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Let’s Talk About It: Political Relationships in Nepal

Benjamin Wolf Lehr Mueser

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Lets Talk About It
Political Relationships in Nepal

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between citizens, political parties, and local government in Nepal. Specifically, the research focuses on the relationship as it pertains to the decision-making processes in the VDC and DDC in Salleri, Solukhumbu. Through interviews with individuals at the policy level in Kathmandu, officials in Salleri, and residents of Salleri, the research studies this interaction and how it relates to citizen’s individual agency, political parties’ role as a middleman, and local government’s ability to communicate with local residents. The research concludes that parties are the only way for citizens to take their demands to local bodies. This process involves a capitalization on the needs of citizens, and a deprivation of citizen agency. It also enfeebles the local government’s ability to communicate with citizens, and it becomes reliant upon parties for the functionality of the political system.
**Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this study to Narayan Shah and Pramod Shah, who welcomed me into their home in Salleri, treated me as a son and brother, and helped me conduct this research.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Pramod Shah for his extensive help in locating interviewees and interview translation, Arun Adhikary for his guidance in this project, and all those who afforded me their time to talk.
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**Introduction**

Nepal is a rapidly modernizing country, both economically and socially. It is also still in the midst of the peace process after years of conflict, and elections at the local level have not been held in nearly a decade. Decentralization and local governance is hotly contested in the writing of the new Constitution, which is a vital component in the peace process. A key question considered by the Constitutional Assembly is how to organize states – a question that will involve difficult decisions about the relationship between local governments and their populations. Both Nepalis and aid agencies have expressed concern however, at the protracted process in forming a federal state (USAID 2010).

This paper aims to understand the relationships that currently exist between people and their governments in Nepal. In the absence of elections, it is important to study how citizens are interacting with the VDC and DDC. This study necessarily includes a look at the function of political parties, as they play a crucial role in the communication between local bodies and the people. Specifically, the study is situated about the budgeting process of the local bodies, although other forms of decision-making do exist.

**Salleri**

The location of the study is also focused. This paper examines the above relationships specifically in Salleri, headquarters of the Solukhumbu district of Eastern Nepal. Salleri is a small village of approximately five thousand residents, and holds all the district-level offices as well as the chief administrative office. Salleri is also home to the main office for many district wide organizations, as
well as the branch office for many national organizations. There is also a branch of Tribhuvan University, and a Nepal Army Barracks. The dominant political parties are the Maoist Party and the Nepali Congress Party, but there is also a small presence of the Himali Party.

Although it remains one district, Solukhumbu is sharply divided between the area north of Lukla, Khumbu, which is the Mt. Everest (Sagarmatha) region, and the region south of Phaplu, Solu. Salleri is the official headquarters for the entire district, but Namche Bazaar acts more as the headquarters for Khumbu, while Salleri is the headquarters for the rest. Many addresses on shops and hotels in Salleri even say “Solu” instead of Solukhumbu.

Although the occasional trekker comes through every few days, the numerous hotels in Salleri are generally filled with Nepalis. Most foreigners go to Lukla to trek up to Everest or Gokyo, and do not bother with Salleri. Salleri is a destination for Nepalis, not foreigners. Nepalis come for business at any of the local offices and organizations but also for other purposes, such as a regional gathering of monks and nuns, and the weekly market. Every Saturday, people come from the entire surrounding area to Naya Bazaar, a large amphitheater-shaped area south of the main section of Salleri (Appendix I), to buy their vegetables for the week. Although food shopping is the main attraction, all other vendors also gather for the weekly market. Many travel on the nearby road in the back of pick-up trucks that drop residents off at their respective villages on the way to or from Naya Bazaar.

Salleri is also home to many castes and ethnic groups, including Sherpas, Magars, Newars, Rais, Kamis, and Tamangs. There are especially many businessmen, workers and teachers from the Terai. There are also however,
significant ethnic tensions in Salleri. Particularly prominent are complaints from Madhesis of discrimination by regional castes, such as Sherpas – both social and economic. This ethnic tension is coupled with economic disparities evident in Salleri. Although it is a small village, there are a number of beggars. In an interview, the local government school vice principle also said that children from Salleri normally go to private schools, while children from remote areas com to the Salleri government school (Rai, 2011).

Salleri is a vibrant town, but not without its share of social and economic problems. The town has many facilities (internet shops, markets, schools, healthpost, veterinary office, agricultural office, and many organizations), but also many issues with the local infrastructure. Many businessmen complain that it is hard to bring goods to Salleri, and just a week before my stay, a fire consumed 10 homes in the center of town. Another fire two years ago destroyed another four homes. Salleri poses an appropriate context in which to study the relationship between citizens and the local government, both as a village and as the district headquarters.

Relevant Literature

The concept of good governance in Nepal has been the subject of significant focus both within Nepal and internationally. With the reintroduction of democracy to Nepal in 1990, and the subsequent Maoist People’s War, international agencies as well as intellectuals have paid attention to how they believe government should be administered, hereafter understood as good governance. Since 1990 the national Nepalese government has changed rapidly
and repeatedly, and is currently in the process of trying to write an overdue Constitution.

In the Nepal context, Dahal, Uprety and Subba (2002) closely relate good governance to efforts at decentralization; in order to achieve better governance (i.e. transparency, accountability, and participation) government must be decentralized. The move to decentralize government in Nepal dates back much further than the current political turmoil, but has received renewed vigor in recent years. This dispersing of political power, it is believed, will also strengthen development work at the base level. Naturally this decentralizing shifts the emphasis from national governance to local (Dahal et al, 2002). Nepal (2007) also argues that this move toward decentralization and local governance is closely related to rhetoric for the right to self-determination. This indicates that the effort for effective and responsive local government cannot be separated from the rights of citizens – both as individuals and as groups geographically or ethnically defined – to govern themselves. This makes the decentralization question inextricably tied with the framing of the Constitution.

Local government in Nepal consists of Village Development Committees (VDC) and District Development Committees (DDC). Because there have been no elections in nine years however, these have been run by the “secretary” – a politically appointed bureaucrat called a “Local Development Officer” (LDO) from the Ministry of Local Development. In the place of an elected committee, decisions at the village and district levels are made by the Advisory Committee, a group of representatives from political parties, chaired by the LDO.

Dahal, Uprety and Subba (2002) note that these local authorities find themselves in a “legitimacy crisis” where there exists a gap between their
legislative responsibility, and the reality of their means. Dahal, Upreti and Subba indicate that VDCs in contemporary Nepal are unable to present the “good governance” demanded, begging the question of the effectiveness of projects aimed at enhancing service delivery according to the local citizen’s demands. One such project is the Local Governance and Community Development Programme (LGCDP). It is also important to note that only party representatives are officially involved in the budget distribution process. It is therefore also questionable whether development committees can directly hear the demands of their constituents.

Local authority has been the subject of various aid initiatives from international donors trying to promote practices of good governance. In a basic sense, these rhetorical practices include sustaining a stable local government with which the community can be actively involved. This imagines a paradigm of political economy, in which projects focus on developing the ability of government to provide services (supply) and an active civil society that wants those services (demand). Nepali (2000) espouses a critical view however of the impact of outside organizations on governance practices in Nepal. He believes that such international projects are ill equipped to affect positive change, noting that these organizations are only upwardly accountable to their donor agencies, rather than downwardly accountable to their beneficiaries.

Dahal, Upreti, Subba and Nepali see problems in the administration of development projects in local governance, even with the above factors aside. Nepali demonstrates little confidence in donor agency’s ability to work for local benefit, believing that the NGOs they contract with are just as affected by corruption as the local governments themselves. Similarly, Dahal, Upreti and Nepali...
Subba bring attention to problems in Nepal’s social stratification. Citing patriarchy, the caste system, and religious and ethnic divisions, they suggest that good governance cannot happen until these social structures are addressed (Dahal et al, 2002). The development of both demand and capacity of governmental will therefore have to be interconnected with a transformation in civil society.

Work has been done to evaluate capacity and demand building projects, such as the LGCDP mid-term review. In the review, published in November, 2010, the authors expressed serious concern that the demand side of the project was lacking. This particular aspect of the LGCDP aims to develop local community groups and their ability to stay together and advocate together as a group. The report stated that a great fiduciary risk exists when capacity of local government is increased, but civic demand by the community is not (Ferrazzi, et al., 2010). An anonymous representative from the Ministry of Local Development attributed the delayed fostering of political demand to a disagreement among donors about exactly how to go about it promoting social mobilization.

The Nepal context makes discussion of citizenship also a key issue. As the Nepal government has, in little more than two decades, shifted from monarchy, to democracy, to internal armed conflict, to an attempt to form a federal state, the relationships between citizens and their government has been rapidly changing. As noted earlier, Arun Adhikary brought attention to the dramatic difference between a citizen relationship and a subject relationship between people and the sovereign power. The relationship between people and their political parties has also seen rapid change in recent years. The Panchayat system of guided democracy was notoriously partyless, but the following decade...
saw a stark rise in political parties, with the Maoist people’s war, and the current political gridlock in the Constitutional Assembly. All of this brings into question exactly how the citizens interact with the VDC and DDC, which this study examines.

The discussion of citizenship is as nearly as old as philosophy itself, with discussions tracing back to Aristotle. In its basic sense, citizenship denotes membership in a group by which that member has certain rights. Since its conception as a discourse, the citizen has been contrasted with the subject. In a basic sense, a subject is understood as one under the authority of the sovereign, and who owes the sovereign loyalty. Although Thomas Hobbes asserted that the actual obligations of citizens and subjects to the sovereign remains the same, they are generally accepted as opposing ideas. Citizenship however, must be understood as an expansive concept, and having received substantial attention since the 1990s, is conceived of in many ways (Leydet, 2009).

An important distinction in understanding theories of citizenship is between the liberal and republican model. The republican model focuses on the ability of the individual citizen to take part in the governance of the state. As Dominique Leydet writes about the republican view, “active participation in processes of deliberation and decision-making ensures that individuals are citizens, not subjects,” (Leydet, 1.2). In contrast, the liberal model envisions a citizen defined by their legal status in a community, who is subject to the same laws as fellow citizens. This affords them personal freedoms, but these manifest in private dealings, not necessarily in political deliberations of the state.

Since the spread of democratic institutions in the twentieth century to more and more diverse polities, there has also been discussion about a
universalist idea of citizenship. This perspective advocates identical political and civil rights to all citizens, regardless of their various distinctions, such as gender, class or race. This has been severely critiqued by those saying that minority rights require special protection (Leydet, 2009). In other words, the universalist perspective has been criticized as granting equal rights to unequal citizens. This is particularly important in the Nepal context because of the pervasive influence of the caste system. In contrast to the universalist view, there is also the differentiated concept of citizenship, championed chiefly by Iris Young. This pictures a “heterogeneous public” in which citizens can meet and have a “dialogue across differences,” (Leydet, 2.1).

While Nepal’s government has evolved so quickly, presumably so too has the relationship between Nepalis and the government, both central and local. Although the concept of citizenship as an idea has received serious attention, there is little analysis of the Nepal context. This study intends to begin to address the question how citizens in Nepal are considered in relation to their government, and how the former influences the latter.

**Methodology**

This research was conducted through twenty-six in depth and semi-guided interviews over the course of three and a half weeks. The first week was in Kathmandu, where interviews were conducted with representatives from the Nepal Ministry of Local Development, international donor agencies, and non-governmental organizations. The second and third week of this study was in Salleri, the headquarters of the Solukhumbu district of Nepal. In Salleri, interviews were conducted with officials in the local and district offices, as well
as individuals in the town. The last week of the study was in Kathmandu, finishing writing and conducting final follow-up interviews.

Interviews focused on questions concerning the local government decision-making process with the distribution of the DDC and VDC budgets. Interviews with government officials and other policy-level representatives addressed how budgetary decisions are made and how information is gathered, while interviews with residents of Salleri included what the interviewee’s personal priorities were, and how they are involved in the budget processes. As the study developed, questions also became more drawn toward the role of parties in the process, on both the side of individual citizens and the side of government officials.

Many interviews conducted at the local level were done with the help of a Nepali translator. This presented the potential for a bias in translation. While in Salleri, I was also living with Mr. Shah and his son, who became my translator. Both were helpful in finding people that I wanted to interview, but there were still potential biases because they are both original residents of the Terai, and there in Salleri there is much caste-baste discrimination.

This study also suffers from a serious limitation due to the fact that I was unable to meet with the Salleri VDC Local Development Officer. The research focuses on the relationship between citizens and their local government bodies, so an interview with the local VDC is relevant and quintessential. My final conclusions and analyses are hindered by the absence of this interaction. There is another limitation due to Salleri’s geographic position. Being both a town and the headquarters for the district, it was at times difficult to discern between the
information regarding district-level decision making and issues, and those at the local level.

All interviewees signed a written consent form approved of by SIT World Learning (Appendix II). They were also explicitly told that they had the right to remain entirely anonymous, and to end the interview at any time. The only personal information requested was each person’s name and occupation. No vulnerable groups were targeted in this study.

The focus of this study shifted over the course of the research. It was originally intended to examine the perceptions of good governance, as viewed by people at both the policy level and the local level. In this, the original intent was specifically situated around the work of the LGCDP and efforts to organize citizens in groups – social mobilizations (SM). As the research was conducted, I began to examine more closely the specific relationship that exists between the citizens, their parties, and the local government. This altered focus is still relevant for the original question, but addresses a much more specific question that was posed at first. In this sense, although the study itself has evolved, the new analytical focus does not make the consent form any less valid. The risk associated with the study as well as the personal effect of the study has not changed.

Research Findings

The research was divided between speaking with individuals in Kathmandu, and in Salleri. In the latter, which contains the majority of the research, interviews are again subdivided between discussions with local officials
in the government offices, and with residents of Salleri. Therefore, presentation of research findings will also be divided along these lines.

_Kathmandu_

The main topic of conversation in Kathmandu was the structure of local governance. Among interviewees, there was a general opinion that above all, local government in Nepal lacks actual structure. There was nearly a consensus that local government structure, currently consisting of an LDO chairing an advisory committee, is an unsustainable form of government and administration because elections have not been held. Nearly all participants cited the structure of the VDC and DDC, being mostly controlled by the appointed LDO, as the base of political problems at the local level. An anonymous source from a donor agency remarked that without elections, there has been no real way to foster accountability with government officers. Experts for the LGCDP in the Ministry of Local Development raised similar concerns (Dhital, 2011). Kalanidhi Devkota, executive secretary for the Municipalities Association of Nepal (MuAN), elaborated on the lack of local structures, stating that without downwardly accountable local bodies the people feel as though their hopes and aspirations will not be addressed and they feel as though their problems cannot be solved. “Until local elections take place,” he said, “this kind of situation will just continue,” (Devkota, 2011).

The lack of local structure however, does not necessarily mean social upheaval. Although many participants complained of political instability as an impediment in the way of progress, Jiwan Dhital, capacity building expert for the LGCDP, stated that even if the Constitution were to be finished in May, it would
still be a long time before elections could be held, and nothing would actually change at the local level. In lieu of new structures, he suggested that the efforts of the LGCDP would continue to try to build local accountability (Dhital, 2011).

The general opinion that local government structures are inadequate would indicate a fault in the work of programs like the LGCDP and like programs until a Constitution is finished. With this in mind, USAID has not supported programs like the LGCDP, and only now is accepting proposals for after the Constitution is finished. Vijay Kunwar, former director of Social Empowerment and Building Accountability Center (SEBAC-Nepal), however, stated that the creation of structures is not actually the aim of governance promotion programs. Instead, he purported that the real objective is to foster a political environment. The ultimate goal he says is to create an atmosphere of political awareness and empowerment, in which, even if new structures are not formed, a new generation of political leaders can grow up. “Social Mobilization,” he said, “is to pre-orient the prospective party members, the people who are going to be educated people for future governments,” (Kunwar 2011). Similarly, Arun Adhikary, midterm reviewer of the LGCDP, stated that the true goal is to create an “enabling” environment. Empowering groups to work together for common priorities is one strategy to reach an enabling society (Adhikary, 2011).

An expert for the LGCDP however, noted the danger of developing one side of the political realm without enhancing the other. In this, he was speaking about the aforementioned paradigm of political supply and demand. He explained that if resources of government are disproportionately large, there is a great fiduciary risk of misuse and corruption. Meanwhile, if the civic demand is disproportionately large, there is the risk of unrest and revolt. With this in mind,
it may be a concern that there are many efforts to enhance the capacity of local
governments, while the demand for that capacity is purportedly lacking
momentum.

In the same vein as inadequate local structures, many intimated that
efforts to mobilize local groups have not caught on. An anonymous
representative from a donor agency stated that the civil society of Nepal itself is
vibrant, and yet it appears to be unable to take an extra step to actually hold
government accountable, despite the lack of mechanisms like elections. In other
words, people are forming groups, but still unable to advocate for their demands
successfully. Kunwar expressed similar perceptions, stating that “the Nepal
people are more empowered, they can raise they’re voices… now it needs to
become effective,” (Kunwar, 2011). Adhikary took an alternative look at the lack
of momentum in social mobilization. He noted that historically, citizens of Nepal
have always been considered subjects. As subjects, they do not have a tradition of
active interaction with the government to advocate their needs. Instead, it is a
system of patronage in which subjects passively receive (Adhikary, 2011).

From the views of various individuals in Kathmandu, local government
lacks the structural capacity to successfully interact with citizens. Similarly, the
overall view is that citizens themselves have not been able to effectively reach
out to the government. Although some interviewees did cite specific instances in
which the VDC or DDC and residents try to interact, there seems to be a general
agreement that these efforts are stunted or ineffectual. For example, one source
from the Ministry of Local Development described the process of social and
public audits conducted by the VDCs and DDCs. Although the audits are
intended as a form of accountability in place of elections, he stated that they
represent no actual downward accountability, and are often little more than the formality of getting signatures from enough people.

These various concerns about local governance beg the question “what actually is the relationship between local governments and their constituents?” This was the focus of my study in Salleri, Solukhumbu. Over the course of my initial interviews however, the involvement and role of local political parties became increasingly important. The focus of my research in subsequent conversations shifted in order to incorporate the specific role of political parties into the study.

*Salleri – District and Local Officials*

Interviews were also conducted with district and local level officials in Salleri, Solukhumbu. The ultimate question in Salleri was how local government functions without the appropriate mechanisms, such as elections. These were the main complaints and concerns of participants in Kathmandu, and many conversations with government officials Salleri were aimed at understanding how they interact with local residents.

There appeared to be no consistent and direct interaction between the local bodies and the resident citizens. The focus of inquiries was about the budgetary planning process, and it became clear that in the specific distribution of government funds, there is no direct input from citizens. Instead of an elected body, decisions are made by the Advisory Committee, which is made of representatives from each political party. Although these party representatives are elected from their respective groups, there appeared to be no avenue for individual citizens, or groups of citizens to give input. Purusoltam Nepal, the
Solukhumbu district Local Development Officer, described the process, saying that although only party members get an official place in the process, sometimes they invite groups, such as Dalits or Janajatis, to come and give input on the committee’s decisions. He also described how the DDC office has mapped information of the resident disadvantaged groups (DAG), which they use when input is needed or requested (Nepal, 2011).

Mukti Batrai, the district chief engineer, described a similar process in the implementation of infrastructure development projects. It is his job to advise the DDC on their choice of project implementation, and to oversee the district’s projects. He does this in accordance with the LGCDP, but also the Rural Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Sector Development Program (RRRSRP) and Decentralized Rural Infrastructure and Livelihood Project (DRILP). When asked how he knows what projects to implement and where, he responded that his agenda is set by the central government and the priorities of major donor agencies – often international organizations or aid agencies. The information he receives, he said, is gathered by the central government about the district and local demographics. It is significant however, that although the information has its source in Solukhumbu, Mr Batrai receives it from the central government (Batrai, 2011).

Yada Subedi, the Chief District Officer, told a slightly different story. The Chief District Administration office does not have a budget for distribution like the VDC and DDC do, and its work revolves more around the overall coordination of the district. He stated however, that complaints of the VDC and DDC often come to his office, after which he investigates the claims. He stated explicitly however, that only small groups of one or two people ever come to his
If he fails to address their complaints satisfactorily, he said, people can appeal their grievances to the Ministry of Home Affairs. Unlike the budgetary offices, Subedi has frequent interaction with the local residents, but this is because it is through his office that people can get their citizenship papers, migration papers, and passports.

Inevitably, the question of accountable was raised. Strangely, Nepal (LDO) stated, “we are directly accountable to the people,” (Nepal, 2011). Upon further inquiry it became apparent that by “directly accountable” what he meant was that the planning process comes originally from the demands of the people. The general system he described was that people gather in their communities to present projects at the ward level. These are then prioritized at the VDC level, and then brought to the DDC, where they are further prioritized and some are chosen to be implemented. When he was asked further about political accountability, he stated that the DDC conducts the social audits, as proscribed by the Ministry of Local Development. It is interesting to note that he said party representatives, civil servants, or journalists monitor these audits, but never local community groups themselves. “We are trying to do transition,” he said, referring to a shift to a more directly accountable local body, “but its not going well,” (Nepal, 2011).

Janardan Rajal, the district school supervisor and acting district education minister described downward accountability differently. Rajal stated that teachers were accountable only to their respective political parties, not the communities they teach. Meanwhile, he said that he is only truly accountable to the district education minister, who is intern only accountable to the Ministry of Education.
“It would be best to have accountability flipped,” he said, “…then people would be at the top,” (Rajal, 2011).

Pardon Shrestha, the LGCDP district Social Mobilizer, is instrumental in the intended “transition” mentioned by Nepal, as it is his responsibility to bring citizens into groups together in order to advance their common goals. Shrestha described a process in which people form groups at the ward level and choose two representatives from within themselves to sit on the Chair Manager Conference. Through this conference, different groups discuss their needs and priorities before passing them on to the VDC and DDC. This process was not without problems however. Shrestha stated that there was significant issues of discrimination, based both on caste and income level. Because different groups can contribute different amounts to a given group, he said, they have decided to work on bringing people together in groups based on their income levels, which a greater focus on DAG (Shrestha, 2011).

The other significant problem he mentioned was the interference of political parties. Dominant political parties in VDCs often times have different objectives than the Social Mobilizer. This is easy to understand because it is his goal to bring people into groups separate from their political groups. Shrestha also stated that local political parties demand a percentage of the social mobilizer’s salary for their support, and take a percentage of grants given for projects that are approved for the area. In the case that a constitution is not finished soon, he also suggested that work could potentially be hindered by violent outbreaks (Shrestha, 2011).

Mukti Batrai mentioned similar problems with local political influence. In places where one party has a majority, he said, they control the entire
implementation of a project, including how, where and if it gets done. He also described other problems of implementation, stating that there is not enough staffing to effectively supervise all the projects done across the district. Furthermore, the quality of projects is often lacking because local groups who do not know how implement them. As to why implement through community groups, he said cited two goals: first, to give the community a sense of ownership of a project, and second to get money into the hands of local citizens (Batrai, 2011).

Om Narayan Jha, a local elections officer with the Election Commission, and Janardan Rajal also stressed interference of local political parties. Jha, whose job it is to maintain the voters lists to be prepared for an election, stated that collection of voter information in villages is sometimes made difficult by party affiliations (Jha, 2011). Rajal complained that the funding for schools is ultimately controlled by party ties because the decisions are made by the Advisory Committee, upon which only party representatives sit. Party ties also found their way into classrooms he said, with teachers’ membership to political teacher’s unions (Rajal, 2011).

Salleri – Line Agency Representatives

In addition to local government officials, interviews were conducted with representatives from line agencies providing services for Salleri and the district. These included the health post, the local government school, the district veterinary services, and the agricultural office. I was told that there is no clean water station in Sallari, which would normally be included along with these
agencies, because all water is “clean mountain water.” Nonetheless, most residents drink boiled water.

The most regular comment among line agency representatives was about monetary and material shortages. Lali B.K., a maternity nurse with the Salleri health post noted that medicine delivery is often sporadic and at times not enough (B.K., 2011). Indra Kumar Rai, vice principle (acting headmaster) for the Salleri government primary and secondary school, said that the Nepali government only provides them with salaries, while their school building lacks many supplies and facilities. The things they do have – a couple of computers, notebooks, and pens – are all provided by NGOs, such as Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN), the Hillary Himalayan Trust, and Rural Education and Environment Development (REED Nepal) (Rai, 2011). In considering this lack of support from the central government, I asked Rai and B.K. what a good government would be. Separately, both responded that the government that provides institutions is the good one, that what they currently lack most is a workable structure (Rai, B.K., 2011).

Bhim Bahadur Bogati, the chair of REED Nepal, also spoke about difficulties in advancing education in Salleri. As one of the goals of the REED Nepal organization, he wants the community to be directly involved with the schools. This has been hard he said, because the community members believe that the onus for education rests with the teachers and the government, not themselves. He also expressed a critical view of how development has been done in remote areas of Nepal. Before addressing any problems, he believes that there must be an elected local government. Government and NGO officials he said, do workshops in three star hotels, but do little actual work at the local level.
Although there are many NGOs and INGOs and a lot of money for development, there continues to be little actually done in the village (Bogati, 2011).

Suresh Kumar Sah, the district agricultural minister, and Niraj Bhattarai, the district veterinary doctor, raised complaints about support provided by the central government. Bhattarai said that his office lacks sufficient staff and materials for their lab. Sah also said that although they have enough seed and fertilizer, they are unable to provide it at the right times for maximum output. Both Sah and Bhattarai pointed to political instability as a source of their problems. Bhattarai said that due to instability, the budget is not consistent and reliable. Therefore, he said, a good government is one in which there is no political effect on the veterinary profession, where budgets are fixed (Bhattarai, 2011). Similarly, Sah stated that there needs to be better cooperation between parties, and between people and parties. If this were the case he said, money would flow more smoothly (and presumably more consistently) (Sah, 2011).

**Salleri – Residents**

Finally, interviews were conducted with residents of Salleri. A sense of diversity was sought in these interviews, and they include many castes and professions from Salleri. Throughout the interviews with Salleri residents, the role and presence of the local political parties became increasingly important. Interviews continued to focus more on this particular aspect of the relationship between citizens and their government.

Sunita Kirati, Dharma Pujan Sunuwar and Durga Prasad Rai, members of the Maoist, Nepali Congress and Himali Parties respectively, all presented very similar accounts of the work of their parties. All three described their duties as
party members, to go to remote areas and gather information about the residents needs. As party members, each described a system in which they are expected and required to find more prospective members. There was also a consistent focus especially on DAG. They described recruiting people into their respective parties, sometimes giving DAG an amount of money to help immediate problems, and learning of their needs and problems. They then take that information (the demands) to their party leaders. The party members then meet and discuss and prioritize the various demands, which are then brought before the Advisory Committees in the VDC and DDC, where final budgetary decisions are made.

Kirati, who is the local leader of All Nepal Women’s Association [Revolutionary] (Maoist Party), described her priorities as the advancement of marginalized women’s opportunities and rights. When asked how to promote those goals, she said that with a focus on the poorest and most marginalized, they tell them to relax, and that help is on the way, while those needs are advocated for by the party at the VDC and DDC. She also mentioned, multiple times, waiting for orders from more senior party members. One instance was that when she was asked about her role in the decision making process. Only higher party members, she said, are actually involved in the process in the DDC and VDC. Meanwhile, upon orders from senior members, she goes to remote areas to gather information about the needs of local residents. The other instance was the prospect of the Constitution not coming in May. She stated that she was keeping the party together, staying united, waiting for an order from senior members as to what to do if the Constitution is not finished (Kirati, 2011).
Sunuwar, representative of the Nepali Congress Party, described a very similar situation to Kirati, with regard to both the demand collection system, and preparation if the Constitution is not finished. He also described a intra-party system of advancement, in which after joining, members must work for the party for five years, before they can compete with others to be elected to a more senior position. When asked what he thought a good government would be, he said a democracy in which people’s wants and needs are closely heeded. The current government he said, does not pay attention to citizen’s demands, only the party does (Sunuwar, 2011).

Prasad Rai, a member of the Himali Party and local shopkeeper, also described the system of gathering information from remote DAG. However, he also gave additional insight to the politics of project implementation. When the budget is allocated for a certain project he said, the parties fight for the money to implement it, despite the fact that they work cooperatively to determine what demands to address. This normally happens with smaller needs, like a bridge or a clean water station, not large, overarching goals. He also said that when a party is given money to do a project, the party officials take a percent of that money for their work in advocating for it. When a project is finally approved, the local user groups implement. At first, they only received a portion of the funds, and if they do well, they receive the rest of it. Rai described a slightly different vision if the Constitution is not written. Rather than explicitly waiting for orders from above, Rai envisions a country-wide revolt, and a national demand for it to be finished (Rai, 2011).

I also met with Kumari and Chandre Kami, husband and wife members of the Dalit Union [Revolutionary] (Maoist). For the party, it is both of their
responsibilities to gather information about Dalits, both their demands and their demographics, and file reports of that information to higher party members. They spoke of intra-party discrimination, and negligence of the Dalits’ needs. Rather than issues with the local government, they only described issues within the party. People from higher castes use the name of the Dalits, they said, in order to get funds, and yet the actual Dalits never get the benefits. They also do not participate in the VDC and DDC budget processes they said. Rather they only take part in the Maoist specific budget process.

Similar problems were raised by a group of workers and businessmen from the Terai, although with a less political focus. In fact, this group emphatically stated that they belonged to no political party nor an organization. Like members of the Dalit Union, they described consistent discrimination based on their caste and ethnicity. For them however, the source of their complaints was not within a party, but from the local castes and the local VDC. Facilities are given to the VDC for local residents they say, but it never reaches them. They claimed that this prejudice exists in both social and business settings. When asked what they could do to address this, they responded that nothing could be done. All they can do is sit and wait (Mahere et. al, 2011).

When asked how government should be, one asserted that the monarchy should be reinstated. People have rights he said, but they mean nothing and nothing has come of it. Another expressed a similarly radical view. He opined that Nepal will never have a good constitution by elevating a prime minister, president or king. Rather, all other countries need to stop supporting Nepal, and make it suffer economically. Only then will the country come together to form a good constitution. Right now, he said, parties receive money and have no
problems of their own, while the actual citizens with problems receive nothing (Mahere et. al, 2011).

Kamala Rai and Milan Devi Tamang, members of a local housewives’ organization, also asserted that they were not associated with any political party. The group, formed seven years ago to conserve their environment, has evolved to address various common needs. For example, in response to recent fires in Salleri, the group was putting together plans to ask the VDC for funds for large water tanks in each house to deal with future fires. When they actually go to the VDC however, they need to have the sponsorship of a political party. When asked if they could go as individuals, they responded that the group is split into smaller subgroups, and the leaders of those subgroups can go to the VDC to voice complaints, but not to ask for money.

**Discussion/Analysis**

The research findings indicate that political parties in Salleri have come to fill a role as a middleman between the citizens and local government. This role seems to take the place of citizen-sovereign interaction that would otherwise be taken by elections, or a like democratic mechanism. This middleman role also appears to hinder, rather than expedite the processing of citizen demands. Furthermore, I contend that the parties have become the only avenue through which people and their local government can interact. Finally, it appears that instead of interacting politically with the VDC and DDC, the citizens only interact within the political institution of the party.

In the economy of political capital, the demand of citizens is essential for a political entity to flourish. This is akin to the relationship described by one...
representative from the LGCDP, who warned of the dangers of having too much capacity or too much demand. Although there are projects, such as the LGCDP, which promote the formation of groups to advocate for people’s common demands collectively, it seems that the parties preemptively collect these very same demands and advocate in their stead. As described before, the lack of demand on the local government itself creates enormous fiduciary risk. I also believe that this demand collection deprives citizens of their individual agency, and ultimately, of their ability to participate actively in the local government. Furthermore, as members of political parties, citizens are part of a one-sided patronage relationship. Through this relationship, I contend, parties perpetuate a subject, rather than citizen status of residents. Meanwhile, only the senior party members, having gathered the demands of their members, are actively involved as citizens with the VDC and DDC decision-making process.

*The Only Middleman*

As mentioned above, the party has become the only way that citizens can advance their priorities with the VDC and DDC. Kalanidhi Devkota, an anonymous donor agency source, and Vijay Kunwar all suggested that without an actual election, citizens are having trouble communicating their needs to the local bodies. This is exemplified by Kunwar’s comment that although people can raise their voices, it is not effective.

The dominance of the party as the sole provider of citizen’s demands was also evident through discussions with officers in Salleri. It is clear that although at times they may invite groups to give input, only party representatives have an actual official place in the decision making process. Furthermore, the abundance
of organizations in Salleri can be misleading, because nearly every one is affiliated with a party. The many student, women’s and Dalit unions in Salleri would indicate a civil society rife with active political involvement. These various groups however, only exist as branches of the larger parties.

Purusoltam Nepal, the Solukhumbu LDO had said that they are directly accountable to the people. By this he was referring to the distant origin of where their projects come from, and the system of social audits. Both of these seems to be problematic. First, although demands come to the DDC through a long process that starts with actual citizens, each step of the way they are scrutinized and prioritized strictly by party representatives. Second, the social audits are not considered to be a reliable mechanism for accountability by Ministry of Local Development officials, and even if they were, they are monitored in turn by the political parties themselves. In this way, it appears that party members playing the role of supervisor, often ultimately control the very system that is meant to create some level of communication between local government and constituents.

Pardon Shrestha, the district Social Mobilizer also exemplifies the parties’ dominance. Although the concept of SM is to bring together people regardless of political ties, he stated explicitly that local parties often get in the way of forming, or sustaining groups. Those groups of community members would otherwise serve as a way that citizens could advance their own goals, and yet they are purportedly hindered by parties. These parties seem to hold a monopoly on the method of approaching the VDC and DDC. Rai and Tamang, leader of the housewives’ organization also illustrate this: although they are not in a party, they cannot ask the VDC for funds unless they have party sponsorship.
The only group I spoke to that had no association or dealings with a political party, the workers and businessmen from the Terai, were also the most helpless. This group, complaining of discrimination, purported that they could do nothing to address these problems. Without a party, they had no prospect at all of approaching the VDC or DDC, and are almost entirely at the mercy of the society in which they live.

Dharma Sunuwar, representative of the Nepali Congress Party, perhaps summarized the party’s role best when he said that while the government will not listen to people’s needs, the party will. This is perhaps true, but the question remains whether or not the VDC and DDC are actually able to listen to the people’s needs. I believe that this indicates that parties are currently the only way to bring one’s demands to the local bodies. It may also show that in the party’s absence, local government in Nepal would not have a replacement mechanism to interact with citizens. Perhaps the presence of the party and the role it has taken on has prevented other, more sustainable, methods of democratic participation from forming.

A Middleman for Everyone’s Benefit?

The research findings suggest not only that the parties play the role of a middleman, but also that this role is not mutually beneficial. On the contrary, it appears that the parties’ role as advocate and translator has a significant cost associated with it. This was noted, with varying degrees of exasperation, by a number of participants in the study. Pardon Shrestha, noted that local party leaders not only demand a percentage of Social Mobilizers’ salaries, but also take a cut of funds that are
approved for project implementation. This exact same process was described by Prasad Rai, member of the Himali Party, with the added comment that before funds are even approved, parties fight over the implementation. This seems ironic because although parties may find common ground with one another in their priorities, they nonetheless have a dispute over who gets to actually implement the project for their members. Mukti Batrai, district engineer, also complained that local projects are controlled by parties. The acting district education minister, veterinary doctor, and agricultural minister raised similar complaints about control of budgets, stemming from political discord. Jha, in the Election Commission, also stated that parties interfere with the maintenance of accurate voter lists.

All of the above are quintessential services that should be provided by the state. However, it appears that nearly every single service (infrastructure development, veterinary services, agricultural services and education) is impeded by the presence of parties themselves. Here arises a certain level of irony, stemming from the idea that while the parties take credit for bringing services in the first place, they simultaneously seem to prevent those services from being efficiently provided.

In a different way, there are some issues that parties seem not to address at all. Although the Maoist party in Salleri has a specific group for Dalits, when I interviewed them they complained of nothing more than discrimination within the party itself. The party may claim to represent Dalits that are members, but those actual members do not see benefits from the party. Quite the opposite, Mr. and Mrs. Kami cited no issues with the local government, but serious problems between them and higher party members. It would be hard in this circumstance,
to argue that the party is actually advancing the priorities of its members, much less doing so efficiently.

_Government within the Party_

Many participants, especially those in Kathmandu, cited the lack of workable structure at the local level as the source of political problems in Nepal, in a broad sense. Within the parties however, it seems that there are extensive mechanisms for intra-party governance. In this way, while citizens do not interact directly with the local bodies, they nonetheless are involved in the parties, which possess their own government structures. By classical a definition of citizenship as the active involvement in political procedures, people are truly acting as citizens within their party, but not with their government. I believe that this structure within parties, contrasted with the VDC and DDC, attracts people to them. As evidence for this, Lali B.K. and Indra Rai both stated that what they desire from a government are stable institutions. In this way, it may even be possible that while the formation of a federal state falters, parties have taken up the slack, and lose no time in forming stable functionality within their party.

For example, while there remain no elections for the VDC or DDC, there are many elections inside political parties. Perhaps the most important of these for the local level, are the representatives of the Advisory Committee. Sunuwar explained in depth a process of advancement for party members. This process required years of service to the party, and stiff competition against other loyal party members, and to read and agree to the rules and regulations of the Nepali Congress Party.
The government structure within parties also appears to be a top-down model. Representatives from the Maoist, Nepali Congress, and Himali parties all described receiving orders from senior party members. This was often in relation to going out to remote areas to gather information, but also in regard to what they would do if the Constitution is not finished on time. In the former circumstance, the mission was not only to gather information, but also to recruit prospective members. This raises an interesting issue of how the party base is formed. Unlike the model of grouping encouraged by the LGCDP, the grouping within parties seems to stem from higher party members seeking new members. These recruits are not necessarily drawn to the party of their own accord, but rather brought into it by the party’s missionaries.

It is interesting to note that an anonymous source also informed me that some donor agencies are beginning to initiate a program to promote democratic practices within parties. This program would function much like the LGCDP, except with a party focus. This demonstrates that others have already begun to realize that the inner-workings of parties contains more mechanisms and structures than the actual government does. For this reason, aid programs are being started to focus specifically on intra-party governance.

The Great Collection

The previous discussion of top-down governance within parties leads directly into a common theme brought up by participants. Every party representative, including the members of the Dalit Union, spoke about going out on party orders to gather information and bring in new recruits. The information gathered was mostly about the specific needs of local populations. If people
would join the party, then the party would promise to address those needs. There was also a conspicuous theme of seeking out DAG in remote areas. I believe that this indicates that parties capitalize on the disparities of DAG, and actively works to bring more marginalized citizens into the party.

Mukti Batrai mentioned receiving information from the central government about the local needs. This seems strange because although he aims to do projects for local benefit, his information about local needs comes from an indirect source. Similarly, when the district LDO was asked about receiving input from other groups, he said that they have the Dalits mapped, and may call them to give input. The concept of having them “mapped” implies that the individual Dalits’ actual needs are reduced to a demographic understanding, without any actual personal interaction.

I believe that the system of informational retrieval by parties demonstrates that parties need to have members in destitute situations with dire needs. These needs allow the parties to have a reason to exist. Without members with serious needs, the party has no leverage to use in the Advisory Committee and no reason to receive aid. It was described above how parties seem to use the implementation of development projects to get money for themselves, and I believe this poses an additional incentive to continue to have marginalized members. With this in mind, it becomes clear that parties have a motive to perpetuate either their members’ demands, or to seek out more DAG with demands.

One man I spoke with referred to this, saying that foreign countries need to stop funding Nepal. As long as parties continue to receive money for the needs of their members, they have no motive to fully address all demands. The Dalit Mueser 31
Union representatives I spoke to also raised this topic, when they said that the party uses the name of Dalit to get funds, but they never actually see any benefits. This is why, I argue, the parties actively seek out the most marginalized groups. The continuation of a party’s influence depends on the amount of impoverished members they have. This suggests that civil society in Nepal is perhaps not as vibrant as some have said. Although there are an abundance of organizations, nearly all of these appear to be associated with a party, which in turn has a clear motive to perpetuate a status in which they have marginalized citizens. This model excludes the possibility that DAG demands can ever be fully addressed.

\textit{Government without Demand and Citizens without Agency}

The above system of demand collection presents an additional crisis for individual citizens and local government – the VDC and DDC. While the party gathers citizen demands, they become the sole source of those demands. Neither the local government nor citizens have a direct hold on demand, and both must work through the party as a broker of this political capital. I believe that this has a twofold effect. First, there appears to be substantial fiduciary risk associated with local government because there is only one way that they can receive the demands of their citizens. Furthermore, the vehicle through which they receive those demands has motives and priorities of its own that are not necessarily congruent with the citizens. Second, citizens are denied of their individual agency, and are not able to act independently to advocate for their needs. This is because when a party collects and reports of local demands, the citizens lose their ability to personally act, and the onus to advocate is subsidized by the party (specifically higher party members).
The claim that local government bodies descend into corruption as a result of the parties’ monopoly of political capital is speculative. The research findings from the study did not focus on local corruption. The function of parties, as understood here however, does indicate that there is a serious potential for abuse resulting from an absence of direct constituent demand. Although the evidence here is not conclusive, there is certainly a risk of misuse of funds, even if it stems more from bad information than avarice. An anonymous participant from a donor agency did say however, that the local system of budget distribution has “institutionalized corruption,” both by parties and local officers.

The claim that citizens are denied of their agency is also largely speculative, but is supported by the trends I observed. Kunwar and Adhikary both spoke about the endeavor to create and empowering environment, in which citizens are able to advance their goals collectively. They also said, along with an anonymous source, that people do not seem to be able to actually effectively advance goals, despite the fact that they can raise their voices. Yadav Subedi, the Solukhumbu CDO also stated that although at times people complain to him, they only come as individuals, unable to make actual change. Similarly, the LDO stated the input of various citizens is only directly received if directly sought. I believe that all of this is in part due to the party’s role as sole vehicle between citizen and government. Furthermore, while the party exists, people are unable to personally advocate, and instead are forced to resign their demands to the party they join.

The manner in which party emissaries gather demands is also indicative of a state of political paralysis for citizens, especially those DAG specific sought after. Multiple times, interviewees described assuring marginalized populations...
that help from the party is on the way, and they need to sit back and relax. The system of information collection takes the demands of citizens away from them because the duty to advance needs no longer rests with them. *The Great Collection* takes reason to form groups away from citizens, while providing parties with all the nutrition of a political organization. The party’s hegemony is secured by the deprivation of citizen’s agency, and the government’s reliance on the party for a connection to constituent needs.

*The Relationship – Citizens and Subjects*

Finally, the relationship between residents, parties, and local government must be examined. For the purpose of this study, citizenship will be broadly understood as membership in a group by which one is guaranteed the right to take part in the decision making of a polity. This is largely reflective of the republican model of citizenship. Conversely, a subject will be understood as a person who is under the authority of entity that holds the monopoly over power in the polity, mainly the sovereign. By definition, the subject does not play a role in the decision making processes of the state, where as the citizen, especially within democratic institutions, is often understood to be an part of the same.

I contend that this research indicates that the relationship between residents and the local government seems almost non-existent, neither citizen nor subject. If anything, the relationship is extremely distant. The relationship between people and parties however, appears to resemble a subject relationship, characterized by patronage of both physical resources and advocacy. In contrast, the relationship between parties and the local government (if parties are considered to be one entity) resembles a citizen relationship in which parties

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actively interact with the government and influence how decisions are made. In this way, I believe that the party system perpetuates the subjection of Nepalis, while assuming the role of the active citizen.

The most prominent aspect of the party-resident relationship is the patronage. This takes multiple forms, but was described not only by party members, but also local officials. For example, Mukti Batrai, district engineer, stated that one of the purposes of doing project implementation through the community groups, was to get funds into the hands of the people. Although this appears to come from the government, it is important to note he also said that project implementation is ultimately controlled by parties. Party representatives (Kirati, Prasad Rai and Sunuwar) intimated that when they go out to areas to gather information and new members, sometimes they give money to local populations. This grant is not for any specific local development.

Similarly, Prasad Rai of the Himali party noted a system of upward accountability in project implementation, where although funds are given by the party (secured through the VDC or DDC). Only partial funds are granted however, and the project is only funded in full if the party sees that the community is satisfactorily implementing. This is verbatim the system of accountability described by Arun Adhikary, who hypothesized that the current system of governance sees citizens who are accountable to their parties and governments, rather than the reverse.

The other type of patronage is political advocacy. As described above, party members, when gathering information about DAG and new members, tell them to wait and that help is on the way. The party takes it upon itself to advocate for the people’s needs, while the members engage within the party, but do not
actually participate in accomplishing goals. This not only denies citizens of agency, as argued above, but also continues a relationship in which citizens are subjects of their party.

It may be argued that citizens are involved in intra-party affairs, including elections and demand prioritizing (as described in Government within the Party), and are therefore active citizens in that relation. It is true that there are systems within parties that members can be involved in. However, I believe that the relationship is nonetheless one of subjection because of two characteristic of the interaction. First, although members can be involved in the party, this is only at the bidding of more senior members. Kirati and Sunuwar both described waiting for commands from above, without which they were unable to act. Second, members are brought into the party, and their demands inquired of. This is contrasted with residents choosing independently to join a party and choosing independently to advance their priorities through the party. Exemplified here is the top-down party approach described earlier. In addition, Sunuwar described how when members join the party, their first duty is to read and agree to the party’s rules and regulations. The existence of duties in addition to membership is itself indicative of a relationship defined by upward accountability. Admittedly, citizens are involved within their party, but the guidelines by which the function and the manner in which they joined the party, both illustrate a subject relationship.

Bogati, chairman of REED Nepal, gave another example of this interaction. When describing the problems of trying to get the community involved in the school, he said that community members feel that the responsibility to have good schools lies with the teachers and the government.
Clearly, they expect this service (which many explicitly complained about) to be provided by the sovereign, without their specific advocacy. This has been the tradition in Nepal for many decades. Only with the introduction of democracy barely twenty years ago, did the interaction begin to change, but it appears that there is still the perception that citizens do not actively take a role in securing their needs. Rather, the government provides, or it does not. This attitude is enshrined in the relationship between members and parties.

The Terai businessmen and workers seemed to grasp this distinction particularly well. They recognized that they have supposed rights, but declared that they mean nothing because they cannot actually act upon them. Not surprisingly, a member from this same group advocated for the return of the monarchy. In a sense, he saw that the rights of citizenship seem either nonexistent, or nonfunctional. He would prefer to have explicit subjection, rather than the farce of citizenship.

An anonymous source stated, “the time is ripe for revolt against the parties,” (Anonymous, 2011). With this short comment, he suggested the entire system of subjection and the reality of the middleman’s role. It is interesting that he foresaw a revolt against parties, not against the central government. It is the parties who act as the government for Nepalis. It is with the parties they interact, through the parties they are involved, and from the parties they receive services. On the horizon he saw no revolt against the Government of Nepal, but one against the party system.

Conclusion
On Sunday, April 24, 2011, the town of Salleri in Solukhumbu celebrated Democracy Day. One may think that festivities for this occasion would include civic demonstrations, and some sort of glorification of Nepal’s newfound democracy. Nothing of the sort however, took place. Instead, the DDC organized a volleyball game on the plot of land outside the office (Appendix III). The match was between players from various political parties on one side, and various civil servants on the other. As they warmed up, and some DDC officials served a few times, people from Salleri started to gather around. By the time the two teams started to play a game, a crowd of close 100 people had come, and were sitting on the side of the volleyball court, watching the game.

Democracy Day in Salleri is an appropriate physical metaphor for the political situation this research indicates. While Nepali citizens sat by passively and watched, political parties went back and forth with the actual Nepali government. This research suggests that the parties in Salleri act as a middleman between citizens and the local government. This role is not expeditious, but rather appears to hinder development in Solukhumbu.

Meanwhile, citizens can only interact with their party, which has become the only avenue to reach local government. The party is able to fill this role in part by a complex system of information gathering. In this, the party collects the demands of DAG while welcoming them into the party. Patronage by the party is a key element of this relationship. After gathering demands and members, the party becomes the sole provider for the government of citizen demands. Meanwhile, the citizens are unable to personally advance those same needs. This

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1 Nepal’s officially Democracy Day is on February nineteenth, but April twenty fourth in Salleri was a holiday, and all residents I spoke to said it was “democracy day.”
makes government and people reliant upon the party for their communication. Finally, a subject-like relationship emerges between people and the parties, while the parties act as the only involved citizens with the government. The parties’ role as translator to the local government, and sovereign to citizens, perpetuates the monarchial structure in Nepal, and impedes progression toward more democratic institutions.

The above claims are not entirely conclusive. The research findings for this study however, do indicate that this is the reality of the current relationship between citizens and the local VDC and DDC bodies in Salleri, with the political parties directly in between. This raises serious questions about the nature of civil society in Nepal, and whether or not a feudal relationship is perpetuated in this circumstance. It is important to understand the exact role of political parties in contemporary Nepali political society, if aid is going to continue flow for development. It should be noted that the scope of this study is focused specifically on the budgetary decision making process in the VDC and DDC in Salleri, Solukhumbu. The limitations of this study, as explained in Methodology, should also be understood.

This research nevertheless brings to light substantial doubts about the functionality of civil society in Nepal. More research is needed on these topics to reach more positive conclusions. Specifically, research should be done to further examine the relationship between citizens, parties, and local government. Research should address, *inter alia*, the follow questions. Are there viable ways for local government and citizens to interact besides through parties? Are citizens able to take personal responsibility for the advancement of their priorities? Does
membership in a party allow or restrict a citizen to become politically involved with the local government?

Further research here is particularly pertinent because Nepal is in midst of a struggle to form a federal state. How citizens are considered in relation to their geographic and political surroundings must be understood if progress is to be had. If the above analyses are true, then Nepal has a long way to go before it can shrug off the monarchial spirit. If additional research yields similar findings, the conception of both civil society and citizenship in Nepal needs to be redefined. The current situation, if understood correctly, is a scene in which the political needs of DAG are exploited in order to perpetuate political parties’ role as a multi-functional middleman between citizens and the local government.
Glossary of Terms

Agency… the ability to personally act for one’s self-interest

CDO… Chief District Officer

DAG… Disadvantaged Groups

DDC… District Development Committee

Fiduciary Risk… A risk that a trustee is not acting for the optimal best-interest of their beneficiaries.

LDO… Local Development Officer

LGCDP… Local Governance and Community Development Program

SM… Social Mobilization

VDC… Village Development Committee
Appendix/Appendices

I: Nayabazaar on market day.

II: Written consent form.

**Consent Form**

Depends on Who You Ask

Concepts of Success of Good Governance in Nepal

You are invited to take part in a study involving concepts of success of good governance and social mobilization in Nepal. You have been asked to participate because of your unique knowledge of the subject. Please read this form and ask any questions you have before agreeing to be part of this study.

This research is part of an independent study conducted by Benjamin Mueser, Goucher College, USA as part of the SIT: Nepal Development and Social Change, World Learning Inc. Study Abroad program.

**Background Information:**

As the Nepal Constitutional Assembly tries to write a Constitution, the nation is trying to decide on how to restructure local governance. There has also been a significant focus on the promotion of “good governance” as well as efforts to mobilize a vibrant civil society. The purpose of this research is to examine what it means to many different people in Nepal to succeed at these efforts.
Procedures:
If you choose to take part in this study, I will ask you to do the following:
Spend a short time with me, about 30 minutes to an hour, in a semi-structured interview. This will be an informal conversation, but I will ask you about your views and opinions concerning governance and civil society in Nepal, including the future of these areas and how they have changed, if they have, in recent years.

You are free to end our conversation at any point if you are uncomfortable or do not want to speak further. Our conversation will be recorded for the study, but if you want to tell me something off of the record, please let me know. You also have the right to remain anonymous in the final product.

Risks and Benefits of being in this Study:
There are no risks or benefits associated with taking part in this study.

Confidentiality:
The researcher will not require any personal information about you except for name and job title. You may choose at any time to retract something from the interview. Although I may quote you directly from the record, you also have the right to remain entirely anonymous. The records from this study will remain in a secure place, and only the researcher will have access to them.

Voluntary Nature of this Study:
The choice to be a part of this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision to, or not to, take part and be interviewed will not affect your relationship with SIT or World Learning Inc., and you may choose not to answer any question or withdraw entirely.

Contacts and Questions:
This study is being conduced by Benjamin Mueser. You may ask any questions now, and if you have any further inquiries later, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher at 980 886 0828 or Benjamin.Mueser@mail.goucher.edu. If you wish, you may be given an extra copy of this information.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information, as well as asked any questions I have and received appropriate answers. I consent to be a part of this study.

☐ I agree to speak on the record, understand that I may be quoted directly in the research, and that if I wish to speak off the record I will tell the researcher.

Signature: __________________________________ Date: ____________
III: Yard outside the DDC office in Salleri.
Bibliography


**List of interviews** (if applicable)


Consent to Use of Independent Study Project (ISP)
(To be included with the electronic version of the paper and in the file of any World Learning/SIT Study Abroad archive.)

Student Name: ____________________________________________

Title of ISP: ______________________________________________

Program and Term: ______________________________

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