INTRODUCTION TO SPECIAL ISSUE ON CIVIL SOCIETY IN NEPAL

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Decades after the term 'civil society' first regained popularity, its meaning is still contentious. However, the view expressed in the early years of its re-emergence, namely that it should be dismissed as vacuous or meaningless (Kumar, 1993; Lyons, 2000) is no longer be apposite today. Not only have the contexts in which civil societies operate changed, activists have in the interval been reflecting upon the meaning of civil society and (re)fashioned their actions in interaction with the idea. Both processes have transformed 'civil society' as a social reality and as a concept. This means that the study of 'civil society' is far from complete. It is with such a conviction that we sought to gather articles for a special issue on civil society in Nepal. As a working definition, we understood 'civil society' to refer to a sphere that is relatively autonomous from the state and populated by social actors that act collectively and voluntarily, and for purposes other than making a profit.

The topic of 'civil society' is not new for Nepal: indeed, work that may be classified under the rubric of 'civil society' goes back decades. From the 1950s, students of Nepali society started paying attention to the multiplicity of associations and forms of self-help that are ubiquitous features of rural as well as urban life in Nepal (e.g. Vergati, 1995; Toffin, 1984; Messerschmidt, 1978, 1981; Von der Heide, 1988; Chhetri, 1995). The activities and organisation of more 'modern' forms of association such as NGOs (e.g. Chand, 1991, 2000; Ulvila and Hossain, 2002; Gyawali, 2001; Shiwakoti, 2000; Heaton Shrestha, 2002; 2004; 2006a; 2006b), ethnic activist organisations and women's movements (e.g. Tawa Lama, 1997; Serchan, 1997; Phnuyal, 1997), and caste reform movements were subjected to equally detailed studies, as were civic engagement and voluntary association (e.g. Dahal, 2006; Chand, 2000; Yadama & Messerschmidt, 2002). Work that focuses explicitly on 'civil society' in Nepal, is more recent. It has concentrated for the most part on the roles, approaches and strategies of a range of civil society organisations (CSOs) across various sectors, from development (e.g. Panday, 1993; Acharya, 2000 & Bhattachan, 2000) to peacebuilding (e.g. Dahal, 2006), conflict transformation (e.g. Pradhan, 2006) policy transformation (e.g. Parajuli, 2004), furthering political participation of the poor (e.g. Ulvila & Hossain, 2002), and regime change (Shah, 2008). One collection of papers elected to approach the study of civil society by focusing on activists themselves, in an attempt to sidestep the definitional difficulties of the term itself (Gellner, 2010). A minority of studies has considered the broader social and political impact of civil society as a collection of organisations (Shiwakoti, 2000) and a concept promoted by Northern donors (in Tamang, 2002). In contrast with the earlier studies, these have for the most part not been research-based, but either theoretical essays or pieces based on the experience of the authors, frequently members of a CSO themselves.

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For all its richness, previous work has focused on a relatively narrow set of concerns, mostly instrumental in nature (predominantly the 'role' of civil society) and on individual civil society actors (whether activists or organisations). The CSOs studied have tended to be either 'indigenous' (*janajati*) or 'ethnic', or, when ethnically unmarked, high caste and middle-class. Conceptual work (e.g. trying to identify analogues to the discourse of civil society) has been far less common, has have attempts to study empirically the characteristics of civil society as an emergent whole.

We have tried to remedy the situation in this issue of New Angle. In gathering articles for a special issue on civil society in Nepal, we sought work that would address topics and aspects that have been relatively neglected in the published literature. The five papers that are included here consider civil society norms and values (Dev Raj Dahal); the strategies and practices of civil society actors that are neither high caste and middle-class nor 'ethnic' or indigenous (squatter communities in Ninglekhu, the *Dalit* in Lamsal); the logic of civil society itself (Basnet); the very concept of civil society (Ninglekhu, Lamsal) and related concepts such as civility (Dahal). The paper by Ojha, which describes an innovation by a mainstream NGO, is more typical of existing literature on civil society in Nepal. It is included here as a particularly good example of the genre of practitioner oriented literature and for reasons which we expound below. In the remainder of this introduction, we summarise each article in turn.

Chuda Mani Basnet: Three faces of Civil Society Activism in Nepal

The first of the five articles that are included here is by Chuda Mani Basnet of the South Asian University. This article consists of an ethnographically informed analysis of the 'logic' guiding civil society activism in Nepal at three distinct points in its history. The paper details these 'logics', namely: a 'service logic' (1990-2000); a 'peace logic' (2001-2004); and a more radical and egalitarian logic (2005-6). It then relates the corresponding types of civil society (civil society I, civil society II and civil society III, respectively) to broader political developments in the country. It argues that the changes in the logic underpinning civil society activism can be attributed to the changing patterns of macro power configurations and to distinct challenges faced by the urban literate class over time. The author's main point is that civil societies are not 'self-propelling things' as he puts it, but that they have a distinct 'logic' and that this is shaped by the broader configurations of power.

Basnet's attention to mid-level phenomena – the 'logic' of civil society – is a valuable contribution to studies of civil society, both in Nepal and generally which have tended to focus either on the 'micro-level' of individual associations or organisations, discourses, actors and practices *within* civil society or the macro-level of the relations between civil society as a whole and other spheres (the state, the market). The 'logic' of civil society represents a dimension of civil society that is not captured by 'micro-level' nor 'macro-level' studies. The former type of studies leave the characteristics of civil society as a space underspecified or derive these from theory, while the latter type lack the nuance and complexity of micro-studies as it treats civil society as a homogenous whole, a single agent. Yet attention to this 'logic' is crucial for those working with civil society, as it shapes possibilities for action and collaboration with civil society actors. It is all the more important than this logic is not unchanging. The second significant contribution of Basnet's article is its

underscoring of the historicity of civil society as a social reality (as opposed to a concept, of which there have been many excellent historical accounts e.g. Coombe, 1997; Hearn, 1997). In the Nepal context, studies of civil society have tended to be synchronic or, when more historical, have not related changes in civil society to the transformations in the broader political context (e.g. historical account of associational life in Nepal in Dahal, 2006; Shrestha & Farrington, 1993), with very few exceptions (e.g. Heaton Shrestha & Adhikari, 2011a). In any case, Basnet is unique in tracing this fluctuating logic over a relatively extended period of time (1990-2006). Finally, the article by Basnet advances the study of civil society in Nepal in another way, that is, in exploring the relation between regime type and associational life. Outside of the Nepal context, numerous studies have explored the impacts of repressive and more liberal regimes on associational life (Paxton, 2002; Salamon & Anheier, 1999) and voluntary energies (Hamman & Manuel, 1999; Encarnacion, 2000) and described the specific forms of informal co-operation and civic engagements that develop under authoritarian governments (e.g. Buchowski, 1996). The impact of regime type (democratic vs undemocratic) on organisational culture has also been the subject of study (Rossteutscher, 2010), and a substantial number of publications have examined the ways in which civil society changes during political transitions (e.g. Brysk, 1994; Krygier, 1997; Valenzuela, 1989). To date, however, Basnet is one of the few analysts to have attempted such work on civil society in Nepal.

In addition to the article's contributions to the study of civil society at the more conceptual level, the text is peppered with insights into Nepal's associational life and activism. For instance, the author sheds light on the origins of the peculiar relation of civil society to political parties in Nepal and writes of the critiques of civil society by Nepali intellectuals, which rarely appear in English language publications.

Sabin Ninglekhu: Breaking Open Civil Society: *Sukumbasi* and the City

The second article is by Sabin Ninglekhu of the University of Toronto. The article is an ethnographic account of strategies mobilised by *sukumbasi* (squatter communities) in Kathmandu to meet basic needs such as water and electricity and for claiming landownership rights and citizenship. It pays particular attention to their organising practices, the building of solidarity and the establishing of linkages which, the author finds, are not dissimilar to those of 'mainstream' civil society groups. This observation, in turn, allows the author to highlight the conceptual binaries (such as formal-informal, professional-unprofessional) defining 'civil society' in Nepal, and to note their exclusionary character. It is suggested that the concept of civil society be broadened so as to include groups, such as the *sukumbasi*, which do not currently fit neatly into civil society definitions in Nepal.

The paper is a valuable reminder that understandings of 'civil society' will vary across settings (for instance, outside of Nepal: Shneider, 2001; Lewis, 2004; Nordvall, 2009; Hann & Dunn, 1996) and makes explicit some of the categories underpinning understandings of 'civil society' in the context of Nepal. While elsewhere civil society might denote a society that is ruled by a civil as opposed to a military government, or refer to labour movements rather than middle class forms of association such as NGOs (Hearn, 2001), in Nepal, Ninglekhu finds it refers to a collective of non-state associations

characterised by formality, professionalism and citizenship.[1] 'Formality' and 'professionalism' are not salient elements of definitions of 'civil society' elsewhere, and neither is apoliticality universally accepted as a criterion for belonging to civil society (see Basnet this volume; and Gellner 2010, who argues that political activism should be seen as a contribution to civil society). This paper clearly indicates that the widespread 'catch-all' definition of civil society as a sphere that is relatively autonomous from the state and populated by a plethora of social actors acting collectively and voluntarily for purposes other than making a profit, is not a sufficient definition for civil society in the Nepal context. The article further highlights the fact that the term 'civil society' in Nepal excludes certain groups which elsewhere might be considered to properly belong to civil society.

There are clear practical implications of being excluded from definitions of civil society – implications for funding and other forms of assistance, for a start. This makes the task of grounding analysis and practice in local understandings of the term a crucial one, as pointed out by numerous scholars of civil society (e.g. Mamdani, 1996; Hann & Dunn, 1996; Fowler, 2012). The broader impact of absorbing wholesale and uncritically models of civil society derived from 18th and 19th century political philosophy were highlighted more than a decade ago by Seira Tamang (2002). She argues, *inter alia*, that a focus on civil society may obscure other forms of politics in Nepal which may lead to more effective forms of democracy. But while Tamang's argument might suggest that the term be abandoned altogether, we hold that a more productive approach is to develop a programme of research which is able to conceive of civil society on its own terms and enter into dialogue with models of civil society derived from Western philosophy. NInglekhu's article is one step in this direction, as is Dahal's contribution to this special issue, as we will see.

Ninglekhu's paper is also a reminder that civil society can be 'uncivil'. Debate about civil society in Nepal has not, on the whole, considered its 'uncivil aspects' and how it might actually reinforce inequalities and discriminatory practices prevalent in society as a whole. We say 'on the whole' because this point has been made in a volume edited by Mahendra Lawoti (2007). In his introduction to the volume, he points out how collective action by rural and indigenous minorities have occurred alongside protests by elites attempting to maintain their traditional privileges (e.g. Hindu fundamentalists, who have sought to oppose and reverse the declaration of Nepal as a secular state). Nonetheless, 'un-civility' is an under-debated aspect of civil society in Nepal, and it is worth re-visiting especially in view of the still widespread conviction that 'more civil society is a good thing'.[2]

Hemant Ojha: Civic Engagement Through Critical Action Research

Next in the collection is a paper by Hemant Ojha (formerly Executive Coordinator of ForestAction Nepal & currently associated with SIAS), which describes a mode of 'doing civic action'. It is based on documentation of the experience of a large NGO in Nepal, ForestAction. It details the method that was developed, termed 'Critical

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[1]   See also Hatchhethu (2006) for a view of civil society as the preserve of people belonging to the professions.

[2]   The uncivil aspects of civil society have, on the other hand, been thoroughly discussed elsewhere, including neighbouring India (e.g. Harriss, 2007; Chandhoke, 2003).

Action Research' or CAR. CAR "emphasises learning from practice, collating and communicating critical evidence for transforming policy dialogue while also empowering right holder citizens and their alliances through sharing knowledge counteracting the dominant system". The paper also details the historical and political economic context in which CAR developed, provides examples of how CAR operated at different levels of forest and natural resources governance, and outlines the challenges faced by CAR innovators. It suggests ways forward for NGOs wishing to bridge the divide of academic and 'applied' research, advocacy and service delivery.

The level of detail makes Ojha's reflexive account of a programmatic innovation within a Nepali NGO a particularly good example of the genre of practitioner oriented literature. The rich contextualisation of the innovation (CAR) allows for a deeper understanding of the method and for an assessment of its transferability to different socio-cultural settings. Though not explicitly discussed in the present paper, the author suggests that the way that CAR as a form of civic action emerged and was organised is specific to the context of a 'fragile state'. While this yet needs to be established, the paper acts as a reminder that development innovations should not be treated as context-free tools (see for example Mosse, 2001; Witharana, 2002).[3]

The case study of ForestAction is of more general interest for another reason. That is, its deliberate blending of frames of reference which usually stand apart in writings on civil society, namely: the political sociological literature on social movements on the one hand, and the literature on civil society in development studies or political philosophy on the other (with some rare exceptions e.g. Purdue, 2007). This is not just a matter of disciplinary boundaries or academic division of labour alone: in Nepal, at least, there is a widespread tendency to consider social movements (*andolan*) and civil society (*nagarik samaj*) as distinct phenomena (e.g. Parajuli, 2004). As Ninglekhu points out in his contribution to this issue, in the binaries of formal/informal, professional/unprofessional – and one could add hierarchical/non-hierarchical, mainstream / radical, apolitical/political – the first term is popularly associated with 'civil society' and the second with '(social) movement'. ForestAction, however, as an NGO (generally associated with the first element of the binaries above) engaged in the production of counter-hegemonic knowledge (associated with the second element of the same binaries), appears to confound this tendency as it draws on both social movement and civil society vocabularies and practices. At first surprising, this promiscuity is a welcome corrective to most writings on civil society. One clear benefit of this mixture is that it keeps in check the risk of treating civil society as an ahistorical phenomenon, since many social movement theories, concerned with the emergence and evolution of social movements, are historically oriented (e.g. political opportunities theories, *inter alia* Tarrow, 1998). Another benefit of introducing social movement theories in the study of civil society in Nepal concerns the issue of the apoliticality or, conversely, the politicality of civil society, given the widely acknowledged status of social

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[3]   Mosse argues that the influence of the wider institutional and social environments must be acknowledged and need to be seen as part of the development effort, requiring explicit planning of managerial attention rather than as a source of problems or misunderstandings. Witharana, meanwhile, raises important questions regarding the assumed transferability of 'conflict mapping' tools/techniques.

movements as political (e.g. Tilly, 2004; Tarrow, 1998; Alvarez et al., 1998). The desirability (or otherwise) of a political or politicised civil society, the very possibility of an apolitical civil society and the very meaning of these terms, are topics that deserve further exploration in the case of Nepal, where this issue is still a contentious and emotive one (see Heaton Shrestha & Adhikari, 2010 for an attempt to discuss this). Taking a cue from the article by Ojha, future research on civil society could usefully draw on social movement theories and perhaps lay to rest some of the controversies still surrounding the term and which, on occasion, unnecessarily hamper action by civil society actors.

Dev Raj Dahal: Recovering the Roots of Civil Society in Nepal

The fourth paper in this issue is by Dev Raj Dahal, the Nepal country director of the Friedrich Erbert Foundation and a well known contributor to writings on civil society in Nepal (e.g. Dahal, 1995, 2001, 2006; Bongartz & Dahal, 1996). This paper is an essay about civic values or 'virtues', and the need for civic education in contemporary Nepal. It makes an argument for 'recovering the roots of civil society in Nepal', which the author locates first and foremost in Hindu philosophy. This is necessary as, in its current form, mainstream or 'elite' civil society has lost touch with democratic values and the sense of social responsibility that the author refers to as *niskam karma.* 'Elite' civil society is divided along political party lines and susceptible to pursuing profit motives and self-promotion and has contributed to slowing down progress towards the creation of a modern state in Nepal. Civic education programmes grounded in age-old philosophical traditions in Nepal has the potential to transform current political culture and help resolve many of Nepal's present ills. The author also holds hope for a new civil society,

one that will emerge from rural areas as these become increasingly connected to each other and globally through ICTs and migration.

The paper offers more a diagnosis and prescription than a description of Nepal's civil society. As such, it departs from the other papers in this issue and *New Angle* policy, which tends to emphasise research based, empirical contributions. The paper's main interest lies in its attempt to establish equivalences between the discourse of civility or civic virtues and notions of the good life and proper human conduct in Western liberal political science on the one hand, and Hindu and Buddhist philosophies on the other. It strives to think the specificities of actually existing Nepali civil society through the lens of leading Western theorists. Notably, the paper's narrative of civic decline recalls Putnam's work unmistakably (e.g. Putnam, 1993, 2000), yet it is made specific to the Nepali context. Here, the loss of civicness or civic virtues are not due, as in Putnam, to changing work and family structures, TV and so forth, but to 'geopolitical forces' and the fact that the elites of civil society and leaders are 'aligned with global markets'.

Also of interest is the paper's endeavour to identify local conceptual equivalents of the notion of 'civility'. In the concept of *niskam karma* (glossed by the author as 'selfless service'), the author finds an analogue to the values that are said to underpin civil society in the liberal version of 'civil society' exemplified by De Tocqueville and popular in international development circles (Lewis, 2004). In its focus on values underpinning civic action, Dev Raj Dahal's work has equivalents elsewhere, for instance in studies of the cultural concept of *ubuntu* found throughout East, Central and Southern Africa (e.g. Murithi, 2009; Telschow, 2003). Writers have identified *ubuntu* as a fount

of behaviours and values said to be supportive of democracy such as attentiveness to the common good and willingness to participate in the life of the community, and cultivated through participation in civil society (e.g. Shils, 1991; Warren, 2001). As indicated in the introduction to this piece, there have been attempts to identify an equivalent of civil society in Nepal at the organisational level (i.e. identify organisational forms that conform to ideas of what a CSO is like). But far fewer have been efforts to identify 'civic values' in Nepali society.

This article deals with the subject matter in broad strokes and begs many questions, but it also suggests new areas for research on civil society in Nepal. The effort to identify or develop analogues to the discourse of civil society – which is only broached in Dahal's article – could be complemented by future studies (historical, ethnographic) that aim to understand the extent to which these values were shared and did inform practice in the past, as well as their significance in shaping public discourse and action today. As for practice, the paper suggests that civil society programmes would do well to pay more attention to local ideas of selfless action and engage with philosophical traditions that have a long standing in Nepal. While the instrumental use of such ideas is not guaranteed to lead to better civil society programme outcomes, it may, at least, bring clarity to a subject that has proved notoriously difficult in the context of Nepal.

Hem Bahadur Lamsal: *Dalit* Civil Society

The final paper in this issue of New Angle is on the topic of *Dalit* civil society. The paper is based on a desk study complemented by interviews with *Dalit* civil society activists. After an introduction to the plight of *Dalit* communities in Nepal, Lamsal gives an account of the emergence of a *Dalit* civil society, the roles it has played and continues to play in national life, its achievements and the challenges *Dalit* associations have faced in the course of their work. The final section explores the prospects for Nepal's *Dalit* civil society. It is one of the very few articles on *Dalit* civil society and, in highlighting the specific challenges facing *Dalit* CSOs, it is expected to help enhance working relations between *Dalit* CSOs, government and international organisations.

Adding to the subtypes of 'civil society' considered so far in this special issue, — elite, mainstream, rural — Lamsal defines '*Dalit* civil society' as the collective of formal non-governmental associations that are run by *Dalit* or by non-*Dalit* but for the benefit of *Dalit* communities. *Dalit* civil society does not, on the whole, concern itself with non-*Dalit* communities and can be understood as a type of 'ethnic civil society' in Haklai (2009)'s sense of a form of activism in which members are from one ethnic group and focus on empowering their own community only. Though not discussed explicitly in the text, there is little doubt that Lamsal's *Dalit* civil society is modelled on 'mainstream', 'elite' civil society, as described by Ninglekhu in relation to *sukumbasi* CSOs. This raises (at least) two questions. Given that NGOs as a form of association is linked with the middle classes (Hearn, 2001)[4] – which historically in Nepal have been drawn overwhelmingly from the dominant castes (Blaikie et al., 2005; Seddon, 1987) – one wonders the extent to which the similarity of *Dalit* civil society and elite civil society is the product of hegemony and, in turn, what impact

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4   Hann and Dunn (1996) goes further, indicating that there has been a general tendency in conventional approaches to civil society to overlook anything other than those groups established by the articulate middle classes.

the adoption of such a form will have for the *Dalit*. In other words, will *Dalit* civil society end up reinforcing middle class hegemony and lose an opportunity to challenge any institutionalised 'casteism' across society and in the state? One also wonders, given that running formal organisations such as NGOs requires and further develops skills and aptitudes acquired though formal education or training – access to which is unevenly distributed among *Dalit* groups – what impact the privileging (notably by donors) of such a form of association might have on already existing cleavages within the *Dalit* community (e.g. Folmar, 2007). The issue of the exclusions of civil society, which is raised in both Lamsal's and Ninglekhu's papers, has long been discussed in the more academic literature (e.g. Habermas, 1989; Dean, 1992), but is not a common topic in practitioner literature nor debates about civil society in development circles in general.[5] Though the paper focuses on *Dalit* civil society, it has implications for thinking about civil society more broadly and beyond Nepal's borders. Indeed, the very need for a distinct '*Dalit* civil society' – and the existence of factionalism within it, as noted by Lamsal – is a reminder that civil society is not impervious to the distinctions and power differentials of the broader society (Chandhoke, 2003) even as sections of civil society try to 'bracket' social and cultural differences and their effects of power (see Heaton, 2001). Lamsal's is a rare, balanced account of civil society in Nepal, both celebratory and cautionary, and opens the way for a host of new questions about the social life of civil society as a whole: how, it urges us to ask, are the social structures of the larger society reproduced – or challenged – through the work or the internal organisation of CSOs? This is but one set of questions that students of civil society or practitioners might wish to consider as they endeavour towards a more just and equitable Nepal.

CONCLUSION

Together, the papers in this issue of New Angle on the topic of civil society complexify rather than simplify the issue: they highlight that there is a diversity of understandings and types of civil society in Nepal – *Dalit* civil society, *sukumbasi*, elite or mainstream, rural civil society are but a few of these – and that both the concept and social reality of civil society changes over time. The papers remind us of the dangers of treating 'civil society' – like any development tool – as context free and ahistorical, and underscore that its transferability to new socio cultural settings needs to be assessed rather than taken for granted. The papers also raise many questions. To conclude this introduction, we would like to highlight some potential areas for future work.

In the text, we have mentioned several areas that would benefit from further elucidation, for instance the impact of regime type on organisational cultures and associational life; the

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5   Indeed, for Habermas (1989), the public sphere only ever achieved universal inclusivity in principle. The requirements for participation in the discussions that took place in the coffee houses, clubs and societies of 18th century western Europe - namely access to the cultural goods that were the subject of these discussions - excluded de facto the majority of the population which was unpropertied and uneducated. Dean (1992)'s is a useful review of feminist critiques of civil society and the different means through which women have been excluded from this sphere, which range from the legal and economic to the conceptual, notably, ideas about the kind of agency which qualifies a person for participation in the public domain – the capacity for reasoned judgement, pragmatic self-assertion and autonomous action – and the association of women with particularity, sentiment and dependence.

desirability and possibility of an apolitical civil society; the uncivil aspects of civil society; and its social life, which may include consideration of the ways in which the social structures of the broader society get reproduced within or through civil society, the work of CSOs and their internal organisation. Yet more potential areas of work suggest themselves. In his article, Ninglekhu highlights one kind of contest over the meaning of civil society, specifically, relating to the identity of those occupying that space. The contests over whether NGOs can be considered civil society actors or not is long standing and well known (see Shiwakoti *op.cit.* among others). On the other hand, the effect of these controversies or interpretive battles on the various initiatives by non-state actors and particularly, efforts to partake more meaningfully in processes of governance, is still to be assessed through empirical study. Another area of controversy concerns the democratic credentials of civil society organisations, which have been frequently questioned by intellectuals in Nepal; future work might search for evidence that (non-governmental) organisational cultures are becoming more democratic, as Nepal's democratic transition gets underway. Further grounding the research agenda in Nepali political realities, future studies might reflect on the rise of the 'political Left' in Nepal and its implications for civil society, widely seen as part of a neoliberal ideological arsenal (e.g. Wallace, 2004). Given the strength of the Left in Nepal, such research might ask, to what extent Marxist ideas have informed debate and relations between civil society and state institutions. Conversely, it might explore how civil society ideas and practices have engaged with, transcended the boundary of, or confronted Marxist ideas and political parties. Another important development in Nepal in recent years has been the rise of new regional political actors and diverse ethnic and identity based social movements demanding 'inclusion' in the polity, notably in the Tarai. Civil society studies could ask how the shifting balance of political power might be reflected in civil society; whether we are witnessing the emergence of more powerful civil society groups, that might challenge the dominance of Kathmandu-centric civil society, or, on the contrary, whether existing civil society groups acting as 'trenches' protecting and insulating the state from these new political actors' attempts to transform it. These are but few of the questions that could be usefully asked by any future research programme on civil society in Nepal. Let us now turn to the papers themselves, which we hope will prove insightful, and, most of all, demonstrate that there is still much to learn about civil society and that past work has anything but exhausted the field.

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