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International Political Economy of Remittances and Development in Nepal

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Abstract

Nepal has experienced emigration and the inflow of remittances (money sent back by emigrants) for over two centuries. Since the beginning, remittances have been implicated in shaping broader politico-economic and sociocultural dynamics. They have also shaped different ways of understanding and practicing ‘development’ in the country. Thus, this PhD research addresses the following question: How are remittance implicated in shaping the understanding and practice of ‘development’ in Nepal? Existing studies have produced rich macroeconomic analyses on the impact of remittances on development but have overlooked sociocultural dynamics and the sphere of the everyday. Additionally, policy debates focus narrowly on the productive use of remittances as a source of development financing. What is missing is a critical investigation of migration-development interactions across time and across spheres of Nepali society. This PhD research draws on the Gramscian concept of ‘common sense’ to unravel the relations between migration, remittances and development in Nepal. The analysis will focus on three broad phases of migration-development interactions: primitive accumulation, modernizations and financialization. It adopts a multi-method and multi-sited methodology mobilizing Critical Discourse Analysis to bring three distinct realms in conversation – national policies and practices, remittances recipients’ understandings and practice and mediations of opinion makers – as well as explore various aspects, sites and implications of the common sense on migration-development interactions.