

Master's Programme in Anthropology of
Development

Utopian forestry in Nepal;

*Local governance
and the production of new citizen*

**A fieldwork of the Community Forest User Group and local society
of the village of Bishanku Narayan, Ward 1, District of Godawari**

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Contents:

Introduction to the Social Landscape of Bistacchap	page 4
CHAPTER 1 History of the Nepali Forestry	page 11
CHAPTER 2 Rules, regulations and stakeholders in Bistacchap	page 22
CHAPTER 3 Community Governance	page 37
CHAPTER 4 Commercialization of Communities	page 58
CHAPTER 5 Conclusions	page 67
BIBLIOGRAPHY	page 70

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Introduction to the Social Landscape of Bistacchap

A Case of CFUG collective mobilization (and under-reporting)

In a damp, hilly jungle landscape a long line of people slowly dig their way through the tough soil with “simple” tools. There are 145 women and men in all ages, who are working on the collective project of digging a ditch for a water pipe between the spring in Godawari and their community water tank in Ward 7. The work had been going on for several days already, and they were making steady progress despite a mediocre attendance. The organizers were discontent; a former veteran of the military – a large and well liked man, and Singh, an important charismatic chairman of Ward 7's Community Forest User Group, which organised the effort. In the process of the construction, trees had to be cut down due to their inconvenient location, and this of course slowed down progress, but the spoils of such “casualties of development” were split by equality principle between the attendees present at the site. These felling were unsanctioned, unlicensed, unsurveyed, and went unreported. I was explained that the cause for this under-reporting was that to report it would just a 'procedural' matter that could only risk trouble for the person doing the reporting. Informants across CFUG's have expressed similar opinions on what they regard as matters of formality.

Later when we were discussing the issues of the day at a Godawari restaurant, the organizers were considering enforcing the latent threat of fining absentee households, and they were discussing the grounds for such action. Had there been enough “awareness” about the project before hand? Surely, they had been here digging three days already. And in the face of the vast communal benefits of the water provided by the people working, it seemed appropriate to issue a fine. However, they couldn't agree between them, and in any case, they couldn't take such a decision without the rest of the board. The Department of Forestry in Godawari, which has responsibility for the administration of the Community Forestry Programme in the municipality regards this under-reporting as a problem, but one that is not greater than it being budgeted for under the yearly 'forest infringement' post of the forestry statistics. However, the advantage of a better system or routine for registering such unauthorized felling, should prove beneficial for all parties, since it makes management more predictable and easy. Alternatively, the upkeep of the cadasterial maps, and the registration of unlicensed treefellings could be anonymized, or reported to the CFUG's rather than the DoF.

Positionality

I arrived in Bistachhap in the harvest season of late August 2011, when the corn stood ripe on most of the fields, and my first day I was named Krishna, after the festival Krishnajatla, which was celebrated the following day. Much happened during my stay and I found many sources of distraction, and confusion, for instance in the demarcation into 'wards' which separated the village of 'Bistachhap' into two distinct 'societies' with their own temples, shops, and social networks, and still, all wards were part of the same village; Bisankhu Narayan. I struggled for a long time with method as to how to delimit the field, without taking the administrative category of 'ward' at face value. Another peculiarity and source of confusion was the local narrative of a community of relatives – that in fact, the entirety of the (relevant) village population was related, and could trace their roots to a common, founding ancestor. This was at best a simplified partial truth, as there are minorities in the other wards that are commonly acknowledged to have occupied the land before the arrival of the Bista's. This is also an issue I found it difficult, if not contentious to investigate further, without a reliable 'gatekeeper'. There were issues regarding my interpreter and gatekeeper, who was one and the same person, and had been provided to me by an outside connection, embedded in the Nepali Civil society. The guide, gatekeeper and interpreter was also a chairman for the local CFUG, and without dwelling too much on this topic here, this led to a series of challenging situations, especially in the setting of the informal interview. Sometimes the expertise of the interpreter was of great benefit, at other times my informants would modify their answers as a part of self-representation toward me, the interpreter, or indeed toward the CFUG which he informally represented. There occurred some spectacular events during my stay, however I could not see their relevance in the context of this project; like when the collective farm burnt down, and the airplane that crashed in the village. I would like to try to show how Community Forest management in Nepal can be seen as a state strategy for retaining control over the directions, aims and ethics of forestry, while at the same time encouraging wide popular participation in this program. The objective is self-sufficiency and sustainability, a system that relies only on government for advice and oversight.

Grandpa' Bista and the Demographics of Ward 1 and Bisankhu Narayan

According to the oral testimony of the oldest man in Ward 1; 'Grandfather Bista' the

village of Bistachhap was gradually settled between 150 and 100 years ago by a legendary ancestral patriarch who gradually relocated cattle for grazing from Kathmandu to this valley due population pressure. At first they migrated seasonally for the benefit of their cattle and goats, but slowly they settled more permanently because of the good agricultural land. The village Bishanku-Narayan is, as almost every local society in Nepal, divided into 9 sub-units called 'wards', these are administered by the Community Development Office (CDO)¹, which is subsumed under the District Development Office (DDC) The borders of the 'ward' started out as the basis of my anthropological fieldwork. Of course, most of the villagers venture outside this narrow administrative demarcation almost every day, but the 'wards' are also commonly taken to be the administrative referent to one or more 'communities'.



1 'Community Development Office' – formerly, and still informally known as Village Development Office (VDC)

The ward system was organised following after *Panchayat*² system was introduced in 1961, and although these politico-administrative borders mostly were drawn along already existing ethnic and familiar land, the informality of the excursions when these were mapped and drawn out ensured that simplifications and occasional incursions were made on others land if they were not present at the time. This has been assured me by the CDO Secretary rarely happened in Bisankhu Narayan. The political terrain of the village redrawn as was a way of fragmenting traditional authorities, centralizing power in the Village Development Office (the current Community Development Office and modernizing the bureaucracy. Bistachhap was separated into two distinct 'wards' due to the national plan that dictated 9 wards for each village, and as Bistachhap was larger than most of the others it was separated. Today there is little social interaction between the two wards, and distinctive societies have gradually grown out of this – at first – purely bureaucratic change. The explanation given to me for why the people don't associate between wards was that they do not know people from other wards, and – tautologically enough – the reason for this is they don't socialize with people from other wards; each community today have their own temples and tea shops. Most don't take the same bus route, although their children may meet together at school. The wards have grown into distinct societies, so to speak.

Ward 1, which was the main site for this fieldwork had in 2005 abt. 600 residents³, of whom somewhere between 30 and 40% of the 'adult' population migrate on light motorbikes to work in Kathmandu and its peri-urban areas Here they work in offices; often for NGOs or in some related enterprise, or in business; quite often a family business in the service industry. Women regularly travel on the local morning bus, or walk, to the mill in nearby Badagaun with enormous loads of grains, and a more locally situated mill is high on their wish-list for 'development'. Children and youths travel to Kathmandu to attend school in the wee early hours and return from mid day, depending on the heavy traffic. Bisankhu Narauyan lies within the Kathmandu Valley, and from the peaks of the community forest area, on a clear day, you can see Kathmandu's urban sprawl. The bus connection takes an average of forty minutes on a good day, barring any strikes, accidents, gas shortages, or festivities should incur significant

2 Panchayats were local level officials appointed by the central state, the head of local 'self-governments' based on subsistence principles; mainly sustaining income for administration and sustenance through taxation of buildings and enterprise, as well as the extraction of corvee labour.

3 NGO Health survey in Bisankhu Narayan 2005, found at CDC: not trustworthy. Other data from CDC statistical data.

traffic jams.

99% of the resident inhabitants of Ward 1 work some sort of combination between agriculture, horticulture, aquaculture and/or pastoralism. A great majority keep a few goats, or a herd – and it is quite common to keep a cow or two. Free ranging hens and ducks are kept by many households. The hen house is an exception, although there were a few commercial enterprises in the valley that would in the west be branded 'free range'. These suffered during the fieldwork from an outbreak of bird flue that also came to Bistachhap from Bhaktapur. Land is privately owned, and ownership usually goes back generations within a specific clan, varying in size and quality. As a rule of a thumb, land is ideally split equally between heirs, making the titles smaller for each passing generation. Many siblings purchase property from each other, and this diminishes the tendency towards “fragmentation of estates”. Erosion is also a prime concern, but risk is still rarely a personal concern. Farmers are considering environmental risks constantly, but *dangers* and *threats* (Beck 2004) like erosion are considered external to one's sphere of influence and rarely considered, even in the case of local development initiatives or land development (IO CFUG Sanjit, DoF Vanajit). Land stability is critical to the people as land use varies according to vegetation, soil micro-systems, and crop requirements. The agriculture is a system of rotational dry and wet terrace management. Female labour contributions on dry lands is eight- to tenfold higher than that of men in field preparation and ploughing, including crow sowing, clod breaking, weeding, harvesting, manure supply and food processing. Women, by virtue of their continuous presence, are involved in seed selection, multi-culture soil improvement through manure supply and harvesting of crops for increased production of biomass for animals and human beings. Any loss or degradation of natural resources impacts women as they play a significant role in integrating agriculture, forestry, livestock, and maintaining a balance in land and household. Time allocation studies have indicated that 70-80% of field labour is performed by women, and that in the hills of Nepal, the women's share of the total work load is between 150 and 180% more than that of men (S.Gurung 1994:330, 331-332). Gender issues, including the “women in development”-discourse will regrettably be almost completely absent from this narrative, due to textual considerations. But these data are important to keep in mind throughout the paper.

The Community Development Office (CDO) is based in Ward 1, and has the

administrative responsibility for all of the 9 Wards. Each ward has at least 1 CFUG, and these all meet together annually for coordination and sharing of experiences. There is little in the way of social interaction between the wards, most of them are self-sufficient in matters of small-businesses and ritual infrastructure. Earlier most wards even had their own local schools. A 'community' is usually constructed as a purely human domain, a sphere cultivated by human presence, but social formations are embedded in a biophysical context, and must be understood in the context of its surroundings and its cosmological framing of this social landscape, in addition to its historical relation to it. Through meaning-making processes in narrative and discourse; divergent meanings are formed and what is perceived as natural becomes objectified. At the same time these processes create multiple natures; simultaneously real, collective and discursive-fact (Escobar 1999:2, Baldwin 2003). Changing patterns in the conceptualisation and utilization of the landscape redefine the social relations between, and within village communities, and their relations to the 'environment'.

"Representations of nature matter because they generate very real material effects. When constructed as a natural resource, we are asked to assign value to a tree independent of the forest in which it stands. In mainstream political economy in which forests are identified as the true sources of value underwriting corporate bond issues, aggregate forest health becomes dutifully governmentalized through the discourses of conventional silviculture..." (Baldwin, 2003:425)

The 'environment' is a historical phenomenon; part biological reality and part social construct. The history of Nepali forestry is a history of state control, and although there is a stated policy of local empowerment, the state continues this policy of control through the program of Community Forestry through institutional and procedural control mechanisms that govern the operation and foundation of the Community User Groups. (Mikesell 1994). The philosophy and institutions of community forestry encourages participation, by entitling 'community' not only to resources previously forbidden, but also to access expert knowledge formerly monopolized by the specialists of forestry, and by mobilizing the local population through legible, state formations, the program is framing the conditions for interaction in deliberative space and engagement with the state, and in produce the new citizens and their life-worlds (Scott 1998, Sivaramakrishnan 2000, Escobar 1998 & 1999; Luke 1999, Baldwin 2003:420).

I will attempt to show how the Community Forest Program reorders the existing lived

realities of the society and produces new citizens through the participation in community management practices and its associated activities. This is accomplished through the Community Forestry philosophy of local management, that through espousal of the claim that 'community' is the best mobilizing force toward collective interests (Leach 1997). The state decentralizes responsibility for management and fosters participation in forestry activities, with a focus on what is called 'raising of awareness', which is an important part of establishing a local regime of governance. The participatory profile of community forestry, together with an emphasis on a particular form of 'self-sufficiency' promote processes of commercialization within the 'community'.

CHAPTER 1

History of the Nepali Forestry

Prior to the unification of modern nation state of Nepal during the first part of the 18th century, the territory was divided into many autonomous principalities, displaying a great variety and intricacy in local management practices that varied with geography, caste, religion, and ethnicity. The unification was legitimated by the Gorkha kings as a strategic move to block British colonial expansion towards China, but as the expanding feudal state consolidated its power it intruded in significant ways upon local hierarchies, systems of management, and local practices of landholding such as '*Kipat*' (Gurung 1994). These local systems were typically comprised by clans or extended families, and usually regulated wide aspects of society rather than a confined 'administrative' domain of 'expertise'. Partly because of this, and because these systems were founded in relational 'embeddedness' in the social networks within the society, such local systems could have balancing effects of social control beyond the financial motivations inherent in the distribution of 'common pool resources' (Fisher 1994).

The Gorkha rulers promised to guarantee the customary rights and privileges of communal forms of land tenure. However, in the process of consolidating power and centralising control in the new state, they confiscated communal lands of fugitive people and granted them to non-local settlers under other various forms of new land rights and a standardized code of laws, this way introducing new Hindu elites to administer a new top-tiered bureaucratic state. The new land rights granted by the monarchy to its local officials were premised in the central authority of the state, such as the *Raikar*'; land on which the state levies tax, *Birta* and *jagir* - lands granted by the state rulers to the members of nobility, civil and military officials, and other select groups in the society on which they depended for the sustenance and continuance of their authority. This, and other policies, such as encouraging the immigration of influential groups from Tibet and India, led to influential high-caste groups obtaining large land holdings while alienating many locals, and deteriorating communal commitments to forests (O.Gurung 1994) . The motivation providing the framework and parameters for the planned management of the early nation of Nepal came from the ruling

interests of the feudal state, and were largely motivated by material and strategic interests; fiscal receipts, military manpower, infrastructure or “state security”. Templates were enforced by state administrative and military power, a totalizing narrative based in Hindu cosmology, a set of standardized codes of laws. Not least the Nepali language which the state went to great lengths to spread throughout the country.

There are many benefits of a national language; according to Scott (1998) the cultural project of imposing “a standard, official language may be the most powerful tool of standardization, and is the precondition of many other simplifications” (Scott 1998:72). Diversity in languages pose difficulties for state legibility, as well as for transparency, at the same time as the variety facilitate local autonomy and favour local monopolies. Hence, “Colonizers in most places and at most times try to gain control over both the material and the semantic practices through which their would-be subjects produce and reproduce the very basis of their existence.” (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992:236) In addition, hybrid discourses and diversity in comprehension emerge from disparity between languages and measurements which may not be corresponding. Access to and co-presence in the same discursive arena necessitate some common ground in language; this does not only increases legibility and transparency of local practices for state administrators, and facilitate conformity to state codes and streamlining of provincial administration, but also enable locals to incorporate and engage in a wider, trans-local; national discourse (B.Anderson 1983). In the creation of such an 'imagined community'⁴ as Anderson discusses, the bureaucratic elites would be favoured, and the mastery of to the *Khas*⁵ language a prerequisite. According to Comaroff and Comaroff (1992:246), the moments when arguments and terms are crossing linguistic and discursive barriers are significant in the process of colonization. The favouring of one, national language, discriminating others, is itself a process of domestic colonization (Scott 1998:72) In Nepal the ethnically and culturally diverse valley regions were linguistically and culturally subdued and incorporated into the condoned language of the central state. Of course, this was not a complete transformation, but in making Nepali the only official language of Nepal, the authorities made a separation between the acknowledged and unacknowledged education. These other languages became important ethnic and identity markers, usually associated with

4 B.Anderson (1983) 'Imagined Communities' Verso

5 Nepali national language

castes.

Because the local management systems usually were informal and complex, the local regimes were 'illegible' to the central state, and could not be assimilated into an administrative grid, without being either transformed or reduced to a convenient 'shorthand'. Such shorthands are derived from an abstraction created from a narrowed, scientific gaze into an analytical field of inquiry, that allow a totalizing 'synoptic' template be assembled. The necessity of the process of centralization is to an extent implicit;

“Legibility implies a viewer whose place is central and whose vision is synoptic. State simplifications are designed to provide authorities with a schematic view of their society, a view not afforded to those without authority.” (Scott 1998:79)

After the Rana prime ministers ascended in a *coupe d'etat* in AD 1846, the exploitative feudal system introduced by the Shah rulers was further consolidated and professionalized into a colonial-type administrative structure based on a multi-tiered top-down hierarchical model (Bryant and White 1982 *ibid* Fisher 1994), that is “concentrating administrative and financial resources at the centre, while the local organizations are entrusted with responsibilities without authority. The Nepali bureaucracy is encumbered with formalistic procedures and a capacity to delay rather than expedite both service delivery and program implementation” (Fisher 1994). Like their predecessors, the Rana rulers followed the policy of extraction and repression rather than production, and regarded public resources, such as lands and forests as profitable commodities. In addition to opening for sales of hard timber resources to the British interests in India, more fiscal policies became important for local management. The extraction of taxes to support the ruling families and military expenditures were the major policies of the government, and more and more lands of the hill people were converted from untaxable, 'unproductive' communal arrangements into '*raikar*'. This was *precedented* policy, both within Nepal, and in the spirit of the 18th French physiocrats, whom had condemned all common property on presumptive grounds that such inscrutable arrangements were inefficiently exploited, and fiscally barren (Gurung 1994, Scott 1998). 'Nature' become 'natural resources' as the regimes of objective measurement unified fiscal and commercial logics in the “bottom line”, and the economics of scale. These developments opened the possibilities for for experimentally controlling the environment, in theory at least, as the field is always subject uncontrollable variables. This narrowing of vision makes enables abstraction to be made in order to formulate policy. “This restriction of focus reflected in the

tables was the only way in which the whole forest could, with reference and field tests, be taken as a single topic. In the regulated, abstract forest, calculation and measurement prevail” (Scott 1998:13). As the logic scientific silviculture was virtually identical with the logic of commercial exploitation in the determining power of 'the bottom line. These methods of standardization and control not only increased legibility, but empowered the bureaucracy to manipulate society with greater accuracy than before. Coinciding with commercial interests finding its way into locality, the forest as a habitat and social space increasingly disappear and is replaced by the forest as an economic resource to be managed efficiently and professionally (Scott 1998). The Rana government also introduced many different forms of corvee labour, chief among which were the dedication of labour to the construction of temples and infrastructure – in particularly military logistics and agro-forestry including the appropriation of 'waste land' (user-right lands). The extraction of taxes and the introduction of corvee labour placed a heavy burden on the hill population, particularly the peasantry, resulting in progressive impoverishment and increasing internal inequalities. As the state began to assume control over increasing fields of the society and communal resources, the base of the legitimacy of local institutions fractured. Locals became increasingly locked into grossly inequitable and discriminatory patron-client relationships of various forms, and a dependence of the dominant class of the bureaucratic feudal state (Gurung 1994:85). The increasing appropriation and commodification of 'natural resources' in this period was a central element of the great transformation to a market economy – and, at the same time, led to disenfranchisement of the local population, and combined to increase problems of degeneration of forests (Gurung *ibid* Allen 1994:84-85). Scott (1998) writes a particularly enlightening paragraph concerning the Nepali context of modern statecraft, and one may consider it to be roughly describing the changes during and after the Rana regime.

“An illegible society then, is a hindrance to any effective intervention by the state, whether the purpose of that intervention is plunder or public welfare. As long as the state's interest is largely confined to grabbing a few tons of grain and rounding up a few conscripts, the state's ignorance may not be fatal. When, however, the state's objective requires changing the daily habits or work performance of its citizens, such ignorance may be disabling.” (Scott 1998:78)

The state sponsored exploitative and exclusionary modernization of forestry contributed to shape local population in its own image; a marginal and destructive force subsisting on non-sustainable practices, encroaching on degenerated forest lands (O.Gurung

1994). Access to the influence over these resources came primarily through the dependency to the top-tier bureaucracy and later the *panchayats*. It entailed a process of colonization, with the production of social landscapes and environments to suit the abstracted map of the central plans, and “an attempt to create specific subjectivities (Scott 1998, Comaroff & Comaroff 2005:16).

In 1943, the state initiated an extensive land registration process, in which the conversion of 'waste land' to taxable crop lands was encouraged, emphasizing economic growth through the industrious work of subsistence people . The policy led to a concentration of land holdings in with the dominant sections of the population, who were able to acquire the more fertile agricultural lands and rich forests in their names, and further marginalized people who depended on common management regimes, whose rights were illegible to the modern state by this time. This policy substantially aggravated the deteriorating condition of resources. (O.Gurung 1994) After the second world war, the Nepali nation state had strengthened both its hold of, and mandate over 'society', as a reified object, separate from, and subject to state manipulation (Scott 1998). Although Nepalese territory had not been under attack during the war it had been an ally of Great Britain, both supplying soldiers from elite units, and allowing the British to recruit directly from within Nepal. Already, Nepali soldiers had been serving in India, and the state had managed to produce institutions, infrastructure and statistical knowledge about its population, that allowed for categorizing and abstractions that in the 1940's and 50s opened for

“Social engineering according to technical standards – the abstraction of an artificial, engineered, society designed, not by custom and historical “accident” or reproduction, but according to conscious, rational, scientific criteria. All aspects of society could be improved upon. (...) Similar [to the gardener who impose his own ideals of utility, order and beauty upon nature], social engineers consciously set out to design and maintain a more perfect social order. An enlightenment belief in the self-improvement of man became by degrees a belief in the perfectibility of social order.” (Scott 1998:92-93)

The first high modernist blueprint introduced was the Green Revolution, arriving in 1946. Great promises of development in the agricultural, industrial, energy and transportation sectors were delivered from the king himself to soldiers returning from the front. In fact – the event was seen as so prestigious that the soldiers were called back to the capitol to be greeted a second time for the ceremony to be performed more elaborately, in public. (IO Grandpa

Bista) That promises were delivered to raise living conditions through agriculture was no coincidence. The large majority of the population relied on subsistence farming, and the hope was also that by increasing the yield of the Nepali “marginal subsistence agriculture”, the state would also curb illegal incursions in the forest. Comaroff and Comaroff (1992) comments on this issue;

“The belief in the civilizing role of cultivation is as old as English colonialism itself... Agriculture made men peaceful, law-abiding, and governable. Agriculture... would cultivate the worker as he cultivated the land: production of new crops and the production of a new kind of self hood went together in the evangelical imagination.” (1992:246)

The intensified agriculture of the Green Revolution led to heightened living standard, at decreased labour costs (IO Grandpa Bista), but there was a lack of market access, and slow delivery of other development initiatives. Most farmers in Bishanku Narayan remained subsistence producers, and still most farmers rely on a combination between intensified agriculture with a more "traditional" integrated agroforestry that relies on natural fertilizers and rotation of crops.

In the 'Private Forest Nationalization Act' of 1957 remaining unregistered public and communal lands and forests were nationalized. This nationalization further eroded villagers' socially embedded incentives to protect their forests and other local resource. It undermined villagers' social obligations, motivation and incentives to protect communal resources, as it formally mitigated the social contract of village people in forest management. Villagers whose control of nearby forests had been removed often succumbed to the temptation of possession by capture. The nationalization program undermined the local systems of authority, which often maintained their charismatic power by showing their influence through practical action in a wide sector of society; the modern state was chipping away at the mandates of the village heads. The enforcement of the Act of 1957 is said to have resulted in the decline of forest area, as well as the forest condition in certain regions of Nepal, and was believed to have destroyed the 'indigenous systems', however some persisted and have outlived the Act of 1957. (Bartlett and Malla 1992 Chhetri 1994:20 Bajracharya 1983, Gurung 1994)

The Panchayat system was introduced in 1961, and the remaining fragmented administrative powers of the village head was transferred to new local officials. These traditional headmen, who gained their authority through the positions they held in social

structures of kin groups and through their achievements in society, played key roles in village affairs. They had served not only individual or community interests but a wide array of interests of all village members irrespective of clan, lineage, kin and caste. In local systems of authority, village heads were powerful in regard to all village activities including forests and pasture management. The introduction of the Panchayat system was an attempt to centralize authority, and this undermined the relatively participatory process with regard to resource management, and in its stead put in place a set of rules and obligations in line with the feudal state hierarchy. In addition, Nepal was proclaimed Nepal a Hindu Kingdom and Nepali, or Khas the only official language. These nationalist policies further marginalized Nepal's multi-religious, poly-vocal, and multilingual character, and formalizing the basis for already existing discriminatory practices. These transformations created not only conditions for resource destruction, but dismantling of the social order, or rather bureaucratization of the local society. In 1968 the Panchayat Forest Rules were introduced, in which all remaining common property lands were legally converted into *raikar*; taxable land – a government policy further accelerating the deteriorating conditions of local resources, as many people in the hills could not register arable lands in their names and they were forced to encroach further on forest areas. (Gurung 1994)

Faced increasing forest degeneration, and the incapacity of local management to efficiently cope with this problem, the government began to experiment in 1976 with the re-creation of communal property rights. Rasaily (2011) notes that

“Community forestry policies emerged in Nepal as a response to "institutional failure" at the local level, which had led to progressive degradation of hill forests. The 1976 National Forestry Plan acknowledges deterioration in the hill forest and the need for community involvement. Following the plan came amendments to the Forest Act in 1978, providing handing over of forest to Panchayat (lowest level of administration at the time).” (Rasaily 2011:13)

However, this could not be the only factor leading up to the passing of the 'Panchayat Forest Rules' and 'Panchayat Protected Forest Rules' in 1978. The revision was not only motivated by a sudden faith in local democracy or similar notions, a large part came from the concern to guard the commercial resources of the forest – 'the Wealth of the Nation' from the irresponsible population. According to Fisher (1994) the community forestry program was promoted largely on the basis of two entrenched premises; 1) The Forest Department had not been able to control the forest resources through the measures taken with a policy of gating,

due to relatively limited manpower in comparison to a large dispersed population and the wide geographical distribution of forest resources. (Fisher 1994:65) To make matters worse, there were worsening conditions of inequality and 'underdevelopment' in the country, partly because of the oppressive policies, which left the state incapable of delivering promises of increased living standards.

2) The second premise for the promotion of community forestry in Nepal, according to Fisher (1994), was the assumption of population growth was at the root of the problem of deforestation, now known as 'the Tragedy of the Commons'⁶, a now contested thesis.

Administrators reasoned that by empowering the local population through granting them user-rights, bound by rules and regulations of the '*ban nagh*' – the Forest Laws, enforced by the social contract of the 'community' itself; would be a more resource-efficient means to curb illegal activity than by a 'fencing' policy. When the community forestry program was being implemented in the 1970s and early 1980s, the existing local, 'informal systems' or 'flexible' systems of management were overlooked in the attempts to create new 'community forestry' institutions. This oversight was made on the side of academia because the 'indigenous local systems' were largely viewed through the perspective of primordialism or originalism, and thus thought destroyed, and on the side of state administration, these informal formations were largely illegible to the cadestrial maps and measurements. These systems were not necessarily “traditional” in the sense of having long pedigree, rather, they were often relatively recent and dynamic responses to changing situations. Customs are best understood as “living negotiated tissue of practices” (Scott 1998:34-35), and the flexible structure that lend a capacity for dynamic and adjustable response are important characteristics of what is often labelled 'indigenous' as opposed to 'modern' common property management. They were continually being adapted to new ecological and social circumstances and relationships. Chhetri (1994), also emphasise that "people not only know the importance of forest resources in their farming economy but have had a perception of *hamro ban* (our forest) towards local forests" (Chhetri 1994:29), insisting on the importance of identifying “legitimate” stakeholders, and ideally also continuity with such 'flexible' or 'informal' systems when establishing formal Community Forest User Groups (Chhetri 1994, Fisher 1994:70) to draw on the strengths of *hamro ban*. As the CFUG's were formulated, abstracted and established,

6 Hardin (1969) '*Tragedy of the Commons*' published in Science

the relationship between citizen and state was also reconstituted from one of obligation in a feudal hierarchy into a new contractual arrangement. (Feeny 1990, Chhetri 1994:31, Fisher 1994:65, Messersmidt 1994:99).

Another particularity arose through the distrust of the social sphere, perhaps reinforced by international environmental discourses; the introduction of a 'Forest First' policy in the Community Forest Program (Rasaily 2011:11). However, if it is seen as a continuity with the emphasis on production, then it is in accordance with the top-down model of Community Forestry seen in its first era, such as the the Decentralization Act of 1982 empowered Panchayat to form people's committees for forest management, mobilizing the local populace for an efficient management of forest resources. The Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-1990) prioritized the mobilization of people's participation in forest management to ensure their subsistence needs were met. The decade saw a number of donor agencies assisting His Majesty's Government (HMG) with resources and other aid for the Community Forest Programme, and since the late 1980s there was a significant increase, partly as a result of changing the focus from the panchayats, who were abolished, over to Community Forest User Groups (CFUG's) (Messersmidt 1994). The Master Plan for the Forestry Sector (HMG/N, 1988) allocated 47% of investment in the forest sector in support of Community Forestry programs, and envisioned that all the accessible forests should be handed over to FUGs⁷. (Rasaily 2011:13) It was a change in policy on a high modernist scale, aimed at radically changing not only policy and management, but the society itself. According to the Forest Sector Master Plan of 1988, Forest Act of 1993, and the Forest Regulation 1995, forests in Nepal have been categorised into private and state owned forests. Private forests are subdivided into Single entity and Private Land, whereas the categories of state, or national forest are more complex; 'Protected Forests', or reserves; 'Government Managed Forests', Religious Forest Management (forests managed by religious groups for conservation and self-sufficiency), and 'Community Forest Management' (Maharjan 2005). Biologists would add that in Lalitpur municipality there are subtropical, tropical, and temperate forests.

The formalized and legible CFUG represent a recognized group; stakeholders of 'common pool resources', with recognized user-rights and responsibilities for its management.

7 Such as the Narayan mandir in Bisankhu Narayan, which has its own religious forest with its own User Group.

(Fisher 1994:65-66)

“Of all the programs of Nepal's forestry sector, community forestry [CF] has been accorded the highest priority... Much to the satisfaction and pride of everybody involved in the program, Nepal's community forestry has been widely acclaimed as a successful forest management approach. Indeed, the program has resulted in rural farmers gaining increased access to forest resources, together with improvements in biodiversity and landscape values. To date, 1.1 million hectares of forest (about 25% of the national forest area) has been handed over to more than 13,000 Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs) involving 1.4 million households (35% of Nepal's total population). (HMGN, 2004)" (G.Karki 2006:2)

The link between environmental degradation and social inequality has led to a renewed call for the 'eradication of poverty', but now with 'local community-based models' centre-stage. These measures seem to encourage local participation in all aspects of political, economic and social life; and thus to empower and include local interests as they "bypass" a burdened state level (Dahal 2003, UNDP 2009, Turner & Hulme 1997). The 'local community management' model of Nepal has also received international acclaim; as a good example of a "sustainable and inclusive conservation practice, for its additional carbon sequestration, watershed protection, and for creating a buffer-zone between protected areas and communal agricultural land" (UNU-IAS 2008:2, Dahal 2003). However, even as the forest in ward 1 was replanted in the late 1980s, the pine species of *pinus perrula* and *pinus reuxburghi* were selected, rather than popular multi-purpose trees. This was primarily for the preferred traits of fast growth and commercial value, betraying a disinterest in 'non-timber forest resources' (NTFP's) and farmer interests, and a dedication to scientific principles modern forestry, and the precedence of fiscal policy concerns of the central administration.

The revolutionary years of the between 1994 and 2004, known locally in Bistacchap as “the Years of Trouble”, took its highest toll in the 'less-developed areas', as well as in excluded groups of population, including rural agricultural labourers. The conflict damaged physical infrastructure, along with the schools, health centres and other social facilities. The restrictions imposed on the mobility of people – not only restricted access to public services, but authorities on both sides forbade the informal gatherings of small groups in public places.

Even peaceful demonstrations were met with state violence. (UNDP 2009:22-23, Oxfam

2009⁸). The social landscape is changing in the wake of the civil war, and in the face of climate change. Marginalised communities tend to be those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change; such as a rising frequency of flash floods (ICIMOD 2008); changes in the monsoon rain patterns that disrupt production of staple crops and contribute to declining water resources; and an increase in the prevalence of vector- and water borne diseases (UNU-IAS 2008, Oxfam 2009). Changes in the environment and in weather pattern, as well as the strategies undertaken to remedy impacts of climate change, like Disaster Risk Reduction schemes, affect local conceptualisations of the social landscape and by extension the cosmologies.

8 Oxfam 2009. *Even the Himalayas have Stopped Smiling; Climate Change, Poverty and Adaptation in Nepal*. www.oxfam.org Oxfam International

CHAPTER 2

Rules, regulations and stakeholders in Bistacchap.

Philosophies of the Department of Forestry

To the Department of Forestry; the protection of biologic diversity and the “generation of benefits for the community” are the most important priorities of forest conservation. The District of Godawari, with more than 254 bird species, amongst them the unique *spiny babbler*, has been proclaimed an “Important Bird Area” by the NGO Board of Conservation. Indeed, there are more than 300 species of butterflies and numerous other species of insects, a deer reserve, but also leopards, wild pigeon, wild cocks and more species are regaining their hold in the area, unequivocally ascribed to the success of the CF model by Vanajit, secretary at the DoF (27.09.11). The philosophy and practice of community forestry in Nepal is often said to entail a “handover of responsibilities” and rights from the state to 'communities', represented by 'Community Forest User Groups' (CFUG's), administered by the Department of Forests (DoF). As explained by the DoF Secretary, Vanajit;

“People were separated from the forest in the past through the rules and regulations - '*ban nagh*', with problems such as poaching abounding. These issues have improved as people have become involved in the management and are given responsibilities. As people are entitled, they become responsible, and together we can solve common problems.”

As the policies changed in favour of empowering the local populace with more managerial responsibilities, more entitlements to user rights and control over distribution, the DoF shifted from policing to “raising awareness and fostering good management practices.” One of the rangers at the Godawari Forestry Department, whom I call Arpit, describes the regime before the reforms of the 1990s;

“The forestry department's officials were more like police before the institutional reforms in the 1990s; hunting down trespassers and criminals, now we are more like administrators, bureaucrats and advisers. It is impossible to separate the forest from people and people from forests. They are different, but depending on each other, and for the state to keep them apart only worsen the problems.”

Whereas a generation ago local villagers used to break into the forbidden Royal Botanical Gardens in Godawari – a favoured resort for the prince and royal family, after the royal

massacre in 2001⁹, the gardens have become a popular tourist attraction, resort, and a trendy place to take an acquaintance to embark on private, flirtatious strolls. The entry is free for any local villager, but some complain that the gardens now are in decay compared to their glory days during the monarchy when entry was prohibited, and quite a few ascribe this to laziness among the workers. The Botanical Gardens and their vicinity also contain several research facilities for agriculture, forestry and horticulture, and even a research facility of aquaculture is nearby, although it too has seen better days.

According to my informants at the CF program it is working well compared to the earlier Panchayat system. With this massive cluster of state and quite a few NGO research institutions in the vicinity, the average populace of Ward 1 in matters of agriculture and forestry is above average when it comes to education, both formal and informal – both men and women. Community Forestry under the CDO has a far more inclusive and accountable profile than the earlier *panchayat* regime, since it splits responsibilities between the CFUG's and the DoF. According to Sanjit in the CFUG, its structure is less exposed to patronage-client relationships, and it decentralizes decision-making as well as making the discourse accessible to locals through the CFUG. Community Forest User Groups (CFUG's) are formed on the basis contractual arrangement between the 'community' – represented by households, and the Department of Forestry. The households are responsible for the development, conservation, management and utilization of the forest in line with the terms and conditions stated in an operational plan (Baral, 1993). 'Community Forestry' (CF) management is founded on two constituting documents that formalize and stipulate the contractual relationship between 'the user group' and Department of Forestry. These are '*The Constitution of the Community Forest User Group*', "which governs the people", and '*The Management Plan*' "which governs the forest". Scientific principles of management are utilized to 'manage' both entities through formalized regulations and institutionalized norms. (Chhetri 1994:22, Fisher 1994, DoF Forester Vasantraj 26/08/11). Both the department and the User Groups are provided with the authority to sanction violators by issuing fines, exclusion from the CFUG and hence from the 'community', but the DoF has the additional power to recommend rebuking CFUG charters. '

These two constituting documents used to be part of nationally coordinated five-year

⁹ The Royal Massacre June 1. of 2001 at the Royal Narayanhiti Palace where most of the royal family was killed by the Prince.

plans. However, this policy was changed in favour of local differentiation. It was pointed to the fact that different forest compositions have different needs, especially considering the soil quality and the rates of regeneration. The change was thus made favouring local forestry concerns ahead of national standardization control, and now Management Plans are open to revision between 5 and 10 years; within the national framework. This change in policy favouring diversity and flexibility in planning points to a persistent 'forest first policy'. But what changed the policy in favour of local management was not social concerns, rather an ecological focus on the forest condition; led by modern and scientific principles of administration. IO Vanajit at the DoF noted that “*10 years might seem a long time to a human, but to a forest 10 years is a very short period of time.*”

The planning in Godawari is revised every 10 years and when these constituting documents are to be negotiated, incoming suggestions from all 9 wards are added to the agenda of the meeting. There are several factors that affect the relationship between the DoF and CFUG's at this juncture, for instance the degree of textualization and formalization of participation, the degree and nature of contact between foresters and CFUG members, and the attendance of the CFUG to, and degree of coordination at the annual CFUG meeting. Experts also enter into the surveying and planning of these events, and may not favour neither DoF nor the CF positions. Meetings are held over several weeks before representatives meet with the DoF to negotiate the nationally prepared plan for possible local adjustments. There is some leeway in regards to the Constitution, but the Departments act as a conservative buffer, usually requiring several engagements before any changes are implemented, requiring additional approval from central levels (DoF Vanajit 26/08/11).

Governing Nature

The Management Plan is the document that “governs of the forest”, and specifying the principles and practices of Community Forestry according to the Nepali forest acts, as well as central plans for forest and rural development. The community forest is managed according to scientific planning. In fact, the Community Forest of Ward 1 was replanted in the regimental fashion of even-distanced lines populated by the pine species of *pinus perrula* and *pinus reuxburghi*, 25 years ago. These species have a rapid rate of growth and good survival rates in most environments, in addition to being producers of resin which can be used for making turpentine, biofuel, and other useful products (Forester Vasantraj 26/08/11). Collection of resin from the pine trees are performed according to the scheduled management plan, and the trees are divided into even sized blocks that rotate, so that every tree is utilized only every fifth year.

The state has rolled back its presence, and although the forests still are patrolled by DoF rangers from the office in Godawari, they are meant as overseeing and surveys of the management regime that is in place, and their primary responsibility lies beyond the Community Forests. They regularly embark on patrols with armed guards. It is uncommon that they directly encounter illegal activity, and if they come across irregularities they record them for updating the statistical data feeding the Management Plan, and possible official action. There are indeed few grievous oversights or violations that would need immediate response. To illustrate, there is a total ban on hunting in the entirety of the Lalitpur municipality, and according to local DoF officials and local informants alike, no problems of poaching in the area. Even when a leopard was spotted one night in the dark season, rumoured to have attacked a man on a bicycle, no-one considered going to hunt for it. As the objectives for the patrols have changed, so has the training of the rangers and the



Resin being tapped from the CF trees for turpentine production

guards. Rangers now also make notes of changes in the landscape, and progress in the objectives of the scientific management, and have the dual aim of being available to random villagers they might encounter in the forest to offer advice – whereas earlier they mostly were a threat or deterrent to the locals they encountered, and this now has changed to a preventive policing, or investigation.

Among the forestry officials I met in the Godawari district, the rangers were the most self-conscious in regards to self-representation and their activities as representatives of the CF programme. As the field personnel with most exposure to the stakeholders, the rangers have to balance the dual and, according to Chhetri (1994) incompatible roles of policing the forests as well as promoting community forestry. They have to save or protect the forest from the people and also try to foster people's participation in protection and management. Chhetri questions a ranger on this dual role and is told that in implementing community forestry you need to work with rural people, and for this the DoF need to establish a rapport, which is a process that requires time. Official actions such as reporting violations, sanctioning and prosecution erodes the rapport of the individual rangers involved, but also the foundation for cooperation between the DoF and the institutions of CF. This destructive unravelling of social networks works faster than rapport can be rebuilt. Unless sanctioning of the 'community' is used only sparingly, the local people may develop negative feelings towards the philosophy and practice of community forestry itself under such a 'paradoxical situation' (Chhetri 1994:26). This explanation of the self-management of the rangers suit the perspective told to me by Arpit; of a ranger as balancing the roles of mediator/consultant with surveyor/inspector, and the importance of a good relationship between the rangers and the stakeholders is key to building a successful management regime and promoting the trust of CFUG stakeholders (Gurung 1994, DoF Arpit 26/08/11).

"The encroachment of forests by individual families [is one of the main sources of concern in regards to deforestation in the district, as] these days everyone wants a road right up to their front porch. Though it may seem insignificant on a case-by case scale, on a wider, aggregate level, seen per annum, the totality causes much deforestation."
(DoF Secretary Vasantraj)

Again, it was pointed out that the local problems were insignificant when compared to the Terai. But such free riding undermines the CF programmes rationale of empowered local responsible management, which rests on consensus. The CFUG's are usually unwilling to go

against individual stakeholders that wish improved access to their farms. With the underlining notion that people and population growth is responsible for deforestation, the DoF ascribe the continuation of these developments, often unreported, but sometimes with the support of the CDC, as lapses in rationality. In this system of governance great emphasis is placed on the interdependence between farmers and the forest; that farmers need a healthy forest for sustaining an agricultural system. The benefits provided by a well-managed forest are many; materials for construction; fodder; water pools; grass; plants and other NtFPs; locations for discrete rendez-vous' and picnics; it purifies the water; adds nutrients and minerals that are crucial to 'regeneration' of the forest, and to agricultural systems. The 'community' *relies* on the forest and is entitled to it only as far as it manages the forest in a responsible manner. In promoting this perspective; the forest as a necessary service provider, the DoF act as representatives for the forest. Although the DoF emphasize the benefits that return to the stakeholders, its emphasis is that the destinies and fortunes of people and forest are interdependent, and that the importance of this awareness in the 'community' is crucial to the success of community forestry. In fact, the 'community' is not irreplaceable; the entitlements granted to each CFUG can be retracted, and as the 'community' is as much a product of Community Forestry as the CFUG's are, they will be replaced by another CFUG; but the Forest, if mismanaged, is not so easily regrown. It is thus important to note that a 'community' does not equal to the society that it arise from, although in the case, Bistachhap, the administrative delineation of Ward seemed apt to cover the “legitimate” stakeholders. The DoF retains their hegemony as expert foresters, administrating the tools of scientific management that are only accessible to the 'community' through the DoF, and the training provided by them.

There are several local representatives, among them Sanjit, chairman at the CFUG of Bisankhu Narayan's Ward 1, who have commented that the rapid growth of the trees in the Community Forest make them bad construction materials, and their roots are less capable of retaining water and nutrients. There are worries that a homogenous forest composition increases the risk of erosion especially during the monsoon season, and is a cause of increasing acidity and that the fast growing trees are an unsustainable drain on the local water supply. Both forester Vasantraj and CFUG chairmen Sanjit confirm that the uniformity of the plantation forest of Ward 1 causes problems. In particular because the pine litter cover the

forest bed and prevent regeneration of undergrowth, or second generation pine. At the same time acid levels are higher than recommended and rising, with a negative effect on the forest condition and productivity, not abated by scientific forestry's aversion to fire and preference for monoculture (Scott 1998, IO DoF Vasantraj, IO CFUG Sanjit). This will, acknowledged by both CFUG and DoF lead to Forest Death unless countered by some measures.¹⁰ The CFUG of Ward 1 has suggested changing the forest composition, as a measure to improve the forest and soil condition, incorporating a more diverse range of multi-purpose trees¹¹ that are slow-growing and have a more balanced effect on the ecosystem. In addition, they are interested in diversifying the range of species in the forest to increase 'resilience' and incorporate fruit and other useful trees in the community forest. The District DoF in Godawari are taking these suggestions under consideration, and are open for diversifying the existing forest. However they are not presently undertaking any plantation projects; most planting is done by the civil society or private locals. To re-plant the community forest would not only be a large undertaking, but it is complicated by the issue of grazing, which the DoF leaves for the CFUG to govern. Further, forest health is also the daily responsibility of the CFUG, and ultimately the degeneration of the forest is as much a problem for the local farmers and herders as it is for the CFUG.

Fodder and grass is a 'common pool resource' (CPR), and herders daily take their goats into the CF to graze. It is currently unregulated by any formal rule, and if it would be regulated this would be the purview of the CFUG – and, Sanjit informed me, it would be not only be a political problem to restrict grazing rights, but also a problem of disseminating the necessary 'awareness'. In fact, fencing would seem a better solution. The DoF had no objections to the issue of fencing, as long as they did not in some way infringe upon the

10 Scott describes the conditions when allowed to proceed to the extreme of 'forest death' “...spruce roots are normally very shallow. Planted on former hardwood soil, the spruce roots could follow the deep roots channels of the former hardwood in the first generation. But in the second generation the root systems turned shallow on account of progressive soil compaction. As a result, the available nutrient supply for the trees became smaller. The spruce stand could benefit from the mild humus accumulated in the first generation by the hardwood, but it was not able to produce a mild humus itself. Spruce litter rots much more slowly than broad-leaf litter and is much more difficult for the fauna and flora of the upper soil layer to decompose. Therefore a raw humus developed in most case. Its humic acids started to leach the soil under our humid climate and impoverished the soil fauna and flora. This caused an even poorer decomposition and a faster development of raw humus... then the whole nutrient cycle got out of order and eventually was nearly stopped” Plochmann 1968 *ibid.* Scott 1998:20)

11 Popular choices are fruit trees like "*lapsi*" – *choerospondais axillaris*; and "*uttis*" – *Alnus nepalensis*)

stipulated management plan. However, there are no resources for fences, neither in the case of plantations, nor for protection of specific sites or species. If there were local initiatives to fence off areas, this would not matter to the DoF. It would be up to CFUG and its constituents, feasibly external donors, and the DoF may supply the trees and consult in 'scientific forestry'. This illustrates that the CFUG is within its right to initiate projects as long as they are self-sufficient and within the parameters of the Management Plan and the Constitution (DoF Secretary Vasantraj, DoF Forester Vanajit 26/08/11).

Grass is not the only 'common pool resource' in Nepal, water under “community control”, and is “the property of the community, not the state” is the unison testimony of my local informants, including the DoF. That is, water is managed by User Groups along the same lines as the CF. Before the installation of modern water filtration installations and new water pipes, the distribution of water was a source of conflict in Bishanku Narayan, in part due to technical conditions such as the pressure in the few water pipes that supplied the valley, which favoured the households near the origin of the distribution system. Now, every



The Shiva mandir of Ward 1, where the Day of the Dead, or "Yellow Party" was celebrated

ward is to receive its own water pipeline, a project that is far under way. This has, for instance, led to the near termination of the aquaculture research facility as the water for its upkeep is almost entirely being directed to village consumption instead. Despite, or perhaps because of improved access to water, there is now an increasing water shortage. Previously, there was only one main water pipe distributing water from Godawari through the valley to Ward 1, and with that solution many households were deprived altogether, and the location along the water pipe accorded you positional advantage in availability and quality of service. The new, modern, equitable water pipes are evenly distributing and remarkably efficient, but the water source is proving limited, and variable in its supply. It has been noted that the water table is sinking, and the quality deteriorating, but not in an alarming rate. But, in the face of this, there is less water available for government purposes such as nearby research facilities.

The water conflict becomes relevant to the forest when the fast-growing pine forest becomes suspected of not performing its invaluable task towards the farmer as described by the DoF's forest-friendly narrative. Many, including prominent members of the Community Forest User Group point to the forest as a main drain on water resources, and the cause of the poor condition of the soil and groundwater. The Department of Forestry, however, point to changes in water consumption patterns as a result of the improved access to clean water, as the most important reason for this experienced water shortage. A larger portion of accessible water is used today for consumption and household purposes than has ever been before, as access to water has been markedly improved the last 10 years with NGO's assisting in installing household water taps. Both the forest management and the responsibility for the 'sustainable' management of water and forests have been ceded to community user groups, and even though the DoF will not impinge the CFUG's initiatives as long as they are in line with regulations, they do not seem to be supportive in terms dedication of resources for practical action (IO DoF Vasantraj). This is also in line with the policy of 'self-sufficiency' which encourage the CFUG's to seek support outside of state institutions, of course still according to government requirements as stated in their 'Constitution' and 'Management Plan'.

Governing People

Arpit, the Ranger reiterated that *"there is no use in trying to separate forests from people. That is why it was necessary with reform in the 1970s; to empower people to make*

them responsible." The Constitution of the Community Forest User Group is the document that "governs the people", according to the laws and regulations of "rational" management and administration. It is seen as essential to the success of the Community Forest Programme that the stakeholders are educated in these means, methods, and perspectives of modern, rational, scientific forestry, and the benefits that a healthy community forest yields. This awareness in the each member is crucial, because responsibility is decentralized on the premise that the 'community' can manage the regulations in accordance with plans, and the common interests of state and people. The DoF and its rangers thus place an emphasis "awareness raising" and consultation of local villagers in their daily management practice in order to promote responsible behaviour and self-sufficient, sustainable management.

Studies related to the community forestry programme in Nepal, have demonstrated Community Forestry as a potential tool with the capacity to relieve the central government of a lot responsibilities of protection; through education in the proper practices of scientific management. Being 'embedded' in the society, the CF management model enforces the national plans mainly through the participation of the local population, ideally with minimal external support. This increases the accountability of the system, and due to the contractual nature of the Constitution of the CFUG's, the state devolves little control and power. The system fosters more equitable distribution by giving responsibility for the management of the gains of the forest to the CFUG, and contributes to awareness both of the objectives, and the modern methods of management among the wider population (Rasaily 2011:11, Chhetri 1994:27).

The definition of a community made up of shared interests is more than an assumption of some pre-existing harmonious society; it is a template form that once formalized and employed works towards its own aim. In order to apply for a CFUG status, one must, implicitly, formulate shared interests, and through the negotiations one engages in with the DoF through modern discourse valuing both 'scientific expertise' and local concerns, the CFUGs conforms to the state targets as formulated in the constituting documents and plans. Through practice, the 'community' shapes a government that resembles more the institutions of forestry governance they engage, than a representation of the 'community' that they emanate from. Through the active management of the forest and the education administered by the DoF, the stakeholders of Community Forestry are remade into the image of specialized

community foresters that are fit citizens for replacing the overstretched state apparatus, provided they follow the conditions stipulated in the CFUG Constitution and the Management Plan. Hence the biannual forestry training that any villager is encouraged to attend is crucial to the forestry programme's efficiency as a whole, as those regularly attending are 'cultivated' through specialized CF schooling 'en par' with that of the professional foresters, management and fiscal training, and are encouraged to promote participation among their fellow community members.

According to the DoF officials in Godawari (27.09.11) rules and regulations are occasionally broken, but this is a very small problem. Further, violations are usually due to ignorance. Ignorance of the rules and regulations – of the *proper* management practices, misunderstandings; and this is best left for the CFUG to sanction. The binaries awareness and ignorance, responsibility and recklessness are frequently found in their rhetoric, and it is as though the only explanation for not following the forester's “scientifically” condoned advice must be ignorance or irrationality. A case in point is continuing practice of using Sal wood for house construction is a nuisance to the local DoF officials, who – although there is no significant Sal growth in the district – they see the use of this vulnerable species as a breach of the norms of responsibility and good governance; after all the export of 'Sal' wood is what drives the degeneration in the Terai. That the Sal is not from Bistachhap is no excuse, if anything it is incriminating as the timber brings with it the suspicion of organized crime. It is antisocial, and a breach of the fundamental traits of community forestry; ultimately – a problem of 'awareness'.

This focus on 'awareness' and 'ignorance' tends however to be reductive. Most violations of 'rules and regulations' that I have witnessed have happened in spite of awareness of these rules. These incidents have all been minor, but some increase the hazards to the society as a whole. For instance the 'new road' that was built over a three years connecting Ward 6 with Godawari, that went ahead without approved plans at the cost of 2 lachs that was collected by the populace as the road went without government support. This road was constructed despite of government disapproval and it took several years to complete. I will return to this remarkable example of 'people's power' in the next chapter. A less invasive example comes from a late afternoon where I was invited by some young informants into the community forest to fetch some firewood. This is, of course, highly 'irregular', as almost all

forestry activity is performed collectively. They had already sought out the suitable tree; apparently dying. After we had finished cleaving it in parts, we carried the logs through the village to the Shiva *mandir*, where they were to be used for a bonfire to celebrate the Day of the Dead. There are made provisions for such religious use of forest in the Constitution, but the quantity that had been assigned for the festival had proven inadequate, and it was necessary to send the kids to fetch more. It was deemed 'troublesome', not least a bit too late, to notify and apply for the additional use of forest timber for the festival that was later the same evening, and they felt very certain that if they had applied, they would get approval in any case. The violation was really just a breach of protocol, and they felt that to follow it in this case would only entail needless effort and risk of 'problems' with the authorities – which



Playing cards outside the teashops in Bistachhap

nobody wanted.

Local community management has a strong rhetoric of community engagement in forestry, and participation in forest activity. However, accomplishment in projects undertaken by NGO's and larger international institutions (such as UN REDD) are measured through the idiom of 'performance'. 'Performance' is understood as a measure of the

quantity and success of the committee work and of the forest management itself – the quantified evaluative procedures of government and donors, and it ensures that success is less perceived in the trees raised, or the people enfranchised, than in the spread of committees and creation of deliberative development spaces. The spread and activity of forest protection committees has, according to authors such as Sivaramakrishnan (2000) and Fisher (1994) become a main legitimating mechanism of such programmes; their work crucially determines the success of individual schemes and by their aggregation the success of forest management itself. But, when it comes to participation in Nepali community forestry, at least as practised

in Bistachhap, the pro-active presence of 'community members' is itself implicitly forest management by preventing the illicit use, a parallel to the doctrine of 'preventive police work'. However, this participation is only measured once it is formally documented somehow. Thus, modern performance measurement still suffers from an overemphasis on the quantity and quality committee activity and the “programmatically insistence on committees” can lead to “rituals of personal commitment” (Herzfeld 1993:37), from the representatives. But there is also a tendency of bureaucratic organizations to confuse formal committees with effective organization and mobilization (Fisher 1994), especially when measured through the lens of 'performance'.

This liability is aggravated as many CFUGs suffer from a bad attendance rate, especially at the intra-CFUG meetings, where chairmen meet to coordinate and discuss plans and policy. This is mainly due to poor routines for ensuring feedback from each CFUG's 'representatives' to their 'stakeholders', combining with sparse infrastructure and limited time to prioritize between agriculture, family, job and forestry. These factors combine to discriminate peripheral CFUG's, since the committee sessions are themselves treated as an indicator of CFUG 'performance', and these wards are indeed perceived as inept in regards to forestry in part due to their bad 'performance'. But this measure underestimates non-formal, or 'illegible' activity as mobilized through 'thulamanji' or by the CFUG informally. These problems of infrastructure and relaying information are also problems of accountability – it is hard to keep abreast of the work of the CF programme if the representatives don't attend, or if they don't report back to the community. But in regards to local autonomy – lax attendance in these meetings has little effect, as most of the information is received from the national directives to be spread to local constituents. It is mostly an issue of coordinated management, not one of coordinated mobilization – which is still largely performed outside of and prior to formal channels. The under-reporting and the lack of control over “reckless development projects” can not be ascribed to 'ignorance', but may have to do with a lack of institutional routine for feedback and inspection, and a self-interested dis-association on the part of the CFUGs or other agents of 'development'. Under-reporting could still be motivated by a lack of trust in the state apparatus, as not many years ago the forestry department persecuted those that are today the managers of the forest, and their guards still carry weapons into the field (IO CFUG Sanjit).

All effective systems, whether they have a formal structure or not, have an institutional base which comprises at least some agreed practices for regulating forest use. Stakeholders are usually fairly clearly specified through recognized user rights. In the 'informal systems', infringements on norms and regulation were punished by village leaders according to the socially approved code of conduct. Rules with sanctions are sometimes involved, and the CFUG has authority to sanction breaches of the '*ban nagh*' – the rules and regulations of community forestry. Its tools for sanctioning are fining, and exclusion of members from user rights, or to report their crimes to higher levels for formal prosecution. CFUG's in Bistachhap, however, rarely formally sanction their members. Individual exploitation is instead kept in check and local resources were protected by individual beneficiaries; as in the 'informal' systems, where there was a reliance not only on the economic equitable redistribution of goods, but also on considerations such as family needs, communal responsibility, respect, self-representation welfare, and strings of obligation between individuals and families. As the ranger Arpit said, "In CF management, the people police through the CFUG". Only if the problems are too intricate or grave for social sanctioning, the CFUG will turn to external law enforcement (Vasantraj, Vanajit, Arpit DoF 26/08/11, Shrestha 1990 *ibid.* Gurung 1994, Fisher 1994).

Community forest management accomplishes its utopian aspects of governmentality through tapping into these informal networks of interdependence by recruiting households into community management. Through participation in the field and in committees, as well as in training sessions, the 'entrepreneurs of community management' forge associations and rivalries, and they are equipped with the rhetoric of scientific forestry that enable them to engage experts, but more importantly, other villagers, in the deliberative space. But the CFUG is dependent on the cooperation of the 'community', and in especially contentious issues there is a reluctance to act for fear of losing the legitimacy that the User Group depends on in order to mobilize. There is difference and discord within Bistachhap, but this is usually under-communicated. This reflects back on issues of conformity; and to a certain extent on village reputation. Compared to my urban informants there is a notably low level of antagonism between law enforcement and the local populace of Bistachhap, but there is a reluctance of getting involved or involving outside authority unless the suspected responsible party is external to the local society. This may be related to a tendency to associate crime with non-

locals. For instance, when there was a burglary with fatal outcome in the valley, no-one considered it possible that a local could be the culprit – as everyone knew everyone, and the responsible would have been apprehended. It turned out to be someone from a neighbouring valley. While gambling is illegal it is well within what is acceptable behaviour; no-one would imagine reporting it to 'the authorities'. “Small matters”; breaches in norms; debt; abuse; and petty crimes are all usually deemed private or family matters. Transgressors that seriously and consistently disrupt social order are frequently deemed 'psychotic', and the last category of serious antisocial behaviour, or inscrutable or serious crime, is seen as best left for external authorities to handle. External, in the sense that the CFUG have indeed authority to sanction, but also to arbitrate or mediate in conflicts particular to their fields.

The standardizing and formalizing processes of statecraft seek to induce a certain administrative culture within the CFUG's; the constitution and forest laws, formal proceedings, requirements of written protocols, etc. Through these founding and steering documents, the modern, rational expert local community forester is cultivated, and the legibility and transparency and accountability of the CFUGs is thought ensured, at the expense of flexibility (Fisher 1994, O.Gurung 1994, Mikesell 1994, Scott 1998). The state channels its forestry agenda through the Bistachhap CFUG and the engagement in scientific forestry with varying success and enthusiasm spread the 'modern' goals and methods of CF through the general population. With the national aims and the bureaucratic form incorporated into local forestry, capitalist citizens and landscapes are forged. As the state educates people in proper management, not only of the landscape, but also of proper administrative culture, hence of proper self-management; a greater awareness is fostered, probably unintentionally, of time as 'resource'.

CHAPTER 3

Community governance

'Communities' and 'Big Men'

'Communities' are usually represented in development narratives of 'local management' and 'devolution' in a simplified template form as homogeneous 'timeless entities' of shared meaning and experience. As simplifications, template concepts occlude complex social interrelations and frictions that arise from the very existence of identity (Baldwin 2003), and they disregard the particular socio-historical and environmental contexts of specific localities. As such, templates and narratives are fictions that create their 'objects of inquiry' by distortion and social categorization. The distillation of conceptions into a standardized, simplified template means that other possible conceptions and dimensions are being obscured (Haenn 2005).

When I asked Vanajit at the Department of Forestry to define a 'community', and he arrived, referring to their guidelines to the 'community' as “a collection of people with common interests”. Indeed, Fisher argues that such 'communities' of common interests are the basis for community forestry (CF). Given that the Community Forest User Groups (CFUG's) are founded and dismantled on the basis of charters that stipulate their common interests, the DoF and the ban nagh are in fact key in formalizing these 'communities' as manifest entities. As was mentioned earlier, most of these CFUG's have a very thin continuity with previous so-called 'indigenous' institutions, and are created as they are ratified, and although some commonalities presumably are necessary to galvanize people into the application for CFUG's status, it is erroneous to presume that homogeneous common interest is the sole legitimate interests of a local society. However, most CFUG's are not only ratified as the representatives of the 'community' as a whole, but a “representative crystallization” of it. (DoF Secretary Vanajit 26/08/11) Operationalizing the CFUG as *the* 'community' makes its representatives the recognized, authorized, “cultivated” spokespeople of the society, who are empowered to engage in the modern discourse of scientific management – legitimate managers of the postulated 'common interests'; local interests that are at the same time shaped by 'cultural diversity', and in the end coinciding with national agenda as managed by the DoF.

Through high modernist methods of abstraction, the central administration create the CFUG template as a miniature of the society, and in engaging the local populace in the management of resources, the hope is to galvanize them in the cultivation not only of a 'sustainable' – which in Nepal is to be taken primarily to mean self-sufficient – forestry management, but just as importantly; the cultivation of new citizens through participation.

As mentioned in chapter 1, the local, 'flexible' systems were typically comprised by clans or extended families, and regulated wide aspects of society. While they were not utopian arrangements of equality or egalitarianism, they were part of a plural deliberative, or social space 'the multi-vocal society' (Geshiere 2004), which preceded the modern nation state institutions and reforms. Arguably, by being 'flexible' these local knowledge regimes did not disappear due to state modernization efforts, but rather adapted, and utilized what was offered by the modern state, as incorporating hybrid seeds in rotation and traditional, or rather - “hybrid” agriculture.

There is a tendency, especially in a relatively uniform (in terms of caste at least) local society like Bistachhap, for the heterogeneity of households not to be reflected in the way CFUG's manage their community resources, in line with Dev et al., (2003) observations. For instance, a minority of the Ward 1 CFUG members, which include the board of chairmen, argue in favour of an equity-based form of distribution, rather than the current equality-distribution. Neupane et al., (2004) in their study from the Dhading district have, for instance concluded that CF must make *special* provisions and incentives to include and mobilize disadvantaged and marginalized people in order to alleviate poverty; which can also only be positive in the context of increasing awareness and facilitating 'best practice' management – to the extent that the established CFUG's are capable of incorporating such marginal groups (Rasaily 2011:14). However, the majority is so far not inclined to change arrangements in favour of stakeholders relatively 'disadvantaged'. According to Sanjit in the CFUG, this also ascribed to “a lack of awareness” of the most just arrangement of the economy. Rasaily (2011:15) however contend that wealthier households tend to benefit from such a status quo, and since the households who dominate the decision-making processes and assimilate most information about community forestry through organized events frequently are the same. Those engages in the committees, courses and administrative activities, establish deeper relationships associated with the forestry discourse and official representatives than other

stakeholders. There is thus a tendency for local elites to be favoured in this process of expanding social deliberative spaces (Dahal 2003), and they have very little incentive, neither is there a perceived need to alter anything or to change any of the rules governing the way CFUG's operate. However the general, adult suffrage, that is inclusive of women and young men – however they are discriminated outside the formal sessions, make the CFUG a new arena for participation, and reconstruction of the interrelationships that make up the society, while at the same forging a 'community of common interests'.

So, on the one hand, there is hence a correspondence with Dahal (2003) and Rasaily (2011) who points to the tendency for local elites to be favoured in this process of expanding social deliberative spaces. On the other hand, we see that through the 'universal suffrage' where each household is represented in the CFUG; the CFUG creates a new deliberative space that, while favouring merit, education and charisma¹², makes room for upward mobility. In fact, the CF-programme creates the environment where it is possible for almost everyone to effect change through mobilization. In order to mobilize and increase the appeal of particular projects, the enlistment of '*thulamanji*', or 'big men' is still important. In Nepal, a significant emphasis is placed on the charismatic power, or 'social capital' to use Bordieu's term, and there are still significant power exercised through patron-client relationships, and the important *thulamanji* – 'big men'¹³ who are social entrepreneurs that gain their social capital through their capacity to influence and effect practical change. Fisher (1994) separates three factors that enable '*thulamanji*' to retain their positions and influence, while discussing Dulal Brahmins';

- 1.) As they are comparatively rich, they place others in debt either by providing loans or small gifts.
- 2.) They act as brokers (intermediaries) between villagers and officials or project representatives. Their networks, reputation and charismatic influence are crucial to attract or affect investors, and they derive much of their reputation *as thulamanji* from
- 3.) the capacity to effect favourable change and power to influence outsiders (IO Sanjit).

If we now look at the terms associated with the *thulamanji*, we see that these are 'big men' of action, they derive their charismatic power to mobilize, not through their

12 While women are under-represented in most formal CFUG activities, and communal efforts emphasize the male representative by default, young informants have not reported discrimination due to their age.

13 The term of big man here refers to Sahlins' classical article from Oceania (Sahlins 1963).

capital alone, but more importantly from their credible association with successful 'developments' and political enterprise (of others). What makes you a 'big man' is your ability to effect change, or 'merit'. In light of these considerations, the CFUG is opening a room for upwards mobility, as the only other constraints on the inner workings of the CFUG seem to be gender and the degree of 'embeddedness' in the local community.

According to several informants, money is a means to effect change, thereby rising in the social hierarchy, possibly to the position of a *thulamanji* oneself. However, others contend that only '*thulamanji*' have the wealth necessary to affect the society, and that the charismatic power of the '*thulamanji*' is necessary to raise and preserve wealth for oneself, the family, and the society. This is a local theory of social mobility and mobilization, and a source of speculation around the theme of power. The power of a '*thulamanji*' is intimately connected to his community, from whom he derives it. Most '*thulamanji*' are private enterprisers, often businessmen, but it is expected that they direct significant amounts of their wealth to the local society – through 'development'; such as the construction of temples or roads, and the like. This separates the '*thulamanji*' from the politician who is seen as self-interested and corrupted by politics, and the selfish investor, who is unreliable – that is, lacks the *embeddedness* of a '*thulamanji*', and privatize the profits. There are considerable risks involved in this top tier of the local society, as to manage the role of '*thulamanji*' in many ways involves corrupting politicians while not becoming one of the corrupt politicians oneself. Also there are issues of personal finance involved, because one must not seem self serving, lest one loose popular support, neither can one give away ones fortune, and loose the wealth that is the basis for one's material power to affect change. As such, the '*thulamanji*' are experts at influencing political and bureaucratic institutions, and their support and influence is itself currency to its constituency.

To illustrate, there was a sentiment that the chairman, and my 'gatekeeper' Sanjit – who is striving to attain the renown as a '*thulamanji*'; a man of influence and capacity to effect change – was too untrustworthy to have the position on the board. Although he was local, from the majority portion of the populace, and his father had been a palace guard, he was by some seen as been working too much abroad as a migrant, and lacked the settled connections that he ought to have to be a trustee of the community. This point of being settled, or

'embedded' to gain trust and status is an important one in the context of an agrarian society. Thulamanji gain this label through consistent inequality in reciprocal relationships, and a long term relationship with the community, for instance in the support of temple or roadworks – gifts that most other individuals or families could reciprocate. To become a *thulamanji* without a substantial sum of money, even as the chair of a CFUG with a donor NGO at hand, is unlikely as it takes time to earn the reputation through consistent successful endeavour.

The local Manakamana *mandir*¹⁴ stands as a testimony to the power and political



Former brick factory and stone quarry, current Manakamana mandir

cunning of the 'thulamanji'. The complex was previously a brick factory, but there were social dismay at the lack of benefit to the community – as the factory employed migrant workers at low wages. The factory was owned in a leasehold contract with the state by a non-local businessman, while the soil that it stood on still was community ground, and there were protests against this anti-social behaviour (it would be expected that the businessman at least granted some gifts, or the like, but there were no 'goods' to be gained). Finally, so the story goes, with after enlisting several local *thulamanji*, the people managed to persuade a *sadhu*, or 'holy man' to accompany them in occupying the factory facilities during a Holy Day, and

14 Manakamana is the goddess of Hindus

begin constructing a symbol of unity – the Manakamana *mandir*. The efficiency of the action, and the connections with party politicians in the Maoist party that was in power at the time proved invaluable as the state denied to enforce the claims of the factory owner, and sided with the popular action. Since the land was community owned in the first place, it simply reverted back to them. The factory, in name, is still owned by an Indian businessman, but its interior is long gone, and the bricks have been used for embellishments of the compound. This is what one may call 'effective collective action'.

The Bureaucracy and the People – 'CF' a technocratic regime of administration

There is a gap between policy rhetoric and real implementation of 'devolution' in forest policy in Nepal. While Sivaramakrishnan (2000) and Dahal (2003) suspect local-level institutions of being appropriated and used as sites for political lobbying and patronage practices by local elites, and misused by political leaders following devolution of political power, Mikesell (1994) disputes there is any significant power to appropriate; merely responsibilities. In the formulation and planning process, government priorities and concepts are 'mainstreamed' to local levels, while benefits for local users are considered only as incentives provided by the government, and hence there are great difficulties in incorporating local interests in development planning despite their recognized importance. Experts like foresters still make claims of authoritative control over relevant expertise, and influence the decisions at local levels as they get involved in wider issues of local politics and land administration through the rise of scientific expertise in deliberative spaces, in which they still share hegemony with a few other state departments. This contradicts the rhetoric of local autonomy and devolution, as the elite knowledge regime is restrictive, and unaccountable to constituents that don't dedicate themselves to the CFUG work (Brosius, Tsing and Zerner 1996, Sivaramakrishnan 2000, Dahal 2003).

For example, District Forest Office staff in Godawari directly influences the preparation and constitution of management plans, allocations of funds, collection of taxes, and control over selling of surplus timber and non-timber forest products (NtFPs) from 'community', while formally this is the domain of the CFUG's. Periodical amendments of Forest Act 1993 favour government bureaucrats and expert knowledge regimes, and indicate a scepticism towards local autonomy, betraying a weak commitment on the part of the

government to implementing measures of 'devolution' democratic powers as stated the Forest Act (Dahal 2003). As bureaucratic officials are not accountable by reference to their rights and duties, there is still a wide range of physical, social and cognitive gaps between the local people and government personnel (Gurung 1994).

I had the fortune of interviewing former Elected Village President Radha Krishna Basnet at his estate where we ate fruit on his front terrace with view over the valley. He was happy to talk about politics, since few came to discuss such issues with him these days. Former CDC Krishna had been a 'thulamanji' before getting elected as Village President, but as the political career failed him, he lost his charismatic power as well, and although wealthy, he is no longer considered a 'thulamanji'. Krishna emphasised that the powers of planning, legislation and execution “over the CFUG Constitution and Management Plan should be given to over to the CFUG's. They could also grow vegetables directly in the forest – a source of wealth for people. It should not be necessary to ask a 'superior authority'.” He was of the very opinion that in a true local democracy, “people should have absolute power regardless what they want to do” and the bureaucratic authorities should be “reduced to a monitoring role”. He complained that in the current multi-tiered bureaucratic system, only in the event of problems or requisitions would the many different committees and departments communicate, and there is a great lack of coordination, communication and documentation. He had, himself overseen the institution of the new CDC office and a new archival system to achieve more legibility and transparency, an improvement from the previous 'informal' system. But due to the centralized archive, the near complete destruction of the archives was achieved during the fire-bombing of the revolutionary years. The powers of execution and implementation were given over to the Secretary of the Community Development Office, a nominee of the central government. These powers include, the execution of the decisions of the village committee or town program, investigation of complaints filed with the CDC, the overseeing development projects and active NGOs in the area, and upkeep of vital statistics of birth, marriage, death and registration. The role of the development committee is to execute the policies and plans of the central government (Mikesell 1994:290-291). Abolishing the Elected Village President, and turning over the power of government to an unaccountable government official does little to advance the devolving of democratic powers, nor address issues of patronage .

Speaking with the CDC Secretary (24.10.11), she reported that there are strict

economic constraints that stifle development initiatives. The Secretary also informed that the Community Development Office experiences difficulty with irregular delivery of the budgeted finances which makes it difficult to consider budgeting any new initiatives. The secretary is not local, and only present in the CDC office once or twice a week. The Vice Secretary is local, and deals with most of the administrative responsibilities of the office. As he has closer connections to the local society, and spends some of his free time there, he has more 'social capital' and 'local knowledge' than his superior.

The Municipal and Village Development Committees, which are responsible for development plans and budgets, are not governing bodies in which people legislate local laws or control their administration. Both Fisher (1994) and Mikesell (1994) claim that “swollen”, 'colonial administration' is still entrenched in Nepal's state institutions, for instance the Community Development Office (CDC) merely administer programs as already determined in the ministerial portfolios. The functions of the municipalities are similarly top-down and multi-tiered. Mikesell argues that the only real accountability imposed on the local government by the *ban nagh* is accountability to the central government, in terms of the '*right* of higher levels of government to 'suspend and dissolve the committees'. “If the members of the local government attempt to depart from the narrow guidelines specified by the law, which ensure that people have no power, then the central government has the authority to suspend the local committees at its pleasure.” (Mikesell 1994:296) Yet in his formalistic focus, he overlooks the interrelationships that would connect people, even people in official positions, to some degree of –at least personal 'accountability'.

Mikesell argues at length that while the Forestry Act seems to be handing over powers to the people, the participatory terminology is mere window dressing for a law that devolves no new substantial powers – neither legislative, executive, administrative, official nor judicial; just procedural rules (Mikesell 1994:287-288). The law's preamble state that the goal of village, municipality and district development committees is to maximize people's participation in 'development activities', not in government. At the same time the law leaves 'development activities' to be defined and implemented from above, not from within the communities. 'Participation' is seen by Mikesell to signify the way people accept and go along with implementation, not decide upon or shape it, and that the Forest Laws are crafted in order to protect against autonomous action, to ensure the preservation of power within a

bureaucratic hierarchy despite decentralization (Mikesell 1994:289). In Bistachhap participation, at least in CF management, was of a broad scope. This may have simply been due to the relatively uniform demography of the stakeholders. On the other hand, the importance of broad participation in active management, and attendance in courses and meetings, to the efficiency of the CF program and its philosophy of community management can not be understated. Engaging in the CFUG, the local populace not only fulfil valuable tasks of government, like management forest maintenance, but they are also through activity re-created as cultivated foresters – empowered with the discourse and tools of scientific forestry, and instilled by community forestry to recruit their community members to make their forest a better and more forceful environment, or enterprise. The degree of education matter only insofar as positions within the formal structures of the CFUG is concerned.

The authority over implementation of CF policy is spread over many different levels of bureaucracy, and at all levels decisions are influenced by political and personal interests (Fisher 1994). Vanajit and Vasantraj at the Godawari DoF did not consider their branch of the DoF under any political pressure, but the DoF often procedural issues regarding distinction of jurisdiction between their department and the Department of Resources and Reserves. Such contention usually arise when distribution of scarce resources or the appearance of concerns of biological diversity in proposed development projects, over which the Department of Resources and Reserves have mandate and jurisdiction. None among the staff experienced pressure from business interests, 'tuulamanji', or organized crime. Vanajit noted that this was only a problem at higher levels of state. There are occasions where the district level were engaged in confrontations, particularly with other government institutions. In some issues the CFUG shares interest with the DoF against other parts of the bureaucracy – for instance in trying to raise resources, at other times, the CFUG opportunistically attempts to harness support against the DoF from the other departments, or from experts, in some cases differing and competing interests within the community may be vocal through the CFUG, and usually the CDC takes a mediating position. In this complex situation, the central authorities have mandates that are overriding, suppressive, and may ultimately be nullifies the charters of the CFUG's (Mikesell 1994:288, Sivaramakrishnan 2000).

Case of Ward 6; New Roads of Defiance

I journeyed to Ward 6 - Chappakarka – mainly because of a 'New Road' they had spent three years in finishing, in defiance of the DoF. It was planned to cross the mountains and connect Godawari through Ward 6 with the nearby city of Bhaktapur and bring a new flow of tourists to the scenic hillsides, and grant a more central positioning of the ward relative to the rest of the village. Ward 6 is a remote part of Bishanku Narayan, lying on the ridge of a hill. I arrived there with Sanjit of W1's CFUG, after spending six hours on a three hours' walk, we were both ill. I visited their public school which still operates without essential material like books, a blackboard, or electricity for that matter, housing 1st to 5th grade. After 5th grade children must travel to other places, like Kathmandu if they intend to continue in school, the teachers here both travel from Bishanku Narayan every day. The literacy rate is low, while the drop-out rate is high, because few have the relations or money, or the priorities for sending their children to formal education. On the other hand, the ward had attracted investors to establish a hang-gliding base, in association with a home-stay, which incidentally also was the home of Deep, the owner of a tea shop and one of the chairmen on the board of the CFUG of Ward 6. Community and Private Forests are rented for mushroom plantations, they produce alcohol, and recently they have established a mono-crop plantation for the production of commercial plant material. There are quite a few prejudices towards the villagers of Chappakarka, Ward 6, partly because the majority belong to the minority of Tamang with their own language and customs. For instance, and a great source of disfavour among many people in Ward 1, is the alcohol distillation that is a prominent subsistence enterprise in Ward 6, and not to diminish differentials, the Tamang have significantly different marriage customs, where both genders marry young and prefer exogamy. In addition, the distance from the centre means that Ward 6 has the lowest formal 'performance' in the valley in regards to CF, with a minimum five hours walk to trek to and fro ward 1 and 6 means that in the agricultural high seasons, no 'breadwinner' can participate in joint 'community' action. The dispersed settlement pattern equally means that attendance within the community also is low.

Through Sanjit I was introduced to Deep. He had received two diplomas through attendance at courses of scientific forestry the last year alone. He explained that the “New Road” that had been constructed was financed and built through local action, aided by a District Development Engineer helped in planning, and who provided the bulldozer. The road

cost the 'community' between two and three lacs (million rupee), which were collected through the CFUG and voluntary donations from the locals. The fact that they had been breaking the regulations of the Constitution and Management did not seem to have influenced them in other ways than furthering avoidance. As explained by the local DoF Secretary Vanajit; the road was built without any application or permit from the DoF, but the foresters found that they could not stop the development initiative. The locals themselves fully funded the road despite being turned down by the District Development Office.

The road displayed obvious signs of bad estimates there were several dangerous twists and turns, or abandoned stretches of road that ended in the jungle, as well as a lack of water drainage. This ill planned, poorly executed construct is already severely eroded and impassable by any vehicle heavier than a bike; considered by secretary Vanajit “a disaster”. Several trees were cut down beyond what was by the DoF considered 'necessary', especially due to bad planning, the surplus timber distributed among the participants in the construction of the road – a common practice. The secretary Vanajit further explained the dilemma:

“As long as there is the majority of the local society supports such developments, the department of Forestry is powerless to impose state regulations. The whole of CF relies on the consensual support of the 'community', and if this support dissolves, the whole of community management will collapse.”

The ranger Arpit commented, “this is *Jana-sakti*.” *Jana-sakti*, in contrast to previous ontologies of 'servility', is a conception of a potential aggregate power that emanates from the collective Nepali people, and which can manifest in a range of assorted refusals, most notably a refusal to be treated dismissively, or to be submissive, and in the revolt of the mass movement. *Jana-sakti* arises from the 1992 revolution, when a series of engagements between revolutionaries and the army provoked a general outrage at the absence of the King's power, and according to Kondos, the lack of enforcement of the ritual legitimacy of the monarchy, and this contributed to an emergence of a national consciousness of the potential of the inherent power of the people to effect change through mass movement. The power of the people, not just to stake claims but to force the massive revolution of society. A recognition of a certain kind of national collectivity and a consciousness that transgress 'traditional' boundaries, and the emergence of popular awareness of this power of popular mobilization, and an orientation of confidence in that potential (Kondos 1994:281-282). This distinguishes the new ontology from the servility of the past; and in fact, the government is finding with

jana sakti a reluctance to interfere in local systems.

Chappakarka is hardly the only place you will find badly planned and executed road construction in Bisankhu Narayan. In fact, according to the DoF officials, roads are the single most damaging source of 'degeneration' in the area. Again, it must be reiterated that bad planning, and perhaps the formal requirements for legal procedures, are a main problem – the latter point admitted to be a problem also by the DoF. Yet, the need for roads to individual households in forest areas was disputed by the DoF. But as it is the District Development Committee that grants fund for such projects, if contested by the DoF the projects will be scrutinized with feasibility studies, and only if there are no other alternatives (as proposed by the CDC), the roads will be likely to go ahead. In these situations, external experts often play important roles, and will not fall side with the DoF by default. In part because of possible monetary, institutional, 'expert', personal or political considerations.

The CDC secretary informed me while discussing the proposed New Road for Ward 1 that there are usually never any compensations offered for land loss to roadworks or other collective projects. Neither are there any money set aside for such compensations with the District, or Village Development Office, nor precedence for such compensations given by the state. It would be up to the local society itself. While it would be of great benefit and as a practice it would dampen potential conflict in the arbitration on road proposals, there simply were no funds for compensating land loss, and she bluntly said, “what the majority decides will be the course of action, and the minority will loose – it is the people's dictatorship”. In closing, Kondos says, 'Popular justice' accuses and judges according to what it perceives as uncalled for behaviour; not in terms of the strictures of the juridico-legal system. Its rationality does not depend on legal principles. (Kondos 1994:276) The community governance demands effective action and participation to forge shared commitments. The very reliance of the Community Forest Programme on interconnectedness with the wider community enforces the resilience of *jana-sakti*, which entails that a unified 'community' is mobilized to support a *local* initiative, the state cannot stop it without risk of “uprooting” the entire Community Forest philosophy. *Jana sakti*, according to Kondos, only emerges when the society as a whole is galvanized into action against social injustice, and this of course happens only rarely. It is the new-found potential for the directed realization of popular mobilization of *jana sakti* for socio-political ends that is a constant factor, for instance in the

interaction between governing authorities, and between the and their stakeholders, especially regulating the DoF's attitude to the 'community'.

The establishment of the CF model, premised on the concept of 'communities', have given rise to a new social arena for 'deliberation', and given the local population access to a discourse of modernity and development that is welcomed, broadly speaking, by all informants. However, this has happened despite a lack of devolution of legislative or managerial powers. Because these 'indigenous' systems had been founded in relational 'embeddedness' in social networks of the 'multi-vocal society' that included the forest itself, they were broad social regulating mechanisms (Fisher 1994). Flexibility of the 'informal management systems' is lost in the formal, institutionalized CF-management. It is simply not afforded by the standardized demands of the top-down management. Further, as the 'community' is a state formation, it does not include the wide range of concerns that the society it rises from in fact harbours. It is itself a local mediator that balances the interests of the population with the interests of the Community Forest programme, while bartering with other institutions that are more entrenched in state bureaucracy. It's narrow charter allows coordination across wards, but not across sectoral interests, unless for the purpose of 'development'. What here is important to note, is that most of the stakeholders of a community do in fact not participate, as the gender inequality in regards to domestic labour is still at a very high level.

However, the ambition of the CF programme is to embed the CFUG's within their societies, and this is done gradually through integrating the people into the 'community' of educated CFUG managers, and through facilitating the 'participation' of as many as possible in self-organised (that is, organised by the CFUG's) activities. The new managers of the forest are the farmers of the countryside, well educated by the state institutes in the vicinity. These activities are, of course, organised within the framework of the negotiated Management Plan, and by the participation, the 'community' is forged from the existing society by inclusion and 'cultivation' from engagement in planned management and expert discourse. By including locals in the management of the forest the state not only recognize them as stakeholders with responsibilities, but also through the Community Forest User Groups (CFUG) bring families into the institutional structure of the state. I go beyond arguing that the inclusion of the local 'community' in forest management is a dual process of empowerment and a 'regimentation' of

the local populace, which I think is a fairly uncontroversial point to make. The move by the state, in the face of diminishing forest resources and a failing fencing-policy towards management, to change its policies towards inclusion of the local populace was motivated to a great extent by an intention to cultivate responsible and self-sustaining village communities that would still follow the national agendas; by giving them user-rights they would manage the forests and follow the regulations accordingly. This has indeed been acknowledged by forestry officials in my field.

Hence, as management is decentralized, what is accomplished is a two-fold manoeuvre of passing the administration of national objectives to its constituents, and through fostering ownership and participation they cultivate from the constituency a new citizen. In raising the 'awareness' of the state objectives through direct dissemination by leaving the fleshing out, adjustment, enactment and overseeing of the forest management to local actors and the interplay between them, the state apparently devolves power. But in some ways, it rather appears to be absorbing local 'communities' into the administrative structure of the top-down managerial state. The CF program tries to tap into the wider social interdependence of economic decision in common property management where any individual is linked to other village residents by ties of kinship (both descent and marriage), shared ritual obligations and concerns, personal friendship, and by a complex variety of labour relations (patron-client ties, the need to obtain labour, the need to sustain income). Any serious breach of local norms has potentially serious social and economic consequences for an individual and its household; and by empowering the community the hope is make the social norms of the 'community' conform to the state agenda in forestry policy; where free riding both in the national and local level becomes subject to the threat of both social exclusion, and more formal sanctions. Conformity to shared values is quite a sensible thing to do in such a context of interdependent relationships. "There are clearly many places where effective common property resource management does not exist, often, I would suggest, precisely because the combination of shared norms about forest use and a high level of social interdependence is not present." (Fisher 1994:77) In fact, The Department of Forestry in Godawari prefer that the CFUG's as "community representatives" execute "community sanctioning"; a community's problems are best solved from within. There is no obligations or precedence for reporting such events. The CFUG's main tools of sanction are fining and exclusion of the CFUG and thereby from its

social network, unprecedented so far.

Sustainability and Self-sufficiency

Nepali forestry policy since the Rana Prime Ministers has continuously emphasized economic productivity. Even while the post-war era, brought popular terms as 'self-sufficiency' and 'development', these were incorporated into the fiscal policies of the 'green revolution' of agriculture. The new Community Forest Policy of Nepal, which incorporates ambitions of sustainability, do not make a break with the fiscal aims of previous forestry policies. Indeed, instead these fiscal concerns are still central to the national management of the 'wealth of the Nation' and to the very notion of 'sustainability'. The emphasis on self-sufficiency, which previously was connected mainly to agricultural development, became more central after the Community Forestry Programme became a government policy. The term of self-sufficiency is coupled with the discourse of 'sustainability' under the longitudinal reasoning that no project that can't be sustained by a community, either through local resources at the CFUG's disposal, through the market, or external donors, can be sustained at all. This must be seen against the historical context that gave rise to Community Forestry in Nepal in the first place; limited state resources to 'fence off' and administer forest resources.

The CF program has succeeded in facilitating a 'spirit of enterprise' by entitling 'the community' to forest resources, and encouraging them to take advantage of market access. Hence, the argument is that in order to be 'sustainable' a project must be founded in 'community interests', a local resource base, and local participation at some level. There are, however, several contradictory policies, such as the subsidy of plantations, that according to Gurung (1994) was central in nurturing an initial reliance on government support, contrary to the stated goal of 'self sufficiency'. The change of this policy has contributed to the almost complete stop in government backed plantation projects in the Districts of Lalitpur, and the ending of government support for fencing. As there is an expansion of deliberative space and contested meanings, there are also formulated competing narratives and strategies.

Villagers that seek recognition as suited candidates for development projects portray their management practices in line with the terminology of the 'development narrative'. Vague generic templates such as 'community' and 'nature' are open for reinterpretation, appropriation and adaption to local conceptions and concerns by locals in arbitration with the various

development agents. Assignment of projects will often be determined relative to their neighbours and in such cases the question will often arise "Who are the most deserving" or "who fits our narrative", and whose practices are the most sustainable or least detrimental? These development narratives shape new frameworks for the formulation of existing competing interests (Haenn 2005). In addition, both Mikesell and Fisher (1994) points to institutional requirements of external donors and expertise in enacting, as well as central level institutions to control the 'feasibility' of projects, which inhibits initiative, but on the other hand contributes to the conception of 'self-sufficiency' as a model not restricted to subsistence as the CFUG's are encouraged to seek and attract external funds and actors. The Forest Act also stipulate that the non-governmental organisation should be encouraged to identify, implement and evaluate development activities. The NGOs should undertake the local level activities in coordination in joint venture with the Community Development Office and the CFUG. The Community Development Office can implement local development activities *only* through non-governmental organisations. Mikesell asks why, if the local governments are supposedly based on local popular participation, do they need to utilize non-government organizations to implement their development activities? Since the Community Development Office controls NGO registration, the CDC Secretary (and through her the central government) controls the official recognition and validation of NGOs. In this way, even though reference to NGOs seems to provide a means of implementation separate from the government, the government hereby exerts its control over identification, implementation and evaluation of development activities. In the context of this hierarchical bureaucratic structure,

the central state levels exercise influence over iNGO's and civil society by appropriating exclusive rights to define conservation concerns, leaving local concerns a subject to the CFUG's various competing concerns.

Projects should also be approved by authorities after commissioning due feasibility studies to assess the impacts on society and environment. And in the face of many of these studies there materialize differences between the DoF and local spokespersons; differences in in perceived reality and priorities are brought to light (Gurung 1994) despite the CF ideals of 'shared interests' and enlightened awareness of interrelation. Also, the positional advantage of the DoF and the District Development Office enables these authorities to obstruct or “sabotage” any unacceptable plan through interpretations of 'feasibility', (Mikesell 1994:292) a potential of the 'multi-tiered bureaucracy which leads to a common interest between CFUG's and donors to 'fast track' projects at the cost of 'feasibility' studies. That such studies frequently lead to the execution of community action, it is not clear who the beneficiaries are; as in the Lions Plantation project and the Chappakarka New Road, both cases where 'feasibility studies' were not performed.

The Leo & Lions Club Plantation and Leadership project in Ward 1 10.09.11

It was a sunny September Saturday in Ward 1. It was initiated by Lions and Leo Club of Kathmandu, together with Sanjit as the local initiator from the CFUG. The primary ambition of the project was the “training and networking for the young and promising leaders of tomorrow”, with the secondary and merely

contextual aim of regeneration. Youth from “all over Nepal” attended, which mainly meant the Kathmandu Valley, however there was an almost equal share of women and men, many of



Lions plantation project

them aspiring to become rangers of Community Forestry themselves, others already employed in government positions, such as one that worked as a consultant in the department of water and sanitation. Sanjit had been contacted by a project manager and together they had made out the details of the project according to what Lions could aspire to do, and what the 'community' could be in need of. Already, we see signs of the institutional structures that shape the relationship. And Sanjit has already at this stage tailored the depiction of the village, to suit a template narrative thought apt for attracting a donor. In this case, however, Lions did not require much from the community, and due to problems of communication between the CFUG and the NGO, Sanjit had the misconception that when Lions came, their emphasis would be on forestry. The trees had been provided for free by the Department of Forestry, and while the CFUG was meant to supply equipment. This was missed due to the communication problems, and led to a slight delay in the daily schedule. As the planting got underway however, the main focus came into view Lions and Leo's plantation project was part of their 'growing future leaders' campaign, and their use of the community forest was primarily as an arena for this work. The work and expertise of Lions is primarily founded in leadership training, and 'networking', and even though Sanjit had recruited Forester Vasantraj to consult in scientific forestry, these advises were not included into practice, although a full lecture was held on scientific forestry and plantations, where the locals could speak freely, the three people that came, that is. What made matters worse than the non-scientific praxis of the planting was the non-exclusive manner in which the main focus of the work was excersised. Because of leadership organisations such as Lions, but also Rotary, are to hold locally situated leadership courses, they should also include the locals in these projects, rather than using them as sites for development'

Forester Vasantraj was severely displeased with the work done, for instance the lack of regimentation in regards to geometry and equality made mapping of the field hard after the fact, and he explained that it would impinge on the optimal growth of the trees. Also, as the planting was of a composite plantation, it would have been advisable to plant the trees according to some plan in regards to species distribution, which was not done. He felt the project was wasting his day off and 'spoiling' the rational order of the forest that both CFUG and DoF held in common, despite his best instructions. Sanjit persuaded the head of Lions' fieldwork to pay Vasantraj 500 RP for his time and trouble, and then they left both very

annoyed.

Many trees were left over, partly because of delays in the beginning of the day that ensured that the project ran out of time. Many of these trees were given to local shops, where they were sold for-profit by the shopkeepers. However, upon returning to the plantation 10 days later to investigate the problem of fencing, we found several garbage bags of discarded trees in ditches near the plantation. There are no routine system for feedback on development projects, no measure of quality of the actions undertaken or attempt to draw experience from projects, good nor bad. Sanjit, however, as organizing party of the CFUG, attempted to send e-mails and complain to the DoF about the discarded trees. The survival rate of the planted trees at the plantation proved to be about 40%, a figure confirmed by the DoF and Sanjit to be about average, considering the issues of grazing.

Conclusion

The mutual engagement of 'community' and foresters in social deliberative space make room for the production of new significance and landscapes, as well as the production of new science, as the farmers themselves are 'empowered' through training and education in government sponsored forestry courses. CFUG engagement produce commodified time through the practices that are taught and spread through, but not exclusively within the sector of forestry, and the relationship between these 'cultivated citizens' bring new perspectives and time management through their conversation with the wider society, and they show the practical use of these concepts and practices by pointing to the accomplishments of community forestry. Thus we see that entitlements and the education provided through training changes the possibilities and obstructions that reside in the situational context. The same is true for the repertoire of



resistance, whether one is engaged within the discourse of CF, or distanced from it. Through the friction between state officials and villagers, the terms and limits of state authority are constantly subverted, and the boundaries between local autonomy and state power are reconstructed in an ongoing arbitration. These common engagements, whether in committee meetings or in the Lions plantation project, contribute to the reconstruction of society and the production of a new kind of citizen that are self-administrative, capable risk-managers in accordance with “the latest” of rational discourse (Beck 2004, Baldwin 2003, Haenn 2005, Sivaramakrishnan 2000). In fact, the institution of CF insists on its material of substance through its encompassing and inclusive activities within a social landscape of interdependence; that is – the social bonds of mutual obligations mentioned by Fisher in regards to the social fabric that underlines 'communities'(1994). Establishing the community is not only accomplished through the charters of the Constitution, but by affirming the interdependence of forests and farmers through participatory engagement. Not to mention the threats of actual civil sanctions or of mobilized *jana-sakti* (people power) (Kondos 1994) that the CFUG's have at their potential disposal through protocol and networks. In order to oppose these new and formal institutions of the Community Forestry requires to position oneself in the discourse of scientific forestry, and to partake in the confirmation of its reality, and in a 'colonization of consciousness' (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992).

I briefly discussed the history of Nepali forestry regimes and the central state's attempt to extend and retain control over the 'wealth of the Nation'. We see throughout this discussion that fiscal concerns have remained crucial to Community Forestry, and laid the foundation of the 'forest first' policy that is in place today. As a consequence of the decentralization policy that was begun nearly 40 years ago, the forests of Nepal are increasingly “handed over” to the people of the 'community'; those that have become truly 'empowered' through participation in the CF discourse. As we have seen, the central government is decentralizing the responsibility of management from the centralized departments to the locally founded CFUG's, and in the process disseminating the practices of 'good governance' and 'scientific management' through the Community Forestry program. Community Forestry is not only envisioned as a path to the self-sufficient local society, sought since the Green Revolution by the state apparatus, but it also is an efficient way of 'cultivating' enlightened citizens. It is a two-sided process of both empowering and educating the local society in the discourse and practice of modern scientific

management.

So what does the CFUG's and their sister committees govern apart from their practical jurisdictions as defined from central authorities? The key lies in the engagement with scientific discourse that lend a credibility of 'objective fact' that allows the participants of CFUG's to become experts and 'entrepreneurs of modernity'. Through the practical work, and the adoption of the discourse of development, these agents not only spread the practice of modernity into the society, but they also promote an ideology of rational self management in the 'community'. Through recruitment into active participation in forestry activity together with the DoF experts, common referents are forged and *in situo* of the interrelationship with the local landscape the 'community' is made a part of society.

What makes the Nepali Community Forest Programme truly utopian is the attempt to overcome both middle levels of bureaucracy and the critique of template plans as top-down abstract approaches. Through the employment of 'participation' as a basis for the self-replication the CFUG's are sought by planners to become vessels of 'good governance'; in compliance with state directives, their self-administration and management of the local society will produce the 'communities' envisaged in the template narrative, from the bottom – up, across the country. This is the utopian plan, that factors in hybridization processes of diversity as a part of the force of its integration into society. Part of the accomplishment that ensures the continued central control stems from the formal restrictions of the Constitution and the Management plan, enforcing conformity to ideals of institutionalization.

CHAPTER 4

Commercialization of Communities

Nepali Time

There is in Nepal a widespread term roughly describing a condition; called 'Nepali Time'. This does not mean that this condition of 'Nepali Time' is uniquely “Nepali”, but I was informed that the term is has a long oral tradition by sources both from Pokhara and Kathmandu to Bisankhu Narayan. Time is experienced differentially according to circumstance to most Nepali. Most don't use personal planners, don't make schedules for weeks or months and assign little value to 'Time'. The western expression “time is money” has little hold in Nepal. Nepali time “takes place”, and you may experience its events or you may not – accidents frequently occur, or something comes up. Time does not pass, but is a realm of 'eternal return', “tomorrow never comes” to quote a Pokhara informant, it is cyclical, in that most people let the cycles of night and daylight govern their active time. Even as there are people working in NGO's who are subjected to 'commodified' time (Debord 1967) ¹⁵, they still have to adapt to the rhythm of the household, which is governed by cyclical time and ritual.

The rituals of cyclical time are so predictable that even if most don't know what they will do the coming week, all know what they will do next *Dhasain* or *Tiz* festival, or father's day. These are great occasions for family gatherings, and people travel across Neap to visit their families. The two defining meals of the day; *daahl bhad* frame the productive day, and form part of the governmentality of cyclical time. In the city of Bhaktapur, and the village of Bistachhap alike, almost every shop opens at the same time in the morning, only after ample time for pujas and daal bhat, a regimentation imposed by the cycles of day and ritual that are not conducive to the flexible regime fordist, 'commodified time'.

The concept of 'Nepali time', aids in bridging the gap between cyclical and 'commodified' time, as 'Nepali time' is apt to cope with strikes, accidents, road blocks, and

15 “The time of production – commodified time – is an infinite accumulation of equivalent intervals. It is irreversible time made abstract, in which each segment need only demonstrate by the clock its purely quantitative equality with all the others. It has no reality apart from its *exchangeability*”. (Debord 1967:147)

other forms of unpredicted delays. In a way, since the lack of infrastructure, hazards of environment and geography, and social inequality are considerable, there is ultimately not much point in time management and detailed planning. Too many of the sources of 'risk' still lies beyond the reach of personal control, and hence, the rational, cultivated citizen struggles more in coping with the ideals of self-management and fiscal budgeting of one's own resources, than the average nepali, that is not as deeply embedded in the pseudo-cyclical rhythm of work and "free time". Scheduling and 'fixed' ('commodified') time becomes a source of stress and extra planning, as extra care must be taken to investigate that the plans are in fact kept by other parties, that accidents or strikes have not necessitated modifications, etc. This must not be mistaken for resignation; most Nepali are enterprising and actively seek new approaches to problem solving. Indeed, what we see here in Nepali time is the manifestation of the tension of two different temporal regimes.

Commodification of Time

Community Forest User Groups have been chartered as the formally recognized representatives of the local society, yet they still depend on the continuing support and participation of their stakeholders. The program is promoted in keeping with dominant orthodoxies in international development discourse; where local communities are abstracted as distinct entities with the best available knowledge for the appropriate management of local resources, with a shared identity that enable it to mobilize towards common, collective interests (Leach, Mearns & Scoones 1997). The emphasis on fiscal interests and market access, however, ensure that the CFUG's become a mechanism that continue the commodification of the forest, in line with previous policies.

The Community Forestry Programme shows promising signs of raising living standards of its stakeholders, not merely through the distribution of proceeds of sales according to an equality principle, but also through the emphasis on community forestry as an efficient regime for the forest as a "site of development" that can attract investors from civil society, and on incorporating regimes of 'local knowledge' into fiscal plans (O.Gurung 1994, Leach, Mearns & Scoones 1997). What you first see when you approach Bistachhap is the plantation forest with its curious patterned trunks on the left hand side, markings from years of tapping resin for making turpentine. Other wards were growing sabai grass. Both pine resin

and sabai grass are Non-timber forest products (NTFP's) that were promoted and marketed in forestry programmes through the Master Plan for the Forestry Sector as of 1988. In addition to the CFUG's there are private enterprises such as bamboo and mushroom plantations, and common goods such as forest litter and grass are commodified either directly through harvesting or via processing (as in the production of biofuel). NTFP's fall within the government aims of 'sensitivity to local needs', and 'regards for diversity' – and ultimately works towards 'self sufficiency; “that forests should empower the user group through sustainable development” (Chhetri 1994:30), but well within the context of a policy of economic growth. Through the fiscal management of the CFUG, Non-timber Forest products become an important source of income generation for the 'community'. With the emphasis on market orientation remaining, the NTFP's are an important contribution to 'community 'self-sufficiency' and enterprise. The new services and products revealed through the discourse of commodification open new possibilities and for work and organisation within the framework of the CFUG, like the community forest mushroom farm or commercial picnic sites for domestic tourism.

Picnicking is a valued collective activity, engaged in by many and at most parts of the year. In envisioning picnicking as a possible tourist attraction, most draw upon their own associations and experiences, whether these come from the annual communal picnics organized by the Communal Welfare Committee on the basis of caste identity, or gender and family-related picnics that are traditionally associated with festivals; like *tihar* festival, after traditionally foodstuffs were collected that women would use for picnics in the forest. These 'traditional' forms of picnics are changing form, as the Community Welfare Committee is losing its popularity, and competing welfare committees are rising that organize not on the basis of caste and ward, but across wards, on the basis of 'common interest'. In regards to the gender-discriminatory ritualized men's and women's clubs, they have largely abandoned the structure of excluding the opposite sex from their circles. In addition, money has a more central place during the festivals than food, which means that due to the exchangeability of money, many exchange these for consumption rather than social gathering.

The younger members of the CFUG in ward 1 have suggested the possibility of building on this existing local practice of collective and private social gatherings in the forest, into a community forest enterprise, where a scenic commercial picnic spot is established

permanently in the community forest, under CFUG administration. This might require the exclusion of locals in order to make it more exclusive to domestic tourists, and in pointing to existing scenic spots with religious purposes, they felt this could easily be done. In other words, in translating the existing concept of a religious scenic environment, with the local practice of collective picnics into the context of the market-oriented CFUG engaging tourism.

Self-governing Citizens

CFUG stakeholders are cultivated through the participation in Community Forestry to incorporate routines self-management, including scheduling, budgeting, family planning, (CFUG Sanjit), and, crucially, incorporate these modern concepts of 'progress' into their more or less cyclical lived reality. Now that the CFUG is encouraging people to start organizing, not only their time, but also their personal households, there is encouragement to parcel out one's time in *productive* activity. With the fiscal budgeting of time as a resource appears the expression of 'wasted time', with is premised on the notion that there is something better to occupy oneself with. This is of course not a new concept, as noted, laziness is a widely used expression, and people who find no work may quickly find themselves "lazy", as inactivity has never been appreciated. As 'grandpa Bista' espoused; "One should always have something useful to do, and if one has no work, there is always something to clean. If you have cleaned everything already, go out and clean the courtyard, if necessary, do that again!" - a lesson taught him while serving for the British in India. But there is short supply of work to engage in (with the exception of household tasks, of course), and there is no leisure industry. Among those who have less access to meaningful work we see the rise of boredom and inactivity together with the first glimpse of consumable, 'trivialized' 'free' or "spare time"(Hakim Bey 1991) ¹⁶. Under the social reign of commodified time, "time is everything, man is nothing; he is at most the carcass of time" (Debord 1967:147).

About 40% of the in Bishanku Narayan migrate to work in urban areas in the early morning and return late in the afternoon, living with one foot in cyclical and the other in commodified time. The same is in part true for the youth who attend school in Kathmandu and Lalitpur. Meals, however, are prepared not according to the schedules of offices, shops or

16 According to Hakim Bey (1991) TAZ *The Tong* 'Free Time' is connected to work and leisure. 'Free time' is a consumable form of leisure that is mediated through the entertainment industry, and a trivialized form of the equivalent of 'empty time' that remains entrenched in a cyclical regime of time. The temporal eternal return.

schools, but according to ritual cycles and cyclical time. Hence, in most households, the subjects of commodified time must leave on empty stomachs, and equally return home to a cold meal. These cycles of rite are communal in the sense that all Hindu households perform them at roughly the same time, and this also means that, for instance there is no competition between shopkeepers in regards to opening hours, as they all have *puja*, eat, and open at roughly the same time. This is, however, part of the self-administration that these cultivated citizen must, and are educated to manage through courses, as part of the risk management that is being privatized onto communities by the central government.

Problems of infrastructure which inhibit integration of 'commodified time' pose problems for large parts of society that relies on predictability in planning, leading to stress in order to keep up with and balance domestic, ritual and professional responsibilities, creating time as a resource – commodifying time. The slight increase in access to 'time-saving technologies' makes for the possibilities for those who have more financial wealth to “buy time to save time” (processed foodstuffs, hired labour, etc.). Within the regime of cyclical time, there was some truth to the claim that time was a resource all possessed in equal amount, but in a capitalist society where time becomes commodified, time forms part of the generalized economic imbalances of society.

The answer from the state seems to be to raise awareness and to privatize risk, through the aid of donor organisations in civil society that works with Disaster Risk Reduction and similar projects; in order to improve self-management on the local level. Planning and risk suddenly become a personal matter, rather than something reserved for experts. Local involvement in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) is recommended by NGO's such as Oxfam as successful initiatives to increase 'resilience' and 'awareness' of 'communities', and they recommend institutionalization and 'mainstreaming' of DRR in government policy as a whole in order to shift the emphasis from response to risk management (Oxfam 2009). Disaster prevention work can affect cosmology in relation to the conception of what is beyond human control, and what is subject to human manipulation, by whom. Shifting this relation will affect the politics and power relations of any society. A difference between the 'risk society' (Beck 2004), and earlier societies is that 'threats' and 'dangers' are only attributed to external factors, and that society is confronted by itself when it is to handle 'risk'. Almost every human action in the world becomes a possible source of risk and danger. Expert knowledge and

science becomes overtly contested, self-referential, and self-reflexive. The expansion of the domain of risk involves not only a change in conceptions of risk and danger, but also a potential shifting of what is political and what is a domain for science and expert knowledge – altering the social landscape in both material and epistemological ways (Beck 2004). This further modifies the new citizen with a strong focus on self-sufficiency, but also with a new focus on private risk-management.

Commodification and Marginilization

We see in these developments the marginalizing of forest landscape, in the aim of 'self sufficiency'. Already there is a marked reduction of picnicking in the forest in Ward 1, most felt in related to the official communal picnics, but also in the sense that in greater degree, people picnic in the peripheral *jangal* areas, or their gardens, rather than in the forest itself. This, and a strict upholding of the forest regulations in regards to forest hygiene and aesthetics (IO CFUG Sanjit), suggests that the CFUG of Ward 1 discourages unofficial social activity in its forest as a probable source of littering and pollution, disorder in its ordered landscape of scientific management. However, these dreams of domestic tourist attractions, even if close to Kathmandu, must still come to terms to the problem as posed; without commodified time, there can be little entertainment industry. In fact no urban centres have yet established the 24-hour society, and the curfew is still enforced at 12 o'clock in the evening.

Community Forestry, based on the management of the silvicultural methods of science lies well within the temporal regime of 'production' (Debord 1967), which Hakim Bey (1991) describes as a Fordist time. This is the empty time of science and history; the irreversible, linear time that is also sometimes termed 'objective' time. This time of production also has a complimentary consumable form; what Debord (1967) terms pseudo-cyclical time¹⁷. The commercial enterprise of forestry, and the cultivation of new, self-managing – especially risk managing citizens, is party to spreading the pseudo-cyclical time beyond its sector of origin, with a greater efficiency than before. In the case of collective forestry activities, such as resin tapping, the Time of Production is enforced by the CFUG with both positive and negative sanctions: absentees are fined and those that contribute frequently receive surplus proceeds

17 The pseudo-cyclical time is in fact merely a *consumable disguise* of the production system's commodified time. It exhibits the [...] essential traits of [commodified, or Fordist] time: homogeneous exchangeable units and suppression of any qualitative dimension." (Debord 1967:147)

(IO CFUG W1 Sanjit, IO CFUG W7 Singh).

The marginalization of time and space are processes concurrent and related with commercialization; as time is being recast as a 'resource', the previously open and free spaces are marginalized and regulated; As formerly “empty time” and “free space” went hand in hand, there is a rise of regulated – not restricted – space, and consumer activities, which require status or money, giving rise to a question of 'timing'; many lack the money to purchase 'entertainment', which comes in short supply, but most still have 'empty time', but this is no longer an expression of freedom, but rather of neglect of duty, or perhaps of poverty. However, even those with money to purchase entertainment have little entertainment industry to supply them, and hence, they are left in the same category; a lot of 'free time'. There is, as of yet, an absence of an entertainment industry geared toward the domestic population. There has until recently been no 'free time', only 'empty time'(Hakim Bey 1991), and now that more and more people, especially young people, find themselves with 'free time', they also find themselves bored or decreed as lazy.

When it comes to potential for development in the village, tourism ranks high, and among the possibilities that are raised are the reservation of community forest for tourism purposes; picnicking and the construction of other pleasant small commercial resorts on a collective basis. In order to make these sites truly commercial (that is; well kept, attractive, self-sustaining and income-generating), these would be ticketing and possibly exclude locals. However, my claim is that in order for there to be generated a basis for domestic tourism, there must first be made room for 'consumable', 'pseudo-cyclical' time which is a premise for the “free time”, or vacation of domestic tourism. It is not to be confused eternally returning cyclical, festive occasions, which is hardly “empty time”, and is neither planned, nor spontaneous. In the dominant cyclical time, there is just the empty time, time that you occupy. As the market relies on commodified time; the leisure industry needs the infrastructure to facilitate domestic tourism, and people need to have the available, (that is “free(d)”) time and resources to consume (Debord 1967). With cyclical time there are no plans to be made, and all journeys you make are predictable in their planlessness thanks to 'Nepali time' as a coping mechanism.

The strange effect of seeming to have 'too much time' come from the combination of a lack of an entertainment industry, and structural underemployment. People who still have no

relationship with the pseudo-cyclical and capitalist time regimes still only relate time as it brings events, which come as chartered in the given Nepali calendar. They do not normally schedule their time in any other way, and thus do not experience waste or stress in regards to time, as the cycle of the day is imbued by a cadre of ritual signs and social norms one can bend. “Staying out late”, for instance, has completely different significance in cyclical vs. commodified temporal regimes.

Conclusion

Community Forestry's scientific regime of planning and market-oriented strategies are cultivated in its constituency to breed new citizens, as they discipline their lives along the lines of linear time that plans can be made according to schedule. Even more importantly, as the modern obey the laws of scientific management, and not ritual or seasonal traditions; and represent a break with the old institutions of cyclical time, while still carrying a “natural”, pseudo-cyclical rhythm, in that there are actually seasons in most management of nature.

As in other modern, capitalist ventures 'commodified' time is essential to the predictable and flexible operation of the market. It is not a question of option or agenda in this regard, the shift from 'cyclical' time to 'commodified' time - is a result of exposure to globalization, in particular – capitalism. There is a connection between the commercialization of the 'community' through the activities of the CFUG, as it is deeper engaged in the society than individual employment in the private or public sector, and its discourse and tools spread through social deliberative space. The responsibility for managing a 'self sufficient' forest breeds nurtures a 'spirit of enterprise' which makes the Community Forestry programme one of the foremost contributors to the commercialization of the social landscape in Bistachhap. The Community Forest, as a miniature of the ideal, ordered state, functions as a 'theatre of industry', encapsulates the wonders of rational management and the progress of capitalism, cultivating the 'awareness' (to quote the dominant local term) of the values of Community Forestry through participation.

This way, the community itself becomes subject to commercialization processes through the emerging markets of 'non-timber forest resources and the consequent marginalization of social space and cyclical time. This follows from the combination of market orientation in forestry, and the inclusion of villagers in the scheduled regimes of

commodified time (Debord 1967) whom are subjected to the governmentality of the management and budgeting of the Community Forestry regime.

On a closing note, the generation of “trivialized” 'free time' creates an opening; room for redistribution of domestic work; as inactivity is never appreciated, a new regime of time that dictates that casual activity is not productive or socially conductive, would give room for putting unemployed men to work in the house, with a more equal share – especially the young males who presently easily skips their domestic chores duties for junior sisters to take. If time becomes a resource that is limited, for families to distribute as well as for individuals, a process that is underway, this “qualitative inactivity – empty time” *may* become more difficult to maintain, and this may play out beneficially in regards to gender equality, for instance.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS

The Community Forest User Group and its forest was seemingly well functioning in Bisankhu Narayan, Ward 1, especially in the formalistic terms of 'performance'. Whereas problems exist in the realm of scientific forestry and fiscal policy, the practical implications of this go beyond this text. The village's relatively homogenous composition in terms of caste may have played part in diminishing division and conflict. This relatively low level of conflict and high level of conformity to shared referents may be a contributing factor to the CFUG's reluctance to deal actively with issues of grazing, as such action would be a source of conflict in the constituency.

The 'community'; the stakeholders of the CFUGs, have been 'cultivated' as risk-managing and self-administrating citizens through participation in the development discourse and practice of community forestry, and their representatives in the CFUG are expert at specialists at utilizing the language and terminology of development to express their "needs and wants" in line with certain international narratives of local governance. This is of course relevant, and recognizable everywhere, also in the village of Bistachhap; where foreigners are cast as potential foreign direct investors and/or donors, or at least curious tourists, and the civil society cast the various villagers as a 'community' of enterprising forest-people, or, perhaps, as libertarians for market access, with many more caricatures at hand. And this is a two-way process that is occurring in the multitude of arenas, including national political parties, international agencies, and intricate networking including the internet. The civil society and international donors have over time given rise to a national bureaucracy dedicated to managing invested funds, and although this bureaucracy is primarily concerned with its own interests rather than responding to the interests of the population or international agencies and donors (Mikesell 1994:293), the state seems to prefer the local population to seek external donors from private initiatives or civil society, rather than dividing scarce resources between competing interests – or making detailed policies – which also could be a drawn out, contested political process. As such, we see in the local communities the CFUG's and the individual actors projecting the 'community' and its project(s) in line with a more or less tailored image in order to suit the needs of the donor organizations (IO NGO Bahrav).

This 'tailored image' is also to a certain extent used to compare the 'community' to neighbouring Wards, and I take this to signify that the community forest and its representation significant to the *self*-representations among the villagers, of the 'community' as a whole, and of themselves as individuals. It is not a far cry to say that a well run community forest is a source of a certain pride, and the forest condition *is* seen by most as a representative reflection of the society; as the CFUG that is responsible for the forest and its regeneration is a representative core of the 'community' – it naturally follows that a healthy and well managed forest goes with a harmonious and ordered community – vice versa. Not least because an ill managed forest will certainly be well known. The mobilization to participate in the management, not only in committees, but also in practical work, is hence very important, because it drives the sense of community and the validity of the claim to pride in a well run forest – or the impression of one. Because in this, there could be great differences between 'the wealth of the community' and the actual forest condition. The force of mobilization, and the outward splendour mobilized through scientific management and 'good governance' and good 'performance' rating contrary to other parties when the great annual or decennial negotiations are held is a source of pride. The greater the mobilization, not only the greater the spread of the practices and philosophy of Community Forestry, but also the stronger the claim to representative legitimacy on part of the CFUG, and hence also the greater the growing sense of *hamro ban*, if such an expression is appropriate to denote the forest as a source of pride, identity and interdependence.

A problem resulting from the strict top-tier bureaucracy with limited local powers, and the demands on projects for external supervision and support is a severe amount of under-reporting. Often local initiators gather public support with the aid of '*thulamanji*', sometimes completely skipping procedures of protocol and official approval or funding for their projects, preferring instead to enact them clandestinely. If a sufficient majority of the population is rallied, they will not be stopped for fear of undermining the consensus that is the foundation of the philosophy of the Community Forestry (Kondos 1994, DoF Ranger Arpit, CDC Secretary). This is a significant change after the Revolutionary years of the 1990s.

Community Forests are constructed as utopian models of rational, scientific management in the sense that they while are planned on the basis of a national template, they are also produced in the local context as 'theatres of industry' through participation in

community forestry, under the patronage of the state. Through this utopian arena of engagement, scheduled time and other essential features of industrial capitalism is are embedded in practice, and help forge the rational, risk managing citizen. The 'empowerment' frequently spoken of in the Nepali CF programme is the access to the discourse and tools of science that is the other side of this 'colonization of consciousness' (Comaroff 1992). The Community Forest and its CFUG is a miniature society that inspire faith in modernity and development in the hands of 'local communities', and they are constantly re-created and deeper embedded in the social matrix of the already existing society through recruitment to community forestry.

The utopian aspect of the national Community Forest Programme fully blooms on the aggregate level as the effects of the processes in CF spread beyond the field of forestry deeper into local societies. As increasing spheres of social space and time are subjected to commodification, the greater is the awareness of time as a factor; as a 'resource' as some would say. With fewer activities to engage in, the more 'empty time' is at hand, encountering then variables such as exclusion and loneliness (perhaps due to for instance income difference and differences in access to 'entertainment industries'), there is a rise in levels of 'boredom' and "aimlessness"/"inactivity"; created not necessarily in changes in the access to work, but rather the lack of access to 'entertainment', and an increasing awareness of time, coupled with multiple encouragements to 'economize' time and to plan the future and present; rather pointless activities in the eras of cyclical time where most activity either is given or more or less spontaneous response to circumstances, needs and wants. In Nepal; time is not a resource, there is no expectation from the society for people or individuals to begin 'rationing their time', it is still in a regime of 'eternal return'. Although there are significant exceptions, for instance people in government or NGO jobs who struggle with the lack of commodified time that would improve legibility and predictability in their 'daily schedule' (another unfamiliar word in Bistachhap). However, cyclical time doesn't give provisions for overtime, and both employees in NGO's and students suffer stress and practical problems in the border between the 'ritualized' or 'cyclical' regime of time, and the economic regime of commodified time. In face of these developments, it is clear that the commodification processes that come through the engagement between market and 'community' seem only to advance.

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