muldavin, J. S. S. (2004). Upstream, Downstream, China, India: The Politics of Environment in the Himalayan Region. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 94(3), 520-548. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8306.2004.00412.x
- Blatter, J., & Ingram, H. (Eds.). (2001). *Reflections on Water New Approaches to Transboundary Conflicts and Cooperation*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Blyth, M. (2002). *Great Transformations: Economic Ideas and Institutional Change in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Boleman, R., Butler, C., & Cihak, M. (Writers). (2008). *Echoes of Cry of the Marsh* [DVD]. Morris, MN: University of Minnesota, Morris.
- Bourdieu, P. (2000). *Pascalian Meditations*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (2004). *The Science of Science and Reflexivity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. (1999). On the cunning of imperialist reason. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 16, 41-58.
- Brass, T. (1991). Moral Economists, Subalterns, New Social Movements and the (Re-) Emergence of a (Post-) Modernized (Middle) Peasant. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 18(2), 173-205.
- Brenner, N., Peck, J., & Theodore, N. (2009). Variegated neoliberalization: geographies, modalities, pathways *Global Networks*, 10(2), 182-222.
- Briscoe, J. (2010). Viewpoint – Overreach and Response The Politics of the WCD and its Aftermath. *Water Alternatives*, 3(2), 399-415.
- Brown, M. F. (1996). On Resisting Resistance. *American Anthropologist*, 98(4), 729-735. doi:10.2307/681880
- Brown, P. H., Tullos, D., Tilt, B., Magee, D., & Wolf, A. T. (2009). Modeling the costs and benefits of dam construction from a multidisciplinary perspective. *J Environ Manage*, 90 Suppl 3, S303-311. doi:10.1016/j.jenvman.2008.07.025
- Bryant, R. L. (1997). Beyond the Impasse: The Power of Political Ecology in Third World Environmental Research. *Area*, 29(1), 5-19. doi:10.2307/20003756
- Budds, J. (2013). Water, power, and the production of neoliberalism in Chile, 1973-2005. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 31(2), 301-318. doi:10.1068/d9511
- Butler, C. (2014). Hydropower Development in Nepal: Five Month Reflections. *Hydro Nepal*, 14, 8-9. Retrieved from <http://www.nepjol.info/index.php/HN/article/view/11244/9118>

- Callon, M., Lascoumes, P., & Barthe, Y. (2011). *Acting in an Uncertain World: an Essay on Technical Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Centeno, M. A., & Cohen, J. N. (2012). The Arc of Neoliberalism. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 38(1), 317-340. doi:10.1146/annurev-soc-081309-150235
- Chambers, R. (1994). Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): Analysis of Experience. *World Development*, 22(9), 1253-1268.
- Chambers, R. (1995). Poverty and livelihoods: whose reality counts? *Environment and Urbanization*, 7(1), 173-204. doi:10.1177/095624789500700106
- Chatterjee, P. (2004). *The Politics of the Governed*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Chester, K. (2011, May 27, 2011). Dipendra kicked his father after he shot him. *Nepali Times*.
- Chintan, G. S., & Shrestha, N. (2005). *Dams in Nepal Ensuring Compliance*. Kathmandu, Nepal: IUCN-The World Conservation Union Nepal, and Water and Energy Users' Federation-Nepal (WAFED).
- CIWEC, C. I. W. a. E. C. (1998). *Upper Karnali EIA Executive Summary and Main Report*. Retrieved from Kathmandu, Nepal:
- Collier, S. J. (2012). Neoliberalism as big Leviathan, or ... ? A response to Wacquant and Hilgers. *Social Anthropology*, 20(2), 186-195. doi:10.1111/j.1469-8676.2012.00195.x
- Comaroff, J., & Comaroff, J. (2000). Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming. *Public Culture*, 12(2), 291-343.
- Comaroff, J., & Comaroff, J. (2002). Alien Nation: Zombies, Immigrants, and Millennial Capitalism. *south Atlantic Quarterly*, 101(4), 779-805.
- Comaroff, J., & Comaroff, J. L. (1999). Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstraction: Notes from the South African Postcolony. *American Ethnologist*, 26(2), 279-303. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/647285>

- Corbridge, S. (1998). "Beneath the Pavement Only Soil": The Poverty of "Post-development". *The Journal of Development Studies*, 34(6), 138-148.
- Cronon, W. (1996). *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. New York: WW Norton and Company.
- Crow, B., & Singh, N. (2000). Impediments and Innovation in International Rivers: The Waters of South Asia. *World Development*, 28(11), 1907-1925.
- Cummings, B. (1987). The Origins and Development of the Northeast Asian Political Economy: Industrial Sectors, Product Cycles, and Political Consequences. In F. Deyo (Ed.), *The Political Economy of New Asian Industrialism* (pp. 44-83). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- D'Souza, R. (2006). *Drowned and Dammed*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- D'Souza, R. (2008). Framing India's Hydraulic Crises the Politics of the Modern Large Dam. *Monthly Review*, 60(3), 112-124.
- Dams, T. W. C. o. (2000). *Dams and Development: a New Framework for Decision-Making*. Retrieved from London:
- Dao, N. (2010). Dam Development in Vietnam The Evolution of Dam-Induced Resettlement Policy. *Water Alternatives*, 3(2), 324-340.
- de Certeau, M. (1984). *The Practice of Everyday Life* (S. Rendall, Trans.). Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press.
- Delaney, D., & Leitner, H. (1997). The political construction of scale. *Political Geography*, 16(2), 93-97.
- Delang, C. O., Toro, M., & Charlet-Phommachanh, M. (2013). Coffee, mines and dams: conflicts over land in the Bolaven Plateau, southern Lao PDR. *The Geographical Journal*, 179(2), 150-164. doi:10.1111/j.1475-4959.2012.00481.x
- Dhakal, P. (2012, March 10, 2012). Parliament to Probe West Seti MOU. *Republica*. Retrieved from

http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=32655

Dharmadhikary, S. (2008). *Mountains of Concrete: Dam Building in the Himalayas*. Berkeley, CA: International Rivers.

Dhungel, D. (2004). Nepal-India Water Resources Relationship: Looking Ahead. *Observer Research Foundation, India-Nepal Relations: The Challenge Ahead*, Rupa, New Delhi, 187.

Dhungel, D. N. (2011). Nepal's Hydropower Potential. *Climate Himalaya*.
<http://chimalaya.org/2011/08/31/nepals-hydro-power-potential/> Retrieved from <http://chimalaya.org/2011/08/31/nepals-hydro-power-potential/>

Dhungel, D. N., & Butler, C. (2015a). *Water Resource Cooperation between Nepal and India: What Persists?* Journal article. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies. Kolkata.

Dhungel, D. N., & Butler, C. (2015b). *Water Resource Cooperation between Nepal and India: What Persists? (forthcoming)*. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies. Kolkata, India.

Dhungel, D. N., & Pun, S. B. (Eds.). (2008). *The Nepal-India Water Relationship: Challenges*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Springer.

Dhungel, K. R. (2011, September 27, 2011). Hydropower Development: Challenges and Opportunities, Editorial. *The Himalayan Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Hydropower+development&NewsID=304093>

Dhungel, K. R. (2012, May 20, 2012). Hydropower Development: How and for Whom? *The Himalayan Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Hydropower+development+How+and+for+whom%3F&NewsID=332798>

Dixit, A., & Gyawali, D. (2010). Nepal's Constructive Dialogue on Dams and Development. *Water Alternatives*, 3(2), 106-123.

Dixit, K. (2007, July 6, 2007). White Gold. *Nepali Times*.

- Dixit, K. (2015). Calling a Blockade a Spade. Retrieved from <http://nepalitimes.com/blogs/kundadixit/2015/12/02/calling-a-blockade-a-spade/>
- Donovan, K. P. (2014). 'Development' as if We Have Never Been Modern: Fragments of a Latourian Development Studies. *Development & Change*, 45(5), 869-894. doi:10.1111/dech.12117
- Dreyfus, H., & Rabinow, P. (1983). *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ekers, M., & Loftus, A. (2008). The power of water: developing dialogues between Foucault and Gramsci. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 26(4), 698-718. Retrieved from <http://www.envplan.com/abstract.cgi?id=d5907>
- Engels, F. (2010). *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (M. Harris Ed.): Marxists.org.
- Escobar, A. (1995). *Encountering Development: the Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Fairhead, J., & Leach, M. (1996). *Misreading the African Landscape: Society and Ecology in Forest-Savanna Mosaic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fenster, M. (1999). *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Ferguson, J. (1994). *The Anti-Politics Machine: Development, Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Ferguson, J. (1999). *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copper Belt*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
- Ferguson, J. (2006). *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Ferguson, J. (2009). The Uses of Neoliberalism. *Antipode*, 41, 166-184. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8330.2009.00721.x

- Fisher, W. F. (Ed.) (1995). *Toward Sustainable Development: Struggling over India's Narmada River*. London: M.E. Sharpe.
- Fletcher, R. (2001). What are we fighting for? Rethinking resistance in a Pewenche community in Chile. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 28(3), 37-66.
doi:10.1080/03066150108438774
- <For a New Economics of Resettlement a Sociological Critique of the Compensation Principle (Cernea 2004).pdf>.
- Forbes, A. A. (1999). The importance of being local: Villagers, NGOs, and the world bank in the Arun valley, Nepal. *Identities*, 6(2-3), 319-344.
doi:10.1080/1070289x.1999.9962647
- Forsyth, T. (2003). *Critical Political Ecology: The Politics of Environmental Science*. London: Routledge.
- Foucault, M. (1979). *Discipline and Punish*. New York: Vintage.
- Foucault, M. (1980a). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (C. Gordon Ed.). New York: Pantheon.
- Foucault, M. (1980b). Two Lectures. In C. Gordon (Ed.), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (pp. 78-108). New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foundation, N. F. a. T. A. (2011). *Catalysing Rapid Hydropower Development in Nepal: Understanding Underlying Constraints and Engaging Reform Constituencies*. Retrieved from Kathmandu, Nepal:
- Fouquet, R. (2008). *Heat, Power and Light: Revolutions in Energy Services*. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.
- Fox, R. G., & Starn, O. (Eds.). (1997). *Bewteen Resistance and Revolution: Cultural Politics and Social Protest*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Fujikura, T. (2003). The Role of Collective Imagination in the Maoist Conflict in Nepal. *Himalaya*, 23(1), 21-30.

- Galliher, J. F. (1980). Social Scientists' Ethical Responsibilities to Superordinates: Looking Upward Meekly. *Social Problems*, 27(3), 298-308.
- Gangol, P. (2014). Foreign Direct Investment in Nepal's Hydropower Development. *Hydro Nepal: Journal of Water, Energy and Environment*, 14, 41-42.
- Garland, D. (2002). *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gaventa, J. (1982). *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence & Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Gaztambide-Fernández, R. A., & Howard, A. (2012). Access, Status, and Representation: Some Reflections from Two Ethnographic Studies of Elite Schools. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 43(3), 289-305. doi:10.1111/j.1548-1492.2012.01181.x
- Georgescu-Roegen, N. (1971). *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ghosh, K. (2006). Between Global Flows and Local Dams: Indigenoussness, Locality, and the Transnational Sphere in Jharkhand, India. *Cultural Anthropology*, 21(4), 501-534. doi:10.1525/can.2006.21.4.501
- Giddens, A. (1990). *The consequences of modernity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Gilding, M. (2002). *Secrets of the Super Rich*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Glasson, J., Therivel, R., & Chadwick, A. (2013). *Introduction to environmental impact assessment*: Routledge.
- Glyn, A. (2006). *Capitalism Unleashed: Finance, Globalization, and Welfare*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Goldberg, C. A. (2008). *Citizens and Paupers: Relief, Rights, and Race, from the Freedman's Bureau to Welfare*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- GoN, G. o. N. (2008). *MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING between The Government of Nepal, represented by Ministry of Water Resources and GMR-ITD Consortium, concerning the Execution of Upper Karnali Hydropower Project in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Government of Nepal.
- Goodland, R. (2010). The World Bank Versus the World Commission on Dams. *Water Alternatives*, 3(2), 384-398.
- Gould, D. (2011, February 1, 2011) *Class Lecture*. Classical Sociological Theory, Santa Cruz, CA.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. New York: International Publishers.
- Gramsci, A. (1985). *Selections from Cultural Writings* (W. Boelhower, Trans. D. Forgacs & G. N. Smith Eds.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gupta, A. (1997). *Postcolonial Developments: Agriculture in the Making of India*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Gupta, A., & Aradhana Sharma. (2006). Globalization and Postcolonial States. *Current Anthropology*, 47(2), 277-307. doi:10.1086/499549
- Gusterson, H. (1997). Studying Up Revisited. *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, 20(1), 114-119. doi:10.1525/pol.1997.20.1.114
- Guzmán, S. G. (2014). *"I have to believe:" Motivated Reasoning and Movement Participation among Chilean Housing Debtors*. New School for Social Research. New York, NY.
- Gyawali, D. (2013). Reflecting on the Chasm Between Water Punditry and Water Politics. *Water Alternatives*, 6(2), 177-194.
- Gyawali, D., & Dixit, A. (1999). Mahakali Impasse and Indo-Nepal Water Conflict. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34(9), 553-564. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4407709>
- Gyawali, D., & Dixit, A. (2000). Mahakali impasse: A futile paradigm's bequested travails. *Domestic conflicts and crisis of governability in Nepal*, 236-304.

- Gyawali, D., & Schwank, O. (1994). Interstate Sharing of Water Rights—An Alps Himalaya Comparison. *Water Nepal*, 4(1), 228-236.
- Hall, A., & Branford, S. (2012). Development, Dams and Dilma: the Saga of Belo Monte. *Critical Sociology*, 38(6), 851-862. doi:10.1177/0896920512440712
- Hall, S. (1987). Gramsci and Us. *Marxism Today*, 8, 16-21.
- Hansen, T. B., & Stepputat, F. (2001). States of Imagination: Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State.
- Harris, L. M. (2006). Irrigation, gender, and social geographies of the changing waterscapes of southeastern Anatolia. *Environment and Planning D*, 24(2), 187-213.
- Harvey, D. (1996). *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*. London: Blackwell Publishing.
- Harvey, D. (2003). *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harvey, D. (2004). The 'New' Imperialism: Accumulation by Dispossession. *Socialist Register*, 40, 63-87.
- Harvey, D. (2005). *A brief introduction to neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harvey, D. C. (2012). A Quiet Suffering: Some Notes on the Sociology of Suffering. *Sociological Forum*, 27(2), 527-534.
- Hayter, R., & Barnes, T. J. (2012). Neoliberalization and Its Geographic Limits: Comparative Reflections from Forest Peripheries in the Global North. *Economic Geography*, 88(2), 197-221. doi:10.1111/j.1944-8287.2011.01143.x
- Helliwell, J. F. (1988). Comparative macroeconomics of stagflation. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 26(1), 1-28.
- Henisz, W., Zelner, B., & Guillen, M. (2005). The Worldwide Diffusion of Market-Oriented Infrastructure Reform, 1977-1999. *American Sociological Review*, 70(6), 871-897.

- Herzfeld, M. (1997). *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation State*. New York: Routledge.
- Herzfeld, M. (2006). Spatial Cleansing: Monumental Vacuity and the Idea of the West. *The Journal of Material Culture*, 11, 127-149.
- Hetherington, K. (2012). Agency, Scale, and the Ethnography of Transparency. *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, 35(2), 242-247.
- Heynan, N., & Robbins, P. (2005). The neoliberalization of nature: governance, privatization, enclosure and valuation. *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, 16, 1-4.
- Hilgers, M. (2013). Embodying Neoliberalism: Thoughts and Responses to Critics. *Social Anthropology*, 21(1), 75-89.
- His Majesty's Government, N. H. (1990). *Article 126 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal*. Kathmandu: His Majesty's Government, Nepal.
- HPC, H. P. C. (1989). *The Upper Karnali Hydropower Project -- Prefeasibility Study of the Karnali Bend Site KR1A*. Retrieved from Kathmandu, Nepal:
- Humagain, M. (2011, April 21, 2011). Krishna seeks protection of Indian investment. *Kathmandu Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2011/04/21/top-story/krishna-seeks-protection-of-indian-investment/220850.html>
- Hutt, M. (2004). Introduction: Monarchy, Democracy, and Maoism in Nepal. In M. Hutt (Ed.), *Himalayan People's War: Nepal's Maoist Rebellion* (pp. 1-20). London: Hurst & Company.
- Islar, M. (2012). Privatised Hydropower Development in Turkey Case of Water Grabbing. *Water Alternatives*, 5(2), 376-391.
- Iyer, R. R. (1989). Large Dams: The Right Perspective. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 24(39), A107-A116. doi:10.2307/4395391
- Jessop, B. (2002). Liberalism, neoliberalism, and urban governance: A state-theoretical perspective. *Antipode*, 34, 452-472.

- Jessop, B. (2010). The 'return' of the national state in the current crisis of the world market. *Capital & Class*, 34(1), 38-43. doi:10.1177/0309816809353480
- Jha, H. B. (2011, October 26, 2011). Outcome of PM Bhattarai's India Visit: Economic Diplomacy Takes Root. *The Himalayan Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Outcome+of+P+M+Bhattarai%27s+India+visit++&NewsID=307047>
- Jha, P. (2015, September 28, 2015) *Understanding Nepal's Constitutional Crisis: A Conversation With Prashant Jha/Interviewer: S. Kumar*. The Diplomat, New Delhi.
- Jodha, N. (2008). Rural commons and livelihood strategies in dry regions of India. *The European Journal of Development Research*, 20(4), 597-611. doi:10.1080/09578810802464896
- Joseph, G. M., & Nugent, D. (Eds.). (1994). *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Juris, J. (2007). Practicing Militant Ethnography with the Movement for Global Resistance in Barcelona. In E. Biddle, D. Graeber, & S. Shukaitas (Eds.), *Constituent Imagination: Militant Investigations, Collective Theorization* (pp. 11-34). Edinburgh: AK Press.
- Kaika, M. (2003). Constructing scarcity and sensationalising water politics: 170 days that shook Athens. *Antipode*, 35(5), 919-954.
- Kaika, M. (2006). Dams as Symbols of Modernization: The Urbanization of Nature between Geographical Imagination and Materiality. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 96(2), 276-301. doi:10.2307/3694048
- Karmacharya, J. L. (2007). Maximizing Benefits from Hydropower A Nepal Case. *Hydro Nepal*(1), 29-34.
- Karmacharya, S. B. (2012). Lessons to Be Learned from the Experience of Electricity Reforms in India. *Hydro Nepal*(11), 29-36.

- Keeley, B. L. (1999). Of conspiracy theories. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 96(3), 109-126.
- Kelley, R. D. G. (1994). *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*. New York: Free Press.
- Kellner, D. (1995). *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics Between the Modern and the Postmodern*. New York: Routledge.
- Kendall, L. (2014). *Shamans, Nostalgias, and the IMF: South Korean Popular Religion in Motion*. University of Hawai'i Press: Honolulu, HI.
- Khadka, N. (2003, August 8, 2003). The Mother of All Floods. *Nepali Times*.
- Khadka, N. (2004, August 13, 2004). Indian Handshake. *Nepali Times*.
- Khadka, R. (2015, January 14, 2014). Karnali Highway Still Unfinished Business 7 Years On. *My Republica*. Retrieved from http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=67917
- Khagram, S. (2004). *Dams and Development: Transnational Struggles for Water and Power*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- King, H. (2015). Convergent Plate Boundaries. Retrieved from <http://geology.com/nsta/convergent-plate-boundaries.shtml>
- Klingensmith, D. (2003). Building India's 'Modern Temples': Indians and Americans in the Damodar Valley Corporation, 1945-60 *Regional Modernities: The Cultural Politics of Development in India*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Lamb, A. (1986). *British India and Tibet, 1766-1910*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Latour, B. (1988). The Prince for Machines as Well as for Machinations. In B. Elliot (Ed.), *Technology and Social Change* (pp. 20-43). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University of Press.
- Latour, B. (1999). "Factures/Fractures": From the Concept of Network to the Concept of Attachment. *RES: Anthropology & Aesthetics*, 36, 21-31.

- Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the Social: an Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Latour, B. (2010). An Attempt at a "Compositionist Manifesto". *New Literary History*, 41, 471-490.
- Latour, B. (2011). Politics of Nature: East and West Perspectives. *Ethics and Global Politics*, 4(1), 71-80.
- Lee, Y. C. B. (2013). Global Capital, National Development and Transnational Environmental Activism: Conflict and the Three Gorges Dam. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 43(1), 102-126. doi:10.1080/00472336.2012.739933
- Lewis, N. (2009). Progressive spaces of neoliberalism? *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 50, 113-119.
- Li, T. M. (1999). Compromising Power: Development, Culture, and Rule in Indonesia. *Cultural Anthropology*, 14(3), 295-322. doi:10.2307/656653
- Linton, J. (2010). *What Is Water?* Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Loftus, A. (2007). Working the Socio-Natural Relations of the Urban Waterscape in South Africa. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 31(1), 41-59.
- Loftus, A. (2009). Rethinking Political Ecologies of Water. *Third World Quarterly*, 30(5), 953-968. doi:10.1080/01436590902959198
- Lord, A. (2014). Making a 'Hydropower Nation': Subjectivity, Mobility, and Work in the Nepalese Hydroscape. *Himalaya, the Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies*, 34(2). Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.mcalester.edu/himalaya/vol34/iss2/13>
- Magistad, M. K. (2001). *Why Nepal's Crown Prince Went on a Killing Spree*. Boston, MA: PRI's The World.
- Mahmood, S. (2001). Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival. *Cultural Anthropology*, 16(2), 202-236.

- Mallet, V. (2013, December 4, 2013). Maoists Defeated in Nepal Election. *Financial Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/674528d6-5cb8-11e3-81bd-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3ui75da00>
- Manandhar, M. (2011, February 14, 2011). Hydropower for What? *Republica*. Retrieved from http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=28225
- Marcus, A. (2008). Interrogating the neo-pluralist orthodoxy in American anthropology. *Dialectical Anthropology*, 32(1/2), 59-86. doi:10.2307/29790809
- Marcus, G. E. (Ed.) (1999). *Paranoia within Reason: A Casebook on Conspiracy as Explanation*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Marx, K., & Engels, F. (Eds.). (1978). *The Marx-Engels Reader* (2nd ed.). New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Mathews, A. S. (2005). Power/Knowledge, Power/Ignorance: Forest Fires and the State in Mexico. *Human Ecology*, 33(6), 795-820.
- Mathews, A. S. (2008). State Making, Knowledge, and Ignorance: Translation and Concealment in Mexican Forestry Institutions. *American Anthropologist*, 110(4), 484-494. doi:10.1111/j.1548-1433.2008.00080.x
- Matthews, N. (2012). Water Grabbing in the Mekong Basin – An Analysis of the Winners and Losers of Thailand’s Hydropower Development in Lao PDR. *Water Alternatives*, 5(2), 392-411.
- McCarthy, J., & Prudham, S. (2004). Neoliberal nature and the nature of neoliberalism. *Geoforum*, 35, 275-283.
- McCormick, S. (2007). The Governance of Hydro-electric Dams in Brazil. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 39(02), 227. doi:10.1017/s0022216x07002374
- McCormick, S. (2010). Damming the Amazon: Local Movements and Transnational Struggles Over Water. *Society & Natural Resources*, 24(1), 34-48. doi:10.1080/08941920903278129

- McDonald, D. A., & Pape, J. (2002). *Cost recovery and the crisis of service delivery in South Africa*: Zed Books London.
- Mehta, L. (2001). The Manufacture of Popular Perceptions of Scarcity: Dams and Water-Related Narratives in Gujarat, India. *World Development*, 29(12), 2025-2041. doi:[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X\(01\)00087-0](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X(01)00087-0)
- Melley, T. (2000). *Empire of conspiracy: The culture of paranoia in postwar America*: Cornell University Press.
- Mirumachi, N. (2013). Securitising shared waters: an analysis of the hydropolitical context of the Tanakpur Barrage project between Nepal and India. *The Geographical Journal*, 179(4), 309-319. doi:10.1111/geoj.12029
- Mitchell, K. (2003). Educating the national citizen in neoliberal times: from the multicultural self to the strategic cosmopolitan. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 28(4), 387-403.
- Mitchell, T. (1990). Everyday Metaphors of Power. *Theory and Society*, 19(5), 545-577. doi:10.2307/657563
- Mitchell, T. (1991). The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics. *The American Political Science Review*, 85(1), 77-96. doi:10.2307/1962879
- Mitchell, T. (2002). *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Mollinga, P. P., Meinzen-Dick, R. S., & Merrey, D. J. (2007). Politics, Plurality and Problemsheds: A Strategic Approach for Reform of Agricultural Water Resources Management. *Development Policy Review*, 25(6), 699-719. doi:10.1111/j.1467-7679.2007.00393.x
- Moore, D. S. (1998). Subaltern Struggles and the Politics of Place: Remapping Resistance in Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands. *Cultural Anthropology*, 13(3), 344-381. doi:10.2307/656594
- Mosse, D. (2003). *The Rule of Water: Statecraft, Ecology, and Collective Action in South India*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Mosse, D. (2005). *Cultivating Development: an Ethnography of Aid Policy and Practice*. London: Pluto Press.
- Muni, S. D. (2012). Bringing the Maoists Down from the Hills: India's Role. In S. V. Einsiedel, D. M. Malone, & S. Pradhan (Eds.), *Nepal in Transition: From People's War to Fragile Peace* (pp. 313-331). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Murray Li, T. (2007). *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Nader, L. (1972). Up the Anthropologist -- Perspectives Gained from Studying Up. In D. Hymes (Ed.), *Reinventing Anthropology* (pp. 284-311). New York: Pantheon Books.
- NEA, N. E. A. (2014). *Annual Report, 2014*. Retrieved from Kathmandu:
- Nepal, G. o., & India, G. o. (1959). *Agreement Regarding Gandak Irrigation & Power Project*. Kathmandu: His Majesty's Government of Nepal Retrieved from http://www.internationalrivers.org/files/attached-files/treaties_between_nepal-india.pdf.
- NepalNews. (2011, April 28, 2011). Border pillars mysteriously disappearing as Nepal, India blame each other of land grab. *NepalNews*. Retrieved from <https://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2011/apr/apr28/news05.php>
- NESS, N. E. S. S. (2012). *Environmental Impact Assessment Study of Upper Karnali Hydropower Project (UKHPP), 900 MW*. Retrieved from
- Neupane, A. (2013). The Necessity of and Challenges to International Project Financing of Hydropower Projects in Nepal. *Hydro Nepal*(13), 16-19. Retrieved from <http://www.nepjol.info/index.php/HN/article/viewFile/10033/8181>
- Nixon, R. (2010). Unimagined Communities: Developmental Refugees, Megadams and Monumental Modernity. *New Formations*, 69(1), 62-80. doi:10.3898/newf.69.03.2010

- Nugent, D. (2010). States, secrecy, subversives: APRA and political fantasy in mid-20th-century Peru. *American Ethnologist*, 37(4), 681-702.
doi:10.1111/j.1548-1425.2010.01278.x
- O'Hanlon, R. (1988). Recovering the Subject Subaltern Studies and Histories of Resistance in Colonial South Asia. *Modern Asian Studies*, 22(1), 189-224.
doi:10.2307/312498
- Oldenburg, V. T. (1990). Lifestyle as Resistance: The Case of the Courtesans of Lucknow, India. *Feminist Studies*, 16(2), 259-287.
- Ong, A. (2006). *Neoliberalism as exception: mutations in citizenship and sovereignty*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Orlove, B., & Caton, S. C. (2010). Water sustainability: Anthropological approaches and prospects. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 39, 401-415.
- Ortmann, S., & Heathershaw, J. (2012). Conspiracy Theories in the Post-Soviet Space. *The Russian Review*, 71(4), 551-564. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9434.2012.00668.x
- Ortner, S. B. (1995). Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 37(1), 173-193.
doi:10.2307/179382
- Ortner, S. B. (2011). On Neoliberalism. *Anthropology of This Century*(1), (no page numbers). Retrieved from <http://aotcpress.com/articles/neoliberalism/>
- Ostler, J. (1995). The Rhetoric of Conspiracy and the Formation of Kansas Populism. *Agricultural History*, 1-27.
- Panday, D. R. (2012). The Legacy of Nepal's Failed Development. In S. Von Einsiedel, David M. Malone, and Suman Pradhan (Ed.), *Nepal in Transition: From People's War to Fragile Peace* (pp. 81-99). London: Cambridge University Press.
- Pandey, T. (2015, March 17, 2015). 18 Dead in Jumla Bus Accident. *Kathmandu Post*. Retrieved from <http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/printedition/news/2015-03-16/18-dead-in-jumla-bus-accident.html>

- Pandit, H., Shrestha, B. K., Lohani, P. C., Thapa, A. B., Dhungel, D. N., Gyawali, D., . . . Pokharel, L. M. (2014, November 24, 2014). [Open Letter to the Prime Ministers of Nepal and India re Upper Karnali Multipurpose Project].
- Peet, R. (2002). Ideology, Discourse, and the Geography of Hegemony: From Socialist to Neoliberal Development in Postapartheid South Africa. *Antipode*, 34(1), 54-84. doi:10.1111/1467-8330.00226
- Pemble, J. (1971). *The Invasion of Nepal: John Company at War*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Perreault, T. (2006). From the Guerra Del Agua to the Guerra Del Gas: Resource Governance, Neoliberalism and Popular Protest in Bolivia. *Antipode*, 38(1), 150-172. doi:10.1111/j.0066-4812.2006.00569.x
- Perreault, T. (2008). Custom and Contradiction: Rural Water Governance and the Politics of Usos y Costumbres in Bolivia's Irrigators' Movement. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 98(4), 834-854. doi:10.1080/00045600802013502
- Pigg, S. L. (1993). Unintended Consequences: The Ideological Impact of Development in Nepal. *South Asia Bulletin*, 13(1&2), 45-58.
- Polanyi, K. (1944). *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Boston, MA: Beacon.
- Pomeranz, K. (2009). The Great Himalayan Watershed. *New Left Review*, 58(July-August 2009), 5-39.
- Poudel, J. P. (2013). *Demographic Profile of Nepal, 2013/2014: VDC & Municipality Population, Household and Population by Sex : Ward Level*. Kathmandu: Mega Publication & Research Centre.
- Pradhan, G. L. (2008). Electricity: Domestic Consumption Versus Export. *Hydro Nepal*(3), 16-18. Retrieved from <http://www.nepjol.info/index.php/HN/article/view/1913>

- Prasad, M. (2006). *The Politics of Free Markets: The Rise of Neoliberal Economic Policies in Britain, France, Germany, and the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Pritchard, S. B. (2012). From hydroimperialism to hydrocapitalism: 'French' hydraulics in France, North Africa, and beyond. *Social Studies of Science*, 42(4), 591-615. doi:10.1177/0306312712443018
- Pun, L. B. (2013). A Local Method of Development Practice: A Reflection of Dhukuti in Mustang. *A Nepalese Journal of Participatory Development*, 4.
- Pun, S. B. (2009a). The Kosi Pralaya Could the Catastrophe Have Been Averted? And What Next? *Hydro Nepal*(4), 2-7.
- Pun, S. B. (2009b). Tanakpur Barrage: Thirteen Year Saga of the Nepal Canal Sill Level. *Hydro Nepal*(5), 2-7.
- Pun, S. B. (2011). Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project: Nepal's Portion of Water. *Hydro Nepal*(8), 48-56.
- Pun, S. B. (2012). The 1996 Mahakali Treaty: Whither the "Rashtriya Sankalpas/National Strictures" of Nepalese Parliament? *Hydro Nepal*(11), 11-17.
- Pun, S. B. (2013). World Bank's 2012 Ganges Strategic Basin Assessment: A View from Nepal. *Hydro Nepal*(12), 6-12.
- Pun, S. B. (2014a). *Forfeiting 4,180 MW Upper Karnali Storage for 900 MW Upper Karnali?* Kathmandu.
- Pun, S. B. (2014b). Saga of 240/300/900 MW Upper Karnali (KR1A)4,180 MW Upper Karnali Storage Project (KR1B) to be Sacrificed. *Spotlight*, 8.
- Pun, S. B. (2015). Utilizing India's One Billion Dollar Line of Credit. *Hydro Nepal*(16), 2-7.
- Qing, D. (1998). *The River Dragon has Come: The Three Gorges Dam and the Fate of China's Yangtze River and Its People*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

- Rademacher, A. (2011). *Reigning the River: Urban Ecologies and Political Transformation in Kathmandu*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Radon, J., & Shrestha, K. (2012, December 14, 2012). Hydro Power and Equity--- Need to be One! *Spotlight Nepal*, 6.
- Rai, K. (2007). The Dynamics of Social Inequality in the Kali Gandaki 'A' Dam Project in Nepal: The Politics of Patronage. *Hydro Nepal*(1), 22-28.
- Rasgotra, M. (2004). *Discussion II, India-Nepal Relations: The Challenge Ahead*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co.
- Ravilious, K. (2014, July 28, 2014). Kathmandu's Earthquake Nightmare. *Cosmos*
- Rest, M. (2012). Generating power: debates on development around the Nepalese Arun-3 hydropower project. *Contemporary South Asia*, 20(1), 105-117. doi:10.1080/09584935.2011.646071
- Rest, M. (2013). *Water Power: Controversies on Development and Modernity around the Arun-3 Hydropower Project in Nepal*. (Ph.D.), University of Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland.
- Rest, M., Lord, A., & Butler, C. (2015). The Damage Done and the Dams to Come. *Cultural Anthropology Website*(Hot Spots). Retrieved from <http://www.culanth.org/fieldsights/730-the-damage-done-and-the-dams-to-come>
- Rivers, I. (2012). *The New Great Wall: China's Overseas Dam Industry* (2nd ed.). Berkeley, CA: International Rivers.
- Robbins, P. (2003). Political ecology in political geography. *Political Geography*, 22(6), 641-645. doi:10.1016/s0962-6298(03)00071-4
- Robinson, W. I. (2005). Gramsci and Globalisation: From Nation-State to Transnational Hegemony. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 8(4), 559-574. doi:10.1080/13698230500205243

- Roka, H. (2004). The Emergency and Nepal's Political Future. In M. Hutt (Ed.), *Himalayan People's War: Nepal's Maoist Rebellion* (pp. 243-260). London: Hurst & Company.
- Rose, G. (1997). Performing Inoperative Community – the space and resistance of some community arts projects. In S. Pile & M. Keith (Eds.), *Geographies of Resistance* (pp. 184-202). London: Routledge.
- Rothman, F., & Oliver, P. (1999). From local to global: the anti-dam movement in southern Brazil, 1979-1992. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 4(1), 41-57.
- Roy, A. (2001). The Greater Common Good. In A. Roy (Ed.), *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (pp. 47-141). New York: Flamingo.
- Rupert, M. (2005). Reading Gramsci in an Era of Globalising Capitalism. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 8(4), 483-497. doi:10.1080/13698230500205060
- Sahlins, M. (1993). *Waiting for Foucault*. Cambridge: Prickly Pear Press.
- Sangraula, B. (2008, January 24, 2008). GMR Lands 300MW Upper Karnali. *Kathmandu Post*. Retrieved from http://www.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2008/01/25/related_articles/gmr-lands-300-mw-upper-karnali/135246.html
- Sanstha, J. V. (2012). *Ganges Basin Strategic Assessment - Consultative Workshop Report*. Retrieved from Kathmandu: http://www.jvs-nwp.org.np/sites/default/files/Consultative%20workshop%20report_GSBA.pdf
- Schneider, H. (2013, May 8, 2013). World Bank Turns to Hydropower to Square Development with Climate Change. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/world-bank-turns-to-hydropower-to-square-development-with-climate-change/2013/05/08/b9d60332-b1bd-11e2-9a98-4be1688d7d84_story.html
- Schnitter, N. J. (1994). *A History of Dams: The Useful Pyramids*. Rotterdam: A.A. Balkema.

- Schrauwens, A. (2003). Through a Glass Darkly: Charity, Conspiracy, and Power in New Order In T. Sanders & H. G. West (Eds.), *Transparency and Conspiracy: Ethnographies of Suspicion in the New World Order* (pp. 125-147). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Scott, J. C. (1976). *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Scott, J. C. (1985). *Weapons of the Weak*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Scott, J. C. (1990). *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Scott, J. C. (1998). *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Scott, J. C. (2009). *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Scudder, T. (2006). *The Future of Large Dams: Dealing with Social, Environmental, Institutional and Political Costs*. London: Earthscan.
- Sewell Jr, W. H. (2005). *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Shah, B. K. (2011). *Maile Dekheko Darbar*. Kathmandu: Yati Publications Nepal.
- Shah, S. (2002). From evil state to civil society. In K. M. Dixit & S. Ramachandran (Eds.), *State of Nepal* (pp. 137-160). Kathmandu: Himal Books.
- Sharma, R. D. (2011, September 17, 2014). IBN Board Endorses PDA Document. *The Himalayan Times*.
- Shenker, J. (2010, September 15, 2010). Dam Dilemma. *Guernica: a Magazine of Art & Politics*.
- Shneiderman, S. (2010). Are the Central Himalayas a Zomia? Some Scholarly Considerations Across Time and Space. *Journal of Global History*, 5, 289-312.

- Shrestha, E. (2014). Miles to Go, Promises to Keep. *Nepali Times*.
- Shrestha, N. (1997a). Becoming a Development Category. In J. Crush (Ed.), *Power in Development* (pp. 266-277). London: Routledge.
- Shrestha, N. (1997b). Becoming a Development Category. In J. Crush (Ed.), *Power of Development* (pp. 266-277). London: Routledge.
- Shrestha, P. M. (2014, October 22, 2014). Nepal, India Enact Power Trade. *The Kathmandu Post*. Retrieved from <http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2014-10-22/nepal-india-enact-power-trade.html>
- Shrestha, R. S. (2014a). Colonization of Water Resources. *Spotlight*, 7.
- Shrestha, R. S. (2014b). Export of Electricity is Mutually Exclusive with Domestic Consumption. Retrieved from http://www.ratnasansar.com/2014_10_01_archive.html
- Shrestha, R. S. (2014c). Mahakali Water to Quench Delhi's Thirst. *Spotlight*, 8.
- Shrestha, R. S. (2015, January, 21, 2015). Export of National Interest. *People's Review Weekly*.
- Singh, A., Mondal, G. C., Singh, T. B., Singh, S., Tewary, B. K., & Sinha, A. (2012). Hydrogeochemical processes and quality assessment of groundwater in Dumka and Jamtara districts, Jharkhand, India. *Environmental Earth Sciences*, 67(8), 2175-2191. doi:10.1007/s12665-012-1658-3
- Sivaramakrishnan, K. (2008). Introduction to 'Moral Economies, State Spaces, and Categorical Violence. *American Anthropologist*, 107(3), 321-330.
- Sivaramakrishnan, K., & Agrawal, A. (Eds.). (2003). *Regional Modernities*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Siwakoti, G. (2012, March 22, 2012). Unparalleled Opportunity. *Kathmandu Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2012/03/22/oped/unparalleled-opportunity/232949.html>

- Staff HT, T. H. T. (2011, June 20, 2011). Upper Karnali Not in Favor of National Interest. *Himalayan Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=%26quot%3BUpper+Karnali+not+in+favour+of+national+interest%26quot%3B&NewsID=292463>
- Staff KTM Post, K. P. (2010a, July 13, 2010). Government Told to Cancel Karnali License. *Kathmandu Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2010/07/13/nation/govt-told-to-cancel-karnali-license/210427/>
- Staff KTM Post, K. P. (2010b, February 26, 2010). No Backtrack on Upper Karnali. *Kathmandu Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.ekantipur.com/2010/02/26/top-story/no-backtrack-on-upper-karnali/309144.html>
- Staff KTM Post, K. P. (2011a, May 25, 2011). Attack on Hydel Project Offices: Government Vows to Bring Culprits to Justice. *Kathmandu Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2011/05/25/nation/attack-on-hydel-project-offices-govt-vows-to-bring-culprits-to-justice/222115.html>
- Staff KTM Post, K. P. (2011b, May 24, 2011). Concern over Hydel Project Vandalism. *Kathmandu Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2011/05/24/nation/concern-over-hydel-project-vandalism/222081.html>
- Staff KTM Post, K. P. (2014a, September 24, 2014). SC Moved against Upper Karnali PDA. *Kathmandu Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2014/09/24/money/sc-moved-against-upper-karnali-pda/267918.html>
- Staff KTM Post, K. P. (2014b). West Seti in Limbo as Two Mega Projects Move. *Kathmandu Post*. Retrieved from <http://cignepal.org.np/news/west-seti-limbo-two-mega-projects-move>
- Staff, R. (2016, January 5, 2016). GMR Office Attacked *My Republica*. Retrieved from <http://myrepublica.com/economy/story/34404/gmr-office-attacked.html>

- Staff Rep, R. (2015, February 11, 2015). Petition against Upper Karnali PDA. *Republica*. Retrieved from <http://www.nepalenergyforum.com/petition-against-upper-karnali-pda/>
- Staff TN, T. N. (2010, February 13, 2010). Nepal Experts Demand Scrapping Water Sharing Treaties with India. *Telegraph Nepal*. Retrieved from http://www.telegraphnepal.com/backup/telegraph/news_det.php?news_id=7175
- Star, S. L., & Griesemer, J. R. (1989). Institutional ecology, translations' and boundary objects: Amateurs and professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907-39. *Social Studies of Science*, 19(3), 387-420.
- Strang, V. (2004). *The Meaning of Water*. Oxford: Berg.
- Sunstein, C. R., & Vermeule, A. (2009). Conspiracy Theories: Causes and Cures*. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 17(2), 202-227. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9760.2008.00325.x
- Swyngedouw, E. (1999). Modernity and hybridity: nature, regeneracionismo, and the production of the Spanish waterscape, 1890–1930. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 89, 443-465.
- Swyngedouw, E. (2004). *Social Power and the Urbanization of Water*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Swyngedouw, E. (2007). Technonatural revolutions: the scalar politics of Franco's hydro-social dream. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 32, 9-28.
- Tamot, S. (2014). A Bug's Life. *The Kathmandu Post*.
<http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/printedition/news/2014-12-29/a-bugs-life.html> Retrieved from
<http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/printedition/news/2014-12-29/a-bugs-life.html>
- Tarrow, S. (1993). Cycles of Collective Action: Between Moments of Madness and the Repertoire of Contention. *Social Science History*, 17(2), 281-307. doi:10.2307/1171283

- Thapa, A. B. (2012). Upper Karnali Urgency to the National Debate. *Spotlight*, 5.
- Thapa, A. B. (2014a). Implementation of 900MW Upper Karnali Project: Harmful to Nepal as Well as India. *Spotlight*, 8.
- Thapa, A. B. (2014b). International Significance of Upper Karnali High Dam Project. *Spotlight*, 8.
- Thapa, A. B. (2014c). Killing World's Highest Dam Project:Upper Karnali Project Controversy. *Spotlight*, 8.
- Thapa, B. (2013). The Hydropower Export Dream. *Spotlight*, 6.
- Thapa, B. B., & Pradhan, B. B. (1995). *Water resources development: Nepalese perspectives*: Konark Publishers.
- Thapa, D. (2012). The Making of the Maoist Insurgency. In S. Von Einsiedel, David M. Malone, and Suman Pradhan (Ed.), *Nepal in Transition: From People's War to Fragile Peace* (pp. 37-57). London: Cambridge University Press.
- Thapa, M. (2010). Nepal: Maoists' Lock, India's Door. *Open Democracy*.
<https://www.opendemocracy.net/manjushree-thapa/nepal-containing-maoists-handling-india> Retrieved from
<https://www.opendemocracy.net/manjushree-thapa/nepal-containing-maoists-handling-india>
- Thapa, P. (2011, April 16, 2011). Maoists, others go on rampage, disrupt a programme organised by a hydel project. *The Himalayan Times*. Retrieved from
<http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Maoists%26sbquo%3B+others+go+on+rampage+&NewsID=284310>
- Theodossopoulos, D. (2014). On De-Pathologizing Resistance. *History and Anthropology*, 25(4), 415-430.
- Thompson, E. P. (1966). *The Making of the English Working Class*. New York: Vintage Books.

- Thompson, E. P. (1993). *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture*. London: New Press.
- Tilly, C. (1991). Domination, resistance, compliance ... discourse. *Sociological Forum*, 6(3), 593-602. doi:10.1007/BF01114480
- Tiwari, A. (2011, July 1, 2011). All Politics Is Local. *Nepali Times*.
- Tsing, A. L. (2000). Inside the Economy of Appearances. *Public Culture*, 12(1), 115-144.
- Tsing, A. L. (2005). *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Tullos, D. (2009). Assessing the influence of Environmental Impact Assessments on science and policy: an analysis of the Three Gorges Project. *J Environ Manage*, 90 Suppl 3, S208-223. doi:10.1016/j.jenvman.2008.07.031
- Umar, R., Khan, M. M., Ahmed, I., & Ahmed, S. (2008). Implications of Kali-Hindon inter-stream aquifer water balance for groundwater management in western Uttar Pradesh. *Journal of Earth System Science*, 117(1), 69-78. doi:10.1007/s12040-008-0014-1
- Upreti, B. C. (1992). *Politics of Himalayan River Waters: An Analysis of the River Water Issues of Nepal, India, and Bangladesh*. Jaipur: Nirala Publications.
- Upreti, B. R. (2010). External Engagement in Nepal's Armed Conflict. In M. Lawoti & A. K. Pahari (Eds.), *The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Revolution in the Twenty-First Century* (pp. 219-236). London: Routledge.
- Uprety, K., & Salman, S. M. A. (2011). Legal aspects of sharing and management of transboundary waters in South Asia: preventing conflicts and promoting cooperation. *Hydrological Sciences Journal*, 56(4), 641-661. doi:10.1080/02626667.2011.576252
- Uprety, N. K. (2014, March 17, 2014) *Local Polls Can Be Held May-June If There Is Political Will/Interviewer: B. Sharma & D. Karki*. Kathmandu Post, Kathmandu.

- Vandergeest, P., Pablo Idahosa, and Pablo S. Bose. (2007). Introduction. In P. I. Peter Vandergeest, and Pablo S. Bose (Ed.), *Development's Displacements: Ecologies, Economies, and Cultures at Risk* (pp. 3-29). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Vandergeest, P., & Peluso, N. (2006). Empires of Forestry: Professional Forestry and State Power in Southeast Asia, Part 1. *Environment and History*, 12(1), 31-64.
- Vergheese, B. G. (1994). *Winning the Future from Bhakra to Narmada, Tehri, Rajasthan Canal*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd.
- Vernant, J.-P. (1983). *Myth and Thought Among the Greeks*. London: Routledge and Keegan Paul.
- von Einsiedel, S., David M. Malone, and Suman Pradhan (Ed.) (2012). *Nepal in Translation: From People's War to Fragile Peace*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Wacquant, L. (2009). *Punishing the Poor*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Wacquant, L. (2012). Three steps to a historical anthropology of actually existing neoliberalism. *Social Anthropology*, 20(1), 66-79.
- Warwick, D. P. (1974). Who Deserves Protection? *American Sociologist*, 9, 158-159.
- Weber, M. (1946a). Class, Status, Party *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Weber, M. (1946b). Politics as a Vocation (C. W. Mills, Trans.). In H. H. Gerth (Ed.), *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (pp. 77-128). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wedeen, L. (2003). Seeing like a Citizen, Acting like a State: Exemplary Events in Unified Yemen. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 45(4), 680-713. doi:10.2307/3879493
- Weiss, L. (1997). Globalization and the Myth of the Powerless State. *New Left Review*, 225(September-October), 3-27.

- West, H. G., & Sanders, T. (Eds.). (2003). *Transparency and Conspiracy: Ethnographies of Suspicious in the New World Order*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Whelpton, J. (1991). *Kings, Soldiers and Priests, 1830-1857*. New Delhi: Manohar.
- Whelpton, J. (2005). *A History of Nepal*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Whitehead, J. (2013). Accumulation through Dispossession and Accumulation through Growth. In G. H. Michael Ekers & S. K. a. A. Loftus (Eds.), *Gramsci Space, Nature, Politics* (pp. 279-300). London: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Whittington, J. (2012). The Institutional Condition of Contested Hydropower: The Theun Hinboun–International Rivers Collaboration. *Forum for Development Studies*, 39(2), 231-256. doi:10.1080/08039410.2012.666762
- Williams, R. (1971). *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Williamson, J. (2009). A short history of the Washington Consensus. *Law Business Review of the Americas*, 15, 7-23.
- World, C. o. D. (2000). *Dams and Development: A New Framework for Decision-Making*. Retrieved from London and Sterling, VA:
- Worster, D. (1994). *Nature's Economy: a History of Ecological Ideas*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Yergin, D., & Stanislaw, J. (1998). *Commanding Heights: The Battle for the World Economy*. New York: Touchstone.
- Zussman, R. (2004). People in Places. *Qualitative Sociology*, 27(4), 351-363. doi:10.1023/B:QUAS.0000049237.24163.e5