ASIA in FOCUS 1

A Nordic journal on Asia
by early career researchers

Asia in Focus
A Nordic journal on Asia by early career researchers

Issue 1, 2015

Contents

Introduction

Asia in Focus

A Nordic journal on Asia by early career researchers

The scope and number of academic journals is broadening each year yet publish or perish remains a serious reality for early career academics. Over the years at NIAS – Nordic institute of Asian Studies we have engaged in helping new scholars at Nordic member institutions reach an audience outside their own turf by giving courses on how to publish and on how to publish the best manuscripts for a global readership.

By launching the Asia in Focus journal, we take this one step further and offer early career researchers a unique opportunity to publish their work: we provide more focused guidance and feedback than they would get from a mainstream journal, and give full recognition and respect to the stage they are at on their academic career ladder. We are proud that this new activity is so well linked to our other core activities here at NIAS, and it may even be viewed as a necessary addition to our student and researcher support program (SUPRA) and our academic publishing unit, NIAS Press.

As with other scholarly publications, we demand quality, adherence to styles and guidelines and we have a well-qualified editorial committee. As a direct consequence of these unique differences, we are able to access an extremely wide pool of early career colleagues attending Nordic academic institutions, and with them provide readers with original and well-informed analyses of current Asian issues in an open access format.

In this issue of Asia in Focus the authors have a variety of different backgrounds. We feel strongly that it is academically healthy to engage with researchers from many different parts of the world in order to present diverse approaches on particular areas of specialty, with the ultimate ambition of learning from one another.

Each issue will present a selection of the manuscripts submitted, hence there is no binding theme. In this issue you will find works on: family policies in Japan; popular resistance in China; challenging business communication between Finns and Chinese; the liberation of bonded labor in Nepal, and two more on the political culture of the country; and finally an article on problems related to migration from rural to urban areas in Bangladesh.

Enjoy the read, and should you want to submit your own contribution, please do not hesitate to contact us at asiainfocus@nias.ku.dk

Regards,

Geir Helgesen,
NIAS Director

Japan's Family Friendly Policies
Why Fathers Matter

Anna Vainio

This article is a research report introducing the main findings of the study conducted as a part of the researcher's Master's Thesis on Japanese Family Friendly Policies (FFPs) and the effect they are having on advancing a gender balanced society in Japan, focusing on the influence fathers may have in this equation. The research included a three month field work on the experiences of parents who had utilised Family Friendly Policies since their implementation in the 1990s. The research found that the Japanese FFPs have failed to achieve their aims to increase the fertility rate and women's employability for the following three reasons. Firstly these aims are based on the foundations of gender neutrality in a society that is in reality highly divided along gender lines. Secondly the aims are narrow in scope and target group, and thirdly do not address the real causes of low fertility and employment problems. I argue that promoting the role of fathers as carers would disrupt established gender norms and the benefits of FFPs would cross gender lines and produce practical outcomes that the current FFPs are unable to produce.

Keywords: Family friendly, Policies, Fathers, Japan, Gender Imbalance

This research is an investigation into Japanese Family Friendly Policies (FFPs) that claim to facilitate better employment and career prospects for women, and through this process also improve fertility. My interest in this topic grew out of my frustration with the discourse on demographic problems in Japan, and the unbalanced nature of gender equality debates that primarily focus on women. There has been little progress in either of these arenas in the last 20 years, and the purpose of this research is to uncover why policies have failed to improve gender balance at work and overall fertility.

The particular aims and rationale of Japan's Family Friendly Policies focused on in this research make mention of two related issues affecting Japanese society: low fertility rate and women's poor employment rate and career prospects. The logic of the FFPs is that offering extended rights to families and employees through legislative changes will enable employees to maintain their careers through different life stages without having to choose between continuing their career or having a family. This is expected to provide the labour force with more opportunities and support to simultaneously procreate and have a career (Takeishi 2005, Suzuki 2006, MHWL 2009a). The theoretical foundation of my research is based on this rationale. I argue that since Japanese society is built upon the post-war principle of a gendered division of labour and societal roles (Yashiro 2001, Atoh 2001, Kashiwase et. al. 2012, Osawa 2011), the FFPs alone will not function as tools for boosting either the demographic development or gender neutral employment.

I wanted to focus on fathers in a Japanese family unit, and the role they play in the fertility and employment equation for both genders, and to explore the potential effects of a more male oriented approach to studying the functionality of FFPs in Japan. The hypothesis of this research is that instead of solely focusing efforts to increase women's employability, men's role as carers should be promoted at an equal measure to induce faster attitude change on societal level.

Men's socio-economic role has remained largely unchanged since the post-war economic boom despite the demographic and economic troubles of the last 20 years, and become the norm which needs to be assumed by both makes and females in the labor market. (Takeishi 2005). Women who want to work are expected to fit this 'norm' when entering and advancing in the labour market, while at the same time managing the added pressure of caring duties, resulting in the 'double burden' for Japanese working mothers (Coulmas 2007). I argue that by promoting the role of the father as a carer, distorting the established norm, the benefits of FFPs would cross gender lines and produce practical outcomes that the current implementation of FFPs are unable to produce.

I utilised primary data from the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Labour (MHWL) on Family Friendly Policies, such as statistics on labour market participation and fertility rates and longitudal studies on employment (MHWL 2011a, 2011b, 2009b), as well as the 14th National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (NIPSSR 2011a, 2011b) longitudal study on attitudes toward family, work and reproduction. In addition to this I completed a three month field work in Tokyo between August and November 2011, while working with a local Non-Profit Organisation 'Fathering Japan' to gauge the attitudes and experiences of men and women who have taken advantage of the FFPs. I completed a survey with 30 participants (10 men, 20 women), who had utilised childcare leave. I focused on childcare leave due to its centrality within the legislation and because its uptake is regularly used to exemplify the success/failure of the FFPs. Childcare leave is also normally the first piece of family friendly legislation that both men and women can utilise. The open ended nature of the survey questions enabled me to gauge individual experiences much greater depth than is possible in national surveys, while triangulation of the collected data indicated that the experiences were in line with phenomena observed in larger scale studies.

My research found that men's utilisation of FFPs primarily had a positive effect on role sharing within families and their attitudes toward childcare, with all men remaining active in the home after the childcare leave period. This had a positive effect on the spousal relationship, and work-life balance and satisfaction for both partners. Research and statistical evidence on a national scale supported these findings (Sato *et al* 2009, MHWL 2011a, Takeishi 2005). The research found that 20 years of FFPs has influenced the structure and attitudes of Japanese society relatively little and eligibility and access to the FFPs and supporting services remain dependent on gender and type of employment. There are few legal provisions for balancing work and private life for unmarried people, likely having an effect on marriage rates and subsequent childbearing. With only a minority of fathers being able to utilise the FFPs, their potential is likely to remain limited.

The Uncomfortable Fit of Japan's Family Friendly Policies?

Family friendly policies can be regarded as the collective name for a number of legislative measures and initiatives implemented by the Japanese government (and to some extent third sector and private operators), to make it easier for parents to combine their duties at work and at home to achive work-life balance. The trend for these policies began in the early 1990s when Japan was simultaneously struck with the lowest recorded fertility rate and the bursting of the bubble economy. It has been argued that it became important to simultaneously promote women's entry into the labour market for the country to find its way out of the recession, and correct the demographic slump (Takeishi 2005, Suzuki 2006, Schoppa 2006).

Japan at the time had few legal measures to support this, and the idea of a working mother as a societal concept was still rather new (Atoh 2001). Japan has heavily relied on the gendered division of labour in the post-war period and this efficiency contributed to the post-ward economic growth. Gender segregation in Japan has taken place along economic lines, with both sexes having their established tasks within the economic

and welfare system; men form the core of the labour force and women provide social care that takes place at the family and societal levels. Social welfare policies such as childcare services, pension schemes and even the organisation of health care policies have all relied on this separation of roles along gender lines (Yashiro 2001, Atoh 2001, Kashiwase et. al 2012, Osawa 2011).

The FFPs, however, have not been strong enough to break economic codependency between men and women, and have had very little influence in the rates of women's continuous employment in Japan, despite the government's success in increasing women's utilisation of childcare leave (Schoppa 2006, Suzuki 2006). This can be indicated by the figures on women's employment after giving birth. Little has changed in the last three decades:

more radically with the desire to be married to a full-time housewife falling from nearly 40% to 10% in 18 years. Similarly, a third of men in 2010 wanted their spouse to keep working while having children, up from 10% in 1987 (NIPSSR 2011b). While these figures are an indication of a more rapid value shift among men, the reasons for this need to be considered in the societal context of women being less economically independent and men having fewer opportunities to participate in childcare. The uptake of childcare leave among men has since its implementation remained negligeble, below 3% (MHWL 2013).

Opportunities to utilise FFPs seem a luxury based on employment type, i.e. with persons in regular employment having an easier access to the policies rather than those working in non-regular employment (e.g. fixed term contracts).

Women's Continuous Employment and Childcare Leave Uptake			
Birth year of first child	**Employed before the birth of first child**	**Continued employment after birth**	**Uptake of Childcare Leave (average*)**
1985-1989	61.4%	24.0	n/a
1990-1994	62.1	24.4	n/a
1995-1999	63.5	24.2	52.7%
2000-2004	67.3	26.7	69.0%
2005-2009	70.7	26.8	88.6%

Source: NIPRSS 2011a, MHWL 2011b

*Averages calculated from data from the years where data are available: 1996, 1999, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010

A significant proportion of unmarried women still hold on to the idea of established role separation. While the desire to become a full-time housewife has decreased since the 1980s, still in 2010, 20% of unmarried women stated that given the chance they would want to become full-time homemakers, down from 33% in 1987. Continuing to work while having children was given as the desired lifecourse by 20% of women in 1987 and had increased to only 30% nearly two decades later. Interestingly, the same study indicates that men's attitudes toward the employment status of their spouse have changed

However, everyone is eligible to take childcare leave as long as they fulfill the requirements for the nature of employment they are engaged in (length and frequency of work). Alongside regular employees, non-regular employees who have been employed by the same employer for one year or more and are likely to be employed after the end of the leave period are also eligible for the leave. However, the proportion of employees working on fixed term contracts (i.e. non-regular employment) who took childcare leave ranged from 0.2% to 4.5% depending on the regularity of contract renewals by their employer,

indicating that opportunities to take childcare leave among non-regular workers remain limited (JILPT 2007).

While regular employment still remains widespread today, the share of men in regular employment between the ages of 25 and 34 has fallen from 90% in 1992 to 60% in 2010 (NIPSSR 2011b). As there is a correlation between marriage and fertility in Japan, marriage rates become an important indicator of national fertility as well. Compared to the national average of 1.39 in 2010, the fertility rate among married couples was considerably higher at nearly 2 (NIPSSR 2011a), while births outside marriage remain rare in Japan (OECD 2012). The likelihood of marriage again is connected to employment type, with only 12% of men in non-regular employment getting married between 2002 and 2007, compared to double the figure for men in regular employment (MHWL 2009, 2011). This suggests that employment type, marriage and fertility are all interlinked.

Family Friendly Policies therefore seem increasingly narrow and elitist in their scope by ironically offering balancing measures primarily to people who are already in secure employment and have chosen to have a family, rather than focusing on the effects working styles and employment status have on fertility (Takeishi 2005, Schoppa 2006).

Sato *et al* (2009) find that more than 40% of Japanese employees, both married and unmarried, find work conflicting with their private lives and interests, with 70% of unmarried men and 68% of unmarried women stating they would be unable to, or unsure about whether they would be able to care for a child or a dependent while holding their current job. The highest level of work-life balance was reported among people who also exhibited high levels of satisfaction and commitment to their organisations (Sato *et al* 2009).

In the same study, women scored the highest level of work-life conflict, while child rearing was ranked as the second and third biggest cause of work-life conflict among both men and women

respectively, men ranking it higher than women, indicating that making work-life adjustments on the grounds of childcare seems to be more difficult for men. The most common avenue to resolving work-life conflict was to make work-related adjustments (32% of respondents). Overall 12% of respondents said they had opted to leave the organisation on the grounds of conflicts between work and personal lives (Sato *et al* 2009).

However, even the 'elite' are struggling to strike a balance. Fertility rates have been decreasing among married couples since the 1990s, and as seen above, the proportion of women in continuous employment through their reproductive years has increased only marginally. It was therefore important to take a closer look at the main target group itself and unravel why even the 'elite' are finding it difficult strike a balance. Evidence began to suggest a positive correlation between the number of children and the hours men participated in household and childcare duties: 61.2% of families where the father spent eight hours or more on childcare and household chores on his days off had a second or more children, compared to 14.3% of families that practised no role sharing (MHWL 2011a). The focus of my research therefore shifted to the father within this context.

Why Fathers Matter

Fathering Japan is an organisation that provides seminars and events to private citizens, groups and corporations, functions as the contact point for an active community of fathers, and produces material on participatory fatherhood. Due to linguistic and time restrictions, the field research composed primarily of a survey that used a structure of open ended questions that fathers were asked to fill in on their own time after an initial discussion at the recruitment phase. Female informants were recruited through *Yanaka Baby-Mom*, a neighbourhood parents' association that operates in the Yanaka area of the Taito-ward.

I narrowed the scope to of the survey to those who had taken childcare leave, which enabled me to focus on the central piece of legislation among

the Family Friendly Policies. Uptake of childcare leave among men is particularly low, 2.63% in 2011 (MHWL 2013). The survey comprised of five themes:

1. Desire to form a family
2. Preparations for child's arrival
3. Preparations for Childcare Leave
4. Experiences during the leave
5. Societal impact of the leave

I anticipated that men and women might face different types of problems both collectively and separately. Questions on family finances, taking childcare leave and returning to work all carried their assumed gender stereotypings, e.g. that financial stability would be primarily a male concern and returning to work would be more difficult for women. This largely held true with my informants but the details of the difficulties they faced and the experiences many had had brought new insights into the broader research. One surprising aspect was the depth of concern fathers expressed of their capabilities as fathers, bond with their child and ability to physically care for the child. I anticipated that they would have referred to the financial burden of having a child more than they did, as 'breadwinner' is the typical male role in Japanese families; even though this was a concern for many, a *shiyō ga nai* (it can't be helped) -attitude prevailed among responses when the subject came to money.

When asked about their decision to take childcare leave and their preparations for it, most men responded that their personal determination was driving their decisions and actions. However, legislation was also mentioned. It seems that more men than women in my survey relied on the protection of the law, partly perhaps due to the prevailing norm that taking childcare leave is more natural for women. Because of this men felt the need to justify their decision more carefully; and some faced resistance.

I wasn't particularly influenced by anything [in my decision to take childcare leave], but I thought that if such a system existed, I would use it.

Civil Servant, Male (26)

Last year [2010] the legislation was revised and the system in my company was also affected. As a result, they changed the wording for men's childcare leave from 'each case will be judged individually' to 'anyone falling into the conditions for childcare leave will be granted leave'

Office Worker, Male (40)

I was warned about becoming 'career-less'/ losing out on my career; some people also acted coldly towards me.

Sales Person, Male (31)

Most of the surveyed women did not mention leave taking as problematic, but their responses did echo difficulties in managing their lives after childbirth. Women worried about whether they would be able to secure a place in daycare for their child, if returning to the same post would be be possible, and about how they would be able to catch up with the work. While the childcare leave legislation states that leave takers must be guaranteed the same position as before they left, company restructuring and changes in job descriptions were mentioned as ways in which women were 'mommy-tracked' without violating the law. Some women also worried about the working environment, which can negatively affect their job satisfaction and the perception of childcare as a burden (Sato et. al. 2009, Takeishi 2005). As majority of women still give up their jobs after having children (NIPRSS 2011a, MHWL 2011b), changes in job satisfaction and position upon return need to be considered as potential causes.

At the moment I am planning on going back to work, but I am worried about it as well. Since I have been away they have made some organisational changes in my company, so I would not be able to return to the same post doing the same duties as before. I think the working environment would not be as it was before and I don't really have interest returning there as a result.

Office Worker, Female (33)

I used to work as in advertisement and

in this position the work extends late at night and many people are affected by this. Since the company could not change the structure of the work, my job description was changed instead. The content of my work has changed and I am currently trying to somehow combine work and my family.

Office Worker, Female (33)

Men found the childcare leave to have had a profound psychological effect on them in terms of respect and understanding towards mothers, and said the experiences from childcare had influenced their working styles too. Many mentioned the relationship with their partner had improved and they experienced fewer marital disputes than previously. All fathers had remained active in childcare and household chores after their initial leave period, and had assumed responsibility over various daily routines (e.g. dropping children at school). As men's participation in childcare has a positive effect on fertility (MHWL 2011a), childcare leave and other FFPs seem to offer Japanese men a legal and increasingly acceptable avenue for active fatherhood; even if in a limited scope nationally.

Due to the small number of men who have utilised FFPs in Japan, it is difficult to say whether this could have a positive effect on women's employment rate, and not much research has been conducted on the relationship. All of my male informants reported their wives having either returned to work, or were planning to do so after their leave. One male informant said he took childcare leave in oder to enable his wife to return to work. More work on the subject is needed and this should prove a fruitful area of further research.

Conclusions

My research, although limited in scope, provided evidence that the higher utilisation of Family Friendly Policies by men has a positive effect on gender relations and attitudes as well as approaches toward work-life balance. Wider implications are not verifiable due to the small scale of the project, but the findings support the hypothesis that the greater promotion of men's roles as carers could induce faster attitude change and help disrupt the entrenched post-war model of gender segregation. Current measures can be seen as overly oriented toward women while the post-childbirth employment rates among women has remained stagnant, indicating that the one-sided discussion has not yielded the desired results, despite a majority of female employees utilising FFPs (i.e. childcare leave).

However, men's integration into family life can only go so far unless the structures of Japanese welfare policies and labour market practises, built upon a gendered economic structure, are also profoundly re-evaluated. Inefficiency and inadequate supply of childcare services for instance create barriers for women returning to work, a problem the government has not responded to the degree required.

Family Friendly Policies are therefore unlikely to result in the integration of women into the labour market and higher fertility rates without a wider disruption of the gendered division of labour that has affected the design and organisation of social and welfare policies in Japan in the post-war era. As the policies themselves have been designed in a gendered vacuum and discussed in an unbalanced manner, largely excluding the potential of fathers as part of the solution, reaching gender balance in the society through these policies alone seems unlikely.

ANNA **V**AINIO gained her Master of Social Sciences degree in 2013 from the Centre for East Asian Studies at the University of Turku, Finland. She is currently a PhD Student at the School of East Asian Studies at University of Sheffield in the United Kingdom, focusing on post-disaster community development approaches within the civil society sector in Japan, and the theoretical framework guiding the adoption of these approaches.
Email: aevainio1@sheffield.ac.uk

Japan's Family Friendly Policies

Related links:

NPO Fathering Japan (English)
http://www.fathering.jp/english/

Yanaka Baby-Mom (Japanese only)
http://yanakababymom.com/

Atoh M. (2001). *Very low fertility in Japan and value change hypotheses*. Review of Population and Social Policy. No. 10, 2001, 1-21.

Coulmas F. (2007). *Population decline and ageing in Japan – the social consequences*. Routledge, London and New York.

Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (JILPT) (2013). Labour situation in Japan and its analysis. Accessed:
http://www.jil.go.jp/english/laborsituation/detailed/2012-2013/chapter3.pdf

Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (JILPT) (2007). The fixed-term contract employees and childcare leave. Summary. Accessed:
http://www.jil.go.jp/english/reports/documents/jilpt-research/no.99.pdf

Kashiwase K., Nozaki M., & Tokuoka K. (2012). IMF Working Paper: Pension reform in Japan. Accessed: http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/2012/wp12285.pdf

Ministry of Health, Welfare and Labour (2013). "ikujikyuugyou wo riyou shitai dansei wa 3 wari wo koeruga, dansei no ikujikyuugyou shutoku no shutokuritsu wa 2.63%". (The proportion of men wanting to take childcare leave is over 30%, uptake is 2.63%) Accessed:
http://www.mhlw.go.jp/houdou_kouhou/kaiken_shiryou/2013/dl/130314-01.pdf

Ministry of Health, Welfare and Labour (2011a). Eighth longitudal study on the adults of the 21st century (national lifestyle longitudal study).
Accessed: http://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/saikin/hw/judan/seinen11/index.html

Ministry of Health, Welfare and Labour (2011b). The basic labour situation survey of 2011, summary of results. Press release 15.7.2011. Accessed:
http://www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/houdou/2r9852000001ihm5.html

Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (2009a)."kosodate sapooto no tame no jigyoushu koudoukeikaku o sakuteishi, kurumin maaku o mezashimashou!!" (*Employers developing an Action Plan for supporting childcare. Let's getcertified with Kurumin*). Accessed:
http://www.mhlw.go.jp/general/seido/koyou/jisedai/dl/kurumin.pdf

Ministry of Health, Welfare and Labour (2009b). Sixth longitudal study on the adults of the 21st century (national lifestyle longitudal study). Accessed:
http://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/saikin/hw/judan/seinen09/index.html

National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (NIPSSR) (2011a). The 14th basic study on reproduction: Summary on the results on married couples. Accessed:
http://www.ipss.go.jp/ps-doukou/j/doukou14/doukou14.pdf

National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (NIPSSR) (2011b). The 14th basic study on reproduction: Summary on the results on unmarried people. Accessed: http://www.ipss.go.jp/ps-doukou/j/doukou14_s/doukou14_s.pdf

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2012). Share of births out of wedlock and teenage births. Accessed: http://www.oecd.org/els/family/SF2.4_Births%20outside%20marriage%20and%20teenage%20births%20-%20updated%2020240212.pdf

Osawa M. (2011). It is the government that has bigger problems – Gender issues in Japanese society. In *Social Science in Japan*. Institute of Social Sciences, The Universty of Tokyo. Issue 44, March 2011.

Sato H., Takeishi E., Komuro Y., Yajima Y., Takamura S., Yamagiwa K., & Asai Y. (2009). Research project toward realization of work-life balance society. Accessed: http://wlb.iss.u-tokyo.ac.jp/material/pdf/WLB_report_2009.pdf

Schoppa L. (2006). *Race for the exits: The unraveling of Japan's system of social protection.* Cornell University Press.

Suzuki T. (2006). Lowest-low fertility and governmental actions in Japan. Accessed: http://www.ier.hit-u.ac.jp/pie/stage1/Japanese/seminar/workshop0612/suzuki.pdf

Takeishi E. (2005). How companies can support the development of the Next Generation – A proposal for work-life balance. Accessed: http://www.nli-research.co.jp/english/socioeconomics/2005/li050215.pdf

Yashiro N. (2008). Economic factors in the declining birth rate. In Coulmas et. al (eds.) 2008. *The demographic challenge: A handbook about Japan*. 933-945. Brill, Leiden and Boston.

Rightful Resistance through Public Interest Litigation in China

Junxin Jiang

This article discusses the rightful resistance in the form of public interest litigation (PIL) in China from three aspects, including broader public involvement with urbanites at the forefront, challenging the government and state-owned monopolies, and an alternative channel for rights claims and public participation. The paper argues that PIL is a rightful resistance under the authoritarian regime in which Chinese people are making use of the law and judicial system to fight against rights infringement and make their voices heard.

Key Words: Public Interest Litigation, Rightful Resistance, China

Over the past three decades, the rapid economic development at the expense of the environment, social justice and citizenship rights has led to increasing popular contention in China. Public Interest Litigation (PIL) that emerged in the mid-1990s is part of this picture in which Chinese people are making use of the law and judicial system to rightfully resist against rights violators who are mostly the government and vested interests. Thus, it has become a significant social and legal phenomenon. As its connection to citizen resistance under the authoritarian government has not been fully discussed in Chinese academia, this article attempts to examine it from three aspects, i.e., broader public involvement with urbanite at the forefront, challenging the government and state-owned monopolies, and an alternative channel for rights claims and public participation. The paper concludes that PIL is a rightful resistance against the state from civil society in present-day China.

PIL in this article refers to the litigation filed by individuals or organizations aimed at vindicating citizenship rights, advocating for policy change and making voices heard based on the ideal of social justice and rights protection (Goldston, 2006, p. 496; Hershkoff & McCutcheon, 2000, p. 283; Lin, 2008, p. 5). With regards to rightful resistance, O'Brien (1996) noted that it is a form of popular contention consisted of two intertwined aspects: it is the "resistance" (kangzheng) against rights infringement, whereas it is "rightful" (hefa) in terms of law because resisters use laws, regulations and policies issued by the state to fight against rights infringement (p. 33). Therefore, this resistance is deemed as legally and morally justifiable by both the public and elites. Examining PIL in China from this perspective, we can find their similarities. In the course of PIL, those practitioners persisted in making use of law to justify their rights claims and accusing rights violators by exploiting the gap between laws offered on paper and their poor implementation in reality. In this way, they solicited media attention and public support, as well as shielded them from political and career risk.

As litigation types in China are categorized as criminal, civil, and administrative litigation, official statistics do not count PIL cases. Therefore this research has to rely on sample analysis. The data used for this paper were mainly from three sources, i.e., China Public Interest Law Net, Chi-

na Public Interest Litigation Net, and Candidate Cases for China Top Ten Public Interest Lawsuits Selection 2011 and 2012 because those cases they published were taken as representative by professionals. There was only one case that was collected from *Jingji Ribao* (Economic Daily), which was considered as the first PIL case in China. It is acknowledged that these Chinese data sources had to be subjected to self-censorship or censorship so that they did not contain certain types of sensitive cases, e.g., land requisitions or human rights abuses, which are usually classified as rights defense cases in China. All Tables and Charts in this article were made by the author based on these cases.

Broader Public Involvement with Urbanites at the Forefront

As a citizen resistance in the form of PIL, it brought together broader social strata and social groups throughout the country with urbanites at the forefront. As shown in Table 1 below, PIL claimants came from all walks of life by occupation, including university students, lawyers, law scholars, consumers, peasants, school teachers, bank employees, government officials, journalists, civil society organizations, etc. The majority of them are urban residents or live in urban areas, which can be confirmed in location distribution of sample cases presented in Chart 1. It demonstrates that 98 percent of lawsuits occurred in large and medium-sized cities, which comprised of municipalities, provincial capitals, specifically designated cities in the national economic planning, and prefectural-level cities. There are four likely explanations for it. First, it reflects the rapid urbanization in which more and more people have moved to cities. Secondly, urban population are getting more aware of their rights and are willing to stand up for it. Thirdly, there are more social and human resources in these cities that can be mobilized to amplify the voice of PIL litigants. And last but not least, judges in cities, especially in large cities are comparatively more professional and effective.

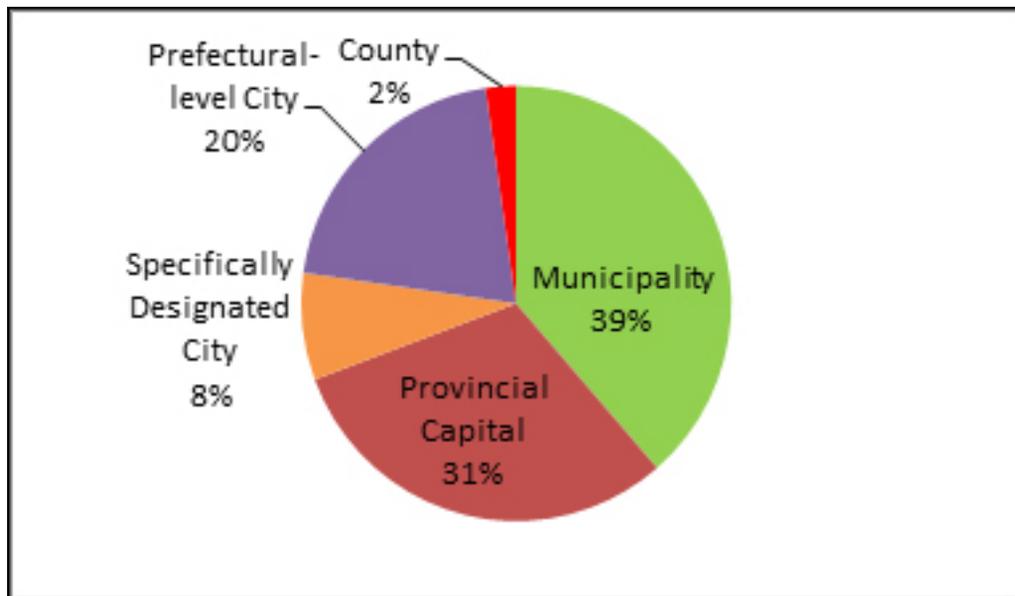**Chart 1: Location Distributions of PIL Sample Cases 1996-2012 (N=88)**

Table 1: Composition of PIL Plaintiffs 1996–2012

Plaintiff	Number	Percentage
University student	22	25.00
Lawyer	16	18.18
Consumer[a]	11	12.50
Law scholar	6	6.82
Peasant	6	6.82
Civil Society Organization	4	4.55
Disabled person	4	4.55
Procuratorate	3	3.41
Government agency	2	2.27
House owner[b]	2	2.27
Retiree	2	2.27
School teacher	2	2.27
Bank employee	1	1.14
Environmental protection volunteer	1	1.14
Government official	1	1.14
Legal worker	1	1.14
Journalist	1	1.14
Private entrepreneur	1	1.14
Pupil	1	1.14
Textile worker	1	1.14
Total	**88**	**100**

Notes:

a. The group of consumers is overlapped with other groups who are also consumers. This Table makes this category because of two reasons: (1) The published cases did not reveal the information on plaintiffs' occupation; (2) The lawsuits they filed were focused on consumer rights.

b. The category of this group is also overlapped with other groups. As plaintiffs' occupation in these cases were not revealed as well as those complainants sued the government for urban planning that might affect their environment and quality of life, they are categorized as house owners.

Among these PIL petitioners, there are two groups that deserve some attention. One is lawyers and law scholars that accounted for 25 percent. These professionals generally have better litigation expertise and social resources that other actors may lack, which is conducive to catching more public attention and achieving positive outcomes. More importantly, they are eager to make their contribution to the rule of law and social progress by means of this sort of litigation. All those interviewed by the author expressed this aspiration. Another group is university students who also held 25 percent of sample cases. Their legal activism came from their sensitive to opportunity inequality in higher education and employment as well as their vitality and courage. Of 22 lawsuits filed by them in the sample, 12 cases (54.55%) focused on equal treatment against discrimination. Some students, especially those who majored in law were anxious to apply legal knowledge they had learned in class to test the law through PIL.

Compared to other forms of contention, PIL has attracted the general public instead of a particular group. For instance, displaced people may take to the street to ask for compensation; laid-off workers may sit-in to protest corrupted managers and unresponsive government officials. However, PIL practitioners involved different social groups as presented in Table 1. The question as to why they engaged in this legal action can be answered according to different individuals and groups, but one thing is certain, i.e., they are all in pursuant of social justice and their legitimate rights enshrined in law. Hence, PIL has become "the new battlefield between state and society" (Froissart, 2014, p. 1).

Challenging the Government and State-owned Monopolies

Who is the main target of this legal action? The data in Chart 2 and Chart 3 indicates that the government and state-owned monopolies that amounted to 78.41 are two major targets. Of sample cases, nearly half of them (46.59%) sued administrative agencies at all levels from town,

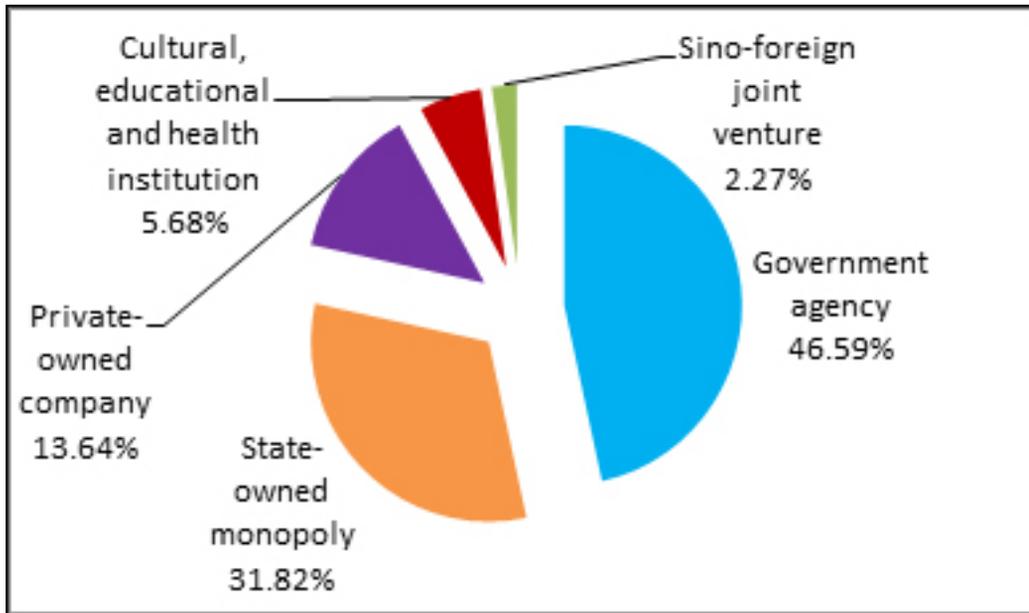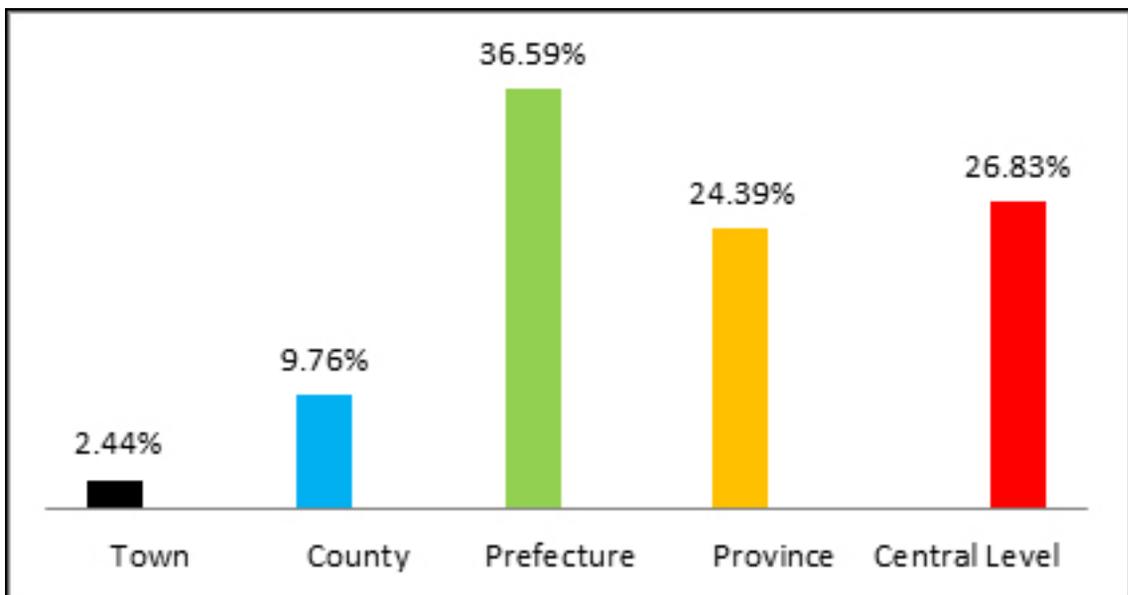**Chart 2: Composition of PIL Defendants 1996-2012 (N=88)**

Chart 3: PIL Cases Aiming at the Government at Different Levels 1996-2012 (N=41)

county, prefecture, provincial all the way to central government for their unfair administrative decisions, discriminatory policies and refusal to disclose government information relevant to public interest. Another 31.82 percent of lawsuits charged state-owned monopolies like railways, banks and telecommunications companies for their infringement of consumer rights by taking advantage of their privileges of exclusive market access and price manipulation endorsed by concerned government supervisory entities.

This outcome should come as no surprise because a series of social issues that the public concern such as fast-rising housing prices, tainted food, rural-urban inequality, pervasive corruption and environmental pollution originate from unfair public policies, administrative nonfeasance or malfeasance, and interest groups' manipulation of market and price. As Wu (2011) pointed out that the government intervention in the market and vested interests domination over key service industries have become major problems in

China. Thus, ordinary people have increasingly distrusted the government and state-owned monopolies, as well as frequently took them to the courts and tried to make them "play their rules to themselves and abide by principles they have established" (O'Brien & Li, p. 116).

It is little doubt that PIL practitioners are trying to advance their cause by way of PIL, but this does not meant that they intend to confront the authorities head on. Instead their litigations are moderate and self-contained. They scrupulously filed those lawsuits that were "politically permissible within the authoritarian system and legally enforceable by China's weak judiciary" (Fu, 2011, p. 348) because they are aware of the fact that developing PIL depends largely on the party/state that dominates most social and political resources. Chart 4 demonstrates that almost half of litigations focused on consumer rights protection, which is perhaps the least politically sensitive area in which lawsuits about it were relatively easy to register in the courts and obtained favorable

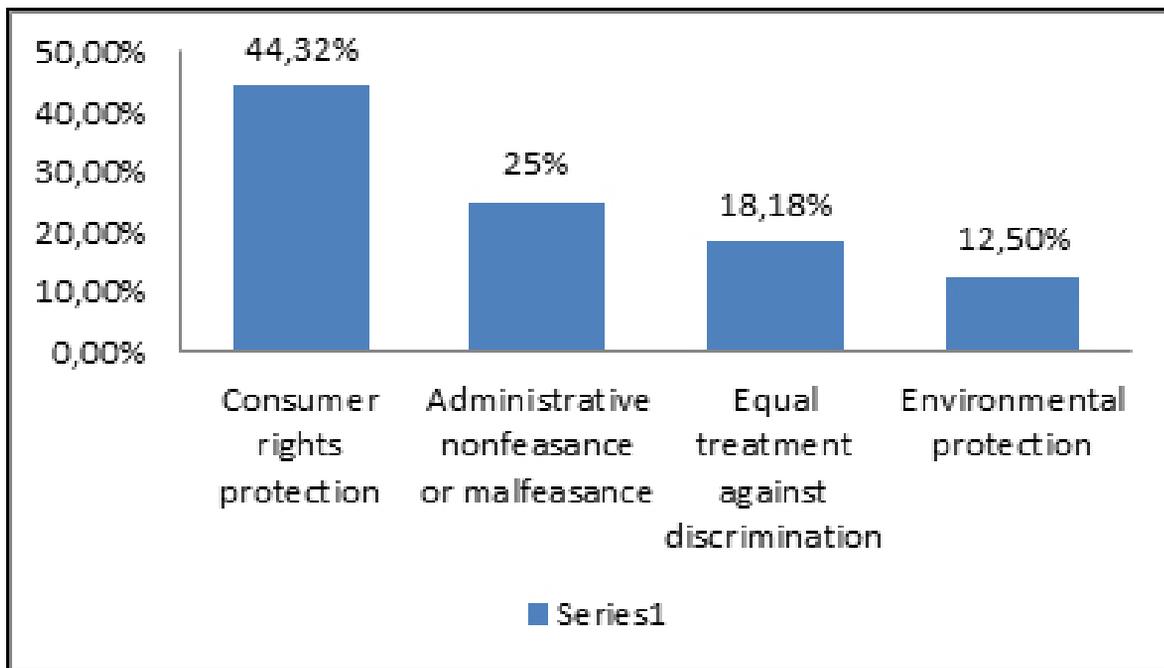**Chart 4: Types of Cases in the Sample 1996-2012 (N=88)**

Table 2: Outcome for PIL Plaintiff in the Sample 1996-2012 (N=88)

Category (%)	Won (%)	Lost (%)	Settlement (%)	Dismissal (%)	Rejection (%)	Withdrawal (%)	Number
CRP	12 (13.63)	5 (5.68)	3 (3.41)	18 (20.45)	0	1 (1.14)	39
ANM	3 (3.41)	1 (1.14)	1 (1.14)	9 (10.22)	5 (5.68)	3 (3.41)	22
ETAD	2 (2.27)	3 (3.41)	4 (4.55)	4 (4.55)	2 (2.27)	1 (1.14)	16
EP	4 (4.55)	0	3 (3.41)	2 (2.27)	2 (2.27)	0	11
Total (%)	21 (23.86)	9 (10.23)	11 (12.51)	33 (37.49)	9 (10.22)	5 (5.69)	88 (100)

Notes:
CRP: consumer rights protection;
NM: administrative nonfeasance or malfeasance;
ETAD: equal treatment against discrimination;
EP: environmental protection.

rulings. Table 2 shows that the winning ratio for plaintiffs in this area was 13.63 percent, which is much higher than three other litigation areas even though they are less sensitive, too (3.41%, 2.27% and 4.55% respectively).

In addition, PIL litigants generally paid attention to politically safe issues such as disputes over administrative decisions, government information disclosure, compulsory insurance, employment discrimination based on height and origin rather than abuse of power or violation of human rights. Moreover, they often just claimed less politically sensitive rights like consumer rights, equal right to education and employment, right to know instead of political rights like right to freedom of speech or association. In other words, these litigation areas, issues and claims, are within the boundaries drawn by the state, though there is not a clear line of demarcation because "the government possesses the ultimate power to judge whether an action crosses its boundaries" (Shi & Cai, 2006, p. 331).

An Alternative Channel for Rights Claims and Public Participation

Since the 1989 Pro-Democracy Movement, Chinese leadership from Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping has tightened political control over the society by repeatedly stressing social stability (Feng, 2013). Under the policy of preserving stability, the party/state perceives almost all legitimate demand for social reform and reasonable petitioning for grievances as the threat to the stability for which it has blocked access to a wide range of social mobilization channels such as demonstrations, gatherings, strikes and elections. Under such circumstances, the social space left for public participation is limited. On the other hand, however, along with economic development, educational process, social pluralism, increased mobility and internet popularity, Chinese citizens' rights consciousness has been on the rise and they are keen to seek some alternative ways to advance their interests and make their voices heard. PIL is just one of a few available channels at present for three main reasons.

First of all, PIL is an institutional channel recognized, or at least tolerated, by the authorities which leave some room for it demonstrated in

Chart 5, which shows that 23.86 percent of lawsuits obtained favourable rulings for PIL plaintiffs, and 12.51 percent of cases reached a settlement. This ratio of winning and settlement can be deemed a considerable achievement given the reality of strong state and weak society in which if the authorities reject any claims from PIL petitioners, the latter can do nothing about it. Second, large quantities of legislations including 236 laws, 690 administrative regulations and 8600 local regulations as of the end of 2010 (China Daily, 2011) have provided either explicit or implicit legal basis that was unavailable in the past for PIL claimants to fight against rights infringement. Finally, PIL that is beyond private interests is much more likely to attract positive media coverage and mobilize public opinion which may generate pressure on powerful defendants who at times have to make concessions in order to get rid of lawsuit and spotlight as soon as possible. Thus, "for marginalized groups, litigation sometimes offers the only, or least expensive, entry into political life at a given time" (Hershkoff, 2001, p. 14).

In fact, employing PIL as a rightful means to resist against the state is not alone in China. Ac-cording to Goldston (2006), ordinary citizens in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe also used PIL to challenge the authorities. In his words: "PIL was often seized upon by those who had dared to express opposi-tion to rights violations under communism." (p. 493). Chinese authorities may perceive this correlation between PIL and citizen resistance so that it is reluctant to see the development of this grassroots legal action and even keeps a watchful eye on it. This attitude was seen in the disposi-tion of sample cases by courts shown in Chart 5, which indicates that 47.71 percent of litigation applications were either rejected or dismissed at the case filing stage on the grounds that they lacked substantial standing, or there was insuf-ficient evidence to support claims, or the claim was beyond the court's jurisdiction. As a matter of fact, at first glance, the proportion of rul-ings favourable to plaintiffs (23.86%) is higher than defendants (10.23%), but given that a high percentage of suits (47.71%) have already been precluded from the outset, defendants actually enjoy a nearly three-to-one (57.96% to 23.86%) advantage over their opponents without counting suit withdrawal and settlement rate.

In conclusion, this article offers insight into why

Chart 5: Disposition of Sample Cases by Courts 1996-2012 (N=88, %)
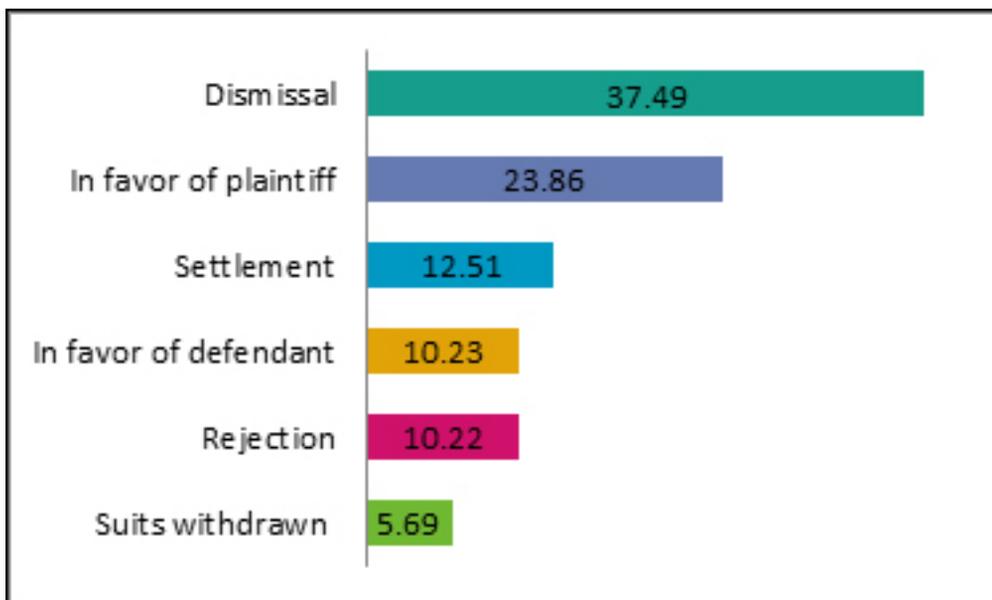
PIL is regarded as a rightful resistance in China. Under the authoritarian regime, PIL provides the public a risk-free channel to pursue their interests, resist against rights violations and make their voices heard. Although its effectiveness is limited in terms of winning case in the court, this citizen resistance in the form of PIL still plays an active role in encouraging people to take advantage of the law to defend their rights, demonstrating the strength of civil society and reshaping state-society relations during the social transition. In this sense, PIL symbolizes the people vs the Party (the title of an article in *The Economist* is "The Party v the people", 2014).

Junxin Jiang who comes from China is a PhD candidate in Centre for East Asian Studies, University of Turku, Finland. He is currently working on a dissertation involving public interest litigation and citizen resistance in China. His research interests lie in public interest litigation, civil society and social movement.
Email: jujian@utu.fi

References

Socialist system of laws established in China (2011, March 10). *China Daily*. Retrieved from http://europe.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-03/10/content_12149185.htm

Feng, C. (2013). Preserving stability and rights protection: conflict or coherence? *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 42 (2), 21-50.

Froissart, C. (2014, August). Using the law as a "harmonious weapon": the ambiguities of legal activism in favor of migrant workers in China. Journal of Civil Society, 10 (3). doi: 10.1080/17448689.2014.941086

Fu, H. (2011). Challenging authoritarianism through law: potentials and limit. *National Taiwan University Law Review*, 6 (1), 339-365.

Goldston, J. A. (2006). Public Interest Litigation in Central and Eastern Europe: Roots, Prospects, and Challenges. *Human Rights Quarterly,* 28, 492-527.

Hershkoff, H. (2001). Public Interest Litigation: Selected Issues and Examples. Retrieved from http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTLAWJUSTINST/Resources/PublicInterestLitigation%5B1%5D.pdf

Hershkoff, H., & McCutcheon, A. (2000). Public Interest Litigation: An International Perspective. In M. McClymont & S. Colub (Eds.), Many Roads to Justice: The Law-Related Work of Ford Foundation Grantees around the World. Ford Foundation.

Lin, L. (2008). Fashehuixue shiye xia de zhongguo gongyi susong [China public interest litigation in the perspective of law sociology]. In He Hairen (Ed.), Gongyi susong de xinfazhan [The new development of public interest litigation]. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe.

O'Brien, K. (1996). Rightful Resistance. *World Politics*, 49 (1), 31-55.

O'Brien, K., & Li, L. (2006). *Rightful Resistance in Rural China*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Shi, F., & Cai, Y. (2006). Disaggregating the state: networks and collective resistance in Shanghai. The China Quarterly, 186, 314-332.

The Party v the people. (2014, October 4). *The Economist*.

Wu, J. (2011). Zhengfu guoduo ganyu he daqiye longduan rang shichang nanfahui zuoyong [Excessive government intervention and big business monopoly make the market fails to play a role]. Retrieved from http://finance.ifeng.com/news/20110702/4220002.shtml

"Opportunities, but Nothing Very Concrete"
The Challenge Finns Face with Chinese Delegations'
General Level of Interest in Finland

Santa Stopniece

This paper explores the challenge of finding common ground between the Finns and the Chinese in the context of co-operation, trade and inward investment facilitation related to general lack of specific interest displayed by the Chinese. The article is ethnographic in nature and is mainly based on data obtained from interviewing individuals working for local governments in Finland and one of the state agencies responsible for attracting foreign investment. The study uses Speech Codes Theory (Philipsen, 1997) when analyzing the cultural aspects of expectations regarding communication between Chinese and Finns. According to interviewees, lack of serious interest, vague government guidelines, the longer time needed to build relationship, and involvement of intermediaries all contribute to the difficulty to move the discussions to a more specific level of focus. Finnish expectations regarding this type of communication are that it should be direct and task-oriented, because they feel pressure to yield real results quickly and efficiently. Suggested strategies to make the co-operation talks more specific are presenting the expertise areas of Finland, clarification regarding too general terms used by the Chinese, and investing into building personal relationships with them.

Key words: Chinese investments, Finland, co-operation, trade, intercultural communication, general level of interest, common ground

1. Introduction

The importance of co-operation with China has been growing in Finland and the rest of Europe in light of the recent rising China phenomenon and interest in attracting Chinese investments. Finland has established governmental agencies to aid Chinese investment and ensured the co-operation of regional and local governments in the framework activities, such as town twinning. An important part of investment facilitation and wider co-operation comprises delegation visits by both interested nations to the other country. These involve enterprise interest matchmaking events, meetings with officials, company visits, etc. While these mutual activities between China and Finland have been ongoing for some years, matching the interests, finding common ground and maintaining partnerships remains a challenging task (Wang, 2007). Fin-

land and the Baltic Sea Region have not so far been a major destination of Chinese investments. Nevertheless Chinese interest in the region has in recent years increased, which has been reflected by awareness in Finland regarding the rising China phenomenon and the possibilities related to Chinese investments as well as trade and co-operation opportunities (Kaartemo, 2007).

The purpose of this paper is to explore and analyze the perspective of the Finnish side concerning challenge of finding a common ground with Chinese co-operation partners. This paper is ethnographic in nature, seeking to understand intercultural communication and the meanings and interpretations attached to it by the participants. The purpose of this paper is to reveal the fascinating every-day reality of people attempting to facilitate investment, co-operation, and trade opportunities between China and Finland.

The theoretical framework of the study is based on the Speech Codes Theory (Philipsen, 1997) that addresses the relationship between communication and culture. Speech codes are understood as systems of socially constructed symbols and meanings, premises, and rules pertaining to communicative conduct. Data interpretation of the study will focus on the fourth proposition of the Speech Codes Theory (Philipsen, Coutu, Covarrubias, 2005), which states interacting sides tend to interpret communicative conduct according to the practices in their own culture. The study will also refer to the sixth proposition which states that speech codes frame responses according to ways accepted in society. There is a lot of scientific proof that people experience social pressure to conform their behavior to social codes in their society (Philipsen et al. 2005). Thus, the Finnish viewpoint on the communication with Chinese partners will be analyzed against the background of the practices and expectations in Finnish culture. The concept of common ground is understood as one aspect of collaborative management, because co-operating sides are making an attempt to work more closely with one another (Garber, 2006).

The main methodological approach of the study involved interviewing Finnish representatives at local and state level who facilitate Chinese investment, co-operation and trade opportunities. Some participant observation in meetings was also conducted to give access to naturally occurring intercultural communication, and to provide a fuller sense of the context. Nine interviews were conducted in Finnish cities of Helsinki, Turku, and Lahti in the autumn of 2013, and two observation projects were conducted for six days during a Chinese delegation visit from Tianjin to Turku in October 2013 and a Finnish delegation visit from Oulu to Suzhou in May 2014.

Five of the interviewees were Finns, three were of Chinese origin and one was Japanese but all these four had lived and worked in Finland for 5-20 years. Four of the interviewees were representatives of local or regional governments, three were team members of state investment attraction agency, and two were interpreters working for the Finns. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions, broadly addressing the experiences of working with the Chinese. The purpose of the interviews was to inductively discover the most relevant themes regarding communication in the setting of Chinese investment, co-operation and trade facilitation and to encourage interviewees to offer their own definitions of particular activities (Silverman, 2006; Briggs, 1986). Five interviews were held in interviewees' workplaces, two in cafeterias, and the remaining two by Skype. The interviews were conducted in English, recorded and transcribed, and the interview quotations used in this paper are direct citations.

The identities of the interviewees were coded IV1-9 to maintain their anonymity in accord-

Table 1. Interviewee codes and basic data

Interviewee code	Gender	Country of origin	Working title
IV1	female	Japan	Business Development Officer
IV2	male	China	Interpreter
IV3	male	Finland	Development Manager
IV4	female	China	Interpreter
IV5	male	Finland	Senior Advisor
IV6	male	Finland	Head of International Affairs
IV7	male	China	Business Development Manager
IV8	female	Finland	Customer Operations Director
IV9	male	Finland	General Manager

ance with the Guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (2012). Some interviewee basic data is provided in Table 1.

During the analysis stage, interview and observation data were categorized according to subthemes and then combined for a thick description of the intercultural communication dynamics in the given context, which has been the basis for several relevant topics (Spradley, 1980). Subthemes that emerged from the interviews were the struggle to cope with the general level of Chinese interest in Finland and proposed strategies to deal with this challenge.

Limitations of this study are that it is small scale and predominantly based on interviews. People's answers in the interview at times do not have a stable relationship with how they would behave in naturally occurring situations (Silverman, 2006). However, their stories do provide insights about their momentary concerns and circumstances.

2. Challenge of the general level of Chinese interest in Finland

Commenting on the situation in general, most interviewees expressed the view that the potential of inward investment opportunities from China has not been fully realized in Finland as the following statements indicate:

> *I think that the amount of investment is surprisingly low still, even though we know that Finland is so good at this question, and there are all these overwhelming, globally big brands, but it doesn't match with the investment.* (IV4)

> *There has been some phase going on with investments, but Finland is one of the few countries in the whole world where China has not invested very much. Huawei is the biggest investment from China to Finland, but there are not too many still. So we are in the phase that there are opportunities, but noting very concrete at the moment when it comes to big investments.* (IV3)

At the local and regional level, the investment attraction activities are entwined with broader co-operation, assisting businesses in making connections, and with town twinning, in which there are also challenges in finding common ground:

> *I think most visits didn't come out with results, only with a shallow contact. Even sometimes signed officially, but the real co-operation doesn't come easily.* (IV2)

> *I think so far it has been quite much of discussing on general level. Even when there are some seminars where there may be some professionals and experts, but the presentations are on average level.* (IV6)

One distinction that several interviewees made was that the issue of a general level of interest was prevalent in meetings with Chinese state and local government officials as opposed to meetings with entrepreneurs and professionals. A further distinction was that interviewees working for local government displayed a greater concern for lack of specificity in co-operation talks than interviewees representing state inward investment agency.

As to impressions of the reasons for discussions to lack direction and for difficulties in agreeing to actual co-operation, several interviewees suggested visiting Chinese only want to get an impression of Finland because there is a pre-formed doubt that Finland may not be a sufficiently important country with which to do business:

> *Many small groups are visiting, for instance, our university of applied sciences, and it's just a friendly visit or something. We have quite many such visiting delegations coming to Finland who just want to learn, kind of want to get an average opinion of Finland.* (IV6)

IV6 also suggested that lack of serious interest may have to do with the fact Finland is a small country:

> *I guess Chinese companies when they go abroad; they are looking for the "big fish". There are not many investments, and I guess*

there is a problem of scale. (IV6)

Another opinion is that the Chinese may view a trip to Finland as a leisure trip with business on the side:

> *They may consider that it is not a serious thing, like a leisure trip, then they plan two hours of official visit, because they themselves don't plan to have some real co-operation. I think they see this as a half-relaxed trip for recreation, because Finland is not kind of important business in those people's mind.* (IV2)

Lack of serious interest may not be communicated directly to the Finnish side: "It is quite difficult to understand when Chinese are really interested and when they are not." (IV3)

One reason for the perceived lack of specific direction in investment discussions is that Chinese officials coming to Finland may only have generalized guidelines of co-operation from China's central government. Visiting Chinese officials may, therefore, be unsure about what concrete actions to take. Commenting on a recent visit from China, IV1 explained:

> *I hear between the lines that they don't really know what they have to do. The wording, the paper that they gave, maybe it is just that it is a bad translation or just a draft, but it is much generalized. I just get the feeling they don't really have a concrete plan what they should be implementing.* (IV1)

Thus, from the Finnish perspective, the reason for the general level of investment interest and lack of specific co-operation aims lies with the Chinese delegations. This perspective implies that the starting point for the Finns is based on own cultural expectations: if the Chinese have come, they want real co-operation and they will discuss matters in a specific way. These expectations are not always met, as IV4 concisely explains: "My impression was that Finns are very efficient (…), but you have to push the Chinese very much."

The interviewees did suggest a combined strategy of Finnish strengths to the twin issues of the per-

ceived lack of serious interest and specific co-operation aims from the Chinese delegations. The first strength lies in experience of comprehensible presentations of Finnish expertise areas and the second is the ability to match interests across a diverse range of economic sectors:

> *I have been working with Finnish high tech companies for 15 years, and now I know a little bit about China, what they are looking for, and how to match these – a very small country with excellent technology, but no scalability - with a big country with a lot of scalability and (great) need.* (IV8)

This viewpoint was supported by another interviewee:

> *We have to look at the Chinese companies who have invested into Europe and then try to compare what we have offered them. It's not enough to tell that Finland is a nice country.* (IV5)

Participant observation of the interaction between a visiting delegation (Tianjin, China) and a host team (Turku, Finland) revealed the difference between the 'vagueness' of the Chinese compared to the specificity of the Finns. During the visit, the leader of the Chinese delegation referred to their areas of interest using non-specific phrases such as 'resource integration', 'platform establishment' and 'technology program.' In response to a Finnish request for clarification of the 'technology program,' the Chinese response was that that the mayor of Tianjin had issued regulations for the support and growth of 40 000 SMEs including start-ups. The Finnish response was a highly detailed presentation enumerating the specific expert business fields in the Turku region, which included a wide range of industries and services such as biotechnology, life science, environment, health, maritime (arctic vessels), functional food and food safety, pedagogic and teacher training, business skills and project management, and quality assurance. Chinese responded that large markets for all these fields exist in both Tianjin and the whole of China. Thus, Finnish strategy to deal with the situation was being proactive in asking direct questions

and giving specific information in attempts to make the possible co-operation direction more specific.

Another reason the interviewees give for the lack of specificity in the discussions is the Chinese wish to take time to develop a relationship first:

> *Chinese would like to build the relationship longer time and go to dinners, and find a kind of way to friendship and relationship and only after that you can start to some extent, openly talk about anything* (IV8)

Delegations from China often consist of agents or intermediaries who do not have the authority to make decisions, which makes it difficult for the delegation to take concrete actions, according to IV6:

> *I think from the Finnish side, where there is a company, there is a person who has the right to start the real negotiation, or can tell what he can sell or buy. But on the Chinese side, there is often some kind of agent who is ready to find contacts for you. But really, there should be a living person from the company who could speak to the Finnish company!* (IV6)

The frustration with the impossibility to move straight to the task and to ask the individuals directly responsible was clearly apparent. "We in Finland don't bother so much about extra details or hustle, we just want to go directly (to the solution)," said IV8. However, the readiness to invest in developing relationships and necessary contacts and to accommodate the need for relationship building was also expressed:

> *Sometimes after business meetings together with Chinese organizations and Chinese people, they tell me – you are the contact person and I want you to come next time. That is when I feel that maybe I have done something right, because that relationship is important, and we both learn to work with that particular person.* (IV1)

The necessities of developing extensive networks

of contacts and the need to visit China to speak to the decision makers were recognized as well:

> *You need more and more contacts, more and more places for people to meet and learn to know each other. They need to find and establish the connections that can really trust on – on both sides, I guess.* (IV6)

> *You have to go to China and you have to meet the people all the time.* (IV5)

In summary, from the perspective of the Finnish side, a major challenge to Chinese-Finnish co-operation is related to persistent difficulties in moving beyond the general interest level shown by Chinese delegations. The contributing factors, according to Finnish views are mainly Chinese and to some degree related to communication issues: a lack of serious interest, non-specific co-operation guidelines, longer time to build relationship, and involvement of intermediaries. Nevertheless, the Finns do seem to be adhering to strategies using the national strengths of Finland enterprise expertise, requesting clarification of generalized descriptions and a readiness to invest in building relationships.

3. Conclusions, theory of the case and implications

There is a lot of interest in making fuller use of co-operation opportunities with partners from China in Finland. Indeed, Finns have high hopes when welcoming Chinese delegations, until they become frustrated at the seeming inability of the visitors to raise their level of interest in investment, trade and co-operation opportunities from vague and superficial to specific and concrete.

The fourth proposition of the Speech Codes Theory (Philipsen, Coutu, Covarrubias, 2005) suggests the interacting sides tend to interpret communicative conduct according to the practices in their own culture. The cultural assumption of the Finns is that if the Chinese have come, they want real co-operation, and to that end they will discuss concrete matters in a straightforward manner with the people directly responsible for

those matters. This process will ultimately lead to concrete actions – actual co-operation, sales, investment, etc. as quickly and efficiently as possible. However, the process frequently fails to produce any concrete outcomes due to a different approach by Chinese.

The sixth proposition of the Speech Codes Theory contends that speech codes frame responses according to ways accepted in society. There is empirical evidence that people experience societal pressure to conform their behavior to social codes (Philipsen et al. 2005). In this context, the Finns apparently experience pressure to come up with the results not only from meetings with their Chinese counterparts but also from the expectation of being efficient.

Aware that they are unable to influence the factors contributing to general lack of topic specific interest by the Chinese, the Finns do try to make co-operation talks more focused. The interviewees discussed some possible strategies, such as the ability to present the strengths of Finland, clarification of vague statements of intent by the Chinese, and adapting the Chinese desire to base investments and co-operation on developed personal relationships. These proposed strategies contain elements of both pressure and accommodation. On one hand, Finns exert pressure on the Chinese to be more specific by offering concrete co-operation areas and clarifying general terms, which could be seen as efforts to frame Chinese responses according to own expectations. At the same time, to some degree at least, there is acceptance and accommodation regarding the longer time needed to build connections and relationships.

The aim of the study was getting to identify the meanings that people working for Finnish inward-investment related organizations attribute to their co-operation with the Chinese. The results have provided relevant information about their perceptions, giving an insight into facilitation of investment, trade, and co-operation opportunities with China. The results of this study may also be relevant on a broader, even global scale, as partners in other countries may face similar challenges when trying to co-operate with the Chinese. The views and perceptions of the visiting Chinese delegations regarding co-operation development was not the focus of this study, but would be equally interesting and important to consider in further research.

Santa Stopniece
University of Jyväskylä, Finland
Course: Intercultural Communication
Degree: MA, PhD Candidate
Nationality: Latvia and Finland (dual)
Email: santastop@inbox.lv

4. References

Briggs, C. L. (1986). *Learning how to ask: A sociolinguistic appraisal of the role of the interview in social science research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity. (2012). Guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity. *Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity*. Available from http://www.tenk.fi/sites/tenk.fi/files/HTK_ohje_verkkoversio040413.pdf.pdf#overlay-context=fi/ohjeet-ja-julkaisut

Garber, P.R. (2006). Fifty-one activities for collaborative management. Amherst, Massachusetts: Human Resource Development Press.

Kaatermo, V. (2007, June). The motives of Chinese investments in the Baltic Sea Region. *Electronic Publications of Pan-European Institute,* ISSN 1795-5076. Available from http://www.utu.fi/fi/yksikot/tse/yksikot/PEI/raportit-ja-tietopaketit/Documents/Kaartemo_72007.pdf

Philipsen, G. (1997). A theory of speech codes. In G. Philipsen, & T. L. Albrecht (Eds.), Developing communication theories (pp. 119-156). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Philipsen, G., Coutu, L., & Covarrubias, P. (2005). Speech codes theory: restatements, revisions, and response to criticisms. In William B.Gudykunst (Ed.), *Theorizing about intercultural communication* (pp. 55-68). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Silverman, D. (2006). *Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analysing talk, text and interaction*. London: Sage Publications.

Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation*. New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Wang, L. (2007). The key activities of partnership development in China: A study of Sino-Finnish partnerships (Doctoral dissertation). Available from http://herkules.oulu.fi/isbn9789514284175/isbn9789514284175.pdf

"Opportunities, but Nothing Very Concrete"

From subordination to "own work"
Perceived life changes of former Haliya bonded labourers after their liberation

Camilla Lohenoja

The article discusses the perceived life changes of former *Haliya* bonded labourers in Nepal after their liberation. It concentrates on the subjective perceptions of the labourers, a field that has had little attention in literature to date. Nineteen semi-structured, in-depth interviews of former Haliyas, were conducted in a rural village in Baitadi, Far-Western Nepal in the summer of 2013. These were then analysed, using qualitative content analysis. The paper is constructed on the concept of social status, more precisely subordination, and it suggests that diminishing subordination, such as caste discrimination, dependency and forcing, is more important in former bonded labourers' lives than the lack of improvement in material benefits. Therefore it can be argued that the literature on bonded labour stresses too much the quantitative data and the meaning of material conditions, and fails to see the importance of the personal experience and improved social status as the most important change in their lives. This suggests that it might be useful to examine the importance of social status when tackling inequality questions as well.

Keywords: Nepal, bonded labour, subordination, rural areas, ethnography, content analysis

Although slavery has been officially abolished, this ancient social institution that has occurred almost everywhere in the world has not yet ended: different forms of contemporary slavery still exist. The most known forms are probably human trafficking, child labour and so called sweatshops, where people work for insufficient wages and in unbearable conditions. Another form, bonded labour, is found to be common in South Asia. Bonded labour has many forms, but the most common feature is that a person works in slavery-like conditions in order to pay back a loan. In most cases the work doesn't reduce the actual debt and therefore the labourers become bonded to the employer for the majority of their lives. One type of bonded labour is the *Haliya pratha* in Nepal, a caste-based semi-slavery system in the country side where often a low-caste labourer works in the field of a high-caste landowner without proper payment in return for a loan.

After the official abolishment of the Haliya sys-tem in 2008, many organisations reported about the continuing plight of the former Haliya workers. Due to the lack of quantitative measures and the complicated political situation in Nepal, the condition of many Haliyas is reported to have become worse since their freedom. Therefore it would seem that the liberation has had negative consequences. This impression caught my attention towards the former Haliyas. I wanted to find out how the Haliyas themselves perceived their life changes after finishing Haliya work. That way this study becomes part of the subaltern studies that gives a voice to one of those groups in society that are socially, politically and geographically outside the hegemonic power structure (see e.g. Spivak, 1988). I use qualitative content analysis for an interview material that I collected in Far-Western Nepal in summer 2013.

Who are haliyas?

Haliya in Nepali language means literally a ploughman, but it is understood more gener-ally as a low-caste rural labourer who works in

someone else's field to pay back the debt he once took from the field's owner (K. Upadhyaya, 2004, 119). The Haliyas are considered bonded labourers since they get either only food or a very small fee for the work they do. Furthermore, the work done does not decrease the debt but is considered to cover only the interest. The original sum, which can be in some cases less than one hundred euros, will be collected from other sources. The result is often that the debt remains or even grows and the person is obliged to work his whole life as a Haliya. Often the debtor's family, such as wife and children, work in the landowner's field as well, and the debt is inherited to the next generation. The Haliya system, that has also been referred to as semi-slavery (CSRC, 2014), is prevalent especially in Mid- and Far-Western Nepal. The exact number of Haliya's is unknown and estimates vary. According to the Nepali government and some NGO's this ranges from 19,100 to 60,000 people. (CSRC, 2014; NNDSWO & LWF Nepal, 6; RDN & CO-LARP, 2012, 1, 19).

The Haliya system is strongly linked to the caste system since most of the Haliya workers are low-caste Dalits. Their landlords, who are the creditors, are classed as high-caste. The reason for this is cultural. Unlike Dalits, high-caste people are not considered suitable for fieldwork – ploughing is considered polluting in a ritual sense. For example Kami (known as Lohar in Western Nepal), Damai and Sarki, all Dalit castes, have traditionally been working as Haliyas. (NNDSWO & LWF Nepal, 6; K. Upadhyaya, 2004, 119). It has also been suggested that the relationship between a Haliya and his landlord is not purely a coercive slavery-relationship but clientelist in its nature: the relationship is considered voluntary and beneficial to both parties (see e.g. Kumar KC, Subedi, & Suwal, 2013, 15).

The majority of Haliya work is typically done during the agricultural peak seasons, sowing and harvesting times. During the off season the Haliyas have typically gone to other places such as India to work, since the landlord offers food only when there is work to do. The Haliyas are still obliged to return as soon as the landlord

needs them again. (NNDSWO & LWF Nepal, 7). The Haliyas living in the hilly area of Nepal are said to have a partly better position than the ones living in Terai, since the previous often have a piece of land on their own. (NNDSWO & LWF Nepal, 7).

Theoretical and methodological framework for bonded labour

The majority of the literature on bonded labour states that the official abolishment of the system has brought new difficulties for the labourers. It is often thought that since the labourers enter the bonded relationship voluntarily, the abolishment might diminish their welfare. Carmichael (2001), Anker (2004, 3), Bhandari et al. (1996, 19), Basu et al. (2004, 209), Daru et al. (2005, 138, 143) and Chhetri (2005, 40-1) argue that some of the former bonded labourers live in worse conditions than before the liberation. Futher, Giri (2012; 2009, 599–601) and Upadhyaya (2008) state that the bonded labour system might transform into something new after the official abolishment but it won't disappear.

The opposite view argues that the abolishment of bonded labour systems has improved the situation of the liberated labourers. Kvalbein (2007, iv) argues that although the annual income of the former Kamaiyas, another group of bonded labourers, vary more nowadays, their average income has risen. Genicot (2002) and Hatlebakk (2006, 20, 26) state that although the bonded labourers enter the bondage voluntarily, the official abolishment makes other employment and loan opportunities possible and therefore enables the improvement of bonded labourers' condition.

Between the two extremes, there is a view to which the impacts of the official abolishment are neither purely positive nor negative. According to Engerman (2003, 187) the liberation doesn't mean improvement in material conditions among the poorest. Ramtel (2008, xii) argues that although the nature of the Haliya work has changed from debt, tradition and land into a psychological socio-structure, still the system exists.

Furthermore, Akerlof (1976) points out that the effects of the abolishment are dependent on other people's actions: if one quits the bonded labour relationship it is harmful to all, but if the whole system is finished, everyone benefits from it. Likewise, Conning and Kevane (2007, 110) state that the freedom of the former bonded labourers is increased but the increase in income depends on whether the landlords have other ways to suppress the former bonded labours. Basu and Chau (2004) state that the way of liberation matters: paying back the debt to the landlord might bring temporary positive change, but it won't change the vulnerability of the former bonded labourer in the long run. Similarly, tighter legislature on bonded labour might lead to children ending up in worse labour conditions. According to them, cheaper loans from official sources decreases bonded labour, but if borrowing is too cheap, the risk is to become indebted again which might result in child labour.

The above stated arguments for and against the liberation focus mainly on comparing objective, material conditions. The research on bonded labour lacks almost totally the level of subjective experiences: the voice of the bonded labourers themselves. Much of this has to do with methodology: While most of the studies focus on quantitative data and questionnaires (see e.g. Villanger, 2006), few of them have done ethnographic research, meaning in-depth interviews and participant observation. Therefore, I see it as important to gain an understanding on the grass-root level. My study focuses on the personal thoughts and perceptions of the group of people whose views are not normally heard outside their own community. The concept that the analysis is built on is social status. Social status could be interpreted as social opportunities, one of the crucial instrumental freedoms of Amartya Sen's (1999, 4, 38–40) notion of freedom. Sen argues that social opportunities such as education and health care are important for the basics of development, such as to avoid early death, but also for people to be able to participate in society. For example illiteracy as a lack of social opportunity might be an obstacle for participating in the economic but also in the political life.

In the analysis below, I suggest that the most important change regarding the social status of former Haliyas is reduced subordination. Mendelsohn and Vicziany (1998, 37, 147) propose that there are two forms of subordination of Dalits: ritual subordination, that is cultural and social by nature, and economical subordination, which means poverty in short. Poverty is visible through the lack of food, income and property, ritual subordination is produced through restrictions of freedom and social exclusion. These two sides of subordination are related to each other and they are manifested through, for example, enslavement of low castes by high caste people.

Former Haliyas' experiences in Baitadi

My data set consists of nineteen in-depth interviews and participant observation over a five week period of former Haliyas in a rural village in Baitadi, Far-Western Nepal. In the interviews, I concentrate on the former Haliyas' experiences on the changes in their lives after finishing the Haliya work.

When most of the literature stresses the weakened position of former bonded labourers, my data doesn't support these findings. Former Haliya's perceptions are much more positive. According to them, the quality of life has increased remarkably after finishing the Haliya work:

> **Camilla Lohenoja (CL):** *If you think about your life, let's say when you were working as Haliya, how has it changed?*
>
> **Interviewee (I)**: *It's different.*
>
> **CL:** *How is it different?*
>
> **I:** *I don't have to go there, I left that work and I worked myself in my house and leading my life, so it's good. I left that work so now it's good.*
>
> **CL:** *What about economically, when was it better, then or now?*
>
> **I:** *It is similar, I don't have anything to like earn much, so it's similar. There is no difference.*
>
> (P18, M 33 years)

The above quotation captures well the for-

mer Haliyas' perceptions about the difference compared to the former: there is change, but counting only rupees does not represent the real essence of the state; we have to dig deeper in order to understand the change more thoroughly. Sentences "I don't have to go there", "I left that work so now it's good" reveal a little bit of the crucial experience of the former Haliyas.

 Using the principals of qualitative content analysis (see Schreier, 2012) I separated different dimensions that seemed important in the interviewees' speeches concerning the experienced change. I labeled these dimensions as changes in material welfare such as work, food and livelihood as well as changes in the social status such as suppression. The change in the social status of the former Haliyas is, according to my analysis, the most important dimension for the interviewees. Although the changes in the material welfare are not that big, the diminished subordination and exclusion as well as increased experience of freedom outweigh the lack of material improvement.

The most remarkable change in the social status is the reduced level of subordination. Decreased caste discrimination, dependency and forcing are each dimensions of the diminishing subordination of the former Haliyas:

> *Now we are free, we can do anything, we can go anywhere, anytime, sort of like, we are free now and, before we have to, we were in suppression, pressio--, like force, we always have to do the work they want us to do, they always call us do this work, do that work but now it has been good, we can do anything, now we have our own choice.*
>
> (P 8, F 26 years)

The answer praises the finishing of forcing and the rise of freedom. It follows Genicot's (2002) and Hatlebakk's (2006) argument that the abolishment makes other employment opportunities possible. Also caste discrimination is seen diminished after the liberation:

> *Talking about caste discriminations,*

> *like yeah, we are not allowed to go to house, enter the upper caste people's house, like... even we are not allowed to go even near the, near the house, like there is ground, even there, but after Maoist movement, and, (.) there was, (.) it's okay now, it has diminished. Before even to buy something, before go to shop we have to stay outside and they give and we take that and come back. But now it's okay.*
>
> (P5, M 39 years)

The quote reveals that although caste discrimination has not ended, it has decreased since the Haliya work has ended. Mendelsohn and Vicziany's (1998, 37, 147) division of caste discrimination into ritual and economic subordination seems appropriate here: just like they suggest, the ritual subordination has diminished more than the economic. However, an important remark is that the economic situation has not become worse either according to my interviewees' perceptions.

Interpretations: Importance of "own work" and the role of Maoists

Concentrating on objective measures and external indicators only, we gain knowledge that doesn't look too promising for the former Haliyas. Incomes haven't risen, and still life is an everyday struggle for survival. However listening to the experiences of the interviewees, develops quite a different picture. Although there is still a lack of sufficient income, the huge change in the minds of former Haliyas is apparent. They feel themselves free to eat whenever and whatever they want, work as much, where- and to whomever they want. They don't feel the suppression and pressure to work for others, but instead they can choose to do work on their own:

> *Before we used to work for them, only for them and there is no other work but after that when we stopped from there we got chance to do our own work and we got chance to grow our own goats.*
>
> (P19, M 51 years)

Therefore it seems that the possibility to be more

independent is a crucial part of former Haliyas' experience.

The impact of Maoists is important to acknowledge in the opinions of the former Haliyas. Since the village was under heavy Maoist influence during the Maoist war in 1996–2006, and the Maoists are still the most popular party in the area, it seems that the responses are strongly influenced by the Maoist discourse. One of the respondents puts it clearly:

> *H: Yeah, Maoist people just forced us to not go the field of landlord, like don't go to plough the field of others, so, that's why we didn't go to work. Most of the people don't say this, because of... fear of things. -- Still I'm also afraid, we are afraid to work as a Haliya because Bishnu [name changed] is here, he might report... us and even still we are maoist people now, we can't also work for, as a Haliya, --*
> (P5, M 39 years)

The comment exposes the power the Maoists still have in the village – Bishnu, one of the village leaders, might report if someone worked as Haliya. The fear of Maoists is therefore a strong incentive not to work as a Haliya anymore. On the other hand the interviewee regards himself and the other Dalits in the village as Maoists. Since one of the Maoist objectives was to liberate Haliyas, the interviewees' responses fit well with the Maoist idea. This is supported by the remarks on the village nearby: there the Maoist influence was much weaker, and the attitude towards Maoists is much more negative.

Discussion

The findings above are somewhat in disharmony with the majority of literature dealing with abolishment of bonded labour system as discussed in the literature review. There might be many reasons for this. For example, most of the literature focusing on Nepal's bonded labour systems deals with Kamaiyas. Literature about Haliyas is very limited due to their more recent liberation. Kamaiyas' situation is somewhat different - most of them used to live in their landlord's lands and

house, when Haliyas often had a piece of land to themselves and a house on their own. When the bonded labour relation finished, the Haliyas' landlords couldn't send the Haliyas away from their own lands, unlike in Kamaiyas' cases. Furthermore, since the village where I conducted my fieldwork is situated close to the Indian border, many former Haliyas have good opportunities to work in India. They also have other means of income such as preparing utensils, carrying loads, working in road construction and cutting wood, so that finishing Haliya work has not meant finished livelihood opportunities.

However, the most important reason for the difference between the interviewees' experience and the literature is, according to my interpretation, the difference in the methodological approaches. As stated above, ethnographic research hasn't been popular when studying the changes of liberation. Therefore, when focusing on the subjective level, the results seem almost opposite to the research using mostly quantitative methods and indicators focusing on material changes.

Based on my data it can be argued that the impacts of abolishing the Haliya bonded labour system in the village of my fieldwork have been strongly positive in former Haliya's perceptions. Although material welfare hasn't improved very much, the diminished subordination is the most important experience according to the interviewees. Therefore, we may suggest that material welfare is not always the most important measure when discussing the impacts of abolishment of bonded labour. This is an interesting observation when discussing welfare questions even on a more general level, instead of focusing solely to the material improvements when tackling inequality, it might be useful to examine the importance of social status more thoroughly as a feature of welfare.

From subordination to "own work"

CAMILLA **L**OHENOJA University of Helsinki,
Master of Social Sciences. E-mail: CAMILLA.
LOHENOJA@HELSINKI.FI

ASIA IN FOCUS

References

Akerlof, G. (1976). The economics of caste and of the rat race and other woeful tales. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 90*(4), 599–617.

Basu, A. K., & N. H. Chau (2004). Exploitation of child labor and the dynamics of debt bondage. *Journal of Economic Growth, 9*(2), 209–238.

Bhandari, J., & M. Bhattacharya (1996). An appraisal of the rehabilitation of bonded labour in the Jaunsar-Bawar area of Uttar Pradesh. *Man in India, 76*(1), 19–34.

Carmichael, E. (2001). Two hours from freedom: An examination of NGO involvement in the"kamaiya" liberation movement of Nepal. Honors Theses, paper 364. Colby College. Thesis. http://digitalcommons.colby.edu/honorstheses/364/. Accessed 16.4.2014.

Chhetri, R. B. (2005). The plight of the Tharu Kamaiyas in Nepal: A review of the social, economic and political facets. *Occasional Papers in Sociology and Anthropology, 9*, 22–46.

Conning, J., & M. Kevane (2007). Freedom, servitude, and voluntary contracts. In A. Appiah, & M. Bunzl (toim.), *Buying freedom: The ethics and economics of slave redemption*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 108–140.

CSRC (2014). Haliya rights campaign. http://www.csrcnepal.org/index.php/campaign/haliya-rights-campaign. Accessed 28.9.2014.

Daru, P., C. Churchill, & E. Beemsterboer (2005). The prevention of debt bondage with microfinance-led services. *The European Journal of Development Research, 17*(1), 132–154.

Engerman, S. (2003). Slavery, freedom, and Sen. *Feminist Economics, 9*(2–3), 185–211, DOI: 10.1080/1354570032000078033.

Genicot, G. (2002). Bonded labor and serfdom: A paradox of voluntary choice. *Journal of Development Economics, 67*(1), 101–127.

Giri, B. (2012). The bonded labour system in Nepal: Musahar and Tharu communities' assessments of Haliya and Kamaiya labour contracts. *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences, 4*(2), 518–551.

Giri, B. (2009b). The bonded labour system in Nepal. Perspectives of Haliya and Kamaiya child workers. *Journal of Asian and African Studies, 44*(6), 599–623. DOI:10.1177/0021909609343414.

Hatlebakk, M. (2006). The effects on agrarian contracts of a governmental intervention into bonded labor in the western Terai of Nepal. CMI working paper 2006:6. Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute.

Kumar KC B., G. Subedi, & B.R. Suwal (2013). Forced labour of adults and children in the agriculture sector of Nepal: Focusing on haruwa-charuwa in EasternTarai and haliya in Far-Western hills. Kathmandu: ILO Country Office for Nepal.

Kvalbein, J. A. (2007). Liberated bonded laborers: Are they better off? Welfare and efficiency implications of an agricultural reform in Western Terai, Nepal. CMI Report 2007: 11. Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute.

Mendelsohn, O., & M. Vicziany (1998). *The untouchables: Subordination, poverty and the state in modern India.* Contemporary South Asia 4. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

NNDSWO & LWF Nepal (2003). Haliya survey in far western development region. Kathmandu: Lutheran World Federation.

Ramtel, K. B. (2008). *Livelihood situation of Haliyas and landless peoples of Dalit community.* A case study from Saraswatinagar and Laxminagar VDCs of Doti. Lalitpur: SNV Nepal.

RDN & COLARP. (2012). Research report on ex-haliya and dalit community in the Far-Western region of Nepal. Kathmandu: RDN & COLARP.

Sen, A. (1999). *Devlopment as freedom.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Schreier, M. (2012). *Qualitative content analysis in practice.* Lontoo: Sage Publications.

Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In Nelson, C & L. Grossberg. *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture.* University of Illinois Press, 271–313

Upadhyaya, K.P. (2004). Bonded labour in south Asia: India, Nepal, and Pakistan. In Anker, v. d., C. *The Political Economy of New Slavery.* New York: Palgraves MacMillan, 118–136.

Upadhyaya, K. P. (2008). Poverty, discrimination and slavery: The reality of bonded labour in India, Nepal and Pakistan. Anti-Slavery International.

Anker, v. d., C. (2004). Introduction: Combating contemporary slavery. In Anker, v.d., C. *The Political Economy of New Slavery.* New York: Palgraves MacMillan, 1–14.

Villanger, E. (2006). Is bonded labor voluntary? Evidence from the liberation of the Kamaiyas in the far-western region of Nepal. CMI working paper 1006:16. Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute.

e

Six years without constitution
The dampened expectations for Nepalese democracy

Aleksi Ilpala

This article peers into the anxieties of the democratic process in post-conflict Nepal. Today, while the recent elections gave Nepal's politicians a new mandate to finish the constitution-drafting process, the negotiations surrounding the troubled issue continue. Despite the established formal democratic institutions and procedures, authoritarian legacies and pre-democratic political practices, values and attitudes co-exist with the new democratic establishment with negative consequences for governmental stability. The article shows how the existing Nepalese political culture reflects a contradictory mix of deference to senior leaders, but also distrust of their authority, and a culture of confrontation rather than compromise.

Keywords: Anthropology, Democratic Consolidation, Nepal, Political Culture, Transition

Introduction

This is an article about the struggles of Nepal's citizens and politicians to consolidate on the democratic gains of the 2006 democratic movement. Nepal abolished monarchy in 2008, yet the young republic's politicians have so far failed to promulgate a new constitution. In addition, the instability of the political system has produced a dysfunctional rule of law with insufficient means to deliver social justice and abolish the culture of impunity that has become rampant in the political sphere (Dahal and Bhatta, 2010; Baral 2012, Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2008; Lawoti 2014). As a result, the article portrays a troubling picture where the lack in functioning systems of accountability is preventing concerned citizens from counteracting abuses of power by the power elite. Nepal's political leaders are entrenched in a clientelistic and patrimonial culture which prevents them from formulating effective policies and contributes to an increasing sense of apathy in their constituencies.

Methods and data

The findings are based on ethnographic fieldwork I conducted during winter 2013–2014 in Nepal, where I participated in workshops and demonstrations of several civil society groups and political organizations, such as trade unions, who were involved in community building, policy making, and in interest group activities. The work builds on the literature on the political history of Nepal, on theories and anthropology of democracy, on local debates and discussion, and on ethnographic data gathered during the fieldwork, and reflects on the framework of democracy development. In addition to information acquired through participant observation, the research material consists of eight semi-structured interviews and several supporting in-depths discussions. The interviewees are urban professionals and members of the small yet growing Nepalese middle-class of the Kathmandu valley. The fieldwork data is analyzed in the context of Nepalese democracy and the analysis is supported by a citizen survey on the state of Nepal's democracy (2013).

In the following chapters I will take a look at the contemporary political developments in Nepal,

reflect on the argument about a state of "democratization of powerlessness", and shortly explore contemporary Nepali attitudes towards both the nation's politicians and the democratization process itself.

Constitutional deadlock and the failure of the 1st Constituent Assembly

Regardless of Nepal's recent impressive political developments, such as the integration of the Maoists insurgents into the mainstream and the collective push towards multiparty democracy, it has become obvious that the political parties that had united against the monarchy are collectively failing to keep their promises. Above all, the parties have been struggling to fulfill the objectives of the 2006 revolution – promulgation of a constitution, completion of the peace process and federalization of the republic in order to ensure both inclusiveness and empowerment of all people, notably, the ethnic groups, the Dalit, women, the Madhesi and other deprived sections of society (Baral, 2012, p. 22). When the 1st Constituent Assembly was dissolved in 2012 after four years and four governments without having delivered a constitution, it sent ripples of outrage throughout the Nepalese society. Bishnu Rimal, who I interviewed in February 2014, was a CA member in 2012. We discussed the post-revolutionary period on which he had recently written an article. In it, he wrote how,

> *"The Nepali people now find themselves at the crossroads of hope and despair, with the color of hope fading each passing day"* (2013)

The quote aptly describes the atmosphere in Kathmandu at the time of my fieldwork. The deficiencies in administrative and institutional processes and the lack of accountability both on the national and local level reflect the historical crisis in Nepali politics – a situation in which formal democratic rules and regulations exist only on paper, and the collective impact from crises of governance and a lack of accountability systems has led to the erosion of faith in demo-

cratic institutions.

Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka (2004) notes how Nepal conforms to a widespread pattern of transitional situations around the world in which reforms have been undertaken but have failed to be successfully implemented. When the democratic reforms are confronted with pre-existing political coalitions, autocratic attitudes and expressions of the previous mode of power, the reforming forces are often brought to a halt. Uneasy compromises between the two will emerge by chance or on purpose, encouraging the creation of parallel state structures in which the new democratic institutions continue a precarious co-existence with the preceding political forces. Consequently, formal rules and regulations fail to be institutionalized. Rather than losing their former prerogatives, resourceful politicians and strongmen manage to gain ground within the new system.

At the moment, the frustration of the Nepali people is being increasingly directed at the political parties that are believed to be obstructing the democratic reforms through their inability to reach consensus on critical issues, namely, in writing the constitution. This deep mistrust emanates from the contemporary Nepali political culture that is characterized by the persistence of old autocratic values and severely contentious politics. The end result is a continuous political struggle over power-sharing and the use of disruptive measures to make a political point or change government policy (for an overview of Nepali political conflicts see Lawoti, 2007). When accountability seems nowhere to be found, and partisan, intraparty and personal conflicts are fueled by conflicting ideologies and favouritism, governmental instability tends to follow. Since the historical shift from panchayat governance into party politics in 1990, excessive polarization of politics has threatened to overwhelm the country and created deep cleavages between different sectors of society (Bhatta 1999). When asked about this, an informant of mine who was coordinating cooperation between local trade unions, told me:

> *"[politicization] in itself is not the prob-*

lem. The problem is our complete inability to resolve these conflicts.""

During my stay in Kathmandu I witnessed on several occasions how the government formation process was slowed down due to individual actors turning procedure formalities into petty rivalries, for instance, whether the first CA meeting should be called into meeting by the President or by the Chairman of the Interim Council of Ministers. This particular incident escalated all the way up to the Supreme Court before being resolved. Another prominent facet of this kind of dysfunctional politics is the political parties' tendency to undermine democratic institutions through abuse of legal technicalities or simply by brute force. A case in point is the 1st Constitutional Assembly's dissolution in May 2012 and the debate on federalism that preceded it.

During the negotiations over this issue, the top leadership of Nepali Congress, CPN-UML and the Maoists attempted to bypass Constituent Assembly committees several times through backdoor deals that would have left many of the proponents of identity-based federalism marginalized and powerless. Ultimately, the leaders of the three major parties manipulated the process to avoid the vote on the federal question by refusing to call a session of the Constituent Assembly until it was set to expire (Lawoti, 2014, p. 137). After four years of squabbling, the political parties failed to settle the federal issue and deliver a constitution, and were now forced to appeal to the Supreme Court to extend the CA's tenure for the fifth time. Instead, the Court ruled that any further extension would be unconstitutional and that the politicians would have to seek a fresh mandate from the people.

Democratization of powerlessness

Based on my observations and on the Citizen Survey 2013 by The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, I can conclude that the majority of Nepalese people identified the failure of the 1st CA to be the direct fault of the political parties in the form of power struggles (43% of the respondents of the survey agreed) and internal division (26%). Most of my interviewees agreed that there was a rift between their party leaders' pro-democratic rhetoric and the reality of their actions. They felt that these displays of contempt for democratic norms have had several consequences, among them the rendering of the elected CA's representative character meaningless and the threatening subversion of Nepalese democracy. At a time when Nepal is in dire need of the consolidation and deepening of democratic practices, the duplicity of Nepal's politicians only contributes to the growing frustration of the people and their disillusionment with the system. Despite a popular support for democratic principles, this frustration is likely to continue to diminish Nepali people's faith in multiparty parliamentary politics.

Despite the fact that voters in Nepal often use their option to punish misbehaving politicians for their failures by not re-electing them, the politicians enjoy a powerful autonomy in relation to their voters. This is especially true when the only alternatives have already disappointed their constituencies in equal measure, as is often the case. On the other hand, politicians who strive to live up to egalitarian standards are often unable to gain the necessary support from their superiors, as weak access to private channels and networks renders them powerless, despite a possible moral high ground. The democratic deficit grows as local electorates who have been repeatedly disappointed by the performance of their leaders, stop believing what their political candidates are saying and lower their expectations of the system. Out of two undesirable candidates – a corrupt leader, or a weak leader – people tend to opt for the former, as he is more likely to obtain badly-needed goods and services through his patrons. (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2004, p. 10–12).

Private networks and patron-client structures allow politicians to demonstrate strength by acquiring goods through external networking, which in return allows them to withdraw from the control of the electorate. This demonstrates how the historical patrimonial politics in Nepal are transforming (and translating) into neopatrimonialism in a democratic state. The strong

tendency for distributional coalitions to form between politicians, civil servants and entrepreneurs is by no means incidental but a result of patronage networks expanding into modern state institutions.

Political culture in 'New Nepal'

The precarious nature of Nepali democratic transition and administrative innovation comes to light when viewed from the perspective of the vast majority left outside these distributional arrangements and powerful patronage networks. Underneath the formal democratic principles lie the long-established patterns of personal politics from the old extractive era – emphasis on informal patronage networks (afno manchhe) and coercing patrons through currying favor (chakari) – that have continued in the present, democratic and developmentalist polity (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2008, Subedi, 2014). This patronage system, partly rooted in 19th century Rana traditions, helps to maintain a culture of impunity. Vincanne Adams' (1998) study on the role of Nepali medical professionals in the 1990 revolutionary changes shows how the persisting patterns of afno manchhe and other forms of patronage are explained by how in the past these reciprocal affiliations were not only necessary for survival, but considered to be a moral necessity and a way of being Nepali. In the traditional Nepalese sociomoral universe it was the Hindu monarch who represented the state and to whom the Nepalese people were connected through a sacred sense of duty. This duty was institutionalized in everyday actions of patronage and reciprocity. To be a loyal citizen meant being involved in actions of reciprocity towards other Nepalis, which in a religious sense converged with this sacred duty to the king.

The dynamics of electoral competition and democratic institutions transformed the patron-client relations; as the new primary political unit and the base for obtaining social affiliations, the Nepalese political parties took advantage of the existing traditional patron-client clusters and incorporated them into their structure. This

impact on the patron-client relations has tended to heighten factionalism and conflict. In the traditional setting any rivalry between patrons was largely limited to the local area but the contemporary electoral system maintains rivalries at both the regional and national level, with destabilizing effects on society and politics. During the past 25 years individual afno manchhe has transformed from, say, obtaining scarce consumer goods, into institutionalized corruption that often involves complicated networks between high-ranking officials, businessmen, army and the police (Subedi, 2014, p.82).

While conventionally credited with taking an important part in democratizing authoritarian legacies, it would seem that in Nepal political parties are highly problematic organizations from the point of view of democracy development (Carothers, 2007, p. 18). There exists a tendency toward leader-centrism, top-down organizational management, nontransparent financing, relentless electoralism and ideological vagueness. Despite continuous experiments with democratic reforms and decentralization, the power abuses of politicians have dampened the expectations of ordinary people about a more democratic and locally grounded political life, and dimmed the scope of sustainable democratic evolution. Therefore the traditional ethos of Nepali elites, despite being instrumental in bringing about a revolution, remains unchanged (Baral 2012, p. 232–233).

When I compare the sentiments in the years following the 1990 revolution (e.g. Bhatta, 1999, p. 81–82), the recent survey data (Citizen Survey Report, 2013), and my own findings from the early 2014, I find that the same main issues continue to feed the public growing disenchantment with the political system. The movement of 2006 failed to transform the existing nature of the Nepali state. There still exists a widespread feeling that not enough has been done and that not enough has changed. People perceive the political parties as continuing to put their interest in power and money over the interests of their constituencies and the nation. Conflicts between personalities, the centralized and patri-

monial party structure, and the manipulation of ideological issues to legitimize competition over state resources and the development process have brought down trust in political parties to the lowest in a decade (36%, Citizen Survey 2013).

From false hope to collective action

Riding on the wave of renewed democratic euphoria, Nepalese party leaders have kept on giving unrealistic promises and false hope of what the republican system would achieve. The role of verbal representations in the creation of egalitarian images can be effective as pacifying rhetoric by the local politicians covers up persisting social cleavages in the democratic polity. In a situation where "democratization of powerlessness" prevails, the strategic use of such rhetoric can bring about social effects that enforce autocratic structures rather than bring about their end (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2004, p. 7). The optimistic view in the beginning of the 21st century was that after a natural screening process, the Nepalese political parties would manage to find a common agenda. Unfortunately, it would seem that we are presently closer to the foreboding possibility set forth by Bhatta (1999, p. 87) that Nepali politics would in time degenerate to such an extent that parties will completely cease to connect with the masses.

An informant affiliated with BibekSheel Nepali, a CSO that runs a leadership program for Nepali youths, articulated this in the following way:

> "The problem with this country is that people know how to get into power and don't know how to govern, how to stay in power, how to actually, you know, rule wisely. Nepal is a very young country, but the political leadership is very old. Not just in terms of age but in terms of thinking. So it's very archaic and out of tune with the rest of the world. And so that's why we've built our organization around pragmatism, and issue based politics, not ideology-defined politics."

He sternly believed that it was necessary to change the political culture of Nepal and to do that they have to become not only a political force, but a moral force. Based on this and on similar views I encountered, there exists a growing mass of critically aware Nepalese who are refusing to be relegated as bystanders in their polity. From their point of view, Nepal needs a greater emphasis on duty-based civil society and public sphere.

Reflecting on the constitutional turbulence and on the debates raised by the civil society (Bhatta, 2010) it can be concluded organizations such as BibekSheel possess the key to countering power abuses by the political elite, and protecting the rights of those citizens left to margins of their polity. To achieve democratic consolidation, the powerless need to have a sufficient stake in the political system or else democracy becomes nothing but a game of power-specializing elites with devastating effects on political stability. Despite the growing frustration with the demeaning nature of Nepali politics, the high voter turnout in the 2013 2nd Constituent Assembly elections (78.34 %) shows that the Nepalese people have not lost faith in the democratic process itself. If the Nepalese citizens are able to make political interest groups and the political parties accountable, perhaps a more egalitarian and transparent democratic culture can take hold and a deep reform of the Nepali state structure becomes possible.

ALEKSI ILPALA is a master's degree student in the University of Helsinki, Finland, majoring in Social and Cultural Anthropology. He is also an active member of Allegra Laboratory of Legal Anthropology. His research interests include political and historical anthropology, democracy development and capacity building. He can be contacted at aleksi.ilpala@helsinki.fi.

Sources and further reading:

Adams, V. (1998). Doctors for Democracy: Health Professionals in the Nepal Revolution. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Baral, L.R. (2012). Nepal: Elusive Democracy and Uncertain Political System. Working paper, eSocialSciences. Retrieved from http://EconPapers.repec.org/RePEc:ess:wpaper:id:4946.

Bhatta, C.D. (2010).Unveiling Nepal's Civil Society. In R.J. Dahal & C.D. Bhatta (Eds), Multiverse of Nepal's Democracy Contents and Discontents (pp. 140–170). Kathmandu: Friedrich Ebert Foundation,

Bhatta, G. (1999). End of the Honeymoon. Re-examining democratization and political reforms in Nepal. Asian Journal of Political Science, 7 (1), 77–107.

Carothers, T. (2007). The Sequencing Fallacy. Journal of Democracy, 18 (1), 12–27.

Dahal, R.J. & Bhatta, C.D. (2010) (Eds). Multiverse of Nepal's Democracy Contents and Discontents. Kathmandu: Friedrich Ebert Foundation,

Lawoti, M. (2007). Looking Back, Looking Forward: Centralization, Multiple Conflicts, and Democratic State Building in Nepal. Policy Studies, no. 43, xi–93.

Lawoti, M. (2014). Reform and Resistance in Nepal. Journal of Democracy, 25 (2), 131–145.

Pfaff-Czarnecka, J. (2004). High Expectations, Deep Disappointment: Politics, state and society in Nepal after 1990. In M. Hutt (Ed.), Himalayan People's War: Nepal's Maoist Revolution (pp. 166–91). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Pfaff-Czarnecka, J. (2008). Distributional Coalitions in Nepal, an essay on democratization, capture and (lack of) confidence. In D. Gellner and K. Hachhethu (Eds.), Local Democracy in South Asia: Microprocesses of Democratization in Nepal and Its Neighbours (pp. 71–105). New Delhi: SAGE Publications.

Rimal, B. (2013). Trade Union Movement before and after the Rhododendron Revolution. In M. Kattel (Ed.), Debating Transformation (pp. 11–39). Kathmandu: GEFONT.

State of Democracy in South Asia & International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2013). Citizen Survey 2013: Nepal in Transition. Stockholm: International IDEA.

Subedi, M. (2014). Afno Manchhe: Unequal Access to Public Resources and Institutions in Nepal. Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology, 8 (1), 337–63.

ASIA IN FOCUS

Everyday conceptualizations of sustainable peace in Nepal
- post-liberal peace and beyond?

Martin Lundqvist

By employing semi-structured interviews this article investigates the peacebuilding environment in Kathmandu, Nepal, with an eye in particular to capture everyday conceptualizations of sustainable peace, and to investigate whether these might contribute to more holistic peacebuilding approaches in the country. The article draws initial inspiration from the post-liberal peace framework put forth by Oliver Richmond, which problematizes the liberal peace model by highlighting its tendency to neglect the local context and needs, as well as its frequent reliance on top-down and technocratic measures. Instead, Richmond calls for peacebuilding approaches which are more holistic and sensitive to the everyday needs of inhabitants of post-conflict societies. It is found that the post-liberal peace approach largely corresponds to the manner in which the interlocutors of this article conceptualize sustainable peace, i.e. by highlighting everyday issues such as material improvements, social justice, and national political stability. However, the article concludes by arguing that there are also issues of practical concern with both the post-liberal peace framework and the manner in which sustainable peace is conceptualized by interlocutors in Kathmandu.

Key words: Nepal, peacebuilding, liberal peace, post-liberal peace, everyday peace

Following 10 years of civil war in Nepal, a peace agreement was finally reached between the antagonistic parties, the Nepal Government and the Maoist insurgency, in 2006. The peace agreement indicated the onset of the peacebuilding process; a process which set out to create conditions for sustainable peace in the country. Although the actual peacemaking process culminating in the peace agreement had been largely a Nepali achievement, the subsequent peacebuilding phase came to involve the international community to a much larger extent (see for example: Insight on Conflict). Perhaps most notably, the UN came to occupy a central role in this delicate phase through the United Nations Mission in Nepal, the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, as well its other bodies such as the United Nations Development Program (Surkhe 2009; Von Einsiedel et al 2012; UNDP-NEPAL).

The peacebuilding process in Nepal can so far best be described as a mixed bag – some commentators argue that it constitutes a liberal peace success story in the making (UN News Centre; USIP; Denskus 2009) while others argue that it has failed to address the root causes of the conflict, and should as such be considered a failure (New York Times; ICTJ; Nepali Times). How can these contrasting perspectives be understood? Critical scholars suggest that it can be fathomed as the inherent logic of the liberal peacebuilding model, which tends to prioritize security and institutional approaches to peacebuilding, while in practice often neglecting the civil dimensions of peace (Richmond 2006; Richmond 2009). As such, a peacebuilding operation can be successful in, for example, establishing democratic institutions and helping contain large-scale violence by disarming former combatants, while on a day-to-day level it fails to address the everyday needs of the inhabitants of the post-conflict society in

question.

One of the more prominent contemporary critical scholars of peace is Oliver Richmond, who has put forth the post-liberal peace framework as an alternative, or complement, to the liberal peace model (Richmond 2009). Richmond is an avid critic of the liberal peacebuilding model, which he argues is fundamentally flawed due to its top-down centricism, institutional bias, universal claims, and the power-asymmetries between "giver" and "receiver" it often entails. Instead, Richmond calls for peacebuilding approaches which are more holistic and sensitive to the everyday needs of inhabitants of post-conflict societies (ibid).

Richmond's focus on the everyday dimension of peacebuilding involves a realization that peace-promoting measures must be anchored in local contexts, cultures, and needs in order to be legitimate and effective at building sustainable peace. Therefore, it goes without saying that peace should be conceived of as open to difference, and that no universally applicable peacebuilding approach can be fashioned (Richmond 2009). This is opposed to the liberal peace model, which tends to assume that a "blueprint" approach to peacebuilding can in fact be prescribed in all post-conflict societies (Richmond 2012). Therefore, Richmond notes that a methodological repositioning of the liberal peacebuilding project is necessary, where participatory methods, such as fieldwork, are increasingly favored over institutional ones. Only through such a methodological repositioning can the liberal peace evolve beyond its current top-down institutional inception and incorporate an approach to building peace which includes the dimensions of the everyday (Richmond 2009).

Moreover, Richmond stresses that in order for post-liberal peacebuilding to be realized, local actors must increasingly be included in the peacebuilding process. In fact, Richmond goes so far as to state that they should be the driving forces behind peacebuilding operations, and thus the most appropriate role of international actors would be to adopt a merely facilitative function.

This facilitative function, Richmond suggests, could in practice take the form of a dialogue-oriented process where international actors seek to grasp how support can be directed towards locally driven peace initiatives. In the absence of such local ownership of the peacebuilding process, it will invariably be considered illegitimate in the eyes of local populations (Richmond 2009; Richmond 2010).

Following up on these post-liberal assertions, this article sets out to investigate the peacebuilding environment in Kathmandu, Nepal, with an eye in particular to capture everyday conceptualizations of sustainable peace, as well as to investigate whether these might in fact contribute to more holistic peacebuilding approaches in Nepal. The generated data presented in this article date back to April and May 2013, when 11 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with interlocutors in Kathmandu, Nepal. The interlocutors were identified mainly through the help of a local connection, and were selected in order to represent as much difference as possible in terms of gender, ethnic background, current employment et cetera. Due to the relatively modest number of interviews, however, the findings presented in this article are not intended to be generalizable to Kathmandu or Nepal as a whole, but should be treated merely as preliminary findings which need to be substantiated by more extensive studies. Nevertheless, the findings provide a tentative understanding of what everyday conceptualizations of sustainable peace in Kathmandu might entail, and may as such serve as a starting point for further research.

Everyday conceptualizations of sustainable peace in Kathmandu

One of the more interesting findings from the interviews in Kathmandu is that most interlocutors considered that the current situation in Nepal should not in fact be called peace. While all interlocutors acknowledged and appreciated that most large-scale violence had effectively been contained since the end of the conflict, most of them carried a sense that peace should entail

more than that in order to qualify as real, or sustainable, peace. One of the main deficits of the current situation was identified as the overall lack of improvements for people in their daily lives, as several interlocutors outlined how their everyday lives were absorbed by a struggle for basic necessities such as water, food, fuel, and employment. This sentiment was vividly expressed by a male interlocutor, a tour organizer for the tourist industry and a father of two:

> *People in Kathmandu today are only thinking about how to survive, what to eat in the evening, what to eat in the morning, when to go to the office […]. This is the main problem; if they had enough resources then they could think about the political situation, about the government, and about the country* (Interview 1).

Another interlocutor, a teacher in Bansbari, Kathmandu, elaborated on this:

> *Yes, the level of struggle is a bit more nowadays […]. Earlier the struggle was less when we went for an employment opportunity […]. The employment situation is a bit tough* (Interview 2).

Additionally, the service delivery of Nepal's public institutions was overwhelmingly considered faltering by those interviewed for this article. A student interlocutor employed the example of how passports are issued in Nepal to illustrate this point:

> *If you pay 5.000, you get your passport in 45 days, if you pay 10.000, you get your passport in two weeks, if you are ready to pay 15.000, you get it in 48 hours [...] the government is just doing business in Nepal instead of serving the people* (Interview 10).

Those interviewed for this article thus suggest that there is a strong correlation between material development and sustainable peace – without the former the latter is left wanting. This finding resonates well with the assumptions of the post-liberal peace framework, which notes that it is essential to address the everyday needs of populations in post-conflict societies in order to build sustainable peace.

Furthermore, multiple interlocutors pinpointed the fact that Nepal remains a structurally unequal society as one of the main barriers to arriving at sustainable peace. Interview statements such as the following are suggestive of this position:

> *If people are considered as secondary citizens of a country, if citizens have to stay in a very remote part of the country so that they don't have the same opportunities […]. Such problems should be addressed in maintaining peace* (Interview 6).

With regard to the structural inequalities in Nepal, several interlocutors proposed that decentralization of political power could serve as a remedying factor to this problem. The following statement of an interlocutor puts forth this position: "I think the major problem in Nepali politics is decentralization of power […] The power delivery to local level is essential, in my view" (Interview 6).

The above statements convey a deep concern with social justice by highlighting the diverse and harsh realities that people in different parts of the country face. Again, this is an indication that the everyday situation of inhabitants of Nepal is conceived as an essential dimension in building sustainable peace. Yet, this is a dimension which is frequently missed by the "cold institutionalism" (Richmond 2009:574) of liberal peacebuilding. Moreover, the opinions presented above give credence to the post-liberal argument that sustainable peace must be anchored in local realities and contexts – here this argument is framed in the language of decentralization of political power.

Finally, the national political system was problematized by several interlocutors. The majority of interlocutors portrayed Nepali politicians as greedy, corrupt, self-serving, and unwilling to compromise. Most interlocutors felt that there is a lack of a common sense of purpose amongst national politicians, who are generally not perceived to be working for the interest of Nepal as a whole. The idea of the self-serving politician

was voiced by, amongst others, a male interlocutor who works as a teacher at a school in Budhanilkantha, Kathmandu:

> *Value based politics is becoming eradicated from the country [...]. Instead it is replaced by selfish politics. If they find any benefits from the politics, leaders do that, whether this is ethically correct or not* (Interview 6).

The interviews also confirmed that political parties are frequently seen as obstacles to achieving sustainable peace due to their inability to cooperate in a democratic manner. This opinion was conveyed by, among others, a female lawyer interlocutor of Lazimpat, Kathmandu:

> *Since the peace agreement there has been so many leaderships of Nepal [...] there is no political stability [...] the parties do not trust each other [...]. The parties should come to consensus, all parties, in order to get a fresh mandate and to bring peace* (Interview 4).

Despite having identified the national political system as dysfunctional, most interlocutors remained hesitant about international involvement in the country, and harbored a general skepticism towards international agencies working in development and peacebuilding in Nepal. There was a commonly held attitude amongst the interlocutors that international agencies fail to have a positive impact due to a lack of understanding of the local context, an urban bias, national vested interests, as well as a reluctance to incorporate local people and resources in the process. A male teacher in Bansbari, Kathmandu expressed his disappointment with the work of international agencies in the following statement:

> *They don't like to go to the rural areas [...]. You are going to conduct a program in the rural area, but still you are not thinking about the participation of the local people [...]. Public participation should be more [...] the local area, the local people, local resources should be utilized to the optimum level* (Interview 2).

When encouraged to elaborate on how international agencies could make a better contribution to Nepal, the teacher continued:

> *INGOs are somehow always working for their own nations first and then secondly they are working for Nepal [...]. Whenever you have come to help Nepal, see that the Nepalese are helped [...]. If your vision is not clear, then you will not do anything – and that is happening in Nepal* (Interview 2).

Another interlocutor, a youth leader of a political party, put forth his view of international involvement in Nepal in the following manner:

> *They are playing political games here [...] We would accept them if they were truly benevolent to us, but we feel that they are playing political games and using Nepal as a field to play their games. They are looking only for their own interest, not Nepal's interest* (Interview 3).

These statements correlate well with the post-liberal peace framework – highlighting how the largely internationally led and defined peacebuilding agenda creates local resistances, which in turn undermine the legitimacy of the peacebuilding operations. Moreover, the interlocutors in Kathmandu reaffirm the post-liberal assertion that in order to make a real difference, peacebuilding must be anchored in local cultures, contexts, and needs.

Discussion

The interviews presented in this article generally affirm the post-liberal assertion that peacebuilding must move closer to the ground in order to be able to achieve sustainable peace. In the absence of material improvements, social justice and political stability, people living in Kathmandu are strongly hesitant about calling the current situation peace. Thus, the liberal peacebuilding operations deployed in Nepal since 2006 have arguably failed at sufficiently incorporating the dimensions of the *everyday* into their agenda. This is not to argue that there have been no positive impacts of the liberal peacebuilding operations so far, but simply that the overall peacebuilding approach is considered flawed from the bottom-up perspective of lived experiences in post-conflict

Nepal. In order to remedy these problems, one might for example suggest that international peacebuilding agencies increasingly take on the task of providing directed social welfare mechanisms in Nepal. This would arguably improve the everyday situation for many people in Nepal, and could also help ameliorate the staggering social inequalities of the country.

When it comes to the dysfunctional political system in Nepal, the discussion on possible solutions turns more complex. While it is true that most interlocutors in this article saw national politicians as an impediment to building sustainable peace, the argument that international peacebuilding actors should seek to intervene politically is dubious. As evidenced by the interviews in Kathmandu, there is a general skepticism towards international political involvement in the country, as this is often perceived merely as self-interest in disguise. Instead, the post-liberal argument that international actors should take on a facilitative, discussion-oriented, approach would seem to resonate better with the sentiments of people in post-conflict Nepal. In practice, this might entail a participatory peacebuilding approach which centers on understanding how international actors can direct support towards local political peace initiatives, without taking on an overly directive role.

While this article has found that the post-liberal peace framework appears to resonate well with the perceptions of people living in Kathmandu, there are still a few points that warrant a critical discussion.

First of all, one might problematize the post-liberal assumption that local involvement in the peacebuilding process is invariably the best way to reach sustainable peace. After all, one should bear in mind that today's conflicts are more often than not internal (Kaldor 2012), and that therefore there are bound to be local actors who are anything but peace-loving (Donais 2009:12-13). Thus, it becomes essential to unpack the notion of "local involvement" in the peacebuilding process. What does this entail in practice? Which local actors might fruitfully be involved in the

peacebuilding process, and on what grounds could such involvement be justified?

Richmond does not offer any clear answers to these questions, but simply notes that all peacebuilding operations should be based on an "empathetic and emancipatory approach" (Richmond 2012) and that therefore any "oppressive social, economic, political, or military structures" (ibid) must be excluded from peacebuilding operations. While on the surface this may appear sound, it does not provide any concrete suggestions on how to decide which local actors should be included. After all, how could we ever objectively decide what constitutes "oppressiveness"?

The same lack of a sufficiently nuanced discussion on the role of local involvement is found amongst several of the interlocutors in Kathmandu, who treat local involvement in the peacebuilding process as a *panacea* to reach sustainable peace. It is asserted that international peacebuilding operations are flawed and will fail to have a positive impact on Nepal as long as they are void of local actors and local connection. Again, on the surface this appears as a sound argument; it lacks, however, the essential unpacking of the notion of "local involvement" in order for it to have any practical implications for peacebuilding practitioners.

Thus, while the post-liberal peace framework and the interviews in Kathmandu have provided us with an important critique of traditional liberal peacebuilding, they also fall short of contributing with a nuanced discussion on the role of local involvement in peacebuilding. In the absence of such a discussion, the ideal of local involvement will remain simply an ideal, which peacebuilding actors will be hard pressed to translate into practice.

More in-depth research is therefore needed on the role of local involvement in peacebuilding in Nepal, preferably by deploying participatory methods such as fieldwork with an aim to understand the complexities of local contexts and actors. Only through such methods can a necessary understanding of the many nuances of "the local"

be developed, after which one might be better able to conceive of contextually sensitive best practices for local involvement in peacebuilding in Nepal.

On a related note, it should be reiterated that post-liberal approaches to peacebuilding are intrinsically unconducive to universal "blueprint" solutions. While this has clear advantages, as we have seen in this article, it can also be problematic in the practice of peacebuilding – an enterprise which calls for immediate measures. After all, without prompt and firm action from peacebuilders there is a very real risk that the fragile peace disintegrates into violent conflict yet again. Herein lies the appeal of "blueprint" solutions for peacebuilders – which the liberal peacebuilding model is never short of providing – as well as the frequent reluctance to rely more on post-liberal approaches. Yet, as this article has indicated, in the long term, post-liberal measures are needed in order to secure sustainable peace on an everyday level.

Finally, it should be duly noted that the efforts to capture everyday conceptualizations of sustainable peace in Nepal is not merely a pretense for further academic discussion. Rather, it should be understood in direct relation to the root causes of the civil war in Nepal, which have invariably been identified as endemic poverty combined with vast inequalities between different groups (Von Einsiedel et al 2012; NOREF 2013), i.e. some of the same issues that have been highlighted as wanting by interlocutors in this article. Thus, a failure to understand and address these issues could potentially have very serious consequences indeed – including, in the worst case scenario, civil war recidivism.

Martin Lundqvist is a Swedish master's student of political science at Lund University, Sweden, where his main areas of interest are the politics of south east Asia and peacebuilding. Additionally, he holds a bachelor degree in peace and conflict studies from Malmö University. Moreover, Martin has been interning at the Asian Human Rights Commission in Hong Kong, and has subsequently been employed with the organization to support their human rights monitoring in Kathmandu, Nepal.

References:

Denskus, Tobias, 2009. "The Fragility of Peacebuilding in Nepal" in *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice*, 21:54–60. Taylor & Francis Group, LLC

Donais, Timothy, 2009. "Empowerment or Imposition? Dilemmas of Local Ownership in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Processes" in *PEACE & CHANGE*, Vol. 34, No. 1.

ICTJ, 2013. "Relief, Reparations, and the Root Causes of Conflict in Nepal".
Downloaded from: http://www.ictj.org/publication/relief-reparations-and-root-causes-conflict-nepal

Insight on Conflict
http://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/nepal/
Accessed January 14, 2015.

Kaldor, Mary, 2012. *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era.* 3rd Edition. Stanford University Press.

Nepali Times
http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=42362#.VO80py45K3Z
Accessed January 14, 2015.

New York Times, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/06/opinion/nepal-on-the-brink-of-collapse.html?_r=0
Accessed January 14, 2015.

NOREF, 2013. "Nepal's elections: new prospects for peacebuilding?".
Downloaded from: http://www.peacebuilding.no

Richmond, Oliver, P., 2006. "The problem of peace: understanding the 'liberal peace'" in Conflict, Security & Development, 6:3, 291-314

Richmond, Oliver, P., 2009. "A post-liberal peace: Eirenism and the everyday" in Review of International Studies 35, pp 557-580.

Richmond, Oliver, P., 2010. "Resistance and the Post-Liberal Peace" in Millennium: Journal of International Studies Vol.38 No.3, pp. 665–692.

Richmond, Oliver, P., 2012. "The Dilemmas of a Hybrid Peace"
http://www.e-ir.info/2012/12/23/the-dilemmas-of-a-hybrid-peace/
Accessed January 14, 2015.

Surkhe, Astri, 2009. "UN Support for Peacebuilding: Nepal as the Exceptional Case". CMI Working Paper. WP 2009:7. Chr. Michelsen Institute

UN News Centre
http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=42362#.VO8z0S5RpsM
Accessed January 14, 2015.

UNDP NEPAL – United Nations Development Program in Nepal.
http://www.np.undp.org/content/nepal/en/home/
Accessed January 14, 2015

UNMIN – United Nations Mission to Nepal.
http://www.un.org.np/unmin-archive/?d=about&p=mandate
Accessed January 14, 2015

USIP – United States Institute of Peace.
http://www.usip.org/node/1782/specialists
Accessed January 14, 2015.

Von Einsiedel, Sebastian - Malone, David M. - Pradhan, Suman (Eds.), 2012. Nepal in Transition: From People's War to Fragile Peace. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

List of Interviews

Interview 1, 2013-04-26. Kathmandu, Nepal.
Interview 2, 2013-04-30. Kathmandu, Nepal.
Interview 3, 2013-05-02. Kathmandu, Nepal.
Interview 4, 2013-05-02. Kathmandu, Nepal.
Interview 5, 2013-05-05. Kathmandu, Nepal.
Interview 6, 2013-05-07. Kathmandu, Nepal.
Interview 7, 2013-05-07. Kathmandu, Nepal.
Interview 8, 2013-05-09. Kathmandu, Nepal.
Interview 9, 2013-05-13. Kathmandu, Nepal.
Interview 10, 2013-05-14. Kathmandu, Nepal.
Interview 11, 2013-05-14. Kathmandu, Nepal.

Rural-urban migration and redefining indigeneity in Dhaka, Bangladesh

Jacco Visser

This paper examines how students from indigenous groups from the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Southeast Bangladesh who migrated to Dhaka navigate the city. It does so by investigating how students relate to discourses of modernity and urban lifestyles while not disregarding the importance of belonging to an indigenous group. This way challenging notions of being indigenous as related to a non-industrial mode of production and essentially rooted in rural areas. In addition, by revealing the ways in which these students redefine themselves as Bangladeshi, the dominant notion of a Bangladeshi as ethnic Bengali and Muslim are challenged since indigenous migrant students are neither ethnic Bengalis nor Muslims.

Keywords: Bangladesh, indigeneity, migration, Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Introduction

This paper illustrates how students from indigenous groups from the Chittagong Hill Tracts who migrated to Dhaka adapt to their new urban environment. To grasp the challenges for student migrants I first provide a background to the Chittagong Hill Tracts region and the problems of national integration of the region in Bangladesh. Afterwards I investigate the role of national and international indigenous people's discourses in the redefinition of indigeneity in the urban context of Dhaka and examine the influence of Bangladeshi nationalist discourses in this process. I do so by presenting ethnographic data from fieldwork in Dhaka during the first three months of 2012. Data will reveal how indigenous students relate to Bangladeshi middle class discourses that stress modernity and consumption, while at the same time not disregarding the importance of belonging to indigenous groups in Bangladesh. In documenting these social changes, this paper provides empirically grounded insights in social change and social mobility in contemporary Bangladesh.

Bangladeshi nationalism and the Chittagong Hill Tracts

The Chittagong Hill Tracts, or CHT as the region will be called henceforth, is an area in the Southeast of Bangladesh which is geographically isolated from the rest of the country. For many Bangladeshis the region functions as a reverse mirror image in Bangladesh; a marker of difference used to define Bangladeshiness by identifying those not considered Bangladeshi. As a result, ethnic and religious minorities living in the region are perceived as underdeveloped jungle people as in contrast to the Bangladeshi as developed and living on the Bengal plains. These images can largely be traced back to political developments and the ways in which Bangladeshi nationalism was constructed after its violent breakaway from West-Pakistan in 1971.

The Bangladeshi demand for independence from Pakistan was mainly a result of marginalization on ethnic and religious grounds by West-Pakistan (Mohsin 2002). Ethnic Bengalis living in East-Pakistan were discriminated in the Pakistani state between 1947 and 1971 on the basis of their ethnic belonging and their adherence to an interpretation of Islam seen as sanskriticized and

polluted by the West-Pakistani ruling elite. This led to a bloody war between Bangladeshi freedom fighters and the Pakistani army in which severe human rights violations occurred (Raghavan 2013). After independence was realized in 1971 the main marker of belonging to the new nation became being an ethnic Bengali. Which was partially a result of the discrimination of Bengalis within the Pakistani state and due to the fact that over 95% of the new country's population is an ethnic Bengali (Mohsin 2002). Although initially a secular state ideology was adopted (Van Schendel 2009, Haque Khondker 2010, Hassan 2011) soon, after a failed experiment with secularism, Islam became a more important marker for Bangladeshi identity when military regimes started to use the idioms of religion to create legitimacy for their rule and to distract attention from the way they monopolized power and looted public resources (Hashmi 2011: 28).

Both interpretations of being a Bangladeshi, whether emphasizing being an ethnic Bengali or being a Muslim, exclude ethnic and religious minority groups, such as indigenous groups living in the CHT, from the national imaginary of what it means to be Bangladeshi. This resulted in increased alienation of these groups from the nationalist project (Karim 1998, Mohsin 2002, Yasmin 2014).For indigenous groups from the CHT this alienation has been enhanced by a guerrilla war that broke out in 1975 between the PCJSS, a political and military organization representing sections of indigenous groups from the area, and the Bangladeshi army. In 1997 a peace accord was signed but the implementation of this accord largely failed due to a lack of lower level political support (Panday & Jamil 2009). As a result violence still erupts regularly throughout the region (Van Schendel 2009). The region's violent history and its people's antagonism towards Bangladesh in recent decades, as well as the emphasis on indigeneity and having a non-industrial mode of production, make the recent migration of these migrants to Dhaka remarkable. Even more so since Dhaka is the symbol of Bangladesh's rushed urbanization and its inclusion in the global economy making living in this megacity initially seem to contrast interpretations of indigeneity.

In the case of indigenous students, migration to Dhaka has increased particularly because of the increased integration of the CHT as part of the politics of centralisation that were set in motion in the Pakistani era (Van Schendel 1992). This centralization, which has further increased since the late 1990s, has resulted in a concentration of institutes for higher education in and around Dhaka, while the lack of institutes for higher education institutes in the CHT has remained. Another factor that has increased the number of student migrants are the quota for indigenous students at universities.

Indigeneity in Bangladesh

Apart from Bangladeshi nationalism the notion of indigeneity has significant impact as a marker of belonging for indigenous students from the CHT. This increasing relevance is part of a global trend in which in recent decades, hundreds of marginalized minorities have positioned themselves as indigenous peoples 'in order to access the rights and political spaces accorded to them by international rights law' (Jung 2008: 184). Problematic in claims of indigeneity is that they imply a relation between being indigenous and having a non-industrial mode of production (Eriksen 2002: 125), making essentialist associations between indigenous and living in a jungle easily made. In addition, indigenous claims are grounded in territories with references made to lands inhabited by people in the past and present (Karlsson 2003: 190). These claims resonate notions of rootedness in certain lands making demands of indigenous recognition, although effective in strengthening indigenous peoples' claims of access to space accorded to them by international law, fail in incorporating the increasing number of people that identify themselves as indigenous but have migrated to urban centres.

In Bangladesh, globalized indigenous politics have had a significant impact on demands of the national indigenous movement, providing additional legitimacy and an adaptation of the global language of indigeneity into local systems of meaning (Gerharz 2014: 565). These transna-

tional activist networks conceptualise indigeneity as constituting trans-local spaces while making use of essentialist categories. This way a broad group of actors draws on transnational indigenous people's discourses while representing, or claiming to represent, marginalized communities in Bangladesh. However the indigenous claim itself is much more than a participating tool, since it is "fundamentally concerned with culture and identity" (Kuper 2003: 207). This has led to discourses in which only certain cultural practises are celebrated in certain contexts to make them fit the claim of being indigenousas put forward by transnational activists' networks. As the following will illustrate, the increasing importance of indigeneity as a political tool as well as an identification marker has implications for how indigenous students in Dhaka relate to Bangladesh and navigate Dhaka

Methodology

For this study I did fieldwork in Dhaka during the first quarter of 2012, doing participant observation and taking 37 semi-structured interviews among indigenous students. During fieldwork I relied on translators who spoke Chakma, Bengali and English since I have only working knowledge of Bengali and did not speak Chakma, the most spoken language among indigenous inhabitants from the CHT. For all material presented in the upcoming sections explicit permission has been given by respondents to publish their stories. However to ensure anonymity respondents have been given fictitious names. Throughout the fieldwork a multi-stranded methodology approach has been adopted, focusing not on bounded fields but on shifting locations in line with the multiple entry points in respondents' lives. To this end I have done research in apartments, shopping malls and at universities, parks and temples.

Being a non-Bengali Bangladeshi

So far this paper has illustrated how indigenous groups from the Chittagong Hill Tracts have been alienated from the Bangladeshi nationalist

project and how the national and international indigenous people's discourses have provided access to rights and political spaces accorded to them by international rights law. Both these developments have had a significant impact on how indigenous student migrants relate to discourses of indigeneity and being Bangladeshi in the context of the mega city Dhaka. To illustrate this I now turn to the difficulties students faced when adapting to life in Dhaka since this involves a process of defining one's position in a new social context. Nearly all students I spoke to about their first period in the city explained how they had difficulties in expressing themselves and finding their place amongst others while constantly being referred to in racial stereotypes as a result of their Sino-Tibetan instead of Bengali appearance. Jash, a student at Dhaka University for example remembered

> "What I really had problems with were the people here. When I first came here my classmates made fun of me because of how I look, how my nose and eyes are. They used to say I am from the jungle, primitive and so on. They called me 'Nak Chapta' [flatnose] too. Now it is better, they know I am not like that but in the beginning it was bad"

For students this kind of racial stereotyping is challenging, not only because of the insults but also because it challenges their perception of themselves as Bangladeshis living in the nation's capital and engaging in its institutions. Abhik for example, a student in engineering living in Dhaka, explained:

> "I have been raised here, I speak Bengali fluently, I had to work hard to do so since my parents who still live in Rangamati are not so good in Bengali, we spoke Chakma at home. But still they (Bengalis red.) will never see me as a Bangladeshi since I do not look like a Bengali. But I am a Bangladeshi and I have lived in this country all my life. So when they ask me where I am from I say I am from Bangladesh"

As well as being Bangladeshi, Abhik also prefers to stress that he is not 'from the jungle' and struggles with stereotypes associated with being

from the CHT, he explained:

> "At first when I came here my classmates at the university asked if I ate frogs and snakes and if we run around naked all day. But now they know I am ok but we constantly have to proof it."

As Abhik's story illustrates, indigenous students in Dhaka feel a constant need to show how they are not 'simple hill people' but Bangladeshi students like their peers.

Modernity and indigeneity

To illustrate their similarity to peers, students often stress that they are modern while at the same time emphasising they are indigenous. By looking at how students refer to the CHT, which is for students closely related to being indigenous since it is the land the indigenous claim relates to, issues of modernity and indigeneity surface. Joshua, a student in economics told me the following about Banderban, the district in the CHT he is from:

> "I am from Banderban and I am proud of this. I am proud of our culture. I am proud of being indigenous. They are my people, we have a good history"

While most students felt proud of being indigenous their migration to Dhaka led them to challenge the often taken for granted relation between being indigenous and having a non-industrial mode of production (cf. Eriksen 2002: 125). This way revealing the falseness of essentialist associations with indigenous peoples and the stereotypes associated with indigenous students in Dhaka. Monica, a female student, for example explained that she appreciated Dhaka because:

> "Here I can buy things I cannot buy in the CHT, I can get a good education, I am in contact with the world, internet on my phone works, you have so many stores. That is not so where I grew up. I really feel like I am a city girl now."

The access to communication technologies and consumer goods as referred to by Monica does not exclude self-identification as indigenous despite the often emphasized link by students of indigenous as being rooted in the CHT. Rather, the indigenous peoples discourse allows indigenous students to redefine modernity in a way that does not exclude being indigenous. There is a negotiation and constant navigation to find a way to be modern *and* indigenous. Monica clarifies:

> "If I will work at a bank when I am older and I travel to Europe, it does not change who I am. I do not become European, I do not become Bengali but still I will be indigenous to the CHT. I cannot change that. For example some Chakmas went to France a long time ago. They still live there, they were adopted at the time of the war. They are not the same any longer but they still come to the CHT because it is where they are from."

The above illustrates how the notion of indigeneity put forward by national and international activist networks, as rooted in territories at the peripheries of nation states and linked to a non-industrial mode of production, does no longer hold for indigenous student migrants from the CHT. At the same time, students continue to emphasize indigeneity as an important category of belonging since it provides them with what the Bangladeshi nationalist project has failed to provide them: a meta narrative that helps in identifying one's place in the world. In addition, the indigenous discourse is a way to articulate a connection to the CHT region, being the land their indigenous claim relates to, providing a sense of security and belonging that reconciles their separation from the area. This way the CHT and the notion of indigeneity are important signifiers of belonging linked to a place where one will always belong to, but which allows, or perhaps needs, negotiating between different forms of identity.

Conclusion

This paper has illustrated how indigenous student migrants from the CHT adapt to their new urban environment in Dhaka and how the Bangladeshi nationalist project has alienated

ethnic and religious minorities from Bangladeshi nationalism that stressed being an ethnic Bengali and being Muslim. Migration by indigenous student migrants to Dhaka increases students engagement with mainstream Bangladesh, resulting in expressions of being Bangladeshi and setting in motion a process of redefining and challenging dominant notions of who is perceived a Bangladeshi and who is not. At the same time, indigenous students continue to emphasize the importance of being indigenous in an urban environment. This challenges notions of indigenous as essentially rooted in rural areas and as related to a non-industrial mode of production. Rather, students express being modern and being indigenous interchangeably, negotiating between different kinds of identities, discourses and positions.

A**FTER COMPLETING** a master in Social & Cultural Anthropology (MSc) at VU University Amsterdam in 2012, Jacco Visser enrolled in a second master's programme in Asian Studies at the Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies at Lund University. At present he is a second year student of the programme expecting to graduate in July 2015. Although broad, his main academic interests are Bangladesh, indigeneity, migration and diversity issues.
E-mail: jaccovisser191@gmail.com

Bibliography

Bal, E. (2007) They ask if we eat frogs, Garo Ethnicity in Bangladesh, Leiden: International Institute for Asian Studies

Eriksen, T.H. (2002) Ethnicity and Nationalism, London: Pluto Press.

Gerharz, E. (2014) Indigenous activism in Bangladesh: translocal spaces and shifting constellations of belonging, *Asian Ethnicity*, 15(4): 552-570.

Haque Khondker, H. (2010) The Curious Case of Secularism in Bangladesh: What is the Relevance for Muslim Democracies?, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 11(2): 185-201.

Hall, S.(1996) Introduction: Who needs identity? In: Hall, S. & du Gay, P (eds) *Questions of Cultural Identity.* London: Sage. 1-17.

Hashmi, T. (2011) Islamism beyond the Islamic heartland: a case study of Bangladesh. In: Ahmed, I. (ed) *The Politics of Religion in South and Southeast Asia*, New York: Routledge, 26- 44.

Hassan, M. (2011) Democracy and Political Islam in Bangladesh, South Asia Research, 31(2): 97-117.

Jung, C. (2008) The moral force of indigenous politics: Critical Liberalism and the Zapatistas, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Karim, L. (1998) Pushed to the margins: Adivasi peoples in Bangladesh and the case of Kalpana Chakma, Contemporary South Asia 7(3): 301-316

Karlsson, B.G. (2003) Anthropology and the 'Indigenous Slot', Claims to and Debates about Indigenous Peoples' Status in India, Critique of Anthropology, 23(4): 403-423

Kuper, A. (2005) The Reinvention of Primitive Society; Transformations of a myth. New York:Routledge.

Mohsin, A. (1997) The Politics of Nationalism: the case of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh, Chicago: University Press.

Panday, P.K. and Jamil, I. (2009) Conflict in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh: An Unimplemented Accord and Continued Violence, Asian Survey, 49 (6): 1052-1070.

Raghavan, S. (2013) 1971, A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Van Schendel, W. (1992) The invention of the 'Jummas': State Formation and Ethnicity in Southeastern Bangladesh, *Modern Asia Studies*, 26 (1): 95-128.

Van Schendel, W. (2009) *A history of Bangladesh*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Yasmin, L. (2014) The Tyranny of the Majority in Bangladesh: The Case of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 20(1): 116-132.

Asia in Focus
A Nordic journal on Asia by early career researchers

Aims and scope

Asia in Focus is a biannual journal where Master's and Ph.D. students affiliated to a Nordic institution have the possibility to publish their findings in a widely accessible, transnational forum. The focal point of the journal is modern Asian societies, from Central Asia to Oceania but excluding Australia and New Zealand, from the perspective of the social sciences and humanities. We aim at a high academic level in a concise, focused and readable form, and publish both academic essays and articles.

Submissions

- Please submit your paper as an email attachment to asiainfocus@nias.ku.dk
- Include in your submission confirmation that you have obtained the right to quote interviewees, publish pictures, maps and such.
- For any other enquiries, please email us at asiainfocus@nias.ku.dk

Preparing your paper

Before a paper can be published it must conform to the Asia in Focus style guide, which is summarized below. Please be sure to read and adhere to the rules of the comprehensive Asia in Focus Style Guide.

- The language of the journal is English. If you use quotations in other languages, English translations must be included. When submitting your article for publication, it must have been proof read by a native speaker of English.
- Text length: 1500-3000 words, excluding photos, graphs and references.
- The paper should be prepared in MS-Word compatible software
- For references you should use parenthetical in-text APA style.
- Do not include any endnotes or footnotes.
- Abstract: A concise abstract of no more than 200 words is required upon submission. Citing references in the abstract should be avoided. Please state whether the submission should be considered an academic article or an essay.
- Keywords: Provide a maximum of six keywords. The reader should get a strong impression of the main ideas discussed in your piece from this short list.
- Please include a short biography, including information about your affiliated institution and academic degree. Please state whether or not we may publish your email address or other contact information for readers to respond to your piece.
- Think about the scope of the journal when you write your paper. Asia in Focus is multi-disciplinary with readers from different academic backgrounds. Thus theoretical stances and arguments should be used carefully. The geographical/cultural focus of your article should always be introduced to the reader.