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Preface

For some time now the former departments of sociology and political science, now being united in the Department II of the Faculty of Humanities at the Otto-von-Guericke University Magdeburg, have conducted so-called students' research training programmes (in German: Lehrforschungen) in South Asia. Excellent students are invited to participate in these intensive learning programmes. The whole process takes a period of one to two years. We start with building background knowledge (phase 0), selecting a research topic and country, establishing a relationship with a partner university, collecting and analysing secondary material, developing the research design, working on research methodology; then writing a research proposal (phase 1), conducting field research in cooperation with lecturers and students of our partner university (phase 2), making data analysis and finally writing a research report (phase 3). The supervisors take the function of facilitators leading the students through the entire process giving them feedback on their interview techniques in the field and supporting the analysis and writing process.

Besides scientific aims, this training programme exposes students to a very different (academic) culture confronting them with sometimes extreme poverty in developing countries, giving them a deeper insight into the life-world and biography of marginalized people, work of NGOs and other organizations in the field, and challenge their personalities with regard to a potential working perspective in developing countries.

In 2004/2005, a group of students conducted research on the strong segregation in Mumbai slums according to religion, place of origin or ethnicity. In spring 2007, another student research group worked on social activism in Mumbai slums: communalism and anti-communalist movements, grassroots organizations and NGOs. The 2014 research group examined five different topics related to the population of informal settlements in a rapidly changing and growing environment in Poone and Mysore.

The latest project in 2018 took the 2015 earthquake in Nepal as the starting point to investigate the Disaster-Conflict Interface, the interplay between a natural disaster and conflict. The students analysed whether and in how far previously existing social conflicts were lessened or increased in the aftermath of the earthquake. Our local cooperation partners were Dr Sagar Raj Sharma and his team from the Kathmandu University. Our 15 students from Peace and Conflict Studies and Sociology split into four research groups and incorporated 9 students from the Kathmandu university who not only helped the German students with their interviews sometimes taking place in the Nepali language, but also conducted their own research on our German students – which also helped overcoming the colonial bias of western scholars studying foreign contexts. The four research topics of the teams were (1) the marginalization of Dalits in the Gorkha Earthquake; (2) LGBTI: Challenges and Opportunities in the context of the earthquake; (3) former child soldiers and the question of whether the earthquake formed a window of opportunity for integration of this marginalized group; and (4) knowledge as context to the Gorkha Earthquake and its aftermath.

Now, we are happy to present our research results. As the other research training groups before them, they decided to publish under the pseudonym Magdeburg Research Group. The four teams consisted of: Julia Beitner, Kim Krüger, Laxmi Neupane, Aditi Pandey, Laura Rehbein, Theresa Reinel, Ridima Tulachan (Team Dalits), Bettina Adamczyk, Anna Nagel, Inuja Pradhan, Maike Rolf, Julia Steinführer, Suban Thapa, Rafael Uribe (Team LGBTI), Leonard Schubert, Alisha Sijapati, Patrick Stutz (Team Child Soldiers) and Daniel Beck, Prapanna Dhungana, Ann-Katrin Heinz, Lisa Stab, Frank Rohde, Barsha Shrestha, Rohini Shrestha (Team Knowledge).

Magdeburg, April 2019

Prof. Dr Heiko Schrader (Sociology) and Dr Kristina Roepstorff (Political Science)

We are thankful to our cooperation partner Dr Sagar Raj Sharma and his team from the Kathmandu University to host us and to support the research.

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List of Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BDS	Blue Diamond Society
CAAFAG	Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DCI	Disaster-Conflict Interface
DDC	District Development Committee
DDR	Demobilization, Disarmament, Reintegration
DDRC	District Disaster Relief Committee
ETCTP	Emergency Top-up Cash Transfer Program
GDP PPP	Gross Domestic Product Per Capita
HDI	Human Development Index 2016
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
I/NGO	International/Non-Governmental Organization
LBT	Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersexual
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ORS	Oral Rehydration Solution
PLA	People’s Liberation Army
PSC	Protracted Social Conflict
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RHRP	Rural Housing Reconstruction Program
SLA	Sustainable Livelihood Approach
STD	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commissions
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIRP	United Nations Interagency Rehabilitation Programme
UNMIN	United Nations Mission in Nepal
UNOCH	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
VDC	Village Development Committee
VMLR	Verified Minors and Late Recruits

I. Introduction

DANIEL BECK

The 2015 Gorkha Earthquake happened in a conflict-ridden society. After centuries of monarchy and a decade-long civil war between 1996 and 2006, Nepal's transformation process towards an independent democracy is still in progress. The situation of Nepal was dominated by weak state structures, corruption on all levels of government and ongoing conflicts.

Furthermore, Nepal is among the poorest countries worldwide. According to the World Bank, it is on position 156 of 187 concerning the GDP (World Bank 2018). The Fragile State Index of 2017 shows the instability: Nepal lies far ahead on position 33 of 178. In addition to internal conflicts, external conflicts such as the power struggle between India and China complicate Nepal's transition towards peace and stability. Its geographical location between the two countries, makes it even more difficult for Nepal to have its own and independent policies.

Nepal's location is not only because of geostrategic reasons problematic: it is in general an earthquake prone country. The earthquake of 2015 was not the first one to hit Nepal hard, there was also one in 1936. However, the 2015 devastation was unexpected and outstanding as many historical buildings and sights that had endured earlier natural disasters were severely damaged or completely destroyed by the strength of the Gorkha Earthquake. After the earthquake, the described situation and the interference of various (international) actors hindered a speedy reconstruction process, exacerbated already existing and gave rise to new conflicts. The total damage resulting from the earthquake is estimated to be US $20 billion which is about 50 percent of Nepal's nominal GDP. Nearly 9,000 people were killed and 22,000 injured. While the earthquake brought a vast devastation among Nepali society, less than half a year later the government passed a new constitution to tackle issues that had fundamentally contributed to the devastation on a social level. On 20th September 2015, the new constitution was adopted. Several political changes, foremost the decentralization efforts of the Nepali state, bring back a glimpse of hope.

Therefore, Nepal is an ideal case to study the concept of the Disaster-Conflict Interface (DCI), which means the positive or negative influence of disasters on social conflicts. The focus of this research group lies on marginalized groups as well as the application of specific knowledge in the context of the DCI. Dalits, LGBTI and child soldiers were in the centre of attention among the marginalized groups of Nepali society. In addition, there is a spotlight on developments which are important for all the focussed groups: awareness and preparedness from a knowledge perspective.

A first chapter sheds light on the context Nepal, followed by a chapter on the theoretical concept of a Disaster-Conflict Interface and depicts the debate around it. In the fourth chapter Bourdieu's forms of capital are introduced, which is the main theory used by all the four subtopics and structures the analysis. The fifth chapter explains the methodology and the research done before going into the field.

The chapters six to nine deal with the particular research topics of the subgroups: The Marginalization of Dalits in the Disaster-Conflict Interface (Chapter 6), Being LGBTI in Nepal: Challenges and Opportunities for Sexual and Gender Minorities after the Gorkha Earthquake (Chapter 7), The Gorkha Earthquake 2015 – A Window of Opportunity for the Former Child

Soldiers? (Chapter 8) and Knowledge as Context to the Gorkha Earthquake 2015 (Chapter 9). The last chapter will be a general conclusion.

The groups decided to work with qualitative research methods. One reason for this choice of qualitative methods was the concept of the Disaster-Conflict Interface – a research topic that is still underdeveloped. Prior case studies in similar contexts indicate rather negative effects of disasters on social conflicts whereby pre-existing vulnerabilities and disadvantages get highlighted. The DCI also considers eventual positive effects like a unifying moment for society. Qualitative methods make it easier to explore phenomena rather than merely describe them (Diekmann 2013: 34). In our research, we also tried to find out how long-lasting the unity and awareness stimulated by the earthquake were and how this influenced previously existing social conflicts.

A closer look at the situation of Dalits in the aftermath of the earthquake shows that despite a short momentum of unity and social harmony in which Dalits received support from members of higher castes, generally they were more affected by the earthquake and received less help in comparison to others. Due to their long history of structural discrimination, Dalits are more vulnerable compared to other social groups in Nepal. A difficulty that becomes evident in their ongoing struggle to recover from the disaster more than three years after the earthquake. While some Dalits are still rebuilding their houses, many others lost hope in ever being able to return to their destroyed homes because they do and did not receive adequate support. One reason for their struggle is that Dalits' particular vulnerabilities were not sufficiently taken into account during the disaster response. In many cases, Dalits were and are still perceived as one homogeneous group sharing political and social struggles and demands. This simplification of Dalit issues consequently hindered the implementation of short- and long-term solutions after the earthquake to alleviate the various root causes of their inability to recover. For example, the constitution that was introduced shortly after the earthquake, and generally considered in favour of Dalits, failed to treat Dalit issues appropriately by neglecting the deep roots of the marginalization of Dalits. The new laws' lack of feasibility simply shifted discriminatory practices from the public to the private sphere. Consequently, the discrimination of Dalits continued. Furthermore, the government failed to compensate the Dalits' inability to access aid supplies in the immediate aftermath, but also during the reconstruction phase as it failed to consider that earthquake grants were mostly unfitting for Dalits as they were not adjusted to their individual needs for recovery. However, even though the aftermath of the earthquake was not able to create feasible structures to dissolve the marginalization of Dalits, it brought broader attention to the issue and the necessity to improve social and political structures.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex people (LGBTI) all over the world continue to suffer from discrimination, physical abuse, social exclusion and human rights violations. Patriarchal societies where heterosexuality is considered the conventional norm are particularly reluctant to include demands of the LGBTI community in political as well as legal agendas. Although the 2007 decision of the Nepali Supreme Court permitting all discriminatory laws against LGBTI people presented a landmark in the LGBTI rights movement in South Asia, gender and sexual minorities are still facing physical abuse, forced marriage and social exclusion in the country.

The Gorkha Earthquake revealed that those mentioned vulnerabilities and the underrepresented political participation of the LGBTI community had an impact on the early recovery phase as well as the aid distribution in the aftermath of the disaster. Evidence for this can be seen in the fact that the demands of LGBTI have been neglected by disaster managers in the recovery phase but also in the systematic discrimination of LGBTI members in emergency shelters, housing and in the allocation of relief assistance. This inequality in distribution of aid was particularly facilitated by a lack of research concerning the situation of LGBTI in Nepal which could raise awareness to the needs of the community in the aftermath of the disaster.

Nonetheless, the responses to the disaster showed not only the different impacts on the LGBTI community, but also exposed resilience and critical dimensions for the framing of an effective disaster response plan. Even if the activism and the networking of the LGBTI community during the relief phase is not to be expected to yield sustainable positive effects, the experiences can still be used to ensure a more effective disaster response in the future and to advocate for social change and the inclusion of gender minorities in a private, public and political sphere.

The situation of former Maoist child soldiers in Nepal remained unchanged after the disaster in 2015. Former child soldiers were identified as an especially vulnerable group before the earthquake. They often suffered from human rights violations, poverty, stigmatization, discrimination, exclusion and rejection from their families, a lack of monetary compensations, job opportunities, proper school education, psychological support and access to political participation. As beneficiaries of the war, the Maoists had neither the need nor the interest to deal with the situation of the former child soldiers. As such, they reminded a politically unfavourable topic and permanent reminder of war demanding monetary compensation. The Maoists were able to hold on to positions of power during the transition enabling them to influence international organizations like the UN, NGOs and human rights activists while the former child soldiers had little influence to draw attention to their situation.

After the disaster hit the country, no window of opportunity was opened to improve the situation of the former child combatants. In the chaotic aftermath of the earthquake, the Maoists were able to prevent international donations as well as the new constitution from taking an interest in the situation of former child soldiers. On the contrary, the One-window Policy for donations prevented support for human rights activist and advocates who tried to help former child soldiers. Today, most of the former child soldiers have started families and were able to build a basis for their lives, however, they are still isolated within the political system with poor chances for participation or advocates.

Knowledge about existing and potential social conflicts is essential in a disaster context to reduce negative impacts. In a disaster situation, applied knowledge is an active conversion of economic, social and cultural capital to address vulnerabilities and safeguard lives and properties. In Nepal, disaster preparedness plans conveyed the knowledge of how to react to an earthquake. However, the implementation proceeded insufficiently as could be seen in the aftermath of the Gorkha Earthquake in 2015. The integration and utilization of knowledge was not managed properly even though the earthquake had been predicted by the respective international scientist community. Research and theoretical concepts could not be integrated because the government’s capacities were exceeded and responsibilities of different actors were held vague. Numerous examples showed that knowledge transfer was also problematic as the premises did not fit the Nepali context. In order to improve this situation, a broader awareness, preparedness and coherent policies are essential. Precisely awareness turned out to be fundamental regarding disaster response and the preparation for future hazards to reduce and minimize disaster risks and conflicts.

Furthermore, the lack of vertical coordination paired with the unexpected dimension of the disaster-initiated problems of relief delivery in the first phase. There was uncertainty about affected and vulnerable parts of society and the immediate needs of affected people. At this point, the assessment of the situation and the selection of beneficiaries proved difficult. Therefore, vertical coordination mechanisms were supported by the One-door Policy.

Different types of knowledge were and are used in the response and reconstruction process after the earthquake. One focus was on the weak infrastructure: engineers' knowledge and building codes were often neglected before the earthquake. Now, the awareness supports the application of knowledge, but especially vulnerable and marginalized groups are disadvantaged. Conflicts became visible in the reconstruction of cultural sites, where traditional, local and global knowledge are in use and therefore also in conflict. Further infrastructure, like early warning systems, is still lacking.

Preparations for a future hazard has to be transferred through different channels, like schools and bureaucracy, but also informal channels like negotiations. Platforms for knowledge transfers on different levels further need to be strengthened as the incorporation of international and local knowledge into functioning systems of disaster management still remains a challenge.

The conclusion will show that immediately after the earthquake Nepali society partially seemed no longer caught in its rigid caste-based hierarchies, but instead people helped each other, grew closer together and consequently, in some cases, overcame prejudices and discrimination. Former child soldier, LGBTI and Dalit communities seemed to have experienced this initial phase as a window of opportunity to overcome their marginalization. However, all chapters describe the phase of harmony as only short-lived.

Though the research is limited with regard to the amount of collected data during the short field visit, the group attached the greatest value to reflection and sensitive behaviour and was conscious not to repeat stereotypes. The group was also aware about concerns of privileged Europeans doing research in Nepal. However, having an outsider perspective which leads to a higher reflection and a more critical perspective, was also seen as an advantage, especially in light of the sensitive research topics of marginalized groups.

Since the research was done in cooperation with Kathmandu University, our focus was mainly on the Kathmandu Valley, close to the epicentre of the earthquake and severely affected by the disaster. But more research should be done on the differences between urban and rural areas with regard to the marginalization of certain social groups in particular and the DCI in general. Despite the limitations of the research, general tendencies become visible concerning the Disaster-Conflict Interface in post-earthquake Nepal.

II. Nepal at a Glance

JULIA STEINFÜHRER, RAFAEL DAVID URIBE-NEIRA

1 The Country

Landlocked between India and China, Nepal and its 29 million inhabitants have experienced a long history of political turmoil and inequalities. Once known as the Kingdom of Nepal in the 18th and 19th century, the country unified other principalities of the sub-Himalayan region. The peace treaty at the end of the Anglo-Nepal War from 1814-16 respected the kingdom's independence and marked the beginning of diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom. In 1951, the Nepali ruler established a cabinet that introduced political parties into the government thus ending the pre-eminence of the Panchayat Regime of hereditary rulers. In 1960, however, political parties were once again banned and only reintroduced in 1990 when a constitutional monarchy established a multiparty democracy (Central Intelligence Agency 2018). A long legacy of political instability and protracted conflict fuelled by poverty, horizontal inequality and ethnic tensions paved the way to a civil war in 1996.

2 The People's War

After the constitutional reforms of 1990, democratic instability persisted because of the unpreparedness to make decisions following democratic rules after years of autocratic rule. Small groups of largely Hindu high-caste party leaders were merely constrained by the constitutional dictate to share power with the king and by internal struggles for party leadership. Strongmen in provinces representing the parties made use of state resources to keep constituencies in line and turned to local youth gangs to exert pressure on rivals or on voters in elections. From 1991 to 2002, 12 governments ruled consecutively in Nepal (Einsiedel/Malone 2012: 18) reflecting the fierce competition for political leverage.

The poor performance of Nepal's democracy in the '90s played a significant role in the wide acceptance and pervasive radicalization of the Maoist Party whose central demand was the abolition of what they called a feudal system and the transition to a republic. After multiple splits, mergers and internal power struggles, Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachandra), the leader of the pro-war faction of the Communist Party, claimed the party name for his own faction. Prachandra took up arms waging a guerrilla war after the police responded with excessive force to Maoist political mobilization.

After five years of armed confrontation, a significant change in the conflict dynamic took place. Upheaval within the royal family allowed the former king's more radical brother to claim the throne and stage a successful coup. He dissolved parliament, annulled the constitution and reintroduced a de facto monarchy. This coup, as well as the military actions[1] against the insurgency under the new king led to the fading of international support of the Government of Nepal (hereafter GoN).

The growing internal disdain for the new monarch and the stalemate with insurgence groups which hurt both parties lead the mainstream parliamentary alliance to search for a political solution. Consequently, the Seven Party Alliance sought out peace negotiations with the insurgents. In November 2005, both sides signed the 12-point Understanding with the diplomatic support of India. This set the basis for the People's Movement (Jana Andolan II) which had the king, in turn, reinstate parliament and renounce all executive power. Both parties set a Ceasefire Code of Conduct, formally marking the beginning of the negotiations between the Seven Party Alliance and the Maoists. As a result, in November 2006 both sides issued a Comprehensive Peace Agreement and an Agreement on Monitoring the Management of Arms and Armies. The People's War lasted for about five years and claimed the lives of approximately 13,000 Nepali.

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[1] Until then, responsibility lied with the police and the paramilitary unit known as the armed police force; the military was not involved in inner-country conflicts.

3 Post-Conflict Reconstruction and DDR

The end of the People's War had significant impacts on Nepal's political landscape. First, it put in motion a set of ground-breaking changes to consolidate the transition to democracy. With the abolition of the monarchy, the first Constitutional Assembly since 2007 gathered to put into effect the first constitution for a republic – in contrast with the abolished parliamentary monarchies of the past – and opened up the possibility of popular participation in politics. However, the provisional Constitutional Assembly was not able to achieve any agreement and dissolved in 2012. The main cause was the tendency to jeopardize the rule of law in favour of political interests, ideology and opportunity (Bhandari 2014: 208). All of this happened in the middle of high tensions such as the pursue of the Madhesi[2] parties in 2007 for autonomy and federal representation which rapidly led to violent confrontations in the Terai plains in the south of the country (Strasheim/Bogati 2016: 1).

In support of the ensuing Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process and at the request of the national government, the United Nations Security Council established the UN Political Mission in Nepal (UNMIN)[3] on January 2007. Disarmament and demobilization provided security for implementing trust between the two factions. Reintegration intended to assist in the resettlement of former combatants through social, political, economic and psychological integration (Bhandari 2015: 64).

Between February and March 2007, Maoist combatants gathered in seven designated main camps and 21 satellite cantonments where the UNMIN and UN arms monitors began with the disarmament and verification of the army's activities[4]. On the 1st of November 2011, the main political parties presented three possible options for the reintegration of former combatants: the provision of cash-based voluntary retirement, job skills programs and the integration into Nepal's Army. After an exhaustive political discussion, the cash payments were decided upon as the most expedite way to proceed (ibid.: 65).

While adult women and men were given access to this reintegration programme, the politicians did not fully address the needs of underaged soldiers. Both factions employed children as soldiers during the war as, for example, sentries, porters, spies and cooks (Human Rights Watch 2007: 4). It is estimated that 10 percent of the members of the Royal Nepal Army were below the age of 18 (Singh 2004: 1648) and that at least one third, approximately 9,000 members, of the PLA (People's Liberation Army) was composed of 14- to 18-year-olds; 40 percent of them being girls (Human Rights Watch 2007). Furthermore, many PLA soldiers who were 18 years or older at the end of the conflict had joined before coming of age (Singh 2004: 1648). As the Maoists denied the existence of this problem (Human Rights Watch 2007: 58), no child protection agency registered children among former rebels during the first three years of the agreement (Binadi/Binadi 2011: 296). Only after the informal dismissal of underage combatants from the camps, governmental agencies addressed the problem (ibid.: 297). Estimations suggest that by December 2009 no more than 20 percent of the 8,297 registered former child soldiers had reunited with their families or communities (Save the Children cited in ibid.: 298).

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[2] Orthographical also Madheshi.

[3] Through Resolution 1740 (Jan 2007 - Jan 2011).

[4] According to the Agreement on Monitoring of the Management of Arms and Armies of 2006.

4 Development, Poverty and Horizontal Inequality

Until today, Nepal counts as one of the least developed countries in the world. Gross Domestic Product per Capita (GDP PPP) for 2017 amounted to only US $2,700. Remittances constituted 29.6 percent of Nepal's GDP in the fiscal year 2015/2016 (Ministry of Finance 2016: xiv), provided by 2,2 million young Nepali working abroad as migrant workers. Of the total population, 25 percent live under the poverty line.

The country is coined by its mainly rural landscape; its main source of income is agriculture (Regmi 2016: 4). This sector provides the livelihood for approximately two-thirds of the population, but it merely generates about a third of the GDP. Coercion of debtors and undervalued labour are still present in rural areas as they typically suffer more severely from poverty than urban areas. Even though the Kamaiya, a system of debt slavery, was abolished in 2002, this has not translated into an improvement of living conditions and income of people in the countryside (Einsiedel/Malone 2012: 13).

However, from 1951 to 2001 the literacy rate climbed from 2 percent to 43 percent, infant mortality decreased from 200 to 61 per 1,000 live births and life expectancy increased from 35 to 59 years (Kernot 2014: 291). Despite these social developments, in 2014 Nepal is still listed as one of the 48 least Developed Countries with regard to the Human Development Index (UNDP 2015: 214) and still ranges among the countries with the lowest achievements in literacy and worst health indicators (United Nations 2015: 68).

In this context, poverty becomes a powerful conflict driver. For instance, the resentment of the government in districts like Rolpa and Rukum grew much faster as the state did not address the livelihood struggles of the population living there – leaving them to the influence of the Communist Party (Gersony 2003: 95). Similarly, districts with poor living standards were generally sooner involved in the People's War than districts with better living conditions and richer inhabitants (Do/Iyer 2010: 745); a high degree of economic inequality correlated with a larger number of Maoist killings and seemed to be deeply intertwined with social and ethnic tensions which represented a strong basis for violence (Nepal/Bohara 2011: 885).

5 Ethnicity and Social Structure

Ethnicity and social structures are central to the understanding of the conflict in Nepal. Nowadays, Nepal ranks as one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world in which 36 percent of the population belongs to one of more than 100 different indigenous groups with their own traditions and more than 93 languages (Einsiedel/Malone 2012: 12). Hence, ethnicity-based discrimination has historically often resulted in tensions within the country.

Since the Middle Ages, the principalities in Nepal were ruled by Hindu strongmen which introduced the caste system. In the 1850s, the autocratic Rana Regime aimed to unify the many populations culturally, linguistically and religiously into a strict hierarchy based on the principle of purity found in Hindu religion. Thus, the high-caste Hindu hill elite placed themselves at the top of society and put so-called enslavables and untouchables (later the so-called Dalits) at the bottom. The middle is comprised of the so-called non-enslavable, alcohol-consuming classes which include the majority of the ethnic groups in Nepal.

The new civil code of 1960, although abolishing the century-long dominant caste-system, did not challenge the ethnocentric hierarchy and lack of mobility for Nepali social groups (Einsiedel/Malone 2012: 12). Also, the constitution of 1991 which increased political freedoms did not significantly challenge this setting. Inequality is still visible as Dalits, who make up 13 to 20 percent of the population, own only one percent of the arable land (Chandra 2004: 152). Due to religious, cultural, economic and historical marginalization, Dalits are still backward in most fields of Nepali society (Dalit Welfare Organization 2010).

Approximately 88 percent of significant posts in governance in 1999 were occupied by Bahun, Chhetri[5] and Newar, all counted as higher castes (Onta cited in Thapa 2005: 38-39). This impacts bureaucracy by creating particularism, patron-client relationships and a fertile ground for corruption within the public service sector, placing value on political affiliation rather than on merit, disregarding neutrality and competence (Jamil/Dangal 2009: 208). Caste-based discrimination, although officially outlawed since 2006, can take various forms: for instance, the denial of the usage of the same food or water sources as other castes, the prohibition to enter certain public places, forced labour and further discrimination in most spheres of society (Dahal et al. 2002: 33).

Besides the historical caste-system, the LGBTI community faces similar marginalization. In 2007, an indictment by the supreme court granted the protection of human rights for sexual minorities, abolished discriminatory laws against them and created a new gender category: the third gender. All of those changes are milestones in the work of the LGBTI community in Nepal, even if the implementation is still difficult (Bochenek/Knight 2011: 11). LGBTI individuals are particularly vulnerable, and tend to have poor familial support, limited social contact, low level of education and often fear unemployment (Bista 2012b: 46).

Nepal still fights serious group grievances within society, horizontal inequality[6] and uneven development across the country – as can be seen in its high Gini[7] coefficient of 32.8 percent (World Bank n.d.).

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[5] Orthographical also Chetri.

[6] Horizontal inequality is defined as existing disparities between groups or regions rather than individuals.

[7] The Gini coefficient is intended to measure inequality in a country by representing the income or wealth distribution of a nation’s residents.

6 The Gorkha Earthquake of 2015: Disaster Management, Preparedness, and Vulnerability

It is in this context that a major earthquake struck central Nepal around midday on 25th April 2015. Known as the Gorkha Earthquake, it reached 7.8 on the Richter scale and was the most severe in 80 years. Several weeks later, on 12th May, a second 7.3 jolt followed adding more victims to the toll. Combined, the telluric movements claimed the lives of 8,891 Nepali people and injured 22,302 (MoHa/DPNet-Nepal 2015:14). 379 aftershocks oscillating between magnitude 4.5 and 6.4 shook the region in the subsequent months and caused the displacement of nearly 2,8 million people (Aon Benfield Analytics 2015: 4; USAID 2015: 1). A total of 604,930 houses were completely destroyed and 254,000 partially damaged (MoHa/DPNet-Nepal 2015: xxiii). Altogether, the earthquake directly affected 39 of 77 districts, 14 of which severely (Balsari/Nandini 2015: 7). The post-disaster needs assessment estimates that the total damage inflicted by the earthquake amounted up to US $7 billion (National Planning Commission 2015: 8).

In response to the crisis national and international, state and private organizations were deployed to support the country. Nepal’s Central Natural Disaster Relief Committee declared a state of emergency and prioritized aid for the 14 most affected districts (Ministry of Home Affairs 2015: 14). A newly established Response Coordination Centre managed search and rescue operations and coordinated between government and international aid organizations. The Ministry of Home Affairs channelled information concerning the rescue efforts. 132,754 Nepali security personnel supported the rescue operations and the State allocated US $12.8 million to the most affected districts (MoHa/DPNet-Nepal 2015: xxiii).

The National Red Cross Society opened an Emergency Operation Centre and soon after 18 countries sent military personnel[8]. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) set up humanitarian hubs channelling more than US $440 million into the country (Balsari/Nandini 2015: 8). Soon a One-door Policy[9] was established which meant all humanitarian efforts were centralized and coordinated by the GoN (Barber 2016: 6). A blanket approach to distributing aid was also set in motion: everyone was considered as needing assistance and therefore received the same amount of aid (ibid.: 9). In June 2015, the international community pledged US $4.4 billion of financial support for Nepal’s reconstruction. However, only half of the total amount was paid out in form of grants. The second half was distributed in loans consolidating the country’s international debt which has increased 18 times since 1980 and amounted to US $3.8 million in 2013. In a country that saw its GDP growth decrease from 5.1 percent in 2014 to approximately 3 percent in 2015, this situation further added to its economic vulnerability (Regmi 2016: 8).

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[8] This subsequently led to logistical problems at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu.

[9] Nepali disaster response is laid down in the Disaster Relief Act (1982), Local Self Governance Act (1999) as well as the National Disaster Response Framework (2013) according to which Disaster Relief Committees on all levels coordinate and cooperate in relief response. The introduction of the ‘One-door Policy’ in early May meant that these committees channelled all (incoming) aid and actors. Relief is registered by the local committees who then direct the aid to the regions and the people in need. The local structures then held the authority in the organization of disaster response. The Local Self Governance Act (1999) lays down the three levels of governance with the respective governing bodies (District Councils, Village Councils and Municipal Councils) and their executive bodies (District Development Committees (DDCs), Village Development Committees (VDCs) and Municipalities) who were responsible for the coordination of aid at the district and sub-district level (Barber 2016: 6-7).

Moreover, the handling of the tragedy rapidly revealed problems related to disaster preparedness. Decades after the issue of the UN declaration of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (1990-2000), Nepal had not taken enough measures to increase the resilience of its infrastructure. By signing the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015) and the Sendai Framework for Action (2015-2030), the national government had set plans in motion for disaster reduction (Ministry of Home Affairs 2015), however, the rhetoric had not translated into results (Regmi 2016: 10).

Additionally, those territories already affected by the war were impacted more deeply by the earthquake because they had even poorer infrastructure and were out of governmental reach in the first place (Wendelbo et al. 2016: 9). Local and national authorities entrusted with disaster response were limited in their capacity to deliver aid and were not able to do so effectively and responsibly (Daly et al. 2017: 420). The Nepal Disaster Report (MoHa/DPNet-Nepal 2015: 22), for instance, concludes that governmental fragility and post-conflict instability were factors that made the reconstruction efforts brought forward by community-based institutions more difficult at subnational levels.

Among other problems, raising earthquake awareness among Nepali communities has increased the demand for more dependable laws and a policy-friendly approach to disaster-management; institutional capabilities, management tools, technologies, and better knowledge management (Shrestha/Pathranarakul 2018: 16). A lack of knowledge among institutions proved to be omnipresent. Prior to the earthquake, municipal corporations lacked engineers and architects to guarantee improved seismic safety of facilities. Qualified engineers and geoscientists that were present, even those who have been trained abroad, often did not have experience in dealing with earthquake engineering. Furthermore, during the emergency, the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge lead to multiple yet insufficient offers of research by national and international specialists. The use of scientific evidence was mainly concentrated at a national level and within the international humanitarian community with access to information provided by foreign experts. National government institutions could rely on their own capacities. However, district-level Disaster Relief Committees did not make use of evidence-based information. In the absence of this kind of information, disaster managers made use of their own experiences and the knowledge of local people (Datta et al. 2018: 9).

7 Concluding Words

In sum, political instability, the war and its structural causes such as poverty, intergroup inequality and social/ethnic tensions are important elements for understanding some of the core problems of Nepal. In such a complex framework, the Gorkha Earthquake raged and impacted especially vulnerable groups within the country, like child soldiers, the LGBTI community and Dalits. Furthermore, conflict drivers clashed with the usual problems in humanitarian aid and development, like the nature of knowledge transfer. In order to understand the reciprocal dynamics between conflict and disaster in vulnerable communities, the next chapter provides a comprehensive theoretical framework: The Conflict-Disaster Interface.

III. The Disaster-Conflict Interface – A Theoretical Approach

ANNA NAGEL

1 Introduction

Many countries of the Global South experience both, disaster and conflict at the same time. It makes sense to assume that the geographical interference of disaster and conflict automatically worsens the impact of the crisis. However, evidence for this assumption is lacking. Although concrete case study observations are available, they stem from different unconnected disciplines and are therefore difficult, if not impossible, to compare.

The lack of academic research on the Disaster-Conflict Interface has practical consequences on crisis interventions as well as on risk management. Especially poorer countries lack comprehensive information systems and regulatory frameworks to respond to a large-scale disaster. The few studies that analysed tendencies and experiences resulting from the relationship between disasters and conflicts, draw a rather pessimistic view. In most instances, disasters increased conflict by diminishing state capacities and creating competition for appropriation of resources. Moreover, they tend to enhance pre-existing vulnerabilities and disadvantage already marginalized societal groups. However, disasters might also provide windows of opportunity for peace and reconciliation processes in conflict-ridden societies. Particularly the emergency phase of a disaster is characterized by high levels of agreement and solidarity among the affected population.

Before an analysis of possible tendencies of the Disaster-Conflict Interface can be conducted, key terms need to be defined. The following key terms have been identified: Disaster-Conflict Interface, Disaster, Conflict and Vulnerability. The aim of this chapter is to examine impacts of disasters on conflict and vice versa while focusing on negative as well as positive tendencies of the relationship between disasters and conflict.

2 Definitional Approach

2.1 The Disaster-Conflict Interface

The meaning of the term Disaster-Conflict Interface follows the definition conducted by the UNDP Study Disaster-Conflict Interface – Comparative Experiences. It defines Disaster-Conflict Interfaces as contexts in which disaster has some relationship to conflict other than happening at the same place and time and affecting the same population. The term 'crisis describes both disasters and/or conflicts' (UNDP 2011: 13).

2.2. Disasters

The UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) defines a Disaster as 'a disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of an affected community or society to cope using its own resources' (UNISDR 2017a).

The impacts of a disaster are diverse and result from a combination of factors. They can lead to loss of life, injury, disease, destruction of property or social as well as economic disruption.

Disasters need to be distinguished from hazards. Whereas a hazard is ‘a dangerous phenomenon, substance, human activity or condition that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damages, loss of livelihoods and services, social and economic disruption or environmental damage’ (UNISDR 2017b), a disaster describes a process. Hence, disasters take place when a society or community is affected by a hazard.

2.3. Conflict

The Oxford Dictionary defines Conflict as ‘a serious disagreement or argument, typically a protracted one’ or as ‘a serious incompatibility between two or more opinions, principles or interests’ (Oxford Dictionaries 2018). Definitions of conflict tend to rely on value laden terminology thus imply underlying normative values toward conflict. The value of a particular conflict depends on such factors as the institutional setting, the consequences of the conflict, the aftermath effects of the conflict as well as the point of view of the individual making the value judgement. These variables, however, should be treated separately from a conceptual definition of the basic behavioural phenomenon (Schmidt/Kochan 1972: 360). Other definitional problems involve an overly broad interpretation of conflicts or confusions on the distinction between conflict and competition. Conflict is a natural part of human interaction and essential for social change. Nevertheless, if societies do not command effective ways to manage disputes, conflicts may escalate into violence and destruction.

As conflicts succumb certain conflict-dynamics, an achievement of conceptual clarity can only be reached when conflict causes, participants as well as mitigating factors (i.e. capacities for peace) are taken into consideration. Thus, categories of conflict causes may include easily identifiable occurrences indicating social unrest (i.e. manifestations), factors that heighten underlying causes of conflict and create conditions for violent uprisings as well as root-causes, meaning structural problems that create conflicts, but are not enough to cause violence (UNDP 2011: 13).

A definition of the term conflict is a highly extensive undertaking in which ideological implications are sometimes hard to avoid. Nevertheless, for the sake of the analysis the following definition of conflict has been chosen: ‘A conflict is the result of parties disagreeing over the distribution of material or symbolic resources and acting on the basis of these perceived incompatibilities’ (International Alert 2003: 2).

2.4. Vulnerability

The impact of a disaster is heavily influenced by the community’s vulnerability to hazards. Therefore, it is essential to define the term Vulnerability to analyse its interdependence towards conflict and disasters. In general, vulnerability is described by the degree to which a community is susceptible to a hazard’s impact. Thus, it is determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors and processes. A community will be less vulnerable to disaster risk if it possesses coping capacities such as resources and abilities. Hence, weaker groups of a society suffer worst from disasters. Poor and marginalized households might be pushed deeper into poverty and as a result find it difficult to recover (Twigg 2015: 3).

Although vulnerabilities are highly dynamic and are changing in response to many different influences, most vulnerabilities remain persistent. They stem from deep-rooted social marginalization, indifference or incapacity of political and official institutions as well as the inadequacy of public services (ibid.: 5).

Wisner et al. (1994: 9) define vulnerability as

> the characteristics of a person or group in terms of their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a natural hazard or man-made conflict. It involves a combination of factors that determine the degree to which someone's life and livelihood are put at risk by a discrete and identifiable event in nature or in society.

3 The Impact of Disasters on Conflict

After having defined the key terms of the analysis, the impact of disasters on conflict and vice versa shall be examined. Though a lack of academic research on the Disaster-Conflict Interface has been observed, the balance of existing evidence implies a rather pessimistic view on the relationship between disaster and conflict. Nevertheless, there has been a limited amount of cases where a disaster has actually led to a peacebuilding process and a resolution of the conflict. The following section will deal with negative as well as positive tendencies of the impact of disasters on conflict.

Disasters have a multidimensional impact on pre-existing conflicts in a society. Hazardous events might influence pre-existing economic and social inequalities. Most studies suggest that grievances are usually deepened by disasters causing greater scarcity or more acute imbalances between areas of scarcity and abundance (Harris/Keen/Mitchell 2013: 11). Hence, the threat of disaster may cause pre-emptive strikes for resources which are expected to be scarce in the incident of a disaster (Ember/Ember 1992: 257). Especially disasters that are associated with drought and desertification are more likely to contribute to conflicts over limited natural resources than any other type of conflict. Such conflicts can deepen when they occur in places where people face high levels of poverty and competition over limited resources (UNDP 2011: 8). Some researchers even assume that environmental changes associated with disasters may fuel armed conflict by increasing migration and undermining the economy. Thus, the conflict is intensified by fuelling tensions within and between communities and weakening institutions (Collier 1999).

On a governmental level, disasters might change power relations or create power vacuums in diminishing state capacity and placing greater demands on the state to return to the status quo (Bhavnani 2006: 4). In connection to that, disasters may exacerbate existing inequalities in access to government services or even further accentuate such inequalities in ways that help to spur a political change (Birkmann et al. 2010: 16). However, governments might try to exploit such tensions to gain political advantages. Disasters are often seen as an opportunity for governments to seize valuable land for reconstruction removing the disaster affected population and appropriating their assets (Harris/Keen/Mitchell 2003: 13). Disasters can also bring in third parties that attempt to expose the government's ineptness and corruption through political movements. Thus, it might present an opportunity for opposition parties and warlords to attack the power while the government has to deal with recovery and reconstruction (Bhavnani 2006: 17).

Another variable which needs to be considered is the distribution of humanitarian aid. Bhavnani (2016: 16) claims that disasters contribute to conflict because they exacerbate inequality in distribution of aid. The uncertainty of aid might play a destabilizing role in that it increases the probability of a civil war (Arcand/Chauvet 2001). Moreover, donor countries might use aid selectively to undermine unfavourable governments or to increase the number of resource-rich political organizations. In addition, relief aid might hinder development by increasing dependencies in distorting indigenous support mechanisms and undermining pre-disaster development initiatives (Bhavnani 2006: 16).

Although the balance of evidence suggests that disasters exacerbate pre-existing conflicts, they may also embed political and economic opportunities that may lead to a peace process. Large-scale disasters provide more profound windows of opportunities which may ease the conflict and contribute to a reconciliation process. Though disaster relief can be seized as a political tool to exercise power, natural hazards might also reduce the political opportunities arising from conflict. The Worldwatch Institute states that the suffering cuts across the divides of conflict thus prompting common relief needs (Renner/Chafer 2007). Especially in the immediate aftermath of the disaster a growth of a therapeutic and altruistic community might emerge. Quarantelli and Dynes claim that the emergency phase of a disaster is characterized by high levels of agreement over disaster tasks and goals as well as means to achieve them. Hence, the conflict is temporarily absent (Quarantelli/Dynes 1976). In addition, a wave of public sympathy for the disaster affected population might make it politically disadvantageous to wage war on them (Kelman 2012).

Small-scale disasters may also contribute to the reduction of local tensions as they provide opportunities to build capacities and trust. Agencies supporting community cooperation and capacity development on a local level might reduce tensions among the population (UNDP 2011: 9). Moreover, the introduction of new resources in the post-disaster phase requires political negotiations which might lead to the empowerment of former vulnerable groups. On an economic level, disasters may increase the opportunity cost of going to war (Collier et al. 2003: 32). The disaster affected population might rather focus on reconstruction efforts than pledging themselves to a rebel group or rely on violent means.

4 The Impact of Conflict on Disasters

Most studies suggest that conflict and fragility increase the impact of disasters, particularly by increasing vulnerability to natural hazards. Whereas pre-existing conflicts possibly lead to environmental degradation, the breakdown of public services and the disruption of livelihoods, political as well as economic pressures might be powerful drivers of social tensions and an over-exploitation of natural resources (Twigg 2015: 289). A particular facet of the impact of conflict on disaster is the conflict-induced displacement. Conflict may increase the disaster risk by displacing people into areas which are more exposed to hazards. In Colombia, for instance, insecurity has forced people to migrate to informal urban settlements located on flood plains and unstable slopes (Williams 2011: 24). This aspect is coupled with an environment of criminality in areas prone to storms and hurricanes which deters individuals from responding to evacuation warnings (Harris/Keen/Mitchell 2013: 19).

Previous studies have shown that the relatively protected part of the population is likely to be more politically influential. They are usually well connected, have greater economic assets or are likely to solicit more risk-reduction measures than those who are deemed to be politically weak or marginalized (ibid.: 19).

In general conflicts may have numerous impacts on disasters:

> A war-weary population with reduced physical and psychological health is more susceptible to a pandemic. A government focusing on war might neglect promulgation, monitoring, and enforcement of earthquake-related building codes. Conflict frequently interferes with or cuts essential supplies such as food, medicine, and building materials, making it more difficult for people to keep their homes and communities prepared for floods or storms (Kelman 2012: 1).

5 The Impact of Conflict on Disaster Response

Conflicts can undermine the capacity of a government to provide adequate protection from natural hazards. Especially fragile and conflict-affected states often face difficulties implementing basic early warning systems or gaining access to high quality data on risks. (Harris/Keen/Mitchell 2013: 17). However, disaster response is not always connected to a state's capacity to deal with the impact of a natural hazard. Sometimes the government itself is part of the conflict politicizing its decision-making about how it manages disaster risk. Especially 'states that had recently undergone a major governance transition, such as gaining independence, were more likely to reduce aid, claiming to demonstrate internal capacity in dealing with a disaster whether or not that aid was needed' (Nelson in Kelman 2012: 110). Connected with that observation is the aspect of the strong political dimension of labelling a situation as crisis. 'Making such an assessment is an inherently political act, and political considerations often weigh heavily as donor governments decide whether or how to intervene' (Harvey 2009: 15).

Apart from the above given impacts of conflict on disaster response, power holders may restrict relief by refusing international help. Powerful groups in fragile and conflict-affected states may hinder national and international actors to work with populations vulnerable to natural hazard. Reasons for the refusal of international help might be a notion of mistrust of the motivations behind international assistance. (Harris/Keen/Mitchell 2013: 23) Some countries delay communicating their need for relief, have difficult relationships with international actors or make ambiguous statements about the severity of their situation. They may also attempt to appropriate humanitarian aid to support political objectives (ibid.: 17). Either way, they exacerbate post-disaster suffering and increase the level of vulnerability of the conflict-affected population.

6 Résumé

Most evidence suggest that the Disaster-Conflict Interface increased the risk of future crisis and hindered crisis recovery efforts. Disaster and conflict occurring at the same time tend to intensify pre-existing conflicts, poverty and inequalities. Disasters lead to a disruption of the functioning community resulting from loss of life, destruction of property and infrastructure as well as economic impacts. Thereby, development processes play a key role in exposing people to hazards. Weaker groups of society tend to suffer worst from disasters. They are usually pushed deeper into poverty and find it difficult to recover.

Even though negative tendencies of the Disaster-Conflict Interface seem to outweigh, the interface may create more drastic windows of opportunity which may pave the way for peace-building or reconciliation processes. Natural hazards may, for instance, increase the opportunity cost of going to war. Furthermore, they may provide possibilities to enhance local-capacity-building and reduce local tensions empowering former vulnerable groups in the future.

The interaction between conflict and disaster is likely to occur increasingly in the nearby future due to climate change, continued urbanization, food price fluctuations, financial shocks and other stresses. Effective programs to manage crisis interventions need to reflect conflict-disaster complexities to respond to them in a holistic and integrative way. Therefore, a larger focus should be given to comparative case study observations. The following chapters focus on the case study Nepal. Through four different approaches the research groups analysed the impact of the earthquake in April 2015 on pre-existing social conflicts as well as the employment of knowledge in action before, during and in the aftermath of the disaster.

IV. Bourdieu's Forms of Capital and Vulnerability in the Disaster-Conflict Interface

FRANK ROHDE

In the context of the DCI we assume that social strata and disaster affectedness are interlinked by various conditions. To provide some examples, different housing structures (concrete houses, brick houses, wooden structures, adobe structures; see AON Benfield Analytics 2015), which correlate to social classes, were unevenly affected by the earthquake. Better-off people may keep certain financial reserves which are necessary for rebuilding their houses, for a treatment in a private hospital, or for a replacement of other damages. Furthermore, they have better access to information concerning relief programmes because of better education, newspapers, internet, etc. Taking these aspects into account, we worked with Pierre Bourdieu (1983, 1986), who developed a theory of capital forms to get a historically founded understanding of the contemporary society in which semi-independent fields are constituted by forms of power or capital.

These fields consist of differentially interrelated positions held by actors and can be characterized as asymmetric power relations of domination and subordination (Dörfler et al. 2003) in competition over access to goods, resources, positions and power itself. The fields are defined by rules which frame individual actions of the actors who are empowered by the amount of the forms of capital they inhabit. Those actors with the largest volumes of capital have the positions to set those rules which determine the functions in the field and therefore define achievable profits (Bourdieu et al. 1996: 132). As a precondition, the actors need to recognize and believe into the value of the stakes and profits of the practices which define the field. Each observable field has a specific tacit recognition (which Bourdieu calls Illusio (Bourdieu 1998: 128)) and unchallenged rules: its Doxa (Bourdieu 1976: 325); a term he uses to mark the difference between inevitability and ideology (Bourdieu 1992: 111-121).

The structure of the field is arranged by the actors in their positions in the field which are determined by the volume and forms of power or capital they inhabit on their behalf. Capital serves as a medium that enables the actors to act in the related field (Bourdieu 1983: 188). Bourdieu differentiates between four forms of capital: economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital.

Symbolic capital is defined as the perceived and legitimized form of economic, cultural and social capital (the prestige of actors) and is therefore a description of the three capital forms in the categories of their perception (Bohn/Hahn 1999: 263). While economic capital comprises all forms of material wealth, cultural capital may be present in permanent dispositions, like skills or abilities (embodied cultural capital); cultural goods, like books, pictures or machines (objectified cultural capital); or institutionalized, as for example in academic titles (institutionalized cultural capital) (Bourdieu 1983: 185-190). The embodied cultural capital comprises consciously acquired knowledge as well as passively socialized knowledge from culture and tradition. It is in differentiation from economic capital not transmissible and acquired by impressions upon the actor's habitus (character and way of thinking) which then becomes impressible to similar cultural influences. Language, for example, embodies means of communication and representation that can be acquired from a variety of cultures.

When Bourdieu added symbolic capital to his theory along with the proposition that the forms of capital have subtypes, he suggested that there is value in further expansion to ‘explain the structure and dynamics of differentiated societies’ (Bourdieu/Wacquant 1992: 119). Even though Bourdieu considered capital as gender-neutral (McCall 1992: 841-842), some authors like Skeggs (1997) or Huppatz (2009) pointed out that gender is an ‘asymmetrical form of capital [...] institutionalised in schools and therefore symbolic capital [which] provides masculine power for boys’ (Huppatz/Goodwin 2013: 295). Women may

> not only accumulate capital, they also possess their own feminine forms of capital. [...] femininity [can be understood as] culturally learned. This means that, while women may be encouraged to take up this form of capital more than men, it is a capital that is available to men as well as women (ibid.).

In this work we therefore consider and investigate gender as a specific form of embodied cultural capital present in the habitus (internalized social structure as embodiment of social standards) of actors.

According to Bourdieu social capital is ‘the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group’ (Bourdieu 1986: 248). Bohle et al. (1994) argue that the social theory of Bourdieu may be used as a theory of social vulnerability. The concept of field and habitus corresponds to their notion of vulnerability as a social space of multiple layers and dimensions determined by the political, economic and institutional capabilities of people. The field of social vulnerability therefore can be constituted towards its stressors or the prevention of (negative) outcomes. This field would be governed by a specific set of rules characterized by the struggle and competition to minimize social vulnerability and increase security. Their hypothesis is that the position of actors in a field wields information about their exposition and sensitivity to stressors and how their choice is shaping their strategy to adapt according to their position in the field and their endowment with the forms of capital.

The extent of revealed vulnerability, however, is ‘determined by the severity of the event’ and ‘can often only be measured indirectly and retrospectively’ and as it ‘changes continuously over time [it] is usually even affected by the harmful event itself’ (Thywissen 2006: 32-37) as it influences following events with additional damage or decreased vulnerability through raised awareness. Lucini (2014) defines Social Vulnerability as a ‘set of characteristics that include a person’s initial well-being, livelihood and resilience, self protection, social protection, social and political networks and institutions’ (ibid.: 23). Opposite to the dominant hazard perspectives of top-down problem solving through hierarchies and authorities with ‘the use of technology, engineering and science to address the hazard’, the vulnerability view addresses socioeconomic and political influences with decentralized management which

> involves community-based problem solving, a grassroots or bottom-up approach using local knowledge, networks, imagination and creativity to address the hazard [with] the goal of reducing the social vulnerability of people [...] to reduce [it] in concert with nature emphasizing an open system and complexity (ibid.: 25).

Consequently, we consider approaches, which explore the possibilities to develop coping mechanisms to enhance human security and resilience. The Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) by Chambers and Conway (1992) addresses the ‘capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living' and they are 'sustainable when [one] can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, and maintain or enhance [one's] capabilities and assets now and in the future' (Twiggs 2007: 1). They discuss types of capital to access resources for possibilities and opportunities similar to those of Bourdieu (1983) which we apply, but their approach was 'elaborated not for social scientists, but for practical intents [...] very operative and practical' to evaluate vulnerable situations and conditions centered by the 'exposed people themselves [...] their perceptions and knowledge' (Lucini 2014: 26).

V. Preliminary Research and Methodology in the Field

Bettina Adamczyk, Anna Nagel

In order to analyse the interdependence between the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake and pre-existing social conflicts in Nepal, a variety of qualitative research methods were applied. The following chapter shall give an overview on these methods by explaining the reason of employment and by giving insights into the research process.

Considering the multidimensional socio-cultural background of the Nepali society with deep-rooted traditional norms as well as patriarchal structures, qualitative research methods are most suitable to provide an in-depth analysis of the Disaster-Conflict Interface. According to Hancock (1998: 2), qualitative methods are particularly effective in identifying intangible factors such as social norms, socio-economic status, gender roles, ethnicity or religion and can therefore ensure a better access to the interrelation of conflicts and disasters. Working with qualitative research methods is also preferable due to the theoretical framework of Bourdieu's concept of habitus and forms of capital as they were described in the previous chapter. Since Bourdieu can be classified as a structuralist, qualitative methods are most likely to reveal hidden discourses and subjective perceptions in the data material. One of the advantages of qualitative research methods is the flexibility of some aspects of the study. The data collection as well as the research questions can be adjusted according to what is learned (Flick et al. 2004: 8). As the data was gathered in the field, the research teams had to be able to react on participant's responses and adapt further steps. Another reason for the choice of qualitative methods is that the interaction between conflict and disaster is a widely unknown field of research. Qualitative methods allow to explore phenomena rather than merely describe them (Diekmann 2013: 34). Hence, they are best eligible to fulfil the research objective.

Apart from that, qualitative research incorporates various methods to collect and analyse data. In this work several interview techniques were chosen. Among problem-centred interviews, expert and narrative interview techniques were employed. A problem-centred interview is an open, semi-structured, qualitative process (Kruse 2014: 153). Thereby the researcher is guided by a relevant problem or research question, a certain degree of theoretical knowledge of the research topic is needed prior to conducting the interviews (Witzel/Reiter 2012: 4). The research group already had in-depth knowledge of the research topic on their disposal due to the collection of secondary data on the socio-cultural background of Nepal, Bourdieu's concept of habitus and forms of capital as well as previous studies on the Disaster-Conflict Interface. Furthermore, the research group applied a strong focus on expert interviews. Experts present a group of people that are related to a specific research question, problem, behaviour or knowledge system. However, the status of an expert is always relational to the research topic (Meuser/Nagel 1991: 443). To contribute to the research object, experts are required to bear privileged access to information regarding the object of the research (ibid.: 445). However, the feasibility of expert interviews is often restricted due to language barriers or a lack of time on either side. As a third interview technique narrative interviews were chosen. Based on the works of Fritz Schütze the aim of narrative interviews is the narration of an individual life story of the participant. Thereby, the course of the interview is utterly open and the interviewee is expected to recount impromptu without interference or judgements by the interviewer (Schütze 1983: 285).

Before conducting interviews, guidelines were developed to ensure a high quality of in-depth interviews. Although the interview guide is a survey tool to serve as a framework for the interviewer, a flexibility of the order of questions in terms of form and timing was ensured (Gläser/Lauder 2009: 149-150). Hence, research teams were able to react to new developments and alter their guidelines accordingly.

Due to the fact that only a small proportion of the message is communicated in actual words, the recorded interviews were transcribed (Flick et. al 2004: 249). With the help of a transcription positive or negative continuations, certainties and uncertainties as well as feelings of enthusiasm and reluctance can be detected (Hancock 1998: 18-19).

The qualitative summary content analysis served as method of evaluation (Mayring 2014). It was implemented with the analysis software MAXQDA. The advantage of MAXQDA is a structured and flexible management of codes and memos which simplifies a comprehensive analysis of the data as well as working in a research team (Kelle 2000: 500). In a qualitative summary content analysis process, units of meaning are bundled into concentrated results. For this purpose, a coding system consisting of super and subcategories was defined in accordance with Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and forms of capital. After transferring the interview transcripts into MAXQDA, the research teams analysed and coded the collected data using the developed coding system which was extended inductively if needed. Furthermore, memos played a crucial role to reflect the whole research process as they serve as a thought protocol including hypotheses, first ideas and distinctive features of the data.

International field research is more than often confronted with the critique of following neo-colonialist objectives. In general, neo-colonialism or academic imperialism describes the extension of dependency relations between countries to universities and research activities. Researchers from affluent countries tend to have more funds at their disposal, more time to spend on fieldwork and often a more sophisticated apparatus of preparation. Thus, they are able to dictate the research agenda as well as choose the research design and methodology and eventually determine what will happen with the results. Even when collaborative arrangements have been made between visiting researchers and counterparts in the field, research relations might be unequal (Fortuijn 1984: 59).

To counter neo-colonialist tendencies, the research group put special focus on the self-reflection process. Thereby, the evaluation of the student’s personal reflective discourse took place before, during and after the international experience. In collaboration with a student of rehabilitation psychology with local expertise, participants of the research group were asked to write a research diary during the stay in Nepal as well as document their experiences afterwards. In addition, reflection rounds were held every day during the field trip to discuss daily events and track the research progress.

Moreover, the research team cooperated with students and professors of the University of Kathmandu (KU) during the entire research project. To ensure an inclusive approach, interview guidelines as well as research proposals were sent to the KU prior to the field trip. The local expertise and the intercultural exchange in terms of data gathering and evaluation allowed the students to consider why something had happened, what could be learned from these experiences or how the experiences influence the researcher and the host. Although it can be assumed that the research project raised awareness to some widely unknown marginalized groups in Nepal, such as LGBTI people or former child soldiers, the danger of merely repeating existing stereotypes and stigma persists. Even though the aspiration of the research project was to obtain a thorough picture of the socio-cultural dynamics in Nepal, the background of the researchers as students of Humanities does not allow a comprehensive expertise of the local context.

Nevertheless, the research team was aware of neo-colonialist criticism during the entire research process. Through constant self-reflection and an inclusion of Nepali students in decision-making, the research group tried to be sensitive towards intercultural aspects and the danger of a reinforcement of a devaluation of local knowledge and skills. However, a misinterpretation of results due to intercultural differences cannot be excluded.

VI. The Marginalization of Dalits in the Disaster-Conflict Interface in the Context of the Gorkha Earthquake 2015 in Nepal

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1 Introduction and Theoretical Framework

When Nepal was hit by a devastating earthquake in April 2015, large amounts of Nepali society were affected. The impact of the disaster does not only differ geographically, but also regarding social groups within Nepal, like Dalits who have been affected stronger. Comprising 13 to 20 percent of Nepal's total population, Dalits have historically been marginalized as so-called untouchables and 'struggle […] for basic human needs, such as security, recognition and acceptance, fair access to political institutions and economic participation' (Azar 1991: 93), in a state with weak governance that fails to ensure access to basic human needs to all people under its jurisdiction (Dalit Welfare Organization 2010). Although there have been attempts to legally fight existing discrimination for decades, it is evident that the state is unable to address the inequalities and vulnerabilities of this Protracted Social Conflict (PSC) as Dalits as a group are highly disadvantaged (Piya/Maharjan 2009: 185; Constitution of Nepal 2015 (Cth)).

"Dalit" is a relatively new term that was first introduced in Nepal in 1956 to refer to the lowest social groups of skilled artisans whose occupation has been linked to impurity and thus untouchability[10] (Cameron 2007: 16-17). When the official discrimination of the Hindu caste system was formally abolished in 1963, the term Dalit was picked up to replace a variety of vague alternatives and now mostly refers to the Nepali people belonging to the 21 different lower castes with stigmatized social status (Duklau 2014: 4-5; NNDSWO 2015: 8). Dalits are in many cases still perceived as untouchables bringing misfortune, lacking general qualifications and turning things and people they touch impure. The understanding of the term varies and sometimes also includes marginalized people independent from their caste membership (Dahal et al. 2002: 32). These old practices and mindsets affect the situation of Dalits until today. Due to religious, cultural, economic and historical marginalization, Dalits are still backward in most fields of Nepali society (Dalit Welfare Organization 2010). Consequently, Dalits in general are poorer and discriminated against in education, health and the social system. They represent the largest number of landless people in Nepal and are often prohibited from entering or using the same facilities and spaces like other castes. In comparison to the national average and other social groups, Dalits rank at the bottom in human development and have a lower life expectancy (ADB 2013-2017: 11; Dahal et al. 2002: 26, 36, 40; UNDP and Government of Nepal 2014: 17-18, 96). Besides inter-caste discrimination, Dalits also struggle with group internal rigid hierarchies weakening their social standing even further (Dahal et al. 2002: 33).

Taking up the idea of social inequality, the Theory of Vulnerability operates on the assumption that all human beings are vulnerable and prone to dependency (Fineman 2008: 8). According to Bourdieu and the SLA, those social groups who lack forms of capital (economic, cultural, social and symbolic) are particularly vulnerable. Therefore, it is the state's obligation to reduce, ameliorate and compensate for that inherent vulnerability. While this is rarely the case for Dalits in Nepal, the PSC to some extent became part of the culture establishing a sense of paralysis which afflicts the collective consciousness of the population. As a result, communities begin to accept conflictual structures and develop a mentality that inhibits constructive negotiation for any resolution. Consequently, structural discrimination and violence becomes legitimized and hardened (Azar 1990: 16-17).

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[10] Unlike in India, there is not only one official template of castes and caste hierarchies in Nepal. Therefore, Dalits in Nepal are not one homogenous group and their estimated number varies from 12 to 20 percent of the total population (UNICEF 2007: 3).

As the Disaster-Conflict Interface (DCI) assumes that conflicts and disasters can impact one another, there are voices in academia stating that disasters can either be seen as 'conflictual' by strengthening previously existing power structures in light of need and scarcity or 'cooperative' as they are able to dampen social conflicts when people feel united in their common fate and previous sources of conflict become less important (Azar 1985: 62). Consequently, this chapter aims at illustrating the Disaster-Conflict Interface by looking into the immediate and long-term impacts of the earthquake on the situation of Dalits to analyse to which extent and in what form the disaster and its aftermath affected social structures. During the field research, I/NGOs being active in Nepal and focusing on Dalits and their development were contacted. Eight interviews were conducted with national and international organizations, but also with members of the social group.[11] Based on Bourdieu's forms of capital, the power structures in Nepal's society and the position of Dalits within this social field will be analysed, that is, in how far the earthquake has been a catalysing event that triggered a redistribution or reappraisal of capital. By means of economic capital, it will be analysed what Dalits owned prior to the earthquake, how much of their properties they lost in the disaster and to what extent they were able to recover. In terms of cultural capital, the development of the Dalits political and legal stand will be discussed based on the creation and implementation of legal provisions. The social capital in form of social relations will be used to illustrate how the earthquake changed social interaction for Dalits in Nepali society. The analysis of positive and negative short-term and long-term developments will be used to examine how Dalits were affected by the earthquake and its aftermath.

2 Dalits and the Gorkha-Earthquake

Disasters are indiscriminate and as such was the 'effect of the earthquake […] overall to every community' (D int 4: 80-81). However, the data shows that the impact on Dalits was stronger compared to other social groups with regard to deaths and broken structures (D int 2: 150-153; D int 4: 100-103), but also referring to a slower and harder recovery (D int 5: 459-461). Previously existing vulnerabilities as a result of long structural discrimination 'put[s] the Dalits at risk [and] makes them less capable [to] deal with any emergencies or disasters' (D int 2: 104-106; also D int 3: 45-46, 91-92; D int 4: 100-102; D int 6: 71-72). Though examples exist of positive developments and of Dalits being able to improve their situation, overall, Dalits are falling behind in recovering and are often worse off after the earthquake compared to other groups (D int 5: 455-461). In this sense, it can be said that the 'earthquake is a natural phenomenon [that affected all]. But [the] disaster is [...] human made' (D int 2: 160).

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[11] Organizations willing to give interviews were: (i) the Feminist Dalit Organization, a Nepali organization that works on the organization and empowerment of Dalit women and the promotion of justice and equality in Nepali society; (ii) Dignity Initiative, which seeks to support Nepali research and the development of entrepreneurship to strengthen the Dalit movement; (iii) Action Aid, an international organization working on the reduction of injustice and poverty; (iv) Centre for Dalit Women, a national NGO that seeks to empower Dalits and marginalized women; (v) Asia Foundation, an international NGO concentrating on Asia focusing on governance, women, economic opportunity, environmental resilience and regional cooperation; (vi) TEWA, an Nepali organization that supports women's organization through funding and capacity building; (vii) women working with FEDO during a community visit; (viii) a Badi man, part of the Hill-Dalit group who are traditionally musicians.

2.1. The Earthquake Aftermath – A Window of Opportunity?

2.1.1 A Momentum of Harmony

Immediately after the earthquake, the government, many I/NGOs and individuals became active, collected and distributed funds, provided food, shelter and clothes and people were relocated or medically treated if needed (D int 1: 146-148; D int 2: 195-197; D int 4: 105-106; D int 5: 845-846; D int 6: 97; D int 8: 18-19). Many were shocked and in need, but in contrast to general assumptions this first phase[12] of relief activities was also a momentum of social harmony as society was characterized as being 'caste-less' or 'class-less' because the shared suffering as victims blurred identity barriers (D int 2: 206-210, 323; D int 5: 249-253; D int 8: 47). According to the interviewed organizations, especially in the early phase, aid was dispersed equally as all affected people received the same amount of relief and 'discrimination in terms of caste or […] households receiving less' (D int 5: 863-868) was largely absent (ibid.: 369-374). 'Dalits were not excluded from getting aid [or] from moving into a displacement camp' (ibid.: 86-88) as well as shared meals, water and the same shelters irrespective of caste differences and long-time established dividing practices, such as the 'untouchability practice'[13] towards Dalits (D int 1: 175-176; D int 5: 253-254). The hesitation of the government to present a plan of action, the society's unpreparedness and the concern of aftershocks created a shared feeling of fear and empathy among Nepali society as hardly anyone knew what would happen next and when aid would arrive (D int 2: 214-215; D int 5: 292-293; D int 8: 65). To cope with the tragedy and their survivability, people started helping each other in their communities no matter what caste they belonged to (D int 3: 137-139). People not being able to access aid were mostly elderly or people living in hard to reach areas; this problem existed regardless of caste affiliations (D int 5: 260-262). Also, Dalit organizations, though only a few existed and with limited budgets, collected materials and provided relief to all people in need irrespective of caste affiliation who accepted their assistance (D int 1: 163-169). The experience of FEDO, where people refused to accept their oil, a liquid and as such forbidden to be shared across caste differences, already hints at paused instead of abolished caste-based discrimination practices (ibid.: 90-91).

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[12] In the interviews, when referring to the earthquake response, people have generally distinguished between three periods: the relief, recovery and reconstruction phase. Differences are made regarding the duration of these individual periods. Relief phase refers to the time immediately after the first earthquake on April 25, 2015. The first 2 months are characterized by shock and the establishment of immediate earthquake response. In this phase opinions state that 'inter-caste differences and discrimination […] blurred' (D int 5: 438-440, 961-962). After three to six months, the recovery phase commences in which the situation started to normalize, people to recover and discrimination to come up again. After another six months, the reconstruction phase follows and it 'was already clear that Dalits are falling behind in their recovery' (ibid.: 278-281).

[13] Untouchability practice is the lawful legitimization of caste-based discrimination; discrimination of the so-called untouchables 'marked by violence, humiliation and indignity' (Navsarjan/RKC 2010: 3). Due to their hierarchical inferiority, so-called untouchables are denied any privileges such as legal, social and economic rights. Instead, they are ostracized as they are perceived as impure and consequently excluded from society (ibid.).

2.1.2 Economic Tailwind

Several opinions claim that the general economic situation of Dalits in Nepal has improved after the 2015 earthquake. The new constitution of September 2015 grants more access to Dalits in terms of entrepreneur and general job opportunities (D int 2: 22-25). There are districts where Dalits, for example, were given farming jobs because the farmers themselves were simply too engaged with reconstruction work after the earthquake (D int 5: 220-226). Especially in rural areas houses have been rebuilt focusing on similarities in architectural style dissolving traditional differences in housing that generally indicated the social status of their owner. Although these so-called model villages are rather exceptional, they are still a promising post-earthquake development integrating Dalits into society (D int 4: 145-156). As they are adding an important sum to the general Dalit economic livelihood after the earthquake, the Centre for Dalit Women considers the government housing grants[14] to be 'the most important […] positive aspect of the consequences of [the] earthquake' (ibid.: 282-283). While Dalits are usually unable to afford building their own house, the post-disaster financial support offered the opportunity to do so. Especially Dalits in hilly regions, where the ground is cheaper, were able to afford land and therefore access grants leading to comparatively high numbers of Dalits being able to reconstruct their houses (ibid.: 180-182).

2.1.3 A Promising Constitution

Two important developments after the devastating earthquake in April 2015 were the enactment of the 2015 constitution and the transition to a federal state in Nepal. After almost a decade of friction over central constitutional issues, in September 2015, Nepal's major political parties finally reached an accord in order to pass the new constitution including a federal model that would allow them to form a government and rebuild the quake-ravaged nation (Einsiedel 2015: 5). The extensive struggles prior to passing the constitution underline the pressure on the government to find a way to act effectively after such a nationwide catastrophe. The Interim Constitution was in place for seven years before passing today's constitution and does per se not stand in direct correlation with the earthquake; yet, this fast-paced decision-making shortly after the earthquake also meant less resistance from the population, an overall easier process with little scrutiny and a way for the government to regain some credibility. As such, the process of passing the new constitution and its implementation was heavily influenced by the earthquake.

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[14] Apart from relief material being distributed to earthquake affected districts, the GoN initiated a set of grants supporting people with direct cash up to around 300,000 NPR. For instance, the Nepal Rural Housing Reconstruction Program (RHRP) aims at reconstructing destroyed houses in most-affected districts using earthquake-safer building techniques. Within a month after the earthquake, the government started deploying external assessment teams, coordinated by District Disaster Relief Committees (DDRC's), categorizing houses on a scale from 1 (little damage) to 5 (highly destroyed). Aiming at gathering data to prepare beneficiary lists based on which earthquake assistance was provided, only the categories 3 to 5 were considered eligible for cash grant assistance. Beside the level of damage, essential requirements to be added to the beneficiary lists 'included proof of land ownership (lalpurja) and people's citizenship certificate' (Asia Foundation 2016: 17). The disbursement of grants in multiple tranches, happening through bank accounts, was based on the progress of construction and started in July 2015 (ibid.: 4-6, 10).

The Constitution of 2015 is perceived as a progressive document for the country. It includes many positive policies in favour of Dalits regarding political, social and economic rights (D int 3: 55-58). An important focus of the new constitution is a quota on all three levels (local, provincial, national) for government officials (D int 2: 41-44). The importance of this is that non-Dalits cannot replace Dalits and men cannot replace women[15] securing marginalized groups representation through strong legal provisions (D int 3: 194-198). The recent election in 2017 ensured more than 6,000 Dalit women to come into power in leadership roles within the government (D int 5: 57-59). However, it was the first election since passing the constitution hence the new system comes only now to pass; the established major parties, mostly consisting of upper caste males, still control most positions of power. Nevertheless, both endeavours hold great promise for marginalized communities, yet, according to interviewed organizations, implementation and reality still seem to be lacking from a Dalit perspective (D int 3: 56). Considering the recent election and comparing this scenario to the last few decades, different NGOs evaluated the situation as improving regarding the political representation of Dalits while emphasizing that there is still a gap to be bridged (D int 5: 71-73).

The federalization included the development of a national, provincial and local level in Nepal which have both executive and legislative power (D int 3: 308-312). It grants opportunities to pass laws based on needs instead of the former generalized laws applicable to all districts of Nepal. In practice, provincial governments can now introduce more practical laws to address specific problems of, for example, Dalits whose situation differ greatly across districts[16] (D int 8: 146-148). This process displays an important change in action when it comes to providing relief after a national disaster like the 2015 earthquake. It presents a long-term provision to create better opportunities to work with the government through the provincial and local levels and provides additional resilience in case of a future national emergency (D int 3: 308-310). Many I/NGOs evaluate this restructuring as a possible improvement for marginalized groups as it provides shorter ways to a new legislation and exercising influence; it appears to be more of an inclusive approach and incorporates the advantage of its orientation on needs in the different districts (ibid.: 305-310).

As seen above, the federalization as well as the 2015 constitution stipulate some changes in favour of Dalits and other marginalized groups. Yet, they do not necessarily reach all people in need due to the disregard of social and political exclusion (D int 7: 29-35).

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[15] Political parties must ensure 33 percent of female candidates in power (D int 5: 942).

[16] It also caters to the fact that most Dalits living in rural areas are living under worse conditions than Dalits living in urban areas due to less education and widespread poverty (D int 3: 42-46).

2.2 The Earthquake Aftermath – Increased Vulnerabilities

2.2.1 Flaws in the Earthquake Response

To coordinate the earthquake response, the government introduced the One-door Policy[17] which lays down that relief is channelled through governmental structures at the district and sub-district level (D int 4: 208-213). In practice, this meant that District Development Committees (DDCs) or Village Development Committees (VDCs) registered (incoming) aid and actors and then directed the relief to the affected areas and people based on lists of registered people in need (ibid.: 219-224). The idea of the policy was to react quicker to local impacts of disasters and reduce conflict between groups, corruption and duplication by increasing transparency and assuming control over the collection and redistribution of aid (D int 5: 835-836, 887-890). Paramount for this approach to work is the capacity of governmental structures, but, according to Asia Foundation, they were not yet functioning properly and the successful implementation in reality depended on local conditions (ibid.: 890-892). In some districts and villages, the committees worked well in cooperation with other civil society organizations and actors and distributed aid equally to all or agreeing on targeted assistance to certain areas or groups who were affected more (ibid.: 863-870, 883-886). In other cases, the Chief District/Village Officer had left and the committee was unable to work, other committees were dominated by political parties or leaders and corruption emerged, collected aid was distributed too late, not at all or with duplication (D int 2: 367-369; D int 5: 334-338, 378-381, 875-880). According to representatives of Dalit organizations, even the initial phase was characterized by discrimination as Dalits were given similar amounts in relief materials despite being more vulnerable. Overall, the data suggest Dalits facing obstacles in accessing aid because of their structural marginalization (D int 2: 197-201; D int 4: 117-119). Dalits lacked the knowledge about how to access relief services and information about who distributes what, when and where (D int 5: 115-117). Many Dalits were not registered on the official lists of people in need based on which relief was distributed because they were living in remote areas, lacked proof of land ownership or the information where to register (D int 2: 371; D int 4: 168-170; D int 5: 111-112, 387-389; D int 8: 108-109). Dalits were also not represented in the committees responsible for disaster response and generally missed the contacts to political and organizational networks to get heard and included (D int 3: 452-453; D int 4: 251-252; D int 5: 319-322).

The governmental blanket approach[18] failed to take this into account as in the immediate aftermath of the disaster humanitarian actors distributed what they thought people needed in order to meet the basic needs of people affected by the emergency (D int 5: 295-297). The focus on the housing grant and reconstruction that generalizes Nepali needs in the later phases is said to have failed to take the particular needs of vulnerable groups into account with regard to reconstruction and other requirements (ibid.: 652-658).

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[17] See explanation on page 14 (footnote 9).

[18] Presuming that enough assistance was available, relief in the first phase was provided according to a blanket approach, an approach that assumes that everyone irrespective of caste, income etc. has been equally affected by the earthquake. Aid could thus be delivered immediately and needs were only assessed if required to supplement existing information. According to a to Barker (2016), this blanket approach is usually applied immediately after a disaster. Unusual in the case of Nepal was that the approach was not followed or supplemented by a 'targeted approach' founded on an assessment of needs and vulnerabilities.

Already since the start, many organizations followed a targeted approach focusing on specific clusters, social groups or regions because of capabilities, organizational specialization or tight budgets (D int 1: 202-204; D int 5: 29-130, 171-173). By activating previously existing contacts and networks of years of local development projects or creating new structures like local relief committees of which Dalits and other vulnerable groups were a part, these humanitarian actors were able to identify and address local needs (D int 1: 218-223; D int 3: 100-104, 164-166, 367-368, 457-459; D int 6: 90-91). Nevertheless, especially moving towards the rehabilitation and recovery phases, people stated that their 'needs are not being addressed' (D int 5: 405-406). This includes security concerns in camps where more and more women, especially from marginalized groups, fell victim to gender-based violence or women traffickers, who started targeting affected regions and vulnerable groups (ibid.: 585-587, 602-606; D int 6: 108-112). Also, other specific needs, for example of menstruating women or psychological effects like trauma, were not on the agenda of many organizations (D int 4: 284-289; D int 6: 113-115).

According to representatives of the organizations, they witnessed the return of previous practices and (increased) inequality and thus the re-emergence of the discrimination of Dalits in the rehabilitation and recovery phases (D int 1: 97-99; D int 2: 236-239, 444-445). With the normalization of the situation, the mindset of unity was replaced by conflicts for resources, and old resentments against Dalits resurfaced (D int 2: 323-326). Many Dalits displaced after the disaster were initially accepted in a new place because of their obvious hardship and emergency. However, after a few months, they were confronted with the 'barriers of caste-based discrimination […] and concept of untouchability' (D int 6: 120-123) for example in light of water shortages and decided to move back to the 'land that was deemed unsafe' (D int 5: 467-470, 968-972). The moment that was hoped to be used for positive change evaporated and voices state that 'no massive change between then and now' has occurred (D int 6: 189-193). The situation of Dalits has been precarious, and the earthquake and the disaster response overall did not address their vulnerability appropriately so that the Dalits and other vulnerable groups have been worse off in the long run despite slow improvements in some fields, like political representation (D int 3: 200-201).

Today, the data suggest that Dalits are 'falling behind in their recovery' compared to other social groups (D int 5: 280). The governmental blanket approach and focus on the housing grant for reconstruction led to Dalits missing out on additional assistance they needed as well as the opportunity for positive development (ibid.: 658). The upper social groups could access relief easier and faster and consequently profit more (D int 2: 356-357; D int 3: 89-91).

2.2.2 Economic Counter-Effects

There were opportunities that have been created responding to the disaster, be it businesses who were able to sell the needed materials or the creation of new jobs in organizations and governmental institutions (D int 2: 257-259). However, interview partners claim that most of them remain only accessible for well-educated, high-caste and high-class men. Consequently, the positive developments following the earthquake were not able to overcome the traditional marginalization of Dalits and they are often still as poor and disadvantaged or are even 'in a much worse economic situation than before' (D int 5: 160-161) the earthquake (D int 2: 231, 251-256, 264-267).

The general composition of houses as well as of the land they live on made Dalits one of the most severely affected groups in Nepal (ibid.: 109-117). Due to their economic vulnerability and the lack of economic means to deal with the impact of disasters, Dalits were facing more obstacles to recover from the earthquake in comparison to other social groups (D int 5: 148-153). Therefore, they would have required more support for a complete recovery than many others. Unfortunately, data revealed that most aid distributors failed to take this crucial point into consideration and Dalits were generally lacking additional basic assistance (D int 2: 237-238). Consequently, Dalits are now often caught in the same conditions as after the first incoming relief while the livelihood situation of many other social groups has considerably improved (D int 1: 188-189; D int 3: 431-438).

Although the housing grants issued by the GoN brought the mentioned positive opportunities, at the same time they constituted an essential component responsible for hampering Dalits from recovering economically. Struggling with poverty and inadequate basic support, many Dalits spent the grants on fulfilling basic needs rather than on reconstruction purposes. Also, the Rural Housing Reconstruction Program (RHRP) grants were in many cases simply insufficient to fulfil their actual aim (D int 5: 149-150). A majority of Dalits did not have enough money to complete the construction of earthquake-resistant houses[19]. Even if government grants seemed to be able to induce positive change in the immediate aftermath, the longer perspective showed that 'Dalits were falling more and more behind in terms of rebuilding their houses compared to other groups' (D int 1: 126; D int 2: 246-247; D int 4: 258-265; D int 5: 152-153). Although many people are still living in temporary houses today, Dalits are the ones unable to make improvements to their shelters (D int 5: 233-235).

Due to the Dalits' precarious economic situation and especially the general lack of money, the government's housing grants further aggravated their situation in many cases. Being directly tied to the reconstruction progress, only those fulfilling the required progress in time were able to get further instalments. Thus, only a small number of people who received the first tranche also accessed the second one. Dalits, already lacking the basic financial means to complete the required level of progress, were in many cases not able to access any following instalments (D int 4: 169-170). Additionally, beneficiaries receiving the housing grant were compelled to completely reconstruct their houses excluding financial support for earthquake-safe repairing or retrofitting measures. As demolishing and complete rebuilding is much more expensive than a partial reconstruction, this procedure gradually contributed to a further marginalization of already disadvantaged Dalits. For instance, this led to cases of Dalits remaining in uninhabitable building shells (Asia Foundation 2016: 13-14; D int 5: 542-543). Due to insufficient grants, many Dalits were forced to take loans to finance basic reconstruction and needs. As they are usually not able to get ordinary loans, they often ended up in exploitative situations such as bonded labour or debt traps. Provoking a worsening of dependencies compared to their situation before the earthquake, data actually underlines counterproductive outcomes of government grants. Dalits were trying to cope with earthquake effects, especially with the increasing poverty, in a variety of ways: for instance, 'organ trafficking […] among vulnerable groups, including a high number of Dalits, has increased in particularly earthquake affected areas', such as for example Sindhupalchok district (D int 5: 474-477, 603-609).

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[19] Surveys 'revealed that the reconstruction grant will not be enough for most affected households' (Asia Foundation 2016: 14). Reasons for this shortcoming are high prices of building materials or people simply not knowing that RHRP grants were not intended to cover all reconstruction costs. Not only that the information on the cash grant in many cases was not shared on local levels, people from remote areas had to travel to urban centres to access the money including high travel costs and time expenditure. In addition, guidelines of earthquake-resistant reconstruction as well as requirements to access further instalments have often not been communicated clearly (ibid.: 20-25).

The government housing grants were not designed as targeted assistance, but instead intended to not discriminate between different groups (ibid.: 487-488). This blanket approach did not take different vulnerabilities into consideration and led to Dalits being generally underprivileged. The main reason for this is the fact that a large number of Dalits, compared to non-Dalits, do not have the required official land certificates[20]. Thus, there were many cases of Dalits being completely excluded from grant distribution processes. As many Dalits do not own proper houses but live in rented buildings, they were also not able to access RHRP grants, being only available to verifiable private property. Due to these unequal access opportunities, a high number of Dalits was not able to claim support and therefore to even basically rebuild their destroyed houses until today (D int 1: 102-107; D int 5: 388). From the initial relief phase until now, the Asia Foundation suggested that Dalits have been further disempowered through growing dependencies from external support. As the RHRP grants, due to the broad range of weaknesses, were not sustainable enough to improve the overall economic situation of Dalits in Nepal and thereby contributed to broadening the gap between Dalits and non-Dalits (D int 5: 515-517, 533-535).

This is why many voices demand a more targeted economic needs assessment focusing on long-term investments and changes besides reconstruction support. To counteract the growing gap between Dalits and non-Dalits, earthquake support, especially for Dalits and other vulnerable groups, has to be conducted more extensively. Since Dalits need instant cash or interest free loans for reconstruction and to fulfil other needs rather than just the required construction materials, an approach focusing on long-term support is necessary (ibid.: 407-408). An alternative approach would require training and scholarships to create sustainable and secure sources of income assuring land property, supporting small businesses instead of denying financial support as well as raising awareness on rights to independently establish businesses. In short, including a larger number of organizations and initiatives and not only focusing on reconstruction grants; there is a need for measures to give Dalits the opportunities to become self-reliant both from economic relief aid in particular as well as from all kinds of other dependencies in general (D int 3: 160-168, 332; D int 4: 317-328). Long-term economic support is a crucial component, for instance, to assure buying basic raw materials, Dalits need to independently sustain their lives. A more sustainable support can also complement already existing and promising offers of awareness training (D int 7: 68). This combination of assistance has the potential to sustainably decrease the gap between Dalits and non-Dalits being aggravated through the earthquake. More and more ‘cooperation between the big organizations working on […] [needs] beyond the housing grant’ (D int 5: 659-660) emerges. But despite promising examples of support taking different kinds of vulnerabilities into consideration[21], there is still a long way to go to overcome the effects of the 2015 earthquake as well as the thereby broadening gap within Nepali society (ibid.: 664-668).

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[20] In Nepal, most marginalized groups do not own official land certificates. Due to historic discriminatory reasons, the high numbers of landlessness among Dalits is still a current issue. For further information see: Nepali, P B 2008, 'Access to Land Resource: Dalits and their Livelihood Insecurity' in K N Pyakuryal, B R Upreti, S R Sharma, Nepal: Transition to Transformation, pp. 163-184. Heidel Press P. Ltd, Kathmandu.

2.2.3 Understanding and Addressing Vulnerabilities

More and more attention is paid to the gap between social groups, but a common definition of vulnerability as well as an approach of how to target these vulnerable groups is lacking (D int 5: 488-492, 497-499). There also seems to be a reluctance on the policy side to design policies on structural discrimination concerning Dalits (ibid.: 555-561).

Vulnerabilities delineated as single women, elderly persons or a certain yearly income address only partial vulnerabilities caused by structural discrimination and neglects the differences among Dalits with regard to the impact of disaster, living conditions and received aid as well as other people in need irrespective of caste (ibid.: 503-510, 558-561). For the government it is easier to target overall accepted and recognized vulnerabilities instead of opening a debate about structural discrimination and the equal treatment of certain castes. To other castes this modus operandi seems more inclusive and thus will be less likely to generate a negative backlash and the resistance of other castes who feel treated unfairly (ibid.: 679-689). Nevertheless, these policies do nothing to acknowledge the historic mistreatments of former ‘untouchables’ in Nepali society who still suffer due to past discrimination. Three to six months after the earthquake, relief targeting Dalits issued by I/NGOs regarding additional food and shelter has shown a growing dissent and sparking a rise in discrimination proving this backlash to be a serious issue within Nepali society (D int 2: 236-240). These points also show a lack of reflection in Nepali society regarding the historic discrimination of Dalit people as well as discord about how to treat them today. Despite the quota system, non-Dalits still represent the majority in Nepali society and in government positions which might explain a lack of incentive or understanding to fight for more targeted policies. Dalits themselves are often not in political positions to influence such decisions (D int 1: 352-356).

As such, the government has to toe a line not to appear favouring Dalits, but also acknowledging their status and issues without inspiring jealousy or greed. It is imminent not to forget that Nepali society is still structured in caste hierarchies and that these social standings are regarded as manifest and legitimate, proving the implementation of equal treatment of everyone without upsetting other castes a challenge.

One important factor independent from the new constitution for Dalits is the so-called Untouchability Act, which criminalizes caste-based discrimination by imploring fines or jail time for such acts. This act was a clear symbol of empowerment for Dalits in Nepal and against discrimination; it is seen as one of the major achievements of the Dalit movement.

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[21] A promising development in this direction was the Emergency Top-up Cash Transfer Program (ETCTP) for vulnerable groups implemented by the Government of Nepal, in cooperation with UNICEF between June and November 2015. The program’s aim was to meet ‘immediate household expenditure needs and to increase household resilience by reducing the use of negative coping mechanisms and behaviours in an extremely challenging post-earthquake situation’ (UNICEF 2016: 1). The ETCTP provided emergency cash to vulnerable groups including Dalit children under the age of 5 and Dalit senior citizens above 60 years.

Even though the criminalization of caste-based discrimination was a major step for the Dalit movement, the knowledge of these laws is limited to Dalit people which in turn limits their political access (ibid.: 287-290). This missing awareness and law literacy can be traced back to differing reasons, like little education and high poverty levels to the extent that it is a struggle to fulfil their basic needs (ibid.: 291-293). With the earthquake setting the Dalits economically far behind other Nepali groups, this conflict intensified even more. Yet, there are many NGOs in Nepal providing trainings about their rights as the government often fails to do so (ibid.: 281-285). However, it is often a privilege for these people to be able to take part as they have to bear traveling to the training locations and invest time they might not be able to spare (ibid.: 46).

As progressive as the new constitution seems, many members of traditionally marginalized groups fear disadvantages as it has been rushed through by established parties which, including the Maoists, are dominated by high-caste, mostly male, leaders. The assembly elected in 2013 is dominated by the traditional parties; together, they pushed through the new draft charter in June saying the disastrous earthquakes in April and May had concentrated their will to get it done (Einsiedel 2015: 5). Although, it cannot be denied that the timing was convenient as the country was still focused on overcoming the earthquake and protests were accordingly slim. One grievance is that a smaller percentage of parliament will now be elected by proportional representation than under the previous post-war interim constitution. This system has helped more members of indigenous and low-caste groups, historically oppressed and marginalized, to get elected (ibid.: 5). The quota system and the federalization do not alienate the fact that Dalits always operate from a place within a minority and as such their influence on important political decisions is limited (D int 8: 146-149). Minorities are faced with different problems than majorities; especially in a strictly hierarchical socio-cultural context where higher castes are still in control of many vital positions. This furthers the felt hopelessness within Dalit communities: ‘whom should we ask for help because our problems are always the same and neglected’ (ibid.: 148). There is an overrepresentation of Brahmin and Chhetri in bureaucracy which presented a crucial issue when relief materials came in after the earthquake: people with connections to the bureaucracy had typically more and quicker access to relief goods than others. In other places the distribution was controlled by political parties or parts of the communities (D int 2: 339-342). As Dalits are rarely able to reach positions of power, the data indicates that they were highly disadvantaged when relief materials came in, setting them even farther back compared to the other castes (D int 1: 96). It becomes evident that the compromise, propelled by the urgency to begin reconstruction, left some important issues unaddressed.

Regarding the quota system, a lack of appropriate education amongst Dalits proves additionally problematic. In order to be able to make decisions on a political level, one has to be able to grasp the complexity of socio-cultural issues as well as the political system itself. Not being able to interact on the same level as more educated Nepali affects not only their individual confidence, but also their social standing. These lacking capabilities within the Dalit people points to a failure of the state to provide what is necessary to fill their constitutional quotas if they want to ensure equality within the country and points to faults in the hastily passed constitution. These issues render an inclusive new regulation, such as the quota system, momentarily dispensable even though it provides a positive long-term perspective for Dalits.

Despite the issues and challenges mentioned above, political access for Dalits has visibly improved over the last decade; also due to the fast passing of the new constitution after the earthquake in 2015 (D int 2: 35-36). However, crucial parts of the political commitment to ensure equality have yet to be translated into action to improve the situation of Dalits and grant them equal access to resources, recognition, same opportunities and representation at state organs.

2.3 Social Reality of Dalits in Nepal

Even after outlawing caste-based discrimination with the first democratic constitution in 1990, the historical caste hierarchies and the connected inequalities do still echo in the mindset of the Nepali people. Today, Dalits face a more indirect or subtle discrimination in society. It seems that by outlawing caste-based discrimination, discrimination did not dissipate, but move from the public to the private sphere (D int 5: 31-32). This transition can be observed in the development of the disaster response.

After three to six months, when aid has started to be delivered to the victims on a large scale, conflicts among Nepali people due to caste, political or religious differences resurfaced (D int 2: 236). Even though many aid delivering agencies stated that their main objective was to help every individual, the harsh reality of the prolonged social inequalities drew another picture (ibid.: 219-238; D int 5: 256-257). Political parties, religious organizations and other figures responsible for the distribution of aid prioritized members of their own networks so that political and religious affiliation determined if and how much help someone would receive (D int 5: 314-318). As the initial atmosphere of unity among Nepali people faded away and conflicts among members of different communities gradually reappeared, so did discrimination (D int 3: 365-369). Shelter, food and water were no longer shared but instead a competition around necessities and needs began. Dalits were highly affected by these developments. As water shortages became in one place a problem, the Dalits there were forced to walk for several hours to get water because they were denied using the same sources as higher castes (D int 5: 967). The water they had then access to was in many cases from contaminated rivers putting them at a high risk of infection and diseases (D int 1: 74-80).

The main reason for the weakness of Dalit networks is often credited to the heterogeneity of their group. While the term suggests a social affiliation, in reality Dalits do not constitute a community. They are in most cases politically divided and live often scattered from one another (ibid.: 122-134). It's been stated that there is a need for more solidarity among Dalits to work together on a social and political level and make their voices heard (D int 7: 29-35; D int 8: 163-165, 255-256). Instead, Dalits lack political unity and representation. In many cases Dalit voices have neither been heard nor taken as equally important than others who are politically better connected (D int 2: 240-242; D int 5: 358-363). As a result, certain districts that were well known to be in urgent need of help, were kept waiting when at the same time other districts have been prioritized in aid delivery due to their inhabitants' connection to government officials (D int 1: 96-99; D int 2: 199-201; D int 5: 165-173). Taking their economic situation and their political and social heterogeneity into consideration, it becomes clear that Dalits have less access to influential networks and therefore less access to support systems (D int 2: 292).

The development in the disaster response of the Nepali communities demonstrates the complexity of the struggle of the Nepali society to overcome caste related patterns of discrimination that first seemed to be eliminated after the earthquake. It has been stated that social conflicts and caste discrimination returned due to deep rooted rigid mind-sets within Nepali society (D int 1: 260-270). Interview experts point out that socially constructed mindsets that define how people are perceived and perceive others can only be overcome by social and educational inclusion. The self-empowerment of Dalits is a challenge since they have been dominated and discriminated against for many decades and consequently often find themselves in inferior positions (D int 4: 426-432). To tackle this issue, the renewal of the educational system to become more accessible for Dalit students and teachers to get better access to the job market is indispensable (D int 2: 263-267; D int 7: 55-57). The assistance in education and livelihood development is needed to effectively improve the situation of Dalits and help them overcome their vulnerabilities in the long run and not make them dependent on relief (D int 4: 312-313, 325-328, 317).

In many cases Dalits are illiterate as older generations were not allowed to go to school, and even today many are forced to quit school at a very young age ‘due to their family working practice’ (D int 7: 22; D int 8: 215). As mainly schools were providing earthquake provision prior to the tragedy of 2015, Dalits were mostly unaware of the potential risk of earthquakes in Nepal and consequently the need to be prepared (D int 8: 8-10). Furthermore, the lack of literacy among Dalits hindered their access to information and ultimately to receive aid (D int 5: 117-119). In some cases, they were even unable to identify the correct use of aid supply, mistaking shampoo or napkins for something they needed more, such as food (ibid.: 423-424).

However, organizations also point out that there are already positive examples of the improvement of the situation of Dalits and other marginalized groups. In the city of Lalitpur, for example, organizations started establishing workshops and other educational programs to bring Dalits and Non-Dalits together to grow closer as a community. Consequently, the marginalization of Dalits in Lalitpur got reduced within the mixed communities living there (D int 1: 334-339). The earthquake can be seen as a connector in the initial phase of the aftermath as people started helping each other while disregarding caste-based identity barriers as well as in the long run as they witnessed the Dalits and their struggle to address their needs to overcome the emergency. As a result, a sense of awareness was created among organizations in Nepal leading them to focus more on issues such as ongoing discrimination and the marginalization of Dalits (D int 2: 295-297; D int 5: 105-106).

3 Résumé: Persistent Power Structures and Vulnerabilities Blocking a Window of Opportunity

The 2015 Gorkha Earthquake had a massive impact on all parts of Nepali society. Although the natural disaster did not distinguish between caste and social status, there are parts of society being more affected than others. Following the initial question of short and long-term impacts of the earthquake in 2015 on the marginalization of Dalits in Nepal, it has been shown that the Dalits’ marginalization in Nepali society is based on unequal distribution of social, economic and cultural capital so that they still belong to one of the most vulnerable groups in the country. The earthquake even further increased the imbalance between the social groups at the expense of Dalits. Until today, a large number of Dalits is still struggling with the effects of the natural disaster.

Although Dalits and other marginalized groups have been historically excluded from many social fields prior to the earthquake, the first months after the disaster were characterized by an unfamiliar momentum of harmony among Nepali. Despite concerns, Dalits were not excluded from assistance in the earthquake response. There are positive examples of Dalits receiving help within socially mixed networks, predominantly in areas with a high presence of organizations working on inter-caste communication for decades prior to the earthquake. In light of the emergency, people united across caste and other social differences, and the feeling of empathy for one another's suffering lifted dividing practices. People were sharing meals, water and shelter and supported each other to jointly overcome the emergency. It is highlighted by organizations providing relief materials that this momentum of unity encourages them to build on that experience and continue to work on overcoming discrimination towards Dalits.

However, after the immediate relief phase in the first few months, the feeling of harmony among Nepali communities gradually faded away; old social patterns of discrimination re-emerged in the recovery and reconstruction phase, although the government, at first sight, tried to prevent discrimination in the earthquake response. Aside from receiving help through the official way, Nepali from higher castes were also able to access various other channels of support. Those influential networks allowed them to be informed about potential sources of help and address their needs towards officials responsible for aid deliveries. As described in Bourdieu's theory, Dalits on the other hand had fewer chances to receive support due to their comparatively weak social networks as well as due to the internal differences that are difficult to bridge. They faced large disadvantages in receiving needed aid because they lacked knowledge, contacts and access to authorities in charge – reverberations of the structural discrimination and marginalization Dalits faced for decades.

At the bottom of this social conflict lays a slowly changing societal structure, which is still in the process of becoming established; it is not expected for century-old traditions to be overruled easily. The earthquake illustrated that Nepali society is still structured according to rigid caste hierarchies and that these social standings are regarded as manifest and legitimate. The constitution demands equal treatment of everyone, yet, it is a challenge to create equity in an inflexible hierarchical system without upsetting other castes. Historical class hierarchies are now separated from the state and are supposed to be inconsequential in public life, however, the earthquake indicates that they still echo in the mindset of the Nepali people and do have an impact on people's behaviour and today's policy making. This non-recognition of retroactive discrimination is a major reason for the stagnant change in the situation of Dalits. At this point, the Nepali state fails to provide Dalits with equal rights and chances by neglecting to assure resources. Dalits are lacking access to education, law literacy, politics and the fulfilment of basic needs. According to Mary Fineman, these are all fields a democratic government is responsible for to provide every citizen with. Influencing Dalit's vulnerability, each of these points proved to be an issue during the aftermath of the earthquake prolonging the already protracted social conflict and resulting in Dalits falling more and more behind in comparison to other social groups. Consequently, the more Dalits are disadvantaged in society, socially and economically, the more difficult it becomes for them to recover from the earthquake and fight for opportunities.

Besides the impact of persisting structural discrimination within Nepali society, the approach of the GoN in disaster relief also furthered counterproductive consequences of the situation of Dalits. The One-door Policy required that earthquake response was centralized and channelled through (local) governmental authorities which generally were not able to adequately coordinate the relief distribution. The dominating blanket approach then failed to take Dalit vulnerabilities into account as needs of people being affected by the disaster were generalized and special requirements not addressed. Lacking an overall accepted understanding of vulnerability, different political, organizational or societal levels instead interpreted and approached vulnerabilities in various ways leading to an often-insufficient long-term support of Dalits in the aftermath of the disaster.

Despite several cases of improvements to their living conditions such as job opportunities and reconstruction support, the number of Dalits being able to completely recover economically from the earthquake is rather exceptional. Although opinions about the positive influences of financial support differ, most claim that the overall economic situation of Dalits in Nepal did not improve or was even aggravated through the impacts of the earthquake and developments in the aftermath. RHRP grants, issued by the GoN, were merely contributing to increase the gap between Dalits and non-Dalits. Regarding their economic situation, the majority of Dalits has always been stricken by poverty limiting their opportunities and making them especially vulnerable. Consequently, they were not able to access and invest these grants as easily as more privileged parts of society. Furthermore, Dalits generally lost more from what they had before in comparison to social groups being economically better off. Being confronted with insufficient financial support to rebuild their overall more severely damaged houses, they had fewer chances to recover, their general living condition became worse and many depend on external support. Consequently, Dalits are still lacking behind in recovering from the earthquake compared to other social groups and three years after the earthquake it is clear that Dalits are often worse off than before the disaster.

It can be concluded that the earthquake revealed that Dalits, although being one of the most marginalized groups in Nepal, did receive aid in the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake. Talking to I/NGOs in Nepal illustrated that the earthquake contributed to an increased awareness about Dalits' needs and necessary changes required to support their full recovery from the 2015 earthquake as well as making them less vulnerable in the future. The earthquake also had a positive social impact on the communities as it made people aware of opportunities to empower Dalits based on mutual understanding, empathy and trust. However, the re-emergence of old resentments and discriminatory practices against Dalits in camps and villages is an indication for the evaporation of that short momentum of blurred social boundaries and unity that could have proven to be the window of opportunity to change the social conflict. Despite promising developments to improve their situation, it became clear that support for Dalits was not sufficiently adapted to their vulnerabilities and needs. Previously existing power structures and an unequal distribution of capital were reinforced in the aftermath of the earthquake. In the long run, Dalits as a group were disadvantaged in relief activities, therefore less capable of coping with the disaster and unable to profit from opportunities that had been created. Unless basic vulnerabilities such as poverty and structural discrimination are not addressed sufficiently, 'whatever beautiful […] legal provision you have in the constitution [it] does not work' (D int 3: 329-330) to improve the situation of Dalits in Nepal. Three years after the earthquake, the developments following the natural disaster seem to have increased Dalit's vulnerability rather than empower them. On this account it can be concluded that the new political system will be stunted without addressing retroactive vulnerabilities as the root cause of existing inequalities. As of right now, Nepal seems to be struggling with the transition to form a new system within the traditional state structure. Yet, innovations, such as the inclusion of Dalits into the Nepali society, can only prove successful if the people in charge want this change, and have the incentive to implement them and take action.

The 2015 Gorkha Earthquake illustrated the interface between the natural disaster and the protracted social conflict in Nepal. Only shortly was a window of opportunity opened in which solidarity and agreement within society emerged, but this momentum did not provide the chance to overcome the protracted social conflict and end the structural violence Dalits still face. Three years after the earthquake, it becomes clear that in the aftermath of the disaster the gap between Dalits and non-Dalits widened as pre-existing vulnerabilities and disadvantages of the already marginalized Dalits were enhanced and the state lacked the capacities to react appropriately. Unless Dalits' vulnerabilities are not considered holistically, Dalits will remain marginalized and as such more prone to the impacts of future disasters.

VII. Being LGBTI in Nepal: Challenges and Opportunities for Sexual and Gender Minorities after the Gorkha Earthquake

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1 Introduction: Nepal –A Beacon in the Global LGBTI Rights Movement?

All over the world Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex people (LGBTI) continue to suffer from discrimination, physical abuse, harassment, social exclusion and human rights violations. Especially patriarchal societies, where heterosexuality is considered as the conventional standard, are reluctant to include issues of the LGBTI community in political as well as legal agendas.

The 2007 decision of the Supreme Court in Nepal presented a landmark in the LGBTI rights movement in South Asia. Permitting all discriminatory laws against LGBTI people made Nepal a 'beacon' for the LGBTI rights progress in Asia (Knight 2017). Although the legislative status of sexual and gender minorities is progressing, social exclusion, forced marriage and physical abuse are still persistent in the country.

As discussed in chapter three, such vulnerabilities might be reinforced when a disaster strikes a country already suffering from pre-existing conflicts. However, disasters might also serve as windows of opportunity for vulnerable groups to strengthen their position in society as well as help to overcome deep-rooted prejudices and harmful stereotypes. Nevertheless, research focusing on the impacts of disasters on LGBTI people is lacking and prevents the development of countermeasures and comprehensive disaster needs assessments.

The aim of this study is to analyse the interaction between the disastrous earthquake of 2015 and the situation of the LGBTI community as a specific vulnerable group in Nepal. The following hypotheses have been identified:

Though equal rights are granted to the LGBTI community in Nepal, they suffer from social exclusion due to predominant family pressure, patriarchal structures and a stagnated implementation of guaranteed rights.

The LGBTI community and its demands have been neglected by disaster managers in the post-earthquake disaster recovery phase.

The lack of research prevents the equal distribution of humanitarian aid after the earthquake as well as the empowerment of the LGBTI community in Nepal.

The disaster earthquake itself did not serve as a window of opportunity for the LGBTI community. It rather illustrated still existing deficits preventing the community to work towards a social inclusion and equality.

The participants of the study conducted eight qualitative interviews with various local and international organizations affiliated with sexual and gender minorities.

In addition to the theoretical framework of the Disaster-Conflict Interface and Bourdieu's concept of habitus and forms of capital, the research group sets their focus on discussions about a possible gender capital in the sense of Bourdieu.

The theoretical approach is followed by a representation of the stance of the LGBTI community in Nepal. The study shall then discuss the results of the analysis of the gathered data which will be summarized in a résumé.

2 Bourdieu and the Masculine Domination

'The social order functions as an immense symbolic machine tending to ratify the masculine domination on which it is founded' (Bourdieu 2001: 9). Although Bourdieu did not include a specific gender capital in his initial theory on habitus and social fields, he stated in later works that a gendered masculine power is represented in cultural and symbolic capital. It is visible in communication, roles and division of labour, different gender habitus and codes of conduct (Dittrich/Schrader 2018: 317). Bourdieu understood gender as a sexual difference; a reflection of often hidden objective and cognitive structures (Skeggs 2004: 21). Thereby, he observes a masculine domination: being included, as man or woman, in the object that we are trying to comprehend, we have embodied the historical structures of the masculine order in the form of unconscious schemes of perception and appreciation (Bourdieu 2001: 5).

Furthermore, he claims that the strength of this masculine order is seen as a fact dispensing any kind of justification. The division between sexes appears to be 'in the order of things' as normal, natural and to the point of being inevitable (ibid.: 8-9). The gendered habitus results in different access to capital forms and is influenced by them. Especially the social construction of bodily appearances is described as gendered forms of cultural capital relating to charm and beauty. These

> have led to [the] emergence of a whole set of female occupations and to the establishment of a legitimate market in physical properties. The fact that certain women derive occupational profit from their charm(s), and that beauty thus acquires a value on the labour market, has doubtless helped to produce not only a number of changes in the norms of clothing and cosmetics, but also a whole set of changes in ethics and a redefinition of the legitimate image of femininity (Bourdieu 1984: 153).

Women who have a 'feminine-sexual' cultural capital cannot escape consequences inherited in such a capital compared to other types of cultural capital (McCall 1992: 845).

Particularly feminist scholars criticized Bourdieu's gender approach. According to Arnot (2002: 49), Bourdieu 'offers no account of social change in the cultural arena'. Hence, the cultural reproduction of sexual identities appears to be an unconscious process which is unlikely to be broken (ibid.).

As gender is seen as an inherited and embodied way of being that is shaped in interaction with social fields, it constitutes a repertoire of orientations and dispositions (McLeod 2005:19). Such dispositions are 'inevitably reflective of the social context in which they were required' (Reay 1995: 357). Thus, gender norms are secured through the internalization and the embodiment of particular structures and dispositions (McLeod 2005: 19).

In the case of Nepal, the embodiment of particular structures and dispositions is reflected in a powerful system of patriarchy and hetero-normative expectations. The affirmation of heterosexuality as a social norm does not only underestimate diverse sexuality but has also the potential to marginalize gender and sexual minorities.

As a result, the LGBTI community still faces multidimensional discrimination in the socio-legal sphere.

3 Being LGBTI in Nepal

What makes Nepal an interesting case study is the many ways in which the LGBTI community has been able to advance a progressive legislative agenda regardless of strict patriarchal structures persisting in the country.

Since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord in 2006, sexuality and gender issues have been brought into national debates and legal reforms throughout the country (Boyce/Coyle 2013: 10). Only one year later the Supreme Court declared the replacement of all discriminatory laws against LGBTI and demanded that provisions must be made by the concerned authorities for the recognition of citizens as not only male or female, but also as third gender (Decision of the Supreme Court on the LGBTI people 2007).

After the Blue Diamond Society, one of the most influential LGBTI organizations in Nepal, lobbied to include the recognition of people identifying as third gender in the national population and housing census, Nepal became the first country to add a category in addition to male and female (Boyce/Coyle 2013: 11). Eventually, LGBTI issues were soon addressed in the political sphere. Numerous political parties, such as the Nepali Congress (NC) or the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (Maoists), included demands of the LGBTI community into their manifestos (UNDP/USAID 2014: 26). Furthermore, Sunil Babu Pant has been nominated as a member of parliament by the Communist Party of Nepal (United) and served as the first openly gay MP from 2008-2012. He was also an assigned member of the constitutional assembly bringing the demands of the LGBTI community in Nepal into the debate. The 2015 constitution includes various LGBTI protections ranging from a Right to Equality (Nepali Constitution Art. 18) to the Right of Social Justice (Nepali Constitution Art. 42). The introduction of the constitution of 2015 was perceived as ‘a momentous step forward to LGBT equality in Nepal’ (HRC Global 2015).

Nevertheless, the discrimination in the socio-legal sphere is still persistent in the country. Especially family ties and the social expectations of marriage and family formation are causes of stigma against LGBTI people (Greene 2015: 10). Any nonconformity is seen as a reflection on families and is able to have an immense impact on their prestige or image (Coyle/Boyce 2015: 16). Therefore, many members of the LGBTI community choose to live a life in secrecy. The decision to hide one’s identity may have serious mental health consequences. Various studies show that rates of depression and suicidal behaviour are significantly higher among the LGBTI community (Greene 2015: 9).

This aspect might also have an impact on educational and employment opportunities. Mental and psychological health issues, abuse and discrimination in school often prevent LGBTI people from focusing on their studies leaving them with lower educational status (Coyle/Boyce 2015: 8). This limited range of professional opportunities compelled many to work as sex workers (Bista 2012a: 107). Thereby, sex work is not only seen as an act of economic survival but also as a part of performing one’s desirable identity (Coyle/Boyce 2015: 29).

Besides being employed as a sex worker, LGBTI people often work for NGOs affiliated with the community. In 2001, the Blue Diamond Society was founded by Sunil Babu Pant. The key challenges were framed to international donors by focusing on rights based on interventions targeting the HIV epidemic and were soon expanded to include broader human rights issues

(UNDP/USAID 2014: 26). Today, the organization is the largest NGO dealing with LGBTI issues and is a respected advocate for policy change.

The following chapters will focus on the situation of the LGBTI community during and after the earthquake and intend to explore the coordination of the humanitarian aid in the aftermath of the earthquake with a special focus on the needs of the LGBTI community as a specific vulnerable group. Furthermore, it will be discussed whether the 2015 earthquake provided a so-called window of opportunity for the LGBTI community in Nepal and analyses which impact the disaster had on the LGBTI advocacy work and their social inclusion in Nepali society.

4 The Social Dimension of Gender Identity in Nepal

Although diverse genders and sexualities were already mentioned in ancient texts of the two dominant religions in Nepal, Hinduism and Buddhism, non-binary notions of gender identities are widely regarded as strange or flawed in today's Nepali society (L int 3: 506-511). The personal lives of LGBTI people and their social inclusion in Nepal are to a great extent influenced by determining factors such as caste and ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation as well as their individual economic situation and educational background. This plurality and diversity of Nepali LGBTI people and their background makes it hard to depict a thorough picture of the situation of the LGBTI community in Nepal. Yet, repetitive statements in the interviews provide significant insights into the current living conditions of LGBTI people in Nepal.

The findings indicate that discriminatory practices take place on a familial, societal as well as on a political level influencing many aspects of LGBTI people's lives as for instance, their accessibility to living space, jobs and fair treatment in public institutions (L int 3: 61-63, L int 4: 211-214, L int 8: 206-212, 986-990).

In Nepali society, where religious traditions, reputation and honour are of utmost importance, identifying as LGBTI is mostly considered a stigma and connected with shame (L int 7: 171-179). The belonging to a certain ethnicity, religion and caste has evidently a significant influence on the opportunities of Nepali LGBTI to live self-determined lives and being accepted by their families.

The findings suggest a tendency for LGBTI people from higher castes such as Brahmin and Chhetri to face more difficulties to live their sexual orientation or gender identity openly since their family's reputation and honour are potentially at a greater risk. Therefore, it can be assumed that higher caste families seem less likely to accept the coming out of their family members (L int 8: 760-771). On the contrary, less prestigious LGBTI-members, from lower castes, of indigenous ethnicity or from the Terai region tend to come out more easily (L int 8: 760-771). LGBTI who are Nepali-speaking, Hindu, of high reputation or from high castes usually face more difficulties to come out due to the family's fear of status loss and cultural reservations to speak about sexuality (L int 1: 483-494).

The aggravated conditions for LGBTI from higher caste families to come out can be explained by their proportionately greater loss of symbolic capital, which, according to Bourdieu's approach, is strongly connected to all other types of capital and therefore can negatively impact the social and economic position of entire families.

In general, the family is the most important social network for Nepali (L int 8: 708-720). Close family ties do not only provide a sense of belonging, but also present an important resource for security and support for its members which, according to Bourdieu, can be classified as a form of social capital. Bourdieu states that social networks such as families can be utilized by their members to e.g. improve their social position.

Nevertheless, close family systems can also be a great obstacle for LGBTI to come out and live a self-determined life. The honour and reputation of a family is often of highest priority as it assures their symbolic capital and thus their social status (L int 3: 278-280, 318-319; L int 6: 88-89; L int 8: 718-720).

A division of the sexes and clearly defined gender roles, to which Bourdieu referred to in his approach on gendered masculine domination, can be assumed as given in Nepali society. According to Bourdieu, those are considered as natural and unalterable conditions. For LGBTI people in Nepal, this consequently imposes major restrictions. Any deviation from an expected lifestyle, which includes a heterosexual marriage and having children, can negatively affect entire families in Nepali society (L int 3: 389-390, 402-403; L int 6: 147-162; L int 8: 708-720). Therefore, the outing of LGBTI people can lead to a degradation of the social status and even the exclusion of entire families from their communities which, according to Bourdieu, can be understood as a loss of social and symbolic capital (L int 6: 46-51, 57-61, 97-101, 120-123, 195-202, 237-247, 296-297).

> (...) in Nepal there is like, we have the family system, like the secure family, you know. And then, when you do think about what my mother will go through, what my father will go through and everything and like what my grandparents would think. Not just about me...but what they would go through from another individual in the society. So that kind of holds them down because if they could make decision about themselves, they would easily come out, you know, it wouldn’t be that hard. But they need to think a lot about how their family would be affected (L int 3: 327-332).

Traditionally, mothers are held responsible for the ‘wrong behaviour’ or ‘wrong identity’ of their children and in certain cases exposed to domestic violence (ibid.: 275-280, 326-335). Within families so-called corrective rapes are reported to be possible reactions on the coming out of LGBTI as well as familial exclusion (ibid.: 400-402).

Societal and familial pressure is repeatedly cited as relevant reasons for LGBTI to not come out and to live in a marriage of convenience (ibid.: 326-336, 389-390). However, hiding the sexual orientation or gender identity was quoted as a common reason for internal conflicts which in some cases lead to psychological health issues and even suicide (ibid.: 390-395, L int 6: 70-77). It can be argued, that the social capital of a secure familial network in those cases is given priority over personal identity aspects and self-determination of LGBTI people which consequently impacts their cultural capital in the sense, that educational performance and academic results tend to significantly suffer from hiding the identity or being ridiculed for it. LGBTI people living a double life in two different social networks (familial and LGBTI community) are unlikely to exploit its respective full potentials.

Without family support, particularly transgender are more likely compelled to work as sex-workers, which dramatically increases their risk of getting HIV positive (L int 4: 313-314). Therefore, it can be said that there is a strong correlation between family support as a form of social capital and economic capital in the sense of financial support and access to jobs for LGBTI people in Nepal.

With the decision of the Supreme Court to abolish all discriminatory laws against LGBTI people in 2007, the legal conditions for LGBTI people improved significantly. However, experiences by affected people affected reveal a lack of practical implementation and enforcement of those changed legal conditions. Security issues are reported to be a risk that openly LGBTI people in Nepal face on a regular basis.

For example, preconceptions according to which every LGBTI person is involved in sex work are common within Nepali society and in some cases even affect police actions (L int 3: 225-227). Reportedly, the police refused to help transgender who were approaching their help, as they are associated with criminal activities (ibid.: 70-71). Due to their otherness and non-conformity to the dominant heteronormative social structures LGBTI people in Nepal are exposed to harassments, (death) threats as well as abuse and forms of violence such as corrective rapes and sexual cleansing practices.

Regarding the living conditions, stark differences can be found between urban and rural regions. The findings suggest that LGBTI in Nepal commonly prefer living and working in cities where acceptance and anonymity as well as job opportunities tend to be greater (ibid.: 281-282, 284-286, 300-303; L int 6: 17-27, 43-44). ‘Kathmandu like it’s the city, like people are more accepting, more open. But usually in the rural areas people cannot come out easily’ (L int 3: 281-282). Hence, numerous LGBTI people from rural areas move to Kathmandu to live their sexual orientation or gender identity openly, however often keeping it as a secret from their families (ibid.: 280-284).

Nevertheless, harassments, limited access opportunities and discrimination against LGBTI people are to be found in rural areas and cities alike (L int 1: 546-560; L int 4: 211-214). Sexual orientation and gender identity in Nepal tend to hamper access to housing and working space and often LGBTI people can find accommodation only temporarily (L int 3: 61-63). Thus, fighting for land in order to build shelter homes especially in rural areas is a strategy to create save spaces for LGBTI community members. Own land and housing can additionally facilitate financial independence for LGBTI people, for example by creating work space at their homes for with agriculture or jewellery manufacture (ibid.: 430-439). This example demonstrates how social capital, as for example the creating and belonging of social networks such as the LGBTI community, can help to decrease vulnerability by strengthening economic capital and independence.

Factors such as beauty and age, the outing status and public recognition were reported to have an impact on the economic situation of LGBTI people as they can facilitate occupational careers in the LGBTI sector (L int 8: 818-831, 863-881).

> Centre * HIV aids ambassador she won that position and ahm her photos used to be published in magazines and there was a lot of media exposure so ahm that helped her a lot to become like established as a prominent figure and she was the first to be ah exposed as a transgender in Bhaktapur and the media ahm it helped hear a lot to come out and the public (L int 4: 273-276).

For obvious reasons, it is more difficult to hide the gender identity for transgender or intersexual people than for homo- or bisexuals. It has been argued that ‘[T]hose who open up are mostly transgender, because they can’t hide’ (L int 8: 833-837). Additionally, it was indicated that for transgender people it can also be of great importance whether they have undergone gender transformation surgeries or not (ibid.: 818-831). The relevance of the outward appearance for occupational success corresponds with Bourdieu's approach of beauty and charm as a gendered form of cultural capital, which he originally proposed with regard to women. The approach proves to be applicable in the case of the LGBTI community in Nepal as well as it can be especially applied on transgender people.

In reference to Bourdieu, the belonging to the LGBTI community in Nepal can be understood as a network and resource of social capital, providing its members with a variety of benefits. For example, the LGBTI community in Nepal provides job opportunities others than in sex work for LGBTI people (L int 6: 209-214). Furthermore, HIV/Aids and STD education and treatment in Nepal is performed primarily by LGBTI organizations (L int 4: 44-51, 94-99). Ignorance about gender identities and sexual orientations, however, do affect those concerned likewise. Often it is only due to the support and counselling of LGBTI organizations and its members on-site that LGBTI people in Nepal gain an understanding of their sexual orientation or gender identity and being able to accept themselves for who they are (L int 7: 77-83, 310-311, 486-487). This fact demonstrates, that essential cultural capital in form of information, education and awareness campaigns is provided almost exclusively by LGBTI organizations, thus emphasizing the importance of LGBTI organizations as a social network for LGBTI people in Nepal. This applies for the provision of jobs for LGBTI people as well as for the self-acceptance of sexual and gender minorities, who find support of like-minded and other people concerned in the community.

Yet, there is a notion of slow but gradual change which however tends to manifest itself in tolerance rather than in acceptance, a subtle difference which is perceived by those concerned as following: living in tacit coexistence but not being equally accepted (L int 1: 330-333, 450-451). According to LGBTI NGOs in Nepal, cooperation for LGBTI awareness programmes with the police, municipality and schools became easier in recent years (L int 4: 36-37, 40-42). Whilst the working environment for LGBTI organizations in Nepal was described as hostile several years ago, awareness programmes, media attention as well as enhanced legal conditions supported an improvement of the overall tolerance and cooperation opportunities for LGBTI people.

During the relief phase, it is assumed that the overall acceptance and inclusion of LGBTI people improved temporarily, especially where interaction between the different social groups took place (L int 3: 175-186). This finding confirms the theory of a temporarily settlement of disputes and agreement over disaster tasks in order to fulfil common relief needs during emergency phases.

However, in the medium term, significant changes of the overall inclusion and acceptance of LGBTI people within the Nepali society after the Gorkha Earthquake cannot be confirmed and discrimination and harassment continue to be a general problem for LGBTI people in Nepal.

5 The Post-Earthquake Situation

The Gorkha Earthquake had significant impact on the LGBTI community in Nepal. As the phone and internet connection broke down entirely people were cut from their peers, families and community members leaving them with feelings of anxiety and uncertainty (L int 8: 471-477). Since there was no comprehensive emergency response plan, vulnerable groups such as the LGBTI community were hardly prepared for the aftermath of the disaster.

Following Bourdieu's approach, it can be assumed that the condition of LGBTI people has been more challenging concerning the distribution of immediate relief aid as well as long term reconstruction efforts. Due to a generally lower social capital compared to cisgender and straight Nepali and an existing masculine-gendered habitus, it is believed that sexual and gender minorities have partially been excluded from cultural and symbolic capital such as recognition, tradition and knowledge. This might have led to an increased vulnerability and marginalization.

However, it is significant to note that the LGBTI-network could have been able to partially replace the lack of social capital in this particular situation. Empirical evidence can be found in the gathered data as well as in previous studies conducted on the situation of sexual and gender minorities in patriarchal societies.

The following chapter shall analyse the situation of the LGBTI community in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake as well as in posterior reconstruction processes. Hereby, the focus shall lie on the inherent vulnerability of LGBTI people due to the lack of social, economic and cultural capital.

After the re-establishment of the mobile network LGBTI-organizations started to assemble community members to estimate the number of missing people (ibid.: 284-285, 471-480). In addition to that, injuries, family losses and damaged or destroyed houses could be listed (ibid.: 707-723). Affected people in need of immediate relief aid saw themselves confronted with an uncoordinated and slow distribution of relief material (ibid.: 285-289).

As the health ministry supported by international organizations started to hold relief meetings, one of the most important Nepali LGBTI-organizations took the chance to bring their needs into the debate (L int 1: 148-158; L int 8: 253-261). At the same time, organizations wrote appeals for donations to different international funds and a worldwide LGBTI network (L int 3: 169-170; L int 8: 274-283).

The housing situation for LGBTI in the aftermath of the hazard was quite diverse and ranged from expensive private shelters in Kathmandu, over public shelters in rural areas to temporary huts built from rubble. In some cases, LGBTI people were accompanied by their family but often enough they had to stay alone outside on the streets in the first few days after the disaster for fear of facing discrimination in the public shelters (L int 8: 539-556). Reports about intolerance in form of gossip or bad talking fuelled such fears (L int 3: 174-186, 202-204; L int 7: 141-154). In addition to that, statements about discrimination by government authorities were given which. Though, they ranged from no government discrimination at all up to profound ones (L int 3: 466-468).

However, especially concerning the shelter situation, a significant impact on the vulnerability of the LGBTI community can be detected. Due to a lower cultural capital conditioned by strong heteronormative structures, gender and sexual minorities faced discriminations in public shelters. In accordance to that, they were either forced to hide their gender identity or to organize themselves in separate shelters which proved to be rather difficult considering a lower social as well as economical capital of the community.

Nevertheless, the LGBTI community was able to partially overcome the lack of economic and social resources. It could be observed that they showed a surprisingly high level of self-organization in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake as well as during the following reconstruction process.

After receiving aid, goods several LGBTI organizations built up more than 15 shelter homes in Kathmandu Valley and provided other partner organizations in rural areas with more tents. This action made it possible to create a safe space for the community (L int 3: 174-186, 202-204). In the shelter homes food and medicine such as ORS were provided to all members of their community. In one instance, they even established a community kitchen where food was given to all people, including the heterosexual neighbourhood (ibid.: 175-186, 202-204; L int 8: 265-271, 498-503).

Another pressing issue was the general need for mental support. As there were no institutionalized structures available, LGBTI members found a rather unique way to support each other. Gathering in their shelters they put make-up on, sang and danced together (L int 8: 447-459).

Referring to Bourdieu, these actions taken by LGBTI-organizations improved the community's social capital significantly. Reports about an unequal distribution related to power, family and caste as well as the perception of a complicated, discriminating and time-consuming bureaucracy forced LGBTI people to rely on their own national community and on their connections to international networks (L int 3: 169-170; L int 7: 97-99, 258-264, 266-276; L int 8: 276-283, 347-356). In addition to that a slight rise of recognition of the LGBTI community in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake could be observed. Due to the convergence set off within the scope of the community kitchen and an overall solidarity among those affected it can be assumed that the cultural capital of the LGBTI people was enhanced to some extend and in this one specific situation after the disaster.

Some weeks after the earthquake the focus slowly changed from emergency aid towards reconstruction. Nevertheless, people stayed in shelters for several weeks or months, as reconstruction was restricted by financial resources (L int 7: 101-105). Although the government declared to give 15,000 rupees for reconstruction purposes to each household, individuals reported on discriminations due to their gender identity, when they were classified as not entitled to this aid (ibid.: 106-111). In general, the distribution of aid seemed to be influenced by networks, power and corruption. Perceived unequal distribution happened by virtue of lacking cultural capital, in some parts also due to the socially unaccepted gender habitus and in some circumstances because of structural inequality in terms of physical or social capital between different groups within the Nepali society.

After the appeal for donations, the Blue Diamond Society (BDS) received US $50,000 from the international LGBTI-community. Due to the One-door Policy of the GoN they needed to get the approval of the concerned authorities in order to distribute the donations among their members. Furthermore, distribution was limited to 15,000 rupees per person. As a consequence, each LGBTI individual who had lost a family member or whose house was damaged received financial support of 15,000 rupees by the BDS (ibid.: 112-115; L int 8: 287-325). However, it was not enough for reconstruction purposes, and was instead spent on groceries or other daily needs (L int 7: 133-138). To reconstruct their damaged houses, individuals were forced to rely on private donations (ibid.: 102-105, 119-123).

The lack of intact houses made it difficult to get a rental apartment. The LGBTI-community perceived that for them it was even more challenging to get an apartment due to unspoken discrimination (ibid.: 298). LGBTI sex workers who had stayed in a shelter for some time, faced expulsion from their accommodation or a rent increase of around 200 percent. In those instances, it was reported that the BDS, the police as well as the media made efforts to support affected LGBTI people so that the issue could be solved (L int 8: 382-410).

The challenges for renting an apartment can clearly be attributed to Bourdieu's gender habitus. People who were not embodied in the masculine order faced numerous difficulties during the process to find a suitable place for living. The housing problem was further intensified with the smaller economic capital of LGBTI members, and they could not pay the reparation due to limited job opportunities and low income. This aspect has been further discussed above.

Not only LGBTI individuals, but also the LGBTI NGOs encountered challenges in their regular work, e.g. on HIV sensitization. During the post-earthquake situation an important part of the target group had left the city to be united with their families residing in villages outside Kathmandu. As a consequence, the organizations could not fulfil their project plans and had problems to get further funding of their work by international donors afterwards (L int 4: 225-236). This particular aspect does not seem to affect merely the LGBTI-community but a majority of NGOs in general. It can be assumed that it is closely connected to a fragile physical capital of non-governmental organizations in Nepal. It is further enhanced by a presumed lack of economical capital increasing the dependence of external funding.

Months after the earthquake governmental authorities supported by a number of NGOs conducted a post-disaster-needs assessment. Although vulnerable groups like Dalits, Muslims or Women were included in the assessment the LGBTI community was neglected (L int 3: 481-492). Nevertheless, organizations affiliated with the LGBTI community evaluated the post-earthquake situation and their work on their own. As one result, the BDS developed a preparedness plan including training sessions and storage of goods (L int 8: 934-958). Additionally, they are advocating in cooperation with the Nepal Bar Association towards being officially acknowledged as a minority group in 2018. An acknowledgement as a minority group is believed to contribute to their special needs, ensure their rights, raise awareness, increase support money and to work against the lack of research on the topic (ibid.: 977-1005).

To conclude, it can be said that even though LGBTI rights are ensured in the constitution, the special needs of them were not considered in the distribution of humanitarian aid after the earthquake (ibid.: 262-265). The challenging bureaucracy behind the aid coordination was generally perceived to reinforce the lack of physical, social and cultural capital making it complicated to receive appropriate relief efforts (L int 3: 169-170). Although the LGBTI community is, according to Bourdieu, assumed to be a vulnerable group due to a lack of social capital and a general masculine-gendered society, global networks and own organizational efforts employed by the community were able to partially compensate the problematic gender habitus in this situation. The earthquake illustrated the still existing deficits of the LGBTI community concerning awareness, social inclusion and financial capital. It can be assumed that the community will use the disaster as a momentum to work towards an acknowledgement as a minority group and an actual implementation of their guaranteed rights.

6 Building Networks in the Face of Adversity and in the Unknown

This section covers the main findings regarding the activities of interviewed LGBTI organizations in Nepal and their difficulties. It also aims to assess the earthquake's impact on the work of the organizations with a special focus on the social advocacy of LGBTI organizations, the networks' outreach reported by the participants as well as existing conflicts over resources and visibility within the group.

Following Bourdieu (1986: 21), who describes the social capital as 'the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to [...] membership in a group', this analysis puts forward that LGBTI groups in Nepal possess a relatively wide array of resources due to their activism-based participation in society, even on condition of vulnerability, based on four areas: HIV/AIDS-prevention, awareness, counselling, advocacy/lobbying (L int 2: 453; L int 3: 65-67, 103-110, 441-443, 497-501; L int 4: 36- 37, 71-75, 40-42; L int 7: 18-28, 310-311).

HIV/AIDS prevention is the core activity that these organizations perform: 'So our movement ah, entry point of our movement is HIV and Aids, and later on we add our STRATEGY and activities on human right and other issues' (L int 8: 82-84). Awareness raising is intended to sensitize the people to several issues among different institutions such as schools, police, the parliament and the general public, through talks, presentations and artistic demonstrations (ibid.: 918-921). In addition to that, counselling offers support to members of the LGBTI community (ibid.: 100-122).

Advocacy work has represented a valuable field of agency for the community. Activism in politics has proved to be essential for its visibility and has translated into a partial gain of recognition by people outside the LGBTI community. However, as the implementation of constitutional provisions has experienced setbacks, advocacy in political spheres became a priority for their work especially after the end of the People's War (1996-2006) and not after the earthquake as initially assumed:

> In 2007 [...] the Blue Diamond Society, Mitini Nepal and all the two or three NGOs, they put a case against the government in the Supreme Court regarding the approval of same sex marriage and living together. And the government it legalized living together. It is legal. So that is a very big thing for them (L int 3: 110-113).

This varied range of activities depends – reportedly – in substantial way on the cooperation with international organizations. The findings show that LGBTI organizations possess a network of partners on international and regional levels on which they relied on before, during and after the earthquake. This network is probably highly centralized due to the narrated high presence of the community in Kathmandu (L int 3: 300-303; L int 5: 77). For instance, the interviews highlight the cooperation in the field of HIV prevention provided by UN aids and UNDP which inform of a testing tool kit to help the diagnosis of HIV and awareness programmes (L int 2: 331-359). During the catastrophe organizations like the Red Cross and Save Children provided humanitarian aid aimed exclusively at this population (L int 4: 139-141). Equally, the cooperation of BDS with regional organizations such as the Transgender Pacifist Network was vital in obtaining funding for the victims of the earthquake (L int 1: 105-106).

The disaster caused human and material losses and stopped the work of the organizations temporarily. Leaders from the BDS reported, they were unable to communicate with their own during the first two days (ibid.: 74-76). Our Equal Access, a LGBTI organization working in Bhaktapur – Kathmandu valley – particularly endured heavy losses and had to interrupt their work for six months (L int 4: 229- 233). Moreover, the earthquake laid bare the unpreparedness due to their focus on HIV/AIDS prevention and the derived activities from it:

> Since the LGBTI community in Nepal main purpose achievement prevention on HVI [sic] issues like there were very much unprepared like what should we do or what help can be do what help can be do like [...] if beforehand we have some knowledge about preparedness [...] they were aware they could they could like ah contact more organizations and help more people [...] but that since they are only focusing more on HIV issues and on human right issues they were like not much aware what to do during that kind of situations (L int 1: 297-303).

Apart from the damages endured by the disaster, experiences with humanitarian aid did not increase the trust in the system of disaster response in Nepal due to the perceived inability of state protocols to deliver aid (L int 3: 452-455). Women organizations were reportedly not included in assessment reports for the ministry of women (L int 3: 481-487). Nepal authorities had to modify regulations to allow NGOs and INGOs to prioritize ‘certain communities’ for the reconstruction grants after the tragedy (L int 5: 134-136). These findings suggest that those humanitarian actors did not only disregard the community needs, but the community itself, even though if some local progresses were made thanks to what one informant described as ‘lobbying’ (ibid.: 114-116).

Invisibility does not come from the outside only, but from within as well. LGBTI organizations have difficulties to extend their own networks due to their inability to reach their target public: ‘There is not a lot of research done on LBT specifically and because (…) we cannot work the way we want to (…) because people don’t come out easily.’ (L int 3: 251-254).

Other actors confirm at some extent this finding: One international agency reported a shortcoming of mechanisms to assess the situation of LGBTI-organizations in disaster, especially state mechanisms, and a policy advisor pointed out the scarcity of published papers on the topic (L int 2: 136-143; L int 5: 229-331). Thus, a systematic lack of research and knowledge transfer jeopardizes the efforts to make the community visible within Nepali society’s boundaries.

Furthermore, the LGBTI community faces internal disputes due to tense relationships among them. Although there were instances where policy advisors reportedly organized workshops with organizations in post disaster assessments, the rivalry between organizations for resources is ostensible. It has been reported from a women organization that cooperation on gender issues are rather inconsistent and does not translate into results which it is understood as symbolic acts rather than effective collaboration (L int 3: 366-369). The results suggest that one possible conflict driver lays on the question about who is represented under the label LGBTI community, at least in the case of the organizations operating in Kathmandu Valley. A salient example is a case narrated by a women organization which talks about who they perceive as more visible within the LGBTI community in Kathmandu:

> And one of the major challenges is like [...] there is a lot of funding for trans [...] trans-women and [...] so a lot of funding goes to trans-women, so the Nepali society, so it is more visible, you know? So [...] like what Nepali society is like, the LGBT community is mostly trans-women and they involve in criminal activities. So, and [...] Mitini Nepal being a LBT organization, like there is not a lot of research in LBT issues. If you read any kind of article, all [the] title may suggest, it also includes [the] entire LGBT community but it’s mostly G and T. Even within T it’s just trans-women mostly. And trans, issues of trans-men are barely highlighted because in Nepal they don’t have enough money to transition and even and [...] many people still have gender identity issues because they believe they are lesbians but they

> are actually trans-women, trans-men, and so that...that dilemma also causes them to stay in hiding and not come out completely (ibid.: 234-244).

This finding confirms at some extent the symbolic masculine domination stated by Bourdieu, in which, for the Nepal case, assigned male bodies at birth enjoys more privileges, visibility and representation at expense of gender identities based on assigned female bodies at birth. Moreover, a hardly identifiable community leads necessarily to weak networks and, therefore, a loss in credibility and access to resources, in other words, less of social and economic capital. Individuals without enabling conditions to come out are unable to access and benefit from the resources and credibility linked to the membership in the LGBTI-community. Simultaneously, few people coming out and participating in the existing organizations representing the interests of the LGBTI-community do not strengthen the social network in Kathmandu Valley. In turn, this problem of visibility relates to the lack of prestige and acknowledgement, called symbolic capital, among this particular community in Nepal.

All things considered, the earthquake and the subsequent disaster response do not support the thesis that the LGBTI community has significantly benefited from a window of opportunity. Gorkha Earthquake has rather negatively impacted the community, bared laid bare pre-existent tensions and inequalities between the group and society and within the group itself. These findings suggest, however, that to at some extent, the disaster showed the ability to operate on their own facing – as a whole – problems in funding, cooperation with partner organizations, and visibility. Empowerment, thus, has a long way to go before it comes true in Nepal.

7 Résumé: LGBTI between Earthquake and Empowerment

The aim of this research was to give an analysis of the interaction between the disastrous earthquake of 2015 and the situation of the LGBTI community as a specific vulnerable group in Nepal. By identifying and testing certain hypotheses, it was attempted to uncover whether the earthquake could be considered as a window of opportunity for the LGBTI community and to assess the impact of the disaster on LGBTI activism and their social inclusion in Nepali society.

The research demonstrated that the earthquake in Nepal cannot be regarded as a window of opportunity for the LGBTI community because the disaster enhanced pre-existing vulnerabilities and even reinforced social and economic inequalities and therefore impeded equal treatment of the LGBTI community. Examples for this can be found in the fact that the demands of LGBTI have been neglected by disaster managers in the recovery phase but also in the systemic discrimination of LGBTI members in emergency shelters, housing and in the allocation of relief assistance.

Similarly, many interviewees highlighted that the exclusion of LGBTI and the inequality in distribution of aid was facilitated by a lack of research concerning the situation of LGBTI in Nepal which could raise awareness to the needs of the community in the aftermath of the disaster. This missing knowledge is particularly problematic as the LGBTI community in Nepal is already affected by a lack of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital due to their non-binary gender habitus under normal circumstances. As the analysis demonstrated this lack of capital can be reinforced in times of disaster and influences the capacity to cope with and to recover from the impact of an earthquake.

Nevertheless, the assessment of the impact of the disaster also showed that even though the earthquake did not generally serve as an opportunity for social change, there were certain positive possibilities for the LGBTI community in the aftermath of the earthquake. For once, the findings point to the fact that when people had the chance to interact with LGBTI, for instance within the setting of community kitchens, they often changed their attitude towards them and became more inclusive. Whether this change of attitude is sustainable and can facilitate the acceptance of the LGBTI community in Nepal remains to be seen. The experience of the disaster, however, affirmed the important change in terms of LGBTI activism that already took place after the end of the civil war in which the focus shifted away from HIV prevention to a more general human rights approach for LGBTI. This strategy intended to raise the needed awareness on LGBTI issues and is supposed to lead eventually to inclusion and social change which ultimately will also have a positive effect on resources and capacities.

Sexuality and gender issues have been brought into national debates and legal reforms since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord in 2006. Nevertheless, the experience of the earthquake also illustrated that there needs to be a stronger representation of LGBTI rights in the political sphere in order to create more positive moments such as the 2007 Supreme Court decision on the abolishment of all discriminatory laws against LGBTI that opened up chances for minorities and issues of inclusivity. This decision reportedly had a significant impact on the visibility and the degree of public recognition of the LGBTI community and could be further enhanced by including gender minorities in political agendas.

In the end, it is evident that the disaster itself did not serve as window of opportunity and was not able to promote sustainable social change and mutual understanding within society even though there were positive momentums for the LGBTI community. Despite the progressive legal framework for LGBTI rights, the members of the community still face intense discrimination and prejudices in Nepali society. Those social attitudes were also persistent in the aftermath of the earthquake and a growth of an altruistic, solidary community that might reduce existing vulnerabilities and promote change could not be verified. Therefore, it can be assumed that a profound change in attitude and behaviour needs to take place within Nepali society before acceptance and equality for gender minorities can be reached.

Nonetheless, the responses to the disaster showed not only the different impact on the LGBTI community but also displayed crucial links between conflict and disaster and exposed existing vulnerabilities but also resilience and critical dimensions for the framing of an effective disaster response plan.

Referring to Olson and Gawronski, disasters can function as politically relevant events and can serve as instrument to strengthen the position of minority groups in society (Olson/Gawronski 2010: 207). Consequently, it can be argued that even if the activism and the networking of the LGBTI community during the relief phase is not to be expected to yield sustainable positive effects, the experiences can still be used to ensure a more effective disaster response in the future and to advocate for social change and the inclusion of gender minorities in a private, public and political sphere.

VIII. ‘Disqualified’ – Vulnerabilities of Former Child Soldiers in the Disaster-Conflict Interface in the Context of the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake 2015 in Nepal

LEONARD SCHUBERT, PATRICK STUTZ

1 Introduction

The aim of this research study is to analyse how the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake impacted the social as well as the political situation of former child combatants in Nepal. This already vulnerable group further struggles with stigmatization and political exclusion, also from the Maoist Party. The strong presence of international organizations in Nepal after the earthquake and the provisions of the new constitution are impacting potentially influential factors on prevailing conflict structures and might help to improve the situation of child combatants. Their experienced marginalization as well as their social status make former child soldiers an interesting research objective with regard to the Conflict-Disaster Interface.

While the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Maoist forces and the GoN in 2006 led to the first democratic elections and new hope in civil society, consequences of the decade long civil war were not eradicated. Furthermore, the Maoist troops, including many females and underage combatants, did not get discharged. Following the CPA and the subsequent demobilization of the Maoist troops, underage combatants faced discrimination, harassment, poverty, grave human rights violations and exclusion. Abandoned by the political party they formerly fought for, the underage combatants had a hard standing in society. In line with the theory of Bourdieu, former child combatants lacked the capital to influence their situation significantly. In a desperate need of change, many became active and took their demands to the streets, started huge protests and were not afraid to engage in open dispute with the newly formed government coalition which included the Maoist party.

Until 2015, these protests did not have any significant impact. However, after the Gorkha Earthquake hit Nepal, a high amount of international aid and non-governmental programs streamed into Nepal. Furthermore, the ratification of the new constitution and the large attention by international media indicated a potential change within the political situation. Therefore, the research focuses especially on these factors, analysing whether they could open a window of opportunity for the former child combatants.

After giving a brief contextualization of the employment of underage combatants during the Nepali Civil War, major vulnerabilities of the discharged soldiers of the conflicting parties will be identified. Subsequently, the impact of these factors on the child soldiers’ social status and political participation will be analysed followed by the discussion whether the developments in the aftermaths of the earthquake provided new opportunities or perspectives to the individual former child soldiers as well as to their organized movement in general. Altogether, eleven interviews were conducted with several NGOs, former government representatives and former child soldiers to shed light on the situation of child soldiers within the DCI. The chapter ends with a résumé concluding that post-earthquake developments did not open a window of opportunity for child soldiers and they consequently were not able to improve their situation.

The official term for former child combatants or former child soldiers is Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (CAAFAG). Since the term CAAFAG is mainly used by

NGOs but the interviewed combatants as well as human rights activists used the term former child soldiers, this paper will stick with the latter.

2 Contextualization

Before 1990, Nepal's political landscape was characterized by agitation and unstable governments. By benefiting from societal dissatisfaction, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) declared open warfare against the monarchist government in February 1996 starting the so-called People's War that lasted until November 2006. By denominating it as a simple law and order problem, the government's harsh police actions in rural areas led to a quick escalation. The conflict, which initially started in the rural West and Mid-West of Nepal, quickly began to spread across the country. Profiting from weak governmental infrastructure in rural areas, the Maoists saw a vast influx of combatants and established their People's Liberation Army (PLA) in 1999. To uphold their strength, the Maoists established certain recruitment programs amongst others the One House, One Person Policy (Shakya 2011: 557). Three years later, the Maoists claimed to control the majority of the 75 districts, although, official estimations spoke of 25 percent (Karki/Seddon 2003: 43). To establish their military and political dominance in these districts, their insurgency was based on guerrilla warfare and the establishment of local government bodies, the so-called people's committees. After the dissolution of the parliament in 2005, King Gyanendra Shah finally declared a state of emergency. This controversial political decision unified the political parties in Nepal and led to the CPA (Bogati 2015: 5). The remaining Maoist combatants were placed in seven main and 28 smaller cantonments. In the following years, the Maoist troops were used as bargaining chips in the negotiations during the peace process. While the PLA was dissolved in 2012, the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) held a verification process in 2010 which led to the demobilization of 4,009 verified minors and late recruits (VMLR) (Robins/Bhandari 2016: 36).

The One House, One Person Policy led to the incorporation of minors into the People's Army (C int 3: 91; C int 4: 21, 91, 236). Although not all of them were involved in direct combat, a great number of underage persons served in the Maoist ranks. Official documents speak of 2,973 combatants under the age of 18 as of 25th May 2006 and 1,036 late recruits which were also mostly minors. Together, these numbers add up to 12 percent of child soldiers among the registered Maoist combatants (Robins/Bhandari 2016: 18, 36). Excluded in these numbers are minors who gave the wrong information about their actual age, were discharged before the CPA or fled the cantonments. NGOs therefore speak of a total number of 10,000 to 25,000 children that were included in the Maoist ranks (C int 3: 104; C int 4: 229).

3 Vulnerability after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement

While children are generally seen as a vulnerable group, the concept of vulnerability explicitly applies to 'children affected by armed conflict' (Arora et al. 2015: 194). With the Comprehensive Peace Accord (United Nations Peacemaker 2006), the parties consequently called for the rescue of underage combatants which seems to reflect the awareness of their vulnerability. It is also indicated that these young people were objectified and not included as active subjects in the peace process. This objectification is reflected in the role the young combatants had for the Maoists during the peace process as they were used as leverage. By increasing the number of soldiers after the CPA and continued recruitment of minors into the

PLA, it was hoped to generate larger amounts of monetary compensation and aid by government bodies and the UN (C int 7: 158-159). Hence, activists criticize that the CPA quickly started to ignore the needs of the (former) minors as well as the late recruits. By the time of the re-elections in 2012 and the entry of the Maoists into the government, the issue of former child soldiers was forgotten and the group excluded from the political and social agenda (ibid.: 108).

Part of the vulnerabilities specific to former child soldiers are severe psychological traumas and mental health problems, inter alia, caused by abuse and torture (C int 4: 21, 54-55):

> So basically, those who refused to be part of the Maoists, they were forcefully taken and [...] they were beaten too. [...] But they said they were put in the cold just in their underwear. [...] There was this girl whose father was a businessman. Her older brother was in the army. And the Maoists have (...) pressured the father to recall the son. So finally, when he gave in (...) the son gave in and the father gave in (...) he was tortured, cut into pieces and finally the daughter had to go and buy a bullet, so he should be shot. (...) and his brother was shot on the way too (ibid.: 105-112).

Psychological studies conducted in Nepal showed that the mental health of ex-combatants generally worsened after the demobilization and exclusion from the cantonments. At that point, the Maoists had already become a protecting and stabilizing factor in the life of the minor combatants (ibid.: 120). By leaving their peer group, or ‘surrogate family’ (Wessels 2016: 110), the former child soldiers lost this feeling of security and belonging in their lives while receiving little to no psychological support after returning home to their communities. Former child combatant Mira Rai described the situation as follows: ‘Many of my friends they are crying, they do not sleep and I think some (...) some ask for help’ (C int 9: 514). Additionally, studies show that only 45 percent of the affected soldiers were in contact with the psychological counsellors mandated by the UN program (Kohrt et al. 2008: 701; Robins/Bhandari 2016: 17, 38). Others speak of a maximum of 1,363 VMLRs who received psychosocial support. A main reason for the limited range of psychosocial services was their centralized nature which excluded families and concerned persons in rural areas (Transition International 2013: 17). This decision was described as very short-sighted considering the rejection that former combatants often faced by their families:

> So, he left the house and joined the Maoists because he thought he could do something good. But after a year he realized ‘No, it cannot be done’. It does not help him. So, he returned. And the first thing the father said was ‘No, police, please take him away!’ so they took him and put him in some NGO shelter (C int 4: 137-140).

Furthermore, these studies do not include the massive numbers of former CAAFAG who had left the PLA before the validation process in the cantonments was implemented. Contrary to the UN approach, NGOs reported steady contact with and counselling of family members and communities including tracing the families of the child soldiers and preparations for a possible return of the minors (C int 3: 19, 178).

Despite the large number of female child soldiers, the psychosocial service generally lacked an inclusive and gender equitable approach. Reports indicate that female combatants were advised to ‘re-adapt to their expected roles as wives in the communities, even in cases of domestic violence’ (Transition International 2013: 17).

Additionally, actors involved in the peace process continued to raise their concerns about the possible dangers as a result of the former child soldiers’ mental state and their convictions. By referring to practices of ‘brainwash[ing]’ (C int 3: 164), examples were raised to prove that the children who had left the cantonments still hold radical beliefs. While some social workers were insulted as ‘rats who only eat dollars’ (C int 4: 477), others reported that revolutionary propaganda was still dispersed in the shelters (C int 3: 165). By providing psychological counselling and training especially to children who have left the cantonments during the peace process, social workers achieved results ranging from mixed to positive outcomes (ibid.: 173):

> There were two children whose fathers killed each other during the war and they became best friends. It is like (...) The first session is difficult. I want revenge, I want to kill. Whatever happened to me I want revenge. [...] The two comic books were like 15 days; the other workshops were 6 days. And by the fourth day we came through the whole revenge cycle. [...] They started to realize that not only they (...) that everyone suffered. And they also realized revenge doesn’t help. Violence doesn’t help. And it became so interesting that they became friends. It didn’t matter where they came from: Combatant, victim, army, Maoist (C int 4: 330-341).

However, considering the short length of these training offers, a lack of long-term support can be presumed (C int 10: 55, 61). In addition to the psychological support, NGOs offered mediation sessions and UNDP provided specialized training sessions for example in conjunction with sports (C int 9: 523; C int 10: 59). The sessions were considered ‘at least some sort of help, not completely, but some sort of psychological help’ (ibid.: 59). But when UNIRP, UNDPs program for CAAFAG ended in 2013, it showed that a long-term approach was once again not guaranteed (Transition International 2013: V). The disregard of international experiences with child soldiers from other countries further undermines sustainability. UNIRP generally excluded the GoN and solely focused on strengthening NGO capacities. This decision was justified by disagreements with ‘policy decision(s) taken by the GoN’ (Transition International 2013: 17). Additionally, there was little effort to profit from the already existing experience and skill of the concerned CAAFAG. Other conflicts showed that psychosocial processes gain plenty sustainability by training the former child soldiers to become counsellors themselves, a method which was not put into practice in Nepal (ibid.: 17).

Besides their psychosocial vulnerabilities, former child soldiers also have to face severe livelihood challenges. Due to a lack of job opportunities and financial dependency, a large number of former child soldiers left Nepal and migrated to India, Malaysia or the Middle East (C int 3: 262-264). Former combatants claimed that about 50 percent of their former comrades had left the country in order to find jobs (C int 8: 198-199). These challenges did not only impact their daily lives, but also their ability to express their needs to officials or to rally protests.by organizing or protesting. Their poor economic situation rather forces them into a state of acceptance and hinders them to be active subjects in the transitional justice process (C int 7: 241). Even as a result, though the Truth and Reconciliation Commission accepted some cases from former child soldiers, it faces accusations of human rights defenders for that it did not living up to the expectations of the conflict victims (C int 2: 40-41, 117-118):

> They haven’t solved a single case so far and it is already years. So, what we have been asking the government (...) and the victims did the same (...) these commissions should be reconstituted. It has to have the people who really understand the ergonomy of the victims (...) and who are committed to resolve the issue. Who are not political! (ibid.: 265-268).

A major factor in terms of vulnerability is the former child soldiers’ severe lack of education. During the time of the peace process, children finished school in Nepal after the 10th grade.

Most minors who were affiliated with the Maoists left school before graduation and did not receive any formal education later in the cantonments. After either leaving the camps voluntarily or being disqualified in the UN verification process, the former combatants had a hard time to reintegrate themselves in the educational system. Being older than their potential classmates as well as being strangers to them was seen as a major discouragement (C int 3: 185-189).

The absence of support by the civil society further increases the group's vulnerability. In Nepal, the CAAFAG have faced stigmatization for decades. The GoN as well as the United Nations used the word "ayogya", which generally means unfit, incapable or unqualified to describe those discharged ex-combatants who were excluded from the ongoing peace process (Robins/Bhandari 2016: 38). This highly questionable denomination led to the assumption that these soldiers already failed during the first step of the integration process of the Maoist forces into the Nepali Army. This nationwide stigmatization can especially be observed inside the communities of origin of the discharged.

> People in the society are afraid of them! Even after the CPA, maybe now 11 years, people think that (...) they are Maoists, former Maoists. And people are afraid to talk to him or people are afraid that he will do some harm so (...) and then, it was very difficult for them to assimilate into society, to mingle with the colleagues, their friends. Some of the friends they were in the village but (...) he was not assimilated into social activities or cultural activities in the society. It took time but now it is 12 years after the armed conflict and (...) now it is getting better but even after that (...) a kind of accusation was there for them (C int 5: 280-286).

While the UN refrained from using the term and refers to the former child soldiers as VMLR, the GoN continued to use the word ayogya and did not take any measures to lessen the already established stigmatization (Bleie/Shrestha 2012: 28). While this label is, superficially seen, only a semantic category and was not a commonly applied term in society, its impact on self-esteem and identity was immense and has been described as a major factor for the high vulnerability of former child soldiers (C int 2: 136; C int 7: 548; C int 9: 558-560; Robins/Bhandari 2016: 72). Activists emphasize that the affected people still carry that label with them (C int 11: 91). The corresponding humiliation and development of a negative self-perception had fatal effects on the psyche of the young persons (C int 2: 165). In extreme cases, it even led to suicide (ibid.: 183; C int 8: 136). For some former child soldiers, the presumed condemnation was so strong that they did not tell their peer group about their former role as a combatant for years or were not able to return home to their spouses or children (C int 9: 429; C int 11: 103).

Furthermore, the stigma was one of the reasons for the increasing migration of former child soldiers to the major cities. While the exclusion of CAAFAG was not a problem on the national scale, it was consistently present on a local level and got worse the older the CAAFAG grew (C int 11: 79):

> And I think that whole thing had a very negative impact. For them it is like 'OK, you guys rebelled and left home and now you are ayogya. Why should we take you back?' Also, I think it has very different implications because the ones we worked with mostly they were younger. I think this is also a different part whereas when the whole thing went down, they were over 18 (C int 4: 397-401).

Interestingly, the media coverage of the situation of former child soldiers often seemed to be positive. 'Activists involved in journalism spoke of public sympathy for the minors and that they are perceived as people who did not have a choice and they were forced to fight' (C int 7:

519). Especially in the areas around the cantonments, the level of acceptance and compassion was high (C int 7: 522). This assumption contradicts the perceptions of former child soldiers as well as those of NGOs (C int 9: 558). Experts involved in the reintegration process state that 'CAAFAG were blamed for the war (…) for the losses of families (…) for so many bad things' (C int 3: 190).

Identifying these severe vulnerabilities, especially war traumas, a poor financial situation, the lack of education, stigmatization and a missing access to institutions, led to the question how these factors were impacted by the Gorkha Earthquake in 2015. The next chapter will analyse the social movement of former CAAFAG before and after the earthquake. Furthermore, it will identify a possible window of opportunity created by the influx of NGOs and humanitarian aid into the country.

4 The Gorkha Earthquake 2015: A Window of Opportunity for the Former Child Soldiers?

Disasters can not only have negative consequences but might open up spaces (so-called windows of opportunity) for change in structures and social conflicts. This chapter will analyse the social situation of former child soldiers in Nepal after they were discharged from the cantonments, directly before and after the earthquake in 2015.

Different events related to the Gorkha Earthquake were identified and examined with regard to their potential impact on the conflict. This includes the massive amount of international support via NGOs and donations that came into the country, the new constitution that was passed shortly after the earthquake and the fact that Nepal was in the focus of international media attention in the aftermath of the earthquake – factors that were examined as especially interesting with regard to their potential impact on the conflict.

4.1. Demands, Protests and its Outcomes of Former Child Soldiers before the 2015 Earthquake

From 2009 to 2015 demonstrations of the former child soldiers were already in transition. In the direct aftermath of the discharge from the cantonments in 2010, the former child soldiers felt abandoned and forgotten by the Maoists. Many of them were deeply disappointed and could not understand why they were suddenly stigmatized by the people for whom they had fought. As described in the previous chapter, they faced a huge amount of vulnerabilities which they tried to address and compensate.

While many former child soldiers went to the Middle East because of economic reasons, a group of initially around 1,000 to 2,000 child soldiers organized demonstrations in Kathmandu to raise attention for their situation (C int 3: 217; C int 8: 192-197, 221-227). In the beginning, the protests reflected their direct needs, their disappointment, and their past as former combatants: they demonstrated partly violently and made demands including monetary compensation, recognition, jobs and good educational training opportunities to improve their current situation (C int 6: 251-253; C int 8: 250-253; C int 9: 22-24; C int 10: 375-378). Furthermore, the protesting former child soldiers organized a strike and blocked the offices of Maoist politicians with the aim of getting monetary compensation (C int 8: 241-247).

> So, in the beginning we thought there must be a settlement for us. […] In the beginning what we did was we came together from all over the country and about 1,000-2,000 people came to Kathmandu. So, in the beginning what we did was […] national strikes, bike rallies, driving cars which gave information through speakers. So, like that we did so much. Destroying things of the politicians, destroying their cars (ibid.: 221-225).

Stigmatization, social isolation, and mental health issues apparently deeply impacted the former child soldiers (ibid.: 142-149). Although they did not articulate all of these grievances, the former combatants' demonstrations targeted stigmatization in form of labelling child soldiers as being disqualified and were designed to gain recognition in the media (C int 5: 18-24; C int 6: 240-251; C int 8: 185-189).

The Maoists mostly ignored and denied the demands of these early demonstrations and neglected or dissolved protests with the help of police and military forces. After an office blockade and negotiations between the group of the former child soldiers and the political leaders of the Maoists, monetary compensations summing up to around US $2,000 were promised to every former child soldier. This decision has been challenged by the National Congress and the case is still in court (C int 8: 262-268). During the formation of the new government, media attention for child soldiers was raised for some time because the conflict between former Maoist soldiers and their own party did produce some notice (C int 10: 245-248).

Some child soldiers who organized or participated in the demonstrations were confronted with means of oppression, including legal accusations, torture and imprisonment (C int 8: 273-282).

> And at that time, in my beginning phase, my own people, from the Maoist party took me and tortured me. Why did they do that? I mobilized all the people to start the strike, this wasn't successful, they thought it was bringing shame to their party, so they came inside my room and took all my stuff (ibid.: 273-276).

Human rights activists and lawyers spoke of 'thousands of false accusations' and argued that they were made in order to keep the former child soldiers from demonstrating:

> And when they were having battling the Maoist headquarter there were thousands of false accusations. They were put in prison for some years. Some of their friends are still in prison for (...) they are serving in prison for five years. So, they don't want any hustle with the Maoist (C int 5: 325-328).

After the imprisonments, the forms of protests the former child soldiers deployed started to change:

> So and after this happened, one year later, well in the meantime the strikes stopped because if one or two of your friends are put into jail, then you get afraid that you might also get into jail. And after I came out, I understood, that it is not useful to do these violent crimes and I left that. And after I left the violent strategies and after that I started to call experts, human right experts, politicians and I had debates to let people know about our situation (C int 8: 274-280).

Some of the former child soldiers tried to educate themselves through legal and vocational training and tried to organize more political demonstrations as a group (C int 3: 146-147; C int 5: 322). The group is based in Kathmandu and consists of about 300 permanent members. Many other former child soldiers recognized that it was not possible to achieve a fast solution for their situation and migration to the Middle East or to the cities are therefore common phenomena (C int 8: 206-208, 362-365). Many tried to detach themselves from their old identity in order to be less stigmatized (ibid.: 206-211; C int 9: 429-435).

Before the earthquake in 2015, the situation of the former child soldiers had slightly changed, mainly because of their own efforts and the amount of time that had passed. But the protests were not able to influence political decisions (C int 11: 139-141).

4.2. Demonstrations, Demands and Situation of Former Child Soldiers after the 2015 Earthquake

The movement of the former child soldiers has further politicized after the earthquake and their demands have slightly change. Instead of direct monetary compensation they now asked for sustainable jobs, for better education for their children, and for laws that prevent future employment of children as soldiers in Nepal (C int 8: 293-296). This represents a change in the mindset of the former child soldiers as they had previously spoken about their past as combatants with great pride and had even looked for jobs within the Maoist army. One initiator of the early demonstrations stated that he wants to work as a politician in order to have a chance to alter society and to work on behalf of former child soldiers (C int 7: 167-170).

These different mindsets seem to be in line with the changes regarding protests and demands which started to develop even before the earthquake. While some argue that the social situation of the former child soldiers did not undergo any major changes, other human rights activists speak of a ‘double victimization’ (C int 6: 313-319; C int 10: 302-307; C int 11: 225-227). ’And just like the conflict affected vulnerable groups more than the others, the earthquake also affected vulnerable groups more than others’ (C int 7: 267-268).

Nevertheless, activists agree with each other that constitutional changes did not address the child soldiers’ issues (C int 11: 406-411). Furthermore, organizations who tried to support the child soldiers got less money than before and faced more difficulties (C int 6: 329-333, 262-288; C int 11: 220-227, 262-267).

> So, they are much focusing on that [...] (economical) development [...]. And especially donors, especially international donors and the national donors are also privatized on the development like especially rehabilitation, rescue and other [...]. And then specially that human rights [...] and that human rights they got affected. They were not able to carry on with their work like they were able to in the past (C int 11: 220-227).

In 2018, three years after the earthquake, it becomes clear that former child soldiers were not able to profit from the window of opportunity as their situation did not significantly change.

5 Analysis and Discussion

To analyse why the window of opportunity did not lead to any significant changes for the former child soldiers, Bourdieu’s social theory of capital (see chapter three) will be applied to the case of former child soldiers.

Analysing the processes before and in the aftermath of the earthquake, one can see that the Maoists blocked attempts of the former child soldiers to change political processes, despite their employment as part of the Maoists army during the People’s War. We could identify several possible reasons underlying the Maoists’ denial: fear of legal consequences for the deployment of child soldiers, the unpopularity of the topic of the war in society and financial consequences due to monetary compensations (C int 2: 43-47; C int 6: 380-383, 410-412; C int 11: 118-122, 144-149). All these points are connected to the Maoists' unwillingness to risk a loss of power.

> So, in that sense the child soldiers' issue would have resonated [...] worldwide. Because the Maoists, because child soldiers means, on when it comes to autocracies, disappearances, killings, there is almost always more [...], the child soldiers were only used by the Maoists, and almost exclusively, so they wouldn't want it because that would be a black mark (C int 6: 279-281).

The former child soldiers lacked financial, social and cultural capital to build up enough pressure on the Maoists to really push through their demands (C int 7: 235-238). Stigmatization and simultaneous association with the Maoists were major reasons why the child soldiers were denied the promised monetary compensation by the political parties (C int 2: 204-205; C int 6: 265-271). The stigmatization resulted in the lack of support in Nepali society for the child soldiers and their demands. Furthermore, the former child soldiers initially had neither jobs nor money to assure their daily survival or to invest in organizations and demonstrations (C int 7: 241-244). The unsuccessful protests discouraged many of them from future demonstrations. Instead, they put their resources into other efforts to improve their living conditions (C int 5: 178-182; C int 8: 188-203). Compared to the general population, the number of child soldiers was not high enough to be seen as a major issue (C int 6: 331-333). Furthermore, and especially in the beginning, the former child soldiers did not address their issues in socially accepted ways, but in the ways, they had learned before. It was easy to block their protests by force when violence erupted (C int 5: 185-190; C int 10: 41-52; C int 11: 105-107, 192-198).

The former child soldiers also lacked the support of the international community, whose main aim after the earthquake was to help Nepal to build a new government and to stabilize the country in the peace process. As a result, the international community refrained from advocating sensitive issues too much (C int 6: 410-412; C int 7: 113-120; C int 11: 262-286):

> Nobody wanted to make the Maoists too uncomfortable. The Maoists themselves would not want this, but now let's look at the way in which the government was formed now, by the end of it, they collaborated in the coalition governments, they knew each other, it became a friendly kind of a couple at the top, and so why add this element to make it difficult for them, and then you could always say: For the greater good. And then to say typically what they say: Let's go on, let's go on, you know, forgive and forget (C int 6: 362-368).

While the former child soldiers did not have enough capital on any level to gain enough power to change their situation themselves or to mobilize enough help from the society to do so, the Maoists had more than enough capital to stop their attempts. Being part of the government, the Maoists could influence the outcome of the peace agreement (C int 6: 84-90; C int 7: 496-499, 113-120). Because of their position, they were also able to influence the new constitution. As a result, the Maoist in contrast to the former child soldiers were able to take benefits from the window of opportunity the new constitution provided (C int 2: 15-25; C int 7: 200-203; C int 11: 310-315, 405-408).

Another interesting part of the window of opportunity was the high amount of donations that poured into Nepal after the earthquake. As described in several articles on the Conflict-Disaster Interface, it is not unusual that disasters are used by parties in power to control the flow of money and goods within their country (Sisk/Bogati 2015).

At one point, international donations reached the height of one quarter of the BPI of Nepal (ibid.). To avoid too much international influence and corruption within their country, the

Government of Nepal organized the so-called One-door Policy, that allowed the government to control and distribute most of the donations from the international society (ibid.). The international society did criticize this procedure. The conflict between the government, international donors and organizations slowed down the distribution of humanitarian and reconstruction aid (C int 7: 288-294; Sisk/Bogati 2015). Human rights activists report that after the implementation of the one window policy their funding broke down (C int 11: 262-286).

An important step to create chances for victims of the People's War would be the implementation of a commemorative culture in Nepal as a basis to really address and overcome issues related to the war and as a basis for a healthy society and a sustainable peace and reconciliation process, in which victims can be heard and their needs can be fulfilled (C int 6: 502-503, 515-518, 549-551, 561-572). 'We would not have a repeat of at least these types of this so-called class-warfare, that will not happen if we are able to do this memorialization and accountability and a genuine transitional justice process' (C int 6: 570-572).

While in other cases civil war Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs) have been an important part for the establishment of memory cultures and reconciliation processes, several activists say that these commissions in Nepal failed to address the issues of the former child soldiers (C int 2: 40-48, 117-118; C int 7: 171-172; C int 11: 97-98, 232-234) because they have been strongly influenced by the government (C int 2: 79-83). Nevertheless, with the pressure of NGOs, victims and activists it was possible to lower the governmental influence on the TRCs (ibid.: 104-108). Additionally, activists reported of power shifts within the political sphere and articulated the hope that more issues will be addressed in the future (ibid.: 281-287).

While the former child soldiers were barely able to change their situation on institutional levels so far, many of them stopped to rely on institutions or politics and organized themselves in order to help themselves.

> They tried to help their friends. They tried to help other people more than themselves. And they didn't rely on the government. The government has pledged to give a certain amount of money to every citizen. But, you know, they had already understood the [...] given by the government so they were like 'We need to do it by ourselves!'. They rebuilt their homes and they rebuilt their lives and they helped other citizens rebuild their lives (C int 9: 481-485).

Analysing the overall situation, it is questionable whether the developments in the aftermaths of the earthquake provided a real window of opportunity for the former child soldiers. Rather than creating political changes, the earthquake was an additional difficulty they had to deal with, often facing double traumatization and victimization (C int 7: 266-267; C int 11: 71-75).

6 Résumé: Evaluation and Outlook

The aim of our research was to analyse the correlation of the Gorkha Earthquake 2015 with the group of former child soldiers being identified as an especially vulnerable group in conflict with the Maoists' party. In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, a chance for a window of opportunity was created through a huge amount of donations and international attention, the new constitution and democratic elections. However, in-depth research has shown rather negative impacts of these phenomena on the conflict supporting the hypothesis that disasters can help to maintain or even deepen conflicts and their underlying social structures.

Even before the earthquake, former child soldiers suffered from vulnerabilities and a lack of social, cultural, economic and symbolic capital. Many of them had little school education, were war-traumatized and generally stigmatized by society as disqualified or persons who broke social norms. The former child soldiers have not been included in the peace process. After their exclusion from the cantonments, many of them felt abandoned. They had difficulties to sustain their livelihoods because they had no money, had difficulties to get jobs and were not able to live with their families because of social rejection and fear. Consequently, most of them migrated either to the Middle East or tried to settle in the anonymity of big cities in Nepal. Unlike other soldiers, they did receive little to no support from the UN and the Maoists. As a result, they organized demonstrations in 2010 for more psychological support, educational trainings, monetary compensation and recognition.

As beneficiaries of the war, the Maoists had neither the need nor the interest to deal with the situation of the former child soldiers as they reminded the people of the unpopular topic of war and demanded monetary compensation. They influenced international organizations like the UN who were interested in successful peace negotiations and did not want to get into conflict with the Maoists.

While the Maoists, as established politicians, had economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital including strong allies, the former child soldiers had less capital in all of these categories. Instead, they faced many vulnerabilities. This made it difficult for them to put enough pressure on the Maoists to create changes, although the use of child soldiers is a war-crime and could have had the potential to put pressure on the international community. Additionally, the Maoists were able to confirm their dominant position in the first democratic elections which empowered them to weaken the impact of the TRCs. They could even stop demonstrations and other attempts for social change by force.

This did not change after the earthquake; the earthquake diverted international and domestic attention even more. Possible opportunities like the income of international donations or the new constitution were once again influenced by the Maoists and did not lead to positive impacts for the former child soldiers. On the contrary, NGOs who supported the former child soldiers gained less financial support after donations were distributed by the government. Additionally, former child soldiers are not specifically considered in the new constitution like other vulnerable groups. The former child soldiers got isolated in the political sphere and had not enough capital of any form to themselves change their political situation.

Nonetheless, some indicators for a development of the situation were displayed. The demonstrations of the former child soldiers transitioned from violent protests for monetary compensations and jobs in 2010 towards non-violent and more organized demonstrations and negotiations after the earthquake, aiming at children rights, sustainable jobs and education for their families. Although these transformations already started before and are thus not directly connected to the earthquake, the new style of political activism might help the former child soldiers to change their situation. Furthermore, some child soldiers improved their social acceptance in some areas by using their skills to help people after the earthquake to, for example, build shelters. Yet, the capital distribution hinders a fast and comprehensive in-depth change of the current conflict situation.

An important step to create chances for victims of the People’s War would be the implementation of a memory culture in Nepal as a basis to really address and overcome issues that are related to the war. As long as the situation stays as it is, the basis for a healthy society and a sustainable peace and reconciliation process in which victims can be heard and their needs can be fulfilled is not given. Three years after the earthquake, it is evident that the disaster and the developments in its aftermath did not provide a window of opportunity for the child soldiers that has enough impact to change their social position and lessen their vulnerabilities.

IX. Knowledge – Key Factor in the 2015 Earthquake?

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In the interface of conflict and disaster, knowledge about existing and possible conflicts is essential to minimize the negative impacts of social interactions in a disaster context and enable the best possible reactions. In the disaster situation applied knowledge is an active conversion of economic, social and cultural capital to address vulnerabilities and safeguard lives and properties. We have conducted 19 expert interviews to understand the role and dynamic of knowledge before, during and after the Gorkha Earthquake 2015 in Nepal.

Knowledge is a habitually learned practice that serves as cultural and symbolic capital of actors and appears through communication. It is embedded as practice in social context which by itself is constituted through social relations and interactions. Cultural capital, as Bourdieu conceptualized it, is knowledge of an actor that results from the impact of the social environment on his educational development and his internalization of cultural abilities and skills. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1997: 70-73) have explained the development of knowledge as a spiral through certain categories of knowledge content. It is transferred into an internalization process by observations and shared actions (imitation) and on the other side of the communication by externalization of such established knowledge (expression). Socialization describes the transfer of implicit, unconscious and tacit knowledge transfer between actors (transferring existing norms and habits). It is the foundation of conscious expressions externalized into explicit knowledge that can be combined then with other forms of such explicit knowledge (of other actors) and if these combinations are successfully productive in their combination, they can be internalized as new social norms which (re)start the process of socialization and what Bourdieu calls habitualization and embodiment of culture. Families may be an example of how established knowledge is externalized by parents and internalized as socialization by their children. In schools, that knowledge is externalized and combined with the knowledge of other children and also combined with schooling knowledge externalized by the teachers to be internalized as a different habit or social norm.

This work of Nonaka and Takeuchi about the Knowledge Spiral is part of a broad scientific knowledge discourse on knowledge management as part of organizational and economic theories to improve certain activities (such as clustering network activities) to attract and grow economic capital. Their theory serves us not only in terms of organizational knowledge transfer and systemic knowledge production, but also as description of a mechanism of conversion from cultural to economic capital (social and cultural capacities for economic interactions) as Bourdieu suggests.

In this work we are focusing on the explicit forms (externalization, combination, internalization) of earthquake related knowledge conversion and transfer as well as the obvious barriers to the relevant knowledge transfers (externalization and combination) before, during and after the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake. Part of our analytical framework is the RIU model to look for successful transfer of scientific knowledge with existing research based on ‘scientifically accepted principles, methods and standards’ (Böcher/Krott 2016: 33) in the relevant fields, the integration towards ‘describing [...] and successfully solving’ (ibid.) conflicts and the utilization of such ‘scientific knowledge by actors in practice’ (ibid.: 34). According to the RIU model, scientific knowledge transfer is defined as follows:

> Scientific knowledge transfer is the connection between research, and integration, and utilization. The content and extent of research and integration activities are derived from the requirements of utilization, which is determined by the demands of political and practical allies (ibid.: 32).

1 Awareness and Preparedness

By describing disaster related knowledge and its transfer processes or barriers as crucial part of the interface of conflict and disaster, we understand awareness as the integral key component of it. Being aware is the precondition to consciously act in specific situations and the disaster related knowledge enables orientation for appropriate reactions. In the context of the Gorkha Earthquake 2015, the issue of awareness turned out to be fundamental regarding disaster responses (coordination, reconstruction) and preparation for future hazards to reduce and minimize related disaster risks and conflicts.

This subchapter details some of the challenges the affected region faced after the earthquake by examining pre-earthquake assumptions or expectations underlying or present in the reactions and responses.

1.1. Wrong Assumptions and Knowledge Barriers

A look at the situation in the affected region in Nepal before the earthquake reveals that even though the relevant knowledge existed and preparations on actions in case of an earthquake had been made, barriers blocked the reach of such knowledge and led to a lack of information and wrong assumptions where it mattered.

Even though the earthquake had been predicted by the related international scientist community (presented onsite in 2015: K int 14: 199-202), the integration and utilization of this knowledge was not managed properly. It was available at the academic level but ‘that knowledge could not be…it’s still not I would argue… transmitted to the local people where it really matters’ (K int 14: 45-46). As a consequence, people felt poorly prepared and described the occurrence of the earthquake as ‘shock’ (K int 5: 82-83). Knowledge transfer was also problematic where it was transferred (and even applied) but did not fit the Nepal context. Some of the knowledge came from developed countries like Japan where the constructions were initially prepared for earthquakes and consequently safer or differed from the conditions in Nepal in other ways (K int 7: 325-328). A headmaster of a governmental school describes the enormous and tragic consequences as follows:

> for example, there was the teaching that when an earthquake comes, we can hide below bed. So, but if they hide below the bed, in the context that nothing will happen to the building, to be safe from the like cupboards. But if the building itself is destructed, there is no meaning of hiding below the bed. So, what happened, that in some places where people were in an open place, they went inside the house and tried to hide below the bed. And some people even died in that case. So, if the education is not properly given and if the education is not as for the reality of the country, it get wrong (K int 8: 331-338).

Additionally, assumptions in the preparations for earthquakes caused conflicts in the aftermath of the Gorkha Earthquake 2015. Disaster Action Plans were organized so that disaster affected districts could be supported by nearby districts. Core aspect of these plans was that Kathmandu as the capital would function as coordination and distribution centre for aid. Simulations did not take the possibility into account that Kathmandu could struggle to support nearby districts in the case of an earthquake. The underlying expectation of a fully capable Kathmandu turned out to be a wrong assumption as it, by contrast, turned out to be very difficult to organize and distribute aid from Kathmandu because of heavy damages in the capital itself. A community director of an international aid agency describes the situation after the earthquake:

> What happened: The epicentre was at that time in Gorkha and we [Kathmandu] also were affected mostly and other people nearby district could not support to Kathmandu. And Kathmandu was one of the most affected districts and Kathmandu had to support other districts as well. And that was the lesson learned. That was what we not were expecting (ibid.: 152-157).

1.2. Raising Awareness

As a result, awareness raising should be taken seriously in the disaster context to enable improved actions and responses. Not only should the attention for the scale of natural hazards be improved, but also the necessity to reach out to the people regularly in this regard. Media like radio and TV are central to achieve this (K int 1: 260). Some radio stations would broadcast even from regions with massive damages and helped to inform people gathered around radios right after the earthquake (ibid.: 56). Video broadcasts via Internet and TV later served similar purposes (ibid.: 54-58). To support the credibility of information and attract attention because of their greater acceptance and public confidence in them, prominent or official individuals and institutions could deliver important messages (ibid.: 85).

Schools and education are also substantial opportunities to manifest fundamental behaviour rules. As shown with the knowledge theory of Nonaka and Takeuchi (see above), socialization is important to internalize knowledge and therefore make it operational from embodied lessons in the habit and practice of actors (see also chapter 4). Even before the earthquake, schools taught their pupils how to react. After the experience of the earthquake in 2015, curricula were adapted to the Nepal context (K int 7: 120-122). Immediately after the earthquake, schools were used as accommodations due to the lack of public space and therefore classes were cancelled, and children not educated. In some schools the problem persisted till 2018. The use of schools for other purposes and the lack of other solutions can be seen as a barrier for knowledge transfer because schools are institutionalized places where knowledge is transferred easily. Knowledge transfer is impeded or even blocked when schools cannot fulfil their purpose of educating children.

1.3. Preparedness for Future Earthquakes

What became obvious in the research was that even mentality and sentimentality play an important role in terms of how people prepare for and are aware of future hazards. The experience after the earthquake reveals that certain aspects could be improved for better preparation towards future earthquakes. Even though changes are in progress, in some fields it turns out that there are barriers, which impede these changes. The origins of the barriers are diverse and some of the main problems are highlighted in the following.

The Government of Nepal adopted rules and laws addressing the experience of Nepal's society with the earthquake and instructed people how to build earthquake resilient houses (K int 9: 384-394). There are monitoring mechanisms to control the compliance with these rules, but interview partners emphasized that the control mechanisms are too weak to enforce these laws (ibid.: 384-394).

Different types of knowledge were and are used in the response and reconstruction process after the earthquake, including traditional, local and global knowledge. Sometimes they conflict with each other due to different needs. While scientific knowledge is focused on security issues, in traditional knowledge the cultural identification of the people is taken into account. This leads to conflicting situations in the reconstruction process. While instructions are developed according to scientific knowledge, in reality application of traditional knowledge is in practice (K int 5: 861-882). As a result, diverging beliefs between ‘how things should be done theoretically’ and ‘how they are done in practice’ exist. Even though a general awareness for the importance of exchange between academia and other fields is in place, practical implementation and utilization stagnates (K int 14: 110-116).

On the more positive side, interview partners pointed out that the exchange of information and cooperation with the GoN intensified which will help to improve future disaster response actions (K int 5: 861-882).

2 The Coordination of Relief Supplies

When a natural hazard like an earthquake happens, time is a critical factor for actions of rescue and relief (Amatya/Chatterjee/Pal 2015: 112). State and non-state organizations from all over the world supported humanitarian operations with financial and personal means. Gaps in the coordination of relief supplies and actors were one of the first visible consequences of the weak preparedness of the GoN.

A British engineer, who worked for United Mission Nepal in Kathmandu at that time, summed up what most of our interview partners experienced in the days after the 25th April:

> When the earthquake happened there was a revolving door of people in and out of the country. So, a lot of big organizations upscaled and ahm you know they flew people in. Sometimes people were in for two weeks, ten days... And there is a lot of trouble in terms of people coming in and then wanna partner with us...and actually in the end of the day none of it materialized. So, there is lot of energy spent on...with whom can we work with, or who wants to work with us (K int 5: 780-794).

Following international standards of disaster management, the government of the affected states with support of the UN would be in charge to coordinate relief actions. Coordination in this context means ‘the planned response to tasks within an organization or among actors where they are dependent on one another for best results’ (Amatya/Chatterjee/Pal 2015: 113).

To be able to plan the disaster responses in case of an earthquake, institutionalized knowledge and a strong authority are key factors (K int 8: 38). Although the GoN developed plans and standards for disaster management prior to the Gorkha Earthquake, deficits in the implementation existed. Responsibilities were not matching the capacities of the state agencies in charge and definitions of roles and authorities were generally vague (Amatya/Chatterjee/Pal 2015: 114). As has been indicated in the previous chapter, theoretical knowledge about disaster management was in place but the practical knowledge of how to apply the high standards and therefore to guarantee quick relief was missing.

While the government and the UN worked on the harmonization of vertical coordination structures, already established non-governmental humanitarian actors organized their relief actions more successfully on the horizontal level within their structures (K int 6: 142-146). Bigger players in the field like World Vision, Plan International, United Mission Nepal, the Red Cross and several UN corps could resort to their international guidelines and organizational standards to begin their operations quite self-sufficiently.

Although INGOs were better organized, their assumptions about the magnitude and the geographical scope of the earthquake were not accurate (K int 8: 51-54). The capital Kathmandu, which was supposed to be the centre for the coordination of relief actions (see above), was itself heavily affected and consequently, the infrastructure within and into remote areas broke down (ibid.: 88-99). Therefore, existing disaster plans had to be adjusted.

The lack of vertical coordination paired with the unexpected dimension of the disaster brought up three major problems for relief delivery in the first phase:

Who are the most affected and vulnerable parts of the society?

Which items are needed the most to ensure the basic needs of all affected people?

How shall the delivery of the needed items be organized?

Due to the fact that information systems mainly broke down, headquarters in Kathmandu could not update their information in situ as fast as the situation changed (ibid.: 95-96). Humanitarian organizations relied mainly on the assessments they had conducted themselves in the past. Our interview partners from World Vision, Plan International, United Mission Nepal, the Nepal Red Cross and UNFPA based their beneficiary selection on assessments of the most vulnerable in their districts: Children, (single-headed household) women and Dalits were mentioned by all as vulnerable groups in Kathmandu in general. Others, including the LGBTIQ community and former child soldiers were not in focus.

Although these assessments might be justifiable in everyday Nepal, vulnerabilities and the abilities of self-help changed in the context of the earthquake (K int 6: 43). In Kathmandu, the headmaster of a primary school showed us the housing situation of the poor parts of their community. Poor community members lived in unstable houses built on boggy farming ground at the edge of the district. In this case, already vulnerable societal groups got most affected through the Gorkha Earthquake and depended on external help (K int 7). In other locations the earthquake did not increase the vulnerability of already vulnerable groups as our interview partner from United Mission Nepal reported:

> (...) post-earthquake they, north Dhading which is poor, they were able to survive, because that's what they do every day. You know it's like, when you're coming up to help these people, you don't actually have to teach them to survive in fact. If you drop me into Dhading and you have the earthquake I'd probably wouldn't survive, while most of them survived, cause they hardened to it. They already knew how to survive cause that's their daily life (K int 5: 630-637).

Therefore, assessments of the most vulnerable should be adapted to the changing circumstances. Difficulties in adapting their programs and target groups to the situation arose also from budget limitations and donor directives which restricted an organization's freedom of action (ibid.: 174-178). Smaller, locally based organizations could adapt faster and had more direct channels to the affected population. Their local knowledge helped them to identify the needs of specific groups like the LGBTIQ community. But they did not have the resources and human capacities to operate on a bigger scale.

Another challenge in this context was the selection of beneficiaries in a setting where people belonging to different social groups were affected in similar ways (K int 14: 179-194). The selection was difficult because ‘you cannot hand over food to the child and neglect the rest of the family’ (K int 6: 19-21). This fact was well recorded in disaster management programs, but again the practical implementation was a challenge.

Alongside this problem of selecting people in need the question arose which items are needed most. In this multi-player setting without vertical coordination it is not surprising that the statements of our interview partners from World Vision, United Missions Nepal and Plan International about the most needed items varied extensively. While our interview partner from Plan International pointed out that food was needed the most in the first phase, our interlocutor from UNFPA opposes this (K int 2: 55-61). United Missions Nepal named blankets and tents, and the Nepal Red Cross indicated that drinking water was needed the most (K int 6: 180-189; K int 8: 82-83). Other non-material goods like psycho-social support or protection mechanisms for vulnerable groups were difficult to keep in focus in the initial phase and were therefore often neglected in the listing of most needed items (K int 8: 132-134).

Not only varied the understanding of what was needed most, the amount of goods and money handed out also varied in the different jurisdiction areas. ‘You know, I said we give you 25 kilograms of rice, another organization saying: I’ll give you 15’ (K int 5: 854-855). Another humanitarian actor reported, that

> initially, we prepared for the immediate support temporary shelter support, to give 7,000 rupees to affected families in some areas ... later government announced giving 10,0000 rupees as a first cash support. Then we had to increase our fund from 7,000 to 10,000 to made that consistent... at least every household should get ... should get similar amount, not a different amount from the different organizations (K int 8: 448-455).

Furthermore, the need for local partners to define who lives in an organization’s working district and who just came by to benefit from relief supplies increased. ‘[T]here were a lot of people arriving, call well I live here. And I mean how do I know’ (K int 5: 394-396).

Fortunately, the cooperation between people on the local level worked very well. In the initial phase, people showed solidarity across societal lines and self-organized relief supplies with local and international help somehow balanced the inequality of relief supplies (ibid.: 22-23). Hence, inequalities resulting from the system of beneficiary selection and corruption could be balanced to some extent (ibid.).

‘With recruitment of new staffs in the second week of the earthquake, the coordination started improving with systematic commands from the central to local level’ (Amatya/Chatterjee/Pal 2015: 114). Vertical coordination mechanisms were exercised in a One-window Policy (Giri 2015).

From 9th May onward, all relief operations were channelled and organized through the Central Disaster Relief Committee (CNDRC). The task to select areas of competence and target groups performed by the organizations themselves was handed over to this committee. From the third week after the earthquake onward, organizations only received the mandate for relief operations if they had the capacity to cover 100 percent of the cases in one district (K int 5:

193-200). Smaller organizations fell off the list immediately and even bigger organizations struggled to fulfil this task.

The advantage of this approach was that the selection of beneficiaries ended and also remote communities who were not reached by humanitarian organizations could receive aid (Amatya/Chatterjee/Pal 2015: 114). Our interview partner from United Mission Nepal reported:

> (...) in the end was solely an issue of beneficiary selection...so ahm you know there is so many houses in this area, and we have only money to fix 10 or 15 percent, how do you select 10 or 15 percent? And that' s actually where the government said for us NO * the other fix everything and you don't fix so many! So, there was very black and white...if you wanna work in this area, fix all houses, if you`re not able to, then being out (K int 5: 190-200).

The disadvantage was that the logistics of goods was already a major challenge which could not be organized centrally (ibid.: 272-274). As a consequence, the provision of aid got further delayed which had impacts especially in the second phase of reconstruction. Nevertheless, the government provided a broader access to relief with their One-window Policy. The takeover of authority brought up accountability, which the people needed in this disastrous situation (K int 2: 7-8).

3 Reconstruction

3.1. Infrastructure

There are two fields of reconstruction: public and private. Public reconstruction involves public buildings like hospitals and schools and other infrastructure as roads, bridges, wash facilities, drinking water systems and schools (K int 5: 205-209; K int 6: 272-275). Also, sanitation and hygienic needs were given priority since there were risks involved (K int 1: 116-123). Directly after the earthquake logistics were a problem due to the collapsed roads and is still a major issue (K int 3: 144-150; K int 13: 442, 1124-1127). 'The actual logistics on the post-earthquake Nepal was a massif problem because there was no infrastructure in the country to deal with' (K int 5: 270-275), outlined a British engineer. Luckily, the only international airport stayed functional, but, like in disasters before, transportation on roads to remote areas was difficult (ibid.: 94-105; K int 6: 123-130). Also due to the One-window Policy, certain NGOs focussed more on the reconstruction of infrastructure: 'So we then moved focus to fixing foot trails, fixing agricultural roads, fixing bridges. Putting wash facilities, repair drinking water systems and actually the major component was the reconstruction of schools' (K int 5: 198-216). Especially for rebuilding schools most of the money came from NGOs and INGOs (ibid.: 1060-1064). As the infrastructure for communication has also broken down, radio programs and SMS services were used to have contact to remote areas (K int 6: 746-766). Nowadays, the internet is seen as an important component of Nepal's infrastructure, which is not developed to its full potential (K int 13: 560, 1020-1024).

Already before the earthquake, the insufficient infrastructure was seen as a main challenge for the country (K int 8: 206-208). Rules for behaviour taken from other countries like Japan also proved to be wrong due to the weak infrastructure (ibid.: 488-496). Criteria for sufficient infrastructure vary highly, for example concerning equipment and facilities of governmental schools (K int 6: 148-152). Even if there was international support in reconstructing infrastructure, there was not always the adequate knowledge present which is shown for example in local health posts where people do not know how to use certain equipment (K int 5: 965-972). Further improvement in infrastructure is needed in areas like early warning systems (K int 8: 714-720).

3.2. What is Reconstruction?

In a broad sense, reconstruction can be seen as a fresh development in contrast to the pre-disaster society (Murosaki 2016: 1). The developments in the aftermath of the earthquake therefore can be seen as a window of opportunity, when reconstruction resulted in profound positive changes for the communities. Important principles to respect are 'the independence of affected people, to consider the sustainability of local areas, and to maintain and give continuity to local history and culture' (ibid.: 1). Endorsement for reconstruction in Nepal starts in early 2018. Many supporters of the Housing Reconstruction Recovery Platform (HRRP) were backing off (K int 5: 1090).

The shelter cluster was responsible for reconstruction and closed in December 2015. Its successor however, the Nepal Reconstruction Authority (NRA), was only commissioned in April 2016 which slowed down the process. Once it was working, there was a lot of bureaucracy involved when getting a project approved (ibid.: 155-167). 'The National Reconstruction Authority is aiming for an Owner Driven Approach of reconstruction with a focus on prioritizing local resources, local knowledge and local skills' (Pujari/Jachnow 2016: 12).

Because weak materials like stone and mud instead of brick and hard stones are used to build houses, poor building construction contributed to the amount of damage (Bothara et al. 2015: 122). 'And even if there is the building code, it already was, it was in 1997. But it was not reinforced enough. So, people were not so conscious to enforce or consider those measures. So now there is some of monitoring is going on' (K int 9: 387-388). There is a lack of 'knowledge dissemination on earthquake-resistant construction and awareness for the need for it' (Bothara et al. 2015: 121).

Minor improvements were made only in urban areas. In Nepal, there is generally little involvement of engineers in the design of houses as the role of artisans is much more important. But they often have no formal training or education, which makes it difficult for innovations to be spread (ibid.: 127, 130). Only small markets for construction materials exist in Nepal which causes shortages of fuel and goods regularly. It is time consuming to acquire products through personal contact (K int 5: 364-370). The strike in 2015 at the border to India, which lasted six months, also led to a complete stop of the reconstruction activities (ibid.: 412-414; Pujari/Jachnow 2016: 8).

Schools have an important role in the transfer of different types knowledge and the generation of cultural capital (for like reconstruction issues). However, the public funding for governmental schools is very limited and people with high social and economic capital are sending their children to private schools or abroad as many schools are closed for earthquake related reasons or limited in their teaching abilities (K int 7: 128-133) thus, extending not only the initial problem of inequality but also the problem of basic knowledge transfer requirements to minimize conflicts in another disaster situation.

In the health sector, serious issues of maintenance and slow rebuilding speed of hospitals exist (K int 9: 190, 264). The reconstruction of private property is done by an owner-based approach in Nepal (K int 8: 383-384). As a result, limited public financial support is spent partially for other purposes when the responsibility of the slow progress is projected on organizations and government (ibid.: 379, 387).

3.3. Reconstruction vs. Tradition?

During reconstruction, the cultural traditions of communities should be kept and the use of local and traditional material for buildings is recommended (Murosaki 2016: 5). Monuments and significant buildings should be reconstructed to preserve the culture which can be seen as cultural capital (Pujari/Jachnow 2016: 9). However, conflicts are visible here. Foreign aid is connected to guidelines given by the donors which influence the country's traditional style and culture well-preserved for generations (K int 4: 90-94). According to reconstruction workers, rebuilding in the affected area without updated earthquake-resistant designs meets basic demands (ibid.: 111). Pragmatism in Nepal makes relevant knowledge transfer and its implementation difficult, as engineers report (K int 5: 1004). Efficient strategies were selected only one or two times out of ten (ibid.).

Often workshops were held to train local masons in earthquake resilient construction techniques (K int 14: 41-45). They were prepared in strengthening the resilience of domestic buildings and supervised reconstruction. The shelter cluster and the Department of Urban Development and Infrastructure (DUDBC) provided information for the reconstruction of resilient houses in the form of manuals and radio programs (ibid.: 476-479). However, confusion and problems in spreading the information to the citizens occurred (K int 8: 503).

The 'Department of Urban Development and Infrastructure is basically responsible to guide what type of households people can construct and giving different models and technical things' (ibid.: 500). Later, despite there were also model houses built by organizations and the government showed designs of resilient houses, it was too late for an official reconstruction (K int 5: 1003). Many people already spent money on improving their shelters and did not want to start again. Model houses thus should have been built earlier on significant locations (Bothara et al. 2015: 132).

Especially for the reconstruction there were not enough qualified workers to do this job. Organizations trained local people in reconstruction but as soon as they finished the training, many migrated to Saudi Arabia as skilled masons (K int 6: 28). In combination with the owner driven approach, this leads to a problematic increase in prices. The monsoon season further complicates reconstruction as building activities become impossible (K int 5: 231). In addition, a knowledge gap also exists on the governmental side. There are insufficient resources in terms of engineers and their qualifications (K int 8: 395). There are huge delays in certifying that houses fulfil standards which is required to receive further tranches when rebuilding houses (ibid.: 396).

Even if people already built new houses, they are still emotionally attached to their old houses or due to insufficient economic capital unable to build houses which are large enough, so some family members have to live in the previous houses (K int 1: 270). People were lacking information on how to open a bank account and receiving funds by the government for rebuilding their houses (K int 5: 27). The Post-Disaster Needs Assessment from August 2015 involved issues including families pretending to be more than one family in order to benefit from increased financial relief support trying to overcome their economic limitations that are barriers for proactive change and innovation (K int 1: 265-270). Large proportions of land are required for farming and because many people have to build their houses in unsuitable places, they become more vulnerable (K int 5: 656-662). Due to poverty, Nepali often have to sell land in order to generate sufficient capital for reconstruction (K int 2: 37). As a result, many still live in temporary shelters (K int 7: 54). This is further complicated by the need for official documents without which ownership is not acknowledged officially (ibid.: 57-61).

4 International Knowledge Transfer

4.1. International Earthquake Knowledge Exchange and Awareness

International conferences have been held about possible earthquakes in Nepal 'even before 2015 [..] but then that knowledge was really limited to that workshop venue and that knowledge could not be … it's still not [...] transmitted to the local people where it really matters' (K int 14: 46-47). Despite the international academic knowledge transfer about the then forthcoming earthquake in the region with 'the predominant earthquake specialists' (K int 13: 211-212), 'the preparedness was not there' (K int 14: 250). Warnings resulting from the academic meetings have been installed 'in the front of the ATMs… always a sign saying… you know like there's an earthquake going to happen… so it was like everyone knew that was going to happen, right?' (K int 14: 199-202).

International earthquake knowledge from, for instance Japan (K int 14) or India (K int 19), has not even prepared the international experts for the real experience as the seismic activities 'seemed to go on forever' (K int 14: 38-269) and intensified the scare of aftershocks

> because you have already lived through the first one and you knew what it could do and now you think it might be another big one and we didn't know whether we wanted to go back' (ibid.) 'You see that tall apartment there? It was shaking like a bamboo and I was surprised how it just didn't collapse. [...] So scary you know… my god… You cannot really explain it. You have to feel it to get the intensity of it and to really feel it (K int 14: 38-269).

Awareness campaigns are seen as an important tool to set off preparations as '[…] the radios, the TVs, big media could play a big role in that, in having a regular program on how to do that. Not only on earthquake days […]' (K int 14: 68-71). The Red Cross and the United Nations Organization have cooperated successfully in the aftermath of the earthquake to spread information from local municipalities with mobile radio stations (K int 8). 'If you listen to the radio or see the TV you don't see any advertisement or any awareness program for disasters or earthquakes any day. You would have asked the government and the donor agencies to at least allocate one person of the amount in awareness campaigns' (K int 18).

However, international groups of engineering scientists (i.e. from China, India and South Korea) have installed an early earthquake warning system and evaluated previous technology to link research from the global context to the local sites. Thus, achieving and make a visible impact using in Nepal scenarios with Nepal's own resources to and make it also accessible for

> the poorest of the poor people and make the technology as simple as possible. […] So, when there's the earthquake, then at that time there's a signal of some kind of sensors…, we want to join that technology along with the telecommunication technologies so that it can become widespread, but there's some kind of a bureaucratic part to it, where the telecommunication authorities have a say that has to work (K int 17).

4.2. Youth Experiences and International Travel

Nepali students and young people are increasingly trying to get to foreign countries, to improve their economic and cultural capital, especially in major industrial nations like Japan, Saudi Arabia, India, Germany or the United States (K int 12; K int 19). Despite the importance for societal development, it is criticized that young people often live in debt as they come back to Nepal (K int 19).

> [...] Most of the people who are leaving are in their twenty-somethings who are out of school with no opportunities. Boredom is also a big reason why people are going. […] As we look around there is a move away from agricultural life. It's seen as a poor man's living, it's seen as unsustainable. Personally, I would like to prove this wrong. And I think of course it's unprofitable if your rotation is corn and mustard. Sure you never gonna be rich out of it. […] So, this is why I put a lot of emphasis on high value fruit and nuts (ibid.).

Social Networks, like Facebook, might contribute to the orientation of the youth towards other countries but similarly inwards to Nepal by international tourism (K int 10):

> There's a lot more opportunity in Nepal post-earthquake. There's cash here that wasn't here before. It's now becoming much more visible. […] More support for Nepal is there than was before the earthquake, like I'm an international person, I'm making a project, for example we run classes every month, we need sponsorship. Actually, it's much easier to access this sponsorship I think now than it was before earthquake. Everybody is suddenly aware again of Nepal. It was slowly becoming forgotten let's say before the earthquake. Like tourism was going down. I was here at the height of the Maoist Revolution when every embassy was saying like travel warnings and stuff like that and for sure you went trekking to Everest, you'd meet a guy with a gun who says 'donation' and you gave him the donation. It was okay. But you went into Thamel […] in the evening time you couldn't walk, you couldn't drive a car in there, there was so much tourism. […] there was a lot of foreign tourism here. It didn't go away with the revolution time. But post-revolution it dwindled away. Like really there was almost no tourism at certain points. And now post-earthquake again you kind of see people are coming back, but it's a different variety of people. […] Many people are coming now on like NGO, INGO, helping hands, something. Much more than before. Voluntourism maybe. […] The people you meet has changed in these years (K int 19).

4.3. International Investment and Opportunities

International entrepreneurs, for example, from Japan (K int 19), Korea (K int 19), Ireland (K int 19), Australia (K int 11) or the United States (K int 13) have not only tried to make a step into Nepal's markets, but also changed their businesses following the disaster. For example, the lowered economic capital around Kathmandu, caused by the earthquake, reduced the demand for milk so that cow owners sold their cows or even gave them away (K int 19). As a result, they changed to other markets like reconstruction, tourist demands, export, interactivities with international agencies which want to assign themselves to local initiatives (K int 11, K int 19). Another example is the transition of an entrepreneur in art installation and digital skill transfer based on private funds to automotive component development and disaster zone employment with digital 3D technologies. These developments include potential solutions to logistical barriers and infrastructure bottlenecks since the use of smartphones and internet for online medical examinations could reduce some traffic. Improved recycling might reduce some international material dependencies and improve the waste situation (K int 13).

> Unfortunately, we can’t take bottle caps and turn them directly into 3D printing material but. We can only take 20 percent recycled bottle caps and 80 percent of raw or virgin plastics and mix them together. The problem is consistency is different chemical compounds and cleanliness and all of that we’re hopefully going to be making some out of that for sure (K int 13: 112-118).

Existing foreign investments in the digital market in Kathmandu had been halted because of insecurities about power and communication network outages, unavailable local server hosts and delayed service delivery times immediately after the earthquake (ibid.). The supply of 24 hours of electricity, previously non-existent, however, might help to regain trust in that area.

4.4. Sustainable Lessons Learned?

Nepal’s earthquake and disaster scientists have recognized and consequently acted on the seismic activities with the international community before the Gorkha Earthquake. Despite a few local notices, large scale preparations have been missing on national and international levels. Since then, an early warning system is implemented with groups of international engineering scientists. Though the earthquake created job opportunities, young people, especially from rural areas, are nevertheless leaving the country to improve their economic situation. However, international entrepreneurs on the other hand as well as scientists and volunteering tourists are making use of the opportunities investing in a changing landscape. Unfortunately, the embodied emotional and other earthquake related experiences have not yet been institutionalized to update the previous knowledge activities of specialists. The updated 24 hours connectivity of Kathmandu may be helpful until its fragile dependencies are shaken by events that can recur any time in the Himalaya.

Regarding the question of Scientific Knowledge Transfer (Böcher/Krott 2016), it can be stated that the relevant international research knowledge to predict the physical disaster event of the earthquake has been used in the forms of international publications and conferences globally and locally with the aim to prepare Nepali society and raise awareness. However, the same cannot be said about the integration of psychological and social research to prepare relevant actors and institutions. Even though some national and international NGOs like the United Nations Organization or the Red Cross have been giving a certain amount of trainings before, they have not been programmed or clustered efficiently to the scale of the following events so that a strategic integration process of the relevant issues can be observed after the earthquake only. Further research may be needed to examine the role of international NGOs in the integration and utilization process of existing conflict and disaster research from their respective fields. Considerable measures have taken place regarding early-warning systems and general cluster approaches to integrate actors. The pre-existing socio-economic gaps and inequalities in the social structure however, which we find to be the foremost blocking factor in the recovery process and future earthquake preparedness, still need to be tackled adequately to enable the utilization of other dependent solutions.

5 Résumé: Knowledge in the Context of the Gorkha Earthquake

In the context of the RIU model and ideas on vulnerability, improvements in knowledge transfer in disaster preparedness and management should tackle challenges regarding comprehensive and recognizable terms and local organization. Throughout the considered areas, it became obvious that key challenges need to be addressed in political integration processes because they influence the appropriate utilization of knowledge by organizations and the population itself.

When the consequences of the Gorkha Earthquake put pressure on governmental and organizational structures to respond to the devastation, existing weaknesses in the different systems became obvious. In its initial response to the earthquake, the GoN failed to execute vertical coordination of relief actors, funds and supplies. Despite the fact that the GoN could resort to a national disaster management plan based on international humanitarian standards and scientific data, the implementation of this theoretical knowledge was a major challenge. Research and theoretical concepts could not be integrated because the capacities of the government were exceeded and responsibilities of different actors were hold vague.

Some challenges increased because of the transmission of reactions taken from inadequate contexts to respond to earthquake disasters in Nepal as they did not fit to the regional structures. Expertise from Japan might appear as a good example for development of earthquake resilience by construction standards appropriate to the circumstances. Japanese guidelines stress that preparedness is more cost efficient and saves more lives than any immediate reaction. But because of the ongoing lack of financial and personal resources, Nepal’s government might be unable to provide skills and material needed for this kind of comprehensive preparation used in Japan. Consequently, the implementation of Japanese actions towards relief and rescue in the aftermath of the earthquake were not useful in Nepal. Countries like Haiti show more similarities in their infrastructural and societal context, so that an application of Haiti’s lessons learned could serve as a better example for Nepal’s immediate disaster management.

Despite a lack of resources, barriers in the transfer of necessary knowledge to the population hindered an effective preparation. Mechanisms are needed to raise awareness about the preparation before and the behaviour during an earthquake. One of the obstacles of a sufficient preparation was the weak exchange between academic knowledge and scientific forecasts on the one side and the people’s needs during and after the earthquake on the other side. Although needs assessments have been conducted prior to the earthquake, vulnerabilities and the capacities of self-help changed rapidly during the earthquake. Influenced by the breakdown of many information systems, direct channels to the population have been cut. Coupled with a weak coordination exercised by the government in the initial phase, the supply of relief items and financial support was organized around beneficiary selection of other humanitarian actors. Lack of coherent rules and regulations from the government, coupled with the exclusive character of beneficiary selection, contributed to an unequal distribution of knowledge, goods and money to the affected population.

To counteract this development, NGOs at place are mandated to train the local population in disaster preparedness and the reconstruction of earthquake resilient houses. But still, pragmatism is missing in the application of learned knowledge. Preparation for a natural hazard has to be transferred through different channels. Formally, schools have to update their curricula concerning the behaviour during earthquakes, and bureaucratic hurdles must be removed to guarantee access to financial means of relief. But also, informal negotiation processes about the necessity of the application of scientific knowledge on earthquake resilience have to be strengthened. The support of platforms of knowledge transfers between national and local authorities on one side and the local population on the other, already rose but has to be strengthened further. Prevailing uncertainties of the young Nepali about the long-term earthquake situation encouraged many to look for educational and working experiences and especially income opportunities in foreign countries like India, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Germany and the United States.

Nevertheless, Nepal's experiences and policy adjustments following the Gorkha Earthquake did support the accountability of the government and improved the disaster management for future scenarios. The improvements became slightly visible after the floods in August 2017, when the provision with shelter and the distribution of drinking water, food and medicine seemed to be more effective.

The improved governmental accountability had also positive effects on international economic investments into disaster preparedness and related fields. Business entrepreneurs from technologically advanced countries are investing in modern infrastructures for internet businesses, export of cultural goods and symbolic capital for sustainability-oriented projects. The earthquake has thrown back some of the projects because of uncertainties related to the short-term disaster impacts, the improved situation in Kathmandu with 24 hours of electricity could reinforce previous and additional investments. Internationally available technologies developed for seismological monitoring and early warning systems could be implemented if either economic capital and/or the implementation and adaptation knowledge in the related systems can be advanced. Plastic pollution has become a huge concern in accordance with similar global problems but could become a resource in specific areas of application. The already poor drinking water supply infrastructure has been hit substantially and the causes of poor quality remain an area for research. Nepal's transport infrastructure has been a bottleneck for many development efforts and is increasingly so because of raised material demands due to the earthquake and will remain risk-prone to a variety of hazards.

Due to comprehensive evaluations and post-disaster needs assessments, involved governmental and non-governmental institutions can look back on many lessons learned from the experience of the Gorkha Earthquake. The academic and political system of Nepal advanced its attachment and affiliation to many relevant international institutions for disaster preparation and response. While in the area of research, assumptions and recommendations get adjusted in relation to the local experiences with the Gorkha Earthquake, positive changes are difficult to achieve in the fields of integration and utilization. Given the economic and political constraints, the incorporation of international and local knowledge into functioning systems of disaster management remains a challenge. A stable government and the beginning political decentralization can support integration efforts in the future. Furthermore, the state has to invest in the utilization of knowledge on disaster response inside Nepali society. Therefore, formal and informal education programs and vocational trainings could be key factors in the short- and long-term management of natural disasters like an earthquake.

X. Conclusion

The content objective of this research training program was to get a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between the Gorkha Earthquake and pre-existing social conflicts in the Kathmandu Valley. Prior case studies in similar contexts indicate rather negative effects of disasters on social conflicts whereby pre-existing vulnerabilities and disadvantages are get highlighted. This tendency is also visible in our findings. Socially marginalized groups, like the Dalits, the LGBTI community as well as former child soldiers, were more affected by the consequences of the Gorkha Earthquake than other parts of the society. Their marginalization manifested itself in different dimensions impacting and reinforcing each other. In the present research context, these interconnections were especially visible in the housing situation and in the access to relief and support for reconstruction after the earthquake. In the urban context of Kathmandu, social marginalization expresses itself in the living situation and the structure of the houses. The most socially vulnerable often build or live in outer areas on boggy soil or former farming land. Due to the instability of this soil, these houses were particularly affected when the earthquake hit. Similarly, the lacking political representation and agency hindered the marginalized groups in accessing relief supplies and adequate protection mechanisms.

Beyond this cross-group trend, the group's chosen research method provided the ground to capture a more nuanced picture of the subjective perceptions of differently involved actors. Thanks to the collaboration with Nepali research colleagues and the openness of interview partners to share their experiences, the four research groups were able to track and name perceived challenges and windows of opportunity for the regarded groups and beyond.

In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, a lack of governmental coordination contributed to the experience of chaos and insecurity in Nepali society. Although the GoN could resort to a national disaster management plan, based on international humanitarian standards and scientific data, the plans were flawed, incomplete and consequently its implementation failed. Prior to the earthquake, the government did not realize a sufficient strategy, and did not invest enough in raising awareness of an earthquakes even though scientific forecasts about its possibility were published in place beforehand. The partial lack of practical knowledge also derived from the application of wrong knowledge contexts to predict an earthquake in Nepal. Consequently, neither the government nor the population were sufficiently prepared for the disaster.

While state institutions failed to respond adequately, and (international) organizations struggled to replace state responsibilities in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, people supported each other across societal boundaries. Many interview partners felt a unique unity in which empathy and solidarity lifted dividing practices. Nepali society seemed no longer to be caught in its rigid caste-based hierarchies, but instead people helped each other, grew closer together and consequently, in some cases partially, overcame prejudices and discrimination. Former child soldier, LGBTI and Dalit communities seemed to have experienced this initial phase as a window of opportunity to overcome their marginalization.

However, all chapters describe the phase of harmony as mostly short lived. The unequal allocation of what Bourdieu calls the different forms of capital caused a disproportionate distribution of aid reinforcing historically established hierarchies leading to resurfacing discrimination further dividing the Nepali society and consequently closing this window of opportunity.

Today, former child soldiers are still fighting for recognition and support as they feel especially disadvantaged by the developments of the earthquake. Unlike other marginalized groups, they were neither before nor after the earthquake represented in the constitution of 2015. Therefore, they are politically and socially more isolated than those considered by political and social changes before and after the earthquake. Also, the LGBTI community experienced a setback as the immediate solidarity gradually faded away. Earlier political progress, such as the Supreme Court decision of 2007 to abolish discriminatory laws against members of the LGBTI community, was overshadowed by reappearing discrimination. Therefore, the overall impact of the earthquake is in many cases described as a negative setback. as its aftermath consequences ultimately raised lead to the question if legal provisions in favour of the LGBTI community brought some changes after all. Although the Dalits were, unlike former child soldiers and the LGBTI community, specifically considered in the Nepali constitution of 2015, new laws were not able to meet the actual needs of the Dalits. The new quotas of political representation did not address their wish for social inclusion and the access to help after the earthquake. Instead, they also faced increasing discrimination after the period time of solidarity. With only little support of other communities and inappropriately low grants, Dalits are today, three years after the earthquake still struggling to recover from the earthquake’s devastation. The window of opportunity that the aftermath of the earthquake had opened for them is described rather to be rather on paper than part of the Dalits everyday lives.

One positive development, all regarded groups experienced, was an improved awareness of grievances among Nepali society. Now, social and political marginalization receives more attention, even though one can argue that the awareness of Dalit issues is higher than of the situation of former child soldiers and LGBTI groups. Nevertheless, the experienced acceptance of minorities in the phase of solidarity was giving them hope and new incentives to continue political and social activism peacefully and resolutely.

Next to the risen awareness on social exclusion, preparedness for future disasters became a major topic where positive developments are visible.

One research group illustrated how influential knowledge and its application is in terms of preparedness and immediate and longer-term reaction to the earthquake in Nepal. Thereby, they stressed out that the application of wrong knowledge contexts and the weak knowledge transfer between the academia, political institutions, humanitarian organizations and the affected population were main barriers for an effective disaster management that prevented windows of opportunity. The needs of the affected population, especially of the most vulnerable, were not known and therefore not represented adequately. From immediate relief supply to reconstruction programs, vulnerabilities due to caste, class and gender are until today not sufficiently recognized. But due to post-disaster needs assessments and a risen awareness, involved governmental and non-governmental institutions could improve their knowledge transfers and reference systems. This improvement was already visible in the government’s handling of the floods in the summer of 2017. Nevertheless, the research on vulnerabilities has to be deepened and the transfer of knowledge on preparedness within the population has to become more inclusive and institutionalized.

Many interview partners stated that political stability and accountability are vital for the inclusion of marginalized groups in particular and Nepal’s development in general. After centuries of monarchy and a civil war, Nepal’s transformation process towards an independent democracy is still in progress. Even though new media and technology, such as smartphones and internet, can help to increase awareness and access to information by reaching many people quickly, information and knowledge about political participation and civil rights still need to be spread among the whole country.

Several political changes, foremost the decentralization efforts of the Nepali state, bring back a glimpse of hope. It has often been highlighted by interview partners that the decentralization of the Nepali state is a chance for exchanging, cooperating and increasing knowledge and expertise between the local, provincial, organizational and governmental level. By increasing the variety of political actors and voices in the policy-making process, an improvement in social inclusion can be expected due to more policies and programs targeting the needs of marginalized groups.

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