

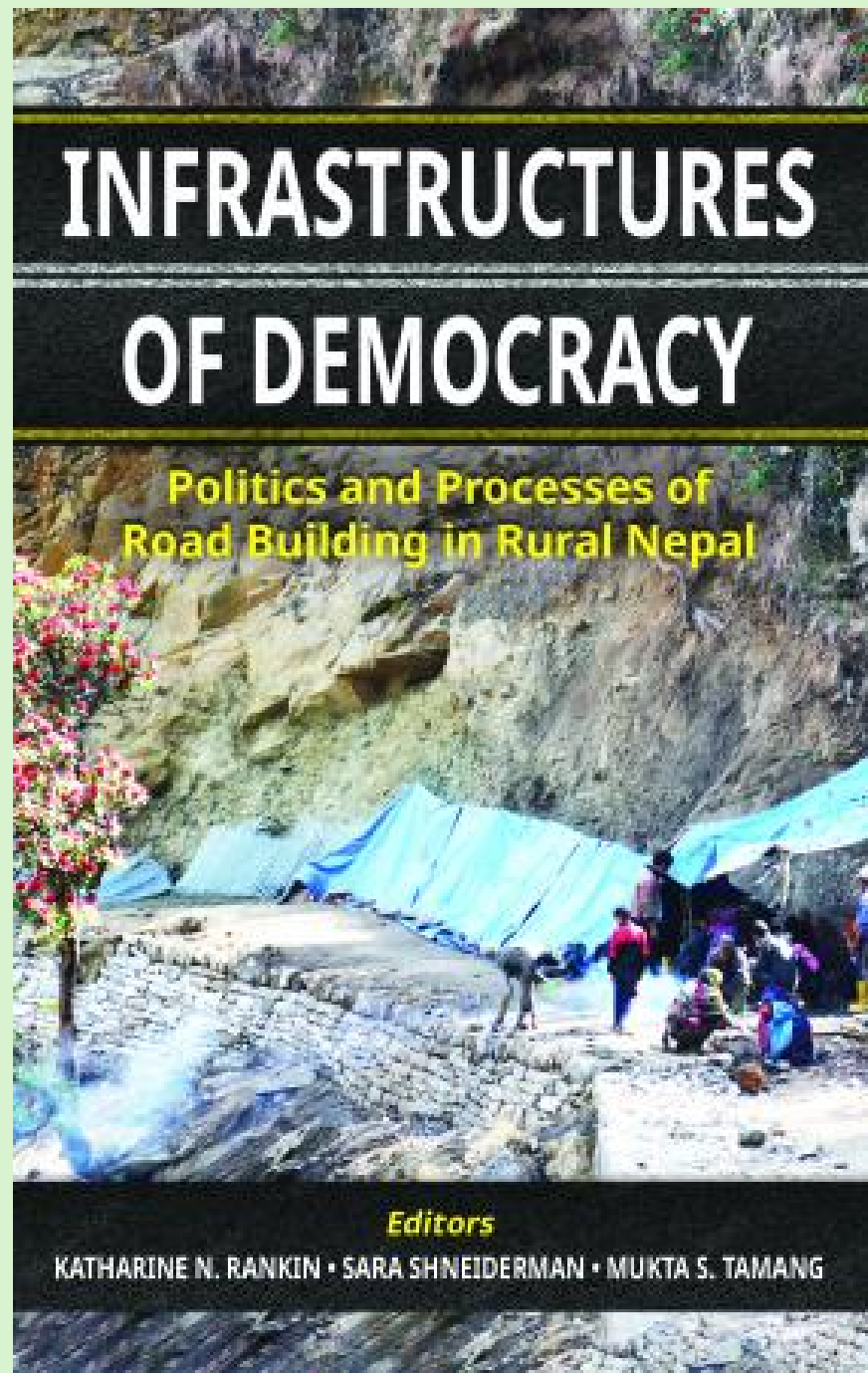
Corruption and the Situated Logics of Ethical Judgment: Rural Road Building in Nepal

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Singati – Lamabagar road,Dolakha District, before 2015 earthquakes



Rankin, K.N., S. Shneiderman & M.S. Lama, eds. 2026. *Infrastructures of Democracy: Politics and Processes of Road Building in Rural Nepal*. Kathmandu: Chautari Books.

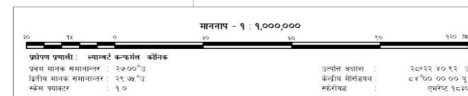
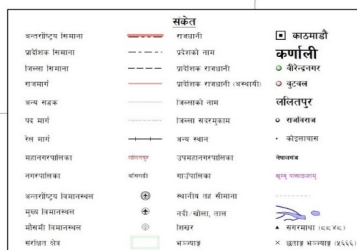
(राजनीतिक तथा प्रशासनिक)

Mugu

Research sites

Dolakha

Morang



Khane/khuane = eating/being fed

- ***ghus khane*** = taking a bribe
- ***commission khane*** = taking a commission
- ***budget, yojena or bikas khane*** = cheating a budget, a project, or development overall

Milne/milaune = being suitable or fitting/arranging

- ***milemato*** = an arrangement
- ***kagaj milaune*** = arranging on paper
- ***setting milaune*** =_arranging a situation or setting

KEYWORDS

dal = political parties

Thekadar-neta = the nexus of
contractors and politicians

Asare budget = budgets expended
at the end of the fiscal year

syndicate = cartels



**Nigale-Phuli road, Mugu (what users' committee are supposed to look like),
Tulasi Sigdel, 2017**

**Dakkhin Karnali
Bagdo Chha**

**The Karnali Flows
Southward**

Suman Malla
2008



YOJENA KHANE, BUDJET KHANE, BIKAS KHANE

Cheating a project, a budget, or development overall



Launa ke garne? Oh what to do?

Neetesh Jung Kunwar, 2018

Taxi drivers pretend that their meters are not working

They won't take you anywhere for less than Rs. 500

While doing checks, the traffic police don't care

Who is going to say anything, Who is going to say anything?

Even if it is at a slower pace, the road is expanding

It is as if there is no regulation, people are just doing what they want

Due to road accidents people are dying everyday

Who is going to say anything, Who is going to say anything?



Contractors, *milemato*, Gamgadhi, Mugu
June 2017



There are many contractors. They divide different projects and take turns for [receiving] the contract. We move our process forward if they have followed our procedures, even if they come having arranged which contractor would submit the winning bid What we need is proper documentation [*kagaj milaunu parcha*]. Once they come up with that documentation then we give the contract to the lowest bidder and do the agreement.

**LDO
Mugu, 2017**

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Lutna Sake Lut, Take all you Can

Pasuhpati Sharma, 2019

पशुपति शर्माको ब्याङ्ग्यात्मक गीत लुट्न सके लुट नेपालमै हो छुट...



On the roads it's like a chaotic festival, there are no traffic lights.

The traffic police blow their whistles, but no one listens;

Just to install the traffic lights, how much does it really cost?

Do we have to tell them this, or should they figure it out themselves?

CHORUS

Loot as much as you can, my boy, loot as much as you can

Eh, loot as much as you can, my boy, loot as much as you can

You can't do this in other countries, but in Nepal you can feel free

Eh my boy, you can't do this in other countries, but in Nepal you can feel free

The contractor wins the tender and takes the contract
He creates more trouble and then leaves the work instead of completing it.

They went here and looted, and then over there to loot?

Now the mentality is that everyone has to loot

Khane

Ethnography

- Pocketing money devolved to community groups for personal gain
- Contractors using stones from gabion wall of a road to grind into sand to make cement for construction of private house.

Cultural productions

- *The Karnali River Runs Southward—having to pay the gift to the 4th CDO & material harms that result*
- *Oh What to Do—eating permeates the system, but no one will say anything.*
- *Take as Much as you Can--if government officials and others providing a service are going to take bribes, then you might as well loot all you can from the system*
- .

Khuane

Ethnography

- Illicitly “feeding” government employees, contractors or equipment operators out of budgets devolved to users’ committees, in order to [a] curry favor so consensually desired work gets done
- And [b] express appreciation and respect.
- Having to pay commissions to carry out business and livelihood activities.

SITUATED ETHICSS–SOME CONCLUSIONS

Everyday practices of road building

- Public good is not road development itself, but getting quality roads built in a way that honors relationships and demands on peoples' time, while also mitigating against concentration of wealth and opportunity.
- Individual gain at public expense is not acceptable.
- Collusion may be warranted if it helps to expand market access, keep capital local, and rotate opportunity among those with experience and capital.

Ethnography

- Show the critical consciousness of the poor
- Show the situated logics of ethical judgment
- Convey the nuance and contradiction

Cultural productions – Create biopublics, constituency for critique of corruption

- Show the vulnerability of the poor – *The Karnali Rivers Runs Southward, Sacrifice*
- Show how entrenched the system is – *Oh What to Do*
- Encourage people to game the system – *Take as Much as You Can*

Your thoughts and experience?

- Do you find the approach useful, why or why not?
- Does the concept of situated ethics make sense?
- How does this relate to the anti-corruption curriculum at NASC?